

Alexis Heflin: The Good, the Great, and the Greater

By Clare McGlaughlin

Excellent teaching skills, broad cultural exposure, and a great sense of humor sound like the package deal! Well-Trained Mind Academy has been lucky to get just that in Alexis Heflin, our Latin and ancient history teacher. Born in and currently residing in Louisiana, Mrs. Heflin is the oldest of 4. Though she did not take Latin classes until the 7th grade, since then, she has not stopped learning the language and has been working with Latin for 33 years.

In her studies at Middlebury College in Vermont, she majored in French and the Classics with a focus on Latin and was advised to go into teaching, which ended up being the right choice! She taught in public schools in Virginia until she and her husband moved to Louisiana. Unfortunately, their area schools did not offer Latin courses.



Alexis Heflin

Luckily, WTMA gave Mrs. Heflin a way to teach Latin and many students a chance to learn it remotely. For this dedicated teacher, WTMA was an "amazing opportunity," allowing her to expand her course catalog into mythology courses and Latin Club and her wonderful teaching skills to be shared with those who would not have otherwise had access to them, including students who move mid-year and can continue their classical education. Mrs. Heflin is also an adventurous person, having traveled to quite a few countries. For her own studies and to accompany students, she has been to Japan,

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to our second issue. Let me begin by saying that none of this would have been possible without our amazing writers and supervisor, Dr. Lisa Gentile. We have been working behind the scenes since the beginning of the semester to ensure that this edition is as intriguing, educational, and straightforward as the first.

Newspapers have been integral to the mass education of the public about both local and global current events since their introduction in the mid-1500s. Even influential American figures like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson had their gazettes, which they exploited to influence public opinion. Newspapers were the primary means through which people learned about significant historical events, including Christopher Columbus's 'discovery' of the New World and the beheading of several French monarchs. Therefore, newspapers have always served as an essential tool for disseminating information and were frequently relied upon by many.

This semester, we proudly present a compelling assortment of articles that we know will captivate our fellow readers. Arts and culture, science and technology, and current events are some of the columns offered by our newspaper. We have a diverse set of topics ranging from the upcoming American presidential election to the newly released Disney+ Percy Jackson series. All in all, we hope to provide our readers with an enjoyable and educational experience.

Happy reading!

Aanandhamayi Romero, Editor-in-Chief

China, Russia, Australia, Peru, and 10 to 15 European countries. Fluent in French, she has also studied some Italian and Spanish to better understand Latin, and she also knows a bit of German and Japanese.

Mrs. Heflin's eight-year-old dog, Spot, also enjoys her teaching from home. Part-Australian cattle dog and part-Latin learner, Spot has started to jump whenever she says "vale!" at the end of her classes. Her students are always enthusiastic whenever they get a glimpse of Spot, as one particularly unique aspect of WTMA vs. brick-and-mortar schools is being able to see your teachers' pets.

In her free time, Mrs. Heflin enjoys walking Spot, exercising, following college gymnastics, hanging out with friends and family, and reading. She reads in English for the most part, though she has been doing some more reading in Latin in preparation for the reading club that WTMA offers students, which provides a fun way to keep their Latin skills sharp over the summer! Historical fiction and nonfiction books grab Mrs. Heflin, who has been especially interested in the Middle Ages. She finds it interesting to see Latin's influence in the post-classical period and how the language changed, was influenced, or stayed the same.

With her language experience, travel to other countries, and excellent teaching skills, Mrs. Heflin is a unique asset to Well-Trained Mind Academy. Her classes are well-organized and interesting. Given her engaging teaching and homework, students have no choice but to learn.



Spot

Science & Tech
Viruses: To Be or Not to Be?

By Claire McGlaughlin

...When a virus infects an organism, it hijacks the host cell's reproductive system to duplicate itself, showing that the line between life and nonlife is blurry."... Page 2

Feature
The Naval Observatory:
Tracing Its History

By Mae Paul and Katelyn Deng

... Intriguingly, United States Vice President Kamala Harris calls one of the oldest scientific agencies in America, the US Naval Observatory, her home... Page 7

Off the Beat
The Memory Palace
Technique

By Valentin Wunderlich

... To "build a memory palace," first choose a place you know well—a single room, a whole house, even a street—and mentally visualize it.... Page 8

Exploring the Universe: Celebrating Three Years of the James Webb Space Telescope

By Katelyn Deng

Last December marked an important anniversary for all space lovers and cosmic fans: three years ago, the James Webb Space Telescope launched from the Guiana Space Centre on Christmas Day. As the engines ignited and the Ariane 5 rocket transporting the telescope soared into the sky, carrying with it the collective ambition of the global scientific community, audiences cheered at the success. Victory at long last. A reporter announced in triumph, "From a tropical rainforest to the edge of time itself, James Webb begins a voyage back to the birth of the universe."

Named in honor of NASA's second administrator, this telescope results from a decades-long collaboration between NASA, the European Space Agency (ESA), and the Canadian Space Agency (CSA). With highly advanced technological features (including four different types of mirrors) and a potential for radical observations, the Webb telescope promises to be a revolutionary leap in space exploration.

Unlike its predecessor, the Hubble Space Telescope, the James Webb Space Telescope, or JWST for short, is designed to operate mainly in the infrared range. The infrared range is a part of the electromagnetic spectrum made mostly of invisible heat radiation. It goes beyond what our eyes can see, since human vision is limited only to the visible light spectrum.

However, some devices, like the JWST, use infrared to detect heat and visualize



Image: NASA, ESA, CSA, STScI, Alberto Bolatto (UMD), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

objects. This shift in focus allows the telescope to pierce cosmic dust clouds, providing clearer views of what once was shrouded in mystery. Still, the most extraordinary part of Webb's telescope is the mirror.

