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Cover Art by Marriya Schwarz  
Back Cover Art by Brooke Rees



# Top West Wing Episodes for the Holiday Season

By Silvana Smith

Something about 2000s television just feels like home. Maybe it's the hazy glow of non-HD camera quality, the terrible 2000s fashion (yes, I reject its comeback), or the lack of smartphones, but something about shows from back then make for the perfect cozy holiday marathons. One of my favorite shows that I return to during the holiday season is *The West Wing*—Aaron Sorkin's 26-time Emmy-winning drama about the White House senior staff.

Although my childhood nostalgia for the time before social media plays a role in my affection for television of this time period, there are definitely stories told in this show that have stood the test of time. Along with the quick-witted writing of Aaron Sorkin, the beautiful Allison Janney, and the ability to inject heart and humor into the cold world of politics, *The West Wing* has some of the best holiday episodes of any show, bar none. Something about the timbre of Martin Sheen's voice, the classic workplace romances, and the idea of a White House staffed by people with good hearts and human souls gets me all warm and fuzzy, even if the good guys don't always win at the end of each episode.

So, whether you're in the mood to dive back into an old favorite or whether you're looking for a new show to binge, here is a list of my favorite *West Wing* holiday episodes suited for whatever mood you're in this winter season.

**If you want an Emmy Award Winning tear-jerker:**

"In Excelsis Deo" (Season 1 Ep 10)

Diving straight in with what is probably the best Christmas episode of the whole series, we have the first episode that won this

show an Emmy for screenwriting—not to mention this episode is effectively the birth of Josh and Donna's more-than-coworkers-not-quite-lovers ship. The episode takes place in the few days leading up to Christmas Eve, as Josh and Sam try using the low road to save a good friend's career. Meanwhile, CJ fights off romantic advancements from a White House reporter, and Toby finds out that a homeless Korean War veteran has died and is determined to give him the funeral that a man with a Purple Heart is entitled to.

In this heartwarming episode, although no grand policies change or life-changing laws pass, these 45 minutes are a testament to the enduring currency of respect and honor—that even if the troubles in this country seem too insurmountable to tackle, we owe it to our nation and the people who fight for us to try. It's a nice thought in the 2020 landscape of defeatist attitudes plaguing our news feeds and monsters plaguing our White House. This episode is also a valuable representation of the homeless population, who often go unseen and ignored by the many that walk by. The ending sequence of the homeless veteran's funeral is set to "Little Drummer Boy," as we hear the 21-gun salute over the young boys' choir, and it's sure to bring anyone to tears.

**If you want to remember the true spirit of Thanksgiving:**

"Shibboleth" (Season 2 Ep 8)

"Then said now unto him, say now 'shibboleth' and he said 'sibboleth', for he could not frame to pronounce it right"

In honor of Thanksgiving and the upcoming Christian celebra-

tion everyone talks about, this episode is about religious freedom. Although the show addresses the racist history of Thanksgiving in a separate episode, I chose to include this particular one because it illustrates the hypocrisy of America and its attitudes towards immigration and religion. After a container ship full of Chinese evangelicals seeking religious asylum arrives in California, the president is pushed to decide whether or not to grant them refuge on the eve of Thanksgiving after accusations of feigning faith. Along with more lighthearted side storylines of pardoning turkeys and ceremonial carving knives, the staff also tackles the subject of allowing school prayer. The episode not only explores what religious freedom means in a country like America but also highlights parts of America's shameful past (and some of its present).

**If you want a late-night office hang:**

"17 People" (Season 2 Ep 18)

This bottle episode is perfect for anyone who misses hanging out with co-workers (or any group of more than four people really). Although the episode starts off with a somber Toby uncovering a dark secret about the president, this one is a fan favorite for its lighthearted B-story of Josh, Sam, and the rest of the gang staying late to punch up the lame jokes for the president's speech at the Correspondents' Dinner.

In this episode, viewers also get a glimpse into how much Josh and Donna truly mean to each other. And with quotes like "If you were in an accident, I wouldn't stop for red lights," it sounds a lot deeper



**"Something about the timbre of Martin Sheen's voice, the classic workplace romances, and the idea of a White House staffed by people with good hearts and human souls gets me all warm and fuzzy."**

than a boss-employee relationship to me. Although not even a part of the show's original storyline, Josh and Donna's relationship was one

of the show's main arcs—the classic love story; a will-they-won't-they for the ages. All in all, this episode is about loyalty and to what



# Television

extent the I'd-walk-through-fire-for-you sentiment can be tested.

Although admittedly this isn't a holiday episode or even a winter season episode, it is an episode where characters take inventory of the people in their lives they truly trust. And in the spirit of the holidays, I hope this episode inspires you to give back to those people in your life and perhaps give them a token of your affection. Maybe even give them a bouquet of flowers (but not in a mean way @ Josh Lyman).

**If you want to watch Josh yearn from afar whilst Donna dates a Republican:**

"Holy Night" (Season 4 Ep 11)

Anyone who has gotten through the first three seasons of *The West Wing* knows that Donna has a way of accidentally dating Republicans. Despite the obvious conflicts of interest, by season four, she still hasn't learned her lesson. However, the elements have conspired to intervene in her relationship as a winter storm blows in, threatening to delay any travel to meet her boyfriend for the holiday (much to Josh's liking as he's spending the evening alone). Also, Toby deals with some daddy issues, as his father drops by unannounced (although unannounced guests during a COVID-19 holiday are especially unappreciated). As the *West Wing* episode with the most carol singing, I highly recommend this episode for those who need a little holiday pick-me-up in the midst of any letdowns this season.

**If you want to see an Irishman show emotion (and cel-**

**brate male friendship love):**

"Bartlet for America" (Season 3 Ep 10)

This Christmas episode is sure to pull at your heartstrings. Although this season is usually filled with cherishing time with your family or your significant other, it's also a time to reflect on the friends in your life that you love as well. Many of us have been separated from our friends for far too long this year, and it's good to remind them how much they mean to us as well. This episode does just that. Told in present day and flashbacks, we see the beginnings of the president's

friendship with his Chief of Staff, Leo, and how strong that bond remains today as Leo testifies before Congress about the president.

**If you want to get a lil' steamy during these cold winter nights:**

"The Cold" (Season 7 Ep 13)

This episode is all about the double meanings. The premise of the episode is literally in the title: the cold. As the winter weather signifies the election creeping closer and closer, the governor gets an actual cold, American troops face

fighting their first land war near Russia during wintertime in decades, and Josh gets the cold shoulder. After some shake-ups with the showrunner and writing staff in the 5th season, the 7th season is when the team really starts to get their groove back just in time for the series ending, and episode 13 is probably one of the best written episodes of the last season. So as the winter winds and snow storms keep you indoors this holiday, this is the perfect episode for anyone who wants to warm up with the ~heat~ of a little sexual tension. Will Josh and Donna finally consummate their love!?! You'll have to watch to find out. And with an

ending sequence set to the incomparable Billie Holiday, what more could you need to get into the holiday spirit?

**If you want to quiz your Hebrew School knowledge:**  
"On the Day Before" (Season 3 Ep 5)

This episode starts off with the gang getting black tie ready for an event at the White House (a nice change of pace for anyone else who's been in sweatpants since March like me). At the same time, the president vetoes repealing the estate tax, and Republicans hold

an emergency session. Janel Maroney was actually nominated for an Emmy for this episode, and Donna dates yet another Republican, which turns out to not only be a conflict of interest but potentially a legal liability.

However, the night comes to a halt when tragedy strikes two American students in Jerusalem, forcing the staff to try and quell tensions overseas. When the president calls the victims' parents to offer condolences, he recalls a conversation with a dinner guest earlier that evening: "On Yom Kippur, you ask forgiveness for sins against God. But on the day before, you ask forgiveness for sins against people." Erev Yom Kippur. During a time when it feels like the world is conspiring against us as some kind of cosmic punishment, it's good to remember the control we still have over our actions and the



**"Many of us have been separated from our friends for far too long this year, and it's good to remind them how much they mean to us as well."**



# Television

violence we create against others. The world has been cruel enough; let this be a season to spread peace. Log out of Twitter, turn off the news, and spend time with the ones you love (while watching *The West Wing* of course), if only for the night.

**If you want to feel seasonally angsty:**

“Impact Winter” (Season 6 Ep 9)

Maybe you aren’t feeling the holiday love this year. The world is currently crumbling around us and to top it off, it’s cold as hell and the sun sets at four o’clock. We all get a little seasonal angst; some even get seasonal affective disorder. Turns out the characters of *The West Wing* aren’t immune to winter madness either. This episode finds the gang in not the best spirits. The President has an MS attack and sends the rest of his staff spinning trying to get through a critical summit with China. On top of this, the episode deals a huge blow to Josh that really everyone else saw coming except him. Not to mention, there’s an asteroid heading straight for Earth. All in all, this is a very angsty episode filled with nothing going right and everything going wrong. I think anyone watching this episode in 2020 can relate.

**If you want to cope with some trauma:**

“Noel” (Season 2 Ep 10) (TW: PTSD)

This episode takes place on Christmas Eve over the course of one therapy session between Josh

and a representative from ATVA (American Trauma Victims Association) as they get to the bottom of why he has a bandage on his hand, with flashbacks breaking up the conversation. Meanwhile, the White House prepares for a Christmas performance from Yo-Yo Ma much to the excitement of Donna and to the chagrin of our resident grinch, Josh.

Bradley Whitford was nominated for an Emmy for his performance as Josh in this episode about his PTSD, although it is to be said, it felt eerie to see an episode featuring ATVA made in 2000 that lists off major traumatic events in American History pre-9/11. As a viewer, you get that moment we’ve all felt a lot this year whenever we’re looking back to the past with that “if they only knew what was to come” feeling. As a millennial, I grew up in a country defined by its collective trauma and the ways

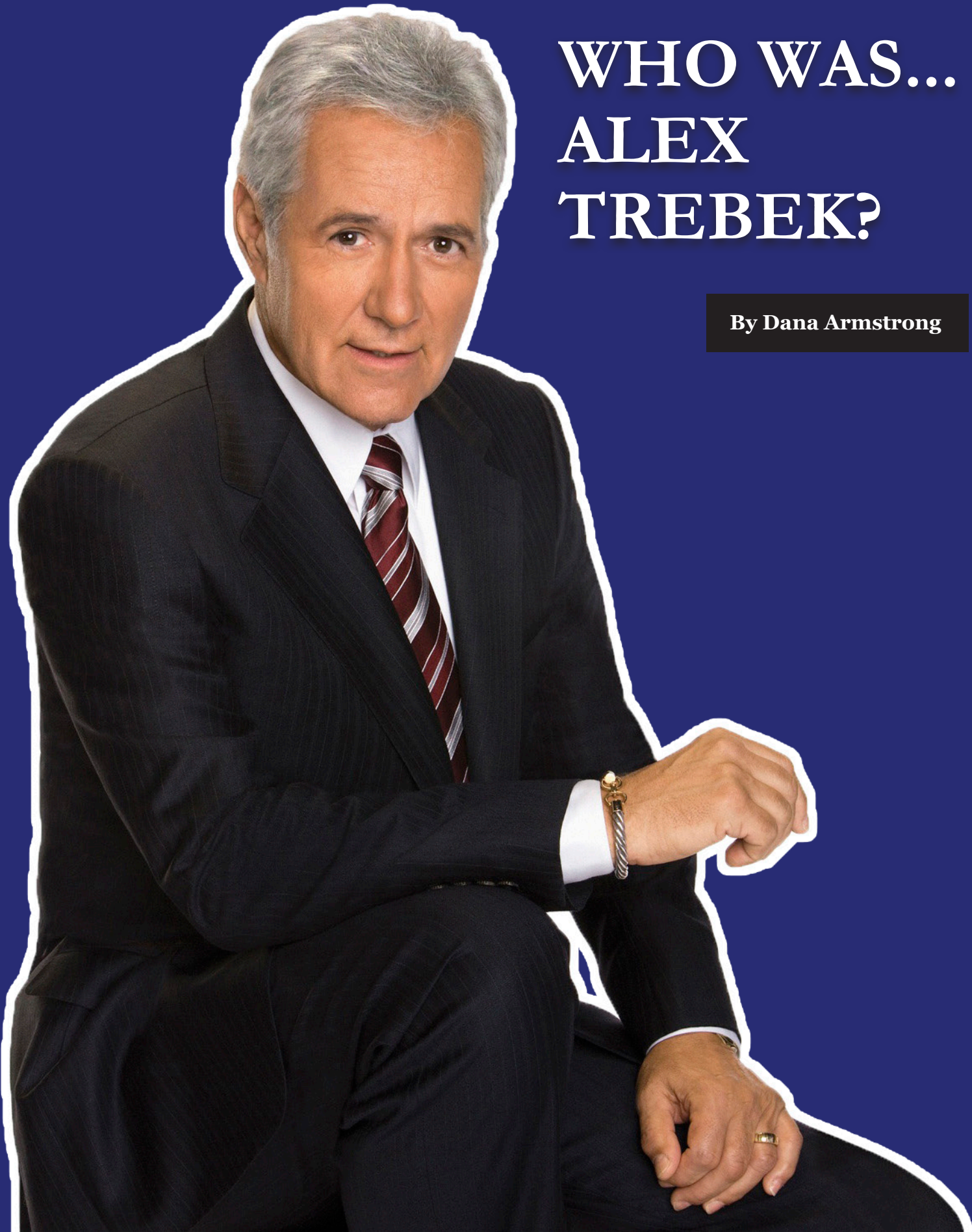
So whatever kind of holiday season you are having this year, I hope this list and *The West Wing* will offer you some television to enjoy, whether as catharsis, comfort, or distraction. Feel free to go make yourself a cup of hot cocoa or cider, grab a cozy blanket, and curl up on a couch before you press play.

If you want to take your love for *The West Wing* one step further and get behind-the-scenes insight into each episode, I strongly recommend checking out *The West Wing Weekly* podcast, a great show hosted by one of the actors (Joshua Molina) and *Song Exploder’s* Hrish Hirway, with a sick online community as well. In fact, they are hosting a Netflix watch party for episodes “In Excelsis Deo” and “Noel” on 12/23. Make sure to check out their Twitter page for more info.

