

DECEMBER 2020 | ISSUE 5

# NDUB STUDENT PRESS

OFFICIAL STUDENT NEWSLETTER OF NWSS



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**A BLACK  
PERSON'S TRUTH**

**DEALING WITH  
PROCRASTINATION**

**A (HALLMARK)  
CHRISTMAS  
STORY**

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# A BLACK PERSON'S TRUTH

BY DELINA MEHARI

My name is Delina Mehari. I am from East Africa, a country called Eritrea. I am a minority, and I have some truth to share.

Racism ebbs and flows through daily life. In fact, it thrives nowadays. As humans evolved, racism evolved in the same way. While it may have begun with slavery, it has evolved to lingering stares and whispered comments. Gradually, this turned into covert racism defined by Fitchburg State University as "racial discrimination that is concealed or subtle rather than obvious or public." Racism lives in modern day society disguised as dark humour, justifying a slur since it "does not have its full ending," and a societal perception of "blackness." That is still racism, simply a bit more blurred. A branch from the tree of discrimination; merely variations on the same prejudice. Allow me to explain.

Close your eyes and imagine for a moment that you are black. Let me hold up the mirror of society (and for my fellow brothers and sisters, open your eyes and live, for this is your daily reality). Allow me to tell you who you are, but remember that society is inconsistent and you may begin to become confused. You are 100% black, and came from Ghana when you were seven in hopes of "a better life," with parents who made up your world. You knew nothing of gangs and violence, discrimination or the "n word," criminals or death by police. But as time passes, you begin to notice that you are, in certain environments, "too dark."

You ruin the photos, blending into the background or into the darkness when playing hide and seek. Eyes linger on you when slavery is brought up or Father's Day comes around or food is wasted. You feel shameful of your culture, and notice people scrunching their noses and passing odd looks when you bring native food. You realize your parents' accent translates to them being uneducated immigrants, and over time you feel ashamed of them being janitors or housekeepers or the fact that they each have three jobs to make ends meet. You are only ever asked for a pass for a word that you have never used, never associated with your very existence. Your lips become too big and your hair is not unlike the fur of some animal, to be pet constantly. You are told to act a certain way, fit a certain view. Say a five letter word and allow others to as well. You are told to act "black."

You become hood, and ghetto. You become distant from your heritage and parents; fall into the expected crowds. "Uneducated," despite the fact that you had loved English until others called you whitewashed for it. "Thief," despite the fact that every item you had earned you were questioned for. "Criminal," having been the number one suspect for any hint of trouble or lurking crime, regardless of your innocence. As a man, you do drugs and walk wrong and slur your words. You own guns and are in and out of jail. You will never hold a stable job, and are not expected to live long. Aimless and young and stupid and poor. As a woman, you constantly fight and yell, you are cheap and less than. Hoops and makeup and fake hair. You realize you are not allowed to hope for a better life, that it did not matter that you had never even jaywalked, forget selling drugs. You became the role society said you looked, except now society is somehow against you.



Eventually you realize that those “expectations” were in actuality a branch of racism. Covert racism, slowly slipping into overt racism. Or “obvious” racism. A double standard existed all along. Over time, when you look in the mirror, you start not recognizing who you are, and do not remember who you were. You realize, also, that black is a personality here, not an ethnicity. A lifestyle, not an origin.

As you settle back into yourself, think, is this not racism? Does racism not exist as certain as the air you breathe, polluting souls and swirling all around us? The key factor is that it “may be implicit as a result of unconscious bias that exists within an individual, regardless of ill-will or any self-aware prejudices”; meaning it's learned. Adapted into the minds of claimed “allies” without their knowing, and explained away when said ally makes a comment on starving African children or suspects a black individual of theft because they own something unexpected of their “status.” That is gaslighting. That is racism. Modern day cases of racism grow from the seeds of covert racism planted in individuals, with no original ill-intent.

The fact of the matter is that *you* need to change your portrayal of black people. What do you honestly see when you look at us? You need to realize “blackness” is not defined by anything other than where we are from, our ancestors. There is no way to act, or talk. Our *being* and our skin color do not depend on one another to exist. Do not believe anyone who says otherwise, do not fall into the cycle. You need to educate yourselves; Africa is a continent, not a country, and is overflowing with life and love and joy, not starvation and ruin. Our motherland is not a wasteland. You need to confront subtle racism as you would obvious racism; as you would homophobia, sexism, any phobia or hatred of another human being. It is still racism, and it is not our job alone. *We* are tired. *You* need to solve the white man's problem. You, the people, need to end the cycle.

My name is Delina Mehari, and this is the truth: we are black, we are human, and we demand help.

# QUEER LITERATURE AT NWSS

## BY GRACE HODGES

Why does our school choose to teach its students literature? Is it just for the classes to slog through yet another essay, discussing yet another motif, in yet another assigned book? Or is there something bigger about books that makes them so integral to our education system and understanding of the world around us? I would argue, as would most, that literature is important because it gives us lessons to learn, unheard perspectives to share, and tells stories to an audience that might never have encountered them before. In reading, people develop expectations and understanding of communities they themselves are not a part of. Thus the question is posed: whose stories are we telling and uplifting? Unfortunately, it's probably not those of the queer community.

This past summer, I came to a shocking revelation. The book I was reading over the summer, *Kafka on the Shore* by Haruki Murakami, was the very first book I could remember reading for school that included a prominent queer character. Out of my twelve years spent in the B.C education system, I could not for the life of me remember studying a novel that at the very least included a queer character and their story like the one present in my assigned reading. Questions surfaced in my mind: where were the queer stories? Did our school even have books that offered representation that was not just limited to the cisgender, white experience of queerness but instead the historical intersectionality of the community?

So I procured a list of the novels and plays our school offered to its English teachers and undertook the task of categorizing which pieces included LGBT representation and which ones did not. While I left out short stories, seeing as I simply do not have the time or accessibility to pore over hundreds of stories within the various anthologies, I felt comfortable assessing the novels and plays as the basis for sharing LGBT stories. Out of these texts I divided it into three categories: No LGBT representation/no significant LGBT representation, LGBT adjacent themes, and explicit LGBT representation. If representation could not be found by reading the synopsis and character description, then it went in the first group. This first group represented fifty-nine of the ninety-three texts, about 63.44%. The second group represented twenty-one of the ninety-three texts, around 22.58%. This included stories that challenged gender roles and had themes of found family, being yourself and other queer-coded concepts. The third group represented thirteen of the ninety-three texts, about 13.98%. This felt underwhelming. Only in thirteen of ninety-three texts was there a guarantee that queer issues and stories would at the very least be discussed, regardless of whether the representation was good or not. Though what qualifies as good representation? Is it some arbitrary standard created by the queer overlords to impose on the cisgender heterosexual writing community? No, good representation simply means authentic storytelling. Storytelling that does not reduce queer characters to homophobia or transphobia based trauma, nor the stereotypes that have been historically shoved onto the community.

Authors must actually center QTBIPOC (queer/trans Black Indigenous people of colour) voices and create multi-dimensional characters and arcs. At the very least, treat queer people like people that deserve to have the entirety of their being shared.

Why include these stories at all? Sure, queer kids probably get a kick out of seeing themselves on a page, but surely there are other forms of representation? Maybe a book or a movie they can seek outside of school. So why go so far as to prioritize a selection that encompasses the diversity in the stories from the queer community? Because reading, learning, and discussing is the basis for action. No queer kid is going to harm another kid for their gender or sexuality, but other students might. If the justification that queer kids deserve to see themselves represented to the same extent that their cisgender, heterosexual peers do isn't enough, then at the very least acknowledge the value of sharing these stories. This forces students to reevaluate how they perceive a community they are unfamiliar with and how they will treat them. That is an invaluable experience for a student to gain and one that can make all the difference. All this is not to say NWSS has done an abysmal job of representing queer youth in the reading materials, as those thirteen texts have some solid representation. At least five of the books focus on intersectional voices—four of them are Black or Indigenous voices—but there's always room for vital improvement. Even among those texts, the representation is flawed. At least three of the texts feature queer characters that are rapists, pedophiles, or cheat on another character through a queer relationship; all stereotypes that actively hurt the community. Now this does not mean to remove those texts entirely. These characters are part of a larger story, like in "Indian Horse" in which a priest sexually assaults young Indigenous boys. However, the queer literature at NWSS must be expanded.

Research has shown that the inclusion of queer literature significantly reduces homophobia levels. In a study performed by Victor Malo-Juvera, an eighth grade english class studied a novel discussing the various experiences of queer youth in contemporary high schools. General homophobia was significantly reduced after the experience, and while interpersonal homophobia remained at similar levels, the study suggested prolonged inclusion of queer novels to address this. As of right now, only the small minority of students whose teachers decide to pull one of the thirteen of ninety-three explicitly queer books learn queer stories. Not only does this limit the exposure for cisgender, heterosexual teenagers, but this also actively harms LGBT students. There is a unique experience that comes with queerness; an isolated but folkloric experience. The nature of being LGBT is not genetically inherited, as you are not necessarily going to be born into a community of those like you. For this reason, stories have become integral to creating community within queer identity. Queer literature supplies language and terms for an unfamiliar identity, and shares the history and experience of being LGBT to teens who are just beginning to explore it. As a result of the importance of stories within the queer community and the impact a story can have on prejudice, the school must actively work to avoid solely pushing a stereotypical and limited perception of what queerness is, and instead teach the diverse and revolutionary history of the community.

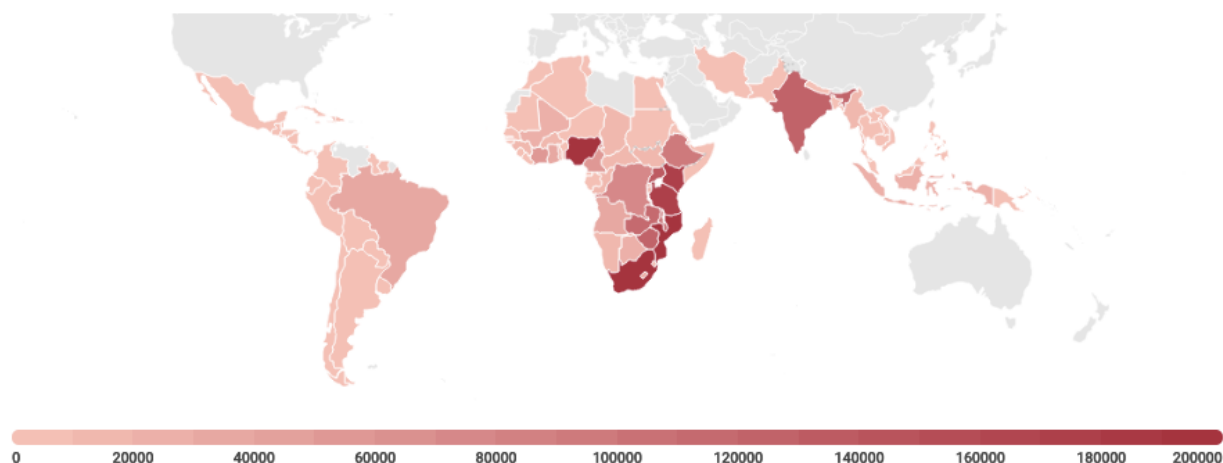
# LET'S TALK HIV/AIDS

## BY RISHITA APORAJITA (UNICEF CLUB)

With World AIDS Day just having passed on December 1st, it is time to have what may be an uncomfortable, but necessary conversation about HIV and AIDS.

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is an infection that impairs the immune system's ability to combat disease. HIV is transmitted through blood, sexual bodily fluids, and from mothers to their children through birth or breastfeeding. It is easily and commonly transmitted through the sharing of needles and unprotected sex. In addition, the infection disproportionately affects people that lack sex education, fall victim to human trafficking, substance abusers, and sex workers. If left untreated, HIV can evolve into Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), the final and fatal stage of HIV.

There are currently no cures for HIV or AIDS. Fortunately, there are prevention and treatment options. HIV can be prevented by Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP). PrEP is prescribed to those that are at high-risk of contracting HIV. The medication is commonly given to people that have shared needles, engaged in unprotected sex, or want to prevent transmission to their baby. On the other hand, those who think that they have been exposed to HIV can ask for Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP). If PEP is taken within 72 hours of exposure, it can prevent HIV from taking hold within the body. Finally, for people who test positive early on, Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) can prevent transmission to sexual partners and stop the development of AIDS. Life expectancy is significantly reduced for AIDS patients who survive only 1-3 years without treatment.



