

Ela Gulener ('24)

Gulener said she has a red lightning bolt as a tattoo, which she decided upon because the "red represents power and confidence" which is how she wants to be perceived.

Gulener said she also has a second tattoo that counters the tattoo of her close friend.

"Another tattoo I have is a flower with my best friend," Gulener said. "It is a matching tattoo since we've been best friends for 12 years."



Tattoos: Meaning behind the ink

Community members examine the value and societal perceptions of tattoos, giving personal anecdotes of their experiences.

**Ella Friel /
Media Team**

Carefully traced lines of ink planted onto skin, many tattoos have unique significance. Students and faculty with tattoos voice their opinions on this permanent form of self-expression.

Level of significance

According to an online survey sent to High School students and faculty Oct. 12-23 with 244 responses, 68.9% believe tattoos should be meaningful.

Fernando Hartogs ('24) said he echoes the notion that due to their permanence and the complex process of creation, tattoos must carry significance.

"You should never get a stupid tattoo," Hartogs said. "You shouldn't get a tattoo to show it off. I feel like it's meant

to be a personal thing."

Alternatively, Yearbook Teacher Lina Densley said a tattoo is unique, and it is up to each individual to determine the significance of their tattoo.

"What meaning it has for you can really vary," Densley said. "I know people who have meaning associated with deep and emotional connections and meaning as simple as, like, 'this is a thing I care about.'"

Social Studies Teacher Aaron Fazzio said he feels it is necessary that his tattoos carry meaning but recognizes each individual's autonomy.

"I would want it to have some meaning, whether that's big or small, but I think it doesn't have to for everybody," Fazzio said. "I have a friend who has a piece of cake on one leg and a taco on another. And she has all sorts of crazy tattoos that's just, you know, well how she wants her body, and I think that's perfectly fine."

Self-expression

Ela Gulener ('24) said tattoos ultimately showcase personality.

Densley, for example, said her sister-in-law has a semi-colon tattoo – which typically represents solidarity with those who struggle with mental health – and chose to get it because it "reminds her of a specific time in her life."

Performing Arts Teacher Todd Sessoms said one of his tattoos, which was done with two of his friends, symbolizes the poem "13 Ways of Looking" by Wallace Stevens.

"We made it ultimately so that there are 13 birds, and each bird represents a different stanza of the poem, and they're specifically crafted to the visual representation of the main idea of the stanza," Sessoms said.

Societal expectations

According to the survey, 11.9% of the community have tattoos, and 45.9% said they

have considered getting one.

English Teacher Hannah Notowitz said her tattoos have impacted her professional life.

"I've been asked to cover them up at work," Notowitz said. "And, I understand why people ask you to do that, but I don't agree with it."

Notowitz said tattoos often carry a negative connotation.

"People are worried about how a tattoo will make you seem," Notowitz said. "Tattoos have often had connotations of danger. Some people might feel as undesirable or dangerous or untrustworthy. You're messy."

Fazzio said tattoos are judged differently depending on one's location.

"It's a very cultural thing," Fazzio said. "In other coun-

tries that I have worked in, I had to be very covered up. Here, I feel like I've seen teachers with many."

Likewise, Sessoms said he feels as if societal perceptions of tattoos depend on the nature of one's surroundings.

"Each environment that we're in has its own cultural expectations," Sessoms said. "There are codes of behavior and conduct, and I think depending on the environment that you're in, folks are going to perceive things differently based on the expectations of that environment."

However, Sessoms said he would not go around advertising his tattoos because "it might not fit with the professional culture."

Hartogs said if the place-

ment or quantity of one's tattoo hinders their ability to work adequately, it becomes problematic.

"The minute the tattoos start impacting, like, your ability to get a job or your ability to be viewed as by a certain person, then I think that yes, it's too much," Hartogs said.

Conclusively, Densley said while she does not want to have many tattoos, it is a valid and individual decision.

"I have a limit, I don't want to be covered with them," Densley said. "But I don't think there's anything wrong with anybody who does want to be covered. I think that's a very personal choice."

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**MS/HS Yearbook
Teacher Lina Densley**

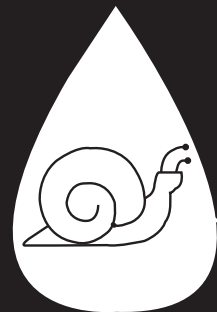
Densley has a memorial tattoo on her chest which represents the passing of each loved one in her life.

"The moon represents my youngest brother who died when I was 11," Densley said. "The stars represent other family members and important people to me that I've lost."

**English Teacher
Hannah Notowitz**

Notowitz said she has eight tattoos, the most recent of which is a snail that she got because it reminds her of childhood pets and is representative of a challenging time period in her life.

"I got it at a frustrating and difficult time in my life," she said. "I specifically chose a snail as well because I wanted to remind myself that it's okay to be slow and to be patient and to just make steady progress."

**Social Studies Teacher
Aaron Fazzio**

Fazzio got a tattoo of a phoenix to remind himself of his strength during his sophomore year. He said the year was challenging as he developed a medical illness.

"I had a brain tumor, and it was kind of a five year post-brain surgery present," Fazzio said. "I have one tattoo. It's a phoenix and it says, 'If you want to live, keep moving' and it's on my left arm."



IF YOU WANT TO LIVE, KEEP MOVING