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Don't Yuck My Yum
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The Spectrum

✦ *e cineribus et ad astra* ✦

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Winter is Coming
LUKAS KANICS

Synthesia: A Gift Connecting Music and Color

By BELLA MATHEWS'27
Spectrum Staff

Synesthesia is defined as one sense triggering the experience of another sense. Specifically, chromesthesia occurs when your mind connects music to certain colors. You may feel music a certain way: blasting it in your car and singing along, resonating with the lyrics, or maybe just feeling certain emotions or memories that a certain song can trigger. However, those with synesthesia experience it very differently.

Music is a vital part of life. In the article on Pfizer's website, "Why - and How - Music Moves Us," the author writes "instinctually, intuitively, we know that music makes life better." This highlights the small impact that music has on a human life. We've grown up with music, maybe around the house, or our parents put headphones on their stomach even before we were born. Music can also restore memories through its nostalgia; for example, a dancer associates music with choreography. Or even if your favorite song was on, you could know all the lyrics that you slowly picked up and memorized without being aware you had even memorized them. Music has an impact on your memory. For some people who experience memory loss, music can help them pick-up on ideas or remember their lost memories. Additionally, it can help relieve pain. From a scientific perspective, this can be through the release of dopamine. When listening to music there is a natural release of dopamine, which can make you experience happier feelings and joy. Also, music impacts what is called the limbic system. This system is what allows a human to process emotions and control memory. Overall music impacts parts of your brain such as memory, pain relief, and your mood.

But how does the brain work when you have synesthesia? According to an article on the Cleveland Clinic website, people with synesthesia experience a sense in two different ways. The first one is called the primary effect: "An example of this would be hearing sounds and recognizing them as music". Then afterwards they experience a second effect, called the secondary effect. Relating to chromesthesia, this would be when you would experience the colors along with the music. Sometimes people experience it directly connected with sight, projecting a sense like they are really seeing it.

The Cleveland Clinic article continues describing how there are many types of Synesthesia, and they can be developed through either brain development differences, genetics, or the specific structure of the brain as it triggers different areas. They also develop due to brain injury, or drugs known as hallucinogens. It is a fascinating condition, as "experts estimate at least 4% of people worldwide experience it." Some people may not even realize that they have the condition due to it being so normal in their lives. In summary, synesthesia and music both impact the brain differently. That's where chromesthesia comes into play.

Chromesthesia varies from person to person. This can mean someone who hears a guitar note may see one color and another person with this condition may experience a whole different one. The sounds and textures of a certain song can influence a whole array of effects from a synesthete's point of view. The web article "Synaesthesia: The Psychology of Music and Colour" from the website Universal Production Music adds "even if you don't have synesthesia, you might still notice some connections between music and visual qualities." That shows how anyone can experience music. Music has colorful qualities that each song uniquely possesses. The article further explains that there are eight different parts of music that can alter the colors produced by a song. These can either be experienced harshly by a synesthete through colors or someone without the condition may just be able to assume the color/feeling of a song. For example, one of them is tempo. Thinking about tempo or rhythm, maybe faster is more happy, or bright, and slower would be more sad. That's a way an average person would feel but someone with chromesthesia could potentially experience a specific color. Maybe if the tempo is slower the color would be darker, but it depends on the person. Other examples include: dynamics, melody,and texture. Those are just a few parts of songs that can affect the colors of a song.

How many people do you know who have this condition? Some famous artists like Billie Elish and Lorde have the condition, using it to shape and create their music. Another unique artist who possesses this is Stevie Wonder. Although blind, he is still able to "see" the colors produced from music. Additionally, a BBC interviewer met a girl named Valeria, someone with the condition. She explains she sees it as an "extra sense." She can interpret chords shifting from one color to another. She adds that even one note can alter the whole color profile of the song. Valeria had started to learn more instruments and other ways of experiencing her chromesthesia. And it's not only instruments, voices can affect color. Hearing from a real synesthete gives a real time view into their lives and differences.

Overall, music and synesthesia have unique and rare effects on humans everywhere. Whether you're sitting in your room and can view the colors coming from your record player blasting music, or you just sit and feel the joy from the music, everyone experiences music differently. Maybe you're one of the lucky 4% who get to see the colors associated with music. Ultimately, all of us are lucky to be able to experience music in our lifetimes.

Intro

Letter From the EICs

By Vani Mittal ‘26 and Matthew Liu ‘27
Co-Editors-in-Chief

Hi everyone,

As we enter a new year, we hope you will pause and step back from the chaos of new activities and classes, and enjoy reading our Winter Issue.

In this issue, we are focusing on the topic of colors. Color ties into a variety of different topics, whether it’s music, murals, emotions, or culture, and you can read about each of these topics in our Mainspread section!

Beyond Mainspread, you can read about current events in the world or right here at Acton-Boxborough in the News section, our thoughts on school lunches in the Op-Ed section, and winter foods and beverages in the Off-Topic section.

For this issue, we are introducing a fifth official section: the Reporting Team. Here, you can find articles that our writers researched in depth and reported on.

As always, look to our back page for fun and games, like finding Pressly, the official *Spectrum* teddy bear, six word stories, or even our own take on the Connections and a crossword!

As we look ahead to the new year, here’s to a season of breaking out of old routines, trying something new, and embracing the color of new beginnings and possibility. We hope you enjoy this issue of *The Spectrum* and learn something new!

Best,
Matthew & Vani

What’s With the Gov?

By Tina Li ‘27 *Op-Ed Editor & Reporting Team Leader*

The 2025 shutdown began on October 1st, 2025 due to a disagreement in Congress on fiscal year funding. Lawmakers from both parties were unable to reach a consensus on budget priorities, including healthcare subsidies and spending levels, which resulted in a funding gap. About 1.5 million federal workers had been left without pay during the shutdown (AP News). Federal housing assistance, immigration services, scientific research, IRS operations, SNAP, and various other public programs were significantly slowed if not stopped altogether. This left families all over America struggling financially, wondering where their next meal would come from and when their next paycheck would be.

When Congress fails to pass funding legislation before the beginning of that fiscal year, a government shutdown occurs. In the case of the 2025 shutdown, the Republican party insisted on deep Medicaid cuts and halts on Affordable Care Act subsidy extensions, which clashed with the Democratic Party’s opposing demands. Without appropriation bills or a resolution passed by both Congress and signed by the President, federal agencies are required to stop non-essential operations until funding is restored. However, essential services like national security and emergency responses continue. Federal agencies like the Department of Justice, Department of Homeland Security, and Department of Labor lose the legal authority to spend money, resulting in thousands of operations being put on pause. In 2025, this scenario unfolded once again, resulting in the longest federal government shutdown in U.S. history. Stretching for weeks, this shutdown deeply impacted workers, services, and the broader well-being of American citizens. When the shutdown began, the effects of these halted operations rippled through the country. Hundreds of thousands of federal employees were required to work without pay, disrupting livelihoods and household finances.

There have been several cases in history where a shutdown occurs. Since 1974, twenty three legitimate shutdowns have happened, but there have been hundreds of instances where a shutdown almost occurred. In these situations, Congress adopts budget measures called “continuing resolutions”, which are short term funding measures that can be used to fund the government for a short period of time. Several possibilities exist to remedy this situation. For example, one method discussed by a Harvard Kennedy School expert involves reforming the short-term budget committees to be long term, reflective of the long term budgeting tasks they are entrusted with. These budget committees are usually staffed by junior members of Congress and have term limits on membership; therefore, constituents do not have enough real power to enforce anything substantial.

The shutdown concluded on November 12, 2025, lasting for forty-three days and earning the title of the longest shutdown to date, overtaking President Trump’s first term shutdown of thirty-five days. Months later, the effects of this shutdown are still apparent. Agencies see backlogs and delays of processes such as permits, loans, court cases, and immigration paperwork. Marginalized communities that depend on federal assistance such as healthcare, housing, and nutrition face instability and lasting consequences. Low-income households and nonprofits often cannot overcome losing weeks of pay, causing financial ruin. Apart from visible impacts, invisible effects have arguably deeper ramifications. Each shutdown normalizes the strategy further, setting a political precedent for future shutdowns and making it more likely for it to occur again. Without consistent funding, long-term planning becomes harder for federal agencies and committees, creating a feedback loop that feeds on instability. Ultimately, the 2025 government shutdown stands as a lasting warning that political stalemates leave longlasting damage to public trust, institutional vulnerability, and the lives of citizens most dependent on government support.

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The Best Starbucks Winter Treats

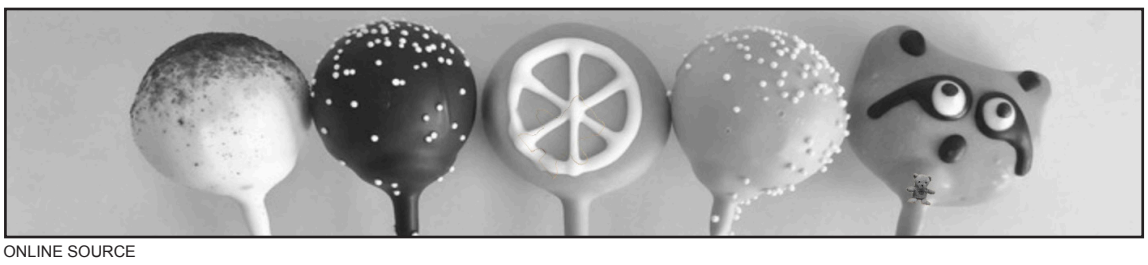
By Evey Gutzler ‘28
Spectrum Staff

Over four billion cups of coffee are sold off the Starbucks menu annually. That’s about six-hundred cups a day, which is double the amount of an average cafe. Starbucks is famous for their winter treats to get in the holiday spirit. Unfortunately, the menu is no longer available; but, let’s take a look at some of the favorites from the season. From the polar bear cake pop to the classic peppermint mocha, there is something for everyone. Nonetheless, most people had strong opinions on the best sugary delight this year.

First off, the food menu. After looking over reviews from various sources here’s the most liked and least liked food items. The menu includes well known treats like the cranberry bliss bar, polar bear cake pop, snowman sugar cookie and sugar plum cheese danish. Let’s start with the cranberry bliss bar, a well-liked treat and a favorite on the menu. Many spoke to how it tastes like Christmas. The tart sweetness of the cranberry and the buttery crumble of the cake made this the perfect winter delight. Next, the polar bear cake pop, which is not much to remark on. This menu item is said to be just like any other cake pop. While it looks cute, the flavor was an oridnary vanilla cake white chocolate blend to most customers. It’s an icon on the menu but average in the eyes of a reviewer, with only the cute polar bear decals making it unqiue. Continuing with the snowman sugar cookie: it is similar to the cake pop. Many are underwhelmed with this treat. Where the cranberry bliss bar is bursting with flavor and filled with satisfying crumbly texture, the snowman cookie is bland. The flavor is unremarkable, making the specialty of this treat the same as the polar bear cake pop; its uniqueness is in the aesthetic. Finishing off with the sugar plum cheese danish, overall, it’s a disappointing dessert with many saying it tastes like a cough drop melted onto a danish. There is no cheese pull or the expected rich flavor in this dessert.

Secondly, the drink menu, which many say is the star of the winter treats menu. With notable drinks like the peppermint mocha, caramel brulee latte, iced sugar cookie latte, and iced gingerbread chai, the drink menu is the reason customers keep coming back. To begin, customers love the peppermint mocha. Reviewers note that the luxurious chocolate mixed with the energizing peppermint gives customers the best of the both worlds. The combined flavors made this drink favorable among consumers. Then there is the caramel brulee latte. This drink is preferred when served hot. The cold version is not flavorful and not favored by clients. However, the hot, smoky sensation is what puts it on customers’ radar. Next is the sugar cookie latte. Much like the caramel brulee, most frequenters of Starbucks prefer this drink hot. Reviewers remarked that the drink tastes watery when iced, and the hot version of this drink tastes like sugar cookie dough. It’s a good hot drink for the winter. Finally, the gingerbread chai. Consumers preferred this drink cold. Many said this was their favorite drink on the menu. With a chai base and gingerbread cold foam, this drink takes the cake for the best treat on the menu.

In conclusion, the Starbucks holiday menu is full of flavor and offers tasty treats to satiate different cravings. The highlights of the menu this year included the cranberry bliss bar and the gingerbread chai. Keep these ideas in mind for the holiday menu’s return next winter, and try to predict next year’s favorites!



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News

Executive or Enforcement Orders?

