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# Headlight



Written by the students of Marblehead High School for our school and community

2026 - 2027 Issue

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## Ranking the Academy Awards Best Picture nominees (1/2)

Nathaniel Carper-Young, Senior

The Academy Awards is one of the most prestigious events in entertainment, though with each passing year, people seem to care less about it, given its steady decline in viewership and in ratings over the last decade. I tend to make it a mission to watch all of the Best Picture nominees, so don't feel bad if you missed them last year, as I've ranked them for you here. As such, here is a ranking of every film nominated for Best Picture at the 98th Academy Awards, from worst to best.

### 10. *F1*

*F1*, helmed by *Top Gun: Maverick* director Joseph Kosinski, is the only film nominated this year that I was genuinely shocked by the inclusion of in this year's ceremony. It is a totally flat, shiny-ugly film boasting very truthfully some of the most disconcertingly abrasive editing seen in a movie this side of the digital age. Brad Pitt can be described as no more than half-asleep. It is not good.

### 9. *Frankenstein*

I have never been much of a fan of the films of Guillermo Del Toro, which I am not even sure *Frankenstein* credibly qualifies as. It comes across as more a brainchild of Netflix than anybody else - it is mostly watchable but, like *F1*, one of the more sinfully ugly movies I've ever laid eyes on. Del Toro adds nothing to a story already told one thousand times over beyond an aesthetic that I can really only describe as "AI-generated."

### 8. *Hamnet*

Chloe Zhao won Best Picture for her film *Nomadland* at the 2021 Academy Awards; I must say I am grateful the same mistake was not made twice. *Hamnet* is a frequently well-performed (on Jessie Buckley's part, anyway) and indeed consistently watchable movie, but it feels thoroughly misguided as a piece of historical fiction, failing to ever figure out whether it is actually interested in the events that may or may have not guided Shakespeare's career or in the trauma of his wife. Her feelings are "central" but mostly dismissed by the film in favor of her husband's artistic struggles; in this capacity, it is one of the more misogynistic films to have been released last year.

### 7. *Train Dreams*

*Train Dreams*, directed by newcomer Clint Bentley, is an attractive-looking portrait of a bygone America, adapted from a novella of the same name. What is conveyed by it with the greatest efficiency and consistency, most regrettably, is a general feeling of tranquility, failing to interrogate any of the ethical questions that are asked of any artist dealing with an early 20th-century America. The white protagonist witnesses the death of a Chinese railroad worker at the beginning of the film, which certainly offers up some potential political and emotional complexity, but all the audience is prompted to feel is a vague sorrow for the protagonist and the guilt he feels about his implicit position in the violence being dealt to the people around him. I think that more intrigue ought to be expected out of a film nominated for such an award.

### 6. *Sentimental Value*

Director Joachim Trier is clearly infatuated with the likes of Ingmar Bergman and John Cassavetes, but what is produced from these interests is nothing more than a totally bog-standard, uber-static European drama that amounts to disappointingly little after nearly two and a half hours. It is extremely measured—in its performances, in its cinematography, in every formal choice—which I suppose is worth something, but this film mostly just feels safe, and sadly kind of boring.

## AP Tests are here, and the pressure is on

Grey Collins, Editor-in-Chief, Senior

If you head over to the library or Starbucks this week, you'll likely find groups of high school students hunched over their laptops and notebooks, feverishly studying for their AP exams. It's no secret that springtime is one of the most stressful times of the year for high school students, and this year is no different. With AP testing season in full swing, sophomores, juniors, and seniors have been balancing difficult schedules, homework, and work, with studying for their AP exams.

In addition, seniors are also working on completing their senior projects this May, a program that allows seniors to spend the final quarter of the school year pursuing a project or internship of their choice away from the classrooms. Balancing studying for AP exams and learning in the classroom with working on their senior projects has been challenging to say the least. "It's definitely a lot of work, so I'm excited to take the exam and be all done with it, and go fully into senior project," said Avery Wysor, a senior, who is studying for two AP exams this week.

But the AP classes have added another layer of pressure for students at MHS. More than half of the sophomores, juniors, and seniors took one or more of the 22 AP exams offered by MHS last year, an increase from previous years. The most popular AP classes at MHS are AP US History, AP Government, AP Environmental, and AP English Seminar. If students pass the exams, they can receive college credit. Last year 926 AP tests were taken at MHS, and this year, several juniors and seniors are even taking as many as seven AP classes, completely filling their schedules. Many students and educators believe this pressure to take as many AP classes as possible is contributing to an overly competitive academic culture at MHS.

"I definitely feel that kids feel pressure that they need to take more AP classes," said Mr. Heenan, who teaches AP Biology at MHS. "Gone are the days of taking an AP class because it's something you're genuinely interested in. Now it's become more of a race to see who can get the most AP classes on their transcripts." In previous years, taking an AP class at MHS required an application process, or sometimes an entrance exam, which limited the number of students taking the classes. Heenan believes this system would reduce the unnecessary pressure and competition between students that we see today.

Nationally, participation in AP courses is also rising. According to the College Board, students across the country are taking more AP courses than ever, with a 7% rise in the number of exams taken in 2024 compared to 2023, and over 4.8 million AP exams taken in total in 2025. This increase reflects the rising pressure on students to take a challenging course load to succeed in the college admissions cycle.

AP exams are becoming a large part of student life at MHS, but they are also becoming a symbol of the pressure students feel. At the same time, many think that having these opportunities for students to challenge themselves academically is valuable, and a good lesson in the importance of not spreading yourself too thin. "I think everyone feels that they need to take as many as possible," said Mrs. Shatford, the MHS Librarian and AP Coordinator. "But I think focusing on what you're passionate about is often the best way to mitigate your stress level."

Stay tuned until next week to read Nathaniel's top 5  
Best Picture Nominees!

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