

AMP

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DAREDEVIL: THE VISIBILITY OF DISABILITY

Characters can...**DIE???**
Unforgivable.

The Key to Survival -
CYBERBULLYING?

The Ultimate Authority on
SEX: Two Virgins.

AMP

Editors' Desk

Weebs good, capitalism bad

Hello, Comets! The Spring semester is well underway now — midterms sure crept up fast — and so is the construction around the Student Union. Ahh, the sounds of heavy machinery in the morning.

We heard the superb... owl? or something? happened last month. We all know UTD students don't care about sports, so we won't bore you with who won. Happy for you though, or sorry that happened. More importantly, the internet was angry about pretty much everything except the football part. Some are calling Travis Kelce's screaming a red flag and assuming Taylor Swift must hate him, because they definitely know her inner thoughts. People who are allergic to peanuts are mad at Uber for "making fun of them" in their ad. More understandably, deaf viewers were upset by the lack of accessibility in the ASL interpretations of the halftime performance. And speaking of that halftime performance, a lot of people were thrown off by how much chemistry Usher and Alicia Keys had considering they're both married... and not to each other. The truth is, no one is really watching the Big Game for the game anymore.

In other news, the weebs are taking over. Even if you aren't familiar with Vtubers (Virtual YouTubers) you may have been hearing about them recently. More mainstream content creators like MoistCr1TiKaL, Pyrocynical, and Kwite are covering the developments at Nijisanji, bringing them to the attention of people outside this niche community. If you've been wondering what all of this is about, here's a short rundown: Nijisanji is a talent management company for Vtubers, except they're notorious for being pretty terrible at managing those talents. Naturally, a lot of their employees have either quit or been unfairly fired, and the internet is taking notice. Nijisanji is trying to backpedal hard, but they're only digging themselves a deeper grave as a result. It's a messy situation that's hard to explain without a lot more background knowledge, but basically capitalism bad.

But hey, it's not all bad. After all, you're reading AMP! That's enough to brighten your whole week.



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Have an opinion?

Think you're funny?

Write for AMP! Contact us at ampatutd@gmail.com and follow us on social media @AMPatUTD for more information.



AMP HOROSCOPE



Pisces

Unclench your jaw. In fact, unhinge it. This will aid you in the trials ahead.

Aries

Icarus was a loser. Fly closer to the sun.

Taurus

You're your own person, as long as you ignore the oppressive, inescapable yoke of late-stage capitalism.

Gemini

Your dealer will come in surprisingly handy this month. (AMP does not encourage the use of controlled substances.)

Cancer

The stars think you should reinvent yourself. Try summoning demons, joining the secret society of mole people that runs the world, or getting into gardening.

Aquarius

TikTok can't solve all your problems. Try YouTube instead.

Virgo

Destiny decrees that one small mistake could ruin the rest of your life. The best way to deal with this is to cry yourself to sleep at night.

Leo

You get plot armor this month. Literally nothing could go wrong.

Libra

Take out your AirPods and listen to nature's song. It'll drown out your sorrows just as well.

Scorpio

Theft from large corporations in the name of class solidarity is still theft, in that it's rad as hell.

Sagittarius

The hand of fate is telling you to stop lying to yourself. It won't be just five more minutes, now, will it?

Capricorn

Did you know somewhere around \$62 million goes missing in pennies every year? That could all be yours, with a little dedication.

SASHA WUU

sophomore | atec
Aries sun, Aquarius
moon, Cancer rising

Food for Thought

This month I explored two local Chinese restaurants that were absolutely delicious. Both are perfect spots to bring groups of friends to share dishes with. Be sure to also check out the video reviews of these spots, coming soon on Moon Meals by UTDTV!



Steam Dumpling

The first stop I visited was Steam Dumpling, conveniently located 15 minutes from campus on Custer Road. I loved all of the dishes I tried, and appreciated the generous portion sizes. I went with my family and they all loved it! The staff was really nice, and let us watch the dumplings and noodles be made fresh-to-order right in front of us. I had originally heard about this spot for their noodles and soup dumplings, but all their dishes surprised me with lots of flavor. The Xiao Long Bao, also known as soup dumplings, were delicious and had a hefty portion of soup in each dumpling (almost a whole soup spoon's worth)! I also tried their steamed lamb dumplings, and as someone who usually isn't much of a lamb person these have converted me. The filling was tender and juicy, and I might even prefer them to the soup dumplings which is a shocking first for me. Next up on my list of things that blew me away were their wide hand-pulled noodles. These noodles are made in-house and have unique textures and shapes. They're dense and chewy, and the thickness of the noodle is perfect to cut through the spice from the chili sauce. One bowl of noodles had enough for almost 3 meals (which, BTW, was perfect to nom away at while binging late night Netflix, not that that's from experience). The beef fried rice was loaded with flavor, and the beef roll pancake was light and tasty.

Food: 8/10 Atmosphere: 5/10 Price: 8/10



JS Chen's Dimsum and BBQ

The second spot was JS Chen's Dimsum and BBQ! This hole-in-the-wall spot is located on Legacy Dr. I headed over with a few friends, which is a great way to try more dishes. The shrimp dumpling and wonton noodle soup was filling and refreshing! The broth was light, and the noodles were bouncy and had an impressive length (perfect for noodle pulls). My friend also got a small cup of soup which had a massive wonton in it! I was pleasantly surprised by the quantity of wontons that were provided — far too often I've been disappointed by either too few wontons or really small ones, but these wontons were large and filled to the brim. From the dim sum dishes, we loved the steamed dumplings Shanghai Style — they were tender, and so juicy that there was actual liquid in them, almost like a soup dumpling! Next, we ordered the shrimp and Chinese chive dumplings which weren't our favorite; I would recommend their standard shrimp dumplings instead. The texture of the shrimp and Chinese chive dumpling was a little gooey on the outside, and while the shrimp was very juicy, it felt like the Chinese chive overpowered it a little. Finally, we loved the BBQ pork bun — the exterior was a little stickier than I was used to, but as soon as you break open the bun it turns into a fluffy pillow. The filling is sweet and absolutely delicious.

