



The Cougar Outlook

February 2021

The Ghost of Covid - Past, Present, and Future

Ryleigh Johnson

According to NBC News, in late December 2019, the Chinese government began reporting dozens of cases of pneumonia, “from an unknown origin.” On January 7, 2020, the outbreak was classified as a new strain of the coronavirus. On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) named the Novel Coronavirus a, “global health outbreak.” NBC News reported that at that time, there were just over 9,000 cases reported worldwide. On March 11, 2020, Covid-19 was declared a “global pandemic.” That was almost a year ago.

On March 13, 2020, Hamilton Township Schools closed for in-person instruction. Soon after, the Governor of New Jersey, Phil Murphy, ordered all New Jersey schools to stop all in-person instruction in order to, “protect the health of New Jersey’s 1.6 million public and private school students as well as thousands of educators.” According to the New Jersey Department of Health, by the Summer of 2020, the United States was averaging about 47,316 new cases every day.

In September 2020, Crockett Middle School rolled out a plan for hybrid instruction. There would be three groups of students attending school for in-person instruction on alternating days. It seemed like the safest possible option to get kids back into school. Lois Loiseau, a 7th-grade student, said that on one hand she was disappointed when she found out about hybrid learning because she had been, “hoping that things would be back to normal by then.” But on the other hand, she said she was, “excited that she would get to come back to school once or twice a week,” which in her opinion is, “much better than full remote.” Mr. Fiorentino, a 7th-grade mathematics teacher, said, “When I first heard that we were going to go hybrid, I was excited to see students again more than anything else. I knew the workload was going to be



tough and we would have to rethink a lot of what we usually do, but I knew we were all up for the challenge. It hasn’t been easy, but I feel like every day we learn something new and take another step towards making this new system work even better.”

After a few weeks of hybrid functioning successfully, Hamilton schools had to close down again because of another peak. Brayden Hawk, a 7th-grade student, said he thought

going remote again would be like the first round of remote, which he found, “very frustrating at times.” He felt comforted when he was informed it would be nothing like the Spring roll out. Mrs. Pullen, a 7th-grade social studies teacher, said, “The closure in November felt more complicated than the original closing in March. She said she felt, “some defeat that we had to close and sadness because she could no longer see her students in person.” We are now in hybrid, which started January 19, 2021. We are still on the three groups alternating schedule which appears to be functioning well so far. Mikayla Marenelli, an 8th-grade student and Student Council President, said she, “doesn’t think reopening is a good idea because she doesn’t think people will follow the rules and be consistent with the necessary hygiene required to keep this safe.” She also said that she doesn’t, “think it’s a good idea because of how soon we had to close last time.” Similarly, AJ Gray, a 7th-grade student, said that she, “loves going to school, but doesn’t want people to be exposed.” Mrs. Jolley, a 6th-grade science teacher and advisor of the STEM club said that she is, “so excited to be opening and that she thinks that the benefits outweigh the risks.” Clearly, there are many different opinions, but one sentiment is clear. Everyone loves Crockett and can’t wait to get back to school, in person, five days a week.

FIFA '21 Review

Andres Menendez



Fifa 21 is a soccer game with over 700 soccer teams. It can be played on numerous platforms including Xbox, Playstation, PC, and Nintendo Switch. Fifa 21 is based on real teams. You can play across a variety of platforms with friends, family, and other soccer fans from all over the world. Every year a new edition comes out, and each edition includes a few updates including updated rosters and new uniforms. The first-ever Fifa was made in 1993. It was developed by EA sports and has incredibly realistic graphics. You can change your mode of play to be a player, coach, or part of an “Ultimate Team,” which is basically an all-star team you get to create.

The game is suitable for anyone which is reflected in its rating: “E for Everyone.” This game is especially fun for soccer players and fans, but can really be enjoyed by anyone.

My cousin taught me how to play when I was only six years old, and it has been one of my favorite games ever since.



