

Pg. 7

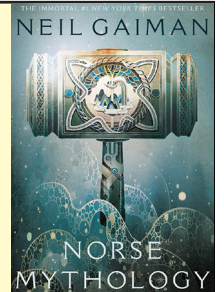


Pg. 2

THIS WEEK'S
THE READLIST

Featuring:
Northern Lights by Phillip Pullman
Norse Mythology by Neil Gaiman
The Book Thief by Markus Zusak
Lord of the Flies by William Golding

Pg. 8



WESTERN POLITICS

-Pranav Chandhoke, ISC Batch of 2019

‘West ruling the West from the West Wing.’ Sounds dream-like for an alliteration lover.

The 59th Presidential Elections of the United States of America became a whole lot more interesting with Kanye West announcing his aspirations for debatably the most powerful position in the world. Looking at the amount of ridicule his announcement received, one might be fooled into believing that the Presidential elections are something that Americans take very seriously. The reality, however, is very different from this. Despite the supposed dignity of the post, the conduct of certain American Presidents has often been a cause of embarrassment to their nation. Be it Lyndon Johnson waving about his ‘member’ in the Capitol bathroom while discussing a pending legislation with a colleague or Donald Trump refusing to wear a mask during the coronavirus pandemic, Americans should not be too critical of the idea of a rapper sitting in the Oval Office.

At this point, however, it becomes imperative to note that West is more than just a rapper. A contributing member of the American society who not only has a brilliant business acumen but has long demanded for pro gun reforms – sounds exactly like someone the United States needs at its helm. Kanye West is someone who has neither shied away from the cameras, nor has he been afraid of speaking his mind. West’s reputation of being a person who dislikes beating around the bush precedes him. As someone who can interrupt Taylor Swift while she is giving her acceptance speech at the VMAs and allege that President George W. Bush did not care about ‘black people’ during the hurricane Katrina, he is surely ready to face-off with Donald Trump and Joe

Biden in the fabled Presidential Debates. Kanye West becoming President would evidently mean that his wife, Kimberly Kardashian West, would become First Lady. Her becoming the First Lady would absolutely be ‘The American Dream’ coming true, for her at least. Known for her fair share of controversies, Kim Kardashian would certainly spice things up in the White House.

Kanye has his own Pandora’s Box full of controversies too. When he first announced that he would be running for President, social media ridiculed him on the basis that his announcement was nothing more than a publicity gimmick. There were reports of him withdrawing from the race just days after his announcement. These, however, turned out to be ‘fake news’ — something that America should consider trademarking. Celebrities in American politics may generate a lot of hue and cry, but have rarely gone on to make a difference. Once in power, celebrities do not have a strong record of governing. Those that manage to be successful in political roles are the exception, not the rule. Their lack of experience and knowledge of laws and governing often make their campaigns disastrous. At best, they continue with the status quo of dysfunctional politics.

Kanye West, in his first interview after announcing his aspirations to live in the White House, stated that he would be modelling his Presidency after the fictional (hopefully not) kingdom of Wakanda and that he would be naming his party ‘The Birthday Party’. His first rally in South Carolina was an ‘hour-long ramble’ where he declared that he wants an America where marijuana would be free and having children would entitle people to receive a million dollars. Such statements without a sound justification would make one wonder how far he

would make it in his bid for Presidency. With Donald Trump declaring that he might not accept the election results if he is defeated, Kanye West missing out on filing his nomination in atleast 4 states and Joe Biden being the non-controversy creating candidate

(what a disappointment), we are yet to see if 2020 has yet another debacle up its sleeve. Whatever the elections and this year may have to offer, it would be truly be a wonder to see the West family take their place in the aptly named West Wing.

Lilies

-Anoushka S. Rabha, Associate Editor

Even as those who die go on to the next great adventure an echo of them remains with those who lived. It can sometimes be evoked by a wreath of lilies laid down on a misty November morning or by the faint smile that graced their lips while remembering a day that nudged their heart towards healing. Their forgotten selves reflecting in the fleeting moment, as she hears the quiet hum of the careworn world reverting to the course set by the fates.

The sighs escaped her painful hold as she noticed those who had been nothing short of strangers while the remembered was breathing, finding it convenient now to dab their tears and basking in the supposed mourning. Since her return to the world she had once yearned to leave, the heroes and villains of her youth had traded places with a bewildering intensity. Her heart ached with unrestrained sorrow as she glanced around the room, full of people brought together under the pretext of shared tragedy. The questions that have found a home in her mind weighed her down with a terrifying thought of answers better left undisturbed. The mourners, mourning the mourned one, whose beliefs were diminished and disregarded by time. Even in death she could feel the rift, betraying the sentimentality that she fought to keep.

