

The Claw

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An Unforgettable Trip: Memories Made at Camp Mason

Excited students eagerly peer out of the windows of the school bus, trying to catch glimpses of where they would be spending the next three days. When the bus finally rolls to a stop, people gasp and chatter about how much there is to see. From the axe-throwing station to the large lake, perfect for boating as well as fishing activities, everyone is in awe.

The trip, Camp Mason, took place on October 13-15th for students on the blue team as well as students on the gold team. Red team students had the trip on October 15-17th. This trip is an annual Montgomery Upper Middle School tradition ongoing for over thirty years with students who have gone on the trip saying it has been the highlight of their year.

Mrs. Juarez, who planned this trip, shared some challenges she faced while planning, "When you organize a big trip with lots of moving parts, you have to be very organized. I struggled to coordinate all of my parent and teacher chaperones, but in the end I was able to get enough coverage so students could attend this fantastic trip. Both the parents and teachers really pulled through to make the trip a success!"
Continued on the following page.



STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN THE BOATING ACTIVITY.

SOURCE: EVELYN WANG



STUDENTS FIRST ARRIVING AT CAMP MASON.

SOURCE: RED TEAM TEACHERS

Upcoming UMS Events:

- 1/29-1/30 COUGAR CARE DAYS
- 1/30 MARKING PERIOD 2 ENDS
- 2/6 VALENTINE'S DANCE
- 2/14 VALENTINE'S DAY
- 2/16-2/17 PRESIDENT'S DAY: NO SCHOOL



Camp Mason Continued:

Students had the opportunity to bunk with their peers, participate in many activities they had never tried before, as well as spend time in the wilderness while deepening their bonds with others. Blue team student Reese Thomas shared her most memorable moment, "There was this moment me and a couple friends were just sitting together talking about random things and eating snacks, and it wasn't particularly special but I just remember it vividly." Even the littlest moments became memories students will remember for a long time to come.

Some of students' favorite activities included boating, the leap of faith, as well as a variety of other activities. Zen Baranwal from the gold team shared that he enjoyed boating because it was "[a] fun team activity I would recommend." Adesola Ogunbowale, a student on the blue team, went on to say "I tried boating for the first time [and] candle making!" Overall, everyone seemed to have different preferences for which activities were the most enjoyable with some top picks being boating as well as the giant swing, something important for 7th graders looking to attend next year to note!

The trip not only helped students to build bonds with other students but also to unwind from the stress of starting a new school year and try new things they otherwise might never have tried. Michela Koether, a student on the red team, explained, "Something that I participated in for the first time was a bonfire." The bonfire was a fun experience for many, with multiple fun games people could participate in including "Chubby Bunny" as well as "Donut on a String." While it was a time for people to have fun, many people also wished to perform and many students got to cheer on their peers as they performed both songs as well as dances! As a whole, students greatly enjoyed the bonfire as well as shared that it was a great time to bond with peers and a wonderful way to end the day.

While students remember the bonfire as a highlight of the trip, Mrs. Juarez reflected on the lasting lessons they carried home, "Camp Mason gives students time with their teams to build their confidence and their relationships with each other. It is really special to see students who are quiet in the classroom get loud at the Bonfire or to see students who doubt themselves in the classroom shine on the Zipline. Camp provides both teachers and students with a break so they can connect with each other. It is an incredible opportunity for students to forge friendships and create memories that they will treasure throughout their entire 8th grade year and beyond to high school too."

As a whole, the Camp Mason field trip seems to be a success as everyone was able to bond with one another and take part in activities that they will remember for a long time. When asking students if they would recommend the trip to students in the future, Josh Roberts from the red team responded with, "If you were to ask any of my cabinmates, it was one of the best school trips I've ever been on. There's not much to hate about it; bunking with your close friends for two nights, spending time outdoors, and getting to do so many unique and fun activities. Overall, it's one of the best social experiences I've ever been a part of, and I fully believe future students should take part in it."



7th Grade Fun at Pumpkin Day

By: Carsten Poon and Lateef Farayola

On the fifteenth of October, you might have seen pumpkins in the halls as it was Pumpkin Day. It was a non-academic day in Montgomery Upper Middle school. 7th and 8th graders received a break from academics to enjoy a day with friends and fun. 7th graders exited the building in the early hours of school to socialize while carving pumpkins into unique shapes and sizes. Students returned to class rooms and students instructed to the auditorium and the movie "Matilda" by Danny De Vito, Rhea Perlman and Mara Wilson star. After an hour, the movie was paused and students ushered to the cafeteria for lunch.



After that students ate lunch in the cafeteria, students remained in the cafeteria to receive instructions. We afterwards went on our nature walk. We observed plants and flora while traversing the natural environments. Students saw bamboo, crossed bridges and saw other parts of the beautiful natural environment. Soon after the talk, students started walking again, and reached OHES. They were sorted by their social studies class periods. Students were tasked to keep up the inflatable beach ball using teamwork. After the game had been completed, students walked both to UMS and stayed on the outside of the building. They were supplied with snacks and food and allowed to socialize freely until the end of the day. Some students have critiques like Ryan Picone who says "The carving utensils were flinchy and the tarps were quite small." He also believes that we should have had more choice in activities. Despite that feedback, we all agree that the day was a lot of fun and we thank Ms. Haug for all of her hard work planning this event.

Dear Abby?

the UMS claw
Newspaper presents our
new advice column!

Write anonymous letters,
and get advice from our
student staff at the claw!

