

OUR LEGACY • OUR FUTURE



KINGSLEY VOICE

spring
2025

GENERATIONS *of caring*



King is in an era
of change

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Malcolm
Simmonds is
retiring after
35 years at
R.H. King

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KVC MASTHEAD

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Nasif Alam

Losing intelligence with each scroll



Nabiha Tahseen

Overconsumption of fast-paced media including TikTok and YouTube has left students without focus.

By **Namila Chowdhury**

From simplified school curriculums to the rise of AI doing our thinking for us and the endless scroll of short, dopamine-fueled videos it's hard not to wonder where all of this is taking us. With so much of life becoming automated and entertainment being reduced to quick hits of stimulation a question keeps coming up: are we actually evolving or are we devolving? Are we, as humans, becoming dumber?

Some people think we are getting dumber and they have good reasons to believe that. Schools are simplifying their curriculums and high school averages and university admission averages have been noticeably increasing in the years following COVID-19 bringing up questions regarding whether grades are being inflated or whether the curriculum is becoming easier. Standards that once pushed students to engage in school material have been lowered, making it easier to pass or even excel in courses

without fully understanding the material. Nowadays, we do very little to solve or even think about our problems in general. Almost everything is automated or optimized for us. Why memorize a phone number when your contacts app can store it instantly? Why use a physical map when Google Maps can guide you turn-by-turn? Why brainstorm ideas when you can ask ChatGPT to do it in seconds? Technology has made life easier, but it has also replaced moments where we used to rely on our own thinking.

Rather than innovating or learning skills that used to be considered essential, many young people are handing off their work to artificial intelligence. According to a report by Common Sense Media, *The Dawn of the AI Era: Teens, Parents, and the Adoption of Generative AI at Home and School*, seven out of ten teens reported using generative AI with 53 percent of them using it for homework help. This shows how quickly habits are

changing. While it might seem like a harmless shortcut, it shows a trend of avoiding mental effort in favour of fast answers.

In a world where people are constantly pressed for time, technology can be a useful tool. But right now, it is doing more harm than good in many areas. Schoolwork, like essays and research reports, is meant to develop our minds and strengthen our ability to think independently. With AI doing more of the work, students are denying their brains the stimulation they need to grow.

With all this extra time technology gives us, you'd think we'd use it for something meaningful, but instead, we're filling it with endless content. Whether it's watching TV, scrolling through social media, or bingeing short-form videos, we've traded real experiences for quick dopamine hits.

While this downtime is essential for the brain to rest it is important to note that our

ability to engage with and ponder the things around us dulls over time without constant use.

AI and mindless scrolling feed into each other in a loop. Our dependence on our phones makes us more likely to offload tasks to AI and the time we save just ends up being spent on even more scrolling.

Being "smart" shouldn't just mean getting perfect grades, especially not when a lot of tasks or homework are delegated to AI. It should be about thinking critically and most importantly, creatively. It is impossible to deny the part AI is playing in all of our lives, and it will, inevitably, be a huge part in our futures. However, even if generative AI becomes a common resource, this doesn't mean that we as people no longer have a need to think critically anymore. Anything created by AI shouldn't be instantaneously accepted, and we must acknowledge its biases, assess whether the information is factual, and, most importantly, think for ourselves first.

We also need to recognize that sometimes, the problem is our darn phones! The extra time that AI will give us, especially as technology only becomes more advanced in the future and our world becomes more convenient, shouldn't be used for brain-numbing content and instead for active activity that has us interact with the world around us.

A smarter future depends on us choosing effort over ease and to choose thinking over just mindlessly scrolling and clicking.

A special thank you from your editors

By **Nikita Hardial & Nabiha Tahseen**

Thanks for picking up a copy of the *Kingsley Voice*'s 2025 Spring Edition print paper! Over our past four years at King, we have seen so many changes... from the removal of uniforms to the addition of the lottery-based admission system, as well as the myriad of councils and clubs created and dissolved over the years it is safe to say that our school has been through a lot. One thing that always stays with us, though, is the impact from those we see everyday.

While we may not know the name of that one person who happens to be in all of our classes, or the caretakers who are patrolling the halls, the people here have shaped us into who we are. That's why the theme of this issue is generations and legacy. That's also why we chose to put a spotlight on Malcolm Simmonds, a caretaker who has helped this school run for longer than we have been alive. That's why we decided to urge people to speak up about the changes they would like to see, as well as not like

to see, at this school. That's why we encourage you to read and write about the music, movies, books, and art you care about, because that's what makes you who you are and impacts how you interact with the world.

We would like to thank every single person who worked on this issue of the print paper. To the contributors, thank you for writing and keeping the website alive. Despite many of you only being on the council for less than a year, your work has blown us away. To the section editors, thank you for producing amazing pages edition after edition. To the art team, thank you for making sure this paper isn't just a block of text, but actually has pictures, art, and a beautiful cover! To the executive team, thank you for helping us make the final copy what it is. We're so glad to have such a dedicated team that sticks with us.

We're extremely grateful to have spoken to Malcolm Simmonds along with many of the teachers and students of King. Thank you for taking the time to talk to us and making sure your voices are heard.

Mr. Wilkinson, we would like to thank you for ensuring that we didn't tear our hair out and for supporting us in what we chose to produce during our time as Editors-in-Chiefs. We've learned so much from you and we're so grateful that we've been able to pass on this knowledge and experience to other members of KVC. You're truly one of the best people at King.

And of course, we would like to thank you, our readers, because there would be no print paper if there wasn't anybody reading it. When you actually take the paper that has

been shoved into your face and then go so far as to open it and read it instead of throwing it away we know that the past couple of months of hard work and stress has been worth it. We put our hearts and souls into this edition: whether it be the intricate headers or carefully written articles, we gave a 100%, so we hope you enjoy reading it as much as we've enjoyed making it.

Thank you for the last time. It has truly been an honour to be a part of this wonderful community.

Nikita Hardial & Nabiha Tahseen



Riya Mahendrarajah

Your Editors-in-Chief, Nikita and Nabiha, hope to wow you with the 2025 Spring Edition of the *Kingsley Voice* print paper.

L I F E S T Y L E

Turn a crush into a summer romance



Nabiha Tahseen

Small acts of kindness and affection can show your crush you care and perhaps get you one step closer to securing your summer romance.

By Luckshika Ravinthiran

As the school year is slowly coming to an end, now is a great chance to turn your crush into a summer romance!

Find something to talk about

The basis of any relationship is having a solid understanding of each other. It isn't required for you and your crush to be friends already, but it is important to try to get to know your crush through conversations and shared interests. This could be a mutual interest in a subject at school, a sport, movies, books, or anything else! Starting a conversation with your crush is scary, but remember not to overthink it. It can just be a compliment or a discussion about a topic in class, paving the way for more conversations. The more comfortable people are engaging with their crush naturally, the likelihood of the relationship becoming romantic increases.

A common misconception is that students have to be

friends with their crushes in order to obtain a summer romance. It is solely dependent on factors such as the connection within and the timing. Robi Ullah, a Grade 12 student from King, doesn't think it's important at all to be friends before making a move. "How I see it is that people will get into a friendship and then get stuck and afraid of ruining what they already have, they'll never end up making a move.

"Students tend to hide parts of their personality to satisfy others when those qualities are what make them beautiful. Don't be hesitant to talk about your hobbies and opinions even if they differ from others. Standing out in front of your crush is not about changing yourself to fit expectations, it is about embracing one's individuality and allowing your true self to shine," Ullah says.

Feel the energy

Flirting with a crush is all about fun energy and subtle cues. While talking to your

crush, maintain eye contact to build intrigue and smile to provide them with a sense of approachability. Light teasing, such as funny inside jokes, keeps conversations more thrilling. Without being overbearing, students can also convey interest by putting in extra effort through body language.

Airy Arada and Robi Ullah, a well-known couple at King, share some advice on how to score a summer romance. "We both first met in elementary school but we started to become friends in grade 8," Arada says. "Some advice I would give is to not try to 'impress' too much in general when you like someone. Instead use [your] natural charm and be yourself."

Small acts, big rewards

As a person with experience dating, Ullah believes that little acts that can make a big difference in a relationship.

"After such a long time of being in a relationship together,

it's hard to keep track of the small gestures over the years. But one thing that has been consistent since the beginning is always waking up to a good morning text and always saying good night."

Small acts such as this provide a sense of security and comfort. "If all else fails, get back up on your feet and try again!" Ullah says.

Just ask

The end of the school year is the perfect time to take this step: if worse comes to worst and things fail, at least you won't have to see them for the summer! Don't wait forever, though—simply ask your crush! If you're feeling nervous at first, try to start by discussing summer plans to build confidence and if you're picking up signals that they might be interested too then be brave and make a move. It does not have to be a big confession. There's no other way to know what might happen, so try it and it might work out!

Affordable fashion for this spring

By Sabiha Sufian

As the weather gets warmer, it's time to ditch the winter clothes and start preparing for spring fashion! Here are some of Toronto's budget friendly clothing options, ranging from thrift stores to vintage shops, there are many choices!

Space Vintage

With two locations either on 319 Queen St W, or 34 Kensington Ave A, Toronto, Space Vintage is a shop that offers a wide range of vintage dresses with a fairytale feel.



Sabiha Sufian

Value Village Boutique

Located on 639 Queen Street West, Value Village Boutique is a large two floor store with a diverse variety of second-hand clothing, shoes, accessories and much more!

Black Market Vintage

Black Market Vintage has two locations: 347 and 256 Queen St W. With a large selection of vintage tees, sweatshirts, and jeans, there's something for everyone here!



Naiyarah Amarasinghe-Domingue

Plato's Closet

With many locations all throughout Toronto, Plato's Closet provides an easy thrifting experience with many of their items being trendy and popular. They also carry many notable brands, including American Eagle, Nike, and Aritzia. Find them at platoscloset.com.

How to deal with toxicity online



Sharini Arulrasa

With so much hate online, it is important to shield your well-being.

By Armaan Qureshi

During the golden age of social media, apps such as Instagram and Twitter (now X) have allowed people to interact and bond with others across the globe. With the accessibility of messaging

strangers, spreading toxicity and hatred to others becomes hard to avoid when engaging in online activity. This mainly occurs because of the anonymity aspect that comes with being online. Although it's not true that a person's online reputation and actions cannot

be traced, most people forget that and the idea of being unknown can see people behave in ways that wouldn't be accepted face-to-face. If you want to survive in this age of misinformation, of "hot takes," rage baiting, and overall negativity, you should follow these three principles:

1. The block button is your best friend

This button gives users the superpower to cease all contact and interaction with users they don't wish to associate with. The block button prohibits unwanted users from seeing your posts and stories thereby eliminating their presence entirely on your end. Not many people know about it because they like to fight imaginary unimportant battles nowadays. Just block them.

2. It's not that deep

These four words will change your outlook on life. Sometimes you have to take a step

back and consider if that post you saw on Instagram really did impact your life drastically. Although this phrase can sometimes be used to invalidate genuine problems, it can also be extremely reassuring and eye-opening. The reality is that the world does indeed keep spinning and these people's minds often will not be changed by an internet argument with a high schooler.

3. "Touch Grass"

Sometimes, the best thing to do is to "touch grass," meaning go outside, which is most often directed towards teenagers who are chronically online. Go for a walk and bask in the fresh sunlight (or the freezing Canadian snow!). At least you'll be getting more fresh air than the average internet troll.

Now with these weapons provided to you, go out into the cruel world of the internet like the brave knight you are and slay those trolls!

FEATURES

Prison press: how journalism aids inmates

By Jumaina Ahmed

It may be surprising to know that for some time, many prisons actually have their own newspapers written, designed, and prepared by prisoners. These publications have covered a range of topics from prison conditions and legal battles to poetry and personal essays on life behind bars. With the rise of digital media, prison publications are able to spread their work to larger audiences and gain partnerships on the outside.

That's not where it started, though. The history of prison press in North America stretches back over a century. One of the earliest known publications is *The Prison Mirror*, made by and for the inmates at the Minnesota Correctional Facility. They claim to be the oldest continuously running prison newspaper in America. The first issue was released on August 10, 1887, and it is currently being published monthly. Since then, many prison newspapers have emerged across the continent.

