



## ***Have a Nice Trip! See You Next Fall!***

**By Jason Lewicki**

Well, everybody, it seems we're finally at the end of the school year. Many of us still have finals left to finish; some of us (including yours truly) are already over with classes, ready to graduate and move onto the next chapter in our lives. It is a time of hope and uncertainty, of relief and anticipation. It is an ending, but that does not mean it has to be sad. Now, more than any other time, is the best time for reflection.

With summer only a short span of time away, we should all be thinking about our future. Whether it's college, a job, a family vacation, or some other significant lifepath, we now have the time to relax, unwind, and give some serious thought to what we intend to do with our lives. Over the school year, a lot of us are busy with both schoolwork and personal business, so with schoolwork out of the way for a little while, we can give our personal business more attention. This summer, we should all take some time to pursue hobbies new and old, spend time with old friends and make new ones, and find opportunities to support ourselves, our family, and our community. I will personally be doing all I can to prepare for college, ensuring that when the time finally comes to leave Milford, I'll be ready. It's been nice talking with all you lovely readers; I wish you all the best, and I hope you continue to read the West Street Journal!

Whether you're new to MHS or a returning student, we're glad to have you. Here at our school, we have all sorts of avenues through which to connect with the students around you and show your Spartan spirit. Join a club! Attend a sports game! Support our theater program! Read our newspaper! These and more are just some of the ways you can have fun, meet new people, and make new memories here at Milford High School.

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# Summer Reads Under 500 Pages

Isabel Lamb

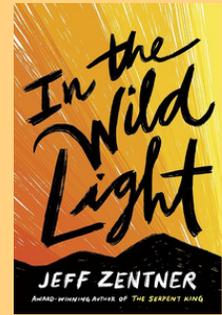


## Dry by Neal Shusterman - 390 pages

Set in California, this book explores what would happen if the droughts got so severe that water became a scarcity. It follows a girl named Alyssa, her brother, and their weirdo neighbor as they try to survive the all-out war zone that the state has become. Good for a particularly warm day that makes you feel like you're going to light on fire.

## In the Wild Light by Jeff Zentner - 432 pages

Is it set over the summer? No. Is it still a good summer read? Absolutely. This book follows Cash and his friend Delaney as they attend a "smart people school," and explores the social dynamics they encounter there. I will say, I cried reading this. For further Zeff Zentner reading, he hides little connections between his books. I've noticed them in Rayne and Delilah's Midnite Matinee, Goodbye Days, and The Serpent King.

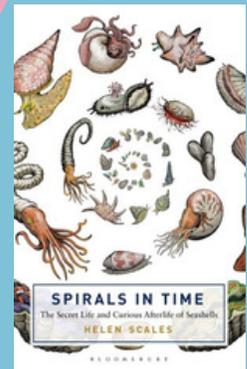


## Wilder Girls by Rory Power - 357 pages

Set on an island school put under quarantine, a handful of girls have to survive the Tox, an infection that warps everything it touches in new and disgusting ways. Some girls cough up teeth, others grow a second spine, and yet others develop gills. When one of them goes missing, the others have to venture out into the Tox-filled woods of the island to find her.

## Spirals in Time by Helen Scales - 304 pages

In this nonfiction book about the phylum Mollusca, Scales discusses the symbolism of shells, different families of mollusks, why shells form the way they do, the use of shells throughout history, and much more.



## A Magic Steeped in Poison by Judy I. Lin - 374 pages



Set in a fictional realm where the primary form of magic is based around tea, Ning finds herself in a difficult situation; having accidentally poisoned her mother and sister, she has to find a way to save her sister before it's too late. She decides to sneak into a competition to become the best tea-magic user, called shennong-shi. The cost of getting caught? Very severe punishment. The prize for winning? A favor from the princess, which could give Ning access to the royal tea ingredients needed to save her sister's life. In the process she gets wrapped up in a political squabble that affects the dynamic of the competition, putting both her and her sister at risk..

