

# C O N N E C T I N G T H R O U G H T H E T I M E S

## **NYT games have gained popularity and a more significant role in peoples' lives**

**A**s senior Vivian Lin opens the New York Times (NYT) app on her phone, she immediately scrolls to the games section. Clicking on Connections, she quickly guesses the first category, the topic being “criticize” with the words being “bash”, “slam”, “pan”, and “blast”. Satisfied, she moves on to another category, her eyes glazing over the words.

Like numerous individuals, Lin learned about NYT games her freshman year when Wordle, a word-guessing game, started gaining immense popularity.

“I noticed many other people in my classes playing the games, especially Wordle, so I started playing that first,” Lin said. “And then that’s when I got into the other games like the Mini Crossword, Letter Boxed, and then Connections ... the games are really fun, and also I enjoy learning [new] words.”

Unlike Lin, freshman Vi Du Tran found the games through social media.

“As the games started getting more interesting, I decided to start playing them more regularly and making them part of my schedule,” Tran said.

Tran mentioned Connections as a favorite, citing its creativity as an attractive aspect of the game.

“I remember one time there was this one puzzle with ‘sponge’, ‘bob’, ‘square’ and ‘pants,’” Tran said. “They were all in separate categories, and everyone on social media was like ‘oh, I can’t believe they did this.’”

Though he sometimes gets frustrated when he doesn’t solve the puzzle, Tran enjoys playing the games as a regular brain break from schoolwork.

In addition to NYT games being a good pastime, students find it beneficial in helping with different aspects of their lives. Freshman Naia Tormala finds that the games help her stay focused.

“It gets me to reset,” Tormala said.

Junior Motoko Iwata enjoys the games for a similar

reason as Tormala. However, she enjoys learning new vocabulary from playing the games, motivating her to incorporate them into her daily routine.

“A lot of times, life can be random,” Iwata said. “School can be stressful sometimes, but having the one thing [Wordle] I do in the morning every day definitely helps me add some consistency and routine into my life.”

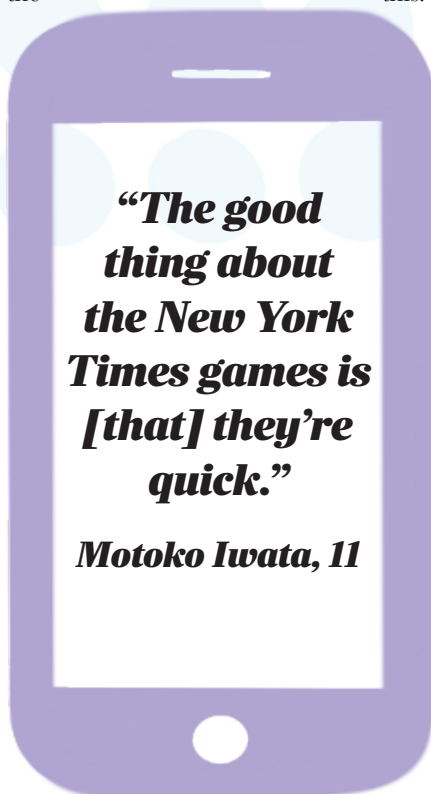
NYT lead columnist and senior editor for games Deb Amlen believes that the games provide many benefits.

“I think that puzzles are reassuring to people, no matter how much they fuss about the answers,” Amlen said. “Generally there is only one answer, and that gives the audience a sense of control that they may be missing in their everyday lives.”

While it can serve as a potential distraction in school, freshman Vedika Agarwal sees the games as a fun alternative to playing other attention and time-consuming games.

“I think they should be allowed in class because ... they help wake my brain up,” Agarwal said. “They can also be fun to do ... something that isn’t totally unproductive.”

Iwata also sees many benefits of having the games accessible to stu-



dents in class.

“The good thing about the New York Times games is [that] they’re quick,” Iwata said. “Most of them are five minutes or less, so it’s a lot better than some of the other games that you can play on the computer.”

While Tran shares similar sentiments, he also found himself getting distracted, especially during middle school. He found himself succumbing to peer pressure as he would try to complete work.

“My friend would pull out Wordle or some New York Times game and say ‘Oh, I bet I can, finish this faster than you,’ and then I would derail my work,” Tran said.

Meanwhile, some NYT games players find fun in coding their own games. Senior Akiva Forrester, an avid NYT Crossword player, is a passionate coder who loves creating games in his free time.

“I take a lot of inspiration from other games, and I really enjoy making things and art,” Forrester said. “I like the fact that you can use programming and art together when you’re making games.”

Senior Sean Gustavson, also a coder, believes that the quality of the NYT games are decreasing as they’re running out of new ideas. As a result, he was inspired to make his own games including Thesaurus Crawl and Two-Word Phase Situation.

“I can code games, and I do [make] a lot of word games, puzzles or crosswords,” Gustavson said.

Similar to Forrester, Gustavson finds a more spontaneous approach when envisioning which games he wants to create.

“I made it [the games] up pretty much on the fly,” Gustavson said. “I was sitting in class and writing an essay ... [when] I found this thesaurus website ... using that, I thought that ... this could be a game, so I drew out a quick concept.”

Like Gustavson, junior Tristan Battumur has some grievances with the NYT; however, he’s most disappointed at the

monetary subscription barrier which NYT Games requires for the Crossword and the Spelling Bee.

“It is a bit sad and frustrating that you have to pay in order to find more [games],” Battumur said.

Despite having similar thoughts as Battumur, Iwata understands that the games are a way for publications to generate revenue.