As the years go by, the goals of the prison press evolve as well. Prisoners are able to bring fresh perspectives and stories that are adapted to the realities of their time. For example, America's first-ever prison newspaper, *Forlorn Hope*, was created to advocate

for debtor emancipation. Other papers might be initially more inward looking, covering the hardships of prison life and prison reform.

In recent years, however, a lot of coverage has broadened. Inmates write about a range of larger societal issues, such as systemic racism, mental health struggles, and rehabilitation efforts. Prisoners are sometimes able to connect with those outside of cell walls, such as activists and legal professionals, to expand their horizons in writing.

For these incarcerated writers, journalism is an opportunity to transform and reinvent themselves. At the San Quentin State Prison, the staff of the *San Quentin News* boast a 0% recidivism rate among its staff since 2008. Not only is writing a transformative experience that provides purpose and intellectual stimulation, it can also be an outlet for inmates to process trauma and gain critical real-world skills.

Taking part in a publication can help prisoners find new passions and pursue them when they leave the facilities. The former prisoners are able to leverage their journalism experience built behind bars, and pursue careers in advocacy, media, and social justice.

"I am one of nearly 3,000 people in San Quentin State Prison who are paying for past

mistakes. Most of us want to do the right thing so that we can earn parole or clemency and get back to our families and communities. My 'right thing' is journalism," writes Juan Moreno Haines for the *Los Angeles Times*. Haines was a senior editor for *San Quentin News* but continues to grow his career even while still serving his sentence. Haines is now the Editor-in-Chief of *Solitary Watch*, a nonprofit organization committed to reporting about mistreatment in prison.

Prison newspapers have had the power to spur great

change for inmates across the continent since the medium allows them to advocate for themselves while still incarcerated and speak up against injustices faced behind bars. In 1990, for example, articles in Louisiana State Penitentiary's *The Angolite* caused the state to halt their usage of the electric chair. In an interview with NPR, Marty Hawthorne, the supervisor of *The Prison Mirror*, weighed in on the importance of journalism for prisoners. "They're incarcerated people, right? They don't have power or authority. Someone has to speak up for

them in these places."

The prison press has dealt with their fair share of challenges as well. Publications often face issues regarding censorship. Court decisions in the States have limited the free speech of incarcerated journalists and legal ambiguities have deterred prison administrations from investing more in publications. Budgetary constraints are also a constant looming threat for prison journalists, but these newspapers are an invaluable resource for incarcerated individuals and for opening discourse on criminal justice in North America.



San Quentin News is vital in rehabilitation as it gives inmates both a voice and a purpose while locked up.

Tradwives and romanticizing the past

By Najiha Rahman

In an era where buying a house seems impossible and fashion trends grow increasingly expensive and short-lived, the groundwork has been laid for the rise of the 'Tradwife' subculture, a movement that glamorizes suburbia, homemaking, vintage fashion, and traditional gender roles. Its community is made up of women who are drawn to the lives of (or are) stay-at-home wives or mothers. It seeks for a division of labour where the husband is in charge of income while the wife is the homemaker. Members of the subculture believe that men and women are inherently suited to different roles: men are protectors and providers, while women are nurturers and homemakers.

Many online creators also focus on views sometimes found in Christianity; that it is a woman's role to submit to their husbands. This subculture has been popularized by TikTok and celebrities, notably Nara Smith and Estee Williams, housewives who post videos of themselves in beautiful, large houses where they often make meals from scratch and dress up for their husbands. This style of content has gained traction and has made homemaking more appealing to young women who may have viewed it in a negative light prior to the trend.

These influencers are just part of the conversation as this subculture is gaining popularity, especially within young, oftentimes progressive, women. Nooha Khan, a Grade 11

student at King, says the growing popularity in this subculture is due to the financial uncertainty many young people are facing. "Today, it feels impossible to even think about being financially stable and having a house. Although not seriously, sometimes I just want to joke about being a housewife because it'd feel so much easier," she says.

As housing becomes more and more expensive and jobs feel spread thin amongst Canadians, these financial fears are bound to fester within young women. This fear of the growing cost of living, fueled by modern economic pressures and higher taxes, encourages people to yearn for a time of financial prosperity. This nostalgia often extends to an idealized cultural past that romanticizes both the suburban housewife lifestyle and the comfort of a middle-class existence. The Tradwife aesthetic capitalizes on the fear of financial instability by idealizing traditional values, complementarianism and heteronormative ideas. It allows women to fantasize about spending money and living in a nice house, all for the measly cost of wearing an apron and baking cakes.

While the Tradwife aesthetic may appear comforting amid financial uncertainty, it raises the question on how it sits with feminist views and women's rights. What began as a fantasy for what seemed

to be easier times clashes with the more progressive and liberal ideals that were raised within younger generations, especially the R.H. King students who grew up in the 2010s, a time where media tried represent many more marginalized groups in a positive manner, including women.

For Gen-Z, a generation who grew up watching films with strong, independent female characters like Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games*, or Hermione from the *Harry Potter* series, the rise of the Tradwife subculture stands out due to its stark contrast to these ideals. Many of these characters are independent and ambitious while the Tradwife subculture promotes staying at home and relying on men for financial stability. Due to this, Tradwife content creators have received backlash, with critics perceiving them as anti-feminist.

Part of it is the perception from many who believe that Tradwives think that all women should live the same lifestyle as them, or that they are against women pursuing other careers. Rumaisa Hasan, a student at King, sees it that way. "When I think of a Tradwife, I imagine girls who don't support women's rights and are super traditional and outdated in their thinking."

Estee Williams, a self-proclaimed 'Tradwife,' speaks out about this backlash in one

of her TikTok videos. Despite her avid support of traditional Christian gender roles, she doesn't see the effect this could have on feminism. "It doesn't mean that we are trying to take away what women fought for. [...] Tradwife TikTokers are saying that every woman's role is in the home. We, as individuals, are choosing to be homemakers."

While this can be chalked up to a woman's right to choose their lifestyle, these content creators actively normalize and advocate for traditional values. This could be eye-opening for many young women, who previously had different views on the Tradwife lifestyle. However, the subculture remains controversial. Despite claiming not to be political, any posts made on social media cannot be separated from the society and environment they are made in. Whether Tradwife influencers are aware of it or not, there are harmful consequences of promoting women's servitude whether it be financial instability, domestic violence, or even coverture. This becomes especially relevant as topics of women's rights laws, such as *Roe v. Wade*, get overturned. It is critical to actively think and decide whether it is really best to go back to the past. Were they simpler times, or are the unstable current circumstances just portraying it this way?



Sharini Arulrasa

Young women are increasingly affected by tradwife content (women who embrace traditional gender roles such as staying home, caring for a family, and more) on social media platforms.



AI’s impact on the environment



Many people are unaware of the environmental impacts of excessively using ChatGPT, such as the large amounts of water required to cool down the massive electrical hardware running the program.

By Julia Nichol

Within the past few years, generative artificial intelligence (algorithms that create content based on inputted prompts) has taken the world by storm.

Generative AI has transformed multiple sectors of society; from education to the arts. Its use increased exponentially with the introduction of OpenAI’s chatbot, ChatGPT. This chatbot is able to have personalized conversations with the user, compose essays, and even write code.

Now, AI’s use has expanded past engaging in conversations. It is being used to improve medical diagnosis and create artwork in seconds.

For example, a survey from Resume Builder, an online resume building platform, found that by 2024, four in ten companies would use AI to “talk with” candidates in interviews. Of those companies, 15% said hiring decisions would be made with no human input. While these systems benefit hiring managers, they

make it unfair for job seekers. In an interview with *The Guardian*, Adele Walton shared how her AI job interview felt unnatural. “In an in-person meeting, you get more social prompts from the other person,” she says. “In this case, I was just talking to myself—or an AI system—with no measure of how well I was doing.” Essentially, the lack of human reassurance like a small head nod made it harder to do well on the interview.

Aside from this negative aspect, AI has opened up positive new possibilities in various fields, especially healthcare. At Unity Health Toronto, scientists from the University of Toronto’s Temerty’s Faculty of Medicine are working on an AI chatbot that can stay in contact with a patient after they’ve been discharged from the hospital and answer their questions; referring them to a doctor when necessary. In an interview with the University of Toronto, Muhammad Mamdani, director of Temerty’s AI research branch felt this was important.

“Poor post-discharge communication and management is one of the reasons we see a lot of patients being readmitted to hospitals,” he says. This means the chatbot could free up spots in hospitals, while ensuring all patients are getting the care they deserve.

While AI brings numerous benefits it also comes with its pitfalls. Most recently, the discovery of its surprising impact on the environment, as mentioned in an article by *The Conversation*, was revealed. Most large-scale AI tools, such as ChatGPT, are hosted in data centers. These data centers require large amounts of electricity to run which leads to increased carbon dioxide emissions and the accumulation of hazardous substances like mercury. According to a report by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), data centers also use water to cool electrical hardware used for training, deploying, and fine-tuning AI models.

According to an estimate from a study from UC Riverside, AI-related infrastructure

may soon consume six times more water than Denmark, a country of 6 million. To power these electronics, AI-hosting data centers also demand a lot of energy, which comes from burning fossil fuels. According to an analysis conducted by the International Energy Agency, a request made through ChatGPT consumes 10 times the electricity of a Google Search. This means 10 times the fossil fuels are being burnt per ChatGPT request as opposed to a Google search, essentially releasing excess carbon emissions which harm the environment.

Furthermore, the mining and production of rare earth metals required for AI hardware, such as lithium and nickel, can lead to soil erosion and pollution. This hardware is not reused or repurposed due to its limited lifespan, leading to an excessive amount of electronic waste that causes more pollution. According to the *MIT Technology Review*, because the waste is not properly recycled, it can contaminate soil and water, posing risks to ecosystems.

AI holds immense potential to revolutionize many aspects of society, however, its environmental impact cannot be overlooked. The number of data centers has surged to 8 million from 500 thousand in 2012, and this number is expected to increase. As the severity of AI’s impact on the environment is still being studied, legislation surrounding the it’s ethical use has been introduced in the European Union and the U.S. to temper its environmental impact. Tech companies are also being encouraged by organizations like the United Nations to make AI algorithms more efficient to reduce their impact on the environment.

Brainrot: is it gibberish?

By Kaycee Wigmore

Slang has a new addition to the cultural milieu and that is ‘brainrot.’ The term originated from internet memes like ‘skibidi toilet’ and has spiralled into nonsensical yapping like ‘tung tung tung sahur’ by making ‘fire’ into AI’s monstrous creations, turning them into low-effort memes we can all laugh at.

Brainrot adds ‘infinite aura’ to a person, giving them that ‘Ohio rizz.’ It completely changes them, transforming them from an ‘NPC’ into a nonchalant ‘dreadhead.’ From hitting the ‘griddy’ in a Roblox lobby, to ‘mewing’ 24/7 in order to ‘lookmax’ for prom. These are all lingo that only the brainrotted would understand.

The origins of brainrot are unknown, though the ‘sigmas’ might say it all started with ‘skibidi toilet’ or the “fanum tax.” However, the ‘OG alphas’ say it started with the birth of the internet, and the alphas may be right. An early instance of brainrot is from the game *Among Us* that helped cook up some fire terms like ‘sus,’ the variant ‘sussy baka’ and ‘imposter.’ Although some lingo like ‘sus’ continue to be goated, brainrot shapeshifts by the minute. Even terms like ‘Grimace shake,’ a McDonald’s drink sold in the summer of 2023, now ‘pmo.’

The ‘uncs’ may say that brainrot isn’t a ‘slay,’ but to that, real ‘sigmas’ say nah fam. Brainrot embraces the true child within. Not just babies can ‘chalantly’ speak in nonsensical babble, so can we. Although not all brainrot has ‘goated’ meanings, brainrot creates a safe space for comical nonsense, something we lose touch with as we get older. It has developed into a ‘lowkey based’ way to connect with peers in the new generation. Brainrot may just be gibberish to some, but for today’s generation, it’s a reminder that no matter how ‘unc-ish’ we get, we don’t need to leave our goofy childishness behind.

Gurt: yo ts (this) sidebar is lowkey fire.
Sidebar: thanks vro.



Nikita Hardial

A brief history of Kensington Market



The unique small businesses of Kensington Market set the area apart from other neighbourhoods of Toronto.

By Naiyarah Amarasinghe-Domingue

Kensington Market has always been an important place for new immigrants arriving in Toronto. It is an artistic, pedestrian neighbourhood west of Spadina between College and Dundas in downtown Toronto. Developed in 1815, it

is known for its eclectic nature and variety of independently owned businesses.

