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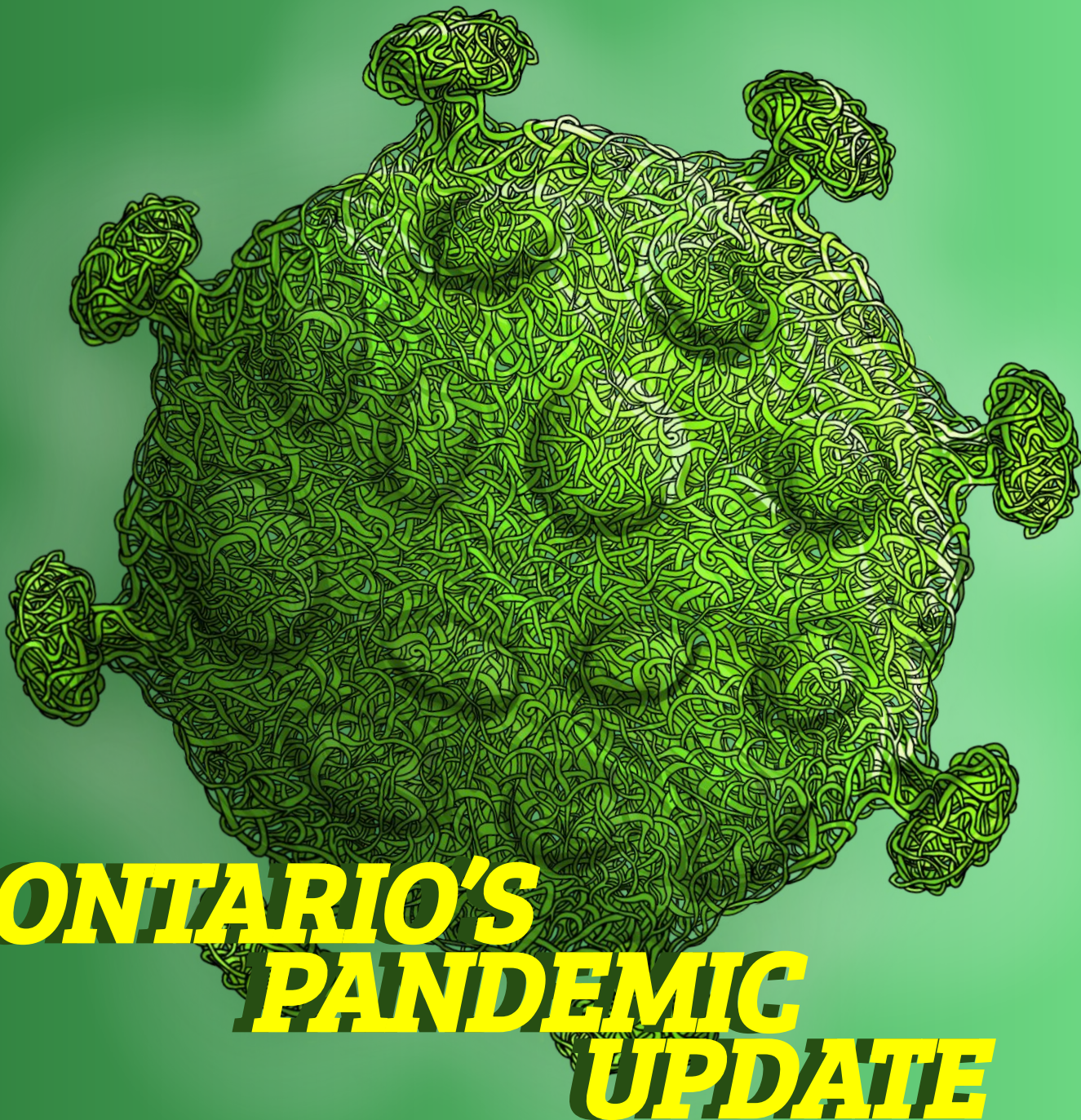
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HAMILTON

Tensions Flare At The HWDSB Over Its New Vice Chair

Above: Becky Buck was elected as the HWDSB's new vice chair, but student trustees say she will hinder efforts to heal the harm done by the racism scandal that caused public outrage earlier this year. **(Richard Leitner/Metroland)**

By John Kerr
Co-Editor-in-Chief

In a HWDSB board meeting in early December, student trustees Deema Abdel Hafeez and Aisha Mahmoud called for their fellow trustees to reconsider their decision to elect trustee Becky Buck to the position of vice chair, citing that she had been named in the board's racism probe in 2021.

"The board's decision last Monday [to elect Buck] acts as a hindrance toward the HWDSB's ability to serve the student body. The harm that has been done has not gone away in our student community and the work that needs to be done is ongoing," said Mahmoud in her address to the trustees in the board meeting on December 6.

Buck was one of four HWDSB trustees named in a racism probe conducted at the board as a result of allegations raised by a former student trustee. In its findings, Buck was deemed to have made a racist comment during a board meeting in which trustees discussed the cancellation of the police liaison program. The report concluded that Buck had labelled activists and concerned meeting attendees, 'Twitter trolls'; and that she was racist in her

opposition to the creation of an Indigenous student trustee position.

A vocal opponent to the election of Buck as vice chair came from the coalition, Hamilton Students for Justice, an advocacy group which student trustees met with before discussing concerns with the board. These calls have been echoed by the Equity Network of Dundas and the board's own human rights and equity community advisory committee.

Members of the committee have protested her opportunity to even run for the position, citing the same racism probe which prompted them to request for Buck's resignation back in the spring. Members of the committee have expressed their doubts that Buck will continue with the "amazing work" being done by the board in the areas of human rights policies and anti-Black racism efforts.

The committee has put through four recommendations to the board, presented at the board meeting on January 17. Apart from requesting Buck to step down from the position of vice-chair, the committee has requested a more transparent voting process to be adopted in future chair and vice chair elections, asking for the banning of secret ballot votes. Gachi Issa, a member of the committee, questioned the credibility of Buck's victory over Paul Tut, the other trustee

in the running for the position, saying, "Who voted for her?"

In an interview with The Bay Observer, Buck acknowledged her hesitation to offer herself for the position of vice chair immediately, knowing there would be some opposed to the idea because of the report. Before the nomination, Buck met with all of her fellow trustees and afterwards, said how fortunate she was to live in a time when women can achieve everything they wish to accomplish. However, Buck also testified to there being a climate of fear among trustees at the board, all scared of saying the wrong thing.

"It's scary that in this social media era everything you say is analysed and pulled apart. That if you have a position others disagree with—you are (considered) a hate-filled person. But it's part of being in public office."

"It is quite frustrating for students to watch the board declare the values of equity and inclusivity, yet watch a majority of the board act hypocritically."

— Aisha Mahmoud, Student Trustee from Ancaster High



CANADA

Indigenous Recognition and Reconciliation Needed

Above: In November 2021, protestors gathered in downtown Hamilton in support of the Wet'suwet'en peoples opposing the Coastal GasLink pipeline in British Columbia. **(Dan Taekema/CBC)**

By John Kerr
Co-Editor-in-Chief

As one of the most crucial changes in modern Canadian society, Indigenous recognition is a significant issue moving into 2022. From the Wet'suwet'en pipeline protests that spanned the country to the discoveries of the unmarked graves containing Indigenous children at many former residential schools, the new decade has been a trying one for Canada's Indigenous population. Recognition of their past and present struggles and reconciliation is a constitutional goal for many organizations, including the HWDSB.

Here at Ancaster High, year-over-year efforts to introduce the culture and heritage of Canada's Indigenous population have affected curriculums and school spirit days alike. Many students have been exposed to Indigenous novels and books written by First Nations authors in their English classes, for example. There have also been daily land acknowledgements before the national anthem as a new standard practice. Speaking to the Assistant Head of Humanities, Mr. Powles, through email correspondence, the change in the procedure for the morning land acknowledgement was touched upon with him saying, "We tend to agree that 'OF COURSE we will start the school day with O Canada'...I'd like for that 'of course-ness' to include the Land Acknowledgement as well," hence the change from intermittent readings to a daily occurrence.

In the Ancaster community, an ongoing struggle over heritage and history has been followed by the local news for months, initially catching headlines with the destruction of the

Brandon house and currently with the Marr house on the corner of Wilson and Academy St. In an article titled: We are all treaty people, published 8 October, 2020, the Pastor of the Ancaster Village Church, Aaron Gerrard, applauded the efforts and citizens calling for the protection of Ancaster's history. He connected these efforts in Ancaster and the advocacy for this issue to "those similarly raised by our Indigenous neighbours."

It is important to remain vigilant to the fact that Ancaster's settler history is not the first history of this land, which falls under the Between the Lakes Treaty, also known as Treaty 3. As the history of Ancaster began, with each road laid and each tree felled, the generations of Indigenous people on these lands have watched their history be erased bit by bit. For some in Ancaster, a similar fate faces them as the buildings that make up their story and history are destroyed, and their land redeveloped.

"When history is erased, whether haphazardly or in the name of progress, we hurt. It does not matter if you are a settler or Indigenous," wrote Gerrard.

