



## Directed Studies

Anya Kane, Freshman

We have all heard that directed studies, also commonly known as study halls, might be removed starting next year. Directed study is a period that Marblehead High School students have during the day in which they are allowed to study, do homework, or relax and take a break in the middle of the school day. The talk of getting rid of studies certainly has caused a stir.

I went around and asked my fellow students what their opinions were regarding study halls. The answers were almost unanimous: the students do not want our beloved studies to go away. Students who play sports and do activities after school argue that studies are an easy way to study before a test or get school work done before the school day ends. Many sports players at MHS had a lot to say on this topic. "I think they are so useful and important to the school," says Evie Riegle, a field hockey player and a ninth grader at MHS. Many other students claim that with after school activities and sports, they don't get home until around five, which is stressful for players who have a lot of homework. Ava Laham, another ninth grader and field hockey player at MHS, says, "Study halls are very important when my sports go late during the day. I think getting rid of them will dramatically affect everyone's grades and mental health." At least 70% of the student body is involved with a sport or club; it will be challenging to manage homework when sports practices range from 2-3 hours each day. Study halls are also a good way to

depress from school. Even if you don't have homework, it's nice to work on personal projects or just sit and relax, listen to music, or watch a show to unwind. Most students do not like the idea of studies being replaced as many students are productive and utilize the time that they have. Getting rid of study halls would drastically change the mental health and work ethic of the students. Students would be going to bed later because they have more homework to complete, and they could start taking fewer honors classes in order to get less homework--the opposite of what any school would want for their students. Plus, students would pay attention less in class due to exhaustion from staying up to finish their homework.

Getting rid of study halls would also impact senior privilege. "The studies are similar to a representation of the school's trust in students to make their own choices, especially with senior privilege," says a 10th grader at MHS. "Senior students with studies as their first or last block of day can have the freedom to not be present at school and instead spend the time at home being productive or slacking off before coming to school, depending on their choices." When conducting interviews, studies were described as "the best part of my day" and "vital to the success of our students at this high school." Students want and need directed studies, and won't be very happy if they disappear. As another 10th grader at MHS said, "I think it would be the worst decision the district has made in a long time, which is really saying something."

## Spooky Story Collection

Ila Bumagin, Sophomore  
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Three Short Stories:  
"I Can Only Wait,"  
"The Ledge," and  
"Aftermath"

### I Can Only Wait

I sit alone, waiting. I don't want them to come. I lean on a rock and feel the sunlight on my face. Trees blow in the wind, dropping leaves on me. I wish I could shed my past like they can. The wind picks up again and I bury my face in my coat, my hands gloveless and numb. Just for a moment the wind clears my head, but back to reality I come. As I dread the moment, I hear them starting to stir in their graves. I will try to make them believe me. They won't. Knowing that, I close my eyes and finish this warning. Carefully, I fold this up so future people will remember not to repeat my fatal mistake. There is such quiet; the only disturbance is the trees blowing in the storm that I have started. I can only wait.

### The Ledge

I sit on a rock, thinking. The dusk deepens as I watch the moon rise above me, it's gleam shimmering on the crashing waves. Although I know I am alone, I feel a presence near me. I stay anyway. Another person walks up the hill and sits on the edge of the ledge, unaware of me. Behind me I

hear a faint rustle as the presence moves away, somehow making me nervous. I realize it is gliding toward the person sitting on the edge, silently sneaking. Suddenly, an uneasy silence fills the air. I try to yell out, but something stops me. Silent and lethal, the presence pushes the other off the ledge. They are submerged in the tide before a yell could be uttered. The presence remains, hovering back to its original spot.

### Aftermath

I've done it. I won! I earned the medal. I can't believe it, and I go crazy with joy. My opponent is home, thinking the opposite. I don't feel bad at all, and I get the odd sense he didn't either. People say I'm lost in my glory, blind to reality. I let it roll off; they're just jealous. I close my eyes to sleep, ecstatic. I know that I'm really eccentric, but I push it down. Maybe that's why I'm dead now. At midnight I flash back to my opponent muttering, "No. Something will need to be done about this one." I ignored it then, and I ignore it now. My mistake. The last I hear is a sound of triumph and a flash of ghostly silver. The world is black.

