




Active Voice

literary journal
CCV spring 2023



writing by the students of
Gail Marlene Schwartz

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Editor's Note

by

Gail Marlene Schwartz

In 2001, I taught my first writing class at CCV. It was Basic Writing, a remedial course, and my students were an incredible group of people with massive challenges. One had a traumatic brain injury. Another had just left an abusive relationship and was living in a shelter. A third came from Iran and was struggling with foundational English vocabulary. Midway through the semester, I realized I wanted to find a way to honor their work and let them know that the writing they had done was important. Their stories and lived experiences had impacted me deeply; their voices mattered, and that had everything to do with them as writers and nothing to do with them as students. So I printed off their essays, designed a very basic cover, and made photocopies. My first student journal was born. They were delighted, as were my coworkers at CCV, and I like to imagine my students each taking their journal home and sharing it proudly with their families.

Fast forward to fall of 2022, several class journals later, and I'm teaching online for the first time, something I could have never imagined doing as a tech-challenged individual. I fell in love with my first synchronous online writing class and loved their stories, so was moved to do a journal, only this time I needed to do it in a digital format. I found a slick black-and-white template, asked them if I could use their photos from the introductory discussion post, and pieced it together clumsily during my free time. This semester, I wanted to up my own game, so I purchased InDesign and a new template and pushed myself to a new level of computer-manipulated design competency. You're reading the result, which I'm pretty happy with.

Like that first Basic Writing class so many years ago, this semester's Comp I students have struggled. As I've told them, I relate to and feel inspired by struggle. It's part of learning to learn. This group has dealt with more than their fair share of issues and experiences, including depression, moving, death, breakups, medical issues, anxiety, and educational trauma. But struggle is only one aspect of their realities. They are also incredibly strong, creative, introspective, funny, intelligent, open, and kind. They are each uniquely beautiful, and when I tell them how happy I feel to see them on Zoom each week, it's ridiculously true.

Perhaps most relevantly, these students are phenomenal storytellers. I've never had a group who wrote so well, and as an editor, this lit the fire under me to get another journal together. Read and savor these essays because they are simply terrific. They will take you from a remote camp in Granby to Leddy arena in Burlington to a cluster of cedar trees in Calais. You'll learn about why stem cells are critical, why cat people make better friends than dog people, why growing your own food is better than buying it at Hannaford. You'll feel the heartbreak of losing a beloved pet and of watching a parent have a brush with death. You'll discover why reading the book is better than watching the movie, why musicians make the best teachers, and why you should take the bus instead of your car. Maybe after reading these essays, you'll consider staying childless or consider picking up finger painting as an adult. And maybe you'll be convinced to visit a national park rather than the beach for your next vacation, to reinvest in your relationship with your best friend, to consider the morals of your favorite artist.

My partner teases me that I fall in love with my students every semester, and I'm only a little embarrassed to admit that it's true. But I think love is, for me, the seed for successful teaching. It's an essential component of facilitating learning and growing, and that's my job. I'm hopeful that these students know I see them and hear them, that I've been moved by their beautiful voices, and that their writing matters, which is just another way of saying that they matter. It's a profound privilege to have been the midwife for their work. It's my greatest gift to be able to share that work with you.

Use Your Brain and Ride the Train

by Sierra Fortin

Imagine sleeping through your alarm. You rush out of the door just to be stuck in heavy traffic. You release a sigh of tired frustration as a public bus passes you. The passengers inside are sleeping comfortably on their work commute. This is a common situation for many who do not have access to proper public transportation such as buses, metros, trains, or even planes. United States citizens should prioritize investment in public transportation more than privately owned automobiles. Public transportation is more efficient, safer for the environment, and more economical than privately owned automobiles such as cars and trucks.


The first reason that you should prioritize the use of public transportation is due to its efficiency. Although it is true that in the past public transportation was necessary within large cities, modern technology makes

public transportation more efficient than ever (Lebsack). Using public transportation saves around 850 million hours of travel time due to the decrease in traffic ("Public Transportation Systems"). Some buses can hold up to 60 passengers. If this space is filled, that is the equivalent of taking 60 vehicles off of the road thus reducing congestion and freeing the roadways of traffic (Lebsack). Freeing that space not only makes driving easier for those who do use privately owned vehicles, but it also allows the passengers of public transportation to travel without having to partake in the traffic. While roads with both public transportation and private vehicles are moderately efficient, transporting approximately one thousand to two thousand eight hundred people an hour, roads with only public transportation can transport up to twenty-five thousand people per hour ("Transit Streets are Designed"). That is nearly nine times as efficient as the United States' current system of combined traffic.

Not only is public transportation more efficient at transporting people, but it is also more efficient monetarily. A person who regularly uses public transport spends on average \$9,823 less than a person who primarily uses privately owned vehicles. This is from gas, parking, maintenance, and other various expenses ("Public Transportation Systems"). Households spend on average 13% of their revenue on privately owned automobiles. This is even worse for poor families, who can spend up to 29% of their income on transportation ("What Does the Average").

Public transportation is not just better for the health of your wallet, however, it is also better for the environment's health. Public transportation can condense a large amount of traffic into a single vehicle. This also minimizes the amount of fuel-burning automobiles on the road,

"A person who regularly uses public transport spends on average \$9,823 less than a person who primarily uses privately-owned vehicles."



thus further reducing the number of pollutants and greenhouse gases released ("Public Transportation Systems"). A single bus can reduce the effects of 60 individual vehicles (Lebsack). Buses emit approximately 20% less carbon monoxide than cars and trucks. They release 90% fewer hydrocarbons, and 25% of the nitrous oxides ("Public Transportation Systems"). Annually, towns with sufficient public transport lower the United States' carbon emissions by 63 metric tons ("What Does the Average").

Of course, there are positives to using privately owned vehicles. Personal transportation such as cars does not force individuals to follow a bus or train schedule. This allows people to form their own schedules and exercise their personal freedom to travel on their own time. People with personal vehicles are able to arrive at or leave their destination whenever they choose (Marcum).

Private vehicles may be more convenient, but public transportation is cheaper, takes less time to travel, and is healthier for the environment. For these reasons, the citizens of the United States need to upkeep the public transportation that already exists and invest in more buses, trains, and planes.



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The Cyclone Named Cyclone

by Aurora Butler

One of the saddest facts in life is that cats don't live as long as humans. I had to say goodbye to my Cyclone, a beautiful Rag Doll cat. He had eyes like blue crystals and fur as white as fresh snow. He also had grey streaks around his eyes, nose, forehead, ears, and tail. He got the name Cyclone from his rambunctious behavior as a kitten, always zooming around the house. He was a whirlwind, and as my favorite companion, he was always there for me. Cyclone lived a life of 17 happy years, from 2005 to 2022, when we had to put him down. I always had a strong connection with him. So when the time came to say goodbye for good, it was one of the worst moments in my life.

Unfortunately, I could only see Cyclone when I visited my father's house. Sometimes, months would pass

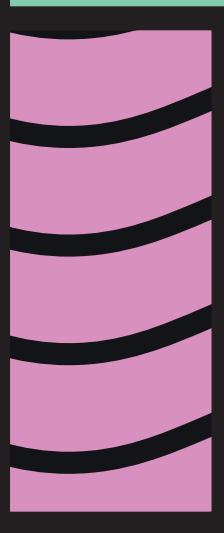
before I saw him again. His usual spots were in the basement or my room, and he rarely ventured anywhere else. However, he ventured upstairs when he knew I was coming over. Cyclone had this uncanny ability to sense when he'd see me next. To which he would walk around the house meowing and looking for me. Much to my father's dismay, he's deaf and very loud when he meows.

My father always joked that I could take Cyclone home because he tended to be annoying when I wasn't there. However, the cat at my mother's house doesn't do well with other animals. So sadly, I couldn't take him home with me. Because I didn't see him much, I always said "Hi" to Cyclone before I greeted the other pets. I'd find him either at the top of the stairs to the basement



or on my bed. If I didn't pick him up when he saw me, he would meow and follow me around the house until I did. I usually spent the rest of the day holding him. Either cuddling on the couch or just walking around the house. If I didn't pay enough attention to him, he would get upset and follow me around until he was satisfied. Yes, he would even follow me into the bathroom. And anytime I was sitting or lying down, he would curl up on my lap, chest, or beside me.

I was already mourning him well before he was back from the vet, and I spent all my time for the next several days with him. There were a lot of tears and cuddles, and he stayed with me until I fell asleep at night. I stayed up until the early hours of every morning each night to spend more time with him. A few days later, my father told me I could set his euthanization appointment in a week or a few days. It was a hard decision, but we set the appointment for two days later. I wanted to be there



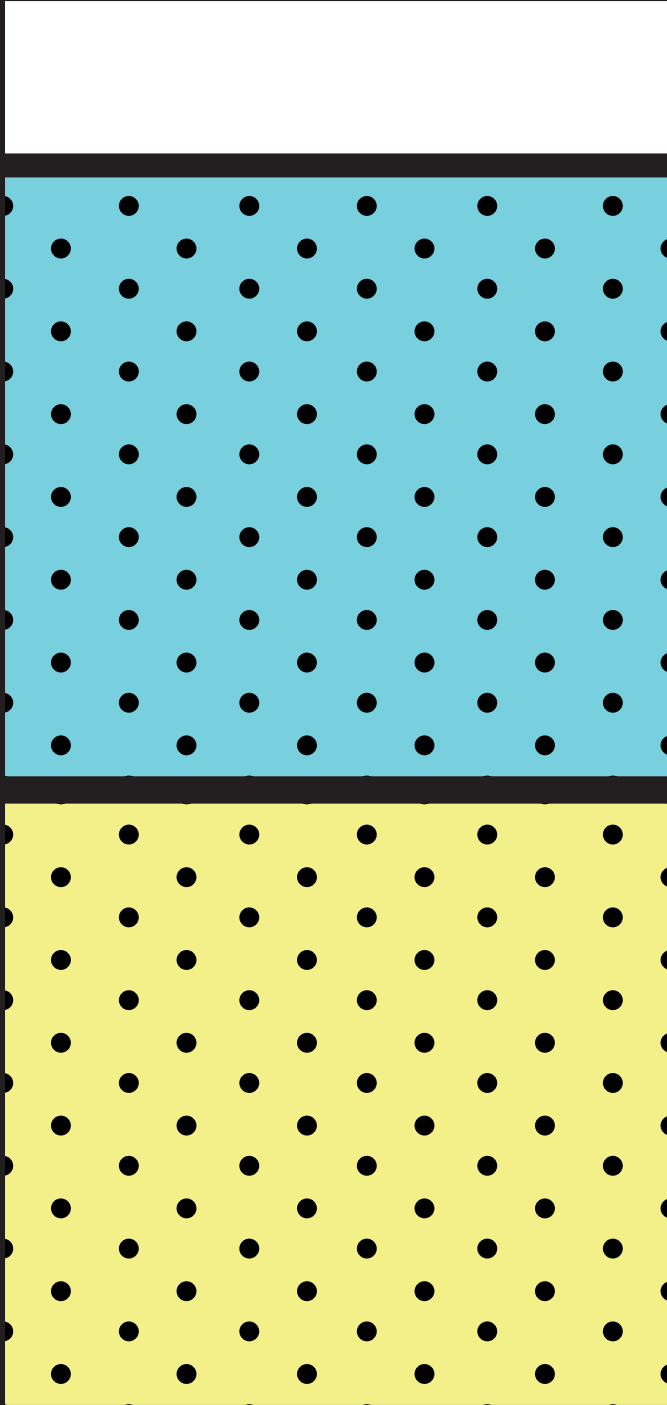
“If I didn't pay enough attention to him, he would get upset and follow me around until he was satisfied. Yes, he would even follow me into the bathroom.”



On one visit, I noticed Cyclone wasn't eating and moving around as he typically would. He was still my shadow, following me around, but he was slower and didn't do it as often. I mentioned this to my father, and after a few days, he brought Cyclone to the veterinary office. The vet said he was just getting old but seemed to be in some minor pain. We decided the best course of action was to put him down before his pain worsened.

with Cyclone so he would feel more comfortable, as he and my father weren't very fond of each other. If we waited another week, I would've been back at my mother's house. To which he would've gone alone with my father. I tried to keep myself together on the car ride to the vet's office. But it was hard because Cyclone kept meowing in the carrier, which sat on my lap. While my father checked us in at the desk, I went to the seating area to take him out of the carrier. He was still meowing





a lot and seemed distressed, and I thought holding him would help. It worked, and he stopped meowing and started purring in my arms. That was the moment I fully realized it was the last time I would hear him purr and the last time I would hold him; I would leave without him. I started crying in earnest. I tried to stop and hide it, but at that point, the feeling was so intense I couldn't help it.

The vet led us to the room in the back and turned on the light at the front desk, signaling that someone was losing a pet and to keep quiet. We waited about a half hour with Cyclone until the vet came back. We had set a blanket down and a pee pad on top of it. When the vet arrived, we laid Cyclone down as the vet inserted the medication to put him to sleep. It was quick.

I wish I hadn't looked into Cyclone's eyes because I saw the moment he was gone. Before the vet said anything, I could already tell. I had watched the light disappear from his eyes. That is something I will never forget. We then wrapped him in the blanket and lifted his limp body back into the carrier. I cried for a bit afterward, but by the time we left the office, I had stopped and felt numb.

The car ride home was silent, and I caught the worried glances my father sent me. Which continued later that night and days after. I didn't cry again until I went to bed and everyone was asleep. I didn't have Cyclone anymore to cuddle, so I went over my memories of him. One of my favorites was him batting at the controller in my hands whenever I played video games. He would get upset that I wasn't giving him attention. So he bat at the controller and meowed until I pet him. Whenever I paused petting him, he would get upset again. My father always said Cyclone was my cat, and I really believed he was. Despite not seeing each other all the time, we were so very attached to each other.

Even over a year later, I know he's still with me in memory and spirit, and I think about him all the time. I don't think you ever stop thinking about your loved ones after they pass.

