

rank & file

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***Winter Sports Madness:
pep rally photo essay***

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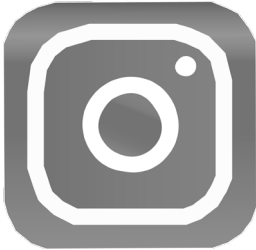
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Letter from the Editor

As we move towards 2024, holiday drinks start to show up at Starbucks, winter sports ramp up, the Grammys are right around the corner and the only thing staying constant is Taylor Swift's name in every publications' headlines. Even ours.

Another big change is our commitment to writing in-depth stories. We have written a total of four pages on the Israel-Hamas war for the education of our readers, and we have more in-depths already in the works. While reading these in-depths, I hope you are open to the clarity these stories can bring about current issues. Our email is always open for input and feedback: info@gcmnews.net.

Melanie George
Editor-in-Chief
Rank&File

This message is from our entire staff about the Israel-Hamas war-related coverage on pages 10-12 and 18. Readers should keep these disclaimers in mind while reading. The Israel-Hamas war is not a religious war but a conflict of occupancy of one piece of land. There is a nuanced history with many interpretations on the Israel-Palestine conflict, but it is not a direct conflict between Jews and Muslims. Not all Jews have the same opinion, and not all Muslims have the same opinion either.

Furthermore, Rank&File values the opinions and perspectives of all, and we do not tolerate hate of any kind to any groups or individuals, especially within the Marshall community. It is our opinion that we need to foster an atmosphere in which people can have polarizing opinions and still be unified as a community.

The doubling of IB HOA Paper 3 prompts leaves students shocked: "It's a disgrace"



SOPHIE HAUBER/RANK&FILE

HOA teacher Dean Wood assists junior Elliot Boon during class

by sophie hauber and rebecca paz

Due to the development of artificial intelligence and the use of websites such as ChatGPT for essay writing, IB History of the Americas (HOA) teachers decided to take initiative this year by doubling the number of possible Paper 3 prompts from four to eight to reduce the possibility of memorization.

"Our strategy in years past has been to give kids a few questions and have them work on them with their peers or at home," IB HOA teacher and Head of the History Department Dean Wood said. "Now, AI can give students some fairly sophisticated responses with very little work."

IB HOA and World History teacher Alex Riddell mentioned that AI is not always used in an honest manner and in years past has been misused.

"AI, while a possibly helpful tool, was not being used as a tool and instead was being used as a way for students to cheat or plagiarize," Riddell said. "Keeping this in mind, it was important for the IB HOA team to limit the AI-written essays."

Many students were not aware of the change. Previous HOA students thought there were still four prompts and current HOA students thought there had always been eight.

This new revelation left students surprised.

"Why?" senior and previous HOA student JP Adiao asked. "What the f***? That's like, that's BS."

Senior Kate Butterworth shared a similar reaction and said she didn't think AI was a big problem last year.

"I'm glad I'm not a junior," Butterworth said. "Having just four questions was already stressful enough. I can't imagine having to prepare for eight."

Having recently written a Paper 3 with eight possible prompts spanning over content from two separate units, current HOA students expressed their concerns about the effects of this change on their time and performance.

"I think [the change] is outrageous, it's a disgrace," Junior Semira Gebremariam said. "It's so hard to prepare for it because we have double the amount of work that last year did and still have the same grading policy."

Junior Chloe Hoang mentioned the difficulties this imposes on her time management as a student taking IB courses.

"It takes so much time away because we prepare for it so much," Hoang said. "All of us have other classes and other things to do, especially people who do the IB Diploma. There's so much to do, and they can't expect us to prepare for all of it and get an 'A' on all of it as well."

Butterworth said it is unfair that students who haven't used AI in the past are being punished for the actions of previous students.

"They're being punished for something that they didn't do and now they have to do two times the work," Butterworth said.

Riddell advised students against writing out each individual paper in preparation.

She said that memorizing eight

papers would be detrimental to the student and their performance on the day of the exam. Instead, she suggests an organizational tactic to best prepare for the questions.

"Thinking about content in terms of themes is also very important as some units rely on one central idea to guide your responses," Riddell said. "Some questions can be thought about in similar ways whereas some are the flipped version."

Wood agreed with this strategy and proposed a similar one to his students.

"The best way, in my mind, to handle a huge group of questions is to group them," Wood said. "Even if you have eight questions, they're generally going to be grouped into two or three themes."

Wood said there are benefits to the change in prompts and learning the strategies to prepare.

He connected the strategy of theme-grouping and common traits found in the IB system.

"IB asks for major themes like change over time, compare and contrast, causes and effects and things like that," he said.

Riddell recognized the relevance the strategy has to IB in general and how the doubling of possible prompts can help students in their preparation for IB exams.

"The change does require more preparation," Riddell said. "This preparation, though, is benefiting the students as they will be more prepared to write an IB exam where they will not know the questions in advance."

Riddell believes that these types of changes are unforeseeable due to constant new developments.

"As a history teacher, we know we can never predict the future as more technology and IB changes are always possible."

Omegle shutdown: students respond

by juline salahi and natalia wells

Omegle, a website that paired strangers together via video chat, was shut down on Nov. 8, 2023, 14 years after its creation.

A female user, claiming that the site neglected to cease sexual harassment which led her to be paired with a child predator, filed a lawsuit in 2021, which recently caused it to shutdown.

Omegle's founder, Leif K-Brooks, released a lengthy statement regarding the shutdown on the Omegle website.

"There can be no honest accounting of Omegle without acknowledging that some people misused it, including to

commit unspeakably heinous crimes," K-Brooks wrote.

Sophomore Lara Carlson used the Omegle website but said she wasn't pleased with the environment it provided its users.

"I only went on the Omegle website because my friends always wanted to go on it," Carlson said. "But, I didn't like it because of the amount of weird things I would see."

Carlson mentioned how she personally experienced predatory behavior and the effects it had on her, calling it "traumatizing."

"I met a lot of people like old men, people my age, but there were mostly

girls and we would have random conversations about anything," Carlson said.

Junior Andrew Alden had similar experiences and met a similar range of people.

