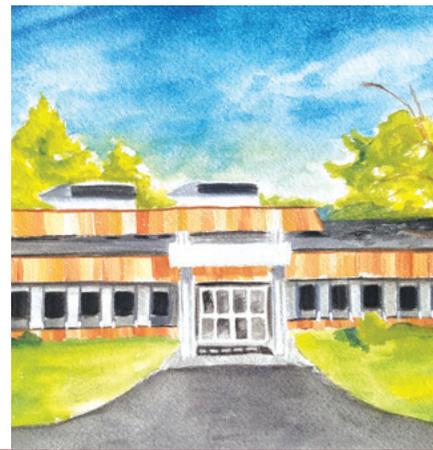


# THE COUNTY COLLEGE OF MORRIS' AWARD-WINNING STUDENT NEWSPAPER

# YOUNGTOWN

# EDITION

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# CCM's Center for Health Professions is victory for community

**STEVE SIMMONS**  
Staff Writer

A new building is rising on the campus of County College of Morris (CCM). Some students are unsure of the building's purpose, while others know exactly what it's intended for.

Business administration major Jessica Granados of Morristown believes it will house classrooms but isn't sure which programs it will support, while nursing students Katie Prause of Rockaway and Kaylie Blanchard of Roxbury both believe it will be a new home for the college's health sciences programs.

In October 2023, Morris County, the State of New Jersey, and local officials held a news conference to announce plans for a state-of-the-art Center for Health Professions building at CCM. This 80,000-square-foot building will be home to the School of Health Professions and Natural Sciences (HPNS) and will also support related health care programs offered through the Center for Workforce Development.

Dr. Maria Isaza is dean of the School of HPNS, which she refers to as "happiness." The school consists of four well-established programs—nursing, radiography, respiratory therapy, and paramedics—as well as biology and chemistry, landscaping, horticulture, and exercise science. Isaza has a long history with the college. As a student, she graduated from CCM in 1999 with dual degrees: an Associate of Applied Science in laboratory medical technology and an associate degree in biology. In 2007, she returned to the college as an adjunct professor, becoming a full-time professor in 2008, followed by roles as assistant chair and dean.

According to Isaza, planning for the Center for Health Professions began approximately two and a half years ago, with construction starting at the beginning of this year. If all goes according to plan, the first courses in the new building could be held in fall 2027.

Isaza said the driver for the new building is a shortage of qualified



PHOTOS BY STEVE SIMMONS

Construction progress as of January 2026 on the Center for Health Professions building, as viewed from the walkway behind Sheffield Hall.



Construction progress as of January 2026 on the Center for Health Professions building as viewed from the entrance to parking lot 4.

staff in the health care industry. "We already knew that there are shortages. That has been, I would say, a complaint of the industry," she said. "We need more nurses; we need more radiographers and so on. COVID showed that the shortages were even deeper than we thought they were. And COVID also did something—it pushed people who were ready to retire, and that made the shortages even more problematic."

The college has excellent relationships with two major partners in New Jersey, Atlantic Health and Prime Healthcare, which Isaza indicated might have 4,000 positions open at any given point, making the shortages a major driver in this expansion.

Another problem is the limited space currently available to the programs. When the Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Center (AMEC) opened, space became available in Sheffield Hall, which Health Sciences was able to acquire for the Paragano Family Foundation Healthcare Simulation Center. "Simulation is extremely important for nursing," Isaza said. "They need

to learn some stuff here before we take them to the hospital, and being able to now expand into Sheffield and having that space was priceless—not only because the space is beautiful, which is so important for our students' pride and our faculty as well, feeling great about where they are, but also because it let us expand our program and have more opportunities to grow the program as well."

The new building will allow HPNS to relocate its existing classes and simulations, which will free up space in Sheffield Hall. The new building will also allow the college to implement new programs. "We are going to have a dental hygiene clinic that is going to be open to the public, and that is a major initiative, I will say," Isaza said, "and that's going to utilize a big space. And we have the dental hygiene director already."

She anticipates that the dental hygiene clinic could open as early as fall 2027. Additionally, she is working on a diagnostic medical sonog-

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## THE YOUNGTOWN EDITION

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All students are welcome to contribute articles to The Youngtown Edition either in person or via e-mail. However, students cannot receive a byline if they belong to the organization on which they are reporting. The deadline for articles is the Wednesday prior to a production.

# Not a detour: Why community college students belong in every elite space

**SUMEYYE OZTEK**

*Staff Writer*

Many people assume that community college students are just in a transitional phase—that we are here because we do not know what we want or have not figured out our paths. What they do not see is determination, ambition, and resilience in every classroom. Some of us are balancing multiple jobs, parenting children, or returning to education after years away. Others are working through challenges most people cannot imagine, yet every day we show up, learn, and contribute. Community college is not a detour; it is a place where real work, real growth, and real impact happen.

I have seen students start their days early, work long shifts, manage family responsibilities, and navigate commutes with textbooks in hand. Their ambition is not theoretical—it is lived, tested, and proven in the everyday balancing act of work, school, and life. Attending community college is not a fallback or a limitation. It is a choice to meet reality head-on, to build determination in the spaces where the world challenges you, and to turn obstacles into opportunities for growth.

Community colleges are spaces where students arrive with diverse academic histories, personal challenges, and ambitions, yet share a common drive to grow and learn. Classrooms at CCM become places where curiosity takes center stage,

where questions matter, and where effort often speaks louder than prestige. Through my work with Phi Theta Kappa alongside my teammates Hannah Mescavage and Niki, and now as the newly selected vice president of engagement, I have explored why community colleges often lose visibility in national conversations, even while serving millions of students. In thinking about how to engage students, I realized it often comes down to awareness and helping students know that these opportunities exist. Our students at CCM are hungry for challenges and passionate about growth. This work, combined with discussions about access and impact, reaffirmed something powerful: community colleges are not places of limitation, but spaces of possibility, growth, and resilience.

I experienced this firsthand at a United Nations policy forum. Surrounded by students and professionals from universities and NGOs, I saw that a community's knowledge matters, and every voice—whether young or older—has value. Our generation can contribute to meaningful outcomes, but the older generation's perspective also belongs in these spaces. This reinforced what I already knew about CCM: our classrooms are communities where all students can grow, contribute, and be seen.

Community college is also a place where mentorship and inspiration thrive. The professors at CCM

show up every day with energy, insight, and dedication that pushes students to grow. Each one, in their own way, challenges students to think critically, makes us feel seen, and creates connections that are invaluable for academic and personal development. Experiences like these are rare at large universities, where students can sometimes feel anonymous. The time we have now in these classrooms is more precious than ever. It allows us to learn, engage, and build relationships that shape our future in profound ways.