Food: 7/10 Atmosphere: 6/10 Price: 8/10



MINUKI MEDIS

senior | psychology
Your local bringer of
chaos!

march 2024 05

Ratford Reviews



This month, Comets sent me their favorite movies to review! I watched each and every one, except for the movies that seemed boring. I have a very refined palate, after all.

Priscilla

Stop calling Elvis a rat. We don't claim him.

Wonka

My niece said Timothée Chalamet "Timothée Chala-slayed". Personally, I just know there's a secret cheese wing of the 'chocolate' factory, and I WILL find it.

The Batman

This is a cheap knockoff! This Batman character is a blatant ripoff of my original character, Ratman. DC, expect to hear from my lawyers!

Kung Fu Panda

Rats have their own version of Jack Black. His name is Pepper Jack Black, and his performance in Kung Fu Rat was phenomenal. There's no way this knock-off could ever live up to that standard.

Nacho Libre

I remember hearing that this movie's name means Free Cheese in Spanish. I had never experienced true bliss until I experienced free cheese. No, I don't count my ex-wife.

9

As a certified Little Guy myself, the many Little Guys in this movie represent my experiences to a T! Running from murder robots is at least 10% of my daily routine.

Wall-E

I don't know if I've ever seen a decision dumber than the humans deciding to leave Earth. Did they not see the piles and piles of trash? It's a rat's dream, I tell you, a dream!

Trolls

Is this Homestuck? I've heard of Homestuck. I don't think I would like it.

Saltburn

Yeah, that's about what I remember the early 2000s being like.


Cars

Unfortunately, there is no cheese in this movie on account of it being about cars who cannot eat. 0/10, needs more cheese.



ELLIE MAGUIRE

sophomore | neuroscience
geek who went greek



ENTERTAINMENT

The Visible

DARE

Ability of Disability in Marvel's

I don't think it's too controversial to say that the Marvel Cinematic Universe has been losing favor with audiences as of late. There's been a collective feeling of fatigue regarding most of the projects that they've released within the past few years. There are always exceptions, of course, but in the general sense... Marvel is resting too much on its laurels. Repeatedly we see screenplays that feel rushed or dull, a show or film peppered with pop culture references that won't hold up in 5-10 years, an over-reliance on awkwardly placed CGI as opposed to practical effects, and the list keeps going. It's difficult not to see some of their productions as simple cash grabs, and others as sloppily put-together projects that failed to reach their full potential. One area that they've made some

decent progress in is the representation of marginalized identities on-screen, but that's only one part of a much larger puzzle when it comes to creating something amazing. Seeing more representation is great, sure, but if the quality of the finished product feels hollow and underdeveloped, then that representation feels a little empty as well. In the wake of monotonous cinematography and predictable writing, it's a good time to look back and reminisce on an example of Marvel's best work. Despite my eagerness to fight on the front lines of the MCU-hater war, I'll admit that they're responsible for one of my favorite series and titular characters of all time. Enter: Daredevil.

DEVIL

This name may be familiar to some and completely unknown to others. Lawyer by day, crime-fighting ninja by night, Daredevil — otherwise known as Matthew Murdock — debuted in his own comic in 1964. He was never a side-character who gained popularity later, or a reformed villain, or anything of the sort. He was his own character telling his own story, which was significant because he also happens to be visually impaired. The fact that we have a story told from the perspective of a blind character that's existed since 1964 is incredible! The list of series with disabled protagonists is much shorter than I would prefer, but Daredevil's been around since before many of us were born. I think that's something worth talking about and more importantly, celebrating! I fell in love with the franchise as soon as I gave the Netflix series (simply titled "Daredevil") a watch, because I'd never seen disabled representation that comprehensive before. Matt's actor, Charlie Cox, was dedicated to giving an authentic performance down to the finest detail. Even the way environments like Matt's apartment or office were laid out made complete sense as places a blind person would navigate daily. The show's approach to disability was empathetic, complex, and believable. I'd like to reflect on why that made the show so beloved, and why Daredevil continues to be so important in Marvel's endless repertoire of characters.

First things first, I want to debunk a common argument that sometimes emerges when discussing Daredevil's disability and how it affects him. Matt has super-heightened senses that developed when he was blinded by a chemical spill as a child. These allow him to "see" the world around him through his other senses, mainly hearing, smell, and touch. These abilities are so sensitive that he can hear a human heartbeat up to 20 feet away or track a scent through a crowd from 50 feet away. Some people believe that these abilities negate his disability, and some even argue that it makes him more abled than a sighted person. This isn't true in the slightest! Yes, he can achieve sensory feats that regular people could never dream of, but he can't read a newspaper or see a caller ID on a cell phone.. His senses help him navigate his environment and fight crime, but they don't change the fact that he's disabled. With that out of the way, let's discuss how the Netflix show from 2015 tackles Daredevil's disability on-screen.

Not long after the show's debut, an interview was given with the blindness consultant on the show, Joe Strechay, on the popular comics blog "A Place to Hang Your Cape." Joe, who is visually impaired himself, works with the American Foundation for the Blind, which is one of the largest and longest established nonprofits for people with vision loss. He spoke at length about the type of preparation he and Charlie Cox did for the role of Daredevil, including orientation and mobility techniques and how to use certain props during filming. "Charlie wanted to give an accurate and competent representation of someone who is blind," Joe says. "Not a caricature of blindness, but he wanted to learn the necessary skills to portray an individual who is blind."