However, therein lies a difficult question, one about the struggle each group faces. No justifiable statement can ever be used to equate the struggle of the Indigenous people to the struggles faced by the 'settler' community in Ancaster. Is it permissible to transcend the time between the eras and infer how one group might feel about such a significant issue? Doing so might be an unknowing use of transcendentalism; the philosophy that states that by using your five senses to take in the immediate situation, you can learn a grander truth about the world on a

larger scale. One of the fundamentals of this movement is the disadherence to institution; it says that you do not need to be an expert to understand something. Immediate, indirect experience is enough. Can that be true in this situation? Can a 'settler' empathize with the struggles of the Indigenous peoples of Canada to an extent where the hurt resulting from the loss of historical Ancaster landmarks can equate with that from the development of ancestral land of the various nations around Ontario?

Regardless, it is difficult to assign an equal hurt to the issues of today in Ancaster to the plight of centuries past. In the final remarks of Gerrard's article, however, he writes that, "As we work to remember and safeguard the history of Ancaster, let us not forget that we should owe the same commitment to our Indigenous hosts." As settlers, it is our responsibility to recognize the unique circumstances faced by the Indigenous populations. Never should their hardships be undermined or downplayed, and as a school and a community, there is always room for change. In my conversation with Mr. Powles, one of his aims for the school's efforts is that "...whatever we DO do is not performative and not just opportunities for virtue-signalling. I would like for the celebration part to be more front-and-centre more so than it is now."

"I'd love to hear students talking in my class about the show Reservation Dogs, or listening to the Halluci Nation, or talking about attending a Pow Wow or eating indian tacos," says Powles. This is a noble goal for the future, and one that the students of Ancaster High can aim for in the new year.

By Arnold Fu
Staff Writer & Editor

Violent Kazakhstan
anti-government protests and riots have clashed with law enforcement, leading to dozens of reported deaths, hundreds of hospitalizations, and thousands of arrests. The nation-wide demonstrations have evolved into an international incident, with the deployment of thousands of Russian-led CSTO troops into the country. While the protests have since calmed down, they will show key answers, such as Russia's role in the geopolitical theatre and the fate of CSTO, often called Russia's NATO.

Kazakhstan was formerly part of the Soviet Union before declaring independence in 1991. The young country is one of the world's most prominent energy producers and the largest in Central Asia, producing 40% of the world's uranium and 1.6 million barrels of oil a day. However, Kazakhstan remains staunchly totalitarian, ranking 155th out of 180 countries on Reporters Without Borders's press freedom index and requiring government permits for protests and strikes.

The protests started with the removal of the price cap on liquefied petroleum gas, also known as LPG, claiming supply issues due to low prices. As LPG is cheaper than other fuel alternatives, Kazakhstanis have come to depend on LPG for their cars and the trucking industry. After the ban, LPG spiked over 50% overnight and later doubled in price. The rising fuel costs led to protests in the province of Zhanaozen, a desert province which imports most of their commodities and whom high LPG prices would affect the most.

Both peaceful and violent demonstrations have since spread across the country, with reports of widespread damage and looting, along with government buildings being broken into and burned. Almaty, Kazakhstan's largest city and former capital, saw the brunt of the destruction, with the declaration of a state of emergency and the temporary closure of Almaty International Airport after demonstrators seized the building.

To quell the protests, the government reintroduced the LPG price cap. However, the protests had since morphed into a wider anti-government stance, with demands for change ranging from the country's rampant corruption to the lack of civil liberties.

Kazakhstan's head of state, President Tokayev, has responded to the protests with rapid and forceful law enforcement, calling the unrest an attempted coup d'etat and a colour revolution, a pejorative term claiming that protest leaders were Western-trained agents directed to topple Kazakhstan's government.



WORLD
Kazakhstan's Fuel-Fueled Riots

Above: On January 5th, 2022, a police car was on fire as riot police got ready to stop protestors in the center of Almaty, Kazakhstan, who were denouncing the doubling of prices for liquefied gas. *(Vladimir Tretyakov/AP)*

Tokayev has also ordered law enforcement and intelligence agencies to “fire without warning”, “shoot to kill”, and “liquidate” protesters, which has only fueled more dissent. The Kazakh defence minister has also since been fired over “leadership qualities”.

Tokayev has also chosen to fire heavily-disliked former President Nursultan Nazarbayev from head of the NSC, Kazakhstan's domestic intelligence agency, along with the two deputy heads, Marat Osipov and Daulet Ergozhin. The former head of the NSC was also arrested under treason allegations and “actions aimed at forcibly seizing power.”

However, even with his forceful response, Tokayev struggled to contain the crisis. As a result, on January 5, Tokayev requested the deployment of soldiers form the Collective Security Treaty Organization's (CSTO's) peacekeeping forces against the “foreign-trained terrorists.” The request was accepted with the deployment of 2500 mainly Russian troops into Kazakhstan, along with tanks and military aircraft.

The CSTO was meant to be a mutual defence treaty between the former Soviet states of Russia, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, and has been referred to as a replacement to the Warsaw Pact.

In reality, the treaty has seen little use, with the organisation abstaining from both the 2010 Kyrgyzstan ethnic conflicts and the Armenia-Azerbaijan armed clashes in 2021. Kazakhstan's activation was likely to instil relevance and good press back into the organisation. While the CSTO is only to be used against foreign attacks, Kazakhstan likely found a loophole by claiming the unrest as a colour revolution and therefore a

foreign threat.

Russia's involvement has not gone unnoticed by the wider political circles. The US's Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, has decried Russia's involvoment into Kazakhstan, stating “once Russians are in your house, it's sometimes very difficult to get them to leave”. The Moscow foreign ministry fired back, framing Blinken as a hypocrite by pointing to the US's past military interventions. Further responses against Blinken have increased with the CSTO's successful withdrawal.

Overall, Kazakhstan and CTSO security forces have succeeded in quelling the protests, and the CSTO forces have since completely left the country. However, the events in Kazakhstan will have heavy implications on what the CSTO does and when it can be deployed, potentially setting a precedent for more authoritarian leaders to use the organisation to counter internal discontent.

The organisation may also begin to intervene more, diplomatically and militarily, in international affairs. There remain many such circumstances within Eurasia such as the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Uzbekistan border disputes or Central Asia's rising water scarcity that could justify CSTO involvement and advance Russia's control over the region.

The deployment could also cement Russia's control over Kazakhstan and to counter Chinese, Western, and Islamist influences. Nevertheless, the Kazakhstan protests and the subsequent deployment will have rippling effects on the balance of power in Central Asia and the CSTO's and Russia's international importance.

External
News
The biggest stories from outside the Ancaster community on a provincial, national and international scale.



EXTERNALS
Origin of Valentine's Day
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EXTERNALS
Snowstorm Trap Drivers On I-95 Highway

Above: Vehicles on I-95, the largest North-South highway in the United States, were struck by a large snowstorm, making them stuck on these roads overnight and desperately calling for help. *(VDOT/Reuters)*

By Arnold Fu
Staff Writer & Editor

The I-95, also known as Interstate 95, the largest North-South highway in the US, was also the site of one of the longest traffic jams in American history. Winter Storm Frida combined with several accidents worked to create a traffic jam spanning 80 kilometers long. This left drivers waiting for hours in subzero temperatures, with some waiting as much as a full day before traffic began moving again. How such a massive crisis could have occurred has been a focus of controversy, frustration, and investigation.

On January 3, a major winter storm fell with full force on Virginia, dropping between 17 to 27 centimeters of snow at a record rate of two centimeters an hour, leaving hundreds of thousands without power and causing five deaths. The storm also resulted in almost five centimeters of rain per hour over the area before the snowfall, preventing the use of salt or chemicals to avoid ice accumulation on roads.

The snowy and icy conditions eventually led to the infamous pileup and subsequent traffic jam on the I-95, with accidents involving upwards of six tractor-trailers. Unable to move, those stuck in the gridlock had no choice but to wait in the freezing temperatures. The weather conditions also forced an Amtrak passenger train to wait on the tracks for upwards of 30 hours, with reports of low food and overflowed toilets.

Relief struggled to reach the area as the storm had knocked out traffic cameras and continued to dump snow across the state. Road crews worked overnight to clear the roads but

heavy snowfall, fallen trees and powerlines, and other factors made opening the roads a long and arduous process. By January 4, progress was finally being made and by the evening, most of the traffic was cleared out.

The motorists in the logjam were left with limited amounts of food, water, and gas, which led to some turning off their engines to ration fuel and heat. The congestion also significantly slowed emergency vehicles from reaching necessary locations, with reports of potential hypothermia cases and needed relief for worried diabetics. While four patients were transported out of the scene, fortunately, no injuries or deaths were reported in the traffic jam.



Above: Average speed on Jan. 3rd-4th, during 8:30-9:00 pm. *(VDOT Officials)*

In the midst of the crisis was US Senator Tim Kaine, who was trapped on his drive to the Capitol. Under regular conditions, the drive would only take about two hours, but instead took Kaine a total of 27 hours to reach his destination. Similar stories came from NBC correspondent Josh Lederman, who spoke on NBC's Today show while trapped on I-95, claiming he had been stuck for 10 hours yet remained 50 kilometers from Washington.

Lederman's response was not alone, with criticism from citizens and lawmakers alike. Virginia Governor Ralph Northam came under major fire for his actions against the crisis. Many also criticised how the “world's richest country” couldn't solve the traffic jam. Demands for the deployment of the National Guard were denied, with Northam justifying the decision by stating that getting crews to the necessary locations was the limiting factor, not manpower.

Slow response times and the seeming lack of action by the government was also a source of disapproval, with examples including not efficiently closing down the highway to prevent further traffic. US Representative Abigail Spanberger called the gridlock a “catastrophe” and demanded for Virginia governors Northam and Youngkin to conduct a closely-examined, cross-agency report on the matter. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has stated that they will take an “exhaustive look” at the event and the circumstances surrounding it.

