

The Muckraker



Goodbyes

**Der
Schwarm**

**Humans of
JFKS**

**Senior
Prank**

**Gossiping
about
Teachers**

The Muckraker

Speaks

As this youngest of years draws to a close, right and honorable readers, one is left with a mixed feeling of elation and melancholy. While the extra class-time created by the absence of tests and graded work is filled with highly educative Hollywood blockbusters, pizza parties and doodling, while one is left staring dreamily out of the window at summer and all the accompanying the beauty and splendor, a hollow feeling remains deep inside – left there by the friends with whom we must part, be it for only eight weeks, or, possibly, forever. The world is alive and full of color, and yet many of us stand at the end of the paths we have travelled together with others and must now bid them farewell. Mr. Robertson, to whom an article in this issue is dedicated, is one of many we must do without during the coming year. Seniors, above all, turn their backs on school and all it meant and continues to mean to them and are left to walk out into the world by themselves. It is, as is proclaimed in this issue, more important than ever to express gratitude towards all we share, have shared and will carry on sharing with our friends and all other humans of JFKS.

And yet we turn to more controversial matters and confront these before the year is done. What really is the purpose of the *Abi Streich*, and is talking about teachers behind their backs really that bad?

And finally, when the school year is completed, academically but also socially and personally, we turn to more light-hearted matters. Be it at the beach, staring nervously out at the waves with Frank Schätzing's captivating novel under one's arm, hiking in the mountains or simply staying in Berlin, we genuinely hope you all find some way of relaxation in doing what you like best.

All the best wherever your path may lead you,
The Muckraker Editors

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LA Sun and Donuts

Goodbyes to Mr. Robertson

With a half-packed suitcase and a bought plane ticket, Mr. Robertson is getting ready to leave for Los Angeles. While spending a year on the West Coast with his family, the (this sounds impersonal and analytical, maybe 'our') English teacher will be greatly missed, especially by those heading out of the high school now or in a year's time, unable to witness his return. And so, to commemorate you, Mr. Robertson, and to humor you, dear readers, some of us juniors and seniors have a few words to share.

Most people already hear of Mr. Robertson in middle school, be it through older students or his fellow colleagues. "My 7th grade biology teacher talked about how Mr. Robertson's basal metabolic rate is amazing and how he can eat a ton of unhealthy food without getting fat," one 11th grade Creative Writing student recalls.

And as their school career progresses, students get into contact with the him, often times through his position as the Head of BERMUN Press. "Back in 9th grade I went to New York with MUN, and Mr. Robertson came along," an 11th grade English student explains. "One of his personal highlights of the trip was 'Sylvia's Soulfood Restaurant' in Harlem. I don't think I have ever seen someone so excited about chicken and waffles. Everytime I've gone to NYC since, he asks if I went back to Sylvia's and had more soulfood." But setting food aside, he truly inspires his team of journalists, layout editors and photographers. A former BERMUN Press member reminisces, "He always told us we were the voices behind BERMUN." A certain ambiance is created due to his support, passion, and good nature, bonding everyone together. "Every BERMUN2, the Press Team could always count on Dunkin Donuts on the last day." (Okay, so maybe food not completely set aside.) "Next year, being my last as part of the team, I will personally make sure that this holy tradition gets upheld - in Honor of you, Robertson. Hellz yeah," another journalist states.

By the time you land in his class, you aren't even sure what to expect. Looking back, a junior English Lit. student describes, "He really gets the best out of people and I feel by being super honest with us, he makes us feel comfortable enough to be honest with him. He gives students the feeling that their

contributions are meaningful and valued." Most of his LK pupils agree. "His ever-present willingness to help me with anything and constant encouragement has been a real gift this year. It is an enormously great thing to know that someone believes in you and your skills."

