

A photograph of a winter landscape. In the foreground, dark tree trunks and branches frame the scene. A path of footprints leads towards a frozen body of water where two people are walking away from the viewer. The background shows a dense forest of snow-laden trees under a clear blue sky.

# the spyglass



spring issue  
twenty twenty-three



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# Our team fav winter activity

//RIANNA ZHU  
PHOTOS// SPYGLASS TEAM  
DESIGN// LYNN HE



**ERIN CHEN**

Likes: baking winter treats  
Sport: skiing/snowboarding



**ANDREW CHU**

Likes: practising his instrument, the trombone  
Sport: music



**AMRITA DUDAKA**

Likes: listening to Christmas music, shopping, building a snowman, drinking hot chocolate (Tim Hortons always), watching Home Alone on repeat  
Sport: skating



**EMMA FODOR**

Likes: sledding  
Sport: skiing/snowboarding



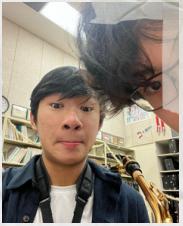
**FIZZAH HAIDER**

Likes: drinking hot chocolate, going on walks, and Julianne Sung Eun Ko  
Sport: skating



**YASMIN HADIZAD**

Likes: drinking hot cocoa with a million marshmallows while wrapped in a warm blanket  
Sport: sleeping



**ANSON LAI**

Likes: being outside late while the snow falls gently on his face  
Sport: video games



**ALLYSON MACK JILLIAN OUYANG**

Likes: Christmas decorating, spending time with cousins & brother  
Sport: skiing/snowboarding



**JILLIAN OUYANG**

Likes: drinking hot chocolate, skiing, rewatching Frozen, using cat heart emoji excessively, being annoying, spending time with her favourite person Rianna Zhu  
Sport: skiing/snowboarding



**ANNA PAN**

Likes: reading in bed  
Sport: skiing/snowboarding



**KATE SHAHIDI**

Likes: holiday movies  
Sport: skating



**MAX SKIDELSKY**

Likes: Going to Winter Wonderland and having a yearly black coffee addiction  
Sport: skiing/snowboarding



**ELAINE WANG**

Likes: skating/skiing with friends, downtown Christmas market  
Sport: skiing/snowboarding



**VIVIAN WU**

Likes: walking outside when it's snowing and everything is perfectly white  
Sport: skiing/snowboarding



**AMANDA XI**

Likes: locking herself in her room and playing video games while it snows outside, spending time with her sister  
Sport: skiing/snowboarding



**DANIEL YANG**

Likes: indoor badminton  
Sport: skiing/snowboarding



**JOLLY YAN**

Likes: watching Christmas movies  
Sport: skiing/snowboarding



**IRIS YOU**

Likes: hot chocolate and movies  
Sport: skiing/snowboarding



**DANIEL ZHANG**

Likes: watching movies and listening to vinyls by the fireplace, spending quality time by himself



**RIANNA ZHU**

Likes: winter break, spending time with her favourite person Jillian Ouyang  
Sport: skiing



# we can be infinite

***“What do you want to be when you grow up?”***

This question presents itself with a daunting lack of plurality. Is there one thing we have to be, one identity we have to assume, one title we have to abide by? The limitations of such a finite future haunt me, and I shiver in its wake.

*“I don’t know,”*

I reply. But really, I do. I remember the exquisiteness of imagining I could be everything--when I was sure that the so-called walls people spoke of were only pessimistic discouragement. I recall a time I was willing to let life sweep me off my feet, eager to fall not knowing whether or not I would land.

*How would I forgive myself for all the things I could not become?*

I pull my memories out of stars and wrap my fears in the warmest blankets. I live a life haunted by a ghost embedded in it. “I’ll catch you”, it whispers. But it lurks. It murmurs my dreams into nightmares and molds my horizons into pits of darkness.

*It is so easy for me to fall in love.*

I used to believe that living was an art. That love was a masterpiece. And while I still bask in the ecstasy of life, everything seems a little heavier than it used to be. The Earth carries the weight of all our hopes, fears, and dreams with it. It caresses every skeptic and nurtures every altruist. The world is excruciatingly fair.

*The roots of the Earth seem to be caving in on me.*

In the midst of the winter months, a special memory I can recount is a gentle one. Christmas lights were strung on buildings and across roofs. The giant tree in the middle of the square shone so very incandescently. The hot chocolate I drank idled warmly as an aftertaste while the sweets I saved for later rested calmly in my pocket. I was happy at that moment. And yet, my being still echoed that lingering ghost.

*I get lost in all the heights I cannot reach.*

Humans are, above all, passionate. Messy, impatient, yes. But such

imperfection may just be the allure of it all. The finiteness of our existence might just be what makes us overflow.

*I will live a life that you are not embedded in, and you will no longer be missing from the places that are not yours to be in.*

Maybe I can make peace with the ghost. Maybe I can find comfort in the midst of this uncertainty. Maybe I can rise to meet each of them and stare them in the eye, and confront their possibilities.

I will take this life in my hands, because hope is all that we have. Caring is all that we have.

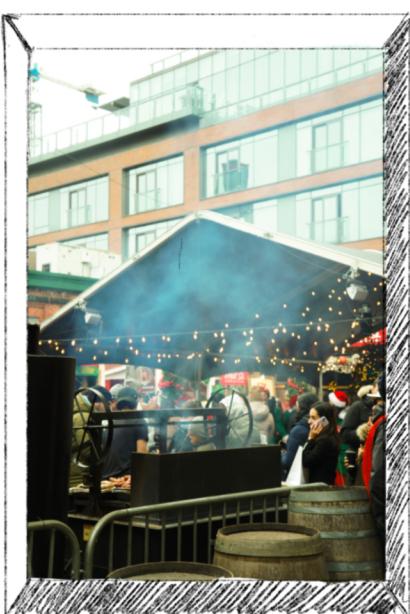
I am young. I am learning how to live. I am discovering the multitude of people I can be so that when they ask me again, “who do you want to be?”

I will respond,

***“Everything. Everyone. I want to be infinite.”***

# Tempus Fugit, Memento Mori.

Time Flies,  
Remember Death.



Nothing lasts forever, unless we want it to. Our words are meaningless, unless we believe give them otherwise. Everything is temporary;; including yesterday's Jeopardy game and the spilled water on the floor. Nothing matters, and so does everything simultaneously. The universe is expanding too quickly and I can't understand anything, especially yesterday's chemistry homework. The sky will never look the same as it did on that does on a mMid-July evening, and my favourite song will one day ring like an unfamiliar tune. My childhood bedroom has faded pink walls, and every memory has since faded into atoms. The people I know will never be the same as they were a moment ago and I can't help but dawn on that. I'm grabbing onto songs and clothes and people and books before they fade into dust and everything looks hazy. Time haunts me like an old friend and I desire too much and have too little. I'm living in my best moments and thinking about the future in at the same instant. Yesterday's test and tomorrow's homework and last week's laundry jumble in my mind, yet against the entropy I'm taken back to the present. I'm lying on the cold hard ground and the earth seems to swallow me and it isn't until then that I Remember Death, Time Flies.

The ground becomes warmer and rather than sinking I feel as if I am floating, because nothing lasts forever. The grass has flattened and the wind has subdued. I take a walk and watch the clouds move. I will find a new favourite song and record another sunset and meet new people.