My father was able to get me a plaster copy of his paw prints, and I keep them next to my bed at home. Whenever I see them, I think of what a happy life he had and how thankful I am to have been a part of it. I'm glad I can think of him and not burst into tears instantly anymore. Now, when I think of him, I remember all the good memories I have. When I think of his eyes, I no longer see those glossy wide pupils. While the sight still haunts my nightmares, instead I remember his eyes full of light and crystal blue. As much as I miss him, I know he's still waiting for me, wherever he is. It puts a smile on my face knowing that when my time to pass is almost here, he'll sense it and wait very impatiently for me.



Among the Cedar Trees

by Andi Dates

In Calais, Vermont, tucked into the mountainside, there is a long, winding dirt road. You won't see many other cars, because you never do in rural Vermont, so take your time and meander a little. If you drive along this road in the summertime, roll down your window and let in the sweet forest air; perch your forearm on the edge of your car door so the sun warms your skin. If you pass through in autumn, make sure you take notice of the shades in the trees, of the dazzling reds and oranges and yellows that saturate the mountains in color. In winter, this pigment has been bled from the landscape like water down a drain, and a layer of quiet white amplifies your thoughts as you make your way along. You can catch glimpses of sap lines between the tall, empty maples. If you happen to be driving down this road during spring, or more aptly mud season, crack your window and let in the breeze, and gaze up at the canopy of tiny green and white buds blooming overhead.

At the end of this road, you will find yourself at a T. I still don't know where the left side leads because I never needed to go that way. If you go right, you will find yourself at a driveway leading up to a medium-sized, quaint looking house sitting on a hill at the edge of the woods.

The yard circles widely around the house on all sides, and a small playground interrupts the spread of grass on the front lawn, one of those little wooden structures with a banana-colored slide and a couple of swings. On the other side of the driveway is a large shed and a stretch of towering cedar trees. The shed is a sugar shack, and thin rubber tubes carry the sap to the shack, branching out into the surrounding woods like a spiderweb. Beyond this is forest.

And now you've arrived at a very special place indeed. A place of serenity and sanctuary, a place that is so close to the edge of the world that it's almost an entirely different world itself.

I don't remember the first time I visited Nadia and Milo's house. They were the children of my dad's close friends, and I'd been coming there for about as far back as I could recall. Mostly in the summertime, when we would stay out in the cedar trees until the shadows grew long and the stars poked out of the inky, clear sky. The stars are different out there, beyond the reach of the light pollution of nearby cities and towns. Not just brighter, but louder. In Montpelier where my mama lived, they were still there, but slightly muted by the streetlights and the hum of civilization. Out here, though, every twinkle rang crisp and true, the bullfrogs and crickets harmonized, and only the fireflies dared rival the light of the Milky Way above.

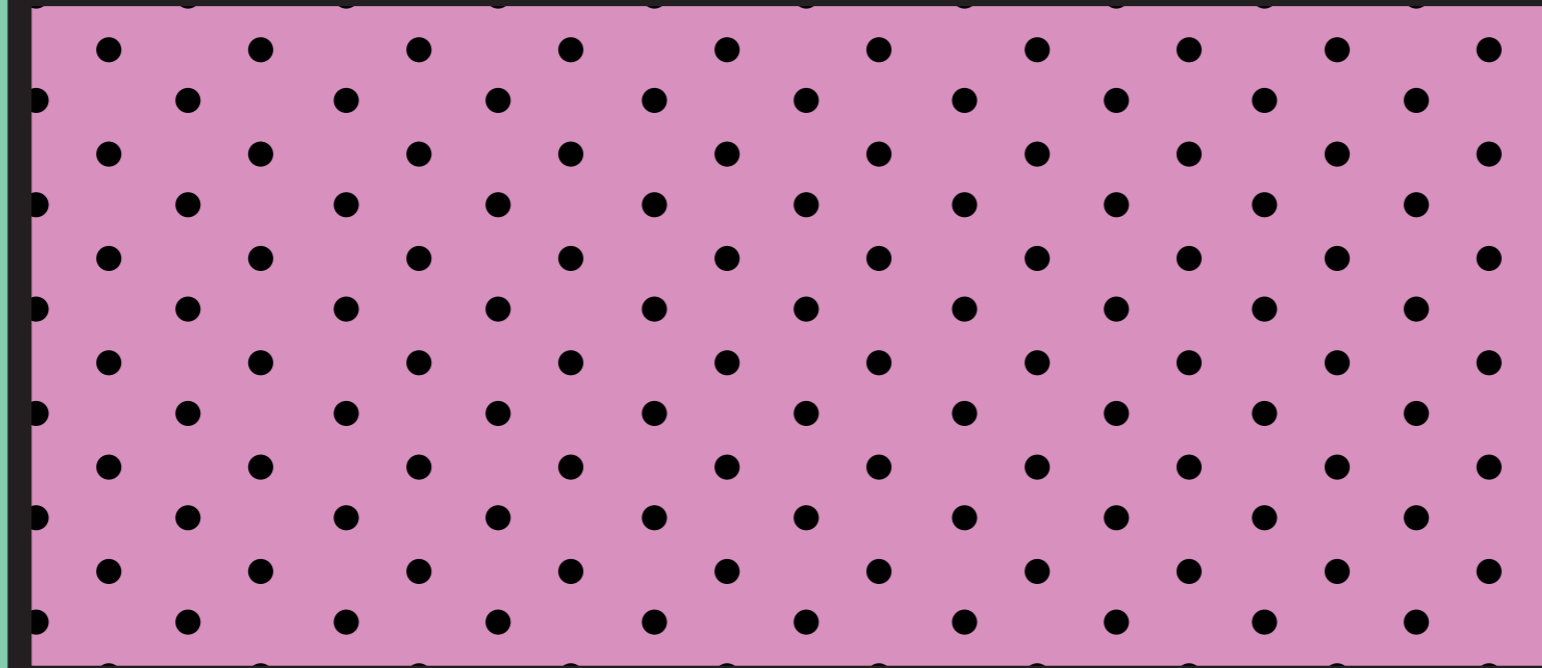
There are a hundred stories I could tell you now, of the games we played and the worlds we crafted, of the adventures we breathed life into and the garden of love, knowledge, friendship, imagination, and curiosity which we tended. We climbed the cedar trees to the top, higher than the house until we could see the whole world and the trunk was so thin it started to bend over under our weight. We dangled from the soft, sturdy branches, swinging from tree to tree like apes.



In the fall, we gathered the leaves into massive piles so huge and deep that we could be entirely concealed within them. In winter, we boiled sausages in the vats of cooking maple syrup, stomping our boots and holding our hands over the steam to keep warm.

Life there was simple and beautiful. When my world at school and at home was in turmoil, when my family argued, when my mama left us, when I fought with my friends, when my dad drank and school sucked and I felt useless and confused and alone, I could come to this place at the end of the winding road and find peace. I could seek refuge among milkweed and mud pies and bonfires. I could play and dance with people who let me live in the moment with my imagination as my only plan.


This vastness – of the woods, of the sky, of the trees and open air – was a far cry from my mama's one bedroom apartment that she shared with my brother and me. And Nadia and Milo were a far cry from my school friends, too. Not that home was bad, or that my other friends were lacking in some way – it was just different. Rules that applied at home didn't apply in the same way there, and I wasn't the same version of myself. In a sense, this place, and these people were etched into me



like markings on a sheet of glass. This glass was a layer of my identity, so that when you lined it up you could see all the ways this place had shaped me, but also all the markings of who I am and was and will be. Lines that didn't make sense alone formed a portrait when laid atop each other. Who I was when I was there, I wasn't anywhere else. And yet, it was still me, and I carried that part of my identity home, too.

Eventually, my family and I stopped going to Nadia and Milo's. I guess we must've grown up. I don't even remember how to get there anymore; I was always at that age where you never really pay attention to where you're being driven until you arrive. I've seen Nadia and Milo since, of course. It's a small area, bound to happen. They're older and taller and different – Nadia pierced her nose and dyed her hair green, Milo plays football and his voice cracks and breaks in that endearing, pubescent-boy type of way. It's bittersweet, seeing them. Awkward, but in a way that we all know is okay.

I know that it will be a long time before I follow that winding road and swing from the cedar trees again, if I ever do. It doesn't make me sad – my time there, for now at least, is simply over. That place was there for me when I needed it, and now I don't anymore. That's all I could ask for, really. Of course, nostalgia pricks at my heart when I think of my memories of that place and that time, of people who have faded out of my life. But it doesn't make me sad. Something that special could never make me sad.



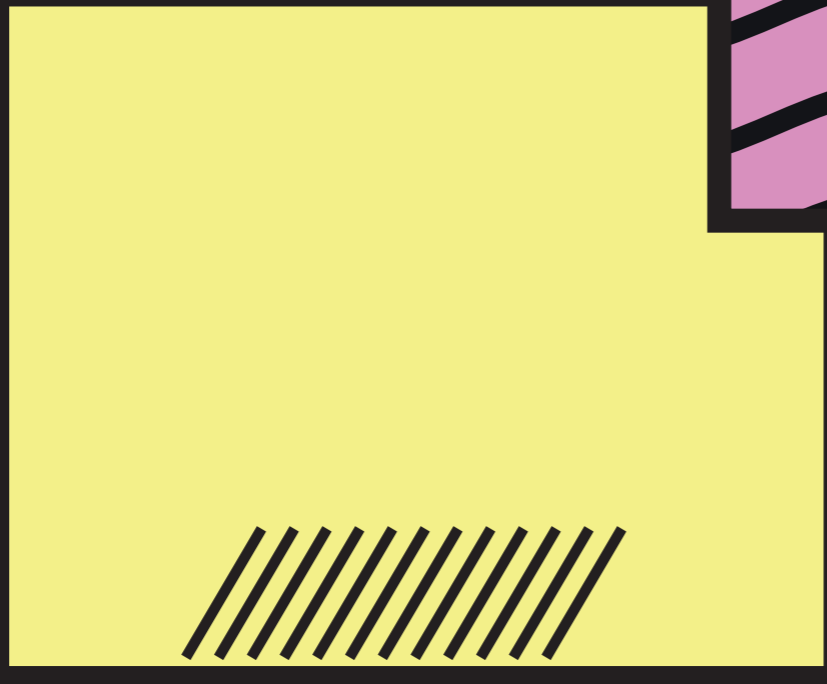
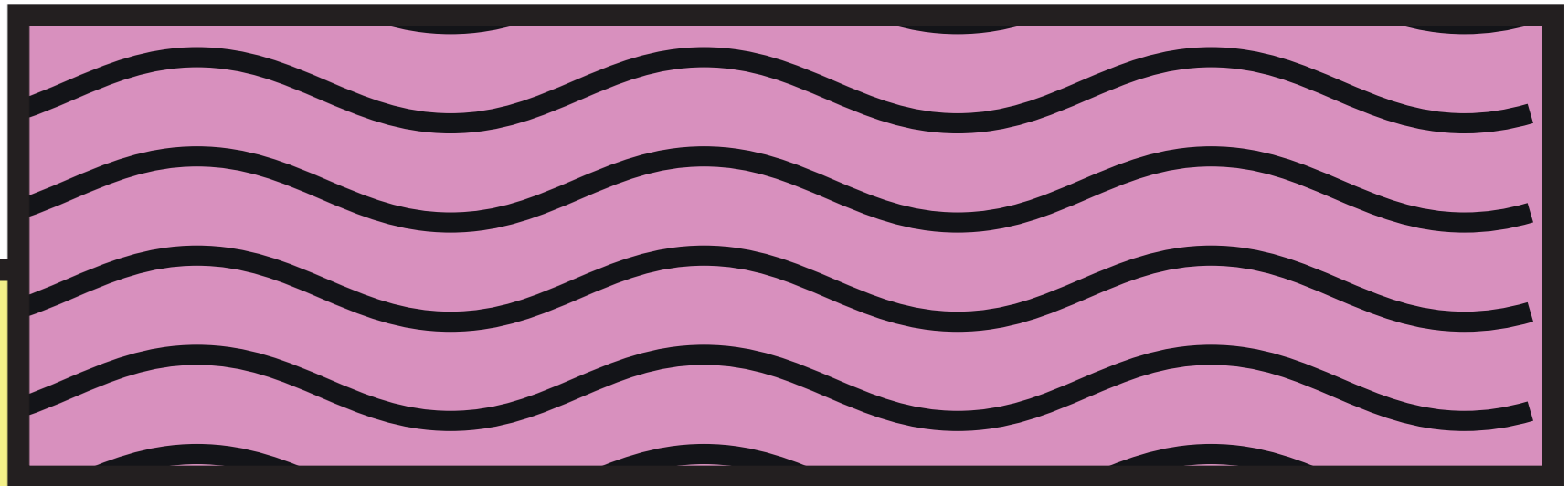
“I could seek refuge among milkweed and mud pies and bonfires.”

by Janessa Horgan

Peer Pressured Into Parenthood

A friend of mine was regularly called a spinster at age 25 for being unmarried with no plans of having children. To me it sounds ridiculous, but to a lot of people it's an expectation they've had placed on them their entire lives. Society has been teaching women for a long time that their sole value comes from being a mother and their greatest fear should be becoming an old hag. We're slowly progressing, and I think a lot of women are realizing that contrary to what they've been taught,

can be the greatest joy in the world. Regardless of who you talk to, being a parent is expensive. "Middle-income, married-couple parents of a child born in 2015 may expect to spend \$233,610 (\$284,570 if projected inflation costs are factored in) for food, shelter, and other necessities to raise a child through age 17" (Lino). This article was published in 2020, and using the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI Inflation Calculator, I found that \$284,570 570 in 2020 has the same buying power as \$330,000 in 2023.