"There's a lot of old men on the website. We all know why," Alden said.

Alden explained that he had an uneasy feeling about the website, much like Carlson and other Omegle users.

"I felt very threatened about it, very uncomfortable," Alden said.

The lawsuit was filed due to repetitive predatory behavior and eventually led to the shutdown of Omegle.

● compiled by maddie bishop and ben pyatt

Athletes of the Month: December

These athletes were selected by the Rank&File staff for their outstanding performances this month.

Jason Penn, 12
Basketball



BY KYLE CERTO/KYLEC.FILMS

Senior Jason Penn has been on the Varsity Basketball team since his sophomore year. Averaging 19 points per game, he has been a key player for the team this year.

"Building relationships with my team and coaches on and off the court is really important to me," Penn said. "Making it to states is my main goal for the season."

Penn recently committed to Lebanon Valley College to play basketball at the collegiate level.

Sammy Dabich, 10
Mid-Distance Track



COURTESY OF SAMMY DABICH

Sophomore Sammy Dabich went to the New Balance Nationals last year and said she hopes to stay healthy and qualify again this season.

Dabich started track in the winter of her freshman year, leaving room for more potential in the 2023-2024 season.

"My favorite thing about track is seeing my own improvement and how supportive everyone on the team is of each other," Dabich said.

Warming Up:

Winter sports teams showcase skills during pep rally

- page compiled by mona farah, maha jiwani and eleanor liang

Seniors Soren Pirhoun and Ben Levy



Juniors Chloe Hoang, Farah Daader, Ellie Tilman and Senior Keegan Rhyu



Freshman Michael Celia and Principal Jeff Litz

“We really just got killed that game”: Students react to Jack Del Rio’s firing

by maddie bishop and rebecca paz

The 2023 NFL season has been a challenge for the Washington Commanders, who face their third losing season in the last four years under head coach Ron Rivera.

“This season has been pretty disappointing,” junior Shrey Desai said. “I expected them to be better than this season because it seemed like we were finally starting to put the pieces together.”

Being a Commanders fan since the age of six, Desai felt frustration with the team and their coaching staff on various occasions.

“This is constantly how I feel being a Commanders fan and especially this season,” Desai said. “After embarrassing losses to the Chicago Bears and the New York Giants twice, I’ve experienced a whole lot of disappointment already.”

According to NFL statistics, the Commanders’ defense has given up the most points over the season.

“How does this happen with a defense that has been one of the best units in the league for the past few years?” Desai asked. “The players on the team didn’t change drastically, so our failure on defense is mostly attributed to the coaching.”

This disappointment returned on November 23 when the Commanders lost to the Dallas Cowboys during the Thanksgiving rivalry game with a score of 45 to 10.

“It was a big disappointment to lose on Thanksgiving; we really just got killed that game,” senior Neala Austin said.

However, junior Aman Berhe predicted the game’s outcome and was not surprised by the 35 point loss.

“The Cowboys had just dismantled the Panthers and the Giants leading up to their meeting with the Commanders,” he said. “My confidence in the Washington defense was already little to none.”

Desai explained he felt the disappointment and embarrassment he has so often felt for this team after the Thanksgiving day loss, but then decided to change his mindset.

“Instead of dwelling too much on this particular game though, I chose to enjoy Thanksgiving with my family,” Desai said.

After this loss, the Washington



COURTESY OF PADMA VANKA

The Washington Commanders play against the Arizona Cardinals on September 10 in the opening game of the season.

Commanders revealed on social media in a quote by head coach Ron Rivera that they let go of their defensive coordinator Jack Del Rio and defensive backs coach Brent Vieselmeyer.

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“This is constantly how I feel being a Commanders fan and especially this season. After embarrassing losses to the Chicago Bears and the New York Giants twice, I’ve experienced a whole lot of disappointment already.”

- Junior Shrey Desai

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“I think it was a good decision,” Austin said. “We started the season below expectations with our defense and Del Rio has been inconsistent.”

Desai agreed and had been awaiting a change in coaching the whole season.

“I’m ecstatic that we fired Jack Del Rio,” Desai said. “I feel like he rightfully shoulders a lot of the blame when it comes to this disappointing season.”

In a press conference after he was fired Del Rio said, “I did feel like change was necessary to shake some things up and get things moving forward.”

Though Del Rio himself believed the team required change, Berhe said he was not

convinced that firing Del Rio was the change they needed.

“I think the problem with the Commander’s defense is evident in the player personnel,” Berhe said. “So, firing the defensive coordinator isn’t going to make much of a difference. Sam Howell is playing out of his mind right now and instead of trying to support him they went and traded their two best edge rushers for more lousy picks.”

Due to the recent changes in the player line-up, Berhe doesn’t expect the season to take a turn for the better.

“With the departure of Chase Young and Montez Sweat, the only decent part of Washington’s defense is gone and they will continue to allow 40-point games and get dog-walked for the rest of the season,” Berhe said.

With this fresh start for the Commanders, there are new expectations and hopes for future seasons.

Desai proposes a strategy to close out the disappointing season.

“The smart thing for us would be to tank the rest of our games to get a good draft pick,” Desai said. “However, this would be painful for me to watch as I would have to endure a bad level of play and deal with friends and family members who root for the opposing teams that we play for the rest of the season.”

Austin also awaits new talent with high hopes for the next season.

“Hopefully with new talent and all the experienced players, we can get better,” she said.

Pinpointing the Wrestling team's new standards

by maddie bishop

The 2024 Wrestling program has grown significantly since last season, as it welcomes new coaching.

History teacher Alex Riddell, the new assistant coach for both girls and boys wrestling, has noticed the significant growth in interest regarding the girls program.

"We have over 60 students in wrestling which means we have to have separate practices to better fit into the wrestling room," Riddell said. "In terms of the girls team, we went from five last year to 12 as of today."

Head coach Daniel Nguyen said that wrestling as a sport struggles to gain the same interest as other popular sports because of the complex nature of the scoring system.

"We have to work extra hard to promote the sport, because it's a lot harder to follow," Nguyen said.

