



My Family Tradition: The Winter Solstice

Nina Johnson, Freshman

The clouds hung thick and grey in a charcoal sky. The moon was just visible through the fog: a pearly white, waxing orb. A gaggle of people clad in thick winter jackets and scarves stumbled across the driveway and up the path to a small grey house with one lit porch light. This wet, shivery day was special, however: it was the Winter Solstice, an annual tradition my family had invented.

Inside, the house buzzed with activity. There was a flurry of jackets, hats and scarves being removed, revealing satisfyingly ugly Christmas sweaters and horrible cases of hat hair. Small children waddled through the hallways in their snowman pajamas, and dogs sat, perplexed, in their own festive attire.

I placed my gift under the glittering tree and quickly scurried away so nobody would see what I had brought. Then I melted into the swollen tide of people, dodging a plate of cookies, and finally finding my cousins laughing, chattering, and holding my baby cousin who was sucking on the bow she had evidently just taken off her head. Amidst the joyful chaos, my aunt was playing "Silver Bells" on the piano, while her two-year-old son added an interesting harmony on the lower keys.

Plates of lox and baskets of black bread came bustling through the crowd. Deviled eggs, herring with sour cream, fish in aspic (which is fish in gelatin and affectionately called by the younger generation in my family, fish Jello), vinaigrette (a beet, potato, pickle salad), and fish eggs. These traditional Russian dishes were for Zakuska, the fish course.

After Zakuska was the main course: a hearty beef stew with ditalini noodles and large chunks of vegetables, pork, and pork fat. We dunked baguette pieces smeared with butter into the soup. We talked and laughed, but finished quickly, because the activities were just getting started.

Downstairs in my grandmother's house is a small theater with a big screen and comfortable, reclining chairs. There we gathered, stomachs full of soup, excited for the next activity of the evening. People shushed each other and gathered their children on their laps as the reading of poetry

began. The lights clicked off and the room was filled with calm silence. The drumming started as a light tapping, like the pattering of rain, and then the rainstick filled the silence between the drumbeats. It was an earthy sound, grounding and connecting. We listened to the soft sounds of the instruments, breathing together, until we were instructed to turn off all the lights. The cousins were sent through the house, clicking off lights and shepherding dogs downstairs.

Once we were all back in our seats, my grandmother read a poem about the Winter Solstice. She reminded us that although the winter was long and bleak, the days would get longer and the sun's warmth would reach us again. After the poem was over, we halfway lit the lights again and, one by one, everyone walked up to the front of the room where there was a tray of small, battery-powered candles. Each person "lit" a candle and announced, silently or aloud, what their intentions for the coming year would be. Instead of declaring our resolutions on New Year's Eve, we always set our goals when the Earth transitioned to the new year on its own.

After the lights were turned back on, the music started up again, this time joined by a violin and a trumpet. We then gathered in the living room to begin the opening of the Secret Santa gift exchange presents. Obscured in holiday wrapping paper, a pile of gifts lay waiting beneath the tree. We proceeded to unwrap the presents in the correct order: youngest to oldest. Then after everyone unwrapped, the guessing would begin, again youngest to oldest.

The last part of the day was dessert. Chocolate everything, a shortbread cookie Stonehenge, fluffy lemon cupcakes, and lots of Christmas candy. There was more music and lots more laughter. The joy in the room was tangible. There's something special about being in a warm room with your family, licking frosting off your fingers, admiring your new gift, and remembering the calm that came with taking a moment to be quiet and listen to the Earth, admiring its patterns, while the steady drum beats through you, grounding you to Earth and connecting you to your family.

November Feelings: Family Celebrations

Olivia DiGiovanni, Freshman

We watch the leaves fall on a crisp autumn day

They look so beautiful as they lay
We feel winter creeping up

As we pour the warm apple cider into our cup

We say goodbye to the Halloween decorations

And look forward to upcoming celebrations

I pull the steaming pumpkin pie from the oven

And place it on the table that hosts a dozen

My big family gathers around
To be with each other as our feelings of gratitude become profound

We take the last bite of stuffing and go to bed
"Goodnight, sweet dreams," my mother said

I wake up in the middle of the night
And see the snowfall shining bright
It glistens throughout the road

We know winter's approaching as the cold air flows

Public School Uniforms - PROs and CONs

Nadia Warab, Freshman

What if Marblehead schools were to obligate uniforms? Would you be excited or opposed to the idea? Many agree that they are formal, elegant, and convenient, but many others don't. They argue that it limits freedoms and could be a burden.