By Jocelyn Wu ‘27
Spectrum Staff

As a new year is upon us and we bid farewell to 2025, it is imperative that we take some time to look back and reflect on the myriad of events that have happened these past few months. Since Trump has taken office, there have been significant changes to government policies in various economic and political fields. Many of these changes have been carried out by the use of executive orders, which the American Bar Association defines as “a signed, written, and published directive from the President of the United States that manages operations of the federal government.” Simply put, an executive order is a way for the president to exercise their legal powers and carry out their objectives without needing Congress’s approval.

Past presidents have utilized these core presidential powers in various ways for numerous reasons. Some purposes were more administrative, such as creating agencies or directing federal action on areas such as homeland security. Some have been revolutionary in terms of strengthening civil rights, such as President Truman’s Executive Order 9981, which desegregated the armed forces. Others are more infamous, such as President Roosevelt’s Executive Order 9066, which authorized the forced removal and incarceration of Japanese-Americans into internment camps. So far, President Trump has issued more executive orders in his first 100 days in office than any other President since George Washington. He has issued more than 200 directives ranging from matters like tariffs and climate change to immigration and foreign policy.

Yet, what are these executive orders exactly? And what do they mean for the future of American citizens? This article will be split into two main parts, each delineating a certain key area that is affected by Trump’s executive orders.

The first part is the social aspect of the equation – that is, how some of these executive orders have affected American society and communities. On November 14th, Trump signed the “Fostering the Future for American Children and Families” order, putting into action an expansive set of initiatives to support children in the foster care system. The order directs the federal government to modernize the foster-care system by improving data collection and information systems at the state level, and tracking metrics like placement stability and permanent family outcomes. It also launches a “Fostering the Future” initiative that will create partnerships across federal agencies, academic institutions, and nonprofits to offer educational employment, housing, and mentoring pathways for youth. Although the program has been hailed by many as a monumental progression for improving the foster care system, critics frame it as an attack on the LGBTQ+ community. Critics claim that the program prioritizes partnerships with faith-based agencies that can receive federal funding even if they refuse to place children with LGBTQ+ families or same-sex couples. Thus, the program has the potential to set the precedent for denying faith-based agencies taxpayer money to support LGBTQ+ foster families. On the other hand, proponents of the order argue that the “Fostering the Future” initiative will benefit children in foster care by modernizing the welfare system and implementing all of the positive reforms as stated above. Furthermore, rather than disproportionately prioritizing faith-based organizations, proponents state that the program simply expands the care provided by faith-based organizations and families, and prevents state and local governments from excluding qualified families and organizations because of their religious commitments.

Another executive order that has had a profound impact on American society is “Ending Crime and Disorder on America’s Streets.” Signed on July 24, the order pushes efforts to institutionalize homeless individuals with mental illness or substance use disorders. The main aims and potential are to make public spaces safer while offering structured treatment for homeless individuals battling substance use disorders. The order, supported by new funding, is meant to increase accessibility to treatment facilities and improve coordination between health providers and law enforcement. However, there are also concerns that the order is nothing more than involuntary punishment for homeless individuals, and short-term measures that harm homeless individuals more in the long run. The order is being interpreted as the unconstitutional criminalization of homelessness, which could shift problems rather than solve them. The negative connotations of “ending crime and disorder” may serve to paint an unfavorable picture of homeless people as deliberately seeking to cause harm or chaos, rather than them being individuals who are in need of humane assistance and care.

The second part of this article focuses on the economic aspect of the equation. Many of Trump’s executive orders have had significant effects on the U.S. economy. At the beginning of his presidential term, Trump promptly imposed tariffs on numerous countries, including Brazil, India, China, Canada, Mexico, and countries in the EU. A tariff is a tax imposed by a government on imported goods in order to disincentivize people from buying foreign products and encourage domestic investment. The justification for these tariffs was that they were reciprocal tariffs designed to address unfair trade balances, as well as retrieve American manufacturing capabilities from overseas. As of January 9, 2026, it is found that the tariffs will amount to an average tax increase per US household of $1,100 in 2025 and $1,500 in 2026. Accounting for negative economic effects, the revenue raised by the tariffs is predicted to be $1.7 trillion over the next decade. However, this will also include a 0.5% decrease in GDP, a 0.4% decrease in capital stock, and 503,000 fewer full-time jobs in the U.S.. Brazil and India currently face high tariff rates with the U.S., both facing tariff rates of 50%.

A few country-specific tariffs are worth noting. On February 1 2025, Trump signed three executive orders to impose 25% tariffs on Canada and Mexico, and 10% tariffs on China. By October, China was facing a 20% tariff on fentanyl and a 10% reciprocal tariff rate. Trump announced the imposition of a 100% tariff on China starting in October, in response to China’s imposition of export controls on rare earth minerals; however, the implementation of this tariff was avoided thanks to a framework meeting with China later in the month. Tariff rates with China continue to fluctuate today.

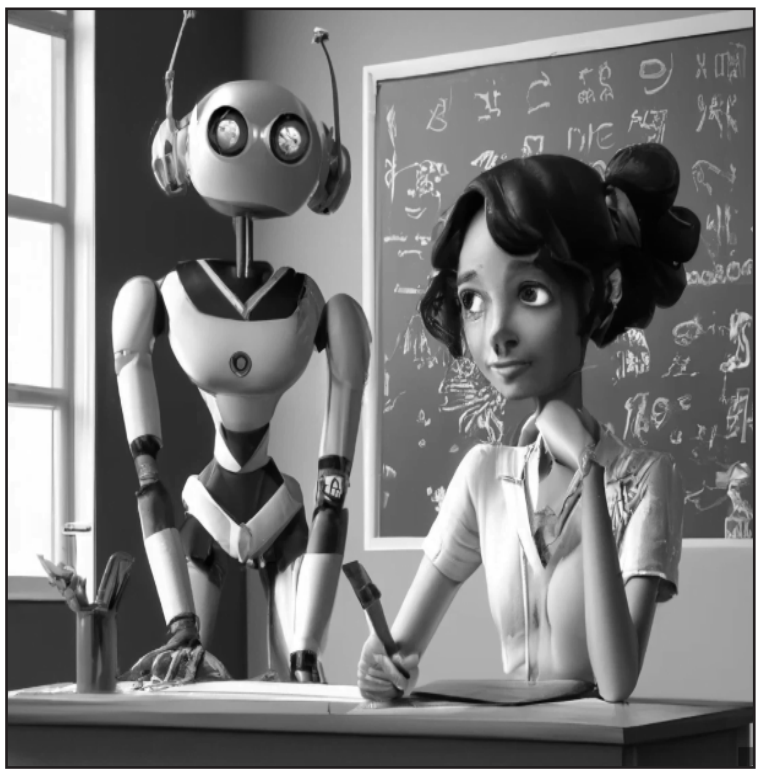
Canada and Mexico are special cases, as they and the U.S. jointly make up the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), which was created to modernize and streamline free trade among the three countries. Canada received several exemptions on tariffs on a variety of goods, such as auto imports, energy imports, and imports covered by the USMCA trade deal. As of August 1, Trump has imposed a 35% tariff on Canada. Mexico also received exemptions on auto imports and all imports covered by the USMCA. In July, Trump imposed a 30% tariff rate on Mexico. For both Canada and Mexico, the tariff increases that Trump has promised have been paused indefinitely.

Finally, looking at the economic aspect, Trump signed a major AI Executive order titled “Ensuring a National Policy Framework for Artificial Intelligence” on December 11, 2025. The order seeks to accelerate data center construction, promote U.S. AI technology exports, and address “woke” or biased AI models in federal government technology. Like many of Trump’s executive orders, the AI Act has faced similarly mixed reviews. While it has been praised for promoting innovation and competitiveness and reducing regulatory shortcomings, it has also been highlighted as an erosion of states’ rights to enact consumer protection laws, and a threat to DEI for eliminating overly “woke” content in AI and challenging state laws addressing algorithmic discrimination.

And now, a few snippets of some of Trump’s executive orders that, albeit more dated, are still important to be familiar with. Trump’s Executive Order 14351, signed September 19, 2025, created the “Gold Card” program, offering U.S. citizenship to individuals who pay $1 million to receive expedited EB-1/EB-2 green cards and eventually, permanent residency. The Gold Card program streamlines the immigration process for wealthy individuals, allowing them to enter the country quickly.

Additionally, Executive Order 14341, signed August 25 2025: “Prosecuting Burning of the American Flag” instructs the Attorney General to “vigorously prosecute” flag desecration to the fullest extent possible. Trump himself claimed, “You burn a flag, you get one year in jail” as he signed the executive order, but the order itself does not include details about a potential jail sentence.

Trump’s executive orders – their impacts and implementation, as well as the motivations behind them – have been a contentious source of debate over the past few months. On one hand, it can be argued that these orders will provide immense benefits for the U.S. economy and society as a whole, improving the foster care system, creating a framework for addressing homeless individuals, and re-establishing the U.S.’s global economic dominance and manufacturing capabilities. On the other hand, it can be argued that these orders are wholly ineffective, failing to truly address the root issues behind the problems they seek to fix. Finally, it is important to remember that the executive orders presented in this article are part of a non-exhaustive list, and this article does not capture the full scope of the many executive orders that have been passed by Trump since he came into office. I encourage you to spend some time researching a few of these orders, or simply to keep up with the news to stay up-to-date on important issues such as these.



AI **AND** TEACHERS???
ONLINE SOURCE

Do Teachers Love AI?

By Ethan Ebbin ‘28
Spectrum Staff

With many calling AI the next “big thing”, comparing it to when the internet first began to revolutionize how we live our lives, education has focused on how AI may affect students but teachers have also been using AI on the other side of the desk. As AI becomes more prevalent in our daily lives, it’s important to acknowledge how it intertwines with our work and appears in our school day.

National trends point to teachers saving an average of 5.9 hours per week when using AI, mostly for streamlining tedious tasks, which could lead to more time for teacher-student interaction. Many teachers caution that with AI the focus must always be on learning, and suggest that an over-reliance on the tool in hopes of getting things like grading done faster would be a mistake.

Within the ABRHS building, teachers’ opinions on AI and integration methods into student learning differ dramatically. Especially with the integration of the AI task force in our school, AI is becoming a prevalent issue within our school. Of the educational departments, science may be the one most in favor of the tool. One teacher reports utilizing Gemini to differentiate assignments for multilingual learners, translating instructions into more accessible language. Another developed a specialized study assistant that generates practice questions that scale in difficulty based on a student’s performance. It’s agreed that AI can be beneficial in learning but at the same time students must stay wary of misinformation; however, this is indeed an issue that will only become less and less of a problem as AI gets more advanced. Furthermore, a teacher noted that AI can do “pretty amazing things in seconds,” but at the end of the day, the student still has to go through the productive struggle of learning.

Similarly in history classes, AI is being used to modify online readings to meet students’ accommodations. Some history teachers have dabbled with AI, letting students use it for evidence generation in the earliest stage of essay writing with a teacher-created prompt. If Gemini were to be open next year to students, some World History teachers would start to incorporate appropriate AI use as a tool, not a replacement.

Many would be surprised to learn that in English, the subject that might be most vulnerable to student AI usage, teachers are more pro-AI than expected. One teacher points out that there is much more to English than just the final product, but it is the process and work that are pivotal. Another teacher adds on to this premise, noting that English may need to transform into a class more focused on the process where AI may be involved than just the final result. While English might be the most vulnerable subject to unwanted AI usage, English teachers argue that AI might be able to assist you in reading, but it could never replace actually immersing oneself in the story.

However, not every teacher shares the rosy view of the usefulness of AI. Many are scared of students using AI to plagiarize their writing and put it off as their own. In fact, they even use software and AI detectors to ensure that students do not do this. In math classes, teachers highlight the troubles of working with the tool, finding more inefficiency in it than benefit. To create a work sheet, constant editing is created a product that is semi-useful, but even after that, a teacher comments how answer keys could still be “complete garbage.” Overall, in the math department teachers reveal that it’s much more efficient to create a worksheet themselves than going through the constant instruction, refining, and edits involved in implementing AI.

As the AI Task Force works to bridge the gap between classroom experimentation and formal policy, ABRHS stands at a pivotal crossroads. The “productive struggle” of learning remains a fundamental value for the district, even as the methods of that struggle undergo a digital transformation. Whether it is a science teacher differentiating a lesson or an English teacher rethinking the weight of a first draft, the focus is increasingly moving away from the final product and toward the human process behind it. In a world where AI can generate complex content in seconds, the challenge for ABRHS will be ensuring that, as these new tools become commonplace, they serve to enhance student thinking rather than replace it. Say no to AI slop!