With new coaches and larger numbers, the wrestling program has more room for growth. Riddell puts emphasis on not only athletes' performance on the mat, but also their academic endeavors and character building.

"This year we enacted a study hall for any student, JV or Varsity, that has a C+ or

lower in any of their classes," Riddell said. "It is important that student athletes do not let their grades fall when they are in season."

Senior Ben Levy, an IB Diploma candidate on the varsity wrestling team, said he found the study hall to be helpful.

"It gives me time to actually do my homework, because I don't normally get home until 7:45," Levy said. "I feel like overall it's a good thing, because out of all of the years I have been here, we've had the lowest GPA every year."

Along with placing emphasis on the wrestlers' education, Nguyen said he wants to bring attention to how "weight cutting" is viewed in the wrestling community, since the Virginia High School League has a required weight control program to calculate a wrestlers weight class.

"Often, people think all wrestlers are cutting weight, which is false," Nguyen said. "Many wrestlers do lose some body fat throughout the season because of the rigorous practices and the changing of their eating habits."

While wrestling has weight classes that determine wrestlers' competition, Nguyen said he values overall skill development.

"When guys are worrying about their weight and cutting throughout the week, they're not focusing on their technique," Nguyen said.

Nguyen said the key to success is making sure wrestlers have the proper nutrition.

"You start seeing guys gassing out really quick, so we really want our wrestlers, guys and girls, to be at their top performance," Nguyen said.

Because the previous starting line-up graduated, Nguyen said there is more opportunity for younger wrestlers to take spots on varsity.

"I think a lot of the younger wrestlers are really looking up to the older wrestlers, which is another part of our success," Nguyen said.

The program this season finished 6th out of 30 teams overall in the Nova Classic tournament on Dec. 2.

"I am optimistic that some of our returning wrestlers and our new wrestlers will make it to states this year based on their effort they have demonstrated thus far in the season," Riddell said.

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Warriors to Wizards: Poole makes the switch



ART BY RACHEL ACKERMAN, MAHA JIWANI&LAYLA MOHRAN

by layla mohran

In 2019, Jordan Poole was drafted to the NBA Golden State Warriors, from the University of Michigan. He spent the next four years playing for the Warriors where his performance was outstanding.

After underperforming in his 2022-2023 season, Poole was traded to the Washington Wizards.

"Poole has been one of the NBA's biggest disappointments this season," Tyler Conway with Bleacher Report said.

This trade choice has upset fans as some believe that one bad season doesn't mean Poole should be traded.

On Nov. 6, during the game between the Philadelphia 76ers and the Washington Wizards, Poole led the team by scoring a total of 23 points. This led some to believe that the Washington Wizards is a perfect match for Poole. Now, Poole has the opportunity to

stand out on the Wizards without being compared to stars like the Warriors point guard Stephen Curry.

During the game between the Wizards and Hornets on Nov. 22, people commented on Poole switching teams.

"It's always tough for young guys to have to change teams, especially after the amount of success that Poole had," commentators from the official NBA youtube channel said.

Tik Toks have gone viral showing pictures of Poole at the Wizards' media day with a glum look on his face compared to a brighter expression when he was on the Warriors.

There has been speculation that the reason that Poole seems down is due to an incident that came between him and Draymond Green last season. During practice on Oct. 5, 2022, Green punched Poole in the face. Green later came out in an interview saying that he "just be hitting people". No further details were given, but the relationship between the two never seemed the same after the incident.

Poole's trade to the Wizards is a new change, perhaps an unfair one, but it may also be necessary putting Poole in the spotlight after his shortcomings last season.

English Department Reacts to Previous Rank&File Opinion:

'Setting Up for Failure: Preliminary English courses do not prepare for the IB path'

by maddie bishop and
zoe jones

The English opinion written in the Rank&File's November issue prompted discussion amongst the English department, bringing new attention to the curriculum.

A few English teachers shared their opinions with our staffers regarding their reaction to the opinion piece, "Setting Up for Failure: Preliminary English courses do not prepare for the IB path", with mainly positive comments.

English 9 Honors and IB Literature HL teacher Matthew Horne comments on his initial reaction to the headline.

"I was obviously shocked by the title," Horne said. "I think the title is a little bit alarming."

Despite his initial surprise from the headline, Horne took the content as constructive criticism and commented positively on how the opinion piece expressed its argument.

"I think this article was able to do it in a way that straddles the line of saying that their experience could have been better and asking for a better education, without saying that it's anyone's fault," Horne said.

However, Horne expressed that there are very

different expectations of rigor across the three levels of IB English. Students select which English course to take in their upperclassmen years.

"IB HL is going to be a big jump," Horne said. "That's the whole idea with HL, right? You can't just assume it's going to be the same thing as there's always a level of jump because students in [English] 10 Honors are tracked for three different [IB] courses."

Horne emphasized the importance of rigor in HL classes as it properly sets students up to do well on future IB exams.

"We need to prepare them for the IB exams which are difficult and the IB rubrics which grade you in a difficult way," Horne said.

By taking in the criticism of the curriculum written in the opinion piece, Horne believes that proposing a more difficult curriculum for the preliminary courses will inflict future change.

"It was advocating for making the earlier levels more challenging," Horne said. "In that way, I completely jive with what I see as the way forward to make the English department and English curriculum better."

The English department met to discuss certain factors of the curriculum and they all emphasized the impact

COVID-19 had on the rigor of the content.

"Over COVID we had a look at our curriculum and we pared it down because we knew that students were less engaged in school," English 10 Honors team lead and IB Literature HL 2 teacher Margaret Hemmingson said.

Now, reflecting on the curriculum for ninth and tenth grade students, the English department has begun to plan how they will re-establish the curriculum for underclassmen, to better prepare students for rigorous courses.

"We looked at some of the criticisms that the students had, and a lot of them were things that we had already decided to not do this year," Hemmingson said.

Horne evaluated the books studied across the preliminary courses and said it could be modified.

"I do think we have books that prepare them, but there are not enough and there needs to be some shedding of the [Young Adult] curriculum in favor of more challenging books," Horne said.

Horne also expressed that the day the opinion piece was issued, the English Department had already decided to exclude the ninth grade required novel, "Scythe".

