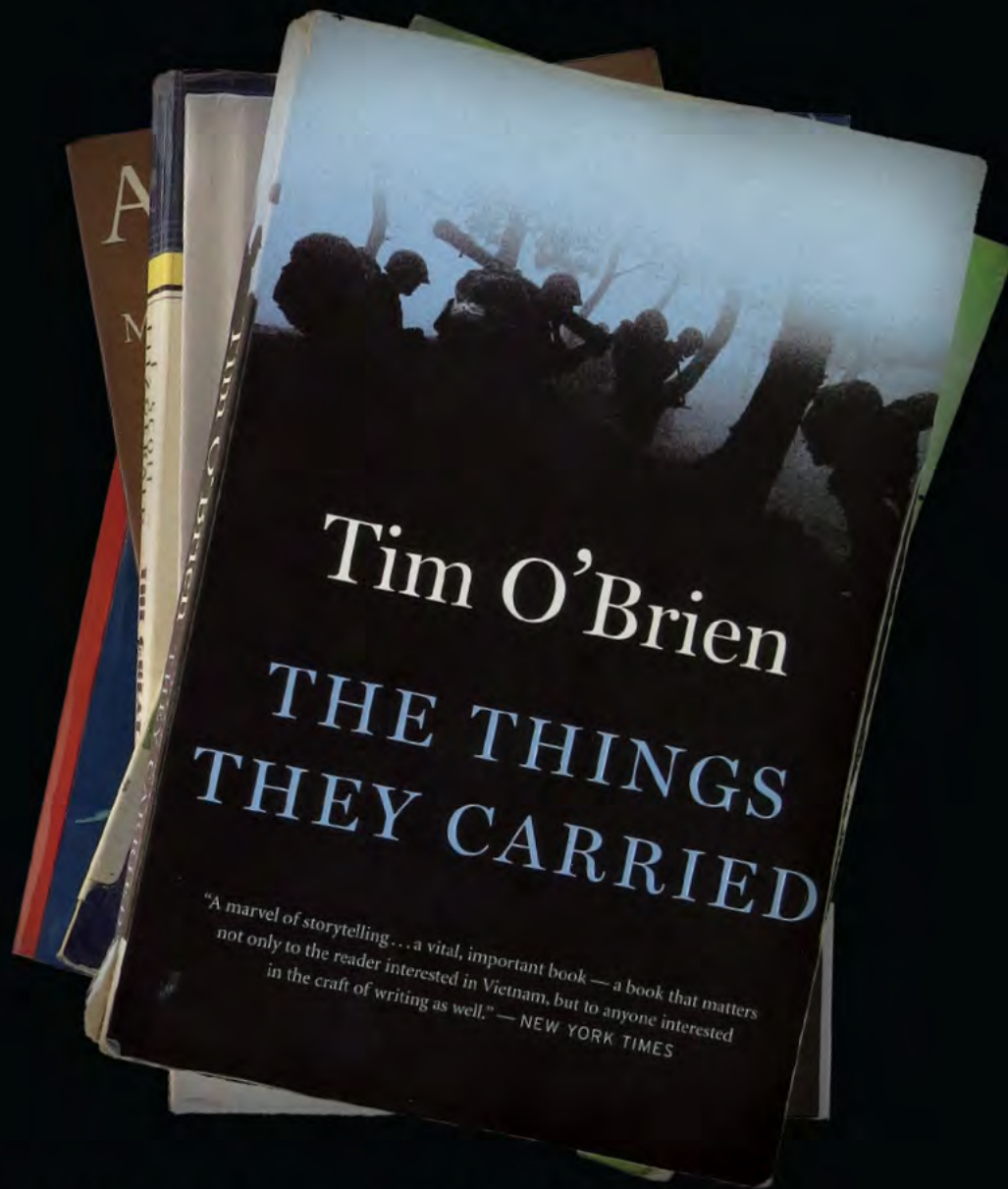


FOCUS

— MAGAZINE —



THE BOOKS WE'VE CARRIED

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FRIENDS' CENTRAL SCHOOL

FOCUS

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PAULITA

BY: DIEGO LUZURIAGA
(Translation: MONTGOMERY OGDEN)

“Paulita” is about Diego’s youngest daughter, Paula, who has profound intellectual disabilities and is epileptic.

Habla un lenguaje anterior
al lenguaje humano
lenguaje de océanos
el lenguaje del viento
dice poesía de sílabas largas
como pedales
poesía de ruidos entrecor-
tados
de mantras
oráculos sin tiempo
ajedrez molecular
palabras sueltas habla
que no dicen lo que dice
conceptos
que fueron a viajar por otros
universos
y que han vuelto cargados
de secretos
que no entiendo.
Repíte sus mantras
alternados con sonrisas
con ausencias
una y otra vez
aióiu aióiu aióiu
imperativamente y sin prisa
baunt baunt
shai shai shai
uuuuuuu
y luego un gesto con la
mano
mil veces repetido
el mismo gesto con mil sig-
nificados diferentes.
Vive de instantes ella
que duran
lo que dura un sueño largo
congelado

posee la inocencia
de una hojita suelta
cualquier niño podría en-
gañarla
una piedra mínima a su
paso
la haría caer
y cae
y cae
cae verdaderamente
como cae el Hombre
y se levanta
y se levanta
y se levanta.
Cuando me mira a los ojos
veo allí dentro
algo como Dios
algo como toda la humani-
dad
pasada y futura
revelándose algo
que no entiendo.
Lo que entiendo
es su sabiduría del abando-
no
del dejar
del desposeer
ella me enseña la certidum-
bre
de la madera que se astilla
de la pintura que se descas-
cara
de la lámpara que cae y se
quiebra
pues al fin
todo cae.
Todo se quiebra.

