

# GALLEY 2023





## Welcome to the Summer 2023 edition of The Galley.

The Galley. The part of a ship used for cooking and storing products. I'd like to think our school Galley occupies a similar function but instead of physical food, it provides a source of mental nutrients. In this edition, you're bound to learn something from recent scientific discoveries to the political turmoil in America or unusual takes on our education system.

As co-editor-in-chief, it's been wonderful to watch our team grow. We have had the pleasure of new writers dissecting their views and ideas. It's so exciting for me to be surrounded with such talent, and I really do thank all of you who have participated in this edition.

A warm welcome is due to Ms Abel as she returns from maternity leave. Her organisation and dedication to this magazine is something we are incredibly grateful to have back. Thank you too to Mr Molnar for all his support this year. Over the last year, we have had some new editors join us and it's been lovely seeing their confidence improve in navigating the difficulties of deadlines and editing software. *The Galley* would also not be possible without the help of Anya Wortley who has been great in assisting others with InDesign.

Finally, huge thanks to Marnix Joris who designed the front cover of this issue. It's bold and bright colours are possibly what drew you to opening up the edition and reading this. And, of course, thank you to all our readers for joining us in this Perichoresis, allowing all of our writers to use their voice through the vehicle of your mind. After all, music is simply dots on paper without a listener. Does a tree falling in the desert produce a sound...?

As always, if you have an idea, hobby or story, please don't hesitate to put a pen to paper and get writing!



## News and Politics

Welcome to this year's News and Politics section of *The Galley*.

As I write this Editorial, I feel a great sense of relief that - so far - this year we have not experienced the same level of political chaos and upheaval that we have come to associate with the last (and its three Prime Ministers).

It would, however, perhaps still be just to argue that these times are, to some degree, unprecedented. The world in which we live remains one defined often by its confusion and division; that is where the importance of discussing politics comes from. It should not be seen as a weapon to divide us, but rather as a tool to unite us. Through such conversations, we develop a deeper understanding of not just the opposition's views, but also of our own, allowing us to become more informed and capable of taking part in society. The value of tolerance can not be overstated.

Though it may pale in comparison to the last, this year has not been without its events, leaving much for thoughtful consideration. However, as you will soon see, this mammoth task has not deterred Dollar Academy's most devoted writers.

This edition, our contributors have embraced true journalistic spirit, cutting through the noise and inaccuracy so symptomatic of these modern times to bring you, the reader, the facts. On the home front, we delve into the Scottish National Party's recent leadership contest, while Innes forwards the case for why the UK's departure from the European Union ('Brexit') should not be seen as an argument for Scottish Independence. In addition, the pages that follow include an overview of the issues facing Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, and how he has attempted to grapple with them so far.

However, it would be foolish (and, frankly, quite strange) to suggest that politics is confined merely to these isles. Adam presents an overview of the USA's 'Red Scare', while (one year on) we look also at the US Supreme Court's landmark verdict against *Roe v. Wade*, and Vanessa delves into the Republican Party's forthcoming primary elections.

Politics itself is such a wide and varied field that there is something for everyone to enjoy and take interest in. Therefore, I hope that as you peruse through the pages that follow, you find something that grabs your attention and pushes you to delve deeper into the fascinating world that is politics.



Logan (Form IV)  
News & Politics Editor



# Let's Not Rock the Boat (Again)

Innes (Form VI)

As the sun set across the continent, and the Union Jack was lowered from the mast at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, our journey to nirvana commenced on board HMS Rule Britannia. "Where are we going?" you ask. "Brexit means Brexit" a boastful Bullingdon Club alumni would reply. To which, many Scots (me included) would respond with despair as we contemplate our escape options.

You see, the journey to 'Brexitland' was always depicted as being easy and seamless by the likes of Johnson; the deal to secure victory was "oven ready", in his own words. However, the proof in this pudding says it all. From political stalemate and rising conflict in Northern Ireland, to the small economic kerfuffle that has already cost us almost £6 billion extra on food bills alone. You don't have to be passionate about politics to know that this big, old Etonian Mess of a dessert is as tasty as a ScotRail lavy. Brexit has been an unmitigated disaster. A disaster that has induced a cost and burden on all of us.



Our bungling crew of politicians have sailed us into these high seas of calamity; our nation has been deprived of resources, driven to the poles of polarisation and isolated in a world of changing currents. The world watches on in horror as our Brexit show and all of its theatrics goes disastrously wrong. Indeed, it's hard to see what the positives are from all of this. I suppose at least (today's) Home Secretary will achieve her lifelong "dream" of deporting desperate refugees. But aside from Suella Braverman, if there is anyone else that is enjoying the show, it's the SNP. The party looks on with a sense of schadenfreude, as they realise this lacklustre Westminster crew and their Brexit misdemeanours provide the perfect opportunity. The perfect opportunity to advocate for the season finale of our United Kingdom. But they are wrong. Their politics is the antithesis of what we need in Scotland and in the United Kingdom.

Reader, I must confess that, in the immediate aftermath of Brexit and 'Partygate', I had a different opinion. I turned to them. I agreed with their sentiment. I felt anger; I felt misunderstood; and I felt ignored by Westminster. At the point of writing this, I still feel all of the above, and I totally understand if you too feel - or don't feel - all of these emotions. Our nation is in tatters, and we need change. But why - given all of this - don't I want independence for Scotland?

First of all, let me take a deep breath, and count to ten.

Okay. You see, my reader, whilst the sentiment is right, the proposition is entirely contradictory.

The SNP put an impressive, progressive veneer on with their clarion calls and emotive, Balmoralistic boasts of Scotland's sheer brilliance. But just like their ferry - the 'Glen Sannox' - which they launched with the windows painted on, there is something spectacularly superficial here. Beneath their veneer of progression lies an insidious agenda. An agenda contingent on intersectional division and blame. An agenda which deepens our acute wounds of sectarianism in Scotland. An agenda which isn't that dissimilar from the likes of Nigel Farage and other flag worshipping, hateful incendiaries. They rightfully tell us to oppose the regressive pursuits of British nationalism, but simultaneously indulge in the same poisoned beliefs. Underneath their blanket of progressive policies and glossy infographics lies a vicious underbelly of vitriol, division and blame that is just as venomous as their supposed opponents.

In our current political climate, it can feel as though they want to compel us to choose between which of these two warped factions we'd like to subscribe to: the SNP or the Brexiterian, hardline British Unionists. One would see us continue with the bungling Westminster crew who seem insistent on steering our ship into high seas and towards the political extremities, wiping out a few desperate, victims of war in the channel as we go. The other proposes we walk the plank into the abyss of these same towering seas, with the hope that for those of us who don't drown, a North Sea oasis awaits. Both options are suicidal. Both are fuelled by division, and both risk plunging the most vulnerable in our society into greater disadvantage at a time of an impending recession. But this whole proposition is - as I've learnt - entirely wrong.

We need not choose which poisoned chalice we'd like to yield.

We need not walk the plank to break free from the regression of backward, far-right rule.

There is an alternative.

We can throw the crew overboard and take charge. No, no I don't mean "Vive la révolution!". I mean we can confine the current, baffling Tory party to history. We can put the ship back onto the trajectory we not only want to see but need to see. Indeed, Gordon Brown's words on Brexit are incredibly powerful in the context of this question on independence; we should "lead, not leave".

Across these islands, we have far more in common than that which divides us. Whether you live in Sheffield or Shetland, Bath or Bathgate: we all are faced by the same issues. We all struggle to cope with the copious amounts of sodden weather. We all face bills which are skyrocketing as a result of Brexit and Putin. We all want an NHS where nurses have no reason to strike. We all want a society where proper transport connects our communities, where prospects are universally positive, and where we can all thrive regardless of background.

We all simply want change from the status quo.

And we can achieve this change. In fact, change is in the pipeline. Why else were the SNP so keen to have an independence referendum before the next UK General Election? They too can see UK wide change is coming. For a party which thrives on discontent and division, this is a catastrophe. Imagine united progression? They know fine well the tide is turning, with more than 80% of the populace, in recent times, expressing disapproval of the UK Government.



For now, the SNP will attempt to convince us that Scotland doesn't have the power to lead change, because we are only a small constituent of the United Kingdom. But they are wrong.

Firstly, the system of governance in the UK is an incredibly convoluted, organic kerfuffle which stretches across a vast multitude of inconsistent, localised organisations. From devolved administrations and parish councils, to central government and Police & Crime Commissioners, decision making isn't as unitary or simple as it seems. This leaves us living in a situation where Scottish MPs can vote on national laws exclusive to England, and where people across the United Kingdom generally feel disenfranchised and unrepresented by the inconsistent systems which bind them. Secondly, whilst it is true, we need systematic change in order to enable the longer-term transformation we desire. This is not an ambition exclusive to "Scotland". Those in the North of England, Wales and right across our country feel exactly the same way. The SNP's assumption that all people outwith Scotland are big, British nationalist bigots is a complete fallacy; Amanda from the Welsh Valleys and Sharon from Newcastle are as hungry for this change as we are.

Whether you liked the last Labour Government or not, they serve as evidence that collective change can happen. When 'New Labour' entered office, they commanded support for change from every group in society and every corner of this nation, from the Western Isles and Central Scotland to London and Cardiff. What ensued was the creation of the minimum wage, record high employment, 600,000 children lifted out of poverty and hundreds of thousands of more staff in education and the NHS, as well as other major achievements such as peace in Northern Ireland. Their movement, despite its fundamental flaws, illustrates the gravity of common endeavour. They showed us the power of being a United Kingdom.

And (unironically) whilst we often forget it, our United Kingdom is one of the strongest, most influential countries in this world.

We are a diverse nation, home to some incredibly inspiring, kind and intelligent people like you. We have a world leading education system that boasts some of the best institutions and innovations known to man. We are blessed with not only revered individuals like Joey Essex and Alison Hammond, but with some of the world's most renowned urban, cultural and geographical locations. We shine as a beacon for diplomacy and cooperation across the world through the G7, G20, our multi-billion-pound foreign aid contributions and our large diplomatic network. We, too, are one of the five permanent members on the United Nations' most powerful committee, allowing us to extend our values of freedom, cooperation and tolerance globally.

We are the United Kingdom, and it is true to say that we have made mistakes in the past. And we will continue to make mistakes in the future. But, fundamentally, our unshakable, collective belief and endeavour to build a society that works for all of us - both here in the UK and abroad - is inspirational. Our synergy of strengths puts us in tremendous stead globally; from the NHS and the BBC, to entrepreneurship and Joey Essex, we have all the key assets to build a success story.



There is no need to build a hard border with our biggest trading partner or to incite division in our society. There is no need to manufacture socio-economic calamity to a scale which will ruin entire communities and lead to major public sector cuts. Brexit serves to substantiate this. It was in a sense a dress rehearsal which showed us just how damaging independence from an economic union could be - never mind an economic, political, historical, constitutional and social union of centuries of age. The London School of Economics emphasises this in their research, with them indicating a potential annual cost to the Scottish economy of £11 billion if we became independent: an impact of an entirely different magnitude compared to Brexit. Not only would we have to contend with division and an economic catastrophe; we'd face public sector cuts, job losses in key sectors such as banking and defence, a weakened relationship with key allies like the USA and a whole plethora of negative implications. All for what? So we can send a Scottish team composed of Lewis Capaldi and Susan Boyle to Eurovision?



Indeed, what the independence cause 'Boyles' down to is sheer identity politics. If we follow their logic, then I, as a Highlander, ask why my region does not pursue independence? We cover an area larger than Wales with a population akin to Iceland; we have all of Scotland's natural capital - be that oil or land - and we have all of Scotland's key assets like whisky, tourism and renewables. Plus, our people have been historically neglected by Holyrood, as evidenced by the Glen Sannox ferry fiasco and the very fact public service centralisation has left me having to travel three hours to access basic medical services. But I don't ask this question (anymore, at least).

So, shipmate, our destination, and our vehicle to reach this destination, lies very much in our hands. All I know is that I don't want to walk the plank nor join Captain Brexit as he follows his broken moral compass. I think, rather than squabble about which flag we fly, we should focus on getting this place into shipshape. Recognising our internal, shared struggles, and also recognising our collective strengths and opportunities. For we are the United Kingdom, and we have it in us to overcome the challenges we all face because now, more than ever, this world needs to change the tide on identity politics.

Brexit hasn't helped the independence cause; it has shown us all the power in unity.

## Rishi Sunak: Cometh the Hour, Cometh the Man?

*Logan (Form IV)*

The claim that last year was, from a political perspective, uneventful is perhaps indefensible. The death of our then-Monarch, three Prime Ministers, and goodness remembers how many Cabinet changes, all contributed to what was a stark reminder that politics can, at times, be painful to watch. However, as the storm of confusion and panic raged on, one figure emerged at its centre. As would-be neo-Thatcher Liz Truss fell, a new politician took her place. Indeed, there appeared to be a consensus across the political spectrum that, regardless of actual opinions, Rishi Sunak was the best-suited individual for what was perhaps the least desired job of the time. His well-known background in business and economics, as well as his widely admired record as Chancellor of the Exchequer, proved to be evidence that led many to believe that he was best placed to steer Britain through the choppy and fierce tides of its ensuing economic crisis.

It was also blatantly clear to all, and one would imagine most to Sunak, that his time in office would not be an easy one. His 'plate', as it were, would be full, and not to mention playing host to a diverse range of issues. Illegal immigration, strikes, the NHS' backlog, and inflation all made up a mélange of seemingly indomitable forces against which he would have to face up.

One might be forgiven, however, for forgetting the exact circumstances under which Sunak rose to power. Entry into Downing Street came at (as has been established) a difficult time for British politics. Liz Truss, having almost a month previously been selected as our new Prime Minister, resigned following what were unintended consequences of her radical economic agenda and attempts at reforms. Following the introduction of major tax-cuts, international markets went into shock, leading the Government to reverse many of its changes. Not all of the consequences, however, could be avoided, with £30 billion being added to the UK's debt. Indeed, the fact that economics came as part of Liz Truss' degree from university (having been one of Oxford's PPE scholars) proved a laughable concept to some. Her premiership will likely be given short shrift by historians of the future. At present, sympathy appears to remain scarce on the streets of Britain.



The fall of Truss forced a (perhaps obvious) question to be asked: who next? At the time, the job of Prime Minister appeared as perhaps one of the least desirable in the country. Regardless, Rishi Sunak was immediately brought into the limelight for being a likely contender. After all, he nearly made it to the then-coveted prize merely a month prior. It surprised few, therefore, when his candidacy was announced, accompanied by Penny Mordaunt - a Conservative whose popularity within her Party rose significantly following her previous campaign for its leadership.

Another figure, however, was also suggested: Boris Johnson. The iconoclastic former Prime Minister (even to this day) has maintained a steady and, indeed, high level of support among the membership of the Conservative Party, with polls showing him to be one of their most favoured candidates at the time. Some MPs made attempts to capitalise on this, announcing their endorsements of his return to power swiftly.

The Conservative Party, to avoid this new leadership contest earning the scathing labels and judgements the last appeared to qualify for, announced a series of difficult hurdles that candidates would face: a nomination threshold of 100 MPs (with the Conservatives holding around 360 in total) and an online ballot within a week. Boris Johnson, according to reports, explored a potential leadership bid thoroughly, wanting to ensure that, were he to throw his hat into the ring, he would be doing so with a

good chance of proving victorious. It is said that, following a meeting with Mr Sunak, he chose not to do this, with only Mordaunt leading an official campaign against the favourite. Upon reflection, however, it becomes clear that Mordaunt had no chance; Sunak led her by a country mile in terms of MPs' support. His crowning as leader and, thereby, Prime Minister, proved a foregone conclusion once Johnson was swept out of his way. His elevation to such was a mere technicality.

However, jubilant celebrations would have to wait for the new Prime Minister. The country, though well aware of the plethora of problems it was grappling with, had been informed time and time again that Britain was in the midst of a 'cost of living crisis'. The highest levels of inflation for decades, spurred mostly by knock-on effects originating from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, led to (and still cause) the prices of household essentials such as food, clothing and, of course, oil, to increase significantly, leaving many citizens not only struggling to go about their daily lives, but also fearing what could come next. In response to this, the Bank of England, on multiple occasions, raised interest rates - a move designed to lower consumer spending and, thereby, reduce inflation. Sadly, such action is not without negative consequences, with many individuals' mortgage payments rising as a result. Clearly, something had to be done. Sunak had, throughout his previous leadership campaigns, said that taxes should be lowered only when inflation had been brought under control; this was a plan he could now attempt to put into action.

Other issues, however, have also managed to make their way onto the Prime Minister's radar. In recent times, the Government's pledge to (in many of their own words) "stop the boats" appears to echo through every minister interviewed. The Prime Minister has declared this to be one of his administration's priorities, with its tackling being of the utmost urgency in his view. He has maintained support for the Government's policy of deporting illegal immigrants to Rwanda (under an agreement with the nation) - a move designed to deter more crossings by migrants, often across the English Channel. This policy has drawn controversy, with the Archbishop of Canterbury making an unprecedented statement against the plan, decrying it as "against the judgement of God". Refugee charities have also made their opposition clear, with legal challenges being launched against the Government's proposal. These have, so far, proved unsuccessful. January saw the High Court rule in favour of the Government, agreeing that the scheme does not breach the United Nations' Refugee Convention. The Government appears though to find lukewarm support from a certain former Prime Minister: David Cameron. In an unusual semi-intervention since his self-imposed exile from UK politics, the former Prime Minister said that he has "huge sympathy" for the Government's attempts, urging its critics to remain silent unless they wish to propose better suggestions. Regardless, attempted migrant crossings are continuing to rise, with those involved often utilising the dangerous methods that the Government is hoping to deter.

Some have argued that the Prime Minister's resolute commitment to fighting what his Home Secretary described as an "invasion" is a tactic of a more electoral

nature. The results of the 2019 General Election remain relevant four years on. That year, numerous traditionally Labour-voting areas (dubbed "the red-wall" given their, when viewed on a map, literal visual resemblance to such) flocked to the Conservatives under then-leader Boris Johnson, assisting him in earning his eighty-seat majority in the House of Commons that has allowed his two successors to govern to this day. Many voters in these areas are believed to have been brought to their decision by their previous support for the UK's withdrawal from the European Union in the 2016 Referendum, with one of the key issues in said vote being greater control and limitation of immigration to the UK. Though debate rages on as to the extent to which legal and illegal immigration were confused as issues in the Referendum, tackling both appear to be a major concern of many of not just these voters, but also many others across the country, giving the Conservatives an opportunity to strengthen their support ahead of next year's General Election.



The Prime Minister's commitment to tackling immigration is not, however, restricted to that of an illegal nature; he has expressed concern also regarding the number of legal entries seen by the UK. The pledge given by the Conservatives under David Cameron (to lower net-migration to under 100,000 per year) remains unfulfilled, with that figure having increased even following Brexit. Sunak, though emphasising his support for the taking in of refugees (such as from Ukraine) and beneficial immigration where appropriate, has declared such levels to be, for the UK, negative. The Government feels that pressure has been placed on key public services and resources, such as education and housing, by the increased demand created by immigration. To alleviate this, the Prime Minister has announced the barring of some foreign students from taking their families to the UK with them, with this believed to, potentially, reduce net migration by up to 150,000.

In a time where citizens are said to be choosing between their family's warmth or its sustenance, one may feel there is a point in suggesting that Sunak's success, although undeniably important in this area, may have to be even wider to garner the electorate's support - something which will, of course, be vital to his survival as Prime Minister.

Recent strikes are another concern on the public agenda. These can be seen, perhaps, as a side-effect of inflation. With many struggling to pay the increased prices for goods, demands for pay-rises (thereby enabling them to do so) began to take centre stage. For those watching, it



workers were on strike. Incidents of industrial action seemed widespread and regular; the impacts have been significant. Workers in areas that played key roles in people's lives – transport, health, education – threatened to strike for higher pay. After the threats, many proceeded to do exactly that. The Government refused to give in to many of the demands (at least, initially) of the trade unions involved, citing two major concerns.

The first, in essence, was quite simple: the money is not there. Though such things as negotiation tactics exist, one would perhaps find it worth their time to note that the first requests launched by many landed in the double-digit zone. The British Medical Association (at the time of writing) still insists that a 35% pay rise is necessary for junior doctors, arguing that it would make up for a fall of around 26% in the real-terms value of their salaries since 2008.



Though the affordability of an increase in pay itself makes for what some would deem a persuasive argument, there is another that appears powerful in supporting the Government's defiance of unions: the cost to the consumer. It has been argued that, were pay to increase for workers, spending would increase also, given that many would, as a result, possess a greater ability to buy products. Spending, however, is linked to inflation and, were it to remain high despite supply shortages, it could maintain and, possibly, even worsen inflation.

These arguments, compelling as they may be, do not appear to cut through politics' typically emotive nature. A YouGov poll (albeit from late 2022) found that public support for strikes remained significantly greater for public services, with those relating to healthcare accruing the most – likely a result of the NHS' ever-increasing popularity, given its role in managing the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sunak's response has been one of elementary support for the Government's general claim that pay-rises are unaffordable at present. In addition, there exists a piece of Government legislation to enforce minimum service levels in key public sectors in its final stages (at the time of writing) – the passage of which was promised by the Conservative Party in their 2019 Manifesto. Whether the belief of some, however, that the public will be angered by the strikes and, thereby, pleased to see efforts by the Government to restrict unions will emerge as being true cannot yet be said. The policy of 'waiting it out' appeared to work spectacularly for one of Sunak's most revered

(or, in some quarters, despised) predecessors: Margaret Thatcher. It remains to be seen whether his legacy, in relation to strikes, at least, shall live up to that of the "Iron Lady".

It is, of course, far too early to speculate over what Rishi Sunak's legacy will be. His promises are vast and resemble a classic series of unfulfilled pledges that have, for so long, been seen as symptomatic of politicians; however, Sunak appears committed to defiance of this stereotype. His imploring of the public to judge him based on his progress on meeting these targets is bold. His party's reputation has been left in a dismal state following the scandals and criticisms of previous administrations and, though he has somewhat improved the Conservatives' poll ratings since the (albeit short) era of Liz Truss, there remains a significant amount of work to be done. Perhaps, given the state that the wider nation is in, we should hope for success on his part – if not for the Conservatives, then for the country itself.

## Candidate Selection for US Presidential Election Already Under Way

Vanessa (Form V)

Donald Trump's announcement that he's running for US President in 2024 wasn't a ploy to avoid prosecution as some have speculated. He's currently laying the foundations necessary for a serious bid to regain the White House and the public's votes.

Mr Trump once again denied he was defeated in 2020 and told supporters that he, unlike any possible Republican alternatives, would be the most effective nominee in 2024. Trump's first two stops of his third presidential campaign were South Carolina and New Hampshire. These two states could prove to be central to Mr Trump's strategy to retake the White House. If this is a pivotal moment for Mr Trump, it comes at a time when public opinion polls are starting to demonstrate support for him, after it dropped in the aftermath of the Republicans' disappointing results in November's midterm congressional elections.

An Emerson Poll found 55% of Republican voters are supporting Trump, well ahead of the 29% for Florida Governor Ron DeSantis. DeSantis has announced a presidential bid, and he is seen to be the former president's most formidable rival. A Monmouth poll in December found DeSantis to be ahead by double-digits. Evidently, this is no longer the case.

Meta also announced that it was lifting the suspension it had placed on Trump's accounts after the attack on the US Capitol by his supporters. His return could provide yet another opportunity to reach out to voters and gain fundraising as his still minimally staffed campaign gears up for its 2024 run. Trump is very serious about his 2024

election campaign, claiming, "I'm more angry now and I'm more committed now than I ever was."

However, it appears Trump may have even more competition. Nikki Haley, the former US ambassador to the United Nations and two-term governor of South Carolina, has announced that she is seeking the 2024 Republican presidential nomination. This cements her as another major candidate for such.

Haley is the third Indian American to seek a presidential nomination. She follows Louisiana governor Bobby Jindal, whose bid in 2015 never came to fruition, and current Vice-President Kamala Harris, who sought the 2020 nomination. During her time as South Carolina governor, Haley developed a reputation as a business-friendly leader who focused on attracting major companies to the state. She also gained national recognition for her response to the racially motivated mass shooting at Charleston's Emanuel AME Church in 2015.

Trump offered her a position in his cabinet as UN ambassador after he became President in 2016. She served there for two years and never had a public falling out with the President (which cannot be said for the majority of Trump's appointees). However, Haley did criticise Trump's behaviour up to and during the 6 January 2021 attack on the US Capitol by his supporters. The day after the riot, she said in a speech that "his actions since election day will be judged harshly by history".



As speculation surrounding her political future swirled, and Mr Trump regained his standing and influence within the party, Ms Haley said she would not run for president in 2024 if her former boss sought the nomination.

It remains to be seen who will run for presidential election in 2024; however, it may be fair to conclude that Trump will not give up without a fight. It's only a matter of who will be lucky enough to be his competition, should he succeed.

## The Red Scare: The History and Lasting Impact on America

Adam (Form IV)

To understand the modern impact of the Red Scare, we must understand what it was. The Red Scare was a nationwide – and sometimes worldwide – hysteria over the perceived threat of Communism. It was referred to as a 'Red' scare due to this being the main colour of the Soviet flag at the time. The Scare started off in the late 1910s, due to the Russian Revolution, and was seen as a threat due to the multiple labour strikes in 1918, and eventually the 1919 anarchist bombings, which targeted government officials and police. Following this, the Attorney General at the time, Alexander Palmer, conducted a series of raids, named the 'Palmer Raids', in which anarchists and far-leftists were targeted by police in their homes and meeting places. These raids were often violent.

However, this would be only the start of America's fear of Socialism. From the 1940s to the 1980s (during the Cold War), the Red Scare reached dangerous levels. The size of the two superpowers (the USA and the USSR) created a fear that leftists and Communists could be actively working for the Soviet Union as spies, intending to destroy America. This created not only a governmental fear, but a domestic fear: that your neighbour, roommate, teacher, son, or daughter could be a communist spy. This culture of fear brought a rise to 'McCarthyism', using the threat of labelling someone deemed as 'anti American' as a Communist. These charges were brought up against celebrities, intellectuals, government workers or anyone who disagreed with him (Senator Joseph. R. McCarthy, after whom McCarthyism is named). His attempts were helped by President Truman's 1947 bill, nicknamed the 'Loyalty Order'. This bill mandated a search to determine if a prospective government employee is loyal enough to the country to serve it. McCarthy's tactics were denounced by his colleagues in 1954; however, his strategies had already lost many their jobs, and had caused lasting damage.

The Red Scare reached its peak in 1949, when the Soviet Union tested its first successful nuclear device, and Mao Zedong's Chinese Communist Party (CCP) took over China. A few years after, the Korean War started, which formed a kind of 'proxy war' between the two powers, with the USSR supporting North Korea, and the US supporting the South. The advancements of communism in other countries around the world convinced many citizens that there was a real danger of 'Reds' taking over their own country. Figures such as McCarthy and President Herbert Hoover fanned the flames of fear by wildly exaggerating the possibility of a 'United Socialist States of America'.

An interesting, and equally horrifying, offshoot of the Red Scare was something now referred to as the 'Lavender Scare', in which people in (largely) government jobs and universities were targeted on suspicion of being part of the gay or lesbian communities, due to people lumping being gay and being a Communist together (due to them



both being against conservative American values at the time). The people who suffered from these attacks were impacted hugely, as an accusation of homosexuality could get a student expelled, or a person fired. This is an example of how accusations of being a communist, or being gay could, and did ruin lives and end jobs. This is the true impact of the Red Scare: the innocent, often unconnected lives that were destroyed, just because of a feud between two nations.



