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# Purple Press

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## Outward Bound to Costa Rica

*OWL students to travel outside of the US for a service trip for the first time*

**Kate Houle**  
Staff Writer

Outward Bound points have gotten more competitive than ever.

Every year, OWL students involved in Outward Bound Service Adventure (OBSA) spend the school year volunteering at events and fundraisers to raise money for trips they go on over the week

of interim. Every hour they spend volunteering and every \$10 they raise gets translated into points, and the students with the most points at the end of the year get the first choice on what trip they'd like to go on.

These trips are usually to partner Outward Bound camps, which are dedicated programs designed to get

students engaged in the natural world. For the past few years, OWL students have traveled to Northern Minnesota, Colorado, and Maine to do service projects and celebrate the fruits of their labor.

This year, students will get the option to travel to a camp in Costa Rica. "It's something that we've been interested in for a long time, knowing that

there were Outward Bound base camps in Latin America. The school that we work with in Maine purchased the base camp in Costa Rica a couple of years ago, and we have a really strong relationship with them, so they asked if we would be interested in going to Costa Rica to do a service trip there," explained OWL Spanish teacher and OBSA coordinator

Tim Leone-Getton.

"We haven't done an Outward Bound trip like that since California in 2023, which was kind of a big deal. The fact that they're bringing kids to Costa Rica is really awesome," said senior Margaret Moe.

This is the first time an OWL OBSA group will be traveling internationally, though there have been school

sponsored trips out of the country before, including to Costa Rica. International travel is a little more complicated, so the logistics for the trip need to be figured out sooner than usual. "We need to identify the group a little earlier so they can get passports for it," said Tim, "we'll be getting more information from the school

Costa Rica, 6

## The college march and how they get there



Rebecca Palmer

The class of 2026 gathers for a photo after the march.

### *Kate dives into some seniors' experience with the college application process*

**Kate Houle**  
Staff Writer

For the past couple of years, I have written a short blurb about the college march for the front page of the Purple Press. This year, in the midst of my own college applications and arguments over what color the senior hoodies should be, I've

realized that what the college march means to me and my fellow seniors goes much deeper than that 200 word overview.

While it can be easy to zone out as each member of OWL's graduating class steps up to the microphone, the truly spectacular part of the college march is that every

single senior has at least one post-secondary application to announce. "We do highlight that everybody applies to some sort of post secondary program, whether it's college, a two year trade school, or even going into Focus Beyond. Everybody has a plan for what they want to do after high school, which I think is really



Rebecca Palmer

Maddie Linstad announces her college plans.

cool because you definitely don't see that at some of the bigger high schools," said Senior Seminar teacher Katie Craven.

The college march is designed to celebrate the hard work seniors have put into their applications. While the process of applying has changed a lot over time, with

seniors now mainly applying online through one catch-all common application, the tedious nature of it all has not. In total, I personally had to fill in 240 fields in the Common App, not including supplemental school responses. Beyond

College, 8

## Are we ready for VR?

**James Hietala**  
Staff Writers

Virtual Reality (VR) has always been "the technology of the future," and is found in nearly every piece of sci-fi or futuristic media. Of course we've tried to pursue this kind of technology in the modern day, and we've been relatively successful in the creation of such technology. In fact you can go down to your local Walmart and spend a few hundred dollars to get one yourself. Despite this however, VR has never really taken off and become a part of everyday lives like it has in movies.

The biggest field that VR has seen success in is the world of simulations and gaming. These headsets are overall priced much lower than productivity focused headsets, generally in the \$300-\$600 range. This kind of VR headset is generally what many people think of when someone talks about VR, and has been moderately successful.

The Meta Quest (formerly Oculus) is the most successful headset in the category. It has many built in games, the most famous probably being beatsaber, a rhythm game that you may have seen as background footage in videos. It can also link to a computer to stream games that are too intensive, or just not available on the Quest. The Meta Quest also has the infamous "Metaverse," officially called Meta Horizon Worlds. The Metaverse is intended to be an online socialization platform, where everyone is represented by avatars and can interact and

VR, 7

## Basque identity: cultural balancing act

*Growing up in northern Spain, switching between Basque and Spanish language is part of daily life*

**Noa Calzada Villanueva**  
Staff Writer

Have you ever struggled trying to explain something you know in another language? That happens to me all the time. Sadly, most of the time this happens to me during exams.

In most of the exams I take, there's an open question and I have to elaborate on

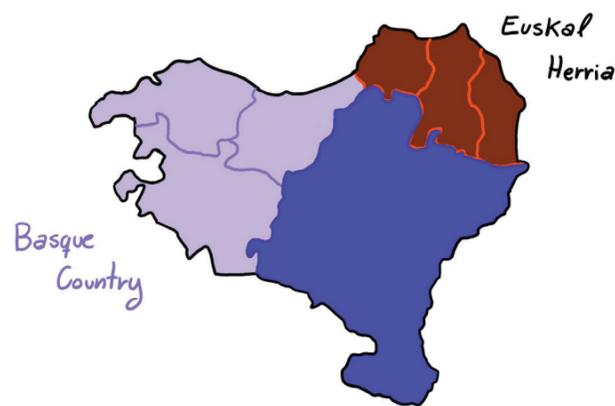
everything I've learned. Most of the time I know what I want to say but can't say it in Basque.

I am from the Basque Country, so this means I have most of my classes in Basque. When I study, I usually translate everything (myself) into Spanish to understand everything clearly. I take my notes in both languages. But, when I am doing the test, I completely forget how to

explain myself in Basque.

In case you didn't know, Basque is a language spoken in the Basque Country, a region in the northern part of Spain, next to France. It is a very difficult language to learn if you are not a native speaker because it is an insulated language with no similarities to any other European language. We don't know when it first

Basque, 7



Noa Calzada Villanueva



# The Purple Press

OWL's longest-running student newspaper was founded in 1996. We publish monthly from November through June. All content for The Purple Press is created by OWL students. The Purple Press welcomes feedback and letters to the editor. Submissions can be emailed to [leo.bickelhaupt@spps.org](mailto:leo.bickelhaupt@spps.org). The opinions expressed in this newspaper do not necessarily represent those of OWL staff or administration.

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## Reading classics: yea or nay

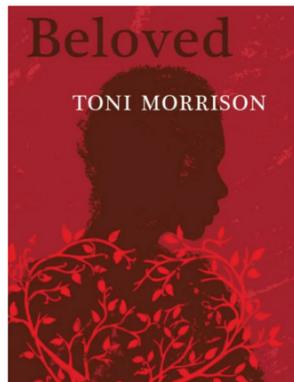
### The adjustment to high school means exposure to classic literature, which can be good and bad

**Talulah Karl and Melita Allen**  
Staff Writer

In 9th and 10th grade Accelerated English, students are expected to read one classic per quarter. This led us to pair up to write a Purple Press story about this topic, with Talulah reviewing *The Color Purple*, and Melita analyzing some of the challenges presented when reading the classics.

Classics are very well known, having been popular since they've been written. It is debated whether or not many books are considered classics, but some of the books that do fit into the classic category include *Pride and Prejudice*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *1984*.

Classics can be difficult to read, with out-dated language and long sentences that might be hard to understand and follow. The goal of much classic literature is to challenge readers to think critically,

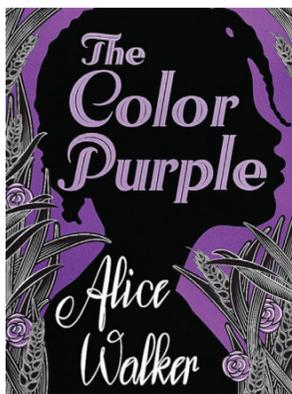


rather than to provide light entertainment. Engaging with these complex ideas is part of the intended experience. This can be a challenging transition for students, from reading books of their choice and interest, to these classics.

I chose the book *The Color Purple* to read for the classics requirement of Accelerated

9th grade English. I had heard about the movie *The Color Purple*, so I was immediately interested to read the book.

*The Color Purple* is a classic book written by Alice Walker



in 1982 and has been adapted into a movie. It follows the journey of Celie, who is an African American woman in Georgia, from her abusive childhood home, to her abusive husband's house, and then to reconnecting with her sister and discovering herself. It's about a journey of a woman through some of the hardest things in life, but throughout it all she finds her own power, as well as financial and social independence in a time where that was not supported.