# D&D CLASS GUIDE: THE ARTIFICER

“ANY SUFFICIENTLY ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY IS INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM MAGIC.”  
- ARTHUR C. CLARKE

## What Is An Artificer?

An Artificer is a spellcaster whose magic derives from their understanding of science, technology, and arcana. By harnessing magic through runes, blueprints, and intense magical study, Artificers can infuse that magic into mundane devices to create powerful gadgets and items to aid them on their quest to acquire knowledge and build even greater contraptions. Whether they be a benevolent inventor, a reclusive genius, or an insane warmonger, it is in an Artificer's nature to use their creativity to change the world.

## What Types of Artificers Are There?

While Artificers can be as varied as the devices they create, three existing schematics are commonly circulated for them to use starting at level 3: the Alchemist, the Artillerist, and the Battle Smith. Alchemists mess around with assorted alchemical ingredients and formulas to create bubbling brews and potent potions for both themselves and their allies to use; Artillerists ditch subtlety in favor of creating explosive magical armaments to either blast their foes to pieces or shield their allies from harm; finally, Battle Smiths charge into the fray alongside a hardy robotic companion, becoming proficient in martial weapons to further their combat prowess. More blueprints exist for aspiring Artificers to follow, but these three are the most widely dispersed.

## How Does An Artificer Work?

As far as spellcasters go, Artificers are surprisingly scrappy. With a d8 hit die, proficiency with Constitution saving throws, and proficiency with light armor, medium armor, shields, simple weapons, and even *firearms*, Artificers, like Clerics, are not too bad at getting up close and personal if properly built. Artificers cast spells with their Intelligence, but like Paladins and Rangers, their spellcasting progresses slower than primary spellcasters, and their spell slots can only reach 5th-level (out of nine spell levels). That's not too much of a concern, though: Artificers are best known for their Infusions, magical enchantments they can place on various items to grant them additional benefits. Certain Infusions make weapons and pieces of armor stronger, others grant mundane items special abilities, and yet others can even replicate pre-existing magical items. As you level up, you will get more of these Infusions, but just remember that you can only have a few going at once. Besides their Infusions, Artificers also eventually gain the ability to use their Reaction to add their Intelligence modifier to certain rolls, get better at creating and using magic items, and even learn how to store spells in objects to be casted later. Like any good machine, while an Artificer may need some fine-tuning in order to work as intended, they can achieve some marvelous feats of technological brilliance.

# D&D CLASS GUIDE: THE ARTIFICER

(TINKERING AWAY!)



## What Does An Artificer Represent?

Now, I know what you might be thinking: what does technology have to do with fantasy? In a world of wizards and swordfighters, what place do things like mechanical contraptions and robotic companions have? Well, innovation is a natural part of civilization. Every society, no matter how monolithic they seem on the surface, has worked to further improve the tools they have access to in pursuit of a higher standard of living. While that might seem a bit too elevated for a tabletop role-playing game, we can still apply this concept when thinking about the role of an Artificer in D&D. When playing an Artificer, ask yourself: where does your character's magic come from, and what sorts of things do they create? Are they an innovator using magic in entirely new ways to create new devices, or are they following the blueprints of a mentor? Does your Artificer simply want to pursue their creative whims and make little gadgets for their own benefit, or do they want to incite some kind of large-scale technological renaissance? If you want to keep things more strictly fantasy-based, then you can: an Alchemist could be a witch brewing potions, an Artillerist could be enchanting normal objects to produce explosive effects, and a Battle Smith could be creating golems to serve their will. Artificers are admittedly a bit of a wild card when it comes to classes in D&D, but with a bit of forethought, they can fit seamlessly into whatever setting you might be playing in.

## Why Should You Play An Artificer?

Artificers, as some of you may already know, are the new kids on the block. They were the first class to be officially added to the 5th Edition of D&D (we're not counting the Blood Hunter, because while it's cool, it's technically unofficial; go look it up if you're interested), and they go in a direction that many familiar with the game would not immediately expect. The idea of introducing advanced (well, by medieval standards) technology to a fantasy game is a risky one, and as such, the class is the subject of a bit of controversy. That all being said, Artificers are still an awesome class with some great abilities, and as I said earlier, you can fit them into a high-fantasy setting just fine with a little bit of reflavoring. If you want to play a class that can combine the wonders of magic and mechanisms to create something entirely new, then the Artificer is the right class for you.

