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The Legacy Six: A New MLK Day



COURTNEY EDWARDS, IZZY READ, SKY COMFORT
Editors-in-Chief

This year's MLK week transcended the recent norm of a day of workshops and instead became an immersive experience put together by a group of students: The Legacy 6. This past November, six students and three faculty members traveled to Montgomery, Alabama, inspired to rethink the way we approach MLK day at Taft. These six students ultimately ended up creating a museum experience through Main Hall, in which elements of the sites they visited in Alabama were brought back to the Taft community.

Taft's three days of reflection started with a presentation by Mr. Allen, Dean of Community, Justice, and Belonging. The assembly covered the life of MLK and included an incredibly moving familial connection. Mr. Allen's grandmother grew up in the Jim Crow South and became a part of history when she traveled to be a part of the March on Washington. This set the tone for this year's MLK Day activities, which involved forming personal connections to history and historical sites. By making connections between past and present, we can more readily reflect on the persistence of racism today.

On Tuesday, The Legacy 6 spoke in Bingham to share their experience of visiting sites such as the Freedom Monument Sculpture Park and the 13th Street Baptist Church. The group included Sophie Brown '25, Xander Chatterjee '25, Ny'Ana Hauser '25, Teni Arole '26, Jabari King '26, and Isaac Obeng '26. Teni shared a bit about the process of joining this team: "Each of us received an email from Mr.

Allen in October, asking us to meet with him in the Day Student Circle after school one day. Confused, but curious, we all attended, and he shared the idea of venturing to Montgomery and Birmingham Alabama during Thanksgiving Break. He, along with Mr. Rosario and Mrs. Hincker, told us the goal was to bring back something for Taft, but we were not sure what exactly at the time (little did we know a whole museum!). The nine of us were excited and counted down the days to the beginning of our trip. Before leaving CT we met for four sessions. At these meetings, we received materials designed by Mrs. Hincker and Mr. Rosario for the purpose of preparing ourselves for our journey. One session that stuck out to me was learning about the March on Selma, a 54-mile walk led by African Americans protesting unfair voting practices."

On the cold Wednesday morning of January 22nd, Taft students embarked on an educational experience unlike anything ever experienced before. It was a perfect culmination of everything that we had learned in the preceding days. As we stepped through the doors of the main building, we entered into a journey through history, starting with the roots of the Transatlantic slave trade, to the Reconstruction era, through the Jim Crow South, and into the present-day concerns of the Black Lives Matter movement such as ending police brutality and reforming the criminal justice system. Members of both The Legacy 6 and the UCT (United Cultures of Taft) guided students through each era of the recreated Legacy Museum. The exhibits themselves utilized images, text, video, and sound recordings, each carefully construct-



ed to be relevant to the time period covered. The museum provided the Taft community with an MLK day experience that offered not only a thorough education but also a deeply moving collection of understandings. The contrast between walking through Rhino Lobby and seeing it transformed into a slave auction site was striking, as was the transformation of the Office of Student Life into a voter registration booth. An experience that activated the body, heart, and mind was the perfect way to close out the revolutionary MLK week of 2025, and the "legacy" of The Legacy 6's hard work will have a lasting impact on not just the students who walked the "museum" halls, but the Taft community as a whole.

We should all be thankful for the hard work and dedication these students put into helping us better ourselves as individuals and as a community. However, the reality is that you only get out what you put in. As Co-Head Mon Sophie Brown '25 said, "I hope hearing about our experience visiting the legacy sites inspired people to embrace the uncomfortable, heartbreaking truth about history." As Sophie said, we must welcome the uncomfortable and often painful parts of our history in order to learn from it, rather than distorting it. Even after MLK day has passed, we should continue to reflect on ways we can live out the values of the Legacy 6, and be empowered to create the changes we want to see at Taft. In doing so, we honor Dr. King's vision of a beloved community, one built on understanding, empathy, and unity.

Photos Courtesy of Robert Falcetti

The Toll of LA's Fires

HOLY RICHARD
Staff Writer

Since January 7th, Los Angeles has seen multiple large and powerful wildfires, sweeping over 40,000 acres of California land. The Pacific Palisades fire, the first of the fires, resulted in unparalleled devastation, marking the most destructive fire in Los Angeles history. This fire reportedly started at around 10:30 a.m., reason unknown, spreading only 10 acres. Yet fueled by severe drought (the driest nine-month period) and up to 80 mph wind gusts, the fire quickly spread 200 acres in 20 minutes. By the end of the day, the fire had reached almost 3,000 acres. Recent reports show that the Pacific Palisades fire destroyed most of the Palisades neighborhoods as well as neighborhoods in Malibu and Topanga, covering 6,051 demolished structures and 788 damaged structures.

The Eaton fire, the other primary fire in Los Angeles, also began later that evening due to sparks from a high voltage transmission tower, at approximately 6:30 p.m. in the Altadena area, northeast of the Palisades fire. Only six hours later at around 12:00 a.m. the next day, the Eaton fire had covered over 1,000 acres, fueled by the same aggressive wind gusts that powered the Palisades fire. By January 8th, the land covered had doubled in size, nearing 2,227 acres, remaining 0% contained. As of January 20th, the Eaton fire was 87% contained with over 14,000 acres destroyed, and the Palisades fire is 59% contained with almost 24,000 acres destroyed. The total confirmed death toll of these two fires is 27 people, with many others missing. The cause of these fires comes with profound social and economic consequences. Insured property losses, including homes, commercial buildings, and businesses, are estimated to approach \$45 billion, with total economic losses reaching double that when accounting for the unin-



sured assets. Local businesses have suffered immensely, not only due to physical losses but also to the drastic decrease in business due to the widespread evacuations of the city because of the fires. The entertainment industry, a cornerstone of the LA economy, has not been spared from these fires either. Many movie and television productions have been canceled or postponed, and major events such as the Grammy Awards are subject to cancellation. Additionally, many homeowners are grappling with massive financial burdens due to underinsurance and policy cancellations. Miriam Cortero, a Los Angeles mother in Altadena, lost her newly renovated home in Eaton worth \$1.2 million, yet is only being provided \$200,000 in insurance coverage. This leaves her with a \$800,000 mortgage and no home or place to live. Furthermore, State Farm canceled the insurance coverage of roughly 1,600 Pacific Palisades homeowners in July, leaving them at risk during these fires.

The emotional toll left on Californians after these fires is immeasurable. Many families had little time to evacuate their homes

before the fire spread, and many left their precious personal belongings that cannot be replaced, leaving people of all ages in shock and grief. The feeling of being involved in a fire is horrifying. Yet, as families begin to rebuild, they will face challenges such as competition for building materials and labor. The overlapping of reconstructing homes and property across the country is straining supply chains and delaying the restoration of these neighborhoods.

As Los Angeles residents grapple with the impact of these devastating fires, the road to recovery is long and unpredictable. Families, businesses, and communities must navigate financial struggles, emotional trauma, and other major hardships in their time of rebuilding. At Taft, Every Mind Matters has been raising money for wildlife releif and The American Red Cross. These events have included a football watch party as well as a dress-down day.

Photo Courtesy of Reuters.

The Editors of *The Papyrus* apologize for miscrediting the authorship of the article titled Teacher Spotlight: Dr. Mirabi. One of the authors was Hannah Xu, who was not mentioned as the author in our December Issue.