**DROP OFF ANY DEAR ABBY LETTERS
TO MRS. JUAREZ IN B105**

**YOU CAN ALSO COMPLETE
THIS FORM**



Cross Country

By: Aiden Zeng



Mr. DeSisto and Ms. Kallens led the Cross Country team through an incredible season. Cross Country is a popular sport any many students come out to participate as we start the school year. Students who are a part of the team are encouraged to persevere to improve their running times. Both coaches love to spend time with their students to help them improve and they are very passionate about sports. They shared us that they had a great season along with the students improving on their times and had a great progress.

The team was proud to send 4 boys and 4 girls to the Meet of Champions as well, which was exceptional. However, the coaches expressed that all of their athletes worked very hard to exceed their own personal goals and should be very proud of themselves for putting in the effort!



Field Hockey

By: Anvika Date

In Montgomery, students are offered a wide range of sports over the school year. You are given choices like soccer, field hockey, basketball, cross country and many more! Field Hockey, for example, teaches Upper Middle School students how to improve their physical fitness, communication skills and quick decision making. In this article, we will be seeing reviews from the Field Hockey coach and players, their opinions on the sport, and more about our UMS Field Hockey team.

Having a great opportunity to play this sport, we also have an enthusiastic coach! Ms. Giunta –who is the girls' field hockey coach and a gym teacher at our school– was asked about her opinions on the season and the team this year. “When I think about this past season I think about how much the team improved. The girls individually and as a team made a tremendous amount of progress throughout the season.” She stated proudly. “It was also great to watch friendships form over the course of the season.”

Ms. Giunta continued to share her love for the sport and her motivation to coach the team. “I decided to coach the field hockey team because I love the sport and coaching UMS students. Sports help build [the] school community and I am happy to be part of that community.” Ms. Giunta was also asked what she would tell the girls on the team to motivate them. Her response showed, “During half time I would focus on the positive. I would talk about what I saw during the game but I also gave the team an opportunity to discuss what they noticed and experienced during the game.”

The team has been working hard for their games and practices. And they have improved a lot since the beginning of the season. They have been focusing on game strategies, stick skills and have been participating in lots of drills, as the Coach stated. They do a lot of exercising, warming up to improving their abilities. “The team goes for a run then comes back and stretches together. Once the team is warmed up, the girls begin practicing various field hockey skills. The team participates in a variety of drills throughout each practice.” As we can see, the field hockey team has been working hard to improve their skills. Let's see what players on the team think about this.

Field Hockey Continued

7th grader Saisha Sharma, who was a player on the Field Hockey practice team this fall. She was asked about how she improved over the course of the season. She stated about her favorite moments, and how other players on the team helped each other out. "The more experienced players really learned to gel [in] with the rest of us, and even those of us on the practice team—like me—got much better at technique and skills. Honestly, I think we all leveled up!" Another thing that Saisha stated was what she enjoyed the most about this season, "I really enjoyed the quick decisions you had to make on the field during practice," she delightfully remarked. "The excitement of playing this sport is absolutely unforgettable, and I'm definitely planning to join the team next year [!]"

Reflecting on this season, it seems like the girls have been practicing a lot on their skills and are having a lot of fun playing the sport! The team has now finished the fall season and will return in the spring! The girl's motto seems to be practice, play, win!

Boys Soccer

By: Aiden Zeng

UMS prides itself in having fantastic after school activities and sports, Boys Soccer is no different. The soccer season begins when we return to school in September and runs through October. The boys who participated this year were an exceptional group and they worked hard as a team to have a great season.

Mr. Figueroa, referred to as, "Coach Figs," shared his opinions about his team and his job as their leader. He said he enjoys, "Getting to know the athletes and helping them grow as an athlete on and off the field and for the love of coaching soccer and having our students learn to work together toward a common goal."

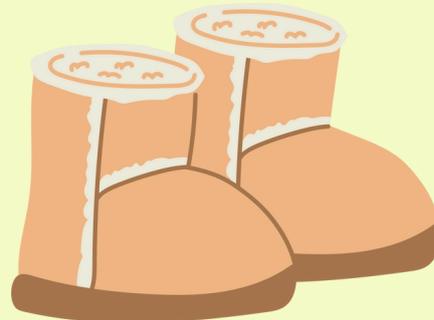
Throughout the season, there were several students learned many different positions and had done well which helped spark some much needed energy in our team during games. The team had a few captains based on effort and participation but what should be noted is how well they played together as a group. UMS 7th graders who enjoyed coming to games and watching the team this year should definitely come out to be a part of the team next year. We wish our 8th graders good luck as they head to the high school soccer program to continue working on these skills.



UMS Trends

By: Morgan Go, Avanti Kanire, Saisha Sharma

Every year in Montgomery, new trends take over our community—impacting how we dress, talk, and spend our free time. From popular clothing styles and water bottles to catchphrases and memes that constantly spread throughout the hallways, trends spread quickly throughout our school. Some trends will last for months while others may fade after a week or two. However, all of these fads make a mark on daily life at UMS no matter how long they last. This article will explore the current trends at our school and why they matter to our peers.



