

THE COMET NEWS

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TALENT FOR THE TROOPS RAISES OVER 11,000 DOLLARS

Written by: Matt LaBarca

The 5th annual Talent for the Troops, hosted by Mr. Cardoza, was a phenomenal show. Talent for the Troops is an annual event held at Hicksville High School. The event's purpose is to raise money to go toward the Fisher House Foundation, Paws for War, and Nassau County Firefighters Operation Wounded Warriors .

Volunteers helped decorate the stage, auditorium and the lobby with red, white, and blue everywhere. The volunteers also provided plenty of food, refreshments, apparel, and raffles. One of the raffle prizes that was available was a PlayStation 4.

The show opened with a string quartet featuring four of our district's orchestra teachers: Mr. Sher, Ms. Krieger, Mr. Nadler, and Ms. Weiss. They performed songs featured in *Pirates of the Caribbean* and *Game of Thrones*.

Many of the district's schools, such as Burns Avenue, OCR, Lee Avenue, and Hicksville Middle School participated in this event. Teachers from the schools prepared dance routines and performed for the crowd. The middle school danced to "Bohemian Rhapsody" and "We Will Rock You." Before intermission, two trophies were given out: one to OCR for having the loudest audience, and one to Burns Avenue for having the most points.

Ms. Civello and Mr. Cohn put together

an episode of Carpool Karaoke to be played at the event. It featured teachers of the high school's English department. The video cut to different people singing "Bohemian Rhapsody." Some clips featured teachers that were completely silent in the car, which was very comedic.

The second half of the show was a rock performance featuring Rage and the Comets. Mr. Lichtenthal, Mr. Paranandi, Mr. Walsh, Ms. Rocco and Mr. Mediate came together to blow the crowd away. They performed popular songs like "7 Nation Army," "Don't Stop Believing," and "Africa." Everyone was excited during this part of the show.

A notable individual act was Ms. Civello. She sang her heart out to "High Hopes," "Bohemian Rhapsody" and other popular songs.

Talent for the Troops was a huge success. The event raised over 11,000 dollars for our troops. Multiple teachers and students helped out with the show one way or another. Some had incredible acts in the show, some recorded the show, and some sold merchandise outside the auditorium. So much effort was put in to make it a beautiful show. Overall, this production was phenomenal because of all the support it got, and it was all for a great cause.



Pictured above: Ross Kash performs with Rage and The Comets

TALENT FOR THE TROOPS

Pictures provided by: Mr. Walter Roche



Pictured above: Performers from the middle school and an elementary school during Talent for the Troops.

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I have had the pleasure of being part of Comet News for two years. I started off as a writer, and worked my way up to the editor of the paper. I can say with all honesty that this is one of the best decisions that I have made in my four years at Hickville High School. As many of you know, the school paper isn't the most popular activity at the school. Many people want to run away when they hear about "writing articles for fun", but Comet News is more than that. Comet News is about giving important information to our high school; it's about expressing yourself and discussing your own opinions. I'm not going to lie; writing an article can be difficult, but the satisfaction of seeing your article, your piece of work, in print, is worth it. My time in Comet News hasn't just made me a better writer; it has opened my eyes to the world around me. It's a rare opportunity, and I am very lucky to have had it.

Trying out something new can show you that you may have a passion you never knew about. I enjoyed writing before I joined Comet News, and I considered myself to be a "humanities" student and

not a "STEM" student, but I never thought that journalism specifically would be something that I would want to pursue in college, or something that would even influence the college I wanted to go to, until I joined Comet News. I took a chance with something that was out of my comfort zone, and it has definitely paid off.

I'd like to thank Mr. Cohn for the hard work and effort he puts into every issue of the paper we've put out. It takes a great teacher to put together a paper filled with at least ten student articles per issue, and all of us at Comet News are grateful for his work and dedication. Thank you to my fellow Comet News members for your hard work and dedication; a newspaper is only as good as the people who are part of it.

For those of you considering joining Comet News, go for it. One of my biggest regrets of high school is not being part of Comet News for all four years of high school. You won't regret it, and it will be a great part of your high school experience.