What he refers to here are blindness-related skills that visually impaired people train for years in order to live independently. These include skills like household chores, organizing money, or even crossing the street. Eventually it becomes second nature, but it takes lots of time and hard work to get to that point. Unfortunately, Joe and Charlie had a limited amount of time to work on these skills, but Charlie hit the ground running. "Charlie took it to a whole new level of detail by asking questions and utilizing videos of me performing different tasks," Joe mentions. "He studied the

videos in extreme detail and would come back with details about my movements and mannerisms that I personally didn't realize." It's because of this that Charlie's performance as Daredevil is so believable. Although it would have been ideal to cast a visually impaired actor for the role, Charlie's dedication to learning these skills and nuances make it clear how much he cares about Daredevil and how he's portrayed.

Another aspect of the TV show that turned it from good to great is the way that Matt perceives and interfaces with his own disability. Usually, we see how others treat Matt as a disabled person, but I feel like it's important for a narrative to show how a character sees themselves as well. Matt's feelings about his own blindness aren't a static thing, they continuously shift and settle throughout the series and throughout Matt's life. Initially when he's blinded as a child he's filled with anger and uses any outlet to release it. Eventually he learns to function with his disability, and as time passes, we see an adult Matt feeling helpless once again when faced with a crime being committed that he feels he could prevent with the martial arts training he did as a child. The first time we see the emergence of the Daredevil persona is when Matt fully commits to his philosophy of vigilante justice and puts an end to the crime he had repeatedly witnessed. We see Matt filled with a sense of renewed purpose and empowerment, which he craves more as time goes on and Daredevil becomes increasingly infamous in their local neighborhood of Hell's Kitchen for the violence he commits. Throughout the show's three seasons, we witness Matt riding the high of what his abilities can really do to help (and hurt) people, and we also witness the deep-seated loathing that appears when Matt feels like his abilities and even his very senses are failing him. His disability isn't solely a boon or a curse, it's just another complex part of him that happens to be the reason he was gifted with special abilities, but is also why he feels alienated from others. It's nuanced, and the show understands this completely.

I could sit here forever and speak about every little detail that made it into the show, but in the interest of saving time and hopefully giving you a new obsession, I'm just going to tell you to go watch it for yourself and parse how you feel about it. I can't stress enough how much more there is to "Daredevil" than what I've touched on here. It's well-written from the start by inviting you to empathize with Matt and other characters completely. It's also fun to yell at Matt when he does things that are so, so incredibly ill-advised. I said he was a complex character, I never said he was a smart one. As a note of finality, I know that Marvel can craft incredible stories when they really get their act together. They've done it before with "Daredevil," and I enjoy the direction that they're going with shows like "Moon Knight" and even "Echo." I just wish they'd have a little more consistency in the quality of what they released, rather than making a single banger followed by several half-baked projects like they've been doing. Regardless of my snide commentary, Marvel at least gave us three solid seasons of "Daredevil" and I'll forever be grateful for that. Love may be blind, but my love for Matt Murdock certainly isn't and that just makes me appreciate him more.





**“I said he was a
complex character,
I never said he was a
smart one.”**



MICKEY DOLPHIN

junior | atec

Bloodborne (2015) made me transgender
but not in a way that's comprehensible



Don't Dismiss Young Adult Literature

As a kid, I would always run to the Young Adult section when I would go to the library. I remember being utterly obsessed with book series like “Maximum Ride,” “Gossip Girl,” and “Twilight,” and would constantly read and reread these books whenever I had the chance. A lot of the books and series that I read back then are still some of my favorites to this day, and I will forever cherish the fond memories I have of trying to read all the books that my local library had to offer in the Young Adult section.

Unfortunately, not everyone looks back at Young Adult (YA) literature with such fondness. YA literature has gotten hit with its fair share of criticism, which is mainly due to critics claiming that some YA novels have predictable plotlines and don't necessarily discuss serious issues in their novels. This is a valid point to make — I remember being aware back then of how cheesy some of my books were. There were also a few genres that tended to become oversaturated, such as the YA dystopian takeover after the release of “The Hunger Games” between 2012–2015.

However, it should be noted that there are many books that feature unique plots and characters that set them apart from the other books in the same genre. A personal favorite of mine is “The Lunar Chronicles” by Marissa Meyer, which centers on various retellings of fairy tales such as “Cinderella,” “Snow White,” and “Little Red Riding Hood,” with a science fiction twist. I remember being so impressed with how the fairy tales were incorporated into the series and how connected everything was in the world of New Beijing, even though the idea of traditional fairy tales intermingled with science fiction could seem a little strange at first.

Many of the novels that have been released as of late also serve as a reflection of just how much society has evolved, as more and more stories strive to feature nonwhite characters at its center, as well as LGBTQ+ relationships. For a while, it seemed that many of the stories that portrayed LGBTQ+ romances were dark, and almost always seemed to end in tragedy. However, through the release of contemporary queer romance media, LGBTQ+ romances are shown in a more positive and healthy light. One example is the critically acclaimed “Heartstopper” series which revolves around Charlie, the only openly gay student in his school, as he navigates friendship and his romance with Nick, a popular rugby player in Charlie’s class who ends up reflecting on his own sexuality. As a series, “Heartstopper” gives readers and audience members a new perspective on LGBTQ+ romance, and gives audiences a realistic look on exploring one’s sexuality and experiencing queer romance.

