



The Takeaways of Forced Literature

Zoe Gast, Junior

In every school of every city of every state, there are books deemed to be essential that the next generation must internalize and analyze until every curtain color is exposed to be foreshadowing and the color of a woman's lipstick integral to the plot (Yes, *Of Mice and Men*, I'm talking to you). The great literature that education lobbyists decide needs to be pored over year after year is debated endlessly, although, in my opinion, hasn't quite been perfected. Even for people who enjoy reading, or at least the superiority complex that arises out of it, the over analyzing and structure of mandatory readings can be dismal. However, there are some curriculum favorites, including some of the most hated, that contain quotes that continue to have a profound effect on my life. Whether that effect was positive, well, since when has classic literature been known for its cheery undertones. But at the very least, they were depressing in a comforting existential way, which in my opinion, is the best way to enjoy life.

Disclaimer: I have only completed 9th and 10th grade at MHS, therefore, there will only be novels mentioned from the freshman and sophomore year honors English curriculum.

"Wherever I sat — on the deck of a ship or at a street café in Paris or Bangkok — I would be sitting under the same glass bell jar, stewing in my own sour air."

-Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*

The Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath is basically the Bible for sad and pretentious teens, an accusation towards myself that I accept wholeheartedly. Watching Esther Greenwood's life in New York City and feeling ostracized by her own mind was not only relatable, but also each page Plath wrote seemed to have been lifted from the transcript of my own thoughts. Her nonchalant way of explaining her declining mental health was quite frankly beautiful to read, especially knowing that the themes were semi-autobiographical. One lesson Esther learns is about how every feeling comes from inside yourself. Running away to new places, physical or emotional, will not change the way she allows herself to perceive and process the world. The quote above perfectly sums up this idea. No matter how far away from her past she travels, she will always be under the same glass jar, an invisible barrier that keeps her own pungent thoughts circling around her.

When I was preparing to study abroad this year, I often joked that I was simply running away from my problems, mental health issues that surely wouldn't make it past security and travel to Spain with me. I joked that despite it being my favorite book, I had obviously not internalized the message Plath was trying to get across. This joke was semi-truthful. I hoped that starting life in a completely different environment would change who I am, similarly to how high school seniors strive to

reinvent themselves before college orientation. Yet, I found the reality disappointing; that's not how that works. I am exactly the same person with the same insecurities and problems as I was in Marblehead. Now, this quote is less cynical, but comforting, making me feel as though my experiences are bland and common. In short, I was not alone. It also serves as a philosophical warning that can be daunting to some: who you are is forever.

"Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge, and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be his world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow."

-Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein (Modern Prometheus)*

Frankenstein. What a book. If not known by its imposing effect on pop culture as we know it, its firm hold as the poster child of gothic literature keeps it a classic for centuries to come. Its messages concerning the danger of toying with human nature perfectly encompasses 19th century scientific advances through today. Seeing news articles concerning robots and genetically modified DNA prove that Shelley's warning still needs to be heeded. Though not just in science, in all aspects of life, this quote made me realize how ignorance truly is bliss. Seeing how the world conducts itself, with corruption and murder, it is hard to know if humanity is inherently good or evil. That is a scary thought. Nobody wants to not be able to trust a single soul on the planet because they have such deep rooted pessimism from their quest for answers. It makes one wonder what the point of human advancement is, if it doesn't make you happier. Isn't happiness really the only important thing to try to get out of life?

"I think people ought to do what they want to do, what else are they alive for?"

-James Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues"

Maintaining the balance between uniqueness and normalcy is the seesaw of high school life. Every person we encounter during our time on this planet will have opinions on where one lies on that seesaw: too basic, too weird, etc. Then there are the specific stereotypes that are seen to some as embarrassing to fit in, especially stereotypes having to do with gender, race, and sexuality. One of the most comforting things to realize about the world is that no one cares, because outside of a few people in one home room class, nothing about yourself should matter to others, and honestly it doesn't. And, not to be cynical, but we are all going to die. Although I am not trying to be existentialist or nihilist, the goal of one's life is to live a life you love, so be you, it's why you are alive.

