

# THE DRAGON

The Student Newspaper for Middlesex Middle School!

## Recycling returns to MMS

### Blue bins bring renewed routine this holiday season

By C. Artemis, Silver Team

The administration here at Middlesex recently changed our paper wasting policy. Blue plastic bins, which were placed in every classroom, are now found in every hallway in the school. This had been an idea in many student's and teacher's heads, but no one had been able to put this idea to work until now.

A couple weeks ago, the Student Council elections were held. Many candidates insisted on having a recycling program for our school. A few weeks after, the idea was carried through.

After all, there is no logical argument against it: it's good for the environment, and gets kids interested in working on other projects to save our planet. Nothing can go wrong!

#### What you need to know!

- MMS recycles white paper, colored paper, newspaper, magazines, etc. We can recycle lined paper with the tiny strip of plastic coating on the edge (i.e. the reinforcement paper), but not something entirely covered

in plastic. That means no laminated paper!

- Have you ever noticed the little triangle on the bottom of plastic bottles with the numbers in the middle? Plastics with any number, 1 – 7 can now be recycled. It used to be only 2's and 3's!
- Used batteries AAA, AA, B,C,D, or any other size should not be put in the regular garbage or the recycling bins at school or at home. We have a plastic box on the Message Center counter for



the batteries.

- Here's something lots of people are confused about. We do not recycle any type of paper that is associated with food, such as napkins, paper plates, paper cups, and paper towels even if they are clean and unused. They are not the kind of paper the recycling company can recycle. Also, please NO TISSUES!! It's really gross when you have to pick someone else's used tissues out of the bin!
- Did you know that the only metal objects to be collected are cans? Since the cafeteria uses the most cans, the kitchen staff will have a bin for metal cans. Please don't come in with your used robot and hope it will be recycled. Because it won't... sorry.

We would like to recognize Mr. Keen for his hard work in putting together this new program. Mr. Keen, a 7th grade social studies teacher, was responsible for organizing the recycling program that ended a few years ago, and through his tireless efforts, it is back!

For his efforts, and the efforts of the entire school, MMS was recently featured in the local paper for this new program. So students remember to keep recycling!

### MMS "Pumps Up" the Weight Room

By Austin McLaughlin, Green Team

The MMS weight room recently received a face lift, and students in all three grades are excited to get their hands on the brand new climbing wall and the interactive video game, *Dance, Dance Revolution*, for Nintendo Wii.

These new work-out implements will help kids build muscles. Gym teacher, Mr. Zeyer, comments that, "The climbing wall helps develop upper body strength, while *Dance, Dance Revolution* works on cardio".

Not only do these entertaining activities work on your muscles and endurance, but they provide an experience like no other. The climbing wall's unique ability to shape your upper body, and DDR's simplistic way of working on your cardio provide an exciting experience for all Middlesex students.

The retro looks of the game play in DDR provide a bubbly screen to look at as you focus on your score. The object is to step on the up, down, left, or right arrows on the mat that you dance on, coordinating your steps with the game, which requires you to step on

the correct arrow when the in-game arrow passes over its silhouette.

This requires consistency, as combo points do help rack up your score. At the end of each 2-4 player match, you receive a grade based on your performance, ranging from S (the best) to E (the worst) on difficulty ranging from basic to extreme.

Many funky songs will play as you dance it off with friends in gym class. Combined with the powerful feeling of having a high score, DDR makes any gym class a retro, enthusiastic experience.

The arrival of the climbing wall has many students excited, as no students in grades 6th to 8th have had the chance to experience it.

The climbing wall has a horizontal line going from its right side to its left side, and around an inverse corner to show recommended height while climbing across. It is most common for gym teachers to instruct students to go right to left, because if you started on the left, you would start at a corner.

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## Album Review: *London Calling* 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary - The Clash

By Cameron Van de Graaf, Green Team

When I think of *London Calling*, I think of the greatest punk rock album of all time. In my mind, this album handily beats out any of the Sex Pistols or The Ramones' offerings by a long shot. However, it is impossible to properly define this album in one genre.

Instead, *London Calling* is a mix of punk rock, rockabilly, ska, reggae and jazz. The reason for this expansion in the musical palette of the Clash was a visit the band took to Jamaica before the recording of the album. The Clash even recorded a song with Bob Marley while there.

And to me, it is important to consider this as an album. Today, most people download a hit track by an artist, and never buy a complete album.

I think that listening through an album is a special experience. Listening to the progression of songs, the attitude of the complete work evokes feelings in me that listening to a solitary song cannot.

One of the facets that make this album so potent is the fervor and belief in the music of the Clash. At the time, they were rebelling against the corporate rock and roll mentality that was so pervasive at the end of the 1970s. Indeed, one of the songs on the album, Koka Kola, even pokes fun at the same corporate structure.

