

Spook-tacular student writings

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Denison, Texas <https://grayson.edu/the-viking/index.html> October 18, 2022 Volume XVI, mini edition

Boo!

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fear: acrophobia. Acrophobia, the fear of heights, is the fear of 15% of the students. Humans have a natural sense of preservation, as staying alive is generally a high priority. As such, the possibility that one small slip at even the smallest of heights could spell the end for a life easily plays into these students' fears.

What do others fear?
Same as me or different? While looking at what most consider to be their greatest fear, the survey brings up a question that takes a look at what students believe other people most fear. The discrepancy between what students believe others fear most versus what they actual-

ly fear is incredible. For instance, over 30% of students believe the scariest thing to everyone else are spiders and insects. However, when compared with the results from what students actually feared, only a third of the predicted surveyed group actually fears spiders and insects. Another disparity between graphs can be seen with the fear of people or specific persons. Over 10% of the students are afraid of either a group of people or one specific person. Yet, this 10% is completely neglected when it comes to the predicted fears others may have: not even 1% of those surveyed believed that other students would fear certain

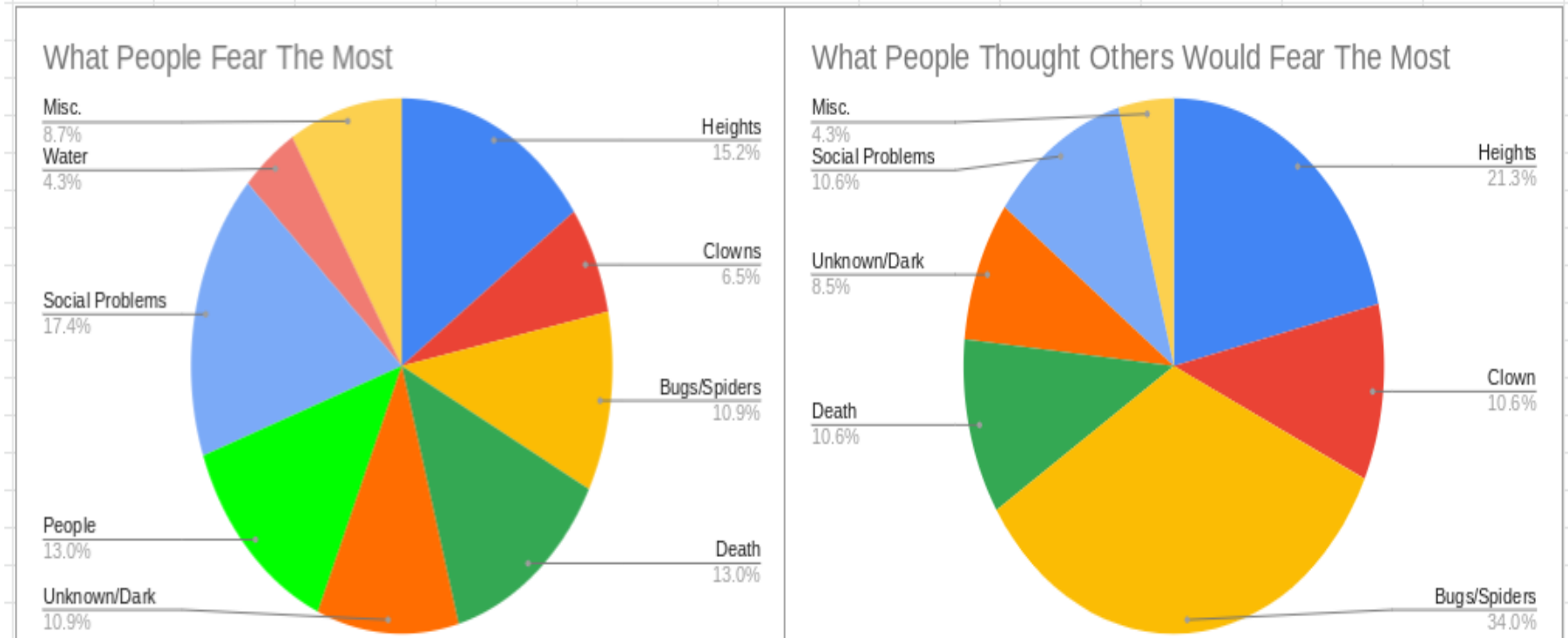
groups of people. In contrast, there are some predicted fears that are decently close to their actual percentages of students' fears. For example, the percentage of students who predicted death to be other students' greatest fear is only 3% off of the actual number of surveyed students who consider death the scariest. Such similarities also exist for nyctophobia and xenophobia, which are the fears of the dark and the unknown respectively.