At the heart of the JWST lies its colossal, gold-coated mirror, spanning an impressive 6.5 meters in diameter (nearly 100 times larger than Hubble's). This mirror and a collection of cutting-edge scientific instruments allow the telescope to capture faint signals from distant celestial objects. In addition, the JWST is equipped with an enormous, deployable sun shield the size of a tennis court, protecting its delicate instruments from the Sun's intense heat and allowing for more precise observations.

Another intriguing detail about the JWST is its ability to function as a cosmic time machine. By capturing light that has traveled across the universe for billions of years, the

James Webb telescope may observe the formation of the first galaxies, the birth of stars, and perhaps even the Big Bang. Scientists hope that these discoveries can lead to more knowledge about the beginning of life on Earth as we know it today. Through the eyes of the Webb telescope, it's like peering back in time to witness the birth of our universe.

For those who mourn the retirement of the famous Hubble Space Telescope, no need to worry! While the Hubble has been a faithful companion in space exploration, the James Webb is not intended to replace it but to complement its capabilities. The Hubble has provided us with breathtaking images and invaluable data over the past three decades, and the JWST is ready to build on that legacy, delving deeper into the cosmos and shedding light on phenomena that have remained mysteries until now.

The last three years have contained significant cosmic milestones for all science enthusiasts worldwide since the James Webb Space Telescope has been continually sending radical information about the wonders of space. Yet, the JWST is not just a scientific tool. It is a symbol of human curiosity and determination, a representation of how hard scientists have worked to make this telescope come to life. As the JWST continues to orbit slowly from its position in the cosmos above, it also offers a fresh perspective on the universe and our small yet vital place within it. Happy Birthday, James Webb!

Viruses: To Be or Not to Be, the Endless Debate

By Clare McGlaughlin

How would you decide if something is alive? It is a question that may seem simple at first glance, but the more you think about it, the harder it is to define. Biologists attempt to answer this question by using the characteristics of life, such as growing, responding to the environment, reproducing, being made of cells, and maintaining homeostasis (a state of steady internal conditions). Some things fit into this list, like mammals, while others don't, like rocks. The interesting territory is where things are right on the blurry line.

Viruses walk the fine line between life and nonlife. When they were first discovered, bacteria-like things that caused disease, the consensus was that they were alive. This notion changed in the 1930s when their structure was investigated more closely. The National Human Genome Research Institute says that viruses are microbes that consist of either RNA or DNA under a protein coating. Smallpox, Covid-19, and measles are all examples of viruses that can affect humans; however, viruses can also infect other animals and even bacteria.

When a virus infects an organism, it hijacks the host cell's reproductive system to duplicate itself, showing that the line between life and nonlife is blurry. While the machinery inside a virus does not resemble living organisms very closely, it does have some agency in its reproduction. Viruses cannot reproduce entirely on their own, but they also aid in reproducing.

This debate might seem like the scientific community nitpicking around the edges of classifications. However, as Scientific American



Graphic by Bree Fowler

points out, this discussion matters because how scientists view life affects how they think about evolution. When the possibility that viruses may bleed into the category of life is ignored, it is easy to minimize their effects on the development of life. Notably, most viruses are not pathogenic, meaning they do not cause disease but can live dormant in host cells for extended periods.

Researchers like Philip Bell of Macquarie University believe that viruses may be able to account for the development of the nucleus. It is possible that a large DNA virus started living in a prokaryote, developing into a nucleus over time. Furthermore, it is probable that some of the enzymes that aid in DNA replication likely have a viral origin.

Viruses mimic both the animate and inanimate, depending on whether they are actively hijacking a cell or remaining dormant. However, regardless of where we draw the line for living organisms, it is important to acknowledge something's effect on life. Even though the question of whether viruses are alive will remain contentious, we should still see them as influential parts of our ecosystem.

Tommy Emmanuel: Talented Guitarist & Inspirational Soul

Review by Valentin Wunderlich

Tommy Emmanuel is an internationally acclaimed guitarist who has contributed invaluable to guitar artistry and innovation in classical music styles. Over the decades, he has written songs for solo fingerstyle guitar and collaborated with numerous artists in multiple genres, including jazz, country, bluegrass, blues, and rock.

Born in Muswellbrook, Australia in 1955, Tommy played guitar with his older brother Phil from a young age. The two boys never took lessons or read sheet music, teaching themselves, analytically listening to records, and jamming together instead. Tommy replicated all the instrumental elements of songs he heard—piano, drums, guitar, and more on his one guitar.

Since then, his "one-man band" approach to songwriting, musical influences, virtuoso talent, sincere personality, work ethic, and experience have earned him a reputation as the "world's best acoustic guitar player" and for delivering unforgettable concerts.

Tommy Emmanuel on Stage in 2006

https://www.flickr.com/photos/janet_dancer/175935684/



Tommy's music career began at age six, and he and Phil toured Australia with their parents for most of their childhood, gaining national fame on the music scene. Once Tommy was old enough to tour

alone, the brothers continued playing together but worked more independently as time passed, all the while maintaining their close bond.

Tommy expanded his career when he moved to the L.A. area, where he started playing bigger gigs and collaborating with other artists in various genres. Since those days in the early '80s, he has contributed his musical skill to numerous records by musicians and groups like Les Paul, Eric Clapton, Sir George Martin, the Australian band Dragon, and The String Revolution (with whom he won a Grammy this February, for a cover of Johnny Cash's "Folsom Prison Blues"). Tommy has also recorded multiple solo albums.

