



CK Reporter of the Week
Aidan Muldoon, Denver

Pop Culture Con draws a crowd



The annual gathering had to drop "Comic Con" from its title for legal reasons, but cosplay is still very much part of the fun. *Photo by Thatcher Mulholland*

What do you think when you think of pop culture?

Do you think of "Star Wars," "The Princess Bride," and "Back to the Future"?

Do you think of comics with Batman or maybe Black Widow?

Do you think of games, like "Settlers of Catan" and "Magic the Gathering"?

Maybe legendary stories of dragons and warlocks?

The Denver Pop Culture Con, held here last week, has it all: Any form of sci-fi and fantasy imaginable.

If you cosplay as an alien with seven arms, you'll get as many pictures taken of you as some of the celebrities who also posed for pictures and signed autographs there.

Some of these legends include Dave Bautista, the

actor for Drax from "Guardians of the Galaxy," Cary Elwes, who plays Westley in "The Princess Bride," and Asher Angel, the uprising actor from "Shazam!"

I managed to snag an interview with a man named Greg Wright, who has been making comics for five years, and has a PhD in English. His work really paid off for the Michigan man, because now, a TV show will be airing less than a year from now (*hopefully*) which is a fantasy based on his comic "Monstrous."

That's exactly the kind of people at this convention; dedicated, impassioned people who follow their life's dreams and encourage others to do likewise.

He also teaches the next generation how to write, as an English professor at Delta College.

That's exactly the kind of people at this convention; dedicated, impassioned people who follow their life's dreams and encourage others to do likewise.

The convention is full of fun and a great place to go.

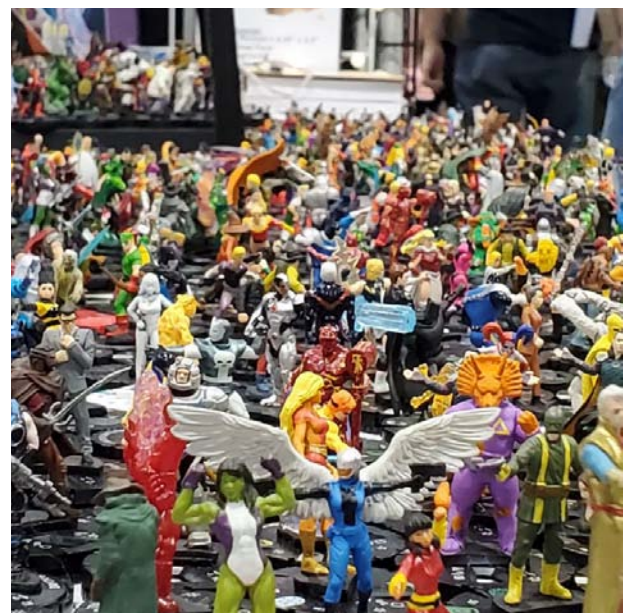
However, there are a few monetary issues, considering the \$30-40 parking fee, the expenses of getting in, which is, on average for one adult for one day, is slightly above \$50, plus the fact that once you go in, you have to pay more money if you want anything.

Along with that, there is at least a 15 minute wait time, and I arrived only 30 minutes after the start, so I presume if you go much later than that there is closer to a 30 minute wait time.

I'd estimate that most people, if they go by every booth, would take a little over 2 ½ hours.

Besides those two restrictions, which you could expect at any attraction like this, the entire experience is very interesting and fun, as long as you are into sci-fi and fantasy.

Another man I interviewed (*this time from San Diego*), Matthew Wolf, has an ongoing series called



If collecting figurines or using them for game play is your thing, you've come to the right place. *Photo by Thatcher Mulholland*

the "Ronin Saga."

He has been writing for 13 years, published his first book 3 ½ years ago, and took eight years to write his first book. However, after he wrote that first book, things clicked into place, and his next one took only 6 months!!