Those clowns . . .
A fear one may not expect is the prevalent fear of clowns, reported throughout the survey. As they are an occupation meant to bring joy

and laughs, it is unusual to see clowns as 6.5% of the student population's biggest fear. The predicted fear almost doubles that, anticipating 10% of the surveyed population to be afraid of clowns. According to explanations given by those participating during the survey, the fear of clowns is based in the cultural staple of the killer clown. Despite the absence of such murderous jesters in the real world, the effect of killer clowns in movies has terrified a decent percentage of our fellow classmates.

Not so funny
So is fear a good thing? One surveyed student who is widely considered to be fearful and skittish by her peers

claimed, "[Fear] makes it easy to be made fun of and people take you lightly." She expressed her dismay about how other students like to scare her, and even though she laughs it off, she still feels slightly hurt. To summarize the survey's findings, the fears of students across campus are diverse and unique. Even if students share a common fear, their reasonings may be different. From heights to spiders to clowns, each person's fear is as unique as their fingerprint, and that just makes each human a little more special.



Two charts depicting what Van Alstyne High School students surveyed said their greatest fear is (left) and what they predicted other students' greatest fear is (right).

Screams and Scares

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unformed idea until the student body takes charge by creating the theme, characters, designs, concepts, and gags, says Jeremy Stein, the director and head of the theater department at VAHS. This year, the department settled on the theme "Haunted Manor," for which they created their own storyline, characters, and set design theme. However, creativity doesn't stop there. The students are challenged to think of unconventional concepts for the house, usually leading to a slew of challenging notions to bring to fruition.

Technical challenges
As the house's entire construction uses previously owned or donated materials from the community, resources are limited. Students must be innovative and precise when coming up with construction plans, says Ben Smith, a heavily involved tech student at VAHS. Tech students are primarily in charge of the planning and construction, including

room designs, structural integrity, and concepts involving complicated mechanical dynamics within the house. This year, one of those concepts is a rising staircase. Smith describes this development process as an abundance of trial and error. He states that the process consisted of frequent exchanges of breaking features, then fixing them, then something else breaking and fixing those, until eventually "you run out of things that break," and they had a functioning and safe staircase. This process is repeated over and over again throughout the building process, more with this year's house than ever before due to the house's size, which is double the square footage of last year's house. Stein states that this Haunted House is "the biggest build we've done." On top of the rising staircase, this house includes a second story, which has posed struggles in the structural integrity aspect, all of which have been over-

come through the students and Stein's trial-and-error processes. **Acting challenges**
A moving staircase is just one technical challenge among many that the student body has overcome; however, the acting side of the event poses its own set of trials as well. For Kenessa Mullins, the Thespian Guild Secretary and varsity theater member, her personal obstacle looked slightly different. Mullins details her struggle in creating her character within the house due to the theme: "I was like, 'Oh great. I'm not going to be able to find anything I like out of [the theme].'" Initially, she thought the manor idea would not require much creativity for actors. Despite that, this view changed once Mullins dove into the creative aspect of the house, stating, "But now I have found aspects of it that I like, and we have made a story out of [the Haunted House] instead of just a house with random scares." Despite

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WEDNESDAYS
6:00 PM
RAID HOUR
MEET @ LIFE CENTER, 2ND FLOOR TV ROOM
FRIENDS & FAMILY WELCOME!

Eerily Entertaining

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<https://wallpaperaccess.com/full/1147379.jpg>

Denison, Texas

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Screams and Scares

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the initial struggle Mullins felt towards creating her character, she was able to take her time to ponder and then create a character that fits well into the theme of the house. Mullins created her character Bonnie McLaughlin, who is a widowed wife of a sick husband and has a child with the same sickness.

Mullins's character goes to the cult that resides in the manor in order to try to heal her husband and child. However, when her husband dies, she decides to become a permanent resident. Bonnie works as a maid within the house, and it is there she learns of the awful activities and sacrifices of the cult.

This creation process repeats for each acting student within the department, leading to complex and diverse character depth and the background storyline of the house. Letting the creative ideas flow is a common practice by actors in this process. The actor's creative processes drive a major motor in the house's initial creation. "[Actors and actresses] make scenes, make characters, and make the story of the house..." comments Mullins.