Happy Holidays <3

our nation chose to pick up the pieces. We never really expected to go through it all again in our twenties. But seeing that process on an individual level, through Josh, helps show that there are healthy ways to cope and friends that will help us get there. Just as we’re doing all that we can to make sure our bodies stay healthy during this time, we can’t forget to look after our minds as well.

The holidays are an especially tough time for many people who experience grief, loss, or isolation, this year in particular. Anyone who’s had first-hand experience in how complex and painful trauma can be will resonate with Josh. This episode is a nice reminder that it’ll be okay. Why? As Stanley, the therapist, says “because we get better.” Our bodies are built to heal and this time in our lives is still just a season that eventually will pass.







## IT HAPPENED ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2020—the passing of a man who seemed immortal.

On the surface, it sounds overdramatic. How could the death of a game show host I never personally knew possibly affect me so deeply? But for me and countless others, Alex Trebek was more than the host of *Jeopardy*. He was a celebration of learning and an ever-present connection to those we bonded with over the course of those sacred 30-minute intervals every weekday. His impressive 36-year consistency saw many of us through significant phases of our lives. Alex Trebek was not just a man, but an era, and one that many of us were not keen on letting go of in an already tumultuous year.

Alex Trebek seemed like a sur-

rogate grandfather to a nation that, for a while, wasn't even his own. His subtle hints of not being American in every pronunciation of "genre" and every scoff when contestants failed to answer a Canada-specific clue was a trait just mysterious enough to keep us intrigued. Though he rarely shared his personal life on the show, he thrived in championing the achievements and quirky shenanigans of his contestants. His subtle digs and snippets of wisdom he imparted on them during their brief interviews each show always came out of places of respect, kindness, and encouragement. He was a man too pure and God-like in a time riddled with fake news

and false claims. He provided instant and judgement-free fact-checking—for the most part, but let's be honest, even the sassier corrections always felt welcome.

Throughout my childhood and into my budding young adulthood, he was one of the few points of consistency and reassurance in an ever-changing world.

One of the only instances of bullying I ever experienced was during fourth and fifth grade when a girl repeatedly taunted that I was a "nerd." At the time, it affected me more than I care to admit. But, ironically, it's a title I now embrace

with an only slightly dampened pride. *Jeopardy* was one of the only almost prime-time, grown-up shows that kept me interested as a kid. Not only did it monetarily reward intelligent people, but it celebrated nerdiness in such a natural way. The contestants' intelligence was never mocked or glorified. If anything, it rewarded those who weren't afraid of sharing their knowledge and answering first. It was inspiring and comforting as a little girl who second-guessed whether or not she should raise her hand in class over fear of being perceived as 'too smart'. And as the years went on and I learned more in school, I was able to answer more clues. To this day, the thrill of correctly answering the Final Jeopardy clue or an entire category of clues that seems like it was curated just for me is unmatched.

But I suppose my real love of *Jeopardy* stemmed from the fact that it was my grandmother's favorite show. She watched it as religiously as she attended church. And, because of that, my family always knew to avoid calling during the 7:30 to 8:00 p.m. time frame

unless we wanted to go straight to voicemail. During one of the few overnight stays at her house, I fondly remember her with her legs perched up beside me on the

**"EVEN WHEN  
I LOST MY  
GRAND-  
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NIGHT."**

opposite side of the sagging couch. Her arthritic fingers laced together in a pensive clasp upon her lap. The blue light of the *Jeopardy* set emanated into the darkening living room from her tiny television

and reflected in her glasses. Even when I lost my grandmother in middle school, Alex stayed on my television every night. In every moment when I wanted to feel closer to her, I knew I could tune into *Jeopardy* at 7:30. Alex would still be there, and the game would progress as unchanged as when my grandmother watched it. For 30 minutes, I could pretend she was watching with me too.

In college, *Jeopardy* helped me make one of my closest friends. Freshman year was rough for me, and I avoided communal dorm life to an embarrassing degree. My soon-to-be friend and I were similarly anti-social in our shared dorm building. I only plucked up the courage to talk to her more when I realized we both frequented the nearby dining hall right before the dinner rush like clockwork on certain days. We started sitting together in the dining hall and soon realized we both loved *Jeopardy*. Eventually, that led to an occasional treat where we'd transition from the dining hall to our dorm rooms to watch *Jeopardy* together. It was a tradition we continued long past our freshman years.

So, in March 2019 when Alex revealed he was battling pancreatic



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cancer, naturally she was the first person I turned to to sympathize with. I don't know whether it was the conviction and positivity behind Alex's announcement or my blind optimism and tendency for denial, but I believed Alex was too strong to possibly lose to such a fickle foe as cancer. After all, even throughout a once-in-a-century pandemic and chemotherapy, he continued hosting with an unwavering grace. One of the undeniable highlights of being stuck at home for the bulk of 2020 was that I was able to watch *Jeopardy* with a consistency I hadn't enjoyed since high school. Though my friend and I were separated from each other and overwhelmed with college coursework, the show could be our moment of intermission and connection.

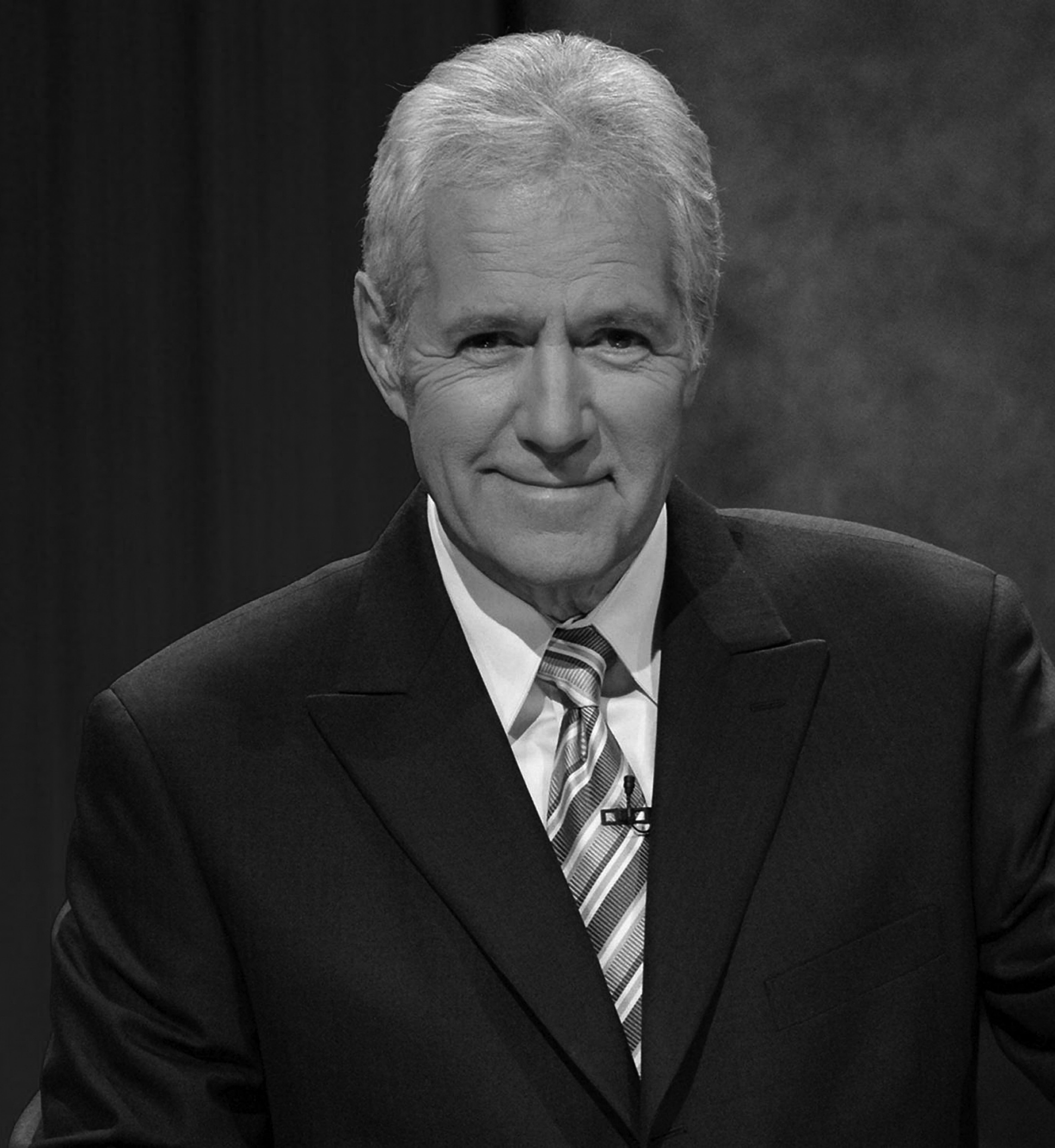
And that's why November 8, 2020 caught me so off guard. I learned the news moments after signing off a three-hour Zoom meeting for school. Initially, all I felt was shock. Then, a repressed grief I hadn't felt since the loss of my grandmother flooded back at full force for the remainder of that one day. For others, it was just another tragic celebrity death in

a difficult year. For me, it meant another one of the few remaining pieces of my grandmother and my childhood had chipped away.

Now as I write this, it's still hard to accept his loss. True to form, he's continued to appear on my screen just as regularly as he has for my entire life. Sometimes I try to look for signs that he's nearing the end—a gravelly voice, his face appearing more bloated one day—just to provide some sort of closure, but I know that's no way to honor him. Alex Trebek was a humble and gracious man with a duty to the truth that I'll always aspire to as an up-and-coming journalist.

In an interview at the beginning of 2020, Alex Trebek said for his final show he only wanted "30 seconds at the end of the program to say goodbye." His final show was originally scheduled for December 25th, but now Alex will see us through the rest of this year. The new date for his final episode will be January 8, 2021. A memorial series of Alex's best moments will run from December 21st through 25th—the very week of Grammy's birthday. ■

**"TRUE TO FORM, HE'S  
CONTINUED TO APPEAR  
ON MY SCREEN JUST AS  
REGULARLY AS HE HAS  
FOR MY ENTIRE LIFE."**





Vlogmas 2020 Recommendations

By Silvana Smith

Comedy

Haul

The Tonight Show

8:44

It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like VLOGMAS!  
#1

Carrie Hope Fletcher · 49K views · 1 week ago

For any YouTube fan, from the casual watcher to the daily binger, Vlogmas has become an important time of year. It’s the time when our favorite online creators post daily videos to keep our proverbial bellies full of content and Christmas joy. Especially during this year, when Christmas will be more different than usual, a lot of viewers are eager to watch as much online content as possible, hoping to find some sort of connection during these isolated times—some holiday cheer, or even just some distraction. Below is a list of YouTubers and creatives that will do just that.

As a veteran member of the YouTube community, since circa 2008, I’ve had well over a decade of curating my favorite creators. On this list, I have creators that offer thoughtful discussions, book and TV recommendations, behind-the-scenes theater content, food content, and a variety of lifestyles. Hopefully these videos will help expose you to new content, ideas, and communities, or at the very least be a good time.

Rosianna Halse Rojas

Quite literally one of the original YouTubers. Latina Londoner, Rosianna, has been making videos online since she was 15 in 2007 when she

filmed video responses to the Vlogbrothers. With an array of content from books and literature, music and travel, fashion and tv, to growing up and losing a loved one, Rosianna has a lifetime of content on her channel to sift through and enjoy. Although she has waned from making videos consistently, as she is now a full grown 29-year-old woman (whose full-time job is now a producing partner with John Green), she still makes thoughtful and intelligent content when inspiration strikes.



She’s done daily vlogging for a month numerous times before, including Vlogmas, but she hasn’t attempted it in a while. After a break and back by popular demand, she has embarked on a video everyday again this December, tackling what is definitely a unique Christmas season. So far, she has addressed grief during the holidays, her love for the band, The Killers, gift guides, and she has made a vegetarian roast. She is perfect for anyone looking for a range of creativity but also someone who brings a more thoughtful and complex perspective to life.

Leena Norms

Although there is a Patreon paywall for this content, you can pay as little as \$1 for the month, watch all of Vlogmas (as well as her other amazing content), and then cancel after that one month. Officially dubbed the Gumption Advent Calendar 2020, Leena makes one post exclusive for her Patreon members every day. This daily content includes exclusive YouTube videos, media commentary, poetry, music recs and reviews, fashion, literature and more. And because of the nature of the Patreon platform, the community of a little under 2,000 viewers also participate and share thoughts surrounding each post.



With years of working in book publishing, producing podcasts, and 12 years of vlogging under her belt, Leena is definitely one of the quirkiest, creative, and intelligent creatives in media. Much like Rosianna, who is part of the same circle of YouTube friends in London, Leena is from the old world of YouTube where people used to make videos to talk about ideas and discuss interests rather than to talk about their own lives. Because of this, you can find a range of interests throughout her content and probably find new ones of your own the more you watch. Although there are hundreds of old and current videos for you to watch on YouTube, joining her

Patreon (affectionately called The Gumption Club) even for one month is 100 percent worth the \$1, in my opinion.

Nicole Rafiee

One of the YouTubers to rise to success during quarantine (shoutout to Kelly Stamps), Nicole is a soon-to-be college graduate. Her videos consist of playlists, advice, hair and skincare content, thrifting, embarrassing stories, and (most importantly) kitten content courtesy of her new kitten, Clementine. Although she was purposeful in not labeling herself as a “college YouTuber” and has never really made study content, you can tell that media is her passion by her level of editing quality and commitment to her channel. Aside from her snarky and relatable tone, her indie rock (think the Strokes and Mac DeMarco) aesthetic and authentic energy is perfect for anyone looking for that super-cool-but-could-totally-be-your-best-friend vibe.



(side note: as she is currently living with her Polish immigrant mother, her daily vlogs are also a great source of comedy for other kids of immigrants who enjoy feeling seen)

Erin Gilfoy & Carly Incontro

The sheer amount of content these two are producing this month is hella impressive. These girls, professionally known as Carly and Erin, have a joint channel together where they post three videos a week to an audience of over a million subscribers. Their content usually includes crafty

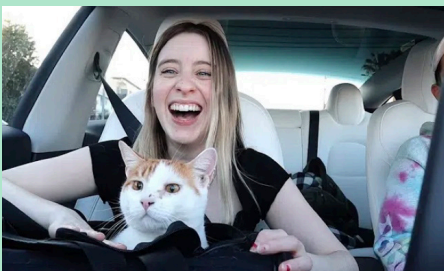


# YouTube

food hacks, online trends, Starbucks content, fashion, music culture, and weekly vlogs. Additionally, these women are each doing a video everyday on their own separate channels (though Carly skips Sundays). That amounts to a total of 16 videos a week from these gals. Talk about work ethic.