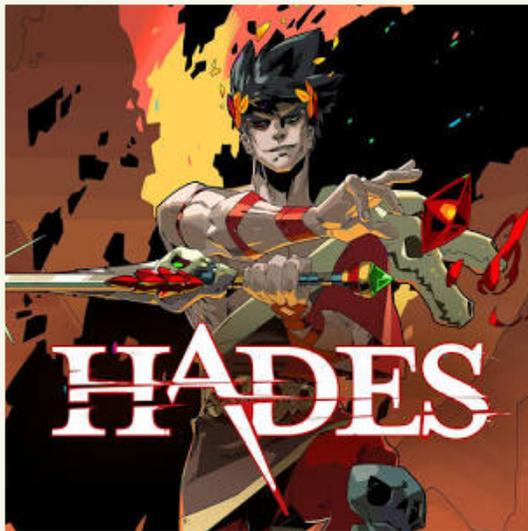




## Hades: My New Favourite Game



Mythology is an obsession for people young and old, each story and god is a favorite of someone. The game Hades, made by Supergiant Games, follows a god named Zagreus, the son of Hades and Persephone. Zagreus grew up believing that Nyx, goddess of the night, was his true mother due to Persephone being absent in the underworld for much of his life. When he discovers the truth of his mother, Zag vows to fight his way out of the underworld to find her on the surface, a plan Hades will not allow to come to fruition. The gods, however, are determined to aid Zag in his quest to escape the underworld by granting him powerful boons, hoping that he will come to live by their side on Mount Olympus.



Each character in this game is deeply developed, with the incredible voice acting, visuals, storytelling, and friendship mechanics all blending together to create a wide array of lovable friends, enemies, and all those in-between. Each god can be befriended through the gifts of nectar Zagreus can find along his journey, and in return they will give a trinket to strengthen him in battle. Zagreus's trinkets, weapons, and spells assist him in fighting through the wretched souls that Hades has called forth to send his son back home.

The three sections of the underworld are Tartarus, Asphodel, and Elysium, which are designed as dungeons for the purposes of the game. In the middle of each section there is a mini-boss, with the end of each section containing a true boss.

The reason this game is my absolute favorite is because of the pure mechanics and story progression. Everything comes with time, half the time independent of the fighting portion of the game. Being able to be invested in a game both story wise and mechanics wise despite any skill level one might have is a show to how well-developed this game is



REVIEW DONE BY SOPHIE LOSS

# We Didn't Lose Our Morals Overnight— Social Media Took Them Pixel by Pixel

**By: Precious Simpson**

Social media didn't strip away our morals in one dramatic swipe—it did it in small, insidious ways. At first, we posted to share, to laugh, or to connect. But as the years went by, something shifted. Likes became currency. Followings became validation. And somewhere along the way, we started performing instead of living. Social media platforms, like Instagram and TikTok, aren't just digital hangouts. They're hyper-realities that mold who we are. We're no longer just responding to trends; we're actively contributing to a system that shapes how we define success, happiness, and even morality. What we 'like' online is starting to echo what we value in life—whether we realize it or not.

## **The Rise of the Attention Economy**

The 'attention economy' was designed to hook us. Platforms aren't just about connecting with friends anymore—they're about keeping us glued to the screen. Everything is algorithmically calculated to show us what we'll engage with the most, and what grabs our attention is often the sensational, the shocking, or the extreme. We're trained to react. Social media doesn't care about nuance or thoughtful engagement—it thrives on outrage, drama, and viral moments. We post to get noticed, not to express ourselves. When we see something go viral, we don't just appreciate its creativity: we crave that same kind of recognition. It's not about what's real—it's about what makes the most noise.

## **A New Definition of Morality**

This culture doesn't just influence how we interact—it shapes our moral framework. On social media, doing what's 'right' isn't always enough to get attention. The platforms reward controversy, and sometimes, being 'wrong' can attract more views than being 'right'. Think of the rise of clickbait culture and the popularity of polarizing figures who spark debates that tear down rather than build up. We're now growing up in a world where being morally 'correct' can be less profitable than being morally loud or outrageous. I see it in my peers, who are quick to jump into a viral conversation without considering the nuance of the issue. We're less focused on kindness and understanding, and more focused on who can make the boldest statement.