- Anya Marquardt

HS FRESHMEN WIN MEDICAL MARVELS COMPETITION

Written by: Roxy Dias and Maeryam Nasari

Hicksville High School won first place in the seventh annual Medical Marvels competition. The Medical Marvels competition, open to ninth and tenth graders, was held on March 8, 2019 at The Feinstein Institute for Medical Research. Thirty eight teams from Nassau, Suffolk, Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, the Bronx, Staten Island and Westchester districts entered the competition. The first place prize was \$1800. Hicksville High School's winning team consisted of freshmen Roxy Dias, Maeryam Nasari, Bisma Omer, Kaitlyn Verdugo, and Sarah Chavez.

This year's problem proposed to teams was "How to put an end to teenage vaping in schools." The competition looked for realistic, innovative solutions to fight off the vaping epidemic this generation is currently facing. Teams submitted papers of up to 14 pages, which were then analyzed and reviewed by a panel of scientists, clinicians and healthcare administrators

using the National Institute of Health's grant scoring criteria.

The winning team's research paper consisted of two long term solutions and multiple short term solutions to address the problem. The two main long term solutions focused on creating new public policy in order to pass new FDA regulations which would require that vape brands meet the new standards proposed in the paper. The team decided that the technology and engineering of the vape pens should be altered in order to include barriers to prevent teenagers from successfully using vape pens. This included adding access codes which only adults can unlock successfully, and connecting the pens to Bluetooth in order to establish geofences around schools. The multiple short term solutions consisted of adding cheap gas sensors around the entire school, promoting public awareness with programs similar to DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education), holding health seminars to in-

form teens and parents of the dangers of vaping, and creating a social media campaign to reach out to teens about the consequences of vaping.

When the judges announced that the Hicksville team won, the five of us and Social Science Research teacher Dr. Piscitelli, our advisor, were ecstatic. Dr. Piscitelli "was very impressed with the work, and glad that people in the field recognized the good work as well." Four years prior to this, her team won second place in the competition, making this the second time one of her teams has placed. Looking ahead, Dr. Piscitelli believes that this first place win sets the bar very high for future students, but that now she can better assess what the panel is looking for in terms of finalists.

The team's success this year has set the bar high, but both the members of the team (who can all return) and their advisor are looking forward to competing again next year.



Pictured above: Roxy Dias, Maeryam Nasari, Bisma Omer, Kaitlyn Verdugo, and Sarah Chavez

Ms. CASSIDY TRAVELS TO THE FRINGE

Written by: Rawan Mohamed

The University of Edinburgh, a prestigious university in Scotland, holds a two week theater program in August for theatre artists and teachers. About 50 scholarships are handed out to school teachers who have applied for this program. One of our own, Ms. Cassidy, an English teacher and director of the school plays, has qualified for the scholarship and will be attending the program in August.

Ms. Cassidy needed to go through the application process just like anyone else. "It's funny, it's been a while since I had to apply for something. We had to get our letters of recommendation, had to write an essay. I had to do a curriculum vitae and a long application for both the scholarship and the program... it was a lot like applying for college."

Ms. Cassidy continued, "the teachers in the programs will be there... we basically see shows, take classes, go to lectures... it will be teachers and theatre artists from around the world that go to this program and learn from each other." This program obviously is very esteemed and fulfilling.

The world's largest arts festival will also be held during the program, the Fringe Festival. This is where a variety of performances are held in hopes to attract the attention of directors, producers, critics, etc. Ms. Cassidy will also have the pleasure of attending this festival. "[This is] the theatre event of the year.. where people bring their new works... everything new in theatre is there."

This is all very exciting for Ms. Cassidy, but even a great director and teacher like her didn't believe her chances of getting in were all that high, stating, "I was excited and surprised... I knew I had a shot, but at the same time you're like there's so many people applying who would get this rather than me. I didn't want to get my hopes up, so when I got the e-mail I was really shocked, but [also] very happy."

