

Editors Column

Get out of the Concrete Jungle and Into Nature



James Lim

Grade 12
Francisco Bravo Medical
Magnet High School



After a 30-minute trek, the Hollywood sign peeks above the clouds behind a memorable climb.
[Source: Author, James Lim]

Living in LA, it seems as though we're surrounded by concrete jungles and asphalt gardens with an absence of greenery. We live in a metropolis that's never at rest. The cityscape is beautiful but far from serene or sylvan. Nevertheless, we often associate these characteristics with the entirety

of Los Angeles; the equanimity of nature calls.

Within a 15-minute drive from Koreatown lies Griffith Park. It's home to the iconic observatory and the Hollywood sign. But if we look past these popular attractions, there are also a variety of hiking trails of various difficul-

ties. Although these trails may not be the greenest or most secluded places, they still allow for a temporary escape from the buzz of traffic and the rush of commuters. Being so close and offering a change of scenery, it's hard to beat.

At the base of the trails, there are flatter routes for those who are looking for an easy walk or a trail run and steeper routes that require scrambling for those who are looking for a more technical experience. The flatter and wider routes tend to have nice views of the skyline throughout the hike and an earthy fragrance that can't be replicated elsewhere. On the other hand, the more technical paths tend to be less traveled and, therefore, have more vegetation and overgrowth along the trails. Subsequently, this type of route also features more scenic views with a more nature-like feel. Most trails, however, lead to the same peak: Tom LaBonge Panorama, which stands at 1,625 feet above sea level.

On one specific visit, my father and I headed up a side trail hidden away with overgrown brush. The moment we stepped foot on the dirt, the whole scenery changed. The beginning was steep yet fun to navigate. The aroma of the morning dew and wild vegetation filled the air. After around three-quarter miles,

the trail eventually merged into a flatter mainstream pathway, and we saw a lot more people. The view was stunning, as only a sea of clouds was visible from the first peak. There was no city in sight, not a car or building; it was a crossing of a threshold. We continued our way up and hiked another half mile to get to the route leading up to the final peak. By that point, my father was tired, and I ultimately went up by myself. Nonetheless, the views were quite stunning despite being obstructed by low-lying clouds. The Hollywood sign was visible and many people exchanged conversation at the Tom LaBonge Panorama. The hike down was just as exhilarating as the hike up. Throughout the whole 40-minute journey, we captured photos and recalled nostalgic memories of past visits as we spotted familiar trees and rock formations.

So much can be done in such a short span of time, and a visit to this local attraction embodies this philosophy. It's a chance to create memories or recall older ones. We often critique the lack of greenery in Los Angeles, but we often don't bother looking around. Nature is something many take for granted, and it's in our best interest to take advantage of moments when we get to spend time outdoors and indulge in the deviations from our day-to-day urban lives.

Student Reporter

The Benefits of Journaling



Chloe Je

Grade 9
Orange County School
of the Arts

In this day and age, our lives are filled with persistent noise and digital distractions. Finding peace is a more challenging task as we enter a new age. However, there's a solution that seems to be quite simple yet effective: journaling. While journaling can be a memo of your daily life, it can also be a powerful tool to help with emotional awareness and well-being. As time passes, it will become clearer that this old-as-time practice can unlock a healthier and happier lifestyle.

One of the immediate effects journaling can bring you is emotional expression, which can help process emotions and reduce stress. By organizing what seems like complicated feelings and thoughts into words, you can bring much-needed mental clarity. This can often lead to improved decision-making and focus. People who journal have also been found to have reduced stress levels, a direct result of articulating emotions. Self-growth is also another great benefit, as journaling allows you to organize the complicated human mind and find a better solution to what may be bothering you.

Not only does journaling help reduce negative emotions,



Journaling can be a great tool to organize your thoughts and find solutions from a different angle, as well as just clear your head right before bed.
[Source: Author, Chloe Je]

it greatly boosts mood, creates better problem-solving skills, and gives peace of mind. It has been found that writing down the pos-

itive aspects in life can facilitate gratitude as well as positive thinking, overall improving one's mental state. Writing about challenges

can often make them seem more manageable, leading to insight, solutions, and memory enhancement. Journaling before bed can also clear the mind and help you get a more restful sleep. Peace of mind is another huge reason to journal. Putting down thoughts on paper can be comforting and therapeutic as it will always be a nonjudgmental and safe space to write whatever you want.

However, writing can also be great for motivation and goal tracking, as it also becomes a log of all your past achievements and milestones. Looking back on all your progress can be very motivational for your current goals. These entries become data points to reflect back on to mark your progress into self-betterment.

