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We're Not So Different After All: An Interview with *Lamar Life*

In early January, we sat down with (or rather, Zoomed with) Lauren Koong and Kathryn Stone of Lamar High School's school magazine, *Lamar Life*, to find out what life is like at another Houston area high school and how they are managing school during a pandemic. While Lamar may be a "traditional" high school, complete with sports and homecoming, it turns out that many of our experiences are pretty similar. Especially when it comes to online learning.

Like Luca, Kathryn returned to in-person learning. They both agreed that just seeing other people in-person has, as Kathryn put it, "made the biggest difference." Luca wholeheartedly agreed, saying, "I get to see people, and I'm super extroverted, so I needed that... we needed this." As much as we have tried to convince ourselves that Zoom game nights and seeing classmates on Teams calls can quell our feelings of isolation, the in-person students agreed that being in the room with peers really helped the feelings of isolation. Like Shelby (at the time of the interview), Lauren was sticking to a fully virtual schedule. While Lauren enjoys the asynchronous time blocked out into her schedule, she said that "it's definitely harder to learn. I definitely feel like I haven't learned as much."

You know that stress that comes from mixing your places of rest and work due to online school? Well, you are not alone with your feelings. Lauren moved her desk outside of her room in an attempt to separate her school and unwinding environments. Kathryn said doing all her work in her room interrupted her sleep schedule because "[her] bed became a place to work." This encouraged her to go back to Lamar's campus.

For the school newspaper enthusiasts out there, we bonded over the difficulties of running a newspaper virtually. Fundraising was a joint issue both *Lamar Life* and *paper** have struggled with this year. *Lamar Life* requested funds from their PTA to start up a website*, and *paper** is still brainstorming as to how a pie eating contest could possibly look in the age of Covid-19.

HSPVA students opted for an eclectic high school experience when accepting a spot at our artsy school without sports. So, we had to ask Lauren and Kathryn what it was like to go to a school with competitive sports. They thought that there is a difference between how athletes and non-athletes are treated at Lamar. Lauren said that "there's only an elevated status if you're [in] football, basketball, cheer, or dance." "They get more recognition and the school cares about them," Kathryn elaborated.

To further tie our experiences together, both HSPVA and Lamar have moved buildings. And a big concern at each of our moves has been the stairs. We,

at PVA, learned that online P.E. did not prepare us for walking up five flights of stairs first thing in the morning. Lamar students learned that only one staircase was built in their new campus. You may have seen the local news coverage of this packed staircase last year. Kathryn remembered the fire marshalls monitoring the school for a few weeks and still getting stuck on the staircase after the initial crowding died down. When reflecting on the fond memories of our old campuses, we learned that both HSPVA and Lamar's old buildings were home to quite a few rat sightings. Seniors may remember the infamous rat falling from the ceiling during a study hall in 2017. Lauren remembered an instance when she saw a rat herself: "In my bio class, we were dissecting rats, and then one ran across the room. Everyone was freaking out, wondering if one had come back to life."

While we had a blast talking to our Lamar peers, we also stumbled upon a sad, shared reality of coming of age in the 2020s: a fear of school shootings, especially in our new buildings. Coming to Austin Street, PVA students and teachers alike worried about the glass windows bordering our classroom doors in the event of a lockdown, with foam cutouts being placed in every room for safety precautions. Kathryn said, "Coming off the freshman year shooting threats and lockdowns, being put in neighborhoods (areas where Lamar students have all their classes) with all glass walls, a lot of kids got really scared because it's like there's nowhere to hide. There are no real closets." While HSPVA and Lamar students share many of the same trivial high school worries, larger, graver matters also occupy space in many of our heads.

Thank you again to Lauren and Kathryn from *Lamar Life* for collaborating with *paper**!

by Shelby Edison and Luca Jarosz



*which you should totally check out at www.lamarlife.org

The Siege on the Capitol

by Addie Fairbanks

At 2:16 P.M. on January 6, 2021, the U.S. Capitol building was breached by rioters for the first time since the War of 1812. Here are the facts:

A joint session of the United States Congress was planned for January 6th to count the Electoral College ballots, overseen by Vice President Mike Pence. Due to many allegations of voter fraud* regarding Joe Biden's election, prominent alt-right figures such as Ali Alexander called for a protest under the hashtag "StopTheSteal." At the same time, plans for the "Save America March" were underway. During preparations for the march, President Donald Trump tweeted "Big protest in D.C. on January 6th. Be there, will be wild!" On the day of the vote count, Trump made a speech to thousands of supporters that had gathered in the Freedom Plaza. He stated that he would "never concede" the election and that they needed to "take back our country." He told them, "We fight like hell. And if you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country anymore." Trump's lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, also made a speech, proposing "a trial by combat."

The crowd marched from the plaza down Pennsylvania Avenue, with many members carrying signs and flags with Nazi emblems, "Don't Tread on Me" snakes, and Trump insignias. Mobs began to form outside the capitol, and the crowd tried to break past police barriers. Some members sprayed police officers with pepper spray and hit them with lead pipes. The crowd built gallows with a noose attached. An hour later, the Capitol was locked down, with no entry or exit. At 2:16, the mob breached the building. They broke windows. They climbed up the walls of the building using make-shift ropes. The House was evacuated. Rioters stormed into the Capitol rotunda and Senate floor. A woman was shot by police, and she eventually died from her wounds. There were photos and live streams of rioters inside the building, hanging off of balconies, looting and vandalizing, and one man posing in the office of Nancy Pelosi. Two explosive devices were found a few blocks away in the building that housed the Republican National Committee. A Confederate flag was flown inside the Capitol building for the first time. Five people died from the insurrection. One policeman was bludgeoned to death with a fire extinguisher. It took Trump until Thursday, January 7th to condemn the actions of the rioters, and when he finally released a

video officially addressing the events, he told the crowd, "We love you. You're very special." He agreed to an orderly transition of power, and Mike Pence declared Joe Biden the next president when Congress reconvened later that evening.

Several people have described these events as treason, insurrection, sedition, domestic terrorism (defined by the FBI as "violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature"). Former Attorney General Bill Barr, who resigned on December 15, 2020, called the event "outrageous and despicable" and said that Trump's actions were a "betrayal of his office and supporters." Former Secretary of State Colin Powell criticized those in the Republican Party that condoned Trump's actions, saying that he (Powell) "can no longer call myself a fellow Republican."

I'm sure you have been bombarded with opinion pieces and analysis on what this means for our country and the fallout of this historical event, and I am not here to try and convince you to conform to a political opinion you read in our school newspaper. I am leaving you to form your own opinion. You be the judge.