*She speaks a language be-
yond human language
a language of oceans
the language of the wind
she speaks a poetry of sylla-
bles long
as pedals
a poetry of faltering noises
of mantras
oracles without time
molecular chess
she says loose words
that don't say what she says
concepts
that have traveled to other
universes
and have returned loaded
with secrets
that I don't understand.
She repeats her mantras
alternated with smiles
with absences
again and again
ioyou ioyou ioyou
imperatively and without
urgency
bownt bownt
shai shai
uh uh uh uh uh uh uh
and then a hand gesture
repeated one thousand times
the same gesture with a
thousand different mean-
ings.
She lives in moments
long
like a long dream*

*frozen
she has the innocence
of a stray leaf
any child could fool her
a tiny rock in her path
could make her fall
and she falls
and falls
she truly falls
as Man falls
and she rises
and she rises
and she rises.
When she looks into my eyes
I see something
like God in there
something like all of human-
ity
past and future
revealing something to me
that I can't understand.
What I understand
is her wisdom of abandon-
ment
of letting go
of relinquishing
she teaches me the certainty
of the wood that splinters
of the paint that peels
of the lamp that falls and
breaks
because at the end
everything falls.
Everything breaks.*

YANGANA EN HAVERTOWN

BY: DIEGO LUZURIAGA
(Translation: MONTGOMERY OGDEN)

Cuando diga yo tres veces
yangana
los árboles esqueléticos
se poblarán de hojas
y los postes de luz se harán
naranjos cargados
y un centenar de ardillas
azuladas
marcharán en fila
hasta las copas de los árboles
y volarán hacia el sur
como gansos
y habrá un desfile de bicicletas
hechas de nardos
y entonces
el vecino malhumorado
saldrá de su casa y regalará
anillos a los transeúntes

y un niño recitará a gritos
las verdades de la vida
y también
el golero de fútbol
dará pasos de ballet antes
de patear la pelota
el diputado
se pondrá a cacarear en
medio de su discurso
el nuevo Papa
bailará merengue en la
ceremonia inaugural
y además
lo más importante
escúchenme bien
seré profundamente feliz
yangana
yangana
yangana.

*When I say three times
yangana
the skeletal trees
will become covered in
leaves
and the lamp posts will be
trees full of oranges
and a hundred light-blue
squirrels
will march in file
to the treetops
and will fly south
like geese
and there will be a parade of
bicycles
made of lilies
and then
the cranky neighbor
will come out of his house
and hand out rings to pass-*

*ersby
and a child will loudly recite
life's truths
and also
the goalkeeper
will dance a few ballet steps
before kicking the ball
the congressman
will crow in the middle of his
speech
the new Pope
will do the merengue at the
inauguration ceremony
and furthermore
most importantly
listen carefully
I'll be completely happy
yangana
yangana
yangana.*

In Memory of Justin

For the past month, FCS has come together as a community to support a very special man and beloved teacher, Gary Nicolai. To anyone who has ever met Mr. Nic or taken one of his classes, he is a genuine and truly thoughtful man. It was a personal joy for me to have taken History with Mr. Nic for two years, and so I can say from my heart that he is a wonderful teacher and a caring person. Mr. Nic has been a devoted member of the FCS community for years and has support-

ed countless students throughout their high school careers. FCS is grieving the recent, tragic loss of Mr. Nic's youngest son, Justin, who was also part of the FCS community. Justin graduated from FCS in 2010, and has been described by many as having a genuine soul, a pure heart, and a fun-loving outlook on life. Many knew Justin personally, and had comforting words for Mr. Nic in his time of grief. Julie Plunkett, Justin's tenth-grade math teacher, had a special

relationship with Justin. Ms. Plunkett spoke lovingly about Justin, saying, "Justin had a beautiful soul. He was kind and extremely funny. All you had to do was look into his eyes and you could see his purity. Unfortunately, it is the people with the most beautiful souls who suffer the greatest. Justin is finally at peace, and his memory will never be forgotten."



The Media's Changing Role Within the Election

BY: JOSH BENJET '16

The media influences elections in many different ways. Around 22 million people watch the nightly news, and the first two Republican debates had viewing audiences of about 23 million people each. From debates aired on news channels to pundits just talking about candidates, each mention is beneficial in gaining attention for a candidate's campaign. Poll numbers influence where you stand onstage for a presidential debate, and the candidates are always trying to speak while they are on television.

During a debate, the higher the poll numbers that a candidate has the closer to the center of the stage a candidate stands. The closer a candidate is to the center of the stage the more camera time that candidate is likely to have. Along with more camera time, the higher the poll numbers the more questions a candidate receives, thus they have more opportunities to share their views and ideas. During the Democratic debate on October 13, 2015, the two leaders in the polls - Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton - had a combined 59 minutes and 10 seconds of speaking time on television, while the next three candidates had a combined 42 minutes and 42 seconds. On the Republican side, during the debate on September 16, the poll leader Donald Trump had 19 and a half minutes of speaking time compared to a candidate like Scott Walker, who had about 8 minutes of speaking time. Walker dropped out of the race about a week later.

Just because a candidate gets to speak a lot does not mean that his or her message will get across to the potential voters. A single poor performance in a debate can be a big blow to a campaign, while a good performance can push a candidate into stardom. Take Carly Fiorina: she did not even make the primetime debate for her first



Republican debate, but many people agreed that she had a great performance, and her poll numbers were pushed to the point where she made the next primetime debate. However, that success was short-lived because her poll numbers now are dropping steadily. This shows the effect that a good performance can have on a campaign. A good performance can drive a campaign into the limelight, but better poll numbers means more scrutiny by the media on a campaign. So, while attention is good, it can be a double-edged sword in the way that the media scrutinizes candidates.

