

# THE VIKING VOYAGER

*Official student publication of Geneva Community High School*

## INTRO

In order to stick with tradition, the Voyager staff thought it would be important for the senior class to create a senior edition before graduation in order to get final messages out to the class of 2020, retiring teachers, and the community as a whole. What follows is a compilation of goodbye letters, articles, and statements by both GHS seniors and Voyager staff.

On a personal note, thank you to GHS and the Voyager Staff for helping me to get this together, even through the difficulties of quarantine. You will forever have my gratitude.

-- Alex Wilson

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# A Goodbye to GHS

By: Alex Wilson

I have changed immensely over my four years at GHS. Like most of my classmates, I came into high school a starry-eyed freshman, nervous but excited to start the last four years of my childhood. Now, conversely, I am nervous but excited to start the first four years of my adulthood in college. It will be an incredibly different experience from high school but I welcome it with open arms, along with the vast majority of my friends.

It is a uniquely strange experience, not having the final capstone to our senior year. I believe I can speak for most of my classmates when I say that graduation, love it or hate it, is an important transition for the majority of high school students. While many seniors have a period of time after graduation in which they feel aimless, set adrift between the worlds of their childhood and their adulthood, this year feels somewhat different. It simultaneously feels as if we are still high school students while also having graduated months ago. Hopefully our online graduation will serve as a satisfying substitute for the traditional one.

Some of my best memories come from the two clubs I ran throughout my upperclassmen years, the Viking Voyager and Model UN. Time spent discussing a variety of issues, from politics to physics, during Voyager meetings taught me all kinds of new stuff I never would have learned otherwise. Likewise, the time spent writing and editing articles for the paper improved my skills in both analyzing others' works as well as coming up with my own material. Model UN helped to shape me into both a better debater and a better compromiser, working with fellow delegates from across the world to solve any issue thrown at us. I will always look back on those experiences fondly, from my days as a timid freshman approaching the podium as the Austrian representative to discuss global disarmament to winning the best delegate award for my role as the Minister of Finance for Saudi Arabia. Similarly, I strengthened bonds with some of my closest friends through nights of cramming research and running to get boba tea before the midnight crisis.

While various special events such as the Orchestra's Texas trip, numerous Model UN conferences, and Eurotrip stand out from the rest of my high school experience, some of the best memories came from day-to-day activities in class. From spending entire days in Mrs. Salvato's AP Lang class discussing the merits of tiny enclaved nations to Mr. Bhatta's AP World History philosophy smackdown, my time at GHS was filled with laughs. I truly want to thank some of my favourite teachers and advisors who have guided me throughout my time at GHS. Without their help and support I would not be the same man I am today.

Overall, while this is a strange way to finish out our high school days, it is important to recognize that we are moving ahead to brighter futures. The world around us may be in chaos, but we have the unique opportunity to emerge from this and create incredible change. With our childhoods bookended by both 9/11 and the pandemic, we have a different perspective than anyone who came before us. We can be the vanguard for a generation of change and revolution. I wish you all the best, wherever your paths may take you.



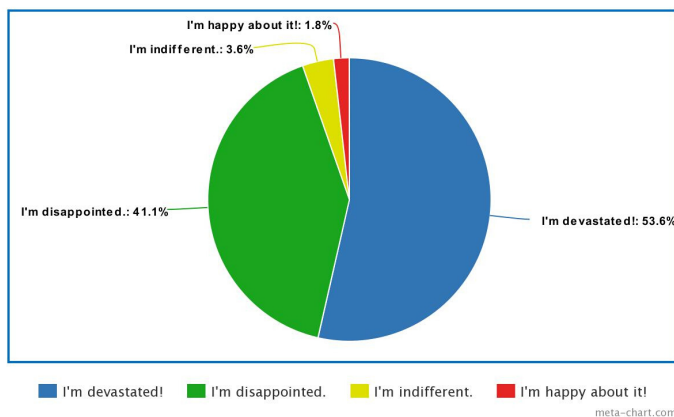
# Voyager's Senior Survey

By: Teagan King

Even though the class of 2020 has been dealt a devastating blow by having the traditional senior year experience taken from them, there is still a diversity in opinion among the individuals comprising the class of 2020 here at Geneva High School regarding how the end of this school year has shaped up. For many, COVID-19 has devastated their hopes of a traditional senior year experience, but for others, an online graduation ceremony is just an underwhelming change from the usual festivities. But one thing is certain: this year's graduation is unlike any other.