So... It's Second Semester Now

by Matthew Kalmans

Hey Hey PVA! Congratulations on making it through the first semester! This year has been crazy, and you are halfway through! Keep in mind, however, that we still have a little more than four months left, and these months can be quite challenging. But do not fear! I am here to give you advice to help you succeed throughout the remainder of the school year.

Freshmen: Wow! Your first semester of high school is done! Bravo! Now that you are adjusting to high school, use this time to expand your horizons. Don't be afraid to try new things and take risks. At this stage, you are likely still exploring yourself and your passions, so you should take advantage of all of the opportunities PVA has to offer. Though they look slightly different this year, actively try to find ways to explore new areas of academics and the arts. Remember, these next few years will come with major change and growth. You can do it!

Sophomores: Way to go! You are almost halfway done with high school! My main advice for you is to keep up with your classes. It is easy for sophomore year to be overlooked, sandwiched between the brand new freshman figuring everything out and the stressed-out juniors working in advanced classes and for standardized tests. Do not let this make you think that your sophomore year doesn't count. Your classes are important, as they reflect on your transcript. Don't let the constant buzz of being a freshman or upperclassmen deter you from your hard work. Make it a great semester!

Juniors: Begin your college process early. I know it may seem stressful; however, if you start early, the load is never unbearable. The most stressful part of college applications is the amount of work that goes into them, so if you start this semester, the workload will not pile up too high. Definitely put your classes first, but be sure to start thinking about your college list, building your resume, and crafting ideas for your personal statement.

Seniors: We are SO CLOSE! Don't tire out, though. Though these last semester grades aren't as important as previous semesters, we still need to pass to graduate. Furthermore, continuous hard work and focus in classes will be helpful once college comes (which is quite soon)! I am so proud of us, and I will miss the Class of 2021!

I hope that this advice helps you thrive this semester. If you ever need anything or have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me! I believe in all of you, and I am excited to see what this semester has in store!

*these allegations have been proven as fraudulent by reputable news sources. There's no doubt; Joe Biden won the 2020 presidential election.

New Year, New President

by Lila Mankad

It was a chilly January 20th, the wind whipping through various politicians' hair. Bernie Sanders was bundled up in a coat and (now iconic) mittens, and the air was full of tension. This was the day of President Biden's Inauguration.

People all over the US were witnessing this live from their computers. (I was watching while doing my World Geography homework.) It was all the news could talk about, and it was easy to lose yourself in the endless articles describing how preparation was going. The National Guard had been called in to watch for any violence, twenty thousand flags were peppered across The National Mall to represent the crowd that would have been there, and the stage was cleared of lingering signs of insurrection. Even dress rehearsals had taken place, with stand-ins filling in as political leaders.

Donald Trump left the White House on Wednesday morning, and staffers frantically began prepping the building, disinfectant wipes used liberally. Politicians, celebrities, and other lucky guests began to arrive at the Capitol. Finally, then Vice President-elect Harris and then President-elect Biden entered to a roar of applause, and the event truly began.

One of the highlights of the event was the arts that were showcased. Lady Gaga's fantastic rendition of the National Anthem and Jennifer Lopez's mash-up of America the Beautiful with This Land is Your Land were two dazzling vocalist performances. Amanda Gorman's spoken word stunned the country and introduced many people to possibilities of what poetry can be outside a 7th grade English class. (A win for creative writing!)

Of course, the keystone of the event was the oaths of office themselves. Vice President Harris was sworn in by Justice Sonia Sotomayor, and at last, Joe Biden was sworn in as president. As the past year has tended to be, this was a historic

moment. Kamala Harris is the first woman, first African American, and first South Asian to hold office as Vice President. Joe Biden was sworn in on the very steps that had been shrouded with tear gas and surrounded by chaos during the Capitol riot two weeks earlier to lead a nation in the midst of a pandemic, filled with calls for racial justice, and a divisive climate.

As Joe Biden stood to give his first presidential speech on this historic day, he gave a cry for unity, asking "every American to join [Biden] in this cause. Uniting to fight the common foes we face." It's a change from the previous administration's message for sure. It might seem hard to strive towards unity when political parties are so polar. Complete unity might not make sense to some right now, and that's okay. But the idea of treating one another "with dignity and respect" is a good first step.



What I Learned From My 9 Month Social Media Detox

by Anna Grace Hethcox

Does anyone remember when the pandemic was only supposed to last two weeks? In March, when I came home from a rural road trip with open businesses and no masks, spring break was extended and the world seemed to shift. Amongst the silence of a quiet city, I began to hear this undeniable cacophony of noise. This noise, of course, was social media. I feel very comfortable saying that pretty much everyone our age uses social media as their main information stream. Well, for nine months I've been attempting something different. I decided, as a personal challenge to myself, I would be rid of Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok for the entirety of our stay at home. I suppose I had just had enough. Social media, in most of its forms, made me incredibly unhappy. I would spend hours trying not to miss a single thing and fail miserably. I was comparing my life, my body, and my art to an expertly crafted image. So I left. But it wasn't so easy at first.

For the first two weeks, I kept reaching for Instagram the second I was even the slightest bit bored. It was as if I didn't know how to just sit and think. I was also missing a lot of important information at first. So much was going on in the world, especially in the political and social climate of the U.S. Instead of completely shutting out the world (I would have been able to, but being able to simply ignore problems in the world is an unsavory example of white privilege), I engaged in more traditional news sources, like the New Yorker and NPR. I signed petitions for Change.org, Grassroots Law Project, and MoveOn through newsletters. Once I got out of the aimless scrolling, I didn't feel like I was missing out on anything. For that summer, I enjoyed my own personal vacation.

Once school started up again and staying connected became more important, I figured it was time for my social media vacation to come to an end. There were parts I really missed about Instagram especially. As hurtful as the platform was to my mental health, it was a great way to connect with artists that I never would have known about otherwise. When I came back to Instagram, not much had changed, except for the dreaded reels. Out of the three platforms I got rid of, I only kept Instagram. Now, TikTok (or more accurately, Instagram's annoying younger sibling) seemed to follow me everywhere. I fell back into the cycle of comparison and hurt. So after a month (and one festive Halloween post later), I had "gone fishin'" once again and was no longer on social media.

Sometimes I don't understand jokes my friends say these days, but they're always happy to show me the TikTok where it came from. My brain is so much quieter now because I have far more control about the information that goes in. I can focus on the things that I think are more important. The things I deem less important may be your priorities; in that case, scroll on. But if you're like me and have a not-so-healthy relationship with social media, it may be time to take a pause.