Valentines Notes: from your secret admirer

*For Andrew Kim,
When I first layed
my eyes upon you, I
felt something tingle.
I've now realized my
love for you is like
diarrhea: I just CAN-
NOT hold it in.*

*Meredith Werblow is the
coolest, kindest, most gor-
geous girl at this school.
Inside, and out ;) And
since I can't take her to
formal, someone else defi-
nitely should.*

XOXO, Secret Admirer

Dear Melissa Maselli,

*"Cecily is not a silly romantic girl, I am
glad to say," and neither are you. I must agree with
Jack on that point. Thank you dearly for always
brightening up my days (especially the cold and
grim ones) by being one of the most unstoppably
witty, truly kind, and ceaselessly caring people I
know. Despite my frequent and frankly unmatched
density, I realized quite quickly that you were and
still are an irreplaceable partner. It has been my
absolute pleasure and privilege to get to know you
throughout my first few months at Taft.*

Xoxo, GKM

Taft at The MET

SKY COMFORT
Editor-in-Chief

A New Yorker myself, I’ve been to the MET numerous times but always find it a different experience coming with Taft, this year for both my Humanities and Greek classes. In early January, students taking the courses Honors Western Art History, Honors Humanities, Honors Introduction to Ancient Greek, and Honors Latin Literature, a.k.a. classics nerds, journeyed to the MET. The MET trip is a hallmark Taft tradition, in which a small cohort of students prepare to hunt through the museum for a painting, and hopefully, get lost somewhere along the way.

Looking at art through a screen is imprecise; your sense of depth, of color, and of feeling are distorted. This lack of tangibility, a vital element for immersive learning, can make the material feel distant. The faculty leading the trip, Drs. Shotwell and Conrau-Lewis, Mr. Werrell, and Mr. Hudak hoped that our visit to the MET would shift that perspective. Mr. Werrell shared a poem about encountering art: “Beyond the flat, smooth surface/ of the textbook.” Dr. Conrau-Lewis explained, “My goal is that students appreciate the tangible legacies of the past. It’s one thing to recite *amo, amas, amat*; it’s another thing to see that word *amor* on a funeral stele made by a freedman husband for his deceased wife, thirty years after their emancipation. The lesson might not sink in immediately but I hope that my students, on reflection, will see that what they study is more than just declensions and conjugations; it is the vestige of an empire in which real people lived and faced similar existential dilemmas and struggles as our own.” These four courses each explore different aspects of the Humanities and perhaps visiting the MET is what helps us understand that humanistic aspect. Dr. Shotwell says that by immersing ourselves in the visual arts, we “continue the lifelong project of nurturing empathy for the endless possibilities of the human experience.” The experience of being at the MET offers the complexities of understanding mirrored experiences of people 1000 years ago intertwined with our personal and group experience of being in a museum for four hours.

Going to the MET is an incredibly stimulating experience. From the moment we finished our group photograph at The Temple of Dendur, there were constant decisions to be made, questions to ask docents, and people to find. It was utterly exhausting, yet humbling. Being at the MET with Taft was different; I could see the bewilderment, amazement, and confusion in my peers. As I had some knowledge of where certain galleries were located, I felt purposeful, even if I took a few wrong turns along the way. For the first time, I became a guide—someone who knew where they were going. It was a stark contrast to being in class, where I sometimes feel imposter syndrome next to brilliant sophomores who seem to effortlessly know the roots of obscure words. But at the MET, at that moment, I didn’t feel out of place; I felt like I belonged, sharing in the awe and discovery of the museum while offering guidance. I got to bring people to my favorite European boiserie rooms, and the best parts of the visit were the spaces we weren’t assigned to go to. Because all four courses are electives, every student has chosen to be there and that makes a big difference; the innate curiosity in the students on the visit made the visit special, and meaningful.

The faculty on the trip understood the importance of the thrill of discovery, designing assignments to take under two hours. This gave us the freedom to explore beyond our academic tasks. In my case, I completed assignments for both Humanities and Greek and still had a spare hour to explore the rest of the museum. While many of us spent a good portion of the time somewhat lost in the museum’s maze-like layout, those aimless moments often led to the most profound encounters with art. As Brady Morris ‘25 eloquently put it “Walking around the museum at first I was lost. But in being lost I became found.”

Image Courtesy of Dr. Shotwell



Taft Papyrus

The official student newspaper of the Taft School, est. 1893

CXXVIII

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The Papyrus is run by students at the Taft School in Watertown, Connecticut.

Founded in 1893 and issued periodically throughout the school year, The Papyrus is devoted to the ideas and interests of the students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends of the Taft School. Since 2020, our newspaper has published content online (taftpapyrus.org).

2025: What’s “In” and What’s “Out”?

ELLIE TAYLOR & ZOE CHIEWESHE
Staff Writers

Would you like to stay informed on the do’s and don’ts of 2025? If so, we have you covered---we have compiled the ultimate list of Taft’s “ins” and “outs” for the year. To start off strong, here is what we are considering **IN**:

1. **Returning dining hall dishes, cups, and utensils:** we’re all tired of going to get a drink just for there to be no cups. Anywhere. So, let’s all try to return our dishes so we have plates and utensils to eat with.
2. **Ditching sneakers for class dress:** recently, there have been two new shoe trends floating around campus. If you’re looking to change up your shoe game, why not stray away from the typical sneaker and towards some new footwear! The black boot: classy and edgy, these are sure to be a perfect winter staple. The on-the-rise loafer: almost as frequently seen as the black boot, loafers are the perfect winter shoe if you’re looking for a quick, easy shoe to slide on that isn’t a flip flop.
4. **“Lurking:”** while the new red and white couches may not be meant for every corner of Main Building, they sure are comfy! We are big on “lurking” this year. What’s not to love about seeing all the faces of The Taft School on a casual winter evening?
5. **Block Blast:** if you’re attempting to limit social media screen time this year, we suggest you get Block Blast! A simple game of matching blocks and trying to beat your friends’ high scores is just the kind of pastime you need to be engaging in. It’s the perfect way to entertain yourself when waiting in the Jig line, hanging out with friends, or during a classic winter “bedrot.”
6. **Pond skating:** one of the upsides of the harsh Watertown winter is the pond freezing over, giving access to the numerous hockey teams and Taft students who want to skate this winter. Just make sure you don’t slip and fall in front of everyone.
7. **Groutfits:** there is nothing more cozy and perfect than an all-grey outfit (street name: “groutfit”) to wear after the school day ends. When you’re ready to get out of class dress, just throw on a nice grey top and bottom! Perfect for studying, relaxing, and of course, “lurking.”



Photo Courtesy of The Taft School

Now that you know what is “in,” let’s discuss what is **OUT**:

1. **Talking above a whisper in the MAC:** trying to get your work done on a Thursday night or crank out a quiz/test you couldn’t take earlier in the week is annoying in itself. But when someone’s semi-loud voice is playing over and over like a broken record, it’s beyond hard to focus. If you can’t whisper, stay away from the MAC!
2. **Flip Flops:** Watertown, CT. does not even remotely resemble the beach, and no one wants to see un-pedicured feet. Closed-toed shoes from here on out!
3. **Orange Bleach Hair:** it is very unclear as to whether this was ever “in,” but it is now certainly “out.” Let’s leave the insane bleach and haircuts to the boy’s varsity lacrosse team, and abandon any more DIY projects.
4. **Outside Guests for Formal:** outside guests are out of the Winter Formal 2025 plans. So get to the poster making, because it’s time to get over your imaginary girlfriend from home...

Now you know all that is necessary to lead a trendy, **IN**, 2025 life. Until next year!

To Tradition or Not to Tradition?

