

The Writers Block

“[It] isn’t the worst thing in the world... hot chocolate, jammies, your favourite playlist... grinding out pages” -

Mr. Sylvester

Featuring

Pandemic Behaviors Following Into 2021

An Examination of “fake news”

How COVID-19 Has Changed the Holidays

A Guide to the 2020 Holiday Season

Editor's Note: Our Time Capsule



As we approach the New Year, I've started to think about how time impacts The Writer's Block's content; will our present ideas be just as applicable in 2021 and beyond? Will the thoughts of 2020's Upper School carry relevance in the future?

With each school year, the graduating class is replaced with new faces from the Prep, bringing a unique mix of voices and opinions: a new Upper School class, different from the last.

Our current situation exacerbates these contrasts; today's Upper School students experience a different school-life from students of years past, and the same will be said of the students who follow. The Writer's Block finds its strength in this diversity, and as the Upper School student newspaper, we highlight the individuality of each year's class.

Our goal is not timelessness, it is preservation. Each issue features the present, real, and honest thoughts of the current Upper School. In 2021, our earlier issues will offer an untainted glance at our views in 2020.

Sometime during the holiday break, over a hot drink of your choice, take the time to read our writing team's end-of-year reflections. And perhaps, years down the road, this issue can be looked upon as a time capsule, capturing the thoughts of 2020's Upper School and the unique environment that they lived in.

Huge thanks are owed to our writers, graphics team, Ms. Della Mora, and Mr. Sylvester. Thank you as well to our incredible editors, Ambihai Akilan, Delnaz Zamanian, and Fanxiou (Franky) Liu, who were rocking it on a tight schedule. And the biggest gratitude goes to you, our lovely readers. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder; our art is little without an audience.

Enjoy the holiday break, and all the best for the New Year.

Hugs,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emiko', written in a cursive, flowing style.

Emiko Wijeyesundera

Editor-In-Chief

Want to contribute to The Writer's Block? Write a Letter to the Editor, addressed to ewijeyesundera@bayviewglen.ca, to be included!

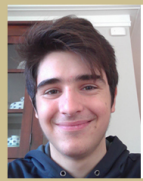
A Guide to the 2020 Holiday Season



A Guide to the 2020 Holiday Season

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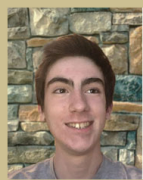
Pandemic Behaviors that Follow us into 2021



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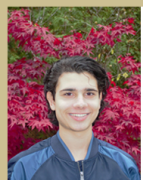
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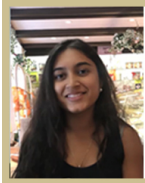
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Student Leaders, Unmasked

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Between the Lines (BVG Anthology) Update



Anavi has been writing since she was a child and uses it as an outlet to de-stress. She hopes her last year will go out with a bang.

It's Anavi again. Let's try something different.

Lately, with the busy school year and the constant change occurring all around us, it helps me to just write without making any sense at all. When we start writing because someone tells us to or for a graded English assessment, it's easy to stop seeing ourselves in our work and start subconsciously conforming to what we think we should write. If you're like me—and I suspect many of you are—then writing is a way to disclose a side of ourselves

that we keep hidden from everyone else because it's too jumbled to get into. It's hard to submit work like that anywhere but if you're like me—and I suspect many of you are—that's not why you write. This break, this two weeks of gifted time amidst a pandemic, I want to encourage this spirit of raw writing. The way that makes sense only to you. It can be a poem, a thought, or any other form with which you've been wanting to experiment. You don't have to submit, but if there's something you want to share, feel free to do so.

For those of you that like structure and have been enjoying the prompts, here's one for December:

Take a mundane activity or eventful story (fictional or not) and write about it in the style of your favourite author or an author who has a distinct writing style. Along with your submission, also include the name of the author you were inspired by.

