



Acton in the fall!
LUKAS KANICS

Stop & Shop’s Effect on Acton

Read to find out how Stop & Shop will affect our town & local businesses.

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Stop & Shop
TORI BELL

Fall Recipe: Apple Cider Donuts

Follow this recipe for delicious apple cider doughnut tips and tricks!

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Try out some delicious donuts!
ONLINE SOURCE



The Spectrum

◆ e cineribus et ad astra ◆

NOVEMBER 2025 • VOL. 45, FALL ISSUE

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

www.thespectrumabrhs.com

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It doesn’t get more fall than this...
SUDARSHAN KOTLANKA, SPECTRUM STAFF

Commodified Happiness

By COURTNEY ARNETT ‘26
Spectrum Staff

In this modern world, it seems that all anybody wants is to be happy. In education, employment, and even in personal life, the desire for happiness plays a crucial role in how people live their lives and is a common motivator behind a person’s behavior. However, the true meaning of happiness is warped by those seeking to profit off others, resulting in many perfectly content individuals considering themselves unhappy. This perversion twists the meaning of happiness into an unattainable ideal, leading many to feel that they will always be in relentless pursuit of joy, yet never reach it. This phenomena has resulted in poorer mental health and a greater sense of dissatisfaction worldwide. The World Population report, through ranking nations based on their perceived happiness levels, reflects this growing discontent and demonstrates the profound impact of capitalism on personal happiness.

Currently, Finland tops the World Happiness Report while the U.S lingers behind at #21. According to the World Population Report, happiness

can be measured using six categories: GDP per capita, healthy life expectancy, social support, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and perceptions of corruption. These categories give a general understanding of where the population stands compared to other countries in regards to personal security, agency, and, most importantly, happiness. After interviewing citizens, countries are then ranked on a scale of 1 to 10. Finland, in 2024, received the highest score yet, that being a 7.74.

According to research from Britannica, Finland’s happiness lies in its robust social support system, natural beauty, and its culture. In regards to social support, Finland’s government offers comprehensive welfare benefits such as health care, education, and unemployment support (Brittanica). These resources reduce stress and anxiety by offering something to fall back if times get tough; it builds both civilian trust in the government and allows citizens to focus on personal growth and community engagement rather than financial stressors. As a result of this, Finnish citizens have reported some of the highest feelings of trust towards the govern-

ment. The impact of Finland’s natural resources, however, are not to be neglected as the country’s wondrous natural beauty has a massive influence on mental well-being. In regards to culture, Finland has a strong emphasis on a healthy work-life balance, enabling its inhabitants to take time for relaxation and rehabilitation.

So, what about the U.S? Why aren’t we as happy as Finland, and what can we do to change this? Well, according to Jeffrey Sachs, the Director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University in New York: “America’s subjective well-being is being systematically undermined by three interrelated epidemic diseases, notably obesity, substance abuse (especially opioid addiction) and depression...” (Narconon). It goes without saying that the U.S has been under quite a lot of stress in recent years. This stress has left many Americans depressed, anxious, and feeling an overall distrust towards their government and its ability to protect and provide for them. This feeling is the exact opposite of what Finland has demonstrated makes a happy country. However, Finland is not without its own issues. In fact, Finland has been struggling with economic issues involving cuts to the social security and healthcare systems, a government rolling back protections

for migrants and asylum seekers, lack of free speech in regard to assembly, and even systemic discrimination and deepening senses of structural racism (Amnesty international). These qualities do not seem to reflect the “happiest country in the world”. So what is going on?

The way that the world thinks about happiness as something that can be captured, embodied, and ranked is fundamentally incorrect. The existence of a “World Happiness Report” goes against the deeply personal nature of happiness. According to Havard University’s class “Psychology and the Good Life”, happiness is much less about factors such as wealth, fame, or social class, and instead the quality of close relationships, feeling sufficiently challenged, fully inhabiting moments, and finding purpose through experiences and connection.

In this modern world, happiness is always being sold, rather than taught. Oftentimes, happiness is commodified, boxed, and sold with no true impact on the happiness of the people buying and selling. The exploitation of happiness, though more apparent in America’s highly consumerist society, is present all over the world. Truly, the quality of one’s happiness depends more on the individual than the country in which they live.

Intro

Letter From the EICs

By Matthew Liu & Vani Mittal
Editors-in-Chief

Hi everyone,

We hope you are all having a great fall season so far! With school now back in full session and lots happening in the world, we hope that everyone is safe. There is no better time to reflect on justice and on peace.

Check out our Mainspread section, where we have articles ranging from culture wars to the Nepal Government protests, and even about the happiest country on Earth... wouldn't you want to live there?

We are embracing a shift towards covering real-world events, such as tax cuts, Acton construction updates, and updates on our own school as well, which you can read about in our News section!

Continuing on the topic of exciting additions, keep an eye out for a brand new mini-section to *The Spectrum*: "The Reporting Team." Over the past couple of years, our staff has been conducting a deep dive into mental health. Our goal has been to spread awareness, and over the course of this upcoming year, we will publish a series of articles to do so. Check out the first of these articles on page eleven.

Also, remember to check out "The

Other Side" on the back page for fun games and entertainment. Whether you are a mediocre crossword solver or a block-fill connoisseur, there is something for everyone.

On another note, we hope this issue finds all you seniors at a great time. We are all rejoicing at the end of Early Action college applications, and we wish all of you good luck. With all of this newfound free time, we challenge you all to find our bear, Pressly, who recently had a naming ceremony! From now on, he will be hiding in one of our pictures in every issue.

As always, take great care, and we hope you are having a wonderful year so far.

In a rather unusual twist, we would like to direct our final statements towards fellow students. Even if you are not a senior applying to college, there is always room to build up the application. *The Spectrum* is always looking for more writers, and we want to extend an invitation to all readers. While writing for a widely-read newspaper may seem like an intimidating challenge, we here are ready to provide support. Feel free to reach us at theabspectrum@gmail.com.

Best,
Matthew & Vani

Policies & Priorities

By Henry Wang '27
Publicity & Finance Manager

A new school year brings updates, including the "Rev Mart" open-grade book system and increased supervision in the hallways. These changes were made to improve your experience around AB, from buying snacks to checking your grades, and even how supervision works during class and break times. Here is a glance at what is new and what you can expect this year.

Firstly, Rev Mart, a newly upgraded school store, has been added, featuring many changes. The most significant of these is the new payment system: students can now use their lunch pin to purchase snacks, drinks, and more without needing to use cash or a card. Enter your PIN and ask one of the new staff members to add the purchase charge to your school account. With that being said, compared to last year, students are no longer given the option to work at the school store and earn community service hours. In past years, student's were able to choose volunteering at the school store as an elective. Since students can no longer work during class periods, the store hours have also been altered. Now, the Rev Market is only open for all lunch periods and thirty minutes before and after school. Additionally, new items have been featured in it's catalogue. Lunch items like power boxes and Boars Head's Sandwiches can be purchased, counting towards the one free lunch given every day. In summary, the new Rev Market accepts lunch pins, no longer allows students to run it, and has changed its store hours.

Secondly, another significant change in the 2026 school year is the introduction of a new open-grades system. Previously, grades could only be accessed through term grade reports, either quarterly or by specifically requesting them from counselors or teachers. Now, the new system has been implemented, allowing all students' grades to be visible on Pow-

erSchool at all times. This system was introduced to us last year, but only for a short window before interims were released. To view your grades, log in using either your parents' credentials or your school email address and password, located at the bottom under "Student Sign-in." After doing so, look at the left sidebar and select "Grades and attendance." You will then be shown your current grades. As a reminder, the grade shown may not be your actual grade due to scaling; for example, in Spanish, grades are weighted into both performative and non-performance grades, which are scaled differently, respectively. To look further into detail, you can see both your grade letter and percentage grade. By clicking on the grade icon, you will be directed to a page that shows your individual assignments and your score. This new system allows students to better understand their standing in each class and provides clarity for completed assignments. Additional features include absences, tardies, cafeteria balances, and much more! It's also important to note that sometimes teachers don't fully post all grades/assignments, so remember not to bombard your teachers with emails and overstress them!

For the last update, supervision and phone policies have become tighter. As you may already know, phones are no longer allowed in hallways or on your person, except during lunch in the cafeteria, common areas, and the library. An increase in hallway monitors has been enforcing these rules. Another area of school supervision is near the bathrooms. To better prevent gatherings or prohibited activities, hall monitors are also stationed outside each bathroom in the school.

These changes are made to make the school a safer, more transparent place. The newly added updates, which span from the Rev Mart, open grade book, and hall security, are designed to help things run smoothly for everyone!

The Spectrum

Founded 1982
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Update on Our Borders

By TINA LI '27
Op-Ed Editor

Immigration has always been a voting issue at the forefront of US politics. What new immigration policies are coming to light under President Trump's second term?

In the past five months, mass restrictions on immigration have been enacted, such as heightened vetting and stricter rules for visa types. Recently, the longstanding protections barring immigration enforcement in institutions such as healthcare facilities, schools, and places of worship have been revoked, allowing entities like ICE to detain and arrest in these locations.

The 2019 Travel Ban has returned in 2025, this time prohibiting entry for nineteen countries. Afghanistan, Chad, the Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Libya, Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen are the twelve countries under a full travel ban, and Burundi, Cuba, Laos, Sierra Leone,

Togo, Turkmenistan, and Venezuela are under a partial ban. This restriction means individuals from these countries cannot seek immigrant or non-immigrant visas, with the exception of individuals from countries under the partial ban, which sets limits on the number of people allowed to receive those visas.

An executive order in January attempted to end birthright citizenship and redefine the 14th Amendment's Citizenship Clause for certain non-citizens. This executive order has been blocked by multiple courts, including federal and district courts.

More funds have been allocated to immigration enforcement for border operations, deportations, detentions, etc. Around \$170 billion has been added to this budget. Furthermore, nearly half of the FBI agents have been reassigned to immigration enforcement to bolster efforts.

In light of the increasing ICE arrests, the administration is reportedly pushing for 600,000 deportations in 2025.

The Alien Enemies Act was invoked to deport dozens to El Salvador, claiming affiliation with gangs. The majority of these individuals were deported without criminal trials, resulting in courts responding by issuing restraining orders and injunctions to prevent further deportations under this act.

Consequently, the arrival of international students has dropped 19% and refugee admissions have been delayed, threatening over 100,000 waiting in limbo for their final status approval. Additionally, fear of ICE limits public healthcare access and education for children.