As we navigate the complexities of modern life, journaling emerges as a beacon of self-care. It allows us to reflect, express, and dream in a space that is not only beneficial for our mental and emotional well-being but also to foster a deeper connection with ourselves. Whatever reason it may be, there is no good excuse for you not to take a moment to pick up a pen and let the pages unfold. Your journey of self-discovery and healing is just an entry away.

Student Reporter

How are Video Games like a Novel?



Jiyeon Hwang

Grade 12
John Marshall High School

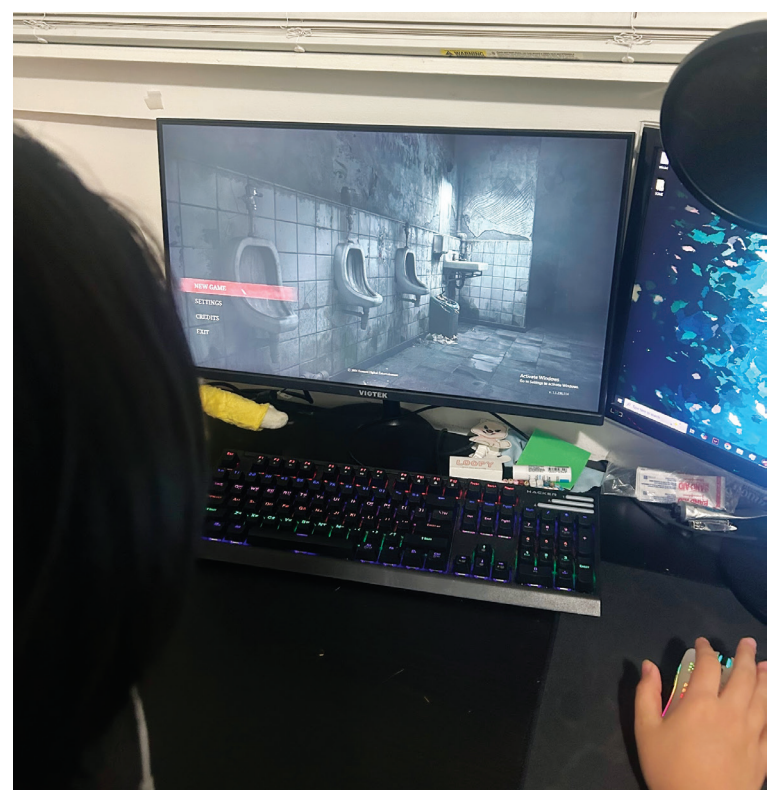
When people think of video games, there are various types: action RPG (role playing game), survival, shooter, sports, horror, and so many more. But there is one category of games that are special: games with stories in them. Just because they are a videogame doesn't make them any less of a medium to send a message out to players. Games such as Omori, God of War, and Red Dead Redemption 2 have intricate stories within their own respective worlds, but Silent Hill 2 is especially good at this.

Silent Hill 2 was one of the very first psychological horror games and was originally released in 2001 by the Japanese company Konami—a remake was released in October of this year by the company Bloober Team. The game is about James Sunderland returning to the town of Silent Hill after having received a letter from his dead wife. What makes this game so unique, meaningful, and enjoyable is how it explores the various facets of the human psyche, especially grief and guilt. The Silent Hill franchise makes one realize how games are just as good of a medium to relay a message as a novel. There are many elements that make this game

so terrifyingly immersive, which could have the same effect as a novel of a similar topic.

For example, in Silent Hill 2, symbolism is everywhere throughout the game, specifically when portraying themes such as guilt, sexual desire, and punishment. In that sense, it's just like a novel using symbolism to get a message to the reader; but here, using visual and sound effects. These are two specific advantages that a game has over a novel. For example, the enemies one encounters are all designed in a specific way, representing something deep within the character, James. The nurses are dressed in a sexualized way, which reflects James' repressed sexual desires for the nurses due to his wife being sick. This entire town is a manifestation of James' mental state. Additionally, throughout the Silent Hill franchise, the main character is always given a radio that alerts the player of enemies nearby. The Bloober Team used this fact to their advantage by allowing certain enemies not to trigger the radio, leaving players on edge constantly to the suspense that someone feels compared to reading a novel.

When going through this



The author, Jiyeon, is about to start playing the game Silent Hill 2.
[Source: Author, Jiyeon Hwang]

game, one encounters the deepest, darkest parts of humanity that aren't often explored, making them stop and think. So, although

you may be playing a video game, you must ask yourself, how much different is this than reading a novel?