At one point, Ben Carson had pushed towards the front of the Republican field, and with that came much more media scrutiny. Media have been looking into inconsistencies in his past stories and have been trying to find weaknesses in his campaign. This is what higher numbers lead to. Established candidates have to deal with just as much scrutiny as other candidates.

High poll numbers are not the only way to gain attention in the media.

Being an established candidate can add to more time in the media. Hillary Clinton gets lots of airtime because pundits can talk about her past record and how she has changed or in what ways she is the same. The same can be said for Jeb Bush on the Republican side. Another reason why established candidates get more time in the media is because when they are doing poorly it becomes of interest because people have heard of them before.

Overall time on television often correlates to how well a candidate is doing or how well they are expected to do. Unestablished candidates have to use the time that they have before these large audiences to push their way to the top, while established candidates have to use the time they are given in front of these large audiences to convince people to vote for them.

Every time you turn on the television to a 24/7 news channel, reporters always seem to be talking about politics. What the candidates say or do or how they are doing in the debates dictates what the news channel focuses on. In any case, attention for candidates is

important, and their goal should be to gain positive coverage not negative coverage. Since an estimated 22 million people watch the nightly news, how a candidate is portrayed in the media is important to bettering their campaigns.

To show the importance, one website called decision data (decisiondata.net) tracked mentions on television since June. The numbers are staggering. Donald Trump has had staggering 183,000 mainstream media mentions. This is 70,000 more than Clinton and Sanders combined. The prevalence of these types of mentions only goes to show that the media has an infatua-

tion with covering the election cycles. But only the media covers the people who are in the lead or near the top. This goes to show why a breakthrough moment is so important in some way, be it in a debate or something going viral. Because once a candidate gets that moment, the media will latch on and continue to cover that candidate.

Times are changing, and traditional media is not the only way to get ahead in an election. Donald Trump has not spent a single dollar on TV advertisements but rather has focused on unorthodox ways to reach potential voters. For example, Trump hosted Saturday Night Live. He used

this form of media to reach voters that a candidate would not typically reach. President Obama was able to use twitter, and many of his speeches went viral, enabling him to reach voters that do not traditionally watch mainstream television. The New York Times recently stated that when a candidate has to air an advertisement it is often seen as desperation at this point in a race. This shows that times have changed because not that long ago advertisements were seen as signs of healthy campaigns.

The way that candidates interact with voters is changing, too. There are more ways to get in contact with viewers than simply mainstream media. While mainstream media still has its place in hosting debates that have lots of viewers, candidates have begun to focus on how to engage voters in different ways. Nowadays, elections have almost become spectacles, candidates battling over who can gain the most attention. Many candidates focus on how they can degrade other candidates, rather than focusing on their campaigns and the issues. Media attention is one way that candidates can get these messages across, which is why media -- especially, more and more, social media -- has become so important to elections.



Poaching: Inhumane and Illegal

BY: CAROLINE WEAVER '18

Fairly recently, I discovered that I had family in Northwold, a suburb of Johannesburg, South Africa. Although I have never met these family members, we email very often, and they tell me about their life there. My grandmother's brother, Robin, has shared a really interesting aspect of his life with me. His job is to fly over nature preserves and track game year round. Among his amazing stories and photographs, one of the biggest upsets in his job is facing the harsh images of rhino and elephant poaching. Although this issue is something that does not directly affect a lot of people in the U.S., it is something that has deeply affected me.

The population of both rhinos and elephants has decreased dramatically over the years. When I asked Robin why he thought poachers targeted South Africa so frequently, his response was, "South Africa still has the largest populations of both black and white rhinos in the world. But with the large numbers being killed for their horns, extinction is a real possibility." He also explained that "tens of thousands of elephants are also being slaughtered every year for their ivory." When I refer to black and white rhinos, it is a common misconception that it is because of their hide color, but that is only half true. The black rhinoceros, also called the

hooked-lipped rhino, is native to Eastern and Central Africa. It is referred to as "black" because its color can vary from grey to brown.

The white rhino, however, doesn't actually have to do with its color, but more with the pronunciation of the name. In Afrikaans, the word wyd (in Dutch wijd) is the word for wide. The white rhino got this nickname because, unlike the black rhino, it has a square, or wider upper lip instead of a pointed curved one.

Although it sounds exaggerated, one rhino horn can be sold for up to \$65,000 per pound. The aver-

age weight for a black rhino's horn is around 2.5 kg. For those of you who don't wish to do the math, 2.5 kg is about 5.5 lbs. A poacher totals \$357,500 profit for only one rhino horn. The white rhino's horns are substantially larger as adults and usually weigh around 6 kg. Six kg is about 13.22 pounds, so in total, the money made would be around \$845,000. You can see why over 90% of rhino poachers go for the white ones instead of the black.

The harsh reality of elephant poaching is very similar to that of the rhino. Elephants are killed for their tusks, which sell for high prices on the black market. The African elephant (*Loxodonta Africana*) is considered to be the largest land animal on the earth. These elephants are just slightly larger than the Asian elephants and

have the distinction of bigger ears that look somewhat like the shape of the continent of Africa. They can weigh between 5,000 and 14,000 lbs, and their tusks alone can weigh about 181 kg or 400 lbs. They can sell for around \$600,000 per tusk, so the poaching of one adult male elephant can have an outcome of \$1,200,000. Even though the slaughter of this creature is illegal, many people see the money as a well worth the risk.