With about 18.1 percent of the Massachusetts population (2025), 28.7% of Acton's population (2023), and 25.4% of Boxborough's population (2023) being foreign-born, immigration policies affect large portions of our local community. Whether some of these policies will hold depends on the courts and Congress. Expanded deportations, visa restrictions, and funding conditions align with the anti-immigration agenda the Trump Administration has set since January.

The Rebirth: ABRHS Football Team

By MEGHA VEERAMACHANENI & RACHAEL CHILDERS '28
Spectrum Staff

The Acton Boxborough Football team has shown remarkable growth this season, demonstrating the results of perseverance, hard work, and teamwork. With improved plays and performances, the team truly transformed on the field. Once underestimated, the team is now thriving and on the rise.

Previously, the football team hasn't exactly been known for their success. They lost the majority of the games they played during the 2024-2025 season. During that sea-

son, their record was 0-11. The football team got tired of all these losses and transformed into a team that nobody could have expected. This season has consisted of more wins than losses. This is a major improvement for the team, especially since they haven't been playing this well in years. In fact, the team is winning more games than it has in the past five years. This increase is thanks to the new coach, Billy Waters, and his team, who have put in a tremendous amount of effort into improving and playing the best they can.

In general, cheerleading fosters important life skills such as teamwork and discipline that cheerlead-

ers carry with them throughout life. You can always count on cheerleaders to bring energy and spirit to the field and the bleachers during games. The exciting atmosphere that cheerleaders bring makes every game more enjoyable. And don't forget, cheerleaders dedicate hours to long practices to perfect their routines. Just like football coaches, cheerleading coaches play a crucial role in the success of cheerleaders. Aside from teaching routines, cheer coaches motivate their athletes and support them no matter what.

GO ACTON-BOXBOROUGH!

News



Highlighting a recent NASA discovery: new stars in the Milk Way Galaxy!
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STEM Fair

By ILDANA TOHTI ‘28
Spectrum Staff

On November 7th, DiscoverSTEM returned for its 9th edition since its 2005 debut, providing a hands-on STEAM night for families, students, and the AB community. Organized by AB STEAM (Acton-Boxborough Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math), it brought together STEM professionals, businesses, and non-profits directly to you, in a reverse science fair format, showcasing demos such as the Boston Dynamics robot dog, eye tracking software, and drone flights. At the event, students learned front and center how textbook concepts translate into the real world through the hands-on exhibitions and even volunteered! Middle and high school students had the opportunity to get paired with a professional, get mentored, and become the booth’s spokesperson, earning up to 3 hours of community service. Additionally, they could meet innovators from corporations like SolidWorks, Haartz Corporation, Acton Lions Eye Care, and Boston Dynamics, diving into today’s most relevant fields of robotics, environmental science, AI, chemistry, finance, biotech, and engineering. DiscoverSTEM outlined their goal as “to spark curiosity, excitement, and immerse in the real-world STEM experience exploration among middle and high schoolers,” and they very much succeeded (Ruchi Jain, DiscoverSTEM organizer)! Find more details at: www.absteam.org/discoverstem.

Recent NASA Discoveries

By SAHARSH KOMATIREDDY & AADITYA BHARIK ‘28
Spectrum Staff

With rapidly improving technology, space organizations like NASA have been making discoveries more often than ever. With NASA’s recent James Webb space telescope, new findings are being reported daily, like Sagittarius B2, a new moon orbiting Uranus, and many others. New stars have been forming in the Milky Way Galaxy, and thanks to the new telescope, we can discover more and more of them every day. One structure that is being explored recently is Sagittarius. Sagittarius is the largest molecular cloud that is forming in the Milky Way Galaxy at the moment. One of the most interesting parts of this cloud is its dark portions. These seemingly dark, empty pockets are actually filled with gas that is so dense that even the Webb telescope can’t see through it. To bypass this issue, scientists experimented with different devices they could use to possibly find what mysteries were lying behind this strange gas. After some time, they concluded that two different forms of technology could be added to the Webb Telescope. This would enable the telescope to see behind the gases of Sagittarius. When the scientists finally used these devices, the results were beautiful: a colorful array of stars that no one would be able to guess were behind these dark, mysterious gases. Although NASA scientists discovered what Sagittarius was hiding, they still don’t know why Sagittarius contains 50% of the gal-

axy’s stars while only having 10% of the galactic center’s gas. Following this breakthrough, the James Webb Telescope went on to make another remarkable discovery, one much closer to home, a brand new moon orbiting Uranus. “On February 2, 2025, the Webb telescope’s Near-Infrared Camera recorded an object creating a series of ten 40-minute-long exposure images,” said Maryame El Moutamid, during a study on Uranus’ ring and smaller inner moons. Scientists were able to determine that this new moon, temporarily named S/2025 U1, orbits the planet’s equatorial plane circularly. S/2025 U1 is only around 6 miles in diameter and orbits between the moons Ophelia and Bianca. Because it is so small, other telescopes and spacecraft such as the Hubble Telescope and Voyager 2, weren’t able to spot it as they lacked the sensitivity and technology to detect the reflection of such a small object. Astronomers say that this discovery offers new evidence about Uranus’s chaotic past. This new moon is located near the planet’s ring system, leading scientists to believe that it was formed after past collisions and breakups, indicating that Uranus’s system has not been entirely calm. NASA’s discoveries reveal the significant progress we have made in exploring the universe, but they also underscore the vast areas of knowledge we still lack. From mysterious molecular clouds to hidden moons, every new finding teaches us more about how space works and inspires the next generation of scientists, engineers, and dreamers to keep exploring.

Tiny Change, Big Impact

By SUDARSHAN KOTLANKA ‘26
Spectrum Staff

The Federal Reserve, the nation’s central bank, cut interest rates in October for the first time in 2025. That means borrowing money—whether for a car loan, a mortgage, or even on credit cards—might start to become a little cheaper over time (Wall Street Journal; Reuters). So why the change? The U.S. economy has been slowing down. Fewer jobs are being added, and people aren’t spending as much as before. Fed Chair Jerome Powell explained that the cut was meant to give the economy some breathing room, while still keeping inflation (the rise in prices) under control. “We’re not on a preset course,” he said, stressing that every decision will depend on new data (WSJ; Reuters). The cut was small—just a quarter of a percentage point—but it signals a big shift. For almost two years, the Fed kept rates high to fight inflation. Now, with the job market showing cracks, they’re easing up a little. Politics also played a role. Presi-

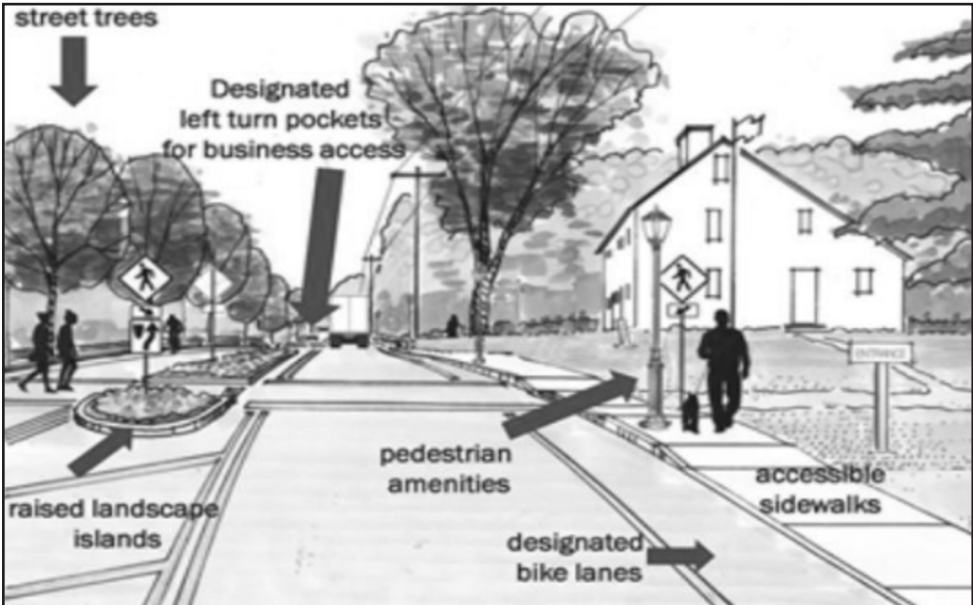
dent Trump and some allies pushed for bigger cuts, saying it would help businesses and the government save money. Even within the Fed, opinions differed. One new member wanted a larger cut, showing not everyone agrees on the best path forward (Reuters; WSJ). For students and families, the impact won’t be dramatic right away. Banks are slow to lower interest rates on things like credit cards. However, car loans, student loans, and mortgages may become easier to manage in the future. Businesses might feel the change sooner, since they often borrow money to grow and hire. Economists don’t agree on what comes next. Some say cutting too much could let inflation flare back up. Others think waiting too long could risk a recession. The Fed expects to make more cuts later this year, but nothing is set in stone (WSJ; Reuters). For now, the move shows Powell is trying to walk a careful line: helping the economy without letting prices get out of control.

An Acton Revitalization

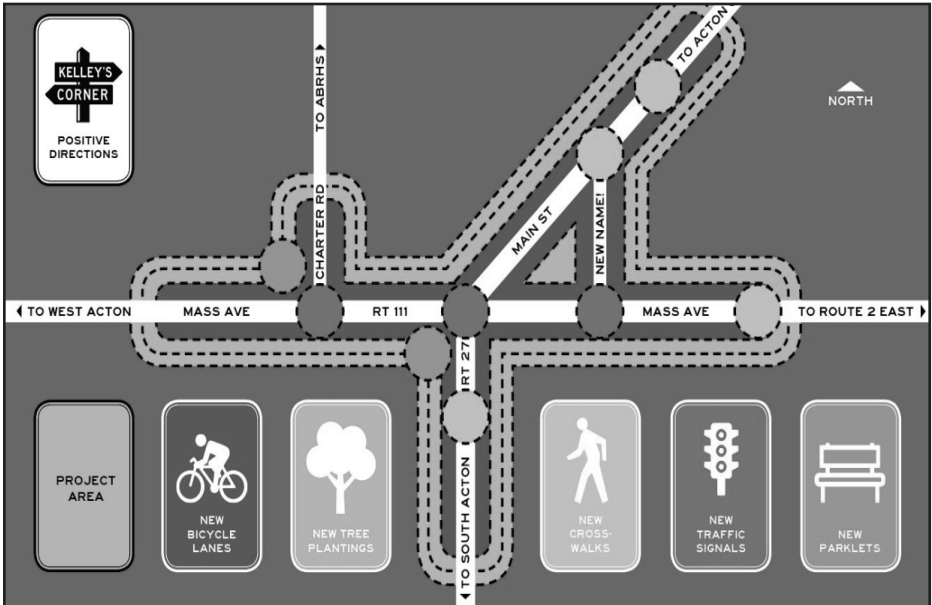
By ADITYA NARAYAN & TINA LI ‘27
Spectrum Staff

Drivers, the wait is over, construction at Kelly’s corner is about to end! Scheduled for the winter, all construction should be finished except for some final touches in the spring. What work remains? Well, an interview with John Mangiaratti, our town manager, reveals these answers. Kelly’s corner has been worked on for the past three years, causing everyone to wonder, ‘What is happening here?’ People have been right to question, as the project has been delayed for an entire year by utility poles! By this winter, the town will have laid down street islands on every road entering the intersection. These street islands will be oval shaped sections separating the road, filled with plants to improve Acton’s greenery. Why reduce the road size at such a busy intersection? Well, take a look at Prospect Street, where rapid construction occurred this summer. Prospect Street has become a safer place, but the main goal of calming traffic and slowing driving, has been achieved. Because the road is so narrow, people will have to decrease their driving speed, which the town hopes will create a safer environment. In addition, it redirects traffic flow to make navigating more efficient.