Student Reporter



Aspen Lee

Grade 10
Santa Fe Christian Schools

The Eternal Dodgers-Padres Rivalry



Game 3 of the NLDS in San Diego, with all the fans holding their terrible towels, waiting for an out or a run scored to celebrate.

[Source: Author, Aspen Lee]

Despite how uninterested one might be in professional athletics, when it comes to the Major League Baseball World Series, most people tune in to watch who will take the final title of World Series

Champions, the best from that season. In Southern California, two of the biggest teams are the Los Angeles Dodgers and the San Diego Padres. Since they are both extremely talented and greatly

supported teams, whenever they come together in the playoffs, the outcome is always unpredictable. Heading into the 2024 Postseason, the LA Dodgers clinched the first seed, and the Padres were required to play in the Wild Card game to advance to their series with the Dodgers.

The rivalry between the two teams sparks tension between residents of San Diego and Los Angeles, even more so for fans of the opposing team living in these cities. After a well-fought wild card, the Padres entered the LA stadium, confident that they would be able to continue their spirit to ultimately achieve their first World Series title. After constant back and forth in the starting innings, Shohei Ohtani, Mookie Betts, and Teoscar Hernández came together to score 3 runs and lead the Dodgers to a win, starting off the series 1-0 LA. To make the series even more exciting for all of the fans watching, the Padres beat LA at their home stadium, with Yu Darvish showing up and pitching seven full innings.

Following the first two games, the teams traveled to San Diego, where Dodgers fans were faced with rejection after a hard loss of 5-6. During Game 3, "Terrible

Towels," a yellow-colored and decorated towel for all Padres fans, were passed around to wave during each pitch to bring community and keep players on both teams on their toes with cheers and boos.

To demonstrate a true Dodgers-Padres Postseason matchup, the Dodgers tied the series with an 8-0 win under the leadership of Mookie Betts, Will Smith, and Gavin Lux's home runs. During the journey back to Dodgers Stadium for Game 5, Dodgers fans were heated to take another National League Division Series title, just another step of the way to their possible eighth World Series title.

And to live up to such hopes, the Dodgers took the chance to play at their home field as the perfect setting to celebrate their 2-0 win from Yoshinobu Yamamoto, allowing them to eventually play the New York Mets in Game 1 of the National League Championship Series.

The well-fought games for both teams deserved a forever applause from fans of both teams, and no matter the result of the series, all players and coaches played as they trained to put on the series that will go down in the books as one of the most entertaining and engaging.

Student Reporter



Kaylyn Yu

Grade 10
Chantilly High School

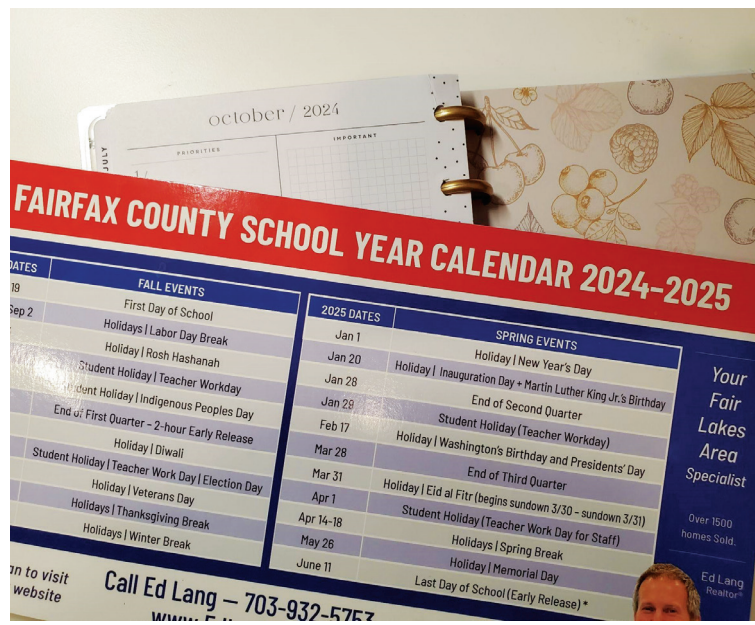
How to Efficiently Take Advantage of Holidays

Holidays on the calendar excite many people with the prospect of having an extra day off from their exhausting schedule. As the usual federal holidays roll around, people enjoy a break, whether uneventfully calm or dynamically packed. So, what is the best way to use these holidays to benefit your lifestyle?