Although various attempts to stop poaching have been put into place, the greed that poachers and hunters have is overpowering to these graceful creatures. How someone could think of taking the life of something so beautiful for profit is something I will never understand. Elephants are quite unique, as they are similar

to humans in certain ways. Did you know that elephants keep their young and elderly in the middle of the herd so that they stay safe? It is wired into them to protect those who are considered "weaker." It is the same wiring that makes human adults protect their babies, or why we tell people to travel with someone at night. Just as humans visit the grave of a loved one, elephants also mourn the loss of a member of the pack by returning to the last place they were together. Poachers are brutally killing these magnificent animals for their financial gain, bragging rights, and sport. I hope this article catches your attention and helps to raise awareness on the saddening truth that is still very much a reality.



Photos by Robin Joffe

SisterCircle

BY: ZOE GINSBERG '17

At Friends' Central School, one of the many things that we value is our variety of clubs. Whether it is Ultimate Frisbee, Mock Trial, or Quaker Bakers, we have a club for everyone. This year, two juniors, Zoe Walker and Noelle Mercer, noticed something was missing. They realized that Friends' Central does not have a club dedicated to feminism, so they decided to create one - called SisterCircle. When asked to describe what SisterCircle is, Zoe and Noelle said, "SisterCircle is an Intersectional Feminist Club! This means that we focus on lifting up the voices of all types of women, not just women who are traditionally seen and heard in society."

Intersectional feminism is a movement dedicated to recognizing the connected nature of our many identities and understanding gender, sexuality, racial, disability, body, reproductive, and class justice as feminist issues that should be addressed. This type of feminism challenges the notion that each woman experiences oppression in similar ways. Zoe and Noelle want to this club to represent an all-inclusive feminism, celebrating differences among women instead of suppressing them.

At their meetings, they bring a topic to guide conversation, along with discussion questions, a video or two, an activity -- and food, of course. In one meeting, so far, the club took an Identity Walk. Participants received many different prompts about identity. Two of the prompts were, "How does this exercise make you think about your privilege? And how does this relate to intersectional feminism?" The exercise helped the students in the club see that we are multifaceted beings with many different identities, experiences, and struggles, and trying to take away or disregard those identities and experiences can be very harmful.

I asked Zoe and Noelle what they want people hopefully take away from SisterCircle. They said that they want everyone to know that we all fit into intersectional feminism in a unique way. Unlike some feminist groups out there, SisterCircle does not want to attack any people for their different opinions. Instead they want to praise them and discuss them. When asked why they decided to create such a club at FCS, they said, "We believe that feminism is for everyone, and we are both very passionate about this movement."

Although we're both in other clubs, we didn't think that they were specifically addressing important feminist issues. Also, with the feminist movement really taking off, it's a great time to hop on the bandwagon of 4th wave feminism and spread the word. For a Quaker school, we think it's pretty important to recognize gender equality!" Noelle and Zoe were influenced by many powerful women, including Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Zendaya, Ellen DeGeneres, Michelle Obama, Billie Jean King, and of course, their two FCS mentors -- Ariel Eure and Dr. Kelley Graham.

To join, email Noelle Mercer or Zoe Walker, and they will get you on the email list. Everyone is also always welcome to pop in any Tuesday for a meeting at 2:35 in Dr. Graham's room.



A Behind the Scenes Look at Terry Guerin

BY: KARISHMA SINGH '18

From Angels in America to Sense and Sensibility, the Friends' Central drama department has showcased a wide range of incredible productions. But what about the woman who helps make it all happen? Of course, you don't need to be an avid participant in the drama department to recognize the familiar, friendly face of Ms. Guerin around campus. Recently, I was able to get an inside look on her process when bringing a show to life.

A huge part of how she chooses her productions actually comes from the students she knows will take part in

them. She explained, "I consider the rising juniors and seniors, and I ask the students what they want to do. For example, this year, I had a lot of women, and so we decided to do Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility." She also shared with me that rest of the community has an influence on her choice of plays, as well. "I like to think about the community and what would be good for them to see."

A major reason last year was so exciting for the drama department was because of Angels in America. This intense and extremely powerful

production is very rarely presented in any high school. When I asked Ms. Guerin what drove her confidence in doing a show that is often perceived as controversial, she replied, "I had the complete support of the administration, so it was great knowing that they were behind it. I also knew that the students in 11th grade read the play and love it, so I knew that the English department was behind it, too."

Personally, I can't imagine not supporting one of our plays -- mainly because of how captivating they are. Plus, as Ms. Guerin told me, many

aspects of theater incorporate Quaker values like community and stewardship. These traits have been seen in many of our shows through different characters relationships. "Most of the plays [performed at FCS] touch on something about humanity. What theater is is a reflection of who we are. Even in *Sense and Sensibility* there was that beautiful example of friendship. Theater is very much like when you talk about silence, but silence in a theater is very exciting. You are about to be invited to see this world unfold right in front of you."

Ms. Guerin's passion for theater and directing comes as no surprise, as she has been working in the FCS

drama department for 28 years. She also worked at Villanova and Baldwin and even directed some professional shows before her time at Friends' Central. Her vast experience is part of what makes our plays so remarkable, but of course, she also credits the hard-working, talented drama students by saying, "It's so exciting because every play is a world you get to create together. Our drama students are just amazing." The community can certainly agree that the School's productions are incredible.

We have a phenomenal drama department, and the plays that we perform here at FCS are never anything short of outstanding. It is important to show our support and appreciation for the



shows and the hard work that so many people put into making these productions possible.