SWIMMING LAPS AROUND THE COMPETITION

Written by: Sneha Gouli

Running a tight schedule and still managing to be a successful team demands motivated and hardworking students. This year, the boys Varsity Swim Team has shown just that. From practices to meets, the team has shown its dedication to the sport.

A recent interview with the coach, Ms. Epstein, gives us insight on what the team does in order to clinch a victory. "There is a lot of traveling that is involved with both practices and games," Ms. Epstein said. The team goes to Hofstra three days a week, and does dryland practicing every other day. Having a pool at Hicksville High School is something that both the members and Ms. Epstein are excited about. "I am looking forward to the pool, as it means we can have more practice hours and home meets." Ms. Epstein added on that the pool would be much more

convenient for other students and people in the community. As far as the success rate goes, the boys are continuing to be successful. The only difference from last year is the addition of more boys on the team, including Ethan Dong. Ethan has set two school records this year, and being that he is one of the fastest swimmers on the team, he has also qualified for states. Ms. Epstein loves coaching the team, and is hopeful that even more boys will participate after the pool is built.

The members also gave a perception on what the team is really about. Chris Kim, a senior on the team, said "The team is like a brotherhood. We treat each other with respect and cheer each other on like family." Many others added that the bond between everyone on the team is strong. Furthermore,

the boys had a lot of success and enjoyment at the finals, even when realizing that for many of them, it would be their last season on the swim team.

Overall, the boys Varsity Swim Team had a fantastic season this year. They finished third in their conference, Ethan Dong qualified for states and in doing so he broke two school records. Although the team will be losing some members next year, the amount of strong swimmers that the team has will surely keep them afloat.

ROBOTICS TEAM HEADS TO THE MOTOR CITY

Written by: Rohan Manjrekar



doing things that encourages high-quality work, emphasizes the value of others, and respects individuals and the community. The J-Birds always use gracious professionalism in doing everything on the team. They put in a lot of hard work and deeply focus on their task every year. The J-Birds also go above and beyond in how hard they work.

der Diaz, operator Nina Carlomusto, human player Alex Furman, and technician Bryan Eichenauer. There were also many scouters in the audience who helped the team by scouting all the matches and finding the perfect robots for the team to ally with. Congratulations to all the J-Birds and good luck in Detroit!

*Article update: In Detroit, the Hicksville Robotics team ranked 16th out of 68 in the Carson Division, and in the overall rankings, the team's robot ranked 80th out of 408. In combined overall totals from Detroit and Houston, the HHS Robotics team placed 125th out of 811.

The Hicksville High School J-Birds won first place at Hofstra University in the month of March. The robotics team, led by Ms. Catherine Temps, won first place in their first regional competition. Due to their win, the J-Birds have advanced to the FIRST World Championship in Detroit, taking place on April 24-27.

There were many international teams that came down to compete in the regional competition, including China, Brazil, and Turkey, but the J-Birds defeated them. This year's game, entitled "Destination: Deep Space," required alliances to maneuver their robots to complete the task of placing hatches and cargo into rockets and cargo ship bays, and due to their commitment and work ethic, the team prevailed in their task.

There are two words that the J-Birds live by: "gracious professionalism." It's a way of

The drive team consisted of driver Alexan-



Pictured above top left: 'Zebra,' the robot designed by the Hicksville HS team.

Pictured above: Members of the Hicksville High School Robotics Team after their win at Hofstra University.

HOW TO STUDY EFFECTIVELY

Written by: Mallika Rangl

Many students are busy preparing for the Regents, AP exams, and the SAT and ACT, and the pressure is definitely on to get the best grades. Studying comes with a lot of stress, and with tests right around the corner, it's important to use the right studying techniques in order to prepare in the best way possible. There are many things you can do to make studying bearable and to get the most out of it.

1. Establish a place and time to study
Although it doesn't seem like a big deal, choosing where and what time you study can have a big impact on your success. Research has shown that students' brains tend to be sharpest in the morning after a revitalizing night's sleep and a nutritious breakfast. However, that isn't to say that studying during the evening or nighttime isn't effective. Some find that there is more peace and quiet at night. Remember that everyone has different preferences, so figure out what time is best for you to retain and recall the information you studied.