In college, he majored in English, even mastering in it, and he also minored in Japanese and Old English.

Once again, this dedication to what you love and influencing the world because of it is what Pop Culture Con is all about.

After all, if Stan Lee had given up on comics and decided to do baking, many people would have never found common ground, never known they were so similar, yet different.

That, above all else, not comics, not books, not art, not games, that is what Pop Culture Con's true purpose is.



By Thatcher Mulholland,
13, a CK Reporter
from Broomfield

Read the first, but you'll love the second

"Aru Shah and the Song of Death," by Roshani Chokshi is just as good as "Aru Shah and the End of Time," the first book of the planned quartet.

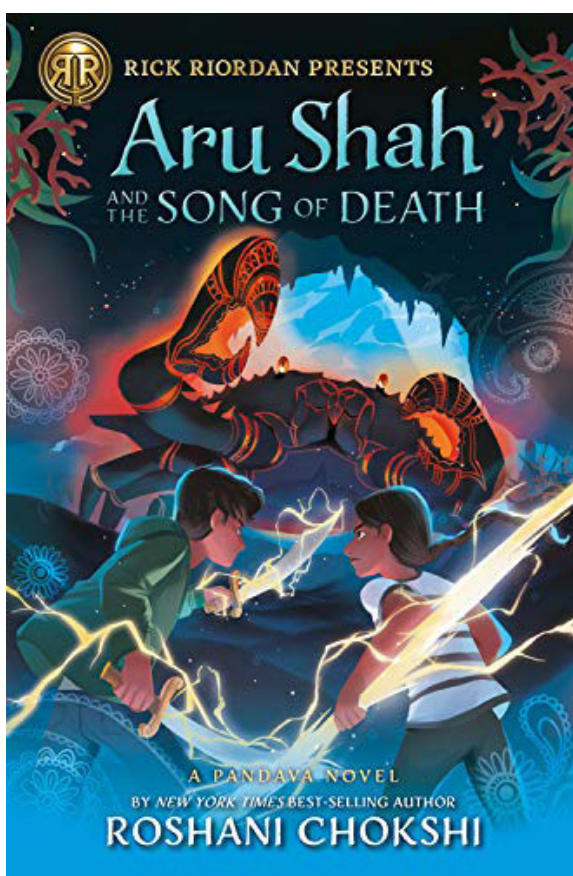
I liked how the book has action from the start, although this would be confusing for people who have not read the first book.

It can get a little slow at times but it always picks up the pace again, like any good book.

There is not a time in the book that recaps the reader on what happened in the last book, so I would highly recommend reading the first book to understand what is going on.

I also enjoyed that most of the characters who have power and influence over others are girls, because this shows that they are just as capable as any other hero.

This second adventure is just as fun as the first. It has clever chapter titles, funny pop culture references and many hidden messages, just like the first book.



It can get a little slow at times, but it always picks up the pace again, like any good book.

If you do not like books that have mythology and a lot of action in them then this is probably not the book for you.

Aru and her soul-sister and BFF Mini track a thief through the Night Bazaar. In doing so they find themselves face to face with Brynne, who is also a Pandava, a person of power and influence.

All three of the Pandava girls are accused of being the thieves.

To set the record straight they have ten days to track the real thief, give back the stolen goods to the gods, and to clear their names.

To make matters worse, there is an addition to their team, Aiden.

The boy who, is not a Pandava, is the new, cute, and popular boy at Aru's school, and the boy that the three girls will have to deal with.



By Suhani Agarwal,
14, a CK Reporter
from Centennial

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‘Dark Phoenix’ misses the mark

It’s hard to write a review of a movie when your first reaction is confusion. With “Captain Marvel” setting the bar, expectations are high for a strong, female hero. “X-Men: Dark Phoenix,” however, can only be described as unsubstantial, pointless, and inexplicably boring.

Intended to serve as a bookend for the original X-Men saga, it ended up as a series of fight scenes stitched together with an altogether aimless storyline. The year is 1992 and the human population has reached an unsteady truce with the mutants.