As a whole, the YA genre — including the romance novels within that genre — has become more aware of certain tropes and plot points that can get tiring after seeing them repeatedly. This has resulted in more YA romance authors, and YA authors in general, who stray away from creating stories that are less fantastical and less repetitive.

Despite the argument that YA books lean towards younger audiences, the age range shouldn’t be a defining factor that turns you away from the genre as a whole. Of course the books are going to be targeted towards younger readers, it’s in the name! One thing that makes the YA genre so important is the fact that there are books being written for readers that are actively going through periods of self-discovery and are able to find characters going through the same things they are and can relate to them. However, this doesn’t mean that older readers aren’t going to be able to relate to YA literature. There is still a sense of relatability when it comes to characters learning how to fit in, navigating friendships and love, and learning who they are as a person, which many people still go through as an adult. Even if you can’t relate to them, YA books are still entertaining and fun, and a great genre to turn to when you’re in the mood to read and possibly relive some middle or high school nostalgia. After all, nostalgia is all the rage now.

In fact, quite a few YA franchises have seen a resurgence in recent years. “Twilight” has recently been revisited by fans due to the aesthetics of the first movie and Bella and Alice’s coveted fashions. On August 4, 2020, after years of development, Twilight author Stephenie Meyer released a new novel titled “Midnight Sun,” focusing on Edward Cullen’s perspective on the events of the first book to capitalize on that wave of nostalgia. More recently, “The Hunger Games” has experienced a cultural renaissance due to



the reliability of Katniss Everdeen — readers have found themselves drawn to not only Katniss’ resourcefulness in the games, but also her personality. They admire her for how outspoken she is against the oppressive government of Panem, and how she consistently stays true to who she is as a person despite the Capital’s attempts to change her into what they view as the “ideal” person a Panem citizen should be. These are all reasons why she unknowingly became a symbol for rebellion in the universe of the series, and why real-world readers look up to her too. “The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes,” a prequel book released in 2020, had a film adaptation last year that only further fueled “The Hunger Games” cultural resurgence. The same can be said for the “Percy Jackson and the Olympians” series, which had its 6th novel “The Chalice of the Gods” released last year and a TV adaptation of the series releasing just this year. All of these Young Adult franchises releasing more media have brought forth a new wave of fans and readers who are able to experience these stories for the first time, or are like me and get to relive the experiences that they went through while reading the books when they were younger.

Though easily overlooked, Young Adult literature is a genre that has a variety of good fiction and is both critically acclaimed and at the forefront of many cultural moments. I suggest that everyone should try out reading Young Adult literature regardless of age. There is a chance you’ll enjoy getting to reread the stories that made you happy when you were younger. You could also have the chance to experience stories that introduce new perspectives or themes you haven’t read about before. I hope I’ve encouraged you to explore this genre, because there are some wonderful books out there for you to read — if you allow yourself to discover them!



AGNES GARRETT

senior | literature

i’m a firm believer in the fact that sam and mercedes should’ve ended up together on glee. yes, this is me admitting to being a gleeek.

K-pop Survival Shows: Let Contestants Live

Korean pop music has grown more and more mainstream in recent years, with idol groups like BTS and Blackpink no longer being names you'll get confused looks for mentioning. (Well, mostly.) Still, there are many aspects of K-pop that the newer Western audience is less familiar with, and one of those is K-pop survival shows. These are reality shows which present a large group of prospective idols, called trainees, and eliminate them down to a final selection after judging them on their singing, dancing, and performance skills. These winners will then get to "debut," becoming a proper K-pop group that will persist after the end of the show. Many well-known K-pop groups were formed this way, such as Twice, Stray Kids, and Monsta X, so these shows definitely have precedent for success.

However... K-pop survival shows, especially the more recent ones, have a lot of issues.

Now, it's not a hot take to simply say that most K-pop survival shows are bad. There are a few main complaints that always come up when discussing them. First, it's obvious when the biased judges pick who they want to be in the group from episode one, and don't acknowledge the talent and growth of other trainees. It's frustrating to see these judges constantly praise their favorites before turning around and yelling at another contestant who's trying just as hard. (They usually aren't giving constructive criticism, either.) Second, in cases where viewers can actually influence the judging on the show, it usually turns into the K-pop Electoral College. The voting systems are odd and even unfair at times. On the show "Boys Planet," the total votes in Korea were weighted equally to the total votes in the rest of the world, skewing the results greatly towards Korean preferences and beauty standards. Speaking of beauty standards, the third problem is the

xenophobia and colorism present in these shows, which means that some very talented trainees are given less screen time and opportunities than others. And I'm not just talking about Black trainees, or Western trainees. Even other East Asian trainees get snubbed, like Chinese trainees or trainees who have a natural tan. Korean idol culture is just that intense.

But beyond how the shows and producers are unfair to contestants, the thing that rubs me the wrong way is how audiences are also given the opportunity to compare these young people to each other. This results in very nasty online content made to harass contestants, calling them untalented or unworthy of the opportunities they worked hard to get. Even after the show ends and certain trainees get to be part of a new group, it's hard to escape the hateful comments about their performances pre-debut.

Let's compare survival shows to how most idols get to join a K-pop group. A company will work internally with hundreds of trainees at a time, as many as we see on large-scale survival shows or even more. They pick just a few of these trainees to be part of a new group, based on criteria we don't often see as outsiders. That group starts getting marketed a few months before debut, at which point they've already been finalized as part of the group and started training together as a whole. There will always be people online who will complain about members of a new group not singing well, or not dancing well, or whatever apparent weakness they focus on this time - but there is not a clear point of comparison. They're new idols, and that's all you see. We don't know what skill level they were at when they started training compared to now, and it's difficult to speculate on which other trainees at their company could have taken their spots because trainees are not public figures yet.

design by: brianne bitar

In survival shows, however, we get to see that early competition directly. The shows call on fans to declare which trainees are “better,” sometimes literally through voting. If your fave doesn’t make it into the final group, then the girl who did has stolen her spot, which is enough reason to dogpile on her and list all her flaws. If someone has a single bad performance, it’ll get memed to death and viewers will claim they should be eliminated because of it. People will actually get mad when the contestant everyone is bullying does well in a challenge, because it doesn’t provide fuel for the fire. This whole system is a breeding ground for hostility, not only between internet users but towards very young girls.