Anywho, both Carly and Erin are going through big life changes this December as they've both purchased their first homes and are beginning the process of moving, so that is sure to be documented in upcoming videos. Erin, along with her husband slash co-founder of Emo Nite (who also vlogs on his channel, TJ Petracca) and their two adorable pets, shares her life in LA as she combines social distancing with social influencing (lol). Carly, along with her live-in quarantine boyfriend slash indie music artist, vlogs her days as she tries almost every new TikTok trend and becomes more and more obsessed with her cat, Frank. Both vloggers are great for anyone down for super chill and lighthearted content to drown out the apocalypse happening outside.



Carrie Hope Fletcher

Straight from the stages of the West End in London, Carrie Hope Fletcher (a veteran British YouTuber since 2010) is vlogging everyday as she plays Fantine in the concert version of *Les Miserables* (a production that is abiding by all of the COVID-19 guidelines in the UK, of course). One of the most cheerful and festive cool-girls I know, Carrie is the perfect vlogger to get you in the Christmas spirit. Also, if there is any city that truly does Christmas decorations right, it's London. After doing a video every weekday with her boyfriend during the first 6 months of quarantine, she is definitely no stranger to daily videos.

Along with musical theater content (she's also set to star as Cinderella in an upcoming production), Carrie does Q&As, holiday baking, ukulele covers, and yes, more cat content. Her warm and friendly energy is perfect for anyone looking for a cheerful escape or to get in the mood for some Christmas spirit. Also, I'm sorry but there's just something about a British accent that is so soothing to have in the background. 10/10 would recommend.

Dani Calleiro

Okay, all cards on the table. The only reason I found this girl was because she used to be in a band called Cimorelli with her sisters, one of which just married (yes, a full ass wedding celebration during COVID-19) the ex-husband of my favorite artist, Hayley Williams. (Yes there is more tea on the internet to be found on that but tl;dr the ex-husband in question is lowkey predatory, and we don't support him.) Although I'm not a fan of the Cimorelli music, the youngest sister of 6,

Dani, recently left the band (we love a rebel) and somewhat distanced herself from her conservative family. (That's a kind of personal thing and I'm unsure just how detailed she's been about that experience, BUT a known contributing factor has been that she has recently become more liberal in her social and political views. We stan becoming politically aware and changing your opinions once you learn more about the issues.)



Although she's relatively new to vlogging, her editing is remarkably good and only getting better. So far, her Vlogmas content has included dyeing hair (using Good Dye Young, Hayley Williams' hair dye company (eyeballs emoji)), road trips, advice, home improvements, and general daily vlogging. Her husband also works in music, which viewers get the occasional peek into. Although her content isn't super unique, she has a warm personality and is great company for anyone looking for vlogs to play in the background while working from home. Truth is, I checked her out for tea on her family but stayed because of how sweet and genuinely interesting she is.

## Special Mention to Lullaby Hotline - Adam Melchor

Although this technically isn't Vlogmas, if anyone is still looking for regularly uploaded content this month, indie folk artist, Adam Melchor, texts fans a brand new song every Sunday. Although there is probably some Christmas music bound to pop up in the coming weeks, there is also a whole backlog of weekly lullabies he's shared since the beginning of quarantine, along with numerous live show sessions of unreleased music he's performed on Instagram and YouTube live streams. So if daily vlogs just aren't enough content for you this season, I highly recommend it. Simply text the Lullaby Hotline at 973-264-4172.

That concludes my list! Go forth and do nothing but stare at screens! Lol, but seriously, there's no such thing as too much content during a pandemic. Enjoy <3



# It's 2020.

## Can We Stop Ripping Necklaces Off of People in Media?

**A**m I an avid necklace wearer? No. But have I worn a necklace? Yes. Therefore, I am something of an expert on the subject.

I'll be honest; I don't wear a lot of jewelry. I think it has to do with my upbringing. After you rock a dried-out bubble Rugrats necklace on a colored cord for the first like 6 years of your life, it sets the bar pretty high. It's the type of thing that makes gold and sterling silver look pretty lackluster. But I've been known to wear a black tourmaline pendant especially when there is ghostly activity, solely for protection.

I've clasped my own necklaces and I've clasped necklaces for other people, so let's just say that I know the mechanism well. Therefore, I'm wondering why I'm constantly seeing a trope in movies and television in which characters physically rip a necklace off. It always starts the same way; there's a mean character who wants an underdog's necklace that maybe they got from their dead

By Marriya Schwarz

mother or something. Instead of taking the necklace off—you know—the normal way, they just grab the pendant and rip the necklace off.

There is no way in hell that would work. I mean, yes, I have potentially early arthritis and I don't think

**"I can't imagine ripping a necklace off of someone**

**without causing blunt force trauma."**

I could even break a pencil, but *still*. You're literally trying to snap off metal. Also, I can't imagine ripping a necklace off of someone without either causing blunt force trauma or scratching the back of the neck. But whenever someone has their necklace stolen, they just seem pissed that they lost their jewelry and not like they have a big gaping wound under their hair.

Plus, what on earth would be the point in ripping a necklace off? Unless you only want the pendant or you want to murder someone with pizzaz, I can't think of any other reason why you would want to break the chain straight off. You know what a necklace is without a chain? Freaking useless. I mean, there is the option of buying another chain, but at some point,

that gets expensive. A quality gold chain can be anywhere from \$7 on a Black Friday sale to upwards of \$40. Why in the hell would you spend that extra money when you could just ask them nicely to undo the clasp? After a while, you're

just going to have a heck ton of pendants with zero necklaces.

But I think the most unrealistic thing is the idea that the necklace is *still wearable*. We've seen it in *A Little Princess*, *Ella Enchanted*, *Once Upon a Time*, and so many other ridiculous forms of media. Ella in *Ella Enchanted* steals her mother's necklace back from her evil stepsister, Hattie. In *Once*



*Upon a Time*, they are almost constantly ripping off necklaces, from Ariel to the Wicked Witch of the West. And in *A Little Princess*, Miss Minchin rips off Sara's necklace as collateral after she loses all of her money. I can get down with the idea that Ella was cursed by a fairy godmother to be obedient, I can understand a cursed Maine town where everyone has forgotten that they are a storybook character, and I would rather not think about the British colonialism in India aspect of *A Little Princess*, but what I *cannot* let slide is the idea that a character can rip off a necklace and then proceed to just



put it back on. Sweetie, that clasp is broken. The actual mechanics of putting on this thin clasp and having to push on this kind of painful lever to keep it open while you loop in a circular piece of metal is hard enough. I cannot entertain the idea that after you somehow sum-

mon Captain America strength to rip a necklace off that that clasp is still in perfect condition.

I'm not an idiot (as far as you know, although I have run into a sliding door), I know that fiction is just that: it's fiction. It's made-up. It's not supposed to be real. Our minds are filled with fantasies of fairytale romances (Although Jason Sudeikis and Olivia Wilde split after like 9 years), the naive idea that good always triumphs over evil (Although Donald Trump exists), and biased perceptions of what human beings should look like. So, please for the love of God, just make *necklaces realistic*. ■





I love you more than I hate my period: a period mix

By Silvana Smith

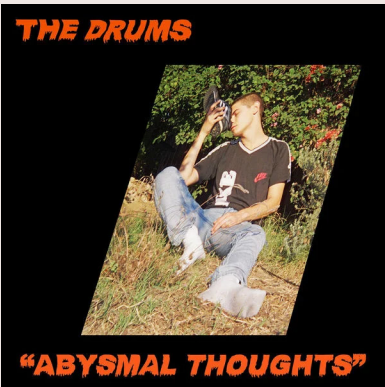
It’s day two of your period. You’re cramping, bloated, and full of metaphysical angst. Not to mention the fact that you’re BLEEDING. And in the time of corona? How rude. No worries—as you wait out the days until all the period pain has left your body, here is a playlist designed to capture all the catharsis needed for your time of the month. This playlist goes beyond clever word play (although I’m pretty proud of the amount of puns I was able to fit in), and soundtracks the existential angst that every period-having-human possesses inside them.



I love you more than I hate my period // say anything

“He’s the singer of my favorite band.  
If I cornered him and locked him in a closet,  
He would understand.  
Take me away from my boring life,  
To his promised land.”

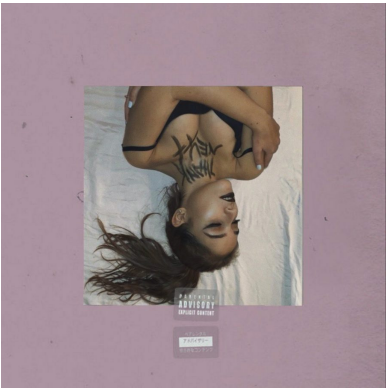
If you’re not familiar with the lyricism of Say Anything, these lyrics might throw you off you for a sec, but Max Bemis is known for writing songs in character. The story told in this particular song is about a teen a little too obsessed with their favorite band’s lead singer. Although more than a few of us can relate to crushing on a celeb and maybe liking a few too many photos of them on our Insta explore page, it becomes clear this teen’s obsession has taken a bit of a murderous turn. Fandom love can be one of the strongest feelings in a young heart (stronger than how much I hate my period, for sure), but has this fan gone too far...? Yes. Please don’t stalk and murder your favs. Murder is bad and is not an effective tactic for seducing your crush.



blood under my belt // the drums

“I see death coming at me too quickly  
I don’t want this to end  
I take an apple from the tree we planted together  
I hold it in my hand”

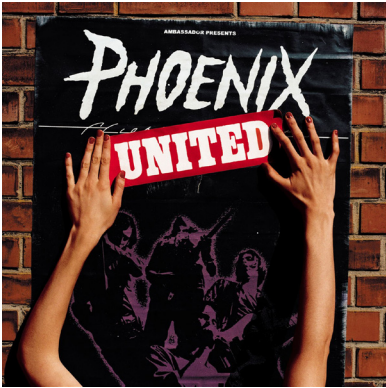
With a cheeky little reference to the biblical origin of a period (or a Twilight reference depending on your subculture preferences), “women’s curse” for Eve’s original sin, this song isn’t so much about menstruation but about asking for forgiveness. The singer knows he’s caused pain, that he’s got blood under his belt, but he’s willing to work it out. I, for one, have experienced a lot of pain and blood under my belt. However, I’m not really ready to forgive my uterus.



bloodline // ariana grande

“They can’t find something to satisfy me”

A song that celebrates not getting pregnant from the person you’re hooking up with is the perfect motivational anthem to get you through this time. Let’s face it; however bad your cramps may be, labor hurts worse. You shouldn’t have to face a lifetime of consequences for just trying to find some satisfaction in this world, no strings attached (tampon pun).



if I ever feel better // phoenix

“I’d better learn to accept that  
There are things in my life that I can’t control”

Until that aspirin hits your bloodstream, cramp pain can seem inescapable and never ending; the ultimate betrayal from your own body. Nevertheless, it helps to remember that eventually yes, you will feel better.



cutie pie, I’m bloated // indoor pets

“You’ve got pipes, I’ve got organs  
Please be cold, I need my brain frozen  
Decapitate and keep me in your backpack  
I’ll be the company for your mother’s Prozac”

We’ve sure got organs and they sure are making us bloated. Not cool, guys. Anyways, make sure you all stay hydrated to prevent bloating and other symptoms caused by lowered progesterone levels.



painkiller // beach bunny

“Fill me up with Tylenol  
Tramadol, Ketamine  
I just need some pain relief”

Along with an onslaught of physical symptoms, periods can bring both physical and emotional pain. Whichever case, instead of overanalyzing why the hormones are making us cry over this random holiday commercial, can we just have some Tylenol please?



cramp, push, and take it easy // stuck in the sound

If you’ve got some angst you need to let out or need some heavy riffs to rage to, this song is for you. With a mix of hooky melodies and loud



repetitive screaming, this dynamic song really expresses the mood swings some may suffer from during this time. You're bleeding; you deserve to let it out and take it easy.

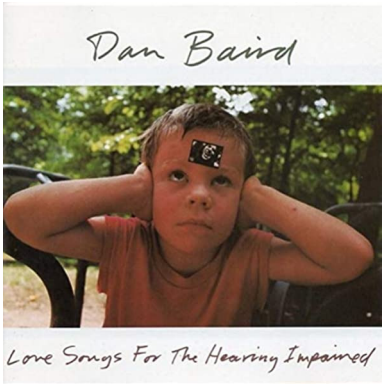
JOYCE MANOR



**constant headache // joyce manor**

As someone who is no stranger to the occasional migraine, it can be incredibly demoralizing to be expected to function normally while under such pain, just because it's not visible. I might be smiling during my Zoom call, but on the other side of the screen I'm Googling how to tell if you're having an aneurysm. With a killer guitar solo and catchy chorus from Joyce Manor (a band that grew to prominence during the emo renaissance of 2015 that revived the genre by going back to its DIY roots), this 2011 song is still one of the band's biggest anthems. Headbanging to this song alone in your room may not help your headache, but it may be just what the doctor ordered to soothe your pain\*.