Fashion trends change quickly, but some styles seem to stick around no matter the season. Brands including Hollister, Aerie, Aeropostale, Ugg, and White Fox are popular among students, specifically the female population at UMS. "My favorite brand is Hollister, and an essential in my closet is my sweatshirts." Avani Patil, a seventh grader at UMS, says. Students express themselves through fashion and clothing choices while staying comfortable throughout the school day. According to eighth grader Ishaan Paliwal, "EVERYONE wears some Nike." From our several interviews, an almost unanimous answer for the questions— "What is an essential piece of clothing in your closet?"— and— "What are some day to day things that you and that you think everyone else wears?"— was sweatpants and sweatshirts. It may seem like an obvious answer— with winter coming and all— if not for the fact that there are a large variety of adapted types of sweatpants and shirts that everyone wears everyday. Whatever your gender is, our sources say that sweatpants and sweatshirts are big this fall.



Now we delve into the world of memes. There is one undisputed "king" of memes this year, which you all probably know. You may think this meme is corny, or you may think it is a silly little phrase. Shamitha Balibani, UMS seventh grader, says that "6-7 is the biggest meme of the year", and I'm pretty sure all of you can agree as well. This meme began with the song, "Doot, Doot (6 7)" by Skrilla which was released in 2024. The meme started gaining popularity in early 2025 through platforms like TikTok and YouTube. It soon became a commonly used phrase throughout classrooms all around the nation, as well as on social media. Even though it has been a long time since it has started, the 6-7 meme still has popularity.



On November 26, the latest season of Stranger Things was released. This release caused an uproar in fans of the show and you can often hear your peers discussing the series in the hallways. Additionally, Stranger Things is also #1 in Netflix's top ten most popular shows. Some other popular shows are from the early 2000s, like Gilmore Girls or Gossip Girl. Some more recent trending shows include Cobra Kai, Ginny and Georgia, and The Summer I Turned Pretty. Aurna Sen, a seventh grader, says, "My favorite show is Cobra Kai." Whatever genre our peers are watching, we can agree that Netflix seems to be popular for television shows.

Continued on the following page.

UMS Trends: Continued

With all of the book-loving students at UMS, it is hard to discern one true 'favorite book this season,' though sources indicate that young adult fantasies and fiction are taking over the stage this winter. "Books that are all the rage right now are The Inheritance Games," says Katherine Wei, a seventh grader here at our school. Not only popular series like the The Inheritance Games saga, but even manga seems to be going big. Seventh grader Jeremiah Lee answers the same question. "Anime manga," he says explicitly. Social media and television will always remain a big factor of our generation, but it seems as though we will always have a special place in our hearts for books.

Most people in our UMS community have said that music is a way to calm down, relieve stress, forget about their problems, or is just fun to listen to. Seventh grader Anvika Date states, "I love Taylor Swift because she's just so awesome!" Some big artists in our UMS community, and in the world right now include Sabrina Carpenter, Taylor Swift, Billie Eilish, Katseye, Tyler the Creator, Tate McRae, SZA, Laufey, Drake, Olivia Rodrigo, and the Weeknd.

One of the biggest factors that determine our school fads is social media. Even outside of school, students can communicate through apps such as TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat. Seventh grader Sana Musuluri states, "My most used apps are probably Youtube and Snapchat." and Eighth grader Mannat Grewal says, "I use Tiktok the most." These apps constantly advertise outfits, brands, and styles that influence viewers, especially when popular creators wear them. "My celebrity idol is Preslee Faith. She is so pretty and kind to people." Katherine says. Celebrities and content creators continue to influence students here at UMS and schools all around the world.

In conclusion, trends come and go, but our school spirit stays. It doesn't matter whether you follow the fads here at our school or not, but what truly matters is that you're a team player. No matter your interests, you are still a part of our school community. Hopefully this article has inspired you to try out some of the current trends, if you haven't done so already. Whether you like mystery books, thriller TV shows, cozy fashion, or listening to Sabrina Carpenter, we all still C.A.R.E at UMS!

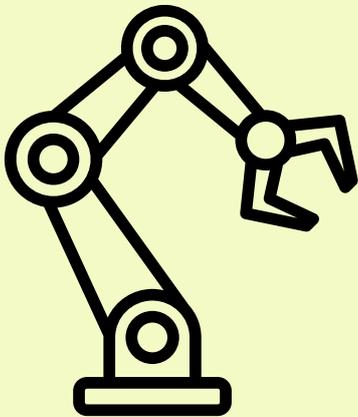


Club Spotlight: First Lego League By: Anika Vaswani and Vanya Jamoriya

The season for First Lego League (FLL) might be over, but for this year's teams, it ended on a high note. After 9 weeks of building, coding, and late - night brainstorms, their competition took place on November 23 in Somerville High School.

At UMS, there are two after-school robotics teams, the Roboclaws and the Montgomery Thundercats. While both teams had different robots and different styles, both teams proudly represented the school and were recognized for their team spirit.

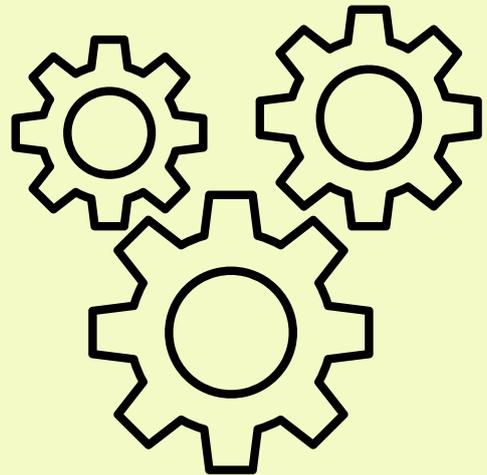
First Lego League is an international STEM program where students between 9-14 learn to think like engineers. There are two parts to the competition. First, teams research real world problems and create an innovative solution. They also build and program a robot on a themed challenge board. This year's FLL theme focused on archaeology, and teams focused on problems such as excavating safely and protecting fragile artifacts.