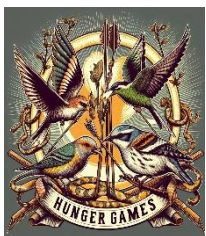
One of the most influential people in Tommy's life was fingerstyle guitarist Chet Atkins, his musical and personal mentor and good friend for two decades. In 1999, Atkins gave Tommy the title of Certified Guitar Player, which recognizes guitarists who "[excel] far beyond the normal line of playing."

In October 2023, at a small venue, I saw a Tommy Emmanuel concert with my mom and my brother, a passionate guitarist. In the first hour, Tommy played with country artists Larry Campbell and Teresa Williams, and then he took the stage on his own. Tommy is very connected to his audience; he frequently interacts with them and does not have a planned set list, instead drawing from the audience's energy and deciding in the moment what is best to play. It is difficult to describe his unique skill and style and the delight, passion, and energy he radiates in his performance.

No matter what kind of music you typically enjoy, a Tommy Emmanuel concert is a joyous, memorable experience. Tommy once said, "When I was a kid, I wanted to be in show business. Now, I just want to be in the happiness business. I play music, and you get happy. That's a good job." Tommy Emmanuel's 2024 global tour starts March 28 and ends November 22.

The 2023 Holiday Film Season By Kaitlyn Lamb

The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes Should Have Stayed a Book



In 2020, author Suzanne Collins surprised Hunger Games fans by releasing another book: *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*, the story of a young Coriolanus Snow, eventually the wicked President Snow from the original trilogy. The prequel was a success, so it was no surprise that Lionsgate announced they would adapt the project into a film. The movie's two leads are Tom Blyth as Snow and Rachel Zegler as Lucy Gray, a singer from District 12 who is reaped into the Hunger Games. Snow is assigned to be Lucy's mentor, so his job is to help her survive while entertaining the citizens of the Capitol. Blyth does an excellent job in this role. His mannerisms are close enough to Donald Sutherland's (who played Snow in the original movies) to keep the prequel connected, but his portrayal is still unique enough to be interesting.

While Zegler's fake country accent can be cringe-worthy at times, she does an outstanding job of showing Lucy's emotion through her singing, prioritizing acting over a perfect vocal performance. Olivia Rodrigo's song, "Can't Catch Me Now," which plays through the credits, is a haunting ending to the film. The chorus's intermingling crowd voices produce an effect reminiscent of Mockingjays, and the lyrics serve as Lucy's response to the finale.

The biggest issue with the film is its pacing. Balanced with the best humor, emotion, and

action, the second act stands out among the three. The screenwriters had the novel's integrity at heart, leaving them with no room to change the ambiguous ending. While a vague ending was intentional, it was supposed to haunt Snow for years to come, yet it is unsatisfying. After investing three hours of your life into these characters, an ending like that doesn't hit home like it should.

Like any of the previous Hunger Games adaptations, the action works better on screen than it does within the confines of the written word. The best part is how incredibly emotional each action sequence is. The message of *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* demonstrates how fragile humanity is and how quickly we denounce our beliefs and turn to survival. That theme is executed extremely well. Every line said in the arena plays into the horror of children killing each other and the atrocity of the Capitol's enjoyment.

Yet, with such odd pacing and a confusing story, many audiences will be left with more questions than they had when walking in, ruining the purpose of a prequel. Exploring a villain is interesting, but Snow doesn't work well as a protagonist. The creators were going for a moral dilemma, but rather than conveying the food for thought they intended, it feels confusing.

Most of the characters are intriguing, but there are too many. There are 24 tributes, each with a mentor, plus other miscellaneous characters. Having read the book or not, the viewer will undoubtedly have trouble keeping track of them. While *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* is a unique and emotional adaptation, the filmmakers seem preoccupied with pleasing the die-hard fans rather than making the story accessible to new viewers.

Wonka: A Surprisingly Charming Family Film

Most people, myself included, did not have the highest hopes for *Wonka*. When the first trailer dropped, many were quick to point out issues with the movie.



Everyone seemed to agree that it would be boring and ridiculous. Fast-forward to the film's release, and I was pleasantly surprised to find that *Wonka* is, in fact, one of the best family movies to come out in years.

The best part of the movie is how faithful it is to Roald Dahl's sense of humor and overall style. Though it is not based on a particular one of his books, just the character of Willy Wonka, the movie keeps the combination of lighthearted charm with just a touch of darker themes that made previous *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* films so successful.

Wonka is a musical, and while the songs aren't spectacular, they're not bad either. The rhymes are fun, and the songs usually do a good job of telling the story musically. The whole movie is quite funny. It doesn't rely on adult humor or the usual awkward jokes found in kids' movies; it finds a place in the middle where anyone will laugh.

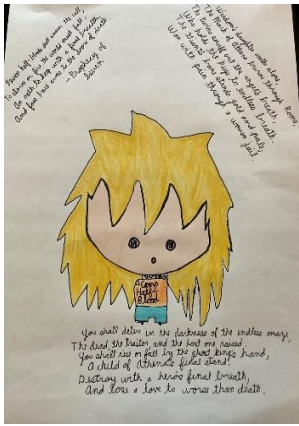
Visually, it is colorful and unique. While it doesn't tie in with a particular version of Willy Wonka we've seen on screen before, it could easily fit with any of them. The sets are colorful, and Timothee Chalamet's acting makes Willy a great protagonist. *Wonka* is a charming and genuinely hilarious film that can be enjoyed at any age.

So, You Think Your Math Teacher Is a Greek Monster?

Review of *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* by Mae Paul

The moment we've all been waiting for finally came. The wildly-hyped show *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* debuted on December 19, 2023. Fans of the books, deeply disappointed by the 2010 movies, have long waited eagerly for this day.