Community colleges also provide opportunities for students to pursue ambitious, real-world projects. In CCM's Honors Program, students work closely with professors throughout the semester on capstone presentations that explore meaningful questions and solutions. Recently, the program added an Impact Award to recognize projects that demonstrate tangible contributions to society. This initiative highlights what community college students are capable of—using our skills, curiosity, and effort to create work that matters beyond the classroom.

Community college classrooms nurture talent and persistence without the spotlight of rankings or headlines. Conversations with peers and mentors at CCM reveal a shared truth: resilience is our common thread. Balancing work, school, and life teaches skills that prestige cannot measure. I have witnessed

students defend their communities too. Last year, when New Jersey proposed cuts to community college funding, CCM students mobilized handing out flyers, speaking to peers, and organizing campaigns to fight the cuts. Each late-night study session, library visit, completed assignment, and act of advocacy is evidence of ambition forged under pressure.

Community college is not a detour. It is a launchpad, shaped by reality, determination, and possibility. Every single day as I walk through the campus doors, I am more aware and grateful that I can pursue an education with the help of financial aid. As I prepare to transfer to a university in Fall 2026, I honor students who may feel unseen in the classroom or overlooked for their effort. I think of peers balancing multiple jobs, long commutes, and family responsibilities, just as I did traveling forty minutes each way every day. Even when asked why I did not choose a school closer to home, I never regretted applying to CCM. Our stories live in classrooms, libraries, and quiet perseverance. We are architects of the future for generations to follow, proving that education does not need to be expensive and that everyone, especially young women, deserves the chance to learn, grow, and lead. We deserve to be recognized not as temporary students passing through, but as thinkers, contributors, and future leaders already in motion.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

raphy program that is already moving through the approval process at the state level. Isaza is also looking at other potential programs, but she feels it is still too early in the process to talk about them.

In addition to housing degree courses, the building will also host health sciences-related workforce development courses, which include Basic Life Support (BLS) and Certified Nurse Aide (CNA).

While students and staff can observe the progress being made on the physical building from the walk-

way behind Sheffield Hall, there is a lot of behind-the-scenes work underway that is necessary before new programs can be offered. CCM will need to submit numerous inspections and on-site visits related to the HPNS programs.

Multiple accreditations will need to be completed. "You have the overarching accreditation for the institution," Isaza said. "That's the Middle States Commission of Higher Education, but in addition to that, programs that have licenses—because my people need to pass a board, they need to go and get a license to practice—for example, for

dental hygiene, it's the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA). For respiratory therapy, it is the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (COARC)."

Additionally, there are New Jersey state requirements that must be met, including those set by the New Jersey Board of Nursing and the NJ Department of Environmental Protection – Radiologic Technology Board of Examiners.

Isaza sees herself as living proof of the impact the college can have on students and says that "CCM is so truthful to our mission because we change lives and we strengthen

communities, and it's incredible." She added that graduates can make \$90,000 per year in entry-level positions.

"Two years and they can get a job and earn enough money to live a good life," Isaza said. "So that is a huge impact. You change the life of that student, think about what they can do for their family, and then we can think about what they can do for our society. We're contributing to closing the gap on the shortage, and with that, we're strengthening our community. We're closing the gap on shortages." Isaza sees that as a win-win situation.

# Echoes of Sankara: In honor of Black History Month

BY ZENITH CARRILLO

Staff Writer

## The Humble Nation

In the central Sahel, where the heat bakes the iron-rich soil of the savanna, sits a small nation that has become one of the more interesting cases in modern African politics. Burkina Faso, whose name translates roughly to “Land of the Incorruptible Man” in the Mossi and Dyula languages, has been dealing with the fallout of French colonial rule for decades now, and in many ways it still is. In 2022, things came to a head. Insurgent groups had been gaining ground across the country, and the civilian government simply did not have the resources to fight back. Some analysts have tied this insurgency to broader U.S. counterterrorism policy in the region, though that connection is debated. The result was two successive coups, and a military captain named Ibrahim Traoré ended up in charge. Traoré has been pretty open about the fact that his biggest influence is a man who has been dead for almost forty years: Thomas Sankara. Whether Sankara’s ideas actually hold up as a model for running a country today is something scholars still argue about, but his name still carries a lot of weight in the region.

Before getting into Sankara himself, it helps to understand how Africa got to where it is. The Berlin Conference of 1884 to 1885 is usually where people start, and for good reasons. European powers sat down and basically divided up the continent with very little input from the people living there. The borders they drew had almost nothing to do with the cultures or communities on the ground, and that fact has caused problems ever since. Colonial expansion kept going through the early 1900s, driven by new technology and military power, until World War I started reshuffling things.

After WWI, the Allied powers held onto their colonies and their influence, but it did not last. World War II threw everything into chaos again. Germany had been rearming



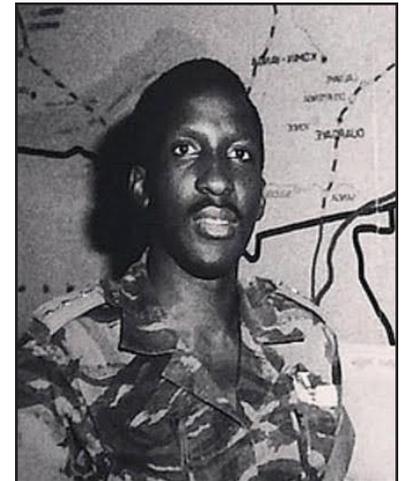
itself, pushing nationalist and fascist ideology, and when Hitler’s regime started its campaign across Europe, it ended any illusion that the old colonial order was stable. By the time the war was over, the world had split into two camps: the United States and its allies on one side, the Soviet Union and its partners on the other. Countries that did not want to pick a side grouped together under what became known as the Non-Aligned Movement.

It was in this postwar environment that African decolonization really picked up speed. A lot of the newly independent countries kept the same borders the Europeans had drawn, mostly because redrawing them would have been a nightmare. The hope was that a shared sense of African identity could hold things together. That idea, Pan-Africanism, ended up being a big deal for a lot of the leaders who came out of this era. Whether keeping those old borders was ultimately a smart move or not is still something people disagree on.

Thomas Isidore Noël Sankara

was born on September 21st in Yako, which at the time was part of the French colony called Upper Volta. He grew up in a Catholic family, and his parents actually hoped he would become a priest. He did not go that route. Instead, he joined the military, which was not unusual for young African men at the time. The army was one of the few places where you could actually move up in the world, and Sankara was disciplined enough to do exactly that.

In 1970, he was sent to Madagascar for military training, and that turned out to be a pretty pivotal moment for him. Madagascar was going through its own political crisis at the time. The ruling party, the PSD, had a reputation for being too close to the French, and people were not happy about it. Farmers, students, and regular citizens started protesting, and when the government cracked down on them, it only made things worse for the ruling party. Eventually the government fell, and a socialist government took its place. It was not a perfectly clean transition, and there were power



struggles behind the scenes, but it was largely peaceful.