Some of the most recent examples of viewers picking a girl to collectively criticize come from “Universe Ticket.” The most viral moment from this show is the contestant Vanesya rapping in “Tell Me.” She fumbled the lyrics, making an obviously embarrassed face afterwards. This clip spread fast, plaguing my social media timelines for weeks with captions like “Vanesya let’s go... home!” What was not shared in those memes was the context: Vanesya does not speak Korean, already making such a fast rap difficult, and she later claimed on a podcast that the show’s producers actually gave her that section of the song last-minute. This information came too late though, as the internet had already decided they hated her. The responses I saw to any of her performances after “Tell Me” were unanimously negative, and people celebrated when she was eventually eliminated. Similarly, the contestant Kotoko was widely criticized for not being a strong vocalist and still ending up in the final group... it’s clear the judges explicitly picked her for her cute appearance and stage presence over her singing skills, in order to make the group more well-rounded. In cases like these, the internet turns its brain off for the sake of starting a flame war, and it gets nasty.

And worst of all, these are all trainees! These contestants are usually not formally trained in vocals or dance; even if they are, they will receive a lot more training after the show to prepare them for debut. Judging them at the level of already debuted idols is not fair to them, but viewers expect them to be ready to perform like professionals right away. It’s like comparing the work of an aspiring artist in their first ATEC class to that of Van Gogh, and being completely serious as you tear them down.

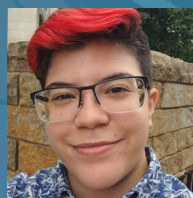
The show “America2Korea” had over a year-long gap between the end of filming and the new group VCHA’s debut. The improvements are drastic in all of VCHA’s members, because they had the time to keep training. For example, during the show many viewers commented that Kendall’s expressions were sometimes vacant or not purposeful, and that she lacked stage presence. I agreed, and wasn’t sure if she would be a good fit for the final group. However, I saw a lot of potential in her performance of “24 Hours,” which was unexpectedly confident. In VCHA’s music video for “Girls of the Year,” her performance is now much stronger and more mature, as she

was able to hone that potential and make it work for her. KG’s dancing ability has also increased, from not dancing much at all to keeping up with her fellow members during very fast choreography. Obviously, these trainees were not ready to debut at the exact moment the show ended, but it wasn’t fair to make that comparison at the time. Now that they’ve worked hard and debuted a year later, they can be held to the standards of other K-pop groups in good faith.

As a disclaimer, there are K-pop survival shows with male contestants who are mistreated and compared like this too, but it’s especially disheartening to see how these shows perpetuate hostility between women and girls. Instead of hyping up the young women who got these amazing opportunities, we’re still putting so many of them down to build another person up. Capable women should not be pitted against each other, or made to think that the only way to achieve their goals is to prevent other women from getting there first. I hope this mentality doesn’t affect the contestants too much, making them resentful towards their fellow trainees and eventual group members. I especially feel bad for the girls who receive targeted hate like Kendall and Vanesya, as many of them have an online presence and have almost certainly seen the posts for themselves. That must be incredibly damaging as a teenager, to be bullied not just by peers but by the world.

I encourage anyone interested in survival shows to support these trainees instead of dragging them down. Continue making fancams, posting clips of your favorite performances, and being excited for these stars in the making. Some criticism is expected on the internet, but if you do want to make that type of content at least consider how you present it. Are you really pointing out specific parts of a performance that could be improved, or are you just pointing and laughing? Then, when eliminations are over and the final group is revealed, be proud: of the winners, of the runner-ups, and of everyone who managed to get on the show at all. That itself is something not many people achieve.

K-pop survival shows are a phenomenon for a reason, and I don’t expect them to stop being made any time soon. Maybe we can’t personally change the problematic things that occur in the production process, but as consumers of these shows we can at least treat these children with kindness. They’re just going after their dreams, so why not be happy for them?



GAVIN ARRIAGA

senior | marketing

I’m being so normal right now



...IS NOT THAT SERIOUS

A quick warning: I'm gonna be delving into serious spoiler territory here, specifically regarding the video games "Suicide Squad: Kill the Justice League" and "The Last of Us Part II," so proceed with caution. On that note...

About a month ago, Rocksteady Studios released "Suicide Squad: Kill the Justice League," a spin-off to their acclaimed "Batman Arkham" video game series. In "Kill the Justice League," Batman and the rest of the Justice League are put under irreversible mind-control by an alien conqueror, turning them into villainous shells of their former superhero selves. The player takes control of the Suicide Squad, a motley crew of convicted supervillains monitored by the government, and must save the day by — surprise! — killing the Justice League.

Following up on Rocksteady's previous Batman games, there was no question that "Kill the Justice League" was on the radar for countless video game and comic book fans alike, but upon its actual release, reception was rather polarizing. A plethora of very fair and objective complaints have arisen, such as the gameplay itself being called dull and uninteresting. These are sentiments that I fully understand, and I should preface what comes next by admitting that I myself am not the biggest fan of this game. However, there is one particularly bitter complaint, one passionately held by many gamers, that's been kindling discourse on sites like Twitter or Reddit. A complaint so bizarre, so disrespectful towards the work and sacrifice behind this game, so dangerously tied to greater forms of cultural prejudice, that I just cannot fathom it.