And even if you don't enjoy English, the literature teacher can work wonders. A once wistful 11th grader admits, "English Lit has never been my favorite subject, but thank you Mr. Robertson for having made it tolerable. The time and effort you invest in your students is praiseworthy. Thank you for having ameliorated my writing skills as well as my vocabulary." He even hopefully offers some advice to future students. "If you're looking for him, make sure to check his desk and if there is an Arizona bottle there, he is still in school."

However, Mr. Robertson is not exclusively supportive of his own. A junior discloses, "I wrote a research paper in a different class and received a grade I didn't like. I talked to Mr. Robertson about it and he took the time to read through it and even asked the teacher to rethink their decision. He always seems just and fair and really tries to help the students."

Mostly, however, Mr. Robertson reaches pupils with his affable personality. As a member of his English LK, many funny moments flash past before my eyes from this past year. Although naturally inclined towards a happy mood, on Fridays during the last two periods, Mr. Robertson lights up even more than usual. One time, when we were whining about an assignment, he imitated us, changing his voice and shaking his hips with an accompanying saucy hand movement. Other times, he will amiably p2oke fun at a rowdy student or other. With humor and spirit, he gets his students interested in the class and even the literary material.

We thank you, Mr. Robertson, for all you have done for your students, both inside and outside of the classroom. We hope you enjoy the California sun and beaches, sipping some Arizona tea with a good book in hand. You'll be missed!

- Alex

Gratitude

Sun's out, school's out. Well, almost. The city has awoken and the people of Berlin have come alive. Just when we think Berlin missed the memo that summer has started, the city blooms. Everyone begins to dream of long sandy beaches, sweet fruit, and salty seas. The excitement, the energy, the anticipation are almost tangible.

Another year has gone by. Bittersweet? Probably. People come and go, memories float freely. Seniors get ready to jump off the cliff into the rough ocean called life. The rest of us watch them leap and speculate about what it may feel like when we get there. Thrilling? Intimidating? Liberating? No one really knows. No one is ready. The steadiness, reliability, and comfort of our (though we hate to say it) second home – school – is often taken for granted. We usually forget it's even there. Changing us. Protecting us. Teaching us. The way we learn, who we learn with, and who we learn from shapes our lives. We may not realize it, but the school all of us share is the place we grew up in. Where we've become who we are. Where we've learned how to deal with life. All of the struggle, the work, and also the fun (don't neglect the fun) will stay with us forever in many ways. We should remember what we've learned here. It's important.

Some people say that high school never ends. What a terrifying thought. But the gist of it does not, in fact, disappear. Childhood is life. High school is life. College is life. Middle age is life. We live all the time. Mostly, we don't even think about it. So, as you surge into the next stage of your existence, whether it's a holiday, 9th grade, or college, stop for a minute. Look around. Who

are the people close to you? Where are you headed? What awaits you? Be present.

Appreciate what surrounds you. Get excited for the possibilities that will appear before you. Too many of us look past what is happening right in front of us and focus on the future, the past, or our phones. A generation of followers, non-thinkers, egoists. But wait. Are we really? Why can't we be a generation of doers, freethinkers, activists? Why can't we wake up and change the world? What's stopping us? That's right. Nothing. We have all of the means necessary to follow our dreams, accomplish our goals, and shape our world for the better. Let's get to it.

Try to choose a path which matches the way you think and what you want. Try to recognize and value the quality of education our school has to offer. It is not a common thing in the world. We have the privilege to attend a bilingual school with students from all over the world. We get to learn multiple languages and all sorts of sciences on top of core subjects. We get to decide between learning in English, under the American system, or learning in German, through the Abitur system. We have the power to decide our fate. We choose the way we learn and how much we learn. Though it may not seem like it all the time, we, as students, wield the power of knowledge, growth, and learning. We are incredibly lucky. Let's remember it. We have the freedom of choice, thought, action. Our lives could go in any direction.

I can safely say that I, for one, am extremely grateful.