My old best friend can't remember how to spell my name but I have yet to meet my future daughter. Tomorrow's chemistry lesson will make sense and the stars will glow on my ceiling again. I will grab a coffee and count the cars on my street and come late for the third period and do it all over again. I will go on a walk during lunch and gossip with my best friends and cry over old photographs. The sky turns pink again and again but I still take a photo of it anyway, because nothing and everything matters simultaneously. I will do anything and be everything and watch as the world fades into nothingness. I am here, despite it all, and the ink left on my paper is dripping proof of my existence. I exist in the corners of my room and my upstairs attic and on the streets of the night. Time flies and soon we will all become yesterday's news, but for now we are here. In the expanse of the universe I can count to ten, and find me and you and close my eyes. The meaning of everything is about nothing and everything existing simultaneously and so are we. It's about everyone in the universe who ever touched a mind. It's about the Tim Hortons employee who gave me extra whipped cream and the friends I made in fourth period science and my best friend, who lies across from me now, at this very instant. We will all fade into dust in the sky, but although for now, we exist.

*Remember death, but also remember to stop and smell the flowers all the same. time flies, but we've built rocket ships anyway.*

# THE holiday serenade

With the arrival of the winter season, it's easy to feel adrift amidst the cold and ice as the world slows to a stupor. However, on December 4th, rich instrumentation and bright melodies rang late into the evening amidst the falling snow, brimming with warmth and holiday spirit. That night, at the Richmond Hill Centre of the Performing Arts, friends and family gathered to celebrate a night of music and community with the return of RHHS Music's annual Holiday Serenade.

At the eve of the concert, the performance hall echoed with anticipation and excitement; hundreds upon hundreds of seats were filled with supportive friends, families, and teachers. Backstage, students took their places, hushed words of encouragement flitting from one performer to the next. As the lights dimmed, all eyes drew to the rising curtains, signalling the start of the show.

Emma Au and Mikkel Canivel opened the evening with a duet of Disney's "A Whole New World." Their intertwining harmony danced atop the stage, sending the audience into a reminiscence with each step. The spotlights then shone upon the Grade 11 Wind Symphony, the first ever entirely Grade 11 orchestra of RHHS. "Ignition" had hearts pumping with its roaring melody and spiralling runs, followed by "An American Elegy," a resounding composition featuring an otherworldly offstage trumpet solo. Finally, "The Nutcracker Suite," a festive waltz, closed off the band as the small ensembles took the stage.

Saxophone Ensemble, led by Amey Lawrence, had feet tapping with "Snow Halation," their energetic rhythm brightening the hall in a blaze of Christmas spirit. Next up was the String Ensemble, led by Anson Lai and Mr. Yuen.

The concert then segwayed from symphony to song with the arrival of Vocal Fusion. With smooth harmonies and joyous rhythm, the choir was met with passionate applause by the end of their three performances.

Gold Fever followed suit, and with Lia Dogadin's rich vocals, brought the house down with their dynamite performance of "When I Fall in Love," a successful close to the first half of the concert.

Conversation flooded the lobby with the arrival of the intermission; vigour danced amongst the crowds as students congratulated one another for the fruits of their hard work.

"What I love is how after a concert hearing how students compliment and comment on each other, giving feedback in a really supportive way," said Mr. Rawlins, head of the RHHS Music Department. "What we do in school is very isolated; when you sit in Math class, you try to get the answer for your own benefit. But when you're in a band, you're putting in the work to benefit the overall community, which is what makes our work very unique. They [the students] get a sense of communal accomplishment."



"Intermezzo from Cavalleria Rusticana" entranced listeners with sonorous strings that swayed in harmony as the woodwinds flitted overhead.

The audience was then greeted by a familiar favourite with Percussion Ensemble's "Feliz Navidad," led by Emma Au and Ziyun Peng. Finally, Clarinet Ensemble, led by Michelle Chen, brought the small ensembles to a close with their ever-nostalgic "Somewhere Over the Rainbow."

The second half of the concert opened with the Grade 10 Symphonic Winds, bewitching the crowd with two climactic performances of "Cajun Folk Songs" and "Imani." The Wind Quintet, led by Elaine Wang, followed with "The Sweet Sounds of Snowfall," the bouncing rhythm and iridescent instrumentation a testament to the holiday season.

Brass Ensemble, led by Andrew Chu and Tony Ruan, carried on the festive theme with a joyous performance of "Sleigh Ride."

The curtains then rose to reveal the Grade 9 Concert Band, faces and instruments glowing in the limelight. Necks craned and cameras snapped throughout the band's three performances as families witnessed their children's first steps into the orchestra. Their instruments sang not only with musicality, but with promise and growing potential.

The Flute Ensemble followed with a breathtaking performance of "Fly Me to the Moon," led by Elaine Wang.



The high winds intertwined in a colourful harmony, the melody bouncing from one performer to the next before cultivating into a joyful rhythm.

"The culminating moment is always performing with the Gold Band," said Elaine Wang, Co-President of the RHHS Music Council. "Once we started playing El Camino Real, I just started feeling all the fulfilment and rush come back to me, because it was something we had been working on for the past few months, and it was a really fulfilling experience to see it come together in the end."

"El Camino Real" enchanted the crowd with its musical diversity, the tone shifting from ominous to daring, the melody bouncing from one section to the next as the harmony swelled and spiralled in the background; a perfect culmination of the vigour and excitement of the evening. "A Christmas Festival," a final testament to the holiday season, wrapped up the concert in a festive fervour, signalling the end to a very merry night.

// AMRITA DUDAKA  
PHOTOGRAPHY // ELINA LAI &  
ALLYSON MACK  
DESIGN // ALLYSON MACK





# IMPACTS OF HUMANITARIAN AND CONFLICT SITUATIONS ON CHILDREN AND WOMEN

FROM RHHS UNICEF

//CHARLES LI // TERESA WU PHOTOGRAPHY // CANVAS DESIGN// LYNN HE

The Covid-19 pandemic, climate change and conflict all share a common thread— each poses a significant threat to the well-being and health of individuals worldwide.

“Evidence on conflict shows staggering negative impacts on women’s, children’s, and adolescents’ lives. Half of the 54 countries that are off track for achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 3.2.1 on child mortality – under-5 mortality at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births by 2030 – are considered fragile or conflict-affected (1), as are about 39 per cent of countries for meeting SDG target 3.2.2 on reducing neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births (1). It is telling and discouraging that the five countries with the highest maternal mortality (Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Chad, Somalia, and South Sudan) are all experiencing or recovering from conflict (2).”

As the pandemic has shown, weak government structures and medical institutions can be further weakened through disease outbreaks. Within low and middle income countries, more expensive and efficient equipment is often unaffordable, and hardly found in hospitals. Because of that, people are much less likely to receive proper treatment, and worse, they are likely to spread illnesses quicker.

Additionally, the atmosphere’s continuous heating creates conditions for new pathogens and infections such as malaria; it is within the warmest areas that resources become more and more scarce. Simultaneously as people desperately search for resources like safe and reliable water, and abandon their homes in the hopes of finding stability, they create internal political instability as aforementioned. As a result of those factors, malaria and other pathogens can begin another global pandemic.