VERONICA ANTOV
Staff Writer

Mr. LaCasse’s address a few weeks ago broached an important debate, one that crosses our minds each time we see a vivid buzzcut bobbing in the halls: how harmful are our age-based traditions? At the center of this discourse are the seating arrangements in Prentice. Is the intent of this tradition truly to exclude or discriminate? Or is it important to defend the concept of seniority and retain some amount of upperclassman privilege because it’s an important part of boarding school culture? I do not stand for hazing, bullying, or public humiliation – like in some other private high schools, where stepping on the school seal as a non-senior requires ten push-ups on the spot – but I believe that Prentice seating doesn’t fit in any of these categories because it is so benign. Do we, as students, perceive it as divisive, or is everybody satisfied with waiting to grow older? And I am all for the institution of new traditions, as Taft is 135 years old and should be progressive in its ways, but this shouldn’t involve abolishing our beloved age-old traditions. I wanted to know what others thought, and asking around was an apt way to figure out the student body’s consensus. Here’s what most people agreed on:

Lowerclassmen are neither offended nor saddened by these unwritten rules. At my middle school, the annual awards ceremony that marked commencement focused on the seniors, the ninth graders. The vast majority of the prizes would be allocated to seniors, with the words “awarded to that ninth-grade student who...” having been included in their descriptions since their establishment. Nobody was particularly fazed by this display of seniority because they all understood that they, too, would have the same chance of receiving such an award in a few years’ time. And all of these ninth-graders bore an important charge. They took classes that initiated them as thoughtful leaders, and they therefore received a felicitous amount of limelight. My friends at other private high schools also have various opportunities for seniors. One of them, for example, has fond memories of hanging out in the senior-exclusive student union, a privilege that many awaited and relished. Where am I going with this? Every Taft lower schooler that I asked about the current dialogue surrounding tradition said that they weren’t bothered because they would soon be Taft seniors chiding defiant sophomores for standing too soon in Bingham. It didn’t bother them that they had to wait to be included. This whole system is cyclical; that’s natural.

Seniority can be a harmful practice, but, if regulated, it matters. Sure, when senior privilege becomes bias, you know that institutional change is impertivative.



Photo Courtesy of Robert Falcetti.

But I would argue that small “perks” aren’t really so destructive. Besides, how different is the tacit understanding that some tables in the Jig are only for seniors than lower schoolers’ study hall being more restrictive than the upper schoolers? If we begin to quash minor traditions by writing them off as offensive, being a senior will lose its charm. Something has to differentiate the twelfth grade from the other grades, some level of prestige, maturity, and privilege to accompany and offer respite from the responsibility and stress. Lowerclassmen should have something to look forward to. If activities, clubs, and traditions weren’t exclusive on some conditions, none of them would feel special or prestigious; to some extent, exclusivity is like healthy competition, because it is beneficial in moderation. Besides, befriending an upper mid or senior is enough to avoid minor grievances like being turned away from Prentice, so there are certainly some known loopholes.

The position that I’ve taken is that Taft students shouldn’t be encouraged to abandon old practices unless they’re really discriminatory or divisive. Rules like these are completely anodyne in the eyes of us students, though it may not seem that way to some adults in the community. Tafties have even been discouraged from small traditions like having ten people say “Happy Birthday” when you’re giving a tour. Much like this inside joke, Taft’s “micro-traditions” deserve to exist even if they aren’t understood by everyone because they do bring us together. There’s nothing like the special feeling of satisfaction upon being invited to Prentice; it feels exotic the first time! To destroy these traditions would be to eviscerate our school culture and unity of some of the fun advantages that follow seniority.

The Age of History Electives: A Conversation with Mrs. Foley

SKY COMFORT
Editor-in-Chief

The History Department is one of the most exciting on campus, thanks to its ever-evolving elective offerings alongside staples like Comparative Government. Students are required to take U.S. History as well as two semesters of a non-U.S. history, but beyond that, they can choose from a huge array of electives. What makes the History Department stand out is that many courses are offered on a semester basis, giving students the flexibility to alternate between History, Art electives, or other electives. When I spoke with Brianne Foley, Head of the History department, she highlighted the move from the AP system as the catalyst for change in the History department. done after the 2021-2022 school year, my freshman year.

The AP system, or Advanced Placement, is a selection of courses that culminate in an exam held in early May, known as the AP Test. These AP courses only allowed for year-long courses which made it hard for students to choose electives over APs. Taft shifted away from those classes after the 2021-2022 school year, keeping some as Honors classes, and making way for new electives. Mrs. Foley explains the approach to re-imagining course offerings, sharing “As the school moved away from the AP, the History Department’s first

move was to survey the students to capture their interests so that history electives could reflect student demand for courses. We used rating systems for students to choose which areas of the world, in which time frames, and certain topics that students are passionate about. We also gave the opportunity for students to write in their interests. We didn’t want to leave any stone unturned! Additionally, we did a departmental audit to ensure that we were being true to Taft’s mission, our POG, and Taft’s DEI statement in our course offerings, both within each course, but also across the courses being offered. It was incredibly important that electives, as they are predicated on the nature of student choice, piqued student’s interest and fed curiosity, but we also wanted to be mindful of avoiding major content coverage gaps, whether geographical, chronological, demographic, racial, socioeconomic, or religious. To add another layer to that, we had to also consider faculty expertise and content knowledge. If the courses didn’t reflect our department’s strengths, they could be less successful. This information also helped us identify hiring goals so that we could round out our department in order to provide the best course offerings to students possible.”



The hardworking, amazing, and incredible Mrs. Foley! (Photo courtesy of Mr. Falcetti)

The 2023-2024 school year launched with eight electives, and due to high demand, that number is increasing to 14-15 History electives for next year! Clearly, students are embracing the new offerings, and favorite former AP classes such as Human Geography and U.S. History are still offered without the stress and lost time preparing for a culminating exam in early May. Reflecting on the elective offerings, Mrs. Foley shares “Many of our courses were fully enrolled: History of Music: Rock and Roll, Honors Politics of Race, Gender, and Society, The History of Modern China, and World War II. The Honors electives in modern U.S. History (the 1960s and 1974-2016) have also had a lot of momentum. We have found in our processes that students really want more modern history courses, so as you can, many of our new courses have the focus. Honors History of the Soviet Union is also generating a lot of buzz! International Relations, Comparative Government, American Government, and American Politics have all filled two sections.”



Photo courtesy of Mr. Falcetti

While 14 electives are more History than most Tafties will take, Mrs. Foley hopes that students are offered even more electives by incorporating a rotation system. Courses will be offered every year or two years, a system in which courses are never deleted, but potentially rotated in and out to reflect student interest and faculty capacity. Mrs. Foley shares “Next year, we are excited to add to our offering with two Honors Human Geography electives and an elective on the American Legal System. We have big dreams, and we are working toward them slowly. We are dedicated to the concepts of student choice and high student engagement. For example, in the future, we would like to offer a course (or more) on Middle Eastern History and also European History. Additionally, we are working to also expand on courses that are global in nature.”



Photo courtesy of MOOC

A Day (12 Hours) Without TikTok

LUCY RYAN
Staff Writer

Beep! Beep! Beep! My phone alarm rouses me, to, alas, another beautiful morning at the Taft School. Snow blankets the ground and rests on tree branches like a scene out of a postcard. “What a beautiful day to use TikTok,” I thought as I gleefully typed in my phone password. The morning of January 19th, 2025, was just like any other day... or so that is what I thought. Little did I know, Tikok had failed to comply with U.S. Congress, and its Chinese conglomerate, Byte Dance, refused to sell the company. Per usual, I reached for my phone to check my social media. I open Instagram; then Snapchat; and then last but certainly not least TikTok—my favorite of them all. Then, the funniest thing happened, a message appeared on my screen that read: “Sorry, TikTok isn’t available right now.” “Haha - that’s a good one,” I thought, “whichever intern okayed this is in for it.” But when I tried to click out to the ForYouPage for my instant hit of dopamine, the unimaginable happened: I couldn’t access my FYP. “What? No, this can’t be!” I thought.