A Space Shuttle is thrown off course by a mysterious force and the X-Men are enlisted to help rescue the crew.

After risking the lives of the team in an effort to leave no one behind, Jean Grey (*Sophie Turner*) is caught in the middle of a massive explosion but somehow manages to absorb the mysterious force.

She makes it back to earth, her powers heightened and volatile.

Jean accidentally kills Raven (*Jennifer Lawrence*) due to not being able to control her powers and flees to find her father, who she thought was dead, due to Professor Xavier (*James McAvoy*) repressing some of her memories.

The only somewhat redeeming thing about the movie is the special effects.

With a character like Jean Grey, it would be impossible to have a movie about her without the high caliber computer generated images that went into the film.

From the superpowered fight scenes to the impressive outer space sequence, the effects are at the level that one would expect the entire film to match.

With actors known for movies and shows such as “The Hunger Games,” “Game of Thrones,” and “Love, Simon,” it’s as if the production company is trying to make up for the lack of ingenuity.

The movie uses cliched and almost cartoonish tropes, such as the “X Phone” that exists in Professor X’s office solely for the reason of calling the president.



It’s also incredibly formulaic, following the generic superhero movie outline to a T. This movie could’ve covered racism and sexism in an actually meaningful way. The opportunity was right there, but it was completely ignored.

It ended up as a series of fight scenes stitched together with an altogether aimless storyline.

Maybe five minutes of the film actually addresses how much the mutant population is feared and discriminated against, and even less time goes towards the blatant sexism. Professor X literally takes it upon himself to minimize Jean’s emotional experience and, even though she is an adult, he continues to try and make choices for her instead of letting her make them for herself. The only time any sexism is acknowledged is some throwaway quip about how they should be called the X-Women instead.

This movie fell short. That’s not to say it’s bad, but the bar had been raised with “Captain Marvel,” especially for a strong female hero. I’d say that this movie has earned its IMDB rating of 6.2/10 as of June 5. If you’re into fight scenes and nothing else, this would be a good one to go see in the theaters.

For the rest of you, it might be a better idea to wait for the DVD.



By Maria Ciobanu, 14, a CK Reporter from Denver

Monster movie lovers will love this



Is “Godzilla: King of the Monsters”? He was but someone else wants to take that away from him, someone bigger, better, and new, someone like a three-headed dragon, Ghidorah.

The movie is exciting and has a lot of cliffhangers that you sometimes get the answer to.

When Godzilla first came five years ago he devastated things and people and families. Mark and Emma Russell (*Kyle Chandler and Vera Farmiga*) were one of the families that lost a child, Andrew (*Tyler Crumley*). Now they have only a daughter, Madison (*Millie Bobby Brown*) and have gotten divorced, largely because Mark started drinking. Godzilla may have been gone for five years but there are still other “Monsters” around. Emma works for a company that studies them. She has a device called the orca, which acts like a

communicator to the monsters and it can also calm them down. But other people want the orca to so they go to her lab and kill everybody except her and her daughter. Emma wants to save the world and so does Jonah Alan (*Charles Dance*), who is part of a secret group that wants to keep all the dinosaurs alive. She releases the monster, but when they release Ghidorah, he challenges other monsters and kills Godzilla, or thinks he did. The movie is exciting and has a lot of cliffhangers that you sometimes get the answer to. I would suggest it for six and up. I thought the movie was really good because I like seeing new monsters trying to take over.



By Ema Perkak, 8, a CK Reporter from Denver

Big Nate



‘Secret Life of Pets 2’ a surprisingly good sequel

Universal Pictures and Illumination have followed up their hit 2016 film, “The Secret Life of Pets” with “The Secret Life of Pets 2,” in which Max (voiced by Patton Oswalt) and Duke’s (Eric Stonestreet) owner Katie (Ellie Kemper) get married and have a kid named Liam (Henry Lynch). Max will do anything to protect Liam. Other characters returning from the first movie include Gidget (Jenny Slate), Chloe (Lake Bell), and Snowball (Kevin Hart).