Communication: The Side Effects of Cell Phones

BY: EVAN PASZAMANT '18

Picture this: You are at a party with your friends or people you are familiar with. You all have iPhones or Smart phones, and you can visibly see them. Now here's the catch: all of those people are simultaneously communicating with others through social media except for you. So, when the people at the party are constantly glued to their phones, seeing if someone snapchatted or posted a picture of them, you feel left out because you aren't linked to any of these social platforms. You went to this party to socialize with other people one to one, not one to screen! You try to get into a snapchat, hoping you will be able to socialize with your friends after the photo is taken. However, the people did not intend for you to be a part of it because you do not have any connection to social media or the virtual world, which leaves you feeling left out and unwanted. This, my friends, is just one part of the side effects of cell phones, and more specifically, communication apps. Cell phones and communication apps easily lead to the exclusion of those who choose not to be a part of social media.



Cell phones, especially iPhones and other smart phones, are outstanding communication devices, and quite frankly, I don't think I could live without one. In our ever-changing society, these phones are central to our everyday lives.

Not only do we use our phones for talking and texting, but we also "socialize" through them because we are communicating our lives through pictures and words. Now with Instagram, you could argue that you cannot communicate through that app. I beg to differ, because the Insta part

of Instagram means in the moment, and when you post the picture of you and your friends at the party, you are communicating to the world stating that you are at a party with this select group of people. You are at a party with some people you follow or who follow you on Instagram, but not all people. The same thing is true with snapchat, though snapchat is an actual communications app. When you take a photo or video using snapchat, you ultimately have to choose who you are going to send the picture or video to. By communicating or connecting with certain individuals over

others, it causes the people who are not being contacted to feel isolated.

Unfortunately, even though you might try to stay away from social media and other communications apps, these programs have become so central that they really are unavoidable. Whether you like it or not, social media and communication apps are here, and they aren't going anywhere anytime soon. Whether you have these apps or not, you are already automatically sucked into it, which sometimes makes you feel as though you are at a major disadvantage.

Though it seems unlikely, there are individuals who have iPhones or smart phones, but do not have any form of social media. Some people solely want to have conversation in person rather than through snapchat, Facebook message, or even a tweet. Unfortunately, the people who are so sucked into virtually "socializing" do not always understand how much of an impact these apps have on people who do not have them. Since so many people use these apps at social events, it causes those without them to feel left out, even though they are physically in the crowd. People today have stronger friend relations with others

because they are constantly connected through virtual communication. The socializing expands beyond everyone's physical presence, so there is the constant pressure to be a part of that social atmosphere through technology, whether you like the virtual world or not. I have made the choice to opt out from using social media and communications apps as my main mean of communication, and to this day I still feel excluded. In certain instances, some people heavily rely on communicating through these programs, which leaves someone like me feeling left out of some things and feeling bad about not having a major part in communicating virtually. There is also the problem of people organizing events by using social media. Before I began using social media, I would be in shows and sports at Friends' Central, and those activities would have group pages. Since I did not have a Facebook account, I wasn't able to see what was happening in the group page. I would miss out on event details and repeatedly ask other members of the group to inform me about what was posted. Ultimately, I decided to create a Facebook page, but others like me are still questioning whether or not to get any form of social media.



iPhones and smartphones are not the problem here. The problem is that our society does not know how to use its social media and communications apps without being exclusive. A few weeks ago, I spoke with Terry Guerin about the use of cell phones and iPads at Friends' Central, and she brought up the idea of a "no technology day." This would mean that you would not use your phone or iPad for one day. Originally, I disliked the idea because I do use my phone very frequently, but as I began to think about it, I wondered what a no tech day would be like. Would having no access to social media for one day really have an impact? To be honest, I do not know, but it is an interesting idea to really think about. Is Friends' Central up for the challenge?

The Backlash of Huckleberry Finn

BY: TALIA ROSENBERG '17

Early in the month of December, the English Department decided to take Mark Twain's controversial, classic novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* out of the mandatory eleventh-grade curriculum. Interestingly, in 2007, FCS put Huck Finn back on the reading list after a period of time without it. (It came and went without controversy.) So, this isn't the first time the book has been taken off the curriculum, and it probably won't be the last time the placement of it is changed. There was a lot of confusion directly after the recent news came out about the book, so just to be clear, this book has not been banned. The controversies over this book extend far outside the "bubble" of Friends'

Central and the Main Line. And certainly FCS isn't the only high school that has decided to take Huck off its mandatory curriculum. People all across America have debated for years whether or not this book should be taught, and the opinions and outcomes vary from school to school.

All that aside, since we are students at Friends' Central, it's easier for all of us to focus more on our own issues. It's also easier to become passionate about something that involves our own education. The current status of Huck Finn is that it is offered as one of the options for extra credit reading for 11th graders in their second trimester. There is an option, for example,

where students who choose Huck are required to go to three classroom discussions over the time they are reading it in order to best address all of the complexities of the story as it unfolds. Through this compromise, anyone with a desire to discuss this novel is able to, and they can also do so in a classroom setting, with a teacher and with peers (plus receive credit for doing so). Although the novel is no longer mandatory, it is still offered.

Before this compromise was created, and even afterwards, a lot of people with opposing opinions were very upset about the whole situation. FCS students took to Facebook to air their grievances against the school, the

administration, and each other. People pledged their support for either side by posting their own statuses or sharing specific opinions, articles and videos surrounding our school's decision.