Kensington has seen many kinds of people over the years. It was once home to many Irish immigrants and later, in the early 20th century, Kensington saw an influx of Jewish immigrants who are credited with introducing the

‘market’ aspect of Kensington as many Jewish people added storefronts and converted their homes into shops—turning Kensington from a domestic area into a working market.

Post-World War II, more room was made for new immigrants and the market diversified—Italian, Hungarian, Ukrainian and Portuguese immigrants moved into the neighbourhood. The community also boasts a large Chinese population as it sits at the west-end of Chinatown. Parks Canada says that this round of immigrants also started running independently-owned businesses in the area.

Much of Kensington Market has held onto the past. The market has swaths of vintage shops and thrift stores with Torontonians going to shop for used clothing and hand-crafted goods.

However, within recent years there has been a rapid gentrification (the process where the character of a poor

area is changed by an influx of affluent new inhabitants) happening in the city’s most vibrant and colorful areas—Kensington being one. Chains and high-end boutiques have begun to replace the older, quirkier stores.

Property prices and rent have skyrocketed, also making it difficult for small businesses to remain open. Long-time residents are also having to relocate as their living costs rise.

Kensington has always had an entrepreneurial, independent spirit throughout its history and while it continues to serve as the family-owned small business central of Toronto, it’s future is unclear, considering the growing presence of larger, more commercial enterprises. The challenge Toronto currently faces is finding a good balance between welcoming development and preserving the unique culture and community that helps to define the city.

Advice from the seniors

Manage your time and study—I wish that the importance of time management was emphasized to me earlier. I also wish I knew how important grade 11 marks were and I didn’t have the mentality of ‘doing better next time.’ Try and do better now instead of thinking “Oh, I’ll do better next semester.”

— *Areeb Munir*

Making friends is easier (and more important) than you think.

— *Shaelynn Lo*

No matter what type of career you’re pursuing, knowing people matters. It helps a lot to get an early start and make friendships with others you like and are different from you. It’s important to have a good network. Keep in contact with people you like, and hold onto your friendships.

— *Mahdia Mayin Uddin*

Start putting in effort early; join extracurricular activities in grade 9 and stay locked in.

— *Sarah Isabella*

Have fun before grade 11! It’s easier to try new things before you’re swamped with work. It’s harder than before and having fun matters.

— *Nasheed Wania*

Don’t take difficult courses you don’t need for the programs you like. Get your average up! Universities don’t care too much about what courses you take; only if you did well in them. Just make sure you have your prerequisites.

— *Lucie LeBlanc*

For future seniors—don’t worry too much about getting into universities and be realistic about your choices. In first semester focus on your studies and in second semester have fun and enjoy the time you have left in high school.

— *Anusia Afrin*

Your passion and purpose are entirely subject to change. In fact, in my inexperienced opinion, the only way to ‘find’ purpose and passion is by choosing one route and taking that leap of faith. Personally, I hadn’t reached a decision regarding my passion by the time grade 12 started. I was just mostly interested in sciences, and even if my grades weren’t the best for it, I decided that I enjoyed learning about it enough to go for it.

— *Riya Patel*



Mannat Barhey

Social media takes a toll on Gen-Z

By Miriam Donnelly

Gen-X worried about housing insecurity and latchkey childhoods. Millennials had concerns about global politics in the aftermath of 9/11. The epidemic afflicting Gen-Z is poor mental health. There has never before been such high rates of anxiety and depression as it exists in 2025. What is to blame for this spike in depression and anxiety? Research points to a strong correlation between this mental health crisis and the use of social media.

According to the Walter Family Foundation, 42% of Gen-Z individuals in America battle with depression and feelings of hopelessness which is almost twice as high as their older counterparts (approx. 23%). Healthcare data management firm Harmony Healthcare IT reported that 61% of Gen-Z youth have some kind of diagnosed anxiety disorder. Given how pervasive social media is it becomes hard not to see it as being a major contributing factor to this issue.

How is it doing this? There are a variety of ways. For one, social media makes major international conflicts and personal stories shared by strangers available for quick consumption by teens. In some ways, this is positive. It in-

creases awareness and makes Canadian youth acknowledge their privilege. But the unceasing flow of information can also be harmful.

At an earlier age than previous generations, Gen-Z can’t escape the news and the worries issues halfway across the globe. These are issues they cannot control or have any impact on. Exposure to traumatic stories can also cause distress. King student Gabriela Perreira had an emotional response to watching a TikTok video in which a father mourns his 10 year old son who took his own life.

“I sat on my couch crying for 10 minutes when I watched it,” she recounts. “And I still can’t stop thinking about it.” While awareness of bullying is important, a flood of such stories can overwhelm viewers and negatively affect their emotional well-being.

By nature, social media is performative and often artificial. Influencers post only what they want viewers to see or think they’ll be interested in. It’s particularly damaging to teens’ perception of body image and their academic work ethic. Teens can’t help but compare themselves to what they see.

Social media can contribute to stress in Gen-Z students in particular. When there are other tasks waiting to be done,



Nikita Hardial

Previous generations had concerns about issues like global affairs, while Gen-Z grapples with the issue of poor mental health partially as a result of high social media usage.

the result of hours of doom scrolling are often feelings of guilt and regret. Tithi Bhattacharjee, a grade 11 student at King admits that once you start scrolling it can often be hard to stop. “As a result, I complete less each day and find myself more stressed,” Bhattacharjee says.

This is not an easy cycle to break. Algorithms play to an individual’s desires, feeding those addictive behaviours by showing more of the same thing.

Of course, social media is accessible to and used by all generations, but Gen-Z has never known a time without Wi-Fi and social media. Baby boomers, Gen X, and Millennials may engage extensively with social media platforms, but this technology has not shaped who they are in the same way it has shaped Gen-

Zs. Furthermore, Gen-Zs experience the triple whammy of the turbulent teen years: hormonal changes, and the stresses of high school, all in the constant gaze of social media. “I wish I had a dollar for every time a Gen-X or boomer says ‘I’m so glad I’m not a teenager now,’” comments Laura Alary, a parent of a student at King. “And it’s almost always related to social media.”

Like most addictive behaviours, it is hard to break the habit of using social media. Time will tell if Gen-Z will be able to go offline in search of things earlier generations took for granted, like in-person relationships and a break from a constant barrage of upsetting news. There was financial instability, there was political fear, and now the crisis of Gen-Z: mental health challenges in the world of social media.

Changing priorities in education

By Naiyarah Amarasinghe-Domingue

It happens every so often that a course at King disappears. Not only does it not run, but it stops being offered. This usually happens when a course doesn’t get enough students who request it. Some notable courses that have seen a drop in requests relatively recently are Studies in Literature, Media Studies, and Canadian History.

The big question is, of course, why are people not taking these courses and, on a larger scale, what does this say about education and the student body? Many teachers say alternative education such as e-Learning, night school, and private school courses may be partly to blame for courses cut at R.H. King and across the TDSB. When there are fewer students requesting to take certain classes during the day at King, there is less demand for teachers at the school and fewer course options. With an influx of students taking alternative paths towards getting their 30 credits elsewhere, there’s growing concern amongst educators over the direction that secondary education is headed.

Some may believe that this trend could be directly resulting in the loss of courses like Studies in Literature or Media Studies, and even devalues the purpose of some subjects.

“It becomes a greater question about society; people need to be able to read and write no matter what field they’re going into,” says Yulie Kim, an English teacher at King. “I don’t know whether they’re getting that in e-Learning...”

Other teachers, however, feel differently. “The board has tried to accommodate students by offering more online options,” says Konrad Pichal, a math teacher at King. Though math, as a department, hasn’t seen many courses cut some math teachers believe that alternative education can be seen as an accommodation or as a smart way to get ahead.

Ideally, students should have as many ways to experience the richest education possible. E-Learning could be useful for students with extenuating circumstances, such as mental health or physical illnesses.

Courses teaching social sciences and humanities are particularly affected by cut courses and the rise of alternative education. Almost always, STEM classes do not struggle to run, largely due to the current generation’s anxiety over the future and the modern pressure to pursue money over anything. According to an article by *CBC News*, economic uncertainty, the rising cost of living and cost of schooling has put pressure of students to pursue a degree that will guarantee them a stable, well-

paying job which has led to decreased enrolment in some arts and humanities subjects. According to data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), the number of humanities degrees awarded has dropped by nearly 25% from 2012 to 2020.

However, many students taking alternative education courses have found them to be beneficial to their learning. Yoyada Tereke, a grade 12 student at R.H. King who is currently taking Calculus and Vectors online, finds e-Learning to be an accommodating alternative to in-person day school. “[e-Learning] lightens the burden of in school classes because assess-

ment times are flexible and learning is somewhat self-paced,” Tereke says.

Perhaps this is equally an argument for a return to grade 13, which would result in more flexibility in schedules. Ben Posthumus, an English teacher at King, reflects on shifting student priorities. “In the 70s, it wasn’t cool to talk about money,” he says. “Now, it’s the first thing on [students] minds... I’d like to tell my student’s that they can pursue anything, but sometimes I don’t know if I’m, well, wrong.” However, by exploring new ideas and taking risks, students may discover what truly interests them and follow paths fueled by passion rather than pressure.



Jumaina Ahmed

As students switch to e-Learning, the number of students taking courses in-person decrease, causing courses to disappear.



Reflections from King’s coaches



The efforts of Ms. Booth and Ms. Clish have made unforgettable memories for the teams at King and brought the players together.

By Pethmi Jayatunge

From a wide variety of athletic programs to a thriving sports culture, King has seen its teams evolve, adapt, and grow to meet the changing needs and interests of its students.

Jordyn Booth and Jillian Clish, seasoned coaches at King—with Booth coaching the Girl’s Basketball, Volleyball, Flag Football team and Clish coaching girl’s Field Hockey and Ice Hockey—have both been integral parts of the school’s athletic program and their insights provide a unique perspective on how sports at King have evolved over the years.

“With many of our teams achieving great success, it all builds positive momentum for the growth of our sports teams at King,” Clish says.

Over the years, R.H. King Academy has consistently seen strong participation in tradi-

tional sports, but Clish also noted the rise of newer and more diverse offerings such as R.H. King’s wrestling and cricket teams.

“I think we will continue to see students coming out for sports teams that have been around for many years, but I think we are also starting to see a shift in some of the sports that are most sought after,” Clish says. “The offering of a cricket team in the recent past and the new addition of a wrestling team at King are examples of this.”

However, the journey to this promising future hasn’t been without its challenges. The pandemic posed a significant disruption to all aspects of school life, and sports were no exception. Both Clish and Booth saw the impact of COVID on participation.

“There were some obvious decreases in numbers that came with COVID,” Clish

says. “But I think we have reached mostly similar numbers to pre-pandemic times. There always was and continues to be a lot of excitement for sports at King.”

However, Booth, who has been coaching since 2007, has seen an ever-so-slight decline in the number of students trying out for teams since the pandemic. “Not drastically, but I have seen a decline,” she says. “I think there are a lot of factors that contribute to that. We have a smaller population of students at King and post-COVID there has been a change in participation levels. Teams are asking that students commit to one team versus being on numerous teams.”

Despite these challenges, both coaches find a lot of rewards coming from their long-time work in the job. Clish, who has been working as a coach at King since 2008, is incredibly fulfilled by the impact of her work.

“The most rewarding part of coaching is building connections and relationships with students that go beyond the classroom,” Clish says.

“Engaging in sports has so many positive impacts on students’ lives both on and off the field or ice. They have the opportunity to meet new people, learn new sports, and develop new skills.”

Booth also shares this feeling, highlighting the importance of commitment and personal growth. “I am proud of the athletes,” she says. “Commitment to a team is a

big undertaking and accomplishment regardless of the end result. It is always rewarding for me to see students improving as they progress through a season. Seeing them reach their goals, work hard, and be open to learning and improving are great life skills that they can always use moving forward.” She also notes that sports can help students on a personal level. “Watching and helping students learn and progress in skills they’ll need in the future, such as time management, is one of my favourite parts of coaching.”

King’s sports programs are evolving, but the essence of sports remains the same: building teamwork, resilience, discipline, and leadership among students. The coaches at King, including Booth and Clish, but also others like Mr. Warrener and Ms. Takahashi, are all dedicated to fostering a positive and inclusive environment for King’s athletes, ensuring they find opportunities for growth and success.

