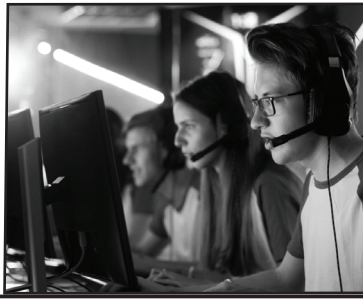


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# The Spectrum

◆ e cineribus et ad astra ◆

SEPTEMBER • VOL. 39, BACK-TO-SCHOOL ISSUE

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

www.thespectrumabrhs.com

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Don't go down Senior Staircase, or else!

Serena Han / Co-Editor-in-Chief

## The Spectrum: Our Student-Run Newspaper

By NEHA SARAVANAN '22  
*Spectrum Staff*

It's 3 P.M. on a Thursday afternoon. You're taking a leisurely stroll in the corridors of Upper South when you hear the overwhelming clacking of keyboards. You follow your ears into Room 152W and find yourself facing a number of fat cat lamps, sleep-deprived students clad in green, and your favorite snacks. You're intrigued at first glance, as you should be.

The newspaper in your hands right now? This is *The Spectrum*. To some, it is an outlet of information, knowledge, and guidance. To others, it's a club filled with hardworking and passionate writers, photographers, editors, comic artists, finance managers, organizers, and more. Members of *The Spectrum* would tell you it's a group of people who work to assemble a thought-provoking product that spreads diverse perspectives to AB students.

*The Spectrum* covers everything from school events, community news, global dilemmas, and even reviews of various media (music, movies, etc.), but its overall goal is to inform and represent the students of AB.

Meetings take place on Thursdays after school. During meetings, *The Spectrum* staff explores journal-

ism and the craft of writing, editing, organizing and funding a newspaper. Members build on existing writing and analytical abilities, improve their organizational skills, forge bonds with others, and ultimately have a productive yet enjoyable time. Ms. Hammond and Ms. Kennedy, the advisors of *The Spectrum*, help the staff's endeavors. As the chief staff supports the rest of the staff, everybody finds themselves juggling a napkin full of Trader Joe's snacks to accompany them on their assignments.

Writers start out by brainstorming article ideas, outlining a piece, and then writing and revising with the help of multiple editors. However, not all articles have the same purpose. The newspaper is split into different sections and offers a range of topics depending on the writer's interests.

The News section contains articles directly relevant to the Acton-Boxborough community. Articles focus on school news and town events, including topics not covered anywhere else. The Reporting Team is a group within the News section that takes a community-wide topic of interest and tries to investigate it in depth and with nuance throughout the year.

The Forum section presents articles that discuss the news on a broader scale. These articles take

mainstream ideas and showcase different writers' perspectives and opinions on various topics. Each writer is challenged to put a unique spin on their work and display a strong voice, while still maintaining relevance to the AB community.

The Off-Topic section contains articles that display student opinions in areas of relatability, guidance, and more. Writers in this section can have a more personal conversation with the reader, and they have the freedom to be satirical, random, or humorous. Art, comics, crosswords, and more are used to display student voices in a unique and fun way.

Lastly, the Mainspread section presents articles that fall under a particular theme, which the staff decides upon before starting each issue. Although these articles vary stylistically, they always connect to that issue's theme.

*The Spectrum* is self-funded and run by AB students. Thus, while writers make up a majority of the group, editors, artists, Layout members, and Publicity and Finance members all play an equally important role. Editors work behind the scenes to improve the clarity and effectiveness of articles, catching those pesky run-ons for each and every article before it's printed. Photographers offer their skills for specific articles, enhancing words with visual art. The Publicity

and Finance team works with local businesses and finds funding for *The Spectrum*, simultaneously improving members' marketing skills, communication skills, confidence, and financial management. The Layout team learns about industry design standards, catering to clientele, creativity, and website design. Each group contributes what they learn in their roles to benefitting *The Spectrum*.

Students work with one another to improve their journalistic skills and also to gain information and advice from more experienced writers. In fact, *The Spectrum* has connections to professional journalists, who provide opportunities to further enrich members' experience.

Together, the various teams work to publish five issues of *The Spectrum* each year: the Back-to-School Issue (the shortest of the five), Fall Issue, Winter Issue, Spring Issue, and Graduation Issue. The members' dedication, curiosity, and passion all contribute to the quality and caliber of *The Spectrum* each print. Due to staff's efforts, readers are presented with information about their community, news of the world around them, and the opinions of their peers with every issue. Most importantly, it is thanks to the readers that *The Spectrum* staff can share their thoughts and findings on valued issues within the community.

