

The Mount Observer

“Voices of the students of Mount Wachusett Community College”

PREVIEWS



A Shot of Reality: The MWCC Virtual Event!

Departments within Mount Wachusett Community College have put together an interactive, educational, and entertaining virtual event about alcohol awareness.

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Profile: Eoin Haggerty

When he was a boy, Eoin Haggerty dreamed of being a firefighter—now, he is twenty-one years old, with one year left at Mount Wachusett and with a dream of becoming a storyboard creator.

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The Reality of Ukraine

The 24/7 news cycle has created a landscape that is quick to jump to the next story, but we must continue to hold our focus on the crisis that is unfolding in Ukraine.

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Creative Writing

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Price Increases at Dollar Tree Stores: What Are the Costs? Dollar Tree Manager and Business Professor Discuss the Cause and Effects of This Change

By Jared LeBlanc
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

The price increase of inventory at Dollar Tree stores has affected many families and individuals throughout the United States. Patricia Bragg, Fitchburg Dollar Tree Store Manager, and Nicholas Cochrane, Business Professor at MWCC, explain how this price increase occurred and how it has impacted low-income families as well as the economy.

When asked why this price increase happened, Bragg explained that the cost of production, supply and demand, and an increase of wages, are

the root causes of this price increase.

Bragg said, “the price has been increasing throughout the last year at Dollar Tree stores throughout the United States, starting in the southern states as well as the west coast, then moving across the Midwest with the east coast being the last area to be affected.”

Bragg said that all items increased in price, except canned vegetables, ramen, single-serve candy, and bags of chips. She explained that many customers in the area are not happy with the price change since many that come to this store are on fixed incomes



Photo by Thomas Hill Jr.

and need to watch where their money is going.

When asked how this process occurred, Bragg explained that this price increase happened overnight. On February 21, Bragg said the store closed

early so workers could change signs and move merchandise around. However, the workers were asked not to speak of the change that they were notified

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eSports: Enthralling, Empowering, and Engaging Join MWCC for Its First-Ever eSports Tournament This Friday

By Cami Stephens
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Mount Wachusett, in conjunction with the 4004 Esports company, will be featuring its first-ever SuperSmash Bros and Mario Cart eSports video game tournament, this upcoming Friday, in the South Cafeteria.

Friday’s event will run 1:00 pm-3:00 pm, and feature multiple rounds of Nintendo Switch’s SuperSmashBrothers, an arcade-style fighting game, and Mario Cart, a competitive racing game, which will allow students to compete for \$400 in gift card prizes. Students are welcome to show up as early as 10:00 am to practice and are welcome to sign up for the event at the door, or on the Mount

Wachusett InvolveMOUNT page.

Meal tickets will be given to the first fifty students who enroll in the tournament, and snacks and drinks will also be provided to keep competitors hydrated.

When asked about the purpose of the event, Kathy Matson, the Director of Student Life at Mount Wachusett states, “I envision the esports tournament as being a fun day for students to come together in-person to play games, meet others, and begin to experience in-person events again. Students of all levels of gaming experience will be able to enjoy the day and have a chance to win prizes.”

Kathy Matson says that she connected with the 4004 Esports company at an

Association for the Promotion of Campus Activities event, and has heard of the growing interest in eSports. She figured the event could hold something for everyone.

The founder of 4004 Esports, Charles Hueber, shared this sentiment. While discussing the inclusivity of the event and the level of skill required to participate in the tournament, Hueber states “we have had students in the past win a couple of rounds, without prior experience.”

Furthermore, Hueber even jokes that “When we refer to [the smashbros tournament] we say that they are playing smash buttons.” Hueber emphasizes that this tournament in particular is about having fun, not so much

about the skillset.

Hueber also discusses the importance of removing the stigma that comes with video games, and the inclusivity that can come from participating in eSports.

Charles Hueber states, “It [eSports] is a way for every student from any walk of life, [regardless of] one’s gender or race that there is a place for them with esports. It is heartwarming to see students that would not normally participate in other activities, participate in Esports.”

Huebert elaborates on stereotypes that are commonly associated with video games

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Pets in Need of Vets

With the Recent Surge in Pet Ownership, Veterinarians are in High Demand



Photo by Laura Paraschivescu from Unsplash

By Halli Coulter
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

The Covid-19 pandemic brought on many challenges for the world and caused a lot of negative emotions for people including loneliness, depression, and anxiety. With thousands of people now working or learning remotely, many have since adopted a fuzzy friend that will keep them company and keep you them. The effect? An increase in the demand for veterinary services and various animal products.

In Massachusetts, there has been a noticeable increase in veterinary hospitals that are booking out months, and emergency hospitals that have to redirect sick patients to different

emergency hospitals around Massachusetts. Specifically, the Ayer Animal Medical Center has experienced these conditions firsthand.

"In the last couple years, there have been many times where we were booking out 3 months just to see a doctor for a wellness exam," Sarah Miller, head receptionist, said. "It came to a point where we stopped accepting new clients for a period of time because we needed to focus on our current clients. The problem seems universal."

Miller has worked at AAMC for 3 years and experienced the transition from pre-Covid-19 conditions to the current pandemic conditions. She has heard the frustrations and struggles from clients every day

MWCC eSports Tournament

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and further explains how the players for his eSports' teams work extremely hard. He states how it is, "more than playing the game, it's about keeping your body up to speed." Hueber even expressed that "Our eSports team runs a mile before practice." Hueber also discusses the stigma that those who play video games are "lazy," but adds that this is usually false.

Noah Willigar, a student at Mount Wachusett, and the treasurer of Mount Wachusett's eSports Club echoes Hueber's concerns. Willigar discusses the benefits of video games, and that even though there can be a

competitive nature, video games can be extremely entertaining, and enjoyable.

When asked what emotions Willigar feels when he plays video games, Willigar describes that "my emotions vary [depending on the game]." Willigar highlighted how certain video games elicit different emotions, thus he tends to stick to more "relaxing" games.

Moreover, Willigar expresses that at the end of a long workday, "I find it [video games] to be very fun and relieving. It is almost like an escape because it brings you out of reality." He elaborates that for some, video games provide a break from everyday stress, which makes

them extremely appealing.

Willigar also discusses the community associated with eSports. Willigar states, "I like the community. It is very diverse, as there are different genres of games and different types of players." He adds, that although esports is primarily an online activity, that does not mean there is no social interaction and highlights the wonderful community that he has found.

If you want to experience what eSports has to offer, you can contact the ESports club through the InvolveMOUNT page or check out the first-ever eSports tournament this upcoming Friday in the Mount Wachusett South Cafeteria.

Dollar Tree Price Increases

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of ahead of time to customers.

As to why the price change was kept a secret to customers, Bragg said she believed that corporate wanted to prevent a run on their stores (which would deplete supplies) to ensure that stores would have enough stock to sell at the price increase.

Bragg said that due to the area where the store is located, she believes that sales will decrease, merchandise will stay on shelves longer, and the demand will slow down. But Bragg said it might

look like sales are increasing due to the price increase.

Cochrane explained that this price increase will affect our economy because low-income stores serve low-income families. Therefore, an increase in price will put a strain on these families' financial abilities. Cochrane also emphasized that the price increase is related to many factors, such as the pandemic and supply chain issues within the stores. But Cochrane said the price increase at Dollar Tree is related to inflation.

Cochrane said, "inflation can

be caused by many factors, one of which includes the pandemic, and inflation places strains on businesses as well as consumers which...can often be felt with price increases."

Cochrane also discussed the long-term effects of inflation on the economy, such as the cause of a recession, and said that everyone, including households and consumers, must make strategic choices on how they spend their money because it affects where money flows in an economy.

about trying to find a near-by hospital that will take them in for an appointment within the next couple of months. She has also been the one to give the news that she unfortunately has to turn them away and add them to a waitlist for openings.

In the neighboring town of Westford, the Westford Veterinary Emergency Hospital is AAMC's "go-to". When there are patients who have life-threatening emergencies, AAMC recommends their clients to go to Westford to receive the best and fastest care.

About a year ago, Westford Emergency was not taking walk-in emergencies, and AAMC could no longer send their client's there, which posed a problem for the clinic because the closest emergency hospital other than Westford is Wachusett Animal

Hospital or Tufts, both being 45 minutes away from Ayer. Today, Westford Emergency still receives a high volume of patients needing to be seen, and often has a few hours wait time depending on the severity of the case.

In addition to the high demand of services, Miller spoke about items that are necessary to animal's health maintenance that are often on backorder. These items include different medications and preventions for fleas, ticks, and heartworms. This is due to the high demand for these items, yet not enough supply to send out to hundreds of hospitals.

One of the biggest concerns the veterinary field as a whole is currently facing is the shortage of DVM's, or Doctors of Veterinary Medicine. There is a lack of

veterinary students coming out of college and starting a career in the field, along with many others retiring from the field. There has also been a problem with doctors in the field finding it hard to balance both work and life, and do not feel valued in their career. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, between the years 2020-2030, veterinarian jobs are expected to grow 17%.

Miller concluded that many people do not consider these current issues, which poses a problem for veterinary hospitals around Massachusetts as they take the impact of angry and anxious pet owners. It is very important to be kind to all veterinary care staff, especially during this time where they are facing many shortages and trying to get back on their feet from a stressful time.

What Can We Gain from Traveling?

