

Editors Column

Backrooms Delivers - If You Know What to Expect

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Ever since the trailers came out, *Backrooms*, a film by Kane Parsons, has been one of the most anticipated and hyped movies of 2026. Starting with just a simple photo of what looks like the interior of an office building and a paragraph on an internet forum, 4chan, the topic of “backrooms” collected millions of fans and lore over 8 years, emerging as one of the most popular urban legends of today. However, when the film debuted in theaters, the reviews were extremely controversial. One side argued that the film was not at all similar, at all, to raw experiences on the internet, and therefore failed to meet expectations. However, proponents of the film claimed that it was never supposed to follow what the internet thought “backrooms” were supposed to be; instead, it followed Kane Parsons’s version of the backrooms lore, which was developed throughout 5 years on his YouTube channel.

I went to watch *Backrooms* recently and realized that if the audience forgets about the popular internet lore and focuses instead



The opening scene of *Backrooms* displays the logo, ASYNC, which Kane Parsons argues is a mysterious organization that works with what’s known as the complex (a.k.a. backrooms).
[Source: Author, Robin Ryul Kang]

on Kane Parsons’s story of the urban legend “backrooms,” the film is extremely well-developed and richly layered. Unlike what people expected, it doesn’t follow the traditional horror structure of using blood or loud creatures to scare the audience. Instead, it focuses on uncanny-looking entities and silence to disturb the audience and make them anxious. The story is also unique. It’s

not about a protagonist exploring the backrooms and running away from monsters. Rather, it’s a more twisted and interpretative one: the two main characters’ past trauma. It contrasts how they handle it differently, leading to a very open-ended or confusing ending that many people may not grasp until they’ve read explanations online.

In my opinion, if you’re look-

ing for a unique horror film that deals with psychology and the terror of the unknown, *Backrooms* is worth every minute of its runtime. On the other hand, if you’re a person who prefers explicitly frightening scenes (i.e., jump scares), gore, and a story that’s easier to digest, you may find the film a bit boring and underwhelming. Similarly, if you go in as a proponent of the fan-made online version of “backrooms” that believes its worth rests entirely upon thousands of different made-up scary entities and “levels,” you could be disappointed as well.

Kane Parsons, at just 20 years old, bravely chose to tell the story that he wanted to tell, not the story that the internet made up for him. Therefore, if you walk in only knowing Kane Parsons’ previously established lore of the legend and expecting a genuinely well-crafted film—instead of a compilation of internet mysteries—you will be satisfied. For a horror film that was inspired by a single anonymous photo on the internet, *Backrooms* is an impressive piece.

Student Reporter

Finding Growth in What We Resist

Yein Cho
Grade 8
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It was one of the weekends that my parents had signed me up for a golf academy. My dad had always been passionate about the sport, and hoped that I would share his interest. When I heard that I was signed up for these lessons, I was devastated. Golf had never been a sport that I wanted to pursue, and the thought of waking up at 7:00 a.m. on a Saturday made it even worse; that was supposed to be a day for sleeping in, a chance to recover from the lack of sleep accumulated throughout the school week.

The first morning was brutal. I struggled to get out of bed and performed horribly during the lesson. I could barely get the ball near the green, and it took countless attempts just to sink a putt. Frustration quickly set in. I felt like I was holding everyone back.

The struggles did not disappear after the first lesson. Week after week, the ball aimlessly flew through the air every time I tried to get even slightly closer to the target. Improvement felt painfully slow, and there were many moments when I questioned whether the effort was worth it. Yet, over time, everything eventu-



Early practices at the golf course seemed like a burden at the time, but taught me more than I could have imagined.
[Source: Author, Yein Cho]

ally became a routine. Waking up no longer felt impossible, and my skills gradually improved. With each lesson, the ball inched closer and closer to the hole. Progress was not immediate, but it was steady. Looking back, I realize that golf was teaching me something far more valuable than how to swing a club. What initially was

a hardship shaped my resilience.

Today, I naturally wake up at earlier times, even on the weekends, and use the extra hours productively. Although I no longer play golf, the lessons I learned from the experience remain with me. I discovered that meaningful growth often comes from doing things we do not initially want

to do. A true difference becomes visible when we continue working productively, while others may choose comfort or convenience instead. Whether it is reading during those extra morning hours or getting a head start on work, those small investments of time accumulate and eventually set us apart.