But I think that this album has relevance even today, and the fury of the music lives on. It is amazing to note the critical acclaim and success of this album after many of the other bands in the U.K. punk scene had crashed and burned or sold out to the same corporate machinery that they had once railed against.

For example, the Sex Pistols only released one album before their fury caused

them to implode. Generation X was only around for 3 or 4 years before Billy Idol went on to a more successful solo career. And of those that did stick around; none of them achieved much critical or commercial success.

Some of the greatest Clash songs ever were featured in this album, and they would profoundly influence the future of music. As I said earlier, this album is inspired by many different genres.

One of my favorite songs by the Clash, "Death or Glory," is clearly a hybrid between reggae, ska, and punk rock.

"Train in Vain" was the Clash's first successful single in the United States, hitting 23 on the Billboard Hot 100. The song ventures further into pop territory than is the norm for The Clash; however it is still quite catchy and one of the better songs by the band.

"Spanish Bombs," a song about the Spanish Civil War, is the most passionate and instrumentally beautiful on the album. It is personally my favorite Clash song.

And then we get to "London Calling," for many the song that defines The Clash. Joe Strummer warns us to beware nuclear meltdown, and at the same time fear an ice age. It is not so much that the lyrics to this song make sense, but the spirit portrayed is one of the strongest examples in the album.

The Clash was revolutionary, and this was their most revolutionary album. And the reason I reviewed this now? December 14 marked the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this landmark album's release. The proliferation of genres, and the unbridled fury that gives life to the songs, shows that this album is truly one for the ages.

## Book Review: *The 39 Clues* to a great series...

By Brendan Ferguson, Gold Team

What if you discovered you belonged to the most influential family in human history? If you were offered a million dollars or a chance for eternal power, what would you choose? What if you accepted, knowing there would be no going back? What if you knew going on this adventure would change your life forever and possibly kill you?

If you're pondering on any of these questions, then this is the book for you.

At ages eleven and fourteen, Dan and Amy Cahill are at a down point in their lives. With the death of their beloved grandmother, Grace, and the forgetting of any memories of their deceased parents, they are at, what feels like to them, rock bottom.

At the reading of Grace's will, Amy and

Dan realize that they belong to the most influential family in the world. They are given the choice to either take a million dollars and walk away, or receive the first of 39 clues to discover a humanity changing secret.

There are six other teams in this competition; all of them smarter, stronger, braver, and richer than Dan and Amy ever could imagine being. Will they accept the challenge? Read the book to find out.

*The 39 Clues: Maze of Bones* is not only a book of grieving and sadness, but a book filled with adventure, sibling bonding, and information. From nine to ninety, anyone can read this intriguing novel.

## Restaurant Review: Barcelona!

By Breana Del Gatto, Bronze Team

This is the place to be! *Barcelona*, a tapas bar in Stamford, located at 222 Summer Street is the latest of six restaurants in the chain.

Pictures that symbolize the restaurants native Spain surround the brown wooden walls making you feel comfortable and at home. The warmth of *Barcelona* and the friendly staff get a ten!

The restaurant is Zagat rated, and its modern style stands out from the moment you see the bold black letters "Barcelona", when walking in.

As you walk in, you will see a crowded bar filled with laughter and chatter. If you prefer a quieter place to eat, then you could always ask to sit in one of the separate rooms that have doors that you can close to block the noise.

Although the restaurant is not quite packed at the "early" hours of the night, around 7 or 8, it starts to get crowded around 9 and 10.

*Barcelona* is on a busy street, so do not look forward to a "pretty" view. On the bright side, if you wanted to have an evening out with your friends, you could definitely stop here for a stomach-filling feast before stopping at any in a number of local stores for a sweet end to the night.

The home made empanada on the tapas bar menu, is a delicacy. They are like little Jamaican beef patties, but filled with spicy beef, or sweet chicken. They come with two sauces, guacamole and red pepper sauce. (I recommend that you eat the sweet chicken with the red pepper sauce to add a little spice, and the spicy beef with the guacamole to make it a little sweeter.)

Mrs. Boulier, who visits *Barcelona* regularly, says, "I also recommend the mushrooms with goat cheese. They are one of (*Barcelona*'s) most popular menu items, and a personal favorite."

For the main course, the paella is fantastic. It takes about thirty minutes for the main course to be prepared, but it is worth waiting for. It has a mix of spicy rice, shrimp (the whole body including the eyes), clams, chorizo, and muscles.

The dim lights do make you tired, so you might not be able to stay awake for dessert! However, there is always another solution. You could stop by some of the delis and parlors around town, maybe Dairy Queen once spring time rolls around (It is closed for the winter).

This restaurant gets an A+! *Barcelona* is the place to be, so don't miss out!

HOLIDAY NOTE: For gift ideas, *Barcelona* gift cards are even being sold at Costco.