Student and Staff Share Traveling Experiences and the Importance of Travel in College.

By Maddie Willigar
ASSISTANT EDITOR

With the end of the pandemic in sight and many individuals looking for travel opportunities as countries open their borders, Science Professor Heather Conn, and former MWCC student Chyrone Ragland, share their experiences with traveling and why they believe it is important for schools to have more travel opportunities.

Between his time in the military and his job afterward as a Military Outreach Coordinator, Ragland traveled to over 25 locations, including Dubai, Afghanistan, Germany, and Poland. Out of all of these locations, Ragland said Dubai is one of his favorite places he has traveled to. Between the leaf-shaped Palm Islands and the “remarkable” architecture, he also explained it was the most beautiful.

While staying in Dubai, Ragland discovered from his cab driver that Dubai had a very low crime rate, and while working as a contractor in the military, he knew many people who decided to move there. “There was so much life to live over there...I think that’s a place everybody could go and experience,” Ragland said.

Besides Dubai, Ragland also said he really enjoyed Poland between the chilly weather, delicious food, and close range to the Tropical Islands Resort, an “incredible” indoor beach only about an hour away from Germany’s border.

One thing Ragland said he has learned from traveling to all of these different places is to make the most of the time he has and to “keep an open mind...because you might not get that same opportunity again.” But when referring to the main benefits of travel overall, Ragland said some are “meeting new people, learning new cultures, [and] opening up your mind.”

To experience these benefits, Ragland said, “the further you go [travel], the more you’ll learn.” He added that often the culture within some states will be very uniform, whether that be “economic status... or race”

and said that his father used to tell him that there is a drastic difference between the North and South that goes deeper than how someone talks or dresses “it’s a completely different lifestyle.” Conn said she had started

traveling with her parents to a few places when she was younger, but the “big event” for her was studying abroad for a biology program in Australia during college. Having now traveled to about

“30 National Parks in the United States” and about 17 other locations, including Iceland, Costa Rica, Italy, Jamaica, and Holland, Conn said her favorite

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“A Shot of Reality”: The MWCC Virtual Event

An Education Experience on the Consumption of Alcohol

By Halli Coulter

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Departments within Mount Wachusett Community College have put together an interactive, educational, and entertaining virtual event about alcohol awareness.

The Student Life Office is hosting “A Shot of Reality,” in collaboration with the Community College of RI, Massasoit Community

College, MassBay Community College, Springfield Technical Community College, Berkshire Community College, and Roxbury Community College.

The event will be held through Zoom on Thursday, April 7 at 1 p.m., and will run until 2 p.m.. If interested, the RSVP link is easily accessible through the Involve Mount website under the event, and a link will be sent to the student’s email the day of

the event.

According to the Addiction Group, as of 2022, 75% of college students drink alcohol, 35% of students have been drunk in the past month, and 28% of college students binge drink (Coy & Bayba, 2022.)

Mission Improvable, an improv group that focuses on teaching others about alcohol awareness and safety, created this event to educate college students about the dangers of drinking alcohol and how to consume alcohol safely with accurate statistics and information. These topics include how much alcohol is safe to consume within and how time affects an individual, the importance of hydration, how alcohol affects the body, how to keep friends safe, the dangers of assault, and more.

“The philosophy is, students will probably drink, so we want them to be able to do it safely,” Kathy Matson, the head of the Student Life department, explained.

Matson stresses that this event, unlike many other alcohol awareness events, is not anti-alcohol. The main goal is to

educate students about drinking responsibly and making the right decisions while consuming alcohol.

What can students expect? Students who participate can expect a high-energy, interactive show, which will include two improv comedians who will act out different scenarios that people often come across in situations where alcohol is involved.

Where does student participation come into play?

Students will be encouraged to engage with the event through their Zoom chat to share thoughts, feelings, questions, and more. Based on the responses, the actors will act out on-the-spot scenarios without a script.

In the past, MWCC has hosted similar events either virtually or in person. Matson shared, one of these events was speaker Ethan Fisher, who shared his experiences on the impact of alcohol abuse and how it can be avoided. Matson also shared that they hosted Mission Improvable a couple of years ago. She loved their program and decided to bring it back because it was

“very well received.” Before the Covid-19 pandemic, there were several events similar to this one, although a couple had to be canceled because of the pandemic.

Matson reminds students that if they do not attend, they will miss the show because it will not be recorded, unlike many other MWCC events.

This event is sponsored by the MWCC counseling department as well as the campus police. Both groups will be attending the event.

In the future, students can look forward to similar events like these, including more in-person events. Matson shared information on an alcohol awareness event that will be coming next spring, which will include a virtual reality simulator to show students what it is like to drive while under the influence. This gives students a chance to experience what would happen if they were to make a dangerous decision, but in a safe way.

For more information and to RSVP to the event, visit mwcc.campuslabs.com/engage.



Photo by Ambitious Creative Co. - Rick Barrett from Unsplash

Travel in College

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places are usually wherever she is at the moment. However, she said she went back to Costa Rica about four times and traveled to Iceland this past summer, and would love to go back with students.

“I tend to gravitate more towards places with natural beauty. I like the cultural part of going to Europe and seeing the coliseum...but if I had to pick my own trip to go on, I more often would like to go see a different ecosystem or a different landscape,” Conn said. Conn added that it is important to have a combination of both because regardless, “you’re still experiencing the different culture.”

Between getting extremely close to an erupting volcano in

Iceland and observing the Pope’s Sunday mass on Easter Sunday from the steps of the Vatican, Conn has experienced many unique things while traveling.

Conn explained that some benefits of traveling are “learning and experiencing” the differences in “the world around

that people can do,” Conn said.

Throughout her travels, Conn has learned to “go with the flow” and applied this mindset to her role as a professor. Knowing that “people are all very different and unique,” Conn explained you have to “go with the flow” because most things don’t

“It’s just a huge way to learn and to... appreciate the variety of humans in the world around us, and I think that’s the best thing that people can do.”

– Heather Conn

us,” such as other countries living conditions and struggles. “It’s just a huge way to learn and to...appreciate the variety of humans in the world around us, and I think that’s the best thing

happen in the way you think or plan, including in the classroom.

She also said that while in class, she tries to encourage others to travel between class trips to Boston or by showing pictures

of National Parks in her Geology class to show them the beauty within our country. Conn added, that many people overlook this because they want to see more “flashy things” like Europe; However, Conn recommended that everyone should explore the United States.

Though Ragland did a lot of traveling while in the military, he doesn’t believe that people should have to join in order to travel. He said that many people don’t have extra money lying around to just go and travel, which is why he thinks it’s important for colleges like MWCC to have more travel and study abroad opportunities.

Conn agreed that traveling opportunities at colleges like MWCC are important. “We’re working hard to get this to happen and make it affordable

for our students...Travel should not be left for those with a lot of money; people should have the chance to travel and to have these experiences and see a different environment or see a different culture...and learn from that,” Conn said.

Conn mentioned that there will be a trip to Iceland in the spring of 2023, which will be open to all students. However, Conn said a scholarship will be available to students who have taken the “Beyond Vikings and Volcanoes” course; hopefully, providing an opportunity for nine students “to have their travel paid for to join.”

If visiting new places like Iceland sounds appealing to you, keep an eye out for the “Beyond Vikings and Volcanoes” class in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 to apply for the scholarship.

The War on Misinformation

U.S. Attempts to Quell Russian Falsities About War in Ukraine

By Courtney Wentz

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

In today's world, where the news cycle runs 24/7 and information is just a touch away, misinformation continues to be widespread and with the eruption of war in Ukraine, the growing threat of misinformation persists, as the truth gets distorted unintentionally or for personal gain.

Weeks before Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine unprovoked, anyone with a reputable news app who had alerts turned on was receiving daily updates about the impending invasion. US intelligence was releasing information on every Russian move made towards Ukraine. The new alerts were surprising and unexpected, but not unwelcome.

In the past, US intelligence has been mum about the information it releases, if it releases any at all. The New York Times reported, "And after high-profile intelligence failures in Afghanistan, Iraq and other global crises over the past several decades, the accuracy of the intelligence gave the C.I.A. and the broader array of U.S. intelligence agencies new credibility at home and abroad. The result has been a remarkable four months of diplomacy, deterrence, and American-led information warfare, including the last-ditch effort to disrupt

Mr. Putin's strategy by exposing it publicly."

The United States attempted to get ahead of the situation mounting in Ukraine and the false information coming from the Kremlin. This included fighting the disinformation with information and with continued statements from the White House that Russia would fabricate a pretext for an invasion using fake videos promoted by the Kremlin's disinformation campaign.

In a report by NewsGuard, an anti-information outlet conducted a study on Tik-Tok videos appearing on the platform. They found that "a new account that did nothing but scroll the app's algorithmically curated For You Page watching videos about the war would be funneled towards false or misleading content within 40 minutes." They also determined that there was no way to distinguish false information from reliable information.

Facebook has seen similar incidents of misinformation. A recent video shared on the platform stated that the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, had fled Ukraine. Though, he has been keeping in touch with the world and his country through videos posted on Facebook and Instagram. The post claimed Zelensky had been using a green screen the whole time and was

hiding in a bunker in Poland. The video was debunked by FactCheck.org.

