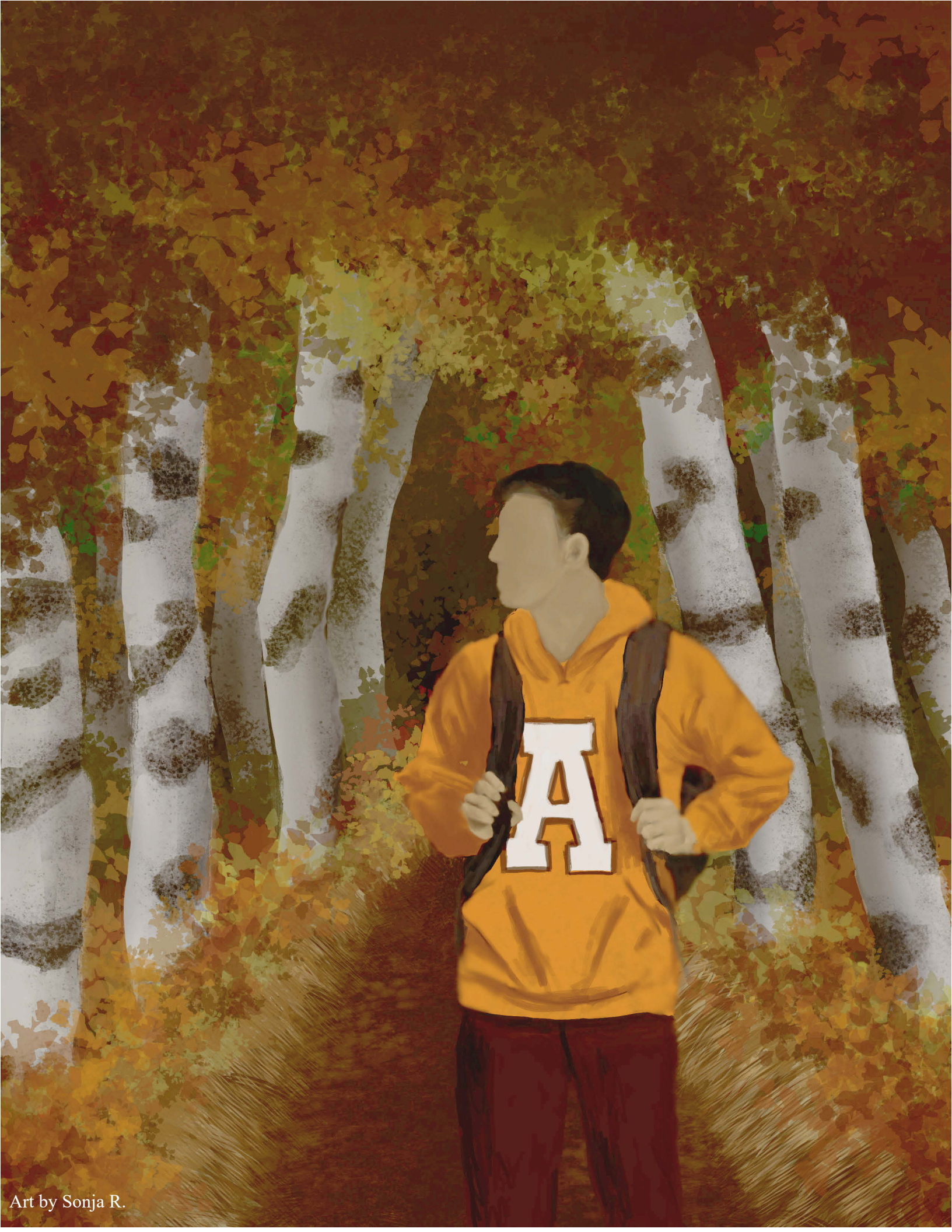


THE ADVOCATE

William Aberhart High School
October 13, 2026





Art by Sonja R.

"I STAND ON GUARD FOR ME": DOES DANIELLE SMITH REALLY SPEAK FOR THE PEOPLE?

By: Cameron W.



A small group of separatists gathered outside of the Alberta Legislature on August 29, 2026. A recent poll has suggested that approximately 53% of UCP supporters are planning on choosing Option Two on the separation question on October 19 (Yuet Man Lee)

Last month, every Alberta household received a *Guide to the 2026 Referendum*. This pamphlet was the result of a four million dollar, taxpayer funded advertising campaign that can be summed up in one word: propaganda. The guide outlines the Alberta Government's very partisan positions on the first nine questions that will appear on the upcoming October 19 referendum, and a misleading tale of what led up to the tenth question on separation. Gil McGowan, president of the Alberta Federation of Labour and former Alberta NDP hopeful, released a video demonstrating various ways to destroy the pamphlet including burning it, shredding it and running it over with a Ford F-150—the truck of a true Albertan. Unfortunately, the circumstances surrounding the referendum are not so funny and the story of how we got to the point has made one thing clear: Danielle Smith may be a populist, but that doesn't mean that she speaks for all of the people.

Premier Danielle Smith has stated that she self identifies as a "libertarian populist," claiming to speak for ordinary people (populism), as well as personal freedom and limited government intervention (libertarianism). Numerous articles have been written about what style of populism she represents, but her actions on the referendum are objectively what political

theorists would call an exclusionary populist.

The word "exclusionary" is key to understanding the problem that this type of populism creates. The word democracy, originating from the Greek *demokratia*, can be split into two parts—*demos*, roughly translating to "common people," and *kratos*, meaning "rule." Populism claims to give these "common people" one, unified voice. The problem is that while a populist leader may claim to represent all people, no society will ever share identical values and beliefs between all of its members.

Exclusionary populism tends to see the "ordinary people" as a very homogeneous group, relegating minority groups to "outsiders." It could be said that the October 19 referendum's first five questions on immigration demonstrate this, since they speak about immigrants in a xenophobic way.

Furthermore, these questions, plus the other four constitutional questions, are also things that really appeal to hardcore UCP voters, a very politically homogeneous group. While Danielle Smith says that she is "seeking a mandate from voters" on this issue, it is hard to square that circle since the government has been anything but neutral on these

nine questions. Going back to *The Guide to the 2026 Referendum* mailer, every graph and explanation is very carefully worded to convince the "ordinary citizens" of the government's position on each question.