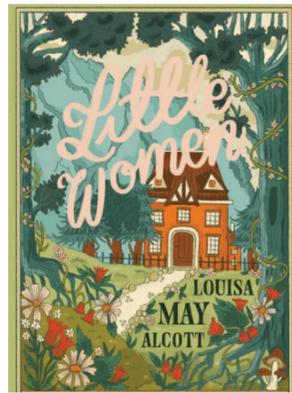
The book starts off with journal-like entries starting with "Dear God." Celie is living in her childhood home, already a mother of two, and getting secretly abused and raped by her step-father "Him." She is "forbidden" by Him to go to school. Her children are from her stepdad, as she was groomed and abused very young. She then gets married off to a man that is in love with another woman. This woman is named Shug Avery and she is a very beautiful singer who travels on tours. Celie's relationship with Shug evolves

over time, starting with an idolization of this powerful woman.

Throughout the book, her relationships with people and herself change. Celie and her husband become friends, her and Shug become 'lovers' before that was even a recognized thing between women. She also reconnects with her sister and her husband. Celie discovers self empowerment and self fulfillment, which took a long time and lots of healing.

I really liked the style of writing. It took some time to get used to the old grammar and unusual spelling with some words, but it felt more real. I could get into the book quicker as opposed to other books that do not go as deep into characters. I really enjoyed the different characters and how the author wrote them. They were easily told apart from each other, with their personalities and how they acted. The story in itself also felt very much like a real life story of someone's life.

I didn't particularly like the almost abrupt character development of Celie's husband, I felt that the author could have gone a little deeper. It didn't necessarily make sense and it felt kinda weird for that



Reading classics, 7

## The history and future of neckties

### The fashion staple has a long history, but is it fading away?

**William Schwartz**  
Staff Writer

This article of clothing traces its history back three millennia ago, is a symbol of the American dream, has and will stand the test of time

I am talking about the necktie.

The Croats are generally credited with inventing the necktie, but according to Merriam Webster, it is "a narrow length of cloth worn about the neck and tied in front." By this definition, neckties were invented long before Croatia was founded.

Among these ancient neckties are neckscarves worn by the Terracotta

Army in China, neckscarves worn by Romans, and the knot of Isis found on Egyptian mummies. During the Renaissance, the cravat was used by the Croatian military, then the French. King Louis XIII of France (the inbred grotesquerie) favored the cravat over the ruff, a common accessory at the time. Cravat is likely a corruption of the word Croat.

It is not known whether bow ties or modern neckties came first, but they both likely derive from the cravat.

An early tie knot was the four in hand knot, which

is usually the first knot people learn. It is named after the four in hand club, which is after a type of carriage which has reins that are tied similarly to its namesake knot, according to [tiemart.com](http://tiemart.com).

There was also the Ediety knot, which was invented in the 1920s and popularized by the movie *The Matrix Reloaded*. The Trinity knot (referenced later in this feature) was based off of it.

Also invented in the 1920s was the clip-on tie. Now it tends to be used by people who don't know how to tie a tie, but they were initially created for safety reasons.

Then came a classic known as the Windsor knot. According to [Ties.com](http://Ties.com), the Windsor knot is among the "3 Knots Every Man Should Know" and is used by the UK Air Force. It was invented not by Duke Windsor, but by a tailor named Domenico Scappino in the 1930s. Windsor actually achieved his signature style by having custom made extra thick stitch on the four in hand knot.

The Trinity knot was invented in 2004 and resembles an Irish triquetra knot, according to Wikipedia. Unlike most knots, this knot

Neckties, 7

## Model UN: learning lifelong skills

### Students relish the chance to explore international problem solving

**Rain Tsuzuki**  
Staff Writer

Did you know that you can prevent nuclear war, battle climate change, and stop AI from taking over the world in just a few hours?

Sorry to get your hopes up, but that's not actually true. Model UN is just a club where you get to roleplay solving those problems and similar ones as members of the United Nations.

According to the Best Delegate Model United Nations website, in Model UN students learn about foreign affairs, improve their research, public speaking, and negotiation skills, and have experience that they can use for their whole life. It's a great place to make connections if you decide to go into something Model UN related. It's also a place where you can meet lots of people with the same interests as you.

Senior David Griffith, one of the club leaders, said, "you get to meet interesting people. There are always interesting delegates that come, and there

will always be interesting stories you can talk about after the conferences." Here at OWL the team consists of around 30 high schoolers (it's an exclusively 9-12 club). They meet during the Friday club time in Luke's room. Model United Nations is a fairly new club at OWL, founded in 2023-2024. David said "[to a student thinking about

joining] I would say that even if it looks challenging, it's not that intimidating, and a lot of people come in having no idea what to do, and they still have fun at the conferences. It's not super competitive. It's more about discussion and having fun."

OWL's club goes to an annual conference at Macalester College, and

collaborates with teams from Central, Highland, and many other schools. David said, "it's from all across Minnesota." At a Model UN conference you work in a committee group called a delegate. With other delegates from other schools you work to solve real world problems by passing laws.

Here is the broken down process of a MUN conference.

The student (and their partner if they have one) will research the country, topic, and committee that they were assigned to represent.

Next, delegates speak in front of the room about their opinions and intentions about the problem, according to what country they represent. This is similar to acting, because they must represent their country/committee's values, not their own.

Then, in a moderated caucus, they debate the problem. A moderated caucus is a debate session where delegates have a set amount of time to make a short speech



Photo courtesy of Dutcher Trobaugh

The Model UN team at their conference last spring.

MUN, 7

## Boys basketball off and running

### Hawks defeated Eagle Ridge Tuesday making them 5-0



Roman Rufi

Senior Simon Casper executes a play on the court.



Roman Rufi

Junior Luke Hobday prepares to make a shot.



Roman Rufi

Sophomore Calvin Hoenisch makes a shot.

# Senior Spotlight

Fiona Curran



**What pronouns do you use?**  
She/her.

**How long have you been at OWL?**  
Four and a half years.

**What are your plans for next year?**  
Going to college to study child development and family studies.

**What's been your favorite class in high school?**  
I really like Joanna's English class.

**What extracurriculars are you involved in?**  
Outward Bound, synchronized swimming, tutoring, and PTO

**Favorite field work experience or school trip and why?**  
I really liked Du Nord because it was super fun and beautiful.

**If you had a walk up song, what would it be?**  
Addicted to My Ex by M City JR

## That One Little Kid

Anika Hauser

**How tall are you?**  
4' 6"

**What pronouns do you use?**  
She/her.

**What's your favorite book, movie, or TV show?**  
Stranger Things is my favorite TV show.

**Who's your favorite senior?**  
Fiona

**What is your favorite thing about OWL so far?**  
The teachers are nice.

**What extracurriculars do you plan on getting involved in at OWL?**  
No clubs.



## Lego League teams start new season

*The competition involves programming robots, and a lot more*

Savannah Yang and Amalena Xiong  
Staff Writer

Three Lego League teams are working to compete in the 2026 regional competition on Saturday January 24 at Capitol Hill Magnet School.

This year's challenge is "Unearthed," an archeology-themed competition that consists of three parts: using a robot to complete tasks and earn points during the robot games, a research project about things that are underground, and a presentation to a panel of judges. Usually, there are three rounds of the robot games and teams are judged based on their highest score. The judges grade teams on the robot games, robot design, research projects, core values, and team spirit. Awards are given out for the robot, the project, core values, and the Champions Award. The Champions Award is given to teams that embody the full First Lego League challenge and perform well in each category.

Right now, each team is working on completing their robot missions and starting their research. The teams will rotate jobs so everyone gets coding experience and has a chance to help research their topic. Middle schoolers can join Lego League through flipside, and eighth graders can also join the robotics class

science teacher Sorcha Nix teaches to learn more about coding with lego robots.

The teams are led by Sorcha and math teacher Clara Raineri. Sorcha coaches one team and Clara coaches two. There can be up to twelve members per team.

We asked the coaches what makes a good Lego League team. Sorcha said "There needs to be kids with a variety of skills, it's not just coding and engineering. There's also a creative aspect like the script writing, skit, research, collaboration and all the core values."

Clara said "They all

acknowledge that everyone else exists and are willing to work with each other. They are willing to know each other's names and are interested in doing something as a team."

We also asked them what makes a good Lego League team member. Sorcha said "Someone who's willing to collaborate with others, learn from their mistakes, and have fun."

Clara said "Students who are inclusive, ready to learn, want to get better at things, who are open-minded, and willing to try things that might not work."

The teams work really well

together in both coaches' opinions. They're willing to help each other code, build robot pieces, and are respectful to each other.

The Lego League members seem to be enjoying their time together and completing their missions. Some of them have even done it before in the past. "I like being able to hang out with people and still learn in a fun way," said 8th grader Bahati Stelheim, "I did it in elementary school, sixth grade, and last year. I really like coding, and it's fun."

8th grader Rocio Hernandez said, "I like being able to code and solve missions. It makes me feel independent, and it's fun to finish missions and see how it all comes together."