The main construction you’ve probably been seeing is the creation of the sidewalks along Massachusetts Avenue. Future plans entail bike lanes, a pocket park behind the Verizon building, and ornamental light fixtures for pedestrians. Along with adding more trees and plant life, this part of the construction is bound to make Acton safer for students and upgrade its aesthetic. After ten years of planning with the state and working on this project, Kelly’s corner is about to be revitalized, so the town and state turn their attention to a new issue, Piper Rd., intersecting Route 2 and across the highway from Conant School. The state has had its 25% hearing (which is a meeting with the state to check in on progress and potential issues), so we are still a long way out from work being started, but the town will try to improve the safety of cars making left turns. A quicker project will be creating a sidewalk and a beacon where the path from ABRHS leads to the Santa Fe plaza to make it safer for students crossing the street, likely done before this winter. “Now it’s just about finishing the details” says John Mangiaratti. Downtown Acton has been under construction for quite some time now, but it’s about to end! Get ready for a completely new look with many more plants and trees, wider sidewalks and biking lanes. But most importantly, get ready for a much safer place to drive!



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War & Peace

Justice on the Brink

By MATTHEW LIU ‘27
Editor-in-Chief

The thick air from smoke rises up around the charred government buildings of Kathmandu, Nepal. Loud clanging of flagpoles falling down and the sound of chants echo throughout the city center of Basantapur Square, led by young protesters. However, one question rings louder above all else: can peace truly be forged in the midst of war? Can justice, long denied to ordinary Nepali citizens, finally become the foundation of that peace?

The Nepalese Gen Z protests which erupted in 2025 may have appeared overnight on the news, but they were years in the making. The Nepali government tightened its grip on power by silencing opposition and enriching the elite fueled public anger and mistrust. Additionally, job shortages, inflation, and the steady collapse of public services over the past decade heavily affected many families. For nearly 10 years, Nepali citizens, especially young people, felt ignored by their government and leaders. They watched opportunities shrink while corruption expanded. Resentment grew quietly, year after year, until it exploded into the open. For many, the protests were not simply about power or economics, but about the deeper injustice of a system that left an entire generation voiceless. The majority of protesters were teenagers and young adults, who were united in frustration and utilized a common tool: social media. It became a lifeline for them to use and also a battlefield against the government’s failures. Activists online began organizing protests, rallying many. Despite the government fighting back with shutdowns and misinformation, the strength and sheer number of the young activists could not be stopped as the digital uprising intensified. Social media amplified the call for justice, turning individual anger into a national movement demanding fairness and dignity for all.

Then, in early March 2025, the nationwide ban of social media triggered a mass revolt. The street filled with demonstrators who started off fighting for their rights peacefully as a march; however, this quickly escalated to an uprising by the end of the week. The leaders of the revolution were often Gen Z activists, with students, coders, and young workers leading the charge against the long-ruling government. They stormed many government buildings and

set them on fire due to the government’s refusal to help the everyday people. Though destructive, these acts reflected not only the rage but also a desperate effort to dismantle an unjust system and force the nation to reckon with its failures. It represented not just rejecting the government, but the younger generation demanding accountability from those who ruled before them. However, the government ended up responding to these protests with force. They deployed riot police who fired tear gas at the protesters and arrested hundreds of them. Yet, instead of silencing the movement, the repression strengthened it. Each arrest became a spark, each crack-down a rallying cry, as thousands more poured into the streets. By late March 2025, the power balance had shifted and the government collapsed under the pressure of its own citizens. The fall of the regime was not merely the collapse of authority, but it was the people’s declaration that true peace must be built on justice, not oppression.

As the dust settled, order had collapsed, and Kathmandu continued to stand in an uneasy silence. While the violence in the streets has ended, peace is neither close, nor a guarantee. Nepal now faces its most important question: rebuild with compassion or risk falling deeper once more into violence. Seeking stability, the people looked for new leadership. In a historic election held on April 2, 2025, organized through Discord, the social media platform that was once banned, the people chose their first female prime minister, Sushila Karki as an interim leader. Her leadership represents a simple and powerful truth: peace without justice is only a pause between battles, but peace with justice can endure.

The story of Nepal’s revolt illustrates to us a paradox that many countries in conflict face: war may destroy nations, but it also forces them to confront the injustices they once ignored. The chants and marches of the youth, the defiance and courage from the ordinary citizens, and the fall of the unresponsive and biased government were all acts of war against injustice. Importantly, these acts were not for conquest, but for equality. Yet, in the quiet that follows, a new kind of war begins: the struggle to preserve peace. Peace, after all, is not the absence of war - it is the triumph of justice. Nepal’s young generation has proven that when peace rises from the ashes of oppression, it can become stronger than the flames



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Culture War and Class Conflict

Andrew Moon ‘27
Spectrum Staff

Conflict or war arises when opposing interests come into collision, and such may find itself in any sphere, whether in that of culture or of economics. This is evident even in the circumstances of our own day. The progress of media and technology, the shifting definitions of personal identity, and the efforts either to transform or to preserve them have brought forth a clash of diverse social and cultural interests — a cultural conflict, or what may be called a culture war. Likewise, the growth of new industries and the advance of modern technologies, the changing relations between labor and management, the vast wealth of a few contrasted with the poverty of the many, and the rising self-confidence and solidarity among workers have given rise to economic conflict, that is, known as a class conflict. Such polarization and growing inequality within society, and the deepening divisions, whether cultural or economic, serve only to undermine social unity. Yet amid these conflicts, one must recall that society cannot endure conflict. If nations are to secure lasting harmony, they must look to the higher principles. Human dignity and the common good demand that social, economic, and political order be directed toward justice, solidarity, and peace, which means safeguarding the laborer, promoting the full development of the human person, and maintaining a just balance between individual rights and social duties.

In our time, “culture war” has assumed proportions most grave, reducing the noble pursuit of humans to flourish. The remedy for so grave a disorder as the modern culture war is not to be found in the triumph of one faction over another, nor in the shifting winds of politics or public passion. When culture itself becomes a battlefield, when ideology is exalted above truth, or when victory is prized more than understanding, the very foundations of peace and civility are shaken. What is first required, therefore, is a renewal of moral vision — a return to reasoned discourse, to fairness of mind, and to the conviction that truth and conscience must govern human conduct. Without this inner restoration, no reform or movement, however well intended, can preserve the unity of society or the harmony of the human spirit.

The conflicts of our age make this plain. The struggles over gender and LGBTQIA+ rights, the unend-

ing disputes concerning abortion and human life, the division over immigration and the treatment of newcomers, the fierce debates on free speech and “cancel culture,” and the enduring quarrels about gun rights — all reveal a society at odds with itself. These battles, though fought in different arenas, share the same source: the failure to recognize that every human being deserves respect and that peace cannot be built upon contempt or exclusion.

Reconciliation begins within the human heart. It requires that people learn once more to see one another not as enemies to be defeated, but as neighbors to be understood. Real peace grows where truth is spoken with honesty and love, and where justice is done without cruelty or pride. Those who hold influence, in politics, media, or culture, bear a grave duty to use their power not to inflame division, but to heal it, reminding society that dignity belongs to all, even to those who think or live differently.

The task before us, then, is not simply to avoid conflict, but to rebuild trust and order in a world torn by suspicion. Freedom must be joined with responsibility; justice must be tempered by compassion; and love must be strengthened by truth. Only when these virtues stand together, truth, justice, love, and freedom, can peace be made firm and human advancement secured for generations to come.

In like manner, the conflict between capital and labor endures as one of the most pressing questions of our age. Though industry has advanced and commerce expanded beyond all former measure, the lot of the working man remains in many places fraught with uncertainty and distress. While the wealth of a few accumulates to an extent once unimaginable, the wages of the many too often stand still, and the fruits of progress are unequally shared. Hence arises a division between those who labor and those who possess, a division that imperils the very fabric of social peace. Yet the solution is not found in socialism or communism, nor does it lie in stirring up hostility between classes, nor in denying the right to private property or enterprise. Such ideas, by setting one group against another, only deepen the divisions they claim to heal.

It must be recognized that distinctions of class are, in truth, inevitable in every well-ordered society. Men differ in talents, industry, and opportunity; some possess wealth, some labor with their hands, and

some direct the work of others. These differences, while natural, do not justify oppression or neglect. Rather, they demand that each class act according to its responsibilities, and that the stronger aid the weaker, so that the structure of society may be maintained in harmony and justice.

The proper remedy is rather to be found in justice and mutual respect. Laborers must be free to form associations and unions for the defense of their rights and the promotion of their welfare. These bodies, founded in reason and fairness, ought not to aim at the destruction of class distinctions, but at the establishment of equity and concord among the several orders of society. Employers, in turn, are bound by a moral obligation not to treat their workmen as instruments of gain, but as persons with dignity. All workers are owed a just wage, safe working conditions, and a voice in matters touching their livelihood. These are not favors to be granted, but rights springing from the very nature of human labor.

Nor may public authority stand aloof from these duties. It is the office of the State to guard the weak from oppression, to restrain excessive greed, and to ensure that the nation’s wealth be directed to the common good rather than the ennoblement of a few. When governments, through neglect or misguided policy, permit the degradation of labor, the decay of social services, or the undue influence of wealth upon law, they betray their trust and invite discontent. The recent struggles concerning strikes, housing, and the mounting cost of nourishment bear witness to the perils of such neglect. A society that exalts profit above humanity cannot endure in harmony.

