

What the f?

This is a story about words we can't write in this story. You most likely hear these words frequently, and now more than ever before. But, even though the words are not present on this page, we can certainly ask: Are we living in an age of profanity? Out of 200 students surveyed, 64 percent admitted to cussing quite regularly, while all students declared they encountered profanity in public all the time. And as for the gold standard of foul words, a single hour at lunch resulted in a total of 97 F-bombs being dropped.

"It's much more prevalent now," said Principal Dr. William Orr. "I think we're much more desensitized to it."

And that appears to be the common outlook. Swearing seems to have become the rule, rather than the exception.

"Profanity has become more accepted and mainstream," said Assistant Principal Melvin Williams.

And Tampa Police Officer Frank Noel agrees.

"You hear [profanity] so much it's become the social norm. Nowadays, people just dismiss it," he said.

As society becomes fountains

of four-letter words, many are not keen on its newfound prevalence in our daily lives.

"The fact that [profanity] has become such an acceptable part of society doesn't please me," said Lou Rowland, a longtime English teacher. "It shows a deterioration of respect for people."

Profanity is not just prevailing at Hillsborough. It's everywhere.

"It's society as a whole. It's become socially acceptable," Officer Noel said.

It's not too alarming to hear profanity peppered throughout television shows, films and music. Much of the pop culture we

tune into today has become as lax about keeping "bad words" out of its shows and songs as many of us have been about keeping it out of our daily vocabulary.

The f-bomb was first dropped on American television audiences in 1981 on Saturday Night Live. Charles Rocket was fired from the show after improvising and using the word during a sketch.

Since then, we've increasingly heard it slip out during talk shows, award ceremonies, sporting events and even a presidential health care signing. And to think, George Washington called swearing a "wicked practice" in his 1776 "Gen-

eral Orders on Profanity."

The Parents Television Council conducted a study to examine the increase in profanity in primetime

television from 2005 to 2010. It found that over those five years, there was an overall 69 percent

increase in cursing on broadcast shows. Fox Broadcast Network saw the largest per-hour jump in profanity, with 269 percent. This study suggests that while the prevalence isn't completely new, we have heard a greater amount of cursing on TV lately.

In movies, directors and script-writers can get away with colorful language even in PG films. As the film rating increases, the profanity can get harsher and harsher. There's also the option to appeal for a lower rating if the filmmaker believes that a different rating is appropriate for the movie due to the circumstances of the cursing.

It's hardly something new for

are making little efforts to make their songs airwave-friendly. "Thrift Shop," by Macklemore and Ryan Lewis, the current No. 1 song on the Billboard Hot 100, features the f-word alone nine times.

Part of the reason for this may be the change in the industry itself. With music downloading on the rise, gone are the days where artists have to rely on their songs to be radio-ready to be heard. Singers and rappers can say whatever they want in their songs; radio audiences just might hear more bleepings and lyric changes because of it.

Many students and administrators don't have concrete answers for what seems to be this onslaught of cursing and its cause. Junior Gianna Rhodes said, "I don't mind cursing in music if it's not too much."

Rowland continued his opinion on the current state of cursing in our society by saying, "I'm not sure whether our common culture reflects pop culture or the other way around. I don't know if profanity appears in music and movies because of society or vice versa."

-By Brittany Valencic & Nikki Ferrera

"It's become socially acceptable."