Humorously, Gleen Youngkin, the winner of the Virginia election scheduled to be sworn in on January 15 also came under fire, despite not being in office yet.

Many questions remain on how the traffic jam got so severe, as it shut down the largest transit artery on the US's East Coast for hours. The VDOT's report will answer certain questions, but will likely raise more questions on how to prevent another disaster and who's to blame for the I-95 traffic jam. Such a report could affect the political structures on the state and possibly at the federal level, tackling key questions such as infrastructure. Only time will tell how the US will react to the I-95 traffic jam and how it came to be.



EXTERNALS

Lunar New Year 2022: The Year Of The Tiger

Above: Countless cities welcome the Lunar New Year with celebratory traditions such as lantern shows, fireworks and firecrackers, decorations, giving red envelopes, having a grand feast with family, and watching lion and dragon dances. As 2022 is the year of the tiger, there will be many decorations of tigers as well! *(VCG/Getty Images)*

By Amy Kim
Staff Writer

On February 1st, the Lunar New Year arrived and marked the beginning of the lunar calendar. The previous lunar year has been running since February 12, 2021, and drew to a close on January 31, 2022.

You may be wondering why the Lunar New Year day isn't on January 1st. This is because Lunar New Year is based on the lunar calendar, whereas January 1st is the New Year based on the Gregorian calendar. The lunar calendar is based on the monthly cycles of the Moon's phases, while the Gregorian calendar is a solar calendar based on the Earth's passage around the Sun.

Each year in the lunar calendar is represented by an animal from the Chinese zodiac system of 12 animals. This cycle of animal zodiac signs is repeated every 12 years and over the course of 60 years, each passes through the five elements: metal, water, wood, fire and earth. The 12 animals in order are: Rat, Ox/Cow, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster/Chicken, Dog, and Pig. It is believed that each zodiac animal has its own characteristics and that people born in the same year have similar personalities, similar to the Western astrological signs.

2022 is the year of the Tiger. Some of the other years of the Tiger include 2010, 1998, 1986, 1974, 1962, 1950, 1938, and 1926. This means people born in these years will share the Tiger's characteristics. This includes:

- Vigour and ambition
- Daring and courage
- Enthusiasm and generosity
- Self-confidence
- A sense of justice and a commitment to help others for the greater good

Lunar New Year is widely celebrated in many different countries across the world, including China (Spring Festival), Vietnam (Tết nguyên Đán), and Korea (Seollal). Despite the fact that these celebrations are all based on China's traditional lunar calendar, the celebrations are completely unique in their own cultures.

WHY ALL RED?

Red has been the most symbolic color in China since ancient times, representing passion, happiness, and hope. In Lunar New Year, it's a belief that red will bring good fortune and scare away evil spirits, which is why we decorate with red lanterns, couplets, paper cuttings, and give red envelopes!

The Spring Festival is one of the most important holidays in China, influencing many other Lunar New Year celebrations. China's Spring Festival traditions include putting up decorations, offering sacrifices to ancestors, eating reunion dinner with family on New Year's Eve, giving red envelopes and other gifts, firecrackers and fireworks, and watching lion and dragon dances. The Spring Festival normally lasts 16 days, from New Year's Eve to the 15th day of the New Year.

Tết nguyên Đán is one of the most celebrated and important holidays in Vietnamese culture. It is

DID YOU KNOW?

There are many superstitions on Lunar New Year's Day you should avoid, a few examples are: Washing your hair or clothes washes away luck, cleaning your house sweeps away wealth, eating porridge is said to bring poverty, and mentioning unlucky words brings it (Ex. Death).

celebrated for at least three days and many Vietnamese and Hoa people prepare for Tết by making special holiday foods and cleaning their homes. Tết nguyên Đán customs and traditions include visiting a person's house on the first day of the new year, worshipping ancestors, exchanging New Year's greetings, giving lucky money to children and the elderly, opening a shop, and visiting relatives, friends and neighbours.

Meanwhile, Seollal is considered to be a holiday reserved for families in Korean culture. During the three-day holiday, Koreans visit their hometown and gather with their family and relatives to perform an ancestral ritual called charye. As well, they practice other traditions and customs, such as wearing hanbok, eating traditional food, and playing folk games. Children also perform formal bows to their elders and receive money afterwards.

However, due to the worldwide surge in COVID-19 and now its Omicron variant, most people all around the world were unable to practice these traditions. To go through this difficult time of sickness and sporadic lockdowns, perhaps we should try to be more like the Tiger this year; vigorous with a commitment to help others for the greater good.



EXTERNALS

Valentine's Day — How it Began

Above: Saint Valentine, who actually may be multiple distinct historical characters, has different stories that are thought to be the origins of Valentine's Day. *(Fototeca Gilardi/Getty Images)*

By Anika Kanagaretnam
Co-Editor-in-Chief

Valentine's Day is a well-known holiday that occurs every year on February 14th. Although it is known as a day to celebrate love and affection, its history and origins are very different from what we know the event to be now.

The whole holiday is somewhat of a mystery, but it is suggested that it has Christian and Roman origins. There are a couple of different stories about how the holiday was created, such as the Roman festival of Lupercalia, which is celebrated in the middle of February. This festival celebrated the coming of spring and fertility, dedicated to Faunus, the Roman god of agriculture, as well as to the Roman founders Romulus and Remus.

Others claim that Valentine's Day is celebrated in the middle of February to commemorate the anniversary of Valentine's death and burial. However, there were several Christian martyrs named Valentine, leading to multiple stories within this claim. The first is that Valentine's Day may have taken its name from a priest who was martyred about 270 CE by Emperor Claudius II Gothicus. Legend says that the priest who was then imprisoned signed a letter "from your Valentine" to his jailor's daughter, whom he had befriended.

Another story was that the holiday was named after St. Valentine of Terni, a bishop, who was also beheaded by Claudius II outside Rome. It could even be possible that both of the two saints were the same person.

Another common legend is that St. Valentine was a priest who served during the third century in Rome. When Claudius II stated that single men were better soldiers than those with wives and families, he outlawed marriage for those men. Valentine realized the injustice of the decree and defied Claudius II. He did this by secretly marrying couples, and once those actions were discovered, Claudius II ordered that Valentine be put to death.

All these legends lead to the fact that this day is associated with love. Although the holiday's true history is quite unclear, every story emphasizes that Valentine was a sympathetic, heroic, and romantic figure. However, Valentine's Day was not celebrated as a day of romance until around the 14th century.

DID YOU KNOW?

The first known official celebration of Valentine's Day took place in Paris on February 14, 1400, which is when King Charles VI of France established *La cour amoureuse*, or the High Court of Love.

The oldest known written valentine that still exists today was a poem written in 1415. This was by Charles, Duke of Orleans, and was written for his wife while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London after his capture at the Battle of Agincourt. However, more formal valentine's messages started appearing in the 1500s. By the late 1700s, commercially printed cards began being produced.

Though Valentine's Day is most popular in the United States, Britain, Canada, and Australia, it is also celebrated in other countries such as Argentina, France, Mexico, and South Korea. In the Philippines, it is the most common wedding date.

BY THE NUMBERS

145M Valentine's Day cards are exchanged in the U.S. alone each year.

\$21.8B Americans' total spending for Valentine's Day in 2021.

\$23.9B Expected spending by Americans for Valentine's Day in 2022.

Although we now associate Valentine's Day with gifts of roses, chocolates, and flowers, along with exchanging valentines with one another, learning about the legends of how the holiday began is fascinating.

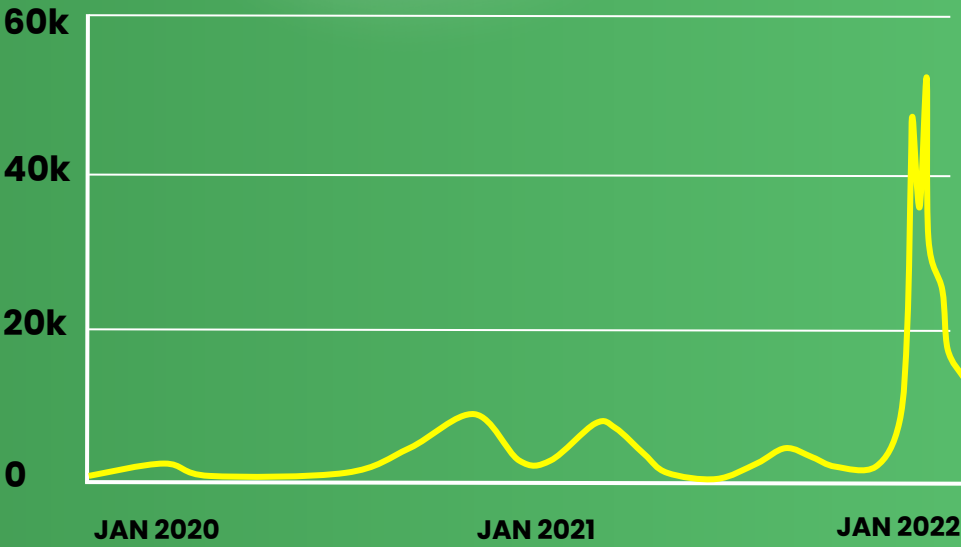
ONTARIO'S PANDEMIC UPDATE

By Anika Kanagaretnam
and Rose He
**Co-Editor-in-Chief and
Staff Writer & Designer**



Illustration by Rose He,
Staff Writer & Designer

Daily New COVID-19 Cases



By Anika Kanagaretnam and
Rose He
**Co-Editor-in-Chief and
Staff Writer & Designer**

Two-week Lockdown:

Although once hopeful that the pandemic would subside soon, the latest Omicron variant has emerged and caused hundreds of thousands of new cases in Ontario, catapulting us back to lockdowns and stricter protocols. Officials were left at a difficult position in deciding how the province should act in regards to events such as school operations amongst the current situation. Thus, their announcement was delayed twice, first to Thursday, December 30th, and then to Monday, January 3rd.