Take cancel culture, for example. What started as a tool for holding people accountable has evolved into a cycle of public shaming, where the line between moral correction and character assassination is blurred. In the quest for justice, we've sacrificed empathy.

Once we're in a cancel conversation, it's hard to step back, reflect, and apologize—it's easier to double down or walk away. This isn't the same as sitting down to work through a problem together.

### **The New "Normal"**

Social media isn't only changing how we interact with the world—it's changing how we define what's normal. Teens are now taught that being constantly connected, sharing everything, and chasing engagement is just part of life. 'Normal' no longer includes privacy, deep reflection, or just spending time with loved ones. Instead, it's the expectation to share everything in real-time, to always be online. In doing so, we often lose the ability to distinguish between genuine experiences and what's simply being performed for an audience.

### **Why We Need to Pause**

I'm not saying we should ditch social media altogether—it's a powerful tool for connection, education, and empowerment. That said, we do need to start questioning how these platforms are shaping our worldviews and our values. Teens today are growing up in a world where their worth is often determined by their online presence, and where the algorithms are teaching us that being extreme, controversial, and attention-seeking are the quickest ways to succeed. We need to ask ourselves if the "likes" we collect are worth sacrificing our authenticity and our core values. We need a new approach—one that values self-reflection, kindness, and the courage to be real in a world that rewards the opposite. Social media should be a tool to enhance, not diminish, our values. It's up to us to reclaim that space.



# Graduation Sugar Cookies



## Ingredients

**1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened**

• **1 ½ cups granulated sugar**

• **1 large egg**

• **1 teaspoon vanilla extract**

• **½ teaspoon almond extract (optional, for added flavor)**

• **2 ¾ cups all-purpose flour**

• **½ teaspoon baking soda**

• **½ teaspoon cream of tartar**

• **¼ teaspoon salt**

• **Extra granulated sugar for rolling**



## Instructions:

- 1. Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C). Line the baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone baking mat.**
- 2. Mix the wet ingredients: In a large bowl, cream together the softened butter and sugar until light and fluffy, about 2–3 minutes. Add the egg, vanilla extract, and almond extract. Mix well until combined.**
- 3. Combine the dry ingredients: In a separate bowl, whisk together flour, baking soda, cream of tartar, and salt.**
- 4. Combine wet and dry ingredients: Gradually add the dry ingredients to the wet mixture, mixing just until combined. The dough will be slightly soft.**
- 5. Form the cookie: Roll the dough into 1-inch balls. Roll each ball in the extra granulated sugar to coat evenly.**
- 6. Flatten the dough: Place the dough balls on the prepared baking sheet, spacing them about 2 inches apart. Gently flatten each ball with the bottom of your glass or your fingers, just slightly.**
- 7. Bake: Bake for 8–10 minutes, or until the edges of the cookies are lightly golden. The centers should still look slightly soft.**



# YOUR OPINION MATTERS

*Reach out to your student leaders!*

## ELECTED ESC OFFICERS:

ESC President – Kamryn Duggins, Class of 2025

ESC Vice President – Cameron Lewicki, Class of 2025

ESC Secretary – Collin Linderman, Class of 2025

ESC Treasurer – Jacqueline Meleedy

Student Representative to the School Board - Nathaniel Kangethe



## CLASS PRESIDENTS:

Class of 2025- Josh Berry

Class of 2026 - Frankie Greene

Class of 2027 - Ryan Delli Colli

Class of 2028 - Jace Wilhelmi

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# West Street Journal Editorial Staff 2024-2025



## Jason Lewicki

[jlewicki@milfordk12.org](mailto:jlewicki@milfordk12.org)

Editor-in-Chief

Payton Burke

Malakai Ramirez

Isabel Lamb

Precious Simpson

Sophie Loss

Lawrence Freeman

Jacqueline (Jaxie) Meleedy

Staff Writers

Nico Romeri

Photographer

Mrs. Katy Heider

[katy.heider@milfordk12.org](mailto:katy.heider@milfordk12.org)

Advisor