# Intro

## Letter from the EICs

By SERENA HAN '20, KIRTANA KRISHNAKUMAR '20, AND ANJALI RAMAN '20  
Editors-in-Chief

Unlike *Phineas and Ferb*, the summer months at Acton-Boxborough do end, and this year, they whizzed past us before we were fully ready for the school year ahead. In the midst of their busy summers—filled with summer camps, college tours, vacations, and the latest season of *Stranger Things*—our staff worked together to create a Back-to-School Issue that we can all be proud of.

This issue, we've focused on questions that freshmen want answered. Our writers cover

everything that they've personally learned from high school, including how to manage one's time, how to get special privileges, and—the most important question of all—where the best water fountains are. We've also included the type of articles that readers will see in future seasonal issues, such as movie reviews, local news reporting, and satirical pieces.

Although we wish summer vacation could last longer, we can't help but be excited by *The Spectrum's* upcoming year. With Trader Joe's snacks at our meetings' round table, the guidance of our two wonderful advisors Ms. Hammond and Ms. Kennedy, and an energetic staff, we can't wait to show you what we have in store!

## Prioritizing Myself

By SOPHIE ZHANG '22  
Spectrum Staff  
Mainspread Article

Mother Theresa once said, "Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin." However, we often lack that initial motivation to start. We tend to procrastinate as an easy escape from our looming problems. Rather than doing our work, we think about what we're going to do tomorrow, like totally getting up at five A.M. and grinding non-stop until it's time to leave for school. It is much easier to imagine a solution than to carry it out, but when have we ever kept the promise we gave ourselves last night? Instead, we become overwhelmed with our school workload and our self-discipline begins to falter, so first, we need to prioritize our future self's well-being.

Personally, I use procrastination as a coping mechanism. I avoid my responsibilities because the stress overwhelms me. I fear the possibility of failing an assignment and momentarily give up. In my head, my first try must be perfect, but ac-

tual outstanding work requires many more mistakes and experimentation. As Ernest Hemingway previously said, "The first draft of anything is sh\*t."

Just a few months ago, I found myself bingeing my favorite show instead of chipping away at a major essay due the following week. My brain recognized the project's importance, but I could not bear to sacrifice my current comfort and safety. Flashing forward to the day before the deadline, I still had to write the entire essay, forcing me to resort to an all-nighter, coffee, and a frantic email to the teacher begging for an extension. The next day, I tried editing my essay during study hall and lunch, but even then, my final draft was a disaster.

Procrastination not only physically hurt my body, but also mentally pained me. Regret about that essay stills rushes through my brain, nitpicking at what I could have done better.

If I had been self-disciplined then, I would have avoided a lot of stress and remorse. Now, having acknowledged the extent of that struggle, I work on

## The Spectrum

Founded 1982  
*e cineribus et ad astra*

**Serena Han**  
**Kirtana Krishnakumar**  
**Anjali Raman**  
Editors-in-Chief

**Michelle Gong**  
Chief Copy Editor

**Amber Li**  
**Emily Zhao**  
Chief Layout Editors

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**Michael Cheng**  
News Editor

**Neha Vijay**  
Forum Editor

**Prisha Dayal**  
Off-Topic Editor

**Francesca Servello**  
**Anushka Wani**  
Publicity and Finance Managers

**Genevieve Hammond**  
**Katherine Kennedy**  
Faculty Advisors

**Contact Us**  
36 Charter Road  
Acton, MA 01720  
www.thespectrumabrhs.com  
theabspectrum@gmail.com  
Facebook and Instagram @theabspectrum

### Copy Editors

Olivia Comolli, Katherine Gu, Elizabeth Howard, Justin Shan

### Staff

Madigan Anderson, Anna Charisse, Annabella Chen, Kelsey Chen, Natalie Dawn, Ananya Gade, Paolina Garro, Pratik Gazula, Joyce Gong, Emily Hiltunen, Alisa Khomiakova, Ritika Koirala, Divya Krishnan, Iris Li, Julia Olney, Ben Orr, Anna Paradiso, Sonali Rai, Mila Rushkin, Neha Saravanan, Supria Shroff, David Tsittrin, Charu Tyagi, Aadhiti Vallatharasu, Brandon Wu, Sophie Zhang, Christopher Sousounis, Rebecca Zhang, Supria Shroff, Akshitha Maqtedar, Sydney Pascal, Jasmine Wu, Jonathan Lin, Jessica Zhang

### Columnists

Katherine Chen, Julia Kuang, Vera Tsang

**Layout Editors:** Sarah Jin, Eileen Kou, Isaiah Lee, Amber Li, Jessica Zhang, Emily Zhao, Milena Zhu

prioritizing my future self and her well-being. I get my assignments finished earlier before they become urgent. I create the best possible scenario for my future self so that I do not have to take a chance on the unknown future. In short, I control what I know in the present.