Watching all of that unfold clearly had an effect on Sankara. He started reading Marx and Lenin seriously, and those ideas would end up shaping a lot of what he did later on. After Madagascar, he went back to Upper Volta and got pulled into a border war with Mali. He fought in it, but he later called the whole thing pointless, arguing that the bor-

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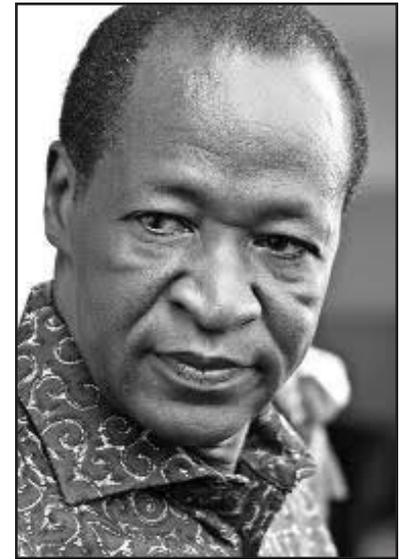
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ders Europeans had drawn were just dividing people who should have been working together. The next ten years were a mess of bad governments and coups, and Sankara became a figure that a lot of younger officers rallied around, including a guy named Blaise Compaoré who would later become very important to the story.

Sankara became prime minister on January 1st, 1983, and right away started pushing back against the more conservative policies in the government. He wanted to make real changes, not just small adjustments. A French diplomat visited the country not long after, and shortly following that visit, Sankara was removed from his position and put under house arrest. Compaoré then led a coup to get him out, and Sankara ended up as president. One of the first things he did was rename the country from Upper Volta to Burkina Faso. It is worth pointing out, though, that Sankara himself came to power through a coup.

One of Sankara's core beliefs was that Burkina Faso could not be truly independent as long as it depended on other countries for basic things like food. And when you look at how the colonial system was set up, you can see why he felt that way. The infrastructure that had been built was designed to move resources out of the country, not to feed the people living there. Education was focused on French language and European ideas. On top of all that, the IMF and World Bank were pushing austerity policies on countries like Burkina Faso. Critics say those policies made it harder for these countries to build themselves up, though the institutions themselves would argue they were trying to help stabilize their economies in the long run. Either way, Sankara decided the answer was to focus on growing food locally.

One of the bigger projects was a reforestation effort. Villages would plant groves on their outskirts and maintain them as a community, and over time those groves would become forests. It was a practical response to desertification, but it also fit into Sankara's bigger picture of getting the country to take care of itself. He laid out the goal simply: provide every person in the country with two meals a day and clean drinking water. That might not



sound like much, but for a country that had been under colonial rule for so long, pulling something like that off was a bigger deal than it might look like from the outside.

As results started showing up, so did opposition. Some of it came from inside the country, from people who had benefited from the old system and did not like seeing their influence shrink. Some of it came from the international stage. It is hard to say exactly how much of that opposition was about money and power versus legitimate disagreements about whether Sankara's approach was sustainable. Probably a mix of both.

Sankara saw education and gender equality as two sides of the same coin, and both were central to what he was trying to do. If you wanted to actually break free from colonialism, he believed, you had to change how people thought, not just how the government ran. So he set up the Ministry of Family Development and the Women's Union of Burkina to give women more support and opportunities. He restricted polygamy and dowries, banned forced marriage and female genital mutilation, and gave women inheritance rights. There was even a nationwide day where men and women swapped roles in the household, men doing the cooking and water collecting while women handled other duties. It was meant to shake up the way people thought about gender, and by most accounts it did get people talking.

The education numbers are probably the most striking thing. The literacy rate went from 13% to 73% in four years. A big part of that was changing what was being taught. Before Sankara, most

schools were run by French teachers or taught curricula that served European interests. He started restructuring that. Some of these reforms, especially the social ones, were pretty ambitious, and there is a fair argument to be made that they were pushed through more from the top down than they were built up from the communities themselves. That does not mean they were bad policies, but it is a tension worth acknowledging.

The people who pushed back the hardest were not the general population. Most regular people were on board with what Sankara was doing. It was more the people who had built their lives on the old system: corrupt officials, teachers who had been teaching colonial curricula, military officers who had gotten rich off the way things were. These were the people who felt the most threatened. Western governments were watching all of this closely too, and there is evidence to suggest they moved to work against Sankara, though exactly how involved they were is still debated.

On October 15th, 1987, Sankara was killed. Compaoré, the same man who had helped him get to power, organized the coup. The attack has been connected to Côte d'Ivoire and to a warlord named Charles Taylor, who had ties to Western interests. Sankara was shot by a firing squad after walking out of a government meeting. Most of his allies in that room were killed too. Only one person is confirmed to have survived. Whether France or other Western actors were directly behind it is something historians still argue about. Some point to a pattern that goes all the way back to European colonization, where out-

side powers would use internal rivalries to bring governments down. Others think that framing gives too much credit to foreign actors, and that the coup was just as much the result of personal betrayal and Sankara's own political blind spots.

Compaoré stayed in power for over twenty years after that, and by the time he was finally ousted in 2014, the country was in bad shape. Corruption had gotten out of control, and what followed was years of instability, one government after another failing to get things under control. The French government promised at one point to release classified documents about Sankara's death, but never fully followed through. That was one of several reasons French influence in Burkina Faso started to decline.

Ibrahim Traoré is in charge now, and he has been direct about the fact that Sankara is his inspiration. Under his leadership, schools have started teaching local languages alongside French, the gold mines have been nationalized, and the country opened its first domestically owned tomato-processing plant. Mali and Niger, which are dealing with similar situations, have joined up with Burkina Faso to leave ECOWAS, the regional bloc that the three countries have accused of being too much under Western influence. Whether Traoré can pull off what Sankara was trying to do, without running into the same walls, is an open question. But what is clear is that Sankara's ideas are not just historical curiosities anymore. They are actively shaping politics in one of the more important parts of Africa right now, and the debates he started about who gets to decide the future of a nation are far from over.

# Rising prices put pressure on students, workers

**BRIANNA GARCIA**

*Staff Writer*

The cost of living in the United States continues to rise, and many Americans say it's becoming harder to keep up. A recent study from the Pew Research Center found that most people believe the price of everyday necessities—like groceries and rent—has increased faster than their incomes, leaving them financially strained.

Young adults are feeling that pressure most acutely. Many students are juggling school and work yet still struggle to afford basics that once felt manageable. Shane Parker, a cashier at ShopRite in Succasunna, New Jersey, said even buying food after work has become a challenge. "You can't come out of the grocery store without spending at least \$50," Parker said. "It

feels like my paycheck disappears the moment I get it."