This environment of distrust, in which Generation X (and millennials to some extent) specifically grew up in, is what has allowed the fostering of an acceptance of more and more right-wing ideologies in America. We see this in the Republican Party's steady shift away from classic, free-market, tax cutting Libertarianism, to a more slogan-based system, which targets people who feel they no longer have a centre-stage place in society. These people are largely white, middle-aged men who feel like today's more liberal society has taken away their importance. This is where groups such as the Proud Boys come in. Due to this anger, extremism is seen to these individuals as less far-fetched, and as a way to form an 'echo chamber' of like-minded views. These echo chambers are what have allowed incidents such as the January 6th Capitol riot to take place.

In conclusion, whilst we cannot tie American extremism to one moment, in my opinion it all ties back to a fear of Communism brought around during the early 20th century, that continues even though the original enemy of the Cold War, the USSR, is long dead.

## The SNP Leadership Contest: The First Signs of Faltering?

*Logan (Form IV)*

Of all of Scotland's political greats, few are more well-known (in the present, at least) than Nicola Sturgeon. Her career is an accomplished one by all accounts, having partook in her fair share of political battles, electoral squabbles and, not to mention, controversial scandals. She was often adored by her supporters, yet despised by those opposed to her, being seen by other Scottish parties as an indomitable roadblock in the way of their path to

power. She can perhaps be credited with, even more than her predecessor (Alex Salmond), transforming her party – the SNP – into an election-winning machine, having held power in Holyrood for 16 years.

It is, therefore, difficult to overstate the significance of her departure for not just Scottish politics, but also the UK's. It must be said that, to many, her resignation came as quite a shock. Granted, the then-First Minister was having to grasp with challenges relating to her controversial Gender Recognition Act – legislation designed to allow transgender citizens to better 'self-identify' – and her relentless pursuit of Scottish Independence; however, that surely couldn't be enough to bring the great colossus down?

One wouldn't be blamed for confusion at the cause of death for Nicola Sturgeon's premiership; indeed, it seems as though there was no 'death' at all (at least, nothing dramatic). The lady herself put her resignation down to personal matters, arguing that modern politics "takes a toll". Perhaps it is best not to argue with this, rather than chase conspiracies. It does, however, seem slightly odd that this should be the reason. Sturgeon herself said, merely two weeks prior to her announcement, that she had "plenty in the tank", following questioning by journalists after former New Zealand Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern (to whom Sturgeon was compared many times), resigned for reasons similar to those later cited by Sturgeon. The entire situation seems almost reminiscent of Liz Truss' declaration that "I'm a fighter, not a quitter" (which was swiftly followed by her resignation).

Perhaps there's little point in speculating on Sturgeon's departure and far more in what came next: the battle for her party's leadership. Nicola Sturgeon had established herself so clearly as the embodiment of the SNP that, when her time to leave came, widespread confusion was unleashed as to who would succeed her. Such a phenomenon had not happened to the SNP for some time; in their previous leadership election (in 2014), Nicola Sturgeon was widely seen as Alex Salmond's (then-First Minister) protégé and, thereby, his near-rightful successor, leading her to run unopposed.

The same cannot be said for this occasion. Three candidates emerged into the arena; each had a (somewhat, at least) different view for the party's future.

The front-runner (initially) was former Finance Secretary Kate Forbes. Young, and seemingly possessing some detectable level of charisma, Forbes appeared to be an increasingly obvious choice for the party's leadership. Her commitment to fighting for independence, along with considered opposition to the GRA (having been on maternity leave when the vote on it took place), placed her in a stable position for the campaign, racing ahead in opinion polls conducted on both the Scottish public and 2021 SNP voters. A problem, however, developed. Forbes' 'Achilles heel' was revealed in an almost brutal fashion: her religious views. Forbes is a member of the Free Church of Scotland – a Christian organisation known to have expressed conservative views on issues relating to same-sex marriage and abortion. Forbes attempted to push back, arguing that, regardless of what her church had said, she had no intentions to bring such views into office

(though she did state that she would have voted against the legalisation of same-sex marriage). This attempt at clarification appeared no use; the damage, it seemed, had been done.

And so, attention was turned to the second candidate: Humza Yousaf. Yousaf was well-known amongst spectators of Scottish politics, having served as (and faced relentless criticism while) Health Secretary under Nicola Sturgeon. Regardless of his opponents' comments, it is difficult to argue with the fact that he is, to a large degree, an established figure within the SNP and its upper echelons, allowing him to cement himself as the front-runner following the downfall of Forbes. Yousaf's campaign appeared to emanate a similar message to those of the others with whom he was in competition, with that being a continuation of many of Nicola Sturgeon's policies and her general vision (seen as illustrious by many in the Party) for Scotland. His attacks against his opponents were, also, seemingly effective. Attempting to take down Forbes, he decried her as being the candidate most popular with Conservative voters (with this quality, in his view, being very bad indeed). It is perhaps worth noting also that Yousaf managed to accrue far more support than any of his rivals in terms of MSP and MP endorsements (58 of the 106 given), placing him firmly as the parliamentary parties' favourite.

Finally, the wildcard candidate: Ash Regan. Regan's platform was primarily built around her own opposition to the GRA, with this marking her out from much of the SNP's establishment who, despite its controversial nature, had resolved to pursue its addition into law. Regan had been known, to those watching, as one of the only MSPs to rebel against her party by voting against the GRA's passage – something that provided her with a certain following among those 'in the know'. Aside from this, Regan spent time emphasising her ardent support for Scottish Independence (as had practically every other SNP MSP/MP at some point in their career).

The actual ballot for the SNP's leader is an interesting one, conducted under a preferential voting system. This sees voters, rather than vote for a single candidate (as they would in a General Election), rank the candidates in order of preference. Once the first-preference votes have been counted, the candidate with the least is eliminated, with their votes being re-allocated to the voters' second preferences. This is repeated – using third, fourth, fifth, etc. preferences (if required) – until one candidate attains over 50% of the electorate's vote. Following this, they become leader.

This year's leadership election saw the re-allocation of votes. Yousaf finished first on the initial count, receiving around 48% to Forbes' 41% and Regan's 11%. After Ash Regan's votes were moved to their second preferences, Yousaf passed the threshold, winning the contest by 52% to 47% (around 1% of the ballots had no other preferences).

When the decision came through, those watching the faces of the candidates live were not seeing nervous countenance but, rather, that of containment, having already been informed of the membership's verdict a short time prior to its official, public announcement. When Yousaf's victory was proclaimed, he rose joyfully, with Forbes congratulating

the victor, and Regan perhaps struggling more than her rival to contain her disappointment.



With Yousaf as the new leader, questions began to arise regarding his ability to follow what was – admittedly – a tough act in Nicola Sturgeon. One of the main concerns was whether he could maintain the SNP's high levels of support that she built and kept during her tenure.

There was a time – perhaps too distant for the very young to remember – when the Labour Party dominated Scottish politics. Indeed, the Central belt once resembled a sea of red. In the 2010 General Election, Labour won 41 of Scotland's 59 seats. This, though granted, was followed 5 years later by the SNP's notorious landslide (taking 56 of the 59 seats), provides a vivid illustration of what once existed in Scotland. The Labour Party were, for some time, the controlling force within the country, only having entered a near-dormant and, perhaps, demoralised state around a decade ago. Their path to power in Scotland has, for some time, seemed nebulous; but now, some feel they may have just cause for hope.

The reasons for the SNP's taking of power in Scotland are, to some extent, a varied melange. They can, however, be simmered into a few key factors.

The most obvious of these would be Nicola Sturgeon herself. As previously mentioned, her charisma and public persona left many (including some who did not support her policies) in veritable admiration of her political skill. Though many have given Yousaf short shrift, casting immediate doubt over whether he can live up to his predecessors (perhaps unprecedented) standing, we must wait to see what proves to happen. His commitment to continuing her policies and general outlook may distil some support from the electorate (perhaps from those who hold allegiance to the party's keystone and popularised policies, such as free prescriptions and 'baby-boxes'), it is more difficult to emulate her actual personality (especially given that Yousaf and Sturgeon are two completely different individuals).

It would be wrong to proclaim that Sturgeon was some form of uniting figure to whom support from all corners of the political spectrum would suffuse. She left office with (and, during her time, received) some poor approval ratings, and was not, by any means, celebrated by all. In addition, some of her policies did prove unpopular with the public



(particularly the GRA) and led to the SNP's lead in opinion polls fluctuating. Regardless, it is difficult to challenge the notion that she did exhibit a redoubtable public persona that left many enamoured. The extent to which 'image' is important for Humza Yousaf's survival as First Minister remains to be seen. He might, however, consider it imperative that he not be overshadowed by the one before him.

A second cause for SNP support is, of course, that of their flagship policy: Scottish Independence. For a long time, the party has continued to pursue the end of Scotland's membership of the United Kingdom. As the largest champion of this cause, the SNP have taken up a considerable amount of the existing support for the issue, with such having been increased during the 2014 Independence Referendum (where the subject began to be discussed more frequently and realistically in the public forum).

The third worth mentioning is, perhaps, somewhat vaguer; however, the SNP's commitment to social democratic policies and aims brings with it a considerable portion of the Scottish electorate. The extent to which their voters are attracted by this in comparison to the other reasons is, granted, questionable. However, its existence is not something worth denying.

Though there are more for consideration, the three reasons above are tied together by a strand that runs through the heart of all three: they appeal best to those on the political 'left'. The first isn't necessary limited to this side of the political spectrum, however, when combined with Sturgeon's aforementioned "keystone policies" (which often required greater levels of government spending) fits this well. The third is perhaps too obvious for explanation (re-read the paragraph if you're confused), though the second is less conspicuous. Regardless, it does still match the trend. One of Scottish Independence's key selling points is that it would apparently provide an ample opportunity to remove Scotland from the control and policies of the right-wing UK Conservative Party. The extent to which this argument is a 'good' one is left for debate. In the meantime, its existence provides an understanding for why Scottish Independence is often more attractive to the left (at least, when the Conservatives hold power).

Perhaps the fact that the SNP draw much of their support from the left should, regardless of the above, not be considered surprising. After all, they regularly proclaim themselves to be a centre-left party with centre-left concerns and policies. However, the fact that the SNP's power appears predicated on left-wing support leaves them vulnerable to the potential resurgence of the Scottish Labour Party, something which would likely devour much of their electoral standing.

For years, the SNP have kept Labour at bay. The latter has appeared as weak and lacking in vitality, being relegated to third-place in Scottish politics by the Conservatives since 2016 (something which, a few years prior, would have seemed an unthinkable feat). However, they remain the primary threat to the First Minister's party, due to their common base of support. To put it plainly, those who vote for the SNP are more likely (given their aforementioned ideological similarity) to desert them for the Labour Party than they are the Conservatives. This, though perhaps invigorating for them (particularly when combined with the fact that

they were already rising, perhaps due to the scandalous reputation of the Conservatives in Westminster), is not enough to warrant jubilation from the Labour Party. After all, voters need a reason to abandon the party they last voted for. So, do they?



Unfortunately for Mr Yousaf, it appears that some of his voters may already possess such reasons. Making matters worse, he does not appear to be providing them with much reason to stay onboard. Since his arrival as First Minister, the SNP's rating in polls has failed to improve by much and, in many cases, has continued to fall.

However, all hope for Yousaf is not lost. Poll ratings have (at the time of writing) picked up slightly, though not by enough to give a definite indication of any impact he may have had. Furthermore, it remains perfectly conceivable that the SNP could remain, by some margin, the largest party in Scottish politics. Some of the most negative polls (for him), often, point to a significant gain of seats for Labour at his party's expense, though not by enough to remove him from finishing in first place. Despite this, it cannot be denied that one is not used (nowadays, at least) to seeing the SNP facing such a difficult time in terms of accruing support. The scandal involving the SNP's accounting is something this article has neglected to mention thus far (mainly because it is so vast an issue, it would take up far too much space for me to fulfil my goal of being allowed to give this piece a title that relates to the SNP's leadership contest). If that, however, continues to garner critical press for the SNP, it is unlikely to augur well for Yousaf.

It is said that a week is a long time in politics. The First Minister has, perhaps, over a year until the next General Election, and around three years until the next Scottish Parliament election. If this truism, therefore, is anywhere near accurate, then he should have ample opportunity to at least attempt to set his party on the right track.

Yousaf's own constituency – Glasgow Pollok – is, itself, a classic example of the SNP's impact on Scottish politics: turning what were previously Labour-strongholds into SNP-backing (and, in some cases, independence-supporting) areas. It remains to be seen whether a red deluge shall emerge from the polling stations. Should it, the First Minister would do well to watch out.

## Roe v. Wade - One Year On From the End of An Era

Logan (Form IV)

In June 2022, the US Supreme Court issued a landmark ruling. In the case of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organisation*, it found that its previous judgement in the 1973 case *Roe v. Wade* was, in fact incorrect, and therefore overturned the decision. The case of *Roe v. Wade* had, for decades, been a conspicuous cornerstone in the movement for abortion rights, as well as the vast majority of the Democratic Party and its policy platforms. Much has been said by pundits, commentators and politicians from across the political spectrum about both the veracity of the Justices' reasoning and the implications their decision will have. However, in order to truly understand the significance of this indelible moment in American history, one must first delve into the case's history.

In 1969, a 25-year-old woman known as Norma McCorvey launched a legal challenge against the state of Texas' abortion laws. At the time, abortion in Texas was only legal if there was reason to believe that the life of the mother was at risk. McCorvey was, when she launched her challenge, in her third pregnancy, which she claimed was brought on by rape; having had her challenge originally rejected, she was forced to give birth to the child. In 1973, however, her case reached the US Supreme Court, along with that of 20-year-old Sandra Bensing (which challenged Georgia's abortion restrictions). With McCorvey assuming the pseudonym 'Jane Roe', Texas' law was defended by Dallas District Attorney Henry Wade; hence, the case is known as 'Roe v. Wade'.



After hearing the case, the Supreme Court's Justices made a landmark decision, ruling in a 7 – 2 verdict that Texas' law violated the right to privacy as established in the due process clause of the US Constitution's Fourteenth Amendment, and that the Constitution therefore provided women with the right to choose to have abortion. The verdict also established the original 'trimester system'. This meant that each trimester (three months of the total nine months of pregnancy) had different restrictions regarding the extent to which states could regulate abortion. The ruling established that in the first trimester, a woman possessed a full right to abortion; in the second trimester,

there was scope for the state to regulate (though not outlaw) abortion; and in the third trimester, states could ban abortion in the interests of the child, except from in cases where the health of the mother was threatened.

Prior to the Supreme Court's verdict in *Roe v. Wade*, abortion was practically prohibited by thirty-three US states, with a further thirteen restricting abortions apart from in specific circumstances; however, women were still known to have abortions at this time. Many partook in 'back-alley' abortions – illegal procedures which could often risk the life of the mother – or attempted to terminate their pregnancies themselves. The worst affected were often those on lower incomes, who could not afford to travel to states that permitted abortion and therefore felt forced to seek such dangerous means.

Following the Supreme Court's ruling, the issue of abortion rights established itself as one of the US' most famously divisive topics, with candidates' opinions on the matter proving instrumental in the success (or failure) of their campaign to pick up votes. The two major political parties in the US cemented themselves clearly on (in most cases) opposite sides of the debate, with Republicans favouring greater restrictions on abortion, and the Democrats pushing for the opposite. The issue often found (and still finds) itself intertwined with that of religion, with politicians' religious affiliations being, in some cases, called into doubt were they to support pro-choice policies (as with President Joe Biden).

On the 2nd of May, a draft of a possible new Supreme Court verdict was leaked. The opinion, written by Justice Samuel Alito, led to speculation that the Court may overturn its decision in *Roe v. Wade*, after he described it as "egregiously wrong." The Court had been considering the (aforementioned) case of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organisation*, where Mississippi's ban on abortion after fifteen weeks of pregnancy had been challenged. Chief Justice John Roberts later confirmed the authenticity of the leak.

When their official decision was released, the Court's majority verdict declared that *Roe v. Wade* should be overturned, stating that, in the Constitution, abortion is not referenced at any point. In regard to the Fourteenth Amendment's Due Process Clause, it argued that, though previous decisions have established that it protects some rights that are not specifically mentioned within the Constitution, those rights must be, as the court previously established: "deeply rooted in this Nation's history and tradition" and "implicit in the concept of ordered liberty." The verdict argues that the right to abortion matches neither of these categories.

This stark contrast in opinion, not just with that of *Roe v. Wade*, but also *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (a case which, though it amended the trimester system, effectively reaffirmed a constitutional right to abortion), is likely due to the appointment of the three justices nominated by Former President Donald Trump, all of whom (as can be expected) are seen as leaning to the conservative side of the political spectrum. Trump's choices assisted in the creation of what is effectively a 6 – 3 majority in favour of this viewpoint.



The announcement of the Court's official decision (as well as the original leak) drew much attention from the media, with speculation surfacing regarding how state governments would react. Particular notice was devoted to the thirteen states that possessed so-called 'trigger laws' – laws introduced to, in this case, regulate abortions to an extent that was not permitted under the Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade*, however are now enforceable given that it has been overturned. Some Democratic governors, such as Gavin Newsom (of California), pledged to ensure the protection of the right to abortion at a state level, with, in Newsom's case, the suggestion of an amendment to the California State Constitution being made. President Biden urged women to travel to states where abortion was legal if they had to, and House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi denounced the decision as a "dark and extreme goal" of "the Republican-controlled Supreme Court." Some politicians, primarily Republicans, praised the decision, with Tate Reeves, Governor of Mississippi, describing *Roe v. Wade* as "one of the greatest injustices in the history of our country."



Additionally, the decision received much condemnation internationally, with the UK's then-Prime Minister Boris Johnson describing it as "a big step backwards." World leaders such as Jacinda Ardern (Prime Minister of New Zealand), Emmanuel Macron (President of France), and Pedro Sanchez (Prime Minister of Spain), as well as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, all expressed concern at the Court's decision, and iterated their belief in protecting abortion rights.

On the home front (for the Court, at least), the decision has merely fanned the flames of division so symptomatic of its current political system. Indeed, recent elections appear to show no widespread consensus over the 'right' direction for the US. It has been argued, that in hindsight the Court's decision may have assisted in accruing votes for the Democratic Party in last year's midterm elections (elections to Congress held half-way through a President's term). Though the party did lose control of the House of Representatives to the Republicans, they retained the Senate, going on to strengthen their majority by one seat. Furthermore, the result in the House saw far fewer losses than had been anticipated, with the suggestion of a 'red wave' transpiring as more of a mirage. Regardless, the wounds inflicted remain, with each jubilant citizen matched, if not exceeded, by one who fears for the destruction of what is – in their view – a key right. Furthermore, there is concern that the dangerous practices associated with pre-*Roe* America (illegal and unsafe abortions) may see an unwanted return.

There is significant value in attempting to view the debate from a less conventional standpoint. Rather than considering it as a debate purely about ethics or the rights of women, one should notice that the issue speaks also about the decision's architects: the Supreme Court. The political debate surrounding the Court, and whom Presidents appoint to it, remains a fierce and contentious issue. Though many may view the division seen now as unprecedented, it is worth noting that, for the Court, the nomination of individuals who are seen to agree with the sitting President is hardly a new concept. It is, rather, an established part of American political practice, stretching back farther than many can remember. However, this does not solve the problem of the fact that the Court was not designed inherently to fulfil such a role, nor does it act as a true, logical justification for the practice itself.

President Biden's now-distant proclamation of America being "back" was often accompanied by cries that the nation would soon be guided into a new era of unity under his wise stewardship. Unsurprisingly, these comments only seemed to originate from the Democratic Party and their allies. Regardless, the dogma held by each side of the ever-widening political chasm appears to be identical: when we hold the court, America is safe; when the opposition hold the court, America is doomed. This ignores the fact that, as an institution, a key difference between the Supreme Court and other branches of the US Government is that it is not intended to be partisan. Both sides appear to take heed of this; however, they appear to feel as though it would be more beneficial to play a deeply damaging political game rather than seek a return to its true purpose.

In truth, the United States is undoubtedly divided, perhaps to an extent that has not been seen for decades. The solution is unlikely to emerge from the derision of the opposition and their supporters (as happens so often with divisive political issues, such as abortion). Some will argue that recent events show flaws with the very design of the American political system; it is easy to see why such a belief may be held. In terms of the Court's decision, many will see it as a victory for the Constitution and for morality, whilst others will interpret it as the terrifying starting-gun for the roll-back on what they see as women's rights. Such differences in opinion are symptomatic of a modern political system; however, these examples only represent the polar-ends of the political spectrum, whereas many Americans will sit somewhere in-between. This, therefore, is perhaps not what makes the path to unification so nebulous, with that instead being that the very institution designed to act as the custodian and interpreter of the nation's supreme law has been infected with partiality. Somehow, America must claw back; the question is how.

## Banned Books Week - Let's Talk About It

*Anna (Form VI)*

In commemoration of the recently celebrated 'Banned Books Week' comes a battle of opinion. Some believe banning books protects our younger generation's innocence. However, others see that banned books cover topics that help people learn about life, and its myriad faults. Do you know what books have been banned? Do you know why? I expect the answer is no, and that is at the fault of our education system, we aren't taught about banning books. Some people may have heard of totalitarian governments banning books during their reigns of tyranny, but what many don't know is that books are still banned every year in our democratic nation. These books cover topics such as race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, mental illness, and disability, topics of paramount importance, topics that will always be there, even if you try to hide them in the act of banning a book. My argument is: if statistics show that children are already exposed to these topics before reaching teenage years, then why are books, that give us tools with which we can better cope with the tumultuous time that is adolescence, being banned. Literature is the crutch on which an entire generation of young people lean. It is therefore undeniable that the suppression of literature leads to the suppression of people.

To begin, what is 'Banned Books Week'? Apart from being an anomaly to all my peers, and myself, it is a week of fundamental importance, campaigning freedom of choice when it comes to literature as well as the exploration of censorship and its negative effects. In the US alone, the number of books banned since 1982 exceeds 11,300, books. In this list I found some of my favourite novels such as 'Looking for Alaska', which explores the difficulties of adolescence, and the treacherous journey of forming your personal identity. Another novel listed is 'The Perks of being a Wallflower', a book that enlightened me to trauma and the wide spectrum of mental health struggles. That someone would try diminishing these books' importance and instead taint them with a label of 'dangerous content', is simply unfathomable.

We're missing a step though; a book cannot be banned without first being challenged. Who does the challenging? Well, predominantly our own parents. A graph on changes by insinuator shows parents to be the most involved in banning books in the 90s and early 2000s. It is arguably fair that parents should control what their own children read. What is unfair and damaging however is their personal opinion being responsible for the restriction of books available to others. In this modern age, where being open and conversing about difficult topics is so greatly encouraged, one is left to wonder why a concerned parent wouldn't go directly to the subject of their

concern and talk to their children. It's that simple. And yet the even in this day and age, the graphs aren't changing. We preach open conversations about mental health but in banning books we are smothering such insightful conversations before they even begin. So where parents' fail, speakers or articles from 'Banned Books Week' can succeed, succeed in teaching our youth and making this topic known.

Have you ever heard someone say "oh that doesn't go on anymore"? Well it's highly likely it does. So, where clarification is needed, in 2019, only two years ago, 377 books were challenged. One such book was 'Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry' a moving and educational story of an African American family facing racism in 1930s Mississippi, this book was banned for having racial slurs, a ridiculous reason when we consider what goes on in real life, in the playgrounds our children populate. In a study exploring helplines in 2019 and 2020, around 550 calls were made to Childline, calls offering counselling sessions to victims of bullying and racial and religious abuse. This study was focused on Childline. Meaning this happens to children. This study immediately alerted me to several red flags, not least that children are undergoing counselling, sessions focusing on their minds before they are even fully developed. Furthermore, children are exposed to such serious topics before even knowing that people ban books, let alone that people read books that don't come with pictures. It is therefore my opinion that the books themselves are not the problem, our attitude to the topics they feature are. Instead of banning books with positive exposure (like reading), which offers a safe way to learn about topics such as racism, adults should make more effort in changing the statistics above, examples of negative exposure, where people learn about these topics by personally experiencing them. Before you try and ban a book for containing a slur think of all the children having one screamed at them.

It's important to know the background to this subject, like why do books get banned and how do they go about getting banned? Challenged books go through a simply illogical process in order to be banned, a three-step test created by the court after multiple complaints over book's contents. The process includes determining whether a book is considered 'obscene', meaning it features in some way lewd material. Secondly the book is put up against





'contemporary community standards' questioning whether the average person finds the book reasonable. Unfortunately what is not disclosed is that 'the average person' does not include young people and so the decision is given right back to the people who brought the issue up. This provides an unfair platform for the expression of opinion and bias in the court. Lastly the book is examined to see if the material has qualifying 'social, historical, philosophical and psychological value'. Unfortunately, this test has ample faults, most pressing is the issue of subjectivity; different people define these 'values' in different ways and so where one person finds a fault another may find merit.

An example of why books are banned is for including sexual content, because this is seen to have a negative social and psychological value. However, in many cases, this material is informative and often it helps protect our youth from predators. Is it not more important to inform our youth on such a pressing topic than to present society as squeaky clean? Not only is the process itself flawed but it is, exasperatingly, lacking a 4th step, the most salient step: a simple discussion with the younger generation. In the majority of cases books are challenged to 'protect the youth' a sort of hero complex that in most cases does more harm than good. It is important to note the people making these decisions are generations older, and so are consequently out of touch with the experience of the youth of today. They aren't inside our heads and so they simply cannot know what is best for us. Presuming we want or need material banned is short-sighted and foolish.

Sex, profanity and violence. Foremost experts on censorship in young adult literature say, no other topics are more likely to get a book banned. If you try and restrict adolescent sexual knowledge, they will just go and find it elsewhere. And as a result can form unrealistic, often harmful views about what sex is. More strikingly if you're worried about sexually explicit books, look at this statistic: nearly 40 per cent of children have either received and/or sent a "sext" by the age of 13. Sex is normal and learning about it in a private environment should be supported. Similarly, the focus on violence in books is quite ridiculous when you see the 'slasher' movies and video games children and adolescents are visually exposed to. When it comes to profanity, simply ask the average child if they are ever exposed to swear words by family or friends and you will see the problem is not with literature, it is with society's habitual use of profanity. The Great Gatsby, banned for reference to sexuality, and profanity. The Colour Purple, banned for sexual scenes, and profanity. These books are now taught extensively and loved by so many. If someone told you the no.1 bestselling series, Harry Potter, was on the road to being banned for reference to 'witch craft', what would you say? It is a story of friendship and bravery and yet people still find a way to estrange it. This just shows that banning books is a flawed concept and if only people knew what went on behind the curtain there would be enough public support to make sure no other potential classic is banned before it gets a chance to become one.



Right in front of our eyes is tangible evidence of why we shouldn't be banning books. A study on Texas teens was created to explore the effects of reading banned material and overall it was found those who read banned books were more likely to be engaged in civic activities such as volunteer work, according to Stetson University psychologist Christopher Ferguson. Ferguson surveyed 282 adolescents living in a small town. They were presented with a list, identified as "commonly challenged books". These ranged from the Harry Potter and Hunger Games series to The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Their parents or carers then filled out a survey on their behaviour and no negative changes were found, instead, finding books that were relatable was said to contribute to emotional growth as well as improving morals. Ferguson wrote, "Consuming edgy material may provide teachable moments to discuss ethical issues between parents and children". If only discussion improved between parents, the primary challengers of books, and their children then we wouldn't see the suppression of literacy that can lead to the marginalisation of our youth.