"We're gonna replace it with three rigorous books,

two of them in translation, one of them in English to prepare for IB," Horne said.

English 10 Honors and IB Language and Literature SL 1 teacher Paul Fauteux said that there is a complex process behind approving books for the curriculum.

"If we are going to teach a new book, we've got to go to committee, have everybody sign off on it," Fauteux said. "There's a bunch of legislative stuff and community stuff that makes it arduous [to approve books] for different reasons, at different times, and for different books."

Fauteux said he chose to exclude the film unit last year and this year, the rest of the department has decided to adopt that idea for this year.

"I didn't do the fourth quarter film unit, I taught a book instead and people are doing more moves like that," Fauteux said.

With there being constant shifts in the content of English courses, teachers have expressed their commitment to keeping students engaged in class.

"The curriculum is always changing," Hemmingson said. "We always want to do something that is going to be interesting for our students while also preparing them for wherever they go next."

Stepping into the Age of AI

Students, staff contend over the role Artificial Intelligence should have in education

● compiled by zoe jones and rhea newnaha

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“I think that people should do their own work, and I think that it’s harmful to creativity and different creative fields.”

Senior Ainsley McCoy

”

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“I don’t think it’s a problem at all to have AI help generate an idea with seeds that are provided to it.”

*Anatomy and Physiology and IB Biology 1 teacher
Angie Rizzo*

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“It is a very helpful tool, and it is the future, so we might as well teach students how to use it correctly and efficiently.”

Senior Valentin Galas

”

Thanks to the digital age, information is at our fingertips, and with the implementation of Artificial Intelligence, this access is only growing.

Students and teachers voice their opinions on how AI should be used in schools, offering a wide range of perspectives.

While there are many differing opinions, Instructional Technology Coach Rachel Baxter argued for a middle ground: the education system must take part in teaching students how to use AI responsibly.

“Regardless of our feelings about AI, the truth is that the world that the students enter, AI is going to be a huge part of it,” said Baxter.

Baxter said that the next step is to teach students how to use the new technology properly. Librarian Elizabeth Toledo agreed.

“We needed to get our mind around it as being a tool instead of all the concern,” Toledo said. “We need to teach people how to use it as we would any other tool.”

Toledo says she cautions students to think about how they are using the technology before submitting any work they

used AI to create.

“It’s still a representation of you,” Toledo said. “You are putting your name on it, and this is what you’re submitting to your teacher or an application for college or whatever it might be. It’d behoove you to make sure that you have used smart prompts.”

Baxter said the emergence of AI in schools raises the question on how and when students should be allowed to use it. For IB Literature HL and IB Theory of Knowledge teacher Hendrick Booz, he invites students to use AI as a jumping-off point.

“Most of the difficulty I think that all of us have is getting started on a project, so getting beyond that little barrier, I think there’s where AI works well now,” Booz said.

Anatomy and Physiology and IB Biology 1 teacher Angie Rizzo said that she also thinks that students should use it to prompt their ideas before they develop them.

“I actually encouraged students to [use AI] if they were feeling stumped about coming up with a science fair idea,” Rizzo said.

Senior Valentin Galas agreed, saying he has used AI to find topics for Internal Assessments papers across his IB classes.

“I would look through [the results], and it would have some really good ideas that I would manipulate a little bit to get a different result because I didn’t want to do exactly what it said,” Galas said. “It helped me a lot in finding ideas for major assignments like that.”

Despite AI’s benefits, many teachers have commented on the quality of work it produces.

“I think showing high-level students what crap it produces is of benefit to both of us, and then also to say, here’s how you can use it,” Booz said.

Baxter agreed that AI is not a perfect technology.

“AI can make things up,” Baxter said. “It has a lot of bias because the people that create it have bias which gets put in there.”

Considering the pitfalls in AI’s credibility, Galas said its intended use was not for students to directly copy the chatbox’s responses.

“People should not plagiarize [but] just use it for ideas [and] not just straight

up copying and pasting what it's saying," Galas said. "That disrupts the learning that each student may have."

Senior Ainsley McCoy agreed.

"I think that the point of being in schools is to learn, and if you're trying to use the easy way out of using these different things, using AI to write your essay or something like that, then you're not really learning," McCoy said.

McCoy also said that she views AI to be harmful to students developing their writing capabilities in the early years of their education.

"A lot of younger kids will probably use it because it's an easy way out to get out of homework," McCoy said. "They won't build up the skills that are necessary for when they are in high school and have to write on an IB exam where they don't have that kind of crutch."

While its use is still a topic of contention, AI is already changing the education landscape.

FCPS looking to approve AI tool

Instructional Technology Coach Rachel Baxter said FCPS is working to approve an Artificial Intelligence tool for students.

"With us not having a tool approved for student use, then that can create an equity issue," Baxter said. "We know that some students on their personal devices are still using [AI] and other students who don't have personal devices, the FCPS laptops will block a lot of it for student use."

Baxter said that the education system needs to adapt to these changes.

"We need to drastically reimagine how we do school and what the purpose of school is if we want to adequately prepare students for the world that we are already in and the world that they will be entering when they graduate high school," Baxter said.



Review: John Lennon lives again, thanks to AI

by **simon barnes**

On Thursday, November 2, the first Beatles song in decades was released. However, along with its announcement, came the immensely controversial news that much of the song would be edited by AI.

The song, titled "Now and Then," was originally made in 1978 with a recorded demo of John Lennon's vocals and piano. Though much of the recording was fuzzy and unusable, the AI was able to make Lennon's vocals listenable.

Lennon was shot and died in 1980, preventing him from finishing the song, but new advances in technology have allowed his voice to live on once again. The song has been dubbed "The last Beatles song," marking the official end to one of the most impactful music groups in history.

The song also included a music video, directed by Peter Jackson (the man behind "The Lord of the Rings"), which included clips from all across the Beatles's illustrious career. Like the song, the music video is an artful farewell to the legendary band.

The song is excellent, sounding just

like any other song the Beatles produced despite its unorthodox origins. Lennon's voice carries over a sorrowful piano in a beautifully haunting manner, singing of a love long lost.