Based on the best-selling books by Rick Riordan, the show follows the quest of three kids: Percy Jackson (Walker Scobell), the son of Poseidon, Annabeth Chase (Leah Jeffries), daughter of Athena, and Grover Underwood (Aryan Simhadri), their half-human half-goat protector. They must trek across America to find Zeus's stolen master lightning bolt. Through incredibly bad luck, the world's fate rests on their shoulders. Not only must they tackle monsters, but they must also deal with their own family, who threaten to go to war. The Olympian gods seem to always be at odds



with each other, and the three very unfortunate youngsters must prevent WWII. On top of all this, monsters and gods are intent on thwarting their every move, and time seems to be moving extra fast.

The show was released on Disney+ and given a \$12-15 million budget per episode. There was also a race-blind casting, leading to inevitable scrutiny and criticism. Lance Reddick, a Black actor, plays Zeus. A Black 14-year-old actress plays Annabeth Chase, though in the books, Annabeth is white. Grover Underwood is also played by a person of color, as is Chiron (Glynn Turman), the centaur and activities director of Camp Half-Blood. Both Leah Jeffries and Aryan Simhadri channel the energy of their characters: Jeffries with Annabeth's intelligence and no-nonsense personality, and Simhadri with Grover's patience, understanding, and almost innocent-like charm. The show has an amazingly diverse cast, reflecting the diversity of today's world.

The cast also has some big-name guest actors. Lin-Manuel Miranda (star of *Hamilton*) plays Hermes, the goofy delivery man for the gods and Luke's father. Sadly, he didn't perform his best, as he did not have the mischievous, sly personality of Hermes from the books. His acting fell flat, a real shame for someone so revered in the acting industry. Another major god was a big disappointment: Hades. Jay Duplass gives Hades an easy-going, friendly personality, while he should have been dark, silent, and brooding (also, for attentive fans, he should be Italian). Meghan Mullally (Karen Walker from *Will and Grace*) plays Mrs. Dodds, one of Hades's three Furies and a part-time pre-algebra teacher. Unlike Miranda or Duplass, she portrays her character's dangerous and cunning personality well.

For the first two episodes, Disney+ received 572 million minutes of watching time. In the United States alone, they reached a stunning 7.15 million viewers and 13.3 million watches worldwide. During its first three weeks on air, it has captured 26.2 million people and has reached the top ten on streaming lists. Costumes, sets, scenery—they were all perfect. Even the music adds suspense. Bear McCreary, my favorite film composer, nailed the music. Some might know him for his soundtracks of *The Rings of Power*, *The Outlanders*, and (the one I love the most) the critically acclaimed reboot of *Battlestar Galactica*.

Besides being a gripping show with believable characters, the show is also educational. Though I learned many Greek myths in elementary school, I only fully remembered them once I read the Percy Jackson books. It felt impossible to keep track of the seemingly endless number of gods and goddesses, but after reading the books, I knew most of them by heart.

The books aren't just about the gods. Percy and his demigod friends encounter a wide range of ancient Greek monsters, from the formidable Medusa to *dracanae*, female reptilian humanoids with snake trunks instead of legs. These tales contain a rich variety of creatures and myths. Whatever the age, I think this show is worth a watch. As to who stole the bolt, you'll have to watch to find out!



Graphic by Bree Fowler

2024 Music Showdown: Bad Bunny vs. Drake

By Aanandhamayi Romero

As we approached 2024, many left school and work to relax, but the music industry did not follow suit. In January, Ariana Grande released "Yes and?" amid cheating rumors, sparking controversy among her fans. In October 2023, Britney Spears' book "The Woman in Me" revealed disturbing secrets about other artists, leading to public shame. Not only scandals have aroused the internet. Many notable music artists have announced that they will tour in 2024. I will compare tour estimates for two of the 44 artists touring in 2024. With all these events occurring in the music industry, 2024 promises to be an exciting year for fans.

In 2022, Bad Bunny generated over 18.5 billion streams, making it the biggest streaming year in Spotify history for any artist. Some of you know Bad Bunny for singing "Perro Negro," "Monoco," or "Mi Porto Bonito," while others may know him as the now ex-boyfriend of Kendall Jenner. Bad Bunny has solidified himself as one of the most successful artists of the decade.

Bad Bunny's upcoming tour, the "2024 Most Wanted Tour," is projected to surpass his previous tour's record-breaking \$435 million gross. The high ticket price of \$708 on average left many fans disappointed. A Bad Bunny concert typically lasts for two hours. The

tour's opening concert will commence on February 23, 2024, in Salt Lake City, Utah, while the concluding concert is set for May 26, 2024, in Miami, Florida. Most of the tour will take place in the United States, but one concert will be held in Toronto, Ontario. Seeing how much money he makes in these four months alone will be exciting. Overall, Bad Bunny's tour will surely be a huge success, both in terms of fans and money. A \$250 million net worth and being the number-one streamed artist on Spotify in 2016 and 2022 make Drake the second biggest artist globally this year. His tour is expected to gross USD 200 million (which is twice as much as his last tour). Drake is well known for his songs like "One Dance" and "God's Plan". This year, he is expected to exceed the gross totals of other major touring artists like The Rolling Stones, Janet Jackson, and Olivia Rodrigo. Altogether, Drake's success in the music industry makes him one of the most successful artists in the world.