As for the place itself, your study space

should be quiet, comfortable, and distraction free. If you want to feel more comfortable, decorate the space with pictures or objects that make you feel happy and inspired to study. It's essential that you find a regular time and place to study in which you can accomplish the most.

2. Understand the material

It's hard to read or learn something new and immediately understand it. If you are struggling with grasping information, there are alternatives to what you might already be doing. You could try using online sources, such as watching videos on YouTube or practicing with flashcards. If you've already tried that, you could attempt to "talk it out" to yourself. Teaching the concepts to someone else, like your friends, can also help you to comprehend the material. On top of that, attend any extra helps your teacher holds for topics you may not understand. If you're preparing for the Regents, it's advised that you are present at most of the Regents review classes so you can be as prepared as possible on the day of the

test. And, most importantly, ask for help whenever you need it!

3. Sleep, sleep, sleep!

Getting enough sleep is an undervalued, but extremely crucial part of learning. Contrary to students' beliefs that staying up all night to study will lead to higher scores, a good night's rest is more efficient than losing sleep to study. Of course, studying is important, but it shouldn't interfere with your sleep. Researchers say that reduced sleep increases academic problems. On the day of your tests, make sure you come to school relaxed and ready, having gotten at least 6-8 hours of sleep the night before.

While studying does get stressful, remember that you must take care of yourself and get proper amounts of sleep and nutrition in order to do your best. Give your brain a rest some days, and take breaks while studying so you can focus and stay on track. These simple adjustments to your studying routine will prove to be very important to your future success in school.



Image courtesy of: www.thoughtco.com

THE DEBATE TO LEGALIZE MARIJUANA

Feature written by: Gurmehar Kaur

What comes to your mind when you think of marijuana? Is it the overhyped pop culture perspective, shown primarily by rappers? Is it the dispute between the government and the common American citizen advocating for their rights? Most of the anti-marijuana sentiment is based on societal norms, but as time progresses, public approval is also being gained.

As of April 2019, only ten out of fifty states have approved the legalization of marijuana. Over a year has passed in New York, in which steps have been taken in order for the legalization to occur. Tetrahydrocannabinols, or THC, is an active ingredient in marijuana and recently the city council passed a bill which prohibits employers from testing for the presence of THC in future employees. The city council has also passed resolutions which propose that all misdemeanor marijuana convictions shall become expunged. Therefore, if marijuana becomes legalized, all past criminal convictions for possession would be erased.

If cannabis becomes legalized, the state legislature will regulate and apply taxes on the drug. The legal age to consume marijuana would be 21 due to the Health Department study, which took a period of six months. The study also demonstrated how the benefits of legal marijuana outweigh the risks. Currently, medical marijuana for patients with serious conditions remains legal in New York. In New York, marijuana possession was decriminalized in 1977, yet arrests have still been made, mostly targeting people of color. Without a doubt, there is racial disparity in marijuana arrests. The prosecution of low-level marijuana possession stopped on August 1st by the Manhattan District Attorney, Cyrus Vance Jr. 3,000 cases dating back to 1978, have been dismissed and sealed and 79% of those cases were people of color.

The legalization of marijuana could yield



Image courtesy: www.leafly.com

\$772 million in tax revenue for New York. It is still unclear what the tax revenue would be used for, but many find it beneficial to put it toward transportation, such as the MTA. The Assembly Majority leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes of Buffalo wants the revenue to be reinvested in minority communities. Along with the revenue, legalizing adult-use marijuana can also help reduce costs for public safety, as well as help alleviate public health problems related to the opioid crisis. According to Cuomo's proposal, legal sales wouldn't begin until April 1, 2020. By 2025 the expected market rate of THC will be 146.4 billion.