As per always, your submissions should be about a page in length. Whether you choose the write-your-heart-out prompt or the more concrete one, give your work a title. If you're like me—and I suspect many of you are—you'll know that titles are the quirky introduction at the beginning of your work and the most powerful hook a

A Guide to the 2020 Holiday Season



A Guide to the 2020 Holiday Season

Leela Bhide is a Grade 9 student with a passion for writing. She loves to write anything, from analytical pieces to something as simple as a recipe for a cookbook! Along with writing, you will most likely find Leela playing volleyball, baking or re-watching The Vampire Diaries.

2020 has been a tough year, but that doesn't mean that our well-deserved holiday break can't be enjoyed during quarantine. Continue reading to learn how you can make this holiday break a memorable one!

The final bell of 2020 at Bayview Glen rings on December 18. We gather our things and say our goodbyes and wishes for the upcoming holidays and New Year. Though our breaks would be filled with exotic travels, lively parties and lots of Christmas shopping, this year things will be a little different. The most exotic place we'll see is our backyard, our socials will be Netflix Parties, and walking out of the mall with bags and bags of presents will be simply memories as free shipping brings packages right to our doorsteps... but that doesn't mean we can't enjoy the holidays just as much. I've compiled a list of things we can do during this break to have the most enjoyment possible.

1. Sleep in. You know you want to, and remember, this is now our equivalent of vacation; make sure to relax!
2. Try that holiday recipe you've always wanted to. There are endless recipes when it comes to cooking or baking during the holidays. For a challenge, try coming up with your own! The best part is you get to eat it!
3. Go outside! Even though we can't participate in indoor activities, there are still tons of things you can do outside to get into the Winter spirit, like ice skating or skiing. Don't forget to give your snowmen masks!
4. Make use of the pile of Starbucks Gift Cards you have sitting in your room. Lucky for us, our favourite, Starbucks, is still open for pickup, and I know that I will definitely be buying many holiday drinks and treats while they last!
5. Holiday movie night! Get cozy with a cup of eggnog or hot chocolate and watch your favourite holiday movies with your friends on Netflix Party. Some of my favourites holiday movies are Home Alone and Elf.
6. Explore the neighbourhood and check out the Christmas lights. Your gym teacher would be happy you are getting some physical activity!
7. A remote Secret Santa! Mail your gifts to each other and open them up on a Zoom call. Personally, I'm participating in a couple of these, and although they are certainly different from a traditional Secret Santa gift exchange, they are just as fun and a wonderful way to keep family and friends connected throughout the holidays, which is what they're all about!
8. A virtual gingerbread house contest! I don't know about you, but I still love making and decorating gingerbread houses; you can never get too old for these types of things. Although we can't be with friends this year, organize a call with all of them and chat while decorating your treats.
9. This year, more than ever, it's important to give back to our communities, so be sure to spread holiday love to those in need. You can donate to a food bank, or help out by shovelling your neighbour's driveway.

That concludes the list of activities for the upcoming break but I hope that it can contribute to making your holiday break special and festive! Wishing everyone a safe break and see you all in 2021!

Pandemic Behaviors that Follow us into 2021



Christian is a grade 12 student who is looking to have a great final year! He adores writing, specifically creative writing.

The world's uproars become less and less audible when the season of winter comes along. Chaos begins to ease as life slows down. It is a time in which the year comes to an end, and prepares for the next one to arise. This upcoming New Year will be one of relief. No, 2021 will not be perfect, but it will be a pleasant recovery from the disasters that the world has faced this year. That being said, the world will not completely revert back to what it formerly was. The COVID-19 pandemic was a call for change of sorts, some of them permanent. There are behaviors and attitudes that we have adopted in 2020 due to the pandemic that will come with us into 2021. Again, these attitudes are not negative ones, but rather different from what we know. Change is not a fast process, but a necessary one. Here are some behaviors and changes that will follow closely behind us into 2021.

