

Realities of high school life IN AMERICA

Contrary to what we see in movies and TV the reality is not as glamorous

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Few things dominate the media industry as much as the lives of high schoolers in the United States. The glamour of teenagers living in their own world, minus the drab duties of adulthood, makes for an enticing storyline. Yet, portraying said glamour leads to the details and realities of high school life being distorted, from the minors in *Riverdale* being involved in gangs and mobs to *Euphoria* making it hard to fathom how the characters are only 17.

During my first days as a senior at an American high school, I realised how unattuned we are, as our only ideas surrounding high schools in this part of the world were formed by the media. Thus, allow me to expel some wisdom based off of newfound experiences from the land of the free, and hopefully tweak the unrealistic ideas of high school that the media you consumed may have drilled into you.

Not everyone is getting into an Ivy League school
Nothing breeds delusion the same as *Never Have I Ever*, where students get into top universities left and right. It's the same with *Gilmore Girls*, where getting acceptance to not one, but three Ivy League universities is made to look like a realistically attainable goal. The sad reality is, however, that the dream of getting into a college as competitive as the ones topping the QS World Rankings is a much more difficult task than what pop culture makes you think. These universities may be more selective with international applicants, but this does not mean that American high school students are ensured admission. The majority of applicants apply to and get into their state schools, reaping the benefits

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of in-state tuition.

Nerds and theatre kids do not get bullied the way you see in movies

The many scenes of the bespectacled nerdy kid being shoved into lockers by their muscular athletic counterparts create the idea that being academically gifted is socially disadvantageous. This could not be further from reality. In fact, the most popular students I know are the ones getting merit scholarships, scoring high 1500s in their SATs, armed with AP classes, and starring in plays or orchestras. Hard work pays off, and being good at school will, more often than not, earn you respect at American high schools. With anonymous reporting programmes in place, physical bullying is mostly a thing of the past, though not eradicated completely. It has, instead, relocated to a much more clandestine place – the internet.

Nobody wears glamorous outfits to school every day
If you asked me what sort of clothing I see most often

on campus, I'd say pyjamas. Most students wake up at five in the morning to catch the bus to school, and nobody wants to spare the effort to pick out an outfit, do their makeup, and look top-notch five days a week. Moreover, dress codes are enforced heavily in American high schools. With rules banning bare midriffs, hoodies, caps, hats, and ripped jeans, there is very little room for *Euphoria*-inspired outfits to be worn at school.

There are rarely any blow-out house parties

There is at least one scene in every high school film where someone texts the entire school "party at my place" the moment their parents' car pulls out of the driveway, and we all know how the party goes. Unsurprisingly, the scope for house parties is limited, and people much rather get together for small hangouts instead.

High schoolers are bad people

Having an unpleasant high school experience is pretty universal. With breakups, rumours, scandals, and betrayals, it's not difficult to harbour a cynical mindset. Hormones and emotions are both on overdrive and navigating the social world of young adults can lead you to believe that high schoolers are inherently evil. In reality, they're just high schoolers, going through life for the first time and making inevitable mistakes, with their entire lives ahead of them. The brain continues to mature till the age of 25, so I think it's fair to give them a couple of years after graduation to dictate if they're a bad person.

Koushin is currently on a mission to lengthen her attention back to pre-TikTok days. Help her out at koushinunber27@gmail.com.