It's powerful and heartbreaking, and for something partially made by robots, it's astoundingly human. Lennon's songwriting remained strong in the latter years of his life, and this song is a testament to that.

Though it played a vital role in the creation of the song, the AI is hardly noticeable, and if it had not already been said, it's likely no one would have known. The song acts as both a fond goodbye to the music sensation that shaped an entire generation and a welcome to a new world of AI-influenced music, and it does a wonderful job at both.

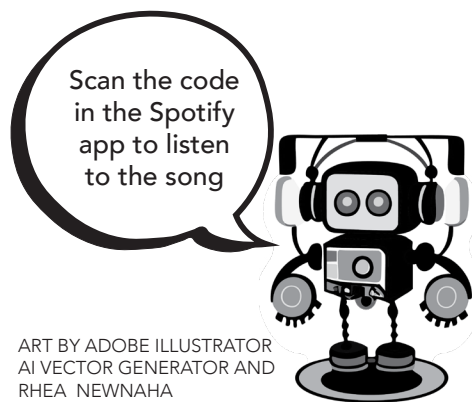
Since this is the last time Lennon's voice will be heard on a new song, this somber and climactic masterpiece acts as a fitting sendoff to one of the most impactful and controversial musicians of all time.

The quality and cultural impact of the song will cause significant changes to the way we listen to music. This song is likely the first of a sweeping trend of

songs to be created using AI, and its ability to breathe life into formerly unlistenable tracks will change everything.

Though this technology is still in its infancy, it's going to be very interesting where it's going to take the music industry. There are likely countless other songs like "Now and Then" that may soon be released with the help of artificial intelligence.

As for the full impact of this technology, only time will tell.



ART BY ADOBE ILLUSTRATOR AI VECTOR GENERATOR AND RHEA NEWNAHA



Young Minds in Changing Times: Dissecting the Israel-Hamas war

● spread compiled by melanie george

As the Israel-Hamas war unfolds, the balance between awareness and mental health gives way to personal reflections within our community.

The reflections serve as a reminder that the mental and emotional toll of a war 6,000 miles away still has a great impact on all.

"It has been incredibly hard watching everything go down on TV knowing so many innocent civilians are being killed," a senior said. "As a Palestinian whose family was displaced because of the conflict, it's scary to realize that those people could have been me."

With family still living in Palestine, the senior checks on them every day.

Senior Jonathan Brough said they needed to distance themselves from the emotional aspect of the issue.

"I've definitely separated myself from it to some degree because [if not], when I really empathize with people, how can I go about my day when there's this conflict happening?" they said.

A junior who has been to Israel said the Israel-Hamas war can be a very personal issue for many people.

"It definitely feels like I have more of an emotional connection because it feels like if anything ever happens, I know that [Israel] would be a place that's safe for me," she said. "My great-grandmother was a Holocaust survivor and needed to flee, but

didn't really have anywhere to go—that's why it's important to me."

They further explained the emotional charge of polarized opinions.

"I know a lot of people in Israel, and it's a very personal issue for me," they said. "So I can see how it's probably a personal issue for people on the other side too, which makes it really hard to have conversations."

Senior Omar Falki agreed.

"[Polarization] is a horrible thing," he said. "We should always be open to change, and I think that being more polarized than anything just makes our nation more divided than it has to be."

The junior who has been to Israel later added that despite the difficulty, it is important to have conversations, even if there is a possibility for disagreement.

"Whatever they take from [this] article, it should not be against anybody else, like even Israel or Palestine. It should never be against the people of that country," they said, "because all they're doing is living there."

More conversations about the war can bring more polarization.

"I'm seeing a lot more people taking opinions or picking a side where I feel like in the past, a lot of people weren't really sure," they said.

The junior added that further exposure brings more of a threat for Antisemitism, Islamophobia and other hate.

"I've talked to people who are

Jewish and who do support Israel who are afraid to say something about it, because they know that they're not in the majority and they can get attacked for it," they said. "I've also met people who are afraid to say something in support of Palestine."

So as not to start an argument, the junior said they keep quiet, and talking about the war becomes "less of a conversation between people."

"I might make the demographic shift a little bit of who actually supports what because I think we're kind of struggling in this community to kind of have just a conversation," they said.

One Jewish junior shared a classroom experience in which students talked about where they came from, and the junior casually mentioned being Jewish.

"No one mentioned anything about it, in other words I didn't feel targeted, and that was really nice," they said. "Not that I expect to be targeted, but knowing that Islamophobia and Antisemitism are both things that students have been targeted for by their peers in other schools, it was comforting to know that we are not that school. I hope it stays that way."

Balancing staying informed and caring for mental health can spark conflict.

The junior further explained that they know about the war but do not keep up with every update about the war for mental health reasons.

"I feel bad about that because I know that I have the privilege to ignore the news while people elsewhere are living it," they said. "But for my mental health I've had to take a break from reading the news."

For others, like Falki, staying up to date is necessary.

"Personally, I would rather know what's going on and be upset by it," he said. "I have two family members [in Gaza] who I don't even know if they're alive. It really weighs you down, but I would say I'm more motivated by it than anything."

Senior Zaid Rahman said he looks at the news twice a day, less often than his parents, for emotional separation.

"I acknowledge what's happening and then I don't really let it get to me because I know I can't do anything about it as one person," he said.

Social media can have positive and negative effects.

"If your question is, does social media contribute to polarization, almost certainly, yes," Kline said. "If your question is does polarization make resolution harder, also almost certainly yes. Is social media bad for this conflict? Not necessarily."

Kline said the biggest positive aspect of social media is the greater reach for engagement from a wider audience.

"Social media is very accessible to people who are not ordinarily attuned to political events," he said.

Instructional technology coach Rachel Baxter has deleted her social

media apps a few times in the past two months because of its toll on her mental health.

"I struggled with doing that because I know it's a privilege that I have that people living through it don't have," she said, "but it's incredibly traumatic to continue to see images of dead or wounded children and feel powerless to do anything about it."

Rahman agreed that social media is not the best resource.