-Officer Frank Noel

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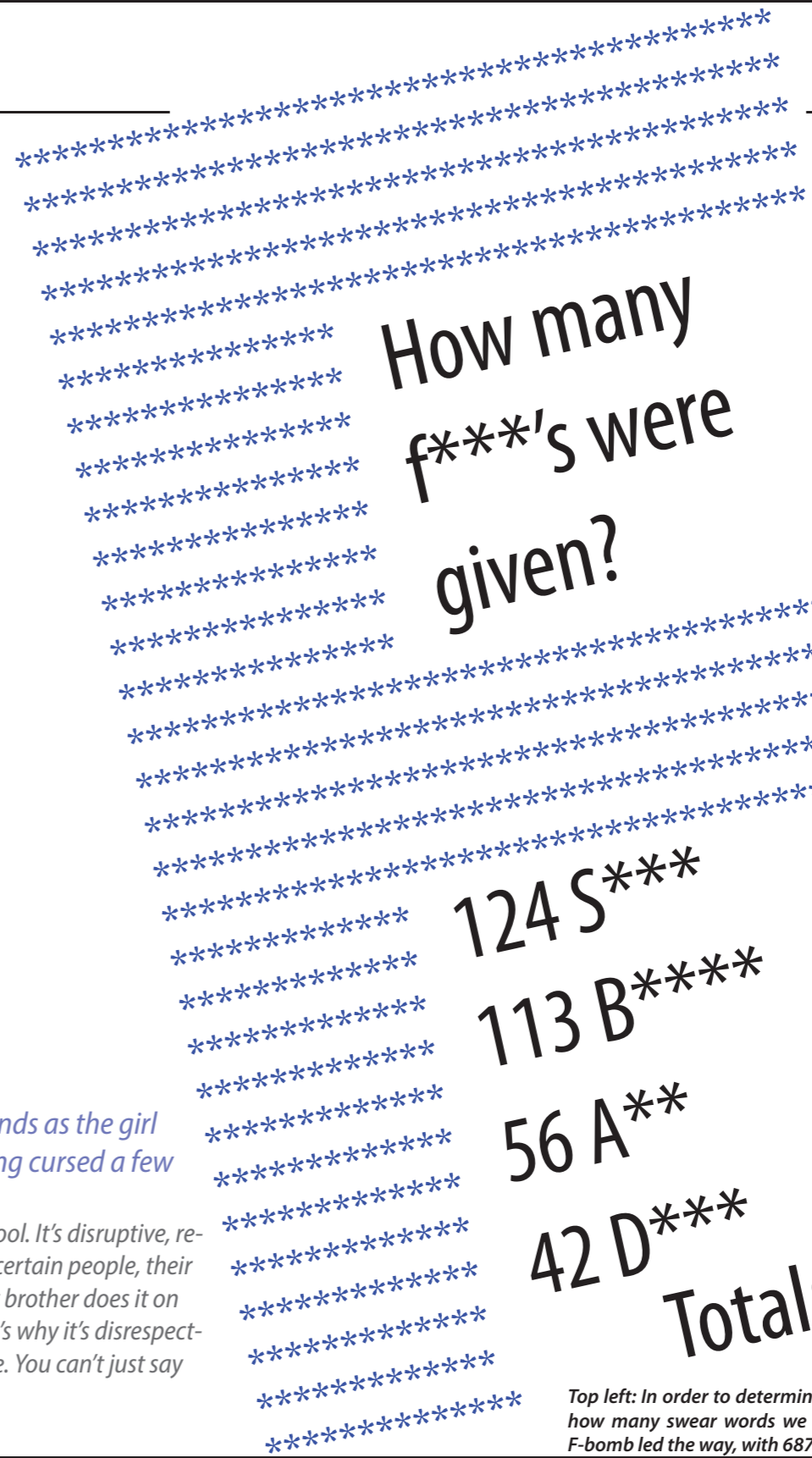
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*When sophomore Vinny Ruia discovered he was being interviewed for his steady use of profanity, he responded with a loud "f*** yeah!" "I rarely curse just to curse. I curse for comedic purposes; people laugh when I curse even if it isn't very funny. I think cursing should be acceptable. Why should some words be considered taboo, when words like 'fat' and 'ugly' are just as offensive? I don't think cursing is a problem when done tastefully and in moderation. You should use appropriate words to express your feelings, but sometimes there aren't any appropriate words! Curses are the salt on the dish of life."*



Junior Jessica Fernandez stands out among her friends as the girl who doesn't curse. While Fernandez admits to having cursed a few times, profanity is a rarity for her. "[Profanity is] disrespectful around people, especially at school. It's disruptive, really. Most of my friends curse and sometimes being around certain people, their traits can rub off on you. My mom is against cursing. But my brother does it on purpose, because he knows [Fernandez' mom] doesn't. That's why it's disrespectful. Most people cuss out of habit, but really it's a moral issue. You can't just say stop, [people] won't listen."



How many f***'s were given?

- 124 S***
- 113 B****
- 56 A**
- 42 D***

Total: 1,022

81%

of students hear others use profanity regularly

64%

of students admit they use profanity frequently

61%

of students believe profanity is acceptable

41%

of students use profanity equally between friends and family

Top left: In order to determine just how prevalent profanity is at Hillsborough, we tracked how many swear words we heard in one day. The chart shows the top five words. The F-bomb led the way, with 687 utterings (one for each *) Top right: Survey of 200 students.