Wonder Woman 1984

by Pieper Grantham

After almost an entire year without a new blockbuster superhero film, *Wonder Woman 1984* swooped in at the last minute to deliver a two-hour spectacle lauded as the “perfect piece of escapism”. Attempting to squeeze a compelling story into a cinematic canon that boxes *WW 1984* in from both sides, director and writer Patty Jenkins succeeds in creating a shiny spectacle in her candy-colored 1980s set...and not much else. In this direct-to-streaming sequel, Wonder Woman is up against Maxwell Lord and the Cheetah as they all grapple with the dark side of their desires. Mysterious artifact? Man bent on world domination? Seemingly somewhat political? *WW 1984* checks all the boxes for a standard superhero flick. What sets the film apart, however, is its surprising lack of action, janky CGI (*hey, I thought Cats was released last December!*), and heavy-handed morality. The slow-to-start and confusing plot overpower any enjoyment brought by the notable cast, and, truly, the movie seems to have no purpose to the DC universe other than commercial pageantry. Is the movie good? Good to have playing in the background while you scroll through your phone, maybe.

The Mandalorian: Season 2

by Celeste Schmidt

Please take this review with a grain of salt; I am a casual Star Wars enjoyer. **Spoilers ahead.**

The Mandalorian's second season continues to follow Din Djarin and his “kid,” Grogu (finally named!). The goal is to get Grogu a Jedi teacher, but events of the galaxy interfere.

Din’s armor is beautiful as always. I love his accumulation of gear: first the armor, piece by piece in season 1, then the signet, the beskar spear, and, eventually and unintentionally, the Darksaber. The super rare all-beskar setup is gorgeous in its simplicity and clarity of intent; there are many Mandalorians in the series, but Din alone lives up to the title of *The Mandalorian*.

I want to spotlight two of my favorite scenes: Grogu and Din drinking out of cups, side by side, Din tipping his helmet back just a touch, and the “quit playing with your food” scene, where Din gently stabs a creature suctioned to Grogu’s face.

Din removing his helmet in the finale felt off! The emotional impact reaches its peak in the episode before, at the Imperial base on Morak. What about the Code? Will the helmet stay off?

Season 3 is expected to begin streaming this December on Disney+.

Soul

by Luca Jarosz

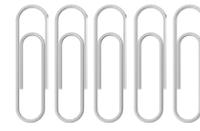
After making movies tackling the culinary dreams of a rat and a humanoid car’s journey of self worth, Pixar is taking on existentialism. To the delight of Disney lovers all across the world, *Soul*, Pixar’s latest feature-film, arrived to Disney+ on Christmas Day 2020.

The movie follows Joe Gardner, who finally receives his big break playing piano in a successful jazz band.

Just as everything seems to work out, Joe gets in a freak accident and his soul and body are separated. Joe, now in the “Great Before” is desperate to return to Earth, and joins alongside 22, a cynical soul who hasn’t found their purpose to begin life. The two then begin their journey to find 22 a life’s purpose, and get Joe back to Earth.

This may sound dramatic, but *Soul* was utterly life changing. Pixar has outdone themselves and possibly delivered their best project to date; it was almost shocking how mature the movie’s message was and how successful Pixar was at portraying it. I legitimately walked away from the movie with more of an appreciation for life. I’m serious. In more specific thoughts, Jamie Foxx and Tina Fey both gave excellent performances as Joe and 22 respectively, and the two had perfect arcs throughout the film. On a more technical note, the world that Pixar has built and the animation itself are utterly mesmerizing. I’d highly recommend *Soul*, as you will legitimately think about life differently afterwards, and also have a good cry if necessary.

paperreviews* Ratings Valentine’s Day Edition



Finding a significant other despite the PVA dating pool



February 15th’s half off chocolate



Promposing to virtual prom



Holding hands in the old building practice rooms



Getting rejected by your dream college and your crush on the same day



Music

Dee Dee Ramone's Rap Career*



By Vera Caldwell

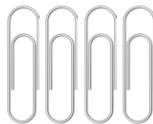
This quote from Marky Ramone sums it up: “One day [Dee Dee] started wearing Mercedes Benz chains around his neck and gold rings. It was crazy. You know, I think he lost his mind.”

Standing in the Spotlight by Dee Dee Ramone (or “Dee Dee King,” as he called his rap persona) came out during the Ramones’ late 80s decline. The album attempts (key word: attempts) to fuse 50s rock (a la *Hairspray*), rap, and punk-esque guitar. Ramone clearly lacked the Beastie Boys’ talent for genre-crossing. From the beginning of the first song, when Ramone delivers the immortal lines “it’s time to rock/it’s time to rap/ it’s time for the mashed potato attack,” cringing commences. One high/lowlight is “German Kid,” which features Ramone badly pronouncing basic German phrases—“Ich mach’ ein Party jeden Tag.” (For those who aren’t familiar with the Ramones—when they mention Germany, RUN.) Debbie Harry’s crystalline, disaffected backing vocals are more suited for hip-hop than whatever Ramone is doing and redeem the album a bit. The overall impression, though, is that of something practiced in front of a bathroom mirror.



There’s never been a relatability crisis with punk; its members are people just like us, who suck at rapping but try it anyway. A polished rock or pop star would be discouraged from risking a project beyond their ability. As with the strange creative choices of other punk heavyweights, such as Captain Sensible’s pop career or Ron Asheton’s acting stint, the tomfoolery that happens without corporate supervision is worth appreciating.

Whole Lotta Red



By Zander Tate

Playboi Carti’s newest album was highly anticipated, and while it understandably fell flat for most listeners, its experimental elements are pushing the genre of rap forward. The first track establishes the sound of the whole album: brash and noisy with nonsensical lyrics over radical synths. While this may not seem enjoyable, Carti manages to create an hour of interesting music due to his stellar vocal delivery that mixes between his melodic rapping and highly criticized “baby voice.” Carti’s lyrics may lack insight, but he still manages to create memorable one liners that reflect on fame, fatherhood, and fornication. Part of why *WLR* is so captivating is because it simply sounds so different from the pop rap tunes that have dominated the genre ever since the rise of TikTok. While you can’t necessarily dance to lines about homicide, you sure could mosh to it. *WLR* may not be pleasant to listen to in your room, but it would be an incredible live performance. If you want to casually listen to some rap, then *WLR* may not be for you, but if you want to listen to the future of rap, then look no further.

evermore



By Heather Smith

Well, she’s done it again. Taylor Swift released another surprise album, *evermore*, on December 11th, 2020, thereby breaking the internet and her fans at the same time. *evermore* is the sister record to *folklore* & shares the same soft, reflective sound of it’s sibling while also venturing into unexpected places (take the country murder ballad ‘no body no crime’, for example). Swift is at her best storytelling here, with characters ranging from a divorcee packing her things to sugar baby cowboys. Songs are just detailed enough to be their own stories, but vague enough to be applicable to almost any situation. They’re practically begging to be on a movie soundtrack.