These positions happen to perfectly match those of the UCP's political base.

Exclusionary populism can also be seen within Question 10, the referendum on having a referendum on separation. *The Guide to the 2026 Referendum* reiterates the claim that Question 10 "stems from the citizen initiative process, which allows a question to be put to voters if a minimum number of valid signatures are gathered in a petition." The government has constantly been justifying the inclusion of Question 10 on the ballot by saying that more than 700,000 Albertans have signed petitions asking for a referendum on separation. What the premier and her ministers have constantly neglected to mention, however, is that more than half of those Albertans, 438,568 to be exact, signed the Forever Canadian petition pushing for a question asking, "if Alberta should remain in Canada," that was never intended to appear on a referendum.

Under the old rules for citizen-initiated petitions introduced by UCP premier Jason Kenney, electors had 90 days

to gather an adequate number of signatures—10% of eligible electors if they wanted to put a vote to the legislature or propose a policy, and 20%, with additional requirements, to pose the question as a referendum. Thomas Lukaszuk, the proponent of the petition chose the legislative proposal option. The Smith government then decided to change the *Citizens Initiative Act*—they lowered the signature requirements to 10% of people who voted in the last election (as opposed to total electors) for both types of questions, and increased the time allotted for the collection of these signatures.

After the successful verification of the Forever Canadian petition, the question was referred to a legislative committee to determine whether the question would appear on a referendum. During the debate on this matter, the UCP caucus sent out an official press release that announced the committee's decision to recommend the question be placed on the ballot, despite no vote having taken place in the legislature. The UCP has sought to blame Lukaszuk and Forever Canadian for the inclusion of a separation question on the October referendum, yet it is abundantly clear that the 34-word referendum on a referendum bears little resemblance to the original legislative proposal.

In fact, not a single question on the October referendum is the result of a citizen-initiated petition. Alberta-based country singer Corb Lund's "Water Not Coal" citizen-initiated petition that called for a ban on coal mining in the Eastern Slopes of the Rocky Mountains gathered significantly more than the required

amount of signatures, but failed in a verification process that some experts have called "questionable." Even if the petition had been deemed successful, Danielle Smith announced that "there wouldn't be enough" time to prepare the question for October 19 since it wasn't submitted to Elections Alberta before June 1. Smith had conveniently neglected to mention that deadline imposed by Elections Alberta until after it had passed. Moreover, under the current rules created by the Smith government, a referendum can't be held within a year of a provincial election, meaning that this question couldn't be put to voters for another two years (assuming that the next election is held on October 18, 2027).

If Danielle Smith really was looking out for the interests of every Albertan, she could have put this question on the ballot, which, given the way the government has seemingly manipulated the citizen-initiative process, she probably would have been able to. She also could have put a question on the ballot related to an issue that is actually being talked about by a large number of Albertans, such as the construction of data centres, which a recent poll found that only seven percent of Albertans "strongly support." Instead, the Smith government opted for ten questions that strongly appeal to their political base, the people who would be able to remove Smith as leader of the UCP should she fail a leadership review. According to a September poll by Alberta pollster Janet Brown, almost 100% of NDP supporters say that they will vote for *Option One* ("Should Alberta remain a province of Canada?") whereas approximately 53% of UCP voters plan

to vote for *Option Two* ("Should the Government of Alberta commence the legal process required under the Canadian Constitution to hold a binding provincial referendum on whether or not Alberta should separate from Canada?").

I think that a recent episode of the CBC sketch comedy show *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* put Danielle Smith's position on separation best. Comedian Stacey McGunnigle played the premier in a spoof of the government's TV ads saying, "I stand on guard for me."

Whatever happens on October 19, it is undeniable that Danielle Smith doesn't really care for "the people." After all, a Venn-diagram differentiating Smith's definition of an "ordinary Albertan" from a UCP supporter would be more-or-less circular. The four-million-dollar propaganda brochure may disagree, but at this point, its best use may be as a fire starter.

THE ADVOCATE

THE ADVOCATE is the official newspaper of William Aberhart High School. THE ADVOCATE is meant as a forum for student expression and is published to inform and entertain the students and the entire school community.

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The Euro-Canadian shift: What does it mean for the everyday Canadian

by: Danielle W.

On Sept. 16, President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen announced to the European Parliament that Canada is invited to become the first associate member of the European Union. Associate member is a new position first proposed by Germany to offer to Ukraine, however, they declined, stating they would prefer to be a full member of the European Union. So, if Prime Minister Carney accepts this offer, Canada would be the first associate member to the EU.

Having this closer relationship with Europe would be beneficial for Canadians

by taking away some of the dependency on the United States for trade. Seeing as the current fraying relationship between the countries as the trade war and tariffs is escalating.

Canada and the EU already have a trade agreement, The Comprehensive and Economic Trade Agreement (CETA). CETA, as of 2017, has helped Canadians by lowering the cost of goods (lowering tariffs) and helped businesses go across the Atlantic. This new agreement between the European Union and Canada can help in new aspects: up and coming artificial intelligence, critical minerals, a space push with France, an energy alliance, and finally a non-voting seat at

the European Parliament.

Seeing that the title of associate member is not an official position, only with real worked out agreements could speculation be made on the ways it will affect Canadians. However, some of the possibilities are less dependent on the United States, benefiting trade, to stay in EU countries for longer periods of time, giving Canada greater negotiating power, and deeper cooperation with the union as a whole. Becoming a member would not directly or greatly affect the lives of an everyday Canadian, even though it would carry some benefits.

ALBERTA TIME: Alberta's Shift to Year-Round Time, and What May Follow

by: Emily R.N.

As we head into fall, Alberta's clocks will not be falling back with us. Beginning November 1st, 2026, the province will be adopting a permanent Mountain Daylight time, officially re-named "Alberta Time" by Minister of Service Alberta, Dale Nally. This decision means that Alberta will no longer be changing their clocks seasonally, and will instead be adopting a year-round system, following in the footsteps of BC, Saskatchewan, Yukon, and Manitoba.