Some American TV outlets have seen similar means of disinformation. Tucker Carlson said in 2019, "Why shouldn't I root for Russia, which I am?" According to an opinion article done by the LA Times, Carlson has repeatedly criticized the involvement of the U.S. in Ukraine and expressed his support for Putin. "He denounced U.S. sanctions against Putin's Russian oligarchs as unfair property seizures and echoed Russian disinformation that the United States has bioweapons labs in Ukraine." Russian television has aired Carlson's segments.

MotherJones reported the following in a leaked memo from the Kremlin, "it is essential to use as much as possible fragments of broadcasts of the popular Fox News host Tucker Carlson."

At the beginning of March, Putin signed a new law that allowed the government to crack down on news and free speech in Russia. Access to Facebook and Twitter, along with foreign news outlets have been banned in the country. According to an article by the New York Times, the law is to "punish anyone spreading 'false information' about its Ukraine invasion with punishments of up to 15 years in



prison." The article also reported that independent Russian news outlets were shut down and other news outlets, like BBC and ABC News, have paused operations in Russia.

The Russian government has seen opposition from its own state-controlled media. Marina Ovsyannikova, famous for holding a sign saying "no war" during a live state-controlled Channel 1 news broadcast. BBC reported she was detained for 14 hours with no sleep and she wasn't allowed legal help. She has pleaded not guilty and faces 30,000 roubles (\$280) in fines.

Ovsyannikova said in a message to Russians, "Don't be afraid of anything. They can't imprison us all."

ABC News posted an article about how to spot disinformation and misinformation on social media feeds. They mentioned some non-profit outlets like First Draft News, that help journalists and others steer through online

information with an hour-long class. The article recommends some things to think about when reading posts on social media:

- Search online for the information or claim
- Look at who posted the content
- Check the profile picture of the account
- Search for other social media accounts for this person
- Inspect the content the account posted

The LA Times reported Jennifer Griffin, Fox News' Pentagon correspondent, stating "If ever there was a time that the world needed journalists, reporters, risking their lives to tell these stories, it's now. Without a free press, the autocrats win."

Government Deceit, or Willful Ignorance?

Parents That Received 2021 Child Tax Credit Surprised at Affects on Tax Returns

By Bushrah Namirimu

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Social media has been awash with complaints and frustration from many parents who are quite displeased after filing their 2021 tax returns. This is due to the discovery that they'll be receiving smaller refunds

than what they had anticipated, following the advance child tax credit which hit their bank accounts between July and December 2021.

Millions of families across the country received monthly checks from the federal government as a part of the American Rescue

Plan. Krista Russell, a student at MWCC, is one of those parents who benefited from last year's ARP package.

Like most parents, Krista admits that she started receiving \$300 a month last July as part of the expanded monthly child tax credit payments which she

used to pay for gas to drive her children to school and to feed them healthier meals.

Russell states, "I did receive the child tax credit in 2021. As far as it affecting my tax returns, they were significantly lower..." The payments which were made through the last six months of the

year were advances of the credit, worth half of the full amount that parents received.

This was the first time the credit was delivered on a monthly basis, which was intended to help

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"Child Tax Credit" >>>

The Veteran's Scholarship Breakfast Returns on April 14

MWCC's Executive Director of Development Explains How the Event Came to Be and What is Being Celebrated

By Amanda Fales

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Taking place on April 14 is Mount Wachusett's Veteran's Scholarship Breakfast held at Great Wolf Lodge in Fitchburg from 9 am to 11 am. This breakfast will honor and celebrate MWCC students who have served in the military for both their achievements and their sacrifices.

Carla Zottoli, Mount Wachusett's Executive Director of Development, created this event three years ago. Branching off of Mount Wachusett's "Evening of Excellence," a celebration dedicated to the accomplishments of students, Zottoli developed the Veteran's

Breakfast. This event focuses on the success of veteran students.

"Over time, the Mount has gained a lot more veteran scholarships, and we realized that individually honoring veterans is needed," Zottoli said. "So, I made a separate event."

Zottoli said, "there will be a keynote address, and both an alumnus and a current student will speak." This year, the keynote address will be delivered by James Kopp, a senior executive who has experience running regional and national nonprofit organizations.

This order is how the event has run in the past, and Zottoli explained, "I make it a point to give our veteran students

a platform to share their experiences; their stories need to be heard."

Zottoli said, "hearing what some of them have endured is so powerful. It makes you realize how small some problems are. Many of them are so young; their families must sacrifice too. I know I would have a tough time sending my son out to save someone else's."

While this event is to honor veterans, it is also a 'thank you' to businesses that have supported and funded veteran scholarships. "We have five major sponsors who provide these scholarships, and this is a way to celebrate them too," Zottoli said.

When this Breakfast was

initially hosted in 2019, before the pandemic, Zottoli said, "We had a great turnout for it being the first one." She added, "We had about 150 people attend."

However, the event has not been held for the past two years due to the pandemic. While things are still slowly returning to normal, the hope for good attendance is high. "I've gotten around 100 confirmations so far, and that will go up as the event gets closer," Zottoli said.

Since this event is dedicated to military veterans, invitation and prior approval are needed to attend. Invitations for this event are sent to veteran students who fit the scholarship criteria, which is maintaining a 2.5 GPA.

Those who are not veterans but are interested in participating in the event can buy tickets on the Mount Wachusett iConnect page or email Zottoli directly at czottoli@mwcc.mass.edu for more information; there is an admission fee, as this event is a fundraiser for veteran centers.

If you wish to donate directly, there is an option on the top right corner of MWCC's iConnect homepage to "give to MWCC." These funds will be donated toward more community centers and resources for veterans.

Student-Directed Extracurricular Initiative: The Mount Production Team

MWCC Student Explains the Origin and Purpose Behind Newly Formed Organization

By Mikayla Barrett

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

In the Fall 2021 semester, Media Arts and Technology student Eileen Maksym pitched the idea to create a club that focuses on the material MRT students study in class. Establishing this program had its difficulties, but Maksym successfully founded *The Mount Production Team* with the help of students and Professor Claudia Plasse.

Maksym, a returning student in her second semester at the Mount, is studying Video Production in the MRT program. She currently possesses a bachelor's degree in philosophy, and a master's in theology and said she is returning to school to

study film "to make her dream of making movies a reality."

With COVID dominating and changing the world, Maksym realized that there is no better time than the present to start pursuing her dreams. Maksym said she is using her study of film to broaden her passion for writing; she has written many short stories and a novella and wishes to bring her writing to the screen.

Wanting to create a place where students could apply what they have learned within the MRT program, Maksym set out to create a club that did just that. However, one of the biggest challenges that Maksym said she has faced is getting this organization recognized as a

club.

Maksym said, "a club requires formalized things: petitions, signatures, training, faculty advisors" and other things that were unattainable for this group.

So, instead of becoming an official school club, Maksym founded an extracurricular student initiative. This is different from a club because they have no designated faculty advisor that attends all meetings. Maksym said Plasse does assist the group as needed, but the initiative is completely student-run.

Maksym added that another difference is that this extracurricular initiative has no designated space to meet and practice within the school. They meet weekly via zoom,

and when they are working on a project they use the Media Arts and Technology studios and equipment when available.

Maksym said she founded this initiative to create a place where students in the MRT track, and any others who have a passion for film, could use and practice what they study. She said that this extracurricular works to "take the wonderful stuff you learn in class and apply it in the real world because the best way to learn to make a movie is to make a movie."

Maksym also said another activity that this extracurricular does together is watch movies to learn more about how all the pieces of filmmaking come together as one.

Maksym explained she is fascinated by all the people and work that it takes to set up and put together films. She added that when you watch a movie, no one ever thinks about the people behind the screen working to put everything together. Maksym wanted this extracurricular to help others get an idea about the work involved in putting a movie together.

The current project that Maksym said the group is working on is a sci-fi/dystopian short film that she wrote. She added that this is the first project that they are working on, and another will be planned once

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"Mount Production Team" >>>

Theatre at the Mount Back at Full Audience Capacity with *Something Rotten*

Director Gail Steele Shares Details of Upcoming Show and the Pandemic's Impact on Theatre at MWCC.

By Mikayla Barrett

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

After 557 days in the dark, Theatre at the Mount returns to the stage with its first full-capacity show since the pandemic began. *Something Rotten* by John O'Farrell and Karey Kirkpatrick opens on stage on April 22 at 7:30 pm. This show also runs on April 23, 29, and 30 at 7:30 pm and on May 1 at 2 pm.

Director Gail Steele has been directing and teaching at Theatre at the Mount (TAM) since 1977 and has worked on "hundreds of shows with thousands of different performers of all ages." She said that her favorite part of theatre is the collaboration between so many different people. Steele

said, "there is nothing outside of the sports world that compares to the teamwork shown on stage."

Steele summarized that *Something Rotten* is a musical comedy that follows the story of Nick Bottom, an aspiring playwright who lies in the shadow of William Shakespeare. Jealous of Shakespeare and wanting to be the best, Bottom goes to a soothsayer who tells him that Shakespeare's next big hit on stage will be "Omelet." Determined to shine, Bottom writes and performs the world's first musical "featuring dancing eggs," which Steele said is one of her favorite parts.

Steele fell in love with this show when she saw it on



Photo by Thomas Hill Jr.