- L. Malin

Der Schwarm

Nicht mehr ganz der Jüngste und doch so aktuell: Frank Schätzing's Roman „Der Schwarm“ aus 2004 prophezeit das Ende der Menschheit, als sich eine bisher unbekannte Spezies aus den Ozeanen erhebt und beginnt, die Landbewohner anzugreifen. Der Autor erzählt von den Bemühungen der Wissenschaftler eine Lösung zu finden, die von der Ausrottung der Spezies bis hin zu Versuchen mit ihr zu Kommunizieren reichen. Gleichzeitig ist Schätzing's Arbeit aber eine Warnung vor der exzessiven Konsumgesellschaft und der Umweltverschmutzung, die heutzutage noch viel stärker sind als zur Zeit der Veröffentlichung des Buches.

Den weniger begeisterten Leser könnte zu Anfang die Dicke des Romans abschrecken – mit 1008 Seiten ist das Schriftstück nicht gerade die Art von Buch, die man in einer Nacht durchlesen kann. Trotzdem ist es in vielen Hinsichten empfehlenswert und besonders geeignet für junge Leser, die an Jugendromanen keinen Gefallen mehr finden, sich jedoch gleichzeitig nicht so Recht mit der Welt der Erwachsenenliteratur anfreunden können.

Anfangs mag der Schreibstil etwas ungewohnt sein, doch im Verlauf der Handlung gewöhnt man sich schnell an die „Sprache der Erwachsenen“. Schätzing benutzt auf der einen Seite das ein oder andere Wort, das der Schüler nochmal nachschlagen muss, auf der anderen Seite leistet er phänomenale Arbeit bei der Darlegung der für die Handlung relevanten wissenschaftlichen Prozesse. Den Roman kann man fast als eine Art Biologie-Stunde ansehen, denn der Autor erklärt die kompliziertesten Vorgänge im technischen, chemischen und organischen Bereich sehr verständlich für den Unwissenden. Das Schriftstück bietet also nicht nur spannende Lesestunden, sondern gleichzeitig einen selektiven Exkurs in die Bereiche der Mikro-,