Once, she had struggled to restrain herself from screaming the truth, that she had nurtured for years, like a woman possessed. It was only afterwards that she realised that interpreting the situation as any other

crusader would have been wide off the mark: there were expectations for receiving the same fealty in return, which was what had ultimately swung the scales. Had it been few years earlier, she would have turned a blind eye to it, for that was all she had known. Only now, though none the wiser, she had experienced far more and knew that fate was a fickle mistress and had learnt somewhere along the way that there were things worth the wait. That was how she found herself here today, dressed impeccably in the colour of mourning with a dash of bold rebellion painted in red on her lips. The colour made her pale skin shine like a subdued beacon in sharp contrast, with her hair spilling down and dancing with the wind. All this while, she had never suspected that it had been anything other than what she had assumed it to be. Nevertheless, she seemed to feel an odd sort of sadness, as portrayed by her uncharacteristically strong grip on the little hand she held even as her eyes spoke of a relentless strength. Some were mourning the loss of a friend, some pretending to be overcome with grief at the untimely demise of a person they had once been acquainted with, and in a corner were the ones who braved the heartache to grudgingly come to terms with reality of the death of one who will forever live in their hearts. Then there she was, separated from the crowd, watching with a distinct detachment only to glance down at the one by her side oblivious of the fact that these people were mourning the father that she'll never know.

Take Me Back

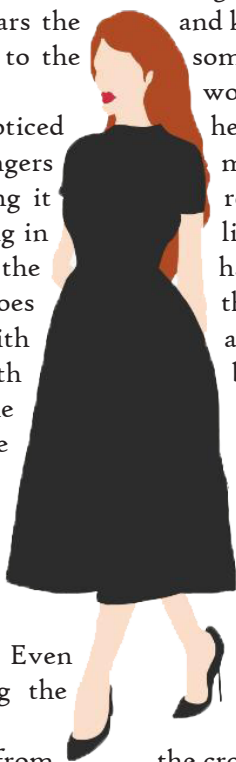
-Havika Apang, XII

It is the month of June and weirdly enough, I am at home. For the past nine years, I have never been in Shillong at this time of the year. I have become so accustomed to the AVS calendar that it honestly feels ridiculous to stay at home for longer than two months. Yet here I am, in the middle of a pandemic, stuck at home.

I had never pictured myself complaining about staying at home longer than expected and always rejoiced when I fell sick at the time of return. However, with each

passing day, I find myself thinking about AVS more and more. I sit alone in the luxury of my bedroom, surrounded by snacks; yet I find myself wanting nothing more than to sit in my four-person room and discuss the contents of lunch and how it could be improved with my roommates. If I were at school right now, I would be as busy as any other Aviator, juggling inter-house activities, coming late from swimming specialisation or preparing for summer fest. I would always be in a hurry,

AVE, Saturday, 25th July



my relaxation time would be filled with complaints about the heat, and the tension of the boards would prevent me from drifting off to sleep during class hours. Summer is the season filled with activities, yet here I am, utterly bored.

Sitting in my room and brooding for hours has made me realise how much I really do miss school. And surprisingly, I miss the things that I usually complain about. I miss having to dreadfully wake up for morning conditioning. I miss having to rush back from first class to not get locked out of the CDH, miss having to attend classes in the scorching heat. I miss having the

dame burst into my room and give me a lecture on the untidiness of my unit. I miss all of it.

I think it is thus safe to say that I am helplessly homesick. In 2012, I had to adjust to a brand new lifestyle and it was very tough for me, and I am surprised that in 2020, I have to do the same adjustment all over again. But now, instead of missing Shillong, I miss my school.

However, the benefit of having already done this is that now I have a few tricks up my sleeve to bear the homesickness. I will use the same method I had learnt all those years ago. I will count down the days till I return home.

The Hushed Abnormality

-Jigyasa Barsha, XII

In these three months of lockdown, there were 66 rape cases and 142 molestation cases reported to the police, not counting those unreported. Statistically it showed that incidents of rape had gone down by 83% during the lockdown. The 83% seemed a greater relief to people than the numbers 66 and 142.