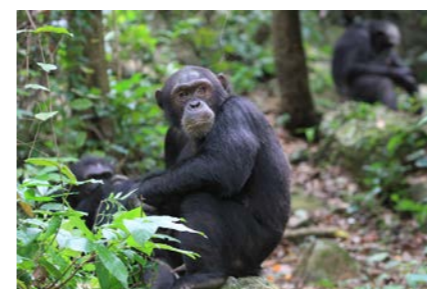
The very existence of books is a blessing. Like Stephen Chbosky, the author of once banned The Perks of Being a Wallflower once said, banning books: "gives us silence when we need speech. It closes our ears when we need to listen. It makes us blind when we need sight". Writing is pouring your heart onto paper, it's relating to others, it's providing an escape to some, it's helping build empathy and so many other traits that teach us about the world we live in and how to navigate it. Books are maps and without them we'd be lost. These statements come from experience. My health struggles led me to spend days lying, staring at a wall in a bleak hospital room. The lack of inspiration only led to my deterioration. Then one day I found a book, and a box with more and I read, and I read and the days would pass and the people in these stories gave me hope that with fortitude I could emerge from my struggles, until one day a nurse tried to ban a book for containing 'bad' language. That moment is the representation of what is happening on a larger scale. Those books gave me the blessing of hope but still someone found a way to alienate them.

So please let's talk about 'Banned Books Week' and remember the world needs literature without suppression.

## Education Makes Me Go Ape

*Affan (Form IV)*

Chimpanzees are humankind's closest relatives and are widely regarded as the next most intelligent animal. Capable of forming complex sentences and showing one of the highest degrees of problem-solving skills in nature, they are not a force to be reckoned with. However, suppose you isolate a chimpanzee from its natural habitat and force it to work an outlandish number of hours each day, pushing its natural capabilities to limits unimaginable; it will eventually succumb to failure in physical and mental exhaustion. In 2008, the USA passed the Great Ape Protection Act (GAPA) to end invasive research on chimpanzees and other great apes as it was considered animal cruelty.



So, if it's deemed inhumane to work a sentient being capable of emotions beyond its boundaries, why do we think it's a good idea to make adolescents pursue an education that goes against humanity's evolutionary instincts?

Most students would typically criticise modern education for the boring nature of the subjects (which, as a student, I can't deny), that is only a symptom of the issue. The problem doesn't lie within what's presented but rather where it's presented. During the Islamic Golden Age spanning from the 8th century to the 14th, there were many polymaths; however, one stood tall from the rest, Al-Khwarizmi. With contributions still relevant to different fields of study, one can only question how he did it. The answer was simple: whenever he researched, he went to the appropriate location for his research. For instance, when creating the world map and attempting to calculate the circumference of our blue globe, he didn't do that sitting in a laboratory; instead, he went on an expedition to the plains of Sinjar in Iraq to calculate the longitude.

Now, if we were to tell the researchers of ancient civilisations that we opted to study in a claustrophobic, mundane, grey-scale prison cell of a room, they could only sigh in disapproval. If we desire to ameliorate the atmospheric melancholia of each class, we should quench students' instinctual thirst to seek and explore the outside world. Even an obliging soldier can't combat

their behavioural instinct to flee when thrown into a pothole.

Being burrowed into a pothole wouldn't exactly result in an ideal experience, but what's more suffocating is being burrowed into an imaginary pothole. The school has taught us to solve questions beginning with "What" but never "Why". What's the colour of the sky? What's 1 + 9? These are questions easily defined. Why do we strive? Why am I? These are questions not so easily replied to. The absence of philosophical and abstract thinking in an education centre is an out-and-out fiasco. Philosophy acts as a moral compass, a lighthouse when we're lost in a sea of cloudy wickedness where what's black and white is blurred into a fog. Without this lighthouse helping youngsters navigate their path throughout a tender age, they might go adrift, resulting in an everlasting impact on their morality and values.

The linear growth of evolution is the linear growth of our ethics and beliefs; after all, our morals and understanding of who we are define what we are. Charles Darwin argued that morality is a by-product of evolution which suggests that this form of knowledge has helped us in the past to adapt as a community which increased the chances of survival. Morality not only steers our actions to be more righteous, but it's also the heartbeat of social cohesion in a community. Morality allows us to agree upon a universal set of principles promoting peace and unity among the people. Our population accumulates like an asymptote, so our descendants must be taught this key to life. Life isn't Nirvana; a baby naked of impurities cannot be thrown into the swimming pool of society and be expected to glide freely through the intoxicating chlorine without being taught to swim, whatever Kurt Cobain's album cover might imply.



Let's take a chill pill from all the seriousness; what do you call a sad coffee? A depresso. What do you call a trek without a summit? Also, a depresso... Enough diatribe on the journey: let's talk about the ultimate goal, the destination of our education system. You go to school, and then you graduate from school. You go to a university, and then you graduate from the university. You apply for the job of your dreams, and then you get that job. Now you work. For as long as you can. After the trials and tribulations, no happy



ending. There's no punchline this time, no depresso, but that still is quite depressive.

Today, our education is formed to assemble an army of acme androids that slave away for our society until an age they are abandoned and deemed abortive with nothing for themselves. Schools should educate students on there being more to life; goals should be what people set for themselves and not determined by societal expectations. Chasing your hobby or being a little more polite is already an accomplishment. In fact, your goals are what you want them to be; but schools don't emphasise that. Schools emphasise that we should sit on a chair and work from 9 to 3, ignoring what we want for ourselves. But we're not a cult of desultory zombies; we're humans. Born hunter-gatherers, we yearn for what we want and should forage for the goals we've set for ourselves, not what others have set for us.



Nonetheless, here I am, behind a screen, typing a persuasive essay. Like a satellite caught up by a gravitational pull, I am stuck in the educational orbit I had just ranted about. I am an astrochimp forcefully launched to space, cramped into my miserably grey-scale space shuttle. I'm adrift. I don't know myself or my purpose; my ape brain is overheated after working for a space agency's goals for so long and ignoring my desire for bananas. My only method of communication with you is about to end. I have realised that I might be lost in space and have been discarded by my space agency after being deemed useless to them. So, I'll spend the rest of my days trying to achieve communication so I can spread my message to the world; hopefully, one day, they'll realise. Hopefully, one day, we'll all realise.

## Global-Scale Meddling (or Foreign Aid)

*Inaya (Form V)*

Every so often, a little red, white and blue bottle finds itself distributed amongst the Global South, with no return address. Take two or more servings annually for incredible growth, enhanced infrastructure, and a shiny, thriving society. It's a saving grace, the epitome of true diplomacy, so naturally no time is wasted in gulping it down. Only when it catches in the countries' throats, and is lodged at the top with no way down, does anyone bother to read the fine print. WARNING – side effects may include spikes in corruption and siphoning, dependence on this treatment, and a crushing debt that you will never have the means to pay back.

In the abstract, foreign aid seems the perfect treatment for international deprivation. How could it not be? Surely, when a country with so much prosperity and wealth takes it upon itself to help nations in need, it can only be regarded as sure-fire proof of humanity and compassion within the highest echelons of government. But a second glance pulls the curtain to reveal the true nature of these “acts of kindness” – as enigmatic international weapons that cause further damage rather than the intended repair.

Take the case of Lebanon. Following the destruction that took place during the Civil War of 1975 – 1990, the country received almost \$170 billion in international grants and capital influx – a figure larger than the entirety of the Marshall Plan which rebuilt Europe after World War II. Despite this colossal quantity of aid, Lebanon remains in a state of disgrace. Dying infrastructure, a derelict economy, and the complete inability to give back to its people. The reason, contrary to popular opinion, lies not within Lebanon's inadequacy to support its population without foreign aid, but rather the converse – effects of worsened government due to developmental aid itself aiming to ‘sustain the unsustainable’ and subsequently prolonging ‘the game of corruption’, as LSE author Valentina Finckenstein puts it. For long, Lebanon's system of government has been in desperate need of reform. The power-sharing dynamic between political groups has allowed for the misuse of public funds, as enticements for equally corrupt parties of different sectors, but the continuous barrage of international involvement has put a halt to any chance of reform in the next decade. A country's foundation is its people, and an attempt to build upon a society where the public cannot trust its government is not only futile, but cruel.

Unfortunately, Lebanon is no odd exception. Criticisms of Western interference in developing continents are often met with the justification that the Global North

is helping impoverished nations to “find their footing” and above all, grow as an economy and world power. It sounds a perfectly logical premise, save for the fact that statistics and research into the effects of aid completely counter this theory. From the early 1960s to the beginning of the modern century, figures show that countries receiving less foreign aid have had higher returns of economic growth due to their international independence, whilst those still trapped in aid bargains' growth has stuttered and even decreased.

It's difficult to be surprised by these contrasting outcomes, when one considers the sentiment that the basis of democracy lies along the string attaching the people to their government. It's best imagined as a two-way pulley system: a government requires tax funding to run the country, and the people, being the providers of these funds, withhold the theoretical right to cut their governments off. Of course, there's the odd discrepancy – but everything is more or less in check and balance. Until, that is, the West enters sporting its shiny Foreign Aid scissors to sever the wires and retract any shred of accountability the government may have been held to. As argued by the Economic Nobel Prize winner come staunch advocate for the benefit of developing countries, Angus Deaton, this lack of responsibility from a government often forms a ground for corrosion.

So why does the West continue their attempts to aid these countries only to put them in worse standings than before? It boils down to a question of two key, yet opposing, principles – ethics and power. We, as citizens of global powerhouses, recognise our privilege and unsurprisingly feel a tugging of our heartstrings, a duty to extend our wealth to the world's significantly more deprived communities – nothing more than lending a long-distance neighbour a bag of sugar. But in this self-righteous haze, what we see to be a helping hand, somewhere along the way, is lost in translation and snowballs into an impossibly large tally against these developing nations (that they couldn't ever

feasibly repay). It's this paradox of imbalance that continues to give Western powers leverage over the Global South – for as long as countries require aid, they owe something, and if they are indebted to the West, economic aid becomes even more vital. The reality of the matter remains the same: the “aid” that global powers distribute is firstly and foremost intended to help themselves. Most foreign aid deals are “fixed”, meaning that the developing nations that receive the deals are obligated to purchase resources and services from the donor countries themselves. If that didn't expose the self-serving objectives of Western governments' international philanthropy blatantly enough, the USA further clarified their interests in a (now deleted) paragraph on the USAid site, reading: “The principal beneficiary of America's foreign assistance programmes has always been, and will always be, the United States.” America First is not a new sentiment; it continues to operate at the expense of developing nations.

Since its conception following the second World War, when it was introduced by the UN and heralded as an alternative to war, the concept of foreign aid has blossomed into an unrealistic ideal of the big countries on campus helping the underdogs out of the goodness of their hearts. But, as Dambisa Moyo writes in *Dead Aid*, ‘aid has been, and continues to be an unmitigated political, humanitarian and economic disaster for most parts of the developing world.’ If ever there was a time to realise that Western interference is unnecessary and furthermore, damaging to emerging countries – it's now. On the testimony of Irish playwright and political activist Bernard Shaw: “An American has no sense of privacy. He does not know what it means.” And unsurprisingly, he and his friends continue to violate the privacy of the developing world.





# Social Media, Fast Fashion and the Loss of Youth Culture

Anna (Form V)

There was a frisson on the King's Road, Chelsea in the mid 1970s when clothing store owner Malcolm McLaren began working with and managing Steve Jones and Paul Cook, two teenagers who would frequent his London shop. From these encounters a band was formed, managed by McLaren and styled by his girlfriend, Vivienne Westwood. The product of this was the Sex Pistols, a group who almost singlehandedly created the 70s Punk Rock Movement.



The movement created a community in which people with similar interests in music and fashion were able to express themselves. It was authentic and refreshing. The more adults rejected and criticised the culture; the more young people embraced it. We can also look at the football casuals, an 80s subculture which saw men wearing designer sportswear such as Lacoste and Fila and listening to music from bands like Joy Division and The Smiths. It was in the stadiums where youths were able to meet and bond over their shared interest in football, allowing the culture to thrive and grow. However, in the modern world teenagers can find like-minded people living thousands of miles away and still interact with them. Apps like TikTok allow you to curate a For You Page consisting of niche content on movies, music and fashion all personal to you. But when will we realise that culture cannot thrive without the alchemy of personal interaction?

Youth culture has long existed, it's something which young people tend to seek out, a community of likeminded folk with similar interests to themselves. These cultures were so sacred to many because of how difficult it was to find anyone around you who liked what you liked, dressed how you did and liked the same music. But then there was the internet. No longer did you have to leave the house and travel to gigs and games to meet people, you could go to a forum or hashtag. And so, now in 2023, a post pandemic world, is youth culture still alive? I would argue that remnants of older subcultures can still be found. On TikTok, #hippiefashion has gained over 21 million views, #grunge at 7.2 billion views. But where has the spark gone that would inspire movements,

ones that could be solely attributed to now, the 2020s? One thing crucial to a youth movement, whether it be Punks, New Romantics or Hippies, is authenticity. It was appealing because parents from an older generation didn't understand it, they weren't in on it. Young people could create their own identity as they transitioned from adolescence into adulthood. But when social media allows anybody and everybody to access the minds of the youth, that privacy is lost. Movements which were once alternative become mainstream. When too many people are in on the culture, it gets abandoned and dies out.

Another factor which is affecting the development of modern youth culture is capitalism. Past examples show that after some time, countercultures are bound to fall into the hands of greedy corporations who will eventually begin churning out clothing and merchandise meant to appeal to the youth. Take grunge, born in the mid 80s as a rejection of the healthy, polished aesthetic of the time. Most followers of the style opted to wear second hand clothing and avoid flashiness or excess. It was the early 90s when Grunge really soared into the public eye through the success of bands like Nirvana and Pearl Jam. It was only a matter of time before the actual message behind the fashion was appropriated from the outside, famously in Marc Jacob's 1993 'grunge' collection for Perry Ellis. For many countercultures, this is the exact opposite of their own ideologies, the idea of 'selling out' to corporations. Nowadays, there is barely any time for a new fashion to breathe before it is replicated by the plethora of fast-fashion brands which will produce thousands upon thousands of a niche style of clothing for the masses to latch onto and buy. Social media has made people's lives so accessible that it takes no time for corporations to figure out exactly what youths are wearing and what styles are 'in'. It's disheartening to see something authentic and original be copy and pasted a million times by brands to lure in consumers. This only makes it more evident that online shopping has for the most part put an end to window shopping as it once was. With so much to choose from online, could it be argued that it is undermining the unity that was once felt from the act of browsing shops with friends, discovering your identity and style? Youth culture used to thrive in cities, weekends were spent by many rushing to the newest boutiques and charity shops to emulate the current trend that had inspired you in a magazine, only to be able to parade it the next day and feel like you were wearing something unique to you.

Whether it be Y2K, Grunge or Indie, it's now unlikely to see a distinct culture surrounding a style. The same goes for



music. It's obvious why youth culture is nowhere near on the same scale that it used to be. Social media seems to have created a space in which nobody is entirely sure who they are or how they want to portray themselves. You may order an entirely new wardrobe to imitate a specific type of person you saw on your Instagram feed last week to then have it off to a charity shop the next month because of a brand-new style that everyone is talking about. The fashion surrounding a movement was a signal to others that somebody was in your tribe; you could feel an affinity to them, speak to them and socialise. Nowadays it is practically impossible to be able to identify who somebody is by their style because of how homogenous it has become. This ever-growing online world of fast fashion, filled with 'hauls' and 'style-inspo' has caused young people to feel as though only wearing one particular style is just not enough. There is competition to be a part of and own clothes from as many different micro-trends as possible, as practically everyone has the fear of not being 'in' with the new.

So, is youth culture dead? Definitely not. It isn't that the young don't wish to have culture anymore, it's just that the current climate is making it increasingly difficult to do so. Social media has created a world in which nobody has a strong sense of self or identity. Nobody needs to put themselves out there or take risks, everything is too accessible. The longing to become immersed in a cultural movement and to interact with other people in person is no longer there for many. Youth culture is born from dedication and devotion. Maybe that is something that the 2020s lacks.

## Climate Protestors: Heroes or Villains?

Emma (Form V)

Imagine finally being able to see your family members after the coronavirus pandemic tore you apart. However, when you are driving to the airport to catch your much-anticipated flight, you must abandon your plans that you so looked forward to. Not because of flight cancellations or family illness, but because of people climbing up gantries on the M25. This is the



harsh reality for Jade McCormick, who was making her way to Stanstead airport to see beloved family in Scotland, when her dreams were shattered by hooligan-esque 'Just Stop Oil' protestors. Disruptive climate protests have been popping up across the country, wreaking havoc in their path and disturbing the daily lives of people just like Jade. Whether it be gluing themselves to roads, pouring milk on the Harrods shop floor or throwing Heinz tomato soup on the world renowned 'Sunflowers' by Vincent van Gogh, you name it - they've done it. Thus, despite being told, throughout our lives, 'don't cry over spilt milk', many people are justifiably angry about having their lives interfered with, due to the actions of so-called climate activists. Therefore, it is imperative that we put a stop to the frenzy of dangerous climate protests that are polarising society and drastically rethink our approach to achieving a healthier planet.

Disruptive protests are not a new phenomenon. However, climate activists have taken them to a whole new level - just when you think you have seen it all, 'Extinction Rebellion' are covering branches of Barclays Bank in oil and spray paint, and your mind is well and truly boggled. You may think, what do these 'activists' want and why take such extreme action? Well, the infamous 'Extinction Rebellion' states, they are a "decentralised, international and politically non-partisan movement using non-violent direct action and civil disobedience to persuade governments to act justly on the Climate and Ecological emergency." However, what Extinction Rebellion fails to reveal here is plain fact that their actions could delay people from going to hospital for life saving treatment, or stop people getting to their jobs, that many rely so heavily on especially due to the cost-of-living crisis that we are currently experiencing. This is simply the crux of the matter, the everyday people most impacted by these acts of rebellion are not the culprits of our deteriorating world. Stopping the working people of this country from picking up their children from school, or attending a much-anticipated job interview, only results in unrest and anguish for all those involved. This is certainly not the wildly heroic and world saving act of rebellion many of these, 'climate activists' envisage it as. It is the people in power who have the blood on their hands. Yet, this does not stop these climate rebels. Until the government acts on climate change in a way that these people approve of, we should get used to hearing about the arrest of 'Extinction Rebellion' protestors, after they glued themselves to a pink bathtub on the M32 or the latest daring climate motivated stunt by 'Just Stop Oil'.

It is impossible not to have seen the headlines about such protests by now, with it feeling as though each week we are hearing about the next extreme action taken by one of these groups of climate hooligans. Therefore understandably, the public's view of the climate organisation's disruptive stunts is generally negative, especially if they have been directly affected by one of their protests. In 2019, a survey was conducted by YouGov, following widespread



disturbance caused by 'Extinction Rebellion's' aim to "shut down London", through targeting the road and rail transport links that the capital so heavily relies on. The survey found that people of all ages were mostly opposed to their actions, with older people being the largest age group with this view. This is significant because it is not just the people in power who are appalled and deeply frustrated by the actions of disruptive climate protestors, but also a large section of the general public - the group most affected by their actions - who also hold this view as well.



Another notable group who has been alienating the British public is 'Insulate Britain'. They want just what their name suggests: low energy insulation for Britain's homes, which will use significantly less energy and attain heating and electricity from renewable energy and on the face of it, these demands seem relatively reasonable. However, it is their methods of conveying their message which have been causing problems, and these are often far from peaceful. In late 2021, the group blocked numerous roads for several weeks, causing severe disruption. Protestors were aware of the enraged passengers, whose lives they were disturbing, but carried on with their felonious acts of climate protest despite this. In one viral clip, a distressed motorist was pictured pleading with the now criminal members of 'Insulate Britain', to let her past as she needed to get to the hospital where her elderly mother had just been rushed. If groups such as 'Insulate Britain' care so deeply about the future of our planet and the lives of the people who inhabit it, then why didn't they think this through? Public opinion of these protests declined considerably as a result of the utter turmoil they caused. A YouGov poll found that nearly a month after the protests began, of those surveyed 72% opposed the groups actions, an increase of 13% from the beginning of their protests. A telling statistic of how these protests divide rather than unite.

On the other hand, many supporters of these mayhem causing acts of climate motivated rebellion, would argue that disruption is a necessary method to get politicians to make a change. One of the 'Just Stop Oil' protestors who made headlines after throwing Heinz tomato soup over Van Gogh's priceless painting, asked the crowd surrounding the tomatoey splattered artwork, "Are you more concerned over the protection of a painting or the protection of our planet and people?" However, what these activists fail

to realise, is the privilege they hold. For example, some of the activists sacrificing their livelihoods in the name of climate justice include people with highly paid jobs, such as an ex-pilot, who was fined for blocking a road outside a Harrods store. George Hibberd told Westminster magistrates court that he gave up his 'dream job' working as a pilot for EasyJet, due to concerns of the ecological impact his line of work was having on the planet. Giving up your job to help save the planet is not an action that most of the people in this country can consider. Not everyone can afford to be in and out of prison in the name of climate justice, with a criminal record tied to their name forever. Especially in today's period of great economic uncertainty for millions across Britain. People are scrimping and saving just to get by, having to make the impossible choice between eating and heating. They do not have the time to be risking their livelihoods by gluing themselves to motorways. Yet, their lives are being disrupted on their way to work, or the supermarket, by people who hold an immense amount of privilege.

The evidence is clear, turbulent climate protests hinder, rather than help, their cause. Instead of uniting the public around their message and persuading people in power to make the changes they so desire, these types of protests often enrage the people most impacted by them and frustrate those reading the same shocking headlines. In reality, their actions never result in tangible change. Free speech is one of the key factors integral to modern democracy. However, vandalism and mass disruption are unlikely to result in a positive outcome for those involved. We need to rethink our tactics. To make substantial strides towards a better climate, we need to realise that methods of climate protests that cause widespread disorder and public exasperation are not the way forward. Instead, it is vital that we find a way of expressing our need for climate justice that is both impactful and respectful. Until then, we risk alienating those who are disrupted by the daring climate stunts we are often seeing. And if this attitude of gluing yourself to a pink bathtub in order to help save the planet is really the best way to protest, then don't be surprised if the number of climate change deniers also increases too.

## To Speak, or Not to Speak?

*Logan Moss (Form IV)*

There is a common theme that runs throughout human history - a lifeblood that powers all democratic civilisations, and provides the oxygen through which politics breathes. The ability to freely express one's own views is a fundamental right afforded to citizens across the globe, and is an integral component of how we live our lives. As such, one would, surely, hope that we are confident in our ability to utilise such a freedom? Unfortunately, and as you perhaps guessed as your eyes gazed over that last question mark, you are about to

be informed that there is reason to believe this is not the case. Indeed, a study from 2020 found that 58% of those surveyed said that they did not feel they were able to speak freely - a concerning statistic, regardless of one's own political views. Few would argue that the ability to speak one's mind should allow any opinion to roam as an untamed beast, and neither shall I. However, balance is key. The view that this freedom is under attack is perhaps warranted; however, it would be dangerous to take the view that any restriction is an authoritarian and, indeed, 'bad' idea.

One of the most important features of freedom of speech is the way in which it provides a backbone for the democratic process. The ability to raise issues of concern, and to carry out discussion around them, is a key component of our political system. Its role can be seen at such fundamental stages as elections, where candidates speak of their views, and voters make clear their agreement or disagreement through voting. The debate upon which both of these processes are founded is powered by freedom of speech. In addition, the ability for the media to report freely on matters relating to those in power (an extension of the right to free speech) strengthens the political process, as it allows for increased accountability, and gives the general public the ability to hold those in power to account through their enhanced understanding of events, supplied by such reporting. Once this is accepted, it becomes quite plain to see that, without free speech, it is actually quite difficult to claim that one is 'free' at all - at least, in a democracy, that is.

Aside from democracy's dependence on the right to free speech, the fact that it provides society with a mechanism to determine the value of opinions and ideologies is of equal importance. Human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell effectively summarised the crux of this point, when he said "bad ideas are most effectively defeated by good ideas - backed up by ethics, reason - rather than by bans and censorship." Indeed, free debate is the best way to settle these kinds of disagreements. How can a society know that ideas are 'bad' if they never actually hear them? The use of freedom of speech not only provides a platform for this manner of discussion, however it also allows for other ideas to be presented, which can then be differentiated between in terms of worth through the challenging of each (which is, of course, powered by freedom of speech.). Furthermore, Tatchell makes a key and pertinent observation when he discusses the idea of censorship. When ideas are merely censored, how can anyone say that they are actually 'bad'? There is no evidence to base this assertion on other than (presumably) the views of a single group or organisation. Some censorship is, granted, understandable, however ideas which we censor in today's world (extremist ideologies, conspiracy theories) have, in the majority of cases, been disproven and/or defeated through widespread societal consensus - a consensus that can only be achieved through free speech.

Not all speech, however, is entirely constructive. Some is intended to hurt or demonise, and is, in many

cases, directed towards groups that hold minority status. It is saddening, therefore, that something as good-natured and widely beneficial as freedom of speech can, in some cases, lay host to language that forces some to live in fear. Legislation, such as Scotland's Hate Crime Bill, has been brought in to attempt to combat this. However, though some defend such actions as a step in the right direction, others question how far society should restrict one of its most important rights to stop some from being offended, especially when disagreement can arise regarding not only the extent to which people should be offended, but also what truly is offensive.

The line between truths and lies can often also be an area of contention in the debate surrounding freedom of speech, particularly when examining political issues. Indeed, though this right seeks to encourage the free expression of ideas, it is not intended to do so for ideas that are factually incorrect or unsound. The damaging impacts of such falsehoods have been seen in recent years, with examples including the 2021 US Capitol storming, in which supporters of former US President Donald Trump, fuelled by the widely discredited conspiracy theory claiming him to have been the rightful victor of the previous year's Presidential Election, broke into the building and disrupted the certification of President Joe Biden's victory. Examples such as this, where democracy itself was threatened, compound the argument that freedom of speech, when left unregulated and open to lies, poses a threat to the very ideals it is supposed to underpin.

From all of this, the conclusion we are left with could not be simpler: freedom of speech is vital, and must be protected. It is the basis upon which we live our lives, and is the greatest tool humanity has in differentiating between right and wrong. However, some restrictions must be placed on one's ability to speak. People should not have to live in fear of being subjected to blatant and unwarranted verbal attacks, especially those which are motivated by prejudice and hate. Bodies with the power to restrict should, however, ensure that when they do so under these circumstances, they act with caution, and only exercise authority where words are truly unforgivable. If not for this, however, then there is another reason why that speech must be in some way restricted: to prevent the rise of misinformation. Lies do not seek only to blunt our aforementioned ability to determine the differences between good and bad; however they also threaten the basis of our political institutions. Therefore, insofar as freedom of speech threatens what it seeks to protect, it is in its own interest to be regulated.



# Monetising Misery - The Morality of Social Media

Freya (Form IV)

In November 2017 Molly Russell, aged fourteen, committed suicide. During the inquest five years later, the Senior Coroner ruled that Molly died from; “an act of self harm while suffering from depression and the negative effects of online content.” The inquest put social media companies on trial and created a wave of media attention and public concern. If, as Molly’s father said, “social media helped kill my daughter,” what should be done to combat the fatal effects of social media on teenage mental health? As the Online Safety Bill progresses through Parliamentary debates, the concern is whether the Bill can achieve social media companies being held legally accountable for children’s safety; or will it be weakened by pressure from the freedom of speech movement?