8th grader Elliot Carlson said, "I think it's fun. I joined because it sounded cool, and I did it at my elementary school for one year. You get to do a lot of teamwork and stuff like that."

Their progress seems to be good so far, with a few missions already finished. All the members and coaches have a personal or team goal for the year and something to look forward to when the competition comes around.

"Honestly, I'm looking forward to the donuts or whatever food we get. It's also fun to go somewhere on the



Sorcha Nix

Sorcha's Lego League team at the competition last year.



Noa Calzada Villanueva

## What should we call fizzy drinks?

*Pop or soda: Theo digs into one of the great debates of our time*

Theo McLaughlin  
Staff Writer

From the days of Mesopotamia, to the Roman Empire, all the way to the American Revolution, and now the hallways of OWL, the debate has remained: is it called pop or soda?

Okay let's get something straight, I am a Minnesotan and I firmly stand for calling it pop. You can try to convince me anyway you want and I will still call it pop.

Another word used is Coke, which I will be leaving out because it is not really common in the northern States and is also a brand name, which is more biased.

In this article I will be focusing on Minnesota and the Twin Cities, so if you are from out of state don't expect me to mention where you're from.

Something that I want to point out early on is that most of the students I've talked to about this are in eighth grade, and almost all of them have said soda. So two things you can learn from this is that eighth graders are idiots, and this is fairly one-sided, so take everything I say about my research with a grain of salt.

For a little bit of background, carbonated water was originally called "soda water." It was just carbonated water. The word pop didn't occur until an English poet (whose name I could not find for the life of me) called it "pop" from the sound the cork made when it was popped off from the bottle. Some people called it soda, and the rivalry was born.

According to many sources on the internet, calling it pop has been in decline recently, and soda is increasing in popularity. These sources also say that Minnesota is still a

pop state, which I want to believe, but you never know until you get firsthand sources.

According to MPR Minnesota is still a majority pop state, but approximately 90% of the people at OWL that I've asked have called it soda, so I don't know if that's just an OWL thing, or if pop is genuinely going extinct, I certainly hope not. If you do know please tell me.

In order to get a good view of what people say, I conducted a survey of 51 people (thank you to those who responded). In the survey, 75% of responders said that it was soda.

Okay, these results shocked me. I thought that more people would say pop, but for some reason only 27.3% of people said that deep in their hearts they believed that it was pop. However that is more than the amount of people who actually call it pop, which was 25%.

A little over 80% of people said that they heard soda more than pop, which I can definitely say is true.

To get a good contrasting opinion I asked some teachers too. Most of the teachers that I've asked have said that they say pop more than soda. I assume that this is a generational conflict.

I wanted to get a more specific opinion, so I asked social studies teacher Luke Turvold what he thinks. Luke grew up in Redwing, MN. He said that he grew in a pop household and uses pop on a day to day basis.

If there's anything I've learned from all of this, it's that the name for carbonated sugar water varies by generation. I don't think that pop will ever go away, but it will have its ups and downs. I know that's cheesy, but you know it's true.



# Reviews 'n' stuff



Noa Calzada Villanueva

## Wicked: For Good is more than good

*The second film provides new perspectives on the characters*

**Claire Ales**  
Staff Writer

Friendship, love, and bravery. All themes that can be seen throughout the entirety of the film, *Wicked: For Good*. The second part of the already amazing and successful story met my expectations and provided me with a new perspective on the characters. You could even say it changed me for good.

It's been a year since the first part came out, so here's a brief summary of what has happened and got us to where we are now.

**SPOILERS for Wicked Part One!**

*Wicked Part One* ended with Elphaba discovering that The Wizard of Oz wasn't really all that he says he is. He doesn't have any powers and is trying to expel all of the animals from OZ (an issue that is very important to Elphaba). Once she discovers this about The Wizard she begins to harness her powers and makes it her mission to expose him. As for Glinda, she's kind of just along for the ride and ends up staying back with The Wizard.

Just like the first part, *Wicked: For Good* had an amazing set that was clearly well thought out. The attention to detail on the costumes was incredibly impressive and they seemed to tell a story of their own through the way they changed over the course of the film.

**SPOILERS for Wicked: For Good!**

My first thought was: we are definitely not at Shiz anymore. *Wicked: For Good* has a darker setting and tone opposed to the first part, which notably featured upbeat song and dance numbers and playful bickering. I really enjoyed seeing the more intense side of Elphaba and Glinda as characters, as I thought it added a lot to their complex

relationship.

I thought the darker side shined through best throughout the song "No Good Deed." This is often considered the moment where Elphaba truly embraces the persona of "The Wicked Witch of The West." The song takes place following the crushing death of her sister (Nessa Rose) and capture of her love interest, Fiyero. The song is already powerful on its own, but with the added cinematic elements, the intensity was amplified. I even thought that Cynthia Erivo's version of the song was better than the original, which is sung by Idina Menzel.

The song that wraps up the journey of Glinda and Elphaba's friendship is called "For Good." This is easily in my top two songs from the entire musical. It talks about their journey together and how they grew as people just by knowing each other. The song shows how far they have come and serves as a goodbye for the pair as they sadly never see each other again after this.

This was the saddest, most heartfelt moment of the entire film, as well as being my favorite. The acting during *Wicked: For Good* as well as the first part is all amazing, but I think during this song in particular, the chemistry that Cynthia and Ariana Grande have was displayed on a whole new level and really played a significant role in the story telling. Specifically, during the final moments of the song, Glinda and Elphaba are on opposite sides of a door of each other sobbing. This was easily my favorite part of the entire movie and I learned afterward that it was improvised. I don't think there was a dry eye in the theater at the end of it.

For the film, two new songs were written. One for Elphaba and one for Glinda. I thought they provided a deeper insight

**Wicked, 8**

## Grandma candy: good or just nostalgic

*Anna ranks some sweet treats that come from grandma's purse*

**Anna Funk**  
Staff Writer

You walk into your grandma's living room and sit down on the couch and look at the coffee table. Placed delicately in the middle of the table, on an embroidered table cloth, is a glass dish with a floral pattern etched into its sides, and inside is the star of the show. You know it, you love it, or you might not! It's grandma candy.

Grandma candies have lots of variety, with sweet strawberry candies, to sour lemon drops, and everything in between. I don't really know the origin of these candies, and why older people have taken a liking to them, but I do know how I found these little gems of pure sugar.

My grandparents usually

give me cookies instead of hard candy, so I didn't actually find out about grandma candy from my grandma, I found out because of Christmas. Every Christmas I would wake up to find delicately wrapped candy overflowing from my stocking and under the tree. I honestly don't know where my parents

found that much candy, but they did. So now, every time I see grandma candies, I think of Christmas, which is my second favorite holiday (I think we can all agree that Halloween is the best). Now without further ado, let's get to rating grandma candies.

Werther's Hard Candy



Isabel Best

Caramels: This is another candy I always seem to find in a waiting room. I honestly like the shape of these candies more than the flavor. It's a very circular hard candy, which is nice because I often cut the top of my mouth if hard candies have sharp edges, but for the flavor, I think it's lacking. I love caramel quite a lot, but this candy just tastes fake and artificial to me, and I think they could have made the flavor a lot more strong. I'm going to give this a 2/4.

Starlight Peppermints: I'm pretty sure that everyone has at least seen one of these, with a white base and red swirling towards the middle. These are a must have during Christmas in my house, probably because they look like candy canes.

**Grandma candy, 8**

## A hate letter to Artificial Intelligence

*It's bad for the environment, and can make us question the truth*

**Eleanor Foote**  
Staff Writer

Earlier this year, during the Dave Time segment in a community meeting there was a video. This wasn't a normal video though, it was an AI video of Dave breakdancing. This weirded me out, why not just have the simple animation like before? If someone had made an animation, yah it would be more work, but it would look way better. And should we really be using AI in place of creative processes?

I am against Artificial intelligence because it is harming our environment. A study from Cornell University says that at the current stage of AI growth, by 2030 AI would produce 24-44 million metric tons of carbon dioxide. One generated response from

ChatGPT uses 519 milliliters of water alone. The water that they use to cool down the machines is clean drinking water. So think: what's more important, you cheating on some random assignment or someone being able to get a bottle of clean water?

AI, outside of its environmental impacts, also poses a threat to reliable sources and true facts. Just check what your parents are looking at, you may be able to tell that it's fake but can they? Even I have been having trouble recently trying to decipher if something is AI or not. I was on my scroll-of-choice app the other day and I came across AI vs not AI video, I couldn't tell which was which.

Anyone can generate

something to "prove" their opinion or views. Even important political figures have been sharing/ generating fake videos to push an agenda. We might look at this as funny or stupid, which it mainly is, but I feel we need to be more cautious of what is happening and take a moment to think about why exactly this was made.