[*WWE 2K20 Wrestling Game Review \(Video\)*](#)

Jahzir Hall

Cooking with Amelia

Amelia Arif

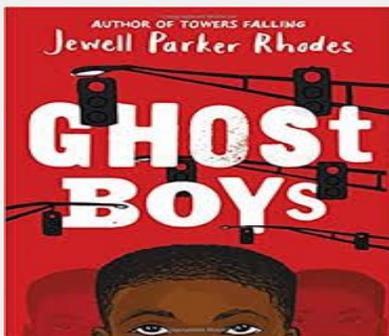
Click the video below to watch my tutorial

[*Edible Cookie Dough Recipe*](#)



Book Review

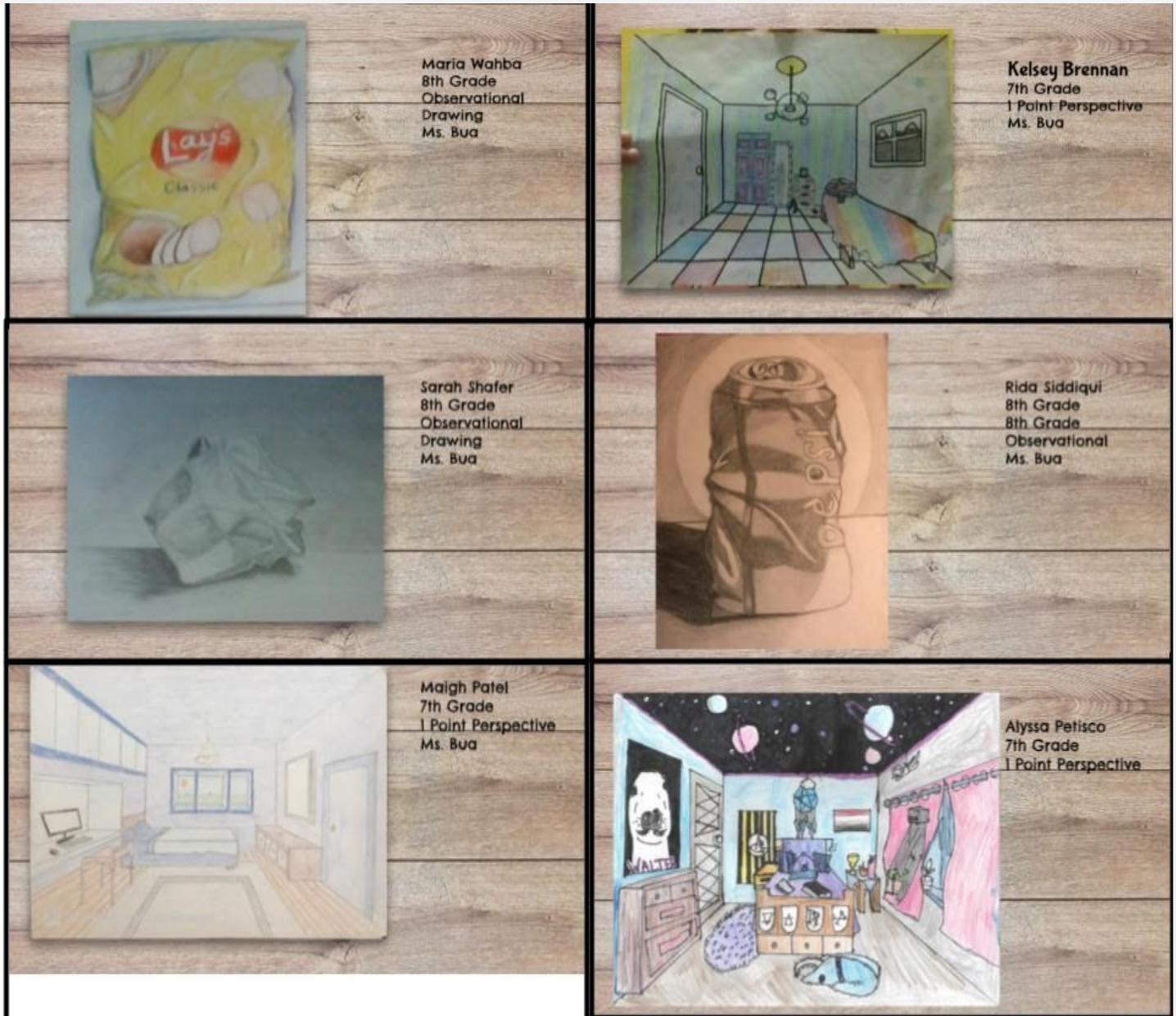
Charlianne Nutt



Ghost Boys is a young adult novel written by Jewell Parker Rhodes. It is available to borrow through Sora which you can access through your Clever account. It is about a shy young man named Jerome who gets shot by a police officer when the officer sees his toy gun and mistakes it for a real one. One of the central questions in the novel is if the police officer made his decision, in part, because of the color of Jerome’s skin. Throughout the book, we discover more about Jerome’s life at school and at home. The chapters shift between flashbacks of when Jerome was alive and his existence as a ghost. When Jerome, as a ghost, returns to his house, he sees how his family struggles to cope with his death. He also watches as they fight to get him justice, and he is finally able to realize how loved he is, which was something he couldn’t when he was alive. Jerome is only seen by Sara and Emmett (his only friends as a ghost) who help him figure out who he was, and why he can’t move on yet. I rate this book 4/5 stars because it is very mysterious and suspenseful. I don’t rate it 5 stars because by the end of the book it was getting a bit boring, and I feel that the end should always be the best part. Overall, this book was really good and made me look at the world a bit differently.