Online activity is a titanic movement that has swept into most aspects of our lives over the last decade. Communication is a crucial part of our lives, so it

makes perfect sense that online communication is so relevant in today's society. Humans are beings of socialization, making an online presence pivotal during the discomfort and isolation of quarantine. People started to transform their living rooms into their office spaces, several education systems shifted to online learning, and basic socialization became more frequent when through a screen. I believe that moving forward, this increase in online interaction will stay with us. People will continue working from their homes, the option to learn online will be standardized, and socialization will change further. In 2021, we will start to see these changes, even when a vaccine has been distributed. Technology is becoming more and more a part of us as people. One could say that in a sense, the veins in our body are becoming wires. The lobes in our brain are becoming gears, turning and turning. Moving forward virtually is the next step in our evolution.

Another aspect of our current lives that will follow alongside us into next year will be our social attitudes. These social attitudes will reflect the adaptations that we had to make this year. During quarantine, any social interaction is valuable. Many find themselves reaching out to their friends and family to check in and chat. As soon as cases begin to decline and we start to feel free being close with others in person once again, an explosion of social interaction will occur. The act of 'reaching out' that people are doing now, well that will be no different next year. I believe that the pandemic has reminded us to keep our connections close. Humans are social creatures. Making time for social gatherings will be much more deliberate in everyday life. Hopefully, once the pandemic breathes its last breath, loneliness will take a beating.

Rome was not built in a day. Likewise, life will not return to 'normal' right away. Social distancing, a key feature of 2020, will be a behavior that we will continue to practice, even shortly after the pandemic ends. People will be paranoid, that is something that is certainly going to happen. Only time will tell when people's behaviors will revert back to the norm that we once knew, but hopefully, we will not have to wait too long.

On New Year's Eve, we will anxiously be waiting for our new beginning. Until then, let us settle our minds. December is a quiet time of year, an opportunity to wind down and think about what is important to us. Now, we prepare for next year: the great known and the great unknown.

Newsletters Referencing this Item

How COVID-19 has Changed the Holidays



Dreaming of a White Christmas

Constantine is a Grade 10 student, and an admirer of the written word. He can be found writing poems or spinning tales no matter the place or time.

The holidays are under siege. COVID-19 is waiting hungrily, an army camped outside the gates of Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, and more. Since there is no *rockin' around the Christmas tree, at the Christmas party hop* this year, we've all had to modify our festive plans. Two Grade 10 students have offered insight into how COVID-19 has changed their holidays.

Michael Gee

What's a normal holiday like for you?

Usually around the holidays, both sides of my family would hold a Christmas dinner with turkey, stuffing and other seasonal treats. We would also celebrate Christmas with gifts, lucky red envelopes, a Christmas tree, and we usually go on vacation during the December break.

Do you usually go anywhere?

We usually travel somewhere within Canada on the December break. For example, last year we went to Quebec City, and the year before, we went to Ottawa.

What are your new plans?

Because of the quarantine, we aren't able to eat together, so we are hoping to hold a virtual dinner through FaceTime. We also are not planning to travel anytime soon either.

How do you feel about this?

The current situation definitely feels isolating. It feels difficult to remember the times when my entire extended family would get together and celebrate. I'm definitely looking forward to when the pandemic is over, and everything turns back to normal.

Maya Freedman

What's a normal holiday like for you?

A normal holiday usually involves seeing many members of my extended family, gift giving, making plans with friends and playing in the snow.

Do you usually go anywhere?

I usually go away on vacation, sometimes driving to my grandparents' cottage in Quebec to go skiing and other times going somewhere warm.

What are your new plans?

This year due to Covid-19, I won't be able to see any of my extended family members and friends. Instead, my plans consist of relaxing at home while beginning to work on ISPs.

How do you feel about this?

It's very difficult not being able to see any of my extended family and it can be frustrating having to be home all the time. Despite all this, I'm still looking

forward to having a fun break filled with tea and hot chocolate.

Nobody will get the holiday break they want this year, but sometimes life doesn't play fair: betrayal is its guiding strategy. But if we want to make the most out of the hand we've been dealt, we need to reassess our situation. Our bubbles can be our delicate snow-globes, enchanted playgrounds with all we need to make this dark winter bright.