## Last Minute Gift Ideas

By Barbara Bell, Green Team

There are only four days left until Christmas, but you still haven't gotten gifts for most of the people on your list. Here's what you should do.

If you can get a ride to the mall, check out the following stores...

- **Brookstone** - This store is always a great place to start, especially for technology lovers. The prices might be higher than you want to pay, but you can always find little things, whether it's portable speakers for your iPod or a digital photo frame key-chain.
- **Forever 21** - Not only are the clothes inexpensive, but you can find jewelry, bags, and lip-gloss at the counters. Perfect for girls who love fashion.
- **GameStop** - The store's name pretty much gives it away. Here you can search for all your favorite video games, from Halo 3 to Mario Kart. Great place to shop for your brother.
- **Barnes n Noble** - They might be known only for books, but you can still find great games, magazines, and notebooks as you search between isles. Buy your parents' presents here.

If you can go into town...

- Visit your favorite food store, like **Panera Bread** or **Robeks**. Most eateries like this sell gift cards, especially over the holidays. Even check out the stores you may not have thought about, like **Uncle's Deli** and **Height's Pizza**.
- **Swoozie's** - Formerly known as the Blue Tulip, this shop is the best place to go if you don't know what to look for. The personalized stationery is always a smart (and inexpensive) present.

If all else fails... iTunes gift cards always do the trick. Choose the amount you want to spend and surprise a friend or family member with the gift of music. Have a great break!

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## Flipside of the Amazon

By Oliver Burke, Red Team



## In the Giving Mood?

By Sandhya Avula, Green Team

Thousands of "oohs" and "aahs" erupt all around the world at the same time. Little kids and grownups can hear the joy of Christmas everywhere. Everyone feels especially enthralled about how this special holiday is truly a time for giving.

Unfortunately, there are still many children who do not wake up with presents under their tree, as well as a lack of food and warm clothing to enjoy this holiday.

That is why MMS encourages you to give, not only to friends and family, but to others in need as well.

Through the hard work of the Maroon team, our school has already helped out by giving presents to the 'Toys for Tots' Foundation, but we can still do even more. By giving presents to groups like 'Person To Person', you too can make one more kid smile on Christmas day. Here is what you need to know:

You can give presents to the 'Person to Person' office which is nearby to school - 1864 Post Road, Darien, CT, 06820 - 5802. You can contact them with any questions by calling either (203) 655-0048 or (203) 662-0410.

You can also go to their website at [www.p2pdarien.org](http://www.p2pdarien.org) for details. Remember, you can also donate food and clothing to make someone's Christmas extra special.

## Weight Room Sports New Features

Continued from page 1...

As you climb, you realize that some of the rocks jutting out are hard to hold on to, so you begin to scramble to the next rock jutting out. This unique feature allows you to climb at your own pace and provides an exhilarating experience sure to make you come back for more.

Both of the newly introduced features in the weight room make many kids vote to use the weight room over dodge ball.

"The games are more competitive and a lot more fun than lifting boring weights," remarks Green Team student, Andy Peña.

With the majority of students saying "hurrah" at this fantastic new improvement to our school, it's something no student should miss. The combined workout and enchanting experience lets you have a unique time in the weight room, with the added fitness.



# Kindness Counts Makes Yard Work Look Easy

By Will Steinthal, Green Team

For the first time at MMS, Kindness Counts took on a new task.

When the group first started at Middlesex, Mr. Smith and his Kindness Counts crew would visit St. Luke's Church once a month, and group members would cook a buffet-style dinner for those in need.

Although these visits always turn out well and are a lot of fun, the members of Kindness Counts and Mr. Smith want to do more. Some group members explained that the feeling of kindness they get from doing a good deed is so empowering, and they want more.

So when Mr. Smith heard there were elderly people in Darien that needed help keeping their lawn in shape, he called upon his rascals and went straight to help.

Mr. Smith tended to all the overgrown plants, while the Kindness Counts group,

with some parent volunteers, started raking as much as they could. With the help of all the members, piles of leaves seemed to spring up sporadically across the yard.



*Kindness Counts members pose with their rakes during a break in the action (Courtesy of Kindness Counts).*

The work took some time, but with the number of people that showed up, the work wasn't too hard. The lawn itself wasn't very big, but there were lots of small crevasses in the flowerbeds and around the decaying shed. The house was finished in the time allotted, which was until it was dark, at about 4:30.

Kindness Counts is a great program founded by Mr. Smith. Although there were a lot of kids, Kindness Counts can always use more help.

Think about all the things you have in your life, and all the things you can do. Now think about what your life would be like without that.

That is a reality for some people. If this makes you want to help out, talk to Mr. Smith or listen to the announcements. Just remember, in everything we do, now and forever, kindness counts!

## *New Clubs Bring Special Interests to Middlesex*

By Kelly Brustman, Green Team

Every year here at MMS, there are a few days that students absolutely dread; I can tell you right now that one of them is picking clubs.