Writing is *evermore*’s strength, but also its weakest spot. While listening, I couldn’t help but bristle at lines like “I come back stronger than a 90s trend”, undercutting otherwise lyrically beautiful songs (see tracks “willow” & “coney island”). Individually these lines aren’t bad, but when put into context of their album & songs, they stick out like sore thumbs. With just a little more time put into refining the lyrics, I believe that *evermore* would’ve been a nearly flawless album.

However, the lyrics that do work on *evermore far* outweigh the ones that don’t. It’s clear that Taylor Swift is maturing as an artist and thankfully, she’s decided to take us with her.



*yes, this happened

FAME: The Virtual All-School Musical

by Rebecca Rock

FAME. That mysterious movie that everyone mentions when they find out you go to PVA. *It's like that school in FAME, right?* Maybe you've heard of the musical or movie or television show, but you probably hadn't seen it as a virtual all-school musical. Until this January!

The show centered around the lives of teens who attend a performing arts high school in New York City. Freshman year, they enter the school full of hopes and dreams. As the years pass, they struggle with relationships, school, and addiction but find comfort in their classmates and art forms.

Though this past semester was unimaginable only a year ago, the normalcy of an all-school musical was infinitely comforting. Rehearsing scenes and learning music over Zoom, though different than a normal show, brought an excitement to otherwise quiet days. With rehearsals pencilled into afternoon hours, you could almost convince yourself that there was no pandemic, and all of the online activity was for the experience.

The experience is what makes an All-School Musical, at least in my opinion. Meeting new people and bonding over smoothies or Starbucks before rehearsals used to occupy the time between 3:30 and 4:00. Though online platforms and the rush to get home for rehearsals changed this situation, company members still developed friendships (though through masks and over text while trying to figure out technical difficulties). Over the roughly two month rehearsal and filming process, an always-exhilarating sense of making art persisted, and freshmen participated in their first all-school musical (you go, freshmen!).

The show aired between January 15th and 23rd, and the access was unparalleled. Family members and friends across the country saved hundreds in airfare while still watching the performances and technical work of loved ones. In a situation with numerous disadvantages, the expanded accessibility was certainly a silver lining.

Though the future of live performances is undetermined at the moment, *FAME* gave students a way to express their creativity and pursue their passions despite a difficult situation. And hey, now you'll probably understand references to it!



Why *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark* Should've Been This Year's All-School Musical

by Shelby Edison

Let me start by saying that *FAME* was an absolute delight to watch. I've desperately missed sitting in the Denney, hearing music blasting from the orchestra pit, and spotting my classmates onstage. While this year's All-School Musical was obviously different, it was still great to see the PVA spirit grace my laptop in the form of a virtual musical. However, if it were up to me, I would've made this year's musical the 2010 Broadway failure *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark*.

If you've never heard of this musical, then I have the honor of introducing it to you. *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark* "tells Spider-Man's origin story, his romance with Mary Jane and his battles with the Green Goblin," as its Wikipedia page says. The show opened for Broadway previews on November 28, 2010 to reviews so horrible that the creative team actually reworked most of the story and presented an updated version of the show during their 182 show preview period, the longest of a Broadway show ever. When it finally opened, it opened to a ton of safety issues. Six actors were injured, including Spider-Man himself falling off a platform after his harness wasn't properly secured, and the New York State Department of Labor cited the show for workplace safety violations. When the show closed, it lost \$60 million. If you don't know about the comical failures of this show, I am begging you to go on a Wikipedia deep dive of *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark*.

So, why am I recommending that HSPVA put on the defunct Spider-Man musical? Because it is the only show that truly captures the essence of the past year. *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark* was conceived with such high hopes, much like our collective excitement to enter a new decade at the beginning of 2020. Things quickly went downhill fast with both the musical and 2020 before

major reworking was required. In the musical's case, it was over the entire storyline. In 2020's case, it was how PVA would keep their shows on the road. And in the end, society had to accept that what we were witnessing was something entirely new and lower our expectations. Yes, *FAME* was fantastic. But it captured a general sense of community and overcoming hard times. Maybe it's because I was online the whole first semester, but I have never felt farther from any communities or had a harder time overcoming the difficulties that life is throwing my way. *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark* embraces not being able to roll with the punches and failing miserably, a mood that has dominated most of my school year.

I know that it's too late to make the 2020-2021 All-School Musical *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark*. So now

I appeal directly to the HSPVA administration: please make it next year's musical. Consider it a tribute to 2020! And the cast should definitely stay six feet apart. If not for public health's sake, for the sake of avoiding being crushed from a Spider-Man falling into the orchestra pit.



Why Valentine's Day is a Garbage Holiday

by Addie Fairbanks

People call it a Hallmark holiday, and they would be correct. Valentine's Day is a bad excuse to sell waxy chocolates and convince couples to spend ridiculous amounts of money on stuffed bears that they will eventually throw out. Hollywood has created this whole song and dance around Valentine's Day that just leads to unrealistic expectations and dashed hopes. Someone will always end up disappointed, whether it be unrequited love or the forgetfulness of a significant other. Also, the in-your-face romance aspects really drive the point home for pining single people. The pressure and guilt to buy an expensive, thoughtful gift when the holidays just happened is completely unnecessary. There are other ways to express your love. Why condense it down to one overhyped, commercialized day that focuses on the showy and insincere aspects?

In Defense of Valentine's Day

by Addie Fairbanks

Remember elementary school Valentine's Day? The candy mailboxes? The joy of opening a treat with your name on it from the kid across the room you didn't know too well? I remember barely being able to sleep because I was so excited about it as a kid. I would painstakingly fold paper cranes with handwritten notes for each of my friends, just to show how much I cared. And it was socially acceptable! Call it commercial all you want, but Valentine's Day is, at the end of the day, about expressing your love to those you care about. Isn't it fun to indulge in the saccharine traditions every once in a while? To watch rom-coms while eating exorbitant amounts of candy with the one you love? Valentine's Day is a glowing ray of pink and red affection in the middle of the dreary snoozefest that is February and as lovely a holiday as any other.



A Public Declaration of Love for PVA

by Kate-Yeonjae Jeong

Kinder HSPVA is not only a place for artistic and academic learning, but a second home to many.