[Click here to see an interactive graphic.](#)

Testing and treatment are necessities for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). Unfortunately, some of those affected are not receiving the care they need. For example, 1 in 2 children living with HIV will die before their second birthday. This is alarming and significantly increases the global infant mortality rate. A 2019 study shows that globally three million children are living with HIV and AIDS. Of these three million, 88% are children in Sub-Saharan Africa, an epicenter of this epidemic. With funding, testing can be increased and treatment can be adequately distributed where it is needed most.

UNICEF has created their very own HIV and AIDS Program to end the epidemic by 2030. It focuses on three areas:

(1) Mother-to-child transmission: This area focuses on providing mothers with testing and treatment to avoid transmission during birth and/or through breastfeeding.

(2) Paediatric treatment and care: Given that HIV tests take a long time to process, UNICEF is working towards increasing the speed of this procedure and providing treatment right after conducting the test for children.

(3) Infections in adolescents: UNICEF is working towards providing biomedical, behavioural and structural solutions for adolescents to learn about HIV. They have begun to provide Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), HIV self-testing, protection services and online resources for treatment and care. According to UNICEF's research, adolescents who receive sex education make safer choices regarding sexual activity.

The HIV epidemic and the Global Sanitation Crisis are interconnected. PLWHA have compromised immune systems and contaminated drinking water increases susceptibility to illness. Access to clean drinking water is a fundamental human right and imperative for sustaining health. UNICEF is working to introduce sanitation measures and provide access to clean drinking water through its WASH Initiative, which will help eradicate HIV and AIDS.

So, what can YOU do? First, if feasible, donate to UNICEF and support their effort to provide access to testing and treatment for HIV. Next, you should follow the same protocols: get tested, share results with sexual partners and practice safe sex, do not share needles and know the treatment options. Most importantly, have conversations with your friends and family to dismantle social stigma. [Here is a helpful resource to get you started.](#)

[Click here to see the sources used in this article.](#)



# DEALING WITH PROCRASTINATION

BY MONIKA ARCADI

As I start writing the day before this article is due, I realize my practice in method acting may have just gone a little bit too far. After being in school for a few months, procrastination is creeping up on a lot of students. When comparing the importance of school work to a global pandemic, the former can often feel superfluous. Although the pandemic has helped the world gain some much needed perspective, students should try to stay on top of their work, because procrastination is a slippery slope.

First of all...why do we procrastinate? Often, procrastination happens when we associate the work that we are aiming to complete with negative feelings. For example, you may have a project due in a week that is worth a high percentage of your grade, but you are not confident in your abilities, you might delay starting it simply because you feel like you will fail. Everytime you work on your project, you will be reminded that it may have a bad outcome. For that reason, you do not want to think about it; nevermind actually doing it. Another reason students procrastinate is because they do not see any value in the work they are doing. When teachers assign endless amounts of busywork, it is very easy to put off, because students know that it will not benefit them and instead waste hours of their day. Furthermore, homework can be confusing, and not all students have parents that can help and answer their questions. One may argue simply asking the teacher for clarification will fix this issue, but asking teachers for help can be a daunting task, and at times, ineffective. As a result, instead of having uncomfortable conversations that do not lead to a helpful solution, students avoid tackling the assignment altogether. Procrastination is caused by many different stressors, and similarly, there are many different ways to approach it.

This leads us to beg the question: how do we avoid procrastination? Since there are so many different reasons people procrastinate, every individual needs to find a method that works specifically for them. For example, if you do not believe in your abilities and think you will complete your task poorly, you can use a cognitive coping self-statement such as, "I can learn as I go." Dr. Bill Knaus also suggests that you "experiment and see what happens," rather than stopping yourself from even attempting to start your assignment because of the negative predictions you have of your own abilities. When approaching a task you are biased against—for instance, busywork you might not feel is necessary, or work that you think is simply too hard to complete—you can spin your own bias to solve your issue. Instead of thinking "I can't do this" or "this is useless," try to find at least one benefit you will get from completing the task. Maybe, if the assignment is busy work, you just know you will feel better after you complete it. Even if you are not gaining anything from doing it, that could be reason enough to conquer the work. When the bias goes deeper than that, you can use the assignment as an opportunity to combat your bias and prove it wrong. After all, it is possible to learn new things under any circumstances and you are likely more adept at solving difficult problems than you think.

**DEALING WITH PROCRASTINATION**

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Next time you find yourself watching Netflix instead of studying for your math test or blankly staring at your empty Google Docs instead of writing your essay, remember that the easiest way to avoid failing is to try. Instead of worrying about the outcome, focus on the progress; remember you can always “learn as you go.” Ultimately, you are just a highschool student doing one assignment for one class you will take in your many years of schooling. Do not blow it out of proportion, you have all the tools you need to complete the task that lies ahead. I believe in you!

# CLUBS AT NWSS

## BY RIONA SARKER

In previous years, the school has always held a “Clubs Day” for clubs to promote themselves, and for students to explore the different activities and groups to join. The library would be crowded with stands for each club, some even spilling out into the courtyard. Obviously, being crammed into the library is no longer safe, and some clubs, having lost their way to attract new members, are not continuing this year. Many have moved online, but are seeing less participation in comparison to last year, and the years before. However, this means there is still a lot of space left for new members, and that people can still join. If you are looking to join a club, but have had little luck finding them because of the cancellation of Clubs Day, hopefully this article can direct you to one that sparks your interest.

### ENVIRONMENT CLUB

Even in a pandemic, climate action remains an important topic of discussion. The NWSS Environment club meets on Thursdays at lunch to talk about different issues and initiatives surrounding climate action. Last year, many students participated in the school walk-outs for climate action, and the Environment club provides them with an opportunity

to continue this work. Although it is not on as large of a scale, students can gain a better sense of actions they can take within the school community and New West as a whole. One upcoming initiative is the button sale, where club members will sell buttons displaying climate-related artwork in order to raise funds supporting the Tiny House Warriors.



### BCSPCA CLUB

The BCSPCA club raises funds for local shelters in order to support their ability to house animals. Like many other clubs, meetings take place online. Meetings happen on a Tuesday-Wednesday rotation at 5pm, and are relaxed brainstorming sessions. The distribution of tasks also happens at that time. Fundraisers will still be happening, but occur online and through preorders, with both drop-off and pickup

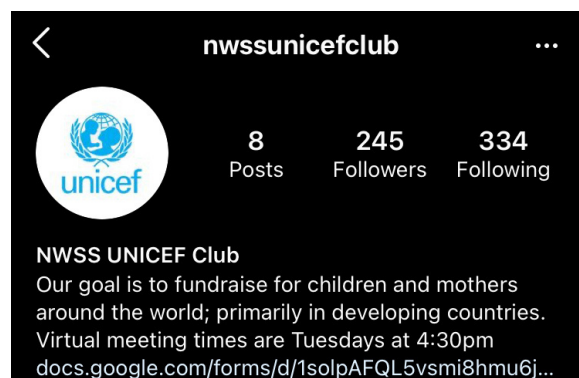
options. Members will run and organize these fundraisers, as well as promote them online and through posters outside meeting hours. This club requires students to contribute hours to attending meetings, making promotional pieces, and possibly delivering goods sold during fundraisers. Participation in meetings and hours spent working on club activities can all go towards volunteering hours, and you can meet a group of people who are passionate about animals. To join, contact @nwss.bscpca on Instagram.



## UNICEF CLUB

UNICEF club, in the past years, has run fundraisers and events at school, from which the proceeds would go towards the efforts of UNICEF Canada. This club promotes social justice by doing so in three different aspects: education, advocacy, and charity. Club activities have previously focused on charity, but in the midst of the pandemic, where bake sales and similar events are not safe to

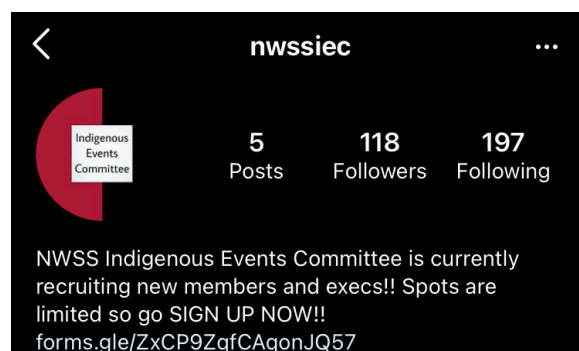
conduct, the approach of this club has shifted. Now, UNICEF club holds its meetings on Microsoft Teams on every other Tuesday at 4:30, and the club focuses on educating people on a monthly topic/issue. Members can make infographics about these topics that will be uploaded onto the club Instagram (@nwssunicefclub), post articles on student-run blogs like CIMH and Student Press, and present during club meetings. There will be fundraisers, albeit less of them, both in school (mainly based on preorders) and online. UNICEF club offers many volunteering opportunities, and certain members of the club, based on performance, organizational, and leadership abilities, could be offered executive positions in the club next year. If you are interested, you can contact Rishita Aporajita (@rishitaporajita on Instagram), or DM the club's Instagram to join.



## IEC

The Indigenous Events Committee is a club that raises awareness on Indigenous issues, and teaches students about their culture through events with guest speakers, posters, and internet activism. This year, the club has moved online, in terms of both meetings (Mondays at 5pm) and raising awareness, their main platform being Instagram. This club

takes a considerable amount of sensitivity to participate in it, as it deals with painful parts of history and the struggles of deeply hurt communities. Members will also plan events, invite speakers, and create educational content for the club outside of meeting times. As people living on Indigenous land, a major benefit of joining this club is the knowledge you will gain about Indigenous culture and history. You practice allyship, learn to keep an open mind, consider different points of view, and do your part in reconciliation. You can also get volunteer hours from attending meetings, creating content, and organizing/running events. To join this club, you can DM @nwssiec on Instagram.



## DEBATE CLUB

In Debate club, you practice critical thinking, forming arguments, public speaking, and most importantly, compete in debate competitions. All meetings and competitions now take place online/on Microsoft Teams, with meetings that last for an hour and a half once a week. Tournaments, however, last for whole weekends, occurring at least four times a year. Participating in this club (to a degree where your skills

improve after the course of the year) takes more commitment in comparison to others. Meetings are longer, and there are several events that will require time on your off days, as this club prepares to compete with other schools in the Lower Mainland. However, club members reap so many benefits from dedicating that much time to their work. This club builds your speaking skills, confidence, and ability to think quickly. It teaches you how to deliver a point with clarity, and many of these skills are valuable assets when it comes to education, and life in general. Debating is a team activity, so you form strong bonds with other members of the club by working together. To join, you can contact @nwssdebate on Instagram.



## STUDENT PRESS

Student Press runs a school newsletter composed of articles written by members of the club. Articles are organized into several sections, such as arts/entertainment, food, fashion, and even French. The club's approach hasn't changed very much, as most of the work is done individually, then later compiled into one issue. Occasional meetings take place over Zoom, and this year, the club will be publishing

an issue every month. Participating in this club takes some commitment; there is a writing schedule that members follow, and you must ask for extensions in a timely fashion. Student Press offers lots of opportunities to practice writing, be creative, expand your critical thinking skills, and collaborate with others. If you're an artist/photographer, Student Press might also be for you. You can provide art/photography and get it published alongside articles for readers to see, or even help design the newsletter itself. To join, you can contact @elenamassing or @nwssstudentpress on Instagram.





# ESCAPISM IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

BY MOLLY CATHERINE CHESMAN

As of December 1st, 2020, we will have spent nine months within a pandemic. In this time, seemingly every aspect of day-to-day life has changed, and what used to be a thoughtless action, such as visiting the grocery store, has become something of stress and prior preparation. Everyone copes with these stresses in their own way, but how has the increased stress of Covid-19 altered the ways we cope?