I first organize and list all my tasks, as this helps me follow through with my responsibilities. Without this guide, my stress overwhelms me, and I resort to procrastination again.

Also, I divide bigger assignments into smaller, more man-

ageable pieces. A whole project can stress anyone out, but by knowing what needs to be done every day, I can make the work at hand more tangible. Spreading out my responsibilities divides my energy and anxiety into little bits as well. For example, would you rather read two chapters a day for a week or rush through a book with only one day left?

To avoid the pain of procrastination, I do my work. Stress only heightens over time, so when I manage my time well, my mental health improves.

Now, I can finally relax without constantly worrying about the workload I haven't dealt with.

This might make avoiding procrastination sound easy. In reality, perfecting the art of time management will definitely be a journey. Your school experience will be a bumpy, winding road. Nevertheless, it's like training a muscle—even when exercising gives you sore legs and sweaty armpits, you push through because you know that in the end, it will strengthen and benefit your future self.

## Reviews of the Summer Movie—*Spider-Man: Far from Home*

By FRANCESCA SERVELLO '22  
AND ANUSHKA WANI '21  
Publicity and Finance Managers  
Forum Article

*Spider-Man: Far From Home*, which takes place shortly after *Endgame*, begins with a Milton High student-made memorial for the dead Avengers. The film then cuts to Peter Parker sharing his plan to confess his love to MJ while on their school vacation to Paris. However, everything is interrupted by certain monsters called Elementals. Nick Fury and SHIELD, the organization that controls the Avengers, insist that Peter fight the Elementals even though Peter just wants to spend time with his best friend Ned and his crush MJ. Relentless, Fury introduces him to Mysterio—a man from "another Earth" who can help defeat the Elementals before they take over Peter's world. Everything takes a turn for the worse, however, when EDITH, the AI Tony left Peter before he died, falls into the wrong hands, and a new villain enters the arena...

### Francesca's Opinions:

I had high hopes for this movie.

*Spider-Man: Homecoming* got me into Marvel in the first place, and I wanted *Far From Home* to be just as good as the first movie. It lived up to—and even exceeded—my expectations.

For starters, the cinematography was beautiful. From the Venetian canals to the Charles Bridge in Prague, every shot added to the story. During Mysterio's illusions, I found myself just as entranced as Peter was.

The movie also did not disappoint in exploring Peter and Ned's friendship, fully displaying their antics. Jon Watts, co-writer and director of the film, knows these characters well, and it shows.

Any joy I felt from these reunions, however, was robbed by the constant reminders of *Endgame's* casualties, the subtle reference to the elusive Uncle Ben, and the constant disruptions of Peter's school vacation.

Though he created much conflict himself, I loved Mysterio. I walked into the movie knowing his role as an antagonist from the Spider-Man comics, but the faux, projection-generated affection he showed Peter really fooled me. Mysterio's power of illusion was haunting and enchanting, but he was extremely effective in identifying his targets' weaknesses;

he exploited Peter's loss of a father figure, even blaming Peter for Tony's death. His motives for evil were understandable, yet repetitive. I wasn't a fan of Tony Stark's mistakes coming back to bite him and his loved ones for the sixth time.

The movie's mid-credit scene was, in the nicest way possible, horrifying. I had wanted J. Jonah Jameson to become part of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, but certainly not like this. Mysterio really had to ruin Peter's life from the grave. The emotional distress this had caused me was immeasurable. In the wise words of Amelia Kim, with whom I saw this movie, "Frick."

Overall, I'd give this movie a 9/10, half a point taken off for the lack of a good credits song like "Blitzkrieg Bop" by The Ramones in *Homecoming*, and another half for the nature of Mysterio's motives. Other than that, it was a wonderful experience that every level of Marvel fan will enjoy.

### Anushka's Opinions:

When I heard that *Spider-Man: Far from Home* was coming out, I couldn't wait for Tom Holland to

grace the screen as Peter Parker once again, hoping the cast would bring me joy after the heart-wrenching events of *Endgame*. Nevertheless, while the film had the lightheartedness that I expected, Peter and the audience also had to deal with a lot of emotional baggage.

Torn by his responsibility to save the world and his desire to be a normal teenager, Peter Parker just wants to enjoy his vacation in Europe. I could easily empathize with Peter regarding the immense pressure he had on his shoulders.