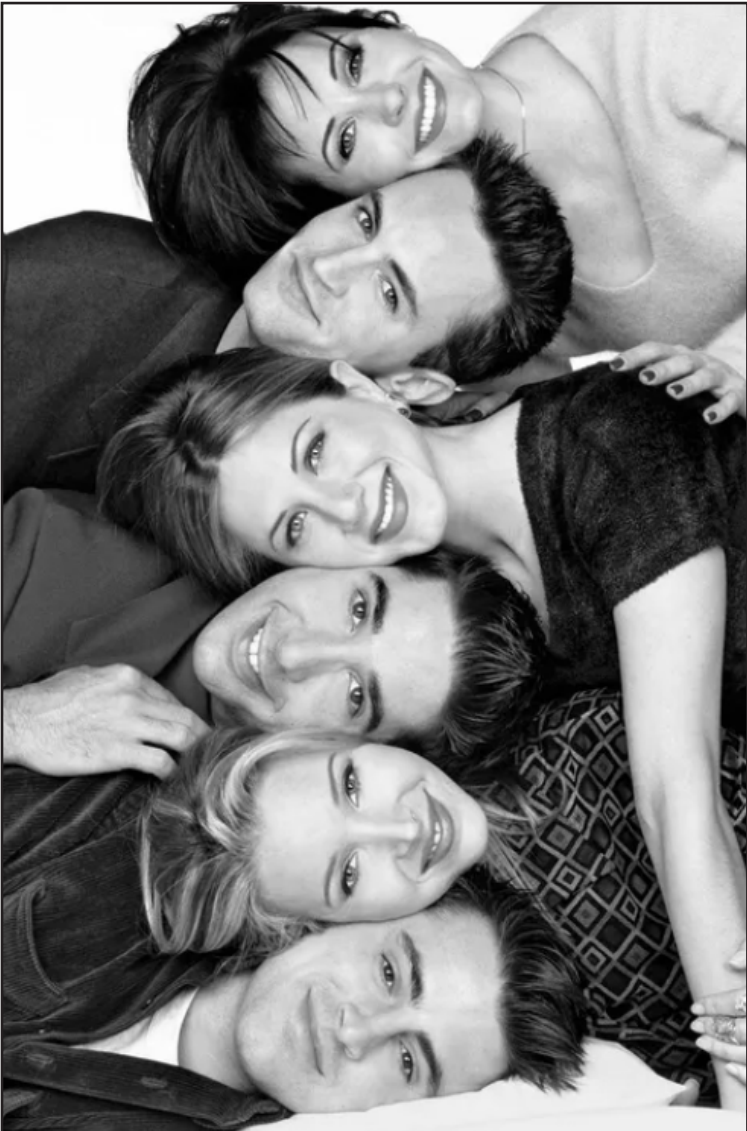
The conflict between capital and labor is not ordained by fate. When the duties of the one and the rights of the other are held in right proportion; when work is esteemed not as mere toil, but as honorable service; and when the spirit of solidarity triumphs over selfish ambition—then shall the wounds of industry be healed, and a more just and enduring peace established among men.

Let all who bear responsibility, whether in government, commerce, or culture, remember that the common good is not an abstraction, but a duty to be realized in the service of each human being; for when justice, solidarity, and respect for the inherent worth of all prevail, the hopes of humanity for a harmonious and flourishing world may at last be fulfilled.



The American Dream
ONLINE SOURCE

Op-Ed



FRIENDS
ONLINE SOURCE

Doom of Democracy?

By MATTHEW LIU ‘27
Editor-in-Chief

Charlie Kirk, the well-known conservative activist and founder of Turning Point USA, was shot and killed on September 10 while speaking at Utah Valley University. He was thirty-one years old, and his abrupt death stunned both supporters and opponents, forcing the nation to confront what happens when political differences no longer stay in the realm of debate and cross the line into violence. Political violence is not just an attack on one person, rather, it is an attack on democracy itself.

Kirk’s rise to fame began in his teenage years, when he founded Turning Point USA, an organization that hosted conferences and mobilized young conservatives on college campuses. Through his activism, he became a vocal ally of Donald Trump and often denounced diversity initiatives and attacked “woke culture.” His ideas, such as comparing progressive movements to authoritarian regimes and dismissing systemic racism, sparked outrage among critics and defense from his supporters, and helped him build a large following.

Following the attack, the nation’s response has exposed many deep fractures. President Trump called Kirk “a patriot who gave his life for freedom” and even announced a proposal to engrave his face on coins. He called for states to lower their flags at half-mast. Many have labeled him a martyr, but critics argue that these gestures risk glorifying the violence itself, by framing his death as a political sacrifice rather than a tragedy, they feed into a narrative that valorizes confrontation over compromise. Such reactions could deepen the political divide by turning a human loss into a weapon. When prominent figures attempted to broach the subject they faced censorship and backlash, similar to

Jimmy Kimmel, who had his popular talk show temporarily suspended from airing after his comments on the growing political extremism surrounding Kirk’s death.

The assassination has ignited a fierce debate about what this means for democracy. Political violence, no matter the target, should never be normalized or excused. Yet, both sides are growing more and more hostile towards one another. When someone is killed for their beliefs, no matter how controversial it is, it signals a dangerous erosion of our shared commitment to peace. Recently, two young women were also killed by an unstable Kirk supporter who claimed he was “defending his legacy,” an unsettling example of how this cycle of radicalization extends well beyond the initial act. As a country, politics has become more and more polarized and radicalized, with outrage replacing dialogue and partisanship replacing empathy. Trapped in outrage, each aggressive act fuels another as empathy and acceptance fade further into the background. Whether one agrees or not with Kirk’s viewpoints, his death should not be seen as a victory. It should be a wake-up call, a moment to ask what kind of nation we are becoming when violence becomes the language of politics. It is a tragedy for his family, yes, but also a tragedy for our nation. It is a sign that the US is slowly losing its ability to coexist across differences and to find common ground.

If this becomes another act to fuel violence and people continue to exploit it for political gain, with one side blaming the other and using his death to rally anger instead of reflection, we risk cementing a future defined by fear and vengeance instead of debate and democracy. The choice before us is clear: either confront the dangerous normalization of political violence, or allow outrage to consume the very principles that hold this country together.

The Resurgence of Old TV Shows

By BELLA MATHEWS ‘27
Spectrum Staff

Are you someone who loves to rewatch or feel that nostalgic comfort with old TV shows? Well, you’re not alone! Throughout the 21st century people have noticed the increased draw to older shows, like comforting comedies such as “Friends” or “The Office,” or thrilling dramas like “Grey’s Anatomy” or “Suits.” The 1990s and 2000s produced a wide range of unique movies and TV shows still prominent in today’s media. According to NRG, “Forty-two percent of Gen Z prefer content from the 2010s compared to 37% of Millennials and just 25% of Gen X”. What is the cause of this re-rise to fame for these beloved shows? Well, according to Screen Rant and NGR, the resurgence of TV shows is due to the intense feeling of nostalgia and simplicity of the shows that were produced during “simpler” times. Old TV shows have the ability to provide comfort which benefits people’s wellbeing.

For example, simplicity is important. NGR notes the difference in comedy throughout the years. Specifically, the show “Sex in the City” has a lot of risque language, which today could be frowned upon. Over the years, there has been progress towards inclusivity throughout the industry, seen in revised remakes, or tamer comedies. This push for diversity by movie makers, influences them to stray away from more scandalous jokes. Although this is better for inclusivity, some view it as a loss of humor or comedy preferred by viewers. NGR explains the viewpoints of Gen Z: “‘Older shows and movies are from a time where content was ‘generally more relaxed and comedy was better,’ said one Gen Z. Another agreed, ‘[old content was] funnier than they are now—it feels like directors try too hard nowadays.’” Many viewers

see the crudeness of older shows appealing, noting how crucial comedic relief is. Simplicity can also be noted through the camera quality. Some newer shows have complex CGI, intriguing uses of colors, and people flying out of planes. Older TV sticks to their laugh tracks and fuzzy camera quality, which some prefer over the high quality newness. This can really be seen in newer versus older rom coms. Older ones have the quality that is appealing to most, and newer ones are not as fulfilling.

Another idea of simplicity is seen through the availability of streaming services. You want a show right away in seconds? You can find it on Hulu, Disney+, Netflix, or many more. However, this has some downsides. First, you need to pay for all of these streaming services. With all the options it makes it difficult to spread your purchases throughout five or six platforms, when some of your favorites will be on Netflix and some on Peacock. Secondly, you are unable to really get into shows. As expressed by ScreenRant, the problem lies with the abundance of streaming services. “[Streaming services] comes with plenty of positives, but it also means that it’s harder for new shows to grow their audiences.” Options are very important in today’s society so it is not surprising how with more choices and shorter attention spans, older shows are familiar and welcome to all generations.

Another main idea that draws people back into their favorite old shows is through the desire for nostalgia. As previously stated: individuals want to go back to the “better days,” with less conflict or problems. ScreenRant notes some people fear the risk of not enjoying new shows, which draws them right back to the shows of old. Nostalgia was studied by GWI, and they noted how important nostalgia is in our generation. Even after the hard-

ship of COVID and things finally getting back to normal, people still wish for the times with less confusion or weariness that could be found in today’s world. You also see more vintage clothing coming back into style. With all of these complex messages from the ever-changing aspects of life, like keeping up with the barrage of politics, trends, or styles, it’s no wonder that younger generations drift to these old TV shows, resorting to nostalgia for comfort. In addition, when getting into old shows, viewers know they are going to be good. A classic staple with consistent viewership since the early 2000s must be good compared to shows that people are just now discovering. NRG notes that Gen Z says “‘[they] never have to worry about waiting for new episodes to come out’ or run the risk of the series being canceled.’” Rather than stressing about if your favorite character will pick the right lover, you know that in the end they will get married. And yes, some people will say that the factor of surprise is important when watching something, but honestly, life gives you enough surprises, and some just want that consistency.

Overall, the old TV show resurgence is due to the craving of nostalgia and simplicity while reflecting on the “harder” more current times. While simplicity and nostalgia are just a couple of factors, everyone has their own preferences when picking something to watch. Watching TV and immersing yourself in a story has many benefits, and older shows have the heart and comedic relief many need in today’s society. So get back into those shows you love, sit down with Michael Scott and Jim Halbert in The Office, explore the streets of Stars Hollow with Lorelai and Rory, and drink a nice cup of coffee with Rachel, Monica, or Chandler, because you’ll find that you won’t be the only one.