As anyone with social media will tell you, the early phase of worldwide quarantine can be summed up in just a few phrases and names: Animal Crossing; New Horizons; Tiger King, whipped coffee, and sourdough bread. In April and May, it seemed everyone was either playing, watching, or making the same things; eager to connect and engage themselves from within the boundaries of their homes. It was during this time that the common belief was that the pandemic would be something soon dealt with and quickly passed by. Nearly nine months later, and such beliefs have proven untrue. As all trends do, those of April and May have grown tired, but although people have grown less vocal about their pandemic-fixations, I believe that they have grown only deeper alongside the virus' impact.

Speaking from my own experiences, I live in a household with two immune-compromised people, myself being the third, and so my life for the past nine months has been spent mainly indoors. It is rare that I leave the house for anything more than walking my dogs, and even then it is only around the neighbourhood. I have had to turn to entertainment and stimulus elsewhere, and have taken to re-reading and re-watching books and films that I am already familiar with. Since June, I've probably re-watched the Lord of the Rings trilogy upwards of ten times. If not paying full attention, I'll have it on while I draw, write, or cook and eat my meals. This may seem compulsive or obsessive, but truthfully I find comfort in a world that, while completely unlike our own pandemic-ridden one, is familiar to me. I can quote full scenes, know just when the arrow is about to fly or soldier keel over, and the structure of a familiar story relieves me of the dreadful unknowing and uncertainty of the world around me. There is a certainty a familiar story brings, certainty in a time where seemingly nothing else is certain.

This experience is far from unique to me, though. Long before Covid-19, psychologists were examining the positive effects of repeated action. Repetition provides structure, and structure provides a sense of certainty. It's the same reason one might listen to a song on repeat, or order the same thing from their local coffee shop everyday.

There is a word for the reason people have turned heavily to films, shows, video games, and other forms of entertainment in the time of Covid-19: Escapism. The urge to temporarily, if not artificially, escape from reality. Social media, work, substance use, and sleep fall into this category as well. Right now we are living in a world where there is a steady stream of bad news and worse news: pandemic politics, Covid-19 case spikes, death counts—it's only natural that we be eager to hide from such realities. There is little

comfort to be found while paying attention to truthful ongoingings, so we turn to the repeated use of fiction, food, and other means of comfort in a temporary attempt at escape.

The problems arise when such tactics are abused. The world is a very dark place as of late, but that cannot be an excuse for us to disappear into our bedrooms for good. In order for any progress to be made, we must stay informed, stay indoors, and keep ourselves healthy; even if that means rewatching the Lord of the Rings trilogy for the thirteenth time.

That being said, I try to be outside at least once a day, even if that equates to sitting on my patio for thirty minutes, looking at the birds. Escaping into my phone or television screen may provide relief for a while, but my mental and physical health cannot be sustained if that is all I do.

What I ask you take from this is to take care of yourselves however you need to. Re-read, re-watch, and re-listen, stand on your patios and drink the same latte every morning. Repetition brings certainty, and we must cling to every ounce of certainty we can dig our nails into.

# HONORING A LOCAL HERO

BY SUHANI HANS

We often think of heroes as strong, powerful beings who always show up just in time to save the world. As many of us watch movies like *The Avengers* or the stories about Superman, we often forget that the real heroes are just past our own backyard. A hero does not have to be physically powerful or have supernatural forces; instead, they have the power to lead, and shape the communities in which we live. They do this with their commitment, hard work, and selfless acts. A hero dedicates endless hours to deliver the highest level of service, and is philanthropic in their efforts to give back to their community. A hero is compassionate, inspires others, and nurtures this inspiration, which then becomes infectious with anyone they interact with.

As a student at New Westminster Secondary School, I have had a lot of time over this challenging period to reflect on our community, its people, and the contributions made by business leaders to help improve our quality of life. One such leader in New Westminster is Dave Vallee, the founder of Team Dave Vallee at Remax. Dave's professional and community leadership has made him an unsung hero whose contributions to the city of New Westminster has helped make it one of the best and unique communities to live in, within the Lower Mainland. I recently had the honour to interview Dave for this article and learn more about his philanthropic efforts, along with his vision for the next generation of leaders in New Westminster.

Dave's career in real estate dates to 1990 and was inspired by his family values and passion for helping others in his community. He defines his success by being driven to help others succeed, and as an opportunity to build relationships and serve his fellow neighbors. Dave is passionate when he talks about our community: "New Westminster has a small town feel and is truly unique, and one of the few places where you can go to a grocery store and see people you know and then drive for half an hour and you're in the busy downtown Vancouver. New Westminster has a plethora of parks, restaurants, and recreational activities, yet still maintains a very close-knit community feel. The city itself is extremely walkable, making it easy to see an old friend while grabbing a coffee or meeting someone new while walking home from the grocery store."

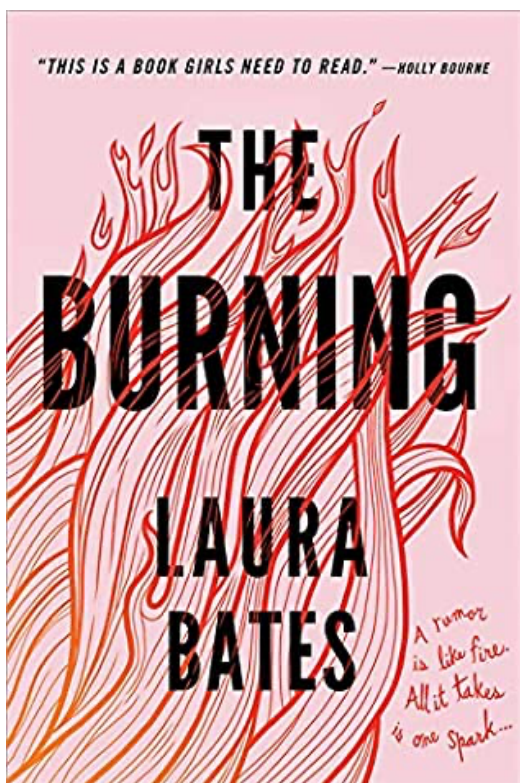
Dave embraces philanthropy as a key part of his value system. He works with several youth organizations, promoting leadership skills and hard work through the Hyack Ambassadors Program and the Hyacks Football Team at New Westminster Secondary School. He is also involved in supporting the local Food Bank, Salvation Army, Children's Miracle Network, and Royal Columbian Hospital Foundation. One of the most personal passions he has been involved with for over twenty-two years is the local Rotary Club. Rotary has done great work, both locally in our community and internationally. Dave has helped Rotary organize fundraising efforts for local youth groups, the Food Bank, school playgrounds, even the clock in Moody Park. His advice for local business leaders is to take the initiative to get involved in local charities and events, as well as to support one another in creating a positive environment: "I am proud of the New Westminster

community and admire many of its local business leaders. The business environment in New Westminster is an incredibly positive atmosphere where everyone gets involved in different causes and supports one another."

The future of New Westminster has a direct correlation to its youth. Dave's vision is: "New Westminster will soon become more populated especially towards the downtown and uptown regions. With this, more restaurants and additional services will become essential. With more families moving in, new recreational facilities will also be built as well as the old ones will be renovated. With all this local development, driving may be reduced, as more residents will choose to travel by walking or if they're travelling out of New Westminster, they'd choose more sustainable methods of transportation such as the sky-train. Above all, New Westminster will continue to convey that small town, community feel."

He shared his advice for the next generation of New Westminster leaders: "Get involved in as many community activities as possible. New Westminster offers an endless amount of activities varying from sports, arts, and volunteering. From musical theatre to football, New Westminster offers many leadership opportunities for students of all ages." I believe our youth can be inspired by heroes like Dave, so we can take the torch and make our community even better than what we inherit from past leaders.

## NEVE'S RECENT READS

*The Burning* by Laura Bates

**Content warning: Sexual harassment/assault and bullying.**

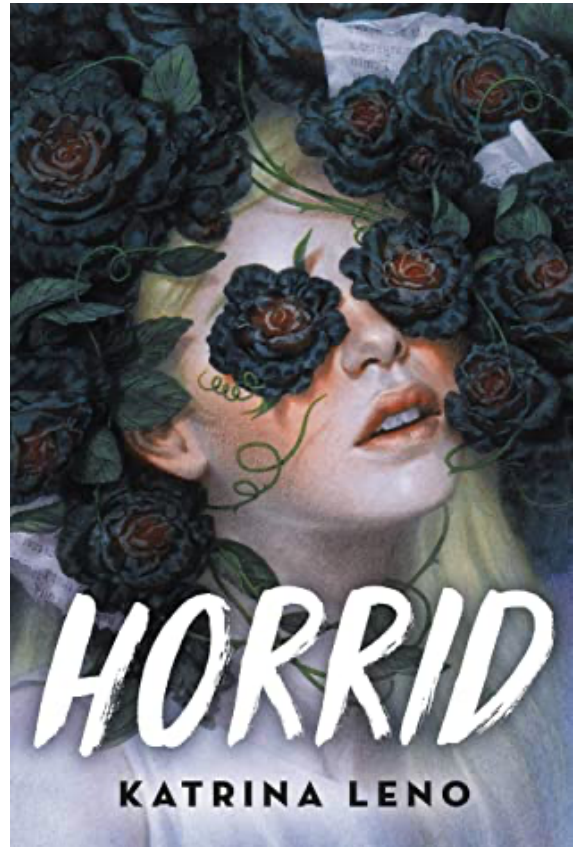
Prude. Tease. Witch. These are all words many women are familiar with. Maybe you've heard them from kids at school or on the Internet, directed at you or at someone else. Laura Bates' 2020 novel, *The Burning*, tackles these issues of harassment and abuse, perpetuated by rape culture in the age of social media. The story revolves around that of Anna Clark, a teenage girl who has just moved to a new school in Scotland after an incident at her previous school. Alongside Anna's is the story of a local girl named Maggie Morgan, accused of witchcraft and burned at the stake in the seventeenth century, who Anna chooses to research for a school project. Anna finds herself connecting to Maggie's story, and in turn, drawing strength from it to stand up against her own tormentors. With the help of her new friends, they all join in the centuries-long fight against sexism and rape culture.

*The Burning* is a relatively easy read, but with a subject matter such as this, it seems like more of a shallow, flat approach instead of what you would expect to be a deep and visceral story. Underdeveloped characters tend to be common in many young adult novels, and unfortunately, I couldn't help but feel as if the characters in this book seemed somewhat immature and unrealistic. In addition to this, the plot itself is all over the place without really going in-depth on any one subject; just throwing in various different elements at their surface level. Although the parallels between the witch hunts of the seventeenth century and the chain of bullying that follows Anna are an interesting basis for the plot, it starts to skew the story more than necessary. Between harassment and assault, abortion, revenge pornography, grief, and hints of the supernatural, there is a lot going on in this novel. As a whole though, *The Burning* gives a heartfelt account of issues that many teenagers are no strangers to, and is another story helping to open up conversations and work towards the destigmatization of sexual trauma. **6.5/10**



*Horrid* by Katrina Leno

Ghosts are often defined as the spirits of those who have passed away, but have come back to haunt us. This may be in the form of a door creaking open by itself, lights flickering on and off, or a chill running down your spine. But for *Horrid's* Jane North-Robinson, she is also haunted by the memories of her happy home in California before her father died, whose death forces Jane and her mother Ruth to move to Ruth's childhood home in Maine: North Manor. From the moment Jane steps foot in the large, dilapidated manor, something feels terribly off, and it's not just because the house is crumbling. Both Jane and her mother begin spiralling into their long-buried memories and trauma, which blur the lines between mental illness, grief, and something sinister lurking in the house. After all, North Manor is nicknamed "the creep house," and rightfully so.



