

Rude Awakenings

GEORGE KACHERGIS

They do a cursed but crucial job. You will depend on one almost every day at school - two, if you are prudent. It will be your best friend and your worst enemy. Its failures - hopefully few and far between - will allow you a few more hours of blissful rest, but you will afterwards be plagued by irritated teachers, make-up work, and delightful purple absence sheets.

Each morning your alarm clock will usher you into a day where you are likely to have two tests and to have a paper due, and to be about eight centuries behind the rest of the human race in physics comprehension. In short: a day in your life at Science and Math.

After many of us have spent at least a third of our somnolent summers in sound slumber, the morning of August 13 will find us bleary-eyed, stabbing at the "Off" buttons on our alarm clocks.

Should you not find yourself in this situation, you may have fallen victim to one of the inevitable mishaps inherent when dealing with alarm clocks. Fine motor control sometimes fails when operating such awkward, delicate machinery, especially under conditions of fatigue, sleepiness, or simple carelessness.

Perhaps your failure was one of memory, as mine was on the first day of school a year ago. The first four classes of the year were a dream for me -- literally. I awoke, quite rested, in the middle of D block, thinking how bright it was for sometime before 7:30 and how odd that I had woken without the cacophony of my alarm.



Luke Misenheimer

George gets ready for a duel with his alarm clock.

The human body is indeed a remarkable thing. Five minutes later I was tearing down Hunt stairwell, ready to beg for my teachers' forgiveness, hoping I hadn't made an indelible bad impression.

Tardiness because of a failure to wake up is no longer excusable. In a time where we advocate independence and self-reliance, where stress is rampant and kindness almost a luxury most don't seem to have time for, perhaps a return to a more forgiving, interdependent system is in order.

In contrast to its practicality, the use of alarm clocks does perpetuate one particularly debilitating condition that is widespread in the NCSSM community: sleep deprivation.

To be healthy, adolescents need to sleep anywhere from eight and a half hours to nine hours and fifteen minutes.

However, many of us find that we can function on five or six hours each night. We are not alone, for the average American adolescent gets six and a half hours of sleep per night. Whether we realize it or not, we suffer the consequences of sleep deprivation.

Sleep is necessary for our brains to work properly: sleep deprivation causes trouble with memory (both recall and memorization), creativity, concentration, and is one cause of the legitimate mental disorder daytime sleepiness.

Yes, "mental disorder"; you should not always be nodding off in math class. Studies have shown that people who receive a healthy amount of sleep become fidgety, rather than sleepy, when faced with dull lectures.

The language center of the brain actually shuts down after a night without sleep, and its function is mimicked (at reduced capacity, according to other studies) by a part of the frontal lobe of the brain.

In addition, chronic sleep deprivation has been linked with depression, and in a recent study, researchers observed spontaneous death in lab rats that were forcefully

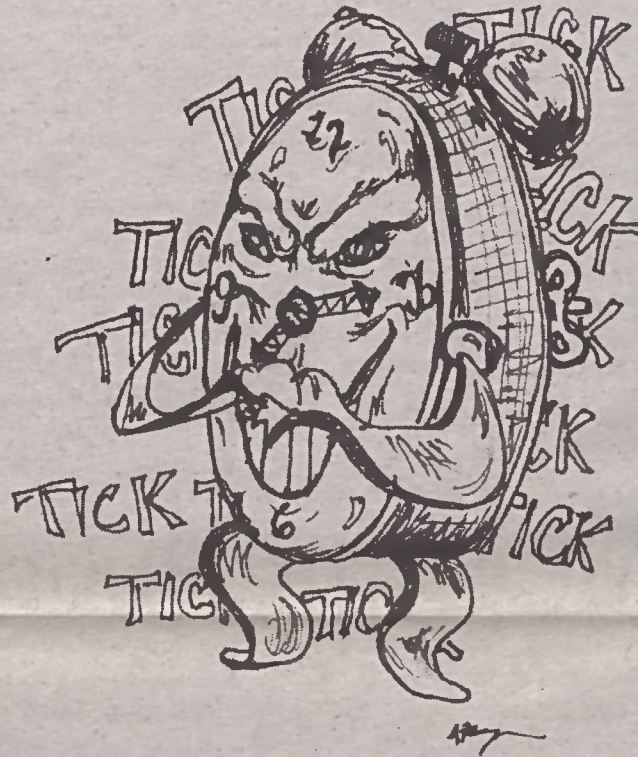
kept awake for a long period of time.

Similar - albeit much shorter and less professional - experiments with my roommate last year resulted in an increase in disagreeability, irritability, and numerous expletives.

How does all of this affect us, practically? Only insofar as we choose. As a student, I feel the necessity to forego

some rest, instead spending that time in pursuit of knowledge of all types.

I cannot bear to pass up an opportunity to interact with my peers or to pursue the scholarly path for the sake of a few minutes of rest quickly forgotten. Our waking hours are far more important, for they will be what we come to cherish as we look back on fond memories of NCSSM.



Ishmael Review

PAUL SMITH

A book with nearly nothing but a conversation between a gorilla and a man? I admit, I too was skeptical, but author Daniel Quinn pulled it off with ease.

This book, published in 1989, brought Quinn's ideas onto the literary stage. In this Turner Tomorrow Fellowship

winner, Quinn uses a format very similar to that of the Socratic method to guide us on a journey with our teacher, Ishmael.

Creating terms such as 'Taker' and 'Leaver' along the way, Quinn delves into issues regarding the general future of humanity with ease. He pulls together his observations on issues such as environmental destruction, overpopulation,

and loss of cultural diversity into an elegant and logical theory; a theory much unlike any I had ever experienced.

The seemingly simple concept of regarding humanity's problems in a way similar to the problems of other species has changed my perspective of the world. This book discusses issues critical to today's world in a manner based largely on logic and unbiased observation.

I have already read two more of his books, and everyday I find myself thinking about the concepts he presented, and attempting to apply his methods of thinking to various issues.

I applaud the committee of school leaders who picked this as our summer reading, a vast improvement over last year's tedious selections. In making this our required reading the school has not only broadened our horizons but also fulfilled one of the greatest commands of this book - to spread the word.

However, I do have one major contemplation regarding the author: Graduation Speaker?



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the north carolina school of science & mathematics
1219 broad street, durham, nc 27705
<http://www.ncssm.edu/stentorian>

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