It's that you have to kill the Justice League. In "Suicide Squad: Kill the Justice League."

I get being attached to fictional people. I mean, characters in every medium of storytelling are written with the specific intent of

captivating audiences. And when a likable character dies a tragic death? It's sad, and for many, tears may be shed. But when your attachment to a set of characters is so powerful that you genuinely can't stomach them dying, and that compels you to shun an entire piece of media? That's... different. But it isn't just the Justice League dying in general that has gamers up in arms. There's one particular digital man whose digital death has become the source of outrage and discourse: Batman.

In one of the game's more climactic moments, the Suicide Squad manages to overpower a brainwashed Batman, subduing him and allowing his former nemesis Harley Quinn to bittersweetly execute him. And thus, the fans reacted with fury. "Oh no! How could they do that!? This game sucks and the writers need to be fired! How could Batman just die like that?" How about because it makes sense? Because it's been built up throughout the game, especially as a final moment between him and Harley? It's understandable to be upset — it's Batman after all, and the scene was clearly meant to be tragic, but that doesn't make it objectively wrong. Newsflash: stories can make you feel bad! Many times, they actively aim to! And that's alright.

Admittedly, there is another factor at play here, but it's one that makes this absurd outrage look even worse. See, this isn't just a matter of personal attachment to a character, but also a matter of legacy. This wasn't just any Batman, after all, but rather the Arkham Batman. He was the protagonist of his own trilogy of games, voiced (alongside countless other iterations of Batman) by the now-late legendary Kevin Conroy. This was indeed Conroy's last time voicing the hero prior to his passing, and I do concede that it's perfectly understandable to be upset at this turn of events. The last role for this legend, the man behind Batman's most iconic voice, has Batman unflatteringly brainwashed and shot to death? It's unfortunate.

However, this doesn't justify vindictively labeling it an outright disrespectful or malicious act. Kevin Conroy wasn't tricked or forced into becoming Evil Batman Who Dies, nor was the role done posthumously by some AI deepfake digital monstrosity. Conroy voluntarily reprised the role, the same role he had performed for three previous games, portraying a superhero he had been voicing for decades only this time in an antagonistic light. The role wasn't written with his real-life passing in mind. If anything, taking the situation further and tarnishing the role could be seen as a greater sign of disrespect given the circumstances. This was Conroy's final performance, after all, and the game itself pays the late actor a special dedication at its end. For people online to take the memory and legacy of this actual man and weaponize it for their own misgivings over a fictional death in a video game? That shows a complete lack of genuine respect or understanding over the situation.

It isn't just Kevin Conroy who's supposedly being disrespected here, however. We also need to consider the reputation, legacy, and feelings of our beloved Arkham Batman! Oh wait, Arkham Batman isn't real. He's fictional, and also dead. But he might not even stay dead! This is a superhero world, after all, where he can easily be revived, or saved through time travel, or whatever. All in all, is the reaction truly warranted?

The sad thing is, this isn't an isolated incident. There are greater underlying issues present that have caused even worse outrage and even harassment in the past. Let's look at another game that had a similar reception: "The Last of Us Part II."

This is a very intense, story-driven game that starts with Joel, the protagonist of the first "The Last of Us" game, being tragically ambushed and killed by a woman named Abby. When "Part II" released in 2020, the backlash against this decision was, to put it simply, insane. The game was review-bombed on multiple websites, entire forums were created to hate on the game, and it ultimately got to the point that Abby's actress, Laura Bailey, began receiving death threats. The situation blew up past any reasonable point, and it still isn't even over. With the upcoming remaster and live-action series adaptation for "Part II," the flames have been stoked once again. Look on Google Reviews right now, and you'll find recent copy-pastes of the same inane ramblings. Why would all of this happen? Because they disrespected Joel, obviously! How could they do this to our hero!?

To truly grasp why this is an issue, one must look at the greater culture war these incidents have contributed to. Yes, a culture war. See, there are always certain circles of fans who like to come up with elaborate sociopolitical conspiracy theories as to why their beloved fictional manly men are dying. Dig around on Reddit or Twitter and you'll find users complaining about how Batman and Joel are just more victims of the woke media's relentless, brutal campaign against straight white cishet male characters. Obviously,



Oh, and don't forget how both of them were killed by women! And speaking of women, did you know the writing team for "Kill the Justice League" had women on it? Just goes to show how the Liberal Agenda is ruining our video games! Oh, and Abby? She's pretty muscular and fit, so clearly she's TRANSGENDER! ...She isn't, and why would that matter anyways?

Frankly, the way fans have reacted to these instances of character death is excessive, and often borders or crosses the lines of genuine delusion or toxicity. As I mentioned before, it's symptomatic of greater underlying issues with how people view media. Personally, I feel like many audiences nowadays (especially gamers) have become so used to immersing themselves in a protagonist's role and putting themselves in their shoes that the lines begin to blur. It isn't just Batman or Joel being killed, but also the player controlling them, and the gamer who idolized them. Eventually, these kinds of deaths begin to feel like direct, personal attacks on their identity. It would explain the outrage, but no explanation is needed to see how this train of thought is unhealthy.

In reality, every narrative needs an ending, and that includes the stories of these characters. It just so happens that death is generally a good way to end one's story — that's how it works in real life, after all. So it shouldn't be seen as so jarring, upsetting, or out of the realm of possibility in fiction. After all, you never know who could be next.