Written by Katrina Leno and released earlier this year, *Horrid* is a great addition to young adult horror, and demonstrates how the paranormal and mental illness go hand in hand, and effectively create an additional element of mystery to the story. There's just the right amount of common yet timelessly spooky scares, combined with the real horrors of despair, grief, and mental illness. Alongside the paranormal theme, the story includes many aspects of the mystery genre and references to Agatha Christie's work, her being the main character's favourite author. Despite a somewhat convoluted plotline that is needlessly complicated at times, *Horrid* pulls off an excellent performance of mystery and fright. **9/10**

# NEVE'S LATEST LISTENS



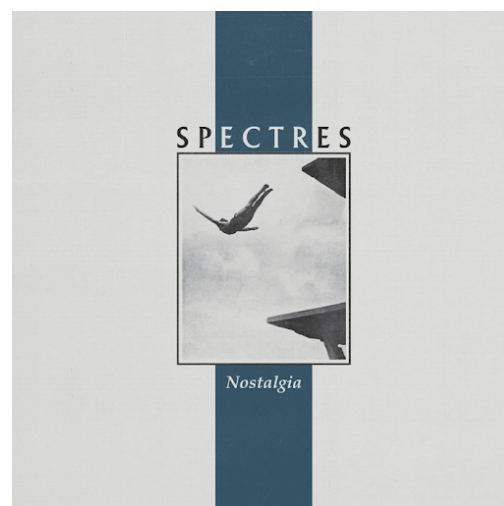
## *Fake It Flowers* by beabadoobee

It's highly likely that any teenager who uses video-sharing app TikTok has heard the song "death bed" by Powfu. It's easily recognizable by its soft chorus, featuring the lyrics of "Coffee," by beabadoobee, her name stylized in all undercase letters as any indie artist would. Just this past October, she released her first full-length album, *Fake It Flowers*. beabadoobee (also known as Bea Kristi) is a Filipino-British musician, known for her combination of indie rock and bedroom pop, and noticeable

influence from '90s artists such as Elliott Smith and Pavement. The album blends her signature soft vocals with loud guitars, but unlike many of her previous EPs, there's a variety of sounds that are newer to this album and add excitement to her repertoire. Her preceding music, such as her *Lice* and *Loveworm* EPs, have the same consistent style of soft bedroom pop that begins to border on dull and sleepy, but *Fake It Flowers* pulls through very successfully. The patchwork of music offers up a nice surprise for fans, with tracks showing different sides to the same coin. Notable songs include the album's singles, "Care" and "Dye It Red," which demonstrate an angstier, wilder sound with undertones of '90s indie rock and a slightly grunge demeanor. In both tracks, the singer expresses impatience and annoyance (particularly towards men). On the other hand, there are tracks such as "Emo Song" and "Sorry" that are much more melancholy and similar to some of Beabadoobee's earlier work, with quiet guitar and somber lyrics that serve as a good intermission in between the album's louder songs. For a debut album, *Fake It Flowers* presents great opportunities for Beabadoobee's future music, standing out with a well-rounded tracklist that breaks out of the artist's regular sound and shows fans where she really wants to go next. **7/10**

## *Nostalgia* by SPECTRES

Hailing from here in Vancouver is the band SPECTRES, with their newest album hot off the press from earlier this March 2020. Originally an independent, underground punk group, SPECTRES has since had their first three albums reissued by Artoffact Records in 2019, alongside the release of their newest album, *Nostalgia*. With *Nostalgia* they have branched off from their initial cold, punk sound into something a little more reminiscent of '80s pop, post-punk, and new wave. The tracks of this album are intriguingly unique to current mainstream music, but retain a noticeable



## NEVE'S LATEST LISTENS

influence from the '80s, with their captivating Joy Division-esque basslines and melodies that bring to mind other bands such as The Cure. In SPECTRES' description of the Nostalgia album, via their profile on the online music company Bandcamp, the band is characterized as "a DIY death-rock outfit, that mixes post-punk, the ethic of anarcho-punk, and an incredible knack for writing catchy songs." And catchy is right.

Each song on the album sounds different, but just as engaging to listen to. Some may sound more light and poppy, such as "Fate" and "When Possessed Pray," while other songs like "Pictures From Occupied Europe" sound darker, but each dreamy track contributes to this well-rounded album and stands out strongly on its own. SPECTRES are not necessarily a brand new group, having released their first independent record in 2012, but they are still a severely underrated gem of Vancouver. Worth mentioning again that their basslines are seriously good. **9/10**

## Selected Singles:



From left to right:

Top row:

- "Pet Cemetery" by The Paranoyds (punk rock, garage rock)
- "Girlie" by Alexandra Savior (dream pop, indie pop)
- "Love U More" by ACTORS (Vancouver, post-punk, synthpop)

Bottom row:

- "Roxanne" performed by Juliana Hatfield, written by The Police (pop/rock)
- "Kerosene!" by Yves Tumor (alternative r&b)
- "Green Eyes" by Arlo Parks (alternative r&b, indie pop)

# CLARISSA'S ALBUM PICKS OF THE MONTH

## What Could Possibly Go Wrong by Dominic Fike

Dominic Fike is an artist who specializes in alternative hip hop and rap rock music. He is perfect for people who enjoy listening to Kevin Abstract, Yeek, or Omar Apollo. This album was released in July, and it is honestly some of the best experimental music of this year so far. All of the songs are quite short, but I wish it were longer because I keep having to put them on repeat, hoping that it never ends! This is his debut album, and considering that he only started his music career in 2017, he has come a long way. In these songs, there are a lot of background echoes and



different mixtures of unique sound textures together. One of the best albums to come out during the summer, so enjoy!

### 1. "Come Here"

It starts off with a muffled voice, which continues throughout the whole song.

### 2. "Double Negative (Skeleton Milkshake)"

By far the best instrumentals from any song on this album. The repetitive keyboard has an interesting effect, and combines nicely with the electronic beat in the background.

### 3. "Cancel Me"

Dominic Fike talks about wanting people to cancel him so that he could go back to his normal life. This is an excellent representation of how celebrities, or anyone who is of high status, may feel drained because of their responsibilities and lifestyle, and that at the end of the day, we are all just human.

### 4. "10x stronger"

The different voices used together are angelic. The song is just too short!

### 5. "Good Game"

Dominic Fike has gone through a lot in his life. This song talks about his family, specifically his father, who recently passed away.

### 6. "Why"

Though summer may be over, this song gives off that perfect, summertime energy.

### 7. "Chicken Tenders"

Even though it is called "Chicken Tenders," the song really has nothing to do with them. Quite a funny title though, I must say.

### 8. "Whats For Dinner?"

This song tackles struggles relating to mental health, and emphasizes remembering to breathe and take it easy.

### 9. "Vampire"

This song is an amazing combination of rap and R&B. A great song for Halloween, as suggested by the title.



10. "Superstar Sh\*t"

He never knew that he would come this far, and this song shows how someone who comes from an unfortunate background, just as he did, can flourish into an amazing artist.

11. "Politics & Violence"

This song highlights the devastating consequences of police brutality. It is encouraging to see certain artists talking about these matters in songs, and using their platforms to show their support for BIPOC.

12. "Joe Blazey"

It sounds as if Alvin and the Chipmunks sang this song, and I am all for it.

13. "Wurli"

A song about being in a toxic relationship and doing caring acts for a person that does not deserve it.

Zeros by Declan McKenna



Though 2020 has been a rough year, music has once again pulled through. To wrap up the year, I figured that I should share my personal favourite album that was released in 2020: "Zeros" by Declan McKenna. Declan McKenna is from the United Kingdom, and makes music in the genre of indie rock/pop. Being only 21 years old, he has already released two amazing albums, and this recent one saved 2020. His music revolves around the themes of capitalism and climate change—topics that are both on the forefront of our minds right now. He is honestly one of the most underrated artists as of

right now and people deserve to see the talent he has. "Zeros" consists of 10 songs, and lasts a total of 40 minutes. All of the songs flow thoroughly and there are messages behind each one that cover the social issues. The fact that it has taken Declan McKenna more than two years to complete this album shows just how much effort and dedication was put into perfecting each song's messaging and musicality. Enjoy, and make sure to listen to the lyrics carefully!

1. "You Better Believe!!!"

The song starts off with a grand, energetic drum entrance. Based on the title, it is safe to say that this is a song full of encouragement, and shows that anything can happen as long as one tries one's best.

2. "Be an Astronaut"

The pain of society converting someone into something they are not is a universal feeling, and is shown through the repetition of the lyric, "you were born to be an astronaut." The guitar riffs definitely give off huge Queen vibes.

3. "The Key to Life on Earth"

One of my favourite songs off the album. "The Key to Life on Earth" demonstrates how capitalism is a prevalent issue worldwide. In this case, Declan highlights its presence in



the UK, naming locations like Brookfield Park and Sainsbury. The constant lyric "Come out and join us honey we will come sort you out" shows how society wants to completely change a person's mindset in order to economically benefit the country.

4. "Beautiful Faces"

This song, as the most upbeat and wholesome one on the album, talks about looking toward the future as a young adult. I can imagine myself strolling the streets of New York with this song blasting on repeat.

5. "Daniel, You're Still a Child"

The song title is constantly repeated to show that Daniel, the person featured in this song, still has a lot to come in his life, and that he still needs to look forward to the future. It seems to be written as a word of advice from his future self.

6. "Emily"

"Emily" differs from Declan's typical style in that it seems to be more carefree and comforting, rather than loud and intense.

7. "Twice Your Size"

The drum part in this song gives off the same vibes as the drums part in "Treacherous Doctor" by Wallows (make sure to check out the October issue to see the other great album that was recommended!).

8. "Rapture"

This is probably the song with the most energy, and is reminiscent of the music of legendary rock groups, such as Nirvana.

9. "Sagittarius A\*"

"Sagittarius A\*" is my favourite song on the album, as it makes me want to leave the country and start a new life in Italy with just \$50 in my pocket.

10. "Eventually, Darling"

Certain parts of this song remind me of 100 gecs, an electropop group. Other than that, Declan ends off strong, and once again does not disappoint.

### ***Songs of the Month***

#### *Genre: Indie Pop*

- "Sarah" by Alex G
- "If You Know What's Right" by Her's
- "Rawnald Gregory Erickson the Second" by STRFKR

#### *Genre: Alternative Rock*

- "Maple Syrup" by The Backseat Lovers
- "When I'm Down" by Oliver Tree and Whethan
- "Everywhere I Go (Kings and Queens)" by New Politics

#### *Genre: Rap/Hip Hop*

- "IV Sweatpants" by Childish Gambino
- "DHL" by Frank Ocean
- "GINGER" by BROCKHAMPTON

#### *Genre: Rock*

- "Give It Away" by Red Hot Chili Peppers
- "When I Come Around" by Green Day
- "Santeria" by Sublime

#### *Genre: R&B*

- "NITROUS" by Joji
- "Want U Around" by Omar Apollo ft. Rue
- "Mango" by Peach Tree Rascals

#### *Genre: Pop*

- "Positions" by Ariana Grande
- "Therefore I am" by Billie Eilish
- "Wash It All Away" by San Cisco

# A (HALLMARK) CHRISTMAS STORY: 8 ELEMENTS TO A PERFECT HALLMARK CHRISTMAS FILM

BY ISABELLA MCDONELL

With the holiday season approaching, soon cable TV will be filled with holiday films: *A Christmas Story*, *Elf*, *Home Alone*, *It's A Wonderful Life*, and other family favourites. Among these flicks are Hallmark Christmas films. At least once a holiday season, I miraculously end up watching one of these cinematic disgraces, somehow braving through 90 minutes of a washed up 90's TV star frolicking around a small town until they meet the love of their life. Something I have noticed throughout these annual viewings is that every film is practically the same. To confirm my theory, I (in the middle of October) suffered through six Hallmark Christmas movies. My final analysis left me with eight essential elements:

1. White people  
As it happens, only straight, white, cisgender, Christian people exist in this cinematic world.
2. A widow  
Usually the love interest, but every once in a while, you'll find a main character whose spouse died a few years prior due to unnamed causes (leaving behind a single parent). If none of these apply, there is usually a plotline involving a dead parent/grandparent.
3. A workaholic  
Who (with the help of their love interest) eventually leaves behind the corporate world and learns to embrace the holiday spirit!
4. A bakery  
Sometimes a café. But regardless of the establishment, the leading lady works there and will inevitably meet the love of her life during work hours.
5. Small towns  
No such thing as metropolitan living in the Hallmark universe!
6. A huge Parks Board budget  
The amount of Christmas decorations is astounding! Seriously, what type of property taxes are people paying?!
7. Actresses people forgot about  
Candace Cameron Bure (DJ from Full House), Lori Loughlin (Aunt Becky from Full House, also a current inmate at Victorville Federal Prison), Lacey Chabert (Gretchen Weiners from Mean Girls).
8. Weak plot  
Truthfully, a weak everything. Terrible acting, embarrassing script writing, just an overall disgrace to the cinema.