“I think sports at King will continue to thrive as long as we keep fostering a love for the game, nurturing relationships with our athletes, and offering new and exciting opportunities for students to explore,” Clish says.

The future of King athletics is sure to be bright. The evolution of sports at King is a testament to the school’s commitment to fostering well-rounded individuals and a spirit of athleticism that will last them the rest of their lives.

Here are the best boys’ washrooms at King:

By Varsan Jeyakkumar

You know that you need to run to the washroom, but which one? Here is a quick guide on how to choose your washroom.

The Congested One: B Science Wing

A conveniently located and well-lit washroom near the B-Floor Science Wing. However, this means that it is more commonly used, so you are likely to find a congregation of students. It is a common socialization spot, so younger students might find it intimidating to step inside and do their business.

Rating: 2.5/5

The Changeroom’s One: Gym 3

Yes, changerooms do have washrooms too. Conveniently located in the gym, this washroom is very isolated except during transitions between periods or sports events. Avoid those times so you aren’t hit in the face with the fresh gym odour.

Rating: 3/5

The Quiet One: B½ Floor

This washroom is unique in its location because it serves the East Wing of the school. Being part of the older building, this washroom is less lit, but quieter and less intimidating. There is a greater sense of security because fewer people use it, but it is not as personalized as the Personal Washroom.

Rating: 3.5/5

The Personal One: Student Success

This washroom is a dream come true for people who want a home away from home. Why? It’s a single-stall washroom. Being less known and used, it is very quiet, safe, and clean. In fact, it is the best-maintained boys’ washroom inside the school. That being said, if you believe in creepy ghosts in isolated environments, maybe stay away.

Rating: 4.5/5



Nikita Hardial

The perfect promposals at King

By Riya Mahendrarajah

Prom season has come and gone. We’ve seen some really creative, heartfelt, and sometimes hilarious promposals! Whether they were asking a friend or that special someone, here’s how King seniors curated the perfect promposals.

The most important thing to keep in mind is your date’s preferences. A promposal that reflects their personality and interests is far more likely to get a “yes.” Consider whether they’d appreciate something grand, or something more personal. What’s their favorite colour? What hobbies do they have?

“I think the most beautiful thing would be if someone danced to a song, such as ‘Naatu Koothu’ from the Tamil movie RRR. It’s a beautiful song about dancing and coming together,” shares Naveena Gnanachandran, a senior at King. “If he came up to me and started dancing to that song, I would immediately, hands down, say ‘yes!’”

Sometimes, a little bit of embarrassment, like dancing in public, shows effort and boldness which can make the gesture even more meaningful. It’s not about perfection; it’s about showing that you care

enough to try something memorable.

Next, choosing the right location was key. Many promposals at King have taken place in front of the library, a popular spot because of its visibility and foot traffic. While some students might find the crowd overwhelming, others enjoy the public attention and shared excitement. If their special someone was shy, many considered a quieter location, like at a café or park, or even the school hallway during a less busy time. Although public promposals often seem like the standard, private ones can be just as meaningful.

“I don’t want it to be crowded and stuff. I don’t want a lot of people looking at us,” says Gelnar Hammoud, another Grade 12 at King. “I feel like I want something I can keep forever. Not a huge board, because that can be easily thrown away if I move, but maybe a bracelet or something. It doesn’t have to be expensive, just something that I can look back to.” For many, the memory and emotional connection mattered more than the size of the gesture.

Sometimes, a grand gesture might not be the move to make at all. For some, the idea of

being promposed to in a public setting might be mortifying, especially with the pressure and attention it brings. Gwyneth Hsu, a Grade 12 at King who has successfully promposed to her friend feels that the number one most important thing to consider though is whether they’d want a promposal. “Especially if it’s romantic and how public they want it—the last thing you want is for your person to feel pressured or uncomfortable.”

Promposals can be a fun and heartfelt experience, not only between romantic partners, but also between friends.

What matters most is that you adhered to your intended date’s preferences, and taken into consideration whether a promposal is even the best way to show your affection.

All in all, no promposal is guaranteed to get a “yes” and it is important to talk with them before doing anything in public—but putting thought and care into the gesture makes all the difference, and will improve you and your date’s experiences. Whether big or small, public or private, romantic or platonic, the best promposals were the ones that came from the heart.



Vidhi Jagesha

Turn a potential prom date into a near-guaranteed one by tailoring a well-planned, thoughtful, and caring promposal to their interests!

GENERATIONS:

Malcolm Simmonds to retire after 35 years

Get to know the King caretaker who helps keep the school running every day



Pethmi Jayatunge

Malcolm Simmonds, 73, is very proud to have earned a Stationary Engineering Certification, allowing him to be in charge of maintaining the boiler room, an integral job in ensuring the school's temperature is regulated year-round.

By Pethmi Jayatunge

This year, the halls of R.H. King Academy will bid farewell to a pillar of the school community as beloved custodian Malcolm Simmonds, 73, retires after 35 years of dedicated service.

Since March 19, 1990, Simmonds has played an integral role in maintaining the school's environment by ensuring that students and staff alike could thrive in a clean, safe, and welcoming space. As Simmonds prepares for a well-deserved retirement, members of the school community reflect on the lasting impact he has had over the decades.

"There's never been a day without Malcolm that I can think of," says teacher-librarian Brian Wilkinson. "You always get a smile and a wave as Malcolm goes about making this place better for everyone who walks the halls."

When Simmonds first start-

ed at R.H. King, the school had a very different atmosphere. "When I started, the presentation of the school uniform was pristine, and the dress code was strictly enforced," he recalls. "The students were respectful, and the perception of R.H. King as the 'School of Excellence' was undeniable. Parents were eager to have their children enrolled, and there were long lines just to get in."

Fast forward to 2025 and while R.H. King still holds its reputation for excellence the school and its community have changed significantly in his eyes. "The dress code is not as strict as it once was," Simmonds notes. "The level of respect among students has also changed and while the school is still considered excellent the drive to get children enrolled has softened. The school's composition is now much more diverse with students coming from a variety of

cultural and racial backgrounds reflecting the changes in the neighborhood," he says.

Amongst Simmonds' most memorable moments at R.H. King are personal milestones such as being promoted from a general caretaker to Shift Leader and achieving a Stationary Engineering Certification which qualified him to manage the school's boiler room. "That promotion was a big achievement for me," Simmonds says. "It allowed me to contribute even more to the comfort of the school environment by ensuring the building's temperature was just right for everyone."

"I've always tried to be someone [students] can rely on—whether it's keeping the school clean, assisting when needed, or just being there for a conversation."
— Malcolm Simmonds

Throughout the years, what has kept Simmonds motivated and dedicated to the job is a combination of passion for the educational environment and strong personal values.

"I love being in a school setting and my teaching background from the Caribbean has made me especially passionate about supporting students.

I believe in the importance of honesty, integrity, and always doing my best to help," he says. "Seeing students strive for and achieve success in their studies has been a constant source of motivation." Custodians, often unseen but always present, play an essential role in creating a space where students feel at home. For Simmonds, cleanliness, safety,

and approachability have always been a top priority. "It's important to create an environment where students feel safe and comfortable," he says. "I've always tried to be someone they can rely on—whether it's keeping the school clean, assisting when needed, or just being there for a conversation."

Over the years, Simmonds has witnessed generations of students come and go. The changing face of the school has been one of the most notable transformations. "The blending of students and staff from different backgrounds has been a beautiful change," says Simmonds. "Getting to know each other despite our differences has fostered a greater sense of camaraderie among everyone—students, teachers, and maintenance staff alike."

As Simmonds prepares for retirement, he will miss the people most. "After 35 years, the students and staff have become like family," he says, visibly emotional. "It's going to be hard to leave them. They'll be dearly missed."

For the students who remain at R.H. King, Malcolm Simmonds leaves behind a piece of valuable advice: "Strive to do your best in whatever area of study you pursue. Always be respectful, kind, and helpful to others."

R.H. King Academy will always be grateful for Malcolm Simmonds' dedication, hard work, and unwavering commitment to making the school a better place for all.



Generations of Suffocation by Yasmeen Rawdah, grade 11.

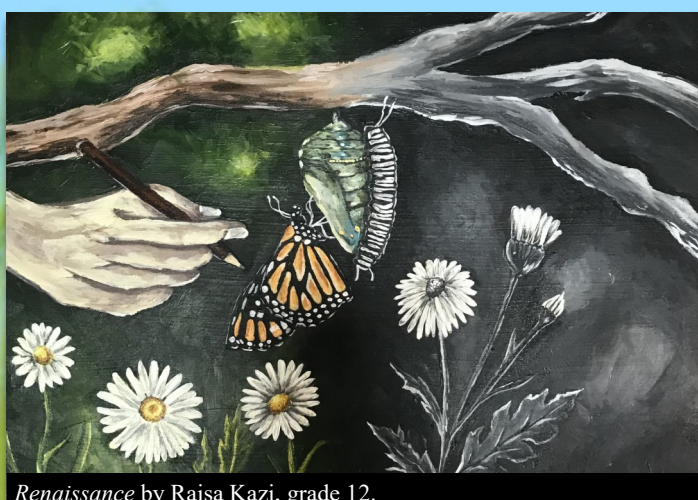
a letter to the home i've (almost) never seen

Winner of KVC's Spring poetry contest

By Echo Moonah

you're out there somewhere
I see you over fuzzy screens on
video calls when I'm lucky

and still I always freeze
when I never can feel what I
want to and I don't know how to
ask
you're trying to show yourself



Renaissance by Raisa Kazi, grade 12.

and I can tell on my face,
carved in white marble like the
statues on whom the paint has
chipped and faded
and it's clear there's something
missing but no one bothers to
say
no one cares about the history
that's been lost when I'm so
beautiful now

and i still want to find it
the canopy I sat under when
the heat made me sick
when no one knew what to do
with me
they still wouldn't but I need to
find out

I need to go beyond my tragi-
cally blank surface
now when I can nurse myself
back to health
so I will do it
even if it means being a
stranger in my own home

OUR LEGACY OUR FUTURE

R.H. King Academy is in an era of change

And it is essential that students continue to use their voices to speak up

By **Nikita Hardial**
& **Nabiha Tahseen**

With the cancellation and reinstatement of King's famous Wellness Week all in one school year, the Academy's future is undoubtedly unpredictable. As time progresses, the wants and needs of students as well as the King community shifts. As such, features of King are tweaked and sometimes even removed. Notable examples include the vote to remove uniforms, the loss of the Leadership Arts program, the system-wide shift to a lottery-based admission system and the assessment of the continuation of the Wellness Week.

One major change was made quite recently in 2022 when a vote was held regarding uniforms. While the majority surveyed was in favour of removing uniforms, it is important to note that most of the respondents never even had a full year with them. Even if they had, the option was not between keeping versus removing the uniforms; it was between implementing a color blocking dress code—any white/navy top with any grey/black bottoms—or not. Accessibility becomes less of an issue when specific items can be substituted with clothes that almost everyone has at home. Regardless of this, the positive side of no colour blocking, such as being able to freely express themselves without being confined to certain colours, outweighed other reasons for many students. "I didn't choose uni-

forms because I like being able to have free will to wear anything to school that I like," says Yani Tafsir, a grade 12 student at King. "It has benefited me by allowing me to express myself and wear clothes that I feel the most comfortable in." The removal of the uniforms serves a majority of King students well by taking into account those that dress for convenience as well as those that want to show off their personal style.

One would think that with the uniforms being removed easily with a majority vote of 71% from students that the same would be true for the Wellness Week. In fact, the 2024 survey done for the Wellness Week boasted a much steeper difference with 86% of students being in favour of keeping the school's break. Sure, while a vote is more formal than a survey, both display the feelings of students towards King's unique features. Even when considering the population of the students who did not complete the survey, there still would have been a majority of the student body in favour of keeping the Wellness Week but it wound up briefly on the bubble.