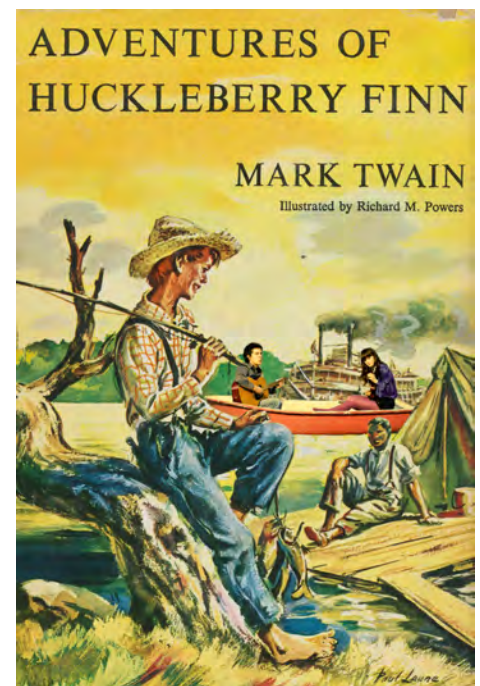
What started off as an in-school debate soon spread outside of our campus and even outside of our town. If anyone in our school checked their Facebook feed during the weeks following the removal of *Huck Finn*, they would have seen posts from alumni/ae and current students alike, stating which "side" they were on. Social media became a place for anyone attached to the Friends' Central community to cyber-debate or scream at each other in long, sometimes tension-filled, comment threads.

There were some upsides to this. It was interesting and informative to be able to read about past students' firsthand experiences with the book, how it made them feel, and why they agree or disagree with the school's decision. A lot of students who have read *Huck Finn* expressed the vulnerability they felt when reading it and how they never got as much out of it as they had to give up. On the other hand, there were students who read it and said it was one of the most interesting books in

the curriculum. Although it was nice to get these perspectives, there were also major downsides.

FCS prides itself on creating a safe environment within our community for each of our students. Unfortunately, these Facebook battles did not feel so "safe." In the heat of the moment, it was hard for everyone to remember to respect opposing views, personal feelings, and experiences. People were sharing posts from popular newspapers and social media figures trying to make their points, and in the process of relying on these news outlets, some of the facts about Friends' Central's motives and actions in the situation were misinterpreted and, in some cases, false. The reality for now is that the book is off the mandatory reading list and moved to the extra credit list, though the debate about the decision remains active.

It is important to focus on how to move forward and to learn from one another. This particular situation has not been our only problem at school recently. In fact, these last few months have been filled with racial tensions that mirror nationwide tensions. We spend a lot of time blaming one another, but the truth is, the steps toward change begin within ourselves. Everyone needs to be more under-



standing of what other people are going through, and every student at this school needs to make a conscious effort to try and close this rift within the student body. Distancing ourselves from each other won't help to solve anything. Going along with the fact that our Quaker testimony for the year is "community," we need to work towards becoming a more cohesive student body.

Back to Africa

BY: NATE GUERRA '16

This summer I had the privilege of spending three wonderful weeks teaching creative writing at the Heritage Academy in Essiam, Ghana. I first heard about this program when I attended the Quaker Youth Leadership Conference in 2014, where the founders of Heritage Academy, Kwesi and Melissa Koomson, gave a presentation about the school. I nearly forgot about the program until my mother asked me this spring what I wanted to do this summer, and after some looking around I rediscovered this program. After a long application process, I was accepted as one of three high school volunteers to teach at the school for three weeks. While I was

tremendously excited when I found out I was going to Ghana, I also was nervous about what was to come. I was nervous about teaching, traveling alone, and whether or not I was going to be able to adapt to the different culture, food, and customs that come with being in a new country. However, I forgot about all of these worries the second I landed in Accra, the capital of Ghana.

The flight was 10 long hours, during which I talked to the other volunteers, learning a great deal about the people I was going to be living with. Once we landed, we got into a trotro, a small van, and drove another three hours to

the guest house where we'd all stay. There we met up with Kwesi, who is one of the kindest, most dedicated and inspiring people that I have met. He gave us the rundown about the cultural differences -- including that we should never use our left hand to eat or hand someone money because it was a sign of great disrespect-- along with final details about teaching at the school the next day.

Teaching was one of the most difficult things that I have ever had to do, which profoundly heightened my admiration for people who dedicate their time to educating others. At first, the hardest part about teaching

in Ghana was the language barrier. Yes, the national language of Ghana is English, and all of the students were fluent in English, but my accent was too thick for them to understand at first. This was an issue I really didn't expect, so I had to approach teaching the students in a different way. I had intended to read a story and analyze a story every class, but I realized that just having the students understand the story was going to be difficult. I stood in front of all of them, introduced myself, and explained that I would be teaching creative writing. I received many blank stares and looks of confusion, and quite frankly, it was discouraging at first. Nevertheless, all the volunteers pushed through and found a way to connect with the students. After a little while, I was able to adopt a Fante(i) accent, which made it a lot easier to communicate with the students.

Creative writing was one of the most difficult classes to teach Ghanaian students. The students there had never been asked to think creatively or outside of the box, so it was much more difficult for them than it would be for an FCS student, or many American students for that matter, who are asked to do so every day. Cheating and plagiarism weren't shunned in Ghana; anything that got them the right answer was encouraged. Kids were taught that there is only one correct answer, so they would all huddle around the one kid that they thought had the closest thing to the "right answer." In creative writing, there isn't a "right" answer, and by the third week, I was able to convey this to the students.

Though teaching the class was challenging on my end, it was incredibly rewarding to see the students develop creative writing skills. By the end of the course, they were assigned a final project where they demonstrated originality and creativity. I was so proud of my students. They stepped outside of their familiar environment and learned a whole new way of writing. During my free time, I had the chance to travel around the country. After school I would explore the nearby villages, and on weekends we went to



different historic sights. One weekend we went to Elmina, one of the oldest slave castles in Ghana, and to the W.E.B. DuBois museum. I also took a trip with my roommate to Sefwi, the only Jewish settlement in Ghana, which had only six people in the entire village.