Most importantly, I have come to the realization that initial challenges are not something to endure, but rather something that contributes to who I am becoming. Ultimately, as time passed, the burden revealed itself as a source for growth even if I could not see it at the time.

Looking back, many of us can identify a burden that ultimately taught us discipline, patience, and resilience.

As you reflect on your own life, consider a burden you are currently facing. Instead of viewing it solely as something standing in your way, try to ask yourself what it might be teaching you. The answer may not be obvious today, just as it was not for me standing on that golf course years back. However, you may discover that this burden of yours was preparing you for growth all along.

Student Reporter

‘Little Kid’ Hobbies Turning into Post-Exam Recovery

Amber Lee
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After the Advanced Placement exams have officially come to an end, students worldwide are now relaxing with post-exam recovery and catching up with all the friends and activities they’ve set aside while studying. As one of the countless number of AP test-takers worldwide, I also took this time to relax from most of the academic pressure. This has given me the time to reflect on myself and what I really like to do in my free time.

Some differences I’ve noticed among students in the post-exam recovery phases are that most of them resort to their electronic devices and doom-scrolling on various social media apps. Although I admit that I also enjoy doing this from time to time, it is most definitely not the best way to cool down your brain.

The first few days after the exams, going through one’s phone, catching up with the latest videos, and hanging out with friends all feel extremely important. Though after a few days, I personally started to get sick of always being on my phone and started looking for more hands-



“Little kid” hobbies like this diamond painting can help relax students’ brains after the AP exams.
[Source: Author, Amber Lee]

on activities I could do lying around the house. This is when I found unfinished crafting sets waiting for me, stuck in the corners of my room.

These hands-on hobbies included things like LEGO sets, diamond painting, pipe cleaners, and origami paper kits. After enough connections with the internet and hangouts with my friends, I

looked to get my hands busy with these activities.

I started with my LEGO set. Other activities, I felt like I was in elementary school again, and many of my peers thought it was cute to turn back to these “little kid” hobbies. Though the more I engaged with finishing off each of the kits, the more I felt relaxed and con-

nected to the world around me instead of being glued to an electronic screen.

The small clicks of the LEGO pieces eventually turning out into a magnificent build, the squish of the diamonds onto the sticky pad creating a beautiful artwork, the twists of the pipecleaners blooming into flowers, and the creases of origami transforming into the shapes of my imagination grabbed my attention for way longer than a short online video I could scroll through.

This is when I realized that these “little kid” hobbies are not just activities for young children, but also activities for teenagers to escape from the pressure as high school students heading towards adulthood. Reconnecting with the things I loved in the past by doing these little crafting hobbies, while having my favorite show turned on, had me engaged and increased my attention span greatly. In a quickly modernizing society that expects teenagers to mature early, attempting to come back to the hobbies we liked as kids may be the path to maintaining our inner peace.

Student Reporter

The Meaning Behind Handmade Gifts



Grace Song
Grade 8
Lexington Junior High School

In a world filled with online shopping carts, same-day shipping, and gift cards, handmade gifts continue to hold a special kind of meaning. While store-bought presents may be convenient, there is something different about receiving a gift that someone spent hours creating by hand.

Recently, I decided to make handmade gifts for my parents' birthdays. First up was my mom's birthday, and I knew I wanted to make something useful, yet visually appealing and thoughtful. So, using air-dry clay, I decided to create a bubble plate, which is known for its thick rim that creates a bubble or donut-like effect. Knowing my mom, I thought this would be a perfect plate to put jewelry or small items on. After shaping the clay, I let it dry for a few days and covered it with a baby yellow paint. Even though the materials used to make this gift were inexpensive, the hours of sculpting and carefully added paint strokes made it even more valuable.

For my dad, I wanted to create something he could keep at work as a reminder of his family throughout the day. I started with simple



The giant mural at the center of the Orange County School of the Arts, painted by graduating students, reflects the school's creativity and dedication. [Source: DongHee Kim]

photo holders and transformed them into meaningful keepsakes. Using clay, I covered the base of the photo holder and sculpted the words "Love," "Faith," and "Hope" onto each. Then I printed pictures of our family to put onto the photo holder. My goal was to create something practical enough to sit on a desk or shelf, while also serving as a small reminder of the peo-

ple who care about him.