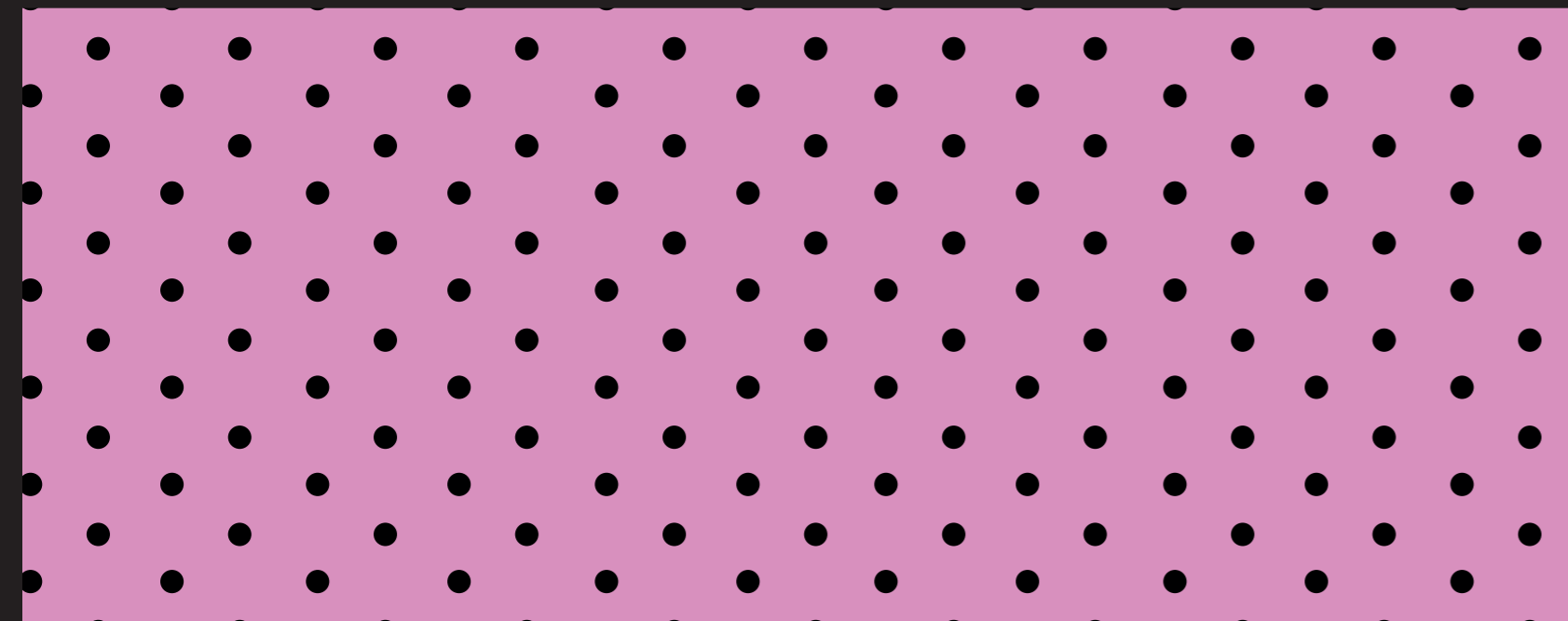


having children isn't a requirement. I don't think I'm in any position to tell someone what to do with their body, but I do think there is a very strong argument against having children. There are far less expensive and arguably more rewarding alternatives to having children, like fostering or working in early education.

Over 17 years, \$330,000 averages out to around \$19,000 a year. Money can't buy happiness, but it most certainly can improve quality of life, both for potential parents and the people around them.

The first reason to consider not having children is the expense. Depending on who you talk to, being a parent

Not only is raising a child incredibly expensive, but there's also an alarming amount of children who don't have a place to call home. There were 407,493 children in foster care in the United States in 2020 (AFCARS report #29).



“While you decorate a nursery for an embryo, there are children waiting in cold detention centers for someone to actually give a shit about them.”



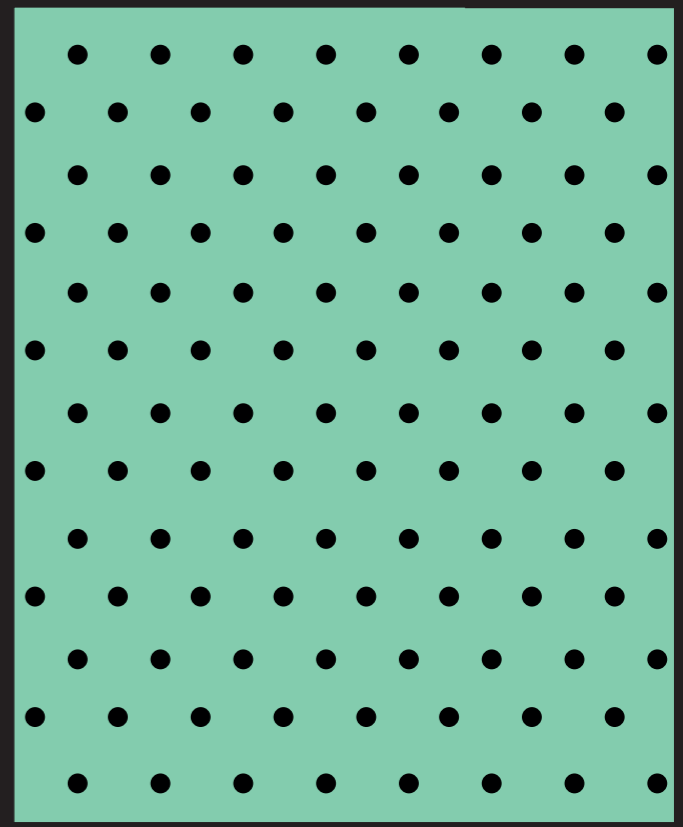
My childhood friend was placed into foster care after his mother was incarcerated. He, along with every other child waiting to be placed with a family, was placed into a holding facility with cinderblock walls reminiscent of a prison. One of the most traumatic events of his life was followed by being treated like a criminal for six months until a family was available. This wasn't an isolated incident. An article from The Washington Post details the stories of the youth placed in these detention centers, “The use of juvenile detention centers varies among states. In some cases, such as Geard’s, foster children have been integrated with criminally convicted youths, subject to some of the same rules and living conditions. In others, as in Oregon, foster children are housed in separate wings, sometimes refurbished to more closely resemble dormitory living” (Wax-Thibodeaux). These children are being isolated and punished for not having parents that can care for them.

An already traumatizing situation is made significantly worse by a failing system and lack of foster families. Caring and competent adults who want children are the parents the foster system needs. Fostering or adopting children can be an arguably more rewarding alternative to having biological children.

Finally, many children who aren't in foster care are still lacking support systems. There are so many amazing opportunities to help support children without assuming a parental role. Teachers, mentors, social workers, coaches, and childcare providers are able to help children grow into responsible and well functioning adults. An article from The New York Time details the shortage of qualified educators in the United States. “We find there are at least 36,000 vacant positions along with at least 163,000 positions being held by underqualified teachers, both of which are

conservative estimates of the extent of teacher shortages nationally.” (Edsall). These positions are often the last safety net for children who don't get the support they need from their families. Working in childhood education can be a way for people to channel the urge to nurture children in a way that's beneficial to their communities. A kind and trusted adult can make a world of difference for vulnerable children, something that is clearly lacking in the United States right now.

There are so many alternatives to reproducing that are far less expensive and far more beneficial to people who are already alive. While you decorate a nursery for an embryo there are children waiting in cold detention centers for someone to actually give a shit about them. I don't mean to trivialize an understandable urge to have biological children, but there's an undeniable need for competent adults to take on the roles of educator, mentor, or foster parent. Examining the generation-long expectation of reproduction and you might find significantly more fulfillment from being a pillar of support for children who need it the most.



by Sofia Anderson-Harrington

Welcome to Leddy Arena

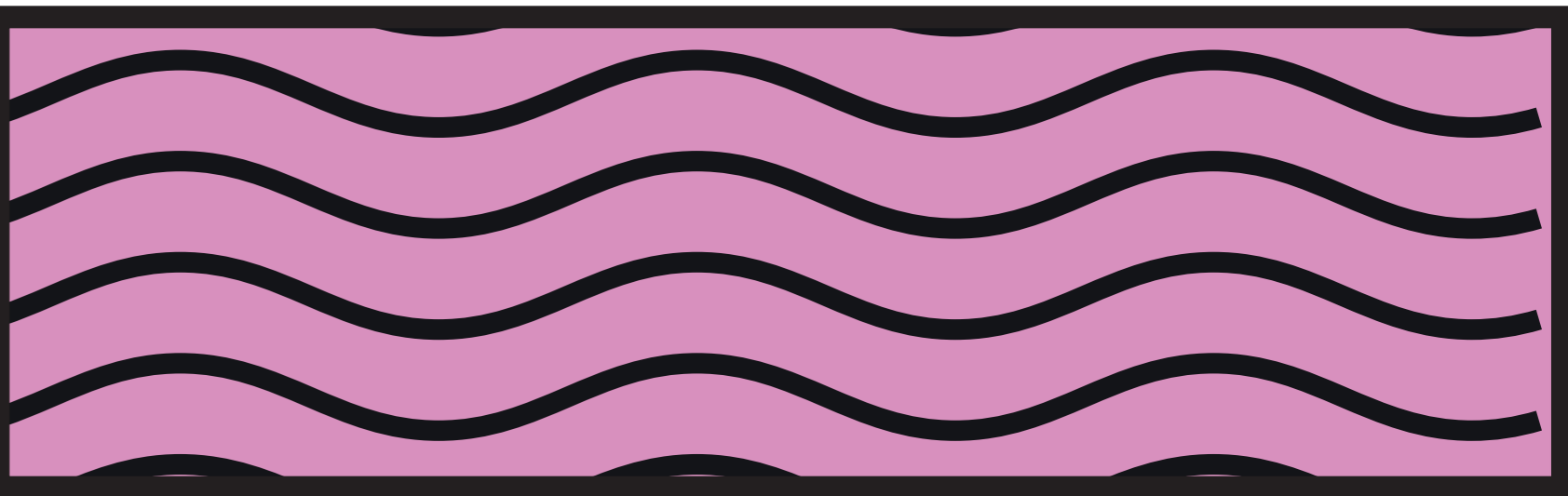
“There are kids who can’t even skate on Monday, and by Wednesday, they are off the milk crate and are starting to glide.”



When I think of Leddy, I think of a second home. Leddy Arena has been a very safe and comfortable place for me since I was six years old. When most people think of an ice rink, they think of a cold, uncomfortable place they need to be to watch hockey or skating. I think of the people, the smells including the smelly hockey player sweat, the chemicals, and the general smell of the rink that I find comforting, the cold air, and the calm I feel when I am there. There are many ways Leddy feels like home, but the first ones that come to mind are skating, relationships, and work.

As I got older, I enjoyed skating more and more. At around this time in my life, I was diagnosed with ADHD and felt like something was wrong with me. Skating was the complete opposite. I could grow at my own pace and it was okay to learn things in different times and spaces than others. During gym, I never enjoyed the team sports where we had to throw balls and play team games.

I moved up to private lessons in third grade. I remember how nervous I was to be on a Sunday afternoon session



I started skating at the age of six. When I was in kindergarten, my mom signed me up for group lessons, where I fell in love with skating almost immediately. The first time I had a group lesson, all the older girls were mesmerizing with the way they could stand up without falling and how pretty they were with their hair pulled back and blowing in the wind as they would glide back in forth helping shuttle us littles onto the ice. Not only were they so graceful, they were so nice. I wanted to be just like them someday.

with all the big kids who moved so fast that I could feel the breeze they would create on my cheeks. But a few years later, I have become one of those big kids who is going around the rink with the wind in my hair, the cold air hitting my cheeks, shuttling kids around the rink, and inhaling a surprisingly comforting chemical smell.

With all that time on the ice, I started making some friends at the rink. I joined Vermont Children’s Theatre on Ice (VCTI).



My first year, the team was made up of mostly high school students who all knew each other. Driving to Hyannis for nationals, I started to feel more on the inside. I was in a car with the two other younger skaters and we had a great time listening to music and watching movies on a tablet. I was spending time with them outside of skating going to movies and making food together.

VCTI is where I met my best friend in the world. We were about to leave to go to a competition in Massachusetts when my mom (who was also the team manager) got a phone call saying that my grandmother had passed away. The only person I wanted to hug was Brima. Which was odd, because at the time, we hated each other. But in that moment, I wanted a hug from her and couldn't let go. My grandmother dying started our friendship, and from there, it has gotten so much stronger. She is my better half who never lets me give up and has saved me time and time again.

When I was in a really abusive relationship, Brima was always a text or phone call away when something happened or I was scared. I treated her terribly, but she never blocked me and was always there for me. She was the one I would call when my ex ended back in the psych ward because she tried to kill herself. After almost a year of this relationship, Brima was there when I left her.

I remember her telling me how proud she was that I finally left. My abusive relationship brought us closer together. I knew that even through all of that messy shit, she would never give up on me or leave me. She is my true ride or die and always will be.

I am in a better place now and even though we don't see each other as much as we would like because I am in college, all I do is homework and I don't skate as much as I used to, we still manage to text almost everyday. I try and always text her good night before I fall asleep. I don't tell her enough that I love her and I am grateful for all she has done. But I hope she knows. She has never let me down, and she always seems to know when I am struggling. Through all my ups and downs in life, we have gotten closer. I can't imagine being best friends with anyone else.

Leddy has helped me feel confident, find my best friend, and has also let me stick a toe into different areas of work. I have been a coach, counselor, camp director and Pro Shop attendant. With my work as a coach, I love seeing the kids' progress, even within a week. In summer, I teach at Cool Camp, which includes skating and swimming. There are a handful of kiddos that come back every year and a few kids that come for the whole summer. I really enjoy seeing how much progress the kids make even in one week. There are kids who can't even skate on Monday, and by Wednesday, they are off the milk crate and are starting to glide. By the end of the week, they don't even need to use the crate, and their confidence goes up which is really rewarding to see.

In the summer, I am also a camp director. Last summer was my first year in this position, and it was a big learning curve. I had to learn how to be a leader. In my life, I like to be in the background and not bring a lot of attention to myself, so being the boss was different and a good change for me. I had to learn how to be in charge. I have learned how to use a bigger voice and have learned how to teach kids how to do art projects. I have a lot of things I want to do differently this summer, and things I want to keep the same. I want to do more nature activities with the kids. We have park rangers at Leddy, and I think it could be really neat if they did a nature craft one day a week. Something that worked well last summer was having a circle each morning when everyone got there to go over the schedule. I would ask a question and then go around the circle and they would need to answer it. In my binder, I have a big list of questions. One of my favorites from last year was, "If you could invent one animal, what would it be?" I really like this because it gets the kids thinking and you can see into their imaginations a bit more.

With working in the Pro Shop, I have learned a lot about how to deal with people. For the most part, the people that come in are amazing and are very understanding. Recently, we have been having computer issues and either can't get into the system or we can't do anymore credit card transactions due to an update, and people are really understanding of how long it can take to type in a credit card number and all the information.