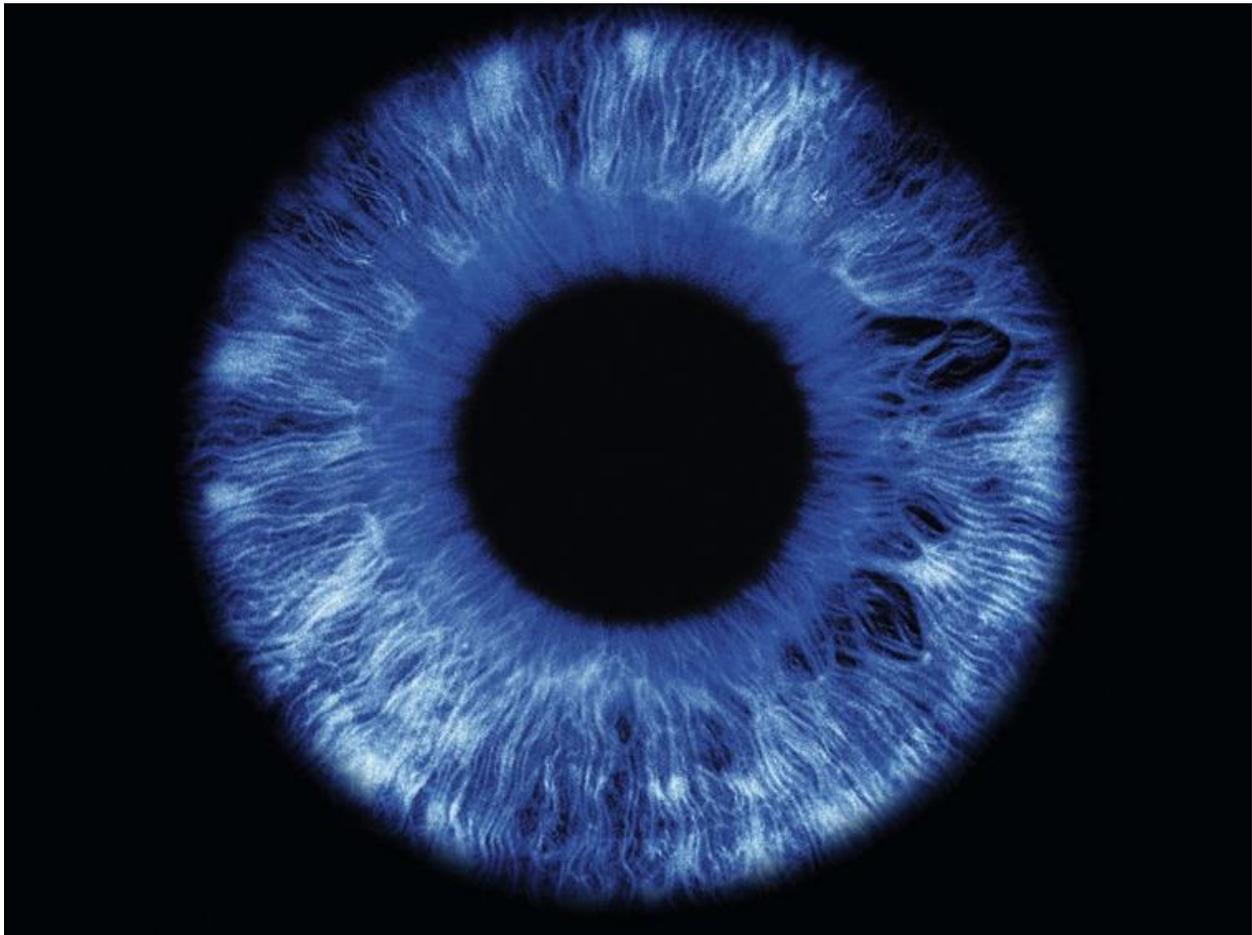
Maritim- und Molekularbiologie. Wenn diese Begriffe abschrecken, sollte sich das Buch erst Recht greifen, denn der Autor schafft es, selbst den trockensten Schulstoff interessant zu gestalten, während er essentielle Informationen vermittelt.

Anders als in typischen Jugendromanen stoßen junge Leser hier auf eine etwas andere Erzählweise. Die emotionale Bindung zu den Charakteren wird weniger durch Beschreibung erzeugt, sondern durch Handlung und Entscheidungen. Die Vorgeschichte wird nicht erläutert – stattdessen wird der Leser durch sie hindurchgeführt und kann die Sichtweisen und bewussten Handlungen der Figuren eher nachvollziehen. Durch die Vielzahl von Charakteren und die Erzählperspektive aus der dritten Person geht der Autor weniger auf die Personen als Einzelne ein. Aufgrund ihrer Authentizität mitsamt Fehlern und auch mal unbeliebten Meinungen wachsen sie dem Leser jedoch im Verlauf der Geschichte umso mehr ans Herz.

Da gibt es zum Beispiel den kanadischen Walforscher Leon Anawak, der die Wurzeln zu seiner Heimat, dem Stamm der Inuit, verloren hat, und die moderne Welt verabscheut. Außerdem gibt es Sigur Johanson, einen norwegischen Molekularbiologen, der mit seinen ausgetüftelten Theorien über die unbekannte Spezies mehrmals den frühzeitigen Untergang verhindern kann. Judith Li, die engste Vertraute des amerikanischen Präsidenten, hat es faustdick hinter den Ohren und im Angesicht der drohenden Katastrophe lässt sie alle moralischen Fragen außer Acht. Wie man erkennt, erlaubt Schätzing's Charakterwahl nicht nur den Exkurs in die Wissenschaft, sondern ebenso ein kleines Abenteuer um die Welt und die Geschichte

unterschiedlicher Kulturen. Bei einem Besuch in Leon Anawaks alter Heimat Alaska berichtet der Autor etwa über traditionelle Rituale der Inuit