Its plot made sense ... its comedy was good, and the new characters served a good purpose.

“The Secret Life of Pets 2” exceeded my expectations by a long shot. Its plot made sense, something other Illumination films I’ve seen can’t say, its comedy was good, and the new characters served a good purpose. When comparing “The Secret Life of Pets” and “The Secret Life of Pets 2,” I feel that the original’s plot was a bit better, but the second movie just had more. With the first movie, we just had Max and Duke trying to find their way home. In the sequel, I’ll try not to give away any spoilers, but there’s a lot more going on

at the same time as the main plot.

Beyond that, the movies are similar in quality. The comedy, however, has been improved on in the sequel. One thing that I believe wasn’t very good in “The Secret Life of Pets 2,” however, is the lack of continuity between the two movies: The events of the first movie are never mentioned, not even once. This is a problem that I’ve seen in the “Despicable Me” series as well. While it doesn’t affect the film, it doesn’t make any sense that the events of the first film have seemingly been forgotten. This generally doesn’t affect the movie, but it impacts Snowball the most. In the first movie, Snowball was the leader of a group built on hatred of humans, and yet Snowball has no problem with humans in the second movie. It’s one thing for Snowball’s hate for humans to steadily decrease over time, but such a sudden shift in attitude doesn’t make a whole lot of sense. “The Secret Life of Pets 2” is a pretty good movie. I would recommend it to everyone, but it obviously is best for kids.



By Marcus Turner, 12, a CK Reporter from Denver

New tech effective against ancient threat

Senegal’s modern capital city, Dakar, is noted for its architecture and for several historic sites that have made it a World Heritage Site. But that part of Africa is known for something far less pleasant: Sleeping sickness, a disease that affects both people and cattle, and which, across Sub-Saharan Africa, is responsible for the deaths of three million cattle a year. The disease is spread by the Tsetse (*TET-see*) fly, which is about the size of a housefly and is one of the most annoying and dangerous pests in all of Africa. However, Senegalese scientists have been working with American and European researchers on an American-sponsored project that has wiped out 99 percent of the Tsetse flies in one area of Senegal. Farmers in that region have been delighted to no longer see the disease make them and their children ill, and are extremely pleased to no longer see their cattle die or stop giving milk. “Life has become more comfortable not only for the animals, but also for the farmers,” one farmer told a United Nations reporter. “Now, we can even sleep out in the open. This was unthinkable before because of the tsetse bites.”

The trick to this success has been a peaceful use of atomic radiation. It starts at a laboratory of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, where male tsetse flies are hit with doses of radiation that make them unable to reproduce. They are then flown to laboratories in Senegal, where they are chilled to sleep to keep them from moving around and injuring themselves in the cardboard boxes that are dropped from airplanes throughout the target region. When the male flies awaken and fly out through holes in the boxes, they meet up with wild female flies. Since tsetse flies can only mate once, this means the female will never produce eggs and young flies. Other nations in Africa have been watching Senegal’s experiment and beginning it in their own countryside, hoping to wipe out the tsetse fly and add to their people’s health and their nation’s farming economy. Meanwhile, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the UN’s Food & Agriculture Organization are hoping to apply the same technique to mosquitos and other disease-spreading insects, since it is a method that effectively targets only the pest at which it is aimed.



Senegal is the western-most nation on Africa’s coastline and has a population of about 15.4 million people. It has a long history, including many years as a French colony, and is known for collections of ancient African art that can be seen there.



(Tsetse Fly photo: Nevit Dilmén)

Sudoku

4	2				5
5			4		
	1	2			
				3	1
		5			
				2	3

Rules: Every row across, every column down and each of the six smaller boxes must contain numerals 1,2,3,4,5 and 6, one time and one time only. The solution to this week’s puzzle is on Page 4.