Leddy has been a place where I have found myself. Over the years, I have learned that I am stronger than I thought I was. I have always been a shy person, but with skating, I have been able to express myself with skating with music and through ice dance. I was the kid who would sit at the back of the classroom and hope that the teacher wouldn't call on me. Skating was a place in my life that I could express myself and feel okay with who I was. Over the years, I have learned to love who I was and I have to thank Leddy Arena for this.

After all my years at Leddy, I can say that I have learned a lot about myself as a person, friend, teammate, and coworker. I have also made some of my best connections that I hope will never die. Leddy is a safe place for me. I find comfort in a cold smelly arena which may seem odd to people, but after all the time I have spent with that smell, it calms me whenever I walk in. I always feel wanted and needed at Leddy, which is not something I have felt in other places in my life.

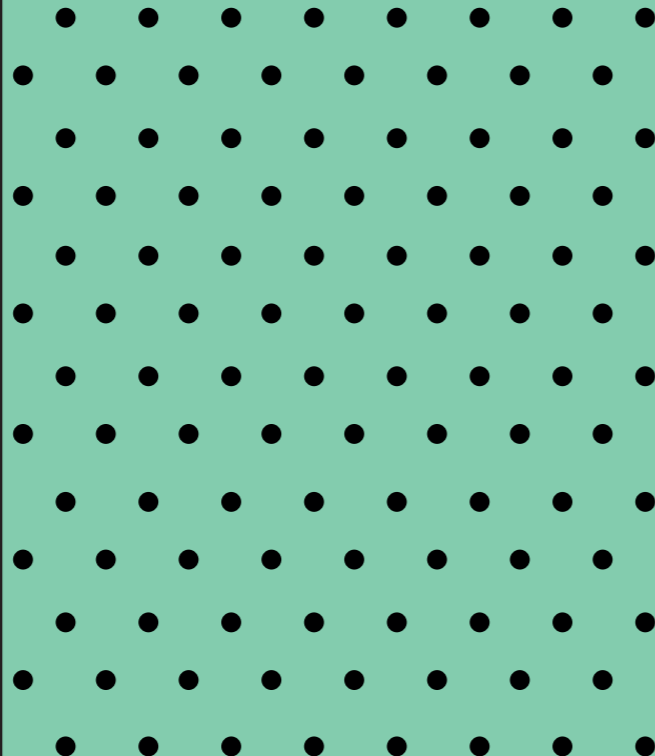


Let's Go Back to Finger Painting!

by Daphney Cisneros

Have you ever thought that arts and crafts were only for children or felt silly coloring with crayons as an adult? I know many adults who enjoy art as a hobby, and even a job, and it helps them in many different ways. We all love to talk about how the pandemic affected us but let's talk about what we used to cope. Anyone with hobbies that they lost due to their jobs probably picked them up again with all the time we had during the pandemic. I hope an art form is one of them because art isn't just crafts and drawing, it can be many things. Because of the pandemic, I began to draw. Although I was already naturally skilled at arts, it wasn't til a later age that I began to take drawing seriously for my career. Crafts aren't childish; they bring many benefits to adults or elders. Art can help an adult relax, develop cognitive skills, cope and increase social tolerance.

Initially, art is something that can help you relax as an adult. Maybe you need some time away from your family and you pick up a notebook. Then, you begin writing about the dog peeing on the tree that you saw on your walk earlier. Or you need to destress from the number of things that need to be done around the

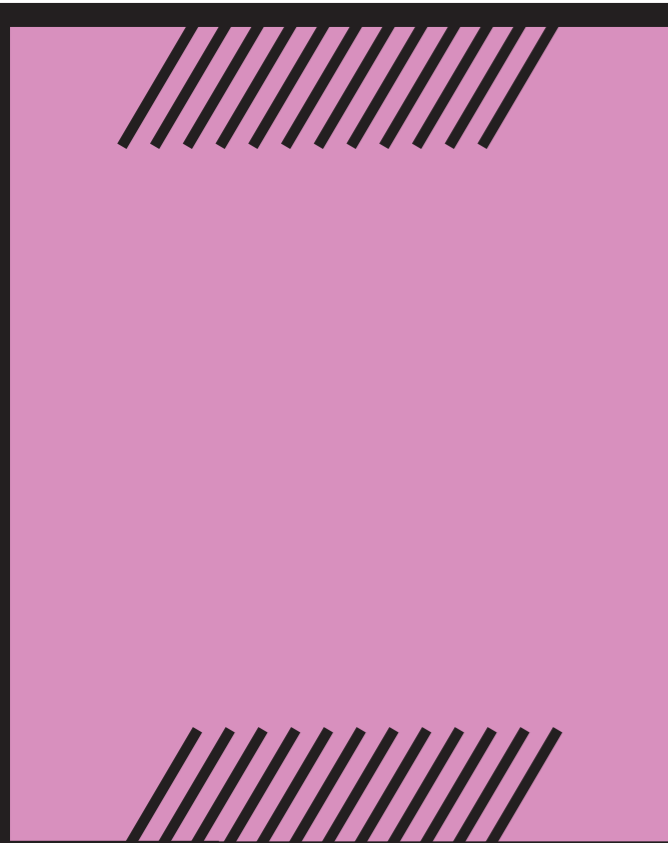


house, so you listen to music and start to do one thing at a time. Or maybe you found a coloring book that looks interesting, so you take hours to finish a page, but it's okay because at least you aren't on your phone. The Newsweek article "Arts and Crafts for Adults: Its Benefits and Why You Should be Doing It" states, "It doesn't matter what type of art activity you do; what matters is that you are allowing the creative, rather than the logical, side of you to take the lead." To restate, I never took drawing seriously before the pandemic, now it is all I can think about. I hope to graduate with a major in Studio Art to pursue my dreams of becoming a Fashion Designer, and it all started because I used drawing to unwind during COVID-19.

Besides relaxing, elders are also able to rebuild their cognitive skills with arts and crafts that are lost naturally because of aging. Have you ever wondered why elders love to knit? Maybe that's the reason they are smarter than a youngster instead of life experience? Cognitive is defined as "...of, relating to, being, or involving conscious intellectual activity (such as thinking, reasoning, or remembering)" (Merriam-Webster). I worked in a senior living space for a while and coordinated activities for the elders. My boss, who is a nurse, showed me the activities that she did before I came and why she did them. She went on to explain that the activities always included things that would help exercise their brains. I researched cognitive-inducing activities and found crafts. "Art activities challenge older adults to stimulate their senses and make art to become sharper. They can also enhance their thinking skills through the learning of new art forms and allow them to make fast neural connections they might have lost in their aging process" (Discovery Senior Living). The residents and I painted rocks, told stories, and made bird feeders and reefs. We also listened to music every day and on special occasions, we would have karaoke nights and dance parties!

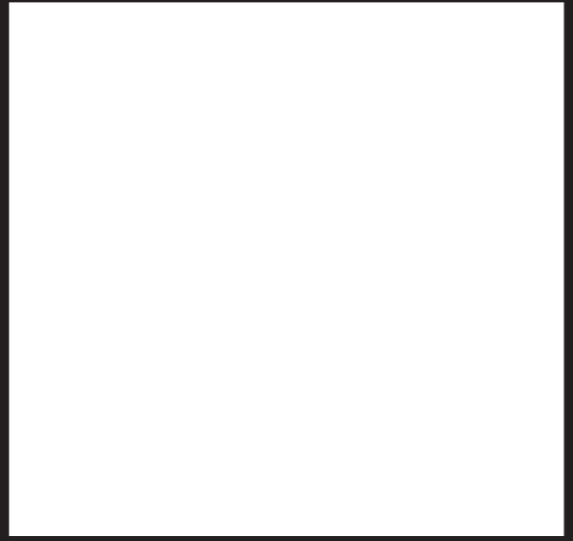
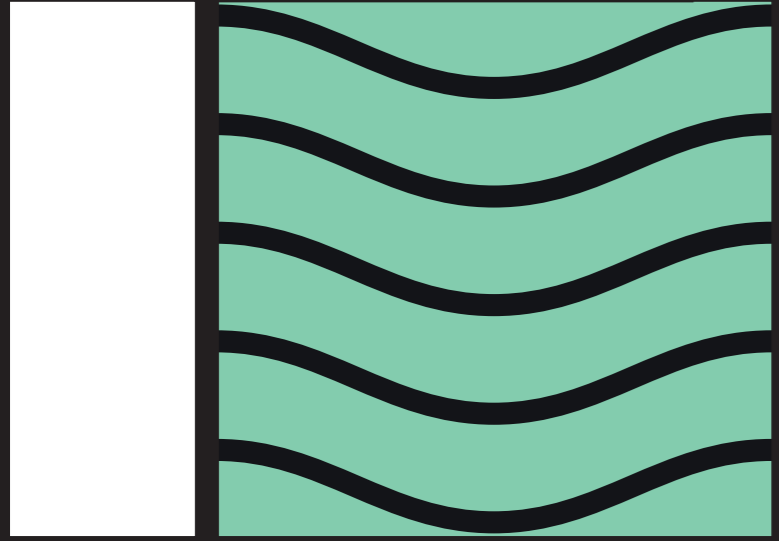
Following, art can be used to cope. One particular art form that I appreciate is makeup. Referring back to the pandemic, I have a special adult in my life that grew their makeup skills during COVID-19 and it was my cousin. The first few months were fun because we didn't have to go to school anymore. Then, she began to feel lonely. In her room all day, my cousin became the blanket that covered her bed. Scrolling through her phone for hours, she would notice the makeup videos that would pop up on her social media feed. After a few YouTube

"I hope to...pursue my dreams of becoming a fashion designer, and it all started because I used drawing to unwind during COVID-19."



tutorials , she got up and tried the makeup looks herself. Slowly but surely, that's the reason she woke up every day. She began to follow makeup influencers that would post continuously. Finally, she had something to look forward to every week. When the panic of the pandemic died down, we would often visit each other and she would show off her crazy makeup looks. She would even practice her skills on me and seemed to enjoy the craft. She used the art of make-up to get through hard and lonely times.

Lastly, have you noticed adults embrace social dissimilarities more than before, like men also wearing makeup? "Social tolerance refers to the extent of recognition and acceptance of differences, willingness to grant equal rights, and refraining from openly intolerant attitudes" (Zanakis et.). Many artists do art with meaning and expression. Much of that expression is towards social advocacy and things that must be accepted in our communities and culture. "Globalization... will put a premium on finding more effective ways to create and share meaning and meaningfulness" (Stuckey et.). Those adults who enjoy art benefit from how their social tolerance is built because they are informed and introduced to what's outside the box. Artists are very sure



to show their interpretation of social subjects. Art pieces by Basquiat are a great example. Basquiat was a Black man who made paintings that engaged with the neo-expressionism movement during the 1980s. He advocated through his art, and I as an adult learned the history of the neo-expressionism movement because of his artwork. Another instance is a song called "Another Day in America" by Kali Uchis and Ozuna and both of these artists have different cultures. This song talks about the truths of America:

"Wanna tell me what's in America?
 But who do you think built America?...
 Say 'land of the free' but the land was always stolen
 Mass incarceration and the detention centers
 Everything they did to us never made the news"

Any type of arts and crafts is not only meant for kids. Finger painting to relax your mind is important to adult life and it does not make you "babyish." I call out to you, a mature mentor that might be paying bills (hopefully), to indulge in arts and crafts because it is a great tool and hobby. Making art and being involved with art can be beneficial to adults mentally, emotionally, and socially.

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The Healing Future

by Morgan Nemeth

Imagine the millions of lives that could have been saved already if people had just supported stem cell research. There is a huge controversy on whether stem cell research should be supported or not. Stem cells are the mother cell; they are able to become any form of cell. They can do everything like repair, replace, restore, and regenerate degenerative cells. Scientists have also successfully grown an organ for transplant surgery. Stem cell researchers are also starting to have an understanding of how to discover the cause of diseases. If stem cell research was sufficiently funded and supported, it could be the future of our healthcare system and save many lives.

Stems cells are like the new organ transplant, except you can grow them. The primary item needed to grow an organ is a biologically compatible 3D scaffold which contains all the biochemical messages in the correct configuration to trigger the stem cell to grow the preferred organ. This makes the risk of rejection much lower due to the organ having the same DNA as the person receiving the organ. Scientists are currently able to grow seven different types of organs: eyes, hearts, skin, bones, muscles, brains, and livers. On average, 16 people die a day because they don't receive the organ transplant they need to survive. There are no laws prohibiting the transplant, but there are restrictions on funding and use. This makes it extremely difficult for stem cell researchers to find the funds to support a transplant.

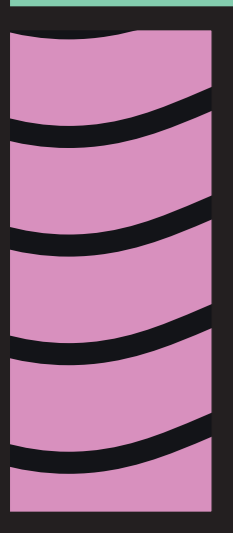
Not only can stem cells grow organs, but they can also help treat or cure diseases. Scientists have figured out how to treat eighty-plus diseases by stem cell injection. Some more common diseases they can treat are Leukemia, Osteopetrosis, Blood disorders, Inherited immune disorders, Bone marrow cancers, and Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome. More diseases like autism, spinal cord injury, diabetes type one, and knee cartilage repair are currently under trial for umbilical cord blood stem cell treatment. Adult stem cells, which are found in adults' bone marrow or fat, are used to treat neurological or heart disease. With the use of genetic reprogramming, scientists have been able to reprogram Adult stem cells to act similarly to embryonic stem cells. These were designed to avoid using embryonic stem cells; they also can prevent immune system rejection of the new stem cells.

Stem cell injections are just like any other treatment. The first step is to administer chemotherapy or radiation to the patient to destroy all the diseased cells; this creates space for the transplanted stem cells to populate in the bone marrow. After that, the stem cells are transferred to the patient through an IV; this has little to no side effects. When they are transplanted, the stem cells begin to grow and reproduce healthy blood cells. Once the process is done, patients are monitored for three to five weeks in case of infection or side effects. After that, it's simply going back to the hospital for regular examinations to monitor the stem cells. In other cases, there are some severe side effects or rejections. Some examples are administration site reactions, the ability of cells to move from the placement site and change to inappropriate cell types, and possible tumor growth that can be caused by this.