India has a population of more than one billion and it's really tough to get things together. Waking up every morning to stories of varied tragedies and subsequent dharnas for justice have become common fold. It is interesting how matters of justice especially those that are women centric often have no hope of mitigation unless they garner national interest. The exhaustive burden on the Judiciary and the mountain of pending cases, do not make matters easy. Justice, they say is a strange conundrum where facts depend on physical witnesses. While this may make The Perfect Murder a great watch, to a victim, it poses the challenge of seeking justice by proving that ill had indeed been perpetrated.

We live in a country where one of the most brutal rape cases that shook the society and became the source for multiple case studies and documentaries, took 8 long years of dedicated pursuit to meet its deserved end despite a truckload of physical evidences. The Nirbhaya Case stayed caught in a loop of legal ambiguities and political quicksand which goes on to specify why rape, as a crime refuses to abate. Political nonchalance, Judicial dispassion and societal mindset, which continues to hold the woman responsible for such a fate, strengthens the arm of the twisted mind who knows that such a crime in all likelihood, will go unseen, unrecorded

and unpunished. The world of the 4G and exposure to a wider global spectrum has also seen a steep rise in juvenile crime, considering the primordial nature of the Indian Penal Code, which sets such underaged criminal with merely a time in a correctional home, free to the world and society at large. Armed as they are with a criminal bent of mind, a twisted sense of entitlement, a convoluted psyche but now also possess a legal know-how of how to get away, scot-free. This in turn leads to rise in sexual crime against children as young as barely a year old. While the debate between the human rights of such juvenile criminals, the possibility of corrections and second chances continue, we also send the trajectories of accusations questioning the morality of women on the basis of their choice of clothes, unhindered.

In India, the punishment for rape cases is 10 years or more in jail, and in the rarest of cases, death penalty. Is rape, and the nuances caught between the underaged and an adult woman, so vast, that it qualifies very little attention and discussion? Why does it require the use of a rod or a stone or something equally intriguing for it to be deemed inhumane or a matter of national interest? Rape, in itself, is a vicious crime! The pain, trauma and humiliation a victim is burdened with, stays for life. She is stripped off her dignity, confidence, faith and belief, her already fragile existence now a constant battle.

Rape as a crime is seen as a punishable offence by death or life imprisonment in most countries across the world. In India, the number of cases registered, the convictions negligible, and the punishment thereon, inconsequential. The fate of these victims depends on our conscience which inevitably is the spirit of the society we are a part of and live in.



Illustration: Sourav Khodal

Study Abroad and Your Career Will Thank You

-Abhinav B Gogoi,

Education and Career Consultant & Vice President - Inspirus Education,
Alumnus - The Assam Valley School

In November 2010, on a cold wintry morning I was standing on an anchorage on the Magellan Strait in Punta Arenas about to board a German research vessel. There was nervous excitement in the air as I walked towards the ship. The heavy gusts of wind, the overcast sky, the smell of the briny strait and the stench of decaying seaweed brought about an uneasy calm in me, much like before a storm. Among all the thoughts running through my head of what the next three months will bring forth, I was most excited of the icebergs and whales that my colleagues and I will encounter on our way to Antarctica passing through the stormy Southern Ocean on the R/V Polarstern.

I had felt the same nervous excitement, in August 2004, waiting to board my Lufthansa flight from Delhi that will take me to study abroad in Germany at the Jacobs University Bremen. The anxious tinge on my face and the edgy beating of my heart was not because this would be my first time traveling abroad, but rather I was traveling alone without my family members accompanying me. As I sat on my seat and broke in to a sigh of relief, little did I know that it was the

start of multiple assays, prepared to test the core of the international student characteristics in me!

I landed in Frankfurt and at once, I noticed the alien weather, odd language, tall, fair and big people, somber food, pink money, green and yellow direction signs and funky electronic billboard advertisements. I decided to explore the airport as I had a few hours before my next flight and got on the sky train. I noticed very soon that the flight gate numbers reached triple figures and it was getting difficult to find my way around. I was lost.

Fast forward to a frantic run at pace and illegible spurts of huffs of broken German asking for directions, I did manage to board my connecting flight to Bremen, much to the chagrin and amusement of the Lufthansa flight host. I landed at the airport in Bremen, but there was no sign or presence of my host family. The bag handle broke somewhere midair, I presume for forcefully

stuffing 30 kilos of my belongings. I was unsure of how to read the metro and train maps in German to reach the university. Hence, I started profiling prospective international students who might have landed at Bremen airport to study at Jacobs. On my third conversation with strangers, much to my relief, I did find one student from Ghana in Africa, who was heading the same way. I landed on a Sunday when university officials were mostly away and offices were closed, except for a few student volunteers and the university guards. I was



given my room key and it read D-211 at the Mercator Building, which I later discovered was recently erected, and was the root cause of further stress for the day. Even with the help of the student volunteer, I could not find Block D in the building. After searching for about an hour in the stinging rain, we came up trumps with only Block A, B, and C for the umpteenth time. Much consultation later, we realized that Block D are the connecting parts to A, B and C.