Since the beginning of quarantine, everyone's daily routines have been affected to some extent. Geneva's seniors are doing all sorts of things with their time, yet many still made schoolwork a priority. Out of the students who responded to the survey, 86% said that they had been doing some amount of remote learning work, but only 35% of those students have been doing all of their assigned work. As a result, seniors have much more free time on their hands, especially with the cancellation of spring sports. One respondent said: "the hardest thing... was coming to terms with spring sports being cancelled. It's incredibly unsettling that I played my last ever game of high school soccer without even realizing it." Instead of being preoccupied by sports and school, seniors have been filling their time with all sorts of activities. The majority of students have been relaxing with activities like reading or watching movies, resting their brains after four mentally taxing years of high school. At the same time, a large group reported that they're getting creative with their quarantine time, whether that is tapping into artistic talents or taking up a new hobby. However, no matter what students are doing with their unexpected time at home, they are making sure to use it well.

How have you felt about missing the rest of your senior year?

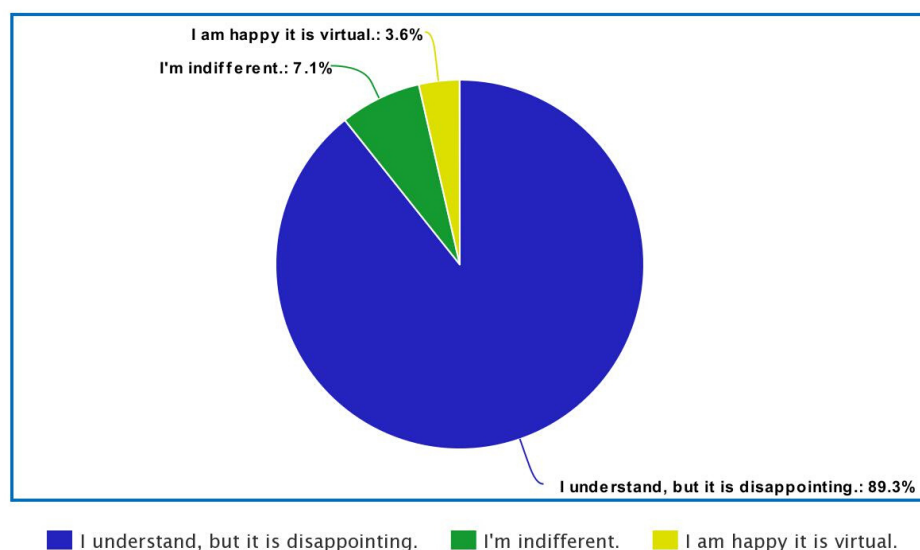


Despite the diversity in activities that students are using to fill their time, they are unified in their opinion regarding how the end of the school year turned out. An overwhelming majority of survey respondents said that they were upset in some capacity about not having a traditional high school graduation experience. One senior said that they “don’t think GHS is prioritizing an in-person graduation or prom... We have worked hard for four years and deserve more than a PowerPoint slide.” 46% said they were disappointed about missing the rest of the school year, while 51% said that they found it “devastating” and wished they had gotten the traditional senior year experience. A small minority expressed that they were indifferent to the change or even happy about having the school year cut short.

Geneva seniors also seem to be in agreement regarding the shift to a virtual graduation ceremony. 89% of seniors who responded to the survey expressed disappointment about having a virtual graduation ceremony instead of the traditional graduation experience, agreeing with the statement that they “understand why it is virtual, but it is hard to get over the fact that we do not get a traditional graduation.”