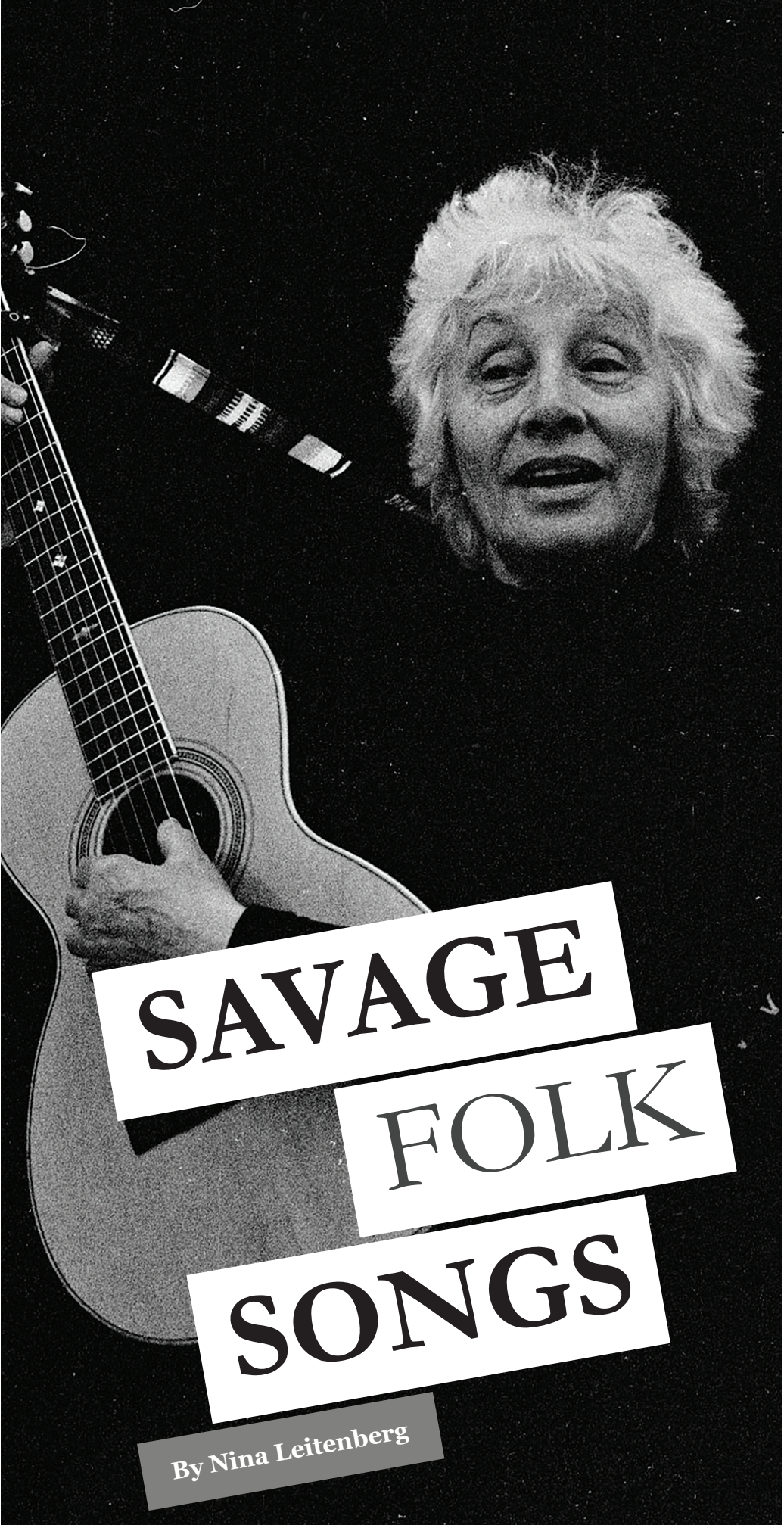
\*Prolonged headbanging has been known to cause neck damage. Please headbang responsibly.



**I love you period // dan baird and homemade sin**

"I Love You Period" is a cute little song about a teacher correcting the punctuation of a love letter she received from a student (lol what a burn). From this, the singer learns that the way to any girl's heart is through good grammar. Whether that's true or not, I thought this was a cute way to end our list with a pun but also a way for this song to act as the proverbial period of this playlist.

Feel free to check out the full playlist on spotify for more angsty music picks.



I asked my fellow zillennial (right on the line between millennial and Gen Z) friends to tell me some adjectives that immediately came to mind when they thought of folk music. Here's a condensed list of what they came up with:

- Chill
- Kitschy
- Quaint
- Old
- Dusty
- White

I think these all fall on a spectrum between You Clearly Have Never Listened to Folk, and Fair Enough.

But these lukewarm perceptions of folk music don't begin to cover the full range of the genre. If you pulled some of the biggest folk names of the 60s out of a hat, chances are, the name in your hand belongs to one of the most *savage* American musicians to ever pick up a guitar. Unlike that other typically savage genre punk rock, they may not have screamed, or moshed, or ripped feedback through cheap amps cranked up to 10. But if you listen past the trilling bird melodies and lackadaisical lyrics, you will find that folk singers could be as conscious as the Clash, as satirical as the Dead Kennedys, as anti-institution as the Sex Pistols, and as brutally honest as Bikini Kill. In a word, they were savage.

It makes sense if you think about it. Contrary to what the bubblegum image of the Beatles might suggest, they had plenty of things to rail about: The world on the brink of nuclear holocaust, brought ever closer by the bipartisan imperial invasion of Vietnam;



# Music

an honest-to-god series of *political assassinations*, including but not limited to MLK, Kennedy 1, Kennedy 2, Malcolm X, Medgar Evars, and Fred Hampton; the full force of American law and violence employed to suffocate Civil Rights out of efficacy; two decades of late capitalism having rendered the souls of American adults numb; and the futures of American children depressing. These are the sad times of the 60s.

Thankfully, before Reagan, there existed a healthy American left to fight the good fight—and a few musicians among them. Reach out your hand from our tragic era to theirs, and take the joint they’re passing around. Born of rage and humor, here are some of the most savage folk songs.

**1. “Love Me, I’m a Liberal” - Phil Ochs**

Savagery Highlights:

*I cheered when Humphrey was chosen,  
My faith in the system restored.  
I’m glad that the Commies were thrown out  
Of the A.F.L. C.I.O. board.  
And I love Puerto Ricans and  
Negros  
As long as they don’t move next door.  
So love me, love me, love me, I’m  
a liberal!*

I open with this song because it represents precisely what I mean when I say *savage*—unapologetic leftist politics, lyrics as weaponry, and a fun sing-along melody that makes for a musical dogpile.

“Love Me, I’m a Liberal” eviscerates the lukewarm centrist WASP, all too happy to virtue signal his love of civil rights, as

he greases the heavy gears of the American war machine and bottom-feeds off the crumbs the Democratic party throws at him.

The most savage part of this song, however, is when Ochs turns the joke on his own audience. You can hear it in the only version of the song that exists online, which is a live concert recording. Ochs has his happy concert-goers hooked from the first verse, as they laugh along with him at the Kennedy-loving, Malcolm X-hating patriotic Democrat. They begin to applaud again when he mentions Pete Seeger—anyone who listened to Ochs would’ve also listened to Seeger—but the applause quickly evaporates when they realize they have become the song’s next hapless target. Singing Pete Seeger songs (or Phil Ochs songs, for that matter) a revolutionary does not make.

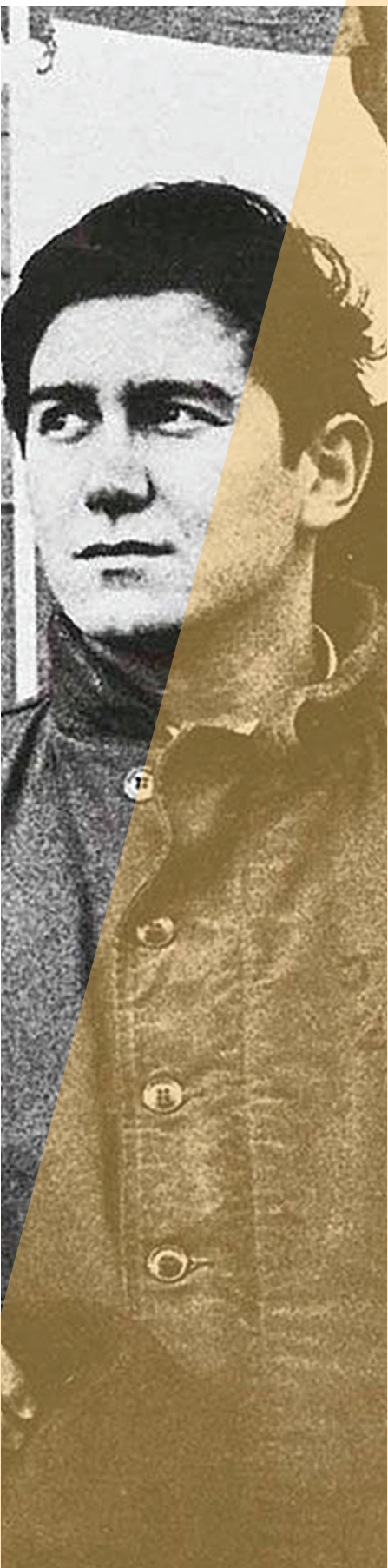
Obama supporters, this one’s for you.

(Also, check out the updated-for-the-90s version by Jello Biafra and Mojo Nixon. And any of the spot-on updated-for-the-2010s versions by Ben Grosscup. Unfortunately, the neoliberals have had a stupifying six decades in power and counting.)

**2. “Casey Jones (The Union Scab)” - Pete Seeger**

Savagery Highlights:

*They got together, and they said  
it wasn’t fair  
For Casey Jones to go around  
a’scabbing everywhere.  
The Angels’ Union No. 23, they  
sure were there,  
And they promptly fired Casey  
down the Golden Stairs.*



Speaking of Pete Seeger. “Casey Jones (The Union Scab)” parodies the legendary story of an American railroad engineer eulogized for his heroic efforts to save train passengers from a catastrophic crash. This darkly funny retelling imagines Casey Jones as a strikebreaker whose tragic ending is merely the price for his moral spaghetti-spine. Originally written by union organizer Joe Hill in 1911 during a real 40,000-strong railroad worker strike, Seeger recorded the song word-for-word from the Wobblies’ *Little Red Songbook*.

The socialist origins of the song show. Seeger sings with what I can only describe as *schadenfreude* as Casey Jones, after scabbing on the railroad line, literally breaks his spine and gets sent to heaven where he then proceeds to scab on the angels’ strike as well. For his double crime, he is banished to hell where the devil forces him to work—a fitting punishment for a scab.

I often lament the lack of meaningful education we get in American high schools about the labor movement. But you can begin to remedy this propaganda-by-omission with a couple of good Pete Seeger union folk revivals, and enjoy some upbeat acoustic savagery as a bonus. Unlike Seeger, you probably won’t get blacklisted!

**3. “We Don’t Need the Men” - Malvina Reynolds**

Savagery Highlights:

*They can come to see us  
When they’re feeling pleasant  
and agreeable,  
Otherwise they can stay at home*



*And holler at the T.V. programs.  
We don't care about them,  
We can do without them,  
They'll look cute in a bathing suit  
On a billboard in Madagascar.*

This entire list could be populated by Malvina Reynolds songs. She is a *savage*. “We Don’t Need the Men” is one perfect example of Reynolds’ ability to roast her enemies with humor and a devil-may-care attitude.

Besides the content, which I’ll get to, the song doesn’t really rhyme in any logical pattern. This might have felt jarring from a lesser lyricist, but Reynolds gets away with it effortlessly. When she rhymes, it seems as though it is purely for her own pleasure and amusement. And when she doesn’t rhyme, it’s to surprise you with a punchline. The result is an unconventional song infused with fun and whimsy, that also feels just kind of *spiky*.

As if it *needs* any spikes. The song takes “women’s liberation” literally. It is 3.5 minutes of making fun of men and celebrating women’s independence from their superfluous presence. Women are relaxed, happy world-travelers. Men are aesthetic. Their interests are silly; their angst is a drag. Who needs equality when you can just have separatism?

And the best part: The original copyright on this song dates to 1959. That’s *four years* before Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*—four years before second wave feminism got off the ground and popularized women’s liberation.

Malvina Reynolds: breaking the curve on savagery.

4. “The Pause of Mr. Claus” - Arlo Guthrie

Savagery Highlights:

*It's hard to be an FBI man. I mean, first of all, being an FBI man, you have to be over 40 years old. And the reason is that it takes at least 25 years with the organization to be that much of a bastard. It's true. You just can't join, you know. It needs an atmosphere where your natural bastardness can grow and develop and take a meaningful shape in today's complex society.*

You might know Arlo Guthrie from his 20-minute-long absurdist talking blues song, “Alice’s Restaurant Massacree,” which isn’t really about Alice’s restaurant at all and which somehow became an American Thanksgiving tradition. Or you might know him simply as Woody Guthrie’s quirky drugged out son.

In fact, Arlo Guthrie contains multitudes. He’s got another song that talks, and seems only slightly less drugged out on it. “The Pause of Mr. Claus” is its name, and it must be understood in its full historical context:

Once upon a time in San Francisco, there was a theater troupe called the Diggers who were engaged in a war of guerilla communication. Whether naked or clothed, you could count on the Diggers to disturb polite, monied society with an invasion of satirical performance art that had the power to tranquilize the twin tyrannies of productivity and logical thinking for the whole day. Think of Dada, now think of Improv Everywhere, now think of anarchy, and you will start to get it. Well, the Yuppies brought Diggers-style tactical shenanigans to the east

coast. Arlo Guthrie grew up on the east coast. Do you see what I’m saying?

“The Pause of Mr. Claus” is a subtle demonstration of guerilla communication. Arlo does not need to take out the FBI by telling his audience how evil they are. That’s common knowledge to this crowd. Instead he tells an absurd story, uncritically, about his idea of what an FBI agent does all day, including the logistical troubles of accidentally taking the seat on the plane of the counterculture rascal he’s following for urgent reasons of national conformity—I mean, security. The story is silly, tangential, and hilarious, and then abruptly gives way to a little ditty about the most nefarious communist of all, Santa Claus.

Ok, so he’s taking the piss. You can easily picture a narc’s head exploding. That’s how you know it’s savage.

5. “Masters of War” - Odetta (covering Bob Dylan)

Savagery Highlights:

*I think you will find  
When your death takes its toll,  
All the money you made  
Will never buy back your soul.  
Well that's the worst fear  
That can ever be hurled.*

As we saw with Pete Seeger, singing other people’s songs is a folk staple. The contemporary folk musicians covered each other, as well as the old folk tunes passed down orally through the generations, all the time. But Odetta was one of the first to sing Dylan—and my god, did she sing Dylan.