"I think there's too much emotion involved in social media, and I think it's portraying [the war] incorrectly," he said. "I think it's creating anger when there isn't a need for anger."

Senior Wonseok Jung said spreading awareness is the most important thing, on social media or otherwise.

"I feel like most events like these, like the Ukraine-Russia war, get covered up after a couple weeks and people don't talk about it," he said. "If we keep talking about it, it can keep people in the loop."

Others, like senior Sebastian Ampudia see positives and negatives to social media posting.

"Every time I open Instagram, and I look at people's stories, I see everything that's going on and it's heartbreaking," he said. "[But] people should post more on their stories to spread awareness."

The senior with family still living in Palestine said it is important to post graphic images.

"The feeling of seeing children having body parts blown up is different than just hearing about it because it makes the situation feel more real," they said.

The senior later mentioned that posting both graphic images and statistics is ideal.

"Pairing the graphic images with statistics emphasizes how widespread the severe destruction in Gaza is," they said. "This would lead to more people speaking out or taking action when they see fundraisers and protests."

Senior Bayann Manna said she has mixed feelings about social media accounts posting graphic images.

"Whenever I see those things I'm on the verge of tears because those are someone's relatives, friends, and it's just messed up," she said. "It's sad that we have to display their dead bodies to get attention for this issue."

Manna posts statistics and organizations to donate money.

"I don't even know what better thing to do," she said. "Even if I have mixed feelings about it, if that's what you're posting, it's better than nothing. Anything to spread awareness."

Manna took to selling Palestine-themed paintings and donating the proceeds to the Palestine Children's Relief Fund.

"As a Palestinian person myself, this is literally my country, and I had to do something," she said.

Manna said individuals should focus on spreading awareness, donating, emailing senators or house representatives and getting informed.

"Even if that's just researching to know what's happening because a lot of people are missing information," she said.

Amid the emotional turmoil of being a citizen during such a polarizing war, students learn to do what they can while preserving their mental well-being.

Social studies teachers analyze the war

Social studies teachers David Gassmann, Wanlace Yates and Lucas Kline explore topics of the war's history, potential solutions, social implications and more in this roundtable discussion video. Scan here to view the video as well as more student input.



'From the River to the Sea': Antisemitic or not?

From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free. Like many things concerning the Israel-Palestine conflict, it can mean different things depending on who you ask.

As a community, it is important to be aware of these differences.

"Basically, the connotation of the phrase is that Israel will be completely destroyed," a junior who has been to Israel said. "From the river to the sea is the boundaries of Israel."

Another interpretation is that it is a phrase many decades old that

represents Palestinian freedom.

"One thing I heard was that someone said it meant to kill all people who support Israel, and I was like where did you get that from?" senior Bayann Manna said.

Manna said it was not supposed to be violent at all.

"It is just one of the chants that are used to symbolize that Palestine will be free," Manna said.

The junior who has been to Israel later acknowledged that it is ingrained in the "Free Palestine" movement,

which can exacerbate the negative effects.

"It's just ingrained the movement, so it's also a phrase that's been brought up a lot especially in the pro-Israel side, and it's why a lot of people are really sensitive to it," they said.

They said there is an unclear connotation.

"Because it's not really clear what it says in the phrase, it feels that way to people who are hearing it because you can't differentiate why they are saying it."

War misinformation and what to do about it



In Palestine, the minister of education ended the school year because ALL of his students were MURDERED....This is genocide, and the world is witnessing the crimes that Israel is committing...

This post on X from Oct. 27, 2023 is an example of viral misinformation that can spread on social media. It received 119.4 thousand views.

Misinformation can be found throughout social media and even some news sources.

The senior who has family living in Palestine said it was prevalent especially in social media.

"Do not believe anything unless there is proof," they said. "If something seems off, look into it on your own before believing it."

They mentioned a viral post that said the Gaza education system shut down because all the students had been killed.

There is no factual evidence to support this. The 2023-2024 school year did end, but it ended because of the war, not because all students have been killed.

"I unfortunately saw many people repost this tweet despite it not being true," they said.

This is not an isolated incident, as there have been many exaggerations on all sides especially through social media.

For this senior, false narratives on both sides are infuriating.

"When it comes from Israel they try and justify the killing of Palestinian civilians, and when it comes from Palestinians it makes us look like liars and does not help the cause, especially because there is so much real information and videos they could actually use," the senior said.

"Read deeply. Go beyond social media posts and really delve into the background of the conflict. Read full length newspaper articles from reputable publications where you can see in more detail what's going on. I think that's a great mindset for American citizens generally in situations like this."

—Social studies teacher
Wanlace Yates

The Queen to the King of Rock 'n' Roll

by **juline salahi**

The movie "Priscilla," loosely based on Priscilla Presley's 1985 memoir, "Elvis and Me," was released in theaters on Oct. 27, 2023.

Sofia Coppola, the writer, director and producer of the film, created a beautifully tender piece.

The film focuses on Priscilla's life from 1959 to 1972, the time frame in which she was in a relationship with Elvis Presley.

Starting from the opening scene, it's evident that Priscilla encapsulates the 1960's feminine glamor with the use of pearls, baby blue satin and of course, Priscilla's iconic eyeliner.

Priscilla's appearance during the film absolutely represented the different eras of her life.

The use of hair and makeup symbolized

Priscilla's feelings and the constriction she felt while in a state of emotional turmoil.

The film also portrays the movie and its characters through Priscilla's eyes, for instance, the happier scenes, in which Priscilla is with Elvis, feel shorter and sadder. Violent scenes appear significantly longer, which is an interesting reflection of how Priscilla viewed her relationship with Elvis.

In addition to the accuracy and aesthetic look of the film, the actors' performance was another excellent factor.

Cailee Spaeny and Jacob Elordi took on the role of Priscilla and Elvis Presley and produced an extremely beautiful and raw portrayal of the couple.

Elordi's acting was phenomenal and provided an immensely important contribution to the film by painstakingly showcasing Elvis' superstar-like poise and unique speech.



