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The war of the letters

Rachel Deyoe
Editor-in-Chief

For Kohawks in sororities and fraternities, this week is Greek Week, when chapters of greek life on campus compete to earn points, raise money for their philanthropies, and prove who has the most sorority or fraternity pride.

The week will culminate in the sorority and fraternity formal dances, but features many more opportunities for fun along the way. On Sunday, students joined in a community clean-up, and Monday featured window-painting. Greek Olympics on Tuesday and Greek Idol on Wednesday are just a few of the events that led up to Thursday's Day of Giving. This day, the second of its kind held annually, provides an opportunity for donors to



While Greek Week events offer Coe's Greek life chapters a chance to compete with each other, they also provide a way to thank donors collectively.

show their appreciation of Coe, and for Kohawks to appreciate their donors. Any and all can participate in the Day of Giving, but for Greek students, the stakes are raised. The outcome of the donations on Thursday helps determine the chapter of Greek life that will win this week.

Over the course of the entire week, Greek life has the opportunity to really show their colors

and make connections between Coe and the surrounding community. Also, starting Wednesday, Coe Greek life used the hashtag #WhyCoeGreek to post photos, videos, etc. showing the positive aspects of Greek life.

"It's just nice to have a system of support academically, socially, and emotionally," said Theodore Williams ('18). "They are like a second family."

TroiAnn Lundgren ('19) agreed. "There's this great group of girls I can go to. I can talk to them if I'm lonely or I can call them if I need advice. They're always there."

Theodore Williams ('18) assists in window painting for Sinfonia. Photos by Rachel Deyoe.



POINT OF CONTENTION

The good, the bad, and the Oxford comma

In this week's Point of Contention, *Cosmos* editors Rachel Deyoe and Lisa McDonald debate whether the Oxford comma deserves a place in journalism.

Rachel Deyoe

Lisa McDonald

Proponents of the Oxford comma are sure to start off with a sentence like "We spoke to the prisoners, Abe Lincoln, and George Washington."

"Without that serial comma," they trumpet victoriously, "it looks like Lincoln and Washington are prisoners!"

An excellent point, my well-intentioned grammarians, but as noted on businessinsider.com, a similar sentence may in fact be better off without the Oxford comma. Consider the following:

"We spoke to the prisoner, Abe Lincoln and George Washington."

This sentence appears without the Oxford comma and makes perfect sense. However, as soon as you slip in that one extraneous comma, it appears as though Honest Abe were the prisoner. So there are plenty of instances in which the Oxford

comma causes as many semantic problems as it solves.

There was a time when the Oxford comma was a requirement, no questions asked. However, it was deleted from the AP Stylebook, the authority on style and usage for most journalistic writing, in order to save space and ink over time. This does not mean the use of the Oxford comma is forbidden, however, and the AP Stylebook still permits if a sentence is unclear without it. But most sentences can avoid the Oxford comma with a simple rearrangement. Take the first example: "We spoke to the prisoners, Abe Lincoln and George Washington." This could easily be written "We spoke to Abe Lincoln, George Washington and the prisoners." With this simple order swap, the Oxford comma becomes irrelevant.

What is the Oxford comma? Well, my friends, it is the lovely creation that conveniently exists to make possible the decipherment of complex sentences. More simply, the Oxford comma is the one right before the "and" when reaching the end of a list involving more than two items.

Why is this comma so important? Take this sentence: "This train is full of Trekkies, you, and your friends." Now let's look at this sentence with the comma deleted: "This train is full of Trekkies, you and your friends." While it is perfectly acceptable for you and your friends to be Trekkies, the entire meaning of this sentence just changed. Before, it was you and your friends swimming in a sea of Star Trek nerds; now you and your friends

are the nerds. The U.S. Government Printing Office, the MLA Style Manual, and the Chicago Manual of Style all include the Oxford comma within their style rules. Why should AP Style, the style utilized by journalists, be any different? A journalist's job is to make the information as clear as possible to the reader. It is the reason journalists write at a sixth grade reading level, to ensure this accessibility to any who might choose to pick up a paper and read it. Why, then, would such a necessary tool for clarification be left out? If AP Style is really about clarity for the reader, the Oxford comma needs to start being included now.