While Peter was a relatable character, so was Mysterio. Like Francesca, I found myself understanding the motives of Quentin Beck, Mysterio's plainclothes counterpart, although his extreme approach seemed unwarranted. I had no idea Mysterio was set up to be the villain—probably because I didn't watch any trailers before seeing the movie—but I was shocked when he revealed himself.

I constantly fell for the illusions in this movie, not only in the plot, but in the graphics as well. The special effects are what made this movie worth seeing in theaters; I can't possibly imagine them hav-

ing the same impact in my living room, and I can only dream of how it would've looked if I had seen it in 3D. I was constantly being pulled back and forth through illusion and reality, feeling just as lost and confused as Peter did in the film.

The comedy in the film was great. However, any humor with MJ fell on deaf ears for me. I found myself getting annoyed with her character and her constant "I'm not like other girls" attitude. The ship was cute, and I'm glad they got together, but I just didn't like her character as a whole. While Peter was very relatable, it seemed like MJ's personality was trying too hard to appeal to the audience, making her an unrelatable character.

All in all, I highly recommend this movie, especially if you are a Tom Holland fan like myself. It is 100% worth it to see the movie in theaters, and I'm sure the 3D version is phenomenal. I would rate this movie 9/10, with a point off for MJ's character. That said, it was a wholesome experience that both pulled at my heartstrings and gave me reason to laugh. It was the perfect push-off for Phase 4 of the MCU.

# Back-to-School

## ABRHS Bathroom, Fountain, and Staircase Review

By ANUSHKA WANI '21  
Publicity and Finance Manager  
Mainspread Article

The transition from R.J. Grey to ABRHS can be daunting, especially due to the major upgrade in size. Because the high school's layout is so different, it's tough to figure out where the numerous water fountains, bathrooms, and staircases are. However, with this guide, you'll be able to navigate the high school like a pro!

First things first: the layout of the school. The school is split up into four major sections: North, South, East and West. Once you enter the school through the front doors, the West wing is on your left. North is straight ahead, and if you go right, you'll pass through South on your way to East. As you wander these wings, you'll probably stumble across a staircase to the second floor. Once you're up there, the layout is the same as the first floor (with the exception of North being on the third floor, obviously).

The most important thing to know are the locations of the bathrooms. On the first floor, you can find one on each side of the cafeteria, as well as on each floor of the East and West wings. There are also bathrooms across from the library and more in the fitness center, along with a few single stalls in Stearns Gym in Upper West, and also some in the locker rooms below.

Now, certain bathrooms are better than others: I wouldn't recommend going to the Lower West

bathroom due to the long lines; go to the one in Upper West to avoid being late. Avoid the Lower East bathroom at all costs. During lunch, if one bathroom—usually the one near the band room—has a long line, try the other one. In general, using the bathroom during passing time almost guarantees that you'll be late to class, so try to get there early, or leave your backpack in class before you go. Other than that, it comes down to where you are and how fast you need to get to a bathroom.

The second most important thing is the staircases. You've probably already noticed the Senior Staircase, as well as the two main staircases in East and West. These are the most popular. Always stay on the right when you go up or down any staircase, and there won't be accidents caused by students bumping into each other when they go in different directions. There are more overlooked staircases at the back corners of both West and East. Another hidden staircase gets you to Upper West from North, and it's one of the best ways to get to the library from the cafeteria. Exit the cafeteria on the side of the Regan Gym, and walk straight. Just before the small set of stairs that leads to the school lobby, take a right and walk through the single door at the end. The staircase leads to the Stearns Gym, making it the best staircase to use to get to the library from the first floor.

There are three other staircases in East. One is at the very end of the hallway right by the elevators.

This one is rarely used, so it won't be very crowded at all. Next to that staircase, there is a window that looks over the tennis courts. It has a cute little nook that you can sit in with a friend during a free period. Nearby, a small hallway to the left offers another staircase leading to the auditorium. This one is used a bit, but not as much as the main arteries. The last staircase in East can be found if you follow the hallway the East bathrooms are in and take a right at the end of that hallway. There you'll find another staircase. This is the most crowded of the three.

The last few staircases are more hidden, leading to the Stearns (Upper) Gym. If you go to West Commons and enter the big double doors at the bottom of the ramp, you'll find a staircase going up to North. Once you go up there, you can turn left and open a smaller set of doors to another, smaller staircase. This is not a main staircase, but it can still get crowded at the end of the day. The last staircase is located where you enter the gym area by the locker rooms, and it leads up to the Upper Gym too. This staircase is usually only used by gym classes, so it is usually pretty empty.