News

AB's *Chicago: Teen Edition*

By Bella Mathews '27
and Maddie Sjoblom '28
Spectrum Staff

Chicago: Teen Edition. A musical starring AB students Fran Roma and Nora Newsham combines scandal and style to produce a fantastic watch. Maddie S. and I attended all three nights of this year's musical Chicago, and we were impressed by the awesome performance.

As we begin our report, we would like to tell you the history of the musical. Chicago, the musical, first premiered in June, 1975 on Broadway. The musical was catalyzed by the rise in interest around crime and jazz. In the 1920s, Maurine Dallas Watkins, a Chicago Tribune reporter, created a play based on popular crime cases. Immediately upon its release, the play was a box office hit, and many years later caught the attention of Gwen Verdon and Bob Fosse. The couple demanded Watkins's rights to the play and not until after her death were they ultimately able to acquire them. With his newfound treasure, Fosse quickly teamed up with writers to produce a musical based on the crimes. The musical was performed throughout past decades, leading high school students to seek to perform it as well. However, due to its scandalous themes, David Thompson wrote a more appropriate Teen Edition, suitable for younger performers and audiences. That leads us to today, where the Proscenium Circus of Acton and Boxborough produced *Chicago: Teen Edition* and performed the musical December 11-13, 2025.

As Acton residents, you take for granted how lucky you are to have such an amazing theater program. Proscenium Circus, a consistent source of excellent musicals and plays, has been providing the Acton Community with entertainment for more than 50 years. Well, Chicago is just another fine example of PC's excellence.

The musical begins with the pit introducing Fran Roma ('26) portraying Velma, an incarcerated felon. Nora Newsham ('26) arrives on the scene as Roxie, and her husband Amos is played by Franscico Trejo Perez-Gil ('26). Velma is accompanied by Mama, played by Brooke Brandt ('26) who is helping her plan her transition back into the world from prison. The story follows a crime committed by Roxie and her desire for popularity in the city of Chicago. This is met with jealousy from Velma, and the help of a certain lawyer, Billy Flynn, played by Cameron Carvalho('28). The competition between the two continues when they argue over who gets the first trial date to prove her innocence. To get ahead, Roxie uses the strategy of faking a pregnancy to attract Billy Flynn's attention. However, after the trial and being proven innocent, she realizes her fame has started to dwindle as other crimes catch the town's attention. Velma notices this and suggests they should perform together as two criminals. Roxie at first rejects this idea, but the musical ends with the two coming together to perform an exciting and colorful act.

To get an insider opinion on the musical, we interviewed one of the actresses, Isabel Bernardo ('27). One word she used to describe the musical was bright. "It's a very loud show, it's got a lot of dance numbers, and musical numbers, and there's big lights, and sequins, and dresses, and suspense, it's a very big, bright, loud show." This was apparent on stage and was true throughout the play, as the actors brought pizzazz to the story and had fun doing it. On the other hand, there were challenges. She noted that since there were so many dance numbers, lines, and songs, it became difficult to organize and perfect them all by December. The time crunch gave the group a challenge, which was then overcome. But of course, there were also memories made along the way. Isabel notes her favorite time as being backstage, laughing and having fun during the overture of the musical. While getting shushed left and right, they were still having a great time preparing to go onstage. Isabel ends with her favorite memory, the senior class. She discusses how they have been with her for all of her time within the program, and without them, it will be different. The senior class is full of talent, and this was the last musical with them featured. This just shows how a community can be created through a program like Proscenium Circus, and how close-knit everyone becomes.

Another vital part of this show was the pit. With one blaring note from the trumpet behind the stage, our school's auditorium transformed into the roaring streets of 1920s Chicago. The ABRHS music program, once again, put together an extremely talented group of musicians: students and music instructors involved in the band and orchestra. The backlit pit was uniquely placed on stage behind the actors, adding tremendously to the overall effect of the performance. It not only allowed the audience to hear and see the musicians better, but also forced the actors on stage to listen and connect with the music. The musical opens with an awesome jazz solo from Oscar Lewis('26), our band's principal trumpet player. With his fantastic vibrato, bright tone, and plunger mute, he set the stage perfectly for Fran Roma's entrance, leaving the crowd in awe. Throughout the entire performance, Professor Chavez conducted the pit, keeping everyone together and in time, while also completely crushing his piano part, nailing the jazz style of the musical. As the musical continued, Kristen Dye, Emmy Hardy, John Russell, and Jacob Healy('26) killed it on reeds. Switching instruments every few bars is not easy, but these musicians did it flawlessly. On the other side of the piano, Will Haines('26), Ben Girguis('27), and Alex Abakah('26) did a fantastic job holding down the ensemble with their booming bass lines. Seated alongside the low brass are the strings and percussion: Masami Rodriguez, Emily Cheng ('26), and Michael Soo. The string players did an amazing job blending with the concert band instruments, while also adding to the jazzy feel of the music. Mr. Soo did an exceptional job on the drum kit, playing countless percussion trinkets while also hitting every rim shot. Special shout-out for his gunshot solo! Coming from Lewis himself, "the score is impossible", so for these musicians to perform as well as they did is truly incredible. ABRHS is so lucky to have these talented musicians who bring life and color to our musicals.

Overall, *Chicago: Teen Edition* was an elaborate and colorful musical performed on the ABRHS stage. We want to applaud all actors, crew members, and others who helped bring the scenes to life. Excited for the many more performances to come!

NYC Mayoral Election

By Meena Adusumilli '27
Spectrum Staff

On November 4, 2025, New York City had one of its most pivotal mayoral elections among candidates Zohran Mamdani, Andrew Cuomo, and Curtis Sliwa. With over 8.3 million residents, New York City is the largest city in the United States. The 2025 mayoral race received extensive coverage throughout the country from both sides of the political aisle. However, to further understand the implications of Zohran Mamdani's victory for both New York City and the rest of the nation, we must look at his background and the values he represents. Then, we can take a deeper dive into how Mamdani's campaign strategy led him to achieve a landslide victory in the mayoral race. Finally, we will examine the future of Mamdani's political career and the effects he had and will continue to have on American politics.

When assessing any political candidate, it is imperative to research not just their policies but also their moral priorities and core beliefs. For Zohran Mamdani, this starts with his diverse upbringing. Mamdani has been exposed to a variety of perspectives, whether it be regarding nationality, faith, or education. Born in Uganda to parents of Indian descent, Mamdani is the first Muslim and first South Asian mayor of New York City. He moved to New York at seven years old, where he attended The Bronx High School of Science. His mother, Mira Nair, is an acclaimed filmmaker, while his father, Mahmood Mamdani, is a Professor of Anthropology at Columbia University. Taking after his dad's study of various cultures, Mamdani went on to earn a degree in Africana Studies from Bowdoin College. He even co-founded Bowdoin's chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine. Seven years after graduating, Mamdani met his future wife, Syrian artist Rama Duwaji, whom he would marry in February 2025. Due to Mamdani's wide range of connections with people from all walks of life, he appears to understand and empathize with the experiences of minorities, particularly people of color, lower-income people, and the LGBTQ+ community. Additionally, it is important to understand where Mamdani stands on the political spectrum. Mamdani, a self-proclaimed democratic socialist, quoted Eugene Debs in his mayoral acceptance speech, "I can see the dawn of a better day for humanity," suggesting a new beginning for the city (Fox 25). Debs, who is often considered the father of American socialism, fought extensively for labor rights, peace, and women's suffrage. He was very anti-capitalist, believing that the capitalist system inherently exploited workers and fueled social and economic inequality. By quoting Debs, Mamdani exemplified what can already be seen in his plan for New York City: Mamdani wants to help the poor and fight the rich.

Now that we have established Mamdani's background and what he represents, it is time to examine his actual policies—the policies that allowed him to win the race by nine percentage points. The majority of Mamdani's plans have to do with affordability, an issue that hits close to home for many New Yorkers. The median rent for an apartment in New York is $3,599 per month, which is two times the national average and a 5.4% increase from 2024 (Mohamed). With the price of housing rising every day and nearly 103,000 people sleeping each night in New York City shelters, Mamdani's rent freeze plan is extremely appealing to the citizens of New York. This plan would suspend rent increases for four years on one million rent-stabilized apartments, allowing lower-income individuals to find affordable housing and potentially decreasing homelessness in the city. Another one of Mamdani's popular proposals has been his call for more city-owned grocery stores. While New York City already owns six such stores, Mamdani wants to greatly expand this network, with the idea being that since these markets would be working on city-owned land, they would not have to pay rent, and prices would be lower. Some predictions say that prices could drop by as much as five to ten percent, another win for affordability (Javier). Following this same trend, Mamdani plans to make public buses free, getting rid of the $2.90 fare, along with raising the corporate tax rate from 7.25% to 11.5%, matching that of New Jersey. He also wants to raise the minimum wage from $16.50/hr to $30/hr by 2030, which benefits both service workers and customers. Indeed, with a living wage, workers can have a better quality of life. As an added bonus, customers will be less obliged to support workers by tipping. Overall, Mamdani's focus on affordability was what made his campaign so attractive to both the people of New York and Americans across the country.

Lastly, let's explore the feasibility of Mamdani's policies, taking into consideration his experience as a government official and his capabilities as mayor. Many political commentators and challengers of Mamdani have criticized his lack of knowledge on how to run a city, as his only political experience was serving two terms as an assemblyman. By contrast, his opponents Curtis Sliwa and Andrew Cuomo have been in politics for decades. In fact, one of Cuomo's main arguments against Mamdani during the mayoral debate was that Mamdani has "never run anything, managed anything. He's never had a real job" (Schemmel). Although true, Mamdani countered by pointing out Cuomo's sexual harassment scandals, asking New Yorkers if they would rather have an inexperienced mayor or a corrupt one. The other backlash Mamdani has faced pertains to the cost of his programs and whether or not his mayoral powers permit him to make the radical changes he is proposing. Making public buses free alone would cost $630 million. Mamdani's other proposals, such as free universal child care, rent-stabilized apartments, and city-owned grocery stores, would cost millions more. All his policies combined would require $7 billion, exceeding the budget of the entire Police Department (Fitzsimmons and Gómez). Mamdani argues that raising the city's taxes on the wealthy would earn nine billion dollars, but to do this, Mamdani would have to work to garner the support of state lawmakers, the Rent Guidelines Board, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), and countless other organizations. As mayor, Mamdani cannot enact any of his policies unilaterally; he must have permission and assistance from an array of people, making it questionable if he will really be able to fulfill his high promises. The only way to find out if Mamdani will actually keep his promises is to watch his performance as mayor in the next few years.

With all this discussion of Mamdani, it is impossible not to wonder about his future in politics. At just thirty-four years old, Mamdani has seized the attention of the entire country, something not many mayors have managed to do. He was even noticed by President Donald Trump, who called a meeting with Mamdani on November 21, 2025. The two had a friendly discussion that provided hope for Democrat-Republican relations. Both men agreed that New York is a critical part of the United States and that they both want the best for the city. At the same time, the peacefulness of their gathering angered much of the MAGA base, as Republicans often portray Mamdani as a dangerous Communist. Moreover, just a few days after meeting with Mamdani, Trump issued an executive order that allowed for some Muslim Brotherhood chapters to be labeled terrorist organizations, placing more doubt on how Mamdani will fare against Trump. In the end, Mamdani's values, policies, and experience teach us how much impact one person can have on politics nationwide. His run for mayor begs the question of whether this recognition is only the beginning of a much larger political future.

Colors

A Poem of Colors: The Art of Life

By Maddie Sjoblom '28
Spectrum Staff

An array of colors lies before your eyes
Blue of ocean and green of pines
Yellow of sun and black of despair
Red of furry and brown of hair
The hues of life some dull some sweet
A sphere of paint don't let it fleet
Bristles of grass and faith in your skill
Just pick up the brush and overfill
Your life with color, it is your choice
Speak up for yourself, use your voice
Make a change and follow your passion
You have only one canvas, don't let it be ashen
No masterpiece is made in one single night
No artist at first gets the proportions right
It's all in your hands, don't be frightened to start
So will your canvas be blank, or a piece of art?