"It's All A Blur" was announced by Drake on November 13, 2023. The tour will begin in Tampa, Florida, on February 2, 2024, and conclude in Denver, Colorado, on April 16, 2024. Drake is also expected to tour Europe in the extended part of his tour, although the exact dates have not yet been confirmed. The average price per ticket on his tour will be almost \$600 less than Bad Bunny. Overall, Drake's tour is expected to draw in a large number of fans but may yield low financial returns compared to Bad Bunny's tour.

Despite these estimates, several factors contribute to the success of a tour. The size of an artist's fanbase plays a significant role in determining the tour's success. As previously discussed, Bad Bunny possesses a larger fanbase than Drake. Therefore, he has more fans who can and will spend that much money on a concert ticket. Bad Bunny's last tour made four times as much money as Drake's. As a result, it won't be a matter of "Which tour will make the most money" but rather "Will Bad Bunny be able to surpass his current record of 435 million dollars?"

Presidential Elections and the Importance of Primaries

By Anna Miller

This year has brought about many big events, including the 2024 U.S. presidential election. In the United States, presidential elections are held every four years to elect the country’s leader. The first presidential election took place from December 15, 1788, to January 7, 1789, when George Washington and John Adams became the first president and vice president of the United States. Since then, fifty-nine presidential elections have been held.

A presidential election is when the president and vice president of the United States get elected indirectly by U.S. citizens who are registered to vote. In contrast to direct elections used by many republics worldwide, the United States holds indirect elections. Voters in indirect elections do not select candidates for office but elect electors who then vote for the candidates instead. The candidate who receives the majority of the votes will win the election and get elected into that office. Congress certifies election results in January, followed by Inauguration Day on January 20, which marks the start of the presidential term. If no candidate receives the majority of the votes, the House of Representatives will elect the president, and the Senate will elect the vice president.

To vote in a U.S. presidential election, you must be a U.S. citizen, at least 18 years old, and have not been convicted of a felony. Though each state has its own requirements, such as being a resident of that state at least a month before the election, most states will allow you to register to vote when you are 17 as long as you turn 18 by Election Day. North Dakota is the only U.S. state that allows voting without voter registration. Voters can vote online, by mail, or in person at a local election office. Voting in any election, whether local, state, or presidential, is not mandatory.

Many people do not understand the importance of voting and overlook and ignore the primary elections. The primaries play a crucial role in determining the outcome of the general elections. They narrow the list of candidates who will make it to the final election in November. The candidates who win the primary elections usually become the official nominees of their respective political parties for the general elections. Primary elections can include “open primaries,” where you vote regardless of your association with a party, and “closed primaries,” where you must be registered with a party to vote. It is important not to underestimate the significance of primaries, as they give voters a voice in shaping the future of our nation and will ultimately determine the nominee for each political party.

Some important dates for this year’s presidential election include the Republican National Convention, which will take place from July 15-18 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and the Democratic National Convention, which will take place from August 19-22 in Chicago. In addition, the general election presidential debates and vice-presidential debates are scheduled to take place this fall in various locations across



the U.S. Lastly, the sixtieth presidential election since 1789 will take place on November 5, 2024. The race for the presidency is underway, and the primary elections have already begun. We now wait in anticipation as the 2024 presidential election unfolds before us.

Photo credit : <https://www.pexels.com/photo/american-flags-and-pins-on-white-background-4669109/>

The Annual Grammy Awards: 66th Time’s A Charm?

By Bree Fowler

On February 4, the 66th Annual Grammy Award Ceremony recognized artists for their outstanding work in the musical industry. Given that music is subjective to each person, the Grammys always face some controversy. This year, while some of the artists awarded were diverse, the way other winners received their awards was noticeably different. Even some artists with multiple Grammy wins are starting to catch on. Does each of these artists truly have an equal playing field when it comes to the Grammys?

One of the more notable people who gave a memorable speech was SZA. Before this year, she had been nominated fifteen times and won once with a song that collaborated with Doja Cat. This year, SZA was awarded best R&B song for “Snooze.” She began to tear up in her speech and said, “You don’t really understand. I came really, really far.”



Similarly, Victoria Monét also explained how long she had been waiting and how grateful she was to finally be recognized for her music. She even stated that the award was an endpoint to “a 15-year pursuit.”

Photo credit : SZA performing at a concert. SZA Ctrl Tour. Shot at REBEL on August 23, 2017 in Toronto
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SZA_performing.jpg



Graphic by Bree Fowler

Grammys ever, has never been awarded Album of the Year. In previous years, many Black artists had been boycotting the Grammys by refusing to submit their music. Much of the frustration was directed toward the hip-hop and R&B categories because of the outcome in previous years. One person who brought attention to this treatment was Jay-Z. After receiving Dr. Dre’s Global Impact Award, Jay-Z used his speech to criticize the Grammys for their mistreatment of Black artists. One example he uses is that his wife, Beyonce, who has won the most

A controversial moment during the Grammys was when Taylor Swift announced her new album during her victory speech. Some compared this moment to someone announcing their pregnancy during someone else’s wedding. Considering that the Grammys are thought to be “Music’s Biggest Night,” using the publicity of the Grammys to promote a new album was not taken lightly. Taylor seemed to steal the whole event, making it about her latest album.

Even with all the controversies surrounding this year’s Grammys, there does seem to be more recognition for artists who deserve it. These improvements have greatly affected many of the artists who were awarded this year. SZA’s speech was filled with emotion, and there was a sense of satisfaction after her win in the R&B category. As more Grammy Award Ceremonies come and go, deserving artists will hopefully receive the recognition they worked so hard to obtain. Jay-Z’s speech may also impact the next Grammys so that those who work hard can feel recognized, too.