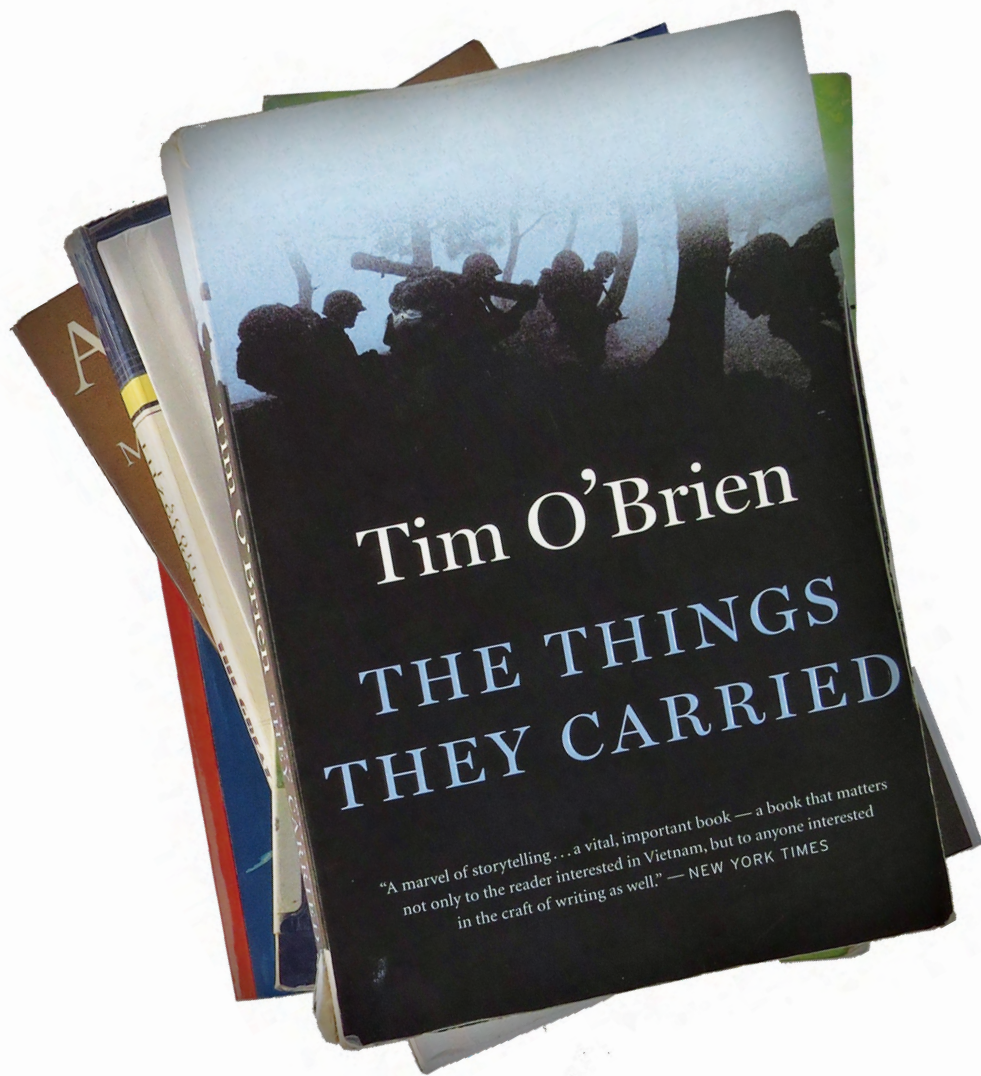
On the last night I was there, our volunteer group had a conversation about the trip, and during this time, Kwesi revealed the main reason why he had American volunteers come teach at his school. He wanted to

expose the kids to more of the world and firmly believed that we inspire others by simply sharing our stories. He said that by sharing a small part of our lives we were able to inspire kids to work harder to make their dreams into realities.

I feel so lucky to have had this opportunity and it has made me rethink some aspects of my life. I left feeling so fortunate about the luxuries that I have. I hope that one day I will return and share even more of my life with even more students.

The Books We've Carried

BY: NATASHA GUY '16 AND
ELIZABETH RAPHAELY '16



When we leave Friends' Central, with the adirondack chairs, the Meeting Room and the Felsen Common behind us, what do we take into the world? For many, it is the friendships we form with classmates and teachers. Others find their true niches in a school activity or a classroom learning experience. And we may carry these passions and pleasures through our lives beyond the FCS grounds.

One of the few communal parts of a Friends' Central education is the required reading of the 4-year English curriculum. Currently, every student enters 9th grade with *Life of Pi* in-hand (or on the Kindle), and every student leaves with *Hamlet* fresh in mind. Each of the books we read along the way makes its imprint on us. We have all worked together (or will) to decipher Shakespeare's comedies or tragedies, to ponder whether or not Pi was on the lifeboat with actual animals, and maybe even to collectively agree that Pearl in the 11th grade's *The Scarlet Letter* is more than a little creepy. Though some books we study at FCS aren't met with universal enthusiasm and some seem to be common favorites, we wanted to see which one book people felt merited the title of "the greatest book I have read in my entire life" or, at least, in our student life at FCS.

After sending out a survey to the seniors, to English teachers, and to some FCS alums, we found that the most popular book is ... the 10th grade Vietnam War novel *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien.

Through a collection of short stories that work together as a novel, O'Brien writes of a platoon of American soldiers in the Vietnam War. This novel may or may not be a retelling of the author's experiences fighting in Vietnam; the events of the book do not all fall under the category of factual truth. With name changes, some seemingly unrealistic stories, and many exaggerated details, O'Brien blurs the distinction between reality and fiction, leaving the readers puzzled and somewhat discomfited.