This decision sparked major controversy, as it goes against the results obtained during Alberta's 2021 referendum regarding this issue. While the results were extremely close, (50.2% voted against the abolishment of the time change, whereas 49.8% voted for it), Premier Danielle Smith's decision to mandate the change without a new vote, or at least public polling, sparked a debate concerning the role of public opinion when making province-wide changes. Nevertheless, Alberta minister Dale Nally supports the decision made, stating that "[Alberta's] situation has changed [since 2021], and the province must adapt."

One of those changes is referring to BC's

recent decision to permanently adopt Pacific Time. That advancement left Alberta sandwiched between two provinces that do not participate in daylight savings, as Saskatchewan had already stopped changing its clocks by 1966, so Alberta's choice was heavily motivated by the hope of creating fewer scheduling conflicts with the neighboring provinces. Furthermore, Alberta's government states that adopting a permanent time-zone will reduce overall confusion, frustration, and disruptions that usually accompany the bi-annual time changes.

However, the new time system has also raised concerns about how this change may affect Albertans' overall health and safety, especially during the winter months. Among those concerned is University of Calgary's Psychology professor, Micheal Antle, who expressed in an interview with CBC: "Come winter, there's going to be a mismatch between the paltry hours of sunlight in Alberta and the digits on the clock, and that's hard on bodies." In other words, the time change will cause the sun to rise considerably later, which could be hard on the human

body's circadian rhythm. During December in Calgary, for instance, the sun won't rise until about 9:15 am, and in Edmonton, as late as 10:00 am. For students and workers, that would mean beginning their day while it's still considerably dark out. Some people have raised concerns over how that could potentially lead to an overall sense of grogginess, and in consequence, a spike in road accidents and lower performance at work or school. The lack of morning light has also been linked to causing mood disturbances such as anxiety and depression.

At the same time, the abolishment of the time change also has its potential advantages as Albertans will no longer have to remember to change their clocks, which the government claims will reduce disruptions and make life significantly more predictable.

All things considered, many Albertans wonder if the convenience of a year-round time zone will really be worth all the changes it may bring. After all, Alberta has been adjusting their clocks routinely for several years. Only time will tell if this change was the correct decision.

This Month In Science: Fruit Fly Brain Mapping

by: Ana F.

What is it?

Imagine trying to draw a map of every lake, river, stream, and spring, no matter how big or small, of an entire country. A map able to show each and every connection shared between every body of water across an entire nation. Now imagine that this nation was smaller than the size of a poppy seed. That's basically what researchers across the globe did with the brain of a fruit fly

Fruit fly brain mapping is called connectomics. A connectome is a wiring diagram (or map) of the brain. It shows every neuron and every connection between them. These connections are made through the firing of synapses that send signals to other parts of the brain. Even though the fly's brain is about the size of a poppy seed, it fires tens of millions of signals from neuron to neuron. However different kinds of neurons have different jobs. Some take in information from the eyes, others from the antennae, and others send commands to the wings and legs, so it's important to understand which neurons interact with which and how the system interacts with each other to produce physical functions. Through connectomes scientists were able to do just this and sort the neurons into thousands of cell types, design a complex diagram of what works with what, and understand the complete 3D wiring of the brain.

Here's how scientists did it:

First they took a fly's brain and cut it into thousands of super-thin slices, each about 1,000 times thinner than a piece of paper. They photographed every slice with a powerful electron microscope, which can see things far too small for regular microscopes. A computer was then able to stack all the images together to make a 3D model of the brain. Each neuron was traced and followed through the stack. Then real people, including scientists and volunteers around the world, checked the work and fixed mistakes.

In October of 2024, a team called FlyWire worked with researchers at Princeton university and finished the first ever completed map of an adult fruit fly brain. It has about 140,000 neurons and about million connections

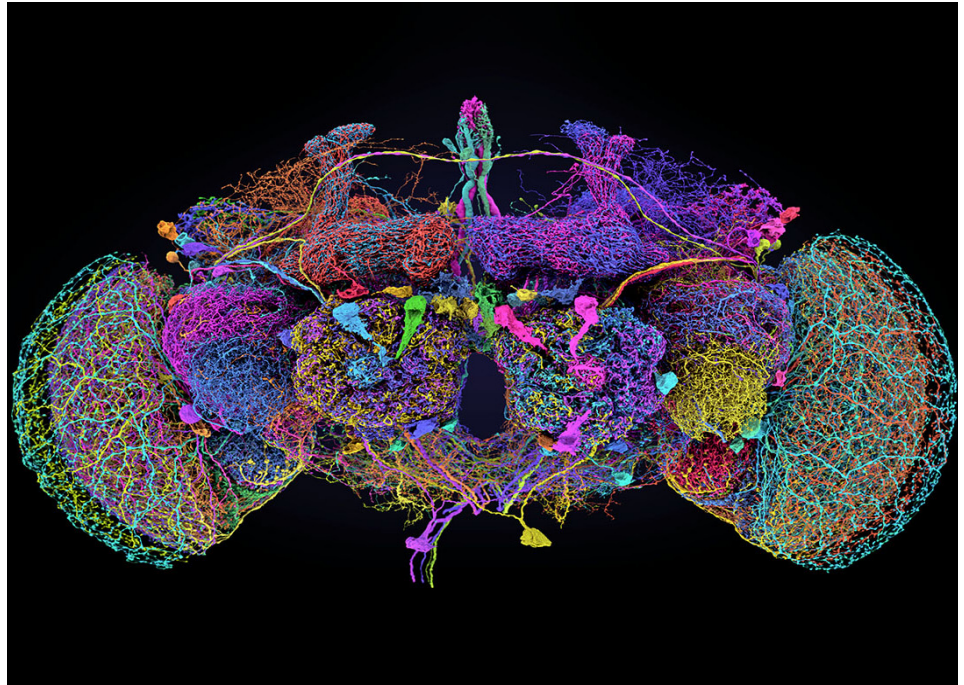


Image source: TYLER SLOAN AND AMY STERLING FOR FLYWIRE/PRINCETON UNIVERSITY; DORK-ENWALD ET AL., NATURE, 20

Why is it important?

A Complete Map: For the first time, scientists don't have to guess how signals travel through a complex brain. If they want to know where a neuron sends its signals, the answer is in the map. With a connectome they can trace the exact path from a sensory input (like seeing a threat) to a behavioral output (like flying away) across 50 million connections. Before, scientists had to guess how parts of the brain were wired together.