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Op-Ed

The Conveyor Belt Myth

By NATE KIM ‘27
News Editor

“Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be” (Benjamin 3).

In the shadows of individuality and self-determination live the insecure ideals of mass democracy. Walter Benjamin, a German essayist and critic of culture and media from the early twentieth century, lived to witness the developments that sought to make life easier and simpler than it had previously been. Transportation, information, and operation had seemingly made life easier, not just for the top few but for the masses. Benjamin wrestled with what these rapid developments could mean to society. Among the gilded trophies, what caught the eye of Benjamin was art. Historically, art’s value rested in its uniqueness and the authenticity of an artist’s intentions, which Benjamin called aura, but now every stroke of an artist could be perfectly replicated by any hand with the right machine, thus deflating the uniqueness of the piece.

Benjamin’s worries did not originate from the reproduction of art. The practice of mass production had its place in society for centuries, ranging from pupils studying and copying a master’s work to imitating and counterfeiting a work of art to be sold as an authentic one. What astonished him was the scale of this action. Pressing buttons captured live motion, recorded voices, remembered colors, and touched hearts. Despite this change, art still fostered its rhetorical and aesthetic purpose. The difference was that millions could be made for millions to see.

Benjamin explores his concerns in his essay The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, as he concedes that mass reproduction dilutes the aura of an authentic work of art, but nods to the unprecedented accessibility it allows for art to truly become the people’s. In today’s society, the rise of social media and AI are raising anew the issue of authenticity in art. Many indulge in the art of doomscrolling, and cynics criticize those consumed by the endless mechanical river of information. Upon close scrutiny of human psychology and behaviors, social media platforms developed an algorithm that exposes our minds to radicalized interests that seek to keep us engaged. As treacherous as throwing one’s body into an obvious trap may seem, Benjamin argues that the dubious form of transferring information benefits society by truly democratizing information to the public. Mass production grants anyone from a carpenter’s child to an aristocrat’s heir access to the colors of politics and shades of entertainment.

For better or worse, the scrolling format of social media has changed how we take in information. If you are in a public space with a handful of people, observe the absorbed, left-eye unconsciously losing focus, scrolling through their phones, like a conveyor belt, unable to stop themselves. Scrolling, clicking, and gazing. Scrolling, clicking, gazing: a practice resembling the Ford assembly line method of production that boggled Benjamin. “The desire of

contemporary masses to bring things ‘closer’ spatially and humanly ... rests on their bent toward overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction” (Benjamin 5). As scary and shameful as unconsciously easing your jaw and drooling away your sense of time to meaningless flashing colors may be, your will to look away is just not enough to defeat the magnetic force of addiction. You have knowingly planted, watered, and eventually matured an uncontrollable monster inside your will, constantly whining for you to scroll. Day after day, week after week, and year after year, the monster outgrew and enslaved its owner. Like a grotesque mockery of water cure, the shame that follows obeying a two dimensional object suffocates its subject. At that rate of consuming myriad information, everything blends together into a muddy grey, without anything holding any significance. Just like the mechanical reproduction of art.

As dipping one’s head in the river of content has become unstoppable, the opioid of information has been molded for our brains that always thirst for it— astoundingly, scrolling fulfills that desire without much effort. It unbuttons our minds from conflicts and details of our lives and allows us to focus on the blur of information efficiently yet ineffectively. Asking a scroller to remember what they saw three scrolls ago would rarely lead to an answer, at most a shrug. This laziness relies on another to spoonfeed thousands of pieces of momentarily comprehended information to be quickly forgotten, but interestingly, this peripheral flow-state of mind allows us to be better connected to the purpose and intentions of artists. “The distracted mass absorbs the work of art. ... Distraction as provided by art presents a covert control of the extent to which new tasks have become soluble by apperception” (Benjamin 18).

The curious conveyor belt takes the wheel of our minds, dictates how we see, and indoctrinates how we think.

As we slowly lose our psychological autonomy, a question arises: are we really losing self-control, or did we ever have control of ourselves? Benjamin quotes, “I can no longer think what I want to think. My thoughts have been replaced by moving images” (Georges Duhamel, Scènes de la vie future, Paris, 1930, p. 52). We must learn to appreciate the change in how we take information and perhaps utilize its unique ability to influence our society for the better. In reality, we are always influenced by what surrounds us, and doomscrolling just allows us to realize that we are constantly influenced. This realization that doomscrolling allows us to acknowledge should be unique and special enough to have its value and place in today’s world. If art can be valued by how successfully it fulfills its purpose, don’t the contents meet their goal by keeping us scrolling? Instead of concerning ourselves with the natural and inevitable, appreciating the act and perhaps shaping the act might be the best today’s scroller can do. One must imagine a conveyor belt happy. Rather than condemning the practice of doomscrolling, we might learn, as Benjamin did, to see in it the mirror of humanity’s evolving way of seeing.

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Stop & Shop’s Effect on Acton

By LUCAS ZHANG ‘28
Spectrum Staff

Stop & Shop is the new sensation in downtown Acton, rising from the ashes of the old K-mart building. It rivals the local gas stations and restaurants for the attention of ABRHS students hungry after school for snacks and goodies. Shoppers flock to it instead of Roche Bros. or Trader Joe’s for their weekly groceries. But how does the establishment of this new powerhouse of a grocery store affect the local businesses we have here in Acton?

Stop & Shop is a Northeastern American supermarket chain known for its large offering of groceries, pre-prepared foods, and in-store pharmacies. Though they do not really have unique offerings, the chain is still much beloved in the northeast. Founded from small beginnings in 1892 by the Rabinowitz family as a small, humble grocery store with one location in Boston by the name of the Greenie Store, it has now grown to an expansive empire of 365 stores.

But how do chain stores such as Stop & Shop invading towns affect the business of well-established local stores? Though the effects are not yet evident, the Walmart Effect makes it clear what this kind of invasion can do to a town. The Walmart Effect describes what happens when retail giants move into small towns, which is clearly the situation that we have in Acton. Because of the large selection, lower prices, and greater

purchasing power that chain businesses offer to a community, local businesses need to charge more for their selections because they spend more to get products due to their small scale. This phenomenon is backed up by research as well, as shown in a Chicago study that found that 82 of 306 small businesses were forced to close within a two-year period that followed a Walmart opening. Some may claim that Walmart’s superior offerings and cheaper prices are worth the closure of “inferior” local shops. However, a 2005 paper from UC Irvine found that the opening of a Walmart reduces a county’s retail employment by 150 workers, meaning that each Walmart employee replaces about 1.4 retail employees. Not only does this mean that people lose their jobs, but in small towns where local stores mean easy employment, the loss of those retail stores could mean that some are unable to find another job, completely ruining their livelihoods. In addition, if those laid-off workers are able to find a job at Walmart, the wages are often lower on average than the local businesses. In essence, Walmart places a monopoly on grocery store workers so that they are forced to work for lower wages.

So, how does this relate to Stop & Shop opening in Acton, and what are the implications? Well, based on the Walmart Effect, it is clear that many local businesses, such as Roche Bros. and local gas stations, could be affected. People who used to shop at Roche Bros. could start shopping at

Stop & Shop if they find the selection and prices more appealing. The loss of business could drastically reduce Roche Bros.’s revenue and could lead to the store closing. Also, the gas stations that see business after high school and middle school classes end, from students going to buy beverages and snacks, could also lose their business. In addition to being closer, Stop & Shop has many more snacks and drinks than the gas stations do. Though their main business is in people pumping gas, the purchase of gas station snacks no doubt contributes to their revenue. In this way, Stop & Shop can also create more stress on these gas stations.

Finally, another supermarket being approved when there are already well-established grocery stores like Roche Bros., Donelan’s and Trader Joe’s, could reveal a vulnerability in the town government. This should have been given some pause for thought, especially if new grocery store openings would hurt existing small businesses.

In conclusion, Stop & Shop may be a welcome addition to Acton. But because of a well-established phenomenon of chain stores crushing local businesses through offering a wider selection, cheaper prices, and more competition, it may turn out to be detrimental and not a positive addition to our town. But how Stop & Shop will change Acton is yet to be seen.

Check out page 10 for our fav Spectrum snacks from Stop & Shop!

Off-Topic

Movies: Behind the Hit

By ILDANA TOHTI & ISABELLA SANTIAGO '28
Spectrum Staff

Think about your favorite movie... what exactly makes it your top pick? For many, it is hard to explain; it might be the huge plot twist, the relatable characters or it was simply “entertaining.” However, behind every successful movie, one that becomes a “favorite”, are complex physiological and neurological processes. By accessing the brain’s depths, producers are able to manipulate emotions, memory and engagement. Netflix’s newly released, *KPop Demon Hunters*, effectively uses neuropsychological techniques to pull audiences into the screen. As a result the movie climbed the charts and “Became the Most Watched Movie in Netflix History” according to Vanity Fair. Through repeated triggering of emotional arousal, individual reward systems, brain science and cinema join together to make unforgettable entertainment.

By the end of the month it was released, *KPop Demon Hunters* hit 236 million views. Attracting high levels of engagement demands the activation of key structures in the brain’s limbic system, a broad network in the brain that dictates emotion, memory, behavior and motivation. In particular, the amygdala and nucleus accumbens are associated with fear, excitement and reward processing. Together, the neurons will absorb the emotionally charged scenes, adding to its memorability and emotional impact. In practice, producers will aim for emotional peaks every 8-10 minutes, which could mean action beats, jump scares or comedic reliefs. With *K-Pop Demon Hunters* the peaks were easily implemented. Demons were used for jump scares or fast-paced action sequences. Interactions between characters invoked humor. So, without the audience being aware of it, *KPop Demon Hunters* was strategically maintaining high energy and keeping dopamine levels spiked. This makes scenes more memorable and pushing viewers to rewatch the movie in an unconscious search for that same hit of pleasure. Realism through close-ups on expressions and layered breathing sounds also furthered activity in the limbic system. Music proved to be another essential strategy for the movie. The National Library of Medicine details that the brain and body respond to music the same way it does to other rewards, such as food and social bonding. In fact, it modulates the mesolimbic system, the dopamine pathway in the limbic network; while changing the autonomic nervous system which activates natural commands like faster heart rate, chills and goosebumps. While the average consumer sees the *KPop Demon Hunters* soundtrack as just a collection of good songs; it is actually triggering the memories of the scenes and brain responses that had occurred because of dopamine spikes and autonomic system activation.