Both teams developed their own unique strategies for completing their robot missions, and it came with its own challenges. One team member, Aliya Sharma said "Since we all had different ideas, we all compromised on a design for the robot in the end."

The innovation project pushed students to think past the robot. They had to understand how archaeologists work, what problems they face, and how modern technology can help archeologists. Team members reflected on the season in different ways. Sharma also shared "We all have good chemistry and share ideas in a healthy way. Being a part of my team at the competition was a fun experience."

The competition day was a combination of all of their efforts. Teams had to present their innovation project and answer questions from judges. At the same time, their robot had to perform in intense two minute and thirty second matches, where every second was counted and the goal was to score as many points as possible. Teams had to stay on their feet, staying calm when the robot did not work as expected, or their code needed last - minute adjustments. The atmosphere was filled with energy, cheers and a friendly sense of competition, as all the teams there showed exactly what they learned over the season.



The Thundercats had been awarded the Motivate Award, which recognizes teams for enthusiasm, positivity, and team spirit throughout the season. This award shows how they supported each other, encouraged other teams, and stayed positive when challenges came up. It reflects the heart of FLL, being able to work together and lift others up along the way.

As the season ended, the Roboclaws and Thundercats walked away with more than just a trophy. They built skills, confidence and friendships that will last way beyond this year's challenge. Both teams proved that with creativity and teamwork, students can achieve great things, on and off the robotics field.

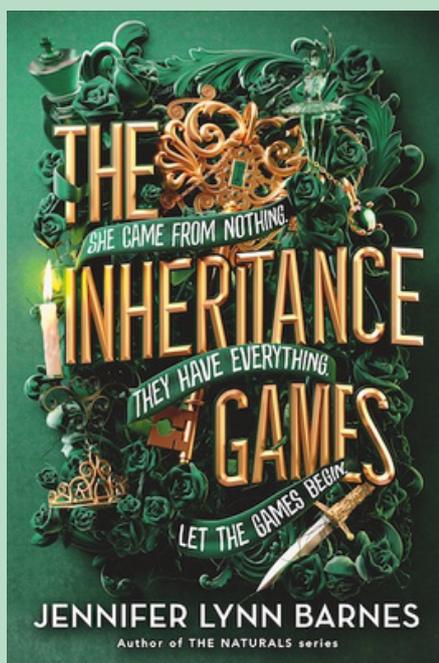
Book Review: *Inheritance Games*

Written by: Anvika Date and Ashmitha Raju

In this article, we star a New York Times Best-selling series, The Inheritance Games! Written by the New York Times Best-selling author Jennifer Lynn Barnes. She has many bestselling series such as The Naturals, The Debutantes, and The Fixer. We could go on and on about her work, but we will mainly focus on the book which started it all: The Inheritance Games.

The Inheritance Games saga has a total of seven books, all filled with suspense, mystery, and riddles. In this narrative, there are two series (The Inheritance Games and The Grandest Game), plus an anthology (The Games Untold).

A seventeen year old girl named Avery Kylie Grambs discovers that a random Texan billionaire called Tobias Hawthorne gave her his opulent wealth in his will after his death. With the help of Tobias' four grandsons, she must solve this riddle and uncover the secrets of Hawthorne House and the Hawthorne family. With the love for riddles and games, this book will surely keep you on the edge of your seat!



The author for this witty-humored, mystery series is Jennifer Lynn Barnes. She has written over 20 acclaimed books, which have fascinated thousands of teens and young-adult readers! After authoring many books, The Inheritance Games gave her a breakthrough, and she's now a fan-favorite! Her work captivates the reader for its never-ending mysteries, with hues of romance, and some psychological thrillers. **Continued on the following page.**

THE CLAW: BOOK REVIEWS

Continued: Book Review: Inheritance Games

We also wanted to interview fellow peers for their opinions on this narrative. We held a conversation with Devin Kapasi asking him about his favorite moments and favorite characters in the book. The scene he enjoyed most, was when Avery first realized that Tobias Hawthorne had left behind trails for her, and that she is officially part of the game along with the Brothers Hawthorne. Devin felt that “it was a major turning point in this story.”

When asking the same story to multiple different people, we see that everyone has their own point of view.

That’s why we asked another seventh grader Aakaash Velagala about what the book means to him. He explained how it follows the “adventures and riddles” of Hawthorne House and Avery. As a poor, yet smart high school girl, she was given the entire fortune of the billionaire Tobias Hawthorne. To inherit it, the only thing she was ordered to do was to live in Hawthorne House for a year. He also mentioned that the book “really kept [him] on the edge of [his] seat, and [he] [so] badly wanted to know what was going to happen.”

If given the chance to ask the author one question, what would it be? Based on Devin’s answer, we see that he was really impressed with the story. He said that he would ask Barnes how she came up with such an “enthraling” book. “This series was unlike any other fantasy story I have read, and even though it was clearly fantasy, I found it to be more realistic (and tied to real-world issues) than other stories, adding to its likeability.

With its various conflicts and complex characters, this novel was a really enjoyable one to read.”

In the end, you can really see how the novel *The Inheritance Games* has brought joy to fellow peers, and many more readers around the world. Everyone who read it described it as a book to die for, and after asking those questions and reading those interviews, I realized that no one was exaggerating any part of the book! This chart-topping novel is something many people around the world enjoy, and we suggest you go read the book yourself!

