



# The Comet Newsletter

January 2020

## A Family Divide

It was Christmas Eve, and my extended family had just sat down for dinner. We began to eat, smiling and joking all around. You could almost say it was like the early 2000's -- except, well, I hadn't been born yet.

There was one stark contrast, though. As I looked around, each of my relatives had a device less than one foot away from them, at hand's reach. My little cousin had put his iPad next to his plate, grubby fingerprints smeared all over. My aunt's



Samsung was daintily resting on her water cup. Even my dad -- who claims to be a technology abstainer -- had slipped his phone into his jeans pocket, one tap away from seeing the weather forecast, or the latest New York Times article, or a photo from our last trip.

At first, the technology that surrounded our dinner didn't seem to be a distraction. But one by one, as the meal progressed, family members began to succumb to the urge to peek at their devices, perhaps discreetly swipe a few times under the tablecloth. My cousins, for one, went all out, hefting their tablets sturdily onto their half-full plates and going to town with games. Conversation across the table went on, but it became more absent-minded and preoccupied.

Believe it or not, this is a real scenario across the US that happens in more than just our household. When each member of the family has a device, it's easy to forget the simple pleasure of spending quality time with one another. With this

technology use comes dire consequences. Research done at Illinois State University reports that parents who spend lots of time on technological devices

“Technology can affect interactions between parents and children.”

have children with behavioral problems such as acting out and crying. “Technology can affect interactions between parents and children,” Brandon McDaniel, a family and consumer science assistant professor, adds. “We need to critically examine our device use... [and] be mindful of how phones can influence us.”

Of course, humans also harness technology for good. There are times where Google Maps or TripIt have guided my family out of some sticky situations. But it would be more sticky of a situation if technology influenced us to stop talking to each other at all. So on that note, don’t forget to pass the mashed potatoes -- yes, the bowl next to my uncle’s phone.

- Naomi Ling

## Travel

The aftermath of missing a week of school to go to San Francisco was not enjoyable whatsoever, but my week that I spent there was incredible. Within the span of a couple days, I managed to visit all the well known destinations and lots of other unique places outside of San Francisco including Downtown Berkeley and Silicon Valley. My trip involved a lot of walking, this ensured that I could stop whenever and wherever I wanted. I walked across the Golden Gate Bridge, around North Beach, and passed through Fisherman’s Wharf numerous times. I stopped at hole in the walls in Chinatown, ate from authentic pizza shops at North Beach, devoured loads of chocolates at Ghirardelli Square, and had some awesome bread at the Boudin Bread Bakery. I rode the iconic cable cars, visited Lombard Street, strolled along Ocean Beach and admired the scenery at the Palace of Fine Arts. My favorite part of my trip had to be viewing the city from above at the Coit Tower. If I ever get another



chance, I would definitely go back and walk the uneven streets of San Francisco and spend time in this fascinating city.

- Alyssa Ma

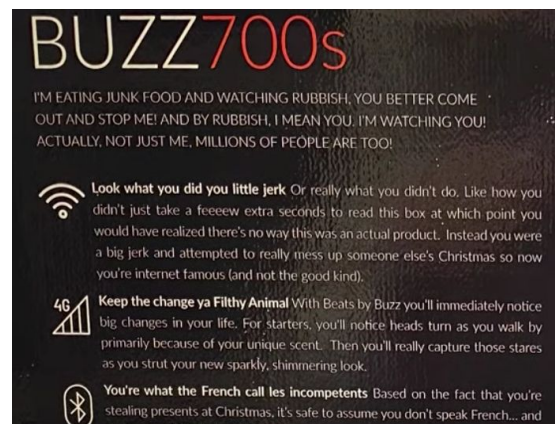
## Comet Talk

### Worried About Losing Holiday Packages to Porch Pirates? Don't Fret, They Won't Stand a Chance Against Glitter Bomb 2.0.

Now that the holiday season is in full swing, more and more people are turning to Amazon for last-minute gifts. Unfortunately, all the wonderful things the company provides, like same-day delivery and killer deals come with a drawback -- the risk of porch pirates. Companies have released gadgets like Ring video doorbells and Nest Hello to deter thieves, but tons of things can still go wrong. For instance, even though Ring promised to only look at publicly shared videos and videos from Ring owners who let them, in 2018, the company was caught letting its team view the videos of users who did not provide consent. Talk about privacy invasion.