Child Tax Credit

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parents pay for housing, food, clothing, and school supplies. However, many parents out there are disappointed that the IRS didn't do its due diligence of informing them about the options which were available to them and how the plan would affect them in the long run.

"I didn't get any information on the tax credit and was actually unaware that it would be taken off of my taxes and I was unaware I could have opted out of it. I assumed it was extra money similar to the stimulus check," Krista adds.

However, according to Nampewo Masagazi, a tax professional with Tyler Tax Service Inc., the Child Tax Credit only changed in a way it used to be distributed which probably confused most parents.

"A lot of clients are upset because they didn't realize that the early disbursement would come out of what they typically received all at once during tax time. This means that parents can

only claim the other half of the credit on their 2021 tax return" Masagazi says.

Ms. Masagazi adds that there was sufficient information from the IRS as a way of preparing the beneficiaries of CTC: "This information was all over news channels and no doubt if they were truly concerned they should have done a little research once that extra money hit their accounts," she emphasized.

As part of last year's American Rescue Plan package, parents received half the credit up to \$300 a month for children up to age 6 and \$250 for those ages 6 through 17 from July through December.

In previous years, some families did not qualify for the Child Tax Credit because they did not make enough money to file taxes, but under the American Rescue Plan, the credit was made fully refundable, meaning that even families not required to pay taxes received this money last year.

Broadway and knew that she had to bring it to TAM's stage. As soon as the rights were available, Steele added *Something Rotten* to the performance schedule. However, unfortunately, it was postponed twice due to the pandemic. But Steele said she never lost hope and is excited to bring this wonderful show to the stage in April. Steele said the show is "laughs from beginning to end."

This contemporary show features period costumes that Steele created herself during the pandemic when stuck at home. Needing something to keep her busy and a way to keep theatre alive in her life, Steele started sewing the costumes that she

knew she would need for this show. She said that the costumes were "fun to create," and she is "excited to see them on stage."

During the pandemic, TAM tried to keep its performers and patrons active and interested by creating virtual performances. Once back on the stage, they opened the house to 25% capacity for the performances, and their holiday show opened up more with 50% capacity. Steele said that the company continues to take "baby steps forward" to bring TAM back to what it was. *Something Rotten* is the first show to perform at 100% audience capacity since TAM came back on stage.

Steele said that their

performance of *Something Rotten* has safety procedures, including masks and social distancing place to protect the cast, crew, and audience. The cast size is smaller than normal, with twenty-five performers, which allows everyone to continue to stay safe. Steele said that she has faith that everyone will "understand the policies in place and that they provide a level of comfort to bring them back to the theatre."

Steele hopes that "people return to the theatre" after a long two-year period in the dark. Join Theatre at the Mount in the performing arts center to welcome theatre back to MWCC.

Mount Production Team

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they are finished.

Maksym said there are currently six active members who help organize and create their projects and an additional six who attend when they are

available. She added that *The Mount Production Team* is looking for anyone interested in learning more about film and creating movies and will welcome new members onto their team with open arms.

Maksym said the group meets every Monday evening via Zoom and that there is no experience necessary to join, only a passion for the art. Email Maksym at emaksym@mwcc.edu if you are interested in joining.

Artistic Crime

Museum Curator and Local Artist Express Views on Graffiti



Photo by James Garman on Unsplash

By **Shaye McKeen**
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Art and crime, a mysterious mixture of expression and struggle—the origins of spray-paint graffiti, an art form that

began in the New York projects, which can often be traced back to the 1960s in the Bronx, where African Americans attempted to reclaim their place in society which was previously barred by

segregation.

Current perspectives surrounding graffiti art vary, as the act of creating graffiti art in its traditional sense of using various buildings and structures as its canvas is inherently illegal. Marjorie Rawle, an Assistant Curator for the Fitchburg Art Museum, offers her insight on the form of art's ethos:

“I like to keep a very broad definition of art, so I think that anyone making images with a vision, personal style, and challenging boundaries and norms is doing important work. I think graffiti is an important part of art history (especially in the context of the development of American urban environments) that's only beginning to be understood and studied.”

Graffiti is a form of art that predates the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and was used by African Americans to assert their presence in society, the origins of which are rooted in emotional expression and strife. Graffiti was created as a cornerstone of the hip-hop movement which emerged in the Bronx in struggling communities of color.

Ms. Rawle recognizes that from this beginning of breaking social boundaries and stimulating change and states, “As an activity that's technically illegal, graffiti probably elicits all sorts of opinions... from different people. It's meant to disrupt public space, and the more outlandish or conspicuous

it is, the better. I think that makes it an art form that is inherently controversial, whether you're an art lover or not.”

She continues to state that the actual purchase and sale of graffiti is “a bit antithetical to the roots of the art form. It's a counter-culture action that is dependent on the specific context of its location and time, so removing it from that context and subjecting it to market forces seems like it doesn't fit with the spirit.” Essentially, graffiti is so expressive and meaningful in nature due to the setting which it occupies, it is an especially communicative form of art.

When discussing the topic of location and graffiti, Ms. Rawle elaborates: “I think location is everything when it comes to graffiti. Where an artist chooses to place their tag or image is an essential part of the meaning and impact of the piece. Whether it's about calling attention to a specific site or just pulling off something that seems impossible, the location holds a lot of the power.”

She adds, “The graffiti artist Acer just tagged the outside of one of NYC's most prominent contemporary art museums, which is a great example of that. It's not only an extremely difficult spot to access undetected, but it also has people wondering about the artist's commentary on contemporary art and museums.”

Challenging social rhetoric is the key principle behind graffiti,

as Ms. Rawle describes, and while aesthetics is often held superior regarding an artistic piece's value, Ms. Rawle believes that “...aesthetic value” is a loaded term that can be interpreted in many ways. For me, regardless of what the piece looks like, the aesthetic value of graffiti rests in its power to disrupt public space and challenge norms and power structures.”

A local artist, Britney McKeen, expresses her own opinions regarding graffiti art and its positive impact on communities as well. Ms. McKeen is an MWCC graduate from the graphic design program and stated that graffiti art “...brings beauty to something plain,” and can “absolutely” enhance a location's aesthetic value.

When discussing the opinions which surround graffiti in society, she states “I feel overall it's negative, which is unfortunate given the many walls of negative space that could be utilized,” in reference to the more unstimulating nature of modern urban infrastructure.

She outlines how graffiti can enhance a landscape: “[By] having a subject matter that ties to the area (say an ocean or beach scene near a waterway) [graffiti] can bring more whimsy to existing areas. Alternatively in cities, having a mural of the ocean, forests or otherwise inaccessible views can be uplifting.”

Speak No Evil, Hear No Evil, See No Evil

Recent Rise in Book Bans Echoes Dark Part of History

By **Shaye McKeen**
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Book banning has recently surged in United States school systems, seemingly targeting material that questions more liberal ideas such as gender, racial, and sexual identity, and one book which has been very recently banned in February of 2022 was Art Spiegelman's novel, *Maus*.

Maus was written as a graphic

novel depicting the events of the Holocaust, with humans being replaced by humanoid mice. The novel is often credited as a go-to for easing younger children into the history of Nazi Germany, with its comic-style of storytelling and art.

In Spiegelman's childhood and early days as a cartoonist in the 1950s, the United States Federal Government pressured the comic book industry into a

mass censorship campaign that targeted offensive or challenging ideas and graphics. Book burning was a frequent event, where adults and clergymen would round up any literature deemed inappropriate and set it ablaze. Spiegelman stated in a recent interview with *The Guardian*, “We as cartoonists of that generation loved the salacious, raucous, uninhibited expression of ideas... We wanted to topple

every article of the Comics Code if we could.”

Spiegelman wrote *Maus* as the child of two Holocaust survivors, which begs the question of why he sided with a Nazi movement advocating for their right to march through the town of Skokie, Illinois, which was inhabited by a large number of Holocaust survivors. In his interview with *The Guardian*, he explains his position on the topic:

“Let them march, and if there's any more trouble, stop them. I thought that was a conversation that had to take place... It shaped me.”

Spiegelman is an advocate for freedom of speech and conversation, as is expressed by the prior quote. He states that the conversation of morality

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“Book Banning” >>>

PROFILE

Profile: Eoin Haggerty

Not Just Another Student, but a Future Storyboard Creator



Photo courtesy of Eoin Haggerty

By Amanda Fales

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

When he was a boy, Eoin Haggerty dreamed of being a firefighter—now, he is twenty-one years old, with one year left at Mount Wachusett and with a dream of becoming a storyboard creator.

When asked why he changed his life goal, he said it was his inspiration. “Movies and video games give me creative outlets and it’s all around me,” Haggerty added with a smile.

According to the Nashville Film Institute, a storyboard creator is responsible for taking “a script, or even just a concept”, and changing words “into a

visual story” (NFI.edu). This echoes Haggerty’s dream of “learning the behind the scenes of film.”

Haggerty explained his love of the show *Euphoria* and one of his favorite games, *Animal Crossing*. He adds, “I like to mess around and have fun, but sometimes I play story games.”

While discussing his “short-term plans for the long-term,” Haggerty said that he will use his last year of school to look for internships and potential job openings. He is unsure whether he will need more schooling once he graduates Mount Wachusett.

Haggerty answered with a simple nod when asked if he

enjoys college. When talking about online school, he chuckled for a second and said “in some ways, I like it more. The flexibility of classes allows me to make school more convenient.” Haggerty added that he has already been doing online classes before the pandemic, so his view of school has stayed the same.