Odetta, in her own right, inspired many of the contemporary folk musicians in the first

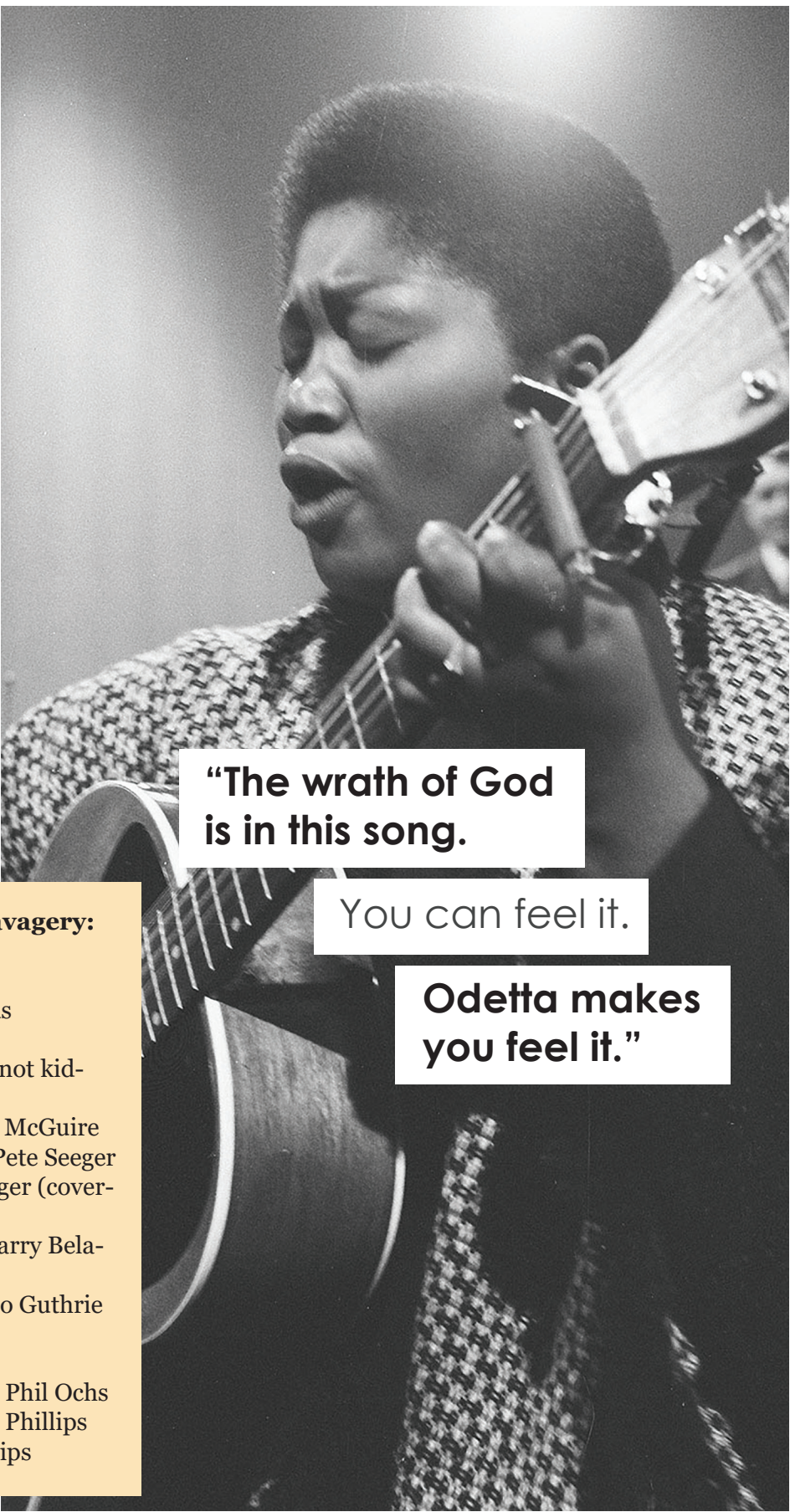
place with her masterful blend of blues, traditional folk, and African American spirituals. Her Bob Dylan cover album shows that he never had a hope in hell of beating her at her own game. After hearing her breathtaking arrangement of “Masters of War,” it is a mystery to me why the man ever sang any of his own songs again.

Deviating from Dylan’s jangly drawl and unchanging strum pattern, Odetta gives the song momentum—a place to go different from where it begins. She builds towards its spiritual condemnation with utterly precise control. A second guitar introduces an intricate, steady picking that gives the anti-war classic a haunted edge. The instruments of her voice—from her deep vibrato to her smoothly pulsating dynamic range—conjure a one-woman symphony. The wrath of God is in this song. You can feel it. Odetta makes you feel it.

Dylan’s lyrics bark, but it is Odetta who makes them bite.

**Honorable Mentions of Folk Savagery:**

“Little Boxes” - Malvina Reynolds  
“The Judge Said” - Malvina Reynolds  
“It Isn’t Nice” - Malvina Reynolds  
“Boraxo” - Malvina Reynolds. I was not kidding about Malvina Reynolds.  
“You Never Had It So Good” - Barry McGuire  
“What Did You Learn in School?” - Pete Seeger  
“This Land Is Your Land” - Pete Seeger (covering Woody Guthrie)  
“Man Smart (Woman Smarter)” - Harry Belafonte  
“Alice’s Restaurant Massacree” - Arlo Guthrie  
“Give a Damn” - Odetta  
“Maggie’s Farm” - Bob Dylan  
“Here’s to the State of Mississippi” - Phil Ochs  
“The Preacher and the Slave” - Utah Phillips  
“Hallelujah, I’m a Bum” - Utah Phillips



“The wrath of God is in this song.

You can feel it.

Odetta makes you feel it.”



# Please Stop Fucking During a Pandemic

## A Note from the College Board

By Marriya Schwarz

Dear High School Student,

I know many of you have wondered if we are still holding the SATs this year, due to COVID-19, but we’ve arrived at the decision that schools can’t admit students solely based on their crew involvement and their famous *Full House* parent.

On that note, we have decided to revise our typical SAT format to a more common sense-based approach since you nasties can’t seem to figure out how to social distance during a pandemic, and you’re just as likely to spread the virus as adults.

Plus, we are trying to stop teen ‘Coronavirus party’ instigators from being admitted into American universities attempting to function with little to no preparation but a need for that sweet, sweet tuition money. Premiering in December 2020, the SAT: Survival of the Fittest Edition will feature specially designed reading, writing and language, and math sections. In each of these sections, expect to see questions like these:

11

Reading Sample

We have decided to forego typical literature excerpts and instead, replace them with segments of the news, since this may be the only way we can make you read this information during a three-hour period; it feels like most of you Tik Talk, but you never listen.

Sample Question 1 is based on the following passage:

This passage comes from a post on the Donald J. Trump election page that explains his administration’s early actions in response to the worldwide pandemic.

1 TIMELINE: THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION’S DECISIVE ACTIONS TO COMBAT THE CORONAVIRUS

1

- As used in line 1, “decisive” most nearly means:
- A) Effective
  - B) Confidently
  - C) Without hesitation
  - D) Well-planned
  - E) We played golf a lot

CORRECT ANSWER: E. Why worry about putting people’s lives in danger when you can focus on the putting green?

22

Writing and Language Sample

1

- Correct the following sentence: Kennedy and Robert decided to invite half of the school to their maskless Friendsgiving, all held in their tiny basement with zero ventilation.
- A) Kennedy, and Robert
  - B) Friendsgiving all held
  - C) basement, with zero
  - D) Kennedy and Robert minded their own damn business.

CORRECT ANSWER: D. Kennedy and Robert came to their senses and cancelled the party. Instead, they learned how to knit and finished watching all Netflix content, thus doing the bare minimum to help their community stay healthy.

33

Math Sample

1

An essential worker went to Target after a long shift in an attempt to buy toilet paper. However, when she arrived, the store was almost empty, and she was only able to purchase 1 pack. Her ending total was \$24 for the toilet paper and some breadmaking supplies. The breadmaking supplies cost 2 times more than the toilet paper. Looking to her left, the essential worker noticed that a man purchased solely toilet paper for \$80. How many packs of toilet paper did this man bring home?

- A) 0 packs
- B) 4 packs
- C) 5 packs
- D) 10 packs

CORRECT ANSWER: A. It turned out that the man was buying massive quantities of toilet paper to sell at expensive prices on the Internet. The feds caught wind of this, confiscated the products, and are now distributing them to those in need.

If you are taking the essay portion of the SAT, you can expect questions like “If your favorite TikTok-er went to a non-socially distanced event to take pics, would you? Wait don’t answer that” and “Please wash your hands,” which is more of a statement than a question.

All the other standard rules for the SATs hold true: Get a good night’s sleep, bring plenty of water, and bring extra batteries for your calculator (that is if Donald Trump hasn’t bought them all out while trying to power Mike Pence.)

And please make sure you bubble in your answers completely with a No. 2 pencil and not a sharpie. If we see one #SharpieGateSAT tweet, we’re going to lose it.

God help us,  
The College Board



SAT VOCABULARY WORD OF THE DAY:

Coitus (co-i-tus) *noun*:

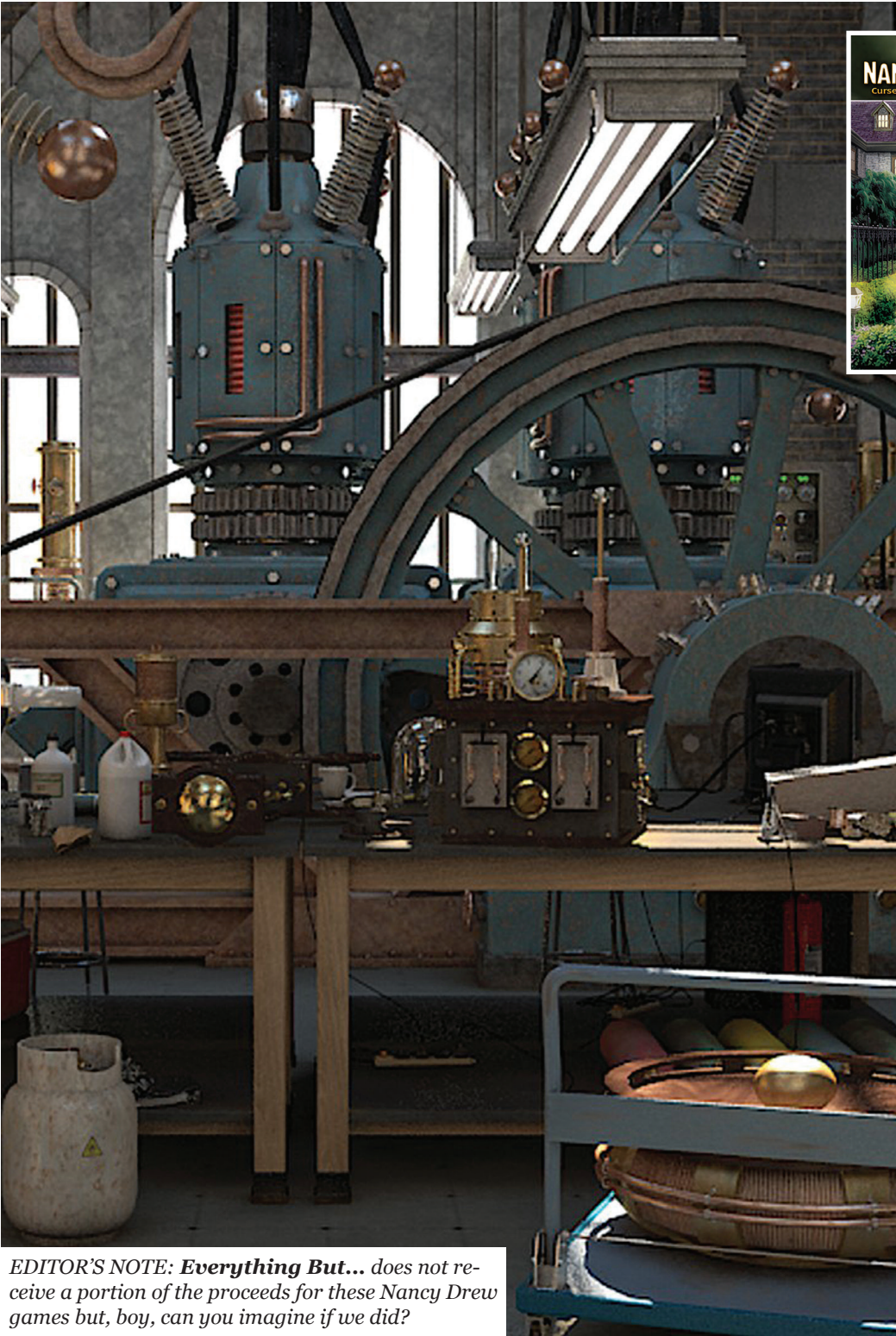
Not worth breaking quarantine for when CDC recommends keeping a distance of 6 feet. And don’t fall for it—no one’s dick is that long. ■



THE NANCY DREW GAMES GIFT GUIDE

There's nothing in this world as comfortingly nostalgic as the theme song of the Nancy Drew game franchise. My grandpa gifted me the box set of the first five games of Her Interactive's point and click series (to be played on a Windows XP computer) at around six years old which launched me into my obsession with the mystery genre.

In my 21 years, I've played a whopping 19 out of the 33 games (though in my youth, I watched Argle-fumph—the self-proclaimed Nancy Drew dude—YouTube playthroughs for many of the others). While I don't have the experience or authority to provide a complete ranking of all the games, I feel qualified enough to share the ones I'd most recommend. The holidays are nearly here, and since you can purchase and download the Nancy Drew games digitally, they can be the perfect last-minute gift idea for yourself or others. Since we all should be stuck at home this holiday season, why not keep your mind sharp and digitally sleuth and travel with the beloved female amateur detective?



EDITOR'S NOTE: *Everything But...* does not receive a portion of the proceeds for these Nancy Drew games but, boy, can you imagine if we did?

My Top 5:



5) #11 Curse of Blackmoor Manor (2004)

This is one of the scariest games in the Nancy Drew series, and because of that my friends and I would cower under blankets and scream at every strange sound and jump scare in our youths. The game takes place entirely within a 14th century English mansion, which may seem limiting, but things are so interesting within that you'll never even feel tempted to explore elsewhere. There are countless secret passages and details within the manor to discover. Plus, the characters are all so engaging and at times genuinely creepy. Even a parrot named Loulou will pull at your heartstrings... and/or sanity. Without giving too much away, there are some seriously dark, supernatural themes in here. One teaser I'll leave you with: lycanthropy.