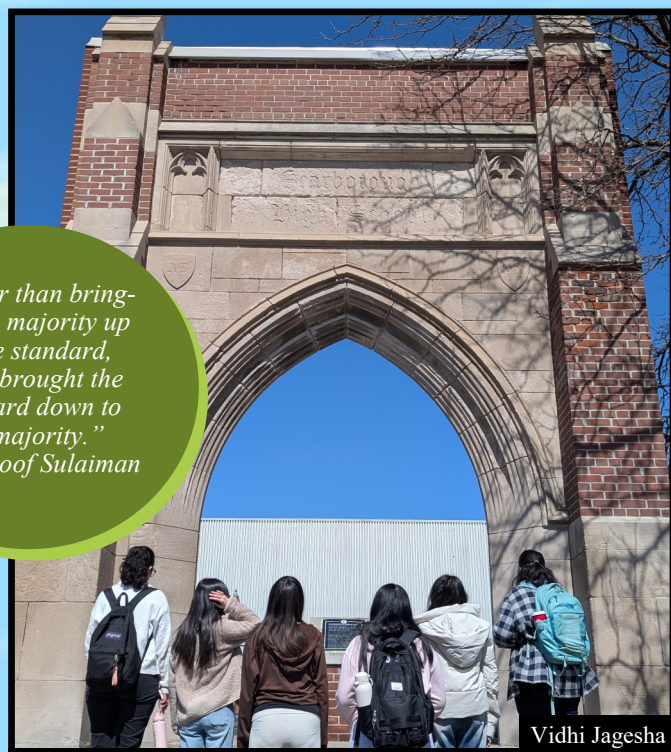
It's true that the Wellness Week can make things more difficult for select students; not being able to attend school for a week can certainly be discomforting to those who do not feel safe at home. However, perhaps more time should be put into accommodating the minority with things like increased mental health services rather than removing something that most agree with.

Fortunately, the community made their concerns clear in regards to the Wellness Week's removal doing more harm than good. As a result, the decision to remove the feature was re-evaluated with trustees voting to keep it. If there are enough people who care about King's identity, people in positions of power will listen. This was also seen with the confusion around the grade 12 Wonderland trip as the decision to cancel the excursion was reversed seemingly because of the outpouring of student discontent.

Making King more similar to other schools by removing certain features can certainly be less difficult than pushing for improvement. This is not limited to individual schools since we've seen the government taking the easier route as well by introducing a lottery element to admissions. "Rather than bringing the majority up to the standard, we've brought the standard down to the majority," says Maroof Sulaiman, grade 12, who is part of the last cohort of students to have been admitted to King through the merit-based system. "I think the way that the government has gone about promoting equity is flawed, they took away specialization and replaced it with indifference," he says.

Suha Ashraf, another student in grade 12, agrees. "I see the logic behind having a lottery system for the leadership program, but I definitely think

"Rather than bringing the majority up to the standard, we've brought the standard down to the majority."
— Maroof Sulaiman



Vidhi Jagesha

If the new generation of students want to see change, they must voice their concerns to benefit both present and future students.

this was the lazy solution to the problem. We should be making more opportunities accessible to elementary students instead of making it just seem like the application process is flawed."

The permanence of features at schools—such as our Wellness Week—are certainly not ensured. Nevertheless, it has become even more apparent that with enough students speaking out that change can happen. It takes more effort to maintain a school that stands out: a school with a unique schedule and specialized program. The easier route can

often be more appealing for those in power, however, it's not always what the majority wants. That is why right now it is more important than ever to speak up about change. The more perspectives we have in a conversation, the greater the chance that changes will be more fair. We have seen this with the uniforms: the removal happened because the voting population decided on it, not because it was forced upon us. Speaking up saved the Wellness Week and an ongoing dialogue with the TDSB as a whole can help improve other aspects of King.

Legacy teachers continue to shape R.H. King



Nikita Hardial

Despite the amount of change happening to R.H. King recent years, legacy teachers, such as Mr. Pichal, continue to embody the school's spirit and its motto to care, to strive, and to serve.

By **Vidhi Jagesha**

R.H. King Academy has changed greatly over the years, but its legacy of excellence lives on through the people within it. Among the most influential are the legacy teachers—those who have spent a significant portion of their careers at R.H. King. These teachers have witnessed firsthand the changes in curriculum and student culture yet they've remained consistent in

their dedication to teaching.

One of these teachers is Konrad Pichal, a math teacher who's spent more than 20 years watching the school grow and change.

Over the decades, Pichal has observed many changes in the school's expectations and student experience. One of the most significant areas of change has been in technology, which has advantages and disadvantages. Pichal appreciates tools like Photomath for

how they help students work through problems independently at home. But the flip side is clear to any teacher: cheating is easier, and sometimes students rely too heavily on tech without mastering the basics. "[Advanced technology] allows teachers to spend less time figuring out what went wrong and more time focusing on concepts and critical thinking. The key is finding the balance and learning how to use these tools produc-

tively," he says.

Despite these shifts, many teachers found ways to embrace the changes while supporting student growth. Maria Koczkoaj, who retired from teaching computer science and related subjects at King after over 20 years, witnessed enormous growth in both technology and student culture. However, one thing remained the same throughout it all: the joy of watching a student truly understand a topic. "It's when I see the students 'get it'—especially in computer science. That moment when it clicks," says Koczkoaj, reminiscing about what she misses most about teaching full-time.

"Computer science is such a unique subject because not everyone understands it—not even other teachers, and definitely not students who haven't taken it. It's like a different language. So when my students finally get it, it feels amazing—because if they get it, it means I did my job. That's the part I really love." Her love for teaching this community is what brings her back to King as a substitute

teacher, despite having already retired.

Similarly, Tiffany Moh, a chemistry and biology teacher at R.H. King for over 15 years, shares why she has chosen to stay at the academy despite its changes over the years. "There is a strong sense of community [at King]," Moh says. "I have created life-long bonds with teachers, whether we are in the same department or have bonded over running extracurriculars together. The students are another reason why I have stayed. We have some of the best students at King, and getting to interact with them on a daily basis makes my job quite enjoyable."

Moh continues on about her interactions with students: "Within the class, I get to help students understand various science topics, which can seem daunting but I try to make it enjoyable and memorable... hopefully!" she says.

Through the hard work and unforgettable commitment of legacy teachers, R.H. King Academy remains a school where a community and learning thrive.

MOVIES & TV

Thoughts from the corner: Wilkinson & Michaud

What were the dinosaurs like?
Wilkinson: I'm so angry at this question that I need to sit down and take my teeth out before I choke on them, you whippersnapper.
Michaud: Like teenagers but smarter and more pleasant to observe.

Do you think kids are dumber now?
Wilkinson: Than what? You'll have to get them to ask Google so they can find out the answer and then immediately forget it.

How do I get to school on time?
Wilkinson: Build a time machine.
Michaud: By learning to respect other people's time.

How do you find what you want to do in life?
Wilkinson: Often, it finds you. Be open to things. Don't be afraid to say 'yes' to interesting opportunities, even if it scares you.
Michaud: See something potentially interesting? Try it out. Rinse and repeat as necessary.

Who was your first love?
Wilkinson: Princess Leia in *Return of the Jedi*.
Michaud: I dunno... probably some girl I thought was cute when I was young but haven't seen or thought about in decades.

What can I do to get inspired to create art?
Wilkinson: Go for a walk. Have experiences. Get in touch with yourself. Use AI and then lie about it. (One of these is a bad answer, but WHICH?)

How do I talk to my parents about my bad grades?
Michaud: Be honest and actually own your choices. You earned your marks. They didn't just happen.

How do I build better habits?
Wilkinson: Give up everything that you enjoy doing.
Michaud: Not my problem. Fix yourself.



A look into Marvel's identity crisis



Robert Downey Jr.'s exit from the MCU brought criticisms about lack of direction and a quality decrease.

By Aleesha Qureshi

Marvel's new era feels like it is having an identity crisis as it experiments with new styles and struggles with quality control, audience fatigue and what many perceive as a lack of direction compared to the lead-up to the last two *Avengers* movies. It is as though the studio is forcing out content, killing the magic that Marvel once possessed.

The MCU's rise to pop culture fame started with *Iron Man* (2008) with Robert Downey Jr., which subsequently made him the face of the cinematic universe. From there, multiple other solo films from Marvel, with characters like Captain America and Thor, came out within a shared film world and lead to a cinema team-up in *The Avengers* (2012) that was unlike anything that had been

done before in cinema. This proved that having a shared universe can be effectively done on screen. Marvel stayed consistent with making sure every smaller story they produced connected to the larger narrative that culminated in *Avengers: Endgame* (2019).

By that point, fans knew what to expect with each film: exciting action, humour and compelling heroes. Even if the story was not groundbreaking, it always felt like an essential piece of a complex puzzle. *Avengers: Endgame* became the highest-grossing film of all time that year. Marvel Studios' reputation was at its peak, the fanbase was ever-increasing, and the films were breaking record after record.

This period was dubbed the Infinity Saga and, once concluded, Marvel started its next phase without a clear direction. The film enterprise had

told its story and was now in fresh waters, uncertain of where to go next. Instead of the structured build-up to a major event, the MCU was flooding the audiences with new content. There were two or three movies released per year as well as Disney+ series like *Moon Knight* and *WandaVision* pouring out regular episodes (with a minor pause thanks to COVID). With this overwhelming amount of content, there was a decline in quality. From *Thor: Love and Thunder* to *Ant-Man: Quantumania*, it was felt as though Marvel rushed production schedules leading to a decline in visual quality, especially with CGI. New Marvel films, once guaranteed money makers, began to struggle to find their audience. *The Marvels* debuted in theatres with \$47 million at the box office domestically, the lowest in the

entire MCU. Worldwide it made \$205 million against a \$220 million budget which meant it had more losses than profit. Recently, *Captain America: Brave New World*, also underperformed.

Grade 12 R.H. King student Tsion Mengestab, a long-time Marvel fan, has also noticed this quality decline. "I honestly think that they're a hit or miss; some of them are good and some of them are just complete garbage, especially with the Disney+ series," Mengestab says. "I still like Marvel, although after *Endgame*, you can tell when they don't give enough thought to some of the scripts compared to others." Marvel's constant content output made each project feel less special.

In response to these criticisms, Marvel seems to be shifting its strategy once again with projects such as *Daredevil: Born Again* and *Thunderbolts** (which has an 88% on Rotten Tomatoes), offering a darker area of the Marvel universe to explore. Marvel is also hoping that it's 60's-inspired *Fantastic Four: First Steps* will bring in some love.

Marvel is trying to lure older fans back in through nostalgia by recasting Robert Downey Jr. to play Marvel villain Dr. Doom in the next two *Avengers* films: *Doomsday* and *Secret Wars*. Whether this was a genuine casting or Marvel once again grasping at straws to stay relevant is unclear and fans are wary.

Whether Marvel's next phase marks a redemption or its death, one thing is certain: the MCU can't rely on past success alone.

Standing the test of time in cinema

By Julia Nichol

The creation of films has evolved profoundly in the past 100 years. In modern-day cinema, where computer-generated imagery (CGI), widescreen formats and streaming services are widely used only a few films remain just as impactful today as they were when they came out.

2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)
Stanley Kubrick's film laid the groundwork for much of the sci-fi that came after it. The film depicts humanity's evolution from the primates who just discovered how to use tools, to modern-day humans who are able to build advanced technology that takes them to space. *2001* is a landmark film in the history of cinema, with critics dubbing it one of the most influential films ever made. Almost 60 years later, its commentary on artificial intelligence, human evolution, and space exploration remains relevant through the use of its deliberately slow pace, minimal dialogue, stunning visuals, and score.

The Godfather (1972)
Even if one has not watched *The Godfather*, the name is instantly recognizable. Francis Ford Coppola's 1972 gangster film is widely regarded as one of the greatest films ever made. An element of the film that makes it so timeless is its characters and their complexity. Even though the Mafia is not a benevolent organization, Coppola structures his film to create sympathy for characters who aren't good people. The use of cinematography and attention to detail help create an atmosphere of tension throughout the film, emphasizing the dark, dangerous world of organized crime, ultimately shaping the way the public has perceived the Mafia ever since.

Star Wars: A New Hope (1977)
The *Star Wars* franchise, created by George Lucas, has become one of the most beloved in cinematic history. What makes *Star Wars* a universally-beloved film is its use of the oldest storytelling structure—the hero's journey.

Luke Skywalker's journey has elements that feel deeply human, even when it is set in a faraway galaxy. *Star Wars: A New Hope* is still so impactful because it taps into something timeless - the universal desire for purpose, courage, and hope.