During the December 30th announcement, Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Kieran Moore, stated that the return to school would still remain in-person, but it would be pushed back by two days to January 3rd instead.

“If we don't do everything possible to get this variant under control, the results could be catastrophic. It is a risk I cannot take.”

— Doug Ford

On January 3rd, at a news conference, Premier Doug Ford announced the new changes that would be implemented to take action against the pandemic and resist the new variant. Schools were delayed from January 5th to the 7th, and schools were moved from in-person learning to remote learning until at least January 17th. He cited that the province could not guarantee that schools would be fully staffed, since many teachers were expected to be off sick. Some other restrictions included temporarily closing indoor dining and gyms. Also, non-urgent medical procedures were paused because it would overwhelm the province's health-care system, according to public health officials. "Our public health experts tell us we could see hundreds of thousands of cases every day," Ford stated. This meant that hospitals could end up thousands of beds short.

Reopening Schools:

On January 10th, Ontario schools were confirmed to reopen on Monday, the 17th. Although COVID-19 cases are continuing to rise with no sign of slowing down, it was still planned for schools to reopen on the 17th, which it did. Additionally, the leaders of two of Ontario's largest teachers unions said that they were not consulted at all about the decision, and questioned how schools were any safer than the previous week.

Karen Brown, president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, talked about how education workers should have been told ahead of time. "We had to find out via social media," Brown discussed. "The courtesy wasn't extended to us. It really sent the message to education workers that decision like this should have been communicated to us."

Furthermore, complaints came from parents after hearing that schools are no longer notifying them of all school outbreaks. On January 12th, the government announced that parents would only be notified of a potential COVID-19 outbreak when around 30% of staff and students in the school were absent, but that data would be available before the threshold was met. To continue, parents would not be notified of each COVID-19 case or exposure within their child's school. This was not the news parents wanted to hear,

considering their concerns about the potential spread of the virus.

As stated on the HWDSB website, "Due to widespread transmission of the Omicron variant and changes to the provincial testing approach, the Ministry of Education announced that it would be suspending reporting of COVID-19 cases in schools."

As of January 24th, data would become available on the province's website on a regular basis.

hwdsb
"All publicly funded and private schools will move to **remote learning starting January 5 until at least January 17**, subject to public health trends and operational considerations."

WORDS OF REACTION

"Only two weeks to flatten the curve right?!! How can you stand for this?!!!"

"Thanks for the short notice, 1 day to prepare is perfect... They should have added a couple more days for parents to prepare."

"YAY thank you!!!"

"Watch my grades sink further down then the titanic bc of this."

"Lockdowns helped my family feel safer, I wasn't risking their health by going to school in person."

"These 20s are so roaring."

"Right, the Roadmap to reopen and then reclose and then reopen and close and open and close and close and open and open and close."

What's up with Omicron?

Ever since the coronavirus emerged in late 2019, like all viruses do, it began to mutate. Every time a virus replicates, its genetic code can undergo random minor errors, as the duplications are not always exact. Over time, these small changes lead to alterations in the virus' surface proteins or antigens, creating a mutated virus, which is known as a variant of the original virus.

To provide some background information, the Omicron variant was first reported by scientists in South Africa on November 24th, 2021. They discovered that this variant had an alarming amount of high mutations and distinct alteration, leading the World Health Organization (WHO) to officially name this variant as Omicron. This

follows the Greek alphabet, as always, but skipping Nu in regards to similarities to New, and Xi in regards to the common surname. WHO has three distinct categories it can place a variant in: a variant of interest, a variant of concern, and a variant of high consequence. Luckily, Omicron nor any other previous variants as of now has been classified as a variant of high consequence.

The WHO claimed that Omicron was said to be a variant of concern immediately two days after its discovery. A variant of concern simply means a variant that has been observed to be more infectious, thus being more likely to cause breakthroughs or re-infections in those who are vaccinated or previously infected. Experts believe that the Omicron variant has over 30 mutations, where many of these mutations are on the spike protein, the part of the virus that enters human cells. These mutations are the cause of the higher transmission rates, as well as the higher chance of escaping the body's vaccinated immune defences, compared to the original strain of the virus. Along with Omicron, the Alpha, Beta, Gamma, and Delta variants are also all classified as variants of concern.

In terms of the symptoms caused by the Omicron variant, so far, the symptoms are reported to be relatively mild, particularly for those who are vaccinated. One key difference observed as of now is that those who have been diagnosed with Omicron have no reports of a significant loss of taste and smell. As Omicron is still considered fairly new, the minimal data can only somewhat confirm the main symptoms of the variant, which are not too different from the commonly known symptoms already:

- Cough
- Fatigue or tiredness
- Congestion and runny nose
- Sore throat
- Headache or fever
- Muscle aches

Health pathologist Shangxin Yang from the University of California shares insight on why the variant is seen as much more dangerous than the original strain, as he suggests that the reasoning for these current breakthroughs of the vaccine is how we are having "a vaccine that was created almost two years ago for a virus that appeared two years ago." This puts the variants on a higher level than us: we would need to evolve and alter our vaccines to match the variant's changes. "Once we have a vaccine that is based on the current variant, we can catch up with the virus," Yang continues.

Though many are tired of hearing more news of another COVID-19 strand discovery, there is no other way to prevent this; as long as the coronavirus continues to spread throughout the global population, mutations will inevitably arise. All we can do is remain safe by following COVID-19 protocols and, as usual, wait for future vaccines to help protect us.

Views & Voices

The *Gazette's* staff weigh in on what they believe matters with essays, opinions, reviews and advice.



VOICES
The Phantom of the Opera: A Review
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VOICES

Exploring Careers In Political Science

Above: Learn about the field of political science and the careers that can be pursued through studying this during post-secondary school. (**Vita Rao/The Royal Gazette**)

By Amy Kim
Staff Writer

By the name of it, you may assume that political science is a major where you discuss elections and politicians. However, what people think of as “politics” are very different from political science.

Political science is a form of social science that studies governments and political power systems, as well as the analysis of political activities, thought, and behaviour, along with the related constitutions and laws. In a brief sense, it is a study as to why people behave the way they do in a political context.

Political science majors explore diverse topics in politics. This includes political theory, international relations, and comparative politics. The University of Winnipeg adds that “political science students learn about how politics permeates almost every aspect of our lives, how to pursue knowledge and career dreams, and how, as responsible and active citizens, to make a positive difference in our world”.

The University of Michigan describes that political science students develop a “broad range of skills” that can prepare them for their future careers. This includes skills like public speaking, writing, logical and critical thinking, data interpretation, and more.

Political science is the most

popular major of law school candidates, with the skills mentioned above proving useful in law school. Additionally, the legal system is closely related to the government, and political science gives students a strong understanding of the theoretical and practical aspects of government and legislation.

Even if you are not planning to go into law or graduate school, a degree in political science can open careers in all sorts of areas, such as the private sector, government, and journalism.

The following is a list from www.utm.utoronto.ca that provides some of the careers and jobs that political science graduates can pursue. Note that some may require further education and experience.

Private Sector

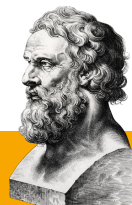
- Budget Analyst
- Communications Officer
- Financial/Business Consultant
- Financial Planner
- Human Resources Specialist
- Market Analyst
- Researcher
- Sales Manager
- Public Opinion Analyst
- Public Relations Specialist
- Lawyer

Journalism

- Editor
- Press Officer
- Print Journalist
- Publisher
- Public Relations Specialist
- Television and Radio Journalist

Government

- Public Policy Analyst
- Financial/Economic Analyst
- Social Policy Program Officer
- Foreign Service Officer
- Immigration & Revenue Officer
- Legislative Analyst
- Political Aide
- Politician
- Lobbyist
- Diplomat
- Customs Officer
- Economic Development Officer



DID YOU KNOW?

Political science originated with the ancient Greeks in the first century BCE. A philosopher named Plato wrote numerous dialogues about politics, questioning the nature of justice, what constitutes a good government, and what is truly the best for humanity. Afterwards, his student, Aristotle, added onto these statements more mathematically: observing and describing the types of governments through a systematic approach.

There is much debate about whether political science is a good major to pursue. Some argue that it is because it is versatile and can lead to a variety of careers. Some argue that it isn't because it does not provide you with a solid backup plan if working in the field doesn't work out. However, these are both valid opinions. In the end, your perspective on political science will depend on whether it is what you aspire to study and are interested in.



VOICES

5 Tips On Staying Healthy During Virtual Learning

Above: Although there can be negative effects on students caused by virtual learning, there are several ways to make these undesirable circumstances more enjoyable. (**Rose He/The Royal Gazette**)

By Munia Khondker
Staff Writer

Unfortunately, many of us are having to transition to virtual learning time-to-time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For many, this unexpected transition can affect one's mental and physical health. For some people, the shift to online learning is a positive experience, but for others, it is a negative one. Despite this, the only thing we can do is focus on the positive during times that are out of our control. Here are five tips to stay healthy both mentally and physically during virtual learning!