A Student Author

By: Kiana Lodha and Arfa Shaik

Words can hold a lot of power and Arfa, a girl from our very own school has an extraordinary way to put her free time to use. She started writing the book in sixth grade and it just released on January 8th, 2026, which surprisingly is her birthday too.

The name of the book is *The Virus Within*, a thrilling sci-fi, mystery book where the main character is on a journey to find something that’s been long lost. Arfa’s book is inspired by many people in her life. Including the famous Ed Sheeran, her brother, and her best friend, an eighth grader at our school, Hana Uppal. Hana was by Arfa’s side through her whole story, making sure she wouldn’t give up. Ed Sheeran’s writing journey also really motivated her writing, since they both weren’t very fond of writing at first, but she hopes to become an amazing writer one day. “I know that obsessing over a person isn’t that good, but it’s not obsessing, it’s admiration, of his work, his struggles that motivated me to do something.” **Continued on the following page.**



“Appearance deceives the eye but not the heart.”

- ARFA SHAIK.

THE CLAW: BOOK REVIEWS

Continued: Book Review: A Student Author

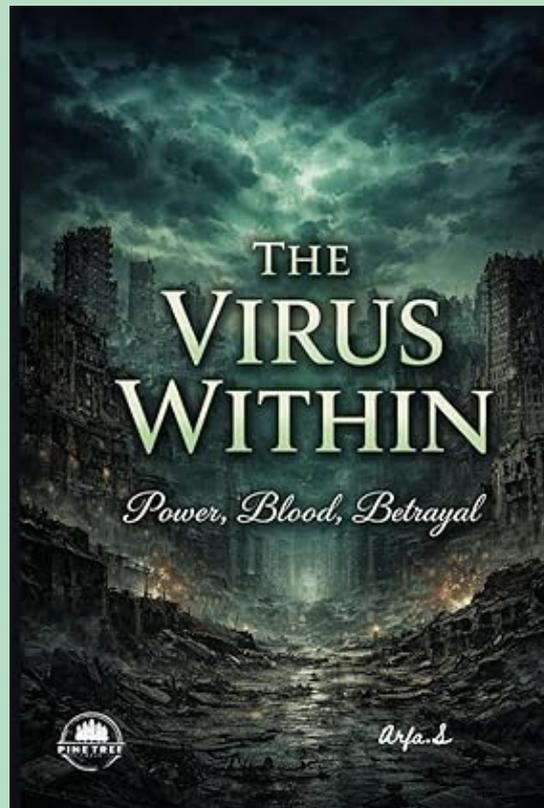
This book took her 5 months of tireless effort to write. Although she never liked writing, since when she tried, it didn't come out the way she hoped. She failed many times and she even thought about quitting as she said, "At one point, I thought it was hopeless, that writing is just not meant for me. But one thing that I realized is that things aren't meant for specific people, it's people who have to work hard to be meant for specific things."

Her characters are based on various people in her life, for example Liv, the protagonist, is mostly based on Arfa, while Ed-name aside- is based on various people including Jameson Hawthorn from the Inheritance games. She herself said that " These characters are mere imitations of how I want people to be in real life. Like Liv, I could be more confident, but I'm not, and that's the difference between reality and fiction."

Anyone who loves reading could love this book with a mix of many genres including mystery, sci-fi, romance, and dystopian with a mix of thrill. Arfa herself said, "An edge-of-the seat, mystery sci-fi, with an end of the world disaster. It's going to twist your brain in ways you can imagine"

You can buy Arfa's book on Amazon right now! If you have any questions regarding her book or anything else you can ask Arfa herself as she's probably roaming in the hallways during to school hours.

So, if any of you have a passion for writing, or dream of doing something big, just keep trying. Arfa went from writing complete trash to publishing an amazing book! So dream big and fly high! Arfa would probably be a bit less jolly when she talks



New Teachers At our School

Written by: Kiana Lodha and Arfa Shaik

Montgomery Upper middle school continues to get bigger and bigger every year. Not in size but in the amount of people within it. Sure enough there are lots of students joining the school every year but teachers? That's a whole different idea. There are many new teachers at our school this year , including Ms. Osbourne and Mrs. England.



Mrs. England has quite a lot to say about her previous years of teaching and her current interests. She has taught for about 9 years before moving here which is a long period of time. In the span of 9 years , she has also taught science for a while and homeschooled her daughters for about 2 years. This shows years of work she put into her career which guarantees a profound interest in teaching. The main reason that she wanted to teach in UMS is because she basically used to go to this same school. As Mrs. England said "I went here."

Motivating students is a tough job, especially when it's about learning math. As obvious as it is, math is not a subject that's specifically liked by a lot of young students. The complexity of the subject often drives students to stress about it. One way that Mrs. England motivates students is , as she said herself, "Jolly Ranchers." Yes. You read that right, Jolly ranchers. It's clear that when there's candy there's always work done. A lot of other teachers have adapted to this method of using candy- especially Jolly ranchers to get the students' brains cranking.

Talking about motivation, the main reason Mrs. England began teaching is because of her kind heart. She loves helping people understand material that's complicated for them and she gains satisfaction from it. The act of helping people fuels her to teach because teaching is a way of helping people- in this case , young students understand the basic essentials of life. She was a substitute at LMS last year, and the students fell in love with her teaching instantly, giving her a title she earned of 'The Best Sub'.