By far, the worst side effect of stem cell injections is the umbilical cord blood infusion. One man went into sepsis and was fighting for his life after doctors found E. coli and a second type of bacteria in his blood from the infusion. Another man was receiving injections in his eyes to restore vision and got a buildup of bacteria. After a week of infection, he completely lost his vision. If researchers had enough funds to support their research fully, they would be able to tweak their injections so these instances wouldn't happen.

There are already so many benefits of stem cells in treating diseases, but they are even finding possible cures for terminal diseases like Parkinson's Disease. A study revealed that a specific stem cell technique had cured Parkinson's disease in mice.





“Scientists have figured out how to treat eighty-plus diseases by stem cell injection.”



This technique involves planting stem cells of dead brain or nerve cells. The mice that were tested had been given the onset of Parkinson’s. When planted in the mice’s dead brain and nerve cells, the stem cells were able to restore the brain cells that were dying and causing the onset of Parkinson’s disease. The mice had even begun to regain motor functions that were lost before the treatment. Getting results this good with funding that poor, imagine what the results could be with accurate funding.

and my heart breaks for her every day. Knowing that if stem cell research were adequately supported and funded, she wouldn’t be crying at photos of her grandkids; she’d be playing with them instead.

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Imagine having a resident that has Parkinson’s disease; you watch and take care of her all day. You bring her her morning coffee, made just the way she likes it. Being sure never to forget the cap and straw on the coffee mug, or the hot coffee will end up covering her because of how badly her hands shake when she tries to take a sip. Or when you walk by the room and hear her sobbing while looking at photos of her grandkids, knowing if she didn’t have Parkinson’s Disease, she could be home right now living an everyday life. Well, I do,

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Sunburns and
Inescapable
Sand or
Hot Springs
Overlooking
Glorious Land

by Olivia Drew

Imagine you're at the beach; you've been lying on your beach blanket, enjoying the sun shining down on you; you look up at the blue sky and hear the waves crashing down. You stretch your legs, and as you stand up, sand falls from every crevice on your body. Your body is hot to the touch, and you are red as a lobster. You see an empty bag of chips crumpled in the sand in front of you that was half full before the seagulls got to it, and your bathing suit is a bit tighter than when you first lay down from all the cocktails and snacks you've enjoyed. If you are ever trying to figure out where to go on your next vacation, the beach or a national park, I advise you to choose the national park. People should vacation at a national park instead of the beach because beach tourism is harmful, time spent in a national park is more comfortable, and going to a national park is a healthier

choice.

The first reason people should vacation at a national park instead of the beach is that beach tourism is harmful. When people vacation at the beach, they usually stay at a hotel or in vacation homes. Most people prefer to stay right on the water where it is convenient. Due to increased tourism, new homes and hotels are built on the beaches frequently. As a result, "...developing new buildings on beaches and many people vacationing in the same place can lead to beach erosion. As more tourist attraction developments are built on the beaches because more people are coming, beaches become smaller" (Beach). "In addition to many buildings being built on the beach, people keep their beaches looking the same every year by taking sand

“The natural sounds like the wind blowing, animals communicating, and geysers shooting up toward the sky all create a relaxing and enjoyable environment for a vacation as well.”

from other beaches, which isn't natural, causing inconsistencies in the natural seasonal movement of beach sediment” (Beach). Unlike the beach, where new developments are moving in on the beaches constantly, national parks go the extra mile to keep their environments protected. “Within the national parks are forests that protect water sources and help maintain the surrounding land” (How National Parks Benefit the Environment”). Not only do national parks preserve their land to protect it from natural disasters such as erosion, but they also protect wildlife and many endangered species within their parks. For example, Yellowstone National Park implemented a grizzly bear recovery area and stopped grizzly bear hunting seasons. As a result, the grizzly bear population increased (Grizzly Bears & the Endangered Species Act). Unlike national parks, wildlife on and around beaches are at risk of being harmed because they are not protected. For instance, many crabs, snails, fish, and small sea creatures who roam on the sea floor are all at risk of being stepped on or picked up by humans. Their homes and environments are at risk every day, especially at beaches that are significant tourist attractions.

In addition to beach tourism being harmful, time spent in a national park is more comfortable than on the beach. All national parks have a relaxing sensation to them. For example, when looking at incredible landscapes, including forests, rock formations, glaciers, and relaxing hot springs, you instantly feel relaxed and at peace. The natural sounds like the wind blowing, animals communicating, and geysers shooting up toward the sky all create a relaxing and enjoyable environment for a vacation as well. Vacationing at the beach, however, can be uncomfortable due to the crowds of people and all their equipment, the hot sun beating down, and the sand that gets everywhere. Popular beaches and vacation spots especially have vast groups of people. Because of new developments being built on beaches, beaches are getting smaller and smaller, yet the number of developments and people coming to the beach is increasing due to oceanfront places being dependent on tourism, such as “...the U.S. state of Hawaii and the island nation of Tahiti” (Beach). Who wants to be on a crowded beach full of loud people lying in the hot sun with sand all over your body, in your drink, and in your food when you can be overlooking the Grand Canyon in

Grand Canyon National Park, relaxing in a hot spring in Yellowstone National Park, or starrng up at the northern lights in Glacier National Park?

Lastly, people shouldn't vacation at the beach because visiting a national park is healthier. National parks provide many physical activities, such as hiking, biking, swimming, kayaking, etc. “Being physically active can improve your brain health, help manage weight, reduce the risk of disease, strengthen bones and muscles, and improve your ability to do everyday activities” (Benefits of Physical Activity). When people are at the beach, they sit in chairs or lie on their towels, eat food, drink, and go into the ocean to cool off. “Laying in the hot sun for long periods leads to exhaustion due to our bodies sending fluid and blood to the surface to cool our bodies down, in turn, using up some of our body's resources, leaving us tired” (“5 Tips”). When people do not hydrate properly or consume alcohol, they fall asleep. While asleep, many people forget to reapply sunscreen, vital while exposed to the sun's UV rays. Failing to reapply sunscreen can lead to sunburns, blisters, rashes, and “...too much ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun can damage DNA in your skin cells and cause skin cancer” (“How Does the Sun”). While beaches have a lot of sun exposure, national parks have many forests that shade and protect the UV rays from coming through. While hiking and exploring, you wear either shorts or pants and long sleeve shirts or short sleeve shirts covering up more of your body and protecting it from the sun.

Everyone loves to vacation at the beach, but vacationing at a national park will be a healthier, more comfortable, and less harmful choice. If you're still debating which one to choose, beach vacation or vacationing at a national park, imagine this: you're at Yellowstone National Park. You are hiking through the forest when you see in the distance a moose and her calf; they continue walking in the other direction. You get to the top of the mountain; you can see miles of green pine trees, the blue sky, and a gigantic waterfall rushing down the mountain. A small rainbow is in the air from the water, and you can hear the water

the water rushing down the mountain and into the river below. You take deep breaths of the crisp air and look at the astonishing landscape before you.

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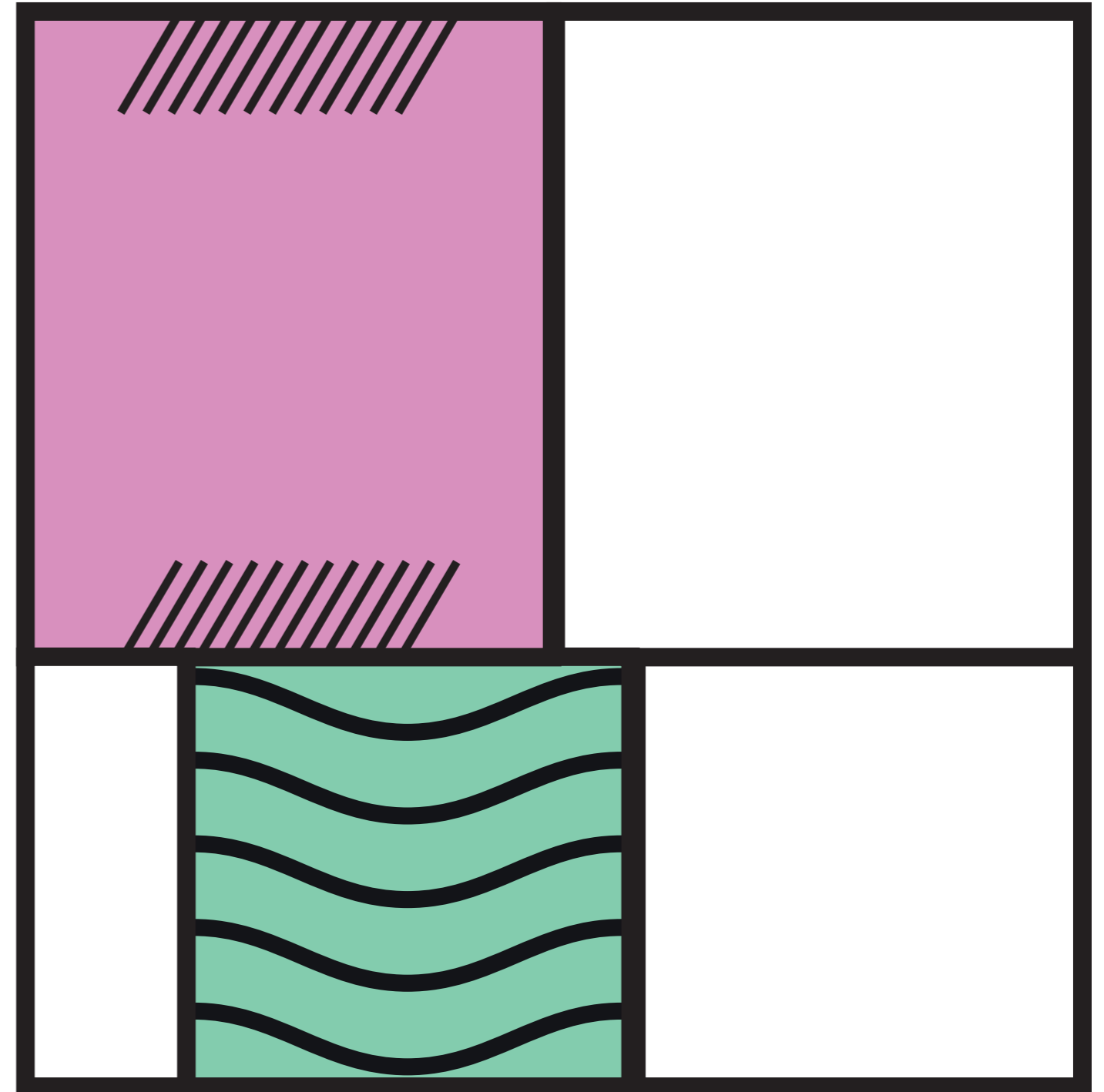
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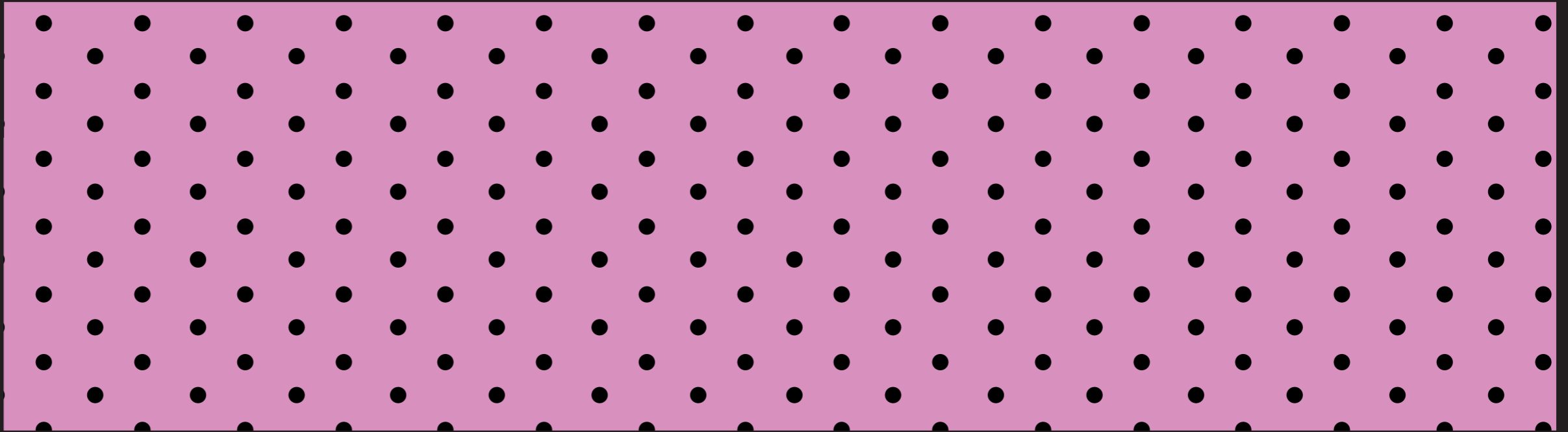
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Watching My Idol Fall

by
Sarah
Sheldon

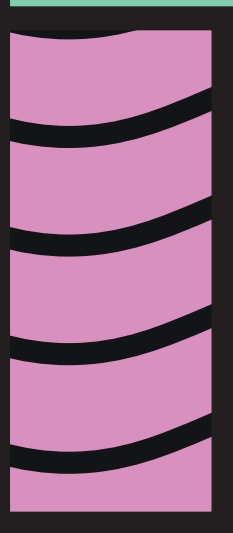


Once when I was in middle school, I stumbled across a video on YouTube and was immediately introduced to then singer-songwriter Melanie Martinez. I was obsessed with her music, her usage of baby and childhood metaphors while singing about darker subject matter. I loved the overall childish, creepy-cute aesthetic — the bright colors and pastels, the costuming, the set design in her music videos — and the way she incorporated these looks with the more adult themes into her artwork. Most of all, she saw that no one was perfect, and she wanted to encourage people to love themselves. I loved her music so much, and her art served as inspiration for mine; she was my idol then and my world revolved around her. I would paint pictures and write stories inspired by her music. I would talk about Martinez as I did with my other hyperfixations.