KPop Demon Hunters’ success also relied on creating personal connections between the audience and the movie by fostering connection. In the brain, the superior temporal and inferior frontal cortices recognize people’s actions and mirror them inside the brain. Then the insula relays the action potential to the amygdala, causing an emotional

response. The interaction between the insula and cortices represents the basis of human empathy, allowing people to simulate the emotions and experience of the on-screen characters, thereby producing real connection. This translates to *KPop Demon Hunters* as the various close-up shots, intimate sound design, and emotionally vulnerable moments provide an opportunity for viewers to feel that the characters do. When Rumi cries, the viewers mirror neurons light up and, with its connection to the amygdala, it feels as if they too had been crying. When Huntrix triumphs, the audience shares the joy. Additionally, the movie’s climax scene is paired with the song “What it Sounds Like,” which now holds 350 million streams on Spotify. During the scene, the audience’s mirror neurons, dopamine levels and emotional centers are all firing; so when replaying the song the associated brain processes and memories will restore the same sense of triumph. Use of idol-like characters contribute by tapping into parasocial bonds or pseudo-relationships fans form with real world public figures of the K-Pop industry. Modeling characters after real K-Pop idols, such as Baby Saja and Sugar from BTS, accesses the existing network of emotionally invested fandom and loyalty. The characters alone can be adored similar to the real world idols they typically connect with. All together the scenes of intense emotions and actions of teamwork, vulnerability, and more reinforce empathy, making the emotional experience not just entertaining but neurologically authentic.

Although emotions greatly influence the viewer’s experience of a movie, what is even more impactful is suspense and anticipation. According to a research article by the Frontiers in Behavioral Science, fMRI studies showed that suspense and anticipation of fear resulted in more activity in attention networks and sensory areas than emotional processing. To put it simply, mystery draws people’s attention, turns watching into a matter of monitoring, focusing, and anticipating since seeking is the most dominant emotion. The sharpened focus sets things up for a larger emotional release later on. When movies have a continuous fluctuation between suspense (tension, silence, etc) and release (explosions, jokes, or songs triggering dopamine), it creates a consistent flow of emotional arousal that prevents mental exhaustion. This “push and pull” method is the basis of the “Transportation Effect”, which drives deep immersion of the audience. For *KPop Demon Hunters*, this is represented perfectly by Rumi’s anticipated reveal of her demon marks, the countdown to the idol awards and the final performance. But every mystery build-up had their aligning emotional release and dopamine spike: Rumi eventually accepts her scars, the idol awards get crashed and the final performance ends with Huntrix victorious. Additionally, the film heightens this neurological effect by being rooted in historical culture. Its specific connection to globally popular Korean and K-Pop culture ensures a deeper absorption and accesses pre-existing fan loops. Deliberate combination of neurological reinforcement, perfectly timed dopamine hits and cortisol releases with cultural familiarity developed

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- Across:
- 2. Acorn
 - 6. Leaf
 - 7. Pumpkin
 - 9. Apple Cider
 - 10. Harvest

- Down:
- 1. Fall Sport
 - 3. Fall
 - 4. Scarecrows
 - 5. Bird
 - 8. Raking

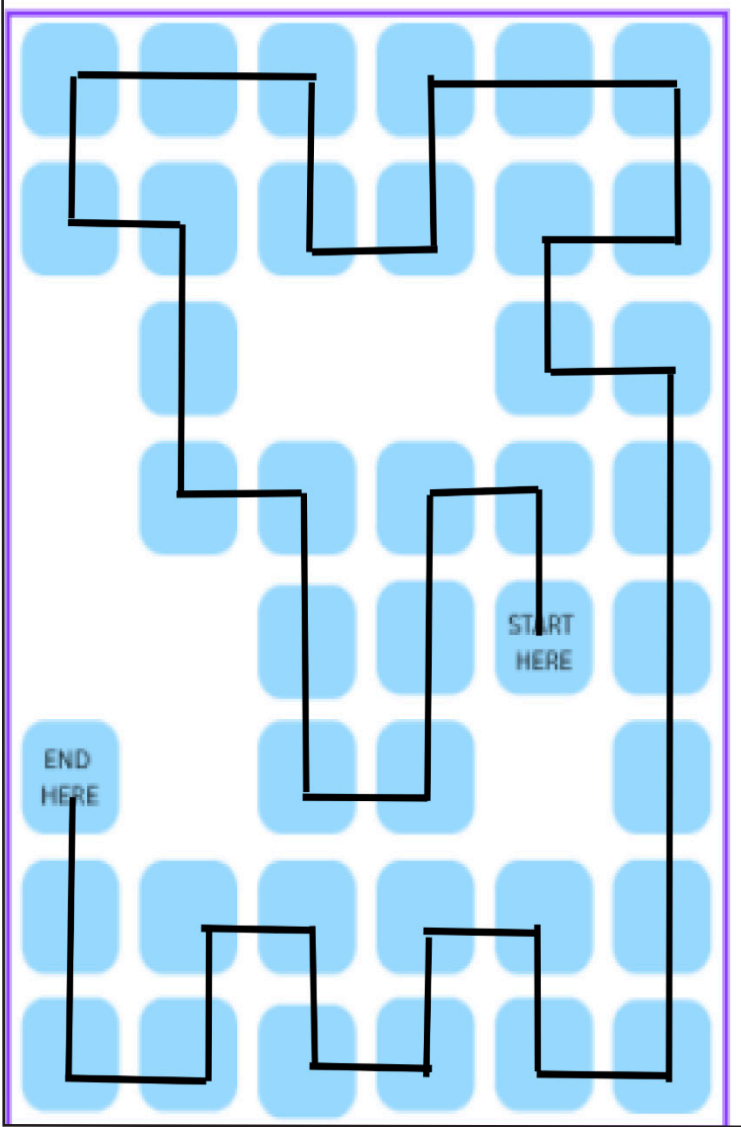
a powerful emotional experience for the audience. *KPop Demon Hunters* was not established as a typical watch but as a landmark in global entertainment, effectively securing its longer-term, enduring memory, cultural relevance, and massive commercial dominance.

Overall, creating cinematic success involves a deliberate and science-backed approach to viewer engagement. The impressive popularity of *KPop Demon Hunters* stands not just as a cultural achievement but as a captivating example in the strategic use of neurophysiological techniques. From triggering initial emotional arousal to activating long-term reward systems, *K-Pop Demon Hunters* proves that the highest levels of entertainment are achieved when cinema and brain science are intentionally interconnected to deliver an unforgettable and lasting experience that ultimately sticks with the watchers.

Block Fill Answers

BY SADIE WASSERMAN

Directions: Make a line that passes through every block. No diagonals!



Off-Topic



John Coltrane
ONLINE SOURCE

Itz Jazz: Who Was John Coltrane?

By ANDREW MOON ‘27
Spectrum Staff

Ars longa, vita brevis—“art is long, life is short.” John Coltrane’s life is one of the clearest testaments to that truth. Although he died at the young age of 40 with only 12 years of career, his influence never decreased, even nearly 60 years after his death. Few dispute that Coltrane was the greatest jazz saxophonist that the world has seen. As Miles Davis, one of the greatest musicians of all time, once said, “his music is what he left us, and we can all learn from that.”

Born on September 23, 1926, in Hamlet, North Carolina, John William Coltrane grew up listening to the popular songs at the peak of the swing era. He received his first saxophone, which was an alto, on his 17th birthday in 1943. He later joined the Navy and played in the Navy big band. After being discharged, he studied music theory with jazz guitarist and composer Dennis Sandole. When he first saw Charlie Parker’s performance in 1945, bebop grabbed his ear. That moment drew him into the world of bebop. With its fast tempos, adventurous improvisation, and complex harmonies, bebop became the foundation of his early musical language.

Before fame found him, Coltrane spent years as a journeyman saxophonist after his Navy career. By the late 40s, his talent caught the attention of some of the biggest names in jazz. He finally got the chance to perform with his idol, Charlie Parker. This experience opened the door to his rise in the jazz world, leading him to perform with legendary bandleaders like Dizzy Gillespie and, ultimately, to join Miles Davis.

With Coltrane, Davis completed his legendary “First Great Quintet,” alongside Red Garland on piano, Paul Chambers on bass, Philly Joe

Jones on drums, and Davis himself on trumpet. Coltrane seemed like the perfect fit for Davis, who wanted someone to complement his calm, controlled trumpet with rapid, lush improvisation — perfect for the newly introduced hard bop style, a genre characterized by its strong blues influence.

Later, Coltrane met Thelonious Monk, a legendary jazz pianist. Unlike Davis, Monk enjoyed playing in a florid and sometimes unpredictable style, making him a perfect match for Coltrane’s adventurous sound. Though their collaboration lasted only six months, this experience allowed Coltrane to take a giant step toward defining his own musical style. During this period, Coltrane released *Blue Train*, establishing himself as a leading figure in hard bop.

In 1957, Coltrane rejoined Davis, and together they released the groundbreaking *Milestones* (1958), helping define modal jazz by focusing on scales over chords. In 1959, they released *Kind of Blue*, the greatest jazz album of all time, featuring Coltrane’s legendary solos on “So What” and “All Blues.” That same year, Coltrane released *Giant Steps*, which stands as a prime example of his signature “sheets of sound,” rapid, cascading runs, and an inventive approach to improvisation that challenged saxophonists for generations.

A year later, in 1960, Coltrane released *My Favorite Things*, featuring the soundtrack from the movie *The Sound of Music* and George Gershwin’s “Summertime.” This album marked the first time Coltrane prominently played soprano saxophone, producing a softer sound compared to his tenor saxophone. In 1961, he left Davis’s Sextet to form his own classic quartet, featuring McCoy Tyner on piano, Jimmy Garrison on bass, and Elvin Jones on drums.

From this point, Coltrane’s music expanded beyond traditional jazz. He explored global influences, as in *Africa/Brass*, incorporating traditional African sounds, while still producing intimate jazz works like *Ballads*, where he transformed simple melodies into deeply expressive statements. His collaboration with another jazz legend, Duke Ellington, on *Duke Ellington & John Coltrane*, highlighted Coltrane’s versatility, showing he could honor jazz tradition while pushing its boundaries.

In 1965, Coltrane released *A Love Supreme*, a personal and spiritual masterpiece that marked a new chapter in his career. Coltrane sought to express his gratitude, faith, and search for meaning through sound, inspiring jazz artists, rock musicians, and even classical composers to explore music as a vehicle for deeper meaning.