It might not seem like a big deal at first glance, but teachers and parents don't understand how important this decision is to us. They don't realize that there is a lot of criteria that the clubs have to meet, like having friends in it, being fun, and pertaining to the student's interests.

Lucky for everyone there is some hope because we have two new wonderful clubs: the Quiz Bowl Club run by Mr. Romeo and the Middle-Earth Club run by Ms. Petersen.

Upon interviewing these two teachers as well as a couple of the students partaking in these clubs, everyone seemed to be having a lot of fun and enjoying themselves.

First, let's take a look at what Mr. Romeo has to say about his club:

**Q:** What is the Quiz Bowl Team all about?

**Mr. Romeo:** Well, it's modeled after other schools' teams. The students compete in online competitions, as well as traveling to different places to compete.

**Q:** Can anybody join?

**Mr. R.:** Yes, anybody can join yet we want serious competitors.

**Q:** What are some of your short and long term goals for the club?

**Mr. R.:** This year, I really just want the club to get its feet wet and get used to the aspects of competing and teamwork. In the long term, really I want us to become a league, comparable to the Math team, and have set competitions.

**Q:** When and how often do you meet?

**Mr. R.:** We meet once a week after school on Wednesdays.

**Q:** What are some achievements that you have achieved up to this point?

**Mr. R.:** Well, we have placed 281<sup>st</sup> out of 577 in one of our competitions. This might not seem like a huge win, but for beginners it's a great start.

Two participants of the Quiz Bowl team, 7<sup>th</sup> graders Kate Halabi and Sofia Imbimbo, both of the Purple team, also talked about their experience in this dynamic new club.

**Q:** What's your favorite aspect of the club?

**Kate:** It is fast and demanding, so you have to be quick on your feet and alert.

**Sofia:** I really enjoy buzzing in on answers. Also I feel like by answering these trivia questions about topics that you aren't quite familiar with it makes you smarter.

**Q:** How do competitions run?

**Kate:** Usually, there is just random trivia that varies from topic to topic.

**Q:** If you could set one goal for the club what would it be?

**Kate:** Really, I just want to compete against other teams like ours.

**Q:** What are some skills that you walked away with from being in the club?

**Sofia:** I learned teamwork skills, made some new friends, and learned to rely on others.

**Q:** Would you encourage people to join?

**Kate:** Yes, definitely, it's a lot of fun and I think people would really enjoy it.

These students really enjoy their new club and take pride in it. Mr. Romeo really has a hold on things and has big aspirations for the club. Keep up the good work you guys!

Joining the new club ranks is Ms. Petersen's Middle-Earth Club. Before our interview, I really didn't know what the Middle-Earth Club was all about. I met with 8<sup>th</sup> graders Maggie Murphy, Lia Barsanti, Phoebe Taylor, all on the Navy Team, and 8<sup>th</sup> grader Kelly Karczewski on the Green Team.

**Q:** What's the Middle-Earth club all about?

**A:** Well, every meeting we bring in show-and-tell items that related to Lord of the Rings or central themes in it and share it with anybody. So far we have brought in action figures! Overall, though we talk about Lord of the Rings and just have tons of fun!

**Q:** Do you ONLY talk about Lord of the Rings?

**A:** Not all the time, but if we do talk about anything else it has to tie back to Lord of the Rings.

As you can tell both of these clubs include students with unique interests. Now with these new additions to the club list MMS is even better.

If you or anyone you know is interested or has questions about either the Quiz Bowl or Middle-Earth just go see Mr. Romeo or Ms. Petersen, and they are more than willingly to answer them. Keep these clubs in mind the next time you are considering what to sign up for because they are both very fun, and I think you will really enjoy them!

## Student Council Update

By Juliet Ruhe, Tan Team &  
C. Artemis, Silver Team

Many people have been asking, "What does Student Council do?"

Student Council helps organize & run charity bake sales along with helping to approve new ideas for the school.

One student council representative said, "We organize all things student related." And we do!

For example, we organize MMS spirits days. But, after Christmas Break, we are starting a Student Tutor Program. And we have many more surprises in store!

Here is a schedule of what we have organized in the past couple weeks:

- **Monday, Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>** - Grade 6 Bake Sale
- **Wednesday, Dec. 16<sup>th</sup>** - Grade 7 Bake Sale
- **Friday, Dec. 18<sup>th</sup>** - Grade 8 Bake Sale
- **Monday, Dec. 21<sup>th</sup>** - Crazy Holiday Outfit Day
- **Tuesday, Dec. 22<sup>th</sup>** - Twin (or Triplet) Day! Dress exactly alike as a friend. (No actual twins are allowed to be "twins")
- **Wednesday, Dec. 23<sup>th</sup>** - Superhero & Team Color Day! Dress like your favorite superhero, make one up, or dress in your team color!