Anyone can use AI. Anyone. And that should scare you. AI can be used for ANYTHING. Meaning if someone even gets a photo of you they can generate you doing, or saying anything they like. Horrifying.

Here's the part where you can make a change: no one is forcing you to generate or use AI. If we all stop feeding into the market, the people who are making it will stop advancing

if we pull our money away. Because the main people who are advancing this technology are in it for the growing market.

Ways you can avoid AI (that are in your control):

In google search, to get rid of AI responses, put "-ai" at the end of your search.

Don't use AI generating apps like ChatGPT.

If you see something fake on your feed, report it/do not interact. We don't want these people making money.

## Pokemon Legends is worth the price

*Legends replaces turn-based battles with real time combat*

**Nikolai Strickland**  
Staff Writer

Imagine this; you're living 1,000 years before most Pokémon media takes place, and suddenly, BOOM, something explodes into the sky. As you recuperate, a green snake Pokemon with a trainer on its back descends from above.

This is the story of how Mega Stones appeared in the world of Pokemon, coming from a meteor destroyed by Rayquaza and its trainer (which happens in one of the side parts of a game).

The latest Pokemon game, *Pokemon Legends: ZA*, released on October 16th, 2025, for the Nintendo Switch 2, bringing Mega Evolution back to the franchise for the first time in almost a decade, with many new mega evolutions, to some mostly forgotten about Pokemon.

*Pokemon Legends: ZA* takes place in Lumiose city, the capital of the Kalos Region, 3,000 years after the meteor rained Mega Stones on the land.

Instead of using turn based battles like any mainline Pokemon game that came before it, *Pokemon Legends: ZA* uses real time battles, with 5-20 second cooldowns instead of Power Points (PP), which opens up a variety of opportunities for the franchise in the future (note: I'm not saying I want them to completely remove the turn based battles, I just think that this could be great for the franchise).

As well as changing battles, there's also no longer gyms, but the *ZA Royale*, which functions as a gym battle, but slightly more complicated.

In addition to remaking the battles for this

game, my personal favorite part of the Pokemon franchise, shiny Pokemon/shiny hunting, has been changed too.

The way they changed shiny hunting (accidentally), was by changing the way spawns work. For example, when resetting spawns, shiny do not despawn, even if you unload them/leave the area. This in turn means you could theoretically AFK the spawns and have guaranteed shines, which you actually can do in one of the wild zones.

Though I think this game is great, many don't agree, with many complaints around the day one DLC release, as well as prices. Starting with the day one DLC, many don't appreciate this, thinking this just proves how "money hungry" Nintendo is.

Although this is a good argument, this has been happening in the game

industry for a long time, with beloved titles like *CyberPunk: 2077* having day one DLC releases. As for prices, many think that *Legends: ZA* being \$80, as well as other Switch 2 games, is an unfair price. Many video game companies have upped the prices, with Nintendo actually being one of the last triple A game



Isabel Best

**Pokemon legends, 8**

# New Taylor Swift album is a mixed bag

*The new release inspired high hopes, but the album disappoints*

**Mavis Cragg**  
Staff Writer

Taylor Swift recently released her new album, *The Life of a Showgirl*. Her last album, *The Tortured Poets Department*, was a very sad album with a black and white color scheme. Looking at the advertising for *The Life of a Showgirl*, which displayed a 1930s showgirl vibe with vibrant colors I was expecting jazzy and more upbeat music and I was excited.

On the day of the release I was miserable, struggling to breathe and coughing, so I decided going to bed could possibly soothe my agony. I slept until I woke up at 1:56 A.M. I stared at the ceiling until I remembered OH! TAYLOR SWIFT HAS A NEW ALBUM! So since I'm a huge Swiftie I checked my phone and put on my headphones to start listening. I switched through songs half way through due

to excitement, but each song left me disappointed. I went back to sleep and hoped it would grow on me. I skipped school the day of October 3rd and went on TikTok to see EVERYONE HATING. So here's my opinions divided into sections.

Songs from the album I like: Honey, wi\$h li\$t and Ruin the Friendship

These are the slower, more

meaningful songs on this album, and that's mostly what I like about them, even though I did want upbeat songs. I like these songs more than the rest mostly because I find the lyrics more interesting, especially in the love songs. Some of the lyrics I like are: "buy the paint in the color of your eyes, and graffiti my whole damn life," from Honey, and

"they should have want

they want, they deserve what they want, I just want you," from wi\$h li\$t.

Songs from the album I find mid: *The Life of a Showgirl*, *Opalite*, *Elizabeth Taylor*, *Eldest Daughter*, and *The Fate of Ophelia*.

These are more of the stereotypical pop songs. They're upbeat but the lyrics don't really do much for me, like "they ripped me off like false lashes and threw me away" or "I'm not a bad b\*tch, this isn't savage." I was expecting pop songs, but I was also expecting more jazz elements like her song from *Lover* "False God" but more upbeat. When it comes to pop music and Taylor Swift I have high expectations because of her album *1989*, which has been labeled the "pop bible" many times and has been praised by many for years



Noa Calzada Villanueva

Taylor Swift, 8

# My Singing Monsters is a chill game

*Feed your monster and take good care of them, earn fun songs*

**Piper Wasmund**  
Staff Writer

*My Singing Monsters* is a fun chill game where you can have many different types of monsters, each with their own unique sounds that make a song. This is a game where you breed, collect, and nurture musical monsters to create unique songs.

When you first join the game you get your very first monster, Mammoth. You place him down on your first island. Your first island is a grassy plain with trees and rocks that you can remove later when you get enough money. But your island isn't just an island, if you look very closely you can make out two eyes and ears. You're on the top of the head of a huge monster. But that's not the only island monster, when you get more money and level up you can go up to 35 islands. That's a lot. But every new island has new monsters you can either

buy from the shop or breed.

Your monsters produce money. So once you collect enough money from your Mammoth, you can buy a second monster from the shop. After that, you place the monster that you chose down and level both of them up by feeding them to at least level four so you can start breeding them to make even more monsters in the breeding structure. After your monsters are done breeding, you then move the egg to the nursery, where you have to wait for it to hatch. Repeat that with different monsters to get a huge variety of monsters. Every monster has a different element or a different combination of elements which is crucial for breeding. There are 521 monsters in the whole game and you can breed almost all of them.

Torches can help your chances of breeding rare

monsters. You first unlock torches in the shop at level 12. You can light them yourself but you have to pay, or you can add friends and they can do it for free. Every torch increases your chance by 1% to get a rare monster, you can have a maximum of ten torches.

You feed your monsters by baking food in a bakery. You can get a small bakery and level it up to a medium bakery, or you can just buy a medium bakery first but it will cost more.

Your castle is another big thing you have to keep in mind. It controls how many monsters you can place down on your island. If you don't have enough "beds", then you have to upgrade your castle with, depending on the level you're upgrading it to, coins or diamonds.

Once you get all these essentials you can start enjoying the game and logging

in every day to get rewards, spins, and a game in which you can earn rewards. There's also a weekly reward which you can get by clicking on the nursery. It's like an egg lottery ticket, instead of a money scratch off it's an egg scratch off. If you get three of the same egg, you get that egg for free.

The game was made on August 22, 2012. It was my childhood game and I've known about it for years. I deleted it years ago but I recently downloaded it again and I can't stop playing it. I really recommend this game to people who like chill, fun games. Everyone from little kids to elderly people will enjoy this game and have hours of fun.

I like this game because I never get bored and I can play it daily. Every day I always try to get a new monster, sometimes

Singing monsters, 7

# The Long Walk is perfectly unsettling

*Chloe shares her opinion on the Stephen King movie adaptation*

**Chloe Annis-Bercier**  
Staff Writer

Would you walk for days without stopping, all for the chance of winning the prize of your dreams?

The Stephen King book "The Long Walk" released a movie adaptation earlier this fall, and has hit a successful Rotten Tomatoes rating of 96%, and many viewers have honored it as one of the best Stephen King adaptations in recent years.

The movie was directed by Francis Lawrence, starring Cooper Hoffman who plays Ray Garraty, the optimistic and loyal leading man of the movie, and David Jonsson as Peter McVries, the witty and charismatic supporting character.

Set in a dystopian version of the 1970s US, the film follows 16 year old Ray, one of the fifty young men chosen from each state to compete in

a brutal annual contest where they endlessly walk without stopping in hopes of being the last survivor. The winner gets a cash prize and any wish of their choice granted. The players must maintain a walking speed of three miles per hour. Falling behind the minimum or stopping results in three warnings, before they are executed by the soldiers who observe the men. The movie revolves around Ray and his relationships with the other walkers as they go through the murderous challenge together and their strive to survive.