But, alas, no matter how many times I clicked on the app, I was barred from entering my oasis of instant gratification. What was this heinous violation of my rights!? Last time I checked, it was my civil duty as an American to spend as much time as possible on my phone. As I researched further, I learned that the Federal Government had deemed TikTok a threat to National Security, and a law had been signed in April of 2024 stating that if Byte Dance (Tiktok’s Chinese Parent

Company) did not sell TikTok within 270 days, the app would be banned in the US. Apparently, our foreign adversaries having access to the data of 170 million Americans sounded off some alarms in Washington. Before I had time to grieve the loss of my favorite app and singular hobby, reality dawned on me: what was I supposed to do with my newly found 18 hours of free time?



Photo Courtesy of Harvard Law School

I contemplated replacing my designated TikTok time with Instagram Reels, but something about it just wasn’t the same. I then toggled with the idea of trying YouTube shorts instead but ultimately reached the same conclusion. As a last resort, I decided it was time to go outside, seeing as I hadn’t since I downloaded the app back in 2020. I opened Centen’s doors and stepped into the sunlight. The rush of the cold air and powdery snow beneath me was ple-

asant, but, to be honest, was nowhere near as good as the sensation of scrolling through my highly curated feed. Those days were behind me, though. It was time to find something to do, a productive hobby that was a net good for society... setting my VPN location to Brazil! Unfortunately, my brilliant idea was shattered because it turns out a functional VPN is quite expensive, and after spending the last of my money on TikTok Shop, I lacked the funds for exorbitant spending. I sighed and realized that all my efforts were in vain, there was no hope of filling the Tiktok-shaped hole in my heart. I would have to resort to boring hobbies, like reading or math or whatever people who don’t have TikTok do for fun. Then, for old times’ sake, I clicked on the app once more. To my elation, it opened up, with the message: “Welcome Back!” My prayers were answered! The stress of finding a new hobby that didn’t include watching 32-part storytimes was over! I retreated to the safety of my bed, and spent the remainder of the day on th e blessed app, making up for all the precious screen time I lost.

January Crossword

HAYDEN CHURCH
News Editor

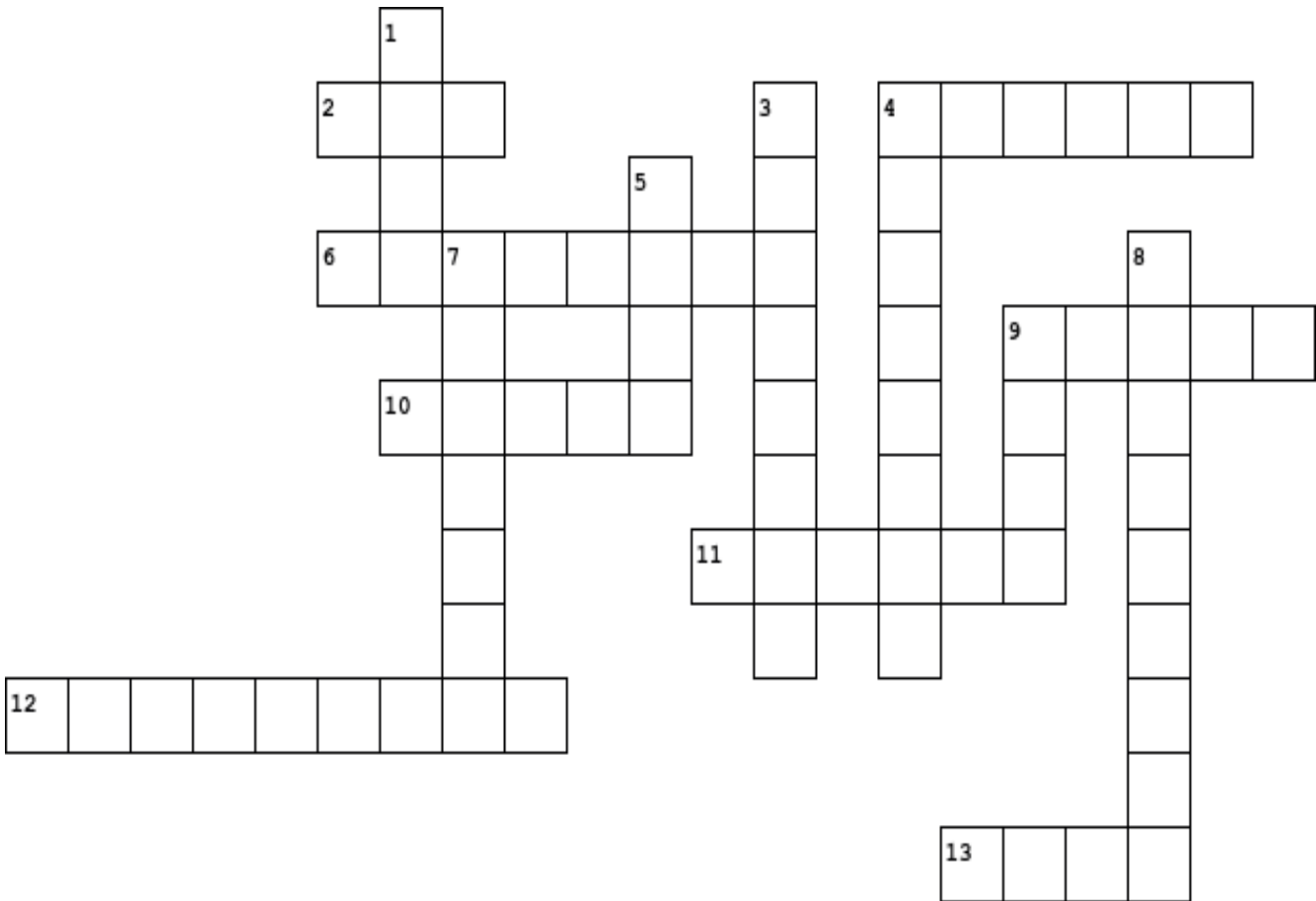
With Valentine’s Day just around the corner, here’s a love themed crossword to get your heart pumping!

Across:

- 2. Loving promise
- 4. Cupid shoots _____
- 6. Month of Valentine’s Day
- 9. Shape of love
- 10. Roman god of love
- 11. The “X” in “XOXO”
- 12. Valentine’s candy
- 13. Romantic outing

Down:

- 1. Popular Valentine’s flower
- 3. Love hormone
- 4. February birthstone
- 5. Letter
- 7. A bunch of flowers is called
- 8. Would you be my _____?
- 9. The “O” in “XOXO”



The Real Cost of ChatGPT

COCO O'BRIEN
A&L Editor

Ever since ChatGPT first became available in the winter of 2022, it has been a valuable resource for students worldwide and within the Taft community. Whether you're asking the bot for help studying for a math test or using it to organize class notes, its accessibility and ease of use have helped it establish itself as a fixture of school life. Typing a prompt into ChatGPT has become a mindless everyday occurrence for many. Beyond the obvious concerns about academic integrity, the site's widespread daily use also raises significant ecological concerns, specifically pertaining to its water usage.

According to a study conducted by researchers at the University of California, Riverside, ChatGPT uses an estimated 500 milliliters of water (roughly the amount in a 16-ounce bottle) every time you ask it a series of 5 to 50 questions or prompts. This range varies depending on where its servers are located and the season. The estimate includes indirect water usage that tech companies usually don't measure, such as cooling the power plants that supply data centers with electricity.