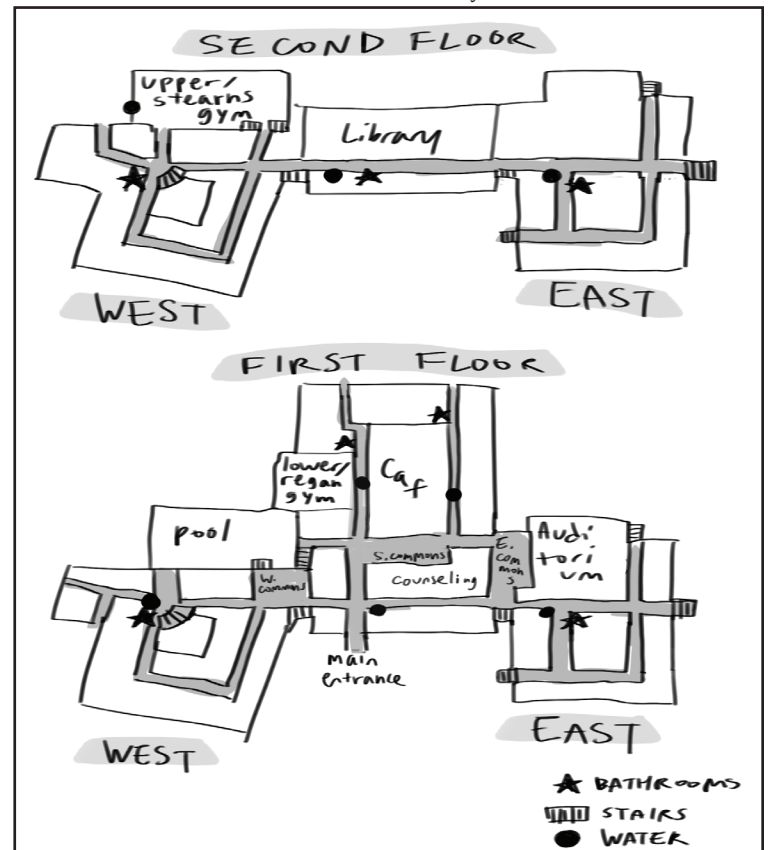
The last few staircases are more hidden and located by the locker rooms in Lower West, and they both lead up to opposite sides of the Stearns Gym. These staircases are usually only used by gym classes, so they are reasonably empty.

Last but not least, we have our beloved water fountains! There are

two types: the water-bottle refilling types and the regular drinking fountains. Of the drinking fountains, one set is across from the library, one is both Upper and Lower West, and one set are on either side of the cafeteria. Meanwhile, there is a refill station in Upper and Lower East, as well as by the main entrance and inside the cafeteria. The best water fountain is the one

on the first floor next to the lobby. Other than that one, I would just stay away from any of the water fountains in the school. They either taste bad or are just too warm.

Anyways, I hope this guide is helpful for your high school experience! It's quite nice knowing where things are in the school, instead of having to stumble upon them along the way.



A map with all of AB's bathrooms, fountains, and staircases.  
Emily Zhao / Layout Editor

## Guide To Freshman Year

By JESSICA ZHANG '22  
Spectrum Staff  
Mainspread Article

Freshman year horror stories always begin with scenes of giant seniors jostling underclassmen during passing time and ninth graders running through hallways, trying, but failing, to reach class on time. Admittedly, most freshmen experience such situations at least once; nevertheless, changes, big or small, are inevitable in life, and the transition from junior high to high school eventually passes. Even with all the stress over schoolwork and extracurriculars, most students emerge stronger despite the challenges. Still, a few tips couldn't hurt, so here's a guide to freshman year from a recently retired freshman.

Ironically, many ninth graders stress themselves out by anticipating more stress than there is. The number one trick to reducing stress is to stop comparing yourself to others. Teachers and friends have likely told you this, and you have likely brushed it off. Don't. It's important to focus on you—not others; so much time can get wasted obsessing over others' achievements and feeling bad about yourself. People learn at different paces with unique techniques. Instead of comparing, work to find your optimal learning style. As you hone your study skills, know that you will make mistakes, and in making mistakes, you will figure out how you learn best. Little by little—you'll find yourself making fewer mistakes if you focus on self-improvement.