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How Color Affects Design Pattern

By Mahima Ramesh '26
Chief Copy Editor

Color, though often viewed as decorative, is a large part of how we experience the world. Think about how often color quietly makes decisions for us. We gravitate toward dark mode at night because the black-and-white contrast feels easier on our eyes. We choose Spotify over another music app because its green feels familiar and energetic. We decorate our room with soft neutrals because they feel calming, or maybe even bold pops of color because they make the space feel more alive. In design, color is one of the fastest ways to grab attention. Bright packaging on a store shelf, a bolded app icon on your phone, or a vibrant color scheme in someone's Instagram post stands out. These visual choices are rooted in how we emotionally connect to color and how brands use that connection to shape trends and lifestyles.

We don't prefer colors by accident. Our attraction to certain shades is tied to emotion, memories, and context. Blue often feels calming and trustworthy, which is why it shows up everywhere from banking apps to bedroom walls. Red can feel bold, exciting, or even urgent, great for "sale" or "stop" signs, but maybe less ideal for a meditation app. Yellow tends to feel cheerful and energetic, while green is associated with growth, health, and balance. We can all recognize these associations quite easily, but what makes color especially interesting is that its meaning isn't fixed. Black can feel sleek and luxurious in fashion, but heavy or somber in other contexts. Pink might read playful in one design and powerful or modern in another. Designers understand this flexibility and use it intentionally, choosing colors based on how they make people feel rather than simply how they look. As products become more lifestyle-focused, color choices become more meaningful. Companies don't only ask, "What looks good?" but also "What mood do we want this product to live in?" That's why popular products often come in carefully curated palettes and variety, helping users feel like the product better fits their personality or aesthetic.

This emotional connection is exactly why color plays such a big role in trends. When a certain look or palette starts appearing everywhere, it's usually because it hints at something people want or identify with. Brands lean into color to make products feel current, expressive, and shareable. For example, the popular Owala water bottles, which are successful for their functionality but are also popular for their color variety. The bright, unexpected color combinations make the product feel fun and personal while encouraging discussion. Owning one feels less like buying a basic item and more like choosing a piece of your persona. Trends spread quickly because we're constantly seeing what others are using and loving. Once a color trend takes hold, it moves into real life, shaping everything from branding to interior design to fashion.

Together, psychology and trends show that color affects far more than we realize. It influences what we buy, how we design, and even how we perceive the world around us. In our digital world, where social platforms are designed to capture attention in seconds, color has become more powerful than ever. As societal values shift toward sustainability and individuality, the colors we see trending will likely shift too. Between calming tones for mental health, expressive palettes for self-identity, or bold colors that challenge the normal, color will continue to shape our day-to-day lifestyles.

Is My Red Your Blue?

By Courtney Arnett '26
Spectrum Staff

Most people with neurotypical vision agree that the sky, the ocean, and Cookie Monster are all approximately the same color: blue. However, we have all wondered once or twice whether this color is truly the same for every person.

This question – "Do we see colors the same way?" – is fundamentally human and of great importance to research involving the human brain. If it was discovered that colors are perceived differently by different individuals, it could fundamentally change the way in which we discuss matters of individual perspective and study both the brain and human behavior.

Though there is no definitive evidence that proves this theory wrong or right, many studies have explored this concept. One such study, conducted by the color vision scientists Joseph Carroll and Jay Neitz, investigates potential cures to color blindness using squirrel monkeys.

Like color-blind people, squirrel monkeys only have green and blue color-sensitive cone cells in their eyes, resulting in them being unable to perceive "red" and "green" wavelengths as these require a red color-sensitive cone. As a result, red and green appear neutral and blend into neutral backgrounds, making monkeys unable to identify them.

As a means of treating the monkeys, Carroll and Neitz injected a virus into the squirrel monkeys' eyes that inserted a gene into their DNA. This insertion resulted in some of the green cones in the monkeys eyes becoming red cones instead. This change allowed monkeys to perceive red and green shades and distinguish the color from neutral backgrounds.

Though the monkey's neurons were wired to receive signals from green cones, they spontaneously adapted to the red cones and were able to perceive new colors. This discovery, though made to help cure color blindness, has profound implications on how all humans perceive color.

Since the transformation of the green cones was done through unnatural means, the "ability to discriminate certain wavelengths arose out of the blue" meaning that the brain circuitry "[took] in whatever information it had and then confers some sort of perception" (Livescience). Though the monkey's neutrons were not used to processing red-cone wavelengths, they were able to perceive a difference that allowed them to distinguish the colors from the initial gray tone. Carrol hypothesizes that when humans are born, "our brains most likely do the same thing…Our neurons aren't configured to respond to color in a default way; instead, we each develop a unique perception of color" (Livescience). If this theory was correct, it would verify the idea of color being a "private sensation" that varies among individuals. This means that one person may perceive strawberries to be the color "red" whereas another person may perceive strawberries as the color "blue".

Though this is an interesting investigation of color perception, Carrol and Neitz are not the only people who have attempted to test whether color perception differs among individuals. Another study that explores this subject was conducted by researchers from the University of Tokyo and Monash University in Australia. This study presents the opposite conclusion to Carrol and Neitz, suggesting instead that our perception of color may be the same after all.

This study aimed specifically to discover if an answer can be given to the question "is my red your red?"; or if two people's subjective experiences might differ: "Is my red your green?". Before undergoing trials, the researchers admitted that the question is "traditionally difficult to analyze because both subjects can agree on what is red or green in terms of verbal reports, even if what they see in their minds' eyes is different." (UTokyo). With this challenge in mind, The researchers gathered responses using a novel experimental and computational paradigm called the qualia structure paradigm. This paradigm removes the color labels and forces the subjects, made up of both color-neurotypical and colorblind participants, to compare the shade that they are seeing to other shades instead of asking them to describe what they are seeing directly, as it is difficult to explain colors outside of the names we attribute to them. Through this method, the researchers were able to distinguish if the shade that one person experiences is similar to the shade another person experiences.

Using this method, the researchers concluded that "participants can be correctly aligned at the group level, such that red correctly mapped to the same red or similar reddish colors," meaning that the colors which we see are, in fact, likely to be the same color (UTokyo). However, the researchers do admit that, since the research was conducted on a non-individual level, there could be differences between individuals that are not reflected in their study.

Each of these studies offers a unique outlook on color perception and, though possessing opposite conclusions, both studies represent logical inquiries backed up by sound investigation and deduction. Though it is still largely unknown whether color perception varies among individuals— and thus impossible to know if my red is your blue—it is still worthwhile to undertake these investigations in an attempt to discover these answers. All and all, the continued effort of humanity to discover that which it does not know is impossibly valuable and must be maintained, even if these inquiries are not always fruitful. Regardless of whether an answer is found, the joy of questioning, of nurturing curiosity, is forever irreplaceable.

Colors

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Cultural Colors

By Tina Li '27
Chief Op-Ed Editor

Color is always around us. We register it instinctively, afterall, it's in our homes, clothes, and screens; yet we move through the motions of life without giving it a second thought. How does a simple hue evoke emotion, communicate meaning, and shape identity simultaneously?

Color is one of the most immediate ways humans interpret the world. It subconsciously affects mood, signals importance, and conveys ideas wordlessly. We all have a favorite color, which can feel deeply personal and reflect our personalities. At the same time, certain colors become collective symbols; red for danger, blue for calm, or black for mourning. These assigned meanings aren't just random, but rather are shaped by culture, history, and a shared human experience. Across different cultures, color carries unique significance. In many Western cultures, white symbolizes purity and is traditionally worn at weddings. In contrast, parts of East Asia associate white with mourning and death. Red, often likened to love or aggression in Western societies, represents good fortune and celebration in China. These stark differences in color significance illustrate how individual experience and unique cultural differences create learned color meanings.

Deeper historical roots of color exist as well. Ancient civilizations had certain pigments that were rare and expensive, making them symbols of wealth and power. Notably, purple used to be reserved for royalty in Ancient Rome due to the difficulty in producing Tyrian purple dye. Similarly, gold has been long associated with divinity and authority, appearing in religious arts across many civilizations and cultures. Over time, these associations became ingrained in generations, becoming a marker of status or meaning.

Red: In India, red is often associated with marriage, fertility, and strength. Chinese culture sees red as a symbol of luck, prosperity, and celebration. It's commonly used in weddings and festivals, notably during Lunar New Year.

Orange: In Hindu and Buddhist traditions, orange represents spirituality, renunciation, and enlightenment, which is featured in the clothing commonplace worn by monks. Western cultures symbolizes it as energy, enthusiasm, and creativity.

Yellow: In Egypt, this color symbolized eternity and immortality. China historically associates orange with emperors and authority, and in Western cultures yellow is representative of happiness, warmth, and caution.

Green: Islamic cultures portray green as a sacred color that represents paradise and renewal. Green is also a symbol of national identity and cultural pride in Ireland. Western societies associate green with nature, growth, and feelings of jealousy.

Blue: Blue is believed to ward off evil and is used in amulets and architecture in Middle Eastern cultures. Similar to purple, blue was a rare pigment in ancient civilizations, making it a symbol of divinity and wealth. Western cultures symbolize blue as trust, stability, and calm.

Purple: In ancient civilizations, specifically Ancient Rome, purple was reserved for royalty due to the rarity of the dye. Ergo, it also represents luxury, power, and wealth in western cultures as well. In religious contexts, it signals spirituality and devotion.

Colors are a deeply symbolic part of our lives that we often overlook. By recognizing its significance, we can gain a deeper understanding of both ourselves, our culture, and the world around us.

This year, I encourage you to take a deeper look into the colors that surround you. Think about the intersection of cultures that exists in our own community at AB!

America's New Mural Renaissance

By Tina Li and Gyan Sreejith '27
Chief Layout Editor & Chief Op-Ed Editor

Imagine this. You are walking through Boston on a cold, blustery winter day. The sky is grey, the clouds are out, and you're bashing your skull in, trying to find something to do. You turn the corner of the street, carefully avoiding the burnt cigarette butts on the ground, and you hear a symphony of cars honking. Yeah, this truly is Boston. To the billions of people who have ever walked through any city, this is a familiar sight. While Hollywood might try to convince you otherwise, those ugly bland streets are what define America's cities; they are nothing more than a concrete jungle. But just like any other jungle, America's cities are constantly changing.

Over the past decade, there has been a renaissance in city architecture and how Americans decorate their buildings. Unlike the Victorian and Gothic styles of architecture, this decoration is not found in the underlying shape of the buildings, but rather in eye-catching colors. Flying buttresses have been replaced by vibrant reds and yellows, and those controversially ugly Gargoyles have been replaced by images and statues of American heroes. While many artists contain their works to a traditional blank canvas, others use the sides of buildings to demonstrate their artistic prowess. In the greater Boston area these works are becoming more and more commonplace. For example, the Interconnected Mural of West Avenue, located on the former Harvard University New England Deposit Library, features a vibrant and distinctive painting of a monarch butterfly, a hummingbird, and a red rose as the focal points. Arrows connect the subjects together, representing the dependencies humans, animals, and the environment have on each other. The artist Sophy Tuttle, notes that her location of the mural is deliberate, purposefully painting her artwork on a building that housed thousands of research works and materials, using biology textbooks as references to the animal and plant life scattered throughout the mural. Another notable mural is The Allumination House of Allston, which is painted on an old abandoned building in Allston, transforming the grey and unassuming space into a vibrant and colorful landmark. The abstruse twists and turns of the thick striking lines paired with unique textures makes this landmark stand out in a sea of chrome colonial buildings. Although they are abundant in urban areas, murals are not just exclusive to cities; they have been appearing everywhere humans are found. In fact, our very own suburban town of Acton proudly displays its own mural at the Town Plaza that across from the Dunkin Donuts. In big bold letters, the mural reads "ACTON", with fun lovable characters like Big Bird from Sesame Street and images of the Hosmer House, referencing the historical significance of our town. Murals do more than just brighten up an atmosphere, they encompass the ambience of a community's environment and honors the antiquity and culture as well.

However, like any other genre of Art, there are individuals whose work inspires controversy, calling this practice of public display into question. Ever since its creation in 1936, Victor Arnautoff's "Life of Washington" has caused strife. As its name suggests, it centers around the life of George Washington. However, unlike many other pieces that augment Washington's legacy, Arnautoff's work takes a more realistic approach. For example, the mural depicts scenes from Washington's home at Mount Vernon, showing the struggles of enslaved individuals that resided on his family's property. While many individuals don't find issues with the subject of the mural, they do not appreciate its location. The mural is found on a San Francisco High School Campus; some people feel that easily influenced individuals, like children, should not be constantly reminded of our country's dark history and our first president's flaws. Critics argue that the meaning behind the mural may be too dark to be imprinted on the high school building.