I should also note that this game took my friends and I years to complete. Granted, we only played this game at sleepovers so we weren't playing consistently—



By Dana Armstrong

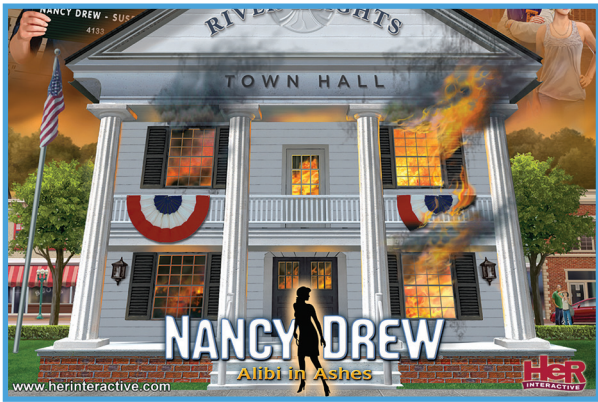
even still, the puzzles take a lot of brainpower and determination to get through. If it wasn't for a walkthrough we finally resolved to use, I doubt we would have completed the game. If you're up for a challenge and a bit of a scare, I can't recommend the *Curse of Blackmoor Manor* enough.

derful, and the hometown feel of this game is so rich. You can even explore Nancy's childhood house. The mini-games in here are stellar, and all of the tasks and puzzles you complete feel so authentic to real mystery solving. It's also ideal for anyone who wants to avoid the scary or supernatural.

3) #13 Last Train to Blue Moon Canyon (2005)

The best way I can describe this game is that it's a more kid-friendly version of Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient*

*Express* meets the Wild West and steampunk. It's an odd combination, I know, but one I promise works beautifully. You get to explore an old train, reveal an old love story, collect crystals, and put together super cool contraptions. The characters are amus-



4) #25 Alibi in Ashes (2011)

This game is so unique and offers the best amateur detective experience out of all of the games. It takes place in Nancy's fictional hometown of River Heights with her friends, boyfriend, and family. During a town-wide scavenger hunt, Nancy is framed for committing arson on the Town Hall. Nancy is actually locked away in the sheriff's office for part of the game, so you must switch characters with her friends in order to gather evidence to release Nancy and track down the real arsonist.

From the ice cream shop and antiques shop owners to the local reporter and Nancy's childhood rival, the characters are so won-

ing because they're so archetypal—you've got the entitled girl living off of her daddy's money, a washed-up detective, a romance novelist, and a ghostbuster. Plus, this is the first Nancy Drew mystery that includes the Hardy Boys!

The pacing and storylines in this game are incredible, and the world feels so expansive. You solve puzzles to gradually unlock the different train cars, and there are two train stops in Colorado and Nevada to explore. I consider this to be one of the most underrated games of the series, so don't make the mistake of missing out.

2) #23 Shadow at the Water's Edge (2010)





Of all the Nancy Drew games, this is the one I've replayed so many times I've *almost* burnt myself out on it. Nancy is staying in a family-run ryokan in Kyoto, Japan while she teaches English to children. However, she soon notices how often guests are checking out early from the inn. Once she's the only guest left in the ryokan and experiences ghostly occurrences first-hand, she realizes why. Now it's up to Nancy to uncover the family's secrets and explain the seemingly unexplainable supernatural activity before the ryokan is forced to close.

Players either love or hate this game due to some of its notoriously difficult puzzles. (Plus, the characters can be frustratingly secretive at times.) But I'm the person who replays this game purely to solve the massive, unavoidable sudoku puzzle for the seventh time, so I'm a bit biased. There are many other tasks such as writing calligraphy, putting together bento boxes, and solving a memory puzzle within a traditional tea ceremony that I thoroughly enjoy but others find tedious. Regardless, no one can deny how culturally immersive this game is.



**1) #28 Ghost of Thornton Hall (2013)**

This is SUCH a good game. You may have noticed that I'm into the darker, supernatural Nancy Drew games, and this game is no exception—in fact, the plot is oddly reminiscent

of *Shadow at the Water's Edge*. Nancy is sent to a plantation house in Georgia to investigate the disappearance of a young woman just before her wedding. Little does she know the investigation will lead her to uncover a family's dark secrets—including a fire that killed one of the family's most beloved members. The detailed backstories and motives of the characters are absolutely unparalleled. Plus, the game delves into complex themes such as grief, mental health, family betrayals, greed, and dangerous labor conditions—they even touch on female espionage during the Civil War. The conclusion of the game is thrilling and haunting, even more so because there are multiple endings!

I've gone into numerous deep dives online to further investigate the details of this game, and that's something I can't say I've done with any other Nancy Drew game.

Although suitable for younger players, older players will get the most out of this game. Beyond the truly startling jump scares, this game is *dark* if you allow yourself to read into it. (I'm convinced that one document hints at incest within the family tree?) There are so many lingering questions with this game—though some argue they're plot holes—and the puzzles are challenging but not impossible. Besides a few frustrating tasks, *Ghost of Thornton Hall* is a masterpiece. Highly recommended!

**Honorary mentions:**

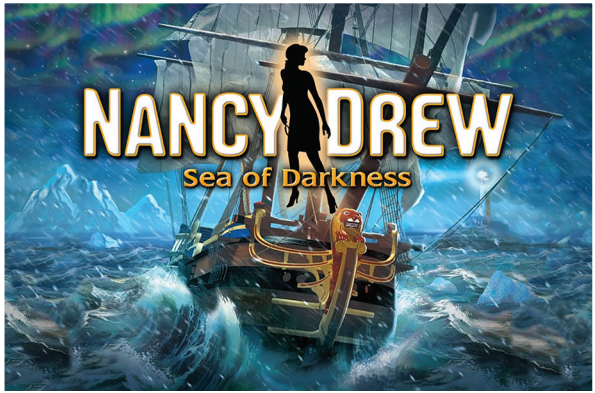
**#21 Warnings at Waverly Academy (2009)**

The only reason this doesn't make the top five is because you're stuck in a residence hall the entire time which feels a bit limiting. This case takes Nancy to an all-girls boarding school where someone is blackmailing valedictorian candidates under the alias of "The Black Cat" in an attempt to take girls out of the running. Nancy goes undercover as a new transfer student, therefore thrust into the petty teen dramas played out through texts and the second-hand stress of elite academics. It's filled with fun mini games, such as air hockey and snack shop management, that balance out the homework tasks you're forced to help peers with. The references to Edgar Allan Poe and secret societies also give the game a delightful, gothic counterbalance.

**#4 Treasure in the Royal Tower (2001)**

For the early Nancy Drew games, #4 is the clear front-runner. The only reason this doesn't make the main ranking is because it was released in 2001 and not everyone may have the 'luxury' of a Windows XP computer to run the game. It takes place in a Wisconsin ski resort that contains a tower that was dismantled in France, shipped to Wisconsin, and rebuilt onto the resort. Even more intriguingly, the tower once housed Marie Antoinette during her imprisonment! With lots of secret passages and arguably the most iconic recurring character in the series, Professor Beatrice Hotchkiss, this is the way you want to experience French history.

**#22 Trail of the Twister (2010)**



Many players rat on this game—and rightfully so to some extent—because the plot doesn't contain much of a mystery. Whereas some see this as a negative, I actually enjoy this game because it is so satisfyingly mindless. Nancy is going undercover as an intern at a meteorological research team's Oklahoman farm house. Therefore, you get to learn a lot about weather phenomena (particularly tornadoes) and complete lots of puzzle chores, all without the pressures of sleuthing a time-sensitive mystery. Plus, Gold Rush is my favorite mini-game ever. If you're looking for some mundane fun, this is the game for you!

As a final note, for some reason, I've either not played or wasn't particularly impressed with more of Nancy's international adventures, but some are in love with these games so I feel like I should shout them out. Help a fashion designer in France with #14 *Danger by Design* (2006), bring an Italian jewelry robber to justice in #18 *The Phantom of Venice* (2008), or investigate disappearances in Germany and monster legends in #24 *The Captive Curse* (2011).

What's the Nancy Drew game that will be on my Christmas list this year? It's #32 *The Sea of Darkness* (2015). I've heard so many good things about this game, but even though it's five years old, I've somehow yet to play it. The graphics and environment are supposed to be stunning, and it's also the last of the true Nancy Drew games (in my eyes and in the eyes of many others, the newest release, #33 *Midnight in Salem* (2019), is a total disgrace and for all intents and purposes does not exist). I'll have to tell you how I rate this case of the missing Icelandic ship captain after I play it. But, until then, happy sleuthing this holiday season!



# an open letter to among us

By Setareh Sanaei

This past semester, with my roommates, boyfriend, and friend that might as well live with us, we had an apartment of five people being personally attacked by online college every single day. I mean, *someone* would wake up each day, *choose* violence, and cause us immense amounts of pain and suffering. Sometimes, it would be our professors. Sometimes, it would be ourselves from the past, making bad choices like procrastinating or drinking too much. And sometimes, it would just be COVID. And during each and every single one of these times, do you know who was there for us? *Among Us*.

Been working for too long and feeling burnout? “*Among Us* break?”

Been procrastinating and need motiva-

tion? “Work for one hour and *Among Us* as a reward?”

You can’t possibly do more work but you don’t want to sleep? “A few rounds of *Among Us* before bed?”



It really just provides everything necessary in order to not go insane during online college. Laughs. Friendship. Camaraderie. Adrenaline. Murder. Deception. Broken trust. A good ol’ fashioned

whodunit. A feeling of victory and accomplishment that school just can’t give you. A feeling of being in control, and this one might sound weird, but think about it—if you get mad at your teachers but can’t do anything about it, just go murder some crewmates.

So, from all of us at 4100G (my fake apartment number so you can’t stalk me), I want to say thank you, *Among Us*. I don’t know if I could have made it through this semester without you, and I’ll see you again in the spring. Happy Holidays.

With love,  
Setareh

**Note to readers:** I will not explain the game. Just download and play with friends for a fun time! ■



# THE ASSASSINATION OF SANTA CLAUS

## INTERNATIONAL CRIME STORY

By Marriya Schwarz

For years, we've shrugged off the 1994 Christmas blockbuster, *The Santa Clause*, as a fun movie prior to Tim Allen's problematic tweets and his replacement by Chris Evans as Buzz Lightyear in the upcoming Pixar release, *Lightyear*. In my case, I thought the movie was just the reason why I still have trouble spelling 'Santa Claus,' but that was the only beef I had with it. But upon rewatching, I think we've been avoiding the dark truth about the film for quite some time: While the film does have puppets, flying reindeer, and a fuck ton of hot cocoa; it also features capital M: Murder.

The film starts innocently—as these things always do. Scott Calvin's (Tim Allen) workplace, B&R Toys, is holding an office party to celebrate the holidays while also praising Calvin and the rest of the Midwest Marketing and Distribution Team on a successful release of Do-It-All-For-You-Dolly (whose jingle goes "Don't you burp me. Don't you change me. I'm the dolly," which, on one hand, is kind of stupid because what the

hell are you supposed to do with the doll? But on the other hand, it does teach kids about consent and saying "no.") Then, Scott is easily kicked out of the running for "Father of the Year" by pretending to get stuck in traffic to make up for being late to host his son, Charlie (Eric Lloyd), for Christmas Eve.

While this is all happening, we see these strange elf spies investigating his town. Keep in mind that Scott Calvin is not Santa yet and it's literally Christmas Eve, so these elves should be otherwise occupied. *Should* be. If they weren't... up to something.

That night, there arises "such a clatter" that wakes up Charlie, who runs to get his dad. Although disoriented, Scott yells to his son to call 911 while he runs outside to see what's going on, thus leaving Charlie in the house that an intruder just might be in the process of breaking into (Again, not "Father of the Year.") When he sees a stranger on the roof, Scott shouts, "Hey, you!" causing the man to fall off the roof—thus killing Santa Claus in front of his son. Thank

goodness his stepfather, Neal (Judge Reinhold), is a psychiatrist.

Upon further inspection, the Santa-dressed stranger has a business card imprinted with "If something should happen to me, put on the suit. The reindeer will know what to do." Because this is technically more of a family movie, Santa just disappears instead of being brutally murdered, but we all know what happened. After Scott is encouraged by Charlie to be Santa for one night, the two return to the North Pole.

When Scott and Charlie are brought into the workshop, no one asks about the old Santa. Instead, the elves even shout "It's the new Santa! The new Santa is here!" They seem fine—almost *too* fine that their old boss was just *killed*. They aren't even surprised! How bad do you have to be at your job to make your employees have an essentially "Ding-Dong! The Witch is Dead" attitude about your death?

This is because this was no accident. This was *premeditated murder*. Let me explain: Because Scott put on the coat, he is the new San-



**"But upon rewatching [*The Santa Clause*], I think we've been avoiding the dark truth about the film for quite some time: While the film does have puppets, flying reindeer, and a fuck ton of hot cocoa; it also features capital M: Murder."**



ta. Once he tries to get out of the “Santa Clause,” the creepy head elf, Bernard, reads out that once someone puts on the coat, he “fully accepts the duties and responsibilities of Santa Claus in perpetuity until such time that the wearer becomes unable to do so by either accident or design.” I’m sorry, I’m sorry—“or design?” The clause literally lets the elves kill Santa.

Really think about it: If Santa goes to every house in one night, why doesn’t *everyone* hear “such a clatter?” Shouldn’t that be a universal thing? Why was Santa so noisy on the Calvin house, in particular? That’s because elves intervened. We know that there is a trained team of E.L.F.S., or Effective Liberating Flight Squad, who define themselves as “Elves with Attitude” and come with flying gear and super powerful tinsel. They could have easily flown onto the roof and caused some noise, waking Charlie. (Besides, pay attention to their name: “Effective *Liberating* Flight Squad.” This is clearly a coup.)

In a way, I understand where the elves were coming from. There is no resume, LinkedIn search, interview process, or anything of the like for the position of Santa Claus. If someone brutally murders Santa and puts on the coat, they become Santa. What a shitty system. I feel like someone had to have figured this out and the last 6 Santas were hardcore murderers. There isn’t even any orientation session; they really make you jump straight into the deep end. If I spent 1,200 years developing a hot cocoa recipe while the big boss was fucking shit up, I would probably throw a coup, too.

Therefore, Scott Calvin becoming Santa is no *accident*. No, no, no—this guy was *vett*ed. That’s



why he had little elf spies all over his neighborhood. I mean, it makes sense: The guy would look *great* on paper: He works in distribution at a toy company *and* his initials are already ‘S.C.’ Clearly, there was something wrong with the Santa system, since Charlie’s mother (Wendy Crewson) and stepfather tearfully admit that they stopped believing in Santa when they didn’t get the toys they so desperately wanted. That’s not great for the brand. So why not bring in an expert in quality toy distribution? Thus, a plan formed.