RAYHAN YOUNAS

junior | psychology

Currently hard at work procrastinating

FEATURE

WITH MY LITTLE EYE



I SPY

design by: aliya lee

8 Balloons

6 Puffballs

5 Mice

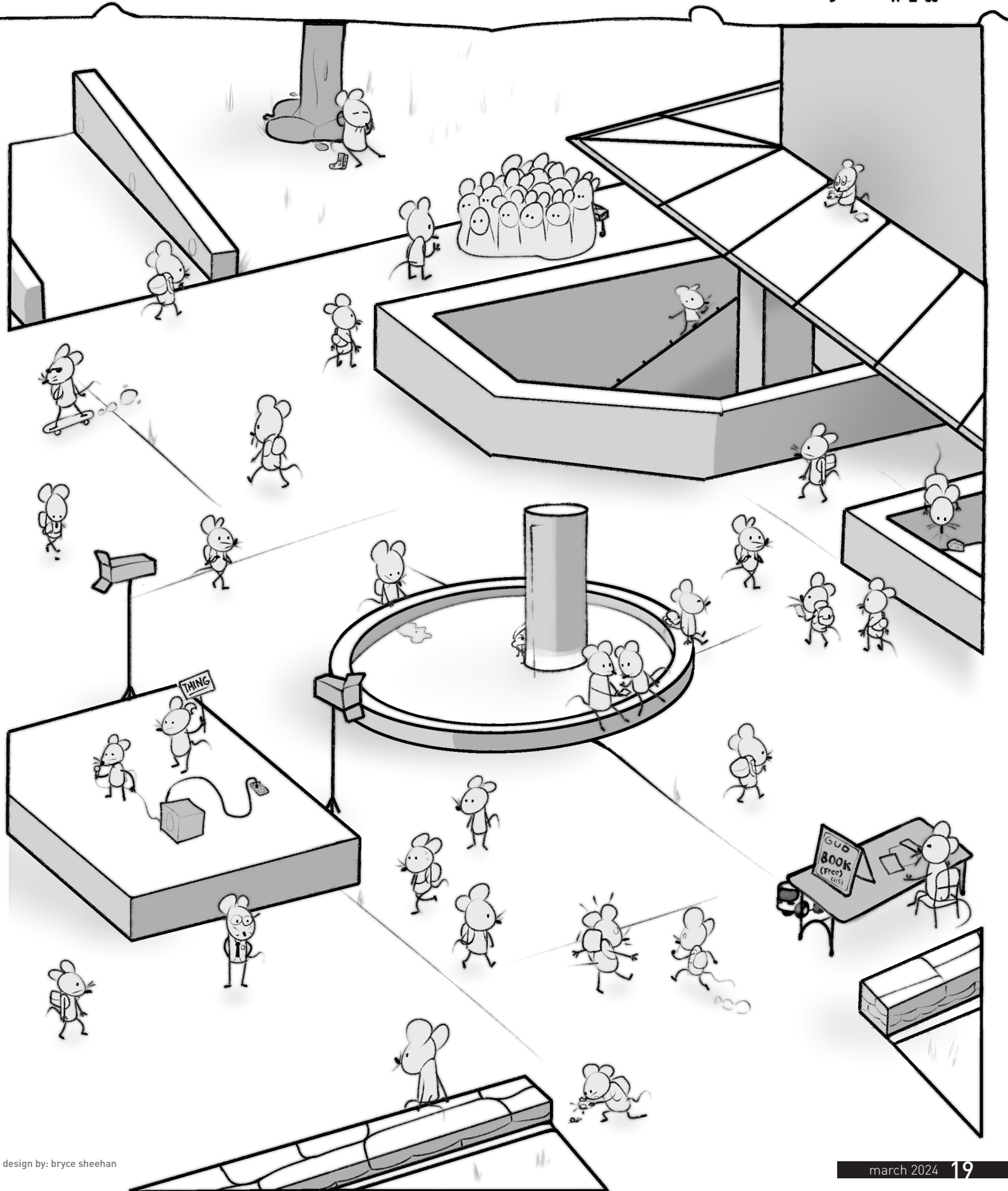
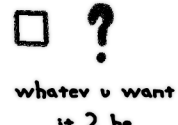
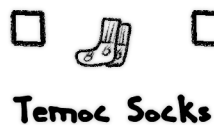
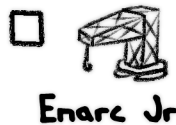
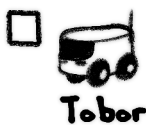
4 Hearts

1 Moon

1 Juggling Mouse

Rat Rampage @ UTD!!

can u find them all?



Two Virgins Preach About Sex (And Yes, You Should Listen)

Dear AMP,

The city of Dallas has the 50th-highest rate of STDs in the entire United States, and I'm worried about staying safe and bug-free during the hedonistic escapades of my youth. What precautions do you recommend for the next time I put on an outfit that's more skin than fabric and wake up in somebody else's inflatable swimming pool?

Dear concerned disciple of the Dionysian School of "You Put WHAT In Your WHERE?",

We are so glad you reached out to us. As proud virgins from the least sex-having secondary education community in the metroplex, we are thrilled to present solutions we haven't actually researched.



Before we begin, let us thank white Jesus for the impeccable Texan public education we were lucky enough to receive, it's by all metrics the best in the world. A dutifully learned lesson from its sacred annals — and occasionally, its afterschool sacred anals — that we wish to impart upon you is the gift of abstinence. If you never have sex, you will never catch an STD, and since rape is illegal you never have to worry about transmission against your will. By enrolling in UTD, your chances of sexual encounter decrease by 200%, and you can drop those numbers another 500% by installing "League of Legends" on your PC.