In recent years, the definition of what a mural is has become more vague as well. From vandalism to modern-art, the word "graffiti" invokes different emotions depending on who you ask. For some, the word triggers images of crude words written on bridge poles and cracked cement walls. For others, they imagine aesthetic clashes of color and praise the creative liberty necessary for these grungy pieces. The graffiti you see in are most likely tags, which are quick stylized signatures of the artists, called "taggers". This type of art is commonplace in the media, showing a different side of graffiti. Many use graffiti as a way to make political statements, with artists like Banksy blowing up on social media through both his satirical and politically charged works.

In this reemergence of the beautification of cities, it becomes more difficult to define where we draw the line for graffiti artists. Spanish cities such as Barcelona and Madrid struggle with an influx of "unwanted" artists, wanting to bring a little more personality to the city. Over three-hundred fifty tags and posters in Barcelona are removed daily from the public eye, testifying to just how many street artists litter the streets of the city. Graffiti, if done with benevolent and creative intent, can better an area, making it more pleasing to the eye with their abstract shapes and colors. However, illegal graffiti can cost a city hundreds of thousands of dollars in cleaning costs and can promote vandalism, so it's always better to do this form of art in designated, legal places. If you're interested in trying your hand out in graffiti and living out your Subway Surfer's dream, visit the Rico Modica way, informally dubbed the "Graffiti Alley". Located in Central Square, Cambridge, the alley is a famous and encouraged graffiti spot, and one of the few legal ones in the Greater Boston area.

How we want to transform our cities is all up to us, the people. A single mural can light up an entire neighborhood, and often holds community-benefitting themes that boosts visibility of the local culture and history. Look for a blank wall, pitch your idea to property owners or local councils, and start painting!

Op-Ed

SCOTUS: Glossip vs. Gross Case

By Hightide Billy
Spectrum Staff

In June of 2015, the Supreme Court decided by a five to four majority in the case Glossip v. Gross to affirm the use of the drug midazolam in administering capital punishment. However, contrary to this decision, midazolam should not be used in administering the death penalty because it is ineffective in its purpose. The primary reason is that the drug violates the Eighth Amendment by not preventing the pain induced, its sole objective. Moreover, midazolam is subject to a ceiling effect, meaning that there is no dosage where it is able to serve its purpose. Most decisively, the expert testifier's evidence was inaccurate and misleading despite being the basis of the court's decision.

Prior to this case, Oklahoma implemented a three-drug protocol for executions that included midazolam after one of the drugs used previously became unavailable. Following the botched execution of Clayton Lockett, several inmates sued the State, claiming that midazolam caused a risk of severe and unnecessary pain by failing to induce a state of unconsciousness: a violation of the right against cruel and unusual punishment granted by the Constitution. After a district court and appeals court both denied the petitioners' claim, the Supreme Court tried the case under appellate jurisdiction. The Supreme Court affirmed the decision of the other courts because petitioners failed to identify another known and available alternative and because they failed to prove that midazolam caused a substantial risk of harm. Moreover, the Supreme Court agreed that Oklohoma's new execution protocol, which used a higher dosage of midazolam, would further eliminate what little risk there was of a botched operation (Glossip v. Gross).

Nevertheless, it is clear that midazolam does violate the Eighth Amendment by not preventing the pain induced during execution, its sole objective. The primary intention of Rocuronium Bromide and Potassium Chloride, the other two drugs administered to the condemned, is "to paralyze the inmate and stop his heart. But they do so in a torturous manner, causing a burning searing pain" (Sotomayor, D.O. I). It is therefore critical that midazolam eliminates the pain produced. However, in a district court hearing, "all three experts agreed that midazolam [...] has no analgesic — pain relieving — effects [... and that] it is not approved by the FDA for the use as the sole drug to produce and maintain anesthesia in surgical proceedings" (Sotomayor, D.O. I.). This caution warns that the drug will inflict the full "burning, severing pain" on individuals condemned. Moreover, the drug's use has not even been sanctioned for milder "surgical proceedings." Nevertheless, the Court believes that midazolam's usage should extend to the physically and emotionally traumatic procedure of the death penalty. This scientific consensus is not just speculation, however. In an Ohio death chamber, "[a]s the lethal drugs, [including midazolam,] flowed into his veins [...] Dennis Mcguire went unconscious. [...] But a few minutes later, his daughter was horrified to see her father struggling, his stomach heaving, [and] a fist clenching. [...] McGuire's execution [...] was accompanied by movement, gasping, snorting, and choking sounds" (Goode, 2014). It is clear that midazolam failed to provide analgesic effects, and as a result McGuire suffered the combined pain of the other two drugs. Moreover, his daughter was forced to witness him suffer, demonstrating that the Court's decision has negative consequences for both the inmates as well as innocent people, their families. Although inmates are deprived of some of their constitutional rights, they are endowed with the protections of the Eighth Amendment. Disregarding the petitioner's ability to find available or viable alternative drugs, such suffering directly violates the Constitution: "The Eighth Amendment categorically [emphasis added] prohibits the infliction of Cruel and Unusual punishment" (Penry v. Lynaugh). The pain induced is "categorically" inhumane, and it is clear that the use of midazolam should be prohibited.

However, not only does midazolam not have sufficient pain-relieving effects, it is not even an effective sedative because it is subject to a ceiling effect. More specifically, Dr. Lubarsky, one of the expert testifiers, detailed that "[midazolam] reaches a point of saturation [... where] the drug cannot keep someone unconscious. [...] in the face of more noxious stimuli," (Sotomayor, D.O. II) such as the other two drugs in Oklahoma's lethal injection protocol. It has already been established that midazolam is incapable of analgesia, and Dr. Lubarsky claims that it is also unable to induce unconsciousness, which would have lessened the pain felt. Additionally, the loss of consciousness would have allowed the inmate to disconnect from their emotional awareness, lessening the burden of family members watching as the inmate's sufferings would be less pronounced. Because the sole purpose of midazolam is to curtail unnecessary suffering, it becomes evident that any dosage will not successfully achieve its objective. This claim is consistent with real-world applications of midazolam as well. Joseph Wood, a condemned inmate, "la[id] on the gurney in Arizona's death chamber, gasping and gulping [for nearly two hours]. By the time Wood died, [...] he had been injected with 750 milligrams of midazolam," (Dart, 2014) one-and-a-half times more than the proposed amount in Oklahoma. As David Waisel, an Associate Professor of Anaesthesia in Boston, explains, there is not always a correlation between increasing dosages and effectiveness (Dart, 2014). From the botched execution of Joseph Wood and the testimony of Dr. Lubarsky, it is clear that no amount of midazolam will leave the inmate fully unconscious. They will be forced to experience extreme pain simply because the drug is ineffective.

Most decisively, the evidence of the State's expert testifier, Dr. Evans, was inaccurate and misleading, although "[t]he District Court concluded that Dr. Evans [...] was 'well qualified to give the expert testimony that he gave' and that 'his testimony was the product of reliable principles and methods reliably applied to the facts of the case'" (Glossip v. Gross). His inaccuracy partially stems from his dependence on the web source Drugs.com, which states on its page on midazolam that "[t]his material is provided for educational purposes only and is not intended for medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment" (Midazolam, Midazolam Hydrochloride (Monograph), 2024). Although Dr. Evans' application of the site's content is not strictly medical treatment, its contribution directly led to the suffering of the condemned. In addition, according to the Supreme Court, a data sheet he referred to labeled a certain dosage of midazolam one-thousand times higher than was accurate (Glossip v. Gross). Many of Dr. Evans' sources were clearly inappropriately used and inaccurate: the basis upon which Dr. Evans made his claims was flawed, and it is clear that his evidence should not have been taken into account. It is even more surprising to learn that he was still considered reliable after "the court likewise assiduously avoid[ed] defending [Dr. Evans'] theor[ies] [...] because [his] testimony was not unsupported, but was directly refuted by the studies and articles cited by Drs. Lubarsky and Sasich" (Sotomayor, D.O. I). One such example is Dr. Evans' extrapolation of the data, claiming that "[a]s you increase the dose of midazolam, it has a linear effect, so you're going to continue to get an impact from higher doses of the drug [... until] you're paralyzing the brain," (Sotomayor, D.O. I) despite providing no evidence. As Dr. Evans failed to provide evidence to support his claim, his testimony is clearly flawed. Because other experts who provided evidence can prove the contrary, it is definite that his testimony should have been discounted. It is clear that Dr. Evans, the sole testifier for the state, was unreliable. His mistakes made the Court's decision misguided, and therefore, it is clear that the use of midazolam should be banned.

Overall, the decision in Glossip v. Gross was deeply erroneous, and it is definitive that midazolam should not be used in administering the death penalty because it is ineffective in its purpose. Whether it is the drug's violation of the Eighth Amendment, its limitations including a ceiling effect, or an testimony of an unreliable expert misguiding the Supreme Court, it is clear that midazolam has caused suffering for many individuals in the past and may for many individuals to come. As courts continue to make flawed verdicts, it becomes society's responsibility to hold them accountable and demand change. To protect the integrity of our Constitution, midazolam's viability in administering capital punishment should be denied.

School Lunch Ranking

By Matthew Liu '27
Co-Editor-in-Chief

When most people hear "school lunch," they probably picture something unidentifiable as food. I'm here to make a case for our cafeteria. It's a place of genuine surprises, comforting staples, and yes, the occasional mystery. Over my years here, I've become something of a lunchtime connoisseur, and I've learned that our menu is way more thoughtful and tasty than it gets credit for. That's why I'm here to rank some of the best of the best, the cream of the crop, pick of the litter, school lunches.

First off, the elite. The S-Tier meals that make you forget you're even at school. The Revolution Bowl is my personal hill to die on. It's not just a meal; it's an experience. You get to be the chef, piling on cheese and tomatoes with crisp lettuce, salsa, and a dollop of cool sour cream. It's the closest thing we have to a fresh, restaurant-style lunch. Then there are the Burgers. Sure, a burger is a burger, but ours are consistently good, and the real magic is at the toppings bar. Loading up with pickles, onions, and extra ketchup, paired with those perfectly salty potato wedges? It's a little piece of fast-food joy right in the cafeteria. And we can't ignore the Chicken Shawarma or Falafel Flatbread. That first whiff of spices when you walk in on shawarma day is unmatched. It's a bold, international flavor that feels like a special treat, not just another Tuesday of pizza. And of course, who could forget the Chicken Wings. The juicy meat and the slightly crisped skin goes together perfectly, especially with the variety of sauces offered. My go-to is buffalo alongside ranch, but the BBQ is never a bad option. The ONLY issue with these is the portion size, as the four that used to be there has woefully been reduced to just three. Alas, it is understandable with rising prices and our meals being free, just the price to pay for real meat.

The A-Tier is for the strong, reliable contenders. The Chicken Parm Sandwich is a warm, cheesy hug on a bun, while the Caprese Sandwich with its fresh mozzarella, tomato, and pesto feels almost fancy, like something you'd order at a cute café. The DIY Baked Potato Bar is a comfort champion. A fluffy, steaming potato you can smother in melted cheese? With a twisted, buttery breadstick on the side? It's the ultimate hearty lunch, and I will happily debate anyone who says otherwise.

Of course, not every day can be a culinary adventure. That's where the B-Tier comes in. It is filled with dependable backups. The classic Grilled Cheese and Tomato Bisque combo is pure nostalgia, always done right. The fridge section with PB&J's, Power Pack's, and wraps and other sandwiches is always good for picky eaters. These options are the unsung heroes, ensuring that no one ever has to go hungry. It's a lighter option for those who enjoy the breakfast bagels a little too much. With the new addition of the Rev Market and the Boar's head sandwiches, the situation has gotten even better. These sandwiches are not only super filling but are packed with flavor and are always great if you are not feeling the entree of the day. Unless you have third lunch because they always sell out by then, which just goes to show their popularity.

But what truly elevates our lunch experience are the extras, the supporting cast that makes the main show shine. Let's pour one out for the Sauce Bar, the underrated MVP of the cafeteria. The ranch that's always there waiting, the buffalo sauce, or even the new Craic's hot sauce that always offers a bright kick, can transform a boring chicken patty into something special. Although not part of the sauce bar, I feel it's my duty to mention Boom-boom sauce, the unsung hero of our cafeteria. Its sweet and spicy flavor is the perfect addition to anything, but it is only available on select days. It is a labor of love, as the cafeteria staff has reported to me that they must make it themselves and is not a sauce that they purchase. Let's always cherish our boom-boom sauce and not take extra because then the rest of us are left with nothing during third lunch. The daily spread of fresh fruits, crunchy carrots, and sometimes even roasted veggies or chickpea salads shows a real effort to give us balanced choices. And the fact that we can start our day with free breakfast like a bagel, cereal, or yogurt parfait is a game-changer for those of us sprinting out the door. The new after-school vending machine, offering free meals for kids staying late for clubs or sports, is a genuinely brilliant and caring addition.