One student summed up how many have been feeling, saying that “Although we are not getting to finish off our senior year as it was supposed to be, this is all for the greater good and we are all going through the same struggles together.” Though there is a range in opinion among Geneva High School students about quarantine and graduation, one thing is certain: this school year has been like no other, but we are all experiencing it together and all of us will come out stronger because of it.

How do you feel about the virtual graduation ceremony?





# A Farewell to Retiring Teachers

## Mrs. Huffman

Huffman was always the first to accommodate any student's needs. Whether it was an early morning or a late afternoon, she was determined to find a way to to remove every obstacle in the path of her students success. Her retirement marks the end of career full of empathy and honest interest in students' lives that few could match. - Eric Palmquist

## Mrs. Ulbrich

Thank you for everything that you did for GHS! Your help in personal finance and business classes inspired students to become entrepreneurs and taught them about taxes and financial responsibility. Without your help, many of your former students would have been unprepared for the future. Thank you for so many great years of teaching!

# Mrs. Dispensa

You may just be the most ideal combination of energy and brilliance I have yet encountered in a classroom. Though your time with Geneva High School is concluding (and probably not in the expected manner), the legacy you leave is expansive. From generations of students who attribute their ability and passion for science to you, to creating new and better curriculums, you've done a great deal to further education. Enjoy your retirement, and never forget that when in doubt, stoich it out! - Valdis Slokenbergs

# Mr. Nickelson

It's sad to see Mr. Nickelson graduating with the seniors this year. His classes were certainly intense, but they were also rewarding, teaching us more than we ever would have expected and allowing us to keep both our understanding and grades afloat with the extremely helpful test corrections. It's a shame to know that future chemistry students will never hear "Click click click buzz buzz!", but the chemistry students who had the pleasure of having will never forget his class. - Matthew Granquist

# Mr. Pease

P.E. with Mr. Pease has always been incredibly fun! While he may be leaving GHS with us this year, it will be hard for any of his students to forget his understanding temperament. We always had fun in his class playing sports with our friends, from pickleball to volleyball. It can be assured that none of us will forget the Turkey Trot, whether we loved it or loathed it. Thanks for so many great years of teaching and we all wish you the best in retirement!

# Ms. Lawrence

Ms. Lawrence has played a large role in my high school experience. I was in orchestra all four years, so Ms. Lawrence was the only teacher that I had every year of high school, which made orchestra class extra special. Orchestra was something that I looked forward to every day, and Ms. Lawrence definitely played a part in that. She has always been so passionate about teaching and spreading her love of music to her students. - Teagan King



# Thanks, GHS!

By: Ian Watson

As I reflect upon my time at Geneva High School, and upon the time cut short, I remember the fantastic memories I made with my friends. One that stands out was our orchestra trip to Texas, where I rode halfway across the country in an uncomfortable bus, slept on a rock-hard seat, and ate downright terrible food just to spend time with my friends. The single most important part of high school was the people I was able to meet. We goofed off, got in trouble, learned, and had the most fun I have had in my life so far. My time at GHS was the best I could have possibly been. I've met lifelong friends; people I can confide in and who I would trust with my life.

Through my clubs and extracurricular activities, I met the vast majority of my friends. I participated on the robotics team for three years and was a part of Model UN and Scholastic Bowl for four years each. Those clubs introduced me to some incredible people through crazy fun competitions and events. I was able to spend a full day discussing the intricate political details of Star Wars at Model UN and our Scholastic Bowl team won second place in a regional tournament. Of course, I also wrote for the Viking Voyager, and although I only wrote this past year, I have learned so much from the other students in this club and have been able to have a platform to improve my writing and have my voice heard, and for that I will be forever grateful.