Beyond the Textbook: Learning Through Museum Experiences

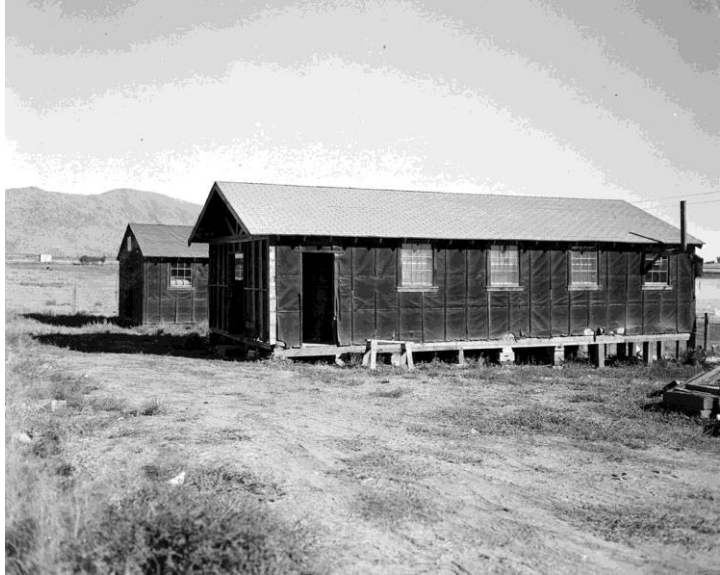
By Katelyn Deng

I’ve always wanted to learn more about the Japanese-American internment camps during World War II. At every chance I got, I would watch documentaries on PBS or dive into books like “Farewell to Manzanar,” “When the Emperor Was Divine,” and “Facing the Mountain.” So, when Mission College announced a field trip to the Japanese-American Museum of Downtown San Jose with Professor Hai Nguyen, I jumped at the opportunity. I packed my bags, and before I knew it, I was on my way to the famous JAMsj. This was such a unique experience; even though I thought I knew so many facts already, being in the museum and seeing the history for myself was an invaluable memory.

The minute our group stepped into the famous Barracks Exhibit at the JAMsj, I instantly regretted my decision to wear a loose long-sleeve indoors. Drafts of freezing wind blew from cracks around the barracks, which the guide explained was due to the entire cabin being made of green wood—wood that hadn’t been properly dried and had shrunk excessively as a result. But it wasn’t just the temperature; everything about the room felt frigid, inhospitable, and unwelcoming. A nearby speaker repeatedly played the ear-splitting wails of a baby, demonstrating how thin the walls were and how little privacy each barrack allowed. A singular light bulb shone dimly in the middle of the room, right above a small oven with broken pipes. The floorboards creaked and groaned loudly beneath the collective weight of our group as we slowly took in our surroundings. I could feel claustrophobia crawl up my throat and discomfort run across my spine. I hadn’t even stood five minutes in the room, yet I already wanted to get out. The Japanese-Americans had managed to survive in these barracks for two to four years.

When reading about Japanese-American incarceration in textbooks, we often experience anger, frustration, or sympathy toward the innocent Japanese-Americans forced to leave behind their entire lives just because of their race. Standing in that cramped, cold room, smaller than an everyday kitchen yet meant to fit six people, I was overcome with the same emotions, but they were more real, raw, and painful. As our tour guide quietly continued describing these inhumane conditions, I tried my best to imagine how I would have felt if I were a young Japanese-American girl forced to leave her home, her school, her friends, and her future to live in these incarceration camps. What would I have thought if I saw the barbed wire fences and the guard towers with armed soldiers that made me feel like a dangerous criminal in prison, except I hadn’t done anything wrong? How would I have even managed the complete lack of privacy in the bathrooms, the sand that blew inside the horse stalls or barracks I would have to live in, and the utter isolation of living in a desert?

Barracks from Japanese American Internment Camp



OSU Special Collections & Archives : Commons, No restrictions, via Wikimedia Commons

Today, it’s tempting to look back on history and judge the past based on the ideals, standards, and norms of the present. While presentism, as it is called, serves as an interesting perspective to consider when learning history, there is always the question of how to judge our ancestors fairly for their actions. I’ve noticed that we often resort to two specific areas in each history class I’ve taken. The first, the classical “textbook” approach, is commonly used across schools and universities. We, as students, gain a vital understanding of history by studying a textbook assigned to the course.

Japanese American Museum of San Jose



Mark Yasuda, CC BY-SA 4.0
<<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

However, the textbook approach is often much more analytical and tends to show a more complex, technical view of history. We learn about different leaders, contrasting political parties, cause-and-effects, approaches to solving crises, and even strategies for warfare. In textbooks, citizens are mostly reduced to black-and-white numbers, photos, and names. While reading the textbook is an undeniably crucial part of understanding how to analyze our history, there are many other perspectives to consider when looking at events from our past and where the second approach, understanding history from the eyes of the people, comes in. Unfortunately, many schools overlook or skim past this idea in favor of the textbook approach. In my opinion, both are equally important. Visiting the museum with my fellow Mission College students gave me a first-hand perspective on the pain and injustice the Japanese-Americans faced in the wake of fear combined with racism. Our tour guide, whose family had gone through the incarceration camps, told us, “The purpose of the JAMsj is to help others remember our story.”

Even after leaving the museum, I continued to reflect on her words. Analytically, the visit confirmed everything I knew about internment from history class: Executive Order 9066 (signed in 1942 by FDR) forced over 100,000 Japanese-American citizens to leave their homes and live in incarceration camps for two to four years. But these were only the facts. Emotionally, the visit overwhelmed me with stories, memories, and experiences no textbook can describe. Everything, from the slips of paper serving as I.D. tags for the Japanese-Americans to the small suitcases in which they had to fit everything precious to them to the cramped barracks they were forced to live in, truly encapsulated the anger, resentment, and confusion of the Japanese-Americans until I almost felt like I was back in 1942 with them. The history textbooks I had read before gave me the context; going to the museum itself turned Japanese-American internment from a long paragraph of facts, statistics, and words into something much more personal.