Adolescence is a crucial period of physical and emotional changes, which can increase teens’ susceptibility to mental health problems. Data from the World Health Organisation suggests that one in seven, 10-19 year olds experience mental health conditions, with suicide being the fourth leading cause of death in 15-29 year olds. Furthermore, The Children’s Society reported that in the last three years the chances of a young person having mental health problems have increased by 50%. Social media use has become a growing epidemic amongst teenagers and the Covid-19 lockdown propelled teens into increased dependency on social media content. A large study of adolescents, reported in the JAMA Psychiatry, found that those who spent more than three hours a day on social media, were at a heightened risk of mental health problems. For Generation Z, social media scrolling induces the addictive release of dopamine in the brain; not far from the ‘neurological high’ created by the addiction to smoking. Writing in The Telegraph following Molly’s death, teenager Claudia Collins, dramatically stated, “social media will fuel the genocide of my generation”.



Molly Russell took her life after viewing thousands of posts about suicide, depression and self harm. The inquest concluded that the content on social media sites was “likely” to have contributed to her death. The Guardian wrote on the 30th September 2022, that a consultant child psychiatrist couldn’t sleep for weeks after witnessing the content Molly Russell had viewed on Instagram before her death. The high-profile nature of this case in the media caused a huge public response which put pressure on the Government. Following Molly’s death, her father, Ian Russell founded the charity, The Molly Rose Foundation (MRF) to support suicide prevention in young people. The MRF acts as a pressure group, encouraging the Government to take action against social media platforms plaguing our society. Research from the 5Rights Foundation found further evidence of the damage the online world was having on the off line world of children. It found that children as young as 13 were targeted with harmful content within only 24 hours of creating a social media account. The Foundation made a number of recommendations for an Online Safety Bill that would provide a ‘duty of care’ for online services accessed by children. The Bill is five years in the making, and in its current form, it requires social media companies to protect users from harmful content. Large fines and the threat of blocking their sites will be overseen by Ofcom, if they breach the new rules. The Government aspires “to make the UK the safest place in the world to be online”... this will only be achievable if there is a legal line of liability.

Social media companies responded by banning graphic self harm or suicide images. However, they were criticized by Molly’s Father for being “reactive to issues and not proactive”. Despite regulations Instagram had placed in response to the coroner’s report, the Financial Times in 2022 were able to identify self harm content within minutes, that contravened Instagram’s policies. Further evidence shows Facebook has repeatedly prioritized growth over users safety. Reported by the BBC in 2021, Frances Haugen, a Facebook whistle blower, told the US Congress that the companies’ apps “harm children, stoke division, and weaken democracy.” In the same year, The Wall Street Journal revealed that undisclosed research carried out by Facebook demonstrated that they were aware from 2019 of the damaging effects of ‘Instagram’ on teenagers, which included; increasing anxiety and depression, negatively impacting body image, promoting suicidal images and using algorithms that send users deep into harmful content. The fact that social media companies are aware of the damaging effects their algorithms have on teens, is morally corrupt. At the core of this issue is the UK Government’s failure to pass legislation that is effective enough to suffocate social media companies’ hold on us.

Controversially, the Online Safety Bill has been challenged with resistance from those who believe the Bill infringes society’s freedom of speech. The Economist quotes David Davis, MP, who remarks, “It will strangle free speech online”. However, the Molly Rose Foundation, counter these allegations on



their website when stating, “This isn’t about freedom of speech, it’s about the freedom to live.” Critics of the Bill, also highlight the difficulty of regulating tech companies, due to the number of social media platforms. The Economist illustrates the issue by pointing out, “500 hours of videos are uploaded to YouTube every minute”, making it impossible for humans to regulate effectively. Faced with the risk of legal actions, companies will need to rely on algorithms to flag harmful content which they argue may interfere with the valuable content supporting self-help for mental health problems. Surely, we cannot accept these as legitimate barriers to improving online safety for young people. Social media companies have put some safe guards in place such as tightening age checks using face recognition tools. However, the MRF was critical that the safety tools relied on the action of the user rather than the platform and would not have stopped Molly viewing the harmful content. This ‘gesture’ from the social media companies is too little too late and has been described by the Times as ‘just a PR move.’

The repercussions of Meta and Pinterest’s failures to protect Molly from seeing the harrowing, horrific content, will forever haunt her family. The graphic content seen by Molly would never have been allowed in the offline world, so why do we allow vulnerable minors to access this content online? The Online Safety Bill is a ‘once in a generation’ opportunity to fix the imbalance between families and social media. These companies must be held accountable for the harmful content seen by teenagers online. We have to pressurise the Government as a society to value our people over profits.

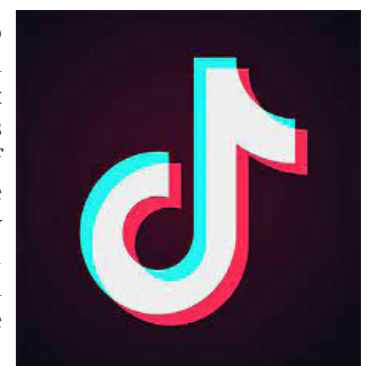
# We Need to Talk About Andrew

David (Form V)

The other day I was scrolling through social media when I stumbled upon a video of ‘controversial’ ex-kickboxer and media personality Andrew Tate. Tate has been labelled by many as the epitome of ‘toxic masculinity’ and is known for his outspoken, hateful attitude towards women. The video was an argument against him, and it seemed all the comments were in agreement – thank goodness TikTok’s algorithm knows I’m not a misogynist – but one particular commenter thought otherwise. I clicked onto his profile and saw that he had a public account. He was a kid. Maybe eleven or twelve, no older. The thought of this young, impressionable boy hearing some of the despicable things Tate has said (“If you put yourself in a position to be raped, you must bear some responsibility”, “Why would you be with a woman who’s not a virgin anyway? She is used goods. Second hand.”) and agreeing with them, made me sick to my stomach. It made me scared for my sisters, for my female friends. It made me question whether this content should be freely available for any eleven-year-old boy to find.

‘Pro ana’ (promotion of anorexia) is the name given to social media sites or accounts which post dangerous, harmful content designed to encourage disordered eating and unhealthy relationships with food. Vulnerable people see these posts, like a few, and soon their social media feeds are flooded with people with no medical expertise and who, themselves, have eating disorders telling them they need to severely restrict calorie intake. After seeing enough of these posts, they start to believe it. The same happens to young boys who like one or two of Andrew Tate’s TikTok’s or Twitter posts and suddenly their social media accounts are dominated by misogynistic content. The same algorithm that protects me from this hateful content makes sure that it is all that some young boys see.

Education workers, charities and school speakers warn that social media influencers such as Tate are giving boys accused of sexist behaviour the ‘ammunition to fight back’. Experts have said these sexist opinions that people like Andrew Tate are spreading to school children can lead to violence against women, which itself is on the rise. Yet fans of Tate, and even those who do not directly support him, will still argue that taking down videos where Tate effectively provokes





violence towards women is ‘censorship’ and goes against the right to freedom of speech. Is it really worth putting up with the spread of misogynistic ideologies and violence against women, just so we can respect Tate’s ‘right’ to have his spewing of hate on any child’s TikTok ‘for you page’? It is undeniable that social media companies have a responsibility not just to limit young people’s access to influencers like Tate, but to ensure that their algorithms do not allow for this content to be all that some users consume.

Is the solution to this rise in violence against women, then, simply to entirely remove hateful views like Tate’s from social media? No. No it isn’t. While it is a good idea to limit particularly young people’s access to any content which truly incites or condones violence, we can’t remove all hints of misogyny from all social media platforms. No matter how hard we try to erase these ideas they will always hide somewhere, in some dark corner of the Internet. When in a small group of like-minded individuals, hateful ideologies can fester like mould growing on the food at the back of the cupboard that nobody sees. Extremism can develop into terrorism. Plus, social media isn’t the only way that hateful ideologies can spread. The influence that the words of a father can have on a young boy cannot be understated. We must keep a close watch on the misogynist, but an even closer watch on his son. By ignoring these views, we allow them to cultivate quietly and without resistance.

Hateful views cannot be suppressed entirely, instead they should be available, but not without strong opposition. Part of this is down to social media algorithms always showing both sides of an argument. An Andrew Tate video should be closely followed with a video made by a feminist who argues just as well. Freedom of speech is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “the power or right to express one’s opinions without censorship, restraint, or legal penalty”. By allowing Tate’s views to be shared along with an argument against, his freedom of speech is respected, and healthy debates and discussions can happen between people who have seen every side to a topic. By doing this, young boys can see and be aware of misogyny, but have the flaws of that dangerous way of thinking pointed out to them. Content like Tate’s should be shown, but shown for what it is – hate speech. By treating controversial topics in this way, people become educated on these issues without being radicalised.

Additionally, other types of discrimination can be treated in a similar way. There is certainly no lack of racist or homophobic content on various social media sites, but provided young people see racism and homophobia exposed as forms of hatred just like misogyny, we can dismantle these views in the same ways.

Where it gets trickier is how to deal with discrimination in forms which are not just by any individual on social media. In more complicated forms. Discrimination with the excuse of religion is a

very real and prevalent issue. Many Christians use the Bible as an excuse for homophobia, and while it is so important to respect religious institutions and allow religious freedom to everybody, religion should never be at the expense of marginalised groups. Freedom of religion is important so long as we understand that religion is about a way of thinking that promotes love and kindness, not about discrimination. Anybody who argues that their outdated, hateful views should be tolerated due to their religion is misunderstanding what their own religion is preaching about. “Many of us in the churches want to root out the evil of discrimination in all its forms” – Rev Mike Claridge

Another common excuse for discrimination is politics. Arguments arise saying that discrimination must be tolerated as it is somebody’s political belief. While there are some issues which come close to these topics (trans women in public toilets springs to mind), these are perfectly reasonable debates, what cannot be excused as ‘political opinion’ is base hatred of a certain group of people. Democracy in its nature is intended to show both sides of any argument, but is “Do (insert sub-group of people here) deserve fundamental human rights?” really a valid argument? Anyone who thinks so doesn’t just have a difference in political opinion, but a flawed worldview.

Above all, it is important not to dismiss hateful views and ideas; discrimination in all its forms must be exposed, without the shield of arguments regarding religion or politics, and talked about in a way that shows how harmful these ways of thinking are. An important distinction to make is that this idea does not stretch to valid debates which simply involve groups of people who are discriminated against, just to the baseless loathing and feeling of superiority over such groups, and I would argue that Andrew Tate’s views cross the line into the latter of the two.

What to do about views like Tate’s in the world of social media is a complicated matter, but, while it is important to respect freedom to express opinion, we must do our best to protect all the impressionable eleven-year-olds in the world from radicalisation, in order to create a safe, inclusive society for anybody and everybody to live in.



## Features

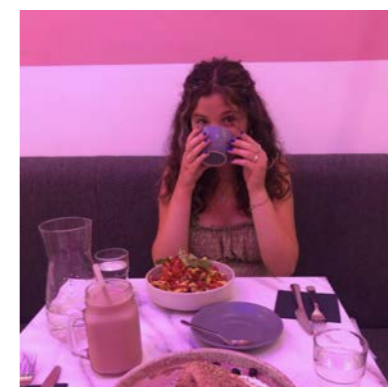
This time of year sucks.

The enticing idea of summer taunts many of us, insisting we sit a string of exams before we can enjoy its sunshine. Days pass too quickly as teachers set up countdowns to the day where we inevitably sit in the assembly hall; confused, stressed and praying we remember the flashcards made hurriedly the previous night.

But this year, the typical personal stressors of everyday life are compounded by the more pressing ones: the stresses that come with an increasingly broken world. So, what can we do about it? Luckily, that is not a question we’re forced to answer in an exam, but it is the one I seem to think about most often. I feel there’s an assumption that we need to just press the red button on the remote: turn off the news and isolate ourselves from the chaos that ensues just outside our window.

But I think that does nothing. I think that by diving in and exploring the nuances of our world and the problems that swirl in our minds each day, we are able to understand them a little more, and make living through them a little easier.

So in the Features section, we have done just this; exploring the complex and intricate world we live in... making this time of year suck a little less.



Izzy (Form V)  
Features Editor



# A Feminist vs Feminine Dilemma

India (Form IV)

As someone who identifies as feminist, I find defining my femininity difficult. Primary to being a feminist, I am a teenage girl. Further, I am someone who admittedly indulges in beauty practices daily. As a child I was less 'feminine', so as I've grown up and become more so, I've also read more on the topic and seen numerous questions arise from the movement, lessening my compulsion to identify as feminist as, to do so do I have to give up my femininity, part of what makes me, me? What does it mean to identify as feminist, or more importantly, *with feminism*? Is my femininity a choice or a condition of the patriarchy? What adds to the complication is that the line of acceptability is subjective between masculinity and femininity, dependant on the audience. In work life we get caught in a paradox; to be successful you must be feminine, but success and authority is synonymous with masculinity. So, to what degree must we conform to society's beauty standard to be successful, and does this compromise my feminism?



In Britain's politics (both actual politics and workplace politics) neoliberalism has created a culture of scrutinising women's bodies so there becomes an inherent need to practice heteronormative standards to not be ostracised, an act of survival in political warfare which never bites its tongue. A deep rooted social belief that women's looks come first and are ornamental, where men are taught to be instrumental. Look at Christine Lagarde - the new head of the International Monetary Fund, among countless other notable qualifications. When the *Observer* published an article on her latest appointment the headline read 'Is this the world's sexiest woman (and most powerful?)' Not only this, but the article also went on to talk about her white teeth, tan, model height and slimness, among other things. The article perfectly demonstrated that in women's politics, looks matter. People born with these standards (whiteness, thinness, heterosexuality etc.) automatically start 10 meters ahead in the 100-meter sprint, and for those not so lucky, the consequences can seriously affect their quality of life in hundreds of identifiable ways. Most obviously, in government, politics and personal life.

From an economic stance, the beauty standards are costing both women and government more by the year, furthering the socio-economic divide. For women,

studies are showing significant numbers are spending over £1000 per month on beauty procedures (hair, nails, and aesthetic treatments). However, it isn't all lost as this is alongside studies in to the salaries of women dependent on their perceived attractiveness, showing, in some cases, a disparity of around 40%. Further, women with darker skin find it harder to secure employment and are paid less in proportion. This uproar in the beauty industry economy indirectly takes from government as body dissatisfaction costs the US government around \$300 billion annually, for example, with costly treatments for depression, anxiety and eating disorders rooted from dissatisfaction.



We look at politics and navigating politics of the workplace. Evidence shows women are just as, if not more, intelligent and successful as men in the early stages of life, but this doesn't show as we progress into working life. For example, in the US, women achieve 57% of Master's degrees and 53% of Doctorates. However, women cannot compete at the same progression gradient on merit alone, something is lacking.

This brings us to the next angle of the effect of unattainable standards. The inability to negotiate femininity in co-existence to feminist identification leaves a distaste between feminists. Acknowledge the counterproductivity of infighting between second wave feminists (the stereotypical bra burners portrayed in the media as hysterical and dangerous) and the third wave feminists who seek a balance of indulgence in consumerism and personal values, and this comes from boiling down to the route of femininity. To distinguish whether your choices are personal or conditioned requires a self-humility as for most, our choices come from seeking male validation, and rejecting some of these standards is considered a feminist decision.

The lack of established respect for women manifests itself further where at a certain point femininity works against us in countless ways. The basic issue is that authority is synonymous with masculinity and men simply receive more respect. Think back to the sprint analogy. However much femininity helps compete against other women, men are starting the race at the 50-meter line, simply on account of being male. Women find it difficult to compete in mainstream politics because men's opinions define mainstream. A women's difference of opinion is viewed as outlandish and foreign. However, we see men passing off similar ideas with zero competition. An editor at *Front Row Central*, Martin R. Schneider, explored this as he conducted his work for two weeks under a female colleague's name. He noted a significant decrease in productivity by around half because each of his comments and suggestions were refuted and argued with. With the same comments made under his

actual name his suggestions were gratefully incorporated and he was able to notice the privilege that comes with being male. Against all odds, women can reach positions of power parallel to their male counterparts, but they experience an exhausting need to prove their intelligence, where a man's is taken as a given.

The predicament appears unsolvable, and there is no real answer. Too feminine or not feminine enough? There is only the suggestion which comes with the judgement of those we interact with and the overriding influence of the male gaze. Misogyny is passed like heritage with little change because the decision to be a feminist is complicated by the assumption that you cannot be feminine at the same time. The line between cultural normalities and the desire to reject them is thin, however feminism provides a bridge allow them to co-exist as mutually exclusive. If woman's success is dependent on how men perceive them, they cannot control the balance and it becomes evident the problem lies with men.

## End "Zero-Covid" Policy for Good

Yuhan (Form V)

This year the Covid pandemic marks its 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday; this also marks three years of captivity for 1.4 billion Chinese people and three years of a crumbling economy. On top of that, 50 million Chinese overseas citizens also suffered the aching heartbreak of forced separation from loved ones. Celebrating the end of an eventful year embraced by the circle of warm and loving faces of dearly missed family and friends has become a distant cherished memory. Covid-19 is the culprit masking the real insensate murderer- the tyrannous "Zero Covid" policy that starved its citizens dead within the concrete walls of their own homes and deprived expat workers and their children (like me) of a long yearned for reunion with segregated family.



At the time of 2020, I was blissfully ignorant of the world turning upside down around me and all the headlines did not seem to affect my life very much. The real pain was standing the torturous test waiting for curbs on overseas travellers to ease, standing the test of countdowns to visit my benevolent grandparents in China grew more excruciating daily. Until that morning in July 2021. I was startled from my

bed at 6am by the howling from my parent's bedroom. I hurtled to my parent's bedroom to witness a frozen screen of an ICU ward and the chaotic voices of all my relatives who'd rushed to see my grandma after she was sent there by ambulance due to a sudden heart attack at home. The next day I rushed out of my bed again at 4am to speak to my grandpa as he pulled off the tubes with shaking hands and I stared at the last earthly image of my grandma before she was placed in the coffin. And after that my mum entered a mental coma at the despairing brick wall China has built around its borders to keep any travellers, including Chinese nationals, out: plane tickets cost the same price as our car and there are impossible excursions to London just for a PCR test. My grandma's funeral was held seven days later, everybody was there but the people that overloaded the capacitance of her heart: her only daughter-my mom and the two grandchildren she raised. Unable to fulfil her duty of an only child, my mother still deems herself an unforgivable daughter from the depth of her aching conscience till this day. I secretly blamed myself for all of this since my education was the reason my parents left China in the first place, but who was really to blame: the stone-cold restrictions severing millions of families or a teenage girl incapable of changing anything?



The restrictions are not only devastating for the overseas nationals, but even more lethal for those in China. With its intrusion to every aspect of daily life, millions are put on the brink of struggle to survive while constant surveillance and lockdowns have turned everyday life into turmoil for all. When facetimeing with our relatives, I am frequently informed of the stories kept silent on TV. A newly married couple was stranded in their empty apartment because of community lockdown and almost starved to death because of long delayed delivery of food; numerous people were pushed to end their own life due to Covid-related financial struggles; many were waking up at 3am to queue for early spots at regular Covid tests... 205 million people face redundancy or are forced to shut down their business if they are labelled as "non-essential" businesses by the apathetic authority. The world's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest economy is on its last straw.

Of course, many supporters of these restrictions would argue that these are necessary to keep Covid-19 under control so that vulnerable groups aren't put at risk and the healthcare system doesn't become strained by the breakouts; the fact here is these restrictions have achieved



exactly *that*. The medicines that chronic disease sufferers need to replenish frequently are always frustratingly out of stock due to whole district lockdowns; the medical staff have reached their physical limits hustling around doing hundreds of Covid tests every day in sweltering protective clothing.



On top of that, hiding beneath the veneer of consideration for public health is the utter violation of human rights during quarantine. According to my mum's personal experience, as soon as they landed, they were confined to a corner of the airport and herded off like a van of livestock to a quarantine hotel which was self-funded. She was incarcerated in a 20-metre squared room and felt an immediate connection to the circus animals opposite the road. My mum desperately jumped on the bus to go home after the week crawled by, only to be informed that she was a close contact of someone who tested positive on the bus- and dragged off to another unfurnished, cardboard bare hotel to quarantine again. Her luggage was left on the ground floor by accident, when she called the reception staff no one was available on the line for an entire day, when she was forced to come out, she discovered the door at the staircase was firmly bolted to prevent their escape. What happens if there is a fire? Don't know, don't care. Five days later, she was finally permitted to leave the cardboard cage and ready to travel to the comfort of her long yearned for home sweet home- where she was obliged to quarantine for another three days under the surveillance of the neighbourhood committee and "helpful" neighbours from every floor, who had installed door sensors on both front and back doors readily for her arrival. My grandfather made the short yet arduous journey on foot every day to deliver food to her front gate, and then he would linger in front of the fences to wave and send his love and comfort across the garden to his only daughter barred inside her own house with his drooping but ardent eyes. The restriction that was supposed to protect vulnerable elderlies broke their heart.

Surprisingly, the government has had one success so far, and that is the propaganda brandishing the feats and justice of the policy. Millions of citizens are terrified by exaggerated news on replay of tens of thousands dying abroad from this deadly virus and are oblivious to the world-leading scientists. Health experts world-wide unanimously agree that most Coronavirus patients show mild symptoms and there is no need to be hospitalized for majority of the population after contraction. According to the leading U.S. medical research institution NIH, the estimated infection death rate of Coronavirus is 0.66%, which levels off with the *Flu* and seems ridiculously puny

when compared to SARS with a death rate of 1 in 10. Those implications combined with the economic disaster make it obvious restrictions should be lifted for the public while health services take a more focused approach to protect the most vulnerable populations through means such as vaccination. Furthermore, the "Zero Covid" policy sounds more absurd than walking on the moon. I suspect the Chinese government health advisor had a stroke when they decided a respiratory infection contractable by inhaling droplets in air circulation could be completely extinguished from the most densely populated country in the world.

The Chinese government insists that the "Zero Covid" policy is designed for protecting the best interest of the Chinese people, by feeding lies to spread terror to its people and depriving people of their basic rights to food, communication, and freedom. Look to the irony of the severed bonds between long separated family members; the haggard faces of the 205 million people scrambling for a source of income who have been surviving on their savings for the past 2 years; the psychological trauma ripping the national mental health. The policy is the masked serial killer, the virus that is slowing stifling 1.4 billion people, *not* the Coronavirus.

## Plus Size Models: The panacea for all the ills of inclusivity or just another manifestation of the male gaze?

Molly (Form V)

I am slouched on the sofa wearing my favourite baggy sweatpants. Always comfortable and effortlessly able to accommodate the swathe of subcutaneous on my hips. At this moment in time, I could not be happier. I am about to commit to some serious online shopping. Eyes fixed to the screen, I am absorbed by the flashing for sale icons. Gift cards from granny in one hand, mouse in the other, I begin scrolling through the endless rolls of size 0 models. I am both enticed and repelled by the stick thin legs, iron flat stomach and the drawn face of the next heroine chic model. But what's this? Moving onto the larger platforms of ASOS and the aptly named Fatface, something new seems to be lumbering up the catwalk. Not the aspirational emaciated figure of the past; but a new overweight young woman who looks remarkably like me. Step forward the new Plus size model. Her rounded thighs, oversized breasts and a double chin are the latest attempt by the fashion industry to embrace body positivity. Celebrating the reality that a staggering 72 percent of us (the UK female population) is plus sized, should I see this as a much-needed step in the right direction or just another cynical ploy by the beauty industry to take part in the body positive conversation?

There can be no doubt that the definition of what constitutes beauty changes with time and culture; what is fashionable at one time and place is relative. Look no further than the

terrifying patriarchy of the 1950s to see that the male gaze very much influenced the fashion and media industry. The iconic tiny waist, busty neckline and voluminous padded skirts all suggested a deeply sexualised female presentation. Fast forward to the 1960s and models like Twiggy and Jean Shrimpton brought the flat chested, stick thin model into the public domain. However, what cuts across all such fashion transitions is that these models remain a visual representation of male heterosexual desire. When feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey coined the term 'male gaze' back in 1975 she perhaps had no idea that society had moved on so slowly. Indeed, I would go as far to suggest that the plus size model is a mere manifestation of that self-same 'male gaze.' Let's face it the Kardashian-esque hourglass figure complete with big breasts and a clearly defined midsection is the 'acceptable' version of the plus sized body. It is little wonder that famous plus sized models such as Hunter McGrady took to social media to complain that the modelling industry still sought to manipulate the female image as models with larger mid sections and smaller breasts were excluded as well as those who were deemed 'too fat for comfort.'

More cynically can we regard the uptake of plus sized models by so many major brands as just another manifestation of commercial greed? Are companies like GAP and ASOS merely exploiting the current conversation in body positivity and inclusivity? There can be no doubt that the plus sized clothing market is on the rise; it was worth a staggering 6.8 billion in 2022. With the global rise in the overweight and obese population has come a greater demand for fashionable, modern garments in the extra-large size. Crucially, the trend in body positivity has been more evident in women and supported by notable celebrities Oprah Winfrey and Demi Lovato. What is clear is that celebrity endorsement has a direct link to consumer choices. In other words, plus sized celebrities have played a role in propelling market demand. And who are we to deny these women their right to celebrate their shape, feel comfortable in their own skin, and wear clothes that showcase their formidable bodies?

Regardless of the economic drivers in the plus sized revolution, should we not enjoy the reality that young girls are no longer offered skewed underweight versions of themselves in the media? One of the most positive aspects of this new movement is the fact that overweight women are also being encouraged to make healthy lifestyle choices through the new range of sportswear and gym gear specifically designed to accommodate their size. A further benefit of the movement could be some form of alleviation in the appalling statistics surrounding eating disorders in the UK. A staggering 1.25 million were diagnosed with anorexia nervosa in 2020 and the demographic appeared to be getting younger with children as young as five and six suffering from eating disorders. Despite the numbers of plus sized models being small, there can be no doubt that they do put an end to the celebration of 'thinness' and to the equation of 'skinny' and 'self-worth.'

Those who seek to offer yet a more cynical view of the plus sized models, do so because of public health. Are these women encouraging and indeed glamourising obesity? Given that two-thirds of all Scots in 2022 were deemed technically overweight such a question appears more alarmist than ever. Such statistics, moreover, increase in deprived areas. A recent poll undertaken by the Scottish government found

that seventeen percent of Scots living in poverty could not cook a meal from scratch and ate less fruit and veg than anywhere else in the UK. Whilst it is normalizing bigger sized women, it would be entirely wrong to suggest that Scottish obesity is being exacerbated by the rise in plus sized models. Surely the bigger issues of food poverty, lifestyle and culture have a far greater role to play in the health debate surrounding Scottish obesity?

Finally, spare a thought for the plus sized male who unfortunately seems to have been excluded from this sea change in size representation. Despite the staggering rise in male obesity, the fashion industry appears reluctant to move away from its traditional narrow spectrum of male 'beauty': the chiselled Greek god, complete with washboard abs or the waif-like androgynous figures so aptly represented by Timothee Chalmette. This is all the more nonsensical if we consider the exponential rise in male fad diets, eating disorders and steroid abuse. IMG (the biggest modelling agency in the world) has a 'handful' of 'brawny' models and they are consigned to the "big and tall" niche marketplace. The reasons for this are, again, complex and myriad. Lagging behind the female body positivity debate, the disappointingly sparse numbers in plus size male models, may be a result of a lack of male celebrity endorsement. Add to this the fashion industry's default argument, that male models are figures of 'aspiration' and you have a cocktail of inertia and under representation of size diversity.