The idea of handmade gifts has also become more popular on social media sites. Across platforms, people share their creations of pipecleaner flower bouquets, crocheted animals, pop-up cards, clay trinkets, and more. Even though trends change quickly online, handmade gifts continue to stand

out because of the time and effort that go into them. A person could easily buy something expensive, but creating something by hand shows dedication; it lets others know that someone was willing to spend their own time making another person happy.

When I gave the gifts to my parents, their reactions reminded me why handmade presents matter so much. They appreciated not only the final products but also the care and effort behind them. "As much as I appreciate store-bought gifts, I love receiving handmade ones because I know there will never be another like it, which makes it super special." Said my mom, DongHee Kim.

In the end, handmade gifts remind us that the most meaningful presents are not always the most expensive ones. Store-bought gifts can be easy and accessible, but handmade creations carry time, effort, and personal thought. Even a simple handmade card becomes a lasting reminder of care and appreciation. So, as events and birthdays approach, I encourage you to take the time to handmake something for your loved ones!

Student Reporter

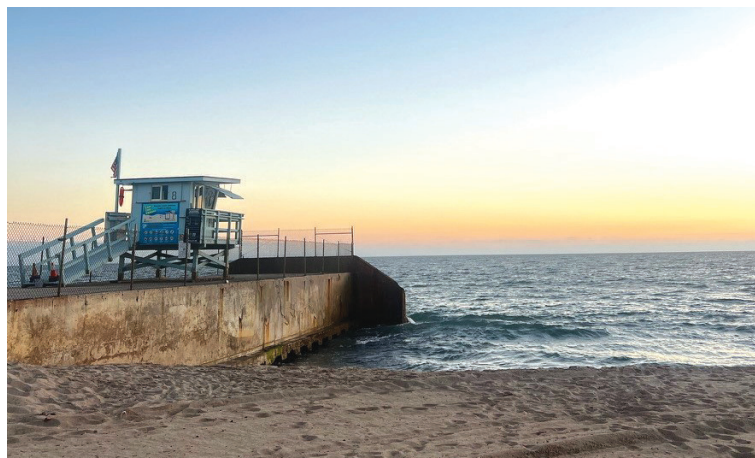
Nothing Is That Deep in Retrospect



Jean Lee
Grade 11
Marlborough School

Somewhere between AP exams, college conversations, weekend plans, and the constant pressure to "make the most" out of high school, I think I forgot how small most problems actually are. As my junior year comes to an end, the biggest thing I've realized is that nothing is ever as deep as we make it out to be. But living in Los Angeles, especially, makes it easy to lose sight of that. Everything here feels heightened, as there's always something to chase: the perfect internship, perfect summer, perfect friend group, and a perfect life that somehow everyone else online has seemed to figure out.

The culture in LA thrives on being extreme. Citizens often overcommit, where being balanced stopped becoming enough. High school actually only amplifies this mindset. At school, every test, project, or grade feels life-defining. Students convince themselves that everyone is watching or even judging, remembering many, many embarrassing things, when in reality, most people are too busy living their own lives to actually notice.



Watching the sunset on a slow day contrasts with the fast-paced culture that often defines Los Angeles. [Source: Author, Jean Lee]

Ironically, science says that this constant pressure is what harms teens the most. According to the American Psychological Association, teenagers who experience extreme levels of stress struggle with fatigue, lack of motivation, anxiety, and sleep deprivation. However, studies on productivity and performance show that doing things in moderation actually improves long-term success. To put it simply, the more we obsess over every little thing, the more it makes it difficult to function overall in the future.

I'm definitely a victim of this mindset: many of us live inside these bubbles without realizing it. Spending so much time in one environment makes everything feel amplified and urgent, often seeming far more important than it actually is. But this year, I started to notice how quickly things pass.

The grade I might've been upset about in September, I've forgotten. The friends I lost along the way are also rarely on my mind. A trend

that I couldn't participate in? Also gone. The things that felt world-ending slowly become irrelevant over time, and life continues on whether you spend days, weeks, or months obsessing over it or not.