Haggerty, like most young adults, was hesitant to answer how he felt about his future. He took some time to decide on an answer. Eventually, he said “it’s exciting to think about the opportunities I will have once I graduate. I’m a little scared though because you never know what can happen.”

Haggerty does have an abundance of choices ahead of him. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics stated that the job outlook for animators and storyboard creators will increase by 16% between 2020 and 2030. There is also the potential to become an art director, graphic designer, or computer programmer (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2022). All these careers involve what Haggerty is looking for: “a chance to be in control of what is put out to the public.”

When asked if he might consider other jobs, Haggerty jokingly smirked and said he’s “pretty set in the field I’m in, but I’m always open to looking.”

Profile:

Nadia Noushie

MWCC Student Inspired by Son to Pursue Her Dream Career After Losing Job During the Pandemic

By Malik Colon

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Nadia Noushie, an African-born single mother and current MWCC student, said she endured many difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic. But because of her son, Noushie was inspired to work to overcome these challenges and is now a future nursing student at John Hopkins University.

Arriving in America just about seven years ago, Noushie said,

what she described as “the lowest point in [her] life.” Unable to do anything, Noushie said she felt as though everything was being taken away from her. But Noushie said, “what helped me out of that place was my desire to want more for my son...he inspired me.”

During quarantine, Noushie reevaluated her place in society and said she eventually found it with the help of her son. Not only did she start to make her dreams

“what helped me out of that place was my desire to want more for my son...he inspired me.”

– Nadia Noushie

“it was always the plan to move to the states...there is just more opportunity in America.” But being a proud African woman and personal advocate on diversity, Noushie soon realized the difficulty of being Black in America. “I represent my culture wherever I go...America is certainly not perfect,” Noushie said.

For many years, Noushie worked a sales job that she said “was not what [she] planned on doing.” However, she said she needed the money to be able to live “a life worth living” and to create a stable life for her future family.

In 2019, Noushie gave birth to her son, who is now three years old. Being a single mother, Noushie relied on her current job to take care of her new family. However, the COVID-19 pandemic left a staggering number of Americans jobless; Noushie was no exception.

Losing her job in March of 2020, Noushie was left to take care of her son alone. This was

of becoming a nurse a reality, but she also began to live a much healthier day-to-day lifestyle.

Like many Americans’ trying to keep busy during lockdown, Noushie described most of her days without a job as “boring and tedious.” However, Noushie, attempting to be the best version of herself for her son, began exercising and stumbling into the world of fitness.

Doing at-home workouts, Noushie gave credit to YouTube and online videos that helped her stay in shape. “It was what kept me busy with no job,” Noushie said.

When asked what word she would use to describe her life, Noushie said, “challenging.” But even after going through these hardships, she still looks to her son as inspiration, her sole reason for “moving forward.” Noushie has now been accepted into John Hopkins University and plans to become a nurse. But in the meantime, she is currently back in Africa and taking online courses at MWCC.

Have your own opinions on current events, hot-button issues, or events on campus?

Write an opinion piece and send it to

mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu

It may just end up in our next issue!

MAT Care and Addiction

A Closer Look at Medicated Treatments for Substance Abuse

By Andi Cunningham
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Methadone Mile is a location that many of us –including myself before I moved to Boston– do not know of. A street with a specific culture. A street made up of rows of methadone clinics, one after another after another, for a mile. A homeless population has set up camp around these clinics because they are open 24/7. This process has created a drug problem with another drug, the medically assisted treatment to hone drug addiction.

As an individual working in the field of addiction and living as an addict, I often wonder if you can really halt an addiction to drugs

and alcohol with another substance. It is a unique thought. In this modern age, many are coming to realize that maybe psychedelics could work. For myself and my disease, which I am an expert on, I abuse everything and anything I can get my hands on. I have to be very careful because if I'm not, then things can go downhill very quickly. I am only one person though. Who am I to say that others cannot take advantage of this revolutionary method of treating drug addiction.

Two different types of medically assisted treatment that have become popular are Suboxone and Methadone. These two treatments help with the phenomenal craving

and obsession of drugs. Your prescriber can be your primary care physician if they have the appropriate license. According to Eleanor Health, a leading information hub on drugs and their standing with the FDA, "Suboxone medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD) is considered a feasible pharmaceutical alternative to methadone due to its low risk of misuse, overdose, and side effects"

When dealing with physical dependence and drug addiction, it is important to remember they are different side effects. If I am physically dependent to an opiate, when my prescription runs out, I don't run to the street in search of drugs. One who is addicted to drugs would run out and look for drugs, and do anything they could do to find them. Being in various treatment

and stimulate these receptors, causing you to feel euphoria and other pleasurable side effects. Over time, your brain gets so used to this stimulation that it can't function without it – this is known as dependence."

Suboxone, on the other hand, is part of the opioid antagonist family. This family is the opposite of an opiate and is used to treat drugs such as heroin, oxycodone, and morphine. Unlike methadone, you use it in your house and do not have to go to a clinic every day. Suboxone combines buprenorphine and naloxone in blocking the "opioid effect." Also known as cravings. Where methadone is a drink, Suboxone is a dissolvable piece of "paper" that is put in between the gum and teeth. Many people don't have the same nodding-off effect that methadone has. This option is generally regarded as

clinic and I have insurance, my insurance gets billed for every service the methadone clinic provides, whether I accept the treatment "service" or not.

A methadone program in the methadone clinic goes as follows, I attend various groups, counseling centers, and doctor's appointments. If I am doing the program correctly I will get off methadone in a nine-month to a one-year span of time. Because euphoric effect happens with methadone, many people choose to stay "legally high."

Now the abuse. Doctors get paid by insurance every time I step into the clinic. To keep getting paid, some doctors will encourage patients to stay in the clinic for what is called a "maintenance methadone program." So this means staying at high doses so the patient doesn't have to feel any

Book Banning

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as it relates to Nazism versus Holocaust survivors is one of extreme importance, and someone who echoes this sentiment is an MWCC resident, Professor Valois.

When asked her opinion on book banning, she had a quite prompt answer: "Stupid!"

Professor Valois labeled the banning of books as "dangerous," and noted that "By banning a book, you aren't banning the actions of those who follow it, you are banning the discussion of the book's ideals. You are banning the discussion of ideas." This exhibits the same principle that Spiegelman follows, and was the basis of his support for allowing the Nazis to march through Skokie, Illinois. It was not about supporting Naziism, but about promoting conversation of ideas.

When questioned whether or not she saw any good in the practice of book banning, Professor Valois responded by stating that "Age restrictions regarding certain material may make sense, but the books that you're seeing being banned are *Catcher in the Rye*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Huck Finn*, and *Maus*. All of these books

challenge ideas and make important statements about very liberal ideas on topics like race, drugs, sex, or rebellion."

With the example of Mein Kampf, Adolf Hitler's infamous autobiography, Professor Valois demonstrated her position on the importance of discussion of even the most radical and controversial ideologies: "Would I ban [Mein Kampf] if I was leader of the world? I would not. ...I would want to talk to someone who read Mein Kampf sympathetically, just to provide them with the perspective of reading literature like Anne Frank's diary, or the stories of Holocaust survivors."

Professor Valois specifically referenced Art Spiegelman's *Maus* as an extremely timely book to read with the current atrocities being committed in Ukraine by Russia's armies, as refugees seek asylum in very unfamiliar countries. She also spoke about the religiously charged crimes committed against synagogues and other places of worship within the United States as well, and how the novel's message sparks conversation and provides perspective on that topic too.



Photo by Miriam Zilles from Unsplash

centers, I have known people who have been on methadone.

Methadone is a brother to morphine, a narcotic originally created to treat people with heroin and morphine addictions. Methadone is known as a "synthetic narcotic analgesic," according to the methadone clinic's website. This basically means it is a controlled substance that helps reduce pain and block the use of opiates. The methadone clinic explains, "Your brain has certain opioid receptors. When you take opioids, these drugs bind to

superior to methadone and was originally created for pregnant women to help get them off heroin. According to the FDA, Suboxone does not harm the baby like methadone and other opiates.

As I started researching, I sat down with a drug and alcohol counselor to ask what really happens as I go to the clinic. The pharmaceutical companies are a multibillion-dollar a year industry and trying to understand what happens behind the scenes can be a little scary. The process goes– I walk into the methadone

withdrawal symptoms at all. If I were to self-pay, it would cost me \$50 for the methadone itself, and the groups and therapies would be thousands of extra dollars.

Because of the nature of methadone, many people do not work while on it, so many patients are on Medicare/Medicaid, costing \$4700 per patient. There are 600,000 people approximately on methadone in the state of Massachusetts alone, this averages the cost of treatment to be around \$2,820,000,000. All of these stats are found under the addiction section on Mass.gov.

Liberal Arts Majors Pack a Punch: Fighting off Major Stigma

MWCC Student Shares Opinion on why Liberal Arts Majors Deserve More Credit

By Maddie Willigar
ASSISTANT EDITOR

For many years, our society has been under the impression that Liberal Arts majors are for those who don't comprehend the weight of education and are ignorantly going to school for a degree they will never use; therefore, between the backhanded comments and 'hushed' criticism, Liberal Arts majors are used to people doubting and questioning the validity of their choice.