Freshwater makes up just 2.5 percent of the world's total water volume, and over half of that amount is ice. Seventy percent of the world's usable freshwater is used for agriculture. By 2050, two-thirds of the global population is expected to experience water scarcity, disrupting many areas of daily life. Given these figures, conserving freshwater is essential. The recent California wildfires have highlighted this vitality. The fires were partially caused by an ongoing drought in the state, and the water needed to fight them has put an additional strain on the region's water supply. As we continue to chip away at our planet's finite resources in the years to come, events like these will become more and more frequent and more and more intense.

This reality should invite us to reflect on our habits, like our reliance on ChatGPT. While a couple of prompts here and there might seem inconsequential on a larger scale, with millions of users accessing ChatGPT every day, its cumulative water footprint becomes significant. So, instead of defaulting to the platform for every task you are assigned, pause and think: could this same question be answered with a regular old internet search, through reviewing class notes, or by asking a friend? These alternatives won't just reduce our water consumption but also encourage independent thinking and problem-solving skills, some of which we seem to have lost in the age of ChatGPT.

It's also worth noting that tech companies themselves have a responsibility to mitigate the environmental impact of their platforms. Investing in more energy-efficient servers, using renewable energy sources, and implementing advanced cooling technologies are just a few ways they can improve their water and energy efficiency. As users, we can support these efforts by choosing to engage with companies that prioritize sustainability. Ultimately, the goal isn't to eliminate the use of ChatGPT but to approach it more thoughtfully. While AI tools have become an integral part of modern life, it's crucial to balance their benefits with their environmental costs. Small changes in our behavior, such as limiting unnecessary prompts or exploring alternative resources, can collectively make a big difference.



Photo Courtesy of Watching America

January Book Recs

ELEANOR PURICELLI
Staff Writer

Water for Elephants - Sara Gruen

Sara Gruen's *Water for Elephants* tells the story of Jacob Jan-kowski, a past member of the Benzini Brothers Most Spectacular Show on Earth. The show, full of various misfits, struggles to survive the Great Depression. Jacob, now in a retirement home, reminisces on his past experiences: from being an orphan to joining the circus. During his time with the circus, Jacob was tasked with caring for the various animals. He soon forms bonds with Marlena, a stunt person, and Rosie, a mistreated elephant. *Water for Elephants* highlights the value of life and connections despite hardships, and it is a historical fiction novel that you will not want to miss.

Rock Paper Scissors - Alice Feeney

Rock Paper Scissors by Alice Feeney is a physiological thriller that follows Adam and Amelia Wright, a couple whose relationship is slowly falling apart. The pair wins a vacation, and they travel to Scotland hoping to save their marriage. There, they stay in an isolated cabin where their story is told through alternating perspectives of Adam, Amelia, and a series of old letters that Amelia once wrote. The couple's secrets are slowly revealed, allowing them to uncover the truth within their relationship, and that one of them isn't telling the truth. The twists and betrayals in *Rock Paper Scissors* will not only leave readers guessing but also allow them to question the power that the truth holds.

A Little Life - Hanya Yanagihara

Hanya Yanagihara's *A Little Life* is a heartfelt novel that tells the story of four friends as they navigate through their lives in New York City. There is Willem, an actor, JB, a painter from Brooklyn, Malcom, an architect, and Jude, a lawyer who serves as the group's center. Jude is extremely talented; however, he has a troubled past where he faced numerous hardships. Early in his childhood, he dealt with abuse, ultimately leaving him scarred and questioning his own worth. The novel discusses the complexity of the circle's relationships, and the various ways in which they have loved and hurt one another. Hanya Yanagihara highlights the importance of hope and the multifaceted nature of human connections.

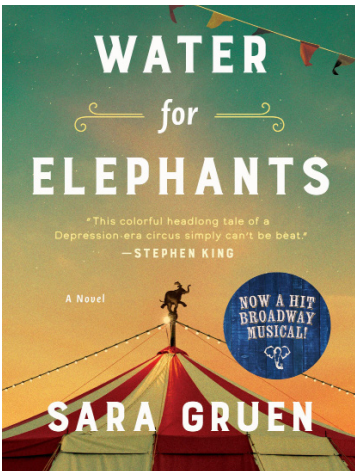


Photo Courtesy of Amazon

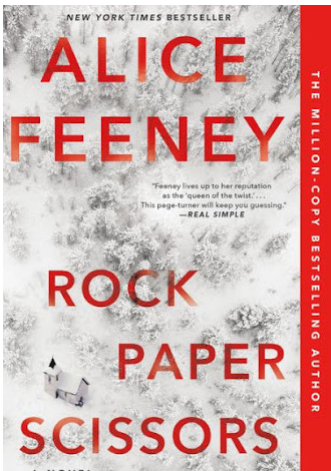


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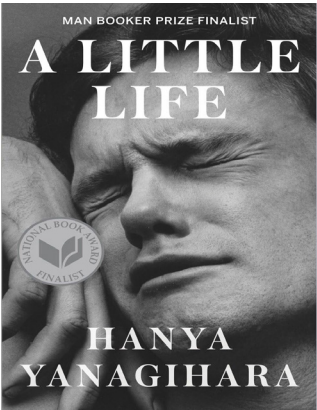


Photo Courtesy of Amazon

Female Main Character Icks

VI LAPHAM
Contributor

I’m going to describe the female main character from the latest book I’ve read: she eats a lot but never gains weight; she’s beautiful, but somehow thinks she’s ugly; she’s dangerous but helpless at the same time, and most of all, she’s not like the other girls. If this sounds familiar, it is because this description details a majority of popular female main characters, or FMCs, written and read by today’s generation. How does literature influence our identities? How do not only the personalities of characters change us, but also their physical traits? Even if you aren’t a big reader, you can probably relate these traits to female movie and TV characters. Vi from *Fourth Wing*, Paedyn from *Powerless*, and Sophie from *Keeper of the Lost Cities* are just a few prominent examples of this type of characterization in books that influence many reader’s identities all around the world.

For young readers, mainly girls, these influential characters are role models and written portrayals of the perfect girl. Many young readers feel pressure to pick up traits exhibited by fictional female characters, even with their unrealistic expectations. This concept of the perfect woman is not only displayed in young adult fiction, but also reflects the standards that are upheld by society in real life. Consequently, trying to take after descriptions of popular FMCs gets very confusing, as the contradictions and unattainable standards in their personalities are apparent. The women main characters are usually described as very small, and helpless looking; as Violet from *Fourth Wing*, a very popular young adult fiction, states in the very first chapter: “I’m too short. Too frail. What curves I do have should be muscle, and my traitorous body makes me embarrassingly vulnerable”. This is a stark contrast to her brazen nature and ability to fight, because somehow, despite being “too short” and “too frail,” Violet is one of the best fighters in the book, and, by the end, the most powerful. Unfortunately, this quote is very similar to descriptions of dozens of other girls in modern popular books. The double standard in *Fourth Wings*’s example is embarrassingly obvious: she looks delicate but is lethal. As Violet’s physical description can pretty much sum up most popular female main characters in young adult books, her readers are taught that looking strong isn’t appealing. Not only is looking strong not appealing, but being weak is also unappealing. Almost always, authors glorify the FMC bottling feelings until eventually another character unscrews the bottle without being asked. Violet’s older sister advises, “This might sound harsh, but don’t seek friendships in there, Violet”. Due to her sister’s advice, Violet spends two thirds of the book attempting to hide her feelings from others so she doesn’t appear “weak.” However, this habit isn’t realistic, and influencing readers to wait for someone to realize something is wrong instead of stating the problem is just one of many unhelpful traits that female main characters are usually written with, as well as always being too quirky or different to have many friends.