The Pew report shows people across the country are cutting back wherever they can. Some are limiting travel, skipping nights out, and relying more on savings to cover monthly bills. Even with those adjustments, many say it still doesn't feel like enough. Students who hoped to save money by attending community colleges are realizing that lower tuition doesn't shield them from broader economic burdens. Anthony Higgins, a student at Sussex County Community College, said rising prices have forced him to pause major life decisions. "I wanted to move out soon," Higgins said. "But now I know there's no way I can afford rent and school at the same time. Everything is too expensive."

Housing has become one of the

biggest concerns for younger Americans. Pew's research shows that many feel stuck—wanting independence but unable to take the financial leap. Even those working full time often find themselves living with family longer than planned. Retail workers see this struggle from both sides; they're selling products that cost more while their own wages rarely rise in response. Victoria Collins, a cashier at T.J. Maxx, said she feels caught in the middle. "Customers complain about higher prices," Collins said. "But we're feeling it too. My wage hasn't changed, so I'm falling behind."

Economists note that although inflation has slowed compared to earlier spikes, its effects linger. Prices that climbed sharply have not fallen back to previous levels, and paychecks haven't caught up. Pew found that many Americans worry not only

about their current situation but also about what comes next.

For students and young workers, the stress isn't only about money, it's about the future. Some fear that postponing education or major life milestones could limit opportunities later. Others worry that no matter how hard they work, they'll always be playing financial catch-up. As costs continue to shape decisions about school, housing, and work, many students are holding onto hope that conditions will improve. For now, budgeting has become essential, and even small purchases can feel like significant choices.

Across the country—and especially among young adults, the reality is clear: living in America is getting more expensive, and making ends meet has become a daily challenge that many didn't expect this early in life.

# Americans increasingly turn to social media influencers for news, Pew finds

**BY EANNA LASHER**

*Staff Writer*

According to a new report from the Pew Research Center, more Americans are getting their news from social media influencers instead of traditional journalists, with 21% of U.S. adults regularly receiving news from online personalities. The trend is strongest among young adults, nearly 40% of whom rely on influencers for news. Pew researchers said the shift reflects how younger audiences consume information, noting that most influence-driven news is discovered passively. About 69% of adults who regularly get news from influencers say it mostly appears in their feeds rather than being something they search for.

College students say influencers feel easier to understand and more relatable than traditional journalists.

"I get most of my news from people I follow on TikTok and Instagram," said Kevin Velez, an engineering science major at CCM. "It pops up while I'm scrolling, and it feels easier to understand than when I watch traditional news." The report found that many Americans value influencers for qualities rarely associated with formal journalism. Among adults who rely on influencers for news, 54% say these online personalities help them understand current events, and 49% say influencers feel more authentic than traditional sources.

"Sometimes I feel like news anchors talk at you," said Steven Cook, a finance major at CCM. "Influencers talk like normal people—because they are—and it feels more like a conversation than a lecture."

Pew researchers noted that most influencers who discuss news or public issues have no journalism training

or ties to established news organizations. A previous Pew study found that 77% of news-focused influencers have never worked in journalism. Supporters say this independence makes their content more relatable, while critics say it raises concerns about accuracy, verification and accountability. For many consumers, convenience drives their reliance on influencers. With social media intertwined with daily routines, news often arrives through casual scrolling. "I'll be on my phone during lunch break at work or between classes, and that's when I see breaking stories," said Sabrina Vasquez, a biology major at CCM. "By the time I get home, I'm already caught up."

The trend spans political lines, with Pew finding little difference between Democrats and Republicans in their use of influencers for news; both groups hover between 21% and

22%.

Instead, the divide appears across age groups. Older adults say trust comes from shared values and authenticity, while younger adults prioritize personality and entertainment. Journalism experts warn that while influencers offer immediacy and relatability, they typically do not follow editorial review processes. Still, they acknowledge influencers have filled a space that traditional news outlets have struggled to maintain for younger audiences.

As digital platforms continue to shape how people learn and communicate, influencers have moved from entertainers to informal news guides for millions of Americans. Whether this shift strengthens or weakens public understanding of current events remains unclear, but the habits of younger audiences suggest the change is already well underway.

# That Percy Jackson Season 2 finale twist? Yeah, we need to talk about it

**ANDREW KIM**

*Sports Editor*

Okay, campers, gather around the hearth. Grab a blue cookie and sit down, because we need to process what just happened. If you just finished *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* Season 2 finale and you're currently staring at your TV screen wondering if you hallucinated the last ten minutes, you didn't.

Also, a spoiler warning for show watchers is still on Season 1, so tread with caution moving forward if you haven't read past the 2nd book after *The Sea of Monsters*.

Let's be real for a second: book adaptations are tricky beasts. You change too much, and the fandom riots. You change too little, and everyone gets bored because they know exactly who dies. But what showrunners just did with Thalia Grace? That's a shocking revelation for both book readers and show watchers for the franchise itself.

So, let's break down the twist that has everyone spiraling, why Percy looks like he's about to punch a wall, and what this actually means for Season 3 (other than inevitable trauma, obviously).

## **Thalia Grace: From Martyr to... Something Else Entirely**

If you read Rick Riordan's books, you know the drill. Thalia Grace, daughter of Zeus, makes a noble sacrifice to save her friends, fighting off an army of monsters alone on Half-Blood Hill. She falls, Zeus takes pity, turns her into a pine tree, and boom: Camp Half-Blood gets a magical barrier. It's tragic. It's heroic. It's classic Greek tragedy stuff.

But the Disney+ series looked at that origin story and said, "That's cute, but what if we made it infinitely more messed up?"

In the show's version of events, Thalia didn't go down fighting monsters. Nope. Zeus, her own father, killed the monsters himself. Why? Because



Thalia found out about the Great Prophecy (you know, the one saying a child of the Big Three will either save or raze Olympus). She refused to be a pawn in the gods' war and tried to leave. So, in a "Father of the Year" move, Zeus turned her into a tree against her will to keep her on the board as a backup plan.

Ouch.

The kicker? Chiron knew. He watched it happen and then fed everyone the "noble sacrifice" lie for years.

## **Why Percy is Absolutely Livid**

This change completely re-contextualizes the ending. In the books, when the Golden Fleece works its magic a little too well, and Thalia pops out of the tree, it's a shock, but it's hopeful. Here? It's terrifying.

Percy isn't just looking at a resurrected demigod; he's looking at a girl who was imprisoned by her dad for refusing to be a weapon. And now she's back, armed with lightning powers and a very valid reason to hate Olympus.

As Percy ominously narrates: "You guys get nightmares, right? Well, not like mine. Because mine just woke up."