Conflict also has a negative impact on children’s, adolescents’, and womens’ lives. Consequences of conflict have destroyed many medical infrastructure. Moreover, many essential health care workers have either fled or quit working due to the lack of resources, payment, or simply because they fear being involved with such conflicts. Besides that, numerous health and first aid workers are constantly being killed by the contributors of conflicts, accidentally or not. Without these workers, many lives are at risk. When health and first aid professionals get injured from the ongoing conflict, they most likely cannot seek professionals to take care of them.

To resolve these three crises of pandemics, climate change and conflicts, everyone worldwide can create change and is essential to taking the next step. Figures such as UNICEF, the UN, NGOs, health care professionals, and academic research establishments, can and should further assist the resolving of these problems. From their help, we can make sure that women, adolescents and children, are getting the protection required and are remembered in all vulnerable communities.



## Work Cited

“Women, Children, and Adolescents Living in Humanitarian and Conflict Contexts Must Not Be Forgotten.” World Health Organization, World Health Organization, pmnch.who.int/news-and-events/news/item/18-05-2022-women-children-and-adolescents-living-in-humanitarian-and-conflict-contexts-must-not-be-forgotten. Accessed 11 Dec. 2023.



# Not Like Other Girls

Throughout my childhood, I was what was once referred to as an NLOG: a “Not Like Other Girls” girl. Or, in more current terminology: a “pick me.” While I never openly voiced these opinions, I used to harbour a sort of contempt towards girls my age. I often found myself thinking that girls’ interests were insipid, that things like fashion or makeup were frivolous and superficial. I would impose preconceived judgments on girls I met, assuming them to be annoying, spiteful, and ditzy.

It was the crux of my identity: not being like other girls. And I wasn’t alone. Some time ago, it wasn’t uncommon to see girls on the internet flaunting their “quirky” and “unconventional” habits of playing video games or eating pizza. While it’s easy to label them as attention-seeking and nothing more, there is perhaps a deeper reason as to why so many girls felt, and still feel, the need to separate themselves from the idea of femininity.

Because believe it or not, little girls aren’t blind. They don’t simply wake up and arbitrarily decide that femininity is dreadful. Throughout their lives, they are primed and moulded, force-fed a continuous narrative which denigrates femininity, while lauding and upholding masculinity as the standard. They are taught through movies that popular, pretty girls are vain, vapid, and empty-headed. They watch hundreds of popular music videos featuring women as glorified mannequins. They see the way femininity is shamed, the way being called “a girl” or being associated with feminine traits is used to belittle and insult boys.

Sure, these examples don’t seem like much on the surface, but this attitude of deprecation and objectification is pervasive, insidious. It’s the way women are discarded when past a prime of beauty, never known solely for their humour or personality. It’s the way teen girls’ fixations are so often deemed frivolous and trivial, when really, what is there that objectively dictates the legitimacy of sports and cars over chick flicks and boy bands?

All this considered, is it any wonder why girls would want to fit into a status quo that elevates the

interests of men over the petty pastimes of girlhood? For young girls without the cultural awareness to critically assess their situation, the conclusion is often that they must be special in some way if they do not fit this patronizing mould of femininity. They internalize these degrading views, assuming that in order to be seen as “cool,” to be legitimized in some way, they must reject girlhood.

While my past as an NLOG is undoubtedly a present source of shame and embarrassment, I recognize its roots in a deeper dissatisfaction with society at large. Yes, it was a pathetic effort to differentiate myself from the crowd, but perhaps, through a more empathetic lens, it was a plea. A desperate attempt to be acknowledged beyond our culture’s framework of girlhood. To be recognized as a human being.

At some point, you realize the enemy isn’t other girls. You realize there’s nothing cringy about dressing up, and that romance novels are actually prime entertainment. You realize the girls you stereotyped as carbon copies are in fact funny, kind, and genuinely interesting. This isn’t to say, though, that girls can’t possess negative traits. Often, in talks of feminism, we stray too far in the other direction, where the predominant portrayal of women in media becomes an overcorrected caricature: flawless, domineering, confident. But in truth, I’m not perfect. I care a little too much about what others think and hold petty, senseless grudges. Girls should undoubtedly be allowed to excel, but be fallible. To be human.

Because girls can be vindictive, sure, but equally as kind. Intelligent in some domains and utterly clueless in others. In so many different ages, across so many places, and times, they are exactly like me.

**And, man, do I love being like other girls.**

# I'D RATHER TAKE THE BIG POINTY STICK

// DANIEL ZHANG  
DESIGN // PHOEBE SU



Fellow Nerds, I bear heartbreakingly news! We have all been lied to by the media. It is with great sadness that I must say that swords historically sucked. Especially during the middle ages, they were not as good (or as commonplace) as pop culture would have you believe. This revelation broke me to my core. But, the saddest part of this discovery was that this media hyperfixation of a mediocre weapon has led to the sidelining of a contemporary weapon truly worth all the praise.

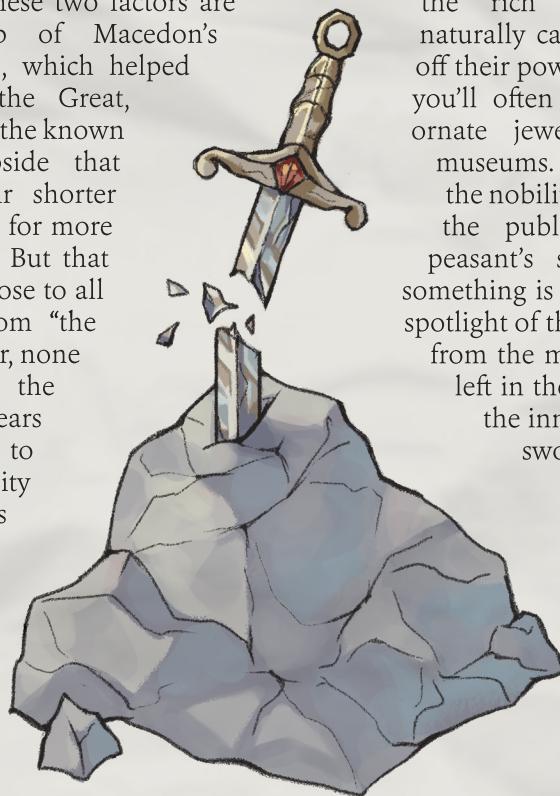
To begin, the simplest flaw with swords is their ineffectivity against armour. Don't get me wrong, swords are great at cutting flesh, but do you really think a thin piece of sharp metal could cut through good plate,

brigandine or chainmail? At best a powerful blow could traumatisise the flesh within the armour, but other weapons specialised at this task could achieve ten times the result with half the effort. This is why the medieval era saw the mainstream usage of "disagreement enders" like maces and hammers. They were just better! The only way swords were able to adapt were through historically hilarious "techniques" like the German "murder strike", which literally involved an individual picking up the sword from the blade and using it as a hammer! Speaking of technique, this is also one weakness of the sword. The training needed to effectively wield one takes way longer than other "Afterlife fastrackers" such as "le big pointy stick" or "ye olde axe".