One day, I was on the computer and I got the news that a woman claimed that she herself was raped by Martinez. This wasn't just any woman, but a singer and songwriter

named Timothy Heller whom Martinez was friends with. My world shattered, and I was distraught. I didn't even know Heller, and I wasn't so sure if I wanted to believe her. Some people did believe Heller, and Martinez's career was ruined: former fans burned and destroyed merchandise, harassed Martinez on social media, a drag queen was bashed for being inspired by Martinez, and Heller even got in contact with some news site and Martinez's innocence was heavily debated.

I was devastated to hear that Martinez would be accused of such actions. I had considered myself a fan of Martinez, probably to the point of assuming to know so much about her; I thought she would be against rape. I was taught the concept of rape in middle school when the teachers were talking about *To Kill A Mockingbird*. I might have been either twelve or thirteen when I was introduced to rape. I knew that rape wasn't okay, that it's wrong.



“I loved the overall childish, creepy-cute aesthetic — the bright colors and pastels, the costuming, the set design in her music videos.”



I remember following the drama until I felt that I was done. It was only recently that I became slightly interested in reviewing the drama again, for whatever reason - maybe because I'm now interested in the media of my childhood. I guess I just like being right. Also that and when I was in my later grades of high school, I was introduced to Mindless Self Indulgence whose lead was accused of sexually assaulting a minor – which disappointed, disgusted, and even horrified me. And as an aspiring artist, I occasionally followed the art community only to realize that there was lots, even acres of drama, stalking, and even lies.

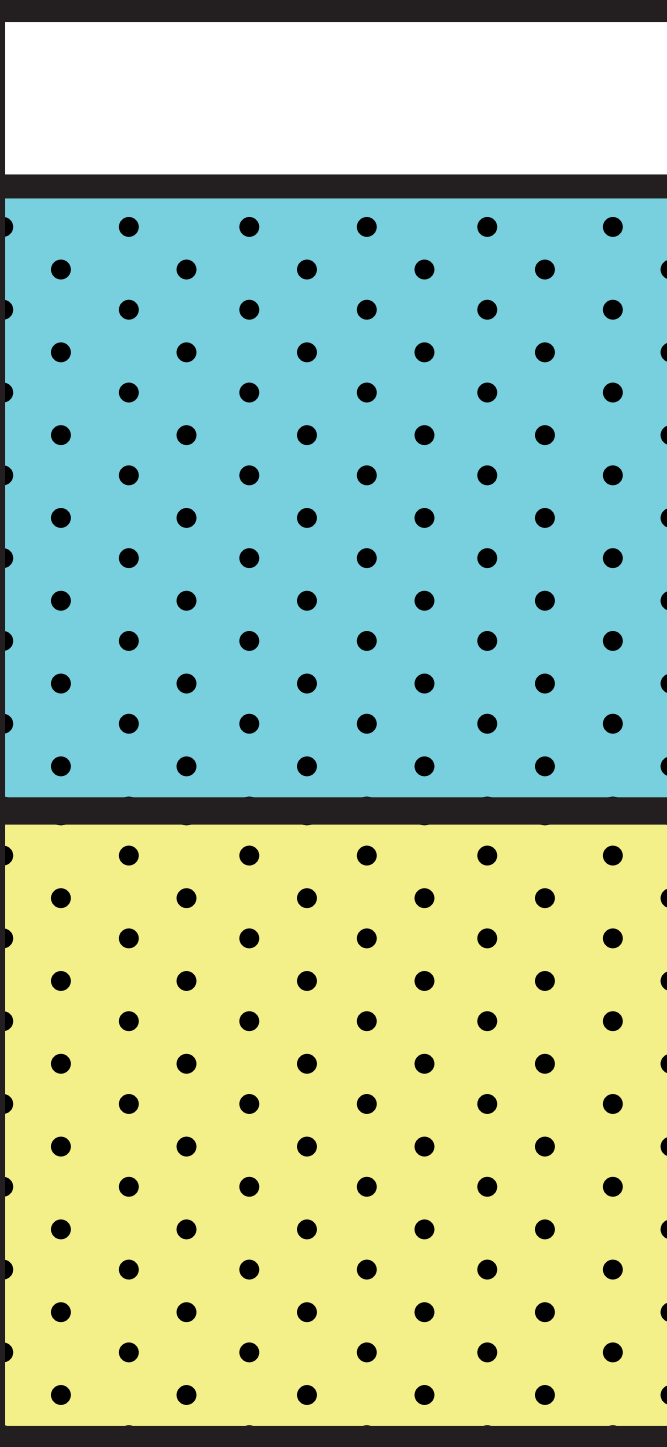
to say the least, to hear of what happened with Heller. Some of the former fans threw away and destroyed her merchandise. I couldn't even listen to her music under the impression that she was a rapist - supporting a monster because her music was that great, how could I? The adults in my middle school expected students to be nice to each other but shun those who did wrong. We don't live in a perfect world, but we live in a world where perfection is expected from each other.



I eventually got sick of it and left to focus on my things.

I felt horrible for liking Martinez's music and not knowing that she could have actually been a bad person. It's always best to separate the art from the artist; the creator from their creation. I became interested in Martinez's art because of the dark, realistic subject matter combined with the bright, pastel colored visuals, and I wanted to know about the artist and where her ideas came from. Most everyone who liked Martinez's art was disappointed,

Years later, I would see that there are people in the world who lie to look like the victim just to get an innocent person in trouble. I am now living in a world where cancel culture exists, and not everyone is a good person. It was eventually proven that Martinez never raped Heller, or sexually abused the latter, but the damage was already done and some people still see Martinez as a monster after all these years later. Some people commit truly awful actions, some are scapegoats. We live in a world where people, females included, tear each other down, and it



makes me sad.

I'll have to admit: I was an occasional jerk growing up — but who isn't an occasional jerk? I was also an occasional scapegoat. I will never forget any such memories in life where I was the villain or the goat, even though my brother says I should just let some of them go. I was a jerk from time to time, but framing someone of rape or murder crosses the line, especially because of how dishonest it is. I could never be like the other girls in my class and I will always hate that, but Martinez said that not everyone is a Disney Princess; that we all have flaws and that we should all love ourselves. People always try to frame Martinez as a disgrace to society, saying that she's rude when she is not, Heller accusing her of rape when she didn't rape anyone, and that lie caused Martinez's career to fall into ruins.

While I am a skeptical person, I do believe that anything is possible — I live on Earth, I get exposed to the outside world thanks to the media. I hate being oblivious to the greater issues, some people ignore the harsher, darker realities. I don't like ignoring the facts, and I can't ignore the harsher realities. Now because of the lies and drama, I hate playing the victim, and lying to make an innocent person look like the villain. I have to see that yes, rape is real, sometimes people commit murder, COVID-19 is real, and so is verbal assault. Sometimes I think of slapping people who think or say otherwise - sometimes it's ignorance and liars that enrage me the most.

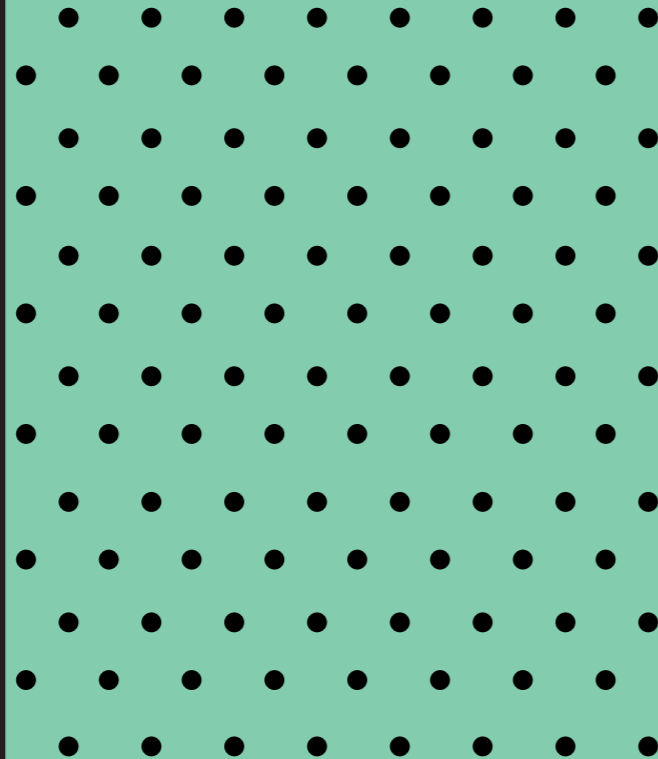
A Better Friend Purrs, Not Growls

by Raegan Rodjenski

The type of people we surround ourselves with says a lot about who we are as a person - both our needs and personality are often viewed in the people we associate with, and over time, we become more and more like the people we love. That is why it is important to choose the right people to be friends with, but it can be hard to know what type of person makes a good friend. Cat people make better friends than dog people because they are more accepting of personal boundaries, more adventurous, and more open-minded. These three traits alone would make someone a wonderful friend.

When you think of what makes a person a good friend, the first thing that should come to mind is whether or not they respect the boundaries you set. Cat owners quickly learn the boundaries their cats set, and respect them - they do the same for people as well. Because they have more experience respecting boundaries, cat people would make better friends than dog people, who tend to prefer dogs because they do not have to earn trust or learn boundaries.

Relationships with cats are built entirely on respect, and not punishment. "Cats don't respond well to



punishment - it can make the behavior worse but can also cause a cat to become stressed or scared of you," (Adi Hovav, The Dodo; "Here's Why You Should Never Discipline Your Cat"). You can tell a lot about a person by the way their cat behaves; a person with a loving, comfortable cat is someone who respects boundaries, and will do the same for people, too.

A good friend is also someone who encourages you to try new things, and is willing to be adventurous. Just as cats tend to embrace their curious nature, cat owners have been found to be just as adventurous, while dog owners tend to be more reserved. "In 2010, researchers at the University of Texas [conducted] a global study [and] cat people [...] were found to be 11% more open to adventure, culture and new experiences," (Good Housekeeping; "Cat People vs. Dog People: Which One Are You?"). New experiences can bring people together; visiting a new place, trying new food, or learning about a new culture keep life interesting, and cat people can offer these things as friends, which makes them a great choice when considering a new relationship.

It is also important to consider whether a potential friend will be accepting of you, and open-minded to you and your opinions. A cat person would make a good friend because they are more open-minded, and not as rigid and close-minded as dog people. "Cat people were generally about 12 percent more neurotic; however, they were also 11 percent more open than dog people. The openness trait involves a general appreciation for art, emotion, adventure, unusual ideas, imagination, curiosity, and variety of experience. People high on openness are more likely to hold unconventional beliefs, while people with low scores on openness (dog people) tend to have more conventional, traditional interests," (Psychology Today; "Personality Differences Between Dog and Cat Owners"). Cat people tend to approach all kinds of things with an openness not seen in dog people; they have a greater appreciation for experiences, and do not conform themselves to one particular belief. This allows them to appreciate all perspectives, making them a perfect example of a good friend.

Not everyone makes a good friend, but some people make better friends than others. Cat people make better friends than dog people because they are more open-minded, adventurous, and are better at

"Just as cats tend to embrace their curious nature, cat owners have been found to be just as adventurous, while dog owners tend to be more reserved."



respecting people's boundaries than dog people are. When it comes down to choosing a friend, there is no "perfect person," but consider what you need from someone - wouldn't you rather get to know a person who will accept your need for space, change of scenery, and personal values, like a cat person will, or someone like a dog person, who won't? There is a lot to consider when choosing who you want to be friends with, but the best choice is someone who likes cats.

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My Best Friend

by Ryilee Berg


Running up to hug my best friend, all I can smell is her vanilla perfume from Bath and Body Works. Her name is Jillian. I get into her car not knowing where the day will take us. Whenever we are with each other, time seems to stop, and we make the best of everything. There is no doubt in my mind that she is my person. I could not imagine a life without her. I would say she feels like home. The love that comes with her is plentiful and I am eternally grateful for it. I could not imagine I would be the person I am today without her.

The number of hard times that we have helped each other through are far too many to count. I am not the type of person to cuddle with anyone, but this girl has gotten her way, and anytime we have a sleepover, she gets to cuddle with me. It is kind of funny because both of us are not the type of people to want to be touched by other people, but with each other it is consistent touching, hugging, and cuddling. No matter what kind of drama there is, we always find ourselves back to each other. We had recently gone on a trip to Montreal, there were 5 people in total. The whole group had plans to go to a nightclub for New Year's just to be out and enjoy the night while watching the ball drop. But someone changed plans and made some for himself and 2 other people, which left out me and my friend Mikayla. After that we all got upset with each other and now our friend group of four is down to a friend group of two. But the day after the trip we were back to normal and forgot what had happened.


Her car has been through so much with the both of us. Sirius is her car's name. He is named after Sirius Black from Harry Potter. He had to endure the torture of Taylor Swift (her favorite artist, not mine). We both would sit in her car in the Planet Fitness parking lot just so our parents would think we were at the gym. We would sit for hours joking, laughing, and looking at cute boys that walked out of the gym. We also would carpool together all the time to Mount Mansfield Union High school, then to Burlington Technical Center every day and we would have so many heart-to-heart talks. Our favorite spot to hang out was the Richmond Park and ride. But now that she has gone off to college her brother has now taken the car and claimed it as his, much to our disliking. Even though the car may not be hers anymore, it has helped us in some.

Jillians' laugh is so contagious no matter what situation we are in; if she starts laughing, there is no stopping the both of us. We can make the worst jokes and still understand what the other is saying and laugh even more about it. For example, there is this joke we have about how I live in the middle of nowhere, she thinks it is hilarious.





Sometimes I think our jokes are so out of pocket that if someone else heard them they would want to send us to an insane asylum. The number of unfunny jokes that we have come up with to cheer each other up is uncanny. We love to joke about this one boy that we used to hang out with. He used to unfriend both of us, then he would come back but only add one of us back. Then he would remove that one and add the other. We thought and still think this is so funny because He can't seem to fully leave but does not want to be friends with both of us at the same time. This might not seem funny to other people, but it is this ongoing joke between the two of us. I love to joke with her about her love life all the time. Even though it is kind of sad I try to cheer her up by making fun of the guys that left her and I call them dumb because she is a goddess who deserves way more than what she goes for. Jillian had gone on a date with a guy and at the end of the date he screamed at her to get out of his truck when she didn't, he took out a knife and stabbed her cup and broke it. That is one of her many dates gone bad but that one was one of the worst. I got to say she is the stereotypical "dumb" blonde that everyone talks about, and I had come up with a nickname that suits her perfectly: "Blondie".