Executive Producer Craig Silverstein didn't mince words about this shift. He noted that while it feels like a massive deviation, it's actually just "activating" the stakes. It gives Thalia a genuine, burning grudge against her father. It transforms her from a confused,

newly awakened kid into a potential threat. It creates a natural rivalry between her and Percy that isn't just about capture-the-flag: it's ideological.

And honestly? It works. It makes the gods look petty and controlling (which, let's be honest, is historically accurate mythology), and it gives Luke's "burn it all down" pitch a lot more credibility.

## **Season 3: Darker, Grittier, and Full of "Dam" Jokes**

So, where do we go from here? Season 3 is tackling *The Titan's Curse*, which is widely considered the book where things stop being a fun summer camp adventure and start getting real.

Walker Scobell (our glorious Percy) has been spilling some tea, and apparently, Season 3 is going to be "even better than imagined." He mentioned that the characters are growing up, realizing they aren't invincible, and facing the grim reality of the prophecy.

But it's not all doom and gloom. Scobell confirmed the one thing we were all praying for: The Hoover Dam scene is happening.

Yes, the iconic "dam" jokes are safe. Scobell even admitted that before he got the scripts, he and Aryan Simhadri (Grover) were worried the writers might cut it for being too silly. Thankfully, the writers have taste. Amidst all the teenage angst and divine warfare, we're still going to get some quality puns.

## **What Else Changed? (Because They Weren't Done Yet)**

The finale didn't just rewrite Thalia's history; it tweaked the final battle, too. Instead of the showdown happening on Luke's cruise ship, the *Princess Andromeda*, the fight came to Camp Half-Blood. Silverstein explained that since the season was about saving the camp, the climax needed to actually be at the camp. It makes sense structurally, even if we missed the boat vibes.

The camp's interim director didn't get sent back to the Underworld by Dionysus this time. He got dusted in battle while trying to eat a turkey leg. Honestly? Good riddance. It was a satisfying, if abrupt, end to the guy who made everyone's summer miserable.

The other thing that changed was that Silverstein admitted they wanted the Party Ponies (Chiron's rowdy relatives) to storm the field, but they couldn't make it look good with the money they had. Tragically, we had to settle for Chiron with a bow and arrow. We'll survive, but a centaur rave would have been nice.

## **The Verdict?**

We're in uncharted waters now, folks. By letting Percy know about the Great Prophecy this early and by giving Thalia a legitimate reason to despise the gods, the show has taken the safety rails off.

The gods are scared. They aren't used to their fate resting in the hands of the kids they've ignored or mistreated. And frankly, they should be scared.

Season 3 is currently filming, and while we have to wait until 2026 to see how this plays out, one thing is certain: The "friendly" competition between cabins is over. The war is here, and for the first time, we're not entirely sure whose side Thalia Grace is going to be on.

Season 1 was a good beginning, while Season 2 brought the heat last year when it was airing late in 3025. But buckle up for 2026, demigods. It's going to be a bumpy ride.

# Haunted by design: The order and chaos of the Overlook

**SARA LIM**

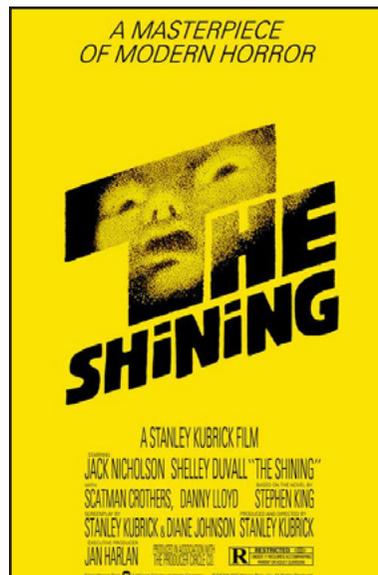
*Editor-in-Chief*

Eternally hypnotic, the Overlook Hotel hums with the precision of a colossal, clockwork dream—an edifice untethered from time, defiantly sovereign in its resistance to reason or explanation. Spiraling {incomprehensibly, illogically, illness-inducingly} the maze outside mirrors its absurdist attempts at compartmentalizing the cosmos. Within the perfectly choreographed world of Kubrick’s 1980 film *The Shining*, the maze functions as the most prominent survival of the primitive, an ancient reminder of the pointless pursuit of life {as ironized by Jack’s pursuit of death at the end of the film} in the face of the coldness of the world, transforming, entrapping, and, ultimately, suffocating those inside. In his short film *The Mazemaker* (1971), British sculptor Michael Ayrton states, “It is, to me, a model of the brain, a diagram of the intestines, a map of the world. Every man inhabits the Maze he himself makes, yet each Maze is no more than a model for a larger Labyrinth—sensed but not known.” The film, too, unfolds as a winding meditation on the absurd terrors that stir within the dark—where truth flickers uncertainly, and the very limits of reality seem to question themselves. The Overlook hotel serves as a physical manifestation of the internal conflicts of its characters, a vaguely anatomical creation capable of physically harming its inhabitants. Through his exploration of the dichotomy of the personal and the mechanical, beauty and rot, and the blood-soaked essence of existence, Kubrick meticulously crafts a horror-filled tale that echoes in the cultural conscience forever, and ever, and ever.

Droning, plodding at steady quarter notes, the *Dies Irae* {a traditional Gregorian Requiem Mass} cloaks the opening shots of *The Shining*, unmistakable foreboding, eternally terrifying. With foresight, the Latin translation of this now-

iconic piece of music is prophetic—the opening theme of the piece translates to, “Day of wrath and doom impending!” This presents a fascinating premise that directly informs the film’s narrative style; the audience is aware of how the plot will develop {through a combination of both the film’s iconic status and the details sprinkled throughout}. Both consciously and subconsciously, the technical and visual aspects of the film construct and condition, psychologically winking at the audience as if to say... “We both know how this story ends.” While this may seem out of the ordinary for a horror film {and initially surprised me}, it creates a unique situation in which the audience is constantly suspended in anticipation, like a hunter in wait for its prey {or, perhaps, the exact opposite} already knowing the gruesome conclusion of this escapade. In a way, this mirrors the human condition: existing within a story while knowing its conclusion. Thus, the focus moves from what happens to how it happens. The film is separated into ten parts, each marked with a title card. In the beginning of the film, the titles refer to the subject matter of each portion, but as the films move on, they abruptly begin marking deliberate time intervals, as if counting down to some inevitable conclusion, purposefully slowing the narrative down to a trot... furthermore, the time intervals become more and more precise, beginning with months, then days, then specific hours of a single day. This creates momentum and suspense within the audience, creating a sense of helplessness before inescapable horror.