There is still a concern in science regarding the addiction rates in marijuana. Some scientists argue that marijuana is indeed addictive and that 30% of marijuana users suffer from some degree of marijuana use disorder. Some argue it is less addictive than cigarettes (which are legal) and other substances. Critics have argued the use of marijuana can lead to schizophrenia and depression. Scientists are still unsure if marijuana triggers these problems. Many are against legalizing marijuana, as it is

reported to alter one's perception. Studies show the alteration can lead to impaired driving.

There are also a variety of medicinal benefits to marijuana usage. More than 25 million adults in the U.S are affected by chronic pain. Numerous studies show that cannabinoids (found in cannabis) relieve chronic pain. Marijuana also helps those struggling with addictions to other substances, such as alcohol or opioids. According to a study at Washington University, "Cannabis significantly reduced ratings of depression, anxiety, and stress." Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S.. Many reports show how cannabis has already helped many overcome their illness.

Marijuana, like many other substances, has both positive and negative aspects. It should be used responsibly under the proper regulations and laws, regardless of your personal opinions.

5 MOVIES TO WATCH BEFORE YOU GRADUATE

Editorial written by: Lillian Aljada

As the year begins to wrap up and graduation gets closer and closer, I have begun to look back at all the movies that I have watched and loved throughout high school. Some of those movies helped me get through lower points of the past four years and some didn't have any deeper meaning to them. They were just fun to watch. During my reflection, I realized that there were a handful of movies that felt like they were mandatory watching before graduating. These movies taught me an important lesson and helped me realize a part of myself that I need to go on through life with. These are the five movies that you have to watch before you graduate high school.

1. *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* - If you ask anyone with a standard knowledge of film what the best high school movie is, they'll most likely tell you it's *The Breakfast Club*. But personally, this other John Hughes classic holds that title. While the movie mostly takes place out of school, there is an important lesson to learn from it. The plot revolves around high school senior Ferris Bueller and his quest to make the most of his day off with his best friend and girlfriend. As the day gets increasingly more crazy, we see Ferris pull more and more stunts. After a day of shenanigans that result in a totaled car, he narrowly makes it home and evades his parents. This culminates in his final lament, directly towards the audience. He tells us that life moves fast and that if we don't stop to look around once in awhile, we could miss it. High school goes by fast and while it feels like we'll be here forever, we have to leave eventually. It serves as an important reminder to cherish the moments as they come, because they won't always be here.

2. *Lady Bird* - While this film recently received acclaim for its portrayal of

young girls, I think it's a story with a message for everyone. The film takes us through the senior year of our protagonist Lady Bird's life. She experiences many highs and lows throughout this year and we see her going through the average teen experience. We see her go through two relationships in the film, neither of them ideal, as she awaits her college decisions. After momentarily losing herself, she hits rock bottom when she realizes that some of the choices she has made weren't so good. But what *Lady Bird* reminds us of, is that it's okay to mess up. As teenagers, we're predisposed to making mistakes. Humans aren't perfect, especially at our age. This film shows us that despite our shortcomings, we can still end up okay.

3. *Rushmore* - This film follows high school student Max Fischer as he attempts to navigate his private school as a scholarship student, which effectively makes him an outsider. In between all his extracurricular activities, he falls for a new teacher at the school. Despite all his efforts to win her over, including attempting to build an aquarium at the school, he fails to do so, eventually losing her to a classmate's father. Throughout the film, we see Max's multiple plots to win her over but we also see how they push her further and further away. He doesn't come out on top and it's something he must come to terms with. It's an important lesson for any young person though. No matter how much work you put into something, you don't always get what you want.

4. *Superbad* - While *Superbad* might be the only comedy on this list, it can still teach us something about friendship. The film centers around best friends Evan and Seth and their navigation of their final days of high school. It takes place over the span of a day and focuses on their involvement in a big high

school party. As the story goes on, we start to notice more and more tension between the two friends. Eventually, we find out that this is the result of Seth being upset with the fact that Evan and their mutual friend Fogell will be going to the same college together. The feeling of abandonment that Seth experiences is an all too familiar one during senior year. However, after talking about it, both are reassured that their friendship isn't going to change just because of college. The end of senior year can be a sad time for many but this film serves its purpose of showing that friends can still be friends if they really care about each other.