# WINTER FASHION

BY MAKENA THOMAS

Winter Fashion is the best kind of fashion. Your outfit options are endless, with accessories, layers, and coats. Annually, there is much similarity in winter fashion trends, however, there are always some slight differences. Pop culture massively influences what's considered "in or out." Even so, there are still a plethora of different styles and fashion aesthetics that can be appreciated. Fashion is powerful, as it allows us to explore our creativity and express ourselves in a million different ways. On that note, here are some pieces that are considered trendy this winter...

## Knitted Sweaters

Sweaters are timeless, and will always be a stylish yet practical choice. Try layering a polo underneath, or throwing a sweater vest over them.

## Long Coats

Fur, wool, trench, leather—you name it. They easily make an outfit go from a 5 to a 10. They provide an element of sophistication to your look, but most importantly, they keep you warm.

## Blazers

Whether they're cropped or average length, they also bring sophistication and maturity to your look, just as long coats do. They're chic, and make the outfit look a lot more put together.



Photograph via Aritzia.



Photograph via Pinterest.

## Mom Jeans

We all know mom jeans have been popular for ages. However, they fit particularly nicely with the items I've already mentioned. Paired with sweaters or long coats, mom jeans have a looser, more casual look that complements the other pieces perfectly.

## Full Denim

Denim top and bottom, also known as the Canadian tuxedo, has made a comeback. Although it may be less common on the streets, the magazines are full of them. It takes skillful styling to pull it off; more of a high stakes, high reward type of outfit.

## Boots

Hiking boots, over the knee boots, and combat boots are just a few examples of this winter fashion staple. It's important to keep your feet warm in brutal Canadian temperatures, which is why boots are always an essential closet piece.

## Doc Martens

Though they may be a bit pricey, these are stunning statement shoes. They really 'up' the quality of the outfit. Boots are the most popular style of Doc Martens, but be sure to take a look at their other adorable options, like the Oxfords. If the standard sole height isn't your thing, nearly all styles of Docs are also available as platforms.



Photograph via Asos.



Photograph via Shein.

## Mary Janes

These iconic shoes were worn at the beginning of the 20th century. Now, over one hundred years later, they're back in style. Since they have a low heel, they add a bit of formality to an otherwise casual outfit.

## Faux Fur Bucket Hats

An adorable accessory that makes any person seem much more approachable and fun. It'll also keep you warm!

## Shoelace Belts

A new trend as of late has been using shoelaces as belts. Everyone loves to accentuate their waists by using belts, but recently, people have been threading old shoe laces through their belt loops instead. It's cheap, cute, and comfortable.



Photograph via Pinterest.

As I mentioned before, there are countless opinions and preferences in the fashion realm. If your favourite winter item wasn't one of my choices, don't fret. Everyone has their own style and is free to wear whatever they choose. Stay warm during the next few chilly months, and enjoy wearing outfits you love, no matter what others say about them.



# CARDCAPTOR SAKURA: FASHION EDITION

BY LAI WEI

Judging from the title, my lovely readers, you may have already guessed what this article is about. Today, we will explore the fashion designs in Cardcaptor Sakura! For those who are unfamiliar with this name, Cardcaptor Sakura is a Japanese anime about our protagonist Sakura, and her adventurous story on capturing mysterious cards that hold powerful magic. While the plot does sound very interesting, today it is the outfit ideas and fashion aspects of this series that take the spotlight.

## Student by Day: Daily Outfits

On the surface, Sakura is an everyday student who goes on with her daily affairs: Attending school, spending time with friends, and wearing cute outfits~



At school: Fashionable uniforms are a must at Tomoeda Elementary School. Sakura's uniform consists of a sailor-themed combo, matched by a white and black color palette with dashes of red. The beret and pleated skirt complete the lively look of the school-wear!

Sakura's casual outfits must not be overlooked too! A pumpkin orange sweater tucked into a pair of black overalls gives off cute and cheery vibes. The snow-white pom poms highlight the look, along with ruby red beaded hair ties!



Festive events: Temple festivals are great occasions to wear traditional Japanese kimonos! A matcha-green bow fastens around the cherry-blossom themed robes, a perfect flower that matches Sakura's name~ A floral fan and pastel pink hair clip complete the look!

### Cardcaptor By Night: Battle-Wears

Time to protect the town from the escaped Clow Cards up for some mischief... Let's get creative with the ensembles~ Making the costumes is a tricky task; *they must qualify for both a lovely appearance, as well as being light and portable in combat!*



Sakura's iconic look: Featuring a color combination of strawberry pink and marshmallow white. What a charming costume~ A cropped princess style dress layered with patterned borders, then paired with snow white gloves and a puffy hat, which add more dimensions to the look. Touches of brightly colored bows and the pair of mini angel wings gives the costume a lively theme!

The night magician: A mystic look... The clownish hat and split-tail cape add a dash of playfulness to the costume. Knee high boots are a great pair with the mini dress, matching in colors. The darkness of the violet sky is illuminated with sprinkles of sparkling stars~



### A Special Acknowledgment: The Clow Cards

Aside from character outfits, Clow Cards designs are beautiful as well~



Where the moon and the sun merge, there are the Clow Cards. They are magical creatures who come to life under the summon of their chosen owner. 花 - the Chinese character for flower, is printed on top of The Flower card. The Flower dances and spins as flowers rain down from the sky; a magnificent scene indeed.

A detailedly designed Clow Card, with grace and elegance. 光 - The Light, shines through darkness that overcasts the sky. Her crown is tall and noble; her hair wavy and continuously extending. The long and slim gown is highlighted by a necklace-like jewel glowing with light.



Which costume/Clow Card is your favorite?



# YOUR GUIDE TO SUSTAINABLE AND ETHICAL FASHION

## BY RIONA SARKER

As fast fashion, a phenomenon of cheap, but unsustainably sourced clothing, has become the norm, the clothing industry has become one of the most polluting industries. It contributes to about 10% of the entire world's carbon emissions, and generates 13 million tonnes of waste in textiles per year, worldwide. More and more people are realizing its impact on Earth, and as a result, people want to be more eco-friendly with the clothes they wear. However, sustainable fashion is a complex topic to navigate. A shirt that you thrifted could be made of a non-biodegradable fabric, or maybe, that brand you've been hearing about is using the term "sustainable" as an advertising tactic. It is important to keep in mind that perfect products and perfect brands are rare. However, this doesn't mean we should give up on being sustainable. There are still ways we can make a great impact.

In fact, one of the ways we can do this is addressing the issue of textile waste. If you know anything about fast fashion, you know that it's trendy, cheap, and that it doesn't last very long. It stimulates "throw-away culture" where certain garments will be the rage one week, then be replaced the next. Keeping up with trends is no problem for consumers as fast fashion is ridiculously affordable. Additionally, since fast fashion does not retain its quality, consumers have to discard the garment and buy again, within a short period of time. The second major problem is the industry's exploitation of workers. In order to sell clothes at a low price, companies will manufacture their products using cheap labour, where garment workers, of whom near 170 million are children, aren't paid enough, and work in unsafe conditions. These places are called sweatshops, and are usually located in poorer countries.

Fortunately, there are several approaches we can take to make better decisions when it comes to what we wear. When we do, it is important to keep sight of the big picture: buy less, and when you buy, make sure you are buying things that you will use for a long time. A common affordable purchase is thrifting clothing, where it is most imperative to keep your goal in mind. The clothes are priced low and are being reused, but often due to easy accessibility, people overconsume which therefore also leads to textile wastage. Other options include repairing, renting, and investing in an article of clothing that will last you a very long time. It is harder to buy from sustainable brands, because brands that are 100% ethical and sustainable throughout their supply chain are rare finds, and it's harder to research their entire operation, but they remain an option.

Another way to practice sustainability through your clothing is knowing the material it's made out of, and how it's produced. Some fabrics you should avoid are polyester and nylon. Both are produced using petroleum and will never biodegrade. It's best to look for natural materials that will, like cotton, wool, or silk. However, even these fabrics have their own issues.

Cotton and related products, like denim, take lots of water to produce, but you can look for cotton made with water systems that recycle the water. Cotton can also have the Fair Trade mark, meaning the people who produced it have been paid enough. Silk and wool are both animal products, but there are alternatives like peace silk, silk made with empty silkworm cocoons, and wool from companies you've researched, and know treat their sheep well.

Obviously, it's very difficult to be 100% sustainable and ethical all the time, especially when we factor in our own financial situations, and the information available to us. One of the easiest and most impactful things we can do is buy less and waste less. If you would like to learn more about different fabrics and the way they're produced, you can visit [this website](#).

# FROM YOUR GRANDMA'S CLOSET TO RUNWAYS OF THE WORLD

BY AMY VURDELA



Photograph via Fun UK.

As we start to break out the decorations and hot cocoa, one more thing comes out of storage: The ugly Christmas sweater, in all of its beautiful, sometimes itchy, glory. These glowing icons—sometimes literally if there are LEDs involved—of holiday spirit have become beacons of joy, or at the very least, laughter. Ugly Christmas sweaters are either sweaters, crewnecks, or cardigans that feature bright Christmas colours, Christmas imagery, or other bright decorations, such as lights, jewels, or tinsel. The ugly element is that it usually contains some sort of ridiculous pattern, colour combination, or joke/pun. What are the rules? Ugliness in fashion, or at least

what is in poor taste, is fairly subjective, however, there are usually guidelines as to what would be considered good or not. Even in ugly fashion, some rules must exist to come to the main consensus of believing that it is ugly. When it comes to ugly Christmas sweaters, the most basic rule is that it must include Christmas in some sort—whether that be colours such as red, green, and white, or actual icons. After that, the campier the sweater gets, the better (or uglier) it is. This means that the funnier, more tricked out, or heinous it gets, the greater it is.

Jingle Bell Sweaters, an idea born in the 1950s, was much less mainstream than today. A big contrast is that they were not worn ironically and they were much less ridiculous, with more muted designs and tones. They then started to gain more popularity in the 1980s. Not as many Christmas themes, but more things typically classified as “ugly.” From the 80s, the patterns, 3D elements, colours—boldness was born. These cardigans and sweaters were also featured much more in the media, such as in sitcoms and movies, increasing their popularity. The trend of Jingle Bell Sweaters slowly evolved in appearance. They were not claimed by any specific city, country, or even designer, however, it is safe to say they had the most popularity in North America. This trend snowballed even more in the 2000s. Finally, Vancouver claimed the origin of the sweater parties in 2002. Chris Boyd and Jordan Birch claim to be the trendsetters, having hosted a party where everyone was required to wear an ugly Christmas sweater. After these pops of colour burned their way into our hearts, in the 2010s they made their way to the runways, debuted by many designer brands. Today they have become mainstream, and even have gained a dedicated day in schools and workplaces, as well as an iconic choice as a fun holiday party theme. They can be found in local thrift stores, fast fashion retailers, or even your grandparents’ closets.

After understanding what they are and where they came from, it leaves a final question: Are these sweaters cringe-worthy or cute? Are they cheap or charming? If you chose the first responses to either of the questions, I have one thing to say: Please, get over yourself. These sweaters are pure expressions of holiday cheer, which do not even have to be confined to Christian ties, as they can celebrate other holidays around that time, or just have the fun decorations and colours. If every part of your life needs to be so serious that you cannot even enjoy a pun-filled sweater in neon colours, what are you trying to prove? The reason why ugly Christmas sweaters are so beloved is that they provide a break from seriousness. It gives you the opportunity to not take yourself so seriously and commit so severely to your fashion style, and just enjoy how ridiculous the



**Photograph via Amazon.**

flamboyant, warm sweater you are wearing is. It also gives a chance to take a break from the pressures of the world and return to the childlike wonder that used to encapture our entire lives. Even grandma's shoulder-padded, bright green, light-up reindeer sweater is haute couture when enough people buy into it. So if you don't have one, go get one! They can be thrifted, bought, ordered, or even DIYed, and will not only brighten your day, but that of everyone within a 5 km radius of you. Get a move on, grinch!