Looking at the big picture, our menu tells a really positive story about our school. It quietly celebrates diversity, as we get to try flavors from all over, from General Tso's to Fajitas to Tandoori to even experimental flavors like Jerk Chicken Wings. Our staff knows students need a balance: sometimes you need the healthy hummus wrap and sometimes you need the mac and cheese. Most of all, it gives us choice and control, from the Revolution Bowl station to the sauce bar and the variety of options that our school has to offer. That respect for our preferences means a lot and shouldn't be taken for granted.

Now, in the spirit of constructive feedback, and because no system is perfect, there's always room to grow. The pasta with marinara is a solid A to B-Tier meal, but when it appears again for the third time in a week, even the garlic breadstick loses its charm. Some of those globally-inspired dishes can sometimes taste a bit timid, like their exciting flavors got left behind in the kitchen.

But here is the most important part, and I want to say this clearly: I am so grateful for our free lunch and breakfast program, and for the staff who make it happen every single day. I also think that all of us should be extra appreciative of our lunch staff who are always smiling and reminding us to get in our veggies. However, it is important to note that this isn't just about the taste of the food. For many students, this is their most reliable meal. It removes stress, stigma, and hunger, allowing everyone to focus on being a student, not on where their next meal is coming from. The lunch staff aren't just servers; they're the people who keep our community fed and ready to learn. We might joke about the food, but we should never, ever take them or this program for granted. It's a lifeline.

So, the final take? Our school lunch isn't just pizza and mystery. It's a varied, thoughtful, and fundamentally supportive part of our day. It has its superstar meals, its comfort-food champions, and a heart that's way bigger than people realize. Let's appreciate the good stuff, offer kind suggestions for the not-so-good, and always remember to say thanks to the people behind the counter. Afterall, they're doing a lot more than just putting the cheese on your potato.

Off-Topic



Dean Martin, The Man Himself
ONLINE SOURCE

Should School Start Later?

By Ethan Ebbin ‘28
Spectrum Staff

Among high school students, sleep deprivation is a common problem that almost every teen faces. At the same time, most students are aware that sleep is a key ingredient in both physical and mental health, which begs the question as to why this problem could be so common. Students have to wake up early in the morning to go to school, something that proves problematic when students’ study habits or schedules lead them to working on schoolwork late at night. Research suggests that an easy form of helping the problem is via school start times, saying that the policy change has the potential to significantly improve student well-being and academic outcomes. However, there’s a lot more to the story than that.

I think we can all agree that the “tired high schooler” is a total stereotype, but it’s one based on a harsh reality. Most of us know we should be getting between 8 and 10 hours of sleep, yet almost nobody actually hits that goal. According to the CDC, by the time students reach 12th grade, a staggering 83.5% of them aren’t getting enough sleep. It’s not just about being “lazy” or staying up too late on our phones; for many, it’s a physical struggle to stay awake during first period. When 7 out of 10 freshmen are already sleep-deprived, it’s clear that the current schedule isn’t working for the people it’s supposed to serve.

The reason this happens isn’t just a lack of discipline, it’s actually science. During your teen years, your internal “circadian clock” shifts. This means your body naturally wants to stay up later and wake up later than a younger child or an adult. Research shows that even a small change makes a massive difference. One study found that when schools moved their start times to at least 8:30 a.m., students didn’t just sleep longer; they also had better moods and felt healthier, physically and mentally. Essentially, by starting school later, we are finally working with our biology instead of fighting against it.

Of course, the biggest pushback usually comes from concerns about what happens after the final bell rings. People worry about sports practices, clubs, and after-school jobs being pushed too late into the evening. However, a study from a large district near Denver showed that when start times were pushed back, it wasn’t just the students who felt better, parents and teachers reported being more well-rested and functional during the day too. If we’re worried about after-school time, a modest 30-minute delay could be the “sweet spot” that gives students extra rest without completely ruining the afternoon schedule.

This isn’t just a theory anymore; it’s becoming the new standard. States like California and Florida have already passed laws requiring later start times, and even nearby districts like Newton and Lexington have made the jump. While changing a schedule definitely comes with some logistical headaches, the evidence is hard to ignore. If our goal is to support student health and actually help us learn, then a later start time is one of the most effective ways to make that happen.

Dean Martin & the Art of Effortless

By Andrew Moon ‘27
Spectrum Staff

Every Christmas season, a familiar voice returns, carried by a deep voice we all recognize: “Oh, the weather outside is frightful / But the fire is so delightful / Since we’ve no place to go / Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow!” His voice is not only recognizable during the Christmas season, but also whenever we turn to songs that warm our hearts, like “That’s Amore” and “Everybody Loves Somebody.” Beyond his individual talents, he became a cultural legend whose distinctive style influenced generations of performers, including Elvis Presley. Wherever he appeared—on television, on stage, or on screen—he brought an effortless cool, what people today might call aura. For more than four decades, Dean Martin didn’t just perform; he made cool feel natural, earning the title King of Cool.

Dino Paul Crocetti was born on June 7, 1917, in Steubenville, Ohio, as a son of Italian immigrants. He didn’t speak English until he went to school at age five. After dropping out of high school at fifteen, he became a boxer; his tall, muscular build made him a natural fit for the sport. He might have gone on to become a professional boxer, but a broken nose from a match ended that path. After his boxing career ended, he worked at an illegal casino as a roulette stickman and dealer. At the same time, he began singing with local bands under the name Dino Martini, inspired by the Metropolitan Opera tenor Nino Martini. By late 1940, thanks to his remarkable voice, Cleveland bandleader Sammy Watkins invited Dino to sing for him. “That Italian name has to go,” said Watkins—and renamed him ‘Dean Martin.’ Later in September 1943, Martin broke his contract with Sammy Watkins, moved from Cleveland to New York City, and signed an exclusive contract with the MCA talent agency. He was soon booked as a last-minute replacement for Frank Sinatra at New York’s Riobamba Room. This moment marked the beginning of his career as a national superstar.

Soon after his rise to national fame, Martin teamed up with a young, wildly energetic comedian named Jerry Lewis, forming one of the most iconic and influential duos in American entertainment history. Their act leaned heavily on slapstick comedy and broke away from rigid vaudeville traditions. Instead of following strict scripts, they improvised—singing, clowning, and chasing each other across the stage. The contrast between Martin’s smooth, laid-back style and Lewis’s loud, chaotic humor turned out to be perfect. Together, they formed a duo that dominated nightclubs, radio, film, and television in the late 1940s and early 1950s, becoming one of the most successful comedy partnerships in American history. Despite their success, Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis eventually split due to creative differences and their vastly different personalities. Lewis sought more creative control and new projects, while Martin preferred more leisure time for golf and family. Ultimately, they realized they no longer enjoyed working together as much, even though they still cared for each other. This separation allowed Martin to focus on his solo career.

After parting ways with Jerry Lewis, Martin found great success as a solo artist. In 1958, he achieved success as an actor, starring alongside Marlon Brando and Montgomery Clift in The Young Lions. As a singer, he also scored a hit with “Volare,” an English adaptation of Domenico Modugno’s Nel blu, dipinto di blu. Building on his musical success, in 1959, Martin released A Winter Romance, an album that showcased his smooth voice on holiday classics that remain beloved to this day. The album featured timeless Christmas favorites like “Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!”, “Winter Wonderland”, “Baby, It’s Cold Outside”, “Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer”, and “White Christmas”, introducing Martin’s signature warmth and charm to generations of listeners during the holiday season. These solo successes as both a singer and actor helped Martin solidify his star power and set the stage for the next chapter of his career: joining the Rat Pack.

The Rat Pack was more than just a group of entertainers—it was a cultural phenomenon of the 1960s. The group started with Hollywood actor Humphrey Bogart and his friends, who would gather for poker games and parties. After Bogart’s death, Frank Sinatra became the de facto leader of the Pack. The Rat Pack truly came into its iconic form when Dean Martin joined Sinatra. In 1958, Martin appeared with Frank Sinatra and Shirley MacLaine in Some Came Running. Although they had only been casual friends before the film, Martin and Sinatra grew close during production, even renting a house together and hosting nightly parties that became legendary among Hollywood insiders. Sinatra later brought Sammy Davis Jr., Peter Lawford, and Joey Bishop into the group. On screen, they brought that magic to Ocean’s Eleven, cementing their image as Hollywood icons. After the success of Ocean’s Eleven, the Rat Pack continued to capitalize on their fame, occasionally hosting shows that combined music, comedy, and celebrity-filled parties. These performances kept their legendary status alive and reinforced their image as the ultimate icons of cool. Together, they dominated Las Vegas, turning the city into a playground of music, comedy, and high-rolling glamour, performing sold-out shows that became legendary.

Building on his Rat Pack fame, Dean Martin soon brought his charm and wit to television with The Dean Martin Show, which aired from 1965 to 1974. The variety show combined music, comedy sketches, celebrity guests, and Martin’s trademark relaxed humor, allowing him to showcase both his singing talent and playful personality. He became known for playful antics, like jumping onto the piano—a stunt that once backfired when the production team pranked him with a lightweight piano that collapsed under his weight. Musical moments were just as memorable, including his legendary performance of “One Note Samba” with Caterina Valente. With its blend of spontaneity, humor, and music, the show captivated audiences and solidified Martin’s status as one of America’s most beloved entertainers.

On television, Martin often played the lovable, slightly sloppy drunk, a persona that became one of his trademarks. His relaxed, tipsy demeanor was so convincing that it sparked a lasting question among fans: “Why was Dean Martin always drunk?” Martin himself once joked, “I feel sorry for you people who don’t drink. I mean it because when you wake up in the morning, that’s as good as you’re going to feel all day.” By portraying a relaxed, carefree persona, he enhanced his image of effortless cool.

In reality, Martin’s off-screen life was far more disciplined. He was a devoted family man, the father-in-law of Olivia Hussey, and a consummate professional with a strong work ethic. His real-life discipline, dedication to his craft, and personal warmth stood in contrast to the tipsy, easygoing character he performed for audiences, showing that his “cool” was as much calculated skill as it was charm.

Dean Martin’s influence has endured long past his heyday, with his music continuing to appear in Christmas playlists, films, and pop culture references. Notably, the King of Rock ‘n’ Roll, Elvis Presley, emulated Dean Martin in both singing style and stage presence. Martin’s swagger and relaxed, effortless delivery had a clear impact on the “sexy, wobbly, almost hiccupping baritone” that became Elvis Presley’s trademark. In his early career, Presley often modeled his song arrangements on Martin’s phrasing and style. With nearly an 18-year age difference between them, Presley’s admiration for Martin was unmistakable. In January 1970, while performing at the International Hotel in Las Vegas, Presley spotted Martin in the audience and honored him by singing his hit “Everybody Loves Somebody.” This was far from the first acknowledgment of his respect—Martin’s daughter, Deana, remembered Elvis saying, “They call me ‘The King of Rock and Roll,’ but your dad is ‘The King of Cool.’”

Recently, as expected, his iconic Christmas classic “Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!” joined the billion-stream club on Spotify, proving that even 30 years after his passing, Martin’s voice and charm continue to captivate new generations of listeners. Through his timeless music, unforgettable performances, and signature effortless style, Dean Martin’s warmth, charisma, and cool demeanor ensure that he will always be remembered as the King of Cool.

Off-Topic

Recipe: Peppermint Snowball Cookies

By Stella Huang-Logan '29
Spectrum Staff

Looking for a festive treat to brighten up your holiday season? Here's a seasonal dessert that's quick and easy to try! These bite-sized peppermint snowball cookies are perfect as both a snack and a dessert. Whether you're preparing for a family gathering, a party with friends, or simply want to enjoy a sweet treat at home, this recipe is for you! If you're not a fan of peppermint, this recipe works great with other flavors!

Ingredients
1 cup unsalted butter softened
2/3 cup powdered sugar sifted
2 1/4 cup all-purpose flour spooned and leveled
1/2 tsp salt
1 tsp peppermint extract
red food coloring
3/4 cup chocolate chips (optional)
additional powdered sugar for coating
Materials
11x17 inch cookie pan
Parchment Paper
Stand or hand mixer
Instructions
With a hand or stand mixer, combine the 1 cup butter and □ cup powdered sugar together until soft peaks form. This will take around 2-3 minutes.