The trick to avoiding the comparison trap? Live a healthy lifestyle to sustain you throughout the year. When I first started freshman year, I prioritized schoolwork over health so much that I never felt energized enough to get through the day. Be-

ing healthy is essential; you have to get sleep, eat a healthy diet, drink water, exercise, and do all that good stuff. High school is a time to live, not just survive. Take care of your physical health with nutrition, and bolster your mental health with friends and extracurriculars that you actually enjoy.

Naturally, no matter how much you ignore it, your social life can pop up and punch you in the face. Almost all high schoolers drift apart from some old friends. Although this may sting, people move on, and so must you. Luckily, high school offers many opportunities for making new friends. For example, without the structured teams of R.J. Grey, you'll likely encounter a greater number of people in your classes. Of course, experiences with friends can vary from person to person, but as long as you spend time with people whom you enjoy being with, you can have a great social life.

Given that maintaining a positive social life, exercising, completing schoolwork, and attending extracurriculars all seem necessary, you will realize how important time management is—and how difficult it is to create your own system. I suggest maintaining some sort of a calendar to visually lay out all

of your activities and deadlines. Don't leave all your work to the last minute; it's so much easier to do a portion each day, even if it's just for fifteen minutes. Make things easier for yourself. Procrastination will get you nowhere and will only trap you into a cycle of not getting things done. Starting your work is often the hardest part, but don't push it aside. Nike knows what's up: just do it.

Even though we tend to procrastinate, that doesn't stop us from thinking about—or, more accurately, obsessing over—our futures. But let me tell you something: few people actually have their whole lives together (if you do, please tell me your secret), so thinking far into the future can be overwhelming. Feel free to keep post-high school plans on the radar, but focus on freshman year first. Take it step by step, year by year.

High school is a rite of passage that people experience together. It can seem intimidating at first, but the more you discover along the way, the more comfortable you'll become. Hopefully, some of these tips will help you find ways to work past the tough times and still have fun. So good luck, and enjoy your freshman year!



School supplies for the freshmen newbie.  
Amber Li / Layout Editor

## Love Doctor: Intro

By JULIA KUANG '22  
Love Nest Columnist  
Off-Topic Article

Hey guys, I'm Julia Kuang, but here I'm known as DR. KUANG. (Living up to the asian expectation, am I right? Mom, please be proud of me) After the disgusting apology by Balwant Singh—former senior and love doctor—in last year's Graduation Issue, it is up to me to re-establish and uphold the esteemed profession of loveology. Unfortunately, I know for a fact that I will regret writing this in the near future, so it is safe to assume that I am hella fake. Definitely not as bad as Balwant, but I literally asked friends to make up questions for me to answer. Have fun reading this, and good luck to all your love adventures and endeavors!

Q: I love this guy, but he got a haircut so now he's UGLY!

A: Well babe, I don't think you really love him, so I don't know what else to tell you other than build a trans-universe time machine using radioactive uranium-235, a rotating ultraspeed 100km long cylinder, an enormous load of money, Albert Einstein's brain, a banana, and several other miscellaneous items that I can't reveal (the government said so) just so that you can go back in time and murder his barber so he doesn't cut his hair and can go back to being the mediocre-looking guy that you think is mildly attractive but never really worked up the guts to talk to (otherwise you guys would be dating already).

Q: I've been into this guy, but I don't really know if I should share fries with him because that's kind of a big step.

A: Quite the relatable situation. Food is very important for the human body, as it provides nutrients and energy. In choosing between

your basic necessities and this guy you're "kinda into," I would strongly recommend putting yourself first, especially in a life or death situation. However, sharing your beloved fries with this dude could really push your relationship to a whole new level. So I guess you gotta balance the situation for yourself, even though it's technically my job to answer this for you. Sucks for you!

Q: I, a senior, fell in love with a tiny freshman. Our love is forbidden... Instead of talking to our parents, we decided to get married. But I killed a man and am now exiled from my beloved and her land. We plan to commit mutual suicide. Did I mention I've only known her for 3 days? What do I do?

A: Ah, spinning off *Romeo and Juliet*, the timeless classic. For those of you in freshman year, get ready for the most riveting, heart-wrenching, overhyped story about love EVER. 10/10 would recommend. Looking at this short but sweet modernized summary, *Romeo and Juliet* is a pretty screwed up story. Friends, don't follow their example. You know how in "Love Story", Taylor Swift very much alludes to *Romeo and Juliet*? It's setting an unrealistic and somewhat toxic romance stereotype, and NO ONE should actually follow the footsteps of these two because then they will make horrible decisions that they will regret very much later or die before then, which is very stupid, so DON'T BE LIKE ROMEO AND JULIET.

And that's all I got... for now. Hit me up with more questions through my school email! I would greatly appreciate some love and support because even the Love Doctor needs some love.

