

Headlight



Written by the students of Marblehead High School for our school and community

www.mhsheadlight.weebly.com

April 2, 2015

Why You Should Start Listening to Podcasts

Kyra Veprek, Sophomore
Reporter

Unlike most people my age, I enjoy weekday mornings. Yes, I said it; I enjoy the time of day that consists of waking up at an ungodly hour just to eat a mediocre breakfast and realize I didn't finish my homework the night before. But it's not the disheveled state of the morning that I love; it's the peace of the car ride to school. Every morning, my mom and I spend 10 minutes together listening to NPR's "Fresh Air," a podcast containing personal interviews with various prevalent luminaries. Listening to NPR's various podcasts not only opens my eyes to events on a global, national, and local scale, but also gives me something to reflect on throughout my day. Most may enjoy silence, or maybe television in their mornings, but I could never make it through a day without learning at least one new thing about my world each morning.

I began listening to podcasts regularly when I found myself with a lack of motivation during runs. The blaring pop music and pounding beats no longer seemed to motivate me. I turned to podcasts as a way to distract myself. I started off by downloading a series of stories from NPR's "Shots," a podcast consisting of the most recent health news. Little did I know that one of the first stories I would ever listen to, "Trapped In His Body For 12 Years, a Man Breaks Free," would be the most impactful. The narrative told the story of Martin Pistorius, a citizen of South Africa who came down with an unidentified illness at 12 years old. The illness caused him to slowly lose all motor functions until he was declared a vegetable, when in reality he remained conscious, alone with his thoughts.

Despite the doctor's advice to allow Pistorius to die, his parents continued to care for him until, after 12 years of being thought of as a vegetable, he regained movement in his eyes, allowing him to communicate his consciousness. Towards the end of the story, when the parents of Pistorius reflected on his time removed from the world, I found myself tearing up. The concept of losing a child to an unknown disease was not one I had ever tried to wrap my head around, and this podcast allowed me to emotionally connect with the parents on a level I never expected. Listening to that podcast truly opened my eyes to the unknown struggles everyone deals with daily, and lead to my addiction of listening to NPR's podcasts.

So, why should you listen to podcasts? Firstly, many of us lack unbiased exposure to the global, national, and local concerns of the present. It is difficult to find any newspapers, magazines, or news stations today that do not favor certain political views. On the other hand, radio stations that deliver podcasts, such as NPR, strive to deliver straight facts. Secondly, podcasts are portable and deliver news to the listener in a way that may be easier to digest than reading. By simply downloading a podcast to any portable MP3 player or iPod, you have instant access to prevalent stories and news (hence, why they're so great to listen to while grocery shopping, exercising, or driving). Finally, you may hear a story that really hits home. The stories and news told through podcasts can have a simple or profound effect, but most provoke emotions that you may not have on a daily level. Now, I understand I sound like an advertisement for NPR, but I promise I am writing this due to the strong effect podcasts have had on my daily life. So, I challenge you to step outside your normal routine and listen to a podcast next time you are in the car or running errands and maybe, just maybe, you'll find a similar love for the news and stories told through podcasts.

My Long Composition for MCAS

Amber Born, Sophomore
News Coordinator

I took MCAS for the first time last week. Going in, I thought it'd be great. My theory was that I'd finish my MCAS ASAP and work on my SAWTAC packets (it was going to be the Week of Acronyms, apparently). I had no idea how the schedule would work, so I figured that if they let us out early, I could go to class, or at least take a really long walk. But the reality turned out to be a little different than my expectation.

The first day of English MCAS consisted of one thing: the Language Arts Composition, which everyone calls "the long comp" with the sort of fear and respect usually reserved for the likes of college applications or Mr. McLean. The long comp prompt asked us to write about a book character who was unusual, which was nice, because that didn't narrow the selection at all. We changed seats twice: once because the rows weren't long enough, once because we weren't in alphabetical order. We were given forty-five minutes to draft an essay in one answer booklet, and then after that, we were given another answer booklet in which to write our actual essay.

MCAS has an odd time limit; you are given forty-five minutes, but you are also given until the end of the school day. You are also scheduled to stay in the testing room (i.e. a math classroom whose original occupants were redirected to another wing) for either three or four blocks. Everyone finished in a few blocks, but we weren't allowed to leave. And it turned out that we weren't allowed to read books once we were done. I assume that's because if anybody had a book out, someone else might use it for their long comp. It's a good thing that rule was in place; if it wasn't, someone would probably have written about the protagonist of Algebra 2: A Common Core Curriculum. Around eleven, I got a little worried, because I normally had first lunch that day. They can take away my phone and they can take away my time, but they can't take away my lunch block, or so I thought. They did, though, and we were released at 11:45. The entire sophomore class was given a full hour for lunch to compensate for...I don't know, but I guess they really didn't want us to go to class. So several hundred people hung out in the cafeteria for an hour, and that was nice. I even got a chair for half of it.

The second and third days were similar, but with multiple choice reading comprehension and open response questions. By the time it was over, no one was sad to be going back to six classes per day. Everyone I talked to was just happy to have their phones back.