# WINTER LAYERING

BY BIEN-SA TRAN


It's wintertime. Frost decorates the grass, Starbucks is pumping out holiday themed drinks, the sun sets at 4, and... it's freezing. What to do in our nearly 70-year-old (and mostly unheated) school? Bring a blanket? Dress head to toe in snow gear? No. Not this year. Of course, there's no shame in sweatpants and hoodies, but if you refuse to sacrifice fashion for warmth, this handy dandy guide will be your best friend this winter.

## Step 1: The First Layer

A good rule of thumb is to layer your tightest and most thin clothes first to avoid stuffiness with your next layers. Start with a long sleeve or tank to keep your core warm, and add a pair of nylons or tights for your legs. Turtlenecks work too, and they will also add a pop of detail around your neckline. If the pants you choose to layer on top are loose enough, you might get away with a pair of leggings too.

## Step 2: Outfit!

Now is when your actual outfit comes into play. Your safest bet for pants is a pair of mom jeans, but if you prefer something comfier and a little more boho, a long, ankle length skirt is the way to go. For your top, you can opt for a cozy sweater, or layer a zip up hoodie/flannel over a tee shirt. If you go for the tee shirt, layering a patterned long sleeve underneath as your first will add detail and style.



BONUS TIP: If you feel like wearing a short skirt, layer a pair of over the knee socks onto your tights. It makes a world of a difference!

## Step 2.5 Inner Shell

This is the last of your inner layers. My biggest suggestion is a zip-up sweater or oversized hoodie. It may not seem crucial, but it goes a long way.

## Step 3. Outer Shell

Shell part two: electric boogaloo. Your last layer should also be the heaviest. Throw on an oversized jacket to counteract the layers underneath. The bigger, the better, at this point. I cannot emphasize how important the size of this jacket is. You can look as stuffy as possible, or have on 20 layers of shirts, and an oversized jacket will literally disguise all of it.

## Miscellaneous Tips:

- Thick socks are critical! And comfortable under a pair of Docs or Tims.
- Scarves, beanies, and mittens! These cannot be forgotten!

At the end of the day, what really matters is that you're staying warm and comfortable. But if you do like feeling cute without freezing to death, I hope this guide helps you out!



# CLASSIC + PUMPKIN SPICE BISCOTTI WITH BUTTERSCOTCH DRIZZLE

BY YVONNE ILAO // @GOURMETNOWAY ON TIKTOK

These biscotti are the perfect companion for your favourite fall drink. Try them classic or with a fragrant pumpkin spice twist! Recipe makes 30.

## Classic

- 2 sticks (1 cup) unsalted butter
- 2 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/4 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp salt
- 3 lg eggs
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 1/2 tsp vanilla extract

## for Pumpkin Spice Biscotti:

- 1 stick (1/2 cup) unsalted butter (instead of 1 cup)
- 1 tbsp ground cinnamon (instead of 1/4 tsp)
- 1 tsp ground nutmeg
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 1/2 tsp ground cloves
- 2 lg eggs (instead of 3)
- 1 cup brown sugar (instead of granulated sugar)
- 1/2 cup pure pumpkin puree

## Butterscotch sauce:

- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup butter
- 2 tbsp milk
- 1/2 tsp vanilla



1. Brown butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Whisk frequently, until butter darkens to a light brown colour and starts to smell nutty. Remove from heat and allow to cool.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, cinnamon, and salt. If making Pumpkin Spice biscotti, add cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, and cloves at this stage.
3. In a medium bowl, beat eggs, sugar, and vanilla. Slowly pour in cooled melted butter while whisking. Whisk in pumpkin puree, if using.
4. Pour wet ingredients into dry ingredients and combine until a sticky dough forms. Flour your hands and knead a little bit until the dry ingredients are fully incorporated. You may also use a stand mixer to combine the wet and dry ingredients. Form the dough into a rough ball shape, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for 30 minutes.
5. Preheat the oven to 350F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Divide the dough in half and place onto a lightly floured surface. Shape each half into 2-inch wide logs.
6. Bake for 25-30 mins. Do not turn off the oven. Cool slightly, then use a bread knife to cut diagonally into moderately thin slices (about 3/4-inch). Place cut side down on the baking sheet and bake for another 20-25 mins or until golden and crisp. Allow to cool.
7. To make butterscotch sauce (optional): whisk all ingredients in a small saucepan over medium heat. Bring to a simmer, whisking frequently. When sauce sticks to the back of a spoon, remove from heat and allow to cool to a pourable consistency. Evenly drizzle over the biscotti. You may also drizzle with melted white chocolate if desired. Serve warm.



# HOLIDAY RECIPES

BY YVONNE ILAO // @GOURMETNOWAY ON TIKTOK

*Enjoy these twists on classic holiday desserts.*

## SMALL BATCH PEPPERMINT GINGERBREAD CHEESECAKE WITH CHOCOLATE GANACHE AND CRUSHED CANDY CANES

Gingerbread crust:

- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp ground cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{8}$  tsp ground cloves
- pinch of salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup butter, softened
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup granulated sugar
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 tsp water
- 2 tbsp molasses

Peppermint cheesecake:

- 2 8oz blocks full fat cream cheese, softened
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup granulated sugar
- 1 lg egg, room temp
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tsp peppermint extract

Chocolate ganache:

- 6oz semi-sweet chocolate, finely chopped
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup heavy cream

Topping:

- 5 large candy canes, crushed

Gingerbread crust:

Lower the oven rack to the lower third position and preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 8x5 loaf pan with parchment, leaving several inches of overhang on either side.

In a medium bowl, whisk flour, baking soda, ginger, cinnamon, cloves, and salt.

Using a hand mixer or stand mixer, cream butter and sugar until fluffy. Beat in egg yolk, then add water and molasses. Beat until

smooth. Gradually add flour mixture, mixing between each addition, until all flour is incorporated. Do not overmix.

Press into an even layer on the bottom of the loaf pan. Bake for 12-15 minutes or until crust is golden brown and solid.

Cheesecake batter:

1. While crust is baking, prepare batter: beat softened cream cheese using a hand mixer or stand mixer until completely smooth. Beat in sugar, egg, vanilla, and peppermint extract until smooth, about 2 minutes. Scrape down sides of the bowl as needed.
2. Pour onto crust and smooth into an even layer (batter will sink down as it bakes). Lower oven temperature to 325°F and bake for 40-45 minutes or until entire surface is set. A toothpick inserted into the center should come out mostly clean.
3. Allow to cool completely. Refrigerate for at least 4 hours to set (this is essential). Don't worry if it cracks.

makes 6 servings



## HOLIDAY RECIPES

Chocolate ganache:

1. Place chocolate and cream into a heatproof bowl or liquid measure. Microwave in 30-second increments, stirring in between, until smooth and liquid.
2. Alternatively, to make ganache without a microwave, place chocolate into a medium heatproof bowl. In a small saucepan over medium heat, bring cream to a gentle simmer. Do not boil. Pour over the chocolate, then let sit for 2-3 minutes. Stir with a spoon or small rubber spatula until smooth.
3. Pour on top of cooled cheesecake and smooth with an offset spatula. Top with crushed candy canes. Refrigerate for 30 minutes before serving.

## SPICED VEGAN COCONUT SHORTBREAD

- 1 ½ cups AP flour
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp ground ginger
- ¼ tsp ground cardamom
- ¼ tsp ground cloves
- ½ cup coconut oil
- 1 ¼ cups powdered sugar
- ¼ cup coconut milk, refrigerated for 2 hours beforehand
- 1 tbsp vanilla extract
- zest of 1 orange



makes 18

1. Whisk flour, salt, and spices in a large bowl.
2. Cream coconut oil and powdered sugar until fluffy using a hand mixer or stand mixer. Mix in coconut milk, vanilla, and zest. Mix in flour on low in three additions. Dough should be crumbly but holds its shape when squished into a ball.
3. Line a baking sheet with parchment. On a well-floured surface, roll the dough to about ½" thick. Be sure to lightly flour the surface of the dough to prevent sticking. Cut into squares, triangles, or use a cookie cutter of any shape. Re-roll the scrap dough and continue cutting out shapes until it is all used. Place onto prepared baking sheet, and freeze for 20 minutes (without freezing, the cookies are more likely to spread).
4. Preheat oven to 300°F. Bake for 12-15 minutes, or until the bottom is slightly golden. Let cool on the baking sheet for 5 minutes, then transfer to a cooling rack to prevent crumbling. Will keep in an airtight container for 5-6 days.

## ESPRESSO MARSHMALLOWS

- 14.5 oz (~2 cups) white sugar
- ¼ cup corn syrup
- 1 cup espresso, divided
- 3 packets gelatin (about 7 tsp)\*
- pinch of salt
- 1 ½ tsp pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup confectioner's sugar, plus more for topping
- ½ cup cornstarch



makes 64 1" marshmallows

Special equipment: sugar thermometer, stand mixer

\*can be substituted with agar to make vegan; however, texture may be different

1. Place sugar, corn syrup, and ½ cup espresso in a medium pot. Stir until the sugar is moistened and mixed with the water.
2. Bring the sugar syrup to a boil over medium-high heat. Gently swirl the mixture around. Do not stir. Lower the heat to medium-low, then cover with a lid and cook for two minutes. Do not lift the lid. While syrup is cooking, place remaining ½ cup espresso into the bowl of a stand mixer. Sprinkle over gelatin and stir to dissolve. Allow to bloom for at least 10 minutes.
3. Check the side of the saucepan for sugar crystals. If there are sugar crystals, cover and cook for an additional minute to allow the condensation to wash the crystals down into the syrup.
4. Clip the sugar thermometer to the side of the saucepan. Cook until the syrup reaches 242 - 245 °F, then take off heat and allow the bubbles to subside. While running the mixer on medium-low speed with the whisk attachment, pour the sugar syrup down the wall of the bowl (to prevent the gelatin from burning).
5. Add the salt and increase the speed to medium-high for 3-5 minutes, or until the marshmallow base is fluffy, light-coloured, and doubled in size. Make sure that the base is still hot while mixing — a cold base will create tough marshmallows.
6. Meanwhile, line an 8x8 in. pan with parchment and rub the utensils (rubber spatula, flat cake spatula) with butter or shortening. Sift confectioner's sugar and cornstarch into a medium bowl.
7. Add vanilla to the marshmallow base and whisk for 1 minute on high. Spread into the prepared pan using the greased spatula. Sift powdered sugar on top and allow to set for at least 6 hours and up to overnight.
8. Turn out onto a work surface dusted with the powdered sugar and cornstarch mixture. Cut into 64 squares using a greased knife or a greased pair of scissors. Toss in sugar and cornstarch mixture. Store in an airtight container.

# CHAOTIC COOKING WITH CLARISSA

## Sweet Mango Balls (Supposed to be Mango Pearls)

Although these were supposed to be mango pearls, the process took a few turns, and now they are sweet mango balls. There were no exact measurements for any of the ingredients—I decided to just go with the flow. In Chaotic Cooking with Clarissa, everything is based on doing whatever you want to do. Keeping this in mind, we can all learn from our mistakes, which is what puts the fun in cooking. Let me explain my steps on my bizarre, eventful cooking journey.

At first, I thought that the mangoes would be able to be mushed together without a blender, but that did not work, so I had to use a blender instead. However, when I used the blender, the mango was still not blending together well, since there needed to be a liquid paired with it. I added a bit of water to the blender, and it eventually mixed together! This has already been quite chaotic, if you ask me. BUT WAIT! There's more! When I took the mango with sugar out of the blender, I added tapioca starch, and since I was quickly losing patience, I just dumped in the whole bag (HUGE TIP: do not do what I just did). A huge wave of regret went through me, and I was very close to losing it. I used flour to even out the texture that had been ruined from the excess amount of tapioca starch. Flour is a chef's best friend, and a lifesaver when it comes to your cooking needs. After adding the flour to the mixture, a dough started forming, which I cut into small squares, then later rolled into ball shapes. Once that was completed, I added the balls to the pot of boiling water, and cooked them until they floated to the surface.

Boy, that was a wild ride. In the following IMPROVED steps, I will be demonstrating how to make sweet mango balls that are great to have as a dessert.