## The View from Nature's Classroom

By C. Artemis, Silver Team

As we boarded the bus to Nature's Classroom, we were all very antsy to get there. As we boarded to come back to Darien, we were very unwilling to leave.

The first thing we did after we arrived was move our stuff into our cabins. It was a little cramped, but we liked it anyway.

"I like being with all of my friends here," one student said. "We get to stay up late and chat for as long as we wanted!"

The next thing we did was eat lunch. All of the meals served at NC were spectacular. Spaghetti, garlic bread, pizza, and nachos were among the favorites.

But even with all the yummy food, we wasted forty pounds of it at our first meal. Mason, our camp director, taught us about "ort" (the wasted food) through a system of recording it called the "Ort Report". We learned about how the wasted food added up and hurt our planet.

"Take what you want, but eat what you take," was one of Mason's favorite lines.

After each class and meal, we had free time before our next class. In this time, we were allowed to visit the petting zoo, play wiffle ball in the brand new Thunder Dome, or go down a giant tube slide.

We were then allowed to sign up for outdoors elective classes. Being outdoors really got to some people.

"The cold was definitely the worst part of the trip," another student complained. "We were wearing five layers at all times. I felt like a giant marshmallow!"

After our classes and dinner, we went to our nighttime field group. Our first night we went on a "quest", which was really just lots of cool experiments. Most of them

involved burning something or watching it explode. The next night was "night experience", where we learned about nature and what it does in the dark.

Our second full day was dedicated to the day hike. We packed lunches and explored the outdoors! My field group climbed a steep cliff without a trail. Our sandwiches were practically soup by the time we got to the top, but we didn't care. The view was amazing, and we got to roast marshmallows on an open fire! Other field groups hiked up the trail and joined us. Some groups hiked around the entire NC campus!

Dinner that second night was especially interesting. One of the counselors, Hustle, challenged us. He said that if we could get under 10 pounds of ort at that meal, he would dress in a powder blue Cinderella gown and help each and every one of us load our suitcases onto the bus the next morning.

That really got us eating. We literally licked our plates clean, trying to get under 10 pounds of ort. At the time of the ort report, we were all at the edge of our seats. Hustle dragged out the moment. We were about to explode when finally, he announced reluctantly, "You guys wasted..... eight pounds of ort!!" The entire cafeteria erupted in cheers and laughter.

Hustle kept true to his word and appeared the next morning in a powder blue Cinderella gown, armed with suitcases, backpacks, and sleeping bags. It was quite possibly the funniest thing I had ever seen.

As we sat on the bus to head back to Darien, we had fond memories of all of the things we learned, all of the cool stuff we did, and all of the times we had spent with our teachers and friends. It's three days we'll always remember.

## Looking to advertise with THE DRAGON?

Contact the advisors, Mr. Sorensen or Mrs. Boulier, for opportunities to advertise your event with the only student newspaper at Middlesex! You can also email us at:

[TheDragon@darienps.org](mailto:TheDragon@darienps.org)



## Variety Show Three - An Insider's Look

By Dominick Wood, Bronze Team

The bright lights of the stage illuminated the keyboard in front of me. I began to let my fingers flow across the enormous grand piano before me, and the song had become memorized to such an extent that I could do it while sleeping.

After the eighth measure, Claire's voice sang harmoniously with the grand's. My heart skipped a beat when suddenly, I realized I had lost count. A complete guess of when to change chords was right, and my act was over. The entire show was a success, and every act was fantastic.

It feels good to know of all of the good things that we are doing for Nicanor School. Thanks to our fundraising, they are now a model school, and the only one with tiled floors in all of Panama.

Even from the start, the goal was always to build a computer lab. Variety

Show 1 covered this and the library, in part helped by an anonymous donor who came with a huge check.

In Variety Show 2, we had enough money to build a poultry farm with the help of yet again another anonymous donor's large check.

Sadly, in Variety Show 3, no anonymous donor came, probably because of our current economic climate, but we still have enough money to build a playground.

Kindness Counts is thinking of holding a Panama Night to help raise more money for Nicanor School. The group will have Panamanian music and dancing plus food from the region.

Once the final amount is calculated from all of this work, Mr. Smith will travel to Nicanor School in April to deliver a check. We hope Nicanor School will inspire the Panamanian government to make every school in Panama as well constructed as this one.

# Look Down: Are You Following in Someone Else's Shoes?

By Sarah LeHan, Red Team

Imagine: someone walks into our school from outer space. They've never seen or heard of Middlesex Middle School or anyone in it. In fact, let's pretend they've never heard of *any* Earthling besides a handful of celebrities like Taylor Swift or Barack Obama.