Here's where Mark Rober, a NASA engineer turned Youtube sensation, stepped up. After a \$5 package was stolen from his porch, he set out to send all porch pirates a clear message: if they were going to mess around, it had better not be on his property. The mission was accomplished with several booby-trapped boxes that unleashed a cloud of glitter to any unsuspecting burglars. Now, Rober has unveiled a more sinister version of his first design. With fart spray, a countdown clock, fake police scanner chatter, and of course, tons of biodegradable glitter, the new glitter bomb is sure to make all porch pirates think twice about raiding your porch.

The [idea](#) is that once the booby trap (designed to look like a package for Bose headphones) is opened, a magnet inside triggers a sensor, which then tells the circuit board to let the glitter and fart spray

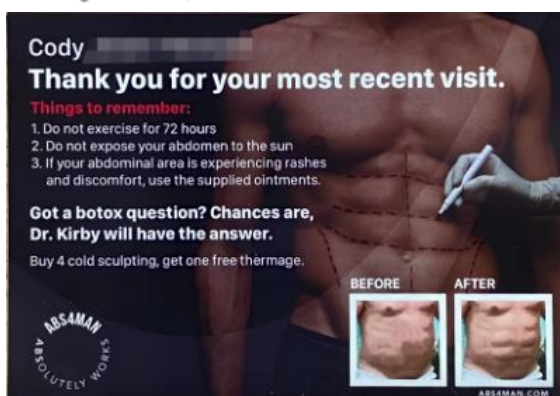


erupt. To add insult to injury, the fake police scanner chatter and countdown clock adds to the chaos shortly after. Rober even hid four phones in each bomb with one-way tape to record the porch pirates hilarious reactions from several perspectives and monitor the bomb's current locations.



After Rober added the finishing touches to the glitter bombs, he reached out to his followers on social media, asking for six volunteers to test the fruits of his labor. Not surprisingly, over 400 people signed up, tired of dealing with package theft. Some things didn't go as planned. One bomb leaked glitter, another rode in a UPS truck for some time instead of detonating, and another was stolen by a volunteer. The poor man, known as Cody, was bombarded with \$300 worth of Scientology materials and tons of wacky postcards addressed to him and his neighbors. "What do you think I'm going to do to the guy who steals the outcome of that year and a half of work? I quit my job at NASA to make YouTube videos," Rober quipped.

Some of the intriguing postcards "Cody," the volunteer who stole a glitter bomb, received.



In the end, however, most things went pretty smoothly, as the video shows. Besides getting to teach the porch pirates a brutal lesson, Rober also had the chance to reward the good guys. He left some packages by an apartment mailbox, and instead of opening it, some passerby called Rober, worried that



someone else would take it. They were awarded a thank-you from the Youtuber, and better yet, \$400 in cash.

Who knows, someday you might be one of the lucky volunteers for the Glitter Bomb 3.0. Don't torment yourself with the thought of porch pirates; instead, spend more time on handmade gifts for family and friends this holiday season!

- Emily Zhang

## What's Happening?

### The New Year (and Decade)

Welcome back everyone! We all hope you enjoyed your Winter Break.

Unfortunately, this does mark the end of the holiday season, but don't fret! This is the perfect time to start your New Year's resolutions, not only for this year, but for the whole decade. Speaking of decades, can you believe we're now just as close to 2040 as 2000? It's the time of new beginnings, so be sure to think about the future while enjoying the present. Maybe it's time to work a little harder in



school and extracurriculars? Or maybe you've been working too hard and it's time to change your mindset, because nothing is more important than your physical and mental health. If you're stuck on coming up with resolutions, just think about what little or big things you can do to make your life happier and healthier.

### Ugly Sweater Day

Last December, CMS students and staff went to school dressed in their ugliest sweaters in honor of this spirit day.

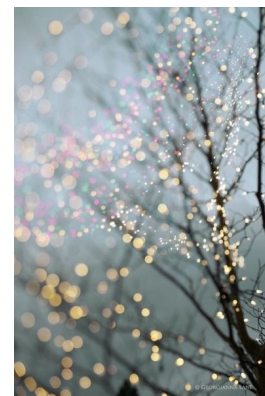
Here's a photo of some eighth graders decked out in their holiday-themed spirit wear!