## New and Improved Steps - Sweet Mango Balls

- 2 mangoes
- 1 bag of tapioca starch
- 1 tablespoon of sugar
- 1 cup of water
- a little bit of all-purpose flour



1. Cut a few mangoes into small pieces and put them in a bowl.
2. Transfer the mango bits to a blender, and blend until a smooth paste forms. Be sure to add some water into the blender!
3. Once blended, move them back to the bowl, then add in some sugar and tapioca starch and mix well (there should be more sugar than tapioca starch).
4. Add around a tablespoon of flour to make sure the texture is balanced.
5. When a dough is formed, roll it out on a flat surface, then cut up into small squares.
6. Form small balls like the shape of boba from each square, using your hands.
7. Put them in a pot filled with boiling water.
8. Once the balls float to the surface, they are ready to eat (this usually takes around 20 minutes).
9. Enjoy!



# WEIRD FOOD COMBINATIONS

## BY CLARISSA TANG

In every issue, I will be testing out and reviewing weird food combinations. It will usually be a competition between two groups, and at the end, I will pick a winner. So without a further ado, let's get to it!

### 1. Vanilla Ice Cream with Olive Oil

**Comments:** This combination was honestly not that bad, but the oil just added a weird slimy texture to the ice cream. The olive flavour was barely present, but it was still there. I would give it a **7/10**.



### 2. Original Flavour Chips with Orange Flavoured Chocolate



**Comments:** I preferred this one more than the ice cream with olive oil, because it had more flavour and tasted like pistachios. The orange flavour was a bit strong, so it would have been better with plain milk chocolate. Overall, it was not too bad! I can see why people like this combination. **9/10**.

**Winner: Original Flavour Chips with Orange Flavoured Chocolate**

Stay tuned for next month for more wacky combinations!

# CHRISTMAS SHOPPING DURING A PANDEMIC

## BY VERONICA POPOVA

With the holidays here, many of us will be relying on online shopping more than ever as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Although it is convenient, there can be some downsides to online shopping that we should bear in mind as we shop, not just during the holidays, but throughout the entire year as well.

### Online shopping

Online shopping is extremely convenient, especially now, when shopping in stores is not recommended. Shoppers can find everything they need with the click of a button, without even having to leave their homes. However, there are some things to keep in mind to ensure we are being as environmentally conscious as possible when online shopping.

Annually, ships are responsible for 2.5% of greenhouse gas emissions and release 940 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> gas into the atmosphere, which results in global temperatures rising. Taking into account that in addition to ships, we rely on trains, trucks, and aircraft in order to transport goods, the global impact is much greater.

Because of this, there are a few important things to consider when shopping online and using shipping services. How many items are you getting? By choosing to buy everything from one provider, you can ensure a higher chance that all the packages will be on the same carrier to avoid relying on many different forms of transport. Similarly, how much time it is given to ship makes a difference. If you give a package a week to ship, for example, then other packages that are being delivered to a similar area can be put together to make the trip less costly. Some companies offer one-day shipping, which may seem appealing until we take a closer look at the consequences.

### One day shipping

As mentioned before, if more time is given for a package to be shipped, there is a higher possibility that effort will be put into placing orders from similar areas together. Opting for one-day shipping means there will probably be more empty space in delivery trucks that could have been used for other packages, making the trip less economic. It makes more sense to use all of the available space, considering the emissions caused by trucks and transportation.

### This holiday season

Keeping all of this in mind, how should we go about Christmas shopping this year? To begin, plan ahead. Cramming in last minute gifts is what often causes people to rely on one-day shipping, which puts a lot of strain on workers and shipping services. Either going in-store before the big crowds, or making an order early enough to ensure its arrival before Christmas, is the way to go. Additionally, buy less. It is worth buying fewer things that are more personal. Investing in a few high quality garments or something handmade from a small business will make the occasion more special. Another option, if you are feeling ambitious, is to make something yourself. If you like to knit or paint in your free time, these hobbies can be put into making gifts for your loved ones. If crafts are not your strong suit, then a personalized Spotify playlist will be sure to make anyone smile. Finally, accept that there is only so much that we as consumers can do. Although there is truth to the phrase "voting with your dollar," it is not realistic for everyone to be super organized, especially considering our current circumstances. There are so many other things to stress about, such as work, school, and not to mention a pandemic. Gift shopping may be the last thing on most people's minds. Considering those factors, it is important to not beat ourselves up if we do end up pushing it to the last minute.



# QUARANTINE CHRISTMAS: A WINTER MOVIE CHECKLIST

BY NEVE LA ROSA

The arrival of winter in Vancouver is synonymous with abounding festivities; sledding, the Stanley Park Christmas train, building snowmen with friends, ice skating, holiday parties. Of course though, with the current state of the world with the COVID-19 pandemic, especially during what is typically the cold and flu season, holiday parties are certainly not going to be an option. Luckily, a cold winter is the perfect time to curl up by the fire with a warm drink and a festive movie. Here's a list including not just Christmas-centered movies, and not just *Home Alone* or *Elf*, but hopefully something everyone can enjoy, no matter what you celebrate.

## *A Christmas Story* (1983)

Well-known for the notorious “leg lamp,” *A Christmas Story* is an iconic Christmas film, yet seems to receive far less praise these days. The story in question is about nine-year-old Ralphie Parker and one especially memorable winter, with the movie featuring several different events over the entire plotline. The comedic relief is excellent, even to this day, and the movie as a whole is truly timeless. Alongside the leg lamp scene are other famous anecdotes from this movie, such as Ralphie’s friend getting his tongue stuck to a post, and Ralphie having to eat soap for swearing (censored as “oh, fudge”).



## *Better Watch Out*

At first, *Better Watch Out* comes off as a cliché horror knockoff of *Home Alone*, centering around babysitter Ashley and Luke Lerner, the 12-year-old boy she’s watching over on a December evening, who has also been in love with her for several years. Luke plans out a “romantic” night meant to woo Ashley, but things go awry when it appears—emphasis on *appears*—that someone is trying to invade the house. This movie is so much more twisted than it seems, and only further reiterates my disdain for preteen boys.

## A WINTER MOVIE CHECKLIST

Gremlins (1984)

For the holidays, most parents get their kids clothes or toys. Inventor Rand Peltzer, on the other hand, discovers an interesting store while Christmas shopping for his son Billy. In this store, he finds an interesting little creature called a “Mogwai”—or a gremlin. Now, who wouldn’t want a pet gremlin? They’re intelligent, they sing, they watch TV, and they’re totally adorable. That is, until they start multiplying into monsters that begin wreaking havoc all over Billy’s town. In my opinion though, they’re still pretty endearing, even when they’re all murderous and mucus-y.

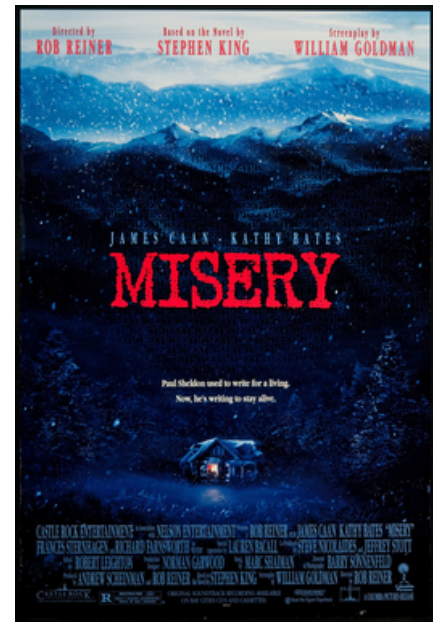
Scrooged (1988)

*Scrooged* is a comedic, '80s Bill Murray-style take on Charles Dickens' classic novella *A Christmas Carol*. TV executive Frank Cross has been blinded by greed and bitterness, and even with all the holiday cheer surrounding him, he has none to spare for anyone, just like cranky old Ebenezer Scrooge in the original story (minus being a TV exec, because TV didn't exist in the 1800s). For Christmas, Frank has been working his employees to the bone for a broadcast of—you guessed it—*A Christmas Carol*. The night before the show, he is visited by three ghosts who wish to show him the consequences of his selfish ways before it's too late.

## A WINTER MOVIE CHECKLIST

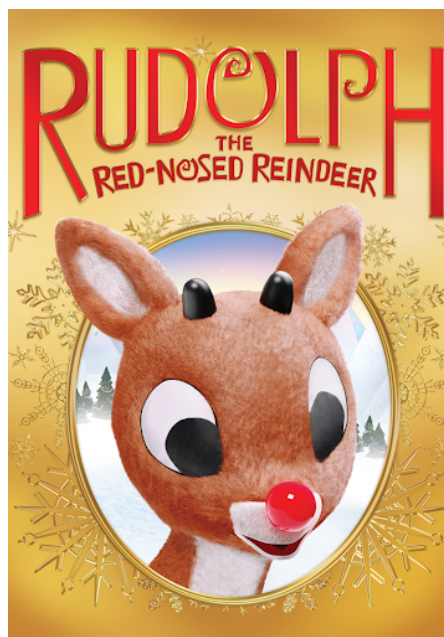
Misery (1990).

What's worse than being stuck in a secluded house during a snowy winter? Being stuck there with broken legs and held captive by a crazy fan. Adapted from Stephen King's novel of the same title, *Misery* is about Paul Sheldon, an author who is imprisoned by the obsessive Annie Wilkes until he writes another book in her favourite series. Annie injures and abuses him after having saved him from a car accident on the snowy roads, and with practically no way for Paul to escape, *Misery* is one of the most thrilling films ever made. The book itself is no less exhilarating and keeps readers on the edge of their seats with every page.



Pretty much any Rankin/Bass Christmas movie, but specifically *Santa Claus Is Coming To Town* and *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*

The production company Rankin/Bass Animated Entertainment is widely famous for their claymation adaptations of classic Christmas stories, including but not limited to *Santa Claus Is Coming To Town* (1970) and *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* (1964), which are my personal favourites. The former tells the tale of a young Kris Kringle before he became the world-renowned Santa Claus, with the latter film obviously being about Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. Both movies are fun, romantic, musical, and demonstrate impressive animation for that era, especially considering the time and effort put into claymation movies. The best part, however, is that the burgermeister's name in *Santa Claus Is Coming To Town* is literally Burgermeister Meisterburger.





# THE COMMODIFICATION OF KINDNESS AND JOY THROUGH CHRISTMAS

## BY GRACE HODGES

What are the first things that come to mind when you think about Christmas? Maybe it's snow or Christmas carols. For most of us though, we'll think of the concept of charity and giving back. To Western liberal society, Christmas is a time to be kind to one another and be happy—or at least it's supposed to be. The modern concept of Christmas has largely degenerated to more commercial intentions, and with that comes the inevitable commodification of kindness and joy, a commodification that denotes the tangible benefits of these emotions.

The basic Oxford English definition calls a commodity “a raw material or primary agricultural product that can be bought and sold.” This means materials like coal or eucalyptus. While this definition is good, it's too simplistic. The definition used within this article is the Marxist definition that “a commodity is a good or service produced by human labour and offered as a product for general sale on the market. Some other priced goods are also treated as commodities, e.g. human labour-power, works of art and natural resources, even though they may not be produced specifically for the market, or be non-reproducible goods.” Within Marx's definition, anything that is produced for the goal of being sold on the market is a commodity. This definition gives us a bit more room and depth to explore the implications of commodities and the commodification process.

Commodities are a part of our everyday life and become relevant to Christmas with the mass commercialization of the holiday. Contemporary Christmas has a lot to do with consumption and feeding into the corporate commercialization process, whether it be Christmas-themed Starbucks drinks or the pressure to constantly buy newer and fancier decorations each year, just to achieve that semblance of festivity. The holiday spirit for most of us is tied to the physical objects we buy that provide us with visual representations of those sweet, sweet vibes. Yet, in the end, they are just objects. Here the distinction is made, what is being sold to consumers is not only the object itself but the concepts that come with them. The Christmas feelings of charity and happiness, perfectly packaged, perfectly commodified. When physical objects become the representation of how much we care, Christmas turns into an important selling point for corporations and kindness turns into yet another marketing technique. These concepts and emotions are no longer just that but instead “a product for general sale on the market,” a strategy for corporations to amass capital.

Capital can be complicated to define, as we often assume everyone knows what it means without taking a second to clarify. There are two definitions, the first, and most broad, being that capital “consists of human-created assets that can enhance one's power to perform economically useful work”. This could mean factories or machinery. At the same time, the Marxist definition contextualizes capital within the scope of wealth.