"The story of the house usually bleeds into the construction and how we

[build the house] because of how the [ideas factor into the background of the house]." The creative process between techs and actors is sometimes different, but despite these differences, they all are fundamental.

Teamwork, creativity, problem-solving

Working towards a common goal of opening night, the students take away more than just fun memories and a monetary gain for the department. Within the building of the Haunted House, students learn an abundance of life skills.

Stein notes the frequent skills he sees his students demonstrate during this process. He observes how his students use teamwork, creativity, problem-solving skills, and collaboration through the building of the house. He recalls

"...watching them work together and figuring out how to fix something, or once a problem has presented itself, watching them come up with a solution. I think that's a really cool moment."

However, this isn't just an occurrence observed by the director. Smith also experienced his own self-growth through the building of the staircase as well.

"Understanding and working through the



Photo by Nautica Barker

process of trial and error has become a significant takeaway I learned from the whole process," says Smith. This self-growth is made possible through Stein's unique approach to the event. Even though Stein is the director, he states his involvement is pretty hands-off:

"... [techs and actors] have an immense amount of ownership towards [the house]... It's not my idea. It's not what I want to do. I literally just take the ideas that are presented and find a way to make them happen."

Funds raised enriching student activities

While maintaining safety and keeping specific ideas in check, Stein still manages to allow

the students' creativity to flow and flourish through their work on their Haunted House.

For this reason, all the proceeds from this house contribute directly to the theater department's activity account. Since the house is created almost solely from student ideas and work, the money donated and earned from the house goes right back to the students, providing the funds for the students to travel to the Texas State Thespian Convention, a 3-day long event for students, filled with theater workshops and shows that serves to strengthen technical and acting capabilities.

He also shares his hopes for using the money in the future to take

the students on trips such as watching a live performance in the Dallas Area.

Community raves

Overall, students and previous Haunted House attendees are ecstatic about the yearly return of the house. Every year the house gains more and more attention, bringing in community people from all different age groups with varying reactions to the atmosphere and scares. For some, the physical scaring aspect is scary enough. However, for others like 48-year-old Shannon Jackson, who finds he doesn't scare easily, the atmosphere created by the actors and the set's design makes

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The 2022 Van Alstyne Haunted House features a second story connected by a rising staircase. The staircase, which was a tech department-wide build, and primarily led by tech student Ben Smith (not pictured), is awaiting the bustling activities of opening night.

Photo by Alistair Slavin

Unforgettable Tradition

cont. from pg. 1

These unique foods, along with many others,

are just a taste of the new items that are coming to the State Fair this year. However, the focus point of attendees when asked about the food seems to be the corn dog. Fletcher's Fair booth is home to the classic corny dog, established in 1942 and flourishing to this day.

But it's also the rides!

So the food may play a major role in the State Fair of Texas, but when someone approaches the Fair what will they see first? The rides! More commonly known as Midway, the Texas State Fair provides more than 70 attractions, ranging from mirror mazes to the terrifying Top o' Texas Tower.

Just like the food, patrons are eager to feel the thrills and excitement that these attractions

give. According to Servati, "I'm always excited to hop on the thrill rides, but my favorite has to be the Ferris wheel. You can see for miles at the top, and the rush that comes over you when looking straight down can't be matched."

And how about that Livestock Show!

The Livestock Show at the State Fair of Texas drives a different crowd than the other two aspects normally do. This

part of the Fair brings people from all over the country to compete.

There are four different events that people participate in, including the Livestock Exhibitors, Horse Exhibitors, Youth Livestock Auction, and the rodeo. Rasor attends the annual showing events at the State Fair and even won last year's competition for the Champion Overall Shorthorn in the Junior Breeding Heifers. Rasor

says, "I love the thrill of the competition and getting to see all the spectacular animals.

It was amazing to see all my hard work pay off as I won my competition; the feeling was like no other and I can't wait to compete again this year."

Organization critical

With such a large project, there are also leadership positions and committees that oversee everything to

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Photo by Nautica Barker

Photos and fun

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<https://wallpaperaccess.com/full/1147379.jpg>

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Unforgettable Tradition

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make sure the Fair is the best it can be. The Fair’s Mitchell

Gleiber states, “We have a volunteer Board of Directors, which consists of about 20, including a Chairman of the Board.” This board is not the only leadership team within the fair, however.