Titanic (1997)
Titanic is an emotional historical drama that has rightfully earned its status as a modern classic. James Cameron's film incorporates both historical and fictional elements of the

sinking of the RMS Titanic in 1912. What initially drew audiences to *Titanic* was its advanced use of effects. A particularly impactful element of *Titanic* is its ability to create an emotional connection with the audience. Even more than 25 years after its release, the film holds its ability to make audiences emotional the when Celine Dion's 'My Heart Will Go On' plays.

These impactful movies of the past prove that great cinema is timeless.





Reboots: nostalgic or unnecessary?



Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life generated controversial opinions on whether this revival was necessary or a good closure for the show.

By Swadana Devadas

In recent years, Hollywood has been filled with reboots and renewals of classic movies and TV shows. From reboots like *The Little Mermaid* to TV revivals like *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life*, audiences have seen many familiar stories returning to their screens. Are these reboots, revivals, and sequels truly adding something fresh, or are they just studios cashing in on audience nostalgia?

A reboot is a new version of a story that disregards the previous continuity, while a revival is when a television show is brought back into production, typically with the same storyline, but updated for modern audiences. Reboots can be a way to restart a franchise by reimagining characters, plots and backstories. A revival, or sequel series, continues the story or develops the theme of earlier works.

When a reboot is an-

nounced, it is often met with skepticism rooted in the concern that they often don't capture the same magic as the original, either because of changes in tone, casting, or the shifting cultural context. However, not all reboots are bad. In some cases, they bring new life into old stories. For example, the 2017 reboot of *Beauty and the Beast* captured the magic of the original animated film while introducing deeper character development and new songs.

Not all reboots do as well. One reboot that received a significant amount of criticism was *Ghostbusters* (2016), directed by Paul Feig. The film was a reboot of the beloved 1984 classic, *Ghostbusters*, but instead of keeping the original cast, it featured an all-female team of ghost hunters. The backlash was immediate, largely because many fans of the original film were upset about the casting change and felt the reboot was unneces-

sary. The film struggled to connect with the original fanbase, and its lack of a strong connection to the source material left some fans feeling alienated. When the next film, *Ghostbusters: Afterlife*, came out in 2021, the reception was much warmer with cameos by the original cast and a continuation of the story first started in 1984.

Not all sequels are hits, though. *Kung Fu Panda 4* is an example of a sequel that left many fans underwhelmed. Instead of featuring a memorable antagonist like Tai Lung, who appeared in the first movie and was praised for his compelling backstory, the fourth movie introduced a forgettable villain who failed to leave a lasting impression.

On the other hand, revivals are often met with excitement from fans who want to reconnect with their favourite shows, but they also come with the challenge of living up to their original legacy. One of the most well-received revivals in recent years was *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life*. The original show, which aired from 2000 to 2007, had a loyal fanbase. When Netflix announced a four-episode revival, fans were thrilled to see their favorite characters return. *A Year in the Life* offered closure for some storylines while leaving open-ended questions, giving long-time fans the bittersweet return they had been hoping for.

The *Barbie* (2023) movie is an interesting case as the argument can be made that the film was a cross-media revival. It took the core concept of the Barbie character as a toy line and presented it in a fresh,

updated way. Historically, Barbie has faced criticism for promoting unrealistic beauty standards and perpetuating narrow representations of femininity. However, the 2023 film directly challenged these perceptions. By incorporating a variety of different body types, ethnicities, and backgrounds, the movie reshaped the image of Barbie to reflect the diversity of real-world women. The film's central narrative is rooted in self-discovery and empowerment, encouraging viewers to reject societal norms and embrace their own unique identities. The toy brand followed suit with new figures that emulated what was seen in the movie.

Despite some successes, revivals are not without challenges. A key issue for many is whether they can capture the magic of the original while also staying relevant in a new cultural landscape. Some revivals may fail to meet fan expectations if they attempt to update too much of what made the original so special or if they fail to adapt the content in a meaningful way. For example, the *Velma* reboot faced significant backlash. While it attempted to modernize the *Scooby-Doo* franchise with a new tone, viewers criticized its drastic changes in characterization and humor.

Reboots, revivals, and sequels are a reflection of the entertainment industry's desire to tap into the audience's nostalgia for beloved stories. Ultimately, the success of reboots and revivals lies in their ability to capture the essence of the original while introducing new elements that resonate with both old fans and new.

Shows are getting shorter... and worse

By Nabihah Tahseen

Over the past 20 to 30 years, the quality and focus of TV shows has shifted. Even the volume of shows has changed with each season many shows getting only eight or nine episodes compared what would commonly be 20 to 22. A shortened season does not allow the viewer to really sit with the story, especially when it comes to sitcoms. In older shows like *How I Met Your Mother*, *Friends*, or *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, the viewers were able to care when important events happened because time was spent setting them up.

"Close care to the script and the plot create something truly meaningful and good," agrees Irene Koumarelas, a grade 12 King student. Anticipating something over a long period of time versus expecting it to after an hour, is simply not as satisfying.

Characters seem more shallow with the limited number of episodes. With fewer episodes, personality is bound to be sacrificed. Even with older shows that could be considered trashy like *Gossip Girl*,

each character had their own motivations, their own storylines, and they felt like real people. Now, there simply is not enough time to fully flesh out characters that, in theory, should be very complex.

Take the popular show *Heartstopper* for example. The characters go through very real struggles like unattainable parental expectations, mental illness, discrimination, and more. But with the sheer size of the cast and only eight episodes per season, Nick Nelson (Kit Connor) cannot have a personality outside of just being a kind rugby boy who has a boyfriend.

Even if newer shows do appear to break out of this mold, they are ending with fewer seasons than they need to really tell a story. Netflix's *Shadow & Bone* was cancelled after just two seasons despite there being talks of a season three and a spin off. The show had so much more to explore, but was not given the chance. The show had multiple conventions and an already dedicated fanbase from the original books, so why give up so quickly?

Fortunately, all hope is not lost. There is something that modern shows really do well at showing that older ones often lacked and that is diversity. Though *Heartstopper* does not go as deep as it could have, the queer joy represented in the show is not something to be taken lightly.

"I think so much of the media depicting queer people

is very focussed on using the idea of queerness as a backdrop for either comedy or tragedy," says Echo Moonah, a student at King. "Our experience, or a straight audience's idea of our experience, is framed as either something to laugh at or pity. Either way, it's not for us."

Depth is still possible, but not the same way as before.



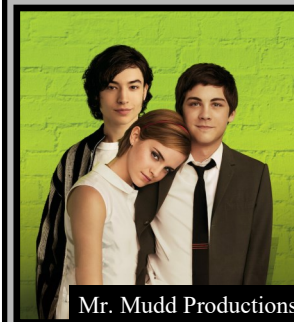
People speculate if *Heartstopper* represents queer identity as detailed as it could be and whether or not a lower episode count is to blame.

Peak teenage cinema: best coming of age movies

By Sabiha Sufian

Coming of age is a genre that focuses on themes of youth, self-discovery and transition into adulthood. Below are some films that are renowned for their exceptional executions of this genre.

1. *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*



Mr. Mudd Productions

The movie centers around Charlie (Logan Lerman), a freshman in high school who previously held himself back due to his struggles with mental illness and the suicide of his best friend. He eventually meets two seniors, Sam (Emma Watson) and Patrick (Ezra Miller), who form a strong connection with Charlie and help him break free.

2. *Little Women*



Columbia Pictures

Little Women focuses on four sisters in Massachusetts during the American Civil War: Jo (Saoirse Ronan), Amy (Florence Pugh), Meg (Emma Watson) and Beth (Eliza Scanlen) March. The film explores each of their lives.

3. *Ladybird*



Scott Rudin Productions

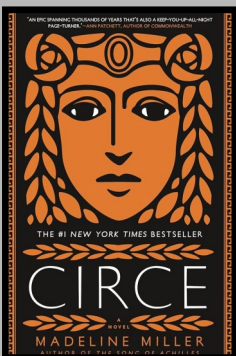
Ladybird follows the story of Christine (Saoirse Ronan), a rebellious teenager in Sacramento and her struggles in a Catholic high school while she navigates her complicated relationship with her mother.

BOOKS & MUSIC

Dense books best read in the summer

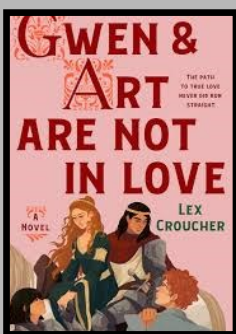
By Scar Stamp-Blackbeard

Circe
By Madeline Miller



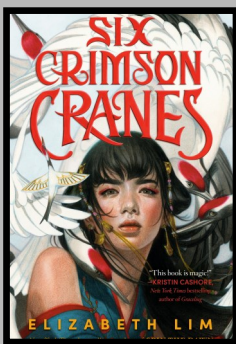
Dive into the world of Greek mythology with this excellent feminist retelling of the story of Circe, a young goddess who is cast away from her home and quickly becomes a powerful sorceress. With legendary characters such as Hermes and Odysseus, this novel is sure to make the readers summer a little bit more magical.

Gwen and Art are Not in Love
By Lex Croucher



Gwen and Art are Not in Love is a hopeful story of two young people who become unlikely allies in an arranged marriage. Both a rom-com and a drama, this is a story that is full of sword fights, romance and even medieval politics.

Six Crimson Cranes
By Elizabeth Lim



While alone and searching for her brothers, Shiori discovers a plot to take over the throne. She is the only person who can save her kingdom from certain doom, however in order to do so she must work alongside the most unexpected partners. Readers will be inspired by and enthralled with this story.

Michael Jackson's lasting legacy



Michael Jackson's performance at the Super Bowl XXVII was a legendary event as he stood perfectly still for nearly two minutes.

By Prithikga Vinotharupan

On January 31st, 1993, 133 million people in the U.S. tuned in to watch one performer take the stage at the Super Bowl XXVII halftime show: Michael Jackson. For 21 years, no artist managed to bring together a larger audience than Jackson did. Since then, he has been named the Most Successful Entertainer of all Time by Guinness World Records and his legacy continues to thrive long after his passing.

Michael Jackson's career first started in the 1960s when he was just 5 years old. It was clear that Michael Jackson had a unique talent that set him apart. He was the lead singer in his brothers' musical group, The Jackson 5. With Jackson's presence in the group their fame skyrocketed. Jackson was known for his vocals,

performances and signature dance moves.

Jackson's solo career started later in 1971. By 1979 he reached stardom with his hit album, *Off The Wall*. The most successful songs on the album were 'Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough' and 'Rock With You.' His most successful album was *Thriller* in 1982 as it brought him eight Grammys and was named the all-time best-selling album worldwide.

Michael Jackson revolutionized the music industry in countless ways. He was the first to break down racial barriers in the industry. That was clear in his song 'Black or White' (1991). The song's message was of racial unity and its music video displayed cultures from all over the world.

All his music videos were unforgettable, showcasing his

distinguishing approach to storytelling. The videos were not simply visuals to accompany his songs; they were short films that brought his songs to life. His 'Thriller' music video was especially iconic with gruesome zombies and memorable dance moves that became an instant Halloween classic.

Michael Jackson's work has continued to live long after his passing due to his originality. Jackson's work was new to the world. It was a style that was never seen before which made him a household name. From notable dance moves like the moonwalk to his patented anti-gravity shoes, he had an inventive spirit. Moreover, Jackson was an electrifying performer. During his *Dangerous* tour, Jackson exited the stage with a jet-pack-like device, stunning the audi-

ence. Other songs like 'Billie Jean,' and 'Beat It,' continue to be played across the world; a testament to the longevity of his work. "It is true that he was a really gifted singer and musician, despite all the controversies that have hampered his image as a person," says Ms. Mansfield, a supply teacher at King.

Some of those controversies, many of which are well-documented, cast a shadow over some of his achievements and could have destroyed his legacy. Many parts of what has been talked about were never firmly established, making this part of his life and career murky and unclear. Despite Michael's controversial personal life, his influence is clear through the many artists who follow his creative footsteps today, keeping his legacy alive.

Books destined for classic status

By Iffat Nafisa

Most people are familiar with the term "classic literature." This usually refers to books like Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, and Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*, all of which have adorned bookshelves for generations. But these books inevitably beg the question: what contemporary books can one potentially expect to one day be considered classics?