## THE COMMODIFICATION OF KINDNESS AND JOY THROUGH CHRISTMAS

According to Marx, capital is “money used to buy something only in order to sell it again to realize a profit,” and commodities serve to amass this capital. By selling products, capitalists can create a structure where they reap capital to buy something, sell a commodity, and amass more capital out of that cycle, as opposed to using money to buy personal property, like clothes, toothbrushes, etc. Through the commodification of kindness and joy, they are packaged and sold to amass capital, especially around Christmas when those emotions are desirable and valued. Now, this is relatively interesting and all, but there’s not much we can do about the commodification of these concepts to amass capital. The distinction and relevance arises when we move from economic capital to social capital.

Social capital is difficult to define in simple language, but for the purpose of this article, we’ll make a go of it. Social capital can be explained as actions or signs and symbols that signify a certain social hierarchy. A good example of this is Jean Baudrillard’s connections of social capital to social media: Followers, likes, and comments are all signs and symbols that serve to reinforce social capital. So how does this translate to Christmas? Feeling and exemplifying kindness and charity to others has become a hallmark of Christmas, you might donate an extra jar of food to the local food drive or buy a coffee for someone in need. These are not necessarily bad things to do, in fact helping someone in need is always going to be a good thing. However, when kindness and charity are commodified, though these actions come from good intentions, they are often one-off things, spurred by the buzz the commodified versions of kindness and charity can create. If I donate at Christmas, I can feel good for creating a transaction where I receive the social capital associated with giving to those in need at Christmas time. Again, giving to those in need is always going to be a good thing, but for so many of us, it becomes something we lean into at Christmas time and put out of our mind for the rest of the year, regardless of whether the issue persists. So where do we go from here?

If I’m being completely honest, I do not have the perfect solution to escaping commodified versions of kindness and joy. A good place to start is making it a part of your daily life. Join a service club at school, try to give to those in need throughout the year. Educate yourself on the cycle of poverty. The Atlantic has a good article, “A Different Approach to Breaking the Cycle of Poverty,” that talks about some of the institutions maintaining this cycle and how they can be addressed. As always, look to BIPOC leadership in navigating solutions of mutual aid, taking on the communal responsibility of caring for one another. Local Vancouver organizations like the Hogan’s Alley Society and the Downtown Eastside Women’s Center are valuable to include on your social media feed. Get involved in organizations moving to create better conditions for those working so that charity becomes obsolete when the need is abolished. Giving at Christmas time is the right idea, yet it becomes only that, an idea, when we are unable to decommodify kindness and charity to invest in tangible, year-round solutions.

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# HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS

## BY LAI WEI

It's getting chilly and dark, but that just makes the festive season even warmer and brighter. During holidays like Christmas, some folks exchange gifts to make celebrations more fun. Most of us like some element of surprise, which makes preparing gifts for others a bit tricky sometimes. If you are out of ideas, you've come to the right place...

### Gift Idea #1: Package Edition

Yes, when it comes to the element of surprise, what is better than receiving a combination of various items in the form of a package? Excitement and anticipation grow as the gift recipient unfolds the mystery of its contents. A great thing about packages is that they can be creative, personalized, and convey lots of love and care!

Care Package: Assemble personal care items in a cute box, basket, or bag. Include snacks, hygiene products, a good book for passing time, or anything to make their day better. Pocket-sized sanitizers and colorful masks are great gifts for a quarantine theme.

Food Package: Food can instantly cheer a person up. The package can include a variety of snacks and drinks, some favourites being instant ramen, hot cocoa, or milk tea.

Unusual Package: Perhaps these ideas are too boring for your liking. Incorporate some uniqueness of your own! Hide print-outs of memes in a book, or stuff toothbrushes in a sock. Make the theme of the package unpredictable.



### Gift Idea #2: Cozy Snuggles

Anything good for snuggling is a great winter gift! Ideas under this collection are perfect for cold weather, and are great items to use during the holiday season.

Giant Stuffedies: A classic choice. Let's bring back the glory of humongous animal stuffies as presents. They are cozy to cuddle, and are so incredibly adorable.

Pyjamas: When it comes to Christmas presents, pyjamas are an obvious choice, as well as brightly-coloured sweaters and oversized socks. However, that doesn't make them an inferior gift—with the variety of designs and their overwhelming comfort, PJ's never fall off the list.

Blankets: No need for explanations. They are practical, and can also have a wide selection of designs. A true essential for a cold Christmas night.



**Gift Idea #3: Matching Items**

Getting presents for a close friend? Buy items in a pair to match with them! They are personal and unique gifts to give.

Essentials: Cups, bags, even umbrellas; matching everyday items are simple but thoughtful.

Accessories: Bracelets, necklaces, key chains, and phone cases are among the many types of matching accessories you could get. Any one of them is very cute.

Clothes/ Outfits: Get outfits in a similar design but different colors, or under the same themes. If you both like the same show or artist, get merchandise together!

**Gift Idea #4: Albums**

Here is where you can get creative. Make an album of some kind to share memories, interests, and just good energy in general.

Music Playlist: Personalize a playlist of music as a gift! Add songs from their favorite artists, or share works from your own favorites with that person. A perfect chance to introduce good artists or musicians to friends or family.

Book Collection: Novels, manga, or comics—get the recipient a collection you know they'll like. If they are a huge reader, maybe mix and match interesting books to add some variety.

Photo Album: This is great for someone who's shared many memories with you along the road. Make a photo album to highlight significant events or meaningful experiences. An exclusive and special gift.

**- Fun Gifts -**

Need some silly ideas for a casual gift exchange? Add a fun twist to common items!

Bookmark: "Have a re-mark-able year!"

Comb: For a smooth and untangled life.

Bottle of Water: Why, did you think there was a special message? It's a bottle of water.

Pen: Start writing a brand new chapter as the year begins.

Calendar: For keeping track of memorable events and dates of the year.

Empty Jar: Again, just a jar.

Hope these gift ideas were helpful! They are fitting for many events aside from Christmas too, such as birthdays, or simply exchanging gifts for fun! Lastly, I just want to say thank you for reading this article, and I hope you have a happy holiday season!

# WORD SEARCH: THE HOLIDAYS

Words can be found vertical, horizontal or diagonal, forwards or backwards.

L	R	U	M	Q	A	Y	E	H	J	S	Y	A	D	I	L	O	H	Y	A
S	A	K	B	E	C	I	R	F	U	E	G	F	A	K	D	A	E	N	U
L	G	R	F	O	H	K	P	A	T	B	E	N	S	Z	H	P	C	O	T
E	W	I	N	T	E	R	S	O	L	S	T	I	C	E	N	V	L	H	B
K	Q	G	A	E	P	T	A	S	Z	E	O	H	U	D	R	A	I	A	E
T	A	H	M	L	H	O	G	N	P	C	R	A	L	J	C	M	W	K	K
O	D	W	A	T	U	V	S	O	M	I	A	T	V	S	U	B	H	K	F
S	X	B	A	S	E	P	N	R	S	L	P	N	O	E	L	G	Q	U	O
N	L	E	C	I	D	S	A	T	E	T	R	A	D	I	T	I	O	N	A
O	R	D	V	M	K	U	M	H	U	O	H	S	E	Y	S	T	E	A	L
W	K	H	I	U	R	A	E	P	X	W	I	C	P	O	C	W	J	H	I
M	Y	A	F	N	S	G	R	O	D	S	E	M	L	S	Y	A	G	D	C
A	B	U	M	O	V	T	U	L	K	A	N	Q	F	E	T	U	N	S	P
N	S	O	L	G	I	N	G	E	R	B	R	E	A	D	N	K	W	E	R
J	U	P	R	E	Y	L	A	S	P	I	O	R	Y	H	B	M	I	L	A

Candy cane  
Christmas  
Gingerbread  
Hanukkah  
Holidays

Kwanzaa  
Mistletoe  
New year  
North pole  
Santa

Snowman  
Tradition  
Winter solstice  
Wreath  
Yule

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		9	1			3		6
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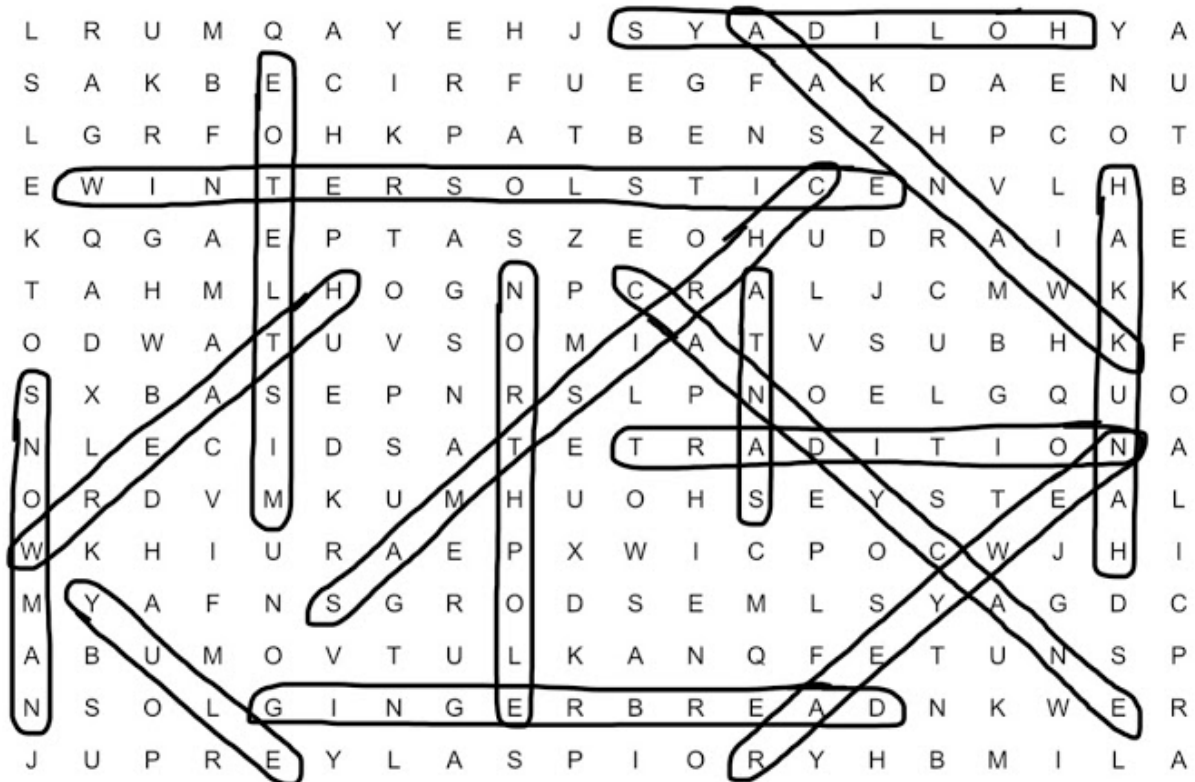
## SUDOKU

Each row, column, and 3x3 box (defined by the bold borders) must contain the numbers 1 to 9.

Difficulty level: medium

Answers can be found on the next page.

# ANSWER KEY



3	1	6	7	8	2	4	5	9
8	7	9	1	4	5	3	2	6
4	5	2	9	3	6	7	8	1
9	8	4	3	6	1	2	7	5
6	3	5	4	2	7	9	1	8
7	2	1	8	5	9	6	4	3
2	6	3	5	7	8	1	9	4
5	9	7	6	1	4	8	3	2
1	4	8	2	9	3	5	6	7

# A MESSAGE FROM THE STUDENT PRESS

Thank you for reading the December edition of NDUB Student Press! No matter what you celebrate, we hope you have a fun, safe winter break.

Questions? Comments? Concerns?  
Send an email to [ndubstudentpress@gmail.com](mailto:ndubstudentpress@gmail.com).

Follow @nwssstudentpress on Instagram for announcements!

**Cover art by Julianna Platts.**

Editor-in-Chief:  
Elena Massing

Editors:  
Natalia Fuentes  
Neve La Rosa  
Bien-Sa Tran

Formatting by:  
Keira Lee  
Erin Godoy  
Elena Massing  
Mark Zavorotny

**"Neve's Latest Listens" Masterlist:**