Pour in 2 ¼ cups of flour, ½ tsp of salt, and 1 tsp peppermint extract. Stir until all ingredients are combined.

Add as many drops of food coloring to reach your desired color. Make sure to put the drops in one at a time to prevent overcoloring.

Fold in ¾ cup of the chocolate baking chips

Put the dough in a container and cover. Refrigerate for 30
minutes.

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Place a sheet of parchment paper on the cookie sheet/pan.

Take one tablespoon of the dough and make it into balls on the parchment paper.

Bake for 7 to 8 minutes. Take out the cookies when they are barely golden brown on the bottom.

Cool for 5 minutes on the cookie sheet.

Lay out a sheet of parchment paper and coat it with powdered sugar.

Place slightly cooled cookies on parchment paper with powdered sugar.

Dust the cookies with additional powdered sugar and let them cool completely.

Fill a small bowl with powdered sugar. Coat the cookies in powdered sugar and enjoy!

Store in an airtight container for up to 4 days.

Gravedigger

By Nathaniel Kim and Matthew Liu
News Editor & Editor-in-Chief

Because the neutralist I am,
I negotiate both sides for an accord
Because the neutralist I am,
I look away when one side goes too far
Because the neutralist I am,
I comply with orders for the common good
Because the neutralist I am,
I accept consensus as the truth
Because of the neutralist,
I am—

Because the neutralist I am,
I must, I mustn't, but alas,
Because the neutralist I am,
I have but no choice to go,
Because the neutralist,
I am torn. I am worn.
Because the neutralist I am,
I must go back. I feel attatched.

Because the neutralist I am,
I mistake silence for restraint
Because the neutralist I am,
I call balance a moral high ground
Because of the neutralist,
I am not stained by blood

Because of the neutralist,
the ground still opens
and I am the one holding the shovel.

Crossword Answers

Across

1. My Way
4. Jingle Bells
7. Frosty
9. Build
10. Polar Express

Down

2. Wonderland
3. Let it Go
5. Let it Snow
6. Snowman
8. A Winter's Tale

Snow Day or Snow Yay

By Dr. Loo
Spectrum Staff

Everyone claims they want a dramatic love story. In reality, most people want a snow day and one person to spend it with.

The appeal is simple. Snow days remove responsibility. There is nowhere to be, nothing productive to do, and no pressure to make the day impressive. That is why they feel romantic. Not because they are exciting, but because they are empty in a useful way.

So here is the advice: if you ever get the snow day you imagine, do not try to turn it into a moment. Moments collapse under attention. Instead, do something small and reasonable. Walk somewhere nearby. Sit inside and talk. Drink something warm. Go sledding together down the hill. A laugh is always nice. Always remember, though, end it before it gets awkward. This is not settling: it is pacing.

Another important rule: do not wait for the perfect snow day to exist before doing anything at all. The fantasy version is quiet, meaningful, and perfectly timed. The real one is slushy, inconvenient, and slightly disappointing. That does not make it worse. It makes it real. A dream snow day is never happening, and even if it was, we would probably end up having school anyway.

If the snow day never comes, that is also fine. You are allowed to want things that do not happen. Wanting them does not mean you failed. It just means you imagined something gentle in a season that is usually not. Sometimes just dreaming about something and yearning for it makes it all the more worthwhile and even better.

That is the entire point. The dream date works best as a standard, not a requirement. Remember to stay safe and warm during this winter season, and best of luck to all you lovelings!

With Love,
Dr. Loo

Connections

By LUKAS KANICS / Chief Copy Editor

Crane	Dojo	Ace	Four
Death	Swallow	Bogey	Bandit
Epaulet	Rail	Ciao	Hostile
Friendly	Eagle	Jack	Diamond

Reporting Team

Can Billy Waters Do It All?

By Courtland Wilder ‘29
Spectrum Staff

Join Acton Boxborough in congratulating DCL Small League Football Coach of the Year, Billy Waters, following his debut season this fall. For just under half a decade, the Acton Boxborough Varsity Football Program has experienced a lack of success, but for the first time since before the pandemic, AB has been reinvigorated with dreams of climbing back to the top. Join us for a first hand account of how this dream is being made a reality.

Q: What are your thoughts on being named DCL Small League Coach of the year?

“It is an amazing honor, and I couldn’t be more proud and fortunate to have such a good group of seniors that lead by example. It was a privilege to coach with these young men.”

Q: How did you get into coaching?

“It was a funny story. I was actually at Boston Architectural College, and my youngest brother started basketball. I was at an internship, they offered me an official position, but I respectfully declined. I told them I went out one week to coach middle school basketball, and it was the highlight of my year. I transitioned to teaching and coaching after, and it’s been history from there.”

Q: Describe your coaching style?

“I am somebody who cares for the players. I am extremely loud, but I make sure we have fun. We work hard and we are detail-oriented.”

Q: Explain your efforts to build the team from the ground up.

“I gotta give a lot of credit to all the current alumni. Some of the former coaches, Bill Maver being one of the main role models, I got to lean on and ask questions on how they did things during their heyday, as well as Coach Morris who is the current Boys Head Basketball Coach. He really helped and gave me the lay of the land. A lot of alumni came back and there has been great support amongst the administration as well as teachers, so it’s really been a cumulative effort. I also adopted a great group of seniors that worked their tail off in the weight room; it’s not rocket science. Football teams that lift together, stick together, and that was what we were fortunate to do this season.”

Q: How have your assistant coaches supported you throughout this process?

“We brought on an entirely new staff with the exception of Coach Morris. Coach Morris led our junior Varsity program with Coach Picca and did a phenomenal job. Coach Smith coached our linebackers and tight ends. He made a humongous impact as well as being an assistant teacher in the building. Coach Higgins helped work with our Varsity offensive line. He is also an assistant teacher in the building. Coach Degouff worked with our defensive line. He is also an assistant teacher in the building. They really made great connections with the kids. Coach Deamantis also played high level football. He helped out with our defensive coordinator, and Coach Gretchem was our defensive back coach. These guys did a great job connecting with kids and teaching them the fundamentals. I mean, I can’t tell you how lucky our kids and I were to have them on staff and the impact they made. It was a total team effort.”

Q: How do you maintain student athletes both on and off the field?

“We did a fun little incentives program in the off season called the AB Games. Kids get points for being consistent in the weight room, making gains, being a multisport athlete, but also doing positive things in the community, like giving back to the youth, being present at other school events, and receiving good grades in the classroom. I think the off-season system really helped speed us forward in the direction we want to go.”

Q: What are some key qualities you are proud of your players for bringing to the field this year?

“Obviously the performance on the field was phenomenal, but how they have led in the classroom, in the building, outside the classroom, and outside the field is where I get the chills. There’s not many teams that you coach, and they say, ‘if we practice really hard and we are focused, can we end practice early to go support the unified basketball team?’ We had a freshman come to tears and say how grateful he was for the positive impact that these seniors have made on them, so what they have done on the field is going to leave a legacy, but how they conduct themselves as young men are the legacies that are going to stand the test of time.”

Q: How are you feeling about this past season and the new hope you have brought forth?

“Honestly I couldn’t be more proud of the kids. The work they put in is why the attendance was where it was at these games. I know people came back to watch the games not just because we have the gold helmets on, but for the kids wearing them. The community support we received, and the attendance at these games were astronomical. We played 3 games in front of more than one thousand fans, which takes a village. I couldn’t be more proud of all the accomplishments of these guys, having a winning season, winning the DCL small, battling on the field regardless of who we played, and never giving up. They are really a great group of young men.”

Q: What advice do you have for aspiring athletes?

“Do your best. Nothing is promised to you, so each day, attack it. Win the day, and if you have a rough one, put it in the back burners, and go after the next day 110 percent. Nothing beats consistency. If you work at something consistently day in, day out, you can outwork and out hustle somebody who is more talented than you are, so just be consistent in your approach, and stay positive in your mindset.”



WE ARE DRAKE MAYE
ONLINE SOURCE

Can Drake “Drake Maye” Maye Do It All?

By Saharsh Komatireddy ‘26
& Aditya Narayan ‘27
Spectrum Staff

Boston has a very successful history with sports, and this year is no exception. Recently, some teams have been doing much better than others. For example, the Patriots bounced back from two four-win thirteen-loss seasons and are marching in the playoffs led by MVP candidate, Drake Maye. The Celtics have had their own midseason resurrection as they climbed from the bottom of the eastern conference. The Celtics have been very successful in the past two seasons, as they won a championship and went far into the playoffs the next season. They were not meant to be in championship contention due to key injuries, but somehow the Celtics are right in the mix of it. Similarly, the Bruins, expected to miss the post season altogether, have had a rollercoaster of a season. From hosting the league’s second highest goal scorer to a mid-season cool down, the Bruins are currently in the hunt for a postseason berth.

Many people argue that the Patriots have the easiest schedule in the league and that they don’t deserve their generational record. Although this statement has some truth to it, the Patriots have beaten many Super Bowl contenders, such as the Buffalo Bills, led by former MVP Josh Allen, and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, led by Baker Mayfield. But why did they perform so badly in the last few seasons in the first place? Well first of all, they had to deal with constant coaching and roster changes, making it difficult to compete. This also made their offense rank towards the bottom of the league, causing them to struggle to score points. Not only this, they had to deal with inconsistent quarterbacks such as Bailey Zappe, Malik Cunningham, and Mac Jones. Finding their quarterback is what started their comeback. Drake Maye immediately put the Patriots in a much better position to compete with the rest of the league. However, this didn’t solve everything. Before key changes, their receiving core was very weak, with Hunter Henry, the tight end leading the team in receptions. Their coaching situation also seemed to be resolved towards the end of the 2024-2025 season. The team fired Jerod Mayo and hired Mike Vrabel. This helped the team in the long run. Vrabel improved the roster by making amazing draft picks and trades. For example, he drafted Will Campbell and Treveyon Henderson. Will Campbell significantly improved the team’s offensive line and Treveyon Henderson has made the Patriot’s running game more of a threat. Finally, the addition of Stefon Diggs improved the receiving core of the team. Even though there were many changes, Drake Maye had the most impact on the team’s sudden uprise. He is currently an MVP candidate and has averaged a passer rating of above 100. This has helped the Patriots in their unexpected playoff run, competing with some of the best teams in the league. So, with all these improvements, what can we expect from the Patriots in the future? Well, once Drake Maye is equipped with a stronger receiving core, we will be an even better team.

The Celtics had a disappointing first month of the NBA season. They sat 10th in the east, despite boasting a winning record (9-8). This was a stark difference from the team we saw last year, and with many surprises in the Eastern Conference of the NBA, such as the Pistons, Raptors and Magic, the Celtics were going to need to find a way to improve during the season, certainly not an easy task. So why were they so bad? The main reason is that their highest paid and best player, Jayson Tatum, suffered a serious injury last year. He is expected to miss the entire 2025-26 season, but has shown signs of an earlier return. Additionally, the Celtics had to let go of many key defensive players like Jrue Holiday and Al Horford due to league salary rules. Luke Kornet and Kristaps Porzingis also had to be let go. This significantly weakened the Celtics’ rebounding core and resulted in them being ranked 24th at rebounds. In addition to all of these changes, the team was in an offensive slump. They were ranked in the bottom half of the league in three point shooting and were struggling to move the ball around the court. But if one looked at the eastern conference, they would see the Celtics sitting in third! What type of magic has Joe Mazzulla, the Celtics coach, conjured up to make this Celtics team a real threat without their star player, Jayson Tatum? There is a simple answer to this, Jaylen Brown and the resurgence of veteran players has helped a ton. Jaylen Brown has exploded and shown why he can be regarded as a team leader. His performances have earned him serious MVP talk as he currently sits in the top 5. He has been averaging his highest points per game throughout his entire career, and has been shooting at a career high as well. Veteran players such as Derrick White and Payton Pritchard have both been averaging career highs in points per game as well. Additionally, the defense has also been improving as the season continues. As the three point shooting inevitably becomes more reliable, the Celtics look to rebound and make a huge underdog push.