The next day, during the academic orientation with my academic advisor,

I discovered that I was registered for the Electrical Engineering and Computer Science Major and not my preferred Earth and Space Sciences. It did not however take long to change my Major and my international student journey was finally underway. From my orientation week at the Jacobs University until the day in 2010 on the anchorage, it had been a learning experience like never before. I was able to travel to 33+ countries, interact with people from 150+ nationalities, learn a new language, try multiple different cuisines, research about Earth's past and its climate, explore the cold ocean in the Arctic and Antarctic regions, make lifelong friends and achieve a Bachelor's degree.

Earlier in 2012, again and for the third time, I was feeling the same nervous excitement, as I stood at the Guwahati airport, having returned from Germany to India for an indefinite period. I was unhappy because the PhD

AVE, Saturday, 25th July

program that I wanted to embark on, did not work out for political reasons, and I sought time in the security of home. The warm and humid breeze, the thundering sky, the smell of the wet earth and the stench of spices and cow-dung brought about an apprehension of whether I will succeed, having come back to Assam after 12 years away. Among all the thoughts running through my head of what the next few months' sabbatical will bring forth, I was encouraged and comforted by the thought that among all the skills I have learnt in my time away from India, adaptability and flexibility has been the foundation of them all. I was thus prepared to face all challenges head-on through an international perspective. Eight years have passed since and I have only stopped to reflect on what I should be doing to find solutions to my

challenges at hand rather than rummage deeper on my problems. I have always learnt that today I should be a better version of myself from yesterday. Therefore, one must always think big and create a dream big enough that your community can thank you for it. My dream is to bring such worldly awareness of opportunities through education and counseling to not just the North-East of India but the entire South-Asian region. This steadfast philosophy has catapulted me straight from being a teacher, to a counselor, and now to an Entrepreneur of sorts. I can only thank my international student experience that gave me the belief.

If you would like to connect with me with regards to the article, please contact the AVE Team or email at abhinav@inspiruseducation.com

The smell of home

-Aanya P. Sarkar, VII

It was a wonder to Bini how the sweet smell of Jalebies from Chintu Dada's Jalebi shop always managed to creep into her bedroom, right when she was doing her Math homework and draw her towards them. "No, I won't go there now," she shook her head, restraining herself. "Homework comes first." But alas! Bini was not really known for her power of resisting such sweet temptations. No matter how hard she tried, she couldn't last long and soon succumbed to the call of the Jalebies. She ran downstairs to the kitchen where her mother was busy doing the dishes. "Ma, can I quickly go to Chintu Dada's shop?" Bini pleaded. "I've got this really bad craving for Jalebies right now." "Have you completed your homework, young lady?" her Mother retorted to her question with yet another question. "Not yet but I promise I will finish it right after I come back," said Bini, desperately. Bini's mother sighed, giving in to her daughter's cajoling. Bini joyfully skipped her way to Chintu Dada, who was busy frying hot Jalebies. "Two Jalebies, please," she requested politely. "Two Jalebies coming right up!" cried Chintu Dada, breaking into a huge smile as soon as he saw the little girl. "So Bini, what have you been up to lately?" he asked. "Well, I have been preparing for my exams," replied Bini, "but it takes so much effort, I hate it." "It takes effort making Jalebies too," said Chintu dada, handing her the sugary treat. "But it's always worth it, you know. If you work hard, your results will be as delicious as these Jalebies." The sudden advice surprised Bini. After contemplating a lot while nibbling on the Jalebies, Bini finally came to a realization and took it to herself to act upon the advice. She rushed back to her house and sat down to study with renewed vigour, much to the surprise of her mother. She studied really hard but also remembered to take a few breaks, considering that if you overcooked a Jalebi,

you burnt it (she was taking her example from a Jalebi). The results came out and Bini got excellent marks. She was thrilled! From then on, she began to pursue her academics with zeal.

Her hard work over the next few years paid off – her Class 12 Board results won Bini a scholarship and a coveted seat for her undergraduate studies at Cambridge University. Bini's life however began to change once she joined the college in London. The recklessness and arrogance of youth took to her, like it did to every other child at a certain stage in life – she completely forgot her family in the company of her friends, and her mother's relentless calls and texts began to be swiped away by the judgement of her peers. She did manage to keep her grades from falling, though.