Brainteaser

Jeanette Rankin was born on this date in 1880. In 1916, she was the first woman elected to Congress. (Women could not vote in national elections yet, but there was no law against them running for office.) So our answers will begin with R.

1. Dogs are regularly vaccinated against this disease, which can make foxes, raccoons, bats and other animals lose their fear of people and attack them.
2. The miller’s daughter had to learn his name after he helped her spin straw into gold.
3. This large, pug-nosed, black-and-tan dog once drew carts, particularly for butchers.
4. Portuguese explorers discovered this Brazilian river in January, of course.
5. The Curious George books were written by a husband and wife with this last name.
6. Large member of the crow family who appears at London Tower and in a poem by Edgar Allan Poe
7. A vegetable stew from Nice, France, or a movie about a rodent who cooks well.
8. Nolan Arenado and Tony Wolters are members of this organization.
9. He was president of the Screen Actors Guild before he was president of the USA.
10. Steamboat Springs is in this county, which was named for Colorado’s first governor (answers on Page Four)



Martian radiation threatens colonies

If you’ve been hoping to be one of the first colonists on Mars, you’d better bring along some sun screen. In fact, you’d better invent some kind of sun screen that’s much more effective than anything we’ve got today. The European Space Agency recently pointed out that Mars does not have the thick atmosphere or the strong magnetic fields that protect Earth’s surface from the natural radiation of the Sun and Universe. This was not news to space scientists. Astronauts on the International Space Station get 200 times the cosmic radiation they would be getting on Earth. On Mars, that would leap up to 700 times, which

means that, in six months, a person on Mars would absorb 60% of the radiation that they would be exposed to in a lifetime on Earth. This doesn’t mean that travel to Mars, or even staying there for a long time, is impossible. The ESA will be developing shields to protect space travelers from the worst of the cosmic radiation, but it is still working to find materials with which to construct those shields. It certainly means you won’t be able to just wander out to enjoy some Martian sunshine. For now, and until those shields are developed, the ESA says travel to Mars is simply too dangerous to risk.

Beyond These Pages!

Hot Links to Cool Sites!

NASA's Space Place

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NIE Special Report

<http://tinyurl.com/ckniereport>

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To read the sources for these stories

Fighting Tsetse Flies

Martian Radiation

go to <http://www.tinyurl.com/ckstorylinks>

The Crown and the Colliers

Chapter Thirteen -- The Trial

Our story so far: The princess will live, and now the Emperor has sent the Archbishop of Mainz to act as judge over Queen Ingrid, who is accused of attempting to kill the princess.

When the Archbishop arrived at the head of his army, Prince Karl sent his own troops back to Ruritania and, with his personal guards, stayed in his camp outside the city gates.

The Archbishop's troops carried out the Emperor's command to take control. They went into the city, posting guards at the armory and putting soldiers on every street corner.

The Archbishop himself changed from his armor into robes and set up his court in the palace, where his soldiers faced their only challenge: Keeping back the crowds clamoring for a glimpse of the trial.

Gabe was sitting in the front row of the audience, with Prince Karl and the Short council members. Queen Ingrid stood in front of the court, while Prince Rupert, his face covered with bruises, sat in the chair provided for him.

Jed was acting as a messenger for the court, but stopped over to speak to Gabe for a moment.

"He's a good woodsman," he said, nodding towards Rupert. "He wandered until he found a small river and then followed it downstream. Every river eventually takes you to people if you follow it downwards."

"What happened to him?" Gabe asked.

"It took him to a colliers' camp," Jed said. "Not the one we were in, but they still knew who he was and that he was supposed to be a prisoner of the council. So they grabbed him and here he is."

"He looks like they did more than just grab him," Gabe said.

"He's lucky they didn't know what he'd done," Jed said, but then walked back to take his place at the bench as the Archbishop came into the court.