einem unvergesslichen Erlebnis macht. Schätzing behält während der gesamten Erzählung ein gesundes und realistisches Verhältnis von Leben



und kritisiert gleichzeitig die Vertreibung und Zwangsumsiedlung der Indianerstämme nach der Ankunft der Europäer. Wenn man als Leser gemeinsam mit Anawak die Schönheit von Eis und Schnee wiederentdeckt und mit ihm unter der Alkoholsucht seines Vaters leidet, ist es schwer, Schätzings Kritikpunkte zu ignorieren. Ähnlich geht es einem mit Johanson, der seine Ruhe in der Einsamkeit sucht und sich auf sein hohes Alter hin immer mehr von der Gesellschaft abgrenzt, bis ihn eine Frau aus seinem Versteck lockt.

Bei dieser Art von Identifikation und Mitgefühl fällt einem der Abschied einer geliebten Figur auch mal schwer, wenn sie der drohenden Apokalypse zum Opfer fällt. Trotzdem ist dieser Aspekt ein weiterer, der den Roman zu

und Tod bei. Die nächste Katastrophe kann unerwartet oder doch vollkommen vorhersehbar sein, was das Lesen umso spannender macht. Nebenbei besticht der Schreibstil des Autors durch seinen durchaus sehr trockenen Humor, wenn er nebenbei berichtet: „Und dann stürzte der Nordhang ab.“

Wenn auch schon etwas veraltet, ist „Der Schwarm“ gute Leseunterhaltung für die meisten Altersgruppen und noch immer thematisch aktuell. Der Autor erhebt zwar schwere Kritik gegenüber der menschlichen Gesellschaft, beschuldigt aber nie den Einzelnen. Die Lektüre regt so zum Nachdenken an und fordert einen auf, rücksichtsvoller zu leben, dennoch ist sie ein erholsamer Zeitvertreib.

- Celestine Landt

Humans of JFKS

“What’s the best memory you have of each other?”

“We like to dance together.”



“What’s your greatest struggle right now?”

“Finding the time to do things I really love, like music and programming. I want to be a musical engineer when I’m older.”

“What’s the greatest risk you’ve ever taken?”

„Putting myself in a wheelchair. Because it disables you to do many things, like walk, or do sports, or live a normal life, how we call it.“

“What’s the most valuable thing you learned from that experience?”

“Actually, something that almost every book tells you. Never really give up hope. Just ignore the negative. Overcome the negative. Just think about the positive.”

What's your greatest struggle right now?

"There are a lot of struggles that you have, and it's really hard to differentiate between the trivial ones and the important ones. I think understanding people. Understanding yourself, the world, it's really hard. Understanding what is important in life, outweighing what you want to do versus what you're supposed to do versus what you can do."

If you could give one piece of advice to a large group of people, what would it be?

"Don't become arrogant. The best experiences and the most you learn is when you're really uncomfortable."



"Do you remember the happiest moment in your life?"

"When I first heard Led Zeppelin. I hadn't heard anything that... the sound... how satanic it was. (Later, he added, "Everyone's gonna think I'm a hippie and worshipping the devil.") No. I'd say my kids being born. Being a dad, being responsible for other people, loving others."

"If you could give one piece of advice to a large group of people, what would it be?"

"There's a Shakespeare quote. 'The course of true love never did run smooth.' It's not supposed to be easy. I think we have this perception that we're trying to get to this place. Life's hard, enduring. And I think that the things that are shitty that have happened to you in life, that becomes the source of your life when you get older. Yeah, the wounds of life, that's the source."

(He asked me to change his advice to the following afterwards:)

"Make it your goal in life to have your Doppelganger, alter ego, life size rendition made by your students, and put up in the rafters, so that you can hang there."