By the end of his career, he worked on avant-guard jazz, constantly pushing the boundaries of jazz. Albums like *Interstellar Space* (1967) challenged traditional notions of melody, harmony, and rhythm, demonstrating his relentless quest to expand both the possibilities of jazz and the expressive power of the saxophone. The same year, he passed away due to liver cancer at the age of 40, ending his short 12-year career.

Coltrane mastered bebop under Charlie Parker, honed hard bop with Miles Davis, and ultimately conquered the top of free jazz. His music invites audiences to experience sound not just as entertainment, but as a profound emotional and spiritual journey. Every note feels alive, urging listeners to engage deeply with both the music and themselves. Decades after his death, Coltrane’s saxophone still speaks, proving *ars longa, vita brevis* — art is long, even if life is short.

Fall Recipe: Apple Cider Donuts

By STELLA HUANG-LOGAN ‘29
Spectrum Staff

As we are approaching the November holiday season, here is a fitting seasonal recipe that you should try at home. Baked apple cider doughnuts with cinnamon maple glaze are a great seasonal dessert, since they feature the season’s food: apples. Moist and rich with a touch of that cinammon tang, its enough to make anyone’s mouth water! The smell will float through your house faster than any Pumpkin Spice Latte candle can. One great thing about this recipe is that you don’t need to deep fry these doughnuts; rather, you simply bake them in the oven, though you might need to buy a donut pan. These doughnuts are also a great way to bond and spend time with your loved ones, and to take a well-deserved break from all the hard work during school. The doughnuts can be made without the glaze and will still be just as delicious! Perfect for desert after cozy fall dinners, family and friends will be begging you to remake these for your next party. I hope you enjoy making and eating these doughnuts!

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups apple cider
- 2 tablespoons salted butter, melted

- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1/4 cup apple butter
- 1/2 cup packed dark brown sugar
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 honeycrisp apple, chopped (about 1/2 cup)
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon sugar

Brown Butter Cinnamon Maple Glaze

- 4 tablespoons salted butter
- 1/3 cup maple syrup
- 3/4-1 cup powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon instant coffee (optional)
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

Instructions

Well in advance of baking, set out eggs and butters to warm up to room temperature which prevents lumps in batter later on.

Preheat your oven to 350° F (~177° C). Grease a 6-cup doughnut pan with melted butter or even with a non-stick pan.

Boil the apple cider over high

heat. Then, reduce the heat and let simmer until reduced to about 3/4 cup. Remove the cider from the heat and let it cool down to room temperature.

In a large mixing bowl, stir together the cider, melted butter, eggs, apple butter, vanilla, and brown sugar until blended.

Then add the dry ingredients (to the same bowl): flour, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, and salt. Mix these until everything is combined.

Dice your apple and toss it into the cinnamon sugar mix, which is around 1 tbs of cinnamon and 2-3 tbs of sugar. Then stir the apples into the batter.

Pour the batter into the pan, just before overflowing. Bake for 14 minutes, until the donuts are cooked all the way through. Remove the donuts from the oven and let cool for 5 minutes. Then take out the donuts and put them on a plate.

As the donuts are in the oven, make the glaze. Add the butter to a small pot set over medium heat. Allow the butter to brown slightly until it smells toasted, about 2-3 minutes. Remove from the heat and whisk in the maple syrup, powdered sugar, instant coffee, and cinnamon. Coat the doughnuts in the glaze.

I recommend keeping these donuts at room temperature for up to one week for maximum freshness!



YUM IN MY TUM.
ONLINE SOURCE

Off-Topic

Comedy: Of Lice & Love

By SADIE & STELLA ‘29
Spectrum Staff

Once upon a time, there was a teenage girl named Teresa who fell in the dirt while roughhousing with her dog, Millard. Since Teresa fell in the dirt, she ended up getting lice. The lice spread all over her head. Then, when Teresa stood up she dusted herself off, and all the lie fell out expect one, Lawrence. As Teresa cuddled with Millard, Lawrence the louse, fell madly in love with Teresa. And when Millard saw Lawrence’s gorgeous face, he fell in love with Lawrence. But, unfortunately, Lawrence didn’t feel that way about Millard, and Teresa didn’t feel the same about Lawrence. That was because Teresa had a boyfriend named Jeff, with whom she was very close. One day, Jeff saw

Lawrence on Teresa’s hair, so he told Teresa, “since you have lice in your hair, we can’t be together since I can’t be with someone who has lice.” So then, Teresa removed Lawrence from her head so she could continue to see Jeff romantically stylez with a Z (Brooklyn 99 reference). Lawrence was super duper sad because the love of his life had exterminated him, and because he was now dead. In the end, Jeff was happy because his relationship could go back to normal with Teresa, now that there was no bug trying to get in between them. Millard was absolutely distraught that the love of his life had just gotten exterminated from his owner’s head, so he held a funeral for Lawrence. Teresa and Jeff got married even though they had only known each other for five months, and moved to Australia with Mil-



Don’t let love bug you!
ONLINE SOURCE

Love is Not Always Loss

By STELLA HUANG-LOGAN ‘29
Spectrum Staff

For my whole life, I had lived with two cats and a dog. But last May, one of my cats peacefully passed away from heart failure. This distressed my family since she had been with us for 17 years, and was one of the nicest cats I’ve ever met. After her passing, I was reminded that death is the end; there was no way for me to bring her back. I grieved and sadness overwhelmed me. In time, I began to hang out with my dog and other cat more, trying to make each moment memorable, since death will eventually take them too.

It dawned on me that after going through a heartbreak, whether from the loss of a friend, a pet, or a partner, people often hesitate to love again, and they may feel they have lost the ability to love, like how I initially felt when my cat passed away. And this depression makes them miss out on wonderful relationships, since they pull themselves back from the world of love.

To avoid these negative thoughts, you can get back up and find new people and pets to love. You may be thinking, “What about my past love? It would be wrong to forget about them”. There is no need to forget about your past relationships, but

instead, reflect and think of those memories with a positive note, and allow space in your heart for new people and pets.

You might have heard of Alfred Lord Tennyson’s famous lines from “In Memoriam A. H.H.” “Tis better to have loved and lost / Than never to have loved at all” (Tennyson 15-16)

These lines emphasize how important it is to be able to move on with your life with new people and pets while still remembering the loved ones from the past. Even though it may be hard at first to love again, it’s important to remember that life requires enduring many major emotional and physical challenges. We will always learn a way to overcome them, allowing us to expand our capacity to love.

A Moody Fall Playlist

By LUKAS KANICS ‘26
Chief Copy Editor & Photography Team Lead

For me, the chilly weather and colorful leaves of autumn pair perfectly with the moody but lively atmosphere of many songs originating from the alternative rock genre during the 80s and 90s, particularly from its grunge, shoegaze, and indie rock subgenres. In this playlist, I have arranged a collection of songs from said period and genres, and I hope you will enjoy listening to them!

1. Nutshell by Alice in Chains
2. I Still Do by The Cranberries

3. Trees and Flowers by Strawberry Switchblade
4. Marigold by Nirvana
5. Pennyroyal Tea – Scott Litt Mix by Nirvana
6. Rotten Apple by Alice in Chains
7. All Apologies by Nirvana
8. Try Not to Breathe by R.E.M.
9. Street Spirit (Fade Out) by Radiohead
10. Never-Never 2023 Remaster by Lush



Fall Connections

STORY	TITANIC	NOTE	TERMINATOR
KEY	ROSE	SCALE	ALIENS
NUTS	POST	SPARE	AVATAR
JACK	REEL	WRENCH	LEGEND

Off-Topic

AB Sports

By CHRIS GIL '28 & HENRY WANG '27
Spectrum Staff

Fall sports have finally come to an end. ABRHS is part of the Dual County League and competes under the MIAA. Congratulations to all members that participated in these activities and for successful seasons, especially thank you to the seniors, your effort will be remembered here at AB. Many teams proved to be successful, as field hockey, soccer, and volleyball (and swim and dive, no accurate data on MIAA) qualified for state tournaments this year. Across all athletic teams this season, let's take a look at our 2025-2026 athletic season.

The football team finished with significant improvement from last fall, going 5-3 and ranking 23rd in the state. While they did not qualify for the MIAA tournament, the season marked a big step forward for the program and a promising glimpse to the future. The season isn't quite over, though: the annual Turkey Bowl against Westford Academy where the team is looking to come out victorious.

The boys' soccer team concluded its season with a 2-12-4 record. Though this season was underwhelming, the team played hard and picked up victories against Bristol Plymouth Tech on Senior Night and Weston earlier in the season. Further both the JV and JV-B (Freshman team) had an electric season. The JV and freshman teams both finished near the top of their divisions, with the freshman team going undefeated. Even though the varsity team may have not performed well this year; JV and freshman records prove that there will be a change in the near future.

On the girls' side, soccer also

had a very strong season as it went 9-5-4 and was ranked 22nd in the state. The team received a nod into the MIAA tournament but lost in the first round after a great battle. That was an excellent performance even with the early exit. The JV team finished 6-7-1 also showing a promising future for girls' soccer. They are looking to stay as a dominant presence in the DCL.

Field hockey also had a strong season, going 8-4-6 and finishing ranked 9th in the state. They advanced to the round of 16 in the playoffs before being eliminated. A good year overall. The JV team had an outstanding season as well, finishing 9-4-1 for the year and showcasing the future of AB field hockey.

It was a valiant season for volleyball. After an 0-4 start, the team battled back to finish 9-9. The resurgence was enough to get them seeded 21st in the state tournament, where they lost in the first round. But their rebound from that 0-4 start was one of the most compelling storylines of the fall, showing perseverance and determination that represents AB as a whole.

In sum, this fall was one of growth across AB programs. From valiant teams finding success to varsity squads improving and competing at high levels, there is much to be proud of. On the field and court or on the sidelines, commitment and energy from players, coaches, and fans alike made this season memorable and different from previous years. Amazing job to the players and staff that were representing the foundations and morals here at AB, here we are resilient, strong, honest, and respectful. This was a great start to kick off the 2025-2026 AB athletic season and there is more to come with winter and spring sports on the horizon. Again, thank you, everyone, for making this 2025-2026 fall season a success!



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Heartful

By BELLA MATHEWS '27
Spectrum Staff

Love, Rosie (R): Released in 2014, Lily Collins stars as Rosie Dunne, a girl navigating her feelings with her lifelong friend Alex Stewart. It follows the trope of friends to lovers, while revealing the struggles and successes of life. This is great to watch while cozied up, with your friends or loved ones.

Notting Hill (PG-13): A classic from the 90s following the love lives of an American Actress and a local London bookstore owner. The movie shows the struggle between fame and true love. Known for its British charm, it's a fantastic watch during the fall season.