What many overlook when considering a Liberal Arts degree is that the major provides a wide array of skills that can be translated into the workplace and also foster an environment of passion and fulfillment. Because of this, I believe that the underestimation and stigmatization of these majors is nothing more than a lack of open-mindedness and knowledge.

In a May 7, 2015 article from *The Washington Post*, author and journalist on higher education Jeffrey J. Selingo explained that since college can be expensive, many major choices are largely based on "the expected return on investment after graduation."

In this same article, Selingo said, "many students believe that picking a major is tantamount to choosing a career. It's not." Therefore, from my perspective, it seems that this idea has created a universal perception that in order to have a stable, productive, and worthwhile future (or career), you need to be extremely careful when choosing a major. With this mindset, the controversy surrounding these degrees seems inevitable.

Vice President for Advancement and Dean of the Robert Day Scholars Program at Claremont McKenna

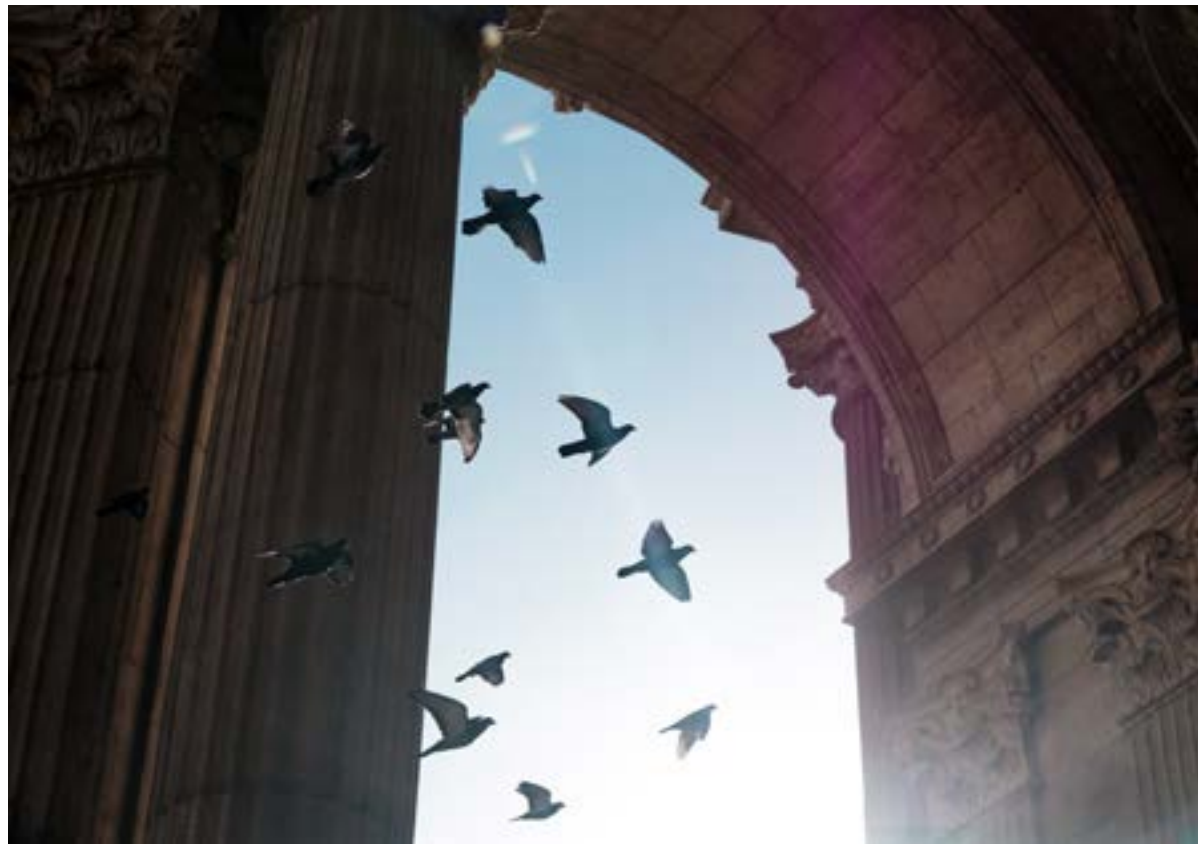


Photo by Yin Yin Low from Unsplash

College, Michelle Chamberlain, elaborated on this concept in a Jan. 14, 2020 article in *The Washington Post*, written by reporter Susan Svrluga. Chamberlain explained that when talking with parents, they always question whether a Liberal Arts major will "pay off." However, I believe that by focusing so much on what majors will "pay off" down the line, we are limiting ourselves to a narrow scope of career possibilities and overlooking that Liberal Arts degrees can give students just as many (if not more) skills as other majors to carry into many different fields.

For example, in a Sept. 2, 2016 article from *The Washington Post*, author and professor Steven Pearlstein wrote, "A study for the Association of American Colleges and Universities found that 93 percent of employers agreed that a 'demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than [a job candidate's]

undergraduate major.'"

If we believe for a second that these skills cannot be gained from pursuing a major in Liberal Arts degree, then we are believing a lie. While pursuing a Liberal Arts, I have had the opportunity to participate in various classes with different students and professors which teaches you how to think, communicate, and navigate things in new and

is that it doesn't train students for a clear-cut job, so searching for employment can be as broad as graduates want it to be."

Selingo also wrote that Anders relayed how "[c]lassics majors are popular among Wall Street banks...because of their ability to closely read texts [and]... Anthropology majors are hot hires for technology companies expanding their user-research

"Many students believe that picking a major is tantamount to choosing a career. It's not."

– Jeffery J. Selingo via *The Washington Post*

challenging ways; these skills are ones that can undoubtedly be translated into the professional world.

In an interview with author and journalist, George Anders, in the Sept. 29, 2017 article from *The Washington Post*, Selingo wrote, "[t]he one advantage of a liberal arts degree, Anders said,

efforts." As you can see, there are many fields that can see the valuable skillset Liberal Arts degrees bring to the table. So, instead of doubting whether specific majors will be profitable, we should consider how these majors will equip us with tangible skills that employers will ultimately value.

In addition to equipping students with a unique skillset, Liberal Arts Majors give students the freedom to choose majors they love and want to pursue, which only sets them on the road to being satisfied with their future careers.

In an Apr. 1, 2019 article from *BBC*, journalist Amanda Ruggeri said, "our assumptions about the market value of certain degrees – and the 'worthlessness' of others – might be off. At best, that could be making some students unnecessarily stressed. At worst? Pushing people onto paths that set them up for less fulfilling lives."

I am of the perspective that life is too short to choose a major in something you dislike just because you think there is a more straightforward path on the other side. I understand that the guarantee of stability is vital to many, especially those trying to support their families, but there will always be a 'safer' job out there if all else fails. If nothing else, along the way, you will gain profitable skills that will set you up for even more jobs than you had considered before.

In addition, those of us who choose to pursue paths in Liberal Arts need to be our best advocates: do your own research, see what skills you can bring to the table, and pursue your passion boldly and with pride.

Together, let's begin to reframe our perspective on how we measure a degree's value. Regardless of what path we start on, we will all eventually find our place in the career world, and pursuing a Liberal Arts degree does not set you up any less than the majors we have been told for years are guaranteed success.

Follow In The Footsteps Of Fossil Fuel Giants

Recent Events in Russia Causing Re-Evaluation in Fossil Fuel Dependence

By Daniel Dow
EDITOR IN CHIEF

With the recent outbreak of war between Russia and Ukraine, the stability of the global market has come under question, and no commodity has been affected more than the price and supply of natural gas and oil. With the price of oil currently at a record high, and demand growing for countries to separate themselves from Russia's fossil fuels, now seems the opportune moment to shift from fossil fuels and to reinvest in renewable energy.

The hostility of Russia has rallied nations to end their dependence on imports of the country's oil and natural gas. The United States has immediately cut its imports, and Britain and Poland have announced a plan to cut Russian natural gas imports by the end of 2022.

With commitments pouring in to move away from Russian energy, it must be noted that according to the International

Energy Agency, Russia is the world's third-largest oil producer and accounts for about 40% of the European Union's natural gas imports. Furthermore, according to the United States Energy Information Administration, Russia supplies around 10.1 million barrels of oil per day to the global market and exports 8.9 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

European reliance on Russian fossil fuels can not be understated, after all, Germany's investment in Nord Stream 2, a Russian-german natural gas pipeline running 1,234-kilometer and costing 11 billion dollars was supposed to secure Europe with Russian natural gas for the next fifty years. But upon completion, the Russian invasion of Ukraine commenced, and so did the German's commitment to this pipeline.

The United States and Germany have attempted alternative means to find new

supplies of natural gas and oil.

Recently, the United States' sent delegations to Venezuela, which has been under sanctions by the US since 2019. This action occurred because the country's president, Nicolás Maduro, used the military to crush his opposition in protest of the country's 2019 election results. Maduro claimed an illegitimate election, decried his opponent, and seized the presidency. At a time of Democracy under threat, it does not seem warranted to support a "president" who promotes autocracy.