The only problem was that the elves did not have Santa’s ‘judge of character’ superpower. How could they have known that Scott Calvin was probably the *least* qualified for the job? The guy didn’t even know that reindeers had ‘antlers’ and not ‘horns,’ and on his first night on the job, he breaks almost every glass object in everyone’s house. But by this point, they’re in

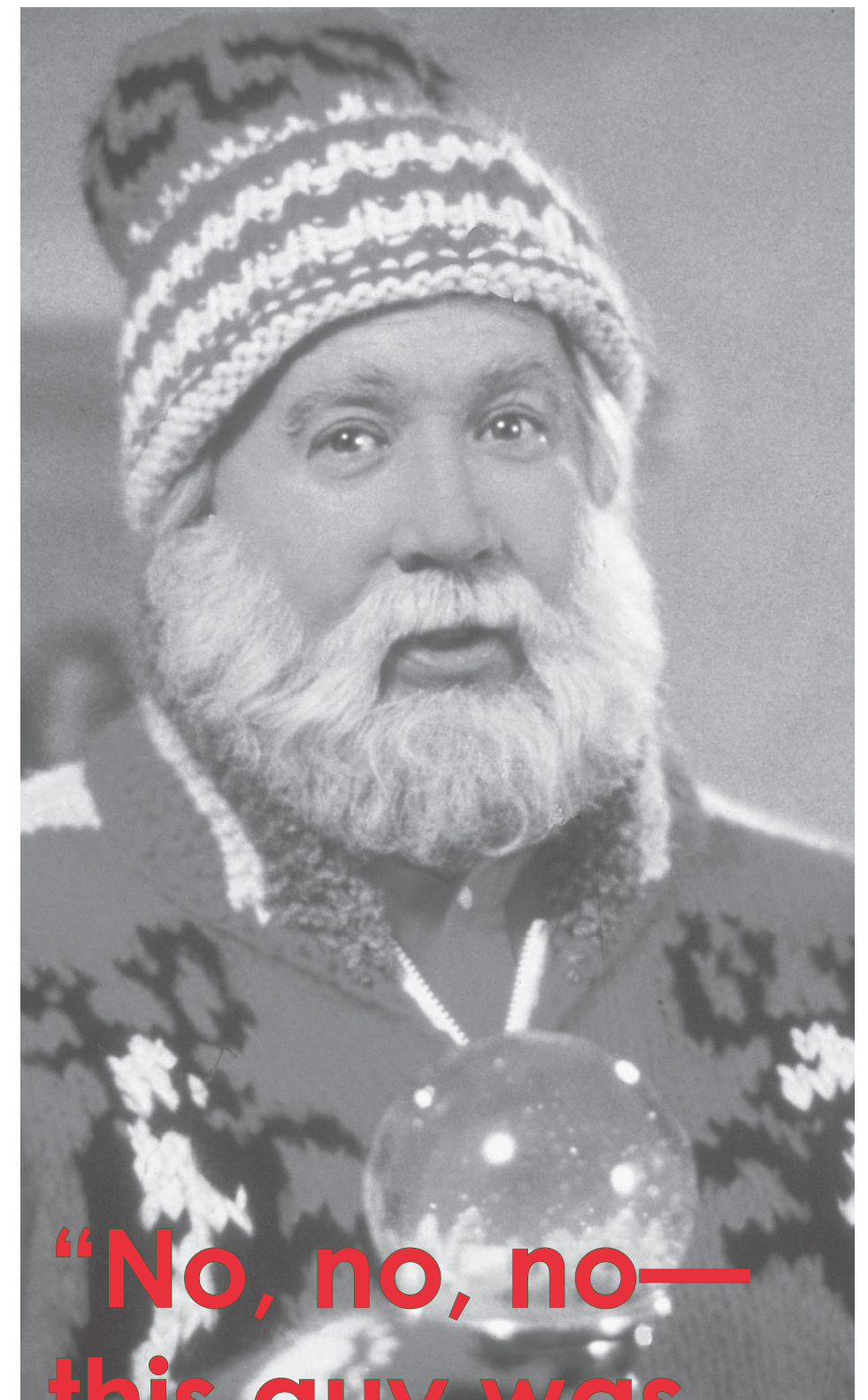
too deep. They had just fucking *assassinated* Santa Claus. It’s a real “nowhere to go but up” scenario.

Besides, Scott Calvin is already deep into his transition by now. He starts putting on weight, and everyone in his office completely fat shames him, which is highly problematic. When he goes to the doctor for help with his hair growth, Scott has probably the most universally female doctor experience. Even though his heartbeat is playing literal “Jingle Bells,” the doctor says he must have a hormone issue and nothing else needs to be done. Welcome to womanhood, Scott! Historically, no one believes us!

But since they can’t push Scott Calvin off of a roof until next Christmas, the elves have to band together to try to create the best Christmas ever, despite the obvious Scott Calvin problem. This is why, even though this Santa Claus position has been around for *centuries*, they finally start coming up with solutions to on-fire fireplaces and maintaining communication networks with the North Pole. But while all of this is being explained to Scott, he keeps asking “But what if I fall off a roof?” No one answers him. That’s because pushing him off the roof is Plan B.

At the end of the film, when Scott is freed from prison and flies away in the sleigh, the same elf spies from before run back to whatever Elf.B.I. headquarters they came from. They’re relieved. They don’t have to murder Santa this year.

But if you thought that this was a happy ending for Scott Calvin, wait until the end: Charlie remarks that he’s “going into the family business” and looks wistfully at Santa Claus’ flying sleigh. Let’s just say Scott Calvin might want to gift himself a copy of *Hamlet* this Christmas. ■







# CHRISTMAS—

(spoilers ahead)

## But Let's Make It as Cringey as Humanly Possible! : Worst Holiday Rom-Coms of 2020

By Setareh Sanaei

Several of my closest friends are obsessed with watching bad movies. And I mean the kind where it is so painfully obvious it will be bad just from the title, description, and poster. Regardless, they *choose* to press play and spend an hour and a half of their lives watching a trash movie and

saying how bad it is. For me, I usually choose not to partake in such masochistic activities. However, this year, I decided my Christmas gift to our dear readers would be to watch every horribly cringey holiday rom-com so you don't have to. You're welcome! Shout out to my friends for watching with me, although they probably would've watched these anyway (masochists, I tell you).

Without further ado, here is my ranking of the worst holiday rom-coms of the season. Watch at your own risk!

### 7. *Happiest Season* (Hulu)

To start off, we've got the only movie on this list that I would actually call a "good" movie. *Happiest Season* is a star-studded film about the conflicts that arise when

Abby (Kristen Stewart) goes home with her girlfriend Harper (Mackenzie Davis) for Christmas—except Harper isn't out to her family yet. And when I say star-studded, you better believe it—in addition to the film's two lead characters, we've got Alison Brie, Aubrey Plaza, Dan Levy, Victor Garber, and Mary Steenburgen. The writing is believable and the characters are both written and portrayed at the perfect level of cringey, which honestly is more than I can say about the rest of these films. It's funny, it's cute, it's got Kristen Stewart; what's not to like?

### 6. *Holidate* (Netflix)

I'm not going to lie to you: this movie is bad. Like *bad*. BUT, it was entertaining. The movie starts

when Sloane (Emma Roberts) and Jackson (Luke Bracey) decide to become each other's "holidates"—someone to bring as a date to holiday gatherings to avoid judgement for being single. As the movie goes on, we jump from holiday to holiday—which is presumably the only time the two see each other—and watch as they progress from holidates to good friends to catching feelings to (spoiler) finally getting together. The whole premise is a little ridiculous—especially the part when Jackson joins Sloane and her mother for Mother's Day brunch. I mean I get they needed more holidays to move the plot forward, but who needs a date for Mother's Day? And why weren't her brother and sister there? Make it make sense, Hollywood. But despite all that, it was entertaining in

a frivolous kind of way.

P.S. this one is NOT for children. Or anyone else not prepared for sexually inappropriate dialogue.

### 5. *The Princess Switch: Switched Again* (Netflix)

Weirdly, I have the most neutral feelings about this one—weird because *usually* I either hate or love something; there's not much of an in between. Even weirder, I don't have anything good to say about this movie, but I still don't hate it. The film is a sequel to *The Princess Switch*, which I did not see, and I can confirm that you don't need to watch the first one to understand the sequel. As a quick recap, the first one is a remake of the Mark Twain classic, *The Prince and the Pauper*. In the first film, Margaret



(Vanessa Hudgens), Duchess of Montenegro, and Stacy (also Vanessa Hudgens), a baker from Chicago, meet by accident. Margaret asks Stacy to switch places so that she can experience what it's like to be a commoner. The sequel picks up two years after the first film ends as Margaret is getting ready for her coronation as Queen of Montenegro. Stacy is getting used to fulfilling her duties as the new Princess of Belgravia (she got married to a prince in the first movie). The sequel introduces a new character, Margaret's evil cousin

Lady Fiona (ALSO Vanessa Hudgens). This might sound mean, but Vanessa Hudgens will always just be Gabriella Montez from *High School Musical*, so all I could think about this entire movie was her laughable fake accents. The plot was predictable, and some parts were not very believable, like when (spoiler) it took them such

an unreasonable amount of time to figure out that Stacy was acting weird because it was actually Fiona pretending to be Stacy. Despite the implausibilities and the wacky accents, it was still slightly amusing for some unknown reason, and that's really all I can say.

#### 4. *Operation Christmas Drop* (Netflix)

I'll make this one short and sweet, because if I'm being honest, I only half-watched it while doing homework. Erica (Kat Graham of *The Vampire Diaries*) works for a U.S.

congresswoman and is given the task of finding a reason to close a US Air Force base in Guam. Andrew (Alexander Ludwig of *Race to Witch Mountain*) is an Air Force captain who convinces her to keep the base open because of Operation Christmas Drop, the Air Force's tradition of airlifting supplies and presents to Guam for Christmas. Like *The Princess Switch*, I don't have any strong feelings to place it at a certain part of the list; it's just not as good as some and not as bad as others. Boring and predictable. I felt exactly zero emotions the

“I am angry that [Christmas on Ice] now lives in my head rent free. Please watch it. I need others to share my pain. Please.”

entire time.

#### 3. *A California Christmas* (Netflix)

To get right into it, a rich lady sends her sleazy asshole son, Joseph (Josh Swickard—WHAT? You've never heard of him??), to a ranch to convince the owners to sell them the land. In a turn of events, the feisty owner Callie (Lorynn York—yeah, no, me neither) assumes he's the new ranch hand. With this opportune mix-up, Joseph decides that the best way to close the deal is to pretend he is

the new ranch hand and charm her until she loves him and accepts the deal. You see where this is going, right? They fall in love, and he doesn't tell her the truth about who he is until it's too late (like every man in every movie ever, ugh). The worst part about this movie was the absolutely unrealistic character development. At the beginning, he was the world's biggest asshole, she was angry and rude, and then like FIVE MINUTES LATER, there's a montage where he's nice, she's nice, and everything's fine and dandy? I don't

think so. If they had started just *slightly* asshole-ish, it would've totally been believable. The best part of this movie was Leo and Manny's quickly-budding, hilarious bromance. Leo is Joseph's assistant (played by an Iranian actor, so obviously, we stan) and Manny is the ranch hand that Joseph is pretending to be, who they

bribe to keep him from telling Callie about Joseph's true identity. I realize I haven't mentioned them up to this point, but please just watch the movie for this iconic duo. It's seriously adorable.

#### 2. *Midnight at the Magnolia* (Netflix)

Lifelong friends (Natalie Hall and Evan Williams—this guy reminds me of my old boss and it's really all I thought about for 93% of the movie) deny that they are too close and have feelings for each other. And then (spoiler) they get

together. Obviously. That's it. Cliche, predictable, boring. Sorry not sorry. The only reason it's not #1 is because the acting was believable, which...

#### 1. *Christmas on Ice* (Amazon Prime)

THIS MOVIE. Oh my lord. Explain to me how this was the only one that we had to pay for and how it was SO bad. AND NOW IT'S FREE AFTER MY ROOMMATE ALREADY PAID FOR IT (thanks and sorry, Hamsa). They probably had to make it free because we were literally the only ones that thought, “let's spend real U.S. dollars on this.” One line summary: An ice skating teacher (Abigail Klein) is heartbroken when the mayor decides to shut down the town's outdoor skating rink due to budget cuts and looks for help from someone close to the mayor (Ryan Cooper) to keep it open. Multi-line upset review: The only redeeming quality of this film is that there was a small surprise twist that I did not predict (although my friend Rachel did). The acting was so bad that it felt like the first five minutes of a one-dollar-budget porno. I've seen high school student films with better acting. The lead character said every line like she was reading it off a PowerPoint for her school presentation. No emotion whatsoever. The *child* was the best actor in every scene she was in. The writing? Atrocious. I can't believe someone wrote this script and then some Lifetime executive said, “Yes, we will make this movie.” *Even for Lifetime*, it doesn't make sense. I am angry that this movie now lives in my head rent free. Please watch it. I need others to share my pain. Please.





About a year ago, I went on a quest to find the perfect chocolate chip cookie recipe.

I had two motivations: 1. Hunger and 2. To take down the monopoly that is Nestlé Toll House. No one should be that powerful.

After trying several recipes that falsely proclaimed that they were “the best chocolate chip cookies you will ever taste” (I’ll be suing them for libel!), I realized that if I wanted to eat some good

chocolate chip cookies, I was just going to have to make my own recipe. You know what they say: if you want to destroy capitalism and have the perfect amount of chocolate in every bite, you have to do it yourself.

After several months of making slight adjustments and raising my blood sugar, I can now say, without a shred of doubt (according to my lawyers), that I have made the perfect chocolate chip cookie recipe. Out of the kindness of my heart, I will share

this recipe with you now under the sole provision that I receive 5 percent of all cookies made with this recipe. I’m just so sick of baking them myself.