Ghost Boys

Crockett's Featured Artists - Paintings



Crockett's Featured Artists - Poetry

"Day Dream"
K.E.

In my memory

You smile and I laugh out loud

I wish you were here

"Chocolate Chip Delight"
Jocelyn Carty

Warm fluffy pancakes

Melted chocolate chips inside

Syrup goes on top

On January 15, 2021, Dr. Martin Luther King Junior would have turned 92 if he was still alive. However, his legacy lives on in all of us. Crockett students reflect on this legacy:

Letters to Dr. King

Dear Martin Luther King,

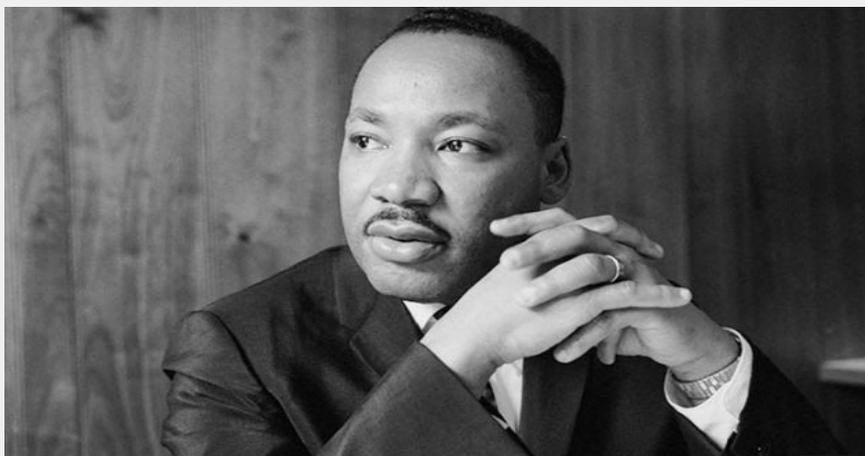
Hey Martin! My name is Mia Rodriguez, and one of the most important things to me is family. I have one older sister and one younger sister. I am 12 years old and in seventh grade, and I go to Crockett Middle School. It is an amazing school, and the staff and students are all very loving and kind.

We are unfortunately going through a pretty rough time, but our community is doing very well under the circumstances. The world today has changed a lot since your generation, but sadly we still are having some pretty serious problems. We have made a great deal of progress in the movement you began, but some people seem to have either not learned from your wisdom or simply forgotten. There are still some more changes that need to happen for all people to be completely equal.

There are a lot of other issues I could tell you about, but something tells me you already know. I'd rather talk about you. I want to thank you for everything you did to make this world a safer and happier place for us all to live in today and specifically what you did to improve the quality of life for African Americans.

Sincerely,

Mia Rodriguez



Dear Dr. King,

My name is Chalianna Nutt, and I want you to know that I am incredibly inspired by you every single day. I go to Crockett Middle school and all the teachers there are amazing! We are a community that is determined and we come together when we have problems. The world is hurting a lot right now, considering there is a global pandemic and sometimes it feels like everything has gone haywire. Another step into history is the 2020 Presidential election which Joe Biden won!

Thank you for teaching our society to respect one another. Your words are so Inspirational and have left a big imprint on many hearts. However, we still have a ways to go. At times some groups still get treated unfairly, but we have peaceful protests and parades to try to set things right. We will never stop trying.

Sincerely,

Charlianna Nutt

Sports: Inclusion and Baseball

Jarrett Kane



On January 18, 2021, I sat down with the Director and CEO of the Miracle League of Mercer County, Dan Swzeck. I also got the opportunity to speak to his friend and business associate, Jeff Hurley, the general manager of the Trenton Thunder, a former double-A affiliate of the New York Yankees.

The MLMC is a baseball league that accepts anyone with a desire to play. Their mission is, “to remove barriers that keep children with mental and physical disabilities off the baseball field and let them experience the joy of playing America’s favorite pastime.” Swzeck told me that, “We have at least 130 people in the Miracle league system, and my goal is to have over 300 once we get the word out.”