MHS Music Department Field Trip

Anya Kane & Lilah Siegal, Freshman

On November 5th, the MHS Music Department traveled to Boston for the day to see the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the musical "HadesTown" at the Boston Opera House. They left at eleven o'clock in the morning on two buses and came back to the high school at midnight. After the long bus ride, they had a bite to eat by the Huntington Avenue Reflecting Pool. They entered the beautiful symphony hall and watched a two hour long performance that included more than forty musicians. Lani Gilmore, a member of the treble choir, said, "After hearing the Boston Symphony Orchestra, it got me really inspired and has motivated me to play the violin now." It is great to see all of the music departments from across the state coming together and uplifting each other.

After the concert, the students went to the restaurant Fire and Ice, which serves hibachi style food. It's safe to say that almost everyone enjoyed the fantastic meal they had there. After dinner they traveled over to the Boston Opera House to enjoy the musical "HadesTown," which is a take on the Greek myths of Hades and Persephone and Orpheus and Eurydice. There are a total of seventeen members in the

cast, and the musical debuted on May 6, 2016.

The location of the musical was absolutely magnificent. The Boston Opera House can fit 2,677 people and has extravagant paintings and architecture throughout the theater. Morgan Siobhan Green played Eurydice, Nicholas Barasch played Orpheus, Kevyn Morrow played Hades, Kimberly Marable played Persephone, and Levi Kreis played Hermes.

Lilah and I asked our fellow music students their preferences. Did they like the Boston Symphony or "HadesTown" better? Ila Bumagin, a treble choir performer, replied, "I think the musical was certainly more engaging for us. The voices were incredible and it was amazing how they only used fourteen people in "HadesTown" to create all the lighting and music." She added later, "However, the pianist for the Tchaikovsky piece was just incredible. I would say that I preferred the musical, but they were both awesome."

Overall, the trip was absolutely incredible. No one felt like it was a school field trip. Everyone appreciated the performances and the food. It is safe to say that they would like a repeat of the adventure!

Taylor Swift Album Review

Amira Warab, Freshman



RED. One color, many associations. It is by definition the best title Taylor Swift could have chosen for her fourth studio album.

Stereotyped for being "deep and emotional," **RED** is one of those albums you develop a deep connection to even if you don't relate to every lyric. Around the time I first streamed it, I was healing from a recent heartbreak, and this album really understood me. It was as if Taylor was writing "Sad Beautiful Tragic" about me. During songs like "All Too Well," I was easily able to put myself in her shoes and sulk over it. I was feeling exactly like a "crumpled up piece of paper lying here," even if my ex never kept my scarf in his sister's house.

The tracklist for **RED** was put together perfectly. "State Of Grace" chants the thought process of falling in love with somebody; in it, Swift thinks about the different ways it could go and how it could possibly end. In "Traacherous" she mentions how she had seen the warning signs in a relationship and chose to ignore them despite predicting how bad the ending was going to be. Then, in "I Knew You

Were Trouble," she talks about how it ended in heartbreak and admits her bad decisions by singing that she "knew he was trouble when he walked in."

Regardless of the many sad songs in this record though, there were also plenty of happy or non-romantic songs. Most of these tracks were "stand-alone" ones, but they still suit the theme of the album one way or another. For example, "22" is about her 22nd birthday party, and "The Lucky One" is about the life of a superstar who left to stardom to find peace.

Swift emphasizes, on this record, crazy relationships that went too well, too bad, but ultimately too fast. This is summarized in the song "Red," where she sings that "Loving him was like driving a new Maserati down a dead-end street / Faster than the wind, passionate as sin ended so suddenly."

In conclusion, **RED** was definitely a masterpiece that needed to be made. For Swift, it was the perfect transition album for the country-to-pop persona she was becoming, and for the world, it was an hour's worth of interesting concepts, fun jams, and emotional melodies to relate to. I can't wait for the re-recording that's coming out soon!

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