Ray meets contestant Pete McVries early in the movie when they arrive at the starting point and quickly form a close friendship. Throughout the walk, they support each other as they both endure the grueling contest. The meaningful friendships between the contenders is the core of the film despite

the dark theme of the movie. While the rest of the group's goal to win was for wealth, Ray has an underlying reason for competing in the competition that you will have to watch the movie to uncover.

The Long Walk is definitely a stressful and harrowing watch, but the emotional aspects of the film make the entire story powerful and entertaining. It's intense and fast paced, keeping me focused the entire time. Even though it may seem boring to watch people walk in one setting for two hours, it turns out to be really tragic and extreme, making it very hard to look away. This film is one of the most disturbing movies I've ever seen. It's not afraid to show the vile and distasteful parts of the walk which I feel like added more authenticity to the film. It may look like your typical grim horror movie, but the theme that stands out the most to me

was the impactful, emotional storyline and characters. These were some of the most compelling characters I've seen in a movie before. They all had very different personalities, showing how they all reacted to being in a life or death situation. They all wanted to win the contest, which was very hard to watch to see if they survived or not.

The performances the actors gave were some of the best I have seen in a movie before, particularly David Jonsson's of Pete McVries. His performance stood out to me the most because of his ability to portray his emotions very well, from empathy and hopefulness to simmering rage and grief. He provided warmth to the film and to other characters. I liked how Pete would support the group when it got hard and helped them

Long Walk, 8



Thad Horn

One of the favorite school lunches: orange chicken

# Students rank school lunches

*Thad, a regular at the school cafeteria, provides his top five*

**Thad Horn**  
Staff Writer

As someone who has a lot of experience eating school lunches I can confidently say that I know all these meals like the back of my hand. These lunches are guaranteed to be the top school meals.

**Honorable Mention: Chicken Sandwich**

I think this is good but it's not in the top five. It's too bland and generic, even the spicy version. I think the blandness is due to the fact that it is just bread and chicken so I think that the chicken sandwich is only a B- on flavor scale. And the hunger scale just isn't quite enough with one plain chicken sandwich and two pieces of small bread. It just isn't enough to fill people, causing only a B on the hunger scale. Overall this is a B-, making it close to fifth but just not quite there.

**5th: Mongolian Beef**

Mongolian Beef is a flavor like no other, and a texture like no other. But this isn't to say it's bad. I personally think it's alright when it comes to the flavor of the rice because it's kind of bland and mushy, but I would say overall it's a B+ on the flavor scale. And it only fills me up a little, but I think it gets a few bonus points for having both rice and chicken which are both filling foods. With all that in mind, I would say that it's a B+ on the hunger scale. Overall I would say that it is a B+, barely securing the fifth spot.

**4th: Orange Chicken**

Orange chicken originated in Hawaii from Panda Express. Orange chicken is just the most superior type of chicken, it's just better than the rest. The orange chicken has a better texture than some other types of chicken, and the rice is always just better than normal when orange chicken is being served. And it has a unique taste that I would compare to sweet and sour flavor and would also consider very good making it an A- on the flavor scale. I would also say it's a B+ on the hunger scale because it has both rice and chicken, which is just enough for my

stomach. Overall this is a B+ and that secures fourth place.

**3rd: Yogurt Parfait**

The yogurt parfait is a thick creamy dairy product that can have multiple toppings, such as fruits or granola. Yogurt is a great snack for when you're not very hungry but I would still give it an A- on the hunger scale. Its creamy goodness with the option of crunchy granola provides a perfect balance between the two textures and the flavor of the fruit and vanilla balance to create a better taste. Considering these two aspects together I would give flavor an A. With these two factors combined I would give it an A- overall, making it into the top three.

**2nd: Sambusas**

Imagine two triangle shaped egg rolls, freshly cooked. That right there is pretty much a sambusa. The dish originated from West Africa in the 13th or 14th century, so it's bound to be good, and it is. In my eyes, sambusas would get an A+ on the flavor scale due to their amazing combination of flavors. But due to the fact that there are only two of them, they only get an A on the proportions scale, securing sambusas an overall A and its 2nd place on this ranking.

**1st: Brunch**

Last but not least, I think brunch is the best. I'm not talking about that crummy French Toast that is always soggy and gross, I'm talking about the pancakes. You can never go wrong with pancakes and syrup. This is just a classic lunch with good nutrients and a variety of flavors. With the potential for many ways to eat and many flavors it gets an A+ in the flavor category, and due to its proportions it can be nice and very filling so I would give it an A+ on the proportions scale. Overall it's an A+ making it the best lunch by far that I have had.

# The top tunes for the holiday spirit

What are the best songs to make us feel like Christmas is here?

**Rocio Hernandez**  
Staff Writer

Christmas. It's my favorite time of year, and it has been ever since I was a little girl. From decorating my room and making paper snowflakes to picking out the perfect tree and wrapping presents, and so on. But what goes hand in hand with all those things? Christmas music. I think it's one of the key elements that really puts Christmas over the top.

I know there are mixed opinions about Christmas music. For example, "All I Want for Christmas Is You" by Mariah Carey. In my opinion, it's a bit overplayed and the lyrics are somewhat repetitive, but I'm not saying it's a bad song. In fact, it did make my top five, but I definitely don't think that it should be the number one Christmas song, which it is according to Google.

These are my takes on this season's top five Christmas songs.

Starting strong in fifth place is, "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas." This song was written by Meredith Wilson in 1951. He used this song in his musical "Here's Love." The more famous recordings of this song are by Perry Como and Bing Crosby, but currently the most popular one is by Micheal Bubl , from his Christmas album "Micheal Bubl 's Christmas." This song really reflects that fun and joyful feeling you get when Christmas is coming around, it uses lots of imagery that just makes you feel cozy and happy inside.

In fourth place is, "All I Want for Christmas is You," by American singer/songwriter Mariah Carey, and Walter Afanasieff, who is an American record producer and song writer. They made

this song in 1994 as a part of Mariah Carey's album, "Merry Christmas." This song takes inspiration from some 1960's style Christmas songs and some blends of pop and R&B. This song is supposed to represent that happiness isn't bought from a store, but from having someone you truly love to be close to and to spend time with. Like I said earlier, this song, in my opinion, is pretty basic and kind of overplayed, but so is a lot of other Christmas music. This song is a catchy, upbeat and iconic song with a festive and nice melody.

In third place is, "Holly Jolly Christmas." This song was written by Johnny Marks in 1962, but became famous from Burl Ives's performance of the song in the show "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer Special." This song has since been recorded by Micheal Bubl . This version has also become

very popular and is a song that many love. He didn't initially plan to record this song as a part of his album, but when he finished recording the album he had extra studio time left, so he ended up adding it. This song has a very fun and jolly vibe, that just leaves you cheery!

In second place is, "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year," written in 1963 by American actor and prolific songwriter Eddie Pola, and composer and conductor George Wyle. This song was written to be a part of Andy Williams' first Christmas album, and had immediate and massive success. Eventually this song became a go-to classic Christmas song even though it wasn't very popular when it first came out. It's catchy, easy to follow along to, and the lyrics make you think

Xmas songs, 8



Isabel Best

## It's holiday baking time

Makayla dishes wisdom on the top five Christmas cookies

**Makayla Eckhart**  
Staff Writer

Every winter, kitchens across the country fill with the scent of butter, sugar, and vanilla. From family gatherings to school events, these are the cookies that actually show up year after year. The familiar treats everyone recognizes and fights over. After careful consideration here is MY ranking of the top five best Christmas cookies this holiday season.

**Honorable mention: Snickerdoodles**

Soft, chewy, and rolled in cinnamon sugar, these deliver cozy comfort in every golden brown bite. They're the sweater-weather cookie. Warm, spicy, and somehow still humble and irresistible.

**5. Spritz Cookies**

Light, buttery, and made in cute Christmas shapes. They're the delicate snowflakes of the Christmas spread. They're melt-in-your-mouth delicious, and usually gone in just a few small bites. You can never really eat them though without leaving a sugary trail behind.

**4. Classic Cut-Out Sugar Cookies**

The blank canvas of Christmas baking. Vanilla scented, rolled thin, cut into trees and bells, then adorned with buttercream and sprinkles. They're 50% cookie, 50% edible art project. The decorating chaos is a huge part of the holiday fun. But let's be honest, no way they're the star of the show.

**3. Gingerbread Cookies**

Whether they're crisp and snappy or soft and chewy. Whether they're speedy little gingerbread men or elaborately decorated houses. The spicy kick, the sturdy dough that holds icing details, the way they pair perfectly with milk or coffee, this is the cookie that you truly can't go wrong with.

