

Focus on grades, but keep grades off Focus

By DAVIS GOODNIGHT

It can sometimes be hard to adjust to the first C students receive here at NCSSM. It can take a while to realize that one bad grade on one assignment will not keep anyone from graduating. But while students eventually come to understand this, it might be harder for parents. The school is currently considering requiring faculty to maintain an up-to-date grade book on Focus visible at all times to students and parents. Both students and parents would be able to see grades for every assignment in every class they take.

This means that, for instance, a student could do poorly on a quiz and the parent could know instantly. This removes the interaction between parent and child, allowing parents to jump to conclusions before the student has any possibility to justify their grade.

Of course, the administration is aware of the problems this would cause. Parents would be able to access course expectations explaining the grading policy and difficulty of the course. A parent would then know that a D on a piece of homework is not as bad as a D on a test or quiz.

Most students speak with their parents about grades on a regular or semi-regular basis—at least enough for them to

know the general trends of how the student is performing academically. Allowing parents to unceremoniously eyeball grades at any moment both severs a link between parent and child and hinders a parent's ability to view grades on a large scale, focusing instead on small pieces of a large puzzle.

Luckily for others who share these concerns, the situation might not progress to this point. Steve Warshaw, Vice Chancellor for Academic Programs, said that while the capability of showing grades to students and parents alike exists within Focus, this is by no means a definitive step in the future.

Warshaw said that, for the most part, "access to information is good," but he agrees with concerns about allowing parents to view all grades. He says that at some point, teachers will probably have to display all grades on Focus, though they will most likely have the option to share the grades with students, parents, or both.

No decision has been finalized yet, so there is still room for change. It seems that both parties will have to continue voicing their concerns in the coming months to influence when, how, and for whom grades will be visible online.

Why young adults should read Young Adult fiction

By TASHA SAMBORSKI

At some point in time we have all walked into a bookstore and seen the section completely devoted to teens. Most of us do not think to take a second glance and keep on walking, as we seem to think they are too young for us, or are too much like our everyday lives. The thing is, there is a plethora of books in this section to choose from that are enjoyed by all age groups and have so much to offer.

Their topics range from high school drama, high-strung adventures, and cliquish romances to the many emotional issues that so many teens face. They also act as portals to unknown worlds, just as books have promised to do for years. The characters are commonplace — they almost feel as if they could be your best friend, or arch-nemesis — it is easy to relate to them and find some semblance to your own life.

As someone who is quite familiar with this genre — I have professionally reviewed over 300 different titles as a book blogger — I feel that I can say that you should all try at least one good Young Adult (YA) book. You will see that the authors try extraordinarily hard to make sure that everything, from the clothes that the characters wear to

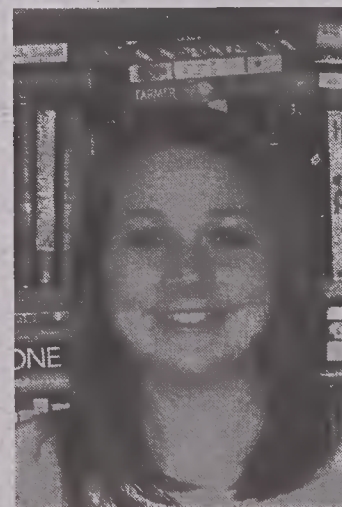
their facial expressions, fits in line with our everyday lives. I have also found that because YA authors try so hard, their books come out so much better. Knowing that we young adults are a tough bunch to impress, YA authors bust their butts to write a good book for teens rather than a mediocre book for adults, a much less selective audience. Because of this fact, YA books end up just being better in regards to writing and storyline. It's like applying to college — you know you will try harder and consequently write a better essay for Harvard, Princeton, or Yale, than one of those easy-to-get-into schools.

Now many people have reservations about reading YA books as they are too focused on teens, or they do not want to read about a life they already know about, but here's the thing — you get to see a new person's life in a different light. Also, a lot of the time, the only reason why YA books are classified as such is because their main character is a teenager.