With Valentine's Day and all, I thought, why not share a public declaration of love for this dream school? Romance isn't dead, you guys!*

At PVA, everyone is talented and artistically inclined in such beautifully diverse ways. A vast range of the arts include vocal, instrumental, dance, theatre, visual arts, and creative writing. Through an extensive audition process that proves everyone's desire to attend this school, the community here overflows with creativity and passion. "The environment of all the artists [is absolutely inspiring]," says Frida Ruiz-Berman, class of '24. "Teachers are also like-minded and understand you."

In a place where your specialization in a specific art is overseen by experts, I can confidently say that PVA is a place for nurture, growth, and development. There's a special energy that courses through the halls of PVA that is one-of-a-kind. It's this aura and the community itself of the school that make it incomparable and irreplaceable. This is where our creative potential blooms.

Additionally, not only do we get to study our desired specifications, we also focus on general classes as well. It's a wonderful opportunity where we can focus on the arts while being able to excel in academic studies; it's a beautiful combination of balance.

"I love that PVA is a kind, accepting place, and that there's little-to-no bullying here," says Jeffrey Kepfer, class of '23. Our school is a loving place for everyone; Kinder HSPVA's supportive environment parallels our close-knit community, to where it feels like family. "The

atmosphere [is notable]," agrees Lily Afghani, class of '22.

As a freshman, I feel beyond grateful to be able to say that I feel I've already felt so included within the student body. I've noted, from my newcomer point of view, no matter who anyone is, they're always welcomed.

Plus, Kinder HSPVA is just all-around cool. "As an ex-exchange student, I couldn't have asked for a cooler school!" says Ishika Dube, 2019/20. "With art education, similar artists to befriend, and fun! What's not to love?"

This place is where I'm continuously finding myself and creating myself, not only as an artist and student, but as a person as well. I could go on forever. Kinder HSPVA, we love you.

The Exact Moment We Fell in Love:

"The sign — 'we welcome all races, all sexualities, all genders, all religions, all nationalities' — that made me so happy." — Jupiter Zimmerman Yang, '24

"My first winter ball. I felt so connected to PVA."

— Athena Haq, '23

"Walking into Mr. D's class, 1st period, freshman year."

— Jack Rota, '22

"Day before winter break, the jazz kids performed Christmas songs; everyone was singing along and it felt like Hollywood Arts from Victorious." — Preston Lim, '24

"My first day, when I sat down in the black box."

— Isabella Guterrez, '23

"Mr. Hune being everyone's dad." — Simon Martin, '24

*Romance is cool. Romance is swag.

Think Big, Shop Small

by Mariah Adeeko

I think I'm not the only one in the pandemic who has taken up a bit of an unhealthy obsession with online shopping. Spending hours scrolling from page to page to window shop (and, occasionally, actually buying something) has just become way too irresistible. At the same time, I've become aware of how much small businesses are in need during this time. It can be hard to find the right ones, so I've prepared a handy little list for you! And hey, maybe you could also get something for your special someone for Valentine's Day!

VintageNRetroFinds

https://www.etsy.com/shop/VintageNRetroFinds?ref=search_shop_redirect

I really like this shop on Etsy because it has a mix of retro designs mixed in with colorful sports gear. The shop is owned by a Michigan local who sells from both his collection and thrifted items. His pieces range from anywhere \$20 to usually no more than \$50, and they are all pretty high quality!

Rustic Glory Soap

<https://rusticglorysoap.com/>

This shop is a beautifully crafted, Black-owned, palm oil free soap and self-care shop that sells a range of products: whipped body butters, custom soap leaves, and more. I highly recommend their products, as they are not only beautiful to look at, but reasonably priced as well.



Hookinguploops

[https://www.etsy.com/shop/](https://www.etsy.com/shop/Hookinguploops?ref=search_shop_redirect)

[Hookinguploops?ref=search_shop_redirect](https://www.etsy.com/shop/Hookinguploops?ref=search_shop_redirect)

Hookinguploops, Crochet Designs by Nana, is a cozy crochet company owned by a Japanese immigrant who resides in Canton, Michigan. Nana, known for her passion for crochet and floral arrangements, has been selling her handmade patterns since 2019. Her designs are a little expensive, but I assure you they are extremely worth it and super snuggly.

Hey, Hey PVA: It's time to buy your YEARBOOK

Order through www.balfour.com and search "Kinder High School for the Performing and Visual Arts" to purchase your yearbook or ad.

Teacher Talk

by Mr. Landry and Ms. Chase

In this edition of Teacher Talk, Ms. Chase and Mr. Landry are going to rant, spill some tea, and ask for cheese for this whine. Here it is: please, if possible, turn on your cameras during class! Your teachers fully recognize that there may be situations at home that prevent you from being able to have your camera on, and for those legitimate cases, please continue to do as you need. This said, even if your camera is off, that does not prevent you from using the "raise your hand" feature to show engagement and participation in class...but we digress. Why is it that teachers would like for you to have your cameras on? Below is our top ten list.

1. We miss your faces!
 2. Students are the fuel source for teachers. Just like Mike Mulligan and his steam shovel, Mary Anne, the more students are engaged, the more energy we can muster!
 3. It may motivate you to start your day and get out of those pa-jam-jams.
 4. One teacher "skill" is the ability to read faces and body language. If students look confused, we know that we need to slow down or review what we just said. Since the rest of your body language is "cut off," seeing your face is even more important!
 5. You already do it in small groups when teachers are not there!
 6. Seniors, you are going to graduate at the end of this year and we want to recognize you at graduation!
 7. Juniors, teachers need to be able to write letters of recommendation for you after this wild year. That is tough for us to do without knowing who you are and how you engage with class. "They came to class and completed assignments...and that is all I got. Please accept them?"
 8. Sophomores, you are starting to establish who YOU are as a true high school student. Be proud and be bold!
 9. Freshmen, you got accepted to PVA! Share your faces so you can start to get to know your other wonderful classmates!
 10. Please?
-
-

Lights, Camera, COVID

by Mo Mitchell, Pieper Grantham, and Eli Johns-Krull

COVID-19 has fundamentally changed the way we all function in day-to-day life, from what we eat to when we wake up to what we watch and how we watch it. Not only has the way we consume media changed, but so has the way we produce it. The television industry has been scrambling to find new ways to create the shows we know, love, and loathe during a pandemic that we all wish would disappear.

The CBS soap opera *The Bold and the Beautiful* was the first television show to resume filming in June...with an inflatable twist. The steamy scenes that frequented in the first 33 seasons are slightly less intimate this year, with lifelike blow up dolls filling in the role of germly lovers between the sheets (see also: Valentine's Day Coping Mechanisms for Singles!).