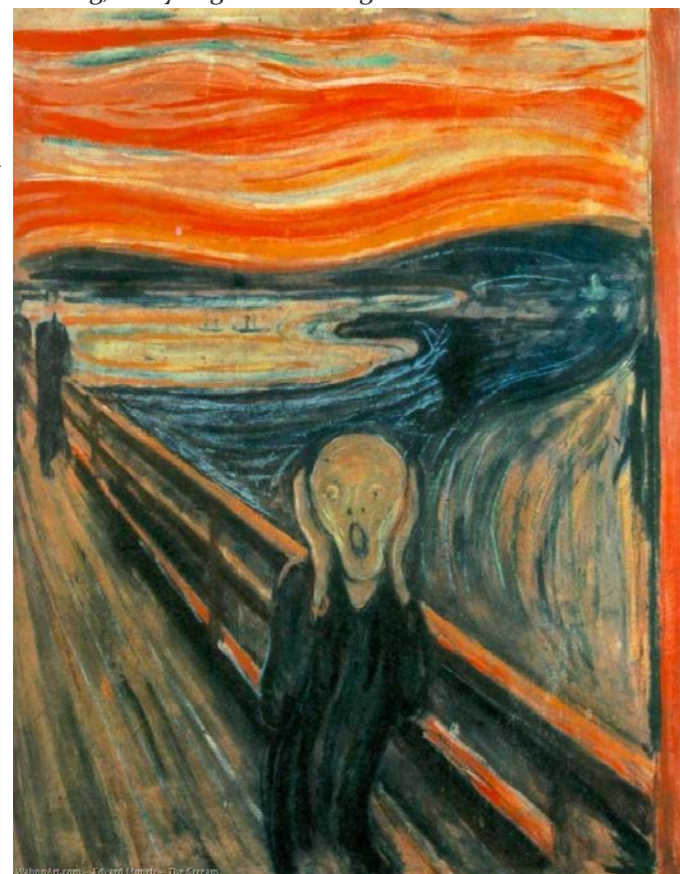
Finally, I would love to conclude that the advent of the plus sized model represents an end to society's fat-phobic attitudes. I would love to conclude that consumers are now being represented by people who look like them and that this is a golden gateway to greater gender, racial and differently abled people in the fashion industry. However, the reality is that only 8% of fashion brands even use plus sized models and those who are used conform to a particular stereotype. What is clear is that young girls are currently receiving extremely ambivalent messaging. On the one hand we are told to celebrate our weight and on the other to conform to a sexualised 'norm.' Twenty minutes into my online purchase and I am ashamed to admit that I purchased from Boohoo where the size zero model with her emaciated stick thin legs was just too disgustingly persuasive. I may have been aware that I was being manipulated but I couldn't entirely free myself from my own skewed perception of the female form.



# My Five-Year-Old Can Do That!

Lois (Form VI)

We have all seen the incomprehensible scribbles, the blank white canvas and the childish finger-paintings. “That’s not real art, my five-year-old can do that!” is often the uninformed response to this art style, yet it takes a lot more time, thought and emotion than the average viewer realises. The so-called ‘real’ art, with a defined and often realistic subject, accurate perspective, and made by a classically trained artist is, to too many people, the only acceptable kind of art – it is logical, it depicts a scene or memory, and it immediately conveys a fairly simple message or theme. The genre of abstract expressionism evokes a much subtler reaction from the viewer, one much more complex and harder to pin down, yet it is commonly met with “I just don’t understand it”. Mark Rothko summarises this very well, famously stating, “I’m interested only in expressing basic human emotions – tragedy, ecstasy, doom...”. Making art is a basic form of communication, and abstract expressionism allows the most direct path to expressing these often-all-consuming emotions – making it one of, if not the, most multi-faceted and thought-provoking art styles in terms of viewing, analysing and creating.



The introspective genre of abstract expressionism, started by painters in the late 1940s and ‘50s and developed in New York, was inspired by surrealism and looked to show ‘intense emotions and expression without any reference to the earthly world’. These seemingly careless and slap-dash paintings are designed to make one feel the same emotions as if they were standing in front of ‘The Scream’ by Edvard Munch or ‘The Blue Rider’ by Wassily Kandinsky - perhaps the most famous and emotive of expressionist paintings -

except abstractly and through the artist’s skilful command of colour, brushstrokes, and scale, just to name a few. As there is commonly no distinguishable subject matter with nothing wholly permanent or definitively meaningful, the viewer is left entirely up to their own devices to decipher its meaning, both to the viewer personally and to those around them. This crucially opens a more intellectual and worldly way of thinking, allowing the viewer to further understand and interpret the paintings as their base instincts tell them.



Abstract expressionism is perhaps the most pure and raw depiction of emotion. Instead of focussing on putting the emotion onto another being, using a middleman as it were, it is conveyed directly onto the canvas, allowing for a much more natural expression. The emotional energy this style takes up is incomparable to any other. It is a picture of unfiltered joy, pain, and frustration. It allows the artist to enter a world of negative capability - the term first penned by Romantic poet John Keats to describe the ability to transcend into a world of pure imagination - and express themselves without fear of judgement or making mistakes. This in turn allows the viewer to transcend into the artist’s state of mind and do nothing but feel pure emotion, something one of the most famous abstract expressionists, Mark Rothko, mastered through his premeditated use of colour, colour theory, and layering techniques.

Colour was massively influential to Rothko’s pieces and allowed him to make the incredibly impactful art we see today. Through studying Henri Matisse’s works and theories, he valued the importance of colour theory above almost any other element of art, examining it extensively. In his rectangular planes of various colours, tones and shades on backgrounds of a different colour, Rothko tried to depict different emotions, although often not his own, helping create his masterpieces. For example, the work ‘Black in Deep Red’ (1957) may look like two black rectangles and one darker red one, on top of a lighter red background, however when displayed alongside other works of similar colours, it can either be seen as a simple collection of red rectangles of varying shape and tone, or as having been carefully and thoughtfully collated to make the viewer feel angry and restless when stepping into the gallery space. With many of his works being either untitled or using a description of the colours in the piece, this further shows just how influential and crucial colour was to Rothko and his working process. For him, colour was the way to show the soul and manipulate the emotions of others.

In contrast, Franz Kline only used black and white in many of his mature works as he saw negative and positive space being of equal importance – showing how the style is fluid

and multi-faceted. This career-defining era was designed to draw attention to the imbalance of colour, something that would be corrected in a traditional art school. ‘Untitled’ (1956) shows how Kline used harsh, fleeting brushstrokes whose direction provided context for the often-unclear subject matter through the subtle reflections of light, and in this case, the subtle differences in tone as the only colours used were black and white. It is also an excellent example of how Kline painted white on top of black a lot of the time as flashes of black can be seen, left over from the exploded, somewhat desperate energy he had when creating the piece, a technique that was also used by Joan Mitchell. She developed a technique using white to blur the background and foreground into each other, for example in ‘Hemlock’ (1956), where the white is seen both behind and in front of the other colours, blurring the definition in the complex subject matter. Cumulatively, these very different paintings can be seen to have links and a common theme of using colour to provide meaning and definition to their subject matter. The use of colour in bright paintings or those that use many different colours is often a strong talking point, but the subtler changes and less obvious choices the artist makes are often overlooked, as seen in Rothko and Kline’s works. The placement of different colours can provide various reactions and bring out or take away different parts of a painting, exemplified by ‘Hemlock’ which also uses brushstrokes and layering to create an intriguing washed-away effect, an appearance very hard to achieve when using Mitchell’s personal technique – again proving how complex and demanding, in terms of skill and perception, abstract expressionism is, in so many different artistic aspects.



This thoughtful, strategic placement and use of brushstrokes successfully allowed many abstract expressionists to better display their emotions. Sweeping, gestural brushstrokes is a common occurrence in the genre as a large physical action is needed, often backed by a strong emotion that can be seen throughout the painting. Kline’s work exemplifies this, with the exciting, sweeping monochrome brushstrokes being the centre of attention in many of his paintings. In ‘accent grave’ (1955) the accent is not connected to the rest of the black marks, drawing attention to its boldness as it breaks the central composition. How the artist uses brushstrokes can influence the overall impact of the painting through how they are layered, how visible they are, and how they work with the composition.

In ‘Hemlock’ the brushstrokes are messy, streaked, and short. This helps convey a sense of anxiety and intensity, as if Mitchell was frantically trying to visualise her emotions, a recurring theme throughout abstract expressionism and something many artists aspire to achieve no matter their art style. The short, pointy brushstrokes are reminiscent of the hemlock tree, giving the piece its name and creating an almost violent image that makes the viewer wary of the canvas. This

is mirrored through the defensive atmosphere emitted from the spiky brushstrokes, showing the complexity within a superficially unordered painting. In contrast, Rothko builds many thin layers of many different colours to create his tonal rectangles. While the brushstrokes are visible, they are not the focus of the piece, instead being used to create a strong tonal depth. A seemingly mundane and forgettable part of a painting can hold so much power over the outcome. They can be the central focus. They can back up another aspect. They can emote.

These brushstrokes need somewhere to land, and the kind of brush and stroke are often influenced by the size of canvas. Abstract artists of all kinds generally prefer larger canvases as they allow for sweeping, gestural marks and have a more powerful impact on the viewer. This is particularly suited to abstracts as their work is most often, as discussed previously, displays of emotion. Additionally, many abstract expressionists are also action painters – people who work in short bursts of extreme energy – and require larger canvasses in order to get their energy out and express themselves without limitations. ‘Untitled’ (1948-9) by Willem de Kooning is an example of this method within abstract expressionism, with this piece and others made around the same time ‘embody[ing] the physical act of painting’. At 108 x 142.5cm it is by no means his biggest work, but the larger scale allowed him to make the most of the space and push his work right to the edges of the canvas. Moreover, Rothko and Mitchell regularly worked on canvasses over two metres with Mitchell in particular being known to regularly paint over two panels – an emotionally and physically intensive method of working, and exceptionally impressive. This makes viewing her, and other, large-scale paintings an incredibly immersive experience that allows the viewer to feel the full emotive impact of the painting, completely fulfilling the purpose of abstract expressionism.

Abstract expressionism is the single most complex and interesting art style. Being a wholly emotional and physical viewing experience, it deeply impacts both those making and those viewing the art, with the finished outcomes often being among the most complex and hard to decipher styles of art while simultaneously being one of the simplest. It requires effort on the level of the viewer rather than the artist to decide its meaning and impact, with the vague subject matter meaning different things to different people, but human intuition and experience automatically conveys the base emotion depicted. It is the viewer’s job to look inside themselves and decide what that emotion is, not the artist’s job to create something that will tell them what to feel. These paintings can be deciphered using developed theories and techniques or by using base intuition. It all depends on the viewer’s own experiences and preferences. As Joan Mitchell said, abstract art is ‘an ambivalence of forms and space’, whatever you want it to be, multifunctional, and most importantly, human.

So no, your five-year-old could not do that. However, they could (after years of practice and research, finding their style, and learning to appreciate art for its message rather than appearance), if they wanted to.



# Dollar's Desert Island Discs

Interview by Freya (Form IV)

Welcome to *The Galley's* third 'Dollar's Desert Island Discs' - a Dollar twist on the iconic radio programme. Our castaway this edition is the Deputy Rector Mr Burbury, who will be leaving the Dollar ship for the distant shores of Malaysia this summer. So, before we say goodbye, we look forward to hearing the 8 tracks that Mr Burbury would take to his desert island.

**Freya: Thank you Mr Burbury for agreeing to be Dollar's Desert Island Discs third castaway. Are you a fan of the radio programme?**

Mr Burbury: Well, I have to admit it's not something I go out of my way to listen to, but occasionally if I'm running or if I'm in the car and it comes on the radio I'll keep listening. In fact, the only time I've gone out of my way to listen to it was when David Attenborough was on, but that was about 10 years ago now.

**Was it difficult choosing your eight tracks?**

The first few were easy, but it got harder; I really struggled with my eighth track.

**So, let's start with your first track.**

I want to start with some classical music; Rachmaninov's 2<sup>nd</sup> Piano Concerto. At the age of 17 or so I actually played this piano concerto, initially with my local Youth Orchestra, but I also played it with the Kuala Lumpur Symphony Orchestra out in Malaysia, and that was actually my first visit to Malaysia. Apart from being just an incredible piece of music with luscious, sweeping romantic melodies, it has also got an amazing, dancing, virtuosic piano part that was great to play, but it's really full of rhapsodic variety throughout. So apart from being a great piece, it just holds so many memories from my early time of learning to play the piano.

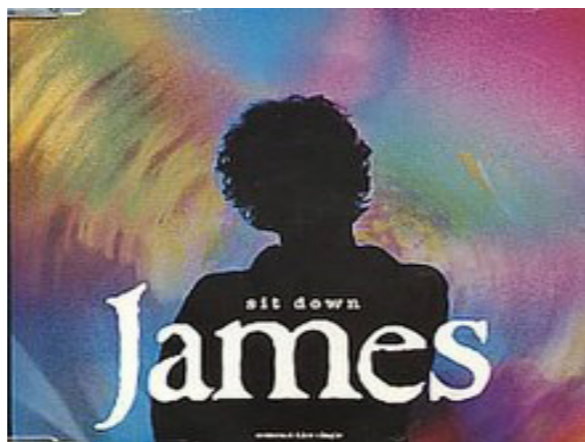


**Professionally music has been a focus in your work. Has music always been important in your life?**

Undoubtedly, yes - absolutely. When I was at school I was heavily involved in music; I learned to play piano, trumpet, and percussion. I went on to the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and then also gained a Master's degree in Music as well before becoming a music teacher. However, throughout that teaching career I've always done some performing on the side one way or another: leading and directing music ensembles of all kinds, playing in theatres, or accompanying pupils. Even now I enjoy getting involved with the music department, whether that be with the mixed voice choir or DAJO, and I still accompany pupils here and there. Music will always be part of my life in some capacity.

**Have you performed to anyone famous?**

So, I've been quite lucky, I've actually performed to quite a few celebrities including several members of the royal family. I have performed to the late Queen Elizabeth and her husband Prince Philip. I was actually asked if my choir would perform at the wedding of Zara Phillips and Mike Tindall. This took place in Edinburgh, and you can imagine with all the security there we had to get there quite early, but the congregation also had to be there quite early. There were half the royal family on one side and half of the English rugby team on the other and it was actually my daughter's birthday that day, so I very quickly phoned her and wished her a happy birthday; the choir that I was conducting for the service heard me say happy birthday and they started singing happy birthday. Before I knew it the whole of the congregation - so the royal family and all the English rugby team - started singing Happy Birthday to my daughter Chloe down the phone; that was a weird moment.



**What is your second track?**

My second track is 'Sit Down' by James. This was definitely the soundtrack of my student days: the surreal memory of everyone literally sitting on the sticky floor of a nightclub, waving their hands in the air and singing at the tops of their voices. It was madness but fun.

**What have been your happiest moments working at Dollar?**

I think my happiest moments are probably when I am out and about and getting involved in some of the co-curricular goings on. There's been so many good memories: 13 The Musical at the Edinburgh Fringe festival, sailing with cadets off the West Coast of Scotland with CCF, and the recent music trip to the US, as well as the Romanian community project and Christmas concerts. I know it tends to be these experiences that pupils remember most fondly, but I don't think it's any different for teachers too.



**Let's hear your third track.**

So, this is 'Make You Feel My Love' by Bob Dylan but the version that I'm thinking about is a cover by Adele. This song was chosen by one of my pupils some time ago to sing in Romania as part of the Romanian community project, when we were giving a little impromptu concert at a home for children with severe physical and mental disabilities. A young girl who would be pretty much nonresponsive to any students at all just decided to get up and dance with the girl that was singing. Now it takes something to bring a tear to my eye, but everyone present was beside themselves with how this usually completely unresponsive individual reacted to this piece of music. It was a perfect example of why music is so important and hearing that track takes me back to that incredible and intensely emotional time.

**What have been your toughest moments at Dollar?**

Toughest moment, no doubt about that... COVID. Just the unpredictability each day brought, balancing the different sensitivities of staff, pupils, and parents, as we tried to return the school to some normality when we came back from our lock down, was very challenging to say the least. Also another challenge was trying to make sure that our boarders were looked after when they couldn't go home for holidays or when they had to quarantine, as well as just making sure that everyone was coping with the protocols and keeping safe in such an unknown and uncharted environment.

**What is your fourth track?**

I don't know if I'm allowed it, but *Evita* by Andrew Lloyd Webber, and the newest version with Antonio Banderas and Madonna. But you know if I'm allowed, I'm going to ask for

the whole musical soundtrack if this is OK. This is what we would put on in the car when we lived in Egypt. As soon as the weekend hit, we would pile in the car and drive as fast as we could across the desert under the Suez Canal and across the Sinai Peninsula to a little scuba diving haven called Dahab. We always aimed to arrive at our destination before the *Evita* soundtrack finished; we rarely made it of course. *Evita* isn't even close to being one of my favourite musicals, but again it's about the memories that music conjures up - the singing in the car at the tops of our voices as we sped through the desert, anything that made that journey bearable.

**Let's hope the whole soundtrack counts! What will you miss the most about Dollar?**

The people, well most of the people and don't ask about anyone specific. I'll probably miss the Ochil Hills; having those hills essentially as an extension of our playing fields really is a luxury. I love getting out there when I can. I do a bit of running and getting up into those hills just from the doorstep is quite amazing. The part of Malaysia that I will be moving to is fairly flat, although it does have some lovely beaches close by, so I have to exchange the beautiful hills for hopefully some beautiful beaches.

**What is your fifth track?**

My fifth track is a piece called 'Oxygene' by John Michel Jarre. I think one of the most bonkers concerts I have been to was a Jean Michel Jarre concert, which was staged at the pyramids of Giza on the eve of the Millennium. I remember studying it in GCSE Music and again at the Conservatoire, but hearing it live with the pyramids in the background and the accompanying light show on the eve was quite special.



**You have travelled to various places around the world. Which place holds a special memory for you?**

There are so many, but I'm going to choose Tanzania. We were once lucky enough to take a hot air balloon ride over the Syracuse at sunrise, so we managed to see first-hand those huge herds of migrating wildebeests charging across the African plane. It was an astonishing sight as we quietly glided above them and when we landed in the middle of nowhere, we were treated to a silver service breakfast out on the open grass plain. For a short moment we really



did feel like we were in that film 'Out of Africa' happily tucking into our luxurious breakfast as wild giraffes and elephants just elegantly strolled by the breakfast table. I know it sounds very extravagant, probably was, but it was our honeymoon.

#### What is your sixth track?

'Somewhere Over The Rainbow' by Eva Cassidy. I think a cover is rarely better than the original, but this is I think one of those exceptions. This version is stripped back. It's simple: it's just voice, acoustic guitar, and a few strings. I just think it's a beautiful melody and a song that we had performed at our wedding.

#### Where else in the world would you like to visit?

You've caught me out with this one. The one part of the world I have never been to is South America. There is so much to see there: the rainforest and I'd love to visit Machu Picchu before the tourism destroys it.... so that's part of the world I have never been to and would like to visit.

#### What is your seventh track?

I couldn't leave Scotland and not take the sounds of the pipes with me. My seventh track is called 'Sleeping Tune and Gillies'; the Gillies part is actually called Noose and the Gillies. It's performed by Wolfstone, a Celtic rock band. It starts off as a slow atmospheric air but eventually turns into a wild energetic reel with attitude, with soaring electric guitars and virtuosic piping. Again, as with all my tracks it brings back lots of memories and this time its memories of playing this music on the tour to Cape Town, South Africa.

#### You are about to be cast away from the Dollar Ship; how will you survive on your own on the desert island?

I quite like my own company, so a part of me is actually looking forward to spending time alone on the desert island. However, I'll probably get bored very quickly and I'll need to build a hut or tree house or maybe a raft. Perhaps I'll enjoy running around the island a few times, of course, and I'll get time to read my book and enjoy my luxury item.

#### What is your eighth and final track?

My eighth and final track is 'One Day More' from the musical Les Misérables; it's by Claude Schonberg. I think Les Mis is probably my all-time favourite musical, but I won't risk asking to take the whole musical again. This track, which comes at the end of the first half of the musical, is for me the true musical finale, as it weaves together very cleverly all the different musical themes and just continues to build throughout. It is the only musical that I've been to see where the audience have given a standing ovation at the end of the first half rather than at the end of the whole musical.



**You will be given the *Complete Works of Shakespeare and the Bible* and, in addition to that, you will be delivered by carrier pigeon the latest copies of *Fortunas and The Galley*. You are also allowed one book of your choice; what will it be?**

I'm kind of cheating by picking five books in one, but I'll go for 'The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.' Interestingly, I have only ever listened to the audio book during long runs, but it was genuinely hilarious and so funny. In fact, occasionally, I had to stop running because I was laughing so hard. I promised myself at the time that I should actually read the book, but I've never got around to it, so I guess the desert island is the perfect chance.

#### What is your luxury item?

This is easy - a piano. Probably the only thing I have in common with David Attenborough, as it was his luxury item as well.

#### If your discs were swept away with the waves, which one would you save?

I would save Eva Cassidy 'Somewhere Over The Rainbow' from the waves.

Thank you Mr Burbury for sharing your Desert Island Discs with the readers of *The Galley*. We wish you all the best as you leave the Dollar Ship for the distant shores of Malaysia.

## Science

Henry Marsh, a neurosurgeon, once described a paradoxical scene where a patient who is being operated on looks at their own occipital lobe - that is - the very section of the brain that is responsible for our vision.

One gazing at their own creation. From the unthinkable microscopic to the unimaginably colossal - we realise that, like bacteria and like galaxy superclusters, we are living in our own order, on our own scale, but we are equally part of something greater.

This is the ultimate enigma of science. That despite the most expensive, profound, advanced discoveries, the sciences merely give us the closest approximation and an analogy of the world we live in. Although a metaphor can never replace reality, a metaphor close enough might just allow us to appreciate and marvel, at a resolution higher than ever before, the wonders of reality and life.

Scientists are the torchbearers for change and discovery. As we near the 21st century, with major scientific challenges in our way, from climate change to antibiotic resistance, that have real world, and in some cases, even devastating consequences, interdisciplinary collaboration and a more thorough understanding of the mechanisms of "why things are" is more important than ever before.

In this edition's Science section, we have everything from the Metric System (Logan, IV), Scoliosis (Isabella, VI), HPV vaccines (Sophie, VI) to the science of Lacrimation (Natalie, IV). Hopefully at least one of these topics will pique your interest.

Science is not about sitting in a lab logging data and drawing graphs. Now, more than ever, science isn't just theory, it has the capacity to influence the livelihoods of millions, and an untold number of future generations to come. And you so happen to be spawned at the time where scientific discovery is booming.

What better time is there than now to investigate life, the universe and beyond?



Natalie (Form IV)  
Science Editor



# Scottish Baccalaureate: HPV Vaccine

Sophie (Form VI)



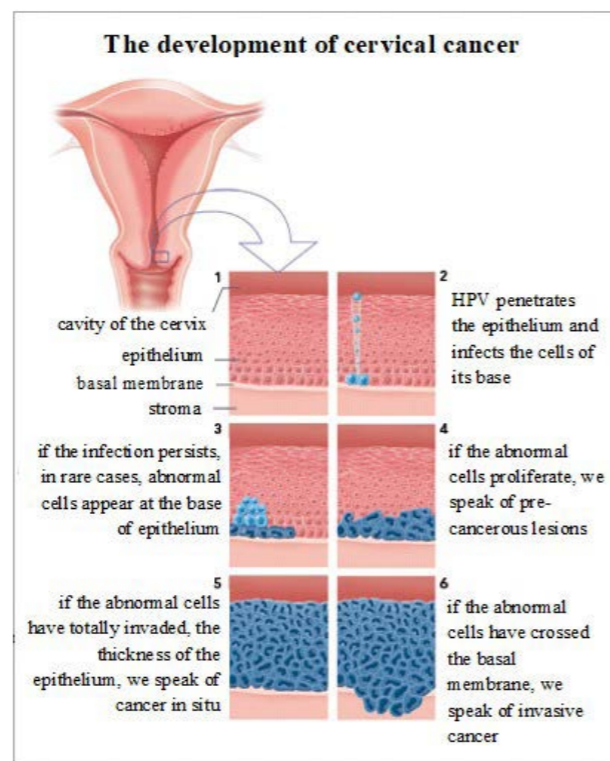
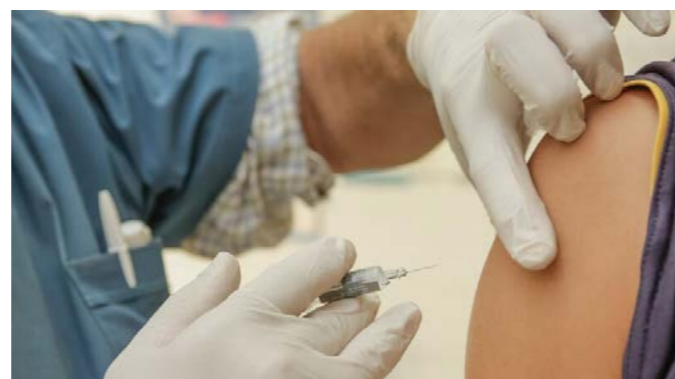
For my Scottish Baccalaureate project, which is an independent research project that sixth year pupils have the opportunity to undertake, I decided to research the HPV vaccination. I decided to undertake this particularly project because I know that there are a huge number of individuals who refuse the HPV vaccine and there are many myths about vaccines in general that circulate around social media. I also remember when I received the HPV vaccine that I didn't really understand why I was getting the vaccine. Therefore, with my project, my ultimate goal was to improve education around the HPV vaccine and the importance of it. To gather all the information I needed I carried secondary research as well as getting first and second year pupils to complete a Microsoft form so I could understand their current knowledge level. I also conducted several interviews with relevant individuals such as a Biology teacher, the school nurse, a public health professional, a GP and researchers from the University of Liverpool and Bristol. Using all this knowledge I delivered lessons to some Form 2 classes about the HPV vaccine, made a leaflet to be handed out to students and parents and this information allowed me to write this article.

The Human Papillomavirus Vaccine is a vaccination that is given to school pupils aged 12-14 through the NHS vaccination program. The HPV vaccine is an incredibly useful vaccine because it can help prevent against certain types of cancers and sexually transmitted infections. The human papillomavirus is an extremely common type of virus, with over 100 different types, and affects everyone - 4 out of 5 people will be infected with the HPV virus at some point in their lifetime. HPV spreads through skin to skin contact, usually through sexual activity. HPV generally does not cause symptoms and most people don't know they have it. Most of the time the virus leaves the body; however, certain types of higher risk HPV do not leave and cause cancer, and other types of HPV may also lead to genital warts.

The HPV vaccine works like lots of other common vaccines and causes your immune system to react. In general if our body is exposed to a pathogen, antibodies will be produced that are specific to the antigens on the pathogen and this results in the formation of a huge number of antibodies and activates the immune system that will destroy the pathogen before it causes harm. Some of these antibodies

remain in the body as memory cells; therefore, if you are exposed to the same pathogen in the future your body will recognise it and will remember quickly the antibodies needed to destroy it. However, the HPV vaccine works by injecting an individual with a particle that is not HPV but has the HPV antigens on it, which our body's immune system will recognise as a foreign body and will try to destroy. This causes the production of antibodies which go on to destroy the particle that looks like HPV (this is why when you receive the vaccine you might feel a bit tired for the next couple of days). Therefore if a real human papillomavirus enters our body, our immune system will remember how to create these antibodies quickly and in a large number so we can destroy the virus before it causes us harm.

The Human Papillomavirus Vaccine is an extremely beneficial vaccine at preventing certain types of cancers including cervical cancers, anal cancers, vaginal cancers, head and neck cancers, vulvar cancers and cancers of the penis. Although the HPV vaccine does not directly prevent these cancers, it helps prevent certain types of high risk of HPV that can cause these cancers. But how does HPV cause these cancers?