Take Megan McCafferty's "Jessica Darling" series, which starts out being about a senior in high school and all her calamities and then proceeds to follow her throughout her college years. Within the books there is gossip, juicy scandals, and oh so much more and all of it has been enjoyed by countless teens and adults alike — and the only reason that you

would find it in the teen section is because the main character happens to be 17. Look at the *Twilight* series. Many people, both young and old, have enjoyed these books and they are classified as YA.

As you can see, YA books are not young, they do not represent a genre that we have outgrown — they are simply books about teens, meant to be enjoyed by all, but in particular, enjoyed by teens themselves. Just think: you have years and years to enjoy the thousands of adult books that are out there, but only a few to cherish those that have to do with you, right now.



Tasha Samborski's book blog can be found at <http://andanotherbookread.blogspot.com/>. • Photo courtesy of Tasha Samborski

NCSSM Presents: Thoroughly Modern Millie

By ERICA VENNING

When set next to musical productions of the past, *Thoroughly Modern Millie* stands out. NCSSM has an arguably impressive string of musicals, including *The Boyfriend*, *Anything Goes*, and *Once Upon a Mattress* in the past three years. However, many students cast in *Thoroughly Modern Millie* will tell you that this show is going to be the best yet.

Strikingly similar to the "Roaring Twenties" feel of last year's *The Boyfriend*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie* embraces the quirky, flapper styles which originated in 1920's America. Perhaps the main difference in the two plays is that last year, when songs from *The Boyfriend* were stuck in your head, you did anything you possibly could to get them out. Now, when songs from *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (TMM) are stuck in your head, it is probable that you will enjoy it. In essence, TMM is simply a better written play in both dialogue and musical scores.

The first thing I noticed when I read the script was that TMM is legitimately funny. The cliché jokes interspersed

in the dialogue never fall flat: I find myself cracking up during rehearsal every day. Also, the jokes are easier to follow. They flow better with the dialogue and make sense with the plot. In fact, the plot itself is a bit of a big joke—not in the sense that it's a flop, however.

The play revolves around the main character, Millie Dilmount (Polly Tobias), who moves to New York City in order to become a true "modern woman". In her mind, a modern woman should not get caught up with petty things like love, and so her main ambition is to marry well. As you may have expected, Millie is unprepared for the insensitive and unyielding populace of New York.

Immediately after she arrives, she is robbed and runs into Jimmy Smith (Nathaniel Swofford). Jimmy is a suave, savvy individual who looks down on Millie for her naiveté and optimism, traits not found in many New Yorkers. Without giving away too much more of the plot, I will tell you that Millie longs to marry her boss, Trevor Graydon (Nick Sanford), gets caught in the midst of a white slavery ring headed by Mrs. Meers (Ashley Teal), finds a friend in

Miss Dorothy Brown (Jessie Brown), and in the end finds love thanks to the guidance of Muzzy Van Hossmere (Erica Venning).

If the cuddly witticisms found in the story line don't evoke some musical curiosity in you, perhaps the choreography or the song line-up will. Nearly every day, Monday through Thursday, members of the cast are in the auditorium rehearsing

from 4:30-6:00 P.M. If the cast isn't blocking lines, they are either in the dance studio or in the music wing.

Thanks to Amanda Ackovitz and dance teacher Kathy Berberian, the choreography in *Thoroughly Modern Millie* is going to be some of the best I've ever seen. I've witnessed members of the ensemble, who take part in the majority of the numbers in the play, running

choreography down the halls on the way to class. If dance isn't quite your cup of tea, then you certainly will enjoy the songs. With fairly complicated harmonies and challenging notes to hit, the songs are incredibly entertaining. As theater teacher and director Adam Sampieri's 10th show at NCSSM, *Thoroughly Modern Millie* promises to be a lively, enjoyable, and all around impressive experience.



Students rehearse as the performance dates of "Thoroughly Modern Millie" draw closer.

• Photo by Dustin Burleson