On a less salacious note, *Grey's Anatomy* has taken our not-so-recent plague and injected it into the plot of it's most recent season. With main character Meredith falling ill after contracting the virus and her actress Ellen Pompeo not renewing her contract, many fans are left theorizing the fate of the beloved character and the show as a whole. Could coronavirus be the cause of death for this critically acclaimed medical drama?

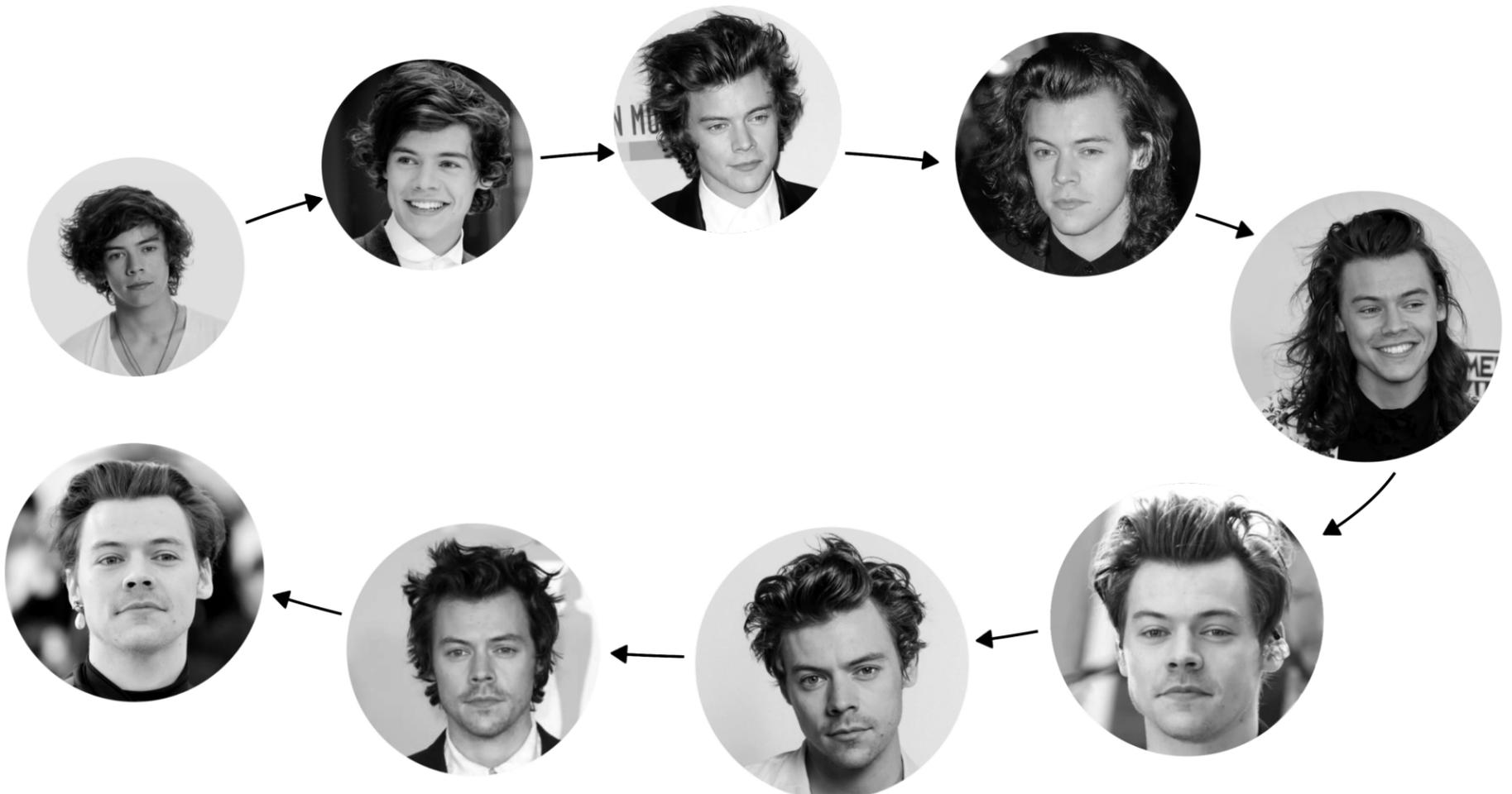
With endings in mind, let's talk about the CW's *Supernatural*. Production for the highly anticipated final season came to a screeching halt on March 13. Filmed in Vancouver, the American cast and crew grappled for months with the strict Canadian quarantine guidelines, eventually returning to set in September with rewrites. With a lackluster final episode missing many beloved faces from the show's massive cast, we can only wonder how much was Covid-caused and how much was simply a show resurrected from the dead a few too many times. At least they attempted to stop queerbaiting, right? (See y'all in Super Turbo Hell.)

These shows are just a glimpse at Hollywood's attempt to stay true to the phrase "the show must go on." With numerous other shows embracing the pandemic as plot (*All Rise*, *Southpark*, *black-ish*, *The Good Doctor*, and *NCIS: New Orleans* being just a few) and others drastically altering production (*SNL*, *Carnival Row*, *The Connors*, and *The Bachelorette*), we can only wonder what lasting impact the pandemic will have on television as we know it. But no matter how bad it gets, at least we can turn to Netflix for a comforting glimpse at entertainment of days past.



An Evolution of Harry Styles's Hairy Styles*

compiled by Rebecca Rock and Ylliana Larsen



yes, this is the pressing story that paper is covering

Ruth + Denney: PVA's Best, Worst, and Only Advice Column*

How do I tell my mom to be quiet and my dad to turn down the volume on the TV every two minutes of my meeting?

—Small House, Big Distractions

Dear Distractions,
I will say that my advice does depend on a couple of assumptions I made based on this question — namely, that you're an only child, so your mom isn't trying to noisily wrangle little siblings when she's being loud and that watching TV isn't necessary for your father's job. With that said, I think this is a problem you can't tackle in the moment. Get your parents together for a family meeting, where no one's rushing to do anything or distracted by other tasks. Then explain that, while you know it's tough sharing close quarters with each other for so much of each day, you're really struggling to focus on class with all of this background noise, and it's making your academic life difficult. Enlist their help in coming up with solutions that work for all of you! Maybe your dad can watch his shows on-demand, after they air. Maybe your mom can take her phone calls outside or to a quieter area of your home. Maybe they'll just need to invest in a good set of soundproof headphones for you. Try not to get too frustrated with them. At the end of the day, we're all trying to deal with a very bizarre situation the best we can, and they probably don't even realize how much their behavior is impacting you. I wish you luck!