BAKING WITH BROOKE:

The Perfect Chocolate Chip Cookie Recipe

Ingredients

- 2 sticks salted butter
- ¾ cup granulated sugar (that’s the normal kind for you baking novices)
- ¾ cup light brown sugar
- 2 large eggs (what does large mean? Idk. Does it look like the chicken was probably slightly uncomfortable laying it? Then it’s probably good.)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract (honestly, you can just eyeball this shit. Let your heart guide you)
- 2 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 bag chocolate chunks
- ½ bag mini chocolate chips
- ½ semi-sweet chocolate bar, chopped into fine bits

Cream together (that means whisk really fast) the butter (which should be at room temperature) with both kinds of sugar, using either a standing mixer, hand mixer, or just super fast hands. Add in one egg at a time, beating well after each addition. Then, add in your vanilla extract and give it a little stir again. Then, add all of your dry ingredients, and stir just enough until it’s all incorporated. Separate but equal is not right; we learned this. Get all those ingredients all mixed in together (and then oppress some of them, but pretend not to!).

Now, time to mix in all of your chocolate. Why that much chocolate, you might ask? I’m not sure why you would ask, unless you were the police officer assigned to the investigation of Augustus Gloop’s death at the Willy Wonka Factory, but just in case you’re not and you’re still wondering: Chocolate chunks: bigger, sexier, we need them. Mini chocolate chips: tiny and adorable, make me feel like a powerful giant. Finely chopped chocolate bar: melts into the dough and makes life better.

Bake at 350°F for about 10 minutes or until they start to look golden on top. You really just got to watch them carefully, like your children at a playground once we learned that serial killers exist. Let them cool for a little bit or dive right in and burn your taste buds like the daredevil you are! Enjoy!

Other Tips and Tricks for Your Holiday Baking:

Tip #1

Sugar cookies are the go-to for cookie cutter Christmas cookies. Once you’ve cut out your shapes and arranged them on the baking tray, make sure to slap those bad boys back in the fridge for at least ten minutes. While you’ve been messing around with your dough, the butter has softened. If you pop your cookies immediately in the oven, this too-soft butter is what makes your cookie shapes expand and spread, and it causes your stockings to look like infected penises. No one wants that, unless you’re at a raunchy bachelorette party!

Tip #2

Want a cool festive cookie but don’t want to waste time with the cookie cutters? Use an engraved rolling pin like the one pictured! There are tons of Christmas and winter-themed designs. To use, simply roll out your dough with a normal rolling pin, and then give it a swipe with the engraved one. You’ll be amazed to see the pattern roll right onto the cookie!



and Other Holiday Tips + Treats

Savory Options:

I recently purchased a small rosemary bush from Whole Foods, and then I promptly killed it a week later. I then RE-purchased another rosemary bush (I remembered to water it, but let’s be honest: it’s living on borrowed time) and made this wonderful rosemary focaccia. If you love baking but are a bit overwhelmed with all the sweets, give this recipe a try. I halved the recipe and just made one circular sexy loaf, but boy do I wish I had made the full serving. It was so good that, for a moment, I forgot about the crushing weight of mortality. And isn’t that all we can ask for in an amazing baked good?

By Brooke Rees





# Which Rejected Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade Balloon Are You?

By Marriya Schwarz



Which is your favorite part of Thanksgiving?

- A. The Thanksgiving Day Parade
- B. The food
- C. The football
- D. The racist origins of the holiday



Pick a Thanksgiving food:

- A. Green bean casserole
- B. Mashed potatoes
- C. Turkey
- D. The KFC 12 piece bucket after everything goes wrong



Pick a Christmas movie:

- A. *It's a Wonderful Life*
- B. *The Santa Clause*
- C. *Die Hard*
- D. I don't like Christmas movies



Which Thanksgiving dinner question do you try to avoid?

- A. Why aren't you married?
- B. What's next career-wise?
- C. Is that a tattoo?
- D. Who did you vote for?



Which 2020 movie release was your favorite?

- A. *Onward*
- B. *Enola Holmes*
- C. *Mulan*
- D. *Sonic the Hedgehog*



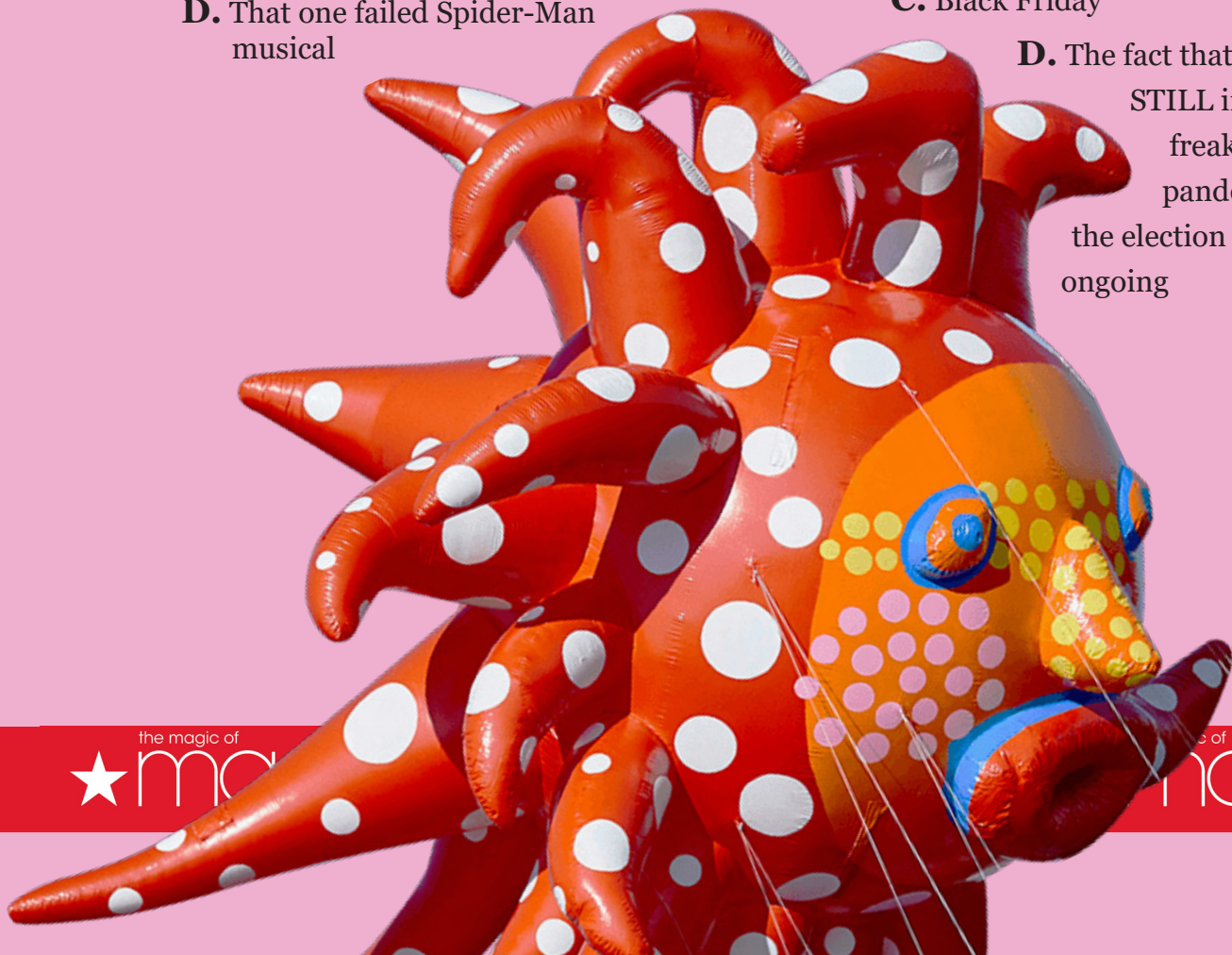
Pick a Broadway show to be featured in the parade:

- A. *Mamma Mia*
- B. *Hamilton*
- C. *Lion King*
- D. That one failed Spider-Man musical



What's your favorite part of post-Thanksgiving?

- A. Not having to talk to extended family for another 365 days
- B. The leftovers
- C. Black Friday
- D. The fact that we are STILL in a freaking pandemic and the election is still ongoing





magic of

macy's

macy's.com

Count up how many of each letter you answered!

the magic of

mac

macy's

If you answered mostly A's:

You're the **Retired Skype Balloon!** While the Trump administration floundered in trying to prepare for the pandemic, Macy's got this balloon up and running as soon as COVID-19 hit. Unfortunately, they were a bit premature with their design and did not account for the idea that, as soon as Skype could have become relevant, it faded into obscurity. Fun fact: This is the lightest balloon in the parade and only needs 5 balloon handlers, which is actually the same number of people still using Skype.



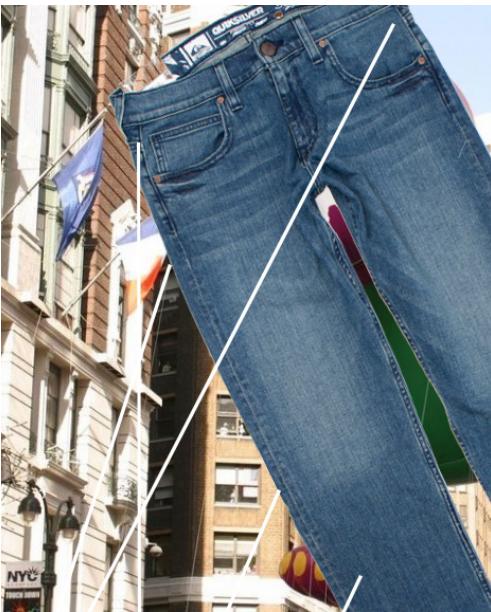
If you answered mostly B's:

You're the **Steve Kornacki Balloon!** With a strict no audience this year, Macy's execs were afraid this Chart-throb would bring out thirsty fans to Herald Square. Fun fact: This balloon is so big that it can fit 5,000 Gap khakis.



If you answered mostly C's:


You're the **Denim Jeans Balloon!** Remember jeans? Remember *pants*, in general? Neither do I. The idea was nixed for obscurity reasons. The sweatpants idea got traction though! Fun fact: Even though this balloon is six stories high, the pockets still hold *nothing*.



If you answered mostly D's:

You're the **Donald Trump Balloon!** Rejected for obvious reasons. Fun fact: This balloon cannot tweet, which is how it should be.





# WHICH UNDERWHELMING CHRISTMAS PRESENT (That Your Dad Clearly Purchased at CVS) ARE YOU?

By Brooke Rees

1. What's your favorite Christmas treat?

☐ A. Peppermint bark

☐ B. Gingerbread

☐ C. Christmas cookies (all of them!)

☐ D. Fruitcake

☐ E. Rumballs

☐ F. The last bite of Tiny Tim's gruel
2. Which Christmas movie could you watch over and over?

☐ A. Love Actually

☐ B. Elf

☐ C. The Santa Clause

☐ D. The Polar Express

☐ E. It's a Wonderful Life

☐ F. Krampus (2015)



Quizzes

3. Pick a Christmas song to rock out to:

- ☐ A. "Jingle Bells" (I love a classic!)
- ☐ B. "Last Christmas" by Wham!
- ☐ C. "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree"
- ☐ D. "Little Saint Nick"
- ☐ E. "All I Want for Christmas Is You" by Mariah Carey
- ☐ F. "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer" (but only the parts where it talks about her murder)

4. What's the best Christmas present you've ever received?

- ☐ A. A new winter coat; I really needed one!
- ☐ B. A bunch of gift cards to Chipotle
- ☐ C. All 17 seasons of *Grey's Anatomy* on DVD
- ☐ D. A new yoga mat
- ☐ E. A monogrammed wine glass that says "It's wine o'clock somewhere"
- ☐ F. The gift of mortality

5. Pick a place to spend your Christmas vacation:

- ☐ A. A snowy cabin in the woods
- ☐ B. An all-expenses paid resort
- ☐ C. I'd rather stay at home, thanks!
- ☐ D. A silent meditation retreat with Jared Leto
- ☐ E. Wherever my friends are going, I'm in!
- ☐ F. In a desolate cave, just north of Whoville

6. Which is your favorite holiday beverage?

- ☐ A. Eggnog all the way!
- ☐ B. Hot apple cider
- ☐ C. Hot cocoa with extra marshmallows
- ☐ D. Just water for me!
- ☐ E. Hot toddy, but just give me the whiskey
- ☐ F. The tears of naughty children

7. It's snowing! What do you do?

- ☐ A. Run outside and play!
- ☐ B. Pray that school/work gets canceled
- ☐ C. Worry about the road conditions
- ☐ D. Go for a jog; the ice just makes it a better workout!
- ☐ E. Snuggle up with a cozy blanket and scroll through Twitter
- ☐ F. Pour water on my driveway and create an icy trap, ensuring that no one will ever come to my house again

Count up how many of each letter you answered!

If you answered mostly B's:

You are **Lottery Ticket**! You are young, naive, and somehow still full of hope. You probably have a lot of student debt and are panicking about your future. Don't worry, it can only go up from here... right?

If you answered mostly B's:

You are a **Lottery Ticket**! You are young, naive, and somehow still full of hope. You probably have a lot of student debt and are panicking about your future. Don't worry, it can only go up from here... right?



If you answered mostly A's:

You are **Toilet Paper**! Like your dad was thinking when he snagged this last-minute gift, you are practical and everyone needs you. Even though this has been a weird year, you may have found yourself gaining even more popularity! You might have IBS, but you can't wait to celebrate Christmas with your family, even if it's from the bathroom.





If you answered mostly C's:

You are a **Pulse Oximeter**! Right now, you are super trendy and give everyone peace of mind. You might be a bio major or a med student, but regardless, your looks and charm raise everyone's heart rate and maybe even take their breath away!



If you answered mostly D's:

You are a **Random Pack of Essential Oils**! You like to keep the holiday season a little bit chill and would rather do some yoga than sing Christmas carols. You bring a calming sense to those around you during the hectic seasons of Christmas cheer.

If you answered mostly E's:

You are **Perfume from a Random Celebrity**! You love nothing more than to rock the nightlife with your friends and maybe sing through a few rounds of karaoke. Even though you always smell slightly like alcohol and bug spray, you are the life of the party!



If you answered mostly F's:

You are **Seriously Discounted Halloween Candy**! We get it, we get it: Halloween is by far your favorite holiday. We know you're sad that loving death and gore is no longer in season, but you're bringing down the mood a little bit here. Get through these next few weeks and then you can start working on next year's Halloween costume.

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