Besides teaching, the opinion of teachers on how this school can be better matters a lot and Mrs. England gladly expressed her opinion. She herself said having "kinder students" can make this school a safe and better place for everyone. One thing she would absolutely say to students is to "Never give up." Those three words can actually have a huge impact when they're taken by heart.

Coming back to the fact that she's new to this school, It's pretty clear that a lot of people would have one question in mind, "How has she been fitting in?" And the answer is, absolutely perfectly. The students love her and we can't blame them, she's an extraordinary person after all.

This is also a really direct example of how a person's good nature can impact people around them.

Ms. Osbourne is the new dance teacher at UIMS and MHS, bringing in a new dance elective for students as well. Growing up dancing at a local studio in Bridgewater, and joining the Somerset County Vocational and Technical High School in their dance department, her passion for dance grew along with her talent. This is a great example of how going after what you love can impact your whole life.

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Continued on the following page.



THE CLAW: TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

New Teachers Continued

After graduating, she pursued a BFA (bachelor in fine arts) and an Ed.M (Electronic Dance Music) in the dance program at Rutgers University. During this time, she began understanding dance in public schools, and realized she also had a passion for teaching. Sometimes, things only appear when you really get involved in stuff you really love. During her undergrad, Ms. Osbourne assisted with community arts dance classes at Rutgers, and participated in the Integrated Dance Collaboratory, helping classes for teens and adults with different abilities.

After various types of dance programs, Ms. Osbourne started substitute teaching adaptive classes, and teaching Saturday community outreach classes through a local school district. She was also the assistant director of the Rutgers Summer Dance Conservatory. When joining the Montgomery School District, because of its openness to creating a dance program, Ms. Osbourne hoped to help create new opportunities for every student to engage in dance. With her journey with dancing alongside people with different abilities, she said, and I quote, "I'm especially passionate about continuing to teach students with disabilities, and I knew Montgomery would support that vision." Showing just how open minded she is. Montgomery Upper Middle school continues to prove itself by ensuring amazing teachers and well behaved students. Mrs. England and Ms. Osbourne are great examples of passionate and experienced teachers who strive to make this world a better place by spreading their talent and knowledge to students for guaranteeing a better future.



Seventh Grade Spotlight

Written by: Carsten Poon and Leteef Farayola

Mr. DeSisto is a 7th grade social studies teacher at Montgomery Upper Middle School. In this interview, we learned about the beloved teacher and how he became a teacher, along with some other details.

We began by asking where he was from and his involvement in school. He told us that he was from Burlington, down south in New Jersey. We also learned that he is on the red team currently and is a cross country coach and a coach for intramural flag football.

His journey at Montgomery began 4 years ago, he told us that he picked Montgomery because they were a good fit to his choice of teaching, being experience based learning. He also told us that the reason he chose social studies was because he believes that it makes a good well rounded individual and that the past is still with us and that it is best taught as something that's alive as opposed to just memorizing facts.

We also dove into more personal details, such as his favorite animal, being elephants because of how they think in a communal sense and never forget things as they care for each other. We also learned about his hobbies, such as playing video games as many students know, listening to music, and trying new foods. Other students also know about his two cats -Rosy & Violet- which are black cats who have been with Mr. DeSisto for a loving two years. As we ended our interview, we knew that we chose right, picking Mr. DeSisto for our interview and even recently winning teacher of the year! Being a great teacher, he strives to help students better understand history and positively impacts our UIMS community. **Continued on the following page.**

THE CLAW: TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Seventh Grade Spotlight Continued

Mr. Pandit, a language arts teacher at UIMS, teaches the grade 7 for the red team. We learned about this teacher through questions and dove into why he chose language arts to teach as well as why he chose UIMS in the first place.

We began by asking where he was from and his involvement in school. he is from Lawrence ,here in New Jersey.

His journey in language arts started when he was young. He would read Isaac Asimov voraciously and it seemed to start a spark in him. In middle school, Mr. Pandit loved to play with words. he would write creatively and contribute poetry to his high school literary folio. Studying British literature and the art of creative writing helped him realize the power of words on people. Some of his favorite writers include the names of Shakespeare, Swift, Milton, Blake, Poe, and Dickinson. Teaching language arts combines his love for all of these as well as helping students learn the beauty of language.

Into more about his background, Mr. Pandit has been teaching for 15 years but started in UIMS in September of 2019 with a lot of teaching experience already as people can tell. But he has still learned a lot from his colleagues here at UIMS. He stated, "I can unequivocally say that the students and staff here at UIMS have been the best to work with." He says he feels appreciated and respected as well! Mr. Pandit is extremely grateful for being here and knows how lucky he is.

Into more personal things, Mr. Pandit's favorite animal is a capybara because of how it's friendly with everything! He finds its apathy towards conflict inspiring. He wisely says, "when life gets stressful, ask yourself, what would a capybara do?" Mr. Pandit also added that he is very fond of trees as they are beautiful and have become resilient by swaying with the wind; being too rigid would also cause one to fall over.

Some of his hobbies include playing the guitar, drums, and singing in a band. He also loves photography. He just started enjoying anime, he says that *Attack on Titan* was epic and is currently watching *Frieren*.

As we end this article, we now know much more about our beloved teacher, Mr. Pandit, from his background starting language arts to his more personal aspect of things today. Being a great teacher, it was great to have him star in the teacher spotlight.



Tiramisu

By: Morgan Go



Image from New York Times Cooking

Tiramisu is a traditional Italian dessert that is well known for its rich flavor and delicate texture. Traditionally served cold, tiramisu is a no-bake dessert that's simple to prepare yet elegant enough to be served at formal settings or special occasions.