Time passed and having completed her education, Bini decided to visit home after she got a high-end job. As she stepped into her house, she did not find her mother in the kitchen where she knew she would have been, cooking Bini a 'welcome home' meal. Nor did she find her anywhere else in the house. Puzzled, she decided to ask their neighbor, Mrs Agarwal, about the whereabouts of her mother. Mrs. Agarwal's surprise at seeing Bini could not stop her from delivering the news any kinder. Bini's mother had passed away four months back from cancer. Had Bini cared to see her messages or bothered to return the innumerable calls, she would have known. Rooted on the spot, Bini suddenly realized that the neighbourhood she had grown up in felt alien. The old mango tree behind their house had been chopped off and the road felt narrower. The old dhabas and stalls had been replaced by grey complexes and fancy malls but she noticed that Chintu Dada's Jalebi shop had remained the same. Tears crawled down her cheeks as the old, strong scent of Jalebies wafted into her nose.

OPINION PAGE

“Is Kanye West worthy enough to be the next leader of the United States of America?”

MEAGAN WARJRI, ALUMNUS – Kanye West is not suitable to run for president because he will just use his power to segregate black votes, and with his mental instability and personal issues. I don't think he is in the right mind to run a country.

IMKONG JAMIR, ALUMNUS – I think that him running for the presidential elections is just another publicity stunt and even if he's serious about it, it doesn't seem like he's capable enough to run a country with his history of behavior.

KIMAYA, ALUMNUS – Even though he's popular and all, I don't think the people have enough faith in him to vote for him and, in their right mind, make him the leader of one of the most powerful countries in the world.

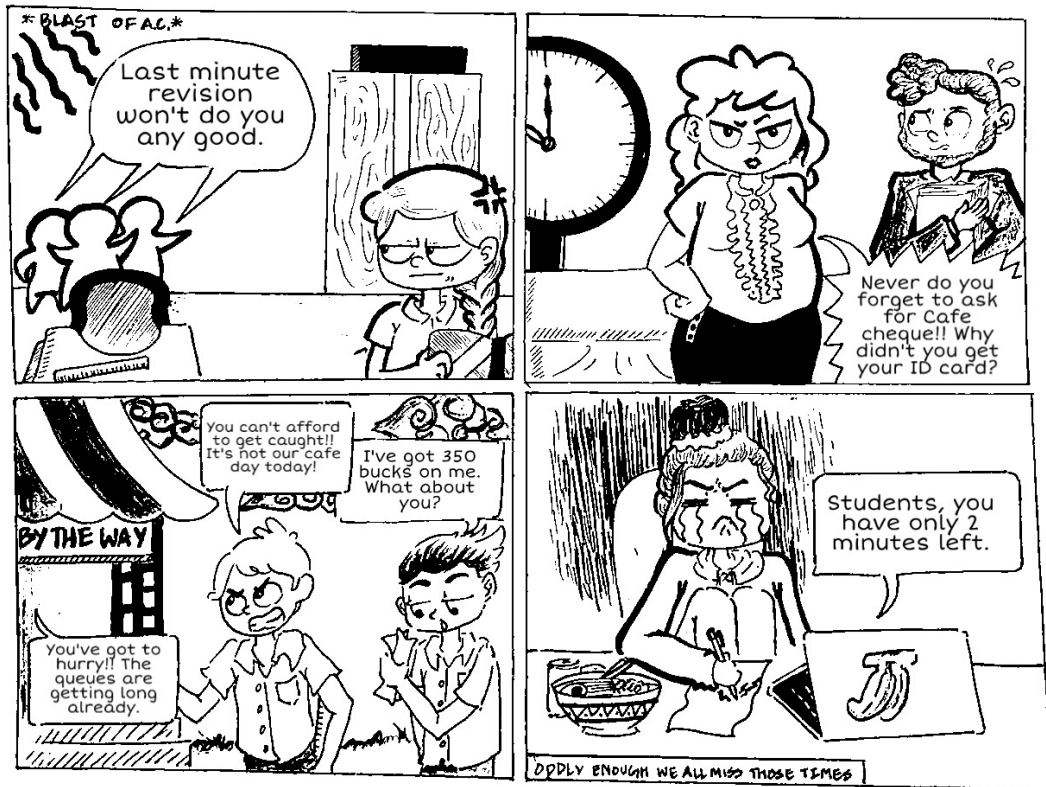
SHRABONA BORTHAKUR, 12 HA – Well, maybe it is a very brave move to run for the presidential elections of a country which has been dominated by two parties since ages. But as amazing and brave as it sounds, we all know the ground reality that it's quite impossible for him to win and he would be just another reason for a division of votes against Joe Biden and Donald Trump which might lead to other possible problems in the near future.