For those weapons, all you really need to do is find the bad guy and use the pointy end to remind them of their wagon's extended warranty. On an individual scale this might seem pedantic, but history has shown us that the best weapon is always the weapon you can most quickly and effectively arm the most people with. If one really wanted a good weapon that saw lots of historical use for their functional superiority, then one shall look no further! The superior weapon is (drum roll please) The Polearm. Polearms are a form of weapon which has the "fun" bits fixed on the end of a long stick (e.g spears, poleaxes, etc). Polearms were arguably the best form of weapon for most of human history. For one, the "big pokey stick" has always been the easiest weapon to equip the fellas with. We've been using it since antiquity and I assume that, given a spear, most of y'all would be able to intuitively figure out how one works. Not only that, but polearms provide far more tactical advantage. Their length allows for your opponent to be in the "stabby" range while leaving you relatively safe. They also more easily translate to large military formations. These two factors are what led to Philip of Macedon's "macedonian phalanx", which helped his son, Alexander the Great, conquer basically all of the known world. The only upside that swords have are their shorter reach, which can allow for more close quarters combat. But that benefit doesn't come close to all the perks you get from "the people poker". However, none of that compares to the main reason why spears shine in comparison to swords; their adaptability to change. Warfare has always been an arms race and spears have always been

extremely adaptable to whatever new niche needs to be filled. "Do you want the polearm to penetrate, cut and deal blunt force trauma? Why not all three with a halberd!" "You're having an issue with cavalry? Make the blade hooked to literally grapple riders off!" "Enemies too close for comfort? Why not use a 20 ft sarissa!" Even if a situation could have applicable use for a sword, you can just stick a blade onto the pole and call it a day! From any way you slice it (eyyy), polearms are just better weapons. Yet if that's the case, then that leaves the question: why do swords seem to take all the spotlight?

Up until recently, recorded history was only focused on the lives of the Royalty and celebrity. In medieval Europe it was seen as a waste of time to record the comings and goings of the simple minded everyman. Swords were overrepresented not because they were exceptionally better weapons, but because they were also symbols of wealth and nobility. Unlike some of the other weapons mentioned, it takes a great deal of craftsmanship and shmeckle to produce a sword. As such, the rich and important would naturally carry them around to show off their power and wealth. This is why you'll often find intricate designs or ornate jewels all over blades in museums. They were extensions of the nobility, and as such were kept in the public eye more than the peasant's spears. Yet just because something is beloved by the proverbial spotlight of the time does not take away from the merits and quality of those left in the shadows. I do not doubt the innate awe and beauty of the sword. Yet, to have it hog the spotlight would be as criminal as tending only to one rose bush in a garden full of blooms.



# HUMANS

HUMANS OF A R H H S

Last year, I was at this dance competition, and I got a pretty good score. During the overalls, I placed second to our studio's prima ballerina. I wasn't that confident in my abilities, and it was only my second solo, and so I thought, "wow, I've made it". I started dance when I was four years old. It was like those ballet classes where you do "don't burn your butt in the toaster!", and I was kind of getting sick of it, and so I stopped for a year. But then, my sister picked it back up, so I also picked it back up. My sister is my greatest inspiration. She's the reason I'm in everything. She encouraged me to become a grade 9 representative for the Music Council. It's like, I'm like the result of the pain of my older sister (lol). But also, because we're so close in age, we relate to each other a lot. We talk about boys, school, and dance together. That's what sisters are for. If you don't get along with your sister, what are you even doing? She's like my personal guidance counselor, my best friend, and everything I could ever want in one person.

**"Material comes with passion - if you're passionate enough, you deserve the material."**



CHARLENE XIE

My greatest struggle right now is my ability to say no. For most of my life, I've been trying to appeal to other people, and sometimes I put myself down because of it. It's such a simple and easy phrase, but sometimes, if someone asks me if I want to do something, deep down I don't really want to do it, but I would still say yes because I don't want to hurt their feelings. I would put myself down just so I can avoid hurting the people around me. But in actuality, the simple phrase helps everyone. Something that I'm really working on to help me grow as a person is just letting them know that I'm not interested, or I'm not okay with it, and I think that will help me go a long way.

During the pandemic, everything was behind a screen. I was at home, alone, and especially in Grade 10, everyone went back to in-person, I was still one of the online kids. My first ever experience in school was being in Greenhouse Club. Everyone else had their friend groups, everyone else had people to talk to, they were all really social, and I just felt like the walls were caving in on me.

Throughout the years, there have been a lot of experiences that have helped me overcome this. Joining clubs and extracurriculars like Vocal Fusion have really helped me open up.



**"I want to become someone who can thrive while uplifting the people around me."**

OLIVER CAÌ

# OF RHHS

HUMANS OF RHHS

I feel like especially in a high-stress academic environment, there's a lot of pressure to do well in everything, and so it's kind of difficult, even if I'm doing well in a class, to pinpoint whether or not I actually enjoy doing it, or if I'm happy in that class just because of the way that mark reflects my performance. I lean toward working in the sciences, but even within that, I don't know if I enjoy that just because I'm good at it, or if I would actually take interest, take initiative, and persist through challenges in those classes. I strongly enjoy my more business extracurriculars, like, DECA is one of my favourite things to do, but at the same time, I don't see myself going into that as a profession. So my interests within my extracurriculars don't exactly align with my academic interests. I think all my extracurriculars are things I enjoy doing with people I enjoy being around, like DECA, it really is like a family. I have always tried to make sure that everything academic is where I want it to be. But more and more, I'm trying to focus less on that, trying to do not the bare minimum, but just enough to get through the notes that I want, and time doing the actually enjoy. I'm back in my reading phase, something I enjoy doing as a counter to some of so-fun parts having to the time.

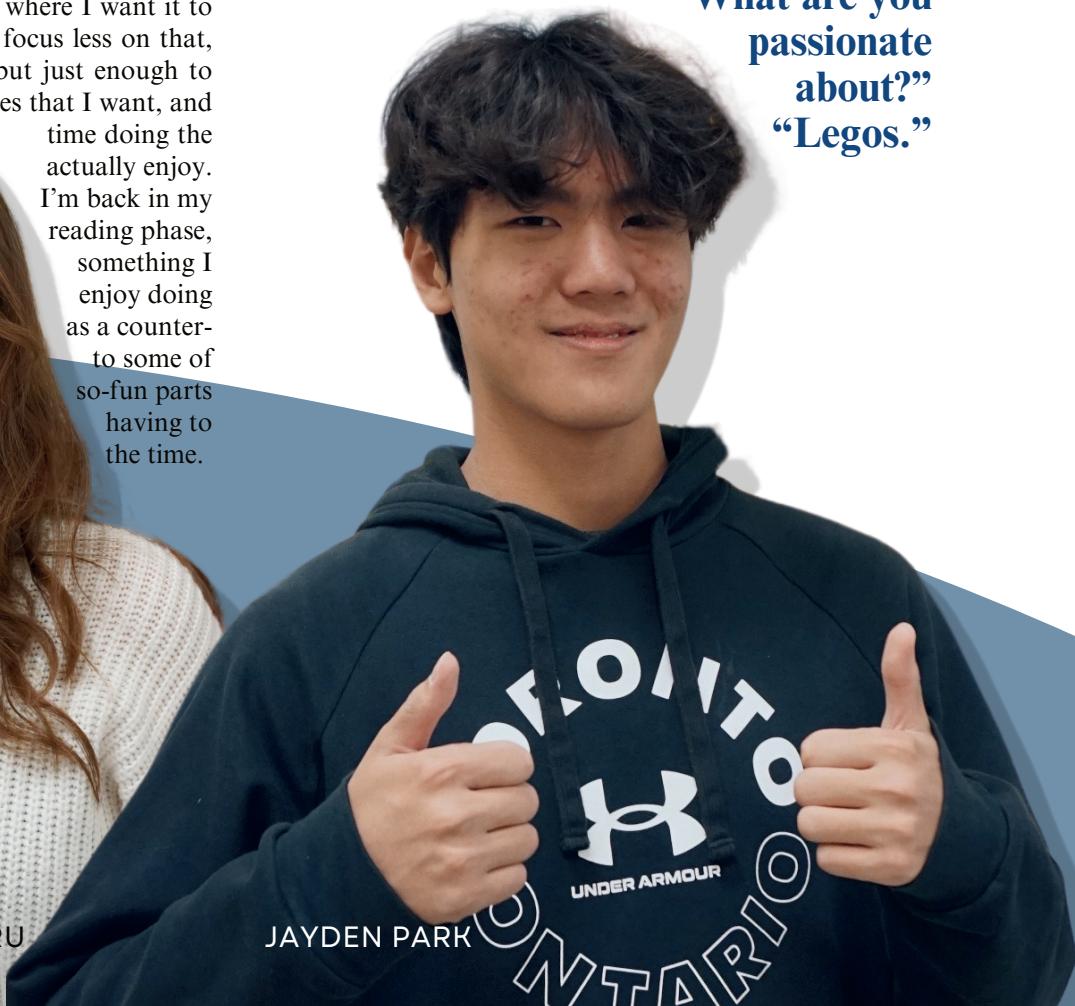
spend more things I Recently, binge- which is genuinely and acts balance the not- work all