5. *Dead Poets Society* - Out of all the films on this list, I think this one has the most to say. The events of the film are put into action by the arrival of a new English teacher at an all boys preparatory school. While there are many different characters, all of them learn one common lesson by the end of the story: seize the day. Going through your day to day life, it's hard to put yourself out there. We often go through stagnant periods where it feels as if nothing happens at all. But if you take it little by little, you can see a big difference. Whether it's just asking someone out, auditioning for a play, or even reading in front of the class, it's important to do the most with the time you have. This movie serves as a sign that we shouldn't just let life pass us by, we should be active participants.

One of the constant things throughout high school for me has been my love of film. I always know that no matter how stressful life gets, I can sit down and watch a movie and make things better, even if it's just for two hours. While films can teach us a lot and allow us to see life in other perspectives, it's also important that we go out and learn a couple lessons for ourselves.

LIFE LESSONS WITH MORRIE

Written by: Laura Buibas

Tuesdays with Morrie is a memoir about a man that visits his sociology professor before the professor loses his fight with ALS. This book has entered my top ten favorite books of all time.

From the moment the reader first meets Morrie, the book is entrancing. He is an old man who is terribly ill and does not have very much time left to live, yet he is still positive and lives life to the fullest. He used to be the sociology professor for the main character, Mitch Albom. They eventually got close, but when Mitch graduated and got a job, he seemed to forget about his teacher. When he found out that Morrie was sick and had an incurable disease, the narrator felt awful and went to visit him. He is surprised to find that Morrie is quite cheerful despite

his situation; he always had been and he did not let his illness change that. Mitch is a dynamic character and seeing how his mentality changed from the first few pages to the last was beautiful.

Morrie has not only changed Mitch, a workaholic who doesn't enjoy the things that really matter, but also the reader. It is difficult to go into too much detail without spoiling the book, but Morrie has taught me lessons about forgiveness, getting over a hard time, enjoying life, and doing the things that truly matter through his wise words and always cheerful personality. Yes, he had his down time when he was sad and felt sorry for himself. After all, he is only human. The author teaches you that just because mountains are blocking your view, it doesn't mean

you can't go around them.

This book was not what I expected it to be. I expected it to be a boring read, but it was surprisingly delightful and engaging. This is not a book that will keep you on your toes until the very end, it is not a book full of cliffhangers. It is an easy, calm read. This is a direct book; the author wrote exactly what he wanted to say and did not hide in the bushes. I definitely recommend it to anyone who is feeling down, wants to learn about new perspectives, wants an easy read, or is just looking for a good book in general.

5 STARS FOR FIVE FEET APART

Written by: Katie Jergensen

The 2019 film *Five Feet Apart* highlights the story of Stella Grant (Haley Lu Richardson), a seventeen-year-old girl who has cystic fibrosis. She lives in a hospital, is on a strict treatment regimen, and has to deal with health issues that most teenagers take for granted. Her sister Abby passed away a year prior to where the story begins, and her best friend and fellow CF patient, Poe (Moises Arias), helps her get through it all. Stella's life is turned upside down even more when a new CF patient enters her ward, the charming, irresistible Will Newton (Cole Sprouse). While they're smitten with one another, there is one obstacle standing in the way of a romantic relationship - their mutual illness. All CF patients must remain six feet apart from each other at all times to avoid cross-infection. They can't touch at all... no hand holding, no kissing. However, as the spark between them becomes a flame, they compromise to rebelliously stand one foot closer to each other - five feet apart.

They venture into this new, vulnerable territory with one another and fall in love. Unfortunately, this romance is short-lived, as Stella's treatments seem to be working (and she can live up to five more years than originally determined) while Will is expected to die within a few months. He breaks up with Stella, reasoning that "if you love something, set it free."