It is easy to fall out of the rhythm of life with these enticing off-days. However, there are certain steps that can be taken to prevent our daily patterns from deteriorating. First, do not sleep in! Although a long holiday may seem like the perfect opportunity to catch up on rest, sleeping in will ruin your sleep schedule for the following days, which could inflict more harm than good. Instead, opt to go to bed early the night before to wake up early feeling refreshed. This choice of rising with the sun will be the impetus to starting your day efficiently.

Secondly, outline your basic agenda. Consider what you hope to accomplish in the entire day, and plan how you will fulfill the goals. Simply adding structure to your timetable will provide you with something to keep yourself accountable.

Lastly, find the right balance



Holidays on the calendar excite many people with the prospect of having an extra day off, but make sure to use your time wisely.

[Source: Author, Kaylyn Yu]

between relaxation and productivity. Use your free time wisely by incorporating appropriate moments to unwind as well as stay in peak condition for your daunting weekday schedule.

There are numerous categories of activities you could commit to for your personal

growth, like friendship, health, family, entertainment, or any other area you would like to invest your time focusing on. There are no limits to your choice of therapy—you could even combine multiple aspects of these ideas. For example, you could watch a movie with your friends and accomplish

your goals to advance connections with your social relationships as well as enjoy your own entertainment. No matter how brief, this little spark of fun will allow you to release stress.

On top of this, you should set a specific period of time within your schedule to solely work on your chores. Giving attention to a single task will help you to finish it more quickly. Whether this is clearing up cluttered laundry or catching up on your studies, make sure to do something that will benefit you in the future when you are back on track with your weekday routine.

Declan Pranoto, a junior in high school, described his normal holiday routine: "I wake up a little later than usual, study, go out with my friends, and exercise." He incorporates practical activities into his day to spend it sensibly, taking mental and physical rest as well.

There is no need to sacrifice your whole holiday for work: if you adjust your schedule accordingly, you can reap the benefits of both a healing break and a chance to keep up with your regular work agenda. Try to integrate these small actions into your routine for a refreshing and productive holiday!

Student Reporter



Jaeyun Park

Grade 10
Hillcrest Christian School

Inside Out 2 and its Animator Exploitation Controversy

Inside Out 2 is the 28th animated film from Pixar Animation Studios, released in June 2024. It is a sequel to a previous film, returning nine years after its predecessor. It depicts the major changes that occur as the main character, Riley, turns 13 and enters puberty, and new emotions appear in the Emotion Control Center. The movie was directed by Pete Docter, a renowned director who oversaw films such as Monsters, Inc. and Up, those that marked the golden age of Pixar.

Although this production wasn't planned when the prequel was made, it has been receiving positive reviews. In the first film, Sadness was the main source of conflict, and the movie dealt with the process of overcoming a slump after a sudden move. Unlike the first film, this one sorts out the anxiety Riley experiences as she strives to join her dream ice hockey team using Anxiety's unilateralism and how it affects one's emotions. While maintaining the theme of the previous film, which depicted Riley's psychological changes in a novel in a relatable way by personifying her inner emotions, it also introduced more emotions that arose during Riley's adolescence and does a great job of depicting Riley reflecting on herself amidst complex emotions. The

prequel was evaluated highly for the amount of thought put into psychologically rigorous descriptions and their effectiveness in expressing and conveying them. This work also showed an excellent visual of Riley's complex and mature psychology as she grew up. In particular, Riley's character shows that under the leadership of Anxiety, which can be seen as the core of this piece, are experiences that everyone has faced at least once in their lives, gaining sympathy from many viewers. Since the series of explanations of the worldview in the prequel ended and a number of new characters were added, the amount of dialogue increased significantly while maintaining the focal point of the story. It fulfills its role as an entertainment film with a fast-paced development, and without any parts that drag on throughout the movie. Although it is not superior to the original film, it is a good piece of work, leading many to think it would win the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature Film.

On September 17, 2024, IGN conducted an interview with 10 former employees of Pixar Animation Studios, revealing that the animators were being exploited harshly. According to these employees, as Pixar's previous films had been box office flops or had



A theater ready to show Inside Out 2, a great movie about emotions and how to deal with them.

[Source: Author, Jaeyun Park]

poor sales, the animators had to work a murderous workload 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with some employees working even on weekends starting four months before release. Also, the overall management was poor, with more 'last-minute changes'

than usual, requiring work to be completed in a rush. Due to this issue, Pixar employees have completely fallen into a burnout syndrome, and combined with the increasing workload for the next film, Elio, employee morale has hit rock bottom as well.