Better Understanding Ourselves: Believe it or not but fruit flies and humans have things in common. What we learn about how fly brains work can give clues about how all brains work, including ours. While a fruit fly brain is much smaller than a human brain, they share fundamental genetic, chemical, and structural mechanisms. In fact many fly genes are similar to human genes, including some linked to diseases. Understanding how a fly brain processes information, forms memories, and controls movement offers a gateway to understanding our own brains.

New neural discoveries: By expanding the brain map down into the nerve cord (fruit fly spinal cord), scientists made a surprising discovery: many complex

behaviours are not controlled by a central hub inside the fly's brain. Instead, they are driven by neural circuits located directly in the body parts to control fine motor skills. This completely reimagines the systems of sensory and motor pathways and coordination.

Technology advancements: This project was done with the use of a lot of very advanced technology and computer systems independent of human interaction. Lots of the development of the maps were recorded and observed by advanced technology rather than scientists themselves. The researchers were then able to check the work and confirm or deny its findings, marking a huge milestone for scientific research machinery.

What's next?

As previously stated, a connectome is like a large map of rivers: it shows where all the water flows, but not how much traffic there is or what pathways are becoming eroded. Connectomes don't tell us how strong each connection is or how brain cells change over time. The map is also based on just one fly, and just like people, no two flies are exactly alike. So scientists are in need of mapping more brains and combining the wiring maps with other kinds of information.

No Disc No Buy - A Summary of Recent Conflict within the Gaming Industry

by: Ashima A.

With recent news from Sony and Rockstar Games, the gaming industry might be moving on from physical media and joining shows and movies in the new concept of streaming services, along with all the challenges and strife that may bring.

Ever since the release of the Atari 2600 in 1977, cartridges or disks have been a central part of gaming. You would go to your local store, buy a game, and put it in whatever console you had. If you didn't like the game, you could resell it, give it to a friend, or maybe just let it sit on your shelf and collect dust. These days, Sony is one of the giants of the gaming industry with their PlayStation consoles. The NY Times Wirecutter considers the PS5 to be among the top three consoles, along with the Nintendo Switch and Xbox Series S. However, on July 1, 2026, Sony announced on the PlayStation Blog that all new games released on PlayStation starting in January 2028 would not receive a physical disk to buy, only relying on digital purchases. This caused an enormous controversy amongst consumers, eventually leading to a boycott of everything PlayStation, called the PS-Blackout. During the week August 23-30, players were encouraged on social media such as X (previously known as Twitter) to not play any games, interact with PlayStation stores, buy any games, make in-game purchases, and more. Unfortunately for these activists, Mart Piscatella, a Senior Director and Video Game Industry Advisor at Circana, posted on BlueSky that the PSBlackout movement had no effect on player activity statistics.

Another point of conflict was on August 22, 2026, where Sony made a response to the backlash of their announcement to end physical game production. Sony started emailing players copies of the Terms of Service, citing a specific part: "The Software is licensed to you, not sold. You are granted a limited, non-exclusive, non-transferable, and personal license to play or use the Software for your private, non-commercial use on the system or device it was intended for. This license is only effective from the indicated software release date, early access date, or beta release date. Any rights in the Software that we do not say in this license are reserved, including all intellectual property in the software."

Essentially, Sony is saying that when you buy a game, you do not own it. You are granted a license to play it indefinitely, but there are cases where the license has been taken away. In Europe's Playstation Terms of Service, it is stated that after at least 3 years of inactivity, they will email you to see if you want them to keep your account open. If you don't respond within 6 months you will no longer be able to access the PlayStation online services or any of the media you originally purchased.

The reception of all this 'new' information was not completely positive, to say the least. A common phrase amongst agitated gamers was 'If buying isn't owning, then piracy isn't stealing,' along with 'No Disc, No Buy!' These consumers believe that they have the right to own their media for as long as they want and whenever they want, especially if they have to pay exorbitant prices for games these days, what with the pre-order for the base game of GTA 6 costing \$109.99. The second-hand game market at places like Gamestop and EB Games are already suffering from decreases in sales for the physical copies they sell, let alone independent retro gaming stores, such as Video Game Trader in the southern end of Calgary. If Xbox and Nintendo follow suit with Sony's decision, then the second-hand market may eventually die. This is the place where supply and demand have its biggest effect. A random horse game for the Wii can go for \$5, meanwhile the copy of Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow went upwards of \$200, both of which were available at Video Game Trader. In the curated digital market, prices remain stagnant for much longer. Of course, if a game is not selling then there might be a sale, but the price won't fluctuate as much as a second-hand store might. If a consumer does not care about a scratch on the case, then they might benefit from buying a copy of the same game but for a cheaper price second-hand. Furthermore, a lot of retro games are discontinued from official stores, whether digital or physical. The only way to buy them is in-person, and if these in-person stores close, then retro games may become even harder to get your hands on. And of course, there is the general nostalgia these people want to save. There is a certain thrill about testing your luck at conventions to see if

they have any games you like in stock, or taking home a game for an absurdly low price. If newer games are not added into the market, it could become stagnant, ending in an infinite loop of buying and selling the same old games. For example, we can already see this at EB Games, the same games such as GTA V, COD, etc, are always on sale. These are because they are 'safe' games, products that are guaranteed to sell. Essentially, the second-hand game market may be in serious danger of extinction.

The final nail in the coffin arrived in August 2026, when Rockstar games announced that the release of Grand Theft Auto 6, the most anticipated game of the decade or even in all of gaming history according to fans, will not include a physical copy of the game. There are several reasons for this, which include the file size of the game being too big for disks, but a big reason Rockstar provided was the declining sales of physical games. This was a wake up call for many gamers who hadn't been caught up on the controversy. Now if you made it this far and you are not a gamer, you may be wondering: "Ok, that sucks for physical gamers, but how does that affect me?" Well, a popular way to purchase movies was through one's PlayStation account. In the situation I mentioned earlier, after 3 years of inactivity, all media purchased through one's account was inaccessible to the account holder. That includes movies and shows that the user had purchased. This is a pertinent example of the gravitation of companies towards digitization versus consumers' general disdain for such practices. Consumers generally want to actually own what they pay for, and with all the fatigue of the public around streaming services and the constant "oops, we don't have this title anymore," this recent gaming conflict could stoke the fires even more.