The Naval Observatory: Tracing Its History

By Mae Paul and Katelyn Deng

Everybody knows where the president lives. In fact, everybody knows an awful lot about him. He is, after all, the most powerful person in the United States, but people don't talk much about his vice president. Where does she live?

Intriguingly, United States Vice President Kamala Harris calls one of the oldest scientific agencies in America, the US Naval Observatory, her home. Located in Washington, D.C., the Observatory (or USNO) is the country's leading astronomical and time data observatory. It was first situated in Foggy Bottom but then moved to Observatory Hill to escape light pollution (unwanted and excessive artificial lighting). The Observatory serves both the U.S. Navy and the Department of Defense.

View of U.S. Naval Observatory Building 1



Public Domain Mark 1. 

President John Quincy Adams signed the bill to create the USNO in 1825, and five years later, on December 6, the building was finished. Adams had advocated tirelessly for this throughout his presidency, citing how Europe had "upward of 130 of these lighthouses of the skies, ...[yet] throughout the whole American hemisphere there is not one." At first, the Observatory was established as merely the Depot of Charts and Instruments, with its primary purpose being to care for, restore, and rate astronomical instruments.

However, as its mission expanded over the years, it was renamed the US Naval Observatory. Situated near the Lincoln Memorial, the USNO became a hub for scientific research. Study after study was conducted within its walls, and in 1855, many of its scientists began to publish their significant findings. Twenty-two years later, astronomer Asaph Hall III discovered Phobos and Deimos, Mars's two moons, while employed by the Observatory.

In 1893, the Observatory relocated to Northwestern D.C., where it remains today. Being out of the city did the USNO good: the blue skies were clearer, and the scientists could explore new theories while studying older ones in the tranquility of Georgetown. The previous site of the USNO, known as the Old Naval Observatory, was named a National Landmark and can still be visited today.

Another significant move took place nearly 60 years later, in 1955. As modern Washington began to form, the heavy air pollution that followed damaged the Observatory's delicate instruments. Thus, the USNO moved its telescopes to Flagstaff, Arizona, where they founded the Naval Observatory Flagstaff Station. Today, this scientific complex holds the Navy's largest telescope ever: the 61-inch "Kaj Strand Astrometric Reflector."

At the Navy's request, the Observatory built a time ball atop its telescope dome. Before the age of electronic devices, the time ball was among the most accurate technologies for measuring time. The ball was dropped every day except Sunday at precisely noon, allowing D.C.'s residents to set their clocks and watches correctly. Twenty years later, the Observatory formed its Time Service, which was used to submit time signals using telegraph lines, and the time ball was retired.

During the Civil War, USNO employees struggled under their enormous workload: supplying the Navy with accurate navigational equipment for strategizing battles. But after the war, the Observatory

blossomed. American astronomers could rely on its information for essential data on stars, planets, and galaxies instead of using European agencies. In 1873, the Observatory instated the world's largest refracting telescope. The "Great Equatorial," as it was called, is still working today. At the country's centennial celebrations, the Observatory proudly displayed all of its scientific research and findings at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia.

In 1893, fed up with the city's increasing pollution, the Observatory moved once more to Northwest Washington, where it resides to this day. The famous American architect Richard Morris Hunt designed the main building, along with the Clock House, the telescope dome, and the Transit Circle buildings. In 1974, it became the official home of the vice president.

Today, the Observatory measures the precise locations of the Sun, moon, specific stars, and other celestial bodies for the Navy, along with multiple agencies, international partners, and the general public as well. It publishes yearly almanacs that include highly valuable data for astronomers, navigators, and spacecraft operators in their studies of space. The agency also researches better methods for collecting astronomical and timing data.

The Vice President resides at Number One Observatory Circle, a large, Queen-Anne-style house located on the grounds of the Naval Observatory. Erected in 1893, the building was initially meant for the observatory superintendent, but in 1923, the Chief of Naval Operations was so enchanted by the house that he took it for himself. For fifty-one years, it remained the lodgings of the Naval Operations chief and his successors until Congress decided to make it the home of the president's number two. They claimed it was more accessible and cost-efficient to house the vice president in a government-provided residence rather than at the V.P.'s personal estate. But this was only going to be *temporary*. To this day, Number One Observatory Circle is still the official temporary dwelling of the V.P.

Vice President Kamala Harris
views the telescope at the Naval Observatory



The White House, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

The Circle had to wait three years before a vice president lived there. Gerald Ford never got the chance to occupy the building because he had become president too quickly, and his VP, Nelson Rockefeller, only used it for parties. So far, only eight vice presidents have lived here: Mondale, Bush, Quayle, Gore, Cheney, Biden, Pence, and now Harris.

Designed by architect Leon E. Dessez, the house spreads across nine thousand square feet, boasting numerous bedrooms, a library, and a kitchen in the basement. The U.S. Navy maintains the area while the Vice President's Residence Foundation raises money for decorating. As the years have passed, each V.P. has added their personal touch to the house. George H. W. Bush constructed a horseshoe pit, and Dan Quayle installed a pool, much to the delight of his successors. Then-Vice President Biden added a tree swing in the Circle. His wife, Jill Biden, built the Family Heritage Garden, which memorialized previous occupants and their family members (including pets, of course). During Pence's stay, his wife even established a beehive and basketball court at the Circle.