1. Create A Proper Study Space!

It is tempting to wake up a minute before class, log on to Microsoft Teams, then go to sleep during class. However, by creating a proper study space and not laying in bed, you can increase your productivity levels which will in turn allow you to be more successful in school. Try sitting in an area with a desk, adequate lighting, a good chair with back support, and a place where there are limited distractions. It is important to keep your phone and other devices out of sight, as they can distract you from learning. I keep mine downstairs as I am less likely to go all the way downstairs to get it.

2. Eat Healthy & Drink Lots of Water!

The key to better health starts with eating healthier and drinking at least eight glasses of water each day. It is easy to munch on chips and snacks, but

doing so could worsen your cardiovascular health. Instead of consuming unhealthy food, try healthier snack alternatives. This includes foods such as apples and hummus, grapes, or yogurt. Make sure you are eating enough as well. Food is fuel! Drinking enough water is also important to regulate body temperature, prevent infections, deliver nutrients to your cells, and keep your organs functioning.

3. Go On Daily Walks!

The weather might be harsh during the current winter but bundle up and go on a walk! Walking around the block for at least 30 minutes increases cardiovascular fitness, reduces body fat, and develops muscle strength. Walking is free and doesn't require any special equipment. It is also a great opportunity to view nature, which is not only beautiful but encourages pleasant feelings and helps create a positive mindset. There are some beautiful local trails in Ancaster such as the Radial Right of Way on Lions Club Rd, Sherman Falls on Lions Club Rd, and trails in Tiffany Falls Conservation Area on Wilson St. Take a peek when you have the time!

4. Call Your Friends!

Being stuck at home can make you feel isolated and lonely, which can create a strain on your mental health. As humans, we need social interactions and with school being the place where most of us communicate with each other, it's hard to keep our mental health intact. This is where Zoom calls and Facetime come into play! Try to Facetime or Zoom call some of your

close friends. You can all communicate with each other virtually while following COVID-19 health guidelines. Remember, it's only one call away!

5. Limit Screen Time!

As we transition to online school, it's hard to not stay on screens as school takes up much of our day. When you have the chance to, take a break from your screens, especially during the night. The blue light that is emitted from devices reduces your body's production of melatonin, a hormone that regulates your sleep cycle. By limiting the amount of time you are spending on screens, you are balancing out hormones in your body so it does not put a strain on how much sleep you are getting. Sleep is important for your body to keep both your mental and physical health intact. If you have to stay on screens, try investing in a pair of blue light glasses to block out eye strain.

Even once your online schooling or e-learning is completed, these tips can continue to help you improve your mental and physical health.

NEGATIVE EFFECTS

Online classes are seen to give many students a harder time learning due to the effects they experienced when isolated at home. Some are:

- Lack of interest
- Stress and anxiety
- Fatigue of Zoom/Teams
- Eyesight problems
- Lack of classroom ethics
- Bad ergonomics
- Lack of physical activities
- And many more



**ROYAL REVIEW:**


**GENRE:**
Gothic, Mystery, Thriller, Romance, Drama



VOICES

The Phantom of the Opera: Is There; Inside Your Mind...

Above: *The Phantom of the Opera*, originally titled *Le Fantôme de l’Opéra*, was written by French author Gaston Leroux and was first published as a serial in *Le Gaulois* (1909–1910), then released in volume form later on. **(Elizabeth Shapiro)**

 By Selina Hazin
Staff Writer

Perhaps you’re familiar with the play, the musical, the movie, or simply recall the title, but the legendary story of *The Phantom of the Opera* all started with the written volumes by Gaston Leroux. To start, I don’t like to overrate books or give 5/5 reviews, but I was pleasantly surprised as I found myself enjoying this book much more than I initially thought I would (I even stayed up past 1:00am to finish it), and I think it’s earned the rank of my favourite book ever.

I can’t comment too much on the writing, since the original story is French and I read merely a translated copy. However, a modern translated version is the perfect classic novel since it’s converted to modern English writing so there’s none of the old English comprehension struggle that comes with most classics. But despite not being in its native language, the writing still kept its residual lyrical and poetic flow.

The narration is quite fascinating as well- it’s told by an unnamed narrator (who seems to be a reporter or journalist of some sort) who tells the story through various sources they’ve acquired, attempting to convince you that the story of *The Phantom of the Opera* is more than just an urban legend.


It’s likely obvious that a story

so famous would have a genuinely interesting plot, and *the Phantom of The Opera* is no exception - I finally understand why there’s so much commendation for the story. Not only is the plot interesting and entertaining throughout the entire story, but the characters make it so much better. Even during some of the narrative’s most terrifying moments, the characters acted as some kind of comedic relief, while cleverly advancing the plot. I personally didn’t like the romantic plot between the main characters, but I absolutely adored every side character and how they contributed to the story. All of the characters (ballerinas, singers, managers etc.) were almost like caricatures of their actual role. The best thing about the plot is that it carried the vintage aspects of a classic while combining it with an intriguing fantastical touch. It genuinely never got boring, either. It threw a plethora of scenarios and layers at you - not in an overwhelming, unorganized way, but in a perfect execution that played out auspiciously by the end.

While I think *the Phantom of the Opera* is definitely worth the read, I can’t speak for those who’ve seen a stage or cinematic adaptation beforehand, since the book is the first piece of media surrounding the story I’m familiar with. You’ll probably also understand or appreciate the story more if you have any kind of knowledge on music, opera or singing in some form (which I unfortunately do not) because those are mentioned

numerous times, but even if you don’t, it won’t interfere with the story at all - it is just an added benefit if you do.

DID YOU KNOW?



This novel is the original story that led to the famous musical adaptation, which received several awards and takes the title of the longest running Broadway show. Some events in the book, such as the infamous chandelier falling, were based on real events at the Paris opera.


Though the novel demonstrated a spectacular adventure, there wasn’t exactly an overall meaning or lesson (take that how you will). There are also some fairly shocking chapters, but I don’t believe there were any plot twists. I will, however, praise the abundance of foreshadowing (because who doesn’t love some *good* foreshadowing?). The ending was pretty bittersweet, neither happy nor sad, but it *did* leave me pensive for a long time after its conclusion.

If you’d enjoy insane composers who wear masks and live underground, a catch-22 love triangle (at least in my opinion), comedy despite dire circumstances, 1880’s Paris theatre vibes, ghosts that also demand an income, questionable infrastructure management, grasshoppers, and scorpions, then I’m sure you’ll absolutely adore *The Phantom of the Opera*.

Overall rating - 5/5 stars

Arts & Culture

The latest on what’s happening in the world of **entertainment, lifestyle, and pop culture.**

**ARTS & CULTURE**
Valentine’s Day Treats!
pg 15



ARTS & CULTURE

The Matrix Resurrections: Is it Worth the Hype?

Above: Eighteen years after the previous installment, Keanu Reeves reprised his iconic role of Neo in *The Matrix*. **Resurrections. (Grobbar/Deadline)**

 By Arnold Fu
Staff Writer & Editor

After nearly 20 years without an installment, the Matrix saga released its newest edition on December 22, 2021 with *The Matrix: Resurrections*. The movie saw the return of an aged Neo (Keanu Reeves), Trinity (Carrie-Anne Moss) and Niobe (Jada Pinkett Smith), along with other loved characters with new actors, such as Morpheus (Yahya Abdul-Mateen II) and Agent Smith (Jonathan Groff). The movie even saw the return of Lana Wachowski as director.

This article will contain minor spoilers for *The Matrix: Resurrections*, with large portions of the beginning exposed, and will also require some forms of knowledge about the previous *The Matrix* movies. Skip the following paragraphs if you want to discover the movie without spoilers.

The movie begins with Bugs, a Matrix escapee, and her operator, Sequoia, visiting a piece of looping old code. After finding it was a trap, Bugs runs and hides before confronting Morpheus, a program who has also escaped from the Matrix. They then exit the Matrix, destined to find who coded the loop to prevent them from potentially deleting Morpheus.

We are then introduced to Neo, a flourishing video game designer who came to fame with his hit video game series *The Matrix*, unconsciously based on his memories in the previous trilogy. He meets Trinity, now named Tiffany, as a married mother of three, however, neither recognize each other. Morpheus pinpoints the looping code

to a file on Neo’s computer, and successfully rescues Neo from the Matrix, while accidentally setting Agent Smith, who had survived by “bonding” to Neo, free. However, Trinity remains wired in.

As Neo and Trinity together are necessary to maintain a power supply, the Matrix’s Analyst demands that Neo voluntarily enter his pod, threatening to kill Trinity. A dangerous game of bluffs and wagers ensues; as Neo attempts to convince Trinity to escape, The Analyst tries to stop him with all his might, and a wild Agent Smith remains on the loose.


The Matrix: Resurrections certainly maneuvers away from *The Matrix*’s tradition of exploring key philosophical questions such as free will and what defines reality. Instead, it seems to focus on the complex, orchestrated action sequences also synonymous with the series, which it does with varying degrees of success. Overall, while the sequences are one-of-a-kind, they lack narrative purpose and ultimately distract and delay from the rest of the movie.


In addition, the movie also chose to lower the stakes on just saving Trinity, a major drop from ensuring the safety of Zion or securing peace between humanity and the machines. Low stakes led to a less theatrically powerful climax, as the outcomes for failure were extremely lowered.