Ultimately, this world is in constant transition. Even without streaming services and digital non-ownership, we were already inventing more and more digital forms of expression and entertainment. Now, we are in an age of streaming and impermanence. The events covered here may be the beginning of a new era, and whatever that new era brings, no matter opportunity or disadvantage, we may have to accept.

Sustainable Agriculture : The Future of Farming?

by: Anwyn M.W.

In an era of mass production and environmental degradation due to the food industry, one thing remains the same: The need for nutrients.

Is there a way to produce food for the world that doesn't involve destroying it?

Luckily, scientists and farmers are working on a solution, one that could change agriculture as we know it. Sustainable agriculture, the practice of producing food for the needs of the world today without destroying the chance for the future world to do the same.

In simple terms, sustainable agriculture is farming that prioritizes environmental health, economic viability and social responsibility. Firstly, sustainable agriculture promotes the wellness and biodiversity of the environment, something that the food industry has seemed to forget. By reducing the usage of toxic pesticides and synthetic chemicals with integrated pest management, along with minimizing fossil fuel emissions and energy reliance (accustomed for industrialized farming), these agriculturalists trek along the path of possibly diminishing pollution effects on the earth.

Many who practice sustainable agriculture

also utilize efficient systems such as drip irrigation and rainwater harvesting to minimize the waste of water in crop cultivation.

Furthermore, economic viability is an important factor for agriculturalists in this field, working to ensure long-term farm profitability and produce stable income, while still keeping true to their central goal of sustaining the environment. They handle this in many ways, including focusing on farm design that can withstand weather conditions, offsetting income losses from drought, floods, or other extreme climatic conditions.

Another thing many in this field wish to promote is social responsibility. Through fair working conditions such as economic equity for farmers, and higher guarantee for workplace safety, sustainable farmers hope this is a job that will evolve positively.

Many places around the world are becoming more open to this practice, with Canada being one of the top leading countries in sustainable agriculture customs. Even so, only a small percentage of our food is produced sustainably. Large leading corporations prefer to manufacture in bulk within factories, but scientists and

farmers around the world with a dream of a maintainable future hope more research and development will be put into sustainable agriculture, believing it could be the key to a great leap forward in the farming industry as well as ecological restoration.

Could this be the start of a better future?

Other Common Practices Used By Sustainable Agriculturalists:

Crop Rotation and Cover Crops: Planting different crops in sequential seasons and growing off-season cover crops like clover or rye helps add nutrients back into the soil, break pest cycles, and prevent soil erosion.

Agroforestry: Interspersing trees and shrubs in and around crop fields or pastures to enhance local biodiversity, stabilize the soil, and store carbon.

Rotational Grazing: Moving livestock systematically between different pastures to allow vegetation time to recover, naturally fertilize the land with manure, and improve overall soil health.

Renewable Energy Integration: Utilizing solar, wind, or biogas systems to power everyday farm operations and lower greenhouse gas emissions.



Art by: Anwyn M.W.

The Great Depression - October 1929

by: Zoe H.

This month in history was the month that in 1929 the great depression started. The great depression marks a significant period of time in modern history as it is sometimes considered as the biggest economical and societal downfall of industrial times. It was a time of immense poverty and economic instability that affected countries worldwide. This period of ten years spanned from late 1929 to late 1939 when the effects of world war two hit countries across the planet.

What was the Great Depression?

The great depression started gradually in the United States. The 1920's had been a period of economic growth and wealth as the world was slowly bouncing back from world war one. Stock prices had risen so much causing economists to worry, and therefore the federal reserve (federal bank that controlled money and interest rates) raised interest rates to combat this. Because of this, the economy started to decline somewhere around August 1929 but what is most commonly considered the beginning of the great depression was when the stock market officially crashed on October 28th 1929 and then again the following day on October 29th. When it crashed, people lost money, so they stopped buying things, which in turn lowered demand so workers of all sorts were out of a job.

The great depression was arguably one of the hardest times in modern history for Americans. Minimum wages dropped and so even the few who were lucky to have a job were living below the poverty line. Unemployment, poverty and homelessness skyrocketed. At its worst, over a quarter of families in the US had no income. Life was rough for people all over. Canned food became a staple of most diets. It was cheap and fairly accessible so things like casseroles and soups became common as they could be made by combining multiple different forms of canned goods. Many men, sometimes married, and even young boys left their lives and families behind, jumping on rail cars with hopes of finding work elsewhere. Slums of crudely made shelters called Hoovervilles (named after the president at the time) popped up all

over the country with everyone from the elderly to families with young kids living in them.

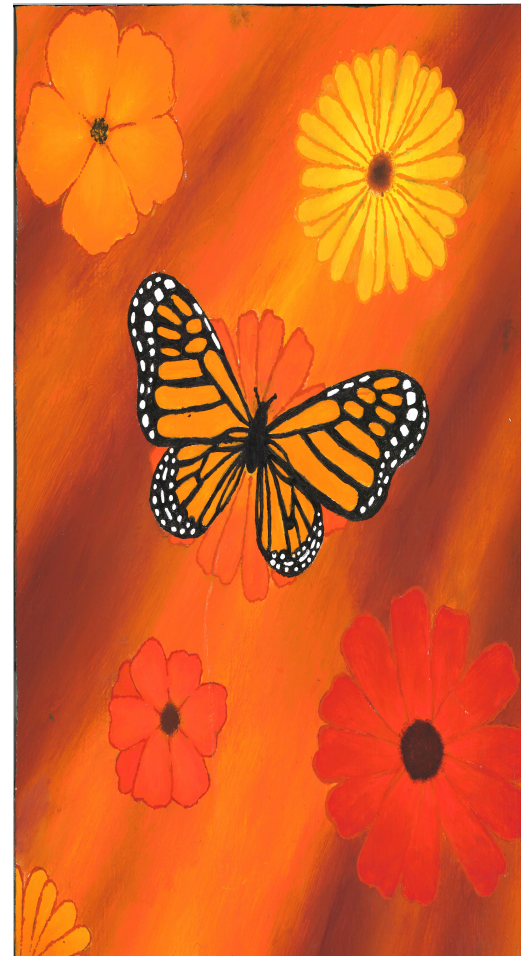
Because much of the world was linked economically to the US, basing their prices off the price of gold in the US, almost every country was affected by the great depression. In places like Canada and Europe, the great depression had a similar effect to what it did in the US. Asia, Africa, and South America weren't affected as much as they relied on the US less, however, economies still dropped all around the world.