Why are young women typically written in such a generic way? In most modern young adult novels, many authors ignore the essential parts of being a woman, and others describe them as flaws. For example, body hair or periods are conveniently ignored unless the author is describing a dislikable or villainous character. These characters are written to be relatable to the reader, but this is simply not the case. Instead, it leaves the audience wondering if their own personalities are lacking because the book character is only liked for her “differences.” This desire to be different in order to be better than the “other girls” pits young readers against each other in an effort to be the perfect person that fictional females portray. All of these arguments about the unfair pressure put on female readers is not to say that male characters are written particularly realistically either; it is fiction after all. However, statistically most young readers are female, and as readers know, a book is usually more enjoyable when the reader identifies with the character whose perspective they are embodying.



Photo Courtesy of Adobe

Dear Horace...

ALEXIE BLAKE
Features Editor

Dear Horace,
Why is CJ Media posting edits of students?
Dear Probable NARP,
Honestly, I’ve got to hand it to them — they’re killing it. I laugh every time I see one on my feed, but they’re pretty cool (and definitely make you look way better at your sport than you actually are).

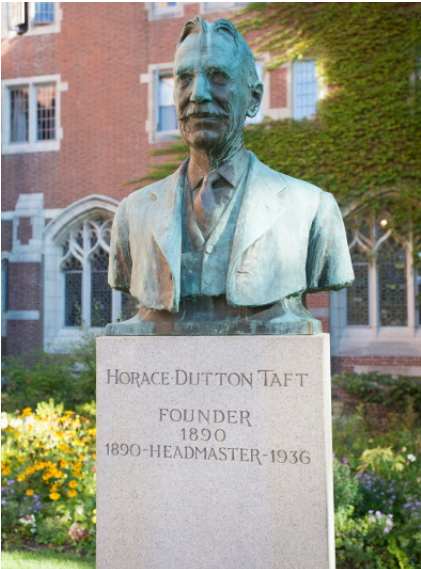


Photo Courtesy of taftschool.org

Dear Horace,
Who put that hideous couch outside of Potter Art Gallery?
Dear Grieving Student,
Don’t even get me started.
It’s just not the same. Not sure who thought the awkward, oval-shaped monstrosity would somehow inspire more “natural conversation.” Still haven’t seen a single person sit on it. Kudos to Farren Camp ‘26 for speaking out against this injustice.

Dear Horace,
Why does everyone have their formal dress already?
Dear Innocent Inquirer,
I don’t know, but it’s starting to stress me out. I’ve always been a last-minute hustler, but I’m starting to think that might not fly this year. I mean seriously, I see five new posts from formaldressesclass25 every time I open Instagram.

Dear Horace,
What is the deal with TikTok?
Dear Dopamine Addict,
Don’t worry, it’s back! I think? Safe to say the entire internet went through the 5 stages of grief after getting the “Sorry, TikTok isn’t available right now” message — only for it to mysteriously return less than 24 hours later. At this point, I’m convinced it was all just an elaborate prank to see how quickly we’d spiral.

Dear Horace,
What do I do if someone asks me to Formal without a poster?
Dear Hopeless Romantic,
Say no.

Dear Horace,
Is my situationship going to ask me to formal?
Dear Wishful Thinker,
Ah, the dreaded question. I cannot offer much guidance, but I wish you the best of luck and hope the clouds clear soon enough. These are troubling times, plagued by Snapchat Plus and the ever-looming question of “what are we?” (never ask). But don’t stress! As thrilling as the awkward bus ride chit-chat is, there is no shame in going with friends! So really, it’s a win-win.

World Dance Appreciation: Taft’s Hidden Gem

QUINN LEONARD
Staff Writer

As far as class descriptions go, World Dance Appreciation is self-explanatory—we learn traditional dances from across the globe. A typical lesson involves memorizing steps while staying in time with a rhythm and our dance partners. This class is often tricky, but the community of Manuella, Letitia, Precious, Alex Calabro, Grace Qudeen, Denzel, Ethan Marquis, Mrs. Surber, and myself, is the perfect combination of vulnerability, leadership, and personality, and so we help each other succeed.

For the first few days of World Dance, I watched the mirrors to gauge the class’s effort, wondering, *are people here for an art credit or the dancing?* I’d joined the class to fill my performance art credit, yet I was also excited to dance. Then we began learning the Brazilian Maculélé and the sub-Saharan Lamban. I loved the energy and felt impassioned to maximize my effort—to be vulnerable and carefree with my movements. The less we, as dancers think, the more our bodies feel the music, and the more our muscle memory is successful. As we dance vulnerably, we feel connected to each other and to the culture from which the dance arose.

Teaching vulnerability is not a curricular directive of the class, but it’s a result; the same goes for leadership. When someone misremembers a step, we show them how to do it. When someone is off-tempo, we get their attention. We make sure everyone puts in the work for our dance to look good showing our appreciation for the culture and erasing any doubts of appropriation.

The final lesson of world dance is personality—in technical terms: *style*. As we rehearse our dance, we gain a deep enough cultural understanding to incorporate unique variations on the moves. We turn an awesome cultural-dance to an awesome cultural-us-dance. Our additive hip sways, handshakes, or foot stomps reveal current emotions and thoughts, and our overall stylistic patterns reveal our long-term dancing personality. To gain a better understanding of my class’s personality, I interviewed its members. We have a strong dynamic of trust and support, so we have fun with each other.

Manuella

Best Memory: The beat of hitting the Maculélé sticks.

Most Potential: Letitia: She has rhythm and follows the steps well. On a side note, if someone says Alex, they’re lying.

Best Dance Partners: Grace & Quinn

Survivor Winner: Denzel

Voted Out 1st: Alex

Instructor: Myself

Letitia - One might says she’s too cool for an interview.

Precious

Best Memory: Alex and Ethan in the Capoeira circle: Their touching performance showed a deep appreciation of the art.

Most Potential: Myself: I’m athletic, smart, and rhythmic. The word “amazing” also comes to mind.

Best Dance Partners: Precious & Letitia “We are literally the same person in different fonts; we anticipate each other’s dance moves.”

Survivor Winner: Quinn

Voted Out 1st: Ethan

Instructor: Myself, I’m patient

Alex Calabro

Best Memory: Ethan’s “My Dance Identity” Presentation

Most Potential: Manuella

Best Dance Partners: Alex & Ethan with a Brazilian dance.

Survivor Winner: Denzel

Voted Out 1st: Letitia

Instructor: Myself

Grace Qudeen

Best Memory: Learning the Capoeira from volunteer teacher Nika and having both Quinn and I thrown over her.

Most Potential: Myself - “Dance isn’t just an art; it’s an identity.”

Best Dance Partners: Grace and Quinn - we’re on a common wavelength and have a history from skiing and engineering.

Survivor Winner: Grace

Voted Out 1st: Manuella

Instructor: Denzel

Denzel

Best Memory: the spinning moves of the Maculélé.

Most Potential: Grace - she gets things easily

On another side note, it’s not Alex; something’s not clicking.

Best Dance Partners: Grace and Ethan: Grace will make Ethan better than Alex and Letitia. I just have a feeling.

Survivor Winner: Ethan

Voted Out 1st: Myself, out of general confusion.

Instructor: Grace

Ethan Marquis

Best Memory: Presumably the warm-up leg shakes, but I forgot to ask

Most Potential: Manuella

Best Dance Partners: Alex and Ethan with a Brazilian dance.