Swzeck has had a lifelong love affair with baseball. He said, “I love it now just as I loved it then when I first started playing. When I see the kids get excited, I get excited.” Swzeck especially enjoyed his time as a student-athlete at Steinert High School, where he played 3rd base. At Legion, he played 2nd base and left field, and he spent his seasons at Ramapo College playing 2nd base. His love of the game came from his Dad, his Grandfather, and his Mom, who was a huge Mickey Mantle fan. He told me, “I had no choice but to be a Yankee fan.”

He feels he is “very lucky” to be with the Miracle League where he began as a volunteer and then worked as an announcer. In 2014, he also began working with the Special Olympics. When the previous Miracle League director left, he was asked if he, “wanted to step up and help,” and he said, “I was happy to.”

The Miracle League and Trenton Thunder partnership came to be because of Swzeck and Hurley’s relationship since High School. Swzeck recalled, “We wanted to do more.” The best part of MLMC, according to him, is that “everyone can be inspired by his players.” Swzeck added that he has been using Social Media to share positive messages of inclusion and togetherness. On the relationship

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Spotlight On Mr. Pedersen

Amelia Arif



1. What was your favorite subject in Middle school?

Either physical education or science.

2. If you could tell your seventh-grade self anything, what would it be?

Probably to just be kind and stay true to myself and my friends; middle school can kind of be a weird time.

3. Where did you go to college? Why should Crockett students consider it in the future?

I went to William Paterson University, and I think it's a great school. They have excellent communication and business programs. They also have a very diverse population with lots of different races, religions, genders. They also have great staff, and it's a cool school in the mountains.

4. What is your favorite thing about Crockett Middle School?

The students because they are goofy and they always try their best.

5. Who would you like to give a shout out to for helping you in your first year at Crockett?

I would have said Dr. Watros. She was my mentor, but she's not a Crockett anymore, so I would say the rest of the 7th grade A House team (Mrs. Pullen, Mrs. Meyer, Ms. Cesaro, Mrs. Hynoski, and Mrs. Moticha).

6. What is the thing you liked best about online teaching?

Being able to be in my sweatpants and to wear comfy clothes in general.

7. What have you learned from the pandemic?

That you need to stay connected with everybody.

8. What's something you had more time for when so many things were locked down?

Last year, in the Spring, I had more time to work on my golf game. I would go to the driving range almost every day after school.

9. What is the first thing you want to do as soon as things get back to "normal?"

I want to take my girlfriend on a real date because I haven't done that in months.

10. Do you like to travel? What's the coolest place you have ever been? Where do you still want to visit?

I do like to travel. The coolest place I've been to is probably when I went to the Florida keys. I went to my professor's beach house, and we went fishing. In the future, I really want to go to Ireland

11. What is one big goal you have for the future?

To start a family, get married, buy a house, and have kids.

12. What is the best piece of advice you can offer all of us?

Do your best and keep working. It's a tough time for everybody, and we all know it's tough. So, as long as you're trying your best we will get through this.

between the Thunder and the MLMC, Hurley said, "I don't want people to think we just cut a check and give some signs, I want people to know that we are invested in the league and the families."

Jeff Hurley has spent 17 years with the Trenton Thunder, winning 4 championships, which is really special to him. "I love what I do. It's been a heck of a ride." He explained that one of his fondest memories with the Thunder is witnessing Derek Jeter's two-game injury rehab assignment, which drew over 8,000 people to the stadium. He's also very proud of winning the award for the league's Best Franchise Award in 2006.

In November 2020, the Thunder heard they were moving to Somerset, and Jeff was both, "shocked and surprised." "After the Yankees left, we tried to locate another affiliate, but it was just too late. The timing was not great at all."

The fans may find their experience will be somewhat different because of the new change of scenery. "There will always be twists and turns, but Arm and Hammer Park will give fans what we have always given which is a great family experience and some of the best baseball around."

Dan and Jeff both talked about how great it would be to get back on the field and start the seasons for both the Thunder and MLMC. Dan added, "We are starting to see some light at the end of the tunnel. I am confident we will have MLMC baseball in 2021 with safety as our first goal to make this happen. We will continue personal training and hopefully, be back together as a league once again." Jeff echoed this sentiment when he said, "It will be great to have baseball back. I'm looking forward to seeing the fans and also the normalcy that this will bring everyone."