Things started to improve for Americans when Franklin D. Roosevelt became president in 1932. He quickly implemented public assistance programs like soup kitchens, and paying farmers so that they could harvest their crops and consequently bring more food into supermarkets. Despite some of these programs helping American families, many of them made the depression worse causing this extreme poverty to continue until the beginning of World War 2. During World War 2 more workers were employed in factories, helping make planes, tanks, ammunition, parachutes and everything else. Many young men and women signed up to join the military, which provided a basic, and much needed wage to families. By the time the war ended, the great depression was officially and completely done.

Current Impact

The biggest impact that the great depression had on the modern world is the abolishment of the gold standard. The gold standard was when countries around the world would base their currency value on the price of gold in the US. This is what caused so many other countries to have similar economic downturns. This event solidified the notion that basing the world's money on one economy was a bad idea. With no more gold standard as a guide, countries began to create their own national banks, like the Bank of Canada, to dictate their own dollar value and interest rates. Federal assistance programs in both Canada and the US largely started during this time period.

The great depression was a worldwide event where economies around the world fell drastically. Poverty, homelessness, and famine increased worldwide because of linked economies. Although the great depression was a horrible time for the people who lived during it, today we have some positive things that came out of it.



Art by: Charlotte B.

“Did you get better today?”: An interview with Coach Fraser

by: Lily K.

A football team is formed by more than just the athletes who step onto the field. Behind every practice and game, there is a coach who wants to help players develop their skills, create personal connections, and learn valuable lessons.

For Coach Fraser, coaching is an opportunity to give back.

When I met with Coach Fraser in late September, and asked him why he coaches, he explained that some of the most important people in his life growing up were his coaches. After having these mentors in his life, Coach Fraser wants to continue that cycle of helping and encouraging the next generation of athletes. His motivation demonstrates that coaching is not just about teaching athletes about football; it is also about building meaningful connections and helping people grow.



One of Coach Fraser's main goals is developing a team culture centered on unity and continuous improvement. He believes that players should learn how to work together while taking responsibility for their own actions. When describing the environment he wants to create, Fraser emphasized “unity” and “constant improvement.” He explained that all athletes should hold themselves accountable before expecting others to take responsibility.

His philosophy focuses on working together every day using each player's strengths and weaknesses to improve and reach the team's potential. He wants players to understand how their effort and attitude impacts the entire team's success.

Losses are an unavoidable part of all sports, but Coach Fraser believes that they can provide important lessons. After a difficult game, his message to players depends on the circumstances. However, he consistently emphasizes the need to learn from mistakes.

“Any time you face defeat or failure in life, you absolutely have to learn from it,” Fraser explained. He believes that every setback should provide a lesson and that athletes should try to avoid repeating the same mistakes. His message applies to everyday life, as challenges and failures can push individuals to develop greater resilience, make wiser decisions, and gain a deeper understanding of themselves.

Although Coach Fraser is a football coach, his love for sports also extends to basketball. When asked about his favourite sport, he described football and basketball as a close competition.

“Honestly, it's a real big toss-up between football and basketball,” he said. Fraser explained that basketball was his first love, but he later discovered football, where he enjoyed the physicality of the sport. He described football as a release for him, allowing there to be more to the sport than he ever thought. His experience with both basketball and football have contributed to his understanding of what it means to be an athlete and the commitment it takes to improve. This fall, Coach Fraser will also be coaching his daughters' basketball teams on top of his commitment to both the junior and senior football teams at Aberhart.

When I asked what advice he would give student-athletes who want to reach the next level, he focused on the importance of daily self-reflection.

“Just every single day, take a look at themselves in the mirror, and ask themselves, ‘Did they get better today?’” he said.

This advice reflects his belief that improvement begins with your own accountability. Athletes can develop through consistent practice, learning from mistakes, and making small improvements each day. For Coach Fraser, becoming a better athlete is not simply about achieving a particular outcome; it is about developing the discipline to reflect on personal prog-

ress, learn from setbacks, and continually work toward improvement.

For student-athletes, the question, “did you get better today?” offers a daily reminder that progress comes from consistent effort, reflection, and a willingness to learn; qualities Coach Fraser hopes to instill in every athlete.



Art by Molly C.

The Song of the Season: a Look Back in Time

by: Jorja F.

In recent months, amidst heavy political stress and an ever-changing digital landscape, there have been few trends gripping the internet harder than “2026 is the new 2016”. At its core, this trend comes from the nostalgia driven young-adults who wish to return to what they deem “a simpler time” full of skinny jeans, bottle flip videos, and unicorn frappuccinos. In the spirit of the trend, the online community has seen a rise in the sharing of 2016 style posts, memes and videos. And with those videos, comes music. So, in keeping with the trend, I’ve decided to take a look back at the fall of 2016’s most played song.

The song in question was so inescapable that it played everywhere from your car radio to grocery store aisles and even late-night hangout spots. This tune changed the cultural environment around it by popularizing cross genres and introducing EDM-pop into the mainstream, capturing the intense feelings of youthful rebellion that were everywhere at the time. Not only did the piece at hand spend 12 weeks at number one on the billboard’s top 100,

but it spent 26 weeks in the top five, 32 in the top 10, and topped charts in 5 different countries. Causing the likes of Andrew Taggart, Alex Paul, Rhett Bixler, Matt McGuire, and Ashley Frangipane to become global music sensations, the track in focus is “Closer” by the Chainsmokers, featuring Halsey.