The instructions read to us every day claimed MCAS would be used to help us learn, though I don't see how it does. Your scores have nothing to do with college or your actual grades in high school. Answering an open response question for MCAS requires a completely different skill set than writing an essay for school or the ACT. MCAS was put in place to determine how successfully schools are teaching their students, so students' scores reflect on their schools. Therefore, students spend a lot of time in school learning how to do a good job on MCAS, rather than learning other, more transferable skills.

I think MCAS is mostly pointless, moderately boring, and a complete waste of time, but I got an extra half-hour for lunch and minimal homework out of it, so I give it two out of five stars.

Last Week's Fire Drill

Riley Sugarman, Senior
Reporter-in-the-Field

I am peacefully working on my artwork, sharing a loose conversation with the girl next to me. I glance at the clock for a time check and see there is plenty of time to finish. Like being forcefully awakened from a nice dream, a loud, sharp beeping abruptly shakes me from my dreamy daze. The fire drill strikes again. Mixed groans and cries of joy sound from the hallway as some are rescued from a dreaded class and others regret starting their homework last minute.

Luckily, I forgot to drop my jacket in the locker room. This made my venture into the biting cold a little warmer. Strutting out into the hallway I am met with utter chaos and streams of people going every which way, eventually finding my way outside with friends. We walk out back with the sudden fear that we will have to stand on the snow-covered field behind the school, but the sea of students and faculty instead leads all the way around the school, making perfect sense. Of course, why not simply walk out front and into the parking lot when we can take the pointless route around the school?

Once in the lot there is more chaos than before. Teachers are yelling over the screaming mass of children and the students are wandering around in attempt to find the class they should be in. Luckily, I find my art teach-

er and my class almost immediately. Our makeshift spot happens to be a pile of snow, and once I'm standing on it I can see everything. Kids are running around, throwing snow, and basically rioting in one very small space. I look over, and the freshman beside me is wearing merely a t-shirt. My friend and I ask him if he is okay, and he insists he is while his arms are covered in very distinct goosebumps. When I look around again, it comes to my attention that this shivering freshman is not alone. I am one of the lucky few protected from the cold with a coat.

My teacher takes pity on us and lets some of us take refuge in my friend's car for the remaining minutes of our time outside. We all sprint the thirty feet and cram inside to get out of the cold. After only a few minutes, we realize the sea of people is moving toward the building, and brace ourselves for the cold outside. Once we finally meet the slowly moving line of people, it takes five minutes to actually reach the doors. As soon as I meet the warm air, I take off my coat and sigh. Hopefully the next fire drill will happen when it's warm.

Mark Your Calendars!!
2015 Acappellooza Concert!
Friday, April 10
7 P.M. MVMS PAC
Performances from all MHS acappella groups!

No Taxation Without Representation

Morgan Hardwick, Senior
Reporter

A saying that was a major basis for the American Revolution, "no taxation without representation," is one I still believe stands true today. As a seventeen-year-old, legal, American citizen, I have started to question how the U.S. government can tax me, but not allow me to vote. After inspecting my paychecks for the last three years, there are always the same four categories of taxes being taken out: federal, state, Medicare, and Social Security. As another April rolls near, so do the tax

refunds. However, refunds only reimburse the federal and state taxes, with Medicare and Social Security not being refunded. This brings about the question: Why can the government take Medicare and Social Security taxes from me, but not allow me to vote on these policies or for representatives to voice my opinion on these policies?

In expressing my idea for this "taxation without representation" article, I have heard a variety of feedback, centering mainly around the fact that when I am 65 years or older I will receive my Medicare and Social Security benefits. Yet, both systems have been around less than a century, Social Security being established in 1935 and Medicare in 1965. Who can promise that in another five decades, when I will be entitled to this money, these programs will still be around or thriving? With the upcoming 2016 election, the stability of Social Security will no doubt be questioned. Magazines today have already

been debating the issue. In a Forbes Magazine article discussing the inevitable baby boomers retirement, Social Security, put simply, is "an entity deemed bankrupt when its obligations exceed its revenues." When Social Security's obligations will exceed its revenues is essentially unpredictable, and arguably, so is the future of any government program dissipating taxpayer money.

With the future malleable to those who can vote to change it, taxing legal citizens, like myself, who are lawfully not allowed to vote seems essentially undemocratic. Isn't it time that working teenagers, susceptible to legal requirements of that of adults, be entitled to vote? The situation parallels that of the 1750's and 1760's Thirteen Colonies' grievances with the British Parliament. I wouldn't say another Revolutionary War is in order to change the condition of unjust taxation, but I do say that taxing unrepresented citizens is a situation that should not be ignored either.

Headlight Staff 2014-15

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF: Alex Kerai, Meredith Piela, and Liam Reilly EDITORS' ASSISTANT : Joanna Rosen

REPORTERS IN THE FIELD: Riley Sugarman, Drew Faria and Becky Twaalfhoven

WEBMASTER: Alex Kerai

NEWS COORDINATOR: Amber Born

FACULTY ADVISOR: Thomas Higgins