The most important thing to me is my legos. Ever since I was a young kid, I always played with legos, and I still play with legos. Whenever I'm struggling or going through problems in my life, I cope with my legos. I build cool buildings, make my minifigures fight each other and they make me really happy. I think I'll want to build a building when I grow up too. Currently, I have over 5000 minifigures and a collection of 10,000 lego sets. I think half of them are unopened and I gave some of them away, but they still mean a lot to me. When I was at my UofT engineering hackathon, I used these lego building skills to design and create an infrastructure which was sustainable using the smallest amount of resources, similar to my lego inventory. From that experience, I learned that this is what I wanted to do in the future.

**“What are you passionate about?”  
“Legos.”**



STEPHANIE MURAIRU



JAYDEN PARK

# A Hallway Confession

She'd thought that it was the end of it. Like an idiot. Of course this clingy, persistent thing didn't know when to quit. She hadn't bothered to memorize her locker combination, opting instead to leave it slightly ajar at all times. If anyone wanted to steal her scruffy rain boots, they could have them. In hindsight, this was a mistake. Theft wasn't the problem— quite the opposite. The mysterious gifts appeared every day, without fail, for an entire week. When she found an entire teddy bear stuffed inside the locker, she pulled out her locker assignment email on the spot. From then on, her locker remained locked at all times. She even sealed the vents with duct tape, in case wayward letters managed to make their way in.

She surveyed the pile of candy grams and roses on her desk with distaste. She'd forgotten that Valentine's Day existed. Not that she could have done anything to prevent this fiasco. Especially since the guy hadn't even ordered these from the school; even he knew that such creepy behaviour would only get him reported. Instead, he'd come to school at an ungodly hour, just to dump these on her desk before she got here.

She marched over to the trash can, intending to dispose of every last one of them.

"Hey, don't you think you're being kind of rude?"

"Even if you don't appreciate them, you still don't need to toss them like that, do you?"

She felt her eyelid twitching in irritation. "Oh, how rude of me. You know what else is rude?" She dropped the bundle of harassment in the trash can and slammed its lid shut. "Idiots who don't know how to take 'no' for an answer!"

She stopped dead on the stairs, still halfway from reaching the bottom. Her eyes flashed. Not in shock. In anger. An elaborate floral piece. A professional-looking banner. A beautifully frosted cake. A crowd of hundreds, their gazes sharp enough to tear her apart. How dare he? He began to speak. She didn't— couldn't— listen. A public confession. What was he trying to pull? Already, the crowd was cheering, like the flock of mindless sheep they were.

"Say yes! Say yes!"

How 'clever' of him, making use of public opinion to pressure her into agreeing. She could already imagine all the nonsense she

She received his first confession after school, scouring the library for a good book to read. She hadn't even realized it was a confession until the chocolates were pressed into her hands.

"I don't even know who you are." She really didn't. If he had been important enough to remember, she probably would have been nicer about rejecting him. No, she wasn't interested in getting to know him. No, she didn't already have a boyfriend, what kind of question was that? Why would it matter if she had a boyfriend or not? She'd said no, hadn't she? What did he care if she was interested in dating? Even if she was, she wouldn't accept his confession. What was it that he couldn't understand?

would be hearing after his little display. 'You could have at least pretended to say yes! You didn't have to embarrass him like that!' As if he hadn't tried to embarrass her first? Did she ask for a public confession? Did she agree to this? Did she—

"Say yes! Say yes!"

But what if she didn't want to? Had they ever considered that?

"Say yes! Say yes!"

"No."

The crowd turned toward her, a thousand eyes all pointed her way. She had cut him off midspeech, raising her voice to do it. "This isn't even the first time I've said 'no'. How shameless can you get?"

She smiled at the crowd, a smile too wide and too bright to be real. "If I ever accept your confession, I've been possessed by a vengeful ghost, and you should cremate my body."

She marched right back up the stairs, dashed across the upstairs hallway, went down a smaller and less crowded set of stairs, made a beeline to the office, and did the in-school equivalent of filing a restraining order.

# veil of death

*I didn't grieve at first.*

Most people don't. They live in a sort of denial, suspension, limbo. Until you realise they'll never come back. It's snowing a week before school starts again, and I think about them. The kid who disappeared. The kid who died.

There is a strange dichotomy that exists between "death" and "life." When I was a child, when the adults mentioned, "Oh, the dog died," or "did you know so-and-so from uni passed away?" it made sense. They were already old, so what was the fuss about?

But she is the kid I went to school with. She is the kid I met when we were both tiny babies, and she's dead. She was the person who I compared my height to every time we met up, who laughed as her sister aimed water balloons at me that one summer.

She had a smile wider than the sun and eyes as bright as diamonds and a laugh like a trumpet blast. She was the one who always missed breakfast in favour of a good book. "I knew them when she was this tall," I say, my hand at my knee.

She raced me up and down the stairs when we were five. She sat beside me as I cried as we left Hong Kong for the last time. She drew caricatures in my notebook when we were twelve, giggling behind our books at stupid jokes. She was the one who helped me with riding my first bike, with my first (and last) fencing match, with my needlework and embroidery. "We were friends," I say, looking at our photos from when we were three, nine, twelve.

*They weren't old.*

*They just grew up.*



I still see her in the mirror sometimes, silently smiling at me with teary, hollow eyes. She died alone and afraid. The world just wasn't meant for them— they were a child and it devoured them like a hyena starved for endless nights. She wanted to see the best in people. She wanted to believe the world to be all good and righteous and that everything would work out— and I have to move on without her.

*They weren't old.*

*They just grew up.*

I still see her in the mirror sometimes. Silently smiling at me with teary, hollow eyes— I see her and remember all the things she loved. I hear her laugh when the dogs chase each other around. I see her smile when we eat strawberries. I see her aiming snowballs at the trees, laughing as she misses. I remember her, so young and happy. Even when I try to forget her, I remember her.