With references to bands like Blink-182 and places like Tucson, Arizona, “Closer” instantly grounded its listeners who were, at the time, primarily millennials between the ages of 20-35, in a deep sense of early aught’s nostalgia. When mixed with a chorus that beautifully represented the young-adult mindset of the time with ideas like “we ain’t ever getting older,” or “movin’ to the city in a broke-down car,” and being as undoubtedly catchy as can be, you have the recipe for the next mainstream hit. Additionally, one of the biggest things that “Closer” had going for it was a perfectly timed release date that coincided almost exactly with the release of the popular streaming platform Apple Music and the continuous rise in popularity of other platforms like Spotify.

Due to the fact that it came out during this liminal time period, “Closer” was one of the first songs to become a chart-topping hit due to digital platforms rather than traditional CD sales and radio listening alone.

At the end of the day, the breakout hit “Closer” by The Chainsmokers featuring Halsey became an inescapable tune thanks to the perfect storm that was its nostalgic references, fresh style, cross genre notes, impeccable release date and wild success. It is, however, quite ironic that a song that gained popularity in part due to its deep nostalgia is now becoming increasingly popular once more because of a trend that is inherently built off of the nostalgic desire to return to earlier, simpler, years. So popular, in fact, that you might even hear it on the radio today, should you happen to find yourself in the backseat of a rover next to your roommate from back in Boulder who has a tattoo on their shoulder and a Blink 182 song in their heart.

Comic: Weather

by: Phoebe O.



The Better Half

by: Claire S

Natalie flipped through the pages of her old yearbook as the wind growled outside, tracing along the faces she would again see this year. Her eyes lingered on a girl from her old class, whose smile seemed to stand out on the page. Something about her appearance was different; everything seemed to be perfectly in place, her jewelry, her gaze, her flowing hair. She was magnetic, and Natalie felt a deep longing in her heart.

This is what I want, she decided.

Moving to her mirror, she pulled at her own hair, trying to simulate the same look. She smiled wide at herself, then stopped. It was too forced, and her hair couldn't seem to fall the right way. Sighing, Natalie let her hands fall and took herself in, looking into the brown eyes she had always found so boring.

She watched her own eyes blink at her. It took only a second for her to realize the strangeness of seeing her eyes close — without having actually closed them.

Subconsciously, she knew she wasn't alone in her room.

"Don't be scared," she heard a familiar voice say behind her. Spinning around, Natalie let out a gasp as she found herself face to face with someone she never thought she would see in person.

Herself.

And yet there was no mirror.

The shock of seeing her physical, living self in front of her left her unable to speak, wracking her brain for a logical explanation. Her double smiled, and Natalie let her shoulders fall slightly. She found it hard to be scared, seeing as she was staring at herself, and yet she couldn't help but notice the hairs sticking up on the back of her neck.

After a few moments, "Hi?" was all she managed to murmur.

The other Natalie let out a soft, chiming laugh. Gesturing to the door, she lilted, "Come, follow me. There's something we have to discuss." Natalie couldn't help but follow, her body dragging her mind along.

Through the house they went, passing through the kitchen where Natalie's mother sat at the counter, typing on her

computer.

"What do you want for dinner, Tilly?" she said, glancing up at her daughter, seemingly oblivious to the identical girl leading the way. Natalie broke out of the daze and looked away from the back of the other Natalie's head.

"I don't know..." she half whispered, triggering a raised eyebrow from her mother. But Natalie didn't seem to notice, and continued to follow her double after a gentle smile and a motion to follow.

As they left the house, Natalie was hit by a gust of wind as she trailed behind into the forest. She barely seemed to notice her bare feet as they crunched along the brush. As the world around her began to take form again, she wondered who she was walking with. Though they seemed to be the same person, she couldn't help but feel a disconnection. Her doppelgänger, she now noticed, walked with grace, a slight smile on her face, whereas Natalie stumbled along and felt unease pinching at her insides. This stranger was confident, and the same sensation of longing grabbed hold of Natalie, reminding her how small she really was.

As if reading Natalie's thoughts, the double began to speak, her tune echoing through the trees. "I think you know why I'm here," she said, a pitying smile etched on her face as she gazed back. Natalie didn't respond, her breath seeming to have caught in her throat.

Her double was right — she knew. This is what I want, her thoughts advised.

The other Natalie's smile seemed to grow, her eyes whispering in sympathy. Natalie studied her companion. As well as delicately confident, she had an ethereal glow. It was like she was the dialed up version of Natalie, and a knot of understanding began to form in her stomach, knowing the extent of her own willpower.

"What will happen to me?" she asked meekly, as she followed her gliding double along the winding path.

"You won't be gone, of course. You'll still be with me, watching everything go right," came the answer. Natalie took a shuddering breath.

so none of the choices will mine

The trees began to clear, the wind picking up now they were out of shelter, and Natalie became aware of where they were headed.

"Of course not. You want to belong in this world, right? Flawed decisions will bring you right back to square one, and no offense, but you are quite flawed." The wind, now howling, seemed to have no effect on the other Natalie, her voice clear and clean as she spoke in the same delicate tone. Natalie's heart thumped in her chest. This is what I want, she reminded herself.

"But what about my parents?" she asked, straining her voice over the wail of the wind.

"They won't find you," the double answered simply. "There can only be one of us."

Silence followed as they continued through the cacophony of wind, and the sky that was now fading into orange beckoned them onwards. Even now, Natalie couldn't calm the trembles that trickled down her spine. This is what I want, she repeated. This is what I want.

Their walking came to a halt, and there it was: the cliff. It was so much bigger than she thought it would be.

"Are you ready?" The doppelgänger said with a smile. Natalie peered over the edge, the howling in her head as loud as her surroundings. The pounding of her heart reverberated in her ears. She looked up at her double, still smiling, and struggled to swallow. She could see more clearly now; the other Natalie seemed to have lost her elegance, an overly joyful smile plastered on her wide-eyed, hysterical face, that seemed to be twitching with anticipation. Her hair wrapped ludicrously around in the wind, as her unproportionate limbs hunched towards Natalie.

As her eyes adapted to the reality of the situation, Natalie's double noticed, eyes arching downwards with a grin still painted on her shaking face.

"I don't know," Natalie trembled with urgency, taking a step back. As if struck by lightning, the double sprang forward, fingers splayed like spiders, and shoved

Natalie off the edge

The doppelgänger's eyebrows lifted in malicious satisfaction, and through the roar of the wind and the jerk of perpetuity as she fell towards the ground, Natalie heard her whisper with the same gentle voice, "This is what you want."