This dessert is built from layers of coffee-soaked ladyfingers and a fluffy mascarpone cream made with eggs and sugar, then finished with a dusting of cocoa powder. While tiramisu may look fancy, it's surprisingly easy to make at home with just a few ingredients and no oven required. With some patience while it chills and sets, you'll have a dessert that tastes like it came straight from an Italian café.

Below is a classic tiramisu recipe from Broma Bakery that's easy to follow and perfect for both beginner and experienced bakers!

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 package lady fingers
- 4 eggs, separated
- 1 cup sugar, divided
- 16 oz. mascarpone, cold from the fridge (use cream cheese as a substitute)
- 1 cup strong coffee
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- Cocoa powder, for dusting (2-3 tbsp.)

[Directions can be found on the following page.](#)

Peppermint Mocha Cookies

By: Vanya Jamoriya and Evelyn Wang



Source: Sally's Baking -- Peppermint Mocha Cookies

Peppermint mocha cookies are made with only a few simple ingredients and the recipe combines festive favorites including candy canes, white chocolate, and more! This festive treat is often made and eaten around the holiday season, especially during the winter time. Consider making these across winter break—it will be a good use of your time!

INGREDIENTS:

- 1/2 cup (8 Tbsp; 113g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- 1/2 cup (100g) granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup (100g) packed light or dark brown sugar
- 1 large egg, at room temperature
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon peppermint extract
- 1 cup (125g) all-purpose flour (spooned & leveled)
- 1/2 cup + 2 Tablespoons (51g) unsweetened natural cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 teaspoons espresso powder or 1 Tablespoon instant coffee granules
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup (180g) mini or regular size semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 8 ounces white chocolate, coarsely chopped
- 3 large candy canes, crushed

[Directions can be found on the following page.](#)

Peppermint Mocha Cookies Recipe Steps:

1. In a large bowl, beat the butter, granulated sugar, and brown sugar together on medium high speed until fluffy and light in color, about 2-3 minutes.
2. Add the egg, vanilla extract, and peppermint extract, and then beat on high speed until combined. Scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl as needed.
3. In a separate bowl, whisk the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, espresso powder, and salt together until combined. With the mixer running on low speed, slowly pour into the wet ingredients. Beat on low until combined and then beat in the chocolate chips. The cookie dough will be thick and very sticky.
4. Cover dough tightly and chill in the refrigerator for at least 3 hours and up to 3 days. Chilling is mandatory for this sticky cookie dough.
5. Remove cookie dough from the refrigerator and allow it to sit at room temperature for 10 minutes. If the cookie dough chilled longer than 3 hours, let it sit at room temperature for about 20 minutes. This makes the chilled cookie dough easier to scoop and roll.
6. Preheat oven to 350°F (177°C). Line large baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone baking mats. Set aside. Scoop and roll dough, 1.5 Tablespoons of dough each, into balls. Arrange 2-3 inches apart on the baking sheets. Bake the cookies for 11-12 minutes or until the edges appear set and the centers still look soft.
7. Cool cookies for 5 minutes on the baking sheet, and then transfer to a cooling rack to cool completely. The cookies will slightly deflate as they cool.
8. Melt the chopped white chocolate in a double boiler or use the microwave. For the microwave, place the white chocolate in a medium heat-proof bowl. Melt in 15 second increments, stirring after each increment until completely melted and smooth.
9. Dip each completely cooled cookie halfway into the white chocolate and place onto a parchment or silicone baking mat-lined baking sheet. Sprinkle crushed candy canes on top of the chocolate. Repeat with the rest of the cooled cookies. Place the baking sheet into the refrigerator to help the chocolate set for about one hour.
10. Now you can enjoy your delicious peppermint mocha cookies! :)