In most cases HPV leaves the body but, in some cases, the high-risk type of HPV stays in the body. Since the HPV virus is a DNA virus some of the high-risk types can damage the DNA. This damage to the DNA can lead to excessive cell division which can lead to cancer. Throughout my project I had the opportunity to speak with the head and neck cancer specialist who explained to me how HPV leads to head and neck cancer. He explained that, since sometimes the HPV virus stays in the body, in some people the virus produces two enzymes called E6 and E7 that cause someone's cells to undergo a process of proliferation. During this lots of mutations occur, and this can lead to cancer. This happens when micro-trauma leads to the crypts of the tonsils and base of tongue, and this is how head and neck cancer occurs. Head and neck cancer is a particularly dangerous cancer because there is very little early detection methods for head and neck cancer.

Overall, I really enjoyed completing this project and found it really interesting conducting interviews with lots of different individuals. I would really recommend undertaking the Scottish Baccalaureate because it is a great opportunity to develop your independent learning skills which will be a great benefit for your future careers.

## The Metric System

Logan (Form IV)

It is a well-known fact that the vast majority of the Earth's nations (with the USA famously finding itself self-exempt from the trend) have adopted a communal system of measurements that allows for the seamless transferring of information across borders. These quantifications, known collectively as 'the metric system', have found themselves embraced for some time now as a leading tool for scientific discovery, aiding the classification of findings and the advancement of various fields of research.

Despite this, not all are keen on the metric system. Some - in this country - would prefer to see the re-introduction of an alternative set of measurements: the 'imperial system'.

Though many pupils will be beyond mere familiarity with the metric system, its architecture - and the logical nature of this - is something worth nothing, as it forms the crux of much of the argumentation forwarding its use. The system is designed to be one which builds off of a central measurement, with various prefixes being used to denote larger or smaller variants through being multiplied or divided by multiples of 10 (usually multiples of 1000). Take, for instance, length. All of the measurements within the system stem from one: the metre. From the metre, one can have larger lengths, such as the kilometre, representing 1000 metres (or, in scientific notation,  $1 \times 10^3$  metres). For smaller lengths, one can have a centimetre ( $1 \times 10^{-2}$  metres), a millimetre ( $1 \times 10^{-3}$ ), or a micro-metre ( $1 \times 10^{-6}$ ) to name a few. The same exists for other measurements, with volume being measured from the litre and mass from the gram.



Though these are some of the most regularly thought of parts of the metric system, there is, of course, another concept worth considering: temperature. Here it can be seen that the system was designed clearly to allow for scientific use. Being measured in 'degrees Celsius', the measurements seemingly revolve around their relationship with water, with  $0^\circ\text{C}$  established as the temperature at which water freezes, and  $100^\circ\text{C}$  being that at which it evaporates. Dividing the distance between these points into 100 pieces gives one a clear unit of measurement for temperature. The way in which the system is structured allows for conversions that are often easier to understand than those of alternative systems; rather than requiring one to divide by unusual numbers (and, not to mention, keep track of the differing amounts which make up various measurements), they allow one to, often, simply divide by a multiple of 10. The relative mathematical simplicity involved (at least, when compared to its competitors) often leads those young enough to never have experienced anything different to question why anyone would hold such a seemingly preposterous opinion as to prefer remembering that a mile contains 1760 yards to remembering that a kilometre is made of 1000 metres.

When considering the debate surrounding the system one is, therefore, led to ask a question: how is the imperial system structured? As many know (or have, at least, heard), and as was alluded to previously, the imperial system does not share the same type of planned layout that is so evident in the metric system. For length, the mile consists of 1760 yards, each of which is made of 3 feet, which can be broken down into 12 inches. For mass, there are 16 ounces in a pound, 14 of which make a stone. If one wishes to measure volume, they will have to remember that 8 pints are in every gallon.



For temperature, the imperial system gives us 'Fahrenheit', a scale more commonly associated with the USA (though one which was, for some time, used here in Britain). Rather than being defined as the point at which water freezes, 0°F was taken as the temperature of a water, salt and ice mixture created by the measurement's inventor – or, at least, that is the view of some sources. There are disputes as to the exact origins of the scale's 0 measurement; however, what remains in the present is certain. Water is said to freeze at 32°F and boil at 212°F.

One, having been educated in the metric system for their entire life, might be forgiven for being sent into a state of disequilibrium, were they to be asked to grapple with such a seemingly obscure set of measurements as those presented just previously.



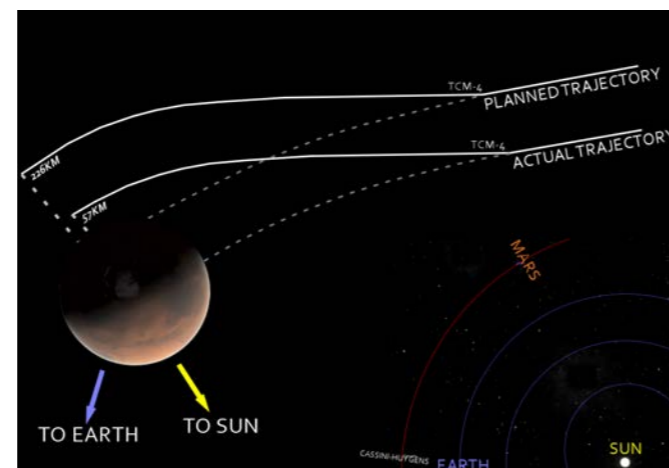
### COMPARISON OF METRIC AND IMPERIAL UNITS

And yet, we often do just that, not even noticing on most occasions. Consider this: when one discusses the speed of a car, are they more likely to do so in kilometres per hour, or in miles per hour? Or take another example: is an individual more likely to know their birthweight in kilograms, or in pounds and ounces? In many cases (and even among the youth), the latter is often found to be the case. After all, it is rare to watch an individual on TV enter their local hostelry and request 0.568261 litres of beer, rather than a customary pint.

The dual presence of both the imperial system and the metric system in everyday life is quite an interesting concept, showing that, despite the attempts of some (often European) authorities, they continue to stubbornly defend their place on the tongues of the populace, seemingly entrenched in our traditions and culture. This provides a glimpse at why some oppose attempts at promoting the metric system over the imperial system: the grievance that many (particularly in this country) have with the metric system is not a scientific one, but is rather a political one.

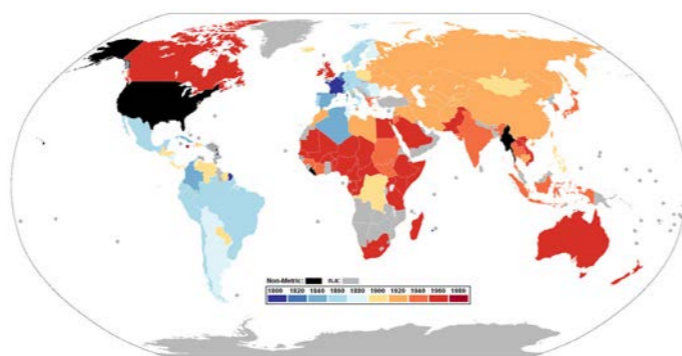
The metric system is (for the reasons already given) often the favoured among the scientists. Were one to peruse through the mission report for the Apollo 11 mission (which allowed for the first human moon-landings), they would find a melange of references to both the metric and imperial systems. Indeed, many of the initial measurements for the Saturn V rocket used in the flight were done in metric quantifications, before being converted into those of the imperial system. Many NASA guidance computers were also coded in metric measurements, though displayed their data in imperial quantities, so as to allow the astronauts to comprehend what was on the screen.

Such attempts at maintaining the use of both have, in the past, led to catastrophic failures of engineering. Looking at NASA again, the Mars Climate Orbiter, launched in 1998, failed to enter into Mars' orbit correctly due to problems with conversion between imperial and metric measurements, leading to its destruction in the planet's atmosphere. Similar incidents have taken place in the airline industry, with a Canadian plane once having to make an emergency landing following confusion between the conversion of litres and kilograms of fuel.



The feeling of nostalgia is perhaps one reason for the enduring fight back in favour of imperial measurements; their use evokes a reminder of a certain bygone era. Equally, there is perhaps – here, at least – a sense of Britishness that is carried by them: a feeling that there is something to be proud of in maintaining our traditions and culture from the influences of the rest of the world.

Regardless, the metric system will likely remain the favourite of scientists, and perhaps for good reason. It shall be seen whether the young will continue the use of at least some imperial quantities, given that their use can often be of an everyday nature rather than a truly calculatory one. We should hope that, no matter which direction society may choose, both systems can coexist peacefully – without causing space agencies to waste millions of dollars.



## Trains, Hearts and Waterfalls

Isabella (Form VI)

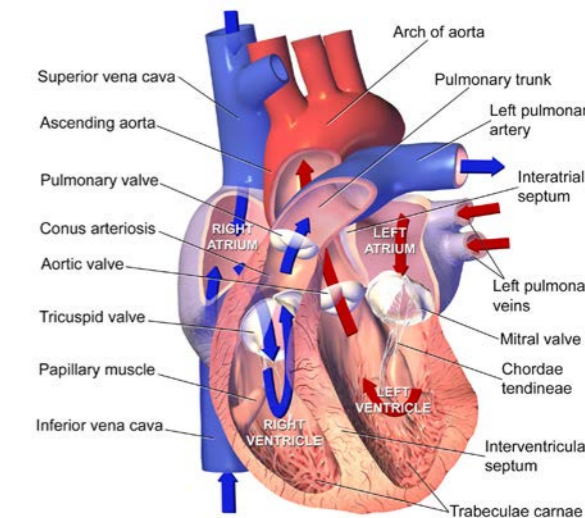
I remember a conversation with my dad many years ago. We were talking about the curious legend behind the invention of the steam engine where the young James Watt was supposedly watching a tea kettle boil in his kitchen. Every now and then, the lid would rise and fall back down. He was told only water was in the pot but reasoned that this couldn't be true as there was something lifting the lid and making it rattle. After being told it was steam, he still couldn't understand how such a small amount of invisible water could have the power to lift a whole lid. And so began the industrial revolution.

Watt realised steam could be used to produce an alternating linear motion. The kettle lid falls because the pressure is released, then pressure builds up and the kettle lid rises. The steam engine has a piston where steam enters the chamber at high pressure, pushes the piston down then a valve opens and releases it. The piston rod is attached to a flywheel eccentrically, translating linear motion into circular motion, just like the pedals of a bicycle. The flywheel also has momentum which smooths out the sine wave of the piston rod. It conserves energy at the end of a stroke allowing the piston rod to move upwards again, driving a train forward. These trains became a fast transport means, able to transport raw materials. Carnegie derived his wealth from manufacturing the steel required to build the tracks and used this money to fund schools, scholarships, and libraries. Endless jobs were created mining the coal required to run the trains. The world as we know it derives from a young boy's simple observation and desire to understand.



Humans have always been a hunter-gatherer species. Some of the oldest unambiguous evidence of human hunting has come from a 400,000-year-old site in Germany where horses were clearly being speared and their flesh eaten. How is it that so early in our history, we had the brain to know how to tactically ambush animals and kill them, seeing their organs, yet not figure out the mechanism behind the heart until the 1600s?

William Harvey was a British physician, working for James I. Most physicians of his day believed that the lungs were responsible for moving blood around the body, however Harvey was determined to show something different. After years of experimentation, he came to the conclusion that the heart actually continuously pumped blood around the body. It had big chambers that squeezed the blood out at high pressures, so it jetted around the body through arteries. After being taken to tissues, he realised the blood moved through a new network: veins. The blood here is at a much lower pressure and so trickles, hence the need for valves to prevent back flow. This is a reasonably obvious conclusion to come to and would be even more obvious if we saw the arterial spurting against the venous ooze. Yet it took millennia.



Sectional Anatomy of the Heart

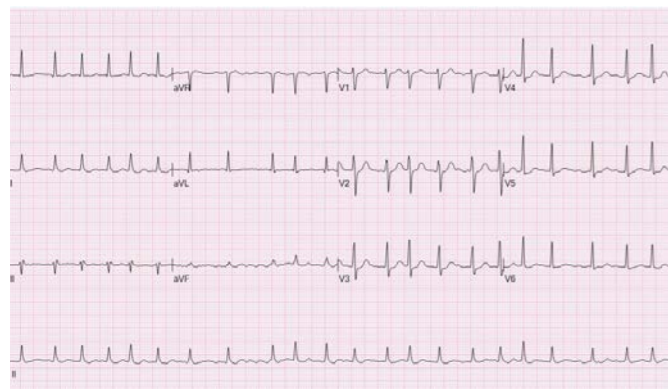
These two stories aren't totally random. In fact, as well as showing much of the unpredictability of science, they are deeply linked. The heart simply beats as the muscular walls of the ventricle move in and out, like the piston rod. The muscle fibres only shorten and lengthen, the ventricle walls shorten and the volume inside the ventricle falls generating pressure. In Harvey's De Motu Cordis he describes the four valves in the heart, controlling the outlet of each chamber. Without the valves, heart contractions would just swirl blood back and forth. But the ventricle's outlet valves close at the end of systole, so blood only moves forwards, generating forward flow. The elasticity of the artery walls acts like the fly wheel. The arteries stretch in systole conserving some of the momentum, so in diastole the elastic arteries release their tension to help smooth out pulsation flow and maintain flow in diastole.

Harvey described the valves found in the veins which only allow forward flow. Veins are at low pressure, and blood moves through them partly because of the residual pressure from the feeding artery, although most of this pressure is dissipated in the capillary beds within tissue. Veins within the big muscles of the legs are also squeezed by the muscles of activities like walking and the valves in the veins ensure this 'muscle pump' only generates forward flow. Without the valves, the veins would just get big and baggy and blood would pool there. You may know this as varicose veins. The two systems are incredibly similar and after knowing the mechanism behind one,



it's hard not to think they were somehow modelled after each other. Perhaps Harvey's pump idea resided in Watt's subconscious. Or perhaps humans have some mysterious preprogrammed notion to capture ideas in similar ways, like the pump. This draws on Jung's idea of archetypes, but that's another essay.

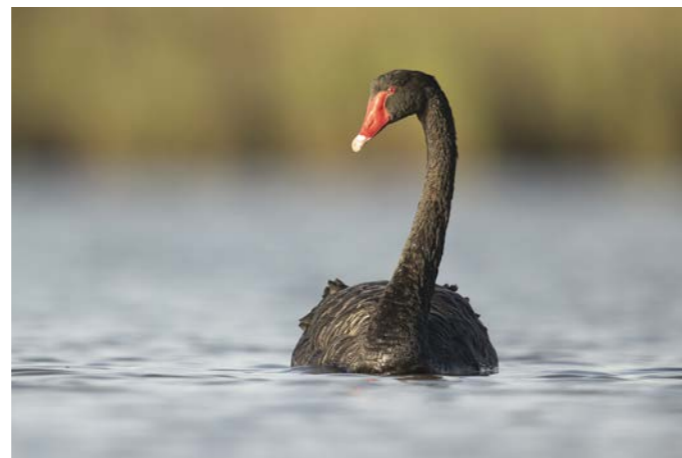
Humans see the world through a system of mental lenses; psychologists would call them cognitive biases. It's easy to believe that how you see the world is the 'true' way that the world is to be seen. However, a simple analysis of the human mind shows this to be false. Knowledge is sourced from our memories, the words of others and past experiences. However, none of these can be 'proven' to be accurate. False memory syndrome is a very real concept, people misinterpret data, and who is to say that we aren't currently dreaming? The point is, what we think is true isn't as obvious as it looks. A study was undertaken to look at the use of AI in diagnosing illness and as part of this, medics were asked to draw a treatment pathway based off of an ECG. This was repeated a few months later with the same clinicians and ECG patterns, yet the doctors gave different conclusions. These results could be for a number of reasons, but the most relevant here is that perhaps the doctors had recently read an article or heard a story that influenced their decision-making process: recency bias or the availability heuristic. This fluidity of the human mind is often used in marketing. Drug companies provide GPs with branded pens, making them more familiar with the drug name and so they'll be more likely to prescribe a particular drug. How many of our actions are truly ours and not just the outcome of surrounding events?



A common mathematical debate is whether mathematics is the intrinsic language of the universe, waiting to be discovered, or if we happened to notice things in the natural world and created a language to document it. The physics behind a waterfall's form is similar to a branch of quantum physics. This begs the question of if this aspect of physics had predetermined mathematics or if we saw the waterfall and subconsciously modelled a language to reflect it. Either way, mathematics and science is an extraordinary tool for modelling the universe, however it should never be taken out of context. Science helps us to understand reality and makes technologically useful predictions, but Scientism is when we go beyond the real limitations of scientific method and treat it as a religion. John Lennox is Professor of Mathematical Physics at Oxford and argues that the great scientists of the enlightenment were driven by a belief in a God who had hidden his signature in all things, and it was for humans to discover the mechanics of His ordered universe.

Atheists object that these scientists lived under the coercion of a powerful church, but a simple reading of

Newton's Principia Mathematica reveals his deep love and knowledge of scripture. Science gives us an understanding of gravity which allows useful predictions about projectiles and planets, but we have absolutely no clue what gravity actually is. Likewise, for light, electromagnetic force, and nuclear forces, science allows us to harness them and make mathematical predictions, but we have no knowledge of the underlying reality. Again, science gives us no clue as to understanding consciousness, conscience, ethics, or morality. And phenomenology, ontology, and epistemology are no further forwards despite science.



We live in a world where 'follow the science' is now used as a tool for political persuasion. But the phrase betrays the user's misunderstanding of science. Scientists constantly disagree, change their hypotheses, see the world through all the distortions of their own all too human cognitive and political bias, ego, and pride. And sometimes they even lie. A recent paper showed that 70% of studies, particularly those in the social sciences, could not be reproduced to give the same results. By Bacon's definition of the scientific method, science can only be used to disprove a hypothesis but cannot prove anything.

Just because we have never seen a black swan, does not prove the statement 'all swans are white'. It is perhaps significant in the post-modern world that Marx and Engels begin their practise of communism with the absolute requirement for a belief in the material world, with no unseen spiritual forces. This assertion cannot be disproven and as such it is a religious faith belief. It is a necessary prerequisite to their utilitarian ethics which allow the means to be justified by their intended end. But utilitarianism can lead to shocking atrocity and unintended consequences from arrogant humans believing they can accurately predict ends. Ultimately, we can't be so sure of our knowledge as it seems we can. The mind is far more mysterious than many would have us believe. Every science journal publishes that the problem of consciousness has been solved, however upon reading these, nothing of actual substance is ever said. Despite new scientific discoveries, the human mind is no different to that documented by Shakespeare. The mind that loves and hates and realises that the gap between these are really not so far apart.

Hopefully, this article can provide a little scientific knowledge, but more importantly, a reflection into one's own mind. We must acknowledge the factors that influence our thinking and see the world with openness and scepticism; considering even the strangest ideas and picking apart the things we think we know. Where have we misinterpreted others because we have seen them through lenses: the tyrannical father, the benevolent parent, a friend who turned on us? To truly see, we must accept our blindness and only then will our eyes be open.

## Lacrimation

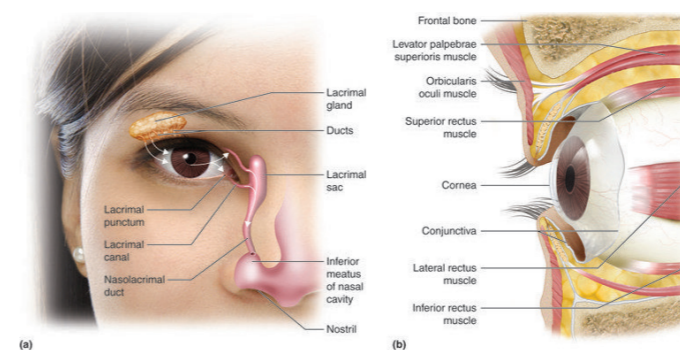
Natalie (Form IV)

Why do we cry when we're sad? Is there a biological advantage other than washing out foreign substances out of our eyes? Why do we have a stuffy nose after crying? How do our tear ducts somehow "produce" tears?

There are 3 types of tears.

First, basal lubrication, which lubricates your eyes preventing them from drying out. The human body produces around 2 microlitres of basal tears everyday.

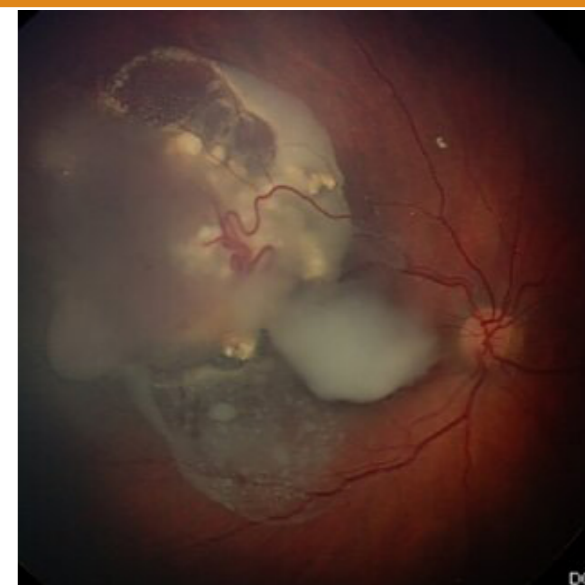
Second, reflex tears which act in response to irritants like sand, dust or even onions. When these irritants stimulate the sensory nerve endings on the ocular surface and the ophthalmic nerve, this will result in the brain releasing hormones promoting tear production in the lacrimal gland.



And as for the type that is most interesting - emotional tears, this is only exclusive to humans. There are several theories of why humans uniquely have this trait. Some theories suggest that when your tears blur up your vision, you handicap any aggressive or defensive actions and put yourself at a vulnerable state, which in turn sends a signal of need, appeasement, or attachment. From an evolutionary perspective, this strengthens the connections of those that are close to you, and thus increases your chances of survival, especially before the invention of language, or other more complex forms of communication. Tears are a fast way to send signals to others that you are experiencing strong emotions. This theory makes sense when we see babies crying - they are unable to communicate what exactly they need, but tears are an effective form of communication to show they require attention.

Interestingly, all three types of tears contain salt, proteins and antibacterial enzymes, but they also have different compositions. For example, reflex tears are made of mostly water, with larger amounts of antibodies to help fight bacteria, but emotional tears have much higher levels of proteins, especially natural painkillers and adrenocorticotrophic hormones, which are linked to high stress levels. Some believe (still inconclusive) that shedding your tears helps to release these hormones and thus lower stress levels. The electrolytes (e.g. potassium, calcium and sodium) in your tears explains why they may be "salty".

Whilst all three types of tears are produced from the lacrimal gland, only the emotional tears are controlled by the hypothalamus. When the fight or flight response is induced, the hypothalamus produces the chemical message Acetylcholine. Acetylcholine travels along the bloodstream and binds to receptors in the lacrimal glands, which are small glands beneath the eye socket. Serous acini, a tissue found in the glands, are responsible for generating most of the tear volume. They are then induced, producing tears.



Tears will drain into your punctums, tiny tear duct openings at the inner corners of the eye. But as they fill up, it will drip out your eyes and onto your face, but also flood your nasal cavity and out your nose.

Many people also feel a lump in their throat while crying. This is known as a "globus sensation". When you cry, your vocal cords and glottis are wide open as a result of the stress response, but when you swallow, and the "lump feeling" is created as a result of the muscles trying to close whilst the glottis is open such that your nasal secretions and tears won't get into your lungs. It is a natural protective mechanism. As a result of the stress response, you might also shake and your voice quiver - as your body prepares for a fight or flight.

This is also why we have a sobbing noise. Sobbing is a reflex action that occurs during inspiration (i.e. inhalation) when there is a diaphragm spasm, (which is when your diaphragm curls up and is unable to relax) simultaneously along with the glottic closure. When the glottis suddenly closes, it produces vibrations along the vocal cords which makes the characteristic noise.

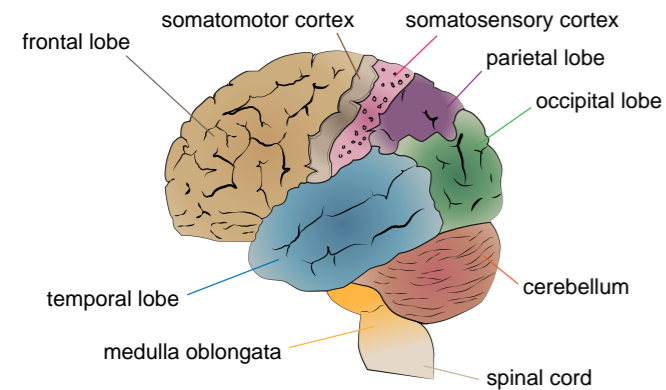
So why do we cry when we are happy? Here's a brief outline of how the stress mechanism works.

When someone encounters a fast car or other stressful situation, the senses (i.e. eyes, ears, nose) send signals to the amygdala, which processes these images and decides what it means. If it thinks the body is in danger, it sends a distress signal to the hypothalamus. The hypothalamus then activates the autonomic nervous system, which includes the parasympathetic nervous system and the sympathetic nervous system, responsible for the relaxed response (rest and digest) or panic response (fight or flight) respectively. It does this by releasing epinephrine in the bloodstream which quickens your heartbeat, and triggers the release of glucose and temporary energy storage sites around your body. If the body decides that you are still in danger, the hypothalamus releases corticotropin-releasing hormone (CRH), which travels along the bloodstream to the pituitary gland, triggering the release of adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH). This, in turn, arrives at the adrenal glands, causing it to release cortisol. Cortisol increases appetite, releases glucose in the bloodstream, and increases unused storage of nutrients, it also increases the concentration of substances that help repair tissues. Cortisol also temporarily slows down or halt functions that would be unuseful and unnecessary during a fight-or-flight situation.



So answering the question. When we see a person whom we have not seen for years, or finally see the finish line after a marathon, scientists hypothesize that the amygdala cannot distinguish between necessarily "good" or "bad" signals - either way, it receives a strong neural signal. Therefore, a tear response is induced.

There is also a reason why crying feels good. When we cry, oxytocin and endogenous opioids (i.e. endorphins) are released. How do these material neurotransmitters give rise to immaterial emotions and the perception of happiness / sadness? I always like using the analogy of software and hardware. Although the physical building blocks for an app are recurring 1s and 0s, the app that is generated is in a completely different form. In a similar vein, the material electrical impulses give rise to immaterial thoughts and feelings. Oxytocin and endorphins are responsible for social bonding and give an analgesic effect.



So next time you shed a tear, you will be relieved to know the feel-good chemicals will kick in soon. And hopefully knowing the fascinating science about tears will cheer you up, even just a little bit.

## A Twist in my Spine

Isabella (Form VI)

In October of 2019, I was trying dresses on for my FII Christmas Dance, when my mum noticed the zips weren't zipping up. When she finally managed to do it up, it formed a C shaped squiggle up my back. Being a doctor, she told me the dress made me look like I had a condition called Scoliosis and started laughing, and then realised that I did, in fact, have scoliosis. 13-year-old me pictured severely disabled children in wheelchairs as I had never heard of the condition. Several hospital visits, X-Rays, 2-foot-long titanium rods and 15 screws later, I had a corrected spine.



Scoliosis is the abnormal twisting of the spine; instead of growing straight, it can look like an S or a C shape. It can arise from various other conditions, but in my case it's simply 'idiopathic' meaning it has no known cause at all.



Idiopathic Adolescent (it affects teenagers) Scoliosis affects about 3% of 10 to 15 year-olds, yet most people have never heard of it. So, in FVI, I decided to take on a project to raise awareness about the condition. I surveyed pupils, nurses, teachers and doctors to get their take on the condition and decided to create PSE Lessons for the younger year groups.