No, she realized. *No*.

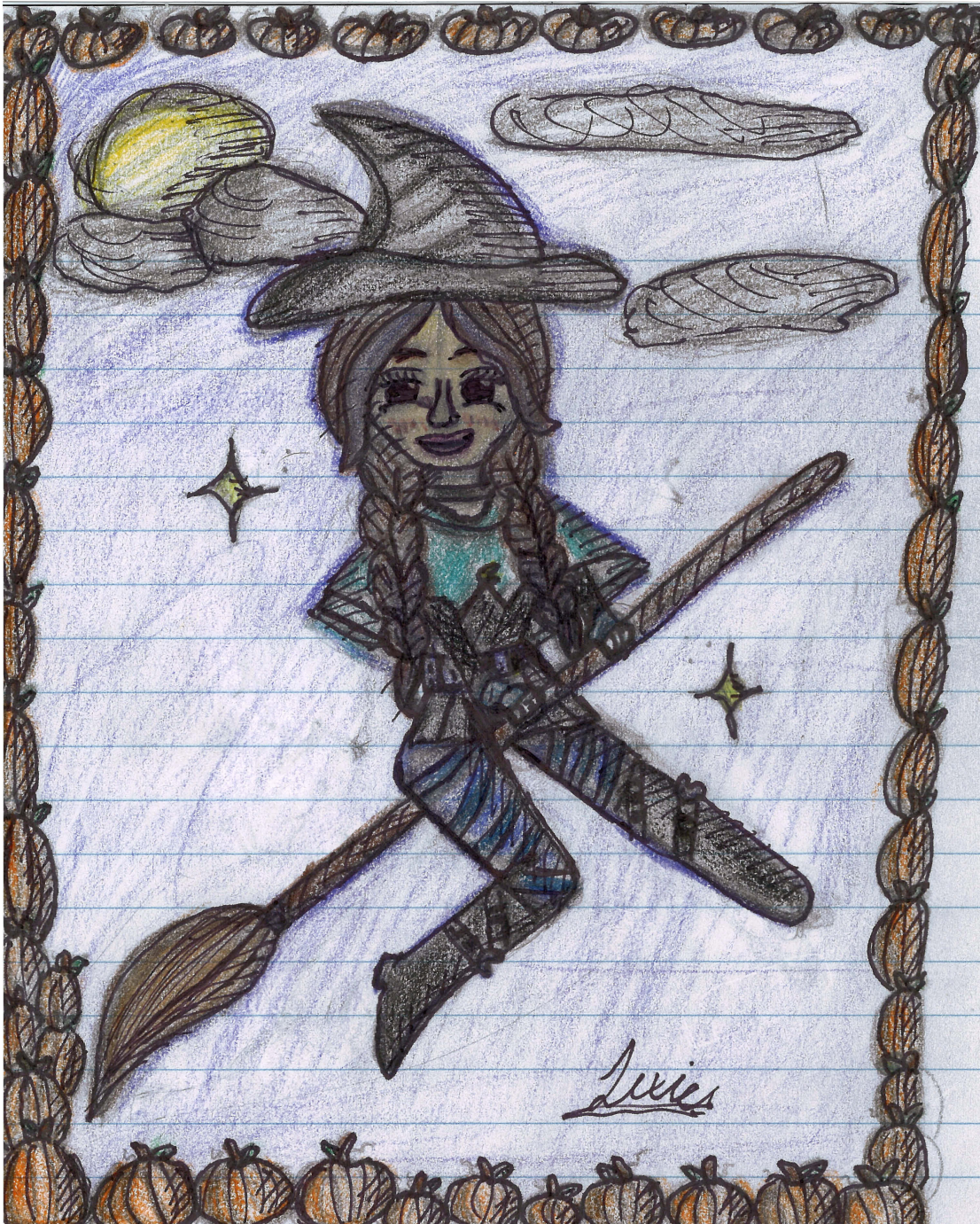
The same word repeated incessantly as

Natalie opened her eyes to a space she could only describe as infinite. She saw them all around her, mirrors upon mirrors, some reflections in window panes, some ripples in water, and took it in as tears slipped down her face. Gazing through the one that resembled her own bedroom mirror, she found herself staring through to her room, and standing in front of her was her double.

Her replacement's face was once again renewed to the graceful, merry smile that Natalie had so easily trusted, and yet traces of insanity could be seen in her eyes.

"See?" she said gleefully. "I told you. Now you get to watch everything go right."

No, Natalie thought, as realization settled in. She had lost it all.



Art by: Lexie T.

The Warm Embrace

by: Zach B

The warm embrace
We all feel it
Maybe we treat it like a race
A race be held within it

In a time of slow
A climb up the hump
An attempt to flow
Into the grasp with a slump

A warm embrace is all
That we want
We'll take the fall
Just for a jaunt

Here it waits
Arms wide open
Almost as a bait
Wanting you to be broken

Feeling hopeless
Wanting a sick comfort
Nothing's worth less
Then a soul caged in a fort

Built of walls
Bound by lies
To hide internal brawls
That buzz like flies

A constant bother
Like an antique clock
Or an evil ex- lover
One you want to hide behind a lock

All it does is remind you
Of all your faults
But when the true
Is shown, it brings you to a halt

Finding your spirit in the embrace
It guides you on a long journey
Keeping you looking forward with grace
Even though your body is on a gurney

To Love The Sun

by: A.B.L.

Somewhere in the world there is a place
You have not met it yet
But in the brief passes when
It tastes a bit like music on your tongue
Somewhere in the fabric of the cosmos
there is a second
Where you will be perfectly happy
You will forget your broken heart
Everything will fall away
And you shall be left alone against a sun
no longer against you
It will be beautiful
Then
Everything will fall
Back down, upon you
The sun will be too hot now
Too heavy
What must you sacrifice for that perfect
point in space-time?
Your time,

Sanity,
The last remaining pieces of your broken
heart?
Yes
And no
You always say last
But somehow there is always more
The scales have tipped already
Your hand will not move to balance them
Despite it all you dream of that perfect
moment
And hence I draw the conclusion
To love the sun
One must love the burn too



Art by: Ada C.



Art by: Claire S