-Alexandra Ni

### Movie/Pajama Day!

On December 20th, CMS had its annual Movie Matinee. It was also Pajama Day, the coziest school day of the year. I personally had a lot of fun watching *Monsters Inc.* with my friends. Sadly, this was my second and last time at the Movie Matinee, and I'll miss it a lot. This tradition is the perfect way to ease right into winter break!



### National History Day

It's that time of year again. The judges are excited, Mrs. Savopoulos and Mrs. Ceglia are stressed, and the eighth graders are -- well, let's just say they have very *mixed* emotions. To my fellow participants, here's just a reminder that the due dates for all student entries are February 3rd and the official CMS National History Day is February 6th. Good luck everyone!

### School Closings

This month, there will be two planned school closings, and maybe more if we get lucky with the weather. There will not be school on January 20th in celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and school off on the 27th for a professional work day for teachers.

### Other Important Dates

**Super Bowl LIV** will be on February 2nd, airing on Fox at 6:30 Eastern. It will decide the NFL's 100th season league champion, and will have Shakira and Jennifer Lopez performing during halftime.

The **92nd Academy Awards Ceremony**, better known as the Oscars, will be held on February 9th. The Oscars are awarded to exemplary artists and technicians in the film industry. It will be aired on ABC.

The **Lunar New Year** will be on January 25th this year, and there will be plenty of celebrations all over Howard County.

- Livia Zhao



## Sports Time

The Ravens won the AFC North Conference with a record of fourteen wins and two losses. The football season is getting much more exciting with all of these amazing scores, so stay updated. In soccer, Liverpool won the FIFA Club World Cup, beating Copa Libertadores champion Flamengo 1-0 in extra time.



- Justin Blackman

## The Ultimate List of January Holidays

The month of January has a lot more holidays than just the New Year. Read below to learn about some interesting holidays.

1. **New Years Day** (the 1st) - The start of the next year, only 19% of Americans make (and keep) their resolutions. Another 36% make them but don't keep them, and surprisingly, 57% don't even attempt to make a resolution!
2. **The Lunar New Year** (the 25th) - Most people consider the first of every January as the New Year. However, according to the moon or 'lunar' calendar, the New Year (this year) is on the 25th. The Lunar New Year doesn't always happen on the 25th, unlike the New year, it's exact date changes, as the moon cycles differently than the sun (we base our calendars off of the sun).
3. **National Whipped Cream Day** (the 5th) - Referred to as "milk snow" in the olden days, this sweet, fluffy cream really hits the spot! But can you imagine piling 71/4 inches of it on a Hot Chocolate? Melissa Arkin and Casey McLaughlin did, on a stop at the RecordSetter book tour.
4. **International Holocaust Remembrance Day** (the 27th)- On this day, 1945, the survivors at the last death camp were rescued. This day was inaugurated in the hope that nobody would ever commit this terrible crime again.
5. **Martin Luther King Jr. Day** (the 20th) - Martin Luther helped our country in so many ways that it was decided that he has a day all to himself. Unlike most holidays, Martin Luther King Jr. Day changes every year. When the

idea to honour Martin by devoting a day to him came about, there were only two other historical figures who had their own days, Christopher Columbus and George Washington.

6. **National Kazoo Day** (the 28th) - Personally, the noise of a kazoo annoys me, but I know a number of people who like the noise of this instrument toy. Even though it was created in 1840 by Alabama Vest, the kazoo wasn't commercially produced until 1912 with help of Emil Sorg and Michael McIntyre.
7. **National Pie Day** (the 23rd) - Did you know that Apple Pie is everyone's year round favorite? Or that very few like Lemon Meringue? (I like any pie as long as it is in my mouth and not on my face.) 44% of people admit to buying their pies, while 30% buy the crust and make the filling, and only 26% make their pies from scratch (or so they claim). How do you like your pie?

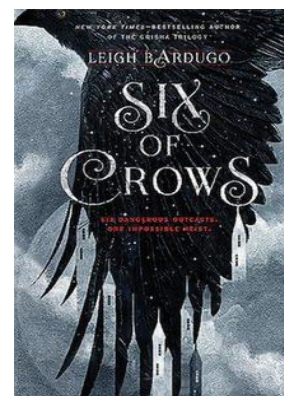
Want to find some holidays to research on your own? Check out <https://nationaltoday.com/january-holidays/> for more!