Newsletters Referencing this Item

- The Writer's Block | Issue #3 (12/17/2020)

Bayview Glen Independent School 275 Duncan Mill Road Toronto, Ontario M3B
3H9 416.443.1030



An Examination of “Fake News”



Trust, but Verify

Slava is a grade 12 student who likes writing about relevant issues. Writing articles is a positive opportunity to share his ideas with people.

The most consumed product by humanity in a post-industrialized world is information. The developments in social media have increased and accelerated global news propagation. The augmentation in the quantities of news that surround us has decreased the time for users to filter the facts or the inexactitudes of the content they consume. In 2016, Stanford University conducted a study that tested and evaluated students' ability to assess information sources online. Their research showed that young adults displayed a stunning and dismaying consistency in their responses, getting duped many times by “fake news.”

One of the worst parts is that fake news tends to spread much faster online than truth. There are two main reasons for this phenomenon: social media algorithms and human psychology. From one side, social media allows us to communicate with the rest of the world, but it also isolates us from other points of view. This happens due to an algorithm analyzing our preferences and showing them in our feeds. One of the goals of social media is to have

the user spend as much time as possible on the platform and to enjoy what they see. Even if we are reading fake messages generated by bots, their sole mission is to correspond with our preferences. For example, if we click on content marked as "disputed claim" on Twitter, we amplify the online traffic for our friends and other users to that post. People are interested to learn more, and the fake news spreads due to the algorithm thinking it is interesting for all of us. In other words, the algorithm magnifies posts in a society entangled in the online web.

In February 2017, Science magazine, one of the most prestigious and popular publications in the world, had "fake news" as the principal topic of their issue. Scientists collected more than 126 000 posts (both true and false) published on Twitter during the last decade. Their analysis showed that lies tend to spread much faster online than truth. According to their research, smaller bloggers use "fakes" to attract online traffic and followers to their web page. Science magazine also stated that, fake articles have a 70% higher chance of being republished than verified sources and can propagate six times faster.

Social media controls our emotions, influences our state of mind, and changes our perception of the world. In 2012, A. Kramer, a Facebook employee, conducted an experiment. About 700 social media users were divided into two groups, with the first group receiving 90% negative content in their feeds and the second groups seeing 90% positive content. This experiment concluded that we could impact our emotions based on what type of content we are exposed to. Emotions such as happiness or sadness or notions to start or stop smoking, propagated like a virus on social media. This tells us that media and social media have a lever that can manipulate our habits and emotions that can strengthen or destroy society. However, there are good news: positive emotions are equally contagious, and disinformation can be combated. To accomplish this, we must read several different news sources, compare facts and statistics, and skip destructive blogs in order to take care of our mental health.

As we move through the 21st century, we must adapt to the new challenges posed to us by the abundance of information without forgetting the words of Kofi Annon, "Knowledge is power. Information is liberating."

Newsletters Referencing this Item

The SEC Profiles: Co-Heads of Community Outreach with Anavi



Anavi has been writing since she was a child and uses it as an outlet to de-stress. She hopes her last year will go out with a bang.



Jacqueline
Number of years at BVG: 11
Famous Last Words: "Thank you."



Zain
Number of years at BVG: 9
Famous Last Words: "Don't take time for granted. Cherish everything moment you ever have."

Interviewing the 2020-21 Student Council...

1. What's your secret talent?

Jacqueline: I do a great job provoking my brother

Zain: I'm great at baseball.

2. What's your favourite place in school? Why?

Jacqueline: My favourite place is the back deck. I think it is because we use it so much this school year and I just love it. The best part is when I go out for breaks and I see someone from another class. It's like a surprise and there's the little rush of excitement that gets to you. I feel like we have never appreciated it in the past as much.

Zain: This is my first year in the Upper School, so I have much to discover but my favourite place so far is the gym. I love gym class; there is no homework and I get to have fun. Especially this year with the changed schedule, I'm just playing for three hours straight.