Germany has made its own efforts to stabilize its country's demand for natural gas. The country's Economy Minister, Robert Habeck, has since met with Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani. This meeting has proven fruitful, as a deal has been struck between the two countries. Germany's Economy Minister recently stated to Reuters "Although we

might still need Russian gas this year, in the future it won't be so anymore. And this is only the start"

Although this is a win for Germany to distance itself from Russia, the question remains if the supply of natural gas from Qatar is truly a reliable one. After all, in July of 2010 Qatar saw an all-time heatwave of 122.7 degrees, and Zeke Hausfather, a climate data scientist from Berkeley Earth, stated to The New York Times "Qatar is one of the fastest-warming areas of the world, at least outside of the Arctic."

This speaks to the existential threat of continued investment in fossil fuels, and perhaps we can look to some of the countries producing the most fossil fuels for guidance.

In September of 2021, Qatar launched a climate change action plan to reduce greenhouse gasses by 25% by the end of 2030. Saudi Arabia, the number one supplier

of oil exports and second-largest global supplier of natural gas has made similar efforts. Last year the country announced a plan to hit net-zero emission by 2060.

Although Qatar may be a quick fix for Germany to distance itself from Russia, it does not create long-term stability. Germany and nations who rely on Russia's fossil fuel industry must weigh the cost of bad investments, and the instability they create.

Over the past three years, if there is anything the world has come to learn from a worldwide pandemic, the increasing threat of natural disasters, and the threat of World War III, is that the world is not short of global destabilization. Actions that can be made to create a more secure future need to be made now and investing in renewable energy that allows countries to be energy independent when an opportune time has presented itself is a good place to start.

Editorial

The Reality of Ukraine

The 24/7 news cycle has created a landscape that is quick to jump to the next story, but we must continue to hold our focus on the crisis that is unfolding in Ukraine. The daily briefs once provided about the ever-evolving crisis are slowly drifting away and are deeming events, such as the latest Oscar snub, more newsworthy.

The fact remains that Ukraine continues to be engaged in a brutal war that continues to take the lives of the nation's soldiers, people, and homes. None of this has dissipated and judging by the latest news coming from Ukraine, the true toll of destruction is only now coming to light as the Russian Armed Forces are pushed back to the Belarus and Ukraine border.

As Ukrainian troops continue to free towns and cities from Russia's control, the need for media coverage is necessary now more than ever because the

true atrocities committed are just beginning to come to light. The spotlight that media coverage can provide to the national and global conversation will allow the true horror of Putin's actions to be seen and become apparent to the world.

Government action supporting Ukraine needs to be no different—Congress and the President must keep up the global efforts of financially crippling Russia and supplying Ukraine with arms.

The global effort is already begging to fade. At the outbreak of the war, an effort was led by the United States, Nato Allies, and many other countries around the world to place sanctions on Russia. Since the initial drop of the ruble that followed these sanctions, we have seen the price of the ruble rebound, Russia has been able to continue to pay on its debts, and the MOEX Russia Index has stabilized.

This news alone must be

widespread and should be driving the national conversation for continued efforts to financially cripple Russia, Putin, and the country's oligarchs.

Additionally, Ukraine may be reporting that its troops are out-performing Russian forces, but cities like Mariupol are still witnessing the worst of this war.

A once-thriving city in eastern Ukraine of nearly 500,000, continues to be besieged by Russian forces. The current losses are estimated to be around 5,000 civilian lives. The city's mayor, Vadym Boichenko reports that 90% of buildings in Mariupol have been damaged and that 40% have been completely destroyed. Mayor Boichenko estimates that the city still contains an estimated 160,000 people and that the city has been without water, electricity, medicine, food, supplies, and access to the outside world for over a month.

The reality of Mariupol's

situation is that efforts to evacuate civilians have been unsuccessful because evacuation corridors remain under control by the Russian Armed Forces.

The International Committee of the Red Cross has made attempts to evacuate the city, but in a recent Twitter post stated, "Today, our team tried to facilitate a safe passage out of Mariupol," but had to return to Zaporizhzhia after conditions made it impossible to proceed. We will try again tomorrow."

In addition, The New York Times reports that nearly three million Ukrainians have fled the war, but also adds that "millions more have been internally displaced and may also need to find safe haven in other countries."

As the chaos unfolds in an ever-changing conflict, the fact remains that the current reported civilian casualties could not possibly hold the

truth of the losses Ukraine has undertaken. The true cost of the Russian Armed Force's tactics of indiscriminate bombing and use of weapons banned by the Geneva Convention, such as cluster bombs, are just coming to light.

The 24/7 news cycle that is quick to jump to the next story needs to stay focused on Ukraine for the true story of what this country has faced is only beginning to be told. Until the Russian Armed Forces have left Ukraine and the "separatist" regions are no longer occupied, we must continue to fly our Ukrainian flags, keep Ukraine in our daily conversation, lobby our government, and bear witness to the tragedies that continue to unfold because any less is an injustice to these people's sacrifice.

Creative Writing

Greetings, MWCC students,

The Mount Observer continues to feature a creative writing section spotlighting students' poetry and short stories. In an effort to drive creativity and interact with our community, the paper will also post a writing prompt each month that is selected at random by rolling writing dice. Dice will be rolled to create a prompt for each of the five w's (who, what, when, where, and why). The author will then need to use each of the rolled themes in their creative piece, which should be around 1000 words. When completed, your pieces can be submitted to mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu and the journalism team will choose the most relevant, creative, and polished pieces to publish. All members of the college are encouraged to participate in this activity!

The following prompts for this month are:

- **Who** - Ageless
- **What** - Land
- **When** - Night
- **Where** - Outdoors
- **Why** - Rejection

The dice rolls for this month reflect some great creative opportunities and embody some great themes from folk tales. Very exciting!

Best of luck with your pieces! The Mount Observer Team looks forward to reading your work!

The Smiling Frown

By Cami Stephens

Smile. You must smile.

Don't ever let your smile turn into a frown.

If you're sad, don't worry, a smile can help fix everything.

Did you forget to smile?

I try to smile in the mirror, but how do I smile when my brain only allows myself to frown.

I cannot force elation; my brain is too engulfed in devastating despair.

I know you get mad when I cannot smile, but I cannot fake it any longer.

I promise I'm not forgetting to smile, it doesn't come naturally anymore.

If I show any emotion, somehow, I'm disregarded.

I must act happy and bubbly all day, every day.

If I'm not smiling, I must be insane, that's what you said to me.

Oh no, I forgot to smile.

Whenever a tear rolls down my cheeks, you wipe it off, and force my cheeks to smile.

"Don't be dramatic, you'll get over it."

You must be right. Let me try and smile.

Why does my smile only point downwards?

Whenever I become angry, I'm immediately poisoned with the idea that I'm crazy.

I forgot I can only be jolly.

I guess I'd rather be "crazy" than whatever your warped version of "jolly" is;

However, I guess I could try to smile just once more.

"Don't take that medicine, it won't help your sadness."

I figured out that a smile is not a cure.

A smile is nothing without authentic joy.

But still, I stare in the mirror waiting for my smiling frown to just be a smile.

Not a Trace of You

By Maddie Willigar

After Aron Wiesenfeld's "Greenhouse"

I remember standing here like an angel clothed in baby's breath: damp hair blowing in the wind by the greenhouse where there was nothing left but buds and dew, no remanence but the faint scent of you passing through like the wind softly kisses the grass and leaves not a trace of itself behind.

I watched the buds struggle to bloom in their cage and reach towards dim light. But what more could a mother do except watch them grow only to know they would wither, just as the caterpillar realizes fragile branches don't support the weight it takes to become a butterfly?

They watched you come and go in their seedling years like the spinning storm sky quietly turns back to blue, without a clue of how destructive each storm was. Blowing around their insecurities in the spiral of your temporary love, they mended what your wind broke with the hope of a compassionate rush.

But I calmed the storm and hid them under my wings until the sky cleared and birds chirped in their trees, and now I stand back and watch as the blossoms that you left, grow into flowers and leave

every trace of you behind.

Let Your Voice be Heard!

Send your stories, poetry, artwork, photography, or other content to
mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu

Uncharted Review

Blandness From Big Beginnings



Image copyright Columbia Pictures and Sony Pictures

By **Gabriel Velez**

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

This film *Uncharted* has taken an incredibly long time to be released. Initially, it was supposed to be directed by David O. Russell, and star Mark Wahlberg as Nathan Drake. However, over time, that clearly didn't happen. Then, Tom Holland became attached to the role of Nathan Drake and Wahlberg took the Sully role.

In 2019, Travis Knight was slated to direct, right when principal photography was supposed to begin in early 2020. Knight then left the project due to scheduling conflicts with Tom Holland. This left the film without a director until Ruben Fleischer took up the reins to ready the film for what was initially supposed to be a March 2021 release.

Come October 2021, when the first trailer of the film was revealed to the world, audiences responded with a resounding “uh-oh.” I'm not going to pretend that I didn't have problems with this film before I ever saw a frame of it. From the initial casting of Tom Holland to Travis Knight's departure and Ruben Fleischer's arrival on the film, I had nothing but worries about the film's direction.

I had reservations about the film because I am a HUGE fan of the *Uncharted* games by Naughty Dog. Those games are excellent in gameplay, storytelling, especially motion capture, and acting from its cast. Nolan North is Nathan Drake in my eyes, so going in,

I was extremely skeptical. To be honest, I was expecting the worst, which goes against my own rules of going into a film.