So, this outer-space-person, being very intelligent as he is, looks through the walls of the school with his x-ray vision and sees all of the MMS students. Every single one of them. And, in keeping with ancient outer-space-person customs, looks down at the feet of the student body. And he finds out a lot. And not just how smelly 1,170 middle schoolers' feet can be.

Okay, so no one from outer space has ever visited our school. But if someone were to walk into our school, they *would* be able to find out a lot.

Look at your own feet! I bet you they are, on any given day, clad in either UGGs, Nikes, Converse, or Rainbows, and the list of brand-name shoes goes on and on. The list of shoes-that-aren't-popular-I-just-wore-them-because-I-felt-like-it is extremely short, however. Short enough that, for some people, myself maybe included, you may have to close your eyes to see it.

What does all this foot examination business reveal? It reveals that we are way too prone to taking what people say is popular and accepting it wholeheartedly as the national anthem of our foot, whether or not it has good lyrics or a good tune.

Take Converse, for example. I have a pair of Converse and love them. But I'm sometimes reluctant to wear them. Why? Because I *can't* jump over as many stairs as I would like to as I'm racing to lunch without my feet hurting, I *can't* jump off the wall I

pass on my way home from school without the shock, low as the wall is, racing through the sole off the shoe; and I can't run *nearly* as fast as I would like to when I'm wearing Converse.

I remember last spring I overheard an adult say to his friend about Converse, "They're called basketball shoes, but if you tried to play basketball in them you'd break your ankle."

This is exactly my point, especially when, again last spring, I had an ongoing argument with one of my best friends about whether Converse were real sneakers or not. As you may have guessed, I stubbornly said they weren't, regardless of what the box says.

And yet, despite the inconveniences Converse have, no one seems to care. In spring and fall, and even winter, they dominate the halls. All because they're "popular."

I also find it a bit strange that the dominant color of "Rainbows" is brown. The only thing that I've noticed that *isn't* brown is the brand-name tag on the shoe with a minuscule rainbow on it. What's exactly so Rainbowish about *brown* flip-flops? I may be missing out on some hidden reason that only I have never heard of; but to me, they don't seem very Rainbowish at all. And yet everyone's wearing them, just because they, too, are popular.

This rant may make me seem completely crazy. However, I'm not the only person who thinks that the feet of MMS are a *little* bit too obsessed with name brands. When I asked why people seem to wear only popular shoes, one eighth grader says that, "It comes down to peer pressure. People don't want to be singled out."

Some people, though most likely not many, may see a sneaker or boot that they

really like. They don't buy it though, because it's not a name brand. For example, one person told me that she saw a pair of boots in an L.L. Bean catalogue that she liked just as much, if not better, than UGGs. But she didn't put it on her Christmas list, for the most part because she didn't want to be scorned about having "fake UGGs."

That brings up another question: why are UGGs, and other brands, like Rainbows, so much better than the "fake" brands? If EMUs or another non-UGG shearing boot brand had made it as the "boot-that-every-single-girl-has," would some people look down on people with UGGs?

Another MMS student said she has fake UGGs, but she doesn't care. She says it's easier to find her size, and she likes the price better. It really annoys her, though, when people walk up to her and ask "What types of shoes are *those*?" or "Why don't you have UGGs?" Besides those irritating moments, she doesn't care one bit whether she has real UGGs or not.

If you head down to the local shoe store, you'll most likely find that there's no real difference between shoes that are "in" and shoes that are "out-or-else-I've-never-heard-of-the-brand-before-so-they-must-stink," except maybe the price tag.

Let's go back to the alien. So, this outer-space-person, being very intelligent as he is, looks through the walls of the school and sees all of the MMS students. And, when he looks down at the feet of the student body, this time, he found something different.

He sees that every single Middlesex student is creative and unique, which is something citizens of Earth already know. He finds out that we do what we think is right, and that we are able to go against the crowds and make our own decisions. He *could* find out a lot, if we only let him.

# What Could Go Wrong SANTA?

By Jeremy Howe, Contributing Comic



## *New Advice Columnists: Holly & Molly Solve Your Problems*

Dear Holly,

The person with the gym locker next to me has a really bad smelling locker. What should I do? Should I tell them to clean out their dirty clothes?

- Smelly Locker

Dear Smelly Locker,

It's probably not the best idea to go up to your neighbor's locker and say, "Your locker smells gross; clean it out." One thing you can do, is get some air freshener and spray it around your locker to get the scent to go away, or you can bring them an extra bag on Friday and say, "here do you want a bag to take your clothes home?"

-Holly ☺

Dear Holly,

I got a really bad grade on my French quiz, and I don't know how to tell my parents? What should I do?

- Bad Grade

Dear Bad Grade,

The worst thing you can possibly do is not tell your parents at all. First, go in to see your teacher and get some extra help on what you got wrong. Then ask if you can do some extra credit work to make up some of the bad grade. When you get home, show your parents the extra work and tell them about the grade straight out. Tell them that you will try harder next time, and you will go in for help before the next quiz. If they ground you, just go with it. Don't whine about it to them; it will just make it worse. Simply say, "I understand that you are mad, and I will do better next time."