There's a vague numbness which we grow into, a desensitisation with which we look at the world today. The wars, the extinctions, the deaths— what is it all for? The pride of nations? The intolerance others? When did we learn this? Why does humanity always feel the need to separate into "us" and "them"? It's draining to watch this squandering of life, of humanity.

We have to remember the children who died when we adopted cynicism from the world. The ones who had great dreams, who believed that whatever they could do would come true. Who thought they could be anyone they wanted to be. Do you remember the little things they loved— the reasons why they got up in the morning, and refused to go to bed at night? The world is pessimistic and the people can be too, so remember.

*We were once kids too.*

# TYPES OF PEOPLE in Winter

// ARWYN WONG  
PHOTOGRAPHY // IRIS YOU  
DESIGN // KATRINA LAM  
GRAPHICS // CANVA



## 1. The Holiday Enthusiast

Whooo!!! Holidays!! This person is blasting “All I Want for Christmas Is You” on the first of November at full volume. The liveliest of friends, they will probably be planning holiday parties or get-togethers, complete with gift-giving and decorations. You can spot these people from a mile away, with their bright smiles and multitudes of bags in their hands (and their humming of holiday pop songs as well).

## 2. Ebenezer Scrooge/the Grinch



Screw the holidays. They are the ones with a permanent scowl from their stints in retail during the holiday season. Ornaments and decorations can go... where the sun doesn't shine. Mariah Carey has left a deep set scar on their soul, and every year it just gets deeper. Alternatively, maybe they just don't like the noise and fuss. They get very annoyed by the mere idea of giving gifts, or just the prospect of seeing relatives for weeks on end.



## 3. The religious one

This person is deeply devout and pious. They feel an obligation to attend every family and religious gathering, even moving their social calendar around to do so. They may or may not have a distaste for all the marketing fuss gathered around this time of year, but they do enjoy their days off during Christmas, whether they celebrate it or not.



## 4. The kid

Yay snow! This person is pulling on their snow boots and jackets, and are out the door the minute the first flake falls. They adore the snowy season-- they do everything they can to enjoy it, from having a snowball fight to attempting to build a snowman. They might seem childlike and young at heart, but are really just enjoying life.



## 5. The Grownup

This poor fellow is stuck shovelling snow while it's still dark out because they've got to drive to work at 8 am. They are the raging driver who is cussing out every icy patch and new hole in the road-- they are the ones who no longer see the beauty in snow. Rather, they are greatly annoyed by it. They dream of summer or autumn, depending on whether they have to rake the leaves as well. If they could move somewhere warmer, they would.



## 6. The Stereotypical Canadian

"It's not that cold," is their catchphrase from October to April. They attend all events in a t-shirt and shorts and maybe even sandals, regardless if it is 10°C or -10°C. If it's really cold they might wear a jacket, but the shorts are still there. And, strangely enough, they don't seem to get sick, despite the lack of layers (and sense).



## 7. The Blanket Burrito

This person would rather hibernate for the winter season. They do not necessarily hate winter, but they do not enjoy the illnesses that plague them when the snow falls. They are bundled up the second the temperature dips below double digits. Most likely with a warm drink in hand (or reach), they are constantly complaining about the chill and their sniffles. Hot water bottles and blankets are their best friend, and they absolutely cannot wait for spring to arrive.



## 8. The Athlete

They like winter for the sports and nothing else. No hot cocoa for this fellow, they are focused on maintaining their fitness through the season in time for spring next year. Skiing, skating, hockey, snowboarding-- they've done it all and more. They probably have a seasonal pass at a ski hill somewhere, and will never pass up an opportunity to work out.



## 9. The Seasonally Depressed

The lack of sunlight during the winter months dims this person's normally sunny smile. They are listless and dour, and seem hopeless and lifeless at times. If you are them, SAD is an actual disorder and you can seek help for it. Take care of yourself and make sure you have social support. Otherwise, do not isolate yourself. Take things as they come, and everything will work out in the end.



## 10. The Social Media Fiend

The snowfall must remain undisturbed until they have whipped out their phone and taken a couple dozen photos, complete with the strategic placement of a cup of hot cocoa and cookies. They are all about the look of winter, with their stylish boots and sweaters, not a hair out of place. They are constantly bingeing the internet for the latest content. Some might be hunting for seasonal recipes, while others are focused on their selfie game.



# THE Christmas SPIRIT



Christmas used to be my absolute favourite day of the year. Between mouthfuls of sweet Halloween candy, I used to remind my parents that Christmas was the next holiday as soon as it was the night of October 31st. I used to help my parents put up the sparkly Christmas tree and decide what new ornaments to buy. Whenever my friends said that Santa Claus wasn't real, I used to quickly object and correct them. I used to lie down on the couch and watch all the Christmas specials after school, and I marked the pink calendar next to my bed whenever we got one day closer to Christmas. On Christmas Day, I used to rush to wake my parents up at 6 a.m. sharp to open my presents and check whether Santa had eaten the atrocious cookies I had made. I used to beam with joy whenever my parents opened the messy crafts I made for their presents. I was the epitome of cliché Christmas joy, and I vowed to myself that I would continue spreading holiday cheer as I grew older.

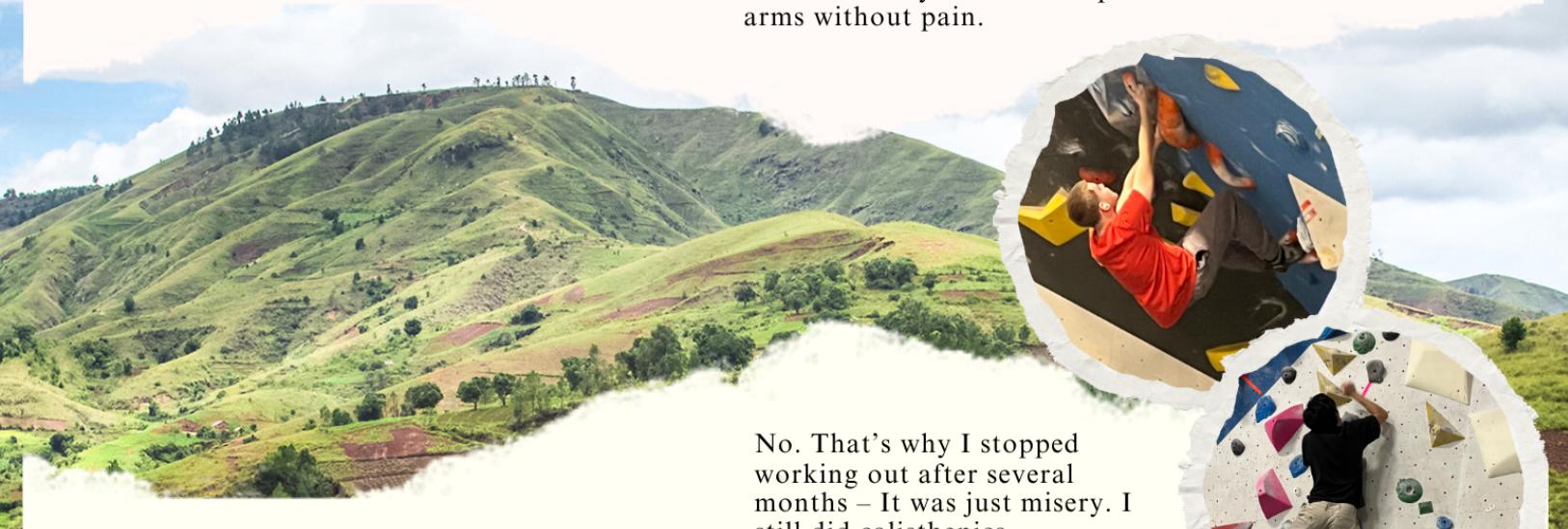
To put it simply, things didn't go exactly as planned. As months turned into years, I slowly became more mature and busy with school and friends. While I still looked forward to Christmas, it wasn't necessarily something that occupied my mind every second of the day like it used to. Although I didn't notice it, the childlike wonder and happiness that I associated with Christmas slowly started to fade. I started becoming indifferent to the colours of the ornaments and didn't really care about watching Christmas movies anymore. I stopped begging my parents to keep the Christmas tree up until January, and I didn't really think about the presents that I would receive. Christmas melded into the days surrounding it, and it became just another ordinary day of the year for me.