Safe to say, I felt vindicated in my fears. *Uncharted* is a bland action-adventure film, with none of the heart and soul of the games it bases itself vaguely on. Vaguely as in it uses the names and occupations of the characters from which they are based on, and misuses them for popcorn entertainment. I want to apologize to anyone who reads this expecting me to praise it endlessly, which will not happen, as I have many issues with this film.

Notably, one of my issues was the casting. While Tom Holland is a great actor and has proven himself time and time again with the range, he is plainly miscast as Nathan Drake. Holland's portrayal lacks any of the charisma, heart, or love for adventure that Nathan displayed in the *Uncharted* video games. He instead plays it as if Peter Parker was more smarmy. He does what he can in the film, all the actors do. Yet, it can't be helped just how poorly cast they are in these roles.

Sophia Taylor Ali is the most “suitably fit” actor in their roles, as she looks enough like a young Chloe Frazer would. However, the film forgot who Chloe was aside from her playing both teams. Chloe is skilled, professional, and just as capable as Drake is in every situation. Chloe knows her limits and who she is, and is a survivor at any cost. In this film, she's a token female character for Drake and the audience to stare at. While Chloe can be capable, she's shown to be ditzy in some cases, which made me question if the writers of the film even played the games.

Furthermore, Mark Wahlberg's portrayal as Sully is painful to watch. Wahlberg seems to just be playing himself, implementing none of the characteristics of his character, Sully. Sully is a wise-cracking scoundrel, but he is the guy you want in your corner. He'll be there for you despite the risk and is willing to teach you

a-thing-or-two along the way. In this film, he's just a blatant scoundrel and not an interesting one at that. Wahlberg's Sully has no depth of character outside of caring about money.

As for other characters, there are two main villains in the film, Santiago Moncada played by Antonio Banderas, and Jo Braddock played by Tati Gabrielle. Banderas does what he can with what little he's given— in all honesty, it does feel a bit like he did this for a paycheck rather than having an interest in it. Gabrielle, however, is trying, and she fills the role of

a villain; she clearly had a lot of fun in this film.

The action is suitably extravagant, and none of it is particularly badly filmed, edited, or choreographed. The stunts are fun and it's clear that Holland is doing a lot of his own stunt work; however, none of it feels at all exciting. The lack of excitement for the stunt work is the result of a vastly weak script that skimps out on solid character work, to give a larger feeling of adventure. None of the characters are particularly interesting or relatable. They have quips, but no real depth

other than what's needed to get by for the plot.

The film, however, does have a brisk pace and can be enjoyed on a basic level. The film included some genuinely funny jokes, and it is for the most part watchable; I just found the film particularly... *bland*. That is the most poignant word I can associate with this film. Bland. It offers nothing new to the table for adventure film fans. If you've seen *Tomb Raider*, *Indiana Jones*, or even *National Treasure*, you've seen better offerings that the genre has to offer. Thus, I'm going to give *Uncharted* a rating of 5/10.

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Turning Red Review

A Fun, Silly Slice of Life, Where Puberty is A Red Panda



Image copyright Pixar and The Walt Disney Company

By Gabriel Velez
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Turning Red was directed by Domee Shi, who previously directed a Pixar short entitled, *Bao*. *Turning Red* is Shi's directorial debut of an animated feature, which means there is a lot of expectation for her to live up to Pixar's name.

If you were somewhat versed with *Turning Red* and its appearance on social media, you would know there is a surprising amount of controversy surrounding this film. The art style was heavily criticized, as well as the film's characters for being "cringey tweens." The response I'd give is "have you never interacted or been around children of that age? That's just what they do. Were you not a child?"

As reactions came through a few weeks ago, the film was gaining heavy praise, but some questionable criticisms. One critique, in particular, illustrated

the film as being incredibly narrow and exhausting to watch, simply because of a difference in ethnicity, and the gender of the protagonist. While I personally am not a Chinese-Canadian thirteen-year-old girl, I can safely say that even I could find relatability in this film.

Regarding the film's animation, I enjoyed the art style. It hearkens to Studio Ghibli and even 90s anime like *Sailor Moon*, and other anime from that time period. This seems to be the film's inspiration, as a very obvious reference to *The Girl Who Leapt Through Time* can be seen in the film's third act. It is more reminiscent of something like Aardman's *Wallace and Gromit*, but it still looks good in my opinion. The characters in the film are incredibly expressive, and it is refreshing to see that in a *Pixar* film. To keep up with the technicalities, I enjoyed Ludwig Göransson's score for the film. It was a throwback to the late

nineties, early 2000s music, as the film takes place in 2002.

The film stars Rosalie Chiang as Meilin Lee, the film's protagonist. She's a spunky, intelligent, overly confident thirteen-year-old girl, who works in her family's temple as an assistant. Meilin has a group of friends who are all diverse and spunky as well. Firstly, there is Miriam, who seems like the voice of reason, and she is incredibly supportive of Meilin. Then there is Priya, who is the dark/edgy girl that spins tales about mortality and reads spicy young adult novels. In addition, there is Abby, who is the loud and sporty one of the group, who just might have a bit too much energy. They're all incredibly supportive of each other, and they feel like a real unit.

As for the group, I thought I would never hear in a modern Disney film. That leads into the

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"Turning Red Review" >>>

Review: The Batman

The Latest Adventure of the Dark Knight Goes Detective Noir



Image copyright DC and Warner Bros.

By Eoin Haggerty
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Matt Reeves' take on *The Dark Knight* is a grisly yet familiar story of redemption and how one must face their past, no matter how unwanted it is. Its epic

runtime of nearly three hours is not unwarranted as it lets the city of Gotham live and breathe—along with the characters that inhabit it. Though, at points, the world may seem fantastical and over the top, that is just the nature of *The Batman*.

Robert Pattinson stars as the titular hero, with Zoe Kravitz, Jeffrey Wright, and Colin Farrell filling the following roles of Cat woman, Commissioner Gordon, and the Penguin. Pattinson's approach to Batman is one previously seen, with him only in his second year of being the caped crusader. Pattinson's Bruce Wayne is also secretive and cold, perhaps still reeling from the trauma that made him into what he is. Kravitz's Selina Kyle is one we have seen before as well. As she is established as

a worker at a local lounge, who makes her money on the side as a thief, not unlike the animated adaptation of Cat woman, which also begins a will-they/won't they with Batman.

Although Gordon is not as involved with the main character, Wright brings a more weathered and on-edge approach to the character, like in the Harley Quinn television series. Colin Farrell as the Penguin was a fine addition to the cast as well, but I thought his New York accent was overdone at certain points in the movie. While all these actors do a good job making these characters their own, Paul Dano as the Riddler is, in my opinion, the standout star of this film.

This new version of the Riddler seemingly takes cues from serial killers, a far cry

from the jester-like Jim Carrey version of *Batman Forever*, and is bent on exposing the below-the-surface corruption running rampant throughout the New York-inspired city. Dano's intelligent yet neurotic interpretation frightens everyone who is unlucky enough to meet him.

Although the movie is called *The Batman*, it is decidedly more about the Wayne family and how their power has influenced everyone in Gotham, from club owners to mob bosses and even the District Attorney. This is like the storyline in the telltale video game adaptation of *Batman*, which sought to explore Bruce Wayne as a person and his legacy, yet the movie goes in to a much more engaging direction.

The visual aspect of the film

complements this detective noir story by inserting shots of Bruce Wayne looking at the clues at each crime scene, which as the events culminated together, some could compare to the finale of *The Dark Knight Returns*. The viewer also goes under the cowl, so to speak, with Batman at points in the film to see his process, and how through his eyes, his family has tarnished the streets of Gotham.

Overall, the almost 3-hour long movie about one of the world's most famous superheroes is one that takes its source material and ultimately spins a new and interesting narrative that fans surely won't want to miss.

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Turning Red Review

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film's comedy, which I found quite funny. It's all rather risqué for a Disney-Pixar film to do, and I'm surprised they let them get away with certain jokes. Not that kids wouldn't say the things shown in the film, (I've heard them say significantly worse, as we all have) it's just in a company like Disney, that is so obsessed with creating a family-friendly brand, it is nice seeing them acknowledge how people talk in day-to-day life.

As for the rest of the characters,

there is Ming, played by Sandra Oh, who seemed to relish the role, and was a scene-stealer from beginning to end. As for her character, I found her to be not as deeply rooted in the themes of the film.

The film is about puberty and the transition from childhood to adulthood. With Ming, the film seems to switch to a message about being a copy of our parents and respecting them, while also becoming our own person. If the film spent more time dissecting that dynamic between Meilin and her mother, then,

we'd have some *Encanto*-level messaging. I certainly found the high expectations from the parents relatable, as my parents do have certain expectations of me. Although Mei's experience with her parents was apparent, I wish the film adopted a more serious approach to the issue, rather than a comedic one.

Furthermore, the film struggled to balance the seriousness of the topics at hand, especially family relationships. It seems more focused on being funny and quirky (which it is, and I won't take that away from the film)

rather than going in-depth on its themes. However, that is really my only significant flaw with the film, as overall, I had a great time watching it.

Turning Red is funny, has relatable characters, great visuals and music, and a message that while I do think is a little muddled should be talked about and should be normalized. It's not the first film to tackle the perspectives of a young person, but more is better in this regard. I'm going to rate it a solid 8/10 from me; I highly recommend it.

BOOK LAUNCH & OPEN MIC

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