ART BY JULINE SALAHI

Additionally, Spaeny's performance perfectly encapsulated Priscilla's gentleness and grace, seamlessly transitioning through her adolescence to her emerging adulthood. However, the few emotional scenes Spaeny had to execute were short of unconvincing at times.

Considering the sentiment, acting and overall production of the film, Priscilla was a wonderful movie that is definitely suitable for all romance movie lovers.

It's That Time of Year Again: Grammy Season

by **mona farah and georgia streett**

The 66th annual Grammy award nominations came out on Nov. 10, with the most nominated artist being SZA with nine nominations in several different categories.

"I think it's well deserved," senior Mariam Diallo said. "She finally released 'Shirt,' which I've been waiting for for a long time."

Two of the awards that SZA was nominated for are "Album of the Year" and "Song of the Year".

"For Album of the Year, I really want SZA's song 'SOS' to win," sophomore Nandini Kumar said. "For Song of the Year, 'Kill Bill' would be good."

Kumar said she thinks SZA should win because of the artist's unique music.

"Her music is definitely different from other artists,"

Kumar said. "It really hypes me up but at the same time I think that her lyrics are pretty meaningful."

Another artist with multiple nominations is Taylor Swift.

"She's nominated for six Grammys and I hope she wins them all," junior Isabel Elliot Ortega said.

If Swift wins Album of the Year with "Midnights," she will break the record for that category, with her fourth win.

"I think Taylor Swift will win the most awards because she has had a really successful year with 'Midnights,' her re-recordings and the Eras Tour of course," Elliot said.

Senior Nathan Estep disagreed.

"Taylor Swift is wack," he said, "Her music is mediocre and her supporters think it's the best music out there. I don't know why she's so popular."

One of the categories,

"Best New Artist," aims to highlight rising stars who have released a minimum of five singles or a complete album.

"The award I'm most looking forward to is 'Best New Artist,' because so many amazing artists are nominated," Elliot said.

The category's nominations include Victoria Monet, Ice Spice, Gracie Abrams, Noah Kahan, The War and Treaty,

Coco Jones, Jelly Roll and Fred Again.

"I hope Gracie Abrams wins because I love her music," Elliot said. "She deserves the award because of all the success she's had this year."

The awards will air live on CBS and Paramount+ on Feb. 4.

"I hope everyone tunes into the Grammys this year," Elliot said.



ART BY GEORGIA STREETT

HOLIDAY DRINK REVIEW

Two staff members visited the Mosaic District and tried various holiday drinks. Here's what they think:



compiled by rachel ackerman, sophie hauber and rebecca paz

Starbucks Iced Peppermint Mocha



Sophie:

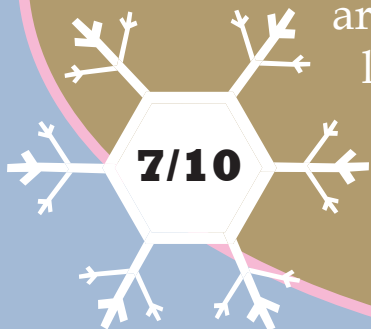
The first sip of this drink was a little disappointing. I was expecting a more subtle taste, but was instead surprised with a strong coffee flavor. However, the more I drank it, the peppermint flavor started to come into focus, and I ended up really enjoying the mocha. The aftertaste was a little more minty than I would have liked, but it helped the drink to feel more "holiday-ish" and added some appeal.



Shake Shack Poppy's Sugar Cookie Milkshake

Rachel:

Who doesn't love a milkshake with cotton candy on top? I appreciated how the milkshake's topping symbolized the pink hair of Poppy from the Trolls movie. The actual milkshake had a super silky texture. But, although the shake tasted like a sugar cookie, it was a tad bit sweet. I also liked how the taste had hints of a traditional vanilla milkshake. However the shake had pop rocks which I repeatedly almost choked on.



Starbucks Iced Gingerbread Oatmilk Chai



Sophie:

I'd like to preface this review by saying that I'm not a fan of chai or fall spices. With that being said, this drink was pretty mediocre. The best way I can describe it is to imagine a very strong fall-scented candle. Then imagine this candle exploding in your mouth. It was really sweet and tasted like fall slightly diluted in sweet milk. It did have some resemblance to gingerbread, and was not awful for a fall drink. If I enjoyed chai or fall spices, I could see myself liking this drink.

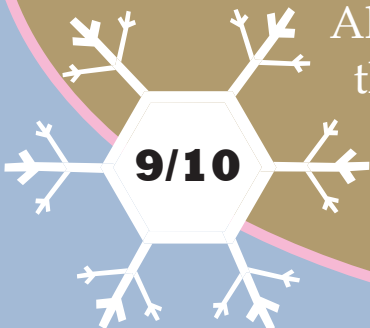


Dolcezza Valrhona Hot Chocolate

Rachel:

If I'm shopping at Mosaic and need a warm drink, I'm going to get the Valrhona Hot Chocolate from Dolcezza. After getting through the mountains of whipped cream on top of the drink, I got to the chocolate part. The actual hot chocolate was amazing. Real chocolate was used, making the drink super creamy and rich in flavor.

Although the marshmallows were small, they weren't needed in this drink. The drink was also customizable, so if you need a little caffeine you can add a shot of espresso to the drink.



New policy needed to ensure student safety

by rachel ackerman

The rights of students to protest and express their views toward different policies and world events is imperative. Student participation shows our community and leaders that future voters are paying attention. Walkouts provide a safe environment for students to undertake political participation.

Throughout my time at Marshall High School, I have participated in walkouts on multiple occasions. In December of 2021, I attended the “End the Hate” walkout after a female Muslim student at Fairfax High School was physically assaulted and then unfairly suspended. I protested against new guidelines introduced by Governor Youngkin that would diminish recognition of transgender students’ identities at schools in September of 2022. The following May, I participated in the walkout for reproductive freedom after *Roe v. Wade* was overturned. These opportunities allowed students to voice their support for specific causes.



JULINE SALAH/ RANK&FILE

Students hold a poster with “From the River to the Sea” written on it during the Marshall High School walkout in support of Palestine.

