



What Should Really Matter to High Schoolers

Jillian Lederman, Junior
Editor-in-Chief

We all want something in our lives. We are consumed by the desire to be successful, to be praised, to be loved. We have these goals in our lives that seem to dictate our every action. What do I want my future to be? What do I need to do to get there? How will my decisions impact my likelihood to achieve success? We set these expectations for ourselves that we just must fulfill. And for high schoolers, these expectations center almost exclusively on getting into college.

Over the past few weeks, seniors at Marblehead High School have been hearing back from the series of colleges to which they have applied. Some rejoice, others hide their disappointment, and all the while social media becomes dominated by congratulatory messages for those who have committed to a particular university.

As a junior, I watch this process with trepidation. Not too long from now, it will be me applying to college, waiting the long months for a result, and reading either a "Congratulations!" or "We cannot offer you a place this year" at the top of every email. It will be me writing dozens of essays about my life up until then: what I've accomplished, what I plan to accomplish, and how I hope to eventually change the world. And I'm scared. Because every year of high school brings with it more discussions of college, more mentions of GPA, more innocent questions of "Where do you want to go next year?" What began as a distant concept has come to loom over every day of my life.

I want to get into a good college. But I think that it is a mistake for college to be so central to our lives from the minute we enter high school. I was told in 9th grade that I needed to immediately start acting in ways that would impress college admissions officers in just four years. I needed to get good grades, develop strong extracurriculars, and become a leader in my community. Each one of those achievements is valuable, and I believe that the work I have done toward them has vastly improved my life and my capacity to challenge myself. But colleges are not looking for me to push myself toward those goals just because I want a piece of paper with their logo stamped on the top that says I graduated from their university. They want me to accomplish impressive things because I personally am passionate about them, because I would do them anyway, because I feel this uncontrollable drive to impact an aspect of the world around me, and because I believe that I have the ability within myself to do so. College is not the end goal; it is just part of the path: a place that will foster our goals and dreams and push us to accomplish them after we graduate. Our goals and dreams. Not those that look good to colleges, not those we did because we heard that someone else



did them and got into their top school, but those that we could talk for hours about, those that we would voluntarily stay up hours trying to achieve, those that we want in our lives before, during, and after college.

Colleges want you not because you want them, but because you are a real person who has something to give to the world. So don't apply for that program you wouldn't actually like to attend. Don't go to that class that bores you. Don't spend every weekend developing a project in a field that you find pointless because you think that what actually interests you won't interest the college you want to apply to. Push yourself to do hard things, but only if you feel genuine satisfaction for doing so. In the end, if you personally find every impressive thing that you have done important, interesting, and exciting, chances are, they will too.

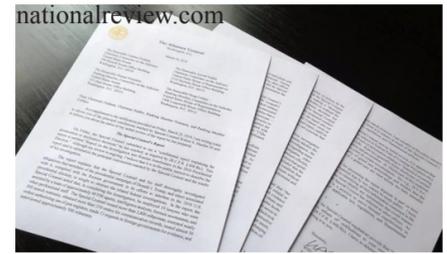


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The Happy Pill

Miranda Connolly, Freshman
Reporter

Many people were disappointed last week when William Barr's four page summary of the Mueller report was made public. The theory that there was Russian collusion during the 2016 election has been around since before the election of President Donald Trump. The Mueller report summary seems to indicate that President Trump and his campaign organizers did not conspire with the Russian government during the 2016 election. This was a shocking blow to many members of the Democratic party, who were hoping that this report would prove that the President participated in some sort of collusion with the Russians. Such a revelation would be a quick way to get President Trump impeached. The Republicans, on the other hand, were glad that the whole scandal was "over with." Now that the summary has been made public, it seems that the media is clinging to the story, attempting to claim that there must still be more to be told and causing Republicans to just turn off their TVs.



This is a great example of a recurring trend in America. It seems that more and more people are looking for a quick solution to problems: those that require the minimum amount of time and the least amount of effort. This can be seen with the rising obesity epidemic in our country. People seem to think that their problems will be solved by a fitness plan that doesn't require any actual commitment, or by a surgery that taxpayers will pay for. Instead of evaluating their lives and recognizing the complex health problems they are facing, there are morbidly obese citizens who choose not to grapple with complexity and ignore long term solutions. More and more do we see ads that promise quick results or instant solutions to problems. All you have to do is provide your credit number and they will send you a quick fix via Amazon; you can keep still in front of your screen while you wait!

Politicians have always promised the people happiness pills. This is shown both by Trump and by Elizabeth Warren. Warren is proposing that reparations will make up for the centuries-old legacy of slavery. The President, on the other hand, has promised a border wall as the solution to all of our immigration woes. Even economists, who are supposed to be objective, are transfixed with one number: the Gross Domestic Product percentage. They see any growth of the GDP as the most important talking point, even though it may have little to do with an increase in living quality for the average American. For too many pundits, "growth" is the golden fleece, whereas what we really need is sturdy wool.

There is no happiness pill, but that does not mean there is not an optimistic future to look forward to. We just can't do it with a spoonful of sugar. We have to take real medicine sometimes.

The Dangers of Plastic

Madison Morris, Junior
Reporter

We all know that littering is bad for the environment, but many people do not realize the devastation being caused by plastic bags floating around the ocean. When plastic is left on beaches or is carried by runoff water into the ocean, it becomes a threat to the lives of shorebirds and many ocean species. Most plastic is delivered to the ocean from rivers, with about 80 percent of the plastic coming from urban sources such as landfills. While plastic bags might not seem like such a menace to humans, to some animals, it looks just like dinner.

Jellies are popular food for many animals, including sharks, swordfish, tuna, and sea turtles. These animals do not understand the difference between jellies and clear plastic bags, and they often ingest the plastic bags accidentally. Plastic cannot be digested by these animals, so it remains in their guts, preventing food digestion and eventually causing death.

On February 14, 2019, a 220-pound male loggerhead sea turtle of breeding age was found dead on a beach in Italy with large amounts of plastic in his gut. Unfortunately, this is not an unusual event. Plastic ingestion kills an estimated one million shorebirds and one hundred thousand marine animals like this turtle each year. Plastic also harms animals by entanglement, damages coral reefs, and accumulates on beaches to form "trash islands" such as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, which is in the north central Pacific Ocean. It is the largest accumulation of ocean plastic in the world (more than twice the size of Texas) and is one of many trash islands in the oceans.

In order to save the ocean populations that are decreasing in size dramatically due to plastic pollution, people must be aware of their plastic usage. Simply using reusable bags, water bottles, and straws can make a huge difference and save the lives of many animals. Joining in on or organizing beach cleanups can help to reduce the amount of plastic that is in the ocean. With dedication and determination, we can all do our part to reduce plastic pollution and maintain biodiversity.

The information in this article was compiled from the following sources:

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Poem of the Week

April is National Poetry Month, so during April, *Headlight* will be publishing one poem each issue, either from a famous poet or from a student at MHS. Find our first poem below!

"My Name," by Mark Strand

Once when the lawn was a golden green
and the marbled moonlit trees rose like fresh memorials
in the scented air, and the whole countryside pulsed
with the chirr and murmur of insects, I lay in the grass,
feeling the great distances open above me, and wondered
what I would become and where I would find myself,
and though I barely existed, I felt for an instant
that the vast star-clustered sky was mine, and I heard
my name as if for the first time, heard it the way
one hears the wind or the rain, but faint and far off
as though it belonged not to me but to the silence
from which it had come and to which it would go.

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