3. What is your favourite aspect of Bayview Glen that remains despite COVID-19?

Jacqueline: Probably the clubs. I'm surprised at how many there are and now that it's online, the meetings are more structured. One thing I'm not sure many people know about is the library; it's still open to borrow books, so I'd recommend you pop in, see Ms. Diklich and read something new over the break.

Zain: Despite the pandemic, it's incredible that we still can come to school and see our friends. We're still able to do initiatives within the student council, which is amazing to me.

4. What is your favourite word? Favourite faculty member?

Jacqueline: Serendipity; it's just fun to say. And it's hard to say just one teacher. I've had so many favourites and they've all affected me in so many ways.

Zain: Hope. It's what everyone needs in desperate times like this. And my favourite faculty member is Mr. Cardone.

5. What is one thing you would like the student body to know about you?

Jacqueline: Please come say hi to me! I love those moments in the hallways when you wave to another student, especially the ones who are not in your grade. I feel students are often hesitant to ask questions or they use super well-structured emails when contacting me, whereas I would be fine with a simple 'hey.'

Zain: I'm determined to make your experience the best it can be, and I'm open to any feedback you guys have for us.

6. What is one thing the both of you want to do as the Heads of Community Outreach?

Jacqueline: I feel like it's helped when students know what they are supporting and when they're collectively passionate about the causes you're supporting. Oftentimes, people are just giving out money and don't know who or how you're helping someone. There is an aspect of donating to communities that goes further than the monetary impact that one makes, it's also about extending kindness to someone else.

Zain: Besides monthly charities and Better Beginnings, I think it would be beneficial to get more hands-on in the community by going out into the real world. I know it's a bit difficult with the pandemic, but there are ways to make a personal impact on a family.

7. With the intention of finding a silver lining: in what way has COVID-19 affected your life in a positive manner?

Jacqueline: In a word, appreciation. I've learned to appreciate so many aspects of my life that I previously took for granted. For example, being able to see my grandparents. I used to have work and say I can't come this weekend, and now I miss them a lot. I have also learnt more about self-motivation. We keep thinking that we can't do this because we don't have time, but now that I have time, I ask myself if I am doing the things I said I would.

Zain: Since COVID-19, I've gotten closer to my family. My sister flew back from England and my parents are working from home, so we spend a lot more time together.

8. What is your favourite story/memory at Bayview Glen?

Jacqueline: I've been here so long that this is such a difficult question. Grade 9 Haliburton was a great time, and I was lucky to have a group with a lot of my friends. With Ms. Russell and her camera, everything was just awesome.

Zain: The best time I've ever had here was probably after-school, before our holiday assembly in Grade 8. All my friends and I went out and I just enjoyed myself thoroughly.

9. What are your famous last words?

Jacqueline: "Thank you." Right before you die, whoever's with you, whether it be a doctor or a nurse or your family, they've done something for you. I think everybody in your life has probably done something for you,

so if I'm dying, it seems like a fitting end.

Zain: "Don't take time for granted. Cherish everything and every moment you ever have."

10. If you could do anything for one day in a world without COVID-19, what would you do?

Jacqueline: Going back to my grandparents, I'd give them a big hug. They're lonely right now and I feel bad for them. The second thing I'd do is just have a huge party with people, I don't care who's there honestly, I just want to be around people.

Zain: Similar to what Jackie said, I'd just hang out with my friends so we can be close without worrying about the precautions that bind us now.

Writer's Thoughts

I learned a lot from these two. The pandemic has provided us all with a huge opportunity for self-pity, but with probably an equal opportunity to learn more about ourselves and those around us in times of sadness. Their honesty and transparentness were a bonus, but the most compelling part of our interview was how much they cared about how everyone else was affected. It seems apt for our Heads of Community Outreach. I encourage you all to take this pandemic and look at it upside down, to examine new perspectives, to reach out to other people and to empathize with their problems by extending past your own. This new year, I challenge you all to change the way you look at the world, and maybe someday you'll end up changing the world itself.

Happy holidays, everyone!

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