“Having a game subscription isn’t unreasonable, but I do think that it can be somewhat meaningless considering there are so many other versions of the games online that you can get for free,” Iwata said. “I hope that The New York Times might consider changing that [subscription policy] and getting more people to play their games.”

Similar to Iwata, senior Aiden Chen understands the motivations for NYT needing money. However, he believes people should have a clear understanding of what they are paying for.

“I’ve seen people take upwards of two hours to do the big crossword,” Chen said. “You pay for entertainment ... if you really wanted to, you could just find a crossword generator online, but it also feels better to do it officially through the New York Times.”

Though many are disappointed by the monetary barrier, Chen finds it beneficial, not just for preventing distractions, but also giving him a sense of achievement when completing a game successfully.

“[For] other games like Spelling Bee, having a limit on how many words you can write without a subscription ... gives me a sense of completion once I get to that point for the set of letters I’ve been given,” Chen said.

English teacher, Karin Kolb is content with paying the subscription to play games since the money is going to support the journalism business.

“I think it’s important to have journalism and other print and also any kind of publication for people to read and stay con-

nected,” Kolb said.

Similar to Kolb, band teacher Katie Gilchrist also pays for a subscription. However, she sees other potential benefits beyond the increased variety. For her, she uses the games in her sixth grade flex class at Greene to give them a brain break.

“Instead of them playing Roblox for five minutes, I’ll put it [a game] up on the screen and the whole class works together to solve it,” Gilchrist says.

Gilchrist saw that the transition from print to online games didn’t make that much of a difference for her. Despite print games becoming less common nowadays, she still feels the ability to bond over them with others.

“My grandma is in her late 80s, and she still does newspaper and book crossword puzzles,” Gilchrist said. “It’s fun to talk with her about it, because she’ll talk to me about her Sudoku and crossword, and then I’ll tell her about my digital crossword and connections ... I do see online replacing it [print] just as much as online newspapers have replaced [physical newspapers].”

Amlen sees other benefits of having an online version of the games.

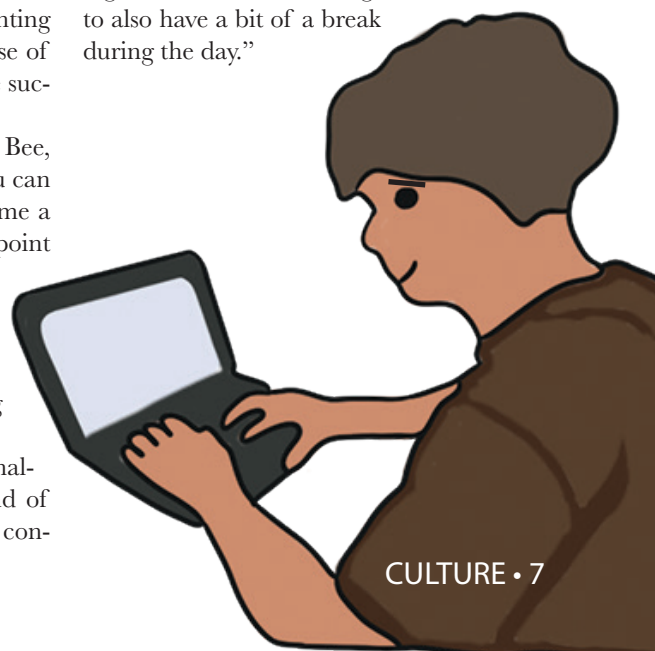
“It’s much more convenient to carry your games and puzzles around in your pocket on your phone,” Amlen said. “When you’re standing in line or waiting at a doctor’s office, a good puzzle can make passing the time much more fun.”

In the end, Gilchrist expressed gratitude for NYT’s innovativeness and acknowledged the large part playing the games had in her life.

“I’m grateful that they’re [NYT] making these mini games and coming up with new ones and not just having crosswords and Sudoku,” Gilchrist said. “They’re being innovative and allowing adults to also have a bit of a break during the day.”

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**Deb Amlen, NYT  
Lead Columnist  
and Senior Editor**

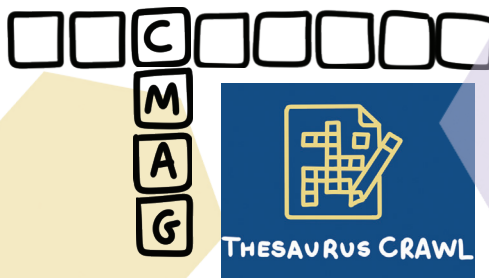


# Thesaurus Crawl

JOURNALISM

How to play:

1. The theme is journalism. Begin by finding a word related to journalism that starts with the letter at the beginning of the line.
2. Continue exploring words related to this theme, aiming to connect your starting word to the final word: "CMAG."



# Sudoku

How to play:

1. The goal is to fill each three-by-three mini-box, rows and columns with numbers one through nine exactly once.
2. Use temporary notes. Write small numbers to mark the possibilities for each cell and eliminate them as more information is deducted.

					3	6		
5			8	7		1		3
	7	3	1		2		8	
3	6			2				
7	4	5	6	3		2		8
	1	8	7					
						8		
9	2		4		7		1	5
			2			9	6	

# Strands

How to play:

1. Connect letters to form words that match the category. Diagonals are allowed.
2. The game is complete once the entire board is filled.
3. There is a Spangram that spans (roughly) the whole puzzle.

TODAY'S THEME  
**CMAG**



M R A T I V  
W R E C V I  
I C M I S U  
L A T Y A Y  
S G S T L L  
O A Z A R A  
N I N E P E  
C U L T U R

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