

Friends, take a journey with me. Find that hoodie that wraps you into a cocoon of comfort, ears rested warmly in the fabric's embrace, fingertips tucked around these silky pages. You sit atop your favorite plush blanket guarding your toes from the bitter cold. Close your eyes and listen. Settle in and breathe into the autumn winds of the new school year.

You're standing outside the fishbowl (you know where), feet planted. Expectantly waiting. A slight breeze beckons. You follow it, nose wrinkling at familiar smells. Sounds greet you as you travel-- you can't quite make out the murmurs so you glide on. Whisked away by your thoughts, a smile starts to form on your lips. You've gone the long way to the main entrance and sink into the carpet of your past. Hushed footsteps now take you through a spiral of dreams, past the ninth grade forum of yesteryear, through the The Mezzanine of old, and into the light of sophomore year. Memories weigh on your shoulders like armor. You were shaped here.

You move on, anxious to reach the steps to your future-- anxious to avoid the calls of junior year. (You know the ones. People told you it'd be tough, but they never anticipated that halfway through you'd turn into Atlas. Holding up a sky studded with the unknown. You made it, so let's not dwell on the difficulty but celebrate your resilience.) At the top of the stairway, sounds pass through you from below, each one distinctly different and merry. The first step leads you down and with each peal of laughter your feet move faster over the descending staircase. You round the corner and then... your pet nuzzles up to your arm and your eyes open ever so slightly.

Well before August, your editors contemplated, chewed over, just how to encapsulate your journey this year. This task, one already daunting, seemed marred by the reality of a global pandemic, one that appeared to grip our international timelines and refuse to let go. And yet, a theme appeared from the constellations of Dr. Smith's 2020 address. A light shone through our darkest thoughts, our moments of weakness, and it was then your editors could see that even in the night there are stars.

This class, your class, tried to get lost in the joys of learning, even while the world around them shut down. You plucked forth the smaller portions of your day, the little things (yes, cliché, I know) that spurred you forward eager for erudition. Ever the antithesis of Plato's dark cave, you championed the future in every instance, allowing happiness and light to find you.

This year's theme encapsulates the peace, hope, and solace harnessed by the collective power of the senior class. A presence so light, even I, a mere Gryphon hatchling, felt a swell of strength during orientation with my freshmen before the first day of school. As your fingers glide through these sacred pages, pages that hold the keys to your memories-- at the main entrance and beyond-- let your mind return to the dream. Let pride continue to rush in. Breathe a sigh of relief and empty out the cobwebs of days long forgotten.

To our champions of the longest year, I share a note of gratitude. Thank you for being more creative with capturing content for this year's book than any other editorial staff. Hala and Christina, your layouts will illustrate airy moments of jubilation that kept us all afloat. Micaela and Mehree, as photo editors, your images will pique our interests for years to come-- pulling us back into those moments of easy laughter and distanced togetherness. When you pull this yearbook off your shelf in 20 years, think about how each of you found light when it could have been so easy to be engulfed in darkness.

Who you are today, seniors, as you embark on your next journey in this life, are stronger, more capable human beings than even a few months ago. Seek solace in the lessons of our past and work to carve out a future for us all. Your long nights have paid off. You didn't just survive the longest year. You found a perseverance within that connected your class in ways unimaginable. So close your eyes, stop holding your breath, and celebrate your journey amongst these pages.

Ms. Danielle R. Ellis
English and Fresh Teacher