**2. Chocolate Chip cookies**

Yes I know, chocolate chip cookies are enjoyed throughout the year and not just during Christmas time, but, this is my list after all. And I quite like a good chocolate chip cookie during the winter months. I mean come on, they're the fan favorite that disappears first at every cookie exchange. What else would you leave out at night for Santa Claus?

**1. Peanut Butter Blossoms**

The Hershey's Kiss hat is iconic, and the soft peanut butter base gives you that perfect sweet-salty balance. They're adorable and addictive. Bite-sized crowd pleasers with bonus points for nostalgia, and the undisputed champion in my personal list.

Well there you have it: the five cookies I guarantee you'll actually find on 90% of American holiday tables this year. Debate amongst yourselves (politely, over milk and crumbs), but keep in mind, opinions are just opinions. Now, if you'll excuse me, quality control taste testing resumes in the kitchen. Happy baking!

## Introducing the Basque Santa Claus

Naughty kids getting coal on xmas originated from Basque myth

**Noa Calzada Villanueva**  
Staff Writer

Did you ever wonder about where the whole bad kids get coal on Christmas thing comes from? Well, there is a Basque myth that might explain it.

This myth is from the Basque region, which is located in the northern part of Spain, straddling the western end of the Pyrenees mountains which border France.

In the Basque Country they have their own version of Santa Claus. His name is Olentzero and is a carbonero (a person who makes or shells coal) that lives in the mountains. There are a lot of versions of his story but the one I'm writing about is one of the popular ones that doesn't have a horror part.

As I said, Olentzero is an old solitary man that lives in Izenaduba Basoa, a 16th-century farmhouse located in the municipality of Mungia (Vizcaya), near Bilbao, in the

Basque region.

He was a carbonero that worked the whole year cutting wood to make coal for the freezing winter. One year he came to the village to warn the people about the next winter. He told them that the next winter was going to be very cold and they told them to start preparing for it. No one listened to him and they kept having fun, ignoring his warning advice.

That winter no one was prepared for the cold weather (about -13°C and 8°F without any way to heat their houses) and they started to regret ignoring the warnings of Olentzero. While the people were freezing, Olentzero was warm in his house, but he hated the idea of being the only one warm that winter. So that night, he came back to the village and entered each house with a bag of coal so they can heat themselves during the

winter.

The next morning everyone woke up with a huge bag of coal. They learned the lesson and the next year they prepared for the freezing winter. Everyone except a boy named Antxon. Antxon kept playing and having fun while everyone else was preparing for winter.

That winter, everyone was warm except Antxon, but he didn't mind because he was sure Olentzero would come and give him a bag full of coal.

He was right. That night Olentzero came and gave him a bag full of coal. The next morning he was so happy because he had coal without doing anything, but when he went to talk with the other kids about it he found out everyone had a new toy to play with. Olentzero gave them new toys instead of coal that year and Antxon felt so bad.

The next year he learned

his lesson and worked with the others for the winter. That year everyone had new toys to play with and since then, every 25th of December, Olentzero goes to all the houses of the Basque Country giving presents to the people that worked during the year, and giving coal to the ones that were bad and lazy.



Noa Calzada Villanueva

## Would you rather

Answered by junior August Seru

**Arlo Moreno**  
Staff Writer

**Get rid of Christmas stockings or Easter baskets?**

"Easter baskets. I don't think I've ever had an Easter basket."

**Live a day as Mr. L or live a day as Santa?**

"Hard question. Probably Mr. L."

**Spend your whole winter break at school or spend your whole winter break in the woods?**

"I would rather spend my whole winter break in the woods."

**Sled on Santa's sleigh or ride on Rudolph?**

"Probably Rudolph."

**Spend long crew day bowling or spend long crew day playing video games?**

"Probably playing video games."

**Miss long crew day or miss Lake Elmo on the last day of school?**

"I'd rather miss long crew day. Lake Elmo is like the big thing."

**Survive off of only ginger bread cookies or only fruit cake?**

"Probably ginger bread, if I can dunk it in milk."

**Spend winter break with your cousins or friend group?**

"Friend group, I have too many cousins."

**Have 30 pages of homework for winter break or 300 pages of homework for summer break?**

"Probably 30 over winter break."

**Only watch Christmas movies or watch Christmas specials from shows?**

"Christmas movies, I feel like there are a lot more Christmas movies."

**Costa Rica, 1**

about what it looks like, and getting some video and some photos to share, so students have a better idea of what the trip would entail."

The hype for Costa Rica has gotten a lot of students dialed in on Outward Bound. Pretty much anyone in the group can tell you that sign-up slots for events are practically impossible to get unless you see them right away, and everyone is clambering to get as many points as possible. "It's gonna be a lot of work [to get on the trip]," said Margaret.

But the possibility of an international trip that you can get on without planning for years in advance is something OWL has never done before, and students are very excited for it. As Tim put it, "It seems to energize students... it sounds to them like an adventure in one way or another."

## Asian Culture Night in photos



Emily Totushek

**Top: students perform in showcase.**  
**Bottom: 10th grader Chris Yang sings at the culture night.**

## Upcoming Events

**December 20th-January 4th:** Winter break

**January 13th:** PTO meeting

**January 15th:** Prospective family showcase

**January 16th:** Community meeting

**January 19th:** No school

**January 22nd:** 6th grade choir performance

**January 29th:** Last day of quarter 2

## Reading classics, 2

specific character. However it did make sense with Celie's character development, so I could see what the author was trying to achieve.

I also didn't like the amount of letters between Celie and her sister Nettie. I thought that it was just going to be a side thing to give the readers more context and a bigger world picture, but it ended up being a very big chunk of the book. I found it confusing because it added tons of new characters and backstories that were hard to follow at times. I do understand the necessity of them, but I just think that it could have been a more of a side thing rather than seeping into and competing with the main plot.

When I started reading *The Color Purple*, I was definitely expecting a heavy book. I knew there were hard topics in it, but I wasn't prepared

for the scale of them. This book has very hard topics in it including rape and both sexual and physical abuse. And it was especially hard to read how normalized it was, to the point where Celie almost expected it. It was really disgusting to read how degrading it was to be a woman, especially because this is based on history.

However, I'm really grateful to have read it. I think that this book- especially with what is happening in the world right now- is very important for young adults and older teens to read. I think that it's a very powerful book and at this time in our lives when we're questioning the world and things around us, and when we're beginning to understand the world, it's very necessary to read. Not only to gain knowledge of the past and to understand the severity of it, but also to recognize how far we've come and that we can't backtrack.

We talked to Librarian Laura Orris for her opinion on the book. She said that while she hasn't read *The Color Purple* in a while, she remembers it being very difficult to read. "Just because something is really sad and difficult doesn't mean you shouldn't read it though. You should understand the difficulty, and have someone you can talk to and get support from while reading to get a broader perspective of what it means, and that's true for most, if not all, classics," Laura said.

Many people think there are a few different categories of classics for different ages. "You could argue that Grimm's fairytales are classics, and those might be appropriate in fourth or fifth grade, whereas *Brave New World* is not appropriate for that time," said English Teacher Alysha Lundquist.

Some people are debating whether or not young people

should read the classics for multiple reasons.

Here are some reasons why people think you shouldn't read classics:

In addition to being difficult to read, they might also have ideas that don't fit modern day society, and people think it would be better to read books that were written more recently.

There are also old classics that people think have been outdated. "I really think we should just let them go. I want to embrace modern classics that are more diverse, both with the authors and with the characters," said Laura.

English teacher Leo Bickelhaupt said, "A ninth grader asked me if they should read *Beloved*, and I said 'no way'. It's a powerful and amazing book, but the vocabulary, narrative structure, and content make it quite challenging. It's a good book for an AP lit book club --

or something you might want to read in college."

But people also think that classics are a good part of modern society.

Some argue that classics are such an important part of history and that the books have an element of timelessness, or they can't be outdated. While a lot of history can be learned through textbooks, we can't forget that it is also preserved through these stories. Through these books, students can experience life through the eyes of someone living in the past.

Other classics are just too good to let go. "The first classic I probably fell in love with was *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The story is really beautiful, the way that it's written from the 10 year old girl's point of view, that really made me understand that not all classic literature is difficult, that it can also be beautiful and relatable," said Alysha.

The ninth graders have a little bit of a different perspective. We talked to ninth graders Lauren Harris and Cooper Small and they said that people could start reading the classics at the end of elementary school and the start of middle school, but that it might be better to read them in high school because of how hard the literature is to understand.

They say that people should read the classics because it shows you a new perspective on the world, "I think that it's good, like, as we grow older and experience things in the world, to know about certain things, and I think that a lot of classic books really tell you how the world is and what you could experience. So I think as a young adult, it's good to read those things and know," said Lauren.