One potential title is *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins. This series mesmerizes young readers by opening the door for dystopian novels. The story is told from the perspective of its protagonist, Katniss Everdeen. She and eleven other "tributes" are set to compete in the Hunger Games, an annual competition where all except one contestant remain alive at the end. Themes of poverty, survival, social classes, and the power exerted by rulers are explored in *The Hunger Games*. The plot is intense and this dystopian book series has everything action lovers look for. The tributes are just ordinary teenagers, making the characters

relatable and captivating to follow along by teen readers. As a result of its timeless themes, thrilling storyline, compelling characters, and worldwide influence, *The Hunger Games* is likely to be featured as one of the beloved future classics.

Another future classic is the book *All the Light We Cannot See*. This WW2-centered novel by Anthony Doerr follows the lives of two children—a blind girl from France and an orphan boy from Germany. The girl, Marie-Laure, loses her eyesight at the age of six. Eventually, Marie learns to make use of her other senses to overcome the barrier of her lost eyesight, but life's unpredictability hits her—she has to flee her hometown when the German military bombard them one night. Its exploration of universal themes like hope, loss, and fear cements its impact. Its history-driven setting allows people to revisit the past as the author's narrative style makes the description of events and character development feel realistic and well worth remembering.

Beautifully narrated, the story of *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak also takes place during WW2. It mainly centers

around a little girl named Liesel who loses her brother while they are being sent off to live with their foster family, the Hubermanns. Liesel develops a strong connection with her new dad who has a way of comforting her with his mere presence. Themes of war, compassion, family, and suffering are explored in the novel. The most intriguing aspect of the novel is its narration, which is done by Death itself, incorporating uncanny but somehow benevolent commentary, sometimes chiming in for more insight, foreshadowing, or introducing a character. The descriptions make

the setting, characters, and events feel close enough for the reader to touch, sense, and visualize. Unique narration, exploration of compassion and human connections, deliberate approach to the characters, and book-reader interactivity—all of these factors contribute to making *The Book Thief* an ideal fit for classical literature in the future.

Classics are admired by generations of readers who appreciate the beauty of timeless literature, and as time goes on, these impactful modern titles certainly have the potential to earn a place among them.



Nikita Hardial

Newer, albeit impactful books, much like the *Book Thief*, are explored alongside what is traditionally known as classic literature.



Romance novel quality is declining



Lack of quality in contemporary books can cause disappointment and frustration for many readers.

By Ariba Islam

It seems as though many have forgotten the purpose of literature: to help people understand their lives and the world around them. Now, it feels as though there is a decrease in the quality of literature particularly when it comes to the romance category. Romance novels, poems, and oral stories have existed for centuries. They're heavily enjoyed by readers because it is easy to connect with the characters and support them throughout their venture in pursuing love. The quality of writing for

such love plots and character depth seems so shallow in the romance novels of today that it loses the emotional connection that many readers search for. An example of this is *The Love Hypothesis* by Ali Hazelwood. The interest Hazelwood's book received was short-lived and was replaced by negative reviews criticizing the lack of an adequate theme. It's hard to see value in some works when novels like these are compared with true classics like Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. The difference is evident both in the quality of writing and how

well the authors expressed their characters and carried the themes of the novel. Modern book pages seem largely filled with the shallow physicals of romantic relationships, providing only momentary excitement. True and healthy love is about emotional safety, connection, and growing together, and the best romance novels teach us this. When new books come with what appears to be a shallow style of writing it takes away lessons that can be learned through love and leaves the story feeling empty and redundant. "A lot of the romance nov-

els these days have a negative message to them and don't engage in larger conversations, instead they're filled with just shallow fulfillment," says Ms. Warriner, who teaches English at King. Kiyori Fernando, a grade 11 student at King agrees. "I think that romance needs to make you feel something that's rarely expressed as much in novels these days." Many believe that there seems to be a rise in poorly written books in part thanks to influence from social media. These platforms prioritize fast-paced content in bite-sized formats. Many books are now written in a way that provides the same instant gratification that social media does. Shorter chapters, more shocking moments, and simplified plots are all ways authors make their stories more social media-like. It has also never been easier to publish a book and just about anyone can do it. This accessibility makes for an increase in books that haven't been properly edited or marketed. This rush to publish can have even major publishing companies feeling pressured to compete and keep up with trends and reader demand. They are potentially pushing out books without prioritizing quality. As priorities shift, we lose an essential part of literature: meaning.

Innovation through genre bending



Beyoncé's music style has drastically changed in recent years, experimenting and mashing up genres like country and pop.

By Armaan Qureshi

For years, music artists have been experimenting with genres, combining them to create unique, never heard before sounds. This technique is usually referred to as "genre bending." Many popular artists have made the choice to use this technique expand from the genre of music they're usually associated with or to further display their musicality to their audience. Two notable artists who have done genre bending in the past are Tyler, The Creator and Beyoncé. If you're a fan of hip hop, you've heard at least one song by Tyler Okonma, otherwise known as Tyler, The Creator. Okonma was a member of the hip-hop group, Odd Future, who skyrocketed to fame due to their unique style of music. Okonma did solo albums dur-

ing his time with the group until they disbanded in May of 2015. His time in Odd Future cemented his roots in traditional hip hop, giving him visibility in the genre before he went on to stretch its boundaries later on in his career. In an interview with TV host Larry King, Okonma spoke on how he wants to expand beyond the binary of rap. "I hate rapping. It puts you in this box... I'm talented enough to do other things." Once Okonma left the group, he began to focus fully on his music and experimented with his musical style that he already began to build up. He released multiple albums that were positively received by fans. Tyler, The Creator has been recognized for his eccentric, chaotic, and genuine personality, along with the unique music style he has developed. Okonma has experimented

with mainly hip hop, combining it with a more orchestral style and sampling vocals or instruments from older songs. Nevertheless, he never shies away from trying new things. In his most recent album, *Chromakopia*, Okonma switches genres completely and uses an acoustic guitar as both percussion and as a backing track for the songs 'Judge Judy' and 'I Killed You.' These unconventional choices in Okonma's music have inspired younger artists to experiment with their own styles. Grammy award winning superstar Billie Eilish has credited Tyler, The Creator as a big inspiration for her music. On her radio show *me & dad radio*, Eilish shared that she had been a fan of Okonma's since she was a kid and his unique style of music inspired her to embrace a more unconventional approach to her music. Tyler, The Creator's switch to using genre bending on top of his knowledge of hip hop has been extremely beneficial to his career, making him one of the most recognized hip hop artists on the scene with two Grammys under his belt and numerous sold out tours. When it comes to music, Beyoncé needs no introduction. She is a pop music superstar, known for her widespread hits 'Single Ladies' and 'Crazy In Love.' However, she's been a topic of discussion recently due to the release of her album *Cowboy Carter*. The album left many of her fans confused. Beyoncé was

known for being a pop sensation, so why exactly is she producing what sounds like country music? *Cowboy Carter* dives into themes about the history of country music and its ties to Black culture. As to why she made the album, she expressed to *The Hollywood Reporter* that it was inspired by her experiences with the genre and her status as a well known pop music star and her racial background. The album garnered widespread acclaim from critics and fans alike, breaking multiple records and led to Beyoncé winning album of the year at the 2024 Grammys, making her the first black female artist to win the title in the 21st century. By creating the album, she highlighted issues with racism within the music industry and further popularized the country genre during the height of its resurgence. Although *Cowboy Carter* is referred to as a country album, Beyoncé combines the sound of country music with other genres she's more familiar with such as R&B, hip-hop, folk and rock music. Through using this technique, Beyoncé was able to create a groundbreaking album that led to her breaking multiple records and leaving an everlasting impact. By utilizing genre bending and combining unique sounds, many artists create signature music styles and have the ability to inspire those who want to become musicians.

Concerts of the summer!

By Sharini Arulrasa

1. The Toronto Summer Music Festival
Festival (TSM) is a classical music event that takes place annually each summer and has been a part of the Toronto music scene for 20 years. Various events, such as string quartets and musical performances will take place encompassing the beauty of classical music. It starts on July 10th and goes on to August 2nd. The prominent locations for their events include Walter Hall and Koerner Hall.

2. The Weeknd: After Hours 'Til Dawn Tour
The Weeknd will perform a concert at Rogers Stadium on July 28th, August 7th, and August 8th. His tour will include special guests like Playboi Carti and Mike Dean. Songs from his 2020 album *After Hours* and his latest album, *Hurry Up Tomorrow*, will presumably be part of his concerts. Prices can be found on Ticketmaster.ca.

3. Stray Kids dominATE World Tour
Stray Kids is a renowned K-pop group with eight members: Bangchan, Changbin, Han, Seungmin, I.N., Lee Know, Hyunjin, and Felix. Some of their popular songs on Spotify are: 'Chk Chk Boom,' 'LALALALA,' and 'Come Play' which was played during the Netflix series, *Arcane*. The band will also bring their tour during the summer months, specifically on June 29th at Rogers Stadium. The tickets range from around \$187 to \$2,106 each.

4. Gracie Abrams: The Secret of Us Deluxe Tour with Role Model
Gracie Abrams is a rising artist who has gained substantial followers thanks to great songs like 'That's So True.' Abrams will perform on July 26th on the Budweiser Stage with another artist, Role Model. Ticket prices can be found online now at Ticketmaster.ca.



USA Today

A R T S & D R A M A

Shows to see this summer!

By Bavina Sivapatham

Disney's *The Lion King*: Princess of Wales Theatre (Mirvish)



Mirvish

Following the original 1994 animated movie, the musical uses iconic songs and stunning puppetry to bring this story to life. The show is running until August 30 and ticket prices range from \$59 to \$169.

The Odd Couple: Scarborough Theatre Guild



Arts Club Theatre

Two best friends, one man a neat-freak, one a slob, are both kicked out by their wives and forced to live together. Through this play, the pair navigate this new living arrangement as they discover why the other was kicked out by his wife. Their opposing personalities clash in ways that make this a hilarious comedy. The show is running from May 30 to June 14 and ticket prices range from \$24 to \$28.

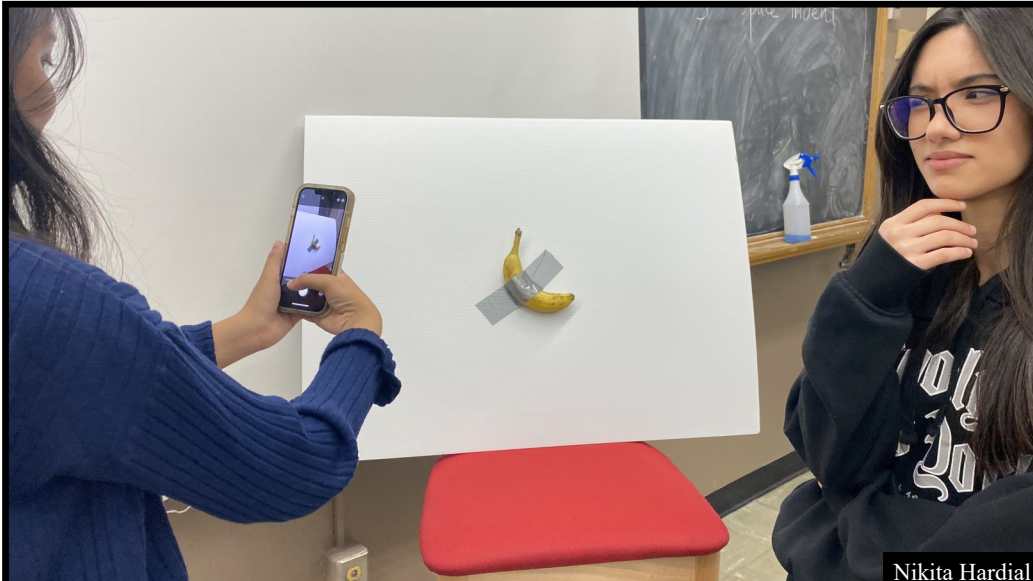
Pygmalion: Scarborough Players



Cal Shakes

The inspiration behind the famous musical and movie, *My Fair Lady*, *Pygmalion* is a comedic play about a woman looked down on due to her appearance and cockney accent. She is discovered by an upper-class man who aims to elevate her social status by making her more "proper." The show is running from June 27 to July 12 and ticket prices range from \$24 to \$28.

Is the hate for 'modern' art justified?