-Holly ☺

Dear Holly,

I am having a lot of trouble with my family lately. I don't feel like I belong with them. They think that I am invisible, and talk about me when I am standing right there! It really hurts my feelings. What should I do?

-Left Out

Dear Left Out,

Your family loves you, and they will always love you. You could try talking to your parents about how you feel. Maybe they just don't realize you feel left out. It could all be a mistake. Or at dinner, you could talk to you family and say that you want to do a family event one day that you know has to involve all of you.

-Holly ☺

Dear Molly,

Today I was so tired that I almost fell asleep in the middle of math class! AAAAAA! What should I do so this does not happen more often?

- Sleepyhead

Dear Sleepyhead,

If you are on the verge of falling asleep in class, chances are you're not getting enough sleep! The average middle school kid should get 8 to 10 hours of sleep each night. If you are not getting enough sleep, you will be sleepy in class, and you will not be able to concentrate. You should try going to bed earlier. If you stay up really late finishing homework, maybe try to get some of it done during study hall, or start it right when you get home. If you are still feeling drowsy, ask your teacher if you can get a drink of water, or go to the bathroom so that you have a minute to refocus.

- Molly ♥

Dear Molly,

I am such a procrastinator! Whenever a test, or project is assigned, I find myself waiting until the last minute to work on it, or study. How can I budget my time so my grades improve?

- Procrastinator

Dear Procrastinator,

To solve your procrastination problem, set aside some extra time right when you get home from school to study for a test, or work on a project starting the day your teacher assigns it, and up until the day it is due, or that the test (or quiz) is going to be. If you find yourself starting to study and suddenly getting distracted, you should set up a study space for yourself that is free of interruptions. Also, if you have questions, don't be afraid to go in early to ask your teacher. You can also go in just for extra review if you don't have enough time to study at home. The teachers are here in the morning to help you!

- Molly ♥

Dear Molly,

I have been consistently late to class because I have to go to my locker after every period to switch my binders. How can I stop being tardy to class?

-Late to Class

Dear Late to Class,

When I was in sixth grade, I had the same problem! Some methods you could try is bringing more than one binder to each class so you don't have to always stop at you locker. If that makes your work load too heavy then, you could get one big binder to hold all of your subjects. What works for me is to have a morning binder and an afternoon binder so you only have to go to your locker before study hall.

- Molly ♥

# Hailie's How To... Study!

**NOTE:** Hailie is a student at MMS who, like you, has to deal with the daily trials and tribulations of middle school life. In her new column, she shares some insight into the techniques that have helped her deal with the various curveballs that Middlesex may have tossed her way.

### LET'S GET STARTED...

**Materials:** pencil, 3-subject notebook, desk, desk lamp, textbooks, flashcards, your school stuff to study from, and a pen.

There are different ways to study for different subjects. For example...

**SCIENCE:** This subject is easiest to study for. Mostly, you just have to memorize. Studying diagrams I have found is the most useful, but flashcards can also help with vocabulary.

**SOCIAL STUDIES:** For this subject, there are a few different ways to study. If you are

given a prompt beforehand, write out the essay. Then, create an acronym to help you remember what to say in order.

An acronym is a word formed from the initials of a name or series of ideas you want to memorize.

If it is just for a test, then do the same thing as you would science.

**LANGUAGE:** Practice saying the phrases in both the language and English. Then, write them all down in both languages, making sure to spell them all right. You can use flashcards or create an outline depending on your preferences.

**MATH:** The message in this subject is simple: practice, practice, practice. In other words, do problems. Do as many as possible until you get them right consistently.

I suggest doing problems that you can get the answers from the back of the textbook so you can check your work, or get

them from classzone.com.

**ENGLISH:** English is a little more complicated. Since there are many parts of English, I suggest you go to your teacher and ask them what to study. They will be the most help.

Some other important rules:

- Study the RIGHT THING! Double check with your teacher if you're not sure.
- Don't cram. Study a little every night.
- Come in for extra help if you need it.
- DON'T be afraid to fail. Be excited to own.
- Have a positive attitude. It helps.

That's all for now. Wait until the next **Dragon** for another HAILIE'S HOW-TOS!