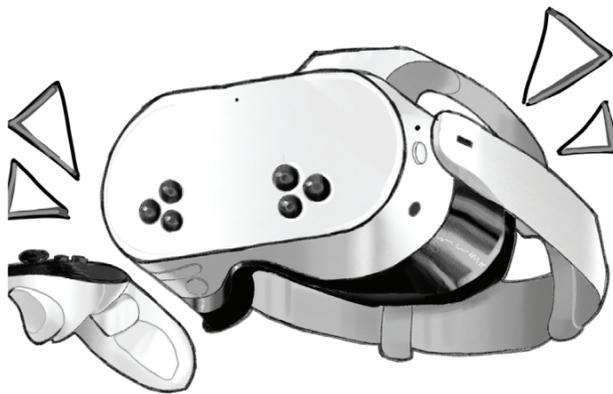
## VR, 1

do activities in different worlds together, almost similar to something like the OASIS in *Ready Player One*.

Playstation has their own headset as well, the PSVR2, which again is in a similar position to the Quest, but requires a PS5 or PC to connect to. Valve, the company behind the biggest PC gaming storefront, Steam, has their own VR headsets as well. They are making the Valve Index, which is a high end (\$1000) headset from 2019 that connects to your computer. They have also announced an updated headset design, the Steam Frame, that will be coming out in early 2026. The price has not been confirmed yet, but it will be cheaper than the Index. It will be able to both connect to an external PC for game streaming, but will also have a built-in computer that will run SteamOS, Valve's operating system, as an alternative to Windows for gaming.

When talking about

gaming I think it is worth mentioning the amount of Android based VR games. These are phone apps that are able to provide you a VR like experience through an attachment that can strap your phone to your face, making a



Kanon Koshino

makeshift VR headset. While this is obviously an inferior experience compared to a proper headset, it is much more accessible, especially if you see VR as a fun gimmick that you might just use once or

twice.

While for the most part I think most people wouldn't classify VR gaming as a failure, I don't think it has been the massive success these companies hoped it would be. VR headsets are more of

a gimmick than anything else for most people. The biggest factors limiting their success from what I've seen is the fact that you need a decent amount of room to be able to use them safely at all, and the lack of good VR games. From

my limited experiences with it, I've found VR to be quite janky and difficult to use as well.

That being said VR has seen massive success in flight simulators. This is not super surprising as the main draw of VR is the immersion it can provide, and that is exactly what a lot of people playing flight simulators are looking for. As a result a lot of the high quality VR games end up being flight simulators, and other such games.

VR headsets have also been used in simulators outside of hobbyist circles, often being used for flight training simulations. The US Airforce started using headsets because it is cheaper, easier to maintain, smaller, and sometimes even more effective than a full size traditional flight simulator.

Next month I'll have a story talking a little about the more productivity focused headsets, such as the Apple Vision Pro, and the state they're in.

## MUN, 2

then the chair/moderator will choose who will respond to the last speaker. A moderated caucus is usually focused more on one small topic so that it accomplishes more than an overall debate.

Next there are unmoderated caucuses, where participants go around and speak freely to each other, without being timed, in an attempt to create alliances. In those alliances, called blocs, they will write draft resolutions for the topic/problem in very specific legal wording.

Lastly the delegates vote for which resolution to pass. More than one resolution can pass if more than one is voted for.

There are different types of conference topics/problems. The most common one is called a general assembly. A general assembly where they cover topics like nuclear weapons, world health, human rights, and climate change. These topics are usually long term problems.

There is also another type of

topic called a crisis committee where the conference goes faster and is focused on a single problem that is from a past, or predicted future, crisis. Examples of these are the Cuban missile crisis, the fall of the Roman Empire, the predicted water wars of the future, or the first contact with aliens.

"International issues are generally intimidating," said David, "and I think people think they don't know enough, or don't have the ability to talk about these issues, but I think a lot of people underestimate their knowledge about the world. You have US government or current event classes, but a lot of that focuses around issues just in this country or in this state, and I think [Model UN] is a platform where students can talk about issues that are more on a global stage."

## Neckties, 2

is tied using the tail (narrow end) as opposed to the sword (wide end).

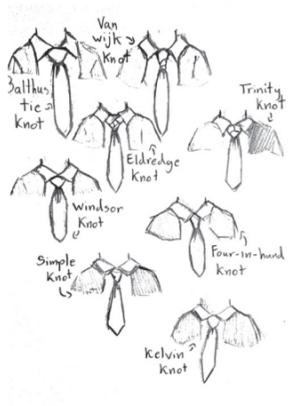
Shortly afterward the Eldredge knot was invented by Jeffery Eldredge. It has 15 steps and is widely considered to be the most elaborate and difficult knot. Eldredge says it is an excellent choice for weddings.

If you're looking to buy a necktie, Hiemie's Haberdashery is a good place in the Twin Cities. If that's too expensive, there are nine Old Navys in the cities where you can find them for relatively lower prices. You could also thrift ties for dirt cheap.

I consulted local thrift store owner and former costumer Roxanne Sanchez as well as some students about neckties. Roxanne says she likes how they are a small way for powerful visual expression and how they've been worn by men for so long. The general verdict from these interviews is that neckties, though appreciated, are now rarely used, especially by adolescents. The pandemic has hurt the expectation for formal clothing even further.

However, the pendulum is still swinging. Consider how for centuries it was considered improper for women to wear their hemline above their ankle. Then came the flapper movement, bringing hemlines to the knee and above. And as suddenly as it began, it ended, being met with the less risqué new look of the 1950s.

Just as people became bored of the formality in society and clothing, people will become bored of casual apparel just as well. Because this has applied to other clothing, it will likely apply to neckties. Neckties will come back.



Isabel Best

## Basque, 1

appeared.

During the Franco dictatorship people tried to ban other languages from Spain and ordered people to only speak Spanish. The Basque population had to secretly speak, learn, and teach Basque if they didn't want to get themselves killed.

Also, from around 1959 to 2018 there was a Basque terrorist group called ETA that was active in Spain. They wanted the independence of the Basque Country. Their ways of fighting for this were horrible. They put many bombs and killed many people. Luckily, this group was officially dissolved seven years ago.

I have been learning three languages since I was born: Basque, Spanish and English. In my house I only speak Spanish, but at my school I have a third of my classes in Basque, another third in Spanish, and the last third in English.

This might seem exhausting, and most of the time it is, because you often mix-up languages, but you get

used to it. I have been learning, reading, writing, and talking in Basque my whole life, but I still can't take part in a very complex conversation. This is because I am used to hearing it, but I don't practice my speaking skills a lot. When I talk with my friends I usually talk in Spanish, since it is our first language.

In the Basque Country you can find newspapers in both Basque and Spanish. People usually read the news in Spanish, but there are some exceptions. We have a lot of Basque shows and films. Most of them are comedies and dramas. One popular Basque musical show is *Goazen*, and a very famous film is *Ocho Apellidos Vascos* (Eight Basque surnames), which is a Spanish comedy filmed in the Basque Country that tells the story of a Spanish man that has to pretend he's Basque.

Around the Basque cities you can find signs, in both Basque and Spanish but you are most likely to find Basque signs in big cities such as San Sebastian and Bilbao. Basque is spoken in the Basque Country, Navarra and a small

part of France. In my city, Vitoria-Gasteiz, most people speak Spanish even though it is the capital of the Basque Country. Vitoria is not a huge city so most people only know Donostia (San Sebastián) and Bilbao. They know them not only because they are bigger, but because most people speak Basque and are more likely to hear Basque in the streets.

I have to admit that Basque is a very beautiful language, and every word has a meaning. Many old words and names are related to nature and Basque mythology, and I think that is very beautiful. For example, the Basque word for moon is *ilargia*, which means dead light.

I love to learn these kinds of words and participate in Basque festivals and sports because at the end of the day, it is part of my identity. Even though most of the time I consider myself Spanish, since I believe you have to be completely familiar with a culture and be completely fluent with the language, I like to proudly say that I am Basque.

## Lego, 3

weekend with friends and do something you like," said Bahati.

"My goal is probably to improve my coding," said Rocio, "For the competition, I'm kind of just excited to see how it all comes together, like watching the missions getting done."

Sorcha said, "My goal is to show up to the competition with a complete project and a functional robot."

Clara said, "My goals are always one thing and one thing only, to win a programming award. I like winning a trophy. Don't need lots of trophies, don't need to go to state, just want a trophy. But also have a good project and a robot that functions and has things the students are proud of."

## Singing monsters, 5

I succeed, sometimes I fail. But I always find it fun. This game is extra special to me because I played it when I was a kid and it brings back so many memories. I also like this game because there's just so much to do. I check this game every day, and so should you!