Now, we know what you're thinking. Sexually transmitted diseases are passed through sex, but how do you even define what sex is? According to the world's leading researchers (Mormons and weird lesbophobic men at bars), only penetrative intercourse qualifies as such. You can hork on an HPV-positive hen all you like, and that oral intercourse won't be able to infect you no matter how angry the virus gets! So shouldn't these other forms of pleasure keep you safe? Not so fast. In 1988, a teenage girl from Lesotho swallowed (as Joseph Smith intended) — but immediately after, her ex broke into her house and started a knife fight with her boyfriend that ended with a stab wound to her gut. Nine months later, she wound up in the hospital with labor pains. Yes, this really happened. If you have any beef with your exes, we recommend against putting your mouth anywhere, lest a stray dagger carve a clean path to your loins for the STD to take.

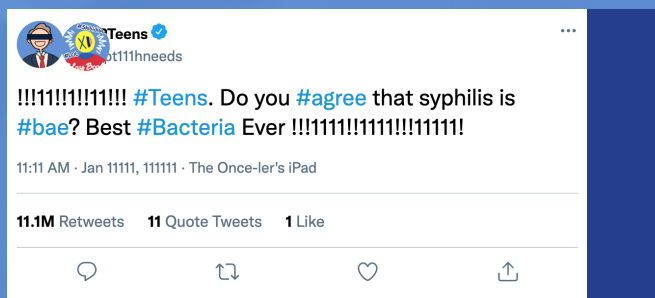


Why are you looking at me like that? Of course that's how biology works. And, hey, don't forget, babies are the most common STD of all.

design by: a. sultana

I'm sure you have taken our sage advice and promptly enrolled at UTD to keep yourself safe. For listening to us uncritically, we commend you as a true Comet. However, we understand that not everyone is morally pure enough to practice abstinence. The debauched and sinful among us, however, can still stay clean. Barriers like condoms and dental dams reduce your chances of catching a bug, but the problem many face is not having one on hand at the right time. We get it. Everyone thinks they're so prepared until you're seven clubs deep into the bar crawl, pockets emptied three buildings ago by the only person who deigned to kiss you all night, and a beautiful young Tobor asks to meet you in the bathrooms. You're without protection or the money to find more — whatever will you do?

To address this critical issue, we encourage all UTD students to protest outside President Benson's office until he approves a line of Temoc-brand condoms. Seeing our cherished mascot's titillating smolder and lickable six-pack on the packaging, not to mention the condom's Baja Blast flavoring courtesy of our local Taco Bell, will commit you to its safekeeping like a knight pledging fealty to his princess. You will never forget it, and carry it everywhere you go. If a pickpocket steals it when you're drunkenly stumbling into walls, you will be consumed with such righteous anger that you'll sober up and beat them into a fine red mist on the quest to retrieve your precious. Only downside? You might spend more time admiring its cometlike beauty than sleeping with your new bedfellow.



As college students, it's our responsibility to drive progress toward a world free of suffering, and at a STEM school like UTD we can dance across technology's cutting edge. Using one of our esteemed biology labs, you can transcend your human form and inject your consciousness into an amorphous paramecium, whose asexual reproductive strategy will defeat the need to get laid. To take it a step further, turn the tables by uploading your mind onto a retrovirus and become an STD yourself, secretly infiltrating their ranks and devising counters to their misanthropic plots. You'll have to evade the chlamydia industrial complex's firing squads once you return to human form, of course, but you should feel lucky to die for such a noble cause.

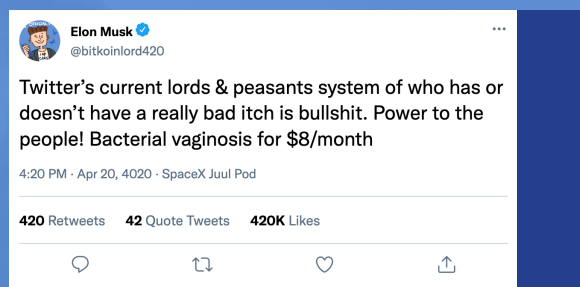
If natural science isn't your forte, then UTD's award-winning robotics programs could be your next best friend. By engineering a **F*** MACHINE 3000®**, you will bypass the revolting constraints of mortal flesh and attain the divinity of steel, silicon, and pistoning hydraulics. Robots don't have STDs. Robots don't get tired. Former President Trump might even commission you for one for his own

use, because robots don't need to consent! If this straight-shooting path to the Nobel Prize somehow doesn't work out for you, then you can always just marry Hatsune Miku like that one guy in Japan did in 2010. Miku doesn't have bugs, either.

What if all these strategies fail and you're left with a nasty infection — or worse, a pregnancy? Don't fret, dear reader. Even though Governor Greg Abbott's recent Order 66 has banned all sexual and reproductive healthcare within Texas, this is still Biden's America, where the woke mob hands out abortions and gonorrhea medication like crack on street corners. Just don't let Abbott see all the coat hangers you're smuggling home in your backpack.

Some concerned readers may point out that our advice stigmatizes people with sexually transmitted diseases because it suggests contracting one is morally low and physically disgusting, made especially problematic by the fact that Americans with STDs are disproportionately from marginalized minority groups. To this, we say hell yeah. As citizens of the People's Republic of Texas, nothing is more important to us than oppressing the underclass. When our beautiful land finally secedes from Bisexual Biden's failed state, we will personally implement mandatory genital inspections to ensure all our citizens are bug-free. Amen.

Donate to your local sewer system for more hard-hitting bullshit and patriotic advice.

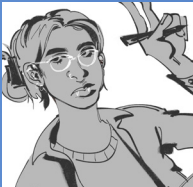




MARIA SHAIKH

s*phmore | biochemistry

temporarily disgraced shounen protagonist



A. SULTANA

junior | VPAS/art history

i am a ff15 apologist