Nikita Hardial

Contemporary art, such as Maurizio Cattelan's *Comedian* (a banana taped to the wall) is imitated at King easily. The piece is put on trial as students question the "laziness" of the work given how simple it is.

By Claire Taylor

The era of contemporary art—incorrectly referred to as modern art by many—began in the mid-1900s as many artists rejected the academic standards of what was and was not considered art. Some names may be familiar, including Andy Warhol, known for pioneering pop art, as well as Banksy, an anonymous street artist who captured the attention of many around the globe. Contemporary art differs greatly from piece to piece, incorporating various techniques. Art has always been subjective, depending on a

person's lived experiences and emotions towards the piece. While some love it, others despise it.

Many argue that some contemporary art is "lazy" as it allows artists to be very simplistic while still selling their pieces for millions of dollars. For example, artist Maurizio Cattelan's piece where there was a banana duct taped to a wall sold for \$6.2 million in 2024. Some question if there is even any thought and meaning behind the piece.

"I personally don't like contemporary art because I feel like there is no meaning behind it anymore and that it's

just too easy to get rich off of low effort work," says Liam Martin, a grade 11 student at King.

Compared to other styles of art, such as realism, which takes a lot of skill and technique, contemporary art is perceived by some as lacking effort, creativity, and originality. Realism is something that can be mastered with practice, while contemporary art can be much more random and spontaneous. However, what many fail to realize is that when art lacks in technical skill, it can make up for in meaning.

On the other side of things, there are some who believe

that contemporary art is a beautiful, true form of expression. Leo Tolstoy, a Russian philosopher, thought that art was dead if it was not about depicting the expression of an emotion. As society shifted away from realism, people began to believe that art was not just about expressing a still image, but about expressing political, religious, and emotional thoughts and feelings.

"What makes contemporary art beautiful is that it truly is formless. It is life captured from an artist's eye, envisioning the constantly changing world around them," says Sahara Meighlal-Sarwan, a grade 12 student at King.

Challenging the notion of traditional art forces people to look deeper to interpret the meaning. The audience must analyze and interpret it their own way. This art does not provide immediate answers as to what it is about, forcing people to take the time to explore what it means to them.

Feelings towards contemporary art is dependent on one's perspective of what art means to them. Contemporary art is about pushing limitations and expectations aside—starting conversations where the limitations of art and what art is are constantly pushed. Art, no matter its form, has the ability to transform and inspire a person with the hardest part being to find a meaning that is impactful to each individual. Art is many things, but most of all, it is subjective.

'Stunt casting' in musical theatre

By Lucie LeBlanc & Vidhi Jagesha

For many decades, beloved movie stars have appeared on stage demonstrating the range and complexity of their talent. Broadway and the West End have long served as venues where big names from film, TV and music have been welcomed into the spotlight of theatre. However, since the pandemic, there seems to have been a dramatic increase in the number of celebrity-led productions. Year after year as more actors, musicians, and influencers make their stage debuts, one wonders if the increased focus on celebrity casting is threatening Broadway's authenticity?

Many performers from backgrounds of singing, dancing, cinema, and more have tried their luck at theatre with some hitting it big while others strike out. The gap between the stage and the screen is not one that just anybody can cross. Theatre, especially musical theatre, demands a wide range of skills including stamina, body and voice control, timing and more. These distinctions are the reason why some stars transitioning from the screen to the stage struggle to succeed. Hiring someone without this experience purely for their fame and not necessarily their theatrical ability is called 'stunt casting.'

The reasoning behind stunt casting is often financial. A study published in the *Journal of Revenue and Pricing Management* found that weeks that featured celebrities on Broadway shows are associated with an increase in revenue of approximately \$250,000. It makes sense that pressure to perform well commercially post-COVID drove an increase in high-profile casting.

The decision to stunt-cast can take away opportunities and exposure from lesser-known actors who, based on their skill and experience, are possibly more qualified for the part. "I think that it depends a lot on whether the celebrity has a background in musical theatre/drama or not," says Naiyarah Amarasinghe-Domingue, a grade 12 theatre enthusiast at King. "Like Charli D'Amelio was a dancer first, TikToker second, and had a long childhood career in professional dance, so it makes sense that she'd be on Broadway as a dancer. Same thing with Denzel Washington and *Othello*. But when they're being cast purely to be a celebrity draw for the show, I think that's ultimately detrimental to the show most of the time." This was seen with Nick Jonas being casted in *The Last Five Years*. His appearance drew a lot of people to the play despite his performance receiving sub-par reviews.

There are several examples where celebrity casting works, not only bringing a different edge to the show while sometimes introducing a whole new audience to the beauty of theatre. A prime example of this is Elizabeth Gillies and Milo Manheim as Audrey and Seymour in the Off-Broadway revival of *Little Shop of Horrors*. Best known for their roles as Jade from *Victorious* and Zed from the *Zombies* franchise, it is no secret that these two can sing. Fans were

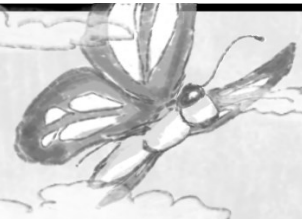
gushing with excitement at the thought of seeing two of their favorite actors together on stage and they did not disappoint. The talent and commitment to the roles was remarkable and shattered any lingering doubt of their talent. The reason why they were well received is likely because they were known as accomplished singers and performers. The balance lies between genuine skill and mere star power in order to maintain integrity and fairness.



Little Shop of Horrors

If celebrities are fit for the role and not just cast solely for their fame, such as in the Off-Broadway revival of *Little Shop of Horrors*, integrity and fairness can be maintained in the production casting.

HEALTH



Your mighty DNA's anything but invincible

Take a deep dive into some of the fascinating science behind physical aging



Nikita Hardial

Physical aging is inevitable, happening due to the damage accumulated over time to tiny but insanely complex helix structures in your body that are called DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid).

By Nikita Hardial

Ever pondered immortality, hoping you could live like Peter Pan and stay your current age forever? Maybe in a distant future technology might just be advanced enough to let us do so, but currently, we are still forced to succumb to aging. The wrinkles you notice on your older relatives or the creakiness in their steps as they try to keep up with you is predominantly due to the damage they've accumulated to their DNA over the years.

Your DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) is what makes you, you. While the members of the human race have almost identical DNA to each other, very tiny variations exist in everyone's genetic code. With in these almost never-ending chains, the simple change in order of a minuscule molecule separates you from another human. Your DNA is undoubt-

edly the most important feature of your body as it is continuously being replicated and passing genetic information onto the next generation of cells so that your body keeps running smoothly. But our bodies can't run smoothly forever.

"We age because there is damage to our DNA," says Ashlyn Gratton, a biology teacher at King. "Our cells grow older. There's lots of molecular damage and wear and tear to our bodies that can't be reversed." As a result, over time people become weaker and susceptible to certain illnesses.

Almost everything around us works against the longevity of our DNA. From the food we eat to the air we breathe, our body pays the price. "The pollutants and chemicals that we ingest contain free radicals, which wreak havoc," Gratton says.

Free radicals are molecules with unpaired valence electrons. "They're trying to steal electrons from things in your body to make up for the electrons they lack," Gratton says. "As we accumulate free radicals, damage can be inflicted upon our DNA since it's all made up of molecules, rich with electrons they'll try to rip out for themselves." The snacks that we consume out of convenience lack the necessary antioxidants to satisfy the electron-hungry free radicals.

Another major contributor to DNA damage are telomeres, or more appropriately, their shortening over time. Telomeres are essentially caps at the ends of our chromosomes that protect our genetic code. With each replication, however, these caps shorten, bringing harmful molecules one step closer to damaging our DNA.

Our everyday choices eventually grow to have a huge

impact on our overall health. Perhaps if we made all the right choices, we'd be able to live 100 years longer.

"There's actually a man who has been undergoing this special program—Project Blueprint—for the last two or three years: Bryan Johnson, this tech billionaire," Gratton says. "He's managed to reverse his biological age by 5.1 years. So every time he has a birthday, instead of aging one year, he ages 8 months." His efforts have undoubtedly contributed greatly to science, opening up avenues for important medical research. However, at this point in time, his actions are unrealistic steps for the average individual to take. Johnson sets aside over two million dollars each year in order to maintain his intense regimens, diets, and procedures.

"As we get older, you'll hear people say 'I can't climb these stairs anymore' or 'I can't go play with my children' and things like that 'because my back's sore, my knees are sore' but I firmly believe it doesn't have to be that way," Gratton argues.

As a biology teacher, Gratton's love for the subject goes beyond the classroom, allowing her to apply what she's learned to her own life. "I just feel like as a society we grew up and that's what we expect, but if you change what you're doing and you treat your body properly, you can continue to do the things that you used to do as a teenager," she says.

Following a strict schedule and diet every day might be too much for most people, but incorporating healthy, antioxidant-rich foods into our meals while setting aside time to take a run might turn out to be a bit

more manageable.

"Eating fruits and vegetables that are colourful—foods like kale or blueberries or just any type of dark berry—contain antioxidant properties that can help lengthen our telomeres and protect our DNA," Gratton recommends.

Busy students often sacrifice their sleep to keep up their grades. Having a consistent sleep schedule (with around 7-8 hours of REM each night) allows our body to properly repair itself. Additionally, poor sleep is linked to dementia. In more ways than one, sleeping long enough at night protects you from many of the harmful effects of aging and decreases susceptibility to disease.

Many remain oblivious to the fact that stress actually takes a physical toll on one's body. "Chronic stress can lead to increased cortisol—a stress hormone—levels in your body, which can cause damage to your cells as well as mess with other hormones that make your body function properly," says Gratton. "The *National Institutes of Health* supports this claim as well. Gratton encourages students to make time to unwind. "On the weekend, while you're studying, make sure you do things that fill your bucket, at least one thing that makes you feel happy because that's what's going to help you reduce stress."

Billionaire Bryan Johnson has taken the extreme route through Project Blueprint, but his efforts have shown that by tweaking parts of your lifestyle, it's completely possible to live a much healthier life. "I don't think it should be about preventing aging," Gratton says. "I think it's how we can age so that we can still do the things that we love."

The evolution of diseases through the years



Priyanka Anand

The increase of medical resources have been an incredible asset in lessening the impact of diseases, turning what was once deadly for many people into something as harmless as a simple cold.

By Lein Elnaw

Over the years, the health of society has fluctuated due to various factors that influence diseases and illnesses. Many illnesses that caused outbreaks years ago can be easily treated now, but new diseases have also been introduced. It's essential to understand and break down the evolution of diseases.

This allows us to predict emerging health risks and create new prevention strategies thereby reducing the risk of outbreaks and exposure to deadly diseases.

A huge factor that has impacted humans' susceptibility to certain illnesses and diseases is genetics, variations capable of influencing the immune system's response to different

illnesses. Past outbreaks and epidemics have affected the human genome. Due to natural selection, leading those with resistant genes to carry them to the next generation, the majority of the world's population has resistant genes. That is why many of the illnesses that killed people years ago, such as influenza, malaria, and tuberculosis are no longer preva-

lent, as the majority of the population are able to fight off these illnesses with their resistant genes.

Epigenetics, a new field in biology that studies how lifestyle choices affect our genetics, also plays a role. People's behavior and environment can determine whether certain genes are turned on or off and these genes can be passed on.

Over the years, people's lifestyle choices regarding diet, exercise, and more have changed greatly. People used to eat healthier foods; nowadays, processed foods and pesticides are very common in our diet. These can affect the expression of genes and increase the risk of the next generation being born with illnesses or being more susceptible to them, as stated by the *National Institutes of Health*.

Global warming, air pollution, and pesticides in our current environment are also a leading cause of illnesses today. The *World Health Organization* says air pollution from

factories and vehicles has increased respiratory illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, asthma, and lung cancer.

Advancements in the medical and technological fields have greatly impacted susceptibility to diseases and illnesses. Nowadays, people are more knowledgeable about the human body, our genetics, and how food impacts our health than they were years ago. People understand the importance of a good diet and are able to diagnose, treat, and prevent diseases more often.

"I've had family members who died from lung cancer after smoking because they were uneducated about the risks of smoking," says Olivia Hodgson, a student at King. Hodgson says she's learned a lot from this experience and she strictly avoids things like smoking and drinking now knowing the dangers. As generations pass by, people learn more and more about how certain things affect their health.

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