At the beginning of high school, we hated each other, but our story shifted from two people that could not stand the sight of one another, to two people who couldn't go without talking for more than a day. After all our ups and downs, I could not be more grateful for my best friend. I could not imagine a life without her in it. My life would have been so boring if she was not here. She is my person, my home, my lover, my everything. And for that, I have to say thank you and I can't wait for our future together. I cannot wait to smell her perfume again, hear her laugh in person, and be able to drive around and make more memories together.

by Gabriel Chaves

Right As Rain

"Between sobs, I could smell burning tobacco. I looked up to see the kindly old grocery manager taking a long pull from his cigarette and flick it away."



I don't remember what I had for breakfast that morning, but I remember my dad had a cheeseburger. I remember my car wouldn't turn over in the frigid February air, so after I helped him clear enough snow for his car to get through, my dad gave me a ride into work. I remember how frustrated he was with me for not taking better care of my things and how he lectured me on proper car maintenance. How I wouldn't have this problem if I was doing regular oil changes, and how I should always have dry gas in my car just in case. I don't remember the end of the car ride or the beginning of my work day, but I do remember the phone call I got a couple hours in.

"Will that be credit or debit?" "I'm sorry, we don't take Shaw's coupons here." But as hard as I tried to keep from thinking, my mind wouldn't stop. "Can I help you bag today?" Chest pain. "Please make sure to write your phone number on your check." Dad is only 54. "If you buy another one, you will get 50 percent off." He had a burger for breakfast. "We have a max of 30 dollars cash back." Why would he do that? "Is plastic okay?" He knows he has high cholesterol. "Have a great day!" Why would he do that? "Looks like you got a coupon with your order today." Why is this happening? "If you sign up for our card today you will get an extra discount." HOW COULD HE DO THIS TO ME? I picked up the next

"Your father went to the hospital with chest pain."

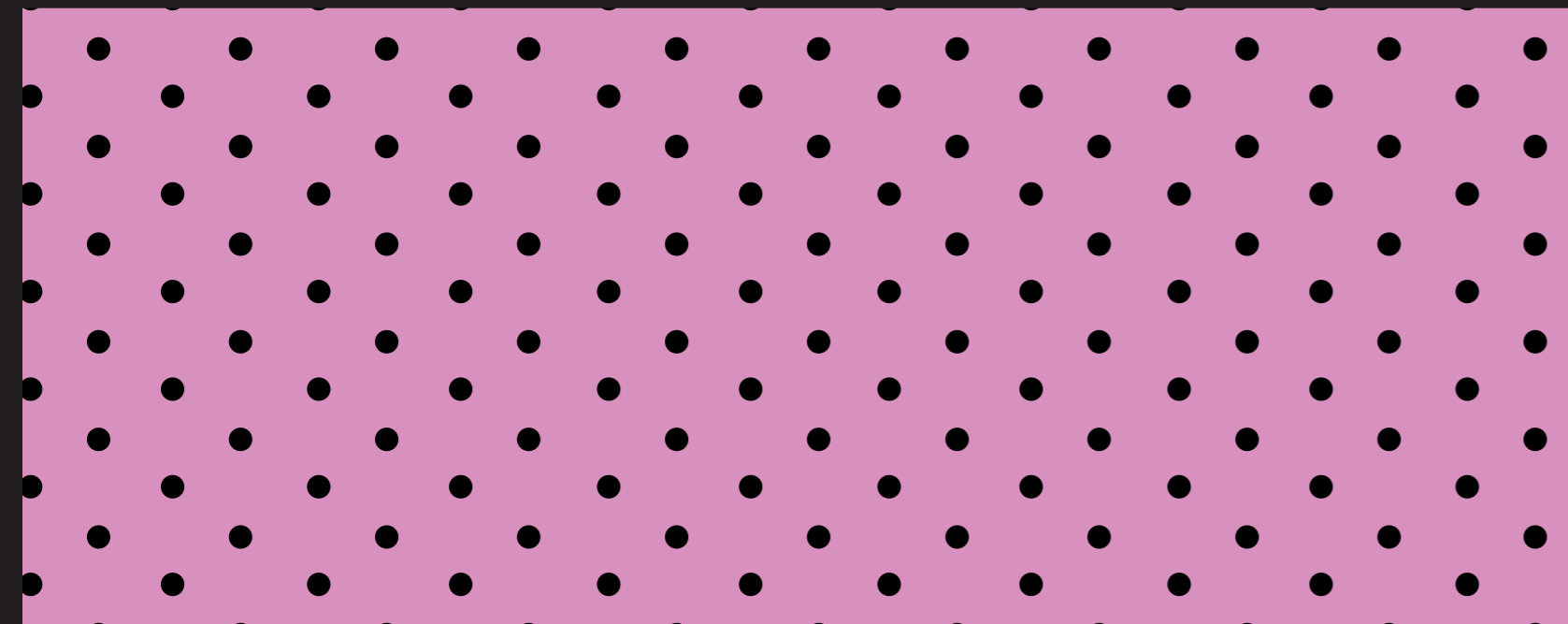
I felt numb. I tried not to think about what chest pain could mean for someone my father's age. I knew there was nothing I could do about it anyway, so for the next hour or so, I tried to keep myself distracted with the customers in front of me. I knew my job well, so I'd just have to stay on script. "Did you find everything you needed today?"

customer's eggs and had to hold back from throwing them. It was time to step away.

"What is going on with you today?" My manager could be stern when necessary, but there was only concern in her voice that day.

"I got a call. I think my dad had a heart attack."

My stomach turned as I said the words I was afraid

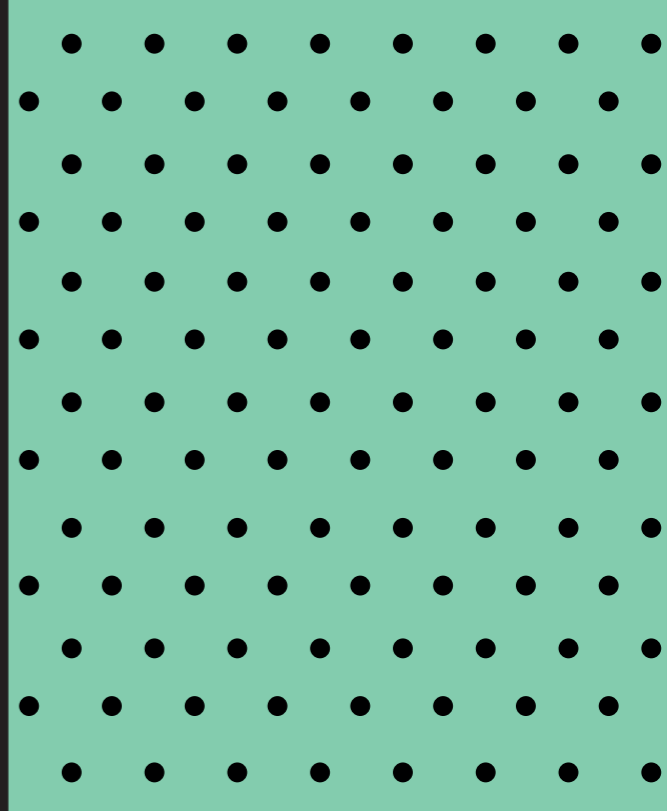


When he was sturdy on his feet, he gave my back a gentle tap. "You'll get through this."

It was dark by the time my ride arrived. My mother's friend was driving her minivan and my mother was in the passenger seat. In the back were my aunt, two of my sisters, and two of my brothers. That left just enough space for me to sit on the floor tucked up against the sliding door. We rode to the hospital in silence. No one had much to say, and someone must have objected to the sounds of pop music and radio DJs because there was no radio either. That just left the sound



of the tires whirring on the pavement to calm our hearts. Even in silence, it felt nice to be around family. All together going through the same thing. We didn't need to speak. It was enough just to be headed in the right direction.



Icy roads slowed us down, and the drive took well over two hours. By the time we arrived late in the evening, most visitors had already left for the day. As we marched toward the emergency room, our hurried footsteps echoed off the empty halls of the hospital. In the ER we were greeted by some family friends who had arrived before us. Hugs and handshakes were given alongside words of comfort and condolence. We were then ushered to a waiting room to sit in anxious silence again. It wasn't too long before a doctor came into the waiting room to speak with my mother. "Your husband is very lucky to have arrived here when he did," the doctor said, "He's going to pull through, but he needs to take better care of himself so this doesn't happen again." Though it was nice to hear from the doctor, the tightness in my chest wouldn't subside until I saw my father roll by on a gurney. The man that had lectured me that morning was now lying pale and weak in front of me, but he was awake, and he was going to be ok.

to think.

"Why are you still here?"

"He was my ride. I have nowhere to go."

She put a comforting arm around me. "Let's get you off the floor. You're done with work for today. And let's find you a ride. You need to go see him." She led me to the backroom to wait while she made some calls. I began to pace. She returned a short time later to let me know that in about an hour, my family was going to be by to pick me up on their way to the hospital. I was grateful but still anxious. Still nauseous. I continued to pace, but the walls of the backroom felt too close. It felt like the ceiling wanted to crush me under it. I had to get out.

I made my way to the loading dock and found a milk

crate to sit on. It was still freezing outside and I had forgotten my coat, but there were no walls out there and I couldn't go back inside. As I sat out there shivering, my mind couldn't stay on one thought. I wanted to cry. I wanted to throw things. I wanted to puke. I wanted to be angry, or hungry, or anything but what I was feeling. I wanted to run away, but there was nowhere to run. I wanted to not feel anything at all, but I felt a tear fall on my cheek and a flood came after. Between sobs, I could smell burning tobacco. I looked up to see the kindly old grocery manager taking a long pull from his cigarette and flick it away. He grabbed a milk crate for himself and sat down next to me. "You know, heart attacks ain't what they used to be." He said, "They'll stick a stint in him and your old man'll be right as rain in days." I had no words for him in return, and we sat there in silence for several minutes. "Welp, back to it I suppose," he said as he put his hand on my shoulder to support himself as he stood back up.





How Well Do You Know That Piece of Corn?

by Bryan Parks

The doctor had a concerned look on their face when they walked back into the room. I could sense what they were about to tell me was not going to be the news I wanted to hear. The doctor, in a serious voice, informed me that the seizures I've been having were caused by pesticides I use on my 5,000 acre farm. Unfortunately, this is not the only consequence of using toxic pesticides for industrial farming. This style of agriculture is affecting our health, impacting the earth's natural ability to resist the effects of climate change, and is depleting soil quality. If people don't stop buying food from supermarkets and start growing their own produce, people around the world will not be able to survive. Growing your own food is better than buying food at a grocery store because it can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it gives you control over the kind of pesticides you use in your garden, and the grower can choose which fertilizers they want to add to their soil.

The first reason growing your own food is better than buying food at a grocery store is it can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Growing food and then transporting it to a store requires fuel, electricity, and packaging, all of which produce gasses that are harmful to the environment. According to the EPA's website, the agriculture industry was responsible for almost 6,000 million metric tonnes of CO2 equivalent in 2020 (EPA 2022a), and in 2011 supermarkets contributed around 2,900 metric tons of CO2 and CO2 equivalent from

power usage and leaking refrigerant (EPA 2011). These numbers don't reflect how many tons of CO2 equivalent that packaging and transportation omit into the air in order to put products on the shelves. One of the ways to reduce emissions around the world is by relying less on industrial farming and grocery stores.

Not only does growing your own food help reduce global carbon emissions, it gives you control over the kind of pesticides you use in your garden. Knowing what chemicals you should use when treating pests and diseases is important because they can be extremely harmful to humans, animals, and the environment. The Penn State Extension Program released a safety fact sheet in 2022 outlining some of the health consequences of short and long term exposure to three categories of pesticides: fungicides, herbicides, and insecticides (Lorenz). Pyrethroids are mentioned in the publication and are a commonly used insecticide in the United States. Exposure to Pyrethroids can cause "...abnormal facial sensation, dizziness, salivation, headache, fatigue, vomiting, diarrhea. [sic] irritability to sounds or touch. [sic] seizures, numbness" (Lorenz). A study conducted by the EPA showed that four different pyrethroids were used on three to five million acres of crops in 2001 (EPA 2022b).

Pesticides can be detrimental to bee populations and watersheds as well. A study administered by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture found that 28 out of the 45 insecticides they tested, are highly toxic to bees. Pesticide levels found in water sources are also very alarming. A survey conducted in 1999 showed that "more than 90 percent of water and fish samples from all streams contained one or, more often, several pesticides" (U.S. Geological Survey). All of these problems could be avoided if people cared more about the impact that chemicals used for farming have on the environment and humans.

Finally, along with controlling what pesticides you use, growing your own food also allows you to choose what fertilizers you add to your soil. The use of fertilizers affects humans, animals, and plants in different ways than pesticides. Most fertilizers focus on a NPK value (N=Nitrogen, P=Phosphorus and K=Potassium). The excess nutrients plants don't absorb "can be washed from farm fields and into waterways and can also leach through the soil and into groundwater over time" (EPA 2022c). Large concentrations of nitrogen and phosphorus can cause algae blooms, kill aquatic life, poison drinking water, and release toxic gasses, such as



“ I have seen
astonishing
differences in color,
taste, and overall
plant health. ”

ammonia and carbon dioxide, into the atmosphere (EPA 2022c ; Keena, et. al). Examples of these contaminants have been known about for decades and nothing has changed.