The Bruins had a yellow hot start to the 2025-26 NHL season. In an ironic twist, the Bruins, expected to miss the postseason this year were sitting with 38 points, good enough for third in their respective division. The Bruins have never been able to live up to the hype since their historic 2022-23 regular season. This year was expected to be no different, especially due to a coaching change with Marco Sturm joining the team for the first time. Previously, the goaltending situation had been drastic as Swayman posted career lows in his first time as a fulltime starter. Key injuries and overreliance on their star player David Pastarnak in the offensive region led to the Bruins finishing near the bottom of the league in many goal scoring columns. So what changed to lead to this turnaround? Morgan Geekie, who had been second in goals for the entire league, was a key factor. However, as the middle of January rolls around, Morgan Geekie has found a recent slump in not being able to find the back of the net too often for the past month. He has had an incredibly slow start to the new year, and the Bruins have fallen to 5th in the Atlantic division, seven points behind first place. What looked like a promising season for the Bruins has hit a brick wall, but there is still hope as the Bruins have mounted an impressive winning streak of four games, including two shutouts and a blowout 10-2 victory against the crumbling Rangers. David Pasarnak has led the team with 56 points, good enough for 8th best in the league. Bruins fans are hoping that this streak continues as the season passes the midway point, and the Bruins are currently on the outside looking in.

All in all, Boston sports have a bright future in front of them. The Patriots have had one of the fastest and best rebuilds in NFL history and the Celtics have a young roster that is full of developing talent. Additionally, the Bruins have battled through ups and downs but remain a strong playoff contender. With the Patriots making a strong run in the playoffs and the Celtics having a high chance to make the playoffs, the off season in 2026 will definitely be fun to watch.

Reporting Team

Mr. Romano: Taking on Two Worlds

By Neel Patel '29
Spectrum Staff

Q: What was your experience like at NASA? What is something you learned?

"In 2017 to 2018, I was what was called an Einstein Fellow. You take a break from your teaching classroom for the year, and you're working in Washington, D.C. assigned to a federal agency or to Congress. In my case, I was assigned to NASA. My job was to be a teacher and bring new perspectives to whatever that agency I worked with. Mainly, they discussed how they could make their education programs and their media outreach better. In the current generation, Mars is a big push. Now that there are a lot of private partnerships with other agencies, a question arose: how do we work together to get to Mars? I went to a lot of meetings, which were kind of boring, but they asked me, "Do you think kids in America today really resonate with the Hubble Space Telescope?" Then, they asked about the big solar eclipse that happened a few years ago. We were just starting to plan how we could make it a nationwide event and get kids excited to see the eclipse. I did have to plan some events, which included teacher events. I'd go to schools and we would talk to the astronauts in the International Space Station. I even went to Space Camp and visited the different NASA centers around the country. Overall, it was a lot of project-based stuff and meetings to just try to represent what teachers and kids would want to do today to make NASA better for everybody."

Q: What is HSGE and how did it help you in your teaching career?

"HSGE is the Harvard Graduate School of Education. For teachers in Massachusetts, everybody has to get their masters to go to grad school. I did my undergrad at Boston University for biology and teaching, and I studied education theory and policy during my masters at Harvard. It wasn't so much 'how to teach,' but more, 'how can we reshape teaching?' There was a lot of seeing how law interacts with education and technology, which by now has all changed, but it was mainly about how we can learn more about education more broadly, to make education better both domestically and internationally. Harvard has a ton of bright people who theorize about how we can make the world better, but in terms of education we don't have unlimited money or classrooms of only ten students. So how can we take the theories that are out there and ground it in making things better for kids? Overall, it was just a really fun and super interesting program focusing on our country's education."

Q: What is your involvement with Ocean Bowl, and how does that impact your professional career?

"Ocean Bowl is a nationwide buzzer style competition for local high schools where we learn college-level marine biology and oceanography in order to compete. We practice October through February, and we have a big competition at MIT in late February or early March against other schools. The winning school goes to nationals and competes against teams around the country. We haven't made it to nationals, but we're going to try again this year. The highest we ever got was third place in Massachusetts, which was pretty good. I teach a marine biology class, and it's a nice intro to the subject for juniors and seniors. It's a fun way for kids who are interested in marine biology to go even more in-depth and be competitive. Some of the students who've done the Ocean Bowl team in the past are now marine biologists and do some really cool things. I love how it gives kids a chance at AB to get more involved in marine bio if that's something people want."

Q: How has the science department progressed during your time here?

"It's my nineteenth year here, so I've seen a lot of development in the curriculum. We have some more electives that we didn't have in the past. I created one of them, which is marine biology, but the science research class is also new. There's also more technology, more labs, and more of a focus on how we use engineering and computer science to get kids ready for the future. I believe it's teaching the jobs and skills of the future, the skills that need to be developed to be successful if you want to go into STEM. It's a lot more focused on critical thinking and application. Overall, I think we offer more now than we have before."

Q: What is an environmental issue that you're very passionate about?

"Biodiversity. Both on land, but especially in the ocean, we just don't know what we don't know. There's so many species that have yet to be discovered. Many of the species that do exist in the deep ocean, coral reefs or deep in the rainforest with different species of amphibians and plants have potential cures to different diseases, different kinds of medicine. That whole branch of science is called bioprospecting. What can we find in terms of different chemicals from different species that might help innovation and make the human population safer. At the same time, we have to preserve the biodiversity that's here and try to undo the problems humans have caused while also trying to flourish as a society on a planet that has very limited parenting capacity. I think that's what gets kids excited about biodiversity. It's the animals and the discovery of new species, and then how do we take that to a place that can save the planet, that's the only one we have?"

Q: What made you decide to teach AP Environmental Science, Chemistry Honors, and Marine Biology?

"I just like all three sciences. I was originally a biology major, and I fell in love with it. The math part of chemistry is really fun to me too. I think Environmental Science presents good examples of biodiversity problems that are really important for the new generation to understand and fix. The class is a way to teach and influence the younger students, which is really important because they're going to be the ones who go out there and change the world.

Q: What is the most absurd thing you've seen at AB?

"One year for a senior prank, all the seniors brought their pets in. There were dogs and cats, and lizards, which I thought was really cool. There were just so many animals in the school, barking or making noise in the hallway. We ended up being sent home because it was too much of a distraction, but it was so strange seeing kids waltzing into class with dogs and cats on leashes."



Our very own Mr. Romano!
Neel Patel

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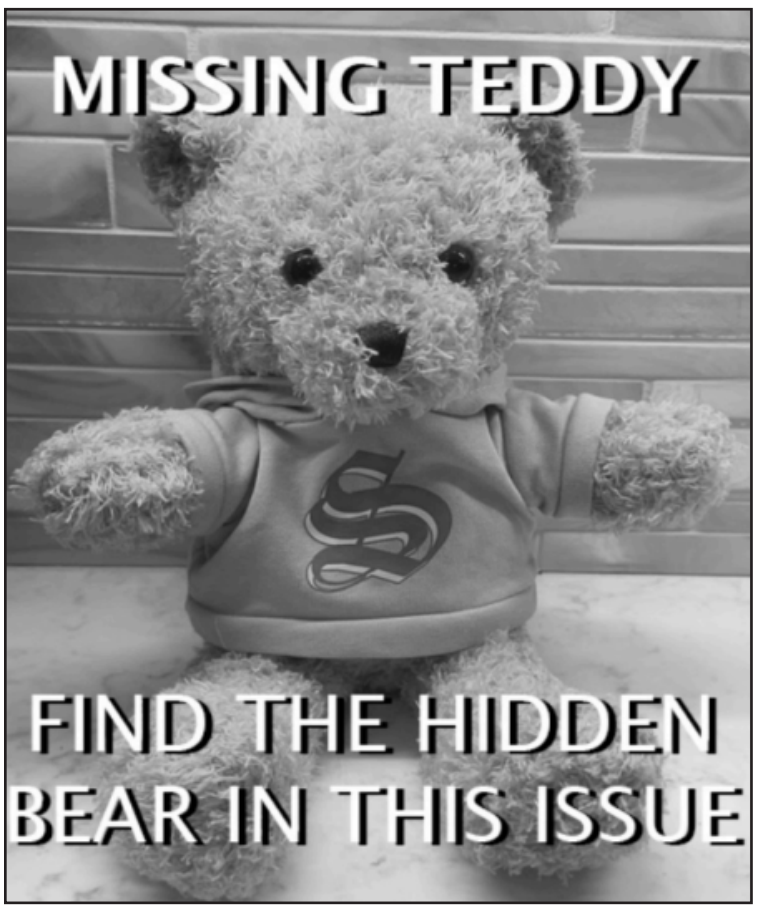
Coach Billy Waters
ONLINE SOURCE

The Other Side



MEMBERS OF BIRD FAMILIES
CRANE, EAGLE, RAIL, SWALLOW

FOUND IN A DECK OF CARDS
ACE, DIAMOND, FOUR, JACK

STARTING WITH INITIALISMS FOR US GOV DEPARTMENTS
CIAO, DEATH, DOJO, EPAULET

AIRCRAFT IDENTIFICATION TERMINOLOGY
BANDIT, BOGEY, FRIENDLY, HOSTILE

Connections Answers
Lukas Kanics





ONLINE SOURCE

SIX Six Word Stories

Hungry, wanted an app, phone died.

Lunar New Year, yelled, got hoarse.

Apple a day, cheaper than insurance.

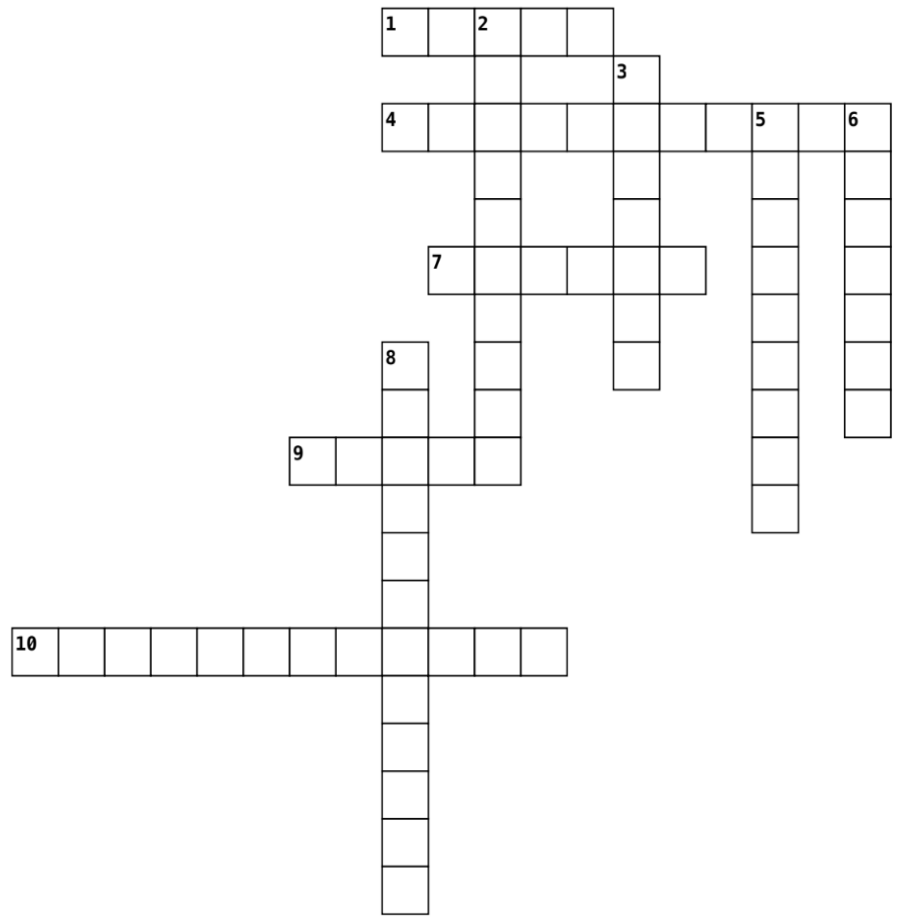
What should I read next? SPECTRUM!

CURIOSITY KILLED CAT. 8 LIVES LEFT.

I failed woodworking. I got board.

Mini Crossword

Niobe Veloz-Mendoza



Across

1. This song is the unofficial theme song for Ice Age, "Send me on _____"

4. This song was originally titled "The One Horse Open Sleigh"

7. He has a button nose and two eyes made out of coal

9. A question Anna asks Elsa in Frozen, "Do you wanna _____ a snowman?"

10. "The _____" is a film featuring the famous song "Believe"

Down

2. "Walking in a winter _____"

3. Famous song by Elsa

5. A famous and hopeful winter song written during a heatwave in July 1945

6. In this seasonal song, SIA sings about a relationship with a _____

8. _____ is a play named after a season by William Shakespeare and is a song by Queen