I quickly realised that very little was known in the school about the condition. So, here are my quick learning points: Scoliosis is not a disease. It won't spread and it doesn't indicate anything about the person with it, other than that they look a bit different. Scoliosis is treated in a variety of ways. Exercise and bracing are ways of reducing the curve or halting its growth, but surgery is the only option if the curve is severe.

The surgery is called a Spinal Fusion and involves metal implants being inserted into your spine. The recovery is long and it does limit your lifelong flexibility. However, it is not needed if the scoliosis is noticed quickly. So learn to check yourself and be aware of what to do if you think you have scoliosis.

Checking yourself is easy. Just be aware of one leg being shorter than the other, your hips or shoulder blades not being symmetrical or clothes not fitting correctly.

If you do think you might have scoliosis, speak to the school nurse or your own GP. They will refer you to the local orthopaedic team who will be able to diagnose the scoliosis and make a plan from there. You might require an X-ray. These are painless and the people looking after you are really friendly.

Scoliosis isn't something to be frightened of; however, it's really important that people know about it so that they can spot signs earlier, visit a doctor and prevent the need for an operation.

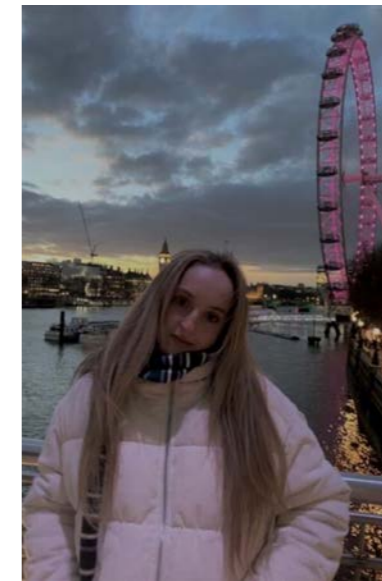


## Creative

I am delighted to introduce the Creative Section of *The Galley* this edition.

Despite how busy the spring and summer terms often are, pupils have still found time for some creativity, and this edition of *The Galley* includes poems and short stories from a variety of year groups. I am continuously pleased to see so many pupils using creative writing as an outlet in the midst of their academic endeavours.

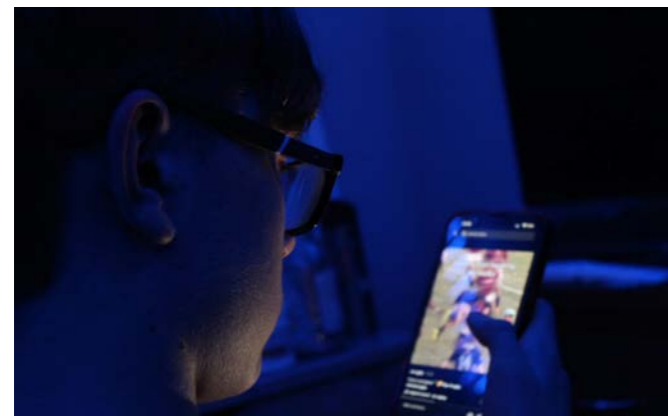
I would like to thank everyone for their unique contributions to our magazine. I thoroughly enjoyed reading such a wide variety of pieces, and I hope our readers find a moment to sit in the sun this summer and soak up this edition.



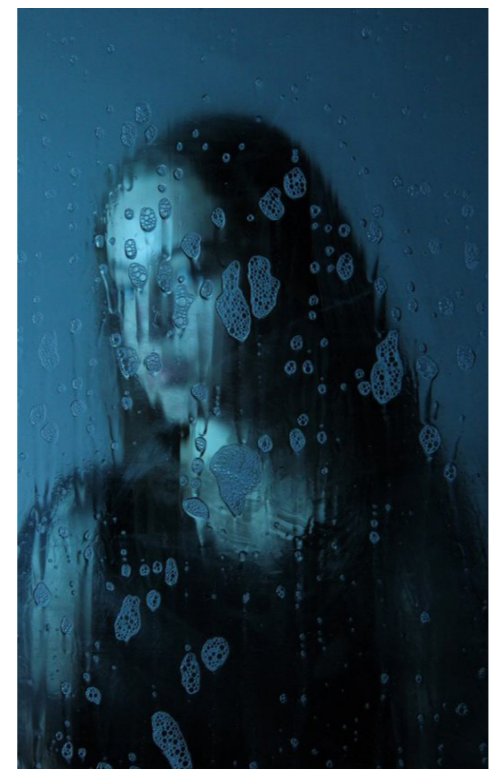
Anna (Form VI)  
Creative Editor



# Photography



Megan FVI



Charlie FVI



Aoffie FVI

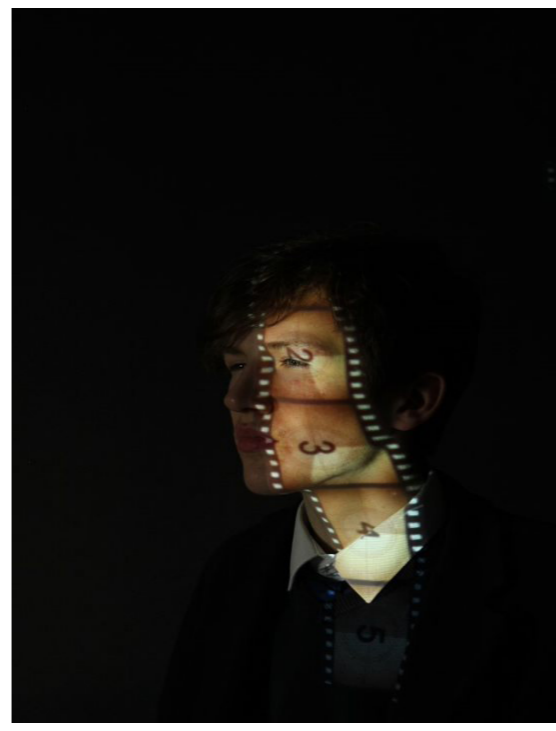


Melissa FV



Ellie-Mae FV

# Photography



Roddy FV



Sara FVI



Megan FVI



Ellie-Mae FV



Melissa FV



# The Horizon Line

*Christie (Form 1)*

It was dark, really dark. All around me the earth was still. My eyes darted around not knowing which way I was facing. But it was silent. My happy place. The stressful earth time seemed to halt everywhere and the phrases that people shouted at me were being rehearsed in my head. Like a play, within my own imagination. I opened my eyes and suddenly it became light, noisy, claustrophobic; the impending stress of day was giving me intense nausea. So, then I closed my eyes.

My mother had always told me I was special, unlike the kids at school who would call me names and make remarks about my difference. However, to my mother, I was just perfect. She used to describe me as “the light within the darkness.” I liked it when she called me that...

I woke up knowing exactly what had happened. I looked down to see my pack clinging onto the side of my soaking leggings and the set of wheels below that, and my legs hanging over the side of them. Then there was Alex - he always looked at me like I was some guardian angel and was there for me, even when it felt like life couldn't get any worse. Through my blurry eyes I saw him in front of me, crouching at eye level. He tucked a loose black strand of hair around my ear and told me that I was going to be okay. That's what they all would say: “It's going to be fine!” or “I'm here for you.” I had watched enough hospital dramas to understand what those two phrases meant. Carefully, I transition my slippery hands onto my pack, it was low. Alex noticed too.

“Could we please get a boost over here!” he called to the other side of the pool.

My dad saw Alex, then sprinted into the kitchen, retrieving my medicine bag and then some out-of-date apple juice. The silence I had was gone; the unconsciousness of the world had disappeared. It was like I had been ruthlessly ripped out of one of my dreams. Then my quiet silence of black re-appeared.

“Are you alright Mel?” Alex asked me gripping my hand tight.

“Yeah...” I said gazing around at the hospital walls. The curtains were drawn, an ombre blue and white was lathered on almost everything except for me... of course. Tightly gripping the wheels of my wheelchair I rolled forward, accidentally crashing into the corner of my pale coloured hospital bed.

“Whoa there!” Alex exclaimed as I was spiralling out of control. My dad waltzed in with a bundle of flowers just for me. Roses, my favourite.

This particular incident had happened before to my dissatisfaction. I was only 12 then, my whole world being an oblivion. Slowly I reached out my hands and grasped the beautiful rose bundle, the plastic texture crinkling at my fingertips. “Thanks, Dad,” I smiled, not to him, at the roses. My eyes were drawn to a small window at the side of the room, almost unnoticeable, tucked away behind all the machines. I saw a deep blue sky against the strong line of the horizon, waves smashed onto the beach and it reminded me...

“You're free to go,” a nurse had swiftly entered the room undetected.

I swivelled my wheelchair around to see her. She was tall, really tall. Her height made me feel small, wounded by my impairment until I looked up at her smiling face. It made my emotions swing like vines.

“Here's your new pack. It should be more reliable.” She demonstrated it to me, showing all the buttons and wires that made my pack, my life support, my pocket size saviour.

“Thank you,” I said, rather enthusiastically.

“You're welcome.” The nurse turned to Alex and dad and whispered, “take her home when you are ready.” With that she smiled and left. That was a great example of why I don't think like they expect me to. People expect me to be dumber, less active, lazy, helpless; but I was none of those things. Like one time in Senior One, I was so ready for swimming! I was training for so long, using a float to hold my legs. That day I realised the real world existed. The coach told me I could participate.

“You're ready to go Mel?” Alex said. I nodded. He could sense something wasn't right about me. Rolling down my car window was like rolling into a new place - when incidents like that happened it's hard to venture back into your life.

My silvery white bungalow glittered in the sun and my obscurely behaved chickens, frolicking in the afternoon sun, were mellow as usual.

Slowly, I emerged out of the car. The open air but dazzled my senses and the livelihood of my emotions became vigorous. I would never swim again I told myself. Again and again, I told myself. I was sick of being in the hospital, never again.

Kindly, Alex set up my wheelchair for me and I got in. I felt the annoyingly normal fabric that itched me on the pedals that my feet sat on. My legs were then velcroed in. I couldn't bear my encasement. Once I was in, I slowly but surely rolled up the drive and into the house, only to see the whiteness of the pool that hurt me.

I thought of my disability; I thought of the pressure it put me through and the restrictions on my life it caused. I told myself I couldn't swim again, not on my watch. My mind was drawn back into reality. I was sick of myself. The water glistened in the setting sun and soon I was manoeuvring myself onto the ledge above the water. My feet dangled into the water, and a cold rush froze my body. I splashed. Immersing myself in the water was truly wonderful. And you, my dad, would be upset as my hospital gown was now drenched; but I didn't care, my happy place was back, and that's all that mattered to me. As my legs tried to weigh me down I held the ledge tightly, tugging myself along the poolside. Until I notice a vibrant red pool float at the other side of the pool. I remembered my training without a float.

‘Pull with your arms not with your legs.’ I repeated it in my head many times: ‘pull with your arms not with your legs.’ I let go of the ledge. The trees swayed in the distance and the whispering of the wind made my ears freeze. A new smile was apparent on my face; the act of concentration on what's within me. My feelings could not get in the way, otherwise I might sink.

I fumbled a couple of times, but the fumbles became less and less apparent. I kept a straight face for the entire time even though I could not keep in my excitement. I had never swum without a float in my entire life and this was it. My training without a float was just my dad holding me in the water when I was panicking as I couldn't stay buoyant. But no, I was swimming.

I hoisted myself out of the water. With great excitement I yelled, “Yes!” It was a truly fantastic feeling. I was sitting on the ledge, breathing in, breathing out. However, it started to rain, the everlasting bliss of water was upon me and I couldn't contain my proudness. The rain began to grow heavier, heavier, heavier and heavier. I began to worry. How would I reach the other side? My wheelchair looked lonely on the other side of the pool and I sat, nervous.

I couldn't stay out in this howling wind and rain; I had to swim back...however, this time I wasn't so sure I would make it. So, that's how I slipped into the water for the last time...



# The Meeting

Anna (Form VI)

Glen Fraser was old. He still wore the cravat he bought from a Croatian street stall in 1955. He wore it slightly too tight so that it created a roll of soft neck pudge above his collar. His outfit, on this day, resembled a mid-century choir master, a perfectly tailored black suit with minimal creasing. Glen had decided that this was an occasion that called for his best suit. He hadn't really stopped to consider that his eight-year-old grandson, who he was meeting for the first time at 2 o'clock, might find his severe funereal appearance rather intimidating.

At 1.30pm Glen walked out to his forest green Volkswagen. He noticed a smudge on the left passenger door and stooped to rub it with his handkerchief. This had left him in a foul mood, for two reasons. Firstly, he had ruined his newly washed hanky. And secondly, he had quickly come to the determination that it was some unruly youth, one of the Robertson boys he was sure, that had left the incriminating smudge on his ever-pristine car. He hoped his grandson wouldn't be like the Robertson boys, who wore hooded jumpers even in the sun and often shouted "shoot it, shoot it!" at 11.30pm from their little gaming nook in the converted outhouse. Glen wasn't one to hope, he found it led to disappointment, and in his 70 years he had yet to learn how to deal with disappointment. He pictured hope as a cruel little imp. He didn't trust it as far as he could throw it, and Glen had had to stop playing cricket at 50 due to a dislocation of his right shoulder. He found the imp tended to lie, creating a new, warped reality, one based on the desperation of baseless desire. Biding its time until it eventually walks away with a heartless chuckle, abandoning the person who so desperately relied on it.

Some may say Glen was a cynic, or a grumpy old man; some may say he was the perfect cliché. He was simply the product of his time. He was a man who was not in touch with his emotions enough to be able to adequately deal with them. Avoidance was his natural state. This left him with a myriad of problems, the greatest of which was his estrangement from his only daughter. Today he would try and remedy that. Time is healing, Glen thinks, or rather, he hopes. Though due to his feelings of resentment toward that particular imp he would fervently deny this. His daughter Allie was unsolicited joy. She was the type of woman who would paint her front door yellow. Her slightly crooked smile and shining blue eyes radiated optimism. As such Glen had found it hard to connect with her. He grew up in a household where the sharp slap of a belt was often heard echoing throughout the grim bungalow. Where declarations of love were as rare as gold, where hugs or any show of affection were admonished. Where a conveyer belt of insults, went round and round until eventually the weak, stupid, careless, ugly young boy believed that that was all he was. Glen carried the scars of his past, and he spent so much time trying not to pass them onto his daughter that he was left with little time to actually parent her.

Glen hadn't seen Allie in 12 years. Their last encounter had been at his late wife's funeral, a time in his life where Glen, in the midst of emotional avoidance, had veered recklessly onto the path to negligent fatherhood. His headstrong, wonderful daughter had on that day declared if he didn't get his act together and pour his scotch collection down the sink, she would never speak to him again. Glen did not believe she was serious. Nor did he want to waste two thousand pounds worth of aged scotch. You could say he had made his bed, which he had in fact done every morning since he was five, now he must lie in it.

Laid out in front of his windscreen was a panoramic and unmarred view of the rolling hills of central Scotland. It was the time of year where spots of vibrant purple were littered across the landscape. It was the time of year where things were born, a time of new beginnings. Though eight years too late it was also the perfect time to meet his grandson. Glen stalled his car on the drive to Kings Park. He hadn't done that in 52 years. Caught up in a whirlwind of nerves, Glen had lost both coordination and control of his limbs. He had attempted to add some revs when his right foot had decided to go frustratingly limp. Whilst restarting his car Glen had made every attempt to apologise to the young mother patiently waiting in the Hyundai behind him. Waves, signals, he had even stuck his head out the window like an excitable dog to shout "sorry", to the bewildered young mother.

As a consequence, Glen was 2 minutes and 25 seconds late. Something his unforgiving inner monologue was viciously berating him for. He shook out his limbs in an attempt to bring them back to life. The little boy who sat watching this strange little dance turned to his mother and giggled, only to find her face strangely pale, her lips puckered in a tight little knot. "Glen," she called, suddenly reanimated.

He tried to shake off the disappointment of hearing his beloved daughter using his first name and instead he focused on the small boy sitting next to her. The young boy looked just like Allie; he had her wavy blonde hair and piercing blue eyes. He was sunshine confined to 4 and a half feet of human flesh. The boy ran in little, hopping strides to meet him. "You look like Headmaster Brown," he giggled.

The funny thing about time is that the past is a constant occupant of the current moment. So much was evident in the heavy presence of Glen's past mistakes. Yet it's often those born out of past events that provide the resolution so greatly needed. It is often the younger generation that heal the wounds of their predecessors. Its true youth has medicinal qualities. The realm of possibility that surrounds a young life is infinite, it hangs around them like a glowing gold aura. Through his grandson Glen had the opportunity to make things right, he could be a part of this young life, he could offer his grandson what he had failed to offer his daughter. Glen had learnt in his 70 years of life that it is not important to be perfect, only to be there. He had decided his presence in this little boy's life would be unfaltering. Glen never reneged, he was much too proud. So that was that.

"Do you like ducks?" Glen tentatively asked.

Finlay nodded feverishly. With a flourish, and a perfectly rehearsed wave of his jazz hands, Glen produced a bag of breadcrumbs. He noticed this move had won him a smile from his daughter, a fact that warmed him inside like smooth, sweet honey seeping into his core.

"You know I'm going to be a farmer," the young boy said earnestly. "So I'm learning to talk to ducks and all the other animals."

Glen wanted to laugh, but Finlay looked so intent that instead he implored: "Can you teach me something in duck?"

Finlay took his hand and started trotting towards the pond. It was easy, Glen noted, to love someone. Love didn't need time. Not like forgiveness did. It just needed some odd but well-meaning quacks from a spirited little boy.





# The Oak Tree

*Fraya (Form IV)*

I stood in a field that stretched as far as the eye could see. Surrounded by tall grain, swaying in the wind, waves of burnished gold forming and rolling majestically across the wide expanse. The wind was a gentle breeze, cool but not cold. Except for the sound of rustling grain, the field was quiet. Not an unwelcoming silence- rather, an indulgent ambience that felt soothing. The sun was setting, a massive copper coin sinking below the horizon, painting the sky with fiery and soft colours, as its fading light captures the world in golden amber. The distant silhouette of a forest stood, silent and still. Wooden soldiers in an unmoving row, saluting the sun farewell after a long day as it went to bed for the night, and the pale moon as it began to rise stark against the darkening sky.

My feet had carried me to this field following a small beaten path. My fingers brushed through the soft waves of grain as I walked. My lungs breathe in the fresh air through slow, deep, and grateful breaths. Yet my mouth is dry and my eyes water. My eyes that are fixed upon a spot up ahead. I have tunnel vision, and my feet, with a mind of their own, carry me forward one step at a time.

In the middle of this rolling expanse, bathed in the light of sunset as if truly captured in amber, is a grandiose ancient oak. It stood tall, with large, reaching branches, casting the surrounding area into shadow. Its trunk, with its massive girth, was bulbous and oddly shaped in places, though that took away none of the splendour that this centuries-old tree held.

My feet carry me forward down the small beaten path one step at a time, and it is as if, with each step, I step back in time, and further into my memories. Not a thing has changed in the passage of time since I was last here, then again, should I really have expected anything to have? The tree had stood here for hundreds of years; it had been here for all my life, yet I have only been here for a tiny amount of its own.

I take the last few steps towards this towering oak, pick out a nice spot against its trunk, and sit down. With my head resting against the rough and mossy bark, I look up into the leafy canopy and watch the leaves rustle in the breeze and the amber light filter through the branches.

Unless you were one with a heart calling for the outdoors and with eyes eager to see every little thing the great wide world has to offer, no one would look twice at this oak tree in the middle of a grain field, out in the countryside. No one but me, that is, for this tree is made special to me by the memories engraved in the bark, hanging from the branches, and lying in the grain field.

I close my eyes and breathe in slow and deep breaths. The fresh country air is a pleasant change from the heavy smog of the city, and the wind that gently caresses my face and rustles my hair is welcomed unlike the harsh wind funnelled down metropolitan streets that makes you stumble. In fact, I can almost imagine myself a teen again, having escaped to the tree in the grain field, desperately avoiding the mounting weight of responsibility on my shoulders, like Atlas who was forced to hold the weight of the world.

I can imagine myself a teen again, here, with you. Just as we would come to play here as children. Short legs and bare feet racing each other through the grain field. Bright eyes wide with wonder in the face of this ancient tree. Faces, hands, and legs painted with mud and dirt. Hanging upside-down from the branches, our faces red as the blood flowed to our heads and the air rang with our laughter. Minds captured by naïve curiosity: could we possibly climb to the top of the tree and touch the fluffy white clouds overhead? Twin Cheshire smiles splitting our faces as we hid in the hollow- our secret base.

Oh yes, the hollow, where we would hide away with blankets and books, snacks and all sorts of bits and bobs we thought we'd need to survive a night out in the wild. We would come up with secret plans; explore the nearby woods which called to us with their mystery, find the legendary treasure hidden somewhere inside their dark depths. We fantasised about the big, wide world outside our hollow, outside the grain field, outside our small country village. Dream about the big city of glass buildings taller than our ancient oak, bustling streets full of more people than lived in our village, roads made of asphalt and travelled by automobiles and not made of packed dirt and travelled by feet.

I snap out of my reverie. Could I still fit in the hollow?

I walk over to where the oak tree's trunk splits open and duck my head inside. The hollow is much smaller than I remember, or rather, I have grown. Looking inside now, the space has a distinct lack of blankets and trinkets, instead, Mother Nature has reclaimed our hideaway with her moss and leaves. However, in the corner of my eye, I catch something familiar. A sombre, nostalgic, smile grows on my face. As if untouched by the passage of time, the childish depictions of our adventures remained preserved in the wooden walls. It's getting late now, so I painstakingly tear my eyes away from the carvings I attempted to burn into my memory.

The sun has disappeared below the horizon, and its amber light has been replaced by the soft silver glow of the wan moon and the glittering stars. I turn to look one last time at the ancient oak in the grain field, and I could have sworn I could see you, waving, laughing from amidst its branches. Alas, it is only I who had returned to the ancient oak in the grain field. I am alone, and only accompanied by the memories of you.





## Bridges

*Ben (Form II)*

I stand at the edge, staring at my reflection. My thoughts drown out the noise around me. I am standing at the end of a bridge in the botanical gardens. In front of me is a huge pond, filled with lotus flowers floating on the surface and Koi fish swimming in and out of the plants, slowly drifting around the shallow outskirts of the pond. I am in the centre of the pond, on an arching bridge that sweeps up and down from the banks.

It is a grim day today, grey clouds about to burst and flood this cruel, unkind world. I climb up onto the wooden railing that separates me from the water. I look around me, one last time. People have seen me and are realising what I am about to do. I hear shouts from across the other side as people tell me to stop.

The reason I am here, where I am now, is because of people. Humans are unforgiving, hateful beings who have no care for others. At least that's what I think after what they have done to me. I close my eyes. I feel a small tear, drip down my right cheek. The clouds have opened, and I feel the water fall down and hit my face. I block out all the other sounds except the noise of the rain on the water. I know what I am doing, and I don't regret it. I fall back and plunge into the cold foreboding water.

I open my eyes. I am standing under a small stone archway, covered with moss, and flowers of immeasurable beauty. In front is a bridge - a tall wooden bridge, which looked as if it had just been painted. It stretched upwards and outwards, until it hit a floating island with a cascading waterfall, flowing off its side.

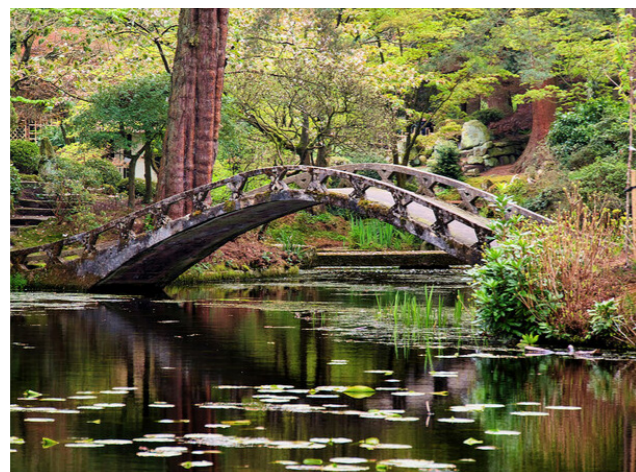
I step out from underneath the shadow of the arch and feel a warm, gentle breeze against my face. There is a pink haze that encircles the area around me. I decide that there is nowhere to go but up. The soft grass squishes beneath my shoes. I walk onto the bridge, which creaks, but holds steady. As I walk, I run my hand over the banister. The bridge is red and black, with flowers intertwining the railing.

I reach the island. On it are cherry blossom trees, petals falling from its branches. Another bridge formed before my eyes, made out of the roots of the tree. I think about how that could happen, but I couldn't seem to focus on anything in my head. I try to remember something, but I seem to have forgotten it all. I continue forwards, up the bridge and onto the island. I feel lighter, almost as if a weight has been taken off my chest.

The series of bridges and islands continues. I climb upwards again and again, feeling lighter with each step I take. Finally, I reach an island with no more bridges. I feel as if I could just float away if I went any higher. There is a small pond at the side with a tree providing shade.

The island is vibrant with colour, as there are flowers everywhere. I am not tired from walking all this way, even though I know I should be. The pond is clear, with white and orange Koi fish circling each other. Lotus flowers are in full bloom and cover the surface.

I lie down at the waters edge, underneath the tree, which almost seemed to comfort me, as its leaves protected me from the sun. I smell the air, which is fresh and clean. I realise that I am content. I fall asleep, knowing that I won't wake up, with a small smile forming on my face.



## A Rainbow

*Kayla (Form I)*

**A Rainbow,**

**The leaves changing colour,**

**Towering over me like a rainbow**

**And the trees waving at me as I wander past.**

**As Summer goes and Autumn takes over**

**The leaves start to fall and change colour**

**There's yellow, there's orange, there's purple and green.**

**What a beautiful sight that I have seen.**

**The never-ending trees go up so high**

**And the tweeting and twooting of birds flying by**

**The sun is a golden ball shining through the trees,**

**I look up and smile and sit there calmly on my knees.**

## Autumn Leaves

*Theodorine (Form I)*

**I look around,**

**My anger flaring,**

**Not a sound,**

**Only rustling.**

**The orange sky soothes,**

**Colours change,**

**The calming leaves move,**

**Shapes range.**

**But now the winds blow,**

**Leaves are as peaceful as a lullaby,**

**The colours are a rainbow,**

**And as the rain washes, the leaves can finally dry.**



## Entertainment

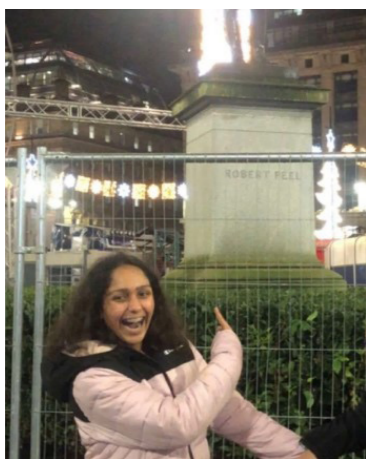
As the summer term festivities enter full swing, and the 22nd of June draws nearer, there is no doubt that the 2022-2023 session has been entertainment abundant.

The turn of the year brought innovation to the box office (and great anticipation for film fanatics of both the *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer* creeds) with Wes Anderson's long-awaited installment *Asteroid City* featuring as a highlight in this edition.

But to be entertained, one doesn't even need to look any further than Dollar itself. From the grassy plains of Africa in the Junior School's *Lion King* to the drama-filled halls of Rydell High in the Senior School's long awaited production of *Grease*, the summer term musicals bring their own unique brand of excitement for audience and actors alike.