Gabe was bored through most of the morning. The Archbishop knew the history of the kingdom but he still had to hear testimony about it for the record, going back to the very first king.

Then he had to hear the recent history: How the latest king had remarried after his first wife died, leaving him with a daughter, and how he himself was killed by falling off his horse while hunting, just a few months after the birth of his son, Rupert. Then, how his daughter, Kristina, had been lost in the forest and presumed dead.

The Princess, looking pale, came into court, was sworn in and asked her name. "I am Crown Princess Kristina, rightful heir to this realm," she answered.

"She is an imposter!" Queen Ingrid shouted, and the Archbishop glared at her.

"Madam, you will be silent!" he snapped, and turned back to Kristina. "If you are Kristina, tell us how you came to be here when everyone thought you were dead?"

"Your Grace, not everyone thought I was dead," Kristina answered. "The country people among whom I have been living have known who I was for all these years. It is only in the city that people said I was dead."

The Archbishop nodded. "The Shorts believed you to be alive, and the Talls believed you were dead."

"I would not say it that way, Your Grace," she gently corrected. "There were Talls among the country folk who knew of me, and Shorts among those in the city who doubted it. It is not height, nor color of hair that makes a person believe one thing or another, just as it is not height nor color of hair that makes a person do good things or bad."

"You are correct, Madame," the Archbishop said. "Now, how am I, who are neither a Tall nor a Short, but from another part of the Empire entirely, to believe that you are who you say you are?"

"It is true that the Queen did not know I was alive, Your Grace," Kristina said, "but others have been with me this entire time and can tell you who I am. I have been among these men ever since I left the palace," she said, gesturing towards the Short council members.

"Your Grace will not take the word of this rebel trash!" Queen Ingrid cried. "These disloyal creatures are the ones who have created this fake princess!"

"Perhaps your Grace will take the word of a member of the Queen's personal staff?" Kristina asked. "Her maid, Astrid, knows who ordered my murder, and how I have survived all these years."

Gabe had already begun listening more intently, but he sat up even straighter as his mother's name was mentioned.

"This is ridiculous!" Queen Ingrid shouted. "How can you possibly allow such nonsense? My maid is not going to be brought in here and made a fool of!"

"Madame," the Archbishop responded coldly. "Let me remind you that I am conducting this court by the will of that same Emperor who allows you to occupy your throne. I will hear from this Astrid. As for you, Madame," he said in a kinder tone to Kristina, "I understand your health is not good and I invite you to remain if you wish or to go and rest. We will let you know if we need more information from you."

Kristina left the courtroom on the arm of the doctor who had been treating her, and then Gabe watched as his mother came into the courtroom, carrying a small velvet bag, and was sworn in as a witness.

"Your Grace," Queen Ingrid said, "I object to this woman as a witness. She has a reason to be less than honest with the court: She is the widow of Rolf the huntsman, the person responsible for the death of the princess."

"May it please Your Grace," Astrid said, "I deny this."

"Do you deny that your husband took the princess out into the forest and lost her?" Queen Ingrid said.

"I deny that I am his widow," Astrid said. "My husband, Rolf the huntsman, is there!"

And as she pointed towards him, the Short who had been calling himself "Kurt" got to his feet.

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For a teaching guide, go to <http://tinyurl.com/ckserial>

Sudoku Solution

4	2	1	3	6	5
5	6	3	4	1	2
3	1	2	6	5	4
6	5	4	2	3	1
2	3	5	1	4	6
1	4	6	5	2	3

Brainteaser Solution



(see Page Three)

10 right - Wow!

7 right - Great!

5 right - Good

3 right - See you next time!

1. rabies 2. Rumpelstiltskin 3. Rottweiler 4. Rio de Janeiro
5. Rey (H.A. and Margaret) 6. raven 7. Ratatouille
8. (Colorado) Rockies 9. Ronald Reagan 10. Routt

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