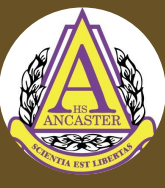
Momentum with the movie’s narrative was also unnecessarily broken several times. A well-made movie will make the audience want to see the next scene, but *Resurrections* struggled to continue this throughout the movie, choosing to pause for exposition and action sequences, ultimately breaking up the flow of the narrative and decreasing the meaning of the given information.

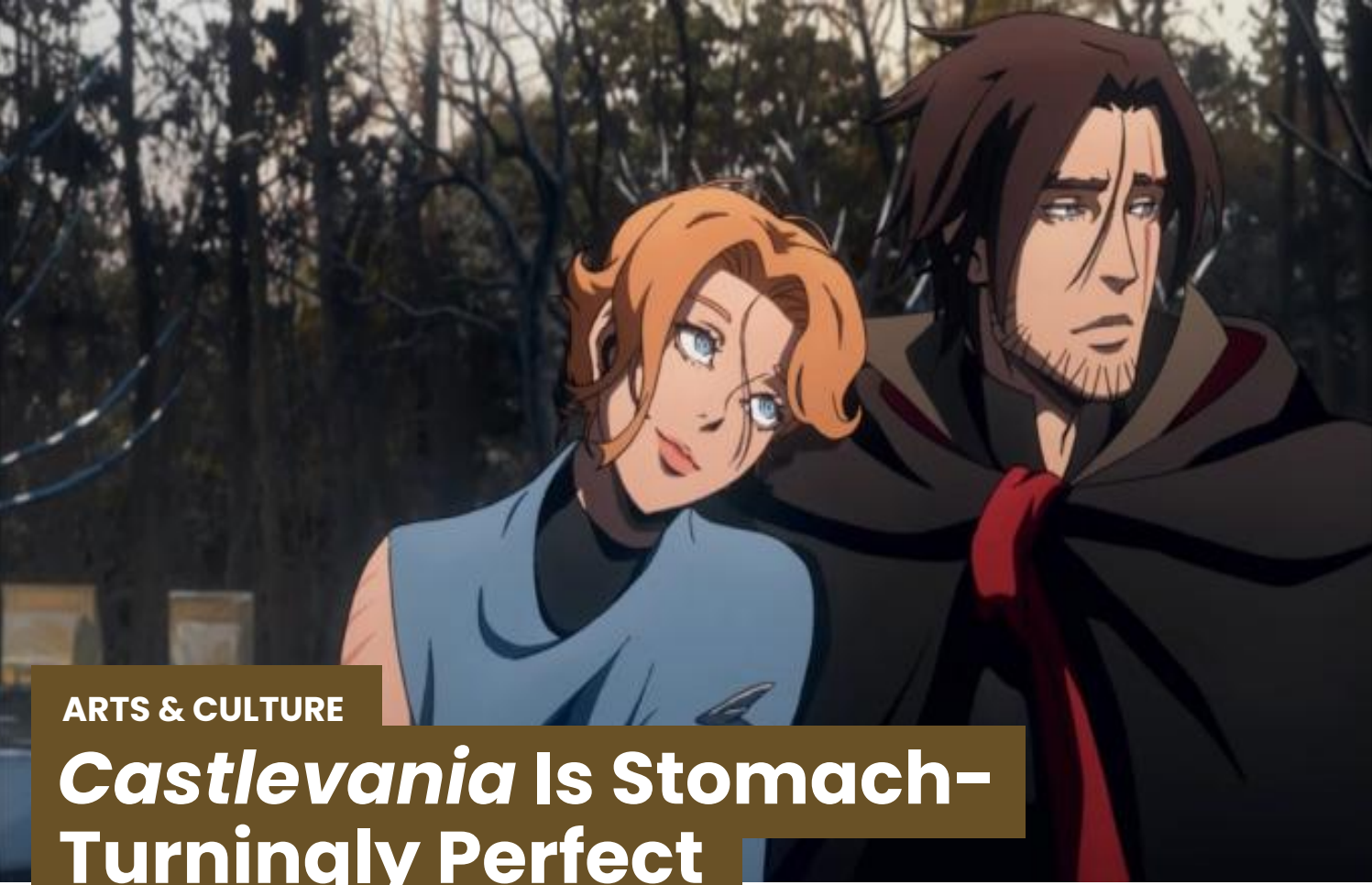
However, *Resurrections* manages to still be watchable, with powerful and interesting action scenes, a partially-intriguing plot, and new takes on key elements such as the Matrix’s Agents. I would rate the film a 5.5/10: enough to suffice at entertaining you, but not enough to be a first pick. Watch if you would like, but acknowledge that there would likely be a better use of your time.

Ratings for *Resurrections* have been mixed, with a 64% critic rating on Rotten Tomatoes and a 63% rating from audiences. The movie was a box office bomb, making \$12 million in the opening weekend against the predicted \$40 million. Costing \$190 million, *The Matrix: Resurrections* grossed only \$136 million, meaning the film has yet to turn a profit.

**Rotten Tomatoes:**
63%

**IMDb:**
5.7/10

**Royal Review:**
5.5/10



ARTS & CULTURE

Castlevania Is Stomach-Turning Perfect

Above: Based on the Japanese video game, *Castlevania* premiered on Netflix in July 2017. It was a major commercial success, garnering millions of viewers around the world. **(Deadline)**

By Victoria Lu
Staff Writer & Editor

Amidst the hype of *Attack on Titan* Final Season Part 2, I will not be adding in my two cents, as I have not watched it yet. Instead, I will be recommending another show that I believe deserves more attention: *Castlevania*.

An animated spin on the classic video game franchise, the story focuses on Trevor Belmont and his quest to save the world from destruction by the infamous Vlad Dracula Tepes. Along the way, he teams up with unlikely comrades to fulfill his mission; a simple yet immaculately executed plot that requires no prior knowledge to enjoy.

To begin, the plot that was described previously only covers the first half of the series, while the latter focuses on the aftermath of Belmont's actions. I really enjoyed this, as I was able to learn more about the world, beyond just Dracula. Instead of focusing on him as the main villain, he was used more as a point of reference to the events that occurred after. The characters are strongly influenced by his actions, but are ultimately guiding the story with their own decisions and goals. By using Dracula as a plot anchor in this way, all parts of the story flowed easily, despite the numerous side plots along the way.

There were many side plots

with many distinct characters, and I fell in love with all of them. Each character was written with strong, distinguishable personalities with interesting aspirations, and when aforementioned aspirations eventually clashed, viewers could empathize with both sides. One of my favourite characters was Carmilla, Queen of Styria. While her actions often contradicted my own values, I often found myself secretly rooting for her, because she was portrayed in such a powerful and dignified way. She was a cunning and charismatic villainess, and never betrayed her own morals.

Another thing that I enjoyed about the portrayal of the characters was that many were morally gray; they acted off of self-interest rather than "the greater good". I thought that this was very refreshing, because it was more engaging to let viewers decide whether they agree or disagree with a character's actions. It also incentivises viewers to reflect on their own moral compasses, which was a unique experience.

Furthermore, an aspect that brought the characters to life was the dialogue. Every interaction felt very natural, and the script was masterfully crafted to replicate a believable medieval setting. The voice work was phenomenal; every voice was unique and matched the characters perfectly, with a plethora of fantastic accents that further encapsulated the viewer. It was personally some of the most

memorable and impressive performances I've heard in any animated series.

Lastly, I must mention the animation. What I saw absolutely took my breath away. There were many scenes filled with gore, and I was expecting the typical blood spills and a few half-baked skeletons every once in a while, but that was not the case. The animators were very thorough with every violent scene, and to spare any queasy readers, I will not elaborate further; only that they were a sight to behold, for better or worse. The rest of the animation was fluid and beautiful, with outstanding character design and phenomenal landscapes to top it off; certainly the cherry on top of a pristine cake.

In conclusion, *Castlevania* is a must-watch for those who like dark fantasy. Due to adult themes, it is definitely not for everyone, especially those who have a queasy stomach. However, I implore those who are even slightly interested to give it a try, because it is truly a one-of-a-kind experience. 10/10.

"Another thing that I enjoyed about the portrayal of the characters was that many were morally gray; they acted off of self-interest rather than 'the greater good'."



POSITIVE RECEPTION

Ever since its release in July 2021, *Young Royals* has been praised for its accuracy from its casting of teenagers for teenage roles and showing of different skin textures. David Opie, the acting TV editor for *Digital Spy*, claimed that *Young Royals* "excels most when it comes to the central romance between Wilhelm and Simon." TV critic Flora Carr of *Radio Times*, also stated that "the authentically teenage cast may also prove a breath of fresh air" for younger viewers.



ARTS & CULTURE

Young Royals: Loyalty or Love?

Above: Netflix released 6 episodes of *Young Royals* in July 2021, a teen drama television series set in Sweden which stars Edvin Ryding as Prince Wilhelm (left) and Omar Rudberg as Simon Eriksson (right). This show centres around the growing connection between these two main characters. **(Netflix)**

By Sneha Desai
Staff Writer & Editor

If you are like me and will probably spend your Valentine's day alone, *Young Royals* is the perfect show that you can binge all evening on February 14th. *Young Royals* was released on July 1st of 2021, and it follows the lives of those at the Hillerserka Boarding School, specifically the relationship between Wilhelm and Simon.