- Cosima Justus



Why talking about teachers is here to stay

...and why they needn't feel offended by it

It is rumored that in the Soviet Union, there existed a top-secret governmental branch which produced funny and accurate jokes about the regime. A deliberate encouragement of dissent such as this may at first raise eyebrows, its utility not being apparent at first glance. In fact, however, undercover dissidence is unavoidable in authoritarian power structures and may actually contribute to their survival and functionality. We thus turn to one of the last bastions of authority – the classroom – and examine the role clandestine resentment (specifically the bad-mouthing of teachers) plays there.

All good will brushed aside, the fact that the underlying structure of school is authoritarian can hardly be altered. The result, then, is that students feel deprived of control and subjugated. Ideally, this feeling of weakness should be powerlessness by a benign, fair and responsible teacher. There are, in fact, instances in which teachers have been valiantly and passionately defended by

starry-eyed students in the face of controversy. However, a teacher who seems stellar to a seventh grader may be a pain in the neck to a senior, and vice-versa. In terms of personality, an in-going student's attitude towards their teacher may be diametrically opposed to that of an extrovert, and so on. Everybody cannot be pleased, and even a teacher of the highest quality will not be well-liked by one hundred percent of his students because of the many factors that influence their disposition towards him or her.

And all of this is based on the assumption that the respective teacher is entirely flawless – a theoretical model, in other words. The fact that the actual objects of this discussion are human beings only exacerbates the situation. People make mistakes – imperfections range from personally intrusive, 'trying to make friends' types on the one side of the lecturing spectrum to loud-voiced, nasty apparatchiks on the other.



The resulting situation can then be summarized as follows: many students dislike many teachers for reasons of which many cannot be avoided or influenced. But why arrive at the conclusion that gossiping about and insulting teachers is the most expedient or even appropriate solution? Are there no other ways to solve the problem?

Attentive students will have noticed that well-meant, touching attempts at student feedback and teacher evaluations can, in fact, be observed now and then at JFKS. These either take the form of a sort of class-feedback session shortly before summer break or of collective trips to the computer lab to fill out provided forms. Both methods are lacking. Internet questionnaires, most obviously, only offer selected questions and answers (possibly reminding the reader of the Hong Kong protests, which erupted because the people were being presented with a choice between multiple candidates, all of which had been determined by the government, in the context of the upcoming elections). Freely written, anonymous teacher evaluations are usually dismissed as outlets for excessive, obscene and groundless rants.

Discussion rounds, in turn, do not allow for students to be by any means as critical as they like, often reducing feedback to half-baked, sugar coated hints at the issue served to the teacher on a silver platter. While grades are still prone to change and the possibility of getting the same teacher next year remains, students will scarcely say ‘your class just just sucked’ to their mentor’s face, even though this might be exactly what they are longing for so desperately.

On top of this, remarks concerning many of the most irritating qualities of many teachers are usually dismissed as irrelevant or

inappropriate. Few polls ask whether or not Mr. X needs to clip his nasal hair or Ms. Y is in dire need of a different *Eau de Toilette*, though doing so would probably respond to a good lot of student complaints. One may wish to note that tales of teachers being reprimanded for behavior disclosed in student evaluations are rather scarce, further diminishing trust in the enumerated methods of feedback. Neither, incidentally, do these bring about the level of satisfaction ensured by a good, jolly round of gossip and snide remarks.

It appears, therefore, that the tradition (for a tradition it is) of students running their mouth about teachers stands unchallenged in matters of gratification, reliability and inevitability. In fact, it’s probably the best game in town; the aforementioned feeling of gratification makes the classroom experience bearable to students, and consequently possible for teachers. Resentful sentiments which, if stored up, would obstruct the functionality of class are harmlessly diverted. In consequence, like it or not, teachers will have to bite the bullet.