At first, it might sound pessimistic, but stay with me, it isn't. I've taken comfort in understanding that not every moment needs to carry weight. This doesn't mean that everything is unimportant or that nothing in life is worth it, but I just started to care about things in moderation. Anything that can be helpful can turn harmful when done to an extreme.

I used to think that growing up was learning to take things more seriously, but now I think that it means learning what deserves your energy and what doesn't, because everything can take 100%. I believe that the LA and high school culture makes students think that everything matters, but I think I've been a lot healthier (and happier) once I started to care about things in moderation, and just let things happen spontaneously.

Student Reporter

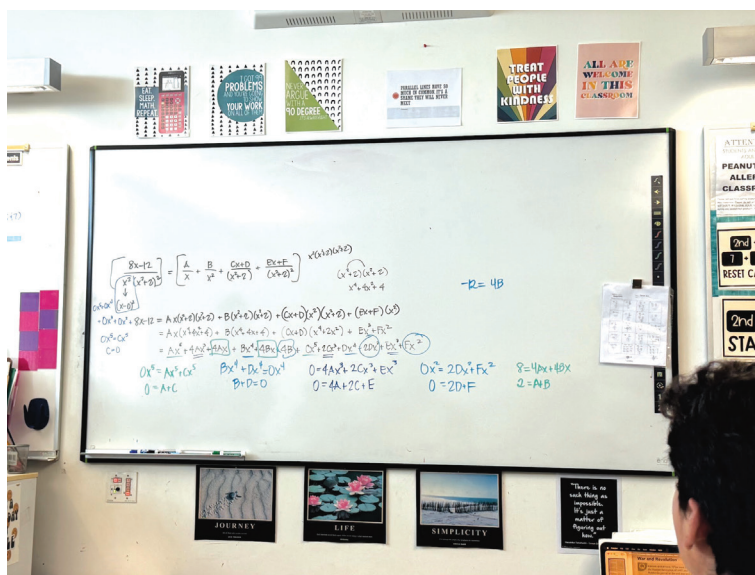
Math Tips for Tutoring and Teaching



Jordyn Bak
Grade 10
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As we all know, education is a vital foundational necessity for societies in the post-industrial stage. This is a social and economic stage where most of the workforce is employed in service-based fields in a society. This includes healthcare, technology, finance, and most importantly, education. I believe education is the most essential because college degrees are now the norm in the current employment system. Math is arguably one of the most important subjects for students, as it is a common core subject that extends even to college. Because of this, I value my work as a Mathnasium Instructor (math tutoring center franchise) and a private tutor for various topics.

Through my experience teaching math, I have realized that it's surprisingly harder to teach a beginner topic than a high school subject. Most people would think the opposite because higher math means more difficult subjects. To a certain degree, that is true; however, people overlook one thing. How does one teach a subject that naturally comes to you? For example, I had difficulty teach-



Math assistance for Pre-Calculus on the board is something tutors use to help others with their math skills. [Source: Author, Jordyn Bak]

ing mental math skills, as it was something natural to me with no real explanation. To tackle this, it's best to approach students with visual representations. One way I did this was by drawing a number line of negative numbers to zero to positive numbers when teaching integers.

However, the flip side to utilizing visual representations is that some students may become too reliant on them. A prime example is finger counting. It is extremely crucial to minimize finger counting for young students to prevent a bad habit. Excessive use of finger counting and other forms of visual tool usage leads to a harder time

getting used to mental math. So in short, visual representations may be a helpful tool, but should only be used to a moderate degree.

But it is also essential to consider patience and discipline when teaching. Without proper patience, both the student and mentor can reach a frustrated state. Learning to repeat and even reword explanations is crucial for the most positive outcomes. But it is also important to consider when it is the right time to discipline. There have been instances, more than I can count, where I have been pushed around by students. A way to solve this is to have a reward-based system. For example, offering treats or cutting problems as an incentive can teach how effort will lead to rewards.

Although math isn't my favorite subject, it is essential to understand the basics of it. Surprisingly, I found that teaching helped me with math. Knowing how to teach skills only advances your own knowledge of the subject. Therefore, I think people should consider mentoring not only for the student's benefit but also for self-growth.