## A Good Book

Aislin Freedman, Sophomore

There is something about a good love story that's timeless and intriguing, no matter context or setting. Some of the greatest love stories are also some of the best remembered and preserved stories, such as that of Romeo and Juliet, Persephone and Hades, and the much-disputed relationship between the famous Achilles and Patroclus. Debates over the nature of the relationship between the two have been happening for centuries, dating even back to Plato's Symposium, where Plato states that they are lovers, but Socrates argued that they were merely comrades. In fact, in the *Troy* film from 2004, the directors got around this by making them cousins. One of the biggest reasons for this debate is because in *The Iliad*, Homer is unbiased on every single front he could possibly have taken, even the slightest bit of opinion. The book isn't even taking sides on the front of the Trojans vs the Achaeans, which is the entire point of the Trojan War. So naturally, we see no opinion on the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, except for insinuations, such as how Achilles wishes for his ashes to be mixed with that of Patroclus when he dies. Some see this as an ultimate declaration of love, and others see it as brotherly comrade-in-arms "bromance."

Madeline Miller, the author of *The Song of Achilles*, takes the strong stance that the two were lovers, with no room for debate within the context of the book. Taking an enormous 10 years to write, Miller's book is both incredibly true to the myths, and easily one of the most interesting books I have ever read. The level of emotional sophistication and comprehension is astounding. Having read *The Iliad* (Robert Fagles) already, and having researched the story of Achilles and Patroclus countless times, I was not expecting to be surprised or even sad at the inevitable outcome of the book, simply because I knew what was going to happen and how. I will not spoil anything for those who do not know the story of the two, but by the end, tears dripped off my face like soft petals falling from a dying flower.

The book starts at the very beginning, with Patroclus going over the story of his mother and father, and reviewing the brief memories he has of that time in such a way that sets up the story. It is written realistically in the perspective of a young boy around the age of 6-9. He remembers small things instead of the grand picture, as is a main theme throughout the book, and it makes the story all the more vivid.

Through the 369 page novel, Patroclus meets Achilles, and they grow up together, learning new things and changing, and eventually, arriving to fight the Trojan War.

At the end of the book, Patroclus says that he is "Made of Memories." This line has a million meanings, but one of them references how, in a way, the whole book was just memories. The emotions and feelings were vivid, the dialogue sparse, the only things said were of the utmost importance to the book, or when something struck a chord specifically with Patroclus. And everything is in the perspective of Patroclus looking back on his life. Multiple times Patroclus vividly describes the shimmer of Achilles's hair in the sun, or the soft soles of his feet when he runs, or the slight muscle movement in Achilles when he shifts position.

Like I have said already, in this book Patroclus and Achilles are lovers, but they are so much more. Miller creates an unbreakable bond between the two, each one caring for the other far more than they care for their own life. Patroclus has a kind-hearted personality and sees the best in everyone, except those who have wronged Achilles. He refuses to even go out onto the battlefield except when Achilles gets lonely and asks him to; at those times, Achilles is careful to protect Patroclus. This is in direct contrast to Achilles during the war, who is proud and stubborn and loves being on the battlefield and reveling in his own strength. The comparison between them is obvious but done in a way that just makes them closer. When they are together they seem to forget about the entire world around them. I love this because it shows how much they love each other.

After reading *The Song of Achilles*, in order to fully appreciate the book, I would also encourage you to read and answer the discussion questions at the end. I answered them to myself in my head, but you could write them down, maybe write a paragraph for each question, or discuss them with a friend who read the book with you. But one thing you need to do is read this book. You will thank me for it.

A good book makes you laugh, cry, and, sometimes, just close your eyes or stare at a wall, needing a moment to absorb the wonderful scene that just took place. A good book will take your heart and rip it into a million pieces, yet still, you will devour each word as if it were the only thing keeping you alive. But most importantly, a good book will make you fall in love with the characters. It will make you love every failure and fault and shortcoming, every success and strength and crevice and fiber of their being because a good book will make that character a part of who you are, and make you love yourself a little bit more.

*The Song of Achilles* is a good book.



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