# Back-to-School

## Back-To-School Shopping

By EMILY HILTUNEN '22  
Spectrum Staff



## AB's New Official Sport: Esports

By MICHAEL CHENG '20  
News Editor  
News Article

AB's newest sport does not take place on a track, field, or court, but instead within the magical confines of a computer lab. For the modern-day Colonials, the new battlefield is digital, and esports is the new frontier.

For the past two years, the AB esports team has operated as an after-school club, but it will be absorbed into the Athletics Department as an official sport this fall. Speaking publicly this past January, Athletic Director Steve Martin remarked that the move would help them reach "a group of students who are really looking to be a part of something, but haven't been able to yet."

Club founder Jessica Shen ('19) echoed a similar sentiment, stating that she believed it would create a place for those like herself, who "don't really like playing sports" but "still [want] to be in the community that a sports team builds." That community, for Shen, was the esports team.

Technically, the esports team is actually three distinct teams competing in three very distinct games—Overwatch, League of Legends (also known as "LoL"), and Rainbow Six Siege—all within the framework of the nationwide High School Esports League (HSEL).

All three AB teams have been successful from the onset: they each qualified for their respective playoff-esque invitational this June. Two made the semifinals, and one won it all.

"We got the summer invitational invite, we ran through the tournament like a truck, and yeah, we just won," summarized LoL captain Eric Zhao ('20), who is ranked as one of the top 150 players of any age in North America for that game.

While these successes helped to legitimize the team, perhaps an even greater legitimacy came from the unexpected outreach from Mr. Martin.

Jessica Shen recalls, "[Mr. Martin] actually reached out to me and stated that he was a fan of esports himself...He offered to work with me to merge the club into the Athletics Department."

While attempts to reach Mr. Martin for comment during the summer were unsuccessful, Shen said that he was instrumental in introducing the idea to other parts of the administration. Now that the merger has been approved, the esports trophies—displayed side by side with those won in traditional athletics—beg the question: Should esports be considered sports?

On this point, even Shen, who dedicated her senior project towards making esports an official sport, has some reservations. "I think it's mostly a sport. It's like Steve Martin put it; it's a spectator sport where people like watching it, like other sports." However, Shen ultimately says, "The way the team works is a lot like a sports team, but I'm not necessarily saying esports is a sport. I'm just saying it functions like one."

Regardless of this semantic distinction, the esports team is determined to make the most of the opportunity that it has been given. The most immediate effects include greater administrative support and access to the department's annual budget by requiring each member to pay \$500 in athletic fees. Both Shen and Zhao also hope that the change can provide the team with greater recognition within the school community, recognition that could help to de-stigmatize competitive esports.

People often criticize video games for being unproductive and having graphic depictions of violence, and while team members say they mostly try to block out the negativity, Zhao actually wrote his college essay on his experiences with such attitudes.

"Sometimes, people don't know that competitive video games are pretty cool and developed and are just good for you."

There has yet to be a scientific or cultural consensus on whether video games are in fact a net positive, but for her part, Shen wrote

a senior project paper where she theorized that "[t]he reason adults don't like video games is because they aren't willing to learn about them. There is a generational divide...which makes [them] harder to understand."

It may take years for these divides to be resolved. In the meantime, Zhao and his teammates are content letting the team only speaking to willing listeners. Above all, Shen stresses that "the main focus of the club should be [to foster] a place where all the kids feel included and...can feel proud of their achievements."

They continue to make strides to these ends. Zhao and Rainbow Six Siege team captain Nick Chafy ('20) are considering their own senior project—to build a dedicated "athletics lab" for the team to practice in, which would house six desktop computers that won at the LoL tournament in June.

Like any high school sport, the esports team faces the annual upheaval of graduating seniors—of the five primary players on last year's LoL team, three have already graduated. But in addition, esports have a natural propensity for constant change: "[There are] thousands of [rule] changes a year. And then, every single year, they revamp the whole game...because they don't want the game to get boring...It's meant to be like this cosmic treadmill run," explains Zhao.

The spectre of boredom leaves video games prone to more seismic shifts as well.

"I know League of Legends is going to be a dead game in 10 years," says Zhao, "And that's how it is. Our esports team is called an esports team, not a League of Legends team...because esports is going to constantly evolve. It's like a survival-of-the-fittest type thing."

This holds for the infantile industry as well, and perhaps there is no better example than the HSEL. The private, for-profit company is rapidly expanding; they announced a slew of new game offerings just a few weeks ago. At the same time, they revealed that they were no longer licensed to host League of Legends competitions—a mere six weeks after AB had won what turned out to be the final one.