The premise is as simple as it is effective: Jack Torrance, an aspiring novelist, takes a job as the caretaker of a vast hotel {the Overlook—as its name implies, overlooking an endlessly mountainous terrain} during the wintertime, taking his wife, Wendy, and his son, Danny, along. What follows is, in Kubrick’s words, the experience of a family collectively “quietly going insane together.” The camera de-



scends in a graceful arc across the breadth of an immense alpine lake, its waters stretching toward distant horizons beneath the vast sky. The lens draws toward a solitary island rising from the lake’s heart—a verdant crown of treetops that seems to float upon the glittering surface. As we approach, the frame sweeps across and beyond this green sanctuary, banking slightly in its trajectory, seeking now some new focal point where the mirror of the lake meets the embrace of the surrounding escarpment, all bathed in that luminous, golden atmosphere reminiscent of Turner’s most radiant canvases. The perspective shifts abruptly to a celestial vantage point, revealing far below a bright yellow Volkswagen, small as a child’s toy against the enormity of the landscape. It winds its serpentine path up a mountain road that cuts through an endless cathedral of towering pines, their elongated shadows stretching across the pavement in the slanting light of early morning. The vehicle climbs steadily toward the upper reaches of the frame yet seems to make no progress against the mountain’s immensity. Through successive cuts, we spiral closer, descending toward the horizontal plane of the automobile’s journey as it traces the mountain’s rugged face. There comes a breathtaking moment when camera trajectory and roadway align in per-

fect synchrony, only for the shot to veer away on its own inexorable path, revealing a valley plunging away into the depths below. Further cuts unfold new vistas—mile upon mile of wilderness terrain laid bare in all its austere grandeur. Finally, we are carried toward a snow-mantled mountain summit, beneath which sprawls an enormous resort hotel: The Overlook. Then darkness claims the screen entirely.

The fluidity of Kubrick’s tracking shots—wandering through the opening shots of *The Shining* as if existing within a curious viewer’s gaze—clashes with the rigidity of his directorial and designer focus within the film. As the titles began, ghastly teal-tinted Helvetica filled the screen. It, along with much of the design presented in the film, is skin-crawlingly grotesque in its hideousness. While this may appear mostly humorous to some viewers {a satire of colors, patterns, and artistic “choices” that permeated the seventies and eighties} it also establishes a vaguely psychedelic experience. Aggressively geometric designs clash with poisonous florals; the rugs, bedcovers, pillows, and curtains of each room in the hotel are completely and utterly at war, and the audience is left scared and alone to ponder their sanity.

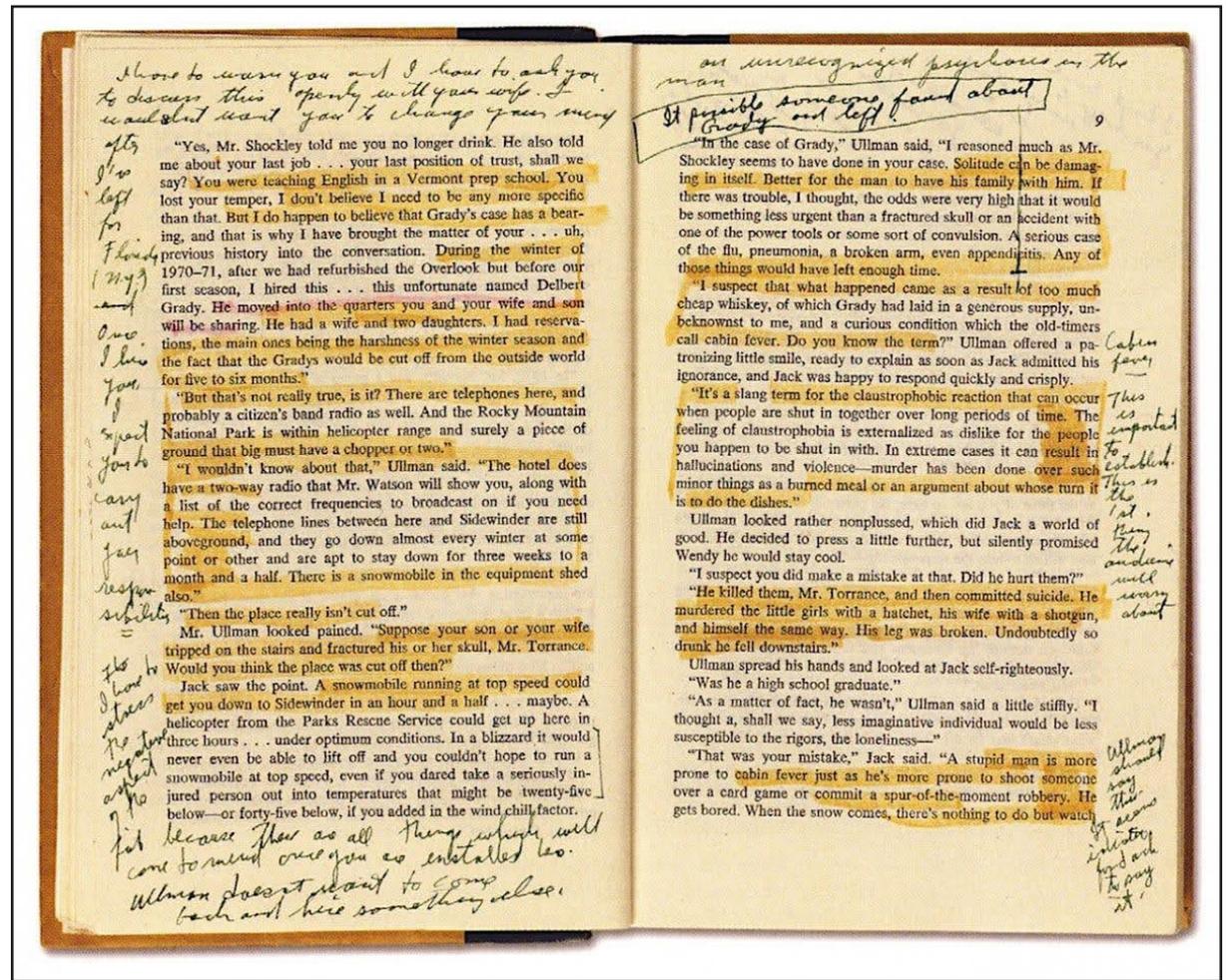
History haunts, a non-corporal presence felt both visually and conceptually within the film. Everything is ever-so-slightly off, a feeling that is amplified through the inventive use of soundscape design. Lynchian in its execution, Kubrick’s approach is described by some as “modernist art-music.” By creating an almost constant swath of sound {and tapping into humans’ primal instincts} within the film, the audience is left constantly on edge, anticipating danger ahead, regardless of the relatively mundane nature of a scene. A study titled (On the nature of) CREEPINESS concluded that, “...creepiness is anxiety aroused by the ambiguity of whether there is something to fear

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or not and/or by the ambiguity of the precise nature of the threat..." It is precisely that ambiguity that Kubrick weaponizes. However, what happens when information is provided to the viewer... twice? Throughout the film, Kubrick employs mirrors, doubles, and twins to highlight the surrealistic parallelism that complicates questions of truth and essence within the narrative. In *The Shining*, Kubrick employs mirrors with deceptive simplicity—a restrained nod to cinema's classic reality-illusion motif. Yet as the film unfolds, fragmentary tales from the Overlook's shadowy past multiply and interweave, while the director's editorial hand grows ever more elusive and enigmatic. The viewer finds themselves ensnared in an endless hall of reflecting surfaces, each image spawning another in perpetual recession. What is real and what is phantom blur together, identity dissolves into echo, and meaning becomes a maze without exit.