#### Wicked, 4

into their characters, but neither will end up on my list of top songs. Elphaba's song is titled "There's No Place Like Home" which I thought was a clever nod to Dorothy. During the song Elphaba sings about her reasons for wanting to stay in Oz even if no one accepts her there. It's a little ironic because in the end she doesn't even end up staying in Oz as all of the citizens think she is dead and are celebrating it.

Glinda's song is called "The Girl in the Bubble." I preferred Glinda's new song over Elphaba's. Throughout the song, Glinda was realizing how she had stayed in her comfort zone for most of her life and she thought it

was time for her to "pop" the bubble. I saw this as a defining character moment for her and I appreciated this because in the stage musical Glinda's development as a person isn't really shown.

Before seeing this film I saw Glinda as just kind of there and willingly being a pawn in The Wizard's game, however, by the end of the movie, my opinion had changed. I appreciated how in the end Glinda was able to stand up for herself and the issue at hand. She banished The Wizard and brought a fresh perspective to the inclusion of everyone in Oz.

All in the first movie, we see Glinda and Elphaba go from loathing each other, to becoming best friends, and

then to eventually parting ways in the end. Something I love about their friendship is that they each have a different view on how to handle the situation with The Wizard and the animals, but they are each able to respect that and remain good friends. During the second part Glinda had multiple opportunities to turn Elphaba in and claim the glory for herself, but she continued to let her go.

I give Wicked: For Good a 9/10. It has a touching story and an idea of friendship that sticks with you. I recommend this film to everyone (as long as you have watched the first part). So, grab some popcorn and get ready to be immersed into the wonderful land of Oz.

#### Long Walk, 5

get back up. A specific scene he does this is where Ray sees his mom on the sidelines while he is walking and runs to her apologizing out of regret and guilt about leaving her. The walkers aren't allowed to leave the road or get out of line, so when Ray does this he receives the three warnings from the soldiers. Pete pulls him away to continue the walk and encourages him to not look back. This scene is very frantic and stressful and the acting of both Ray and Pete was very realistic and captivating.

As the movie progresses, the walk only gets harder as the number of contestants decreases. Eventually, they walk up to 350 miles, leaving

more physical and emotional pressure on them. At this point, they have to constantly keep themselves up, pushing themselves and their bodies to the limit. It was definitely hard to see some of the characters we've grown to know and like not make it to the end. In this movie, I couldn't have guessed half of the things that were going to happen. Every death scene was very brutal, although some were tragic and moving. The ending was definitely shocking and heartbreaking.

Overall, I enjoyed this movie a lot. It's thrilling, well-paced, and very intriguing. It's an entertaining watch, even though it's very gruesome, it's heartfelt and leaves you with an emotional impact. It does very well in balancing

these two themes. I enjoy dystopian movies, so this was definitely a well done film that captured horror, friendship, and dystopian control all in one. If you're a fan of previous Stephen King adaptations, this one is definitely worth seeing.

#### Pokemon legends, 4

companies to raise prices.

Though some arguments against the game make sense, the game is genuinely fun, with the changes to battles, the ZA Royale, etc. In conclusion, Pokemon Legends: ZA is one of my personal favorite Pokemon games, and I think

#### Grandma candy, 4

Honestly, I think that these taste like normal mints, there's not enough flavor. As a sweet tooth, I would definitely like these to be a lot sweeter, so I give these a 2/4.

Butterscotch Candies: With its golden brown color and yellow wrapping, these iconic butterscotch candies are hard to miss. Somehow these seem to always catch my eye in a waiting room in a boring white basket, but they are good for passing time. These candies live up to their name with their strong butterscotch flavor. I do enjoy these candies, but the taste can get old after a while. If you like butterscotch, you'll like this candy. I give these a 3/4.

Strawberry Candies: These popular candies have a bright red color and their distinct wrapping that looks more like a real strawberry. These candies are by far the best. They don't actually taste all that much like a strawberry, but their sweetness is undeniable, even if it does taste a little artificial. These candies were a classic in my childhood and I would honestly just eat these all day if I could. If you like fruity candies with sweet flavors, this candy is for you. This is an easy 4/4.

Lemon Drops: Lemon drops are honestly amazing. I personally love everything lemon, and I think whoever invented these did it right. Whenever I walk into an old timey candy store, lemon

drops are always the first thing I see. A thing I like about these are that they actually look and taste like lemons. They might be a little too neon to be a real lemon, but the oval shape with two bumps on the end make it look more realistic. The outer, more sour layer of the candy is what gives the iconic sour lemon flavor, while the inside gives a sweeter and more dulled down sour flavor. If you're a fan of sour candy, these are for you. Another awesome 4/4.

Overall, I think that we can all agree that most grandma candies are amazing, though some are a bit plain. I personally think that grandma candies are the best, but I know that lots of people have varying opinions on the subject. If you

didn't have any idea about what grandma candy was before this article or if you haven't tried the specific ones I featured in this article, go ahead and try it for yourself. You can find these in your local candy store, and you might like them more than you think!



#### Xmas songs, 6

of fun holiday traditions that just make you feel so nostalgic.

And finally, in first place is, "Feliz Navidad." This song was written in 1970 by José Feliciano, a Puerto Rican singer/songwriter.

Feliz Navidad translates to "Happy Christmas." The inspiration behind this song comes from a time that he was in New York on Christmas and feeling homesick for his family back in Puerto Rico. Though this song is a timeless Christmas classic, it is probably not a song I would usually put as my number one Christmas song, but as a Latino person in today's political climate, there's something especially meaningful and comforting

about how widely this song is embraced. To hear Spanish spoken and sung by people of all different backgrounds so naturally makes this song even more special. It is a unique song with a very different vibe than your average Christmas classic, but the lyrics and music come together to make a very nice song.

As a person who loves Christmas music it was very hard for me to pick just five songs. You don't have to agree with me, and as the season goes on I will probably have a different opinion too, but for now this concludes my top five. Thank you for reading and I hope you enjoyed. Happy Holidays!

#### Taylor Swift, 5

Songs from the album I dislike: Cancelled! Father Figure, Actually Romantic.

I find all of these songs corny, and to put it plainly, the lyrics are really bad

Cancelled! is extremely corny. "Good thing I like my friends cancelled" is literally the chorus, and it reminds me of 2020 TikToks in the worst way possible. She's trying too hard to seem badass, and it's honestly just a hard sight to see. All these songs have a vibe of like "I'm bad" but it just doesn't really work for Taylor and comes off cringey.

Out of all Taylor Swift's

albums this is definitely my least favorite, and my total ranking is 3/10. Now while I don't think this was Taylor's best album, I think that's fine because she's made so many albums across the years. It makes sense one wouldn't be that good.

Plus this is just my opinion, which could change over time, and I don't believe at all this is the worst album ever. I actually enjoyed some of the songs. Now please don't come up to me in the hallway and start crying and screaming or something like that. This is just how I saw the album.

#### College, 1

those questions, I was also required (by both OWL and the schools I was applying to) to write a personal statement of 200-650 words, write three additional essays, get two recommendation letters from teachers, get a recommendation and transcript from my high school counselor, and apply for financial aid via the FAFSA.

"The hardest part for me was all the super tedious bits, inserting my grades and making sure all my information was correct," said senior Elinor McAlpine.

"The advice I would give

would probably be to make a list of all the documents and writing that you have to complete right after applying. It helped motivate me to get things done and made it more clear on my parents' side what they needed to do," said senior Alice Weiland.

But before all that happens, seniors have to decide where they are applying in the first place. "Deciding on where to apply was pretty hard for me. I didn't know where to start but I eventually found this big book called the FISKE Guide to Colleges in Katie's classroom which kinda helped me start my search. From there I just

kinda added schools that suited the interests and curriculum I wanted to explore," said Alice, "I would say when beginning your college search it might be easier first to think and make a list about what goes well for you in high school and what you might like to continue after high school. Same goes for what you don't want in college."

All the steps of the college application process are extremely personal. From deciding what programs to pursue, to writing an essay where you have to seem both down-to-earth and desirable, to realizing you

haven't memorized your social security number, everyone's journey is different. The college march is a chance for seniors to celebrate how far they've gotten on that journey, and for the rest of the school to start thinking about where their journey will begin.

"It feels crazy that I've seen seniors do it every year for the last six years and now I'm finally the one on stage," Alice said, "I remember my first college march in sixth grade, thinking that I wasn't ready for anything to change. But so much has changed since then, and I'm ready to announce the schools I've gotten into."



Rebecca Palmer

Dan's crew gets ready to cheer on their seniors.



Rebecca Palmer

Amya Wright declares plans.



Rebecca Palmer

Alice Weiland delivers.



Rebecca Palmer

The class of 2026 enters the auditorium to loud cheers.