500 Days of Summer (PG-13): Seen all over Tiktok for its famous "I love the Smiths" quote, it is a staple for the summer. Starring Joseph Gordon Levitt and Zooey Deschanel, the movie describes a man falling in and out of love, and the complexity of romance. This movie may bring tears, but it is worth the watch during this fall season.

One Day (TV-MA): Although a TV show, it can still be binged. Based off of a famous movie, this 2024 TV show is similar to *Love*, Rosie following the friends to lovers trope. Set in Britain, the two meet and reconnect every year since their first meeting, slowly viewing each other as more than friends. This show is a must watch for anyone who enjoys British romance themes.

We Live in Time (R): This new film, starring Florence Pugh and Andrew Garfield, artistically portrays the unique ways of meeting loved ones. It conveys the memories you can make in the process while showing the difficulties you can encounter. While watching, you can enjoy a love story, while cozied up with fall gleaming through the windows.

Two Different Worlds

By JANE DOE
Spectrum Staff

A dull palette of bleached chrome
Seeps through my peripheral vision,
a gray version of once-thriving reefs.

Dying coral floats up to the sunshine shores.

I see no life around these watery depths. Only Death surrounds me.

Moving down into the navy blue sea,

a suffocating presence has settled on my chest.

Darkness folds over me
Then there is golden light

Surging into the warm sunlit water

Relief washes over me like waves hitting sandy beaches

And this time,
it's different.

This sea world, no longer a monochrome cin  newsreel

This pristine blue world, a plethora, a twenty-first-century pixel of a lustrous luminosity

I hum along to the ocean's harmony.

I swim through gorgeous coral reefs

Lipstick pink to a soft bridal tint, *Acropora clathrata*, subtle salmon-on shades

Swirling up, I reach for gliding turtles near dark evening blue elk-horn contrasts against cobalt staghorn

Little tiny Dorys dart around twisting emerald kelp forests.

Colorful biomes of fluorescence clash against blue pastel waters

Dozens of Nemo clownfish flutter around me.

I pedal my flippers up to the surface away from the sandy stingrays.

Suffocation.

I clutch my throat gasping for air

Useless air tanks lugging behind me,

I claw at the water, frantically attempting to break its surface

Rays of the once beautiful sun disappear.

Somewhere in the beyond something stirs

movement.

I reach toward it

And the sea exhales.

wandering feet

How the world feels warm and so complete

What is it about fall that warms the cold

Like trees of red, orange, and gold

Or sitting on the porch with steaming tea

How crows trace the wind, endlessly free

What is it about fall that feels like home

Like warm bread rising, fresh and grown

Or dusk that hums a gentle tune

How the world exhales beneath the moon

Freedom

By MADDIE SJOBLUM '28
Spectrum Staff

What is it about fall that softens the air

Like a knitted embrace you almost wear

Or a cooling wind that brushes your nose

How the palette of colors makes time slow

What is it about fall that feels so ripe

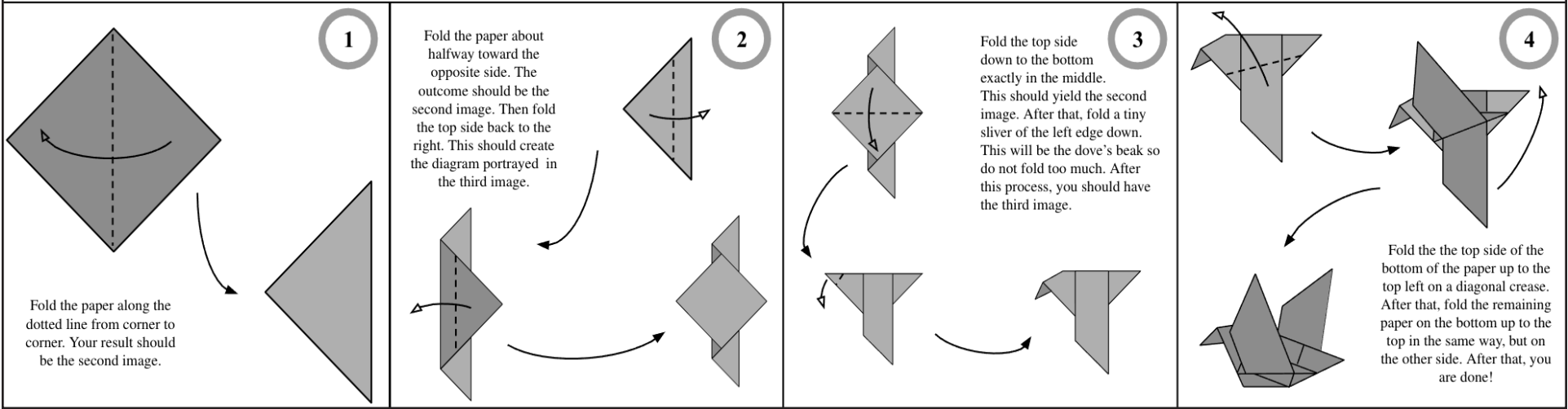
Like a flickering candle, a soft yellow light

Or the crunch of leaves beneath

Off-Topic

How to Create an Origami Peace Dove

By Gyan Sreejith ('27)



Reporting Team: The Future of Mental Health at ABRHS

By TINA LI '27
Reporting Team Leader

The topic of mental health has been a growing discussion point in recent decades. According to the World Health Organization, one in seven adolescents between the ages of ten and nineteen is affected by a mental disorder. With over 1,600 students attending ABRHS, prioritizing student well-being and safety has never been more crucial. The district has taken huge leaps in strengthening support for mental health through reshaping the administrative structure, expanding resources, and fostering a greater sense of community within the school. In an interview with school staff and counselors, Ms. Hagopian and Mr. Chicko revealed potential future actions the school might take to improve student support at AB.

“What’s hard about a high school model is that there’s no team model,” says Ms. Hagopian. “We have seven different teachers that have no relation to each other whatsoever, and trying to make our relationships more intertwined rather than disjointed would change everything”. Her statement highlights a challenge many schools

face, which is attempting to balance academic rigor with emotional connection. Especially at AB, notorious for competitive and challenging coursework, the scale is as important as ever. In a large school, the absence of strong teacher-student relationships can amplify feelings of loneliness and isolation.

In the past, there were only five counselors and one dean, which left gaps in communication and collaboration with students. Adjustment counselors were far and few between, and there was a noticeable disconnect between staff and the student body. However, in recent years, this model has shifted with the adoption of two deans and four assistant principals. More support was added, and the structure of the admin was strengthened, especially in the counselling department. The desired effect not only increases accessibility to resources but also encourages staff to be proactive rather than reactive when it comes to student needs.

Looking through the lens of a school-wide perspective, connecting students together in a meaningful way to teachers, APs, and counselors can build a strong relationship that bridges the gap between staff and stu-

dents. Having a stronger foundation and more trust in adults can provide a healthy support system to students who are struggling. A connection in the building is crucial for students, which can be manifested through them being comfortable in sharing stressors, reaching out to adults for help, and providing more continuity with peers and adults. By making a big group feel smaller, it can create a cosy space that can cultivate a tighter-knit community.

AB has already taken steps in this direction, with the creation of Assistant Principal (AP) teams being one of the most recent spearheads. The AP Games and Competitions strive to make students more comfortable by creating smaller groups of students in a grade. Friendly competitions throughout the school year increase participation within the school, improving school spirit while adding light-hearted fun to otherwise boring school assemblies. Not only that, but this AP model adds regular communication between APs and counselors, increasing capacity to help students. Improving this new model of administration will be a foot in the door to making a big place feel just a little bit smaller. Regular interactions with administra-

tors through things like assemblies give a sense of familiarity to students and aid in building relationships with assistant principals. The stronger the connection is between student and administration, the more adults can do to assist and provide support when needed. Creating consistency is crucial, so that when a student walks into the office, they aren’t just talking to a stranger, but someone who already knows them and their story.

Ideas of changing our day-to-day schedules have been thrown into the conversation. Although not set in stone, adding a common block or flex period would potentially be used as a space for adjustment counselors to work with students on a more frequent basis. The possibility of flex blocks instead of advisory would give students dedicated time to focus on mental health, study, or to simply take a break from the chaotic school day.

Not only are changes happening on the administrative side, but student organizations are changing as well. Mental health awareness events like Walk Out of Darkness, or ribbons given out for Mental Health Month, have all been pioneered by student-led clubs. These events can open up con-

versations about depression, anxiety, and pressures of school life, helping to normalize discussions and reduce stigma. Increasing participation and new mental health clubs can create larger-scale movements for bettering the atmosphere of AB, emphasizing the power student voices hold in decision-making at the school, which is often forgotten amongst the student body. Administration actively seeks feedback and accounts for student needs when making rules or changes, reflecting a growing recognition that improving mental health requires collaboration across all parts of the community.

Through numerous board meetings, student-led initiatives, and continuous communication between counselors and administrators, AB is vigorously working to improve mental health at AB. The ongoing challenge lies in ensuring that all students are seen, heard, and supported in everyday school life, not just in times of crisis. By continuing to implement changes and launch ideas, ABRHS staff continue to work behind the scenes to support all students, creating a community where mental health is prioritized and where no student feels alone.

Traffic Jam: A Sticky Situation

AMESBURY ARSENAULT



BLOCK FILL

A 6x6 grid world environment. The grid contains blue squares representing cells. The top row is completely filled with blue squares. The second row is also completely filled. The third row has blue squares in the first, second, fifth, and sixth columns, with empty spaces in the third and fourth columns. The fourth row has blue squares in the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth columns, with an empty space in the first column. The fifth row has blue squares in the third, fourth, sixth, and seventh columns, with empty spaces in the first and second columns. The sixth row is completely filled. A blue square in the fifth row, fifth column contains the text "START HERE". A blue square in the second row, first column contains the text "END HERE".

BY SADIE WASSERMAN

BY NIOBE VELOZ-MENDOZA

PRESSLY THE BEAR. BEAR OF MANY DISGUISES

REWARD: \$67

2. Squirrels love this

6. Nature's act of letting go

7. This gourd grows in different sizes and is carved into artwork

1. Football is a ____
3. Summer, Spring,
____, Winter

4. _____ keep birds away from crops
5. The closest living relative to the dinosaur
8. An activity that one does to clean fallen leaves

NOTE, POST, REEL, STORY

KEY, LEGEND, ROSE, SCALE

ALIENS, AVATAR, TERMINATOR, TITANIC

JACK, NUTS, SPARE, WRENCH