For the sake of ending on a slightly less grim note, let two things be known. First, the views expressed during gossip sessions may not represent a student’s true opinion of their teacher any more than those voiced in polite feedback sessions – rather, one usually arrives thereat by synthesizing the two. Second, as a natural outlet for stored up emotion, much of which is caused by factors teachers have no control over, all gossip mustn’t be taken seriously. If the entire student body hates you, self-reflection is a good idea. But shrug off occasional jibber-jabber and snickering – all in all, it makes school more manageable for all parties involved.

- Frederick Leo

Abi Streich 2015 Review

On the 22nd of June, the entirety of the high school was met with the 2015 traditional *Abi Streich*, which went exactly like those of the previous years. The theme was 'boot camp', meaning that almost all present 12th graders wore military clothing. Closing off the entrance of the school, dozens of students were trapped in the front. (There is always the possibility to use the back entrance of the school, if one wishes to avoid the event.)

Equipped with water guns, the seniors stood in front of the gates, soaking highschoolers, who were entering or escaping campus, with water. The same, along with soaked sponges, were later confiscated. Bags of flour were also part of their arsenal, which they threw into people's faces, hair and clothing. Once they let the younger grades into the high school building, they were stuck in front of the large staircase, surrounded by darkness. Then began the music and flashing white lights. As the young audience watched, 12th graders simply danced for about half an hour. Originality?

Lacking. Although *Abi Streich* is usually a way for 12th graders to get rid of their aggression towards the other grades before ditching the place, this lack of creativity is simply disappointing. Besides hurting people's eyes, noses and other bodily orifices with flour and generally ruining the day for some people, the event simply is an excuse for the seniors to harass others. Along with that, cigarette packages and broken cigarettes could be found around in the high school building and the bathrooms were filled with a suspicious smell. To top it off, this all violates the dignity of the individual student, which, according to our school's policy, should be at all times paramount.

With these aspects in mind, it's clear that the *Abi Streich* needs to be revised with new ideas that encompass respect towards all students. Aggression and unnecessary annoyance are not needed to make a memorable *Abi Streich*; originality and uniqueness make it such.

- Anonymous



Class of 2015

As soon as I heard Third Eye Blind's "Can I Graduate", I knew I had found my senior year anthem. Its frustration perfectly mirrored mine as I swam through copious amounts of homework and presentations in the final month before graduation, nearly drowning in the process.

But then the last week of school arrived. And suddenly, nostalgia hit me and I couldn't relate to the song anymore. Graduation had always seemed to me like Gatsby's green light: beautiful, but yet unattainable. I never realized how that light was slowly floating closer towards me until it blinded my vision. Now I have to deal with what its shine symbolizes. The startling approach of the light means I have to leave a school I've gone to almost every day for the past five years. There are certain people I expect to see everyday, whether I talk to them or not, and suddenly I won't. For an institution that has played such a large role in my life, to suddenly disappear from it is the strangest feeling. Now when I walk the halls, I am no longer a part of the busy rush between classes, I don't have to worry about homework or my GPA; everything is over. And while I should be relieved, I just feel superfluous, because the current will keep flowing without me. That sounds extremely

conceited, but what I'm trying to say is that after a certain point, as it should be, we stop being defined by our school and need to seize new opportunities.

It also means leaving my friends. *Pauses. Takes a deep breath and continues typing* Never take for granted the ability to see and hang out with your friends practically every day. I can't express how distressed I am knowing soon I'll only see them during Christmas and summer vacation-and that's if we are lucky. If I think about this for too long, I start to get emotional, so I'll spare you the details and move on.

I'm not trying to depress you or give the impression that I want to stay in high school forever. No. Hells no. I'm not Duckie from "Pretty in Pink", purposefully flunking to avoid change. Juniors, this article is for you. Next year, in the midst of college applications, SAT/ACT tests, AP classes/Leistungskurse, mountains of homework, and angry music; take the time to pause and take in the moment, the people you are with, the place you are in, because that will all change. You will change...I will change, that's the scary part. That's also the best part. Congratulations Class of 2015, you've caught the green light, now make something of it.

▪ Elsa Kienberger