Now that you're aware of a few major issues that stem from sourcing food from a grocery store, you can begin to learn about different styles of growing that don't have the same negative impact as commercial farming. One way people have done this is by starting a no-till garden. This style of farming focuses on maintaining a healthy ecosystem within the soil and is achieved by using biological implements to feed and protect plants. More and more farmers are starting to switch to No-till methods of growing. A famous Korean farmer named Youngsang Cho founded an organization called JADAM in 1991 (JADAM), this group has been solely dedicated to discovering ways to garden using low cost methods from organic farming. Cho's book "JADAM Organic Farming: the Way to Ultra-Low Cost Agriculture" contains an abundance of knowledge about organic farming, and different biological applications. I bought a copy and started using his methods in my garden. I have seen astonishing differences in color, taste, and overall plant health. It's amazing how much knowledge you can learn from No-till farming about mother nature and all of the amazing natural resources the earth provides.

There are a lot of benefits of shopping at a grocery store, but growing your own food is the better option. Would you rather bite into an apple knowing what kind of fertilizers and pesticides are being used, or eat an apple that came from an industrial farm you know nothing about?

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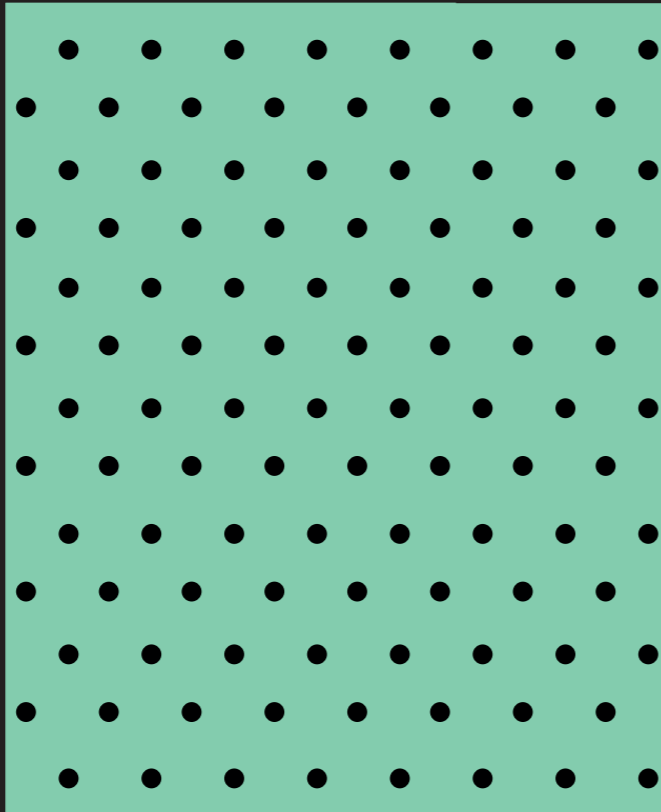
Deep in the Woods of Granby Camp



byGrace Hodgdon

Deep in the woods of Granby, Vermont sits a very special place. I think back to my childhood memories with fondness and love. It was nothing fancy, but it was an escape from normal daily living. My family would pack everything up, clothes, food, etc, then load up in the Expedition and drive north for what felt like forever. But we always knew it was well worth it when we arrived!

Camp was created many years ago in a bad snowstorm in the 1950s. My great-grandfather and his cousin were headed out of the woods from hunting one night with their pickup truck and small camper. They got totally stuck and ended up staying overnight until daylight. Daylight came and they trudged through the fresh, cold, deep snow to get to the landowner's house. I believe back then people were very different. When they reached the house to ask for help, the landowners had no problem with them just leaving the trailer there for future use and indefinitely. The guys thought this was a great idea and many years later, my grandfather trucked a slightly larger job trailer up to camp to create more space.



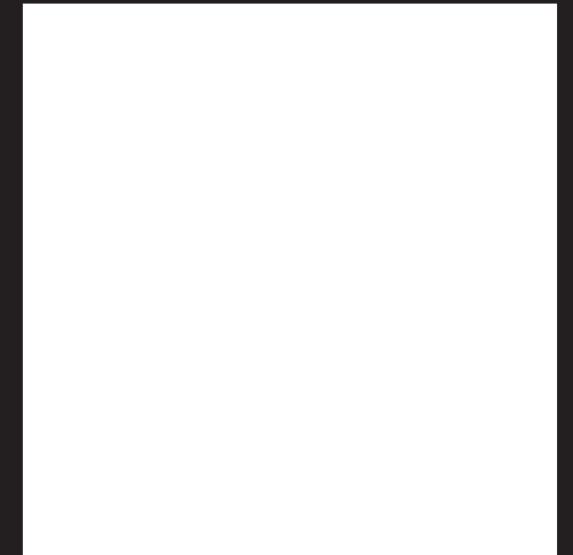
As the years went by, camp grew and changed along with our family. While rustic in design, it had the cozy feeling of family and memories. When you ask me to describe the inside of the camp, I think back to the three twin-size beds lying side by side. My mom and dad would share one, my sister and I in the middle on a second one, and my brothers sharing the third one. The "refrigerator" was an old ice box that most have only seen in pictures, and there was no such thing as running water or indoor plumbing.

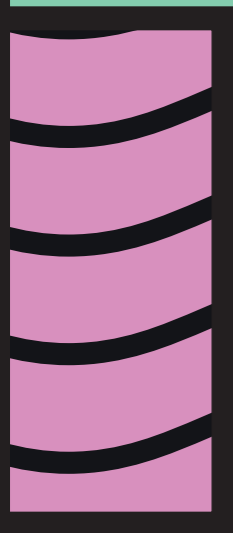
I remember always having to come prepared with all the food and supplies that we would need, as there was only a very small store nearby. Mom and Dad would always be sure to have coffee, we had to lug in our water in large jugs. We would bring bread, eggs, and bacon for breakfast. I can remember the taste of iron on the eggs from the cast iron skillet that rarely got used. Sandwich meats for lunch and hot dogs and s'mores for dinner. We always had a campfire to cook s'mores and hot dogs on. I still to this day remember the taste of a slightly burnt hot dog and a marshmallow on the melty chocolate of the s'mores every time I smell a campfire.

There were many times we would load up the car and head north, to only get stuck on our way in. Sometimes the drive was very muddy, sometimes two feet of snow, and we could only make it so far. We always brought a shovel because we never knew what we would be driving into. My parents would grab what we needed for the night and we would hike into camp, with dad going first to dig a path. The next morning, we would dig the car out and attempt to get it a little closer to camp.

At camp around the front door casing, there were many names and dates of people who had been there, all at different times. This is one of my favorite memories of camp. One time, we went up to camp and there was a note from a pair of cross-country skiers. They were out in a terrible storm and had gotten lost somehow. They waited the storm out overnight in camp. They left a note and some cash to say thank you, after signing and dating the door casing. When we got home, my parents instantly mailed the money back to the pair with a note letting them know that this is what camp is for.

One sunny day in June, while sitting at camp, my mother tells a story





“I can remember the taste of iron on the eggs from the cast iron skillet that rarely got used.”



of traveling in the old Bronco. It was her birthday, she was pregnant with me. It was Mom, Dad, and my older brother and sister. Dad was driving up an old logging road, the loggers had taken out the culvert. Dad did not get the Bronco belly-hung, he got the frame stuck on both ends for hours. She still laughs about it to this day, and will never let him forget about it.

Memories of camp include nature walks, no matter the season. Summertime walks would always include berry picking.

landowners' house, due to fear of running into the huskies.

Years later, when I was in junior high, the landowners decided to sell the land, and the new owners did not want our trailer on their land anymore. I remember crying as a young teenager when we were given this news, and I could not believe it. Nana, Dad, and Mom drove up to camp a couple of weekends in a row to clean things out. On the last weekend, my uncle and father drove up to take the camp and outhouse apart and burn it down.



I always loved the tart burst of flavor when biting into a fresh, plump berry! One day my sister was stung by a bee on our walk, and we could only pack some mud on it to make it feel better. The quiet forest, campfires with family, and being totally disconnected are wonderful memories.

I remember seeing mom walk her pee bucket from the night to the outhouse in the mornings. I remember being afraid of seeing the big, scary barking huskies. We were too afraid to walk through the path in the woods to the

While the camp may not still stand, it will forever hold a special place in our hearts. The quality family time unplugged from the rest of the world helped us form a stronger bond. Even to this day, every time I go for a hike, memories come to mind of all the great adventures we had. With the ending of the camp came the closing of a chapter of my childhood. It was a very tough time, but I believe it helped me to realize that I should never take small memories for granted.

by Claire Moody

Musicians Are the New Teachers of Our Generation

“Until the teacher pulls out Billy Joel’s ‘We Didn’t Start the Fire,’ and all of sudden you’re learning important history facts while jamming out at the same time.”



The music that young people listen to can directly influence their political stance due to the artist’s influence, their own political backgrounds, and the activism that sparked their lyrics. At the age of 18, Americans are expected to choose their political party which is often done without much research. Because of this, Americans rely less on factual information, for example, music. Music is a necessity in most Americans’ lives and can be seen negatively by some but for others a learning experience.

In the first two verses, he tells the people not to wait until the next life to find fulfillment; it’s their right to be free and happy on this planet. In another verse, he talks about how some people can be fooled but you cannot fool everyone all the time, so once someone sees that light, they need to start standing up for their rights. As long as there’s oppression to overcome and a struggle to be won, it will continue to resonate.

Not only do artists and celebrities create content that reaches people on another level, but they also help to

The artist’s music can speak to people on so many different levels while the lyrics could have different meanings for everyone. One example is Nina Simone’s “Sinnerman” which was released in 1962. There is no greater repentance for sin than changed behavior, and Nina Simone’s “Sinnerman” reminds us that change is not only important, but necessary in order to repair the social, moral, and political ties that have withered over time. Another example is Bob Marley’s “Get up, Stand up,” which was released in 1973.

support many political causes and what they believe in due to how much influence they have. For example, Beyonce is known for her incredible music as well as her huge advocacy for voting. She encourages many of her viewers to vote, to take fate into their own hands because it is their lives that matter and their lives that are on the line. Another really important figure in the industry is Alicia Keys. She co-founded a foundation called “Keep a Child Alive,” which supports children in Africa through support and treatment, as well as education about sexual and reproductive rights.



Musicians and party candidates will end up helping one another out by promoting each other when they can and they have been doing that since the 1920 election. Celebrities carry traits that make it easy to understand the positive meaning. Source attractiveness, source credibility, and meaning transfer. In each category, a celebrity must be able to achieve some form of all three categories for the brand to consider supporting them and doing the same. Although there are some celebrities who believe it best to remain apolitical; according to Fox News, Luran Ingrahm told LeBron James to “Shut up and dribble.”

In conclusion, Nina Simone, Billy Joel, and Bob Marley have not been the only ones to treat politics within their songs; nonetheless, they are still the most widely recognized artists to move many with the power of just their one song. Even to this day, we continue to have people who acknowledge and sometimes fix those political issues when it comes to creating their songs. Songs that were created in the '60s and '70s still have as much effect on us to this day, if not more. Feeling supported not only helps the listeners as well and as helping to influence or teach subjects others know less about. For many, to just sit there and hear the teacher draw on and on about history with no feeling or essence is draining. Until the teacher pulls out Billy Joel's, “We Didn't Start the Fire” and all of sudden you're learning important history facts while jamming out at the same time.




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Where the True Magic Lies: Behind the Written Word vs. the Silver Screen



by Shinelle White

“Books are like a window to the imagination, while movies are like a frame to the same picture.” That’s what I thought to myself as I sat in Café Dolce, Kingston, Jamaica, sipping a French vanilla mocha latte and reading a book called “To Kill a Mockingbird” by Harper Lee. Now, I didn’t choose to study that book; it was merely a requirement for school. But as I read more, I imagined myself in the book’s scenes. Ultimately, I realized that I would rather read the book than watch the movie again. While both the book and movie versions of a story can entertain, the book version more effectively conveys the author’s message. This is due to its enhanced depth of detail, character development, and narrative structure.

Unlike movies, books typically offer a more in-depth exploration of details. Books are typographic works of art. They are known for thorough explanations. When you read a book, you may take your time and read at your own pace while enjoying the narrative. Publishers say a normal book has between 50,000 and 110,000 words (Yang). In books, authors frequently take their time describing the characters, settings, things, and events. These in-depth explanations are necessary to help the reader create a mental picture of the story (“Books vs. Movies: Similarities and Differences - 558 Words | Essay Example”). On the other hand, no matter how faithfully authors, filmmakers, and producers try, it seems impossible to accurately adapt a book into a movie. This is because doing so would require cutting hundreds of pages worth of material into the average film length of between one and a half and two hours. As a result, even though dividing movie adaptations into two halves is successful, the enormous amount of information from the book is minimized. Because of this, certain plot points won’t be covered in that amount of time, and characters and scenes will be simplified too much.

Conversely, story characters may be the same in both book and movie versions. However, books give readers the freedom to picture each character and circumstance in their own unique way. Stories are driven by their characters. They develop the storyline and advance it. With this, readers can feel the world portrayed through the characters, both through their interactions with and perceptions of their surroundings. Basmo says, “Books enable the reader to visualize characters’ appearances, voices, and settings. Visualizing has a significant function in brain growth and is a key component of reading. Everyone has a personal interpretation that becomes our intellectual property (“Books vs. Movies: Are Books Better than Movies?”). However, movies constrain character screen time by the running time. In turn, this shortchanges the character’s aims, background, and some traits.

Books are not only different in regards to details and character development, but they also provide the invested time of readers to expand on the narrative structure or plot. They also give insight into characters that couldn’t be created in two hours of film. Five components, in the following order, make up narrative structure: Exposition, which introduces the reader to the story; rising action, the catalyst that sets the main events of the story in motion; the climax, when the main character must confront the truth or make a crucial decision; and resolution, where the story concludes, closes the loop, and demonstrates how the story’s events have changed the characters and the world around them. The falling action is where conflict gives way to resolution, unresolved issues are addressed, and tension eases (MasterClass). This helps readers understand what is happening, how it happened,

“Books give readers the freedom to picture each character and circumstance in their own unique way.”

and how to stay engaged page after page. Conversely, filmmakers may have to alter or introduce alternate narrative lines because of financial restrictions, for instance.

I've watched a few movies adapted from books. However, when it comes to in-depth detail, character development, and narrative structure, books are the clear choice when comparing the two. Hence, if you're a reader and you're debating going to the cinema to watch the film adaptation of the novel "Dune" by Frank Herbert, consider the imaginative worlds you can create based on the plot that appeals to you instead of the limitations of the storyline due to time constraints.

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