Yours,
Ruth

My lovely friend B.D.,
Repeat after me: "No, I haven't seen the batteries."
With love, affection, and petty theft,
Denney

With a domestic terror attack and a growing pandemic, how do you manage to motivate yourself to do menial tasks like schoolwork and the dishes? The allure of sleeping for 19 hours a day grows ever stronger...

—*sounds of head bashing against my desk*

Dear Desk Basher,

I hope you're not bashing your head so hard it begins to hurt — that won't help your motivation. If anything, it'll make your brain fuzzy. But anyways... 2020 and the few weeks we've had of 2021 have been, what can I say, original? Unpredictable? Never seen before? Yes, so many things have occurred in the span of a few months, I get it can be hard to wrap your head around things. And I'm with you on feeling lazy— IT'S FRICKING HARD TO STAY MOTIVATED WHEN IT FEELS LIKE THE WORLD IS GOING TO END. Oh my gosh, sorry for getting a little angry, I just need to rant sometimes.

You may be thinking *Ruth, uhhh... you still haven't answered my question*, and you would be right. Because there is no magic trick to motivation, unfortunately. The best advice I can give you is to find something that you're extremely passionate about. For me, that's my plants, dreaming about college move-in day, and binge watching Netflix. These little distractions may seem unproductive, but the more compassion you give yourself, the less hard it will be to get through these times. Think you don't have anything you're passionate about? Well, you go to an arts high school, so I hope your art area teachers don't find out. For schoolwork, pace yourself and make a to do list. If you need some organization, this is a good place to start. The dishes? Probably my least favorite chore, but find a fun podcast to listen to, facetime a friend, or jam out to your epic Spotify playlist! Find things to keep yourself distracted from the adversities we've all experienced this past year. Do you need to call a doctor for your head banging? Let me know, I'm always here to help!

Yours,
Ruth

Dear Head Banger,

My oh my, Ruthie and I sure have been getting a lot of questions about motivation....

If you have a question you'd like Ruth + Denney's advice on, let them know through this form:

<https://forms.gle/57G7GEzbaXbwsHZ36>



A special shout-out to
Nic Lam
for all his work on FAME and
the Diversity Series and for
being an overall awesome
person and member of the PVA
community.

Zan's Mixtapes

By Zander Tate

Valentine's day is a different experience for everyone, but regardless of if you're in a relationship or not, we could all use some love in our life right now. Here's a collection of cute and fun love songs!

"willow" by Taylor Swift — While most of Swift's recent project, *evermore*, is melancholic, "willow" provides personal songwriting over a gorgeous stringed instrumental that replicates the feeling of falling for someone.

"Starting Over" by Chris Stapleton — This cute track is super catchy and much more insightful than you might expect from a country artist. Stapleton captures the joy in love in this honest and sweet song.

"At Your Best (You Are Love)" by Aaliyah — This classic cover needs no introduction. Aaliyah's ethereal vocals just make you want to sway and feel all the feels.

"Love is a Wild Thing" by Kacey Musgraves — Though this song's feelings are not reserved to romantic love, Musgraves captures the beauty and magic of feeling love.

"Only One" by Kanye West — Kanye, a troubled genius to say the least, lets out some humanity on this oft-forgotten track. Switching between his relationship to his mother and son, Kanye reflects on the trust and bliss in loving no matter how bruised you are.

"The Gambler" by fun. — While admittedly a bit sad, this narrative track details the progression of a couple from their cute teenage relationship to the delights of a lasting marriage. The intimate writing and beautiful depiction of love can make you tear up, so listen cautiously.

"Try a Little Tenderness" by Otis Redding — This gorgeous track is full of fun melodies and old-school vocals that make you feel like an old-fashioned, charming high school couple.

"Mosquito" by Stella Donnelly — Donnelly describes the feeling of love and falling for someone in her unique Australian accent over a lofi guitar instrumental that is infectious with joy.

"Cover me Up" Jason Isbell — A classic country folk song. Isbell details a loving relationship filled with cute country imagery of boots and axes that transports you to living with your soulmate in a cabin in the woods.

Listen to the playlist on Spotify using the QR code!



10 Things I Miss Most About PVA

By Eliza Pillsbury

1. THE TEACHERS. College professors are also amazing, but few act as your second moms (shout out to Ms. Chase and Mrs. Cardenas and Mr. Klein). It's so strange for teachers to go from being your best friends and confidantes (looking at all of you, Theatre Department faculty) to simply...fellow adults.
2. paper*. Need I say more? Y'all have my heart forever, and writing this iconic column is a dream I've harbored since 2014.
3. The surreal surprise of turning a corner and finding oneself in the middle of a rehearsal. When we were rehearsing an audience-interactive Hamilton parody for lower-level showcases in the Commons, we could always find an errant jazz kid to wrangle on "stage."
4. Rory Leech
5. Checkered floors
6. Happenings??? What kind of wonderful fever dream were those? Try explaining them to friends in college and they'll laugh at you, but they've also never heard an entire school echo with cheers when creative writers perform spoken word or dancers GO OFF on a holiday medley.
7. The Stanford Street library: where I submitted almost every college application, where we crowded around a clunky desktop computer to watch the Kavanaugh confirmation hearings, where Ms. Ballard first introduced me to Joan Didion.
8. The Spring Break Europe trips are still some of my most formative memories.
9. Theatre kid supremacy! Surprisingly, this is the opposite of real life! Just kidding, no one is surprised. But hey, I turned out okay, and I'm literally listening to musical soundtracks as I write this.
10. The camaraderie of choosing to sacrifice a traditional high school experience, with football and dances and off-campus lunches, for the maddening experience of making art. Knowing that all one's teenage angst would inevitably fuel one's work, for better or for worse. Sharing a language of creativity that could be the single constant in an otherwise traumatic period of one's life.

Though, I will **not** miss having to function on five hours of sleep, the stress of audition season and tech week, or the nonexistent dating pool. I wouldn't start over in ninth grade even if someone paid me, and high school should never be promised as the best four years of someone's life. But I maintain that HSPVA is the best high school there could be.



Horoscopes

By Maja Neal

It's here: one of my favorite months! I realize that you don't need an excuse to snap up discount chocolate and tell your loved ones how much you appreciate them, but it warms my little heart that there's a whole day for it. If it's not your thing, enjoy the hot-chocolatey, hiding-under-your-blankety last bits of winter before Houston melts back into swampland. Lastly, if anyone asks, my favorite flowers are violets, and I like raspberry sweets. Toss a coin to your writer!