“I manage our Senior Leadership team, who are all experts in their areas. It’s important to make sure everyone is working together towards the same common goal of holding a successful State Fair, then focusing on executing our nonprofit mission the remainder of the year.” This many people, as well as what Gleiber states to be more than 2,000 seasonal employees, create an experience that can last a lifetime after one visit. Gleiber started at the Fair as the head of marketing and sponsorships in 1999 then recently stepped up as the President of the Fair in 2014. Gleiber knows that with the fun of the fair, there are also challenges that arise constantly. He states, “We have challenges every day during the Fair. Each day is different, and you just have to be able to react and make quick decisions on how to best handle situations that arise.” Not only are there the daily circumstances that get called to Gleiber’s attention, but

also bigger challenges that if not executed accordingly could lead to disaster.

“The other big challenge comes from the fact that the State Fair is very diverse in terms of its offerings. We have departments that are very different from one another (Creative Arts, Midway, Livestock), and it’s important to make sure that all departments are working together for the greater good,” he explains. Mission of agriculture, education, and community involvement.

The State Fair of Texas is a tradition that promises something new every year. But it was originally created for a different reason from the fun and food. This nonprofit organization successfully executes a month-long project that leaves lasting memories and life-changing economic opportunities for thousands.

Gleiber expresses for his long-term goals for the Fair, “To continue to stage an annual State Fair that is highly successful and something that fairgoers will look forward to attending each year as part of an annual tradition. Then, using our proceeds to make an impact on the three areas that our mission focuses on... **agriculture, education, and community involvement.**

Developing and executing impactful programs that focus on those areas is very important to us.”

A word from the editor

Thank you for taking the time to read *the Viking* mini edition in honor of this spooky season. I hope that you are looking forward to this holiday season as much as I am. I plan to go with my son trick or treating this year, just as we did last year.

Last year I went as a tiger and my son went as Captain America. This year he is going as a Power Ranger, and I will be going as a butterfly. You are never too old to go trick or treating (in my opinion). I love seeing what everyone dresses up as on Halloween and getting to dress up myself.

With Thanksgiving and Christmas right around the corner the weather is also choosing to do some crazy drops. It’s hard to believe that just about a week or two ago it was 100 degrees outside. I have lived in Texas my entire life and I am still not used to how bipolar it is.

Do you like hot or cold weather better? I love being able to cozy up in jackets layered up, but I am also extremely cold natured and prefer the cold if I have a way to keep warm. I also love pumpkin pie and hot chocolate. So for me, I think I would have to say that I prefer cooler weather. Soon the leaves on the trees will change colors and go bare and we will have our Christmas decorations out.

Have you picked out your Halloween costume yet? Do you have any content for upcoming issues that involve Thanksgiving or Christmas? If you do be send them to me, they could be used in the next paper.

You can send any content you would like in *the Viking* to the editor Katherine Petri at:

prkpetri@vikings.grayson.edu

Happy Halloween everyone!!!



Photo of my son and I from his first time visiting the Gunter pumpkin farm in 2020.

Screams and Scares

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the house a worthwhile experience.

Jackson is a yearly attendee to the Haunted Houses and expresses great satisfaction with his experiences: “I have always loved going through the Haunted House... I don’t really get scared, but I love the atmosphere.

There is some great en-

ergy from the actors, and they play their parts well. I have never been disappointed with the house. I love going every year.” He describes the house as a perfect Halloween activity and enjoys that it “supports our theater kids and their effort.”

Jackson is a strong advocate for the house, believing it’s worth any-

one’s time, as its multitude of dynamic parts and immersive environment make it enjoyable for absolutely any age. Mullins shares his belief, stating, “I just really hope that people enjoy it, but also that people will allow themselves to get involved in the house and enjoy the [storyline], letting us take them on

this [journey]”

The Van Alstyne Haunted House is open 6-9 pm on October 24, 25, and 26. Tickets cost \$5 and can be purchased at the door. Donations, whether monetarily, supplies, costumes, or anything else, are graciously accepted as well.

Contact Theater Directory Jeremy Stein via

[email at jstein@vanalstyneisd.org](mailto:jstein@vanalstyneisd.org).

The Van Alstyne Theater Department is prepping, working, and excitedly anticipating their Haunted House’s opening night and are looking forward to being able to entertain and thrill the public.



Photo by Alistair Slavin



Photo by Kenessa Mullins

Eduardo Martinez and Sergio Hernandez



Flute and Guitar Concert

October 25 | 7pm
Cruce Stark Auditorium
Free Admission