Given that this will already be their third league in four years, it's perhaps no surprise that when asked about his hopes for the team's future, Zhao responded somewhat uncertainly.

"I [wouldn't] necessarily say I want it to be flourishing. I just want it to be there, you know. I want it to be present. I just want it to be stable."

One of the greatest benefits to the team becoming part of Athletics Department might be just that: stability. If nothing else, the change could allow for it to stay afloat in esports' tumultuous waters.

## What I Wish I Knew

By SYDNEY PASCAL '22  
Spectrum Staff  
Mainspread Article

Many freshmen entering high school are overwhelmed by the daunting change. However, the transition will certainly go smoother if you know a few things—most of which I did not—going into the start of the year. Once you get settled, freshman year will definitely be memorable.

Generally speaking, every teacher has a different style and method of teaching, and sometimes, theirs might not work for you specifically. If you're struggling in a class, don't be afraid to ask for help. I would recommend that you email your teachers first because they're always willing to help. If a teacher is not really working out for you though, talk to your counselor. I know people who have switched out of classes or changed their schedules, and it's not a big deal. In junior high, counselors aren't as involved in many of the students lives, but in high school, they are here to help, and many people do seek their guidance. Building a relationship with your counselor is important because as they get to know you, they can provide more and more advice in situations like these. If there is no way to work around a bad fit with a teacher, try to stay positive, use all the possible resources that you have, and show your teacher that you're putting in effort.

That being said, make sure to relax and have fun! Not everything in freshman year should be about school. For some, adopting this care-free mindset can be quite difficult. I, for one, tend to stress about the little things, causing me to be extremely overworked throughout freshman year. Still, I tried to push through because I believed it was the correct way to approach my workload.

While you should always work hard, you also need to take a break to prevent getting burnt out. We often believe that when we put more time into our work, we will do a better job. I harbored this mentality—almost every day, I would go home and do homework until I fell asleep. Ironically, it only took so long because I was overworking myself. I couldn't focus after sitting in class all day and leaving no time for friends or myself. I had become stressed, unhealthy, and unhappy.

By the end of the year, I learned that if I had taken breaks, I would've worked faster, been happier, and relaxed more. Breaks are necessary and productive. Even if the work is important, your health should always come first.

All in all, this year is a period of growth and experimentation. The best piece of advice I can give is this: nothing is ever as big of a deal as you think it is in the moment. Make freshman year as fun and memorable as you can, because it's going to be a great year!

## English Books, Rated

By REBECCA ZHANG '22  
Spectrum Staff  
Off-Topic Article

Freshman English has some of the best books that I have read thus far. A few are certainly ~questionable~. Nevertheless, each novel—as great or tiresome as it may be—focuses on transitions to new worlds, mirroring your own journey during freshman year. English I is a super fun course overall, and as cheesy as it sounds, you will definitely grow a lot as both a reader and a writer. Nevertheless, a little guidance is always helpful. So, as you head into your freshman year, wide-eyed and wary, here are (totally accurate and super serious) one-sentence summaries and ratings of your first year's novels:

**John Knowles' *A Separate Peace*:** In the classic bildungsroman novel, an older Gene reflects on his high school years in which his immaturity (AKA hormonal, impulsive decisions) causes his friend's murder. Oopsies?

My Rating: +3 points for a good attempt at spreading a message, and an extra +2 points for the real star of the show, the secret love story (#GINNY4LIFE). 5/10.

**John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*:** The American Dream is dead...

but don't you DARE tell Lennie.

My Rating: +3 points for diverse(ish) characters, but -1 point for being written by another "John." 2/10.

**Homer's *The Odyssey*:** Big boy Odysseus wants to go home, but he keeps trying to get that cLOuT and screws up big time x100. A fine lesson in learning not to tick off a god. #weirdflexbutok

My Rating: +7 points for Penelope stalling her marriage to a suitor for years while her husband buffs his ego, but -4 points for the 5,000 new characters introduced on each page. 3/10.

**Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*:** RESURRECTION.

My Rating: +15 points for the chances that two characters look exactly the same (coincidence? I THINK NOT.) 15/10.

**Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*:**

Technically another bildungsroman novel where liTtLe gIrL lEaRns aBOuT bIg woRLd, but it's actually just: Boo? Is that you?

My Rating: +7 points for how cute and cuddly Boo Radley secretly is, and an additional +97 points for not being written by an old white dude, whoop whoop! 104/10.



Rainbow Six Siege's coastline map.  
ONLINE SOURCE