Aries — If you find yourself struggling with any hard decisions or situations, it's a good idea to ask someone who has been there before. They can help you navigate new terrain and provide comfort along the way. Advice: remember that you are lovely. And eat an orange.

Taurus — A lot has been going right for you lately, and will continue to — embrace it! Keep an eye out to make sure you're not holding yourself back by expecting everything to come to you on its own. Advice: take up punk covers on the didgeridoo.

Gemini — When you've fallen into doubt, it's easy to forget all of your accomplishments. Don't! One setback doesn't cancel out all your past successes, so don't act like it. Advice: fly over the cuckoo's nest.

Cancer — Focus on your academic pursuits, or even your job, this month. Start second semester strong, and remember that your independent clothes label, Twitch account, or self-published novel won't market themselves! Advice: stop jumping into the lava!!!!!!

Leo — If you have any barriers around romantic love or other kinds of relationships, it's time to reexamine them. If you don't yet have the relationships you want, why? Is there anything you can do about it? Advice: play the Sims 2. It's arguably the best one.

Virgo — You have such a huge capacity for creativity, and

sometimes it's stronger than others. So, when you feel yourself wanting to create, don't worry about the quality, or if others will like it; create for your own sake. Advice: attempt artisan chocolate making.

Libra — You've been working for a long time, and you may feel like giving up. But imagine your journey linearly: why stop going now, when you've made so much progress? Advice: identify the species of those weird birds on your street.

Scorpio — You might be faced with some strained relationships at home. These problems can be exhausting, so remember to remove yourself from the situation as much as possible so that you can collect yourself. Advice: DIY some snow from cotton, 'cause we're not getting any.

Sagittarius — I know your feelings can get really strong, but remember that in a professional or school environment, you'll often be relieved later if you hold yourself back. If it's a small issue, ask yourself if it's worth getting upset. Advice: start a noise pop band and name it after the last thing you ate.

Capricorn — You've been working at academic or practical pursuits, and your focus on that might've led to a neglect of personal relationships. Make sure everyone you value knows you're still there for them. Advice: go on a permanent vacation to the nearest accessible planet.

Aquarius — Don't be afraid to distance yourself from people who aren't good for you. Just know it's always best to do it directly. If they're set on interacting with you, make your feelings known gently but surely. Advice: do NOT eat the fun plant growing out of the concrete.

Pisces — Treasure your time off! High school students know better than anyone that free time is hard to come by, so when you have it, don't waste it — actively do things that make you happy or help you. Advice: knit tiny sweaters for bees. If you're cold, they're cold.

Chinese Zodiac Horoscopes

By Preston Lim

With the new year starting, 2021 could have better times held for us. As the highway burning-car-stack of 2020 slowly recedes away into the distance (I'm counting up to the Lunar New Year as 2020 — I don't think the horoscope predicted domestic terrorism), the Chinese horoscope for this lunar new year is promising.

The Lunar New Year is on February 12, and, since this article was written in January, I can't say for sure how 2021's been going so far. But here's how 2021, the year of the metal ox, should be — based on the Chinese zodiac.

2002 babies (horse): This year will be good for relationships, romantic or platonic. It will also be a year of inner reconstruction, so try to take some time for yourself and reconnect with some familial ties, if you can.

2003 babies (goat): This year will be extremely pivotal, and expect immense personal growth. You might be disorganized, but 2021 will be a good year for any artist of the goat sign. Towards the end of the year, you may lose focus, but continue to pursue artistic growth!

2004 babies (monkey): 2021 will be a year of spiritual evolution. Focus on peace of mind — don't try to do too much. It will be a generally good year; keep friends close and try to confide in them.

2005 babies (rooster): This will be a year of gaining power and commanding more respect. You will help those around you, but don't lose yourself helping others.

2006 babies (dog): This year will be lucky for you — you could get involved in new activities, new relationships, etc. Your plans for the future may change, but you will progress nonetheless. Have energy and authority this year- they will benefit you greatly.

If I missed your year/zodiac, go to thechinesezodiac.org to search up your year! If your prediction doesn't sound right, just remember that your year is what you will make of it. Make the most of this year!



Overheard@PVA

I wasn't advocating *thigh-highs*. I was advocating **chaos**.
— Eli Johns-Krull

Are *gerbils* real?
— Liam Mathus

I used to say my face was on the three dollar bill and no one could **prove me wrong**.
— Athena Haq

Downtown smells like *cheeseburger air*.
— Lewis Painter

Let start with **'Questions to Ask at a Seance.'**
— Care Paden

Eat the squirrel! *Take its acorn!*
— Jamie Garcia

You wouldn't believe how many times I've found my **TV remote in the refrigerator**.
— Mr. Lozano

Drinking tap water *radicalizes* you.
— Tobi Carr

The toy is not inside the chocolate egg, unlike **God and nature intended**.
— KM

What flavor Jello would Alex Powers be? Probably **lime**.
— Marla Gallardo

See you in hell, or not. The *choice is always yours*.
— Robert Wise

Do I want to talk about **Beethoven or Trump** this morning?
— Dr. Smith

I do want to punch Paul McCartney like a *gazelle on the savannah*.
— Frida Ruiz-Berman

"I prefer a citrusy vinaigrette to balance the more **earthy flavors of dirt**.
— Pieper Grantham

I think it's strange how much *Hufflepuffs* enjoy *crime*.
— Anna Tobin

It may be **hate chicken**, but it's good chicken! — Matthew Kalmans, a Raising Canes employee on Chick-fil-A

We're talking about taxidermy and how **it's not the people who do your taxes!**
— Mr. Landry

The *sea shanties* are taking over the news!!
— Ms. Chase

I think National Geographic is trying to *recruit me*.
— Katherine Citino

It's not a sixth sense, it's **just idiocy**.
— Matthew Fu

Is it just me or does a lot of taxidermy look exactly like **Nicholas Cage?**
— Sydney Mills

A clown trained me. Or I was trained **by a clown**.
— Rebecca Rock

Make sure to click *like and subscribe!* — KM

We're supposed to be writing a show, and now we're talking **about Wikipedia cults**.
— Alex Yero

You could draw your favorite capitalist.
— Stella Withrow

And that's why I think we should *encourage polygamy*.
— Liza Stickney

Mr Hune? — Frida Ruiz-Berman

So we really brushed over the fact that we watched Joe Biden get sworn into office over the *Juju on that Beat remix*.
— Nina Fowler

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Follow us on Instagram and Twitter **@hspvapaper** for more paper* shenanigans!

paper*
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