The bright side to making uniforms mandatory is that it would improve security. It helps identify intruders by their clothes. If the jackets have the school's logo, then it is very likely that the trespasser would not have one, and in that case get caught faster. A study from Long Beach, CA, shows that reports of assault decreased by 34%. Fighting incidents declined 51%, and sex offenses dropped by 74%. Possession of weapons dropped by 52%. Another study in Sparks Middle School in Nevada shows reports of gang activity (fights, graffiti, property damage, and battery) decreased by 63%. However, a study in the Miami-Dade County Public Schools Office of Education Evaluation and Management found that fights in middle schools nearly doubled within one year of making uniforms mandatory.

Wearing a uniform seems to make

students feel formal and equal. Some families cannot afford to get trending clothes for their children, but if they wear uniforms then they would feel like they are the same as everyone else, not less. In addition, uniforms help with discipline, which results in better attendance, and increased graduation and proficiency pass rates, which was cited in studies completed by Youngstown State University and the University of Houston.

Although the pros are very convincing, some other factors of getting uniforms should be under consideration. That includes the limits it may set on the students' freedoms. They wouldn't be able to express who they are, especially when it comes to sexuality. Families may also be financially burdened, since mandated uniforms goes against the idea of having a free education. Although that might be true, some schools offer free uniforms.

In conclusion, if uniforms became part of our dress code in the Marblehead schools, then it could either improve or worsen our situation. Safety and graduation rates can differ in schools, so even the studies are not 100% accurate.

A Darker Shade of Magic by V.E. SCHWAB

Aislin Freedman, Freshman

Dive into this marvelous low fantasy book, taking place in - wait there are four Londons?

Rewind.

Dive into this breathtaking high fantasy book, taking place in a make-believe version of - wait one of them is the real London?

Rewind. Again.

Dive into this astounding portal fantasy book, taking place in three different dimensions of the same London.

You have your classic London, the capital of England, without magic and the most boring of all the many Londons. Pennamen: Grey London.

Then there's the beautiful London, home of our beloved main character Kell, and full to the brim of all sorts of flourishing magic. Pennamen: Red London.

And finally, there's White London. A half-destroyed city full of cutthroats and savages, deprived but not without magic.

But wait? There's a fourth London. Merely a myth to scare children to most of the inhabitants of the other Londons, Black London is a story of how the use of magic can go very wrong, and how magic has its own will to destroy.

Now, if that didn't pull you in and grab

your attention, I don't know what will, but just to be sure you'll read it, here's some more about the book.

Kell doesn't belong anywhere. His home is Red London, but his only real family there is Rhy, a mischievous prince. As one of the last two Antari, the only people who can travel between worlds, Kell takes to smuggling in artifacts from the other Londons while on diplomatic missions.

Lila is a street rat. She always has been, always will be, but she's not just any rat, because she has a dagger. Or more like five, to be exact. Masquerading as a male thief isn't hard, as she looks like the former easily due to malnourishment, and as for the latter, well anything worth having is worth stealing, as she sees it. And living in the gutters of Grey London isn't easy, after all.

Holland is an imprisoned servant of the twin rulers of White London. The only other Antari in all the worlds, he is but an asset to his sadist masters. But living in the free-for-all that is White London has hardened him, making Him the more powerful sorcerer.

Now if you've read so far, I would like to ask you: **What are you still doing reading this? Go read!**

Marblehead Football Wins First Super Bowl!

Congratulations to the entire Marblehead High School Football Team, including the players, coaches, band, and cheerleaders, on their victory over North Attleboro and their attainment of the MIAA Division 3 Championship!

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