However, when a protest leaves students feeling ostracized and fearful within their school community, it is an indication that a line has been crossed. Hate speech and intimidation in schools should never be tolerated. During the Pro-Palestine walk-out on November 2, there were multiple signs expressing the phrase “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.” This slogan is Antisemitic and a call to violence. Although the phrase can be interpreted in other ways, it needs to be recognized as hate speech.

The Anti-Defamation League, an organization that works to combat Antisemitism, defines the slogan as the “catch-all phrase symbolizing Palestinian control over the entire territory of Israel’s borders, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. That means it is a call for erasing the State of Israel and the Jewish people who live there. It is also a rallying cry for terrorist groups and their sympathizers to do the same.” Advocating for the creation of a Palestinian state is not antisemitic, however, using language that suggests eradicating the 7 million Jews living in Israel is.

The Fairfax County Public Schools’ “Student Rights and Responsibilities” (SR&R) guidebook, which students are required to sign, states that students have “The right to a school and classroom environment that affirms the identity of all students and is responsive, caring, and inclusive.” As co-president of the Jewish Student Union, I know that before, during, and after this walkout, some students felt anxious, stressed, and unsafe. It was disheartening to see my peers in my school community holding up Antisemitic signs.

A continued concern among students was that the Antisemitic rhetoric wasn’t stopped when it could have been. Principal Jeffery Litz understood that the meaning of this slogan was highly offensive to a segment of our school population but was told he could not stop it. According to the SR&R, “Middle and high school students should submit materials they want to display or distribute to the student government for review” for such assembly purposes. This review failed to happen. Also, it shouldn’t be solely on the student government to interpret and decide what can be displayed.

We saw this incident coming and it could have been avoided. Earlier in the month, “Long Live Hamas” was chanted outside of Robinson Secondary School. The administration was asked to intervene by parent observers but didn’t. The student publication of McLean High School, the Highlander, used an image of a poster with, “From the river to the sea” in an image carousel of an article about their school’s recent protest. Similar incidents happened at Woodson High

School, Langley High School, and nearby schools. This caused frustration among the Jewish community in Fairfax County.

New safeguards should be implemented to prevent hateful words towards any group from being used during walkouts or such assemblies on campus. It is unacceptable to have students holding offensive signs that target others. I call on the school board to review and recreate new policies, for everyone’s safety and sense of belonging within the Marshall and Fairfax County Public School community.

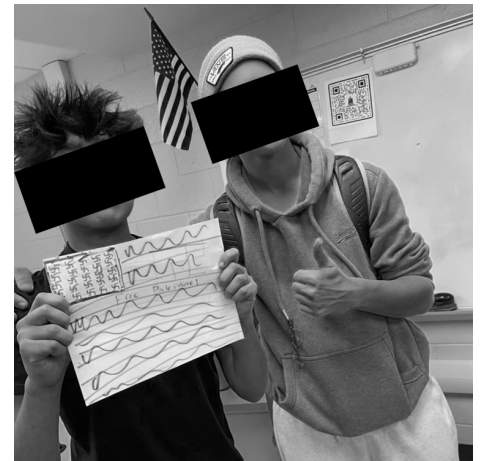


PHOTO FROM FAIRFAX COUNTY TIMES

A student at Langley High School holds an American flag with the stars replaced for swastikas, a prominent symbol of the Nazi Party. Another sign with the neo-Nazi symbol was used during the Langley pro-Palestine walkout. The student who turned in the student who drew the flag also received suspension.

We saw this coming; let’s prevent it from happening again. Antisemitic, Islamophobic, racist, or any speech that makes students feel unsafe is unacceptable and has no place at Marshall or any Fairfax County school. After all, the cover letter of the SR&R, written by Superintendent Michelle Reid, states, “Our school division maintains a commitment to providing a caring and inclusive climate and culture where all students are welcomed, respected, valued, and supported.” After the events of November 2, I beg to differ. We need a new policy created by the school board that gives the administration control to stop this speech from ever being used.



The 'Christ the Redeemer' statue located in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, with a projection resembling the shirt worn in Taylor Swift's 'You Belong With Me' music video.

Swifties: You need to calm down

Photo from NBC15

by mona farah and alexa lawrence

Recently, musical artist Taylor Swift has gained a significant amount of popularity. From her 2023 album “Midnights” and her countless “Taylor’s Version” records, her music has led her to become the #1 Billboard Top Female Artist. Her most anticipated event of 2023, the “Eras tour,” generated approximately \$2.2 billion, the highest-grossing tour ever, according to CNN.

These accomplishments alone have brought Swift massive success. However, they also sparked a debate about whether or not she deserves this success in the first place.

As her fans keep supporting her and making her more famous by the day, she has reached a level of success that very few artists have reached in history. Now that she has started publicly dating Travis Kelce, a player for the NFL’s Kansas City Chiefs, she is constantly put in the spotlight during any game she attends,

as broadcasters focus the camera on her instead of the actual game at times. She has caused a spike in the attendance of these sporting events and those who are attending not only go for football, but in hopes of seeing her too.

When arriving in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, for a concert, the city welcomed her with a projection of the T-shirt from the “You Belong With Me” music video with the words “Welcome to Brasil” on the Christ the Redeemer statue. This is yet another example of how her fanbase, even internationally, has taken Swift’s popularity to a level it should most definitely not be at. Splashing a religious statue with a pop culture reference is not only another daily reminder of Swift, but just disrespectful altogether. Still, the media portrayed this to be a kind welcome to a performing artist, when in reality the statue was merely treated as a billboard rather than a national and religious landmark.

Because Swift has a constant presence in everyone’s lives, we find ourselves not being able to go a day without her name being mentioned. This is mainly because the media always gives her space for the spotlight. Even though Swift has this constant spotlight, she learned how to keep herself relevant and evolve as a musician. She created her own culture that her fan base, the “Swifties”, have become a part of. Her constant stream of content in the media has guaranteed her a permanent stay in the public eye and opens a place for nonstop discussion about her.

Throughout the course of her career, Swift has performed in a couple of different genres and succeeded in getting to the top of the music industry through her fans’ support. However, her fans have exceeded her fame to a level her music isn’t meeting. We knew Swifties were trouble when they walked in.

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