Survivor Winner: Myself

Voted Out 1st: Letitia

Instructor: Myself

Mrs. Surber

Best Memory: Our discussion over observations in the African dance video

Most Potential: Denzel

Best Dance Partners: Denzel & Letitia

Survivor Winner: Alex - He’s athletic, confident, and moderately talkative.

Voted Out 1st: Ethan - He’s silly and very talkative, it’s fun in class but not successful on survivor.

Instructor: Grace - she’s confident enough to lead, knows the steps well, and she can corral everyone.



Image courtesy of Shutterstock

Pap Poll!

The Pap Poll was a staple of the Papyrus in the 90s and we're here to bring it back! In each Pap Poll, one question is asked to a random group of students to gauge a variety of honest opinions on the subject. This month, the question was:

What are your thoughts on the new couch outside of the art gallery?

Here are their responses:

"I'm very sad to see the old one gone. There were so many memories and it's hard to see such an ancient artifact replaced by a modern couch that doesn't match." - 12th grade girl

"Not a fan." - 11th grade boy

"I think white is a very bold color to choose." - 9th grade girl

"It's definitely comfier, but I feel a little creepy just sitting there as people walk by." - 11th grade girl

"Thumbs down" - 12th grade boy

"It's making the school seem more like a museum exhibit than a school. It feels like we're being advertised to some random buyer. I just want to go to school. Not go to some museum." - 10th grader

"Who left their couch in the middle of the hallway?" - 12th grade boy

Seize the Clay

MAYA WOODHALL

Staff Writer

Art electives at Taft are copious, with a variety of types and levels. Requiring an art credit generates a pool of vastly different skills and enthusiasm. Some are delighted to enhance their artistic technique: an expanded knowledge of film and photography, or ability to perform in front of people. Others, however, are more reluctant to accept a new horizon of artistic comprehension: taking leisurely bathroom breaks, staring out the window with yearning, or possessing an expression filled with suffering. It depends on who you talk to. Some people might not call themselves artists but love their 3D design class. Some people might dislike art and are currently disliking their art class of choice. Some people might love art and are thoroughly enjoying and succeeding in their advanced ceramics class.

The latter would be Wilson Littman '28, a student not only with talent but with passion and recognition for the power of art. Wilson started ceramics in 3rd grade, in part due to his art teacher who allowed him to harness his ability by giving him lessons on how to use the ceramics wheel. It was quickly clear that Wilson was very good at ceramics and creating things, being the youngest artist to give a live demonstration at a local art show in Big Sky, Montana. When he came to Taft, he swiftly rose to one of the best in his class, with many other students observing his proficiency in ceramics. At holidays, Wilson gifts pieces to his family, solidifying the fact that homemade gifts are the best ones.



Image courtesy of Wilson Littman '28

Besides having this talent that allows him to create functioning and beautiful pieces, Wilson recognizes that art is a great way to decompress. In any art class, but especially in the visual arts where one is actively creating something, whether it be a painting or a mug, there is an environmental shift. You walk up the stairs from the English wing into the well-lit, apron-lined ceramics room and it feels different. Entering the painting and drawing room—with art mounted on the walls and its high ceilings—elicits a feeling of calmness. Although just meters away from desk-filled and homework-loving classrooms, art rooms give students an opportunity to briefly leave behind the stress and try to take something from within and bring it out.

Talking to Wilson made me realize that the origins of one's interest in any activity—art, sports, etc—is something that is immensely interesting, and really lets one see the avidity someone possesses. Once you realize why someone loves something so much, seeing the diligent effort they put in to learn more, improve, and succeed is an intangible way to bring joy into your life.

Potter’s Pond: A Timeless Frozen Tradition

COURTNEY EDWARDS
Editor-In-Chief

There’s a special kind of excitement that comes with finding out the pond is finally frozen over. It’s a moment that feels like winter’s official arrival—a quiet signal from nature that it’s time to lace up the skates, grab a stick, and head outside for some pure, unfiltered joy.

It usually starts with a curious glance toward the water, the kind you’ve been sneaking for weeks. At first, the pond was a slushy mix of water and thin ice—and as someone who’s fallen through a piece of not-yet-ready ice while pond skating, it’s better to give the makeshift rink plenty of time to properly freeze over. But after a few frigid nights full of these polar vortex temperatures, the surface starts to change.

The moment you notice it’s frozen, something stirs inside you. Maybe you see the thin layer of ice from your dorm window or catch it glistening under the streetlights on your walk back from the library. And then the email comes in: Potter’s Pond is open!

The word spreads quickly around campus. Only four year seniors will remember the last time Potter’s became an epicenter for laughter and cold limbs. So, by the time the final bell rings, the pond is alive with activity. Students arrive with skates over their shoulders, hockey sticks in hand. Makeshift goals are placed on either end, and a game of pond hockey breaks out in the middle of campus—a spontaneous, joyful escape from the everyday pressures of Taft life. The best part? That first skate. Blades carving into ice untouched by snowplows or Zambonis, leaving long, satisfying streaks across the glassy surface. The air is crisp, cheeks flush from the cold, and laughter echoes in the quiet winter landscape.

The pond becomes a gathering place, a hub of winter activity. Unlike the structured environment of a rink, pond hockey takes players back to the roots of hockey itself, where the game is about creativity and joy. There are no boards, no referees, and no whistles. There’s just the sounds of blades cutting through ice, pucks dancing across the frozen surface, and the occasional shout of “goal!” It’s a place where beginners and seasoned players share the ice, where every play feels like a highlight, and where happiness takes center stage.

Potter’s Pond is more than just a frozen stretch of water; it’s a symbol of the winter season and a reminder of the timeless traditions that make the Taft campus feel like home. The first freeze marks the start of something special—a season of skates, laughter, and memories that will last long after the ice melts in the spring.

A Note From Potter the Pond

ALEX WERNER
Staff Writer

Dear Tafties,

At first, I was ecstatic about the icy winter approaching: no more fishing, no more Jig Pat litter, and most importantly, no more ducks treating me like their personal bathtub and bathroom. Instead, I was ready to impress the usually distracted students scurrying down Wu train with my new, hard look.

However, my enthusiasm slowly turned to an imminent sense of nervousness. As winter crept in, I began to wonder: is being the center of attention really all it’s cracked up to be?

The cautious explorers are my favorites. What feels better than being poked and prodded by the scared feet of those hovering around my edges, afraid to commit to taking a full step on my surface? They throw

pebbles and test my new coat of ice like it’s some kind of science experiment, waiting for me to assure them: “Hey, don’t be afraid and come on in! I promise I’m super strong and totally not slippery at all.” Well, spoiler alert: I can’t talk, so I will never say that, and you will just have to live in constant wonder about all the fun you could’ve had. Plus, I secretly like seeing all the newbies take a tumble. It’s a learning experience you can’t get in the classroom.

On the other end of the spectrum, we have the hockey players. Let me tell you, they certainly aren’t afraid of me – they own me. If I’m being honest, I crack a little when I see them approaching in large clans, all sporting matching puffers. They remind me a bit of penguins, except that they rudely

stride across my face, digging their blades into my smooth surface. Ouch. And don’t get me started on the photoshoots. It’s always, “Wow, look at these hockey players posing so majestically on the pond!” Meanwhile, I’m literally holding them up. I’m sick and tired of everyone taking photos on top of me but never with me. Nobody likes my solo Instagram posts, but once a couple of hockey players geared up in jerseys show up, it hits the Instagram stories and inundates my main feed.