The camera's gaze, freed of all physical restraints thanks to the development of the Steadicam, wanders through endlessly identical hallways, finally falling upon its prey... Danny Torrance, the youngest inhabitant of the hotel and the only character who seemingly understands its mechanics. The Steadicam hovers mere inches above the polished floors, maintaining an unwavering vigil behind young Danny Torrance as he pilots his tricycle through the labyrinthine corridors of the hotel in the film's early sequences. We trail him through an entire circuit of the ground floor's geography, absorbing—almost unconsciously—the spatial relationships that bind these rooms into architectural coherence: the industrial vastness of the kitchen, the administrative intimacy of the office, the ceremonial grandeur of the lobby entrance, the leather-appointed expanse of the Colorado Lounge where Jack will labor over his typewriter. Kubrick earns our indulgence for this extended establishing shot not merely through the technical virtuosity on display—which even the most deliberately unimpressed observer must acknowledge as exhilarating—but through his punctuation of the movement with one of cinema's most vivid and lushly particular moments of senso-



ry discovery, possessing an almost primal appeal: that rhythmic clump-whoosh, clump-whoosh cadence as the child's vehicle transitions, with blithe and inexorable momentum, from the mirror-bright hardwood to the deep-piled embrace of carpet. In the words of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The principle of the Gothic architecture is infinity made imaginable," a principle through which Kubrick constructs the film's universe. The camera's gliding passage personifies the hotel's geography, a spatial articulation charting the hotel's neo-Gothic environment that remains, for all its imposing monumentality, simultaneously infinite and claustrophobic—and thus all the more suffocating.

Outside towers another monument to strength—the hedge maze. The Overlook Hotel stands at the threshold of the animistic world, surrounded by enormous trees that obscure and protect the natural world from view. In this context, the maze represents the direct conflict between the romantic and humanistic powers explored within the film. This dichotomy is, in many ways, reminiscent of the "state of nature" as described by 17th-century philosopher Thomas Hobbes in his work *Leviathan*: a vestigial ex-

istence predating civilization characterized by five words... solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short. The perfectly pruned interiors of the hotel belie the true horror of their making, hiding the visceral violence of those who inhabit it and replacing it with the characteristically mid-century American veneer of polish. In that, the labyrinth functions as an Ouroboros, suspended in an eternal ritual of devouring itself, disintegrating at its edges. Yet when all remnants of "civilization" are abandoned, leaving a family to succumb to the echoing interiors of their minds, the animalistic "state of nature" that they distance themselves from escapes out into the open. The Overlook Hotel perches precariously at the liminal boundary between the rational and the primordial, a threshold made manifest when the manager reveals that its foundations rest upon sacred ground—an ancient indigenous burial mound—while its halls are adorned with Native American motifs, an Art Deco veneer that paradoxically resurrects the primitive beneath a gloss of "modernity." During their winding ascent to this mountain sanctuary, Wendy invokes the haunting specter of the Donner party, that ill-fated family whose snowbound despera-

tion drove them to the ultimate taboo of consuming their own. Danny's casual acknowledgment that he has learned of such cannibalistic practices through the flickering glow of television screens serves as an ironic nod at our own involvement. While it may have been repressed and restrained by the despotism of humankind, the maze, ironically, is ultimately the place that hides and protects our protagonist from evil incarnate. The primitive, natural surroundings that exist outside of the bounds of "civilization" and glamour also relate to the discourse surrounding Indigenous imagery and motifs within the film. This repetition and suppression of Amerindian patterns and artwork throughout the hotel present a visual clue to not only the traditional art of the area, but also of the commodification it has endured at the hands of modern societies. Indeed, the pattern of characters or institutions forcibly and violently enforcing their definitions of civilization and order onto the natural state of affairs is perfectly encapsulated in the construction of the hotel—as the building was constructed, nature is stifled, the bones of the past suffocated below lacquered floors and dancing feet.

# The beautiful, outstretched hand

By Dharti Patel

*As a child when you drew me to you,  
Curious, I stood amidst the crowded avenue.*

*When I yet knew your name,  
My soul longing, spoke out your traits.*

*Back then I did not understand,  
Your beautiful hand is still outstretched.*

*Oh, as I wander away,  
You left the 99 and came my way.*

*Patiently you draw me back,  
Through all the toils and traps.*

*Though I did not know of you,  
Until one faithful soul prayed in Jesus name.*

*Then they knew they could not keep me,  
So tempted and distorted my reality.*

*And as I again wandered the world,  
Wounded, blind and undone,*

*You quietly remind me of a distant memory,  
Then I came to the end of myself.*

*There I knelt and cried out your name,  
I prayed Lord please save me,*

*Your beautiful hand is outstretched,  
You answered me Lord right away.*

*So gently you break off all the chains,  
Freeing and restoring what the locusts ate*

*You saved me then from the pits of hell,  
Now bound to your unfailing love.*

*My soul Lord you redeemed,  
Washed by the Lamb's blood.*

*You gave me of your Holy Spirit,  
Your presence is now dwelling in me.*

*You baptized me also with fire,  
That consumed all the darkness away.*

*When doubts start clouding me,  
You reassure and give me clarity.*

*As I enter your promised rest,  
Lord then I know you never left.*

*Oh God you are faithful and true,  
There is nothing I can do without you.*

*All that is good in me Lord,  
Come from your presence alone.*

*You lead me into all truth,  
On the narrow path leading to you.*

*This path though filled with many trials,  
You mold me into a reflection of you.*

*Though troubles arise left and right,  
You're the warrior guarding me on all sides.*

*How wonderful, pure and beautiful,  
Your thoughts for me, Lord you are good.*

*Now this world no longer satisfies,  
Just wait, you say, it will work out and be alright.*

*Every day as I eagerly wait for you,  
Seeking your face and being renewed.*

*I find you are all I need,  
Your word is the light in me.*

*Daily I grow in you Lord,  
I see you make all things new.*

*As this journey continues,  
You say there are souls yet to enter with you.*

*Intercede as I do for you,  
For the blindfold to be removed.*

*Keep praying, keep preaching the good news,  
for the lost to turn and see the truth.*

*Stand firm and do as I teach you,  
Until I come and find faith still in you.*

*Remember that people are not your enemies,  
Just lost and bound like you were by principalities.*

*So, I redeem the time and wait for him,  
With hope and faith looking at end of timing lane*

*For the King is ready to return soon,  
In glory to end the old festering feud*

*Know with certainty that he is near,  
To broken and contrite hearts.*

*Out of his love, mercy and grace,  
His beautiful hand is outstretched to you.*



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We'll provide the coffee!