# So long, farewell, GHS!

By: Teagan King

My four years at Geneva High School were full of many ups and downs, but I would not trade them for anything. Having the privilege to go to a school like Geneva has shaped me into who I am, thanks to the amazing resources at this school, and the wonderful students and staff I have met throughout my four years. Even though we all have our own paths to follow, I am infinitely grateful for the times mine has crossed with others at some point during my time at Geneva High School, to shape me into who I am today.

Of course, having the chapter of high school end and the college adventure begin is bittersweet any year, but there is an extra layer to that feeling this year. With such an abrupt end to the year, seniors, myself included, do not get the proper celebration or closure that the years before us experienced. I know it is disappointing to many of us, and it requires all of us to redefine our idea of "graduation" in a completely new way.

The end of high school-- "quarantine style"-- has definitely been hard on seniors, but we cannot forget about the teachers retiring this year as well. Like us, May 2020 signifies the end of their time at Geneva High School, but of course the teachers retiring had no idea that the last day they saw their students in class back in March would be the last time ever.

Even though this year is not ending how any of us thought it would, at least we can be grateful for what Geneva High School has given us. For me, these four years allowed me to learn numerous things about myself and many important life lessons that I will carry with me to college and beyond. During high school, I made new friends and lost some too, but that's all just part of "the journey," right? It taught me more about myself and the world around me, which is infinitely valuable. My time at Geneva has also allowed me to discover my passions, which made school more exciting and definitely came in handy as I embarked on my college application journey in the fall of senior year. I learned to challenge myself to be the best student and person I could be, and without the great resources and talented faculty at GHS, I don't know where I would be today. So, even though senior year looks different this year, this form of "different" may not necessarily be all that bad.



Alex Wilson will be attending Carleton College to study history and political science.



Matt Granquist will be attending Brown University to study creative writing and mathematics.



Sylvie Croteau will be attending Murray State University to study business and English literature.





Ian Watson will be attending Oberlin College to study human computer interaction.



Teagan King will be attending University of Missouri to study international relations and journalism.

Thanks to all of our senior writers for their amazing contributions to the Voyager and GHS over the years!

# A Final Letter from Ms. Laird

Seniors,

If I had a magic wand to undo how this year would end, trust me, I would be the first to wave that wand. How could anyone predict that this was the way the school year would end? And of all years, your senior year. I know that many of you are feeling defeated and that this is all unfair: missing prom, graduation, and the end of the year festivities that conclude your adolescent school years. Know that you have the right to feel upset, but I can assure you that in time that feeling will fade. While you will forever be remembered as the class that graduated during a global pandemic, more importantly, you will be remembered for your character and how you each showed grace, determination, and resilience during this difficult time.

At the ripe age of eighteen years old, you've now completed your required schooling. While most of you will go on to college, some have ended their school careers entirely. Whether you are going to college, entering the workforce or a trade, or serving our country in the most respective military branches in the world, you will head down those paths and find success. I just know it.

As you conclude a chapter in your life and plan to begin a new one, there is something important that I ask you to do. I credit Mr. Rogers – unfortunately not our principal Mr. Rogers but the infamous TV personality – who often asked people to participate in an exercise to reflect on how you got to where you are and who helped you get there. Take ten seconds and pause to think about the people who have cared about you and have wanted what was best for you in life. Parents, siblings, friends, teachers, coaches... Mr. Rogers used to say that “whomever you’ve been thinking about, how pleased they must be to know the difference you feel they have made.”

This letter and year cannot end without acknowledging the hard-working seniors who manage to keep Voyager sailing. Alex, Sylvie, Teagan, Matt, and Ian – thank you for your dedication to journalism over the years. You all filled that classroom up with joy and laughter every Tuesday and Thursday and you will truly be missed. I have no doubt, however, that you will each be successful in your post high school endeavors. Keep on writing and doing what you love, and know that you are always welcome back to A108.

Congratulations GHS Class of 2020! I wish you all the best because you deserve the best.

- Ms. Laird