Now, this one might be a personal concern, and I’m not sure any of you can help me. As Mr. LaCasse announces that the pond is open for play, I kick back my feet and start enjoying my role as winter’s MVP. Of course, just as people begin to enjoy my frozen self, things start to heat up. The next thing I know, parts of me are roped off like I’m some kind of biohazard, a threat to human nature. Do you know what it feels like to have a whole part of you bordered off from the human touch? As they cordon me off, I hear everyone thinking: “Don’t go there! He’s so weak that if you even think about going near, you will fall into his freezing water and drown!” Can you imagine if somebody wrapped caution tape around your forehead just because you were having a bad hair day? Not a good move.

So, Tafties, as you glide, or cautiously waddle, across my frozen surface, please remember who supports you. I’m trying to stay solid, but we all know our Watertown weather is as reliable as the Taft WiFi. Be kind to the pond, and the pond will be kind to you.



Image courtesy of Robert Falcetti,
edited by Alex Werner ‘26

The College Football Playoff: A New 12-Team Phenomenon

WARD SNYDER
Staff Writer

For the first time ever, the College Football Playoffs featured a twelve-team playoff, transitioning away from the four-team bracket that had been in place for the past ten years. This new playoff format includes several new interesting changes. First off, four teams received first-round byes, which means they skip the first round and get an automatic bid into the second round. These went to the four highest-ranked conference champions in the FBS, the highest level of college football in the NCAA. In addition, the fifth highest-ranked conference champion is granted a bid to the playoff, and the rest of the field is made up of the remaining highest-ranked teams. This creates an interesting scenario, where an unranked team can end up in the playoffs. That would result in a team in the top twelve being pushed out of the playoffs. That scenario in which a top 12 gets pushed out of the playoff happened this year when 17th-seeded Clemson won their conference championship game and were given an automatic entrance. This caused Alabama, the 11th-ranked team, to be pushed out of the playoff. This scenario is guaranteed to repeat over the ensuing years of this format.

Secondly, this year’s college football playoff included many of the sport’s historically successful teams, such as Ohio State, Georgia, and Notre Dame. But the expanded bracket also left room for teams such as Southern Methodist University (SMU), Boise State, and Arizona State (ASU), who wouldn’t have been in the playoff conversation otherwise. The new playoff 12 team system gave these teams an opportunity to play for the championship, when previously they would not have been able to.

While there was luck involved, it would be wrong not to mention the two best players in the CFB playoff: Ashton Jeanty of Boise State and Cam Skattebo of Arizona State. Cam Skattebo had the best single-player performance in the entire playoff when Arizona State faced off against Texas in a quarter-final clash. Skattebo gave quite a performance, including throwing a touchdown pass and completing both a pass and run touchdown. He is the first person to do so in ten years and the first person to ever do it in the playoffs.

The new playoff bracket also created huge upsets, the most notable being Ohio State’s defeat of Oregon 41-21 in the quarterfinals. Oregon was the only undefeated team in the FBS this year, going 13-0, and was the unanimous “number one” team in the nation. However, Ohio State proved to be stronger, as freshman receiver Jeremiah Smith had an amazing day with two scores and 187 yards.

The semifinals of the CFB consisted of four of college football’s most successful and historically significant teams. Ohio State took on Texas in what was a thriller that came down to its final moments. With two minutes and thirteen seconds left in the game—down 21-14—Texas was on the Ohio State eight-yard line, close to the end-zone. What ensued was perhaps the most memorable moment of the entire playoff: Ohio State captain and defensive end, Jack Sawyer, sacked Texas quarterback, Quinn Ewers, and returned the ball 92 yards to ice the game and bring Ohio State into the final. The other semifinal, Penn State vs. Notre Dame, went back and forth all game. However, due to a couple of critical mistakes by Penn State quarterback Drew Allar, Notre Dame was able to squeak by and head to the National Championship to face off against Ohio State.

Ohio State vs. Notre Dame proved to be an entertaining game in which OSU scored 21 unanswered points after Notre Dame scored on the opening possession of the game. The second half started similarly, as Ohio State kept scoring and padded their lead, making it 31-7. Then Notre Dame started to claw back, scoring the next 16 points and closing the gap to 31-23. Ohio State held steady and made a field goal—clinching the game. The final score was 34-23, crowning Ohio State the national champion in the inaugural 12-team playoff. Overall, it’s safe to say that the playoff structure added new, highly contested games and increased competitiveness in college football. These new rules will continue to evolve, keeping fans and teams invested in each and every game they play.



Image courtesy of NCAA.com

January Horoscopes

ELLY OUELLETTE
Staff Writer

Aries (March 21 - April 19)
This week, Aries, you’re going to feel like everything is moving in slow motion while you’re stuck in fast-forward. You might be quick to snap or act without thinking, and that’s likely to backfire. Try not to burn bridges, especially when you’re frustrated. The last thing you need right now is more chaos in your life.

Taurus (April 20 - May 20)
Sometimes, it’s okay to slow down and take things one step at a time. This week, focus on staying grounded and organized. You’re known for being reliable, so use that to your advantage. Maybe it’s time to clean out your backpack—who knows what treasures (or forgotten homework) you might find!

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)
Your social energy is off the charts right now! While you enjoy chatting with friends, don’t forget to balance your social time with some study time. Even multitaskers like you need a little focus now and then.

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)
You’ve got a big heart, Cancer, and this week, your intuition is especially sharp. Pay attention to your gut feelings when it comes to school projects or group work. You’re a natural at making others feel supported, but don’t forget to give yourself a little self-care too. A quiet evening with a good book might be just what you need.

Leo (July 23 - August 22)
It’s your time to shine, Leo! Your creativity is in full swing, and it’s a great time to show off your talents. Whether it’s a class presentation or an art project, you’ve got the spotlight. But remember, it’s okay to share the spotlight with others too. A little teamwork never hurt anyone!

Virgo (August 23 - September 22)
This week, focus on perfecting your skills. Whether it’s acing that math test or organizing your notes, your attention to detail will pay off. You might find yourself offering help to others, and while that’s admirable, don’t forget to take time for yourself—there’s only so much of your genius to go around!

Libra (September 23 - October 22)
Balance is key, Libra! You might feel pulled in different directions this week, but trust that you can find harmony if you manage your time wisely. Whether it’s homework, friends, or hobbies, make sure you’re keeping everything in check. A little downtime will keep you feeling your best.

Scorpio (October 23 - November 21)
Scorpio, you’ve got a serious sense of determination this week. Whether it’s a big exam or a project deadline, you’re not backing down. Stay focused and let your intense energy carry you to success. But remember, taking short breaks will keep your mind sharp and ready for action.

Sagittarius (November 22 - December 21)
Your adventurous spirit is calling, Sagittarius! This week, your curiosity will lead you to discover something new—whether it’s a fun fact in class or a fresh hobby to try. Stay open-minded and don’t be afraid to ask questions. You might just uncover a hidden talent or interest.

Capricorn (December 22 - January 19)
You like to act like you’re the only one with a plan, but all that ambition is starting to look more like a one-person pity party. Ease up on trying to control everything and let someone else have the spotlight. It won’t kill you—probably.

Aquarius (January 20 - February 18)
This week, your innovative ideas are ready to make waves, Aquarius. Whether it’s a class discussion or a creative project, your originality will set you apart. Don’t be afraid to think outside the box. Your unique perspective could lead to something amazing.

Pisces (February 19 - March 20)
Pisces, your daydreams might feel a little stronger this week, and that’s okay! Let your imagination take flight, but remember to bring your feet back to reality when it’s time to study. Your creativity can help you find new solutions to problems—just make sure to balance your dreams with action.