The Olympic Refuge Foundation: Helping Refugees Thrive Through Sports

By Anna Miller

The Olympic Refuge Foundation (ORF) was founded by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in September 2017. The foundation aims to support the protection, personal growth, and development of athletes who have been forced to leave their homes for various reasons, such as conflict, natural disasters, and economic reasons. The ORF already works across multiple countries, benefiting thousands of displaced athletes. Its mission is to help young people who are affected by displacement to thrive and feel a sense of belonging through athletics. It allows them to have a fresh start, succeed in sports, and have more opportunities in the future.

In addition to the Olympic Refugee Foundation, there is a Refugee Olympic Team (ROT). The IOC Refugee Olympic Team, managed by the ORF, is a group of remarkable athletes who inspire the world with their talent and determination. The competitors represent diverse refugee communities from various countries as one team at the Olympic Games. These athletes spread hope, enthusiasm, and encouragement to refugees all around the world, showing that sports and the ROT can provide future opportunities fueled by passion and commitment to achieve greatness.

The IOC president, Thomas Bach, declared the creation of the Refugee Olympic Team as “a symbol of hope for all refugees in the world” to “make the world better aware of the magnitude of the crisis.” On May 25, 2022, the Olympic Refugee Foundation and the IOC Refugee Olympic Team were awarded the 2022 Princess of Asturias Award for Sports by the Princess of Asturias Foundation. The award honors individuals or organizations with notable scientific, humanities, and public affairs achievements. The ORF and IOC Refugee Olympic Team received the award because of the opportunities they provide young people worldwide who are affected by displacement to access sports.

The IOC Refugee Olympic Team competed for the first time at the 2016 Summer Rio Olympics under the Olympic Flag. The International Olympic Committee created the first ROT consisting of 10 athletes from various war-torn countries who competed alongside the other 11,000 athletes in Brazil. It raised awareness of the significance of the worldwide refugee crisis and showed that when given the opportunity, refugees can significantly improve the Olympic community. Later, a team of 29 athletes from various countries competed in 12 different sports at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Once again, the Refugee Olympic Team inspired the world with their talent and strength as a team. The Olympic Refuge Foundation has started to hand out scholarships to athletes to be selected for the 2024 Paris Olympics. As of December 2023, 70 Refugee Athletes Scholarship holders are being supported and training hard to be chosen for this summer’s Olympic Games. The athletes represent at least 12 sports and are from over 11 countries, living in more than 22 host countries. With what we have seen from the previous two Olympic Games, there is no doubt that the Refugee Olympic Team will achieve similar success at this summer’s 2024 Paris Olympics.

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/olympic-symbol-landmark-236937/>



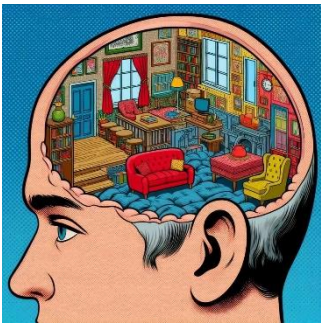
The Memory Palace Technique: Harnessing Our Natural Memory

by Valentin Wunderlich

In the fifth century B.C., Greek poet Simonides, a guest at a banquet, had just been led away by a messenger when, without warning, the banquet hall collapsed, killing and mutilating everyone inside. As family members hurried to the wreckage, scrambling to find unrecognizable loved ones, Simonides, with his sharp orator’s memory, recalled the scene as it had been, seeing in his mind’s eye where each person had stood. He then showed each panicking relative where their loved one had been crushed, relieving some of their anguish.

This tale, while likely a myth, makes the point that spatial memory is powerful; indeed, it is naturally one of the most well-developed aspects of our memory. Thus, spatial memory can be effectively applied to memorization and, in many cases, proves superior to rote memorization (memorizing by sheer repetition). As one might guess from its name, the mnemonic technique known as the “memory palace” takes full advantage of our dynamic spatial memory and two other influential components—associative and visual memory.

To “build a memory palace,” first choose a place you know well—a single room, a whole house, even a street—and mentally visualize it. Then, as you take a mental journey through the place, transform each bit of information you need to memorize into a memorable scene that relates to it, placing each scene at a separate point along the journey. Afterward, “travel” through the place again, and all the scenes should be in order and just as you left them.



Of course, what makes an image or idea “memorable” differs for every person, to some extent; while a hydrogen bomb, minutes from detonation, just sitting on the front porch would stand out to (and alarm) anyone, your particular favorite childhood toy would not. We each have different experiences, ideas, and memories to draw from. However, to demonstrate what an effective memory palace might look like,

here is a general example for the start of the periodic table of elements: hydrogen is the front-porch hydrogen bomb from earlier, which now has mere seconds before detonation; helium is a red helium balloon with white string, ominously floating in your foyer; lithium, a supersized Duracell lithium battery neighboring the nearby hat stand; and beryllium, a giant berry devouring actor Bruce Lee at your dining table (berry-Lee-um).

Alarm, pop culture references, exaggeration of the mundane, and famous people are all in bizarre constellations and inserted into the familiar. The memory palace’s formula no doubt helps in remembering. It uses spatial memory for the journey through the setting, visual memory through the conjured-up images, and associative memory relating an image with both the information it represents and its specific location. Together, these form a logical combination that is ingenious yet simple.

In the modern world, most information we need to remember is not stored in our minds but readily available in countless external sources—the internet, books, signs, notes, and more. Thus, the memory palace, a way of storing some of this information in our minds, is not widely used or known by many people. However, it does have practical uses, such as studying for a test or memorizing phone numbers. And, if nothing else, it is fun to have George Washington stand on the washing machine and John Adams hanging advertisements on the walls around him.