The Netflix show is about the lives at Swedish private school called Hillerserka. The main focus is on the relationship that unfurls with Swedish Prince Wilhelm and Simon Eriksson. There is some focus on side characters such as Wilhelm's second cousin, August, his friend, Felice, and Simon's sister, Sara. We see what the other characters go through at this school and the mysteries that intertwine. Many secrets spill in this first season, with more to come in the future.

The main focus of this show is that Wilhelm is involved in a fight, and to prevent any further damage to the Crown, his parents send Wilhelm to the Hillerserka Boarding School. This show is about Wilhelm's time there and the

choices he makes. The relationship between Wilhelm and Simon is the main focus. We see Wilhelm's constant worry, loyalty or love? It is a constant question Wilhelm faces, making this show a great one to binge on Valentine's Day. It has romance and drama, but also some trigger warnings I would recommend you check before watching the show.

Although the show came out on Netflix on July 1st, 2021, its immense success has led the show to be confirmed for a second season, and production is said to begin soon. Season 2's release date has not been confirmed yet.

IT'S CONFIRMED!

Season 2 is coming to Netflix in 2022! Stay tuned!


Though the show takes place in Sweden and the dialogue is in Swedish, you can turn on English subtitles or watch the show as an English dub. Most of the show is in Hillerserka, though there are some scenes in Simon's home town, Bjärstad.


But really, why should you watch this show? This show has POC representation, *actual* teenagers


playing as teenagers, and has characters who *don't* have perfect skin, because none of us do. Especially when we are teenagers. It deals with a lot of serious topics so as mentioned earlier, please check the trigger warnings! None of these characters are perfect, they all have something to hide. It's full of drama, suspense and slow-burn.

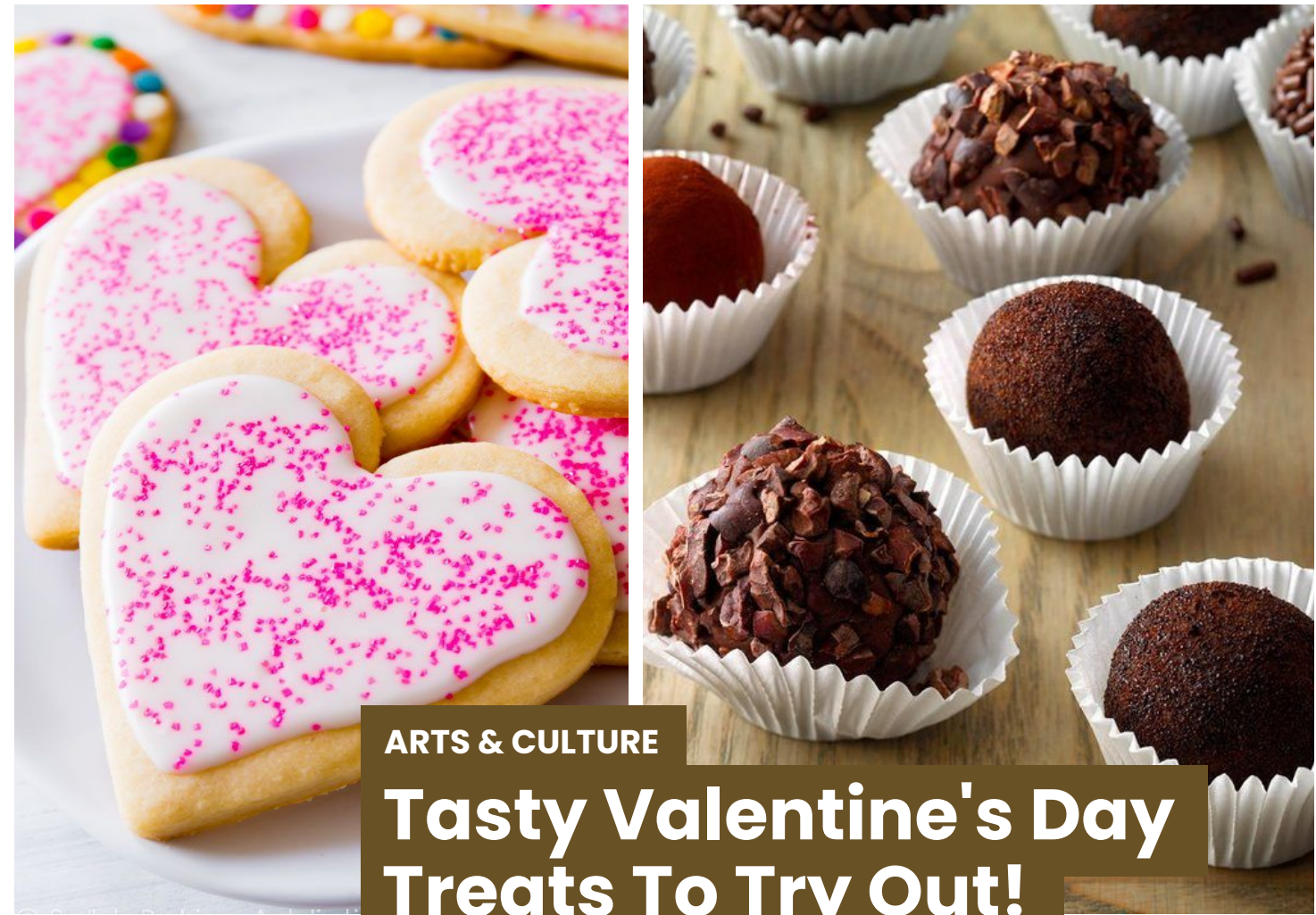
"This show has POC representation... has characters who don't have perfect skin... It's full of drama, suspense and slow-burn."

I hope you enjoy this show as much as I did, and a Happy Valentine's to you all, single or not.

**Rotten Tomatoes: 99%**

**IMDb: 8.5/10**

**Google: 5/5 Stars**



ARTS & CULTURE

Tasty Valentine's Day Treats To Try Out!

Above: Fun sugar cookies with a royal icing and sprinkles (left) and delicious chocolate truffles (right). Learn how to make them for family, friends, and your significant other in this article! *(Sally's Baking Addiction & Taste of Home)*

By Amy Kim
Staff Writer

Valentine's day is just around the corner. Who's going to be your Valentine? Do you have any romantic plans?

Contrary to popular belief, Valentine's Day is not just about lovers, but it is for friends and family as well. Of course, Valentine's Day is not the only day to share our love with those around us, but it is another opportunity to let our friends and family know that we love and appreciate them.

Now, let's take this chance to express our love and appreciation to our friends and family by making them a little treat:

Recipe 1: Sugar Cookies

These classic sugar cookies make wonderful Valentine's Day gifts. You can decorate them in whatever Valentine's Day designs you want. You can even put cute messages on them! Bonus points if you cut them out in heart shapes.

- Ingredients:**
- 3 cups white flour
 - 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
 - 1/4 teaspoon salt
 - 1/8 teaspoon cinnamon
 - 1 cup soft butter
 - 1 cup white sugar
 - 1 egg
 - 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 - 1/4 teaspoon almond extract

Instructions:

1. Take the following dry ingredients: flour, baking powder, salt, and cinnamon and mix them in one bowl
2. In another bowl, take the following ingredients: butter, sugar, egg, vanilla, and almond extract and mix until it is fluffy
3. Add the dry mixture to the wet mixture little by little
4. The dough should be firm, easily peeled away from the bowl, and no longer sticky. If the dough turns out too wet, add more flour
5. On a lightly floured surface, knead it until it is malleable
6. Roll the dough out with a rolling pin, 2cm to 3cm thick
7. Cut out into desired shapes
8. Put the cookies on wax paper and bake them in the oven at 375 F for 15 minutes

Royal Icing

Ingredients:

- 3 cups powdered sugar
- 1 tablespoon melted butter
- 1/8 teaspoon almond extract
- 6-8 tablespoons warm water
- Food colouring

Instructions:

1. In a large bowl, whip all the ingredients together until desired consistency
2. Divide the icing into the number of colours wanted
3. Add food colouring to the icing batches
4. MAKE SURE THE COOKIE IS COMPLETELY COOL. Decorate cookies with icing.

Recipe 2: Chocolate Truffles

If you're not a baker or if you don't have access to an oven, don't worry, I got you. Although these chocolate truffles are easy and simple to make, they are full of sincerity and make for a perfect Valentine's Day gift. It's soft, sweet, and very delicious.

Ingredients:

- 200g dark chocolate
- 100g heavy cream
- Topping of choice (cocoa powder, sprinkles, etc)

Instructions:

1. Chop the chocolate into small pieces and put it into a bowl
2. Heat up the heavy cream and pour it over the chopped chocolate
3. Let the chocolate and the cream sit in the bowl for a few minutes
4. After a few minutes, stir until the chocolate is melted
5. Put the mixture in the refrigerator until set, usually about 1-2 hours
6. Roll it into balls and coat in toppings. An easy way to do this is by putting your toppings and your chocolate balls in a plastic bag and shaking it. This will allow your truffles to be coated with toppings evenly

Psst! Make sure to solve our crossword for the chance to be featured in next month's issue!



Monthly Diversions

Thought-provoking, topical, and enjoyable crosswords, quizzes, and horoscopes.