As two sophomores, we sat in English class (shout-out to former FCS lit teacher, Ms. Ewen!) struggling with this question "What is truth?" that had appeared once again in our curriculum. This theme of questioning "truth" began in all of our 9th grade literature classes with *The Life of Pi*. For some, the tiger is apparently a metaphor for Pi's survival instincts and his courage, though a few of us (and we seem to be a minority) are adamant in our thinking that there truly was a tiger on the boat.

Either way, whether you're discussing the realness of a tiger or truth in a quasi-autobiography like *Carried*, the outcome is the same: no matter the facts, or lack thereof, the "truth" is the way that a book or piece of literature makes us feel. It does not matter if the tiger was real, even though that would be an impressive feat, or even if the war stories are factually true. What matters is grappling with how one story seems to capture a truth more than another. Books that leave us somewhat discomfited and never quite sure of the truth are what led one senior to assert that *The Things They Carried* was "the greatest book I have read in

my entire life." The required reading at Friends' Central has pushed students to feel uncomfortable and to challenge ideals, forcing us to become critical thinkers.

When we first saw the results of our survey, we tried to find a pattern or consistent theme throughout the most popular books. Initially, there didn't seem to be many similarities among, say, *Angels in America*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, and *The Great Gatsby*. They don't even share the same decades! Upon further evaluation, we noticed the theme of empathy runs throughout all of these works. Within every book, there are symbols, such as Holden's hat or Okonkwo's yams or *Gatsby's* green light or Paul D's tobacco tin, that we ponder and that foster our "Aha!" moments. Though these book-specific symbols are fun to investigate with a class, more broadly, all the works in the English curriculum have fostered our empathy with these characters, allowing us to dive into to their varied and even strange stories as if they were our own.

This idea is fundamental to understanding our relationships to the works we read. Whether the events in the book happened, whether or not they are completely accurate in the details, we commit ourselves to the stories. We not only sympathize with characters, but we empathize with them. We picture how we would handle their situations and dive into their stories as if they were ours. Fiction or not, each book we read helps us understand our world more. Yes, our minds dazzle with the vibrant imagery presented in *Gatsby*, and we are struck with confusion when reading Huck's blatant, unfiltered commentary. But beyond triggering our feelings in particular moments, these many books have lasting effects on us. We carry the lessons from the books we read, and we use our understanding to apply them to our world today.

We leave our lit classrooms understanding that the details of these literary works may fade, but the overall lessons we have gained will continuously mold and broaden our perspectives. •



Stress Management and Minding Your Mind

BY: ELIZA CAISSE '18

Stress is a state of mental and emotional strain that most Friends' Central high schoolers face daily. Our stress often results from immense amounts of homework, upcoming tests or quizzes, the college admissions process, and much more. It also may result from issues outside of school or any other unfavorable or demanding circumstances we are currently facing. Stress is our bodies' natural response to overwhelming or unfamiliar situations. It affects most every aspect of our lives, as it has many side effects on both our bodies and minds. According to research at Johns Hopkins University, signs that

an adolescent is overloaded include complaints of pain (headaches, backaches, etc.), withdrawal from people and usual activities, increase in the intensity of one's emotions, irritability, anxiety and nervousness, and much more. Stress can increase the risk of many physical and mental issues such as insomnia, obesity, depression, anxiety disorders, or weakened immune response, and may also lead to various unhealthy decisions with which we cope with our stress. Because of this, it is very important for our community's overall health and well-being to keep our stress levels at a minimum.

Although we are all extremely focused on doing our best in school and extracurriculars, it is also important to remember to take care of ourselves, our minds, and our bodies, as this will benefit us immensely in the long run. As Drew Bergman, our inspirational guest speaker said, remember to "mind your mind." Although everyone's stress release process is different and individual to them, here are a few tips and tricks which may help you out.

1. Find the source of your stress

Attempt to identify the problem that is causing your stress, and learn how to deal with it in a positive manner. Whether your problem be minor or serious, face it head on, or if need be, find outside help. Always strive to solve your problems rather than avoid them, as avoidance will only increase your stress levels.

2. Find Support

Talk to someone you feel comfortable with, or someone who is relevant in the situation. Whether this person be a teacher, a family member, a friend, or a counselor, he or she may offer advice, help to find a solution to your stress-causing problem, or even just offer social support. You may be surprised at how helpful, sympathetic, and understanding others will be.

3. Time Management

Managing your time appropriately will help to organize, regulate, and balance your life and schedule. Set goals, make a schedule or to-do list, and get your tasks done during a specific time frame. Getting your priorities done in a timely manner is likely to reduce your stress, while procrastination is likely to increase it.

4. Sleep

Getting enough sleep (about 7-10 hours per night) not only keeps you awake and alert for your classes, activities, and homework, but also helps your body to recharge and repair itself. Lack of sleep causes an increase in stress as well as a greater likelihood of illness.

5. Exercise

Exercising regularly will help you stay in shape and improve your overall health, all the while reducing stress.

Exercise and other physical activities produce endorphins, which improve your mood and ability to sleep, and minimize your stress. Engage in an activity or a sport that you enjoy, such as soccer, dance, running, or walking.

6. Relaxation

Take some time to relax. Make a relaxation playlist, take a nap, meditate, do yoga, breathe deeply, or take on any other form of mental or physical relaxation that you prefer. These will help you to minimize your stress, decrease your heart rate, relax your muscles, and bring your body back to equilibrium.





FCS IN PHOTOS