I can't deny it; this phase of my life did last for quite a bit. That was, until my sister grew a little older and began to appreciate Christmas herself. Everyday after school now, she sits me down to watch Christmas movies like *The Grinch* with her. She goes over our "gameplan" to make Christmas gifts for our parents without them finding out. She asks me what I think about the messes the Elf on the Shelf would make in our house. She talks about Christmas all day, everyday, and I can't help but enjoy it.

As sickly-sweet as it seems, I go along with all her ideas and proposals because I want her to experience the true joy of Christmas. All I see when I look at my sister is the childhood version of myself who would have loved to have a sibling to do all things "Christmassy" with. Perhaps one of the reasons I began to slowly drift away from my love for the holiday was because of how I only had my parents at home to share my over-enthusiastic speeches and plans with. After all, there was a limit to which I could repeat the same ideas about Christmas joy to the people who had heard them hundreds of thousands of times before. Now, when I do anything Christmas-related with my sister, I immediately feel the same fuzzy feeling I did when I was a Christmas-obsessed little kid. When I think to myself, I always hope that my sister and I will continue to do all these activities together, just so that we can both bask in all the warmth and comfort that Christmas has to offer.

# MAN, I LOVE CLIMBING

On August 1st, 2023, I was invited to go rock climbing by one of my friends. He'd already managed to convince the rest of our mutual friend group to go with him, so I agreed – partially out of FOMO, partially because I was genuinely interested.



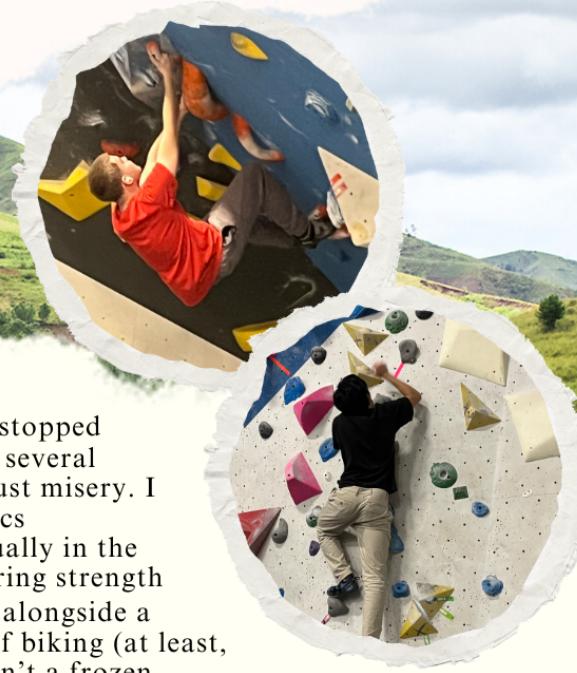
Two weeks later, I went again.

I was fully expecting to be nigh-immobile the day after my second climb. I was greeted, however, with a pleasant surprise the following morning; I felt no more sore than I'd feel after a long bike ride, or an intensive workout.

Rock climbing was only the most recent step in my journey of self improvement. The year before, I'd finally taken interest in the health and strength of my body. I started researching the process of losing fat and gaining muscle, alongside how to work out effectively, making sure to target all my major muscles. I started making use of the exercise equipment I'd always ignored at home, doing some kind of workout or calisthenics every day.

I suppose it's a shame that even with that much conviction, I still hated working out. I'd get home from school, force myself to lift some weights and do some body movements, and feel both bored and miserable through it all. It wasn't because it was too hard, but there was just something in me that despised the feelings of strength training. Being consistent with any sort of training regimen is the most important part of said training regimens, but could I really be consistent with something I utterly despised?

I woke up the next day feeling an overwhelming soreness in the vast majority of my muscles. It hurt to sit up and grab my phone off my nightstand, but displayed on the screen were dozens of notifications in our group chat, all complaining about the same thing; the soreness. It's hard to underestimate just how weak we all felt, from the ripped skin on our palms to the inability to do a sit-up or even stretch our arms without pain.



No. That's why I stopped working out after several months – It was just misery. I still did calisthenics occasionally – usually in the context of comparing strength with my friends – alongside a copious amount of biking (at least, when Canada wasn't a frozen wasteland), but never direct strength training, the thing that actually made me interested in self-improvement.

That is, until I started climbing. The most-repeated advice about workout routines is to choose something you can stick with, because doing anything is better than doing nothing. I'd resigned to thinking that I was too weak or lacked discipline to really stay on-track with a strength training regimen, when in reality, I just hadn't found something that resonated with me. And I suppose that I'm lucky that climbing is what I stuck with, because it turns out it's pretty much a full-body workout (well, except your chest, but you can always just do some pushups at home).

I'm an avid climber now, with a re-ignited passion for improving my body. Not for looks, but to make rock climbing movements like pull-ups and mantles easier. I'm not exactly great at climbing, given how I've only been with it for half a year, and I'm certainly in no position to speak about its intricacies or any kind of technique... But I'm sticking with it.

And that's better than nothing at all.

# How to Study With a Winter Aesthetic

// YASMIN HADIZAD  
PHOTOGRAPHY // DANIEL YANG  
DESIGN // ANDREW CHU



SPYGLASS'S HOLIDAY FAVS

*Ah*, the sweet coming of winter. Many of us know the excitement that comes with the season of crisp white snow and annoying Christmas music on the radio. One of the best parts about the holiday season, at least, in my opinion, is the aesthetic of it all. You know, that feeling of warmth you get watching the flakes fall outside your window with a hot mug in your hand, the sleepy joy you feel wrapped in a blanket in front of a bonfire, the nostalgia you feel listening to old Christmas classics and watching old Christmas movies— that feeling.

With the anticipated advent of winter comes hot cocoa, wonky snowmen, candy canes, snow angels, gingerbread, fat presents placed under a sparkling pine, and...about 10,000 new assignments.

My guess is that, to celebrate the first snow of December, your teachers have decided to hit you with an avalanche of homework. Tests, quizzes, assignments, projects, ISUs, and, if you're in the twelfth grade (like me), lengthy university supplementaries to write on top of all that. So much for holiday cheer. With our heads buried in our notebooks, it can be hard to find much joy in the aesthetics of the holidays. But often one finds that holiday spirit is a state of mind, and that a little in the winter aesthetic can go a long way towards improving not only your rapidly descending mental health, but your motivation and work ethic as well. Since you're probably going to be spending a lot of time slaving away this winter, here is my personal comprehensive guide on studying with the maximum possible winter aesthetic. Grab your cocoa and your Pinterest boards~ let's dive in.