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## Nonsense

By Isabel Stearns

*Nonsense!  
All around me is nonsense!  
Whether here,  
Or there,  
So much nonsense!  
All I hear is gibberish,  
no face behind that mask.  
No thought.  
Vanity, pride,  
Nothing more important than nothing at all.*

# A new era on two fronts: John Harbaugh joins Giants as Ravens turn to Jesse Minter

**ANDREW KIM**  
Sports Editor

The 2026 NFL coaching cycle has delivered one of the most dramatic and symbolic transitions in recent league history. After 18 seasons with the Baltimore Ravens, John Harbaugh, a Super Bowl-winning, culture-defining head coach, has taken the reins in New York. The Giants are a franchise desperate for stability and credibility.

Meanwhile, the Ravens have turned the page by hiring Jesse Minter, a rising defensive mind with deep organizational ties, to become just the fourth head coach in franchise history.

These two moves, though separate, are intertwined: the departure of a franchise icon and the arrival of a familiar protégé. Together, they represent a seismic shift for both organizations and a fascinating case study in leadership, identity, and long-term team building.

## The Giants Land Their Biggest Coaching Hire in Decades

The New York Giants have cycled through coaches at an alarming rate over the past decade, stumbling through failed tenures and rebuilding attempts. After going 7–27 over the previous two seasons, ownership knew they needed a proven, stabilizing force to reset the franchise's trajectory. When Harbaugh was fired by Baltimore on January 6, the Giants immediately zeroed in on him as their top target.

Harbaugh, who compiled a 180–113 regular-season record, 12 playoff appearances, and a Super Bowl championship during his Baltimore tenure, quickly became the most sought-after coach on the market. The Giants moved aggressively, beginning contract discussions the same night his availability became clear, ultimately finalizing a five-year deal within 72 hours.

Analysts widely praised the move. Many are calling it the Giants' best coaching acquisition since Tom Coughlin in 2004. Harbaugh's reputation as a CEO-style leader: one who excels at building staff, managing personalities, and fostering organizational alignment. This was exactly

what New York needed after years of instability.

## Why Harbaugh Chose New York

Harbaugh reportedly received interest from multiple teams, including the Titans and Falcons, but canceled those meetings once he felt the Giants were the right fit.

Giants owners John Mara and Steve Tisch were directly involved in the pursuit of John Harbaugh, assuring him that he would have a clear line of communication with leadership and strong organizational support. Harbaugh was also drawn to the opportunity to rebuild a historic franchise, embracing the challenge of restoring one of the NFL's cornerstone teams to prominence.

In addition, reports indicate that he will report directly to ownership rather than the general manager, giving him an uncommon level of autonomy and influence over football operations.

For the Giants, the hire signals a dramatic shift from the uncertainty of recent years to a future anchored by one of the league's most respected leaders.

## Baltimore's Next Chapter: Jesse Minter Takes the Helm

While the Giants celebrated their coup, the Ravens faced the daunting task of replacing the most successful coach in franchise history. Their solution: Jesse Minter, the Los Angeles Chargers' defensive coordinator and a former Ravens assistant with deep ties to both Harbaugh brothers.

Minter's résumé is impressive. He served on the Ravens' staff from 2017 to 2020, rising from defensive assistant to defensive backs coach. He later became Jim Harbaugh's defensive coordinator at Michigan, helping lead the Wolverines to a national championship before following Jim to the Chargers.

Baltimore's decision to hire Minter was swift. He even canceled a scheduled interview with the Cleveland Browns to accept the Ravens' offer, underscoring the mutual interest and organizational fit.

## Why the Ravens Chose Minter

Baltimore's identity has long



been rooted in defense, discipline, and continuity. Minter checks every box:

His previous tenure in Baltimore gives him a deep understanding of the organization's culture, expectations, and long-standing identity. Over the past two seasons, he has also earned recognition as one of the league's top defensive coordinators, reinforcing his reputation for schematic excellence and player development. In addition, his connections to both John and Jim Harbaugh provide the Ravens with philosophical continuity even as the franchise transitions into a new era under his leadership.

Ravens owner Steve Bisciotti emphasized that Minter's blend of experience, leadership, and organizational familiarity made him the ideal successor.

## Two Franchises, Two Directions

The Giants and Ravens now find themselves at pivotal crossroads, each with a new leader but vastly different circumstances.

## New York: Rebuilding With a Proven Winner

Harbaugh inherits a Giants roster in need of talent, identity, and direction. The team's recent struggles, marked by poor offensive production, inconsistent quarterback play, and a revolving door of coaches, have left fans hungry for stability.

Harbaugh's strengths align perfectly with what New York needs:

He has a long history of assembling strong, well-structured coaching staffs, often developing assistants who eventually rise to head-coaching positions themselves. Harbaugh's teams also have a consistent track record of maximizing player talent, particularly on defense and special teams, where his developmental approach has repeatedly elevated young and overlooked contributors. His leadership style emphasizes ac-

countability, toughness, and unity. These are qualities the Giants have been missing, and he is expected to reestablish those foundational traits within the organization.

If Harbaugh can replicate even a portion of his Baltimore success, the Giants could finally emerge from their decade-long malaise.

## Baltimore: Continuity With a Fresh Voice

The Ravens' decision to hire Minter reflects a desire to maintain organizational continuity while injecting new energy into the franchise. Baltimore still boasts a strong roster, headlined by Lamar Jackson, but the team's defensive struggles in recent seasons demanded a fresh approach.

Minter's defensive pedigree suggests he can restore the Ravens' trademark toughness, but questions remain:

Still, the hire has been widely praised as a strong, sensible move for a franchise that values stability and internal alignment.

## The Harbaugh–Minter Connection

The symmetry between these two hires is striking. Harbaugh's departure created the vacancy that Minter filled, and Minter's coaching philosophy has been shaped in part by his years under both Harbaugh brothers.

This shared lineage ensures that while Baltimore moves on from John Harbaugh, the organizational DNA he helped establish remains intact.

## What Comes Next

Both franchises enter 2026 with renewed optimism but very different expectations. The Giants hope Harbaugh can engineer a turnaround reminiscent of his early Baltimore years, when he transformed a struggling team into a perennial contender. The Ravens expect Minter to restore defensive excellence and push the team back into championship contention.

In many ways, these hires represent the best of both worlds: a proven leader revitalizing a historic franchise, and a rising star stepping into a legacy-rich organization ready for its next chapter.

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