Directed by Justin Baldoni, this film provides unexpected plot twists and tear-jerking moments that pull at the audiences' heartstrings. The movie can be easily compared to the 2014 blockbuster hit *The Fault in Our Stars*, about two teenage cancer patients that fall in love. However, *Five Feet Apart* has such a well-developed storyline and has dynamic characters that separate it from *TFIOS* entirely. What I appreciate, personally, is the beautiful symbolism throughout the film. From the one foot closer symbolizing taking a

chance on love and "letting someone in" to the CF diagnosis representing society trying to keep two lovers apart, the screenplay by Tobias Iaconis and Mikki Daughtry is very detailed and enjoyable to watch acted out. The film manages to incorporate comic relief through the loveable Poe and the initially bashful, budding relationship between Stella and Will, but also takes the audience into the hardships faced and sacrifices made by individuals that live with cystic fibrosis. Haley Lu Richardson is the lead actress and is an absolute standout in the film, with her raw emotion and seemingly effortless behaviors.

And Cole Sprouse? Can't you hear teenage girls across the globe swooning? This film has yet again raised girls' expectations for what qualifies as "boyfriend material." Most importantly, *Five Feet Apart* successfully shared a beautifully tragic love story without glorifying cystic fibrosis.

HYPE BUILDS FOR THE GAME OF THRONES FINALE

Written by: Eric Wang

Very few TV shows shook the world as much as *Game of Thrones* did when it first premiered in 2011. The HBO show has become massively popular, being broadcasted in 170 different countries around the world. *Game of Thrones* is critically acclaimed as one of the best shows in recent history, boasting a 93% approval rating on Rotten Tomatoes and a 9.5 score on IMDB. According to HBO over 17 million people tuned into HBO to watch the premiere of the eighth and final season of *Game Of Thrones* on Sunday, April 14.

While I absolutely love the show, I actually had no intention to start watching *Game of Thrones* when it first came out. The idea of knights fighting in a fantasy world with dragons and ice zombies was intriguing, but I doubted anyone could pull it off to an extent to where I could keep watching without getting bored of it. However, HBO truly blindsided everyone with the most immersive and beautiful fantasy world to have ever been on TV.

One of the many appeals of *Game of Thrones* is how realistic it all feels. The world of Westeros features a rich history that begins more than 12,000 years before the show takes place. The music is amaz-

ing the scenery is beautiful, and the CGI is exceptional especially when you consider it's a TV show, not a blockbuster movie. Even when you take all of the "fancy stuff" away, the brilliant acting and superb writing lead to some of the most memorable moments of the show. The witty banter between a lord and his cupbearer and the gut wrenching feeling you get when you see a man being tortured and broken serve as good reminders that the most powerful moments of the show don't necessarily have to be the flashiest.

The strongest aspect of the show, however, is the character development. Based primarily off of the novels written by George R.R. Martin, the show and its writers (mainly David Benioff and D.B. Weiss) are able to cull plot lines and development from rich, lore-heavy novels. There are many of characters in *Game of Thrones*, but each character has their own motivations, ambitions, and feelings for and against one another. The concepts of good and bad are ignored as seemingly good characters have flaws and make sometimes questionable decisions, while seemingly bad characters still have moments of virtue or even change throughout the show because of their experiences. We get to empathize with these complex characters

and watch them change as they are exposed to new environments and threats. That ties in well with the unpredictability of *Game of Thrones*. The effect of failure is a very powerful and underutilized tool in writing. While other shows tend to only kill off side characters, *Game of Thrones* doesn't shy away from killing main characters or fan favorites.

Obviously, this show is geared more towards mature teens and adults. But I don't think the mature, gory nature of the show is what makes it great. It's very entertaining, but the violence in this show is used as a way to develop characters and evoke different emotions within the viewer. The reason that *Game of Thrones* has such a loyal fanbase is that the audience got to see the journeys these amazing characters went through, and after all this time, it is coming to an end. And while season 7 was lacking a bit compared to the previous seasons, it was still entertaining and brought everyone to their positions to face the threat to come.

There has been lots of excitement built up over the last two years for the final season of *Game of Thrones*. It will be sad to say goodbye, but I can only hope that it goes out in a blaze of glory.