ANUSHKA BARUA, 11 HA – As if the whole Cambridge Analytica fiasco wasn't a stain on democracy, let alone the fact that they had an orangutan running the show... Now there is talk of Kanye West running for president. It is the world's oldest democracy and I think there are two ways to look at this – “wow, anything is possible in the freedom provided by democracy” and “it's time to shift gears to communism from dictatorship”.

NILASHA BHIMSARIA, 11 HB – If he could handle even one of the Kardashians, he can jolly well try to manage the country. Jokes aside, he is a public figure from a non-political background. That is good bait for him to use to gather votes.

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By: Takhe Tamo Reela and Neelabh Kashyap



THE OUTPOST

US-China relations go further south as the US orders the closure of the Chinese Consulate in Houston long suspected of espionage. This warns the world of yet another threat from aggressive China this time with hackers as its warriors. Predictably China goes back on its words and refuses to de-escalate in Ladakh. In a show of power, the Indian Navy and USS Nimitz perform a naval exercise on the Indian ocean even as war torn Yemen faces yet another man-made famine. The Oxford vaccine for Covid-19 dominates the vaccine race while the world waits for a ray of hope.

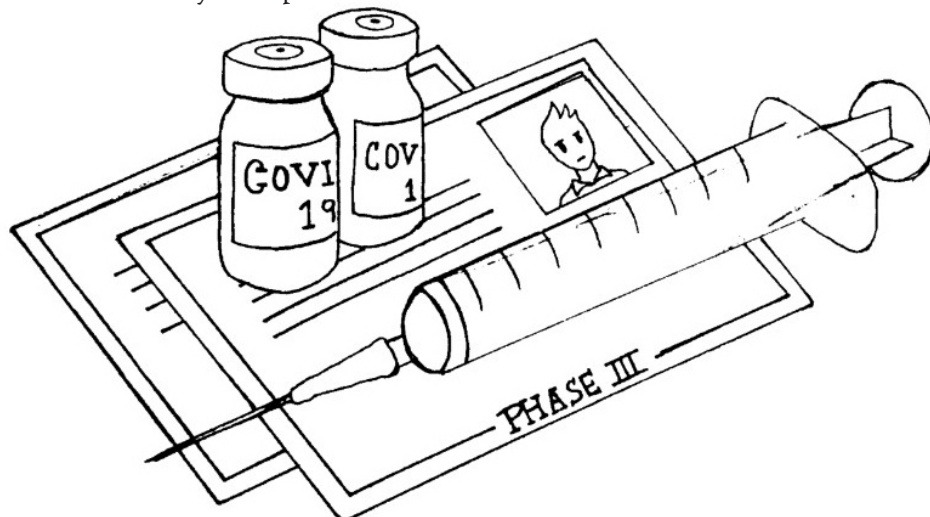


Illustration: Eloziini Semachena

The Quarantine Readlist

Bored of reading the same old monotonous school books? Grab a cup of coffee or tea and dive into the world of these enthralling stories, here is a list of some of our suggestions:

NORTHERN LIGHTS BY PHILLIP

PULLMAN: Lyra's destiny takes her to the mysterious and magical Arctic of her world in search of her friend stolen by the mysterious gobblers.

NORSE MYTHOLOGY BY NEIL

GAIMAN: Old stories of a world that emerged from chaos, mist and fire. A vivid retelling of the Norse Myths in all its twisted, magical glory.

THE BOOK THIEF BY MARKUS

ZUSAK: A beautiful story of circumstances and Fate narrated extraordinarily by Death itself, following the life of a book thief called Liesel.

LORD OF THE FLIES BY WILLIAM

GOLDING: A plane crashes on a deserted island and its only survivors are schoolboys. A horrifying story about about the death of sense and morales as they transform into bestial beings.

Ripple #137

-Aditi Thekedath, XI

*He thought it was a
dream,
To see his pale face in the
mirror -
And feel sunlight without
fuming skin,
But then again, he
couldn't dream the first
place.*

Keep It Reel!

From the Concrete

-Dristi Rathi, XI

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