## 1. Have a warm holiday drink at the ready.

Whether it be tea, a Starbucks peppermint latte, or a classic mug of hot cocoa littered with marshmallows, a hot drink is an absolute must for winter study time. Before you study, plan ahead. Buy or make your drink fresh and set it next to you on your desk to sip while you work. To reap the full aesthetic benefits of your hot beverage, make sure to pause every once in a while to really enjoy the heat as you take a nice, long sip.



## **2. Light a toasty spice-scented candle.**

If you were a big fan of pumpkin spice in October, you'll know what I'm talking about when I say that smell is essential to proper study focus. Many research projects have identified the benefits of smell to one's learning and memory, so in addition to filling your room with the sweet aroma of cinnamon, a good winter-themed candle can actually improve your studying. Who knew that a little peppermint could go such a long way?

Bath & Body Works and White Barn are my personal favourite sources of seasonal candles, but if you love your wallet, Walmart and Dollarama are perfectly good alternatives.

Now, the smell of your candle is crucial to your winter aesthetic experience. Peppermint, nutmeg, and gingerbread are the obvious choices, but anything from fresh pine to apple-cinnamon to vanilla work wonderfully in creating that cosy holiday vibe. In the end, it's about choosing the scent that makes you feel the most of the winter, but anything woodsy or sweet does the job best.

## **3. Get a blanket or sit near a crackling bonfire.**

Warmth is the key to maximum winter toastiness. If you can, have a heater nearby, set up your studies in a warm area, or, best of all, wrap yourself in a thick winter blanket—side effects may include accidental naps at your desk, but it's worth it. Remember, though, never study in your bed. Ever. I know it's tempting, but you don't want to wake up at 2am with your notes in your lap stressing about having to cram tomorrow, do you?

## **4. Put on some relaxing holiday music.**

From Micheal Bublé to Mariah Carey, everyone knows the importance of music to the holiday aesthetic. Music is also one of the most effective study aides to students everywhere, so, when combining the winter aesthetic with proper study focus, music is absolutely crucial. In fact, it's the biggest must on this list. Even if you hate hot drinks, don't have a single heater or blanket, and have never owned a scented candle in your life, putting on some classic holiday tunes can make all the difference turning a boring study session into a relaxing winter pastime.

As for what music to choose, I'd say, it depends on what you're working on. Of course, pick whatever floats your boat, from All I Want for Christmas is You

on loop to a soft winter Lofi playlist. However, as a rule of thumb, pick music with little to no lyrics for when you need to really focus on a difficult homework assignment or when you're studying for a test. In these cases, you need all of your memory and your focus, and playing "Classic Christmas Hits" on YouTube could get you a bit distracted. Feel free to belt Let it Snow while working on some simple homework, but for more heavy and demanding tasks, lofi is my go-to.

Currently, my favourite holiday study playlist is "christmas study music" by joeycimino on Spotify, but typing "holiday study music" into any music app search bar should get you some good lyricless winter study playlists. My strongest recommendation for holiday study music though, is Lofi Girl. On both Spotify and Apple Music, Lofi Girl has recently released full albums of Christmas-themed lofi for all your studying needs. They also have a nearly ad-free Christmas lofi radio on YouTube to study with all winter-long, which I have been obsessed with lately. I'm literally listening to it right now, as I'm writing this. No joke.



## **5. Leave the curtains drawn.**

And now, to add the final touch to your aesthetic winter study session, try to incorporate the outdoor environment into your studies. If you can, sit somewhere with a window view and leave your curtains drawn. If you're lucky, the weather will add an extra hint of holiday wonder to the atmosphere. Let the snowy roofs and cloudy skies finish the scene and take time during your study breaks to look out the window in awe of the world beyond your screen.

## **6. Live the holiday aesthetic.**

Finally, make sure to indulge in the holiday aesthetic outside your study sessions as well. When you truly take time to live the holiday aesthetic, it permeates into your study time and makes your winter-themed studying even more enjoyable. So, spend time making winter or holiday boards on Pinterest, creating holiday playlists, buying cute Christmas decor for your room, or just spending quality time with your family, hanging ornaments on the Christmas tree.

Now, go forth and conquer your endless assignments and quizzes with your newfound winter motivation. Happy holidays everyone!



# Dinner at Eight, Dead by Nine

On Wednesday, November 29th, the Grade 11 drama class performed a spectacular recreation of the show, "Dinner at Eight, Dead by Nine".

The play revolves around the life of Eleanor Van Heusen, a wealthy theatre actress and philanthropist, famous for her snobby behaviour and egocentric personality. The story truly begins when Van Heusen falls face first into her plate of spaghetti, and guests in the audience become witnesses to murder.

Alongside Van Heusen, the play introduces a spectrum of other characters that challenge her arrogant demeanor and all have reasons to dislike her. In this case, Detective Bungler and Detective Ivan are tasked with the challenge of finding the killer.

"This play was fun, it was interesting, and it was a really unique idea," said Sana Zare, the actor of Hadley, Eleanor's niece-in-law. "It was really challenging at some points, because it forced us [the actors] to work together in harmony."

With a full house, the cafeteria was packed —the large audience consisting of supportive families, students, and teachers. The viewers were immersed into a night of comedy, mystery, and delicious food.

"We made Caprese skewers, baked potatoes with sour cream, brie on rosemary crackers, and bruschetta. We also served spaghetti and meatballs with tomato sauce, since that was a key dish that was actually used in the show," said Evelina Mai, one of the secretaries on the Family Studies Council. "A lot of hard work went into preparing the food in the kitchens, but it was definitely worth it in the end. It was a lot of fun making dinner with everyone, and we also got many compliments about the food, so that's another bonus!"

The play was gripping, packed with twists and turns that left the audience at the edge of their seats, in awe as they watched the events of the night unfold. From heartfelt flashback scenes to dramatic plot twists, guests were captivated by the suspense and glamour of the performance, even being able to interact with different characters as the show went on.

"This play was so unique because of how involved the audience was able to be in the dinner theatre component. The play itself was set in the dinner theatre, and this allowed for an immersive experience where both guests and actors played a big part in creating the overall trajectory of the evening. Some of the actors were actually sitting at the tables with the guests, and the servers handing out appetizers were actors as well," said Mrs. Mann, the director of the play.

As the night came to a close and the curtains fell, celebrations took place. Actors cheered backstage, and the crowd erupted in thunderous applause that resonated throughout the theatre.

"Overall, the process was really fun but also really challenging. In directing a group of 28 students, you have to think about all of their individual skill levels and make sure you have different opportunities for each student in the class to shine," said Mrs. Mann.

"In the end, it was really rewarding," she continued. "Each person in the class was able to have their own moment and I was really, really proud of the work they did. From the lights, to the sounds, to our stage managers, to our students working in the kitchen, and to the students on the stage, everything was executed beyond my expectations."

With hard work from all departments, it is needless to say that the night was a massive success.

Now, the question of who killed Eleanor—that's a job for the detectives.

But one thing is for certain: it was a night for everyone to remember.

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