- Sitara Chakkamadathil

### Book Nook

*The Six of Crows* by Leigh Bardugo is a wonderfully crafted novel about a dangerous, impossible heist. Six teenagers work together to free a man from an impenetrable facility. This man holds a dangerous secret that could threaten people's safety and start a war. In this formidable group of teenagers, there is Kaz, the thief, Inej, the wraith, Jesper, the sharp shooter, Wylan, the brains, Nina, the outcast, and Matias, the traitor. However, the group soon learns that there is someone else after the same man and their intent is to harbor the man's secret and use it for personal gain. Who will break the man out of the facility first?

This book is truly a page turner and will surely make you laugh! Make sure to check out the book!



- Shruti Vadlakonda



## Meme Review

### Memes of the Decade

Hello everyone, welcome back to CMS Meme Review. While I'm writing this, it will still be 2019, but by the time you read this it will be 2020! With this new special occasion, people all over Reddit have been arguing over which meme/meme figure should be the Meme of the Decade.

#### 1. Baby Yoda

On November 12th, 2019, 'Baby Yoda' appeared in the very recent TV show, *The Mandalorian*. Blowing up on Twitter, the fans dubbed the unnamed face 'baby yoda', though 'baby yoda' does not grow up to be the Yoda we know. The template is often used to symbolize a child reacting to adult behavior.



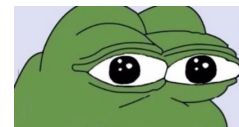
#### 2. Joji/Filthy Frank/Pink Guy



From 2011-2017 George Miller started the breakout trend of The Harlem Shake and ran a very successful edgy channel on Youtube under the names of Filthy Frank, Pink Guy, etc. Soon, the channel became a burden for Miller, causing stress-induced seizures and medical problems. Now, Miller is able to live up to his childhood dream of being an RnB singer, signed to Asian-American record label 88Rising. During his time on Youtube, Miller had and still has a large following that have now grown to respect his wishes and changes.

#### 3. Pepe

With its first appearance on a comic strip called the *Boy's Club* by Matt Furie in 2005, the 'sad' frog became a popular meme with a long reign. Yet all good things come to an end, and Pepe, with an original purpose to be nothing



more than “pointless, early 20-something college humor”, was adopted by alt-right groups with racist intent and is now classified as a hate symbol. Can a down-trodden meme be glorified again? Reddit sure hopes so.

#### 4. Stefán Karl Stefánsson

In 2002, Stefánsson created the pilot of the infamous Icelandic *Lazy Town* TV show, trying to teach kids that they should eat a good diet. He played Robbie Rotten, a villain dead set on staying unhealthy. Two years after the last episode of *Lazy Town*, 2016, Stefánsson was diagnosed with Bile Duct Cancer, and died in 2018. He is remembered today by his charity against bullying, the Rainbow Children.



- Estelle Chen

### Sources

*Worried About Losing Holiday Packages to Porch Pirates? Don't Fret, They Won't Stand a Chance Against Glitter Bomb 2.0.*

- [Glitter bomb 2.0: Former NASA engineer is zapping porch pirates to keep packages safe](#) (Washington Post)

*Memes of the Decade*

- Disney+
- The Viral Mastermind Behind The Harlem Shake Meme Wrote An Album About Heartbreak (HBO), VICE News, [The Viral Mastermind Behind The Harlem Shake Meme Wrote An Album About Heartbreak \(HBO\)](#)
- [How Pepe the frog became a racist symbol](#)

*A Family Divide*

- [Parents' technology addictions lead to behavioral problems in kids, study says](#) (Chicago Tribune)

*What's Happening?*

- [When is Super Bowl 2020? Date, location, odds, halftime show for Super Bowl 54 \(SportingNews\)](#)
- [Lynette Howell Taylor and Stephanie Allain to Produce the 92nd Oscars](#)

## About Us

Hey! The Comet Team consists of seventeen middle schoolers who enjoy writing, editing, and journalism. Contact us at [thecometnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:thecometnewsletter@gmail.com); we would love to hear feedback!

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