Image courtesy of: www.bgr.com

AMERICA'S FAVORITE PASTIME TAKES THE FIELD

Written by: Andrew Scarpaci

Now that we have entered spring, the 2019 baseball season is underway, and mere weeks into the season, we have learned a lot about what all 30 teams have to offer. Many teams have surprised us with tremendous talent, while others are falling far below expectations.

Going into the 2019 season, there were two teams to watch in the American League East: the New York Yankees and the Boston Red Sox. The Red Sox are coming off a World Series Championship, and the Yankees are looking to rebound after a 100 win season that fell short in the playoffs. One would never have expected the season to start how it has. The Yankees, are stacked with injuries all around the diamond. They've gone from having all star talent up and down the lineup, to needing to call up players from the minor league to fill in holes at the bottom of the order. They also are missing their ace on the mound, Luis Severino. Through all this, the Tampa Bay Rays have taken charge in leading this division. Many people were sleeping on the Rays early on, despite the team winning 90 games last year and picking up a few key offensive players in the offseason. They also have a great pitching staff, lead by incumbent Cy Young award winner, Blake Snell.

The AL Central tells a much different story. The Cleveland Indians won the division last year by a landslide, despite only winning 91 games. While Cleveland is still currently holding the division lead, the Minnesota Twins and Detroit Tigers are looking like much better teams this year, and they will give Cleveland some competition as they go for their 4th straight division title.

The AL West is full of talent this year, with all five teams playing to win this season. The Houston Astros are the defending division champions, and have been playing great baseball up to this point, despite ace Dallas Keuchel still on the free agent market. The Seattle Mariners started the season

red hot, winning 13 of their first 15 games. The Mariners are also putting on a display of power never before seen as they had homered in 20 straight games to start the season, breaking the previous record of 14 set by the 2002 Cleveland Indians.

The National League East is a four team race that will be flipping back and forth all year. The Phillies seemed to be the favorite this year after signing the Washington Nationals' star outfielder Bryce Harper out of free agency. After a mediocre season last year that resulted in a third place finish, the acquisition of Bryce Harper from a division rival looked to be their answer for the 2019 season. The New York Mets are also asserting dominance in the division. They fell way short of expectations last year due to injuries, but are playing well so far this season. The Atlanta Braves are also playing good baseball right now, as they look to repeat as division champs. The loss of Bryce Harper will definitely hurt the Nationals' offense, but their solid pitching staff, lead by veteran Max Scherzer, should put them in position to be of relevance this season.

If one player is to be responsible for the outcome of the NL Central, it would be Christian Yelich of the Milwaukee Brewers. The Brewers won 96 games last year, giving them the edge over the Chicago Cubs, who won 95 games. Christian Yelich is the reigning NL MVP, and is surely playing like one this year. He homered in the Brewers first four games of the season. Looking to step in their way are the St. Louis Cardinals, who won 88 games last year. The Cardinals have a great veteran presence, particularly in catcher Yadier Molina, who is perceived to be one of the greatest defensive catchers of all time, and pitcher Adam Wainwright, who is past his prime but still a tremendous talent and leader for this young staff. The Cardinals are also full of young talent, especially in outfielders Tyler O'Neil and Harrison Ba-

der. The Pittsburgh Pirates have been a stagnant team for years, but are playing really well to start the season. Last but not least is the Chicago Cubs. The Cubs have been a great team over the last few years, winning the World Series back in 2016. They had a very rough start to the year, but have been picking it up recently, and will continue to push the whole year, especially after coming up just short last year in the division.

The Los Angeles Dodgers have won the National League pennant the last 2 years, coming up just short in the World Series to the Astros in 2017 and the Red Sox in 2018. They are again leading the way in the NL West, looking for their 7th straight division title, dating back to 2013. Looking to put a hold on this is the San Diego Padres. They have tremendous young talent and a great deal of top prospects playing great baseball this year.

Although we are not far into the 2019 season, we have a few tells at how teams will be doing this year. While we can never accurately predict everything that will happen this season, we can be assured that this will be a very entertaining and eventful season for baseball.



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