THE CLAW: PUZZLES

Riddles

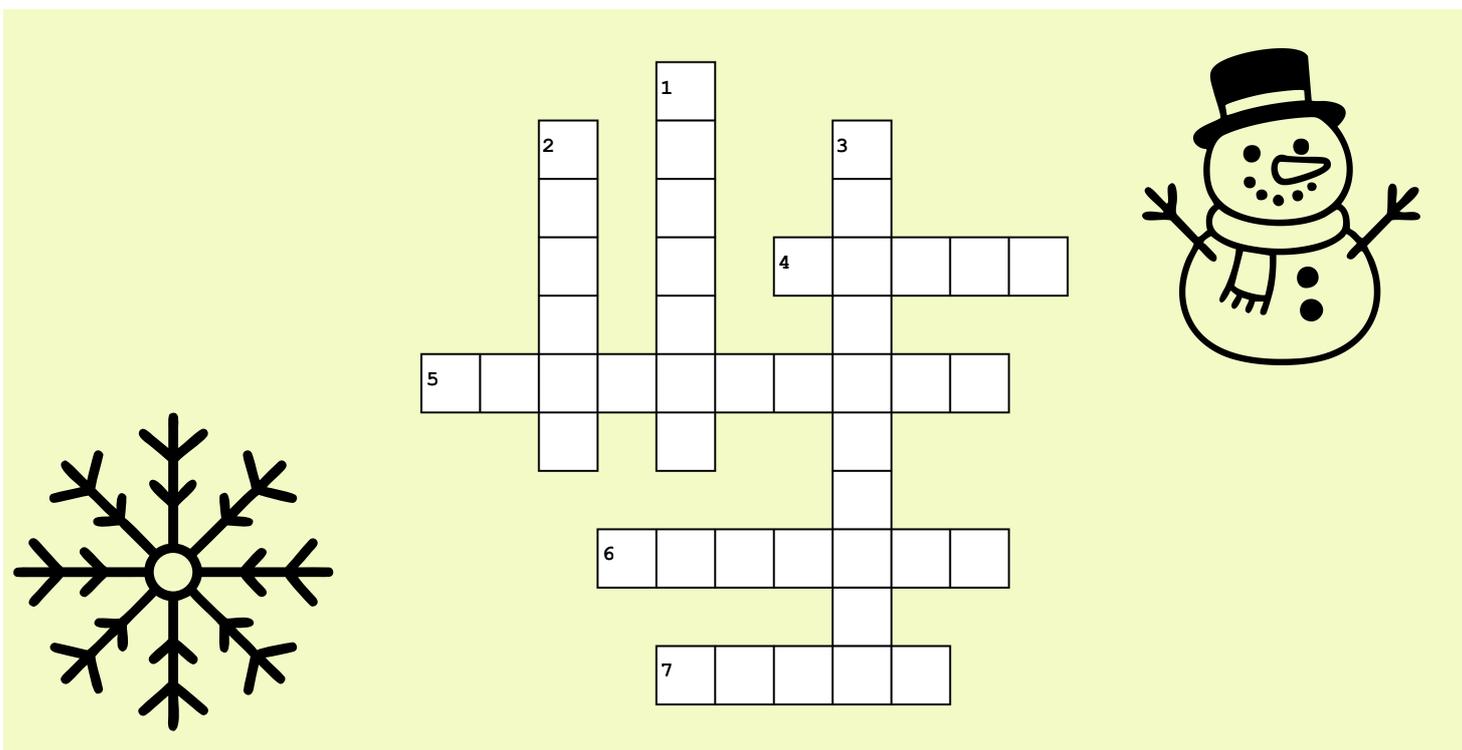
Q- The weatherman said it was going to snow, but everyone was disappointed because later, it started raining instead. On this same day, a little earlier, an old man went for a walk, and it then started raining. He forgot his umbrella and did not own a hat. His head was not covered at all. When he returned home, his clothes were soaking wet, but not a hair on his head was wet at all! How was this possible?

Q- A woman is sitting in her hotel room, all alone on Christmas Eve, when she hears a knock on the door. She opens it to see a man whom she has never seen before. He says, "I'm sorry, I thought this was my room." He leaves the doorway and goes down the corridor and into the elevator. The woman goes straight back into her room and then calls security. What made the woman so suspicious of the man?

Q- I run faster than any beast and can leap across mountains, yet I am invisible and held in a jar. I am the reason you shiver, even by the fire. What am I?

Answers on the following page

Winter Themed Crossword Puzzle



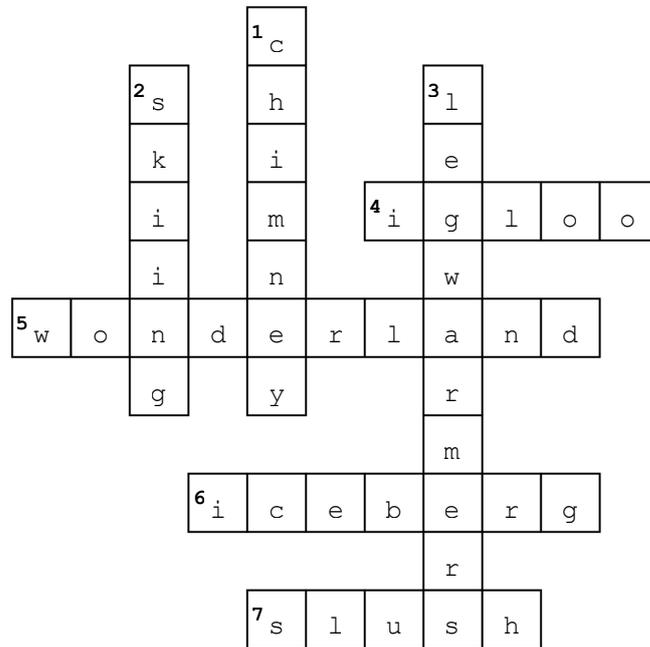
Across

4. A popular shelter to build with snow
5. A song: 'Winter ___' Originally by Richard B. Smith
6. A landform that caused the downfall of the Titanic
7. Wet, partially melted snow. Terrible for playing in

Down

1. What Santa lands down from to deliver presents
2. A winter sport using slopes
3. Articles of clothing worn on lower legs

ANSWER: Crossword Puzzle

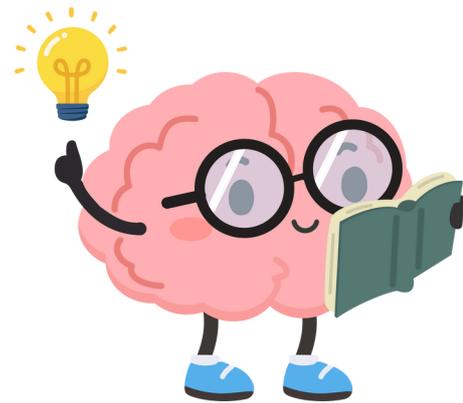


Riddles

A- The old man was bald.

A- If the man had actually thought that it was his hotel room, he would have tried to open the door, he would not have knocked.

A- The winter wind.



THANK YOU FOR READING!

Stay Tuned for Our Spring Issue!