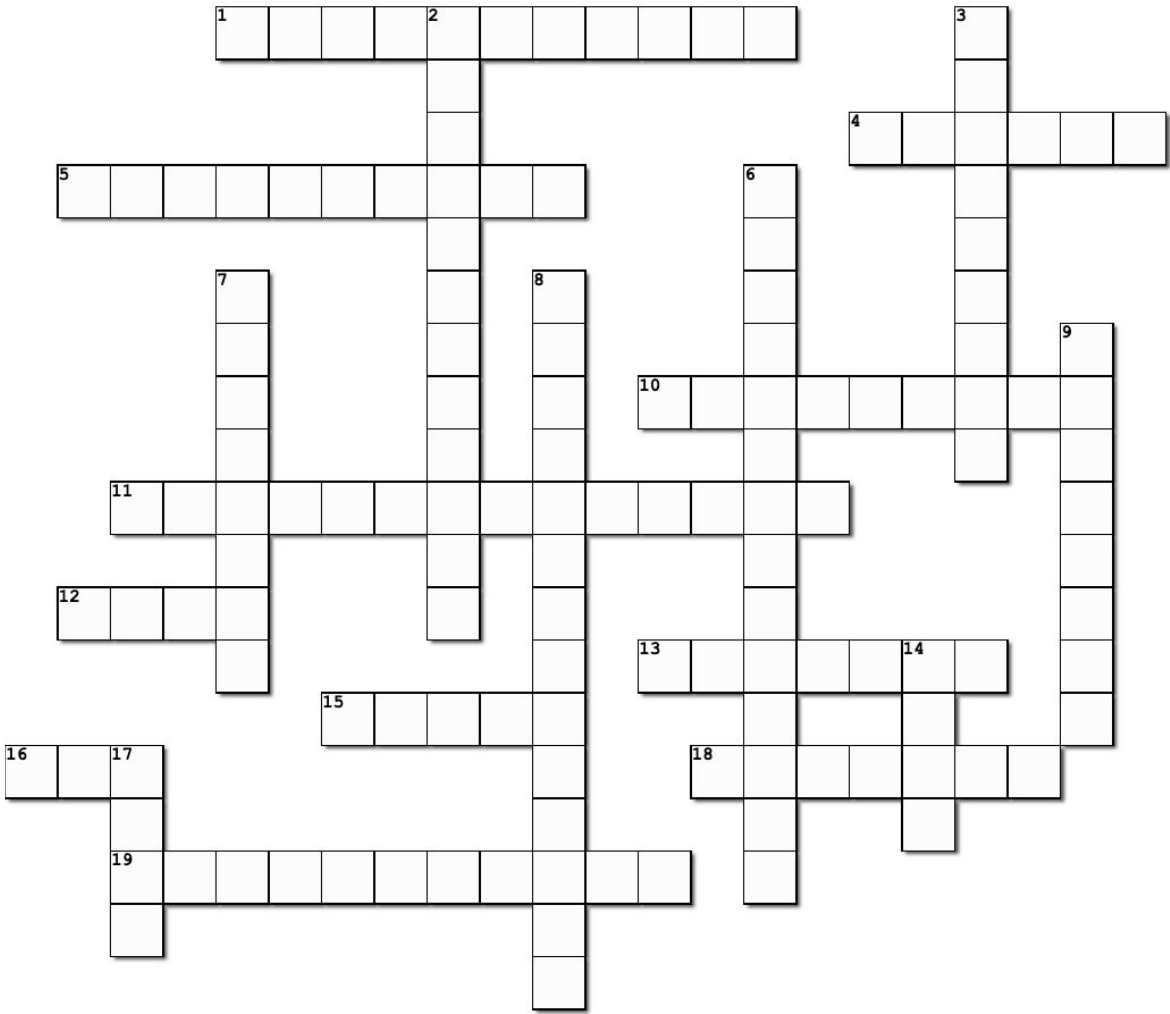


DIVERSIONS
Horoscopes
pg 18

DIVERSIONS

The Royal Gazette Crossword

Below: Be sure to post and tag us in or DM us your completed crossword. The quickest Royals will be featured in next month's edition! *(The Teacher's Corner)*



Across

1. In To All the Boys I've Loved Before, Lara Jean writes five of these.
4. This light source is made of wax and highly flammable
5. Benjamin Bear is an example of this typical Valentine's Day present.
10. Giving it to your crush is the key, this confection is made from the seeds of a certain tree.
11. The presumed inventor of Valentine's Day
12. This object – while most commonly associated with marriage proposals – shares a name with a home security system.
13. A small, handheld flower arrangement
15. He shoots arrows of love
16. The term for heart in Latin
18. Rihanna released a song about this gemstone
19. These small, conveniently-shaped candies come with love-related messages on them.

Down

2. Created by Dr. Gary Chapman, these describe one's ideal way of giving and receiving love.
3. A third party delivers an assortment of candies – usually with an accompanying message – to one's crush.
6. Taylor Swift wrote a song about this iconic Shakespearean couple.
7. After this ceremony, one may call their significant other their "spouse"
8. This is when an individual shares their adoration for someone, without revealing their identity.
9. Valentine's Day month
14. The Greek mythological god of love
17. The flower that dies if The Beast doesn't find true love

DIVERSIONS

Choose Your Story and
Get a Midnight Snack
Recommendation

By Victoria Lu
Staff Writer & Editor

You wake up and find yourself in a strange magical forest with no recollection of how you got there. What do you do?

- a. Walk around and try to find a landmark or something I recognize.
- b. Try to secure some food and water for survival.
- c. Go back to sleep until a strange force forces me to get up.

While walking, you fall into a ditch. How clumsy. How do you plan to get out?

- a. Yell for help. Surely someone has to pass by soon.
- b. Climb out, obviously.
- c. Sleep it off.

While trying to escape the ditch, a girl helps you out. She says that her house is not too far from the meadow. Do you follow her?

- a. Yes, you have no other leads and it's better to take the risk.
- b. No. Stranger danger.
- c. Yes, I might finally get some sleep.

You go back to her cottage for medical help. Suddenly, you hear noises. It is a robber that didn't plan out his robbery correctly. He opens the door to the room. What do you do?

- a. Use the girl as a shield.
- b. Grab the nearest object to use as a weapon.
- c. Glare at the robber until he breaks eye contact out of embarrassment.

You somehow manage to intimidate the robber into leaving, and the girl turns to you and thanks you. She heads to the kitchen to prepare some food. What do you do?

- a. Wait patiently for the food.
- b. Plan my escape in case she tries to poison me.
- c. Fall back asleep after the rude awakening from the robber.

The food comes, and you give in to your hunger. After the thankfully non-poisoned food, she asks what your plans are moving forward. How do you reply?

- a. I'll go where the wind takes me.
- b. I'll travel around to learn about this world.
- c. I'll find a good hotel with the best bed.

If you picked mostly a's... you should eat a cookie!

If you picked mostly b's... you should eat some cereal!

If you picked mostly c's... you should forget about that midnight snack and get some sleep!



HOROSCOPES



Aries ♈
March 21 - April 19
Look at you go! You're doing great, and you'll be having a very productive month. Start the project that you've been putting off, because this is the time to do it.

Cancer ♋
June 21 - July 22
Take charge this month! Connect with your friends, and start some friendly competition with those you're close with. It's all in good fun!

Libra ♎
September 23 - October 22
Relax a little. It's been rough, but bright times are on the horizon. Take the time to step back from everything and find yourself again.

Capricorn ♐
December 22 - January 19
Someone may try and give you less than what you deserve. Stay sharp, stand your ground, and do not give in.

Taurus ♉
April 20 - May 20
You'll be humbled this month. Remember to watch those around you, because they could be the ones to do so.

Leo ♌
July 23 - August 22
When in doubt, don't be afraid to call a friend. You've been struggling lately, and it is important to remember the people around you that are ready to help.

Scorpio ♏
October 23 - November 21
Be careful with the amount of work you take on. You could find yourself fulfilling the expectations of others that you have no obligation to do.

Aquarius ♒
January 20 - February 18
A big decision will soon arrive before you. Do not be hasty. Reflect on the options, and be sure of what you want before moving forward.

Gemini ♊
May 21 - June 20
Take a rest, you've done so much. Watch some Netflix, go for a walk. The world can wait, because it's time for some self care.

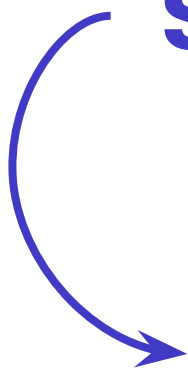
Virgo ♍
August 23 - September 22
Your goal for this month is to heal. You may have experienced tough times, and taking time for yourself is not a bad thing. Take care of yourself, because you matter the most.

Sagittarius ♐
November 22 - December 21
You may feel as if everything is out to get you this month. Remember to stay calm and to not let the small things bring you down.

Pisces ♓
February 19 - March 20
If there is something you are hesitant about, now is the time to take that step forward. Have confidence in yourself, you can do it!

By: Victoria Lu &
Grace Wang

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Agrata Pathak
Anika Kanagaretnam
Rose He
Vita Rao

Illustrators & Photographers

Rose He
Vita Rao

Editors

Anika Kanagaretnam
Arav Patel
Arnold Fu
Eden Ridpath
Grace Wang
John Kerr
Lindsay Liu
Saihaj Law
Sanya Patel
Selina Hazin
Sneha Desai
Thomas Lin
Victoria Lu
Vita Rao

Writers

Amy Kim
Anika Kanagaretnam
Arnold Fu
Grace Wang
John Kerr
Munia Khondker
Rose He
Selina Hazin
Sneha Desai
Victoria Lu

Contact Us



@ahsroyalgazette



gazetteroyal@gmail.com



tinyurl.com/AHSRoyalGazette

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