## WRITER'S SPOTLIGHT

*A section dedicated to creative writing from MMS students!*

## *Fading*

By Jesse Flamand, Green Team

The vibrant pink is beginning to fade  
 The pedal is starting to curl under, like damp paper  
 I see the struggle the stem has to keep itself upright  
 It is beautiful in its misery  
 One last effort, a way to say goodbye, because soon it  
 will be dead  
 When I die I hope  
 I won't fade, or be forgotten  
 Like the smiles on a stranger's face  
 The hug of a dear friend  
 Or clouds that soar in funny shapes  
 I hope I leave something behind that will never go  
 away  
 Like footprints in the sand or fingerprints on a window  
 None of us will survive, and someday it will be over  
 You cannot fight it, but strive towards it  
 Make memories that live on  
 Stories that will be passed down  
 Grab hold and tell life to slow down  
 For if you don't, it will go on  
 No one is waiting for you  
 Telling you to push on  
 Go where others don't  
 Who knows what will happen  
 But make sure to never regret and never forget  
 The little things that made you happy  
 The dragonfly that landed on your nose  
 Or a heart-shaped rock  
 Those chunks of life are your salvation  
 Like a smile in a tough situation  
 Those are life's gifts to you  
 A way of saying sorry for all the things it took from you.

## *Where I Am Now*

By Teghan Guthrie, Green Team

The sky looks the same, from where I am now  
 Blue, like the ocean, white, like the fresh foamy surf  
 But everything else is different, wetter, softer, earthier  
 Colors changing, seasons come ready or not,  
 Breath in, breath out, steam in the cold, cold air

My foot falls silent in the mushy, mossy, green  
 Tree-lined, tree filled, endless, endless green  
 The night time is hushed and stiller and empty  
 With no coyote song echoing off the canyon walls  
 And no ocean rumbling like a grumpy old man

Western wind, hot, dry, driving, burning  
 Eastern wind, cold, whispy, carrying the red, red  
 leaves  
 The wind here whispers, like a weak frosty lullaby  
 Not roaring or taunting of the danger to come  
 Different to my skin, to my ears, to my soul.

The newness and strangeness is like an alien land  
 But peaceful, secure, comfortable, safe  
 No fear of the shaking earth and wind swept flames  
 That's made me jump from my bed.  
 There is beauty in where I am now.

## *Crickets*

By Caroline Freehan, Maroon Team

The trees do not dance tonight  
 There is no breeze for them to sway upon  
 The long majestic branches reach up to-  
 ward the sky  
 As if trying to reveal the heaven above  
 The blades of grass in front of me  
 Wobble uncertainly  
 They seem confused  
 As if wondering when the wind will blow

I hear a chorus of crickets  
 Broken only by the brave one  
 Who sings the loudest of all  
 He is the leader  
 The others are but sheep  
 Destined to follow the herd  
 He is like the rest of us  
 We all want to stand out  
 But not all of us have the courage  
 We all want to have a solo  
 But some of us will stay in the chorus  
 Behind the spotlight

For them all they will do is imitate work  
 Envy the brave and never  
 Appreciate themselves  
 They will never know  
 You should always be proud of your work  
 That the thoughts that you have written  
 down  
 Are the ones that should matter the most  
 They won't know  
 That when they copy someone  
 They are destroying part of who they are

They don't know  
 That by imitating someone  
 They are putting themselves down  
 They are saying  
 That they could never be that good  
 So why even try to do it  
 Even though you might not be as good  
 That doesn't mean that you shouldn't try it  
 So when someone is  
 The cricket in the background  
 It's not because they aren't good  
 It's that they aren't brave  
 Finally I hear another cricket  
 Burst into song  
 With the other lonely one  
 Their duet continues  
 A cold breeze comes in  
 To make the trees dance  
 They do, they are dancing and swaying  
 Waving their arms around and around  
 I can hear the crackle of dead leaves  
 As a louder cricket joins in

## *Tranquil Sunrise*

By Jack Reis, Maroon Team

Tranquility is but a bleak light in the eyes of millions,  
 Waiting to become brilliantly displayed across a  
 relaxed grin.  
 The wind speaks to the masses as a whispered voice,  
 Many hear it, but fewer understand it.  
 The call is weak, but strong in meaning.  
 Few follow it, and even less live by it,  
 But the few that live by it understand true tranquility.  
 And transcendentalism is born.

The words of most pass to them,  
 And they constantly respond, "Simplify, simplify,  
 simplify",  
 They see the world through both eyes as many do not.  
 They see the true world and nature that inhabits it,  
 They see the real sunrise that speaks to them,  
 And they have overcome trying to fit the world into a  
 miniature box,  
 But a bottomless pit of elegance.

The constraints of the common man,  
 Are cast to the dank shadows  
 They only live in past, and present, the constraints of  
 what will come are cast aside.  
 The bronze woven chains of the common man are  
 shattered by the true tranquillest.  
 When you find your true self,  
 The inner tranquility will shine freely.  
 The true transcendentalist has earned the tranquil  
 ability,  
 To break the shackles of the common man and be  
 free.

The common man is constrained by the chains of the  
 future,  
 But when that chain is broken,  
 True jubilancy shows itself,  
 And you may finally see that sunrise of tranquility.

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 publishing creative student writing!*

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