Thank you to all the writers who shared their pieces on entertainment in this edition, and I can't wait to read more next session!

Inaya (Form VI)  
Entertainment Editor



## Say No to Sequels

Roddy (Form V)

What has happened to creativity in the modern landscape of filmmaking? The constant regurgitation of existing franchise material has become the norm in Hollywood, with the creativity and magic of original productions being pushed to the side more and more. Many blame the colossal, faceless studios behind the media we consume for the absence of original content. But, with consumers continuing to support such companies, shouldn't the criticism be targeted more towards them? It's not as if there isn't any original work being produced, but if the box office numbers are anything to go by, it's evident that films not tied to an existing series are a far less lucrative prospect, there's seemingly nothing in the way of executives when it comes to them saying, "I'll be back" for yet another sequel. It is truly saddening. The once glorious industry, built on art that was new and innovative, has been reduced to a cycle of generic and dull products with the sole purpose of making as much profit as possible. That's not to say that many sequels and spinoffs aren't produced with care and creativity; there definitely is room for some franchise entries, but they shouldn't reduce the impact of unique original films that also have new ideas and deserve to be seen.



One hundred years ago, in the age of silent pictures, the general public were enamoured with the fresh new artform of cinema. It has been recorded that an average of fifty million people a week, went to a movie theatre during this time in America, roughly half the population. The simplicity of the films that were played at this time had a unique effect on movie goers and most seemed more than happy to endorse these new and original works. As

time went on into the 1930s, film had already evolved significantly due to the introduction of sound in cinema. Sound, when it was introduced in the late-1920s, was a game changer. Films now became significantly more complex and richer from a narrative perspective, and the characters portrayed within them became astronomically more human thanks to them having a voice. Universal terrified many with what many now consider the debut of the first ever franchise in cinema during the 1930s, with their now iconic monster movies, centred around characters like Dracula and Frankenstein who quickly became pop culture icons, largely due to their depictions in these films. While a massive success, these films did very early on hint towards the lack of creativity to come in Hollywood today, as Universal quickly milked these characters to death, sucking what imagination was present

in these films just as the vampires depicted would drain their victims. Bordering-on-parody movies such as 'Son of Dracula' and 'The Mummy's Hand' brought confusion to the audiences of the time. As they hoped that such unoriginality would not become the new normal, it is more evident than ever that their reluctant fears did indeed come true.

Almost a century later from the dawn of sound in movies and the birth of franchise movie making, it has become evident that moviegoers have swayed much more to buying tickets for franchise material rather than original concepts. This change in people's preferences has caused the colossal entertainment companies that produce the entertainment we consume to focus on producing sequels, spinoffs, and reboots that have been done to death seemingly infinite times and beyond. This needs to stop. The way in which these faceless corporations take their audiences for granted is unacceptable. Taking a recognised brand and preying on people's nostalgia to make a quick profit is grotesque and speaks volumes about the way the film industry treats its customers, but the wider corporate world too. Veterans of the film world who helped build the current world of cinema have also criticised the lack of creativity found in the world of Hollywood. Martin Scorsese, the genius artist behind 'Taxi Driver' and 'Goodfellas', has labelled the current circus of mindless CGI filled reboots and sequels "theme park" films that lack any of the substance or creativity that he tried to pave the way for way back as far as the 1970s. One thing to note about Scorsese's claims is that he himself has been a victim of repression by Hollywood, after an illustrious six decades of being a pioneering director revered by the industry, his latest film 'The Irishman' from 2019 was not shown in cinemas, instead being released on Netflix largely due to fears that the movie would underperform. This speaks volumes about the current state of the film industry. If a master director like Scorsese can't release a film led by acting giants such as Robert De Niro and Al Pacino in cinemas, then what hope is there of a small independent director with a unique idea getting their vision shown in a cinema.



Many of the studios that almost solely produce remakes and sequels have good intentions, or so I'm told. Disney for example has been producing an onslaught of remakes recently.

Translating their animated classics has been hugely successful for the company and some believe that there is merit in the existence of such rehashes. Many of Disney's classics, mainly from the 1940s-1960s have a plethora of problematic elements in them, with extremely racist caricatures of native Americans in Peter Pan and distasteful instances of islamophobia in Aladdin coming to mind, so it's no wonder that to some an update of such classics is more than welcome. While it's fantastic to see more representation and stories



that more closely represent today's world, the existence of these remakes doesn't retroactively erase Disney's murky past. Instead, it allows them to act as if their mistakes never happened without repercussions. Such remakes that are identical to their original counterparts, although now significantly lacking any colour or personality, don't make up for the dated material they are repressing, and companies such as Disney using them to bolster their brands as being 'progressive' is laughable, as it is clear that these companies only evolve when they need to or to follow current trends. Disney have cultivated a lucrative way of making millions, by exploiting audience's fond memories of their classics, and the only way we can break such a vicious cycle of repetition is to refuse to buy into such an influx of repetition, and to support creators and movies that are truly novel and unique.

It is increasingly rare, but sometimes studios get it right when it comes to remakes of nostalgic classics. For example, the second highest grossing film of last year, 'Top Gun: Maverick', exhilarated audiences everywhere by breathing new life into a fondly remembered film, as the world once again felt the need for speed whilst also receiving something new and exciting which built off its fondly remembered predecessor. Incredible new technologies were created to make such a daring film possible, and while it does re-tread some plot points from the original, it is done to tie a massively different film tonally back to the original for the sake of cohesion, not just to get a cheer out of the audience over something they've seen before and remember. With Maverick's colossal success, grossing nearly 1.5 billion dollars, many are hopeful for the future of such an illustrious artform, with artists like Steven Spielberg himself, arguably the greatest director alive, showering Top Gun's sequel with praise, citing that the film saved "theatrical distribution". With such high praise, I sincerely hope that studios will take note of this landmark film's success, and now inject a similar sense of life into the stream of reboots and sequels coming in the near future.

Throughout the many ups and downs of Hollywood's (not very illustrious) history, creativity has become significantly more repressed. Sequels are inescapable nowadays, and originality has become increasingly hard to find in the medium of film, but the future of the industry isn't all bleak. So long as filmmakers fight for innovation with fresh ideas, and audiences vote with their wallets when it comes to corporations manipulating them with lazy nostalgia voyages, it is certainly possible for creativity to live on in the medium of film and for the force to once again be with such a formerly majestic industry.



## Actors Choose a Role... Can they keep it?

Zuzu (*Form IV*)

Many people work, not just to pay the bills, but because it is what they love to do. However, in the acting world, it is difficult to do what you love without receiving unwanted negative feedback. This could come from the audience being unhappy with the way an actor has portrayed their character or difficulty understanding why a certain actor has been cast in a role that was originally written for a character of a different race or gender. If you were an actor, would you just take any job, without listening to the backlash? Arguably it is not just this feedback that matters, it is the way the actors react to it that is key.

Many film lovers find it extremely easy to harshly accuse actors if they are not happy with their casting in certain films. It could just be that they do not 'look the part' or their past films make it hard to visualise them in a different genre. For example, Heath Ledger was highly praised for his characterisation of the Joker, even I think he played the part incredibly well. But when he was first cast as the Joker, Batman fans were not happy. They said that he is the guy from the movie "10 Things I Hate About You", a romantic teenage movie, so he is not serious enough to play the role. This is unbelievably unfair as actors should be able to regularly switch their roles with different genres, and character personalities. So, it is fine to play a fun and easy-going role one time, and then switch to a more serious role for another time. Also, the two films are 9 years apart from each other, which gave Heath plenty of time to make his acting techniques more serious.



Even though it is good to be passionate about something, especially something as extensive as film, people can get a bit too passionate and go too far. As far as accusing someone of whitewashing. When people heard that Scarlett Johansson would be the star in the live-action film adaptation of Japanese manga many were not pleased, and whitewashing allegations were even thrown in. A petition was produced which asked for DreamWorks to replace Scarlett with a Japanese actress, but Scarlett did carry out the role. Scarlett told Marie Claire magazine "I certainly would never presume to play another race of a person. Diversity is important in Hollywood, and I would never want to feel like I was playing a character that was offensive." It is especially important in the acting world to have such maturity, so that you can deal with fans or the press in a polite and measured manner.

Though she spoke very well, she added something at the end, which should make audiences everywhere regretful for their criticism of her: "Also, having a franchise with a female protagonist driving it is such a rare opportunity." It is such a shame, not only that women do not get the chance to be the big fish in the big pond often, but also because people were trying to take it away from Scarlett when she deserved it.

This links to Elizabeth Taylor who was also accused of whitewashing in her role of Cleopatra in the 1963 film. Other people did agree with this view and said that the casting was "racially insensitive"; their reasoning for this was because Cleopatra is a historical figure with mixed ethnicities and heritages, which includes Greek, but there has been a long running debate on the subject of Cleopatra's heritage and supposed appearance. And, after doing research into the matter, I have found that most scholars and students would say that Cleopatra was white, of Macedonian descent. So, in my view and many others, the people that were accusing the film of whitewashing were wrong to do so, as many highly educated individuals have said that Cleopatra was white, and so no whitewashing had taken place on this occasion.



An actor just wants to do their job, without being criticised or misquoted for others' advantage. As another example, we return to Scarlett Johansson. In 2018 she was ready to play the part of a transgender character in the film "Rub & Tug." She received backlash on this, which is sadly unsurprising and afterwards dropped out of the film. Later, in 2019, in an interview with As If magazine she said, "As an actor I should be allowed to play any person, or any tree, or any animal because that is my job and the requirements of my job". Many, which is again predictable, were unhappy with the statement, and they even called her reaction "tone-deaf" and "disappointing". But what is disappointing to me is the fact that she said in a statement provided to Insider online magazine later on that her interview was "edited for click bait and is widely taken out of context."

Even though it is very true that actors should be able to do their job, without being scrutinised, occasionally some actors end up agreeing with that scrutiny. For example, Eddie Redmayne played Lili Elbe, a transgender woman, who was one of the first people to receive sex reassignment surgery. The casting of Eddie in this role brought in criticism, because the film did not have a transgender actor playing Lili. Eddie did end up saying that he would not take the role now; "I made that film with the best intentions, but I think it was a mistake". He did say that he hopes transgender people can



play transgender roles as well as cisgender roles, but he also added "And I hope - as an actor one hopes - that one should be able to play any sort of part if one plays it with a sense of integrity and responsibility." So, even though he agrees that transgender people should be able to play transgender roles, he hopes that is not where it stops and that if morally correct, anyone can play anyone.

In conclusion, these wonderful actors take a wide variety of jobs to do what they love. It is ridiculous that people think it is okay to criticise them in their earned role, especially if it is enough to make them drop out. These self-appointed critics need to put themselves in the actor's shoes and see that they are simply just trying to do the jobs they adore.

## Murderers and the Media

Ellie-Mae (*Form V*)

You would feel horrible if your family member was brutally murdered, right? If they were sexually assaulted? Cut up into tiny little pieces and eaten? Seeing the perpetrator all over the media, looking into their eyes? This has been the reality for the survivors and family members of the victims of notorious serial killers Jeffrey Dahmer and Ted Bundy. Big corporations such as Netflix have been creating remakes of the dramatised versions of these real-life nightmares to profit from it. The families of the victims are living an everlasting nightmare. They are forced to watch the entire internet thirst over the person who did this because the actor is attractive and engaging. TV shows and movies should not recreate heart-breaking murders and should not inaccurately document the lives of these monsters.

# NETFLIX

There are hundreds of TV-shows, movies, podcasts and more about these evil beings. Multiple producers of these shows and movies have been bashed including Renner for his 'Dahmer.' Seattle Times had criticised Renner for 'not offering any insights that weren't thoroughly debated in the media already.' This was said 20 years ago and there hasn't been much change since, unfortunately.

Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer story was released in fall 2022 instantly becoming one of Netflix's biggest hits of the year. In fact, Monster had become one of the few shows to reach 1 billion watch hours like Stranger Things 4 and Squid Game. Berlinger who created Conversations with a Killer, which previously featured John Wayne Gacy and Ted Bundy had planned to release a Jeffrey Dahmer series around a similar time to Monster. Berlinger stated in an interview that he was 'completely unaware' of Monster whilst creating yet another series about the crazed serial killer. It is harmful for young people to be watching so much of this content.

The victims' families of Bundy and Dahmer were not made aware of the remakes, neither were they compensated for the pain this would have also caused them for yet again another remake of how their loved one was murdered. How would you feel if someone were re-enacting how lost, frightened, and hurt you were when you discovered your loved one had been murdered and the murderer was standing right in front of you? This is the reality for Errol Lindsey's sister as she confronted Dahmer in court. Imagine someone pretending to be you in your most raw and vulnerable state.

Bundy victim, Kimberly Leech, had a best friend named Lisa who spoke about Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil, and Vile which featured Zac Efron as Bundy. She described her outrage of Efron being used saying that he was 'cute and attractive.' She said that she would rather see a documentary about the girls' lives. She feared viewers overlooking and minimising the brutality and inhumanity of Bundy's actions. Billy Jensen also mentioned on Twitter about the new series saying 'Please remember the victims. These women all had hopes and dreams. They should all have movies about them instead. I always try to remember what these monsters took away.'

Why is Hollywood obsessed with casting teenage heartthrobs as serial killers? Having your favourite Disney channel actor from your childhood - who likely was plastered all over your wall - cast as a brutal murderer in the next biggest hit. Strange, isn't it? If we are meant to be so repulsed and frightened of these monsters why is Zac Efron playing Bundy? Why is Ross Lynch playing Dahmer? It just doesn't make any sense. Putting an attractive A-list celebrity as the face of a serial killer is problematic. It pushes young people to find the 'bad boy' attractive. It enables people to apply this to their own lives and makes it more likely for young people to allow abusive behaviours from their partners. In these shows we are told that despite committing the most gruesome and heinous crimes, the bad boy isn't all that bad! Is he? Murder is excusable because he is attractive right?



Many fans have criticised Ryan Murphy's dramatization for attempting to 'humanise' Dahmer as he gives insight into his backstory and childhood that some argue attempts to explain his later crimes and behaviours. These people were monsters, and we should not be excusing that. Ask yourself, would you still have watched that new Bundy movie if Zac Efron was not playing Bundy? Due to the way these monsters are spoken about the victims always get overshadowed.

Have you heard of Lynda Ann Healy? Most likely not. This is because the victims of well-known serial killers are not well-known themselves. Infact, these are the people that everyone forgets. Ted Bundy confessed to 30 murders in court despite the fact the media believes that it could have been over 100 other crimes including rape, beating and more murders. The next time you hear someone fawn over Efron's portrayal of Bundy ask them about Lynda. She was 21 years old when her life was ripped from her grasp. She was still in university, she never got to experience her future. Ask them about Kimberly - a 12-year-old girl who had not even had the opportunity to start her life. Stop glamourising these monsters because they are society's beauty standard.

Infact, No Notoriety's founder spoke in a TEDTALK stating 'it seems like the more people you kill, the more you are in the limelight.' The murderer overshadows the victims in almost every aspect. School shootings, for example, the media has now stopped putting the individuals name in the media and this has reduced these shootings as their name and face is not plastered on magazines and on the news infact, they speak about the victims instead. I wonder if they did this with serial killers if this would happen less. It would be a lot better if Netflix came out with a documentary about the victims.

Glamourising and glorifying these murderers is becoming normalised. By the very existence of these shows and movies it is glorifying these monsters and the subject. Stick Ted Bundy on anything, you're guaranteed people will watch or read it. Many viewers of the new Dahmer-Monster went online to gush about the attractiveness of Evan Peters who is well-known for his dark roles in American Horror Story. Many began referring to Peters as Dahmer and from there many true crime fanatics began making fan edits of him in the series and saying how attractive he was or how they wish they were a victim. It is completely taking away from their actions and the innocent lives that were lost due

to the actor being attractive. Infact, if you search on Google 'Jeffrey Dahmer' Evan Peters is one of the first images to appear. This is horrific as people will begin not thinking of the real monster and his actions but the attractive popular celebrity that is on everyone's walls.

The next time you sit down to watch a true crime movie or show, sit, and think about the young girls and men who never got the chance to turn their nightmare off. Think about how they never got to have their future. They had to look into their murderers' eyes. You are watching their pain for your entertainment; you are watching what they could not. Do not support these companies that are using their deaths for their personal gain - they receive all profits and the attention of the media; the victims receive nothing. Their families receive nothing. Bundy and Dahmer will forever be gaining attention for their crimes which is exactly what they wanted.

Give victims the representation that they deserve, and no, this does not include watching another movie or series, listening to another podcast, or reading another book about serial killers.

## The Epidemic of ACL Injuries in Women's Football

*Saffron (Form V)*

ACL (Anterior Cruciate Ligament) injuries are an ever-present problem within the world of women's football, and it is being brought to the fore with the return of the women's World Cup this summer, and particularly, with the striking number of some of the world's best female footballers who may miss it with an ACL injury. It is clear more research must be done as to why so many are out with ACL injuries, with 5 out of the 20 Ballon d'Or nominees injured, including the world's best ranked female player, Alexia Putellas. Women are shown to be up to 6 times more prone to ACL injuries than men in football, but also in sports such as basketball, netball and rugby.

However, the problem is the lack of understanding into why this is. Anatomical differences could be posing a problem, as females have a wider pelvis relative to leg length (which results in increased angulation at the knee) and tend to have smaller ACLs and looser knee ligaments, increasing their risk of injury. The menstrual cycle is often thought to be related as hormonal changes, when oestrogen levels are at their highest, increases the looseness of joints. This increased laxity results in stiff landings, which cause the knee to collapse inward, putting more pressure on the ACL than it can sustain.

England midfielder Jordan Nobbs, who missed the 2019 World Cup after her anterior cruciate ligament injury feels as though her menstrual cycle could have been a "high factor" in her injury. She says, "There does need to be more research put into place and more knowledge, so they know when people go out to training, they've done as much as they can to reduce the risk of a knee injury." Unfortunately, only 6% of sport and exercise research is done exclusively on females, so it is difficult to fully understand the problem.



Calls for research are coming from players, fans and managers, specifically as more and more female footballers become injured, including, recently, Vivianne Miedema, the all-time top scorer in the Women's Super League. Her Arsenal team-mate Beth Mead, who was crowned BBC

Sports Personality of the Year 2022 had also received the horrific injury just a few weeks earlier: "I heard those words, it's your ACL. The three letters you never want to hear as a footballer."



Chelsea manager Emma Hayes comments on this: "For the game to lose two players of that quality and the World Cup to lose those players is horrendous for both of them" Both are keen to get involved in pushing for more to be done surrounding the danger, with Beth Mead claiming "I think if that happened with a Messi, a Ronaldo, a Griezmann there's probably going to be a lot more done when those things happen."

Funding is also a huge problem, as the disparities between the men and women's game lead to the lack of research but also lack of the better staff and resources. Dr Olkhom Kryger suggests "And the resources - at the highest level of the women's game, it wouldn't have a fraction of the number of staff that a very average men's team or very average men's academy would have." Other gender disparities highlighted by Dr Okholm Kryger include the pitches used in the WSL compared to the Premier League and the design of football kit such as boots. Women move and run in a different way to men; however, the length of studs on boots are primarily designed around male movement, increasing the risk of injury among female footballers.

The longevity of ACL injuries is why they pose such a serious threat, as ACL tear recovery is generally six to nine months. With what used to be seen as a career-ending injury, the tearing of ACLs being so commonplace within women's football should not be accepted, and it is clear the problem cannot merely be swept under the rug. With the popularity of the game increasing, and more WSL games becoming sold out than ever, hopefully both funding into preventative measures and research will be improved.



### Challenge the media!

focus on victims & heroes - not their killers

No Name. No Photo. #NoNotoriety.

[www.nonotriety.com](http://www.nonotriety.com)





# Middle Eastern Money - The Scourge of Sport

Hunter (Form IV)

What happens in Qatar stays in Qatar. As many sports continue to grow in popularity and exposure in the international marketplace, the money and funding that follows these sports also grows exponentially. This can be seen most recently in the jaw dropping transfer of Cristiano Ronaldo to Saudi Arabian club Al Nassr where he will be earning a reputed £2.5 million a week. Football, of course, is just the tip of the iceberg and a similar pattern is now emerging within sports like golf and boxing with extreme wealth increasingly being thrown at these sports too.

However, this story doesn't end here; these sports are now part of a political, economic and cultural battle between many western countries and Middle Eastern states like Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Supporters of this move will state that this is a positive change with sports going to new parts of the world and opening new markets for sport globally. Critics accuse these countries of "sports washing" and attempting to cover up the horrific crimes of their regimes by hosting big sports events and rehabilitating their image internationally. And finally, I would accuse them of trying to end sport all together.

LIV golf is a new golf tour based in the USA funded by the Saudi Arabian public investment fund. The tour has been recognized for its huge cash outs, with the most recent cash purse being up to \$50 million, and even bigger controversy as it continues to challenge rivals such as the PGA tour and European Tour. Why is this a problem? As more and more people get caught in the golf aspect of LIV, we seem to be forgetting why the Saudis founded LIV, which is to blind the western population, with these huge amounts of money and great entertainment, of the many crimes of which their country is guilty. One example of this would be the assassination of Saudi Arabian journalist Jamal Khashoggi, that was personally approved by the crown prince, or the fact it is still legal to publicly execute gay people. But as much as these golfers want to defend themselves, they can't dismiss the fact that the main goal of LIV is not to improve the game but to improve the public image of Saudi Arabia. One of the players of LIV golf, Phil Mickelson, said, "They are scary mother f\*\*ers to get involved with" Yet he still involves himself for the money, everybody has a price.



The Qatar World Cup from many uncultured viewers was a success. As much as the football on show was world class, just like LIV golf, we seem to see the football as a bright light blinding the public of the workers' rights abuses and blatant homophobia uncovered on the buildup to the tournament. This was highlighted after a man wearing a rainbow top walked into a stadium later to be turned away due to his active support of the LGBTQ community as well as the estimated 6500 immigrant builders who have died since the announcement of the tournament back in 2010. This was all later swept under the carpet by the Qataris after Lionel Messi won his first world cup leaving many viewers hearts full and brains empty. Qatar will not be the last World Cup in the Middle East as recently Saudi Arabia has set aside 20 billion to bid for the World Cup in 2030 which will also be seen by the Saudis as a great opportunity to improve their international image.

As the largest sport in the world, football is no stranger to the sports washing emerging from the Middle East. This is highlighted by the recent move by Cristiano Ronaldo to Al Nassr Football Club, this is significant as the club is funded by the Saudi public investment fund which also sponsors clubs like Newcastle United. Saudi is again cashing out ridiculous amounts of money to bring one of the greatest of all time to their country.

Ronaldo is currently at £485,000 per day, which is more than many of us will make in ten years, once again using money as a distraction for the many crimes the country has committed. However, this isn't the only case we are seeing of footballers being dragged into this delusion, Lionel Messi has been given an undisclosed amount of money and will be the face of the campaign for the Saudi Arabian 2030 World Cup.



But as the western world continues to judge what the Middle East do, we still find ourselves having two feet to stand on. The Middle East stance is one of little remorse as they comment on the UK not being a perfect country, obviously taking shots at the barbaric empire the UK had made over the last few centuries. But I completely disagree with this statement. The reason we learn and reflect on these barbaric empires is to make sure we do not continue to make the same mistakes as in the past. This does not allow other countries to use free passes to do whatever they like in the modern world.

Let me paint a picture. A young boy aged six watches Robin Van Persie score his flying header in the 2014 World Cup, his face a study as he jumps off the couch waving his hands in the air. His dreams of playing professional football became

so much more important to him. Eight years later he sits downstairs watching Ronaldo play his first game for Al Nassr, not wondering when he is going to score his next goal but trying to calculate how much money per second he is making. Countries that think they can find a way into sports lovers' hearts through money should not be so naïve because they will not be accepted. Sports are sports and that's how it should be, there is nothing like the excitement of watching your favorite team or player win and these recent uproars that are taking away from the game should not be welcomed and should be suppressed.

## Silver Smells

Affan (Form IV)

"Ping", "Pong". The ball bounces back and forth like a pendulum, screeching an eerie echo every time it arrives at its swing's end before swerving back. My opponent and I went back and forth in winning and losing the previous sets, but now we're at equilibrium - a state where two opposing forces are balanced - playing our final round. Spinning round and round, both the ball and me, I blurrily look at the scoreboard with eyes like windshields on a rainy day, drowning in its sweat with no wipers. "(10-11) 13th set". I'm losing a deuce in a best-of-thirteen, needing to win the point to put my right foot back in the game.

It was his turn to serve.

I saw my reflection in the ball in his palm as he launched it upwards.

The clock stopped its constant tick-tock, and my surroundings shrivelled in silence.

It has been over five years since I started competitively playing table tennis. Minutes and minutes have been spent secretly watching highlights of top table tennis players in English class (sorry, Ms Abel) (*categorically untrue - Affan is very hardworking, ed.*). Hours and hours have been spent going to tournaments all alone. Days and nights have been spent going to training when I'd rather watch a movie or do anything else. But I've never paused and asked myself, why even bother?

Perhaps it was the fun aspect of the game that got me hooked on unlatching. It's that feeling of promising your friend that you would only play one more point, but you keep playing anyway. And when you finally pause to look at the time, you realise you've been playing for 30 minutes non-stop. The simple rules and the utter chaos of playing it with your friends as they scream, trash talk, and laugh contradicts yet complement each other; a merry mayhem. The minimal equipment also made it present everywhere and possible to have fun in any social setting, in the school during lunchtime, boarding house or even a pub. Not that I've been to a pub, but if you see me in one, know that I am only there to play table tennis.

But maybe it's the frustration that kept me motorised. The squinted brows pulled downwards after my father would win yet another game against me, making me secretly despise him as I devised my revenge. The curled fingers form a clenched fist whenever my coach points out a repeated error that I just can't seem to undo. The jellied knees stumbling, during all the times I only finished second instead of first, bringing back only a silver medal that smells of old coins. A silver medal always hurts more than a bronze. If you earn a bronze, you're satisfied as you compare yourself to those who missed out. If you obtained a silver, however, you're outraged as you compare yourself to the person who's 5 inches elevated on the podium above you. After all, the melting point of silver is higher than bronze, and I'm boiling along.

Thinking back, there might be a reason I continued playing after being encapsulated in iron for a tad bit long, a silver lining that formed from arteries clogged with molten silver. Whenever I'm in the boarding house, you would always find me in the computer room, where I'd only study and study in staleness. But whenever Mr Baird would tell me that my taxi had arrived for training, I felt as if he was a prison officer telling me I was eligible for parole after serving my 25-year prison sentence, liberated from the tyranny of revision. For once, I wouldn't feel like a bookworm munching upon the leather bindings and glue stains of my revision sheet, but instead, I would feel like a, like a, ping-pongworm?

Well, after five years of competitively playing table tennis, it did free me. The goodness of gold as I unleash my battle cry after winning the final point of a final which continually ululated, deafening those in a 10-meter radius. The torment of not topping it off and the first place is one step away from me on the podium. The good and bad juxtaposed yet synonymised each other, like the yin and yang but for ping and pong.

The ball reaches its apex, floating there for a split second, and starts its downfall.

His forearms hinted a bottom-spin serve, which he changed to a side-spin.

He deceived me.

I'm losing a deuce in a best-of-thirteen. At that millisecond, where my opponent opted for a different technique than I anticipated, I could feel my left foot implanted in the school's van, ready to send me back to the boarding house. In a stance, I flick the ball frontwards, but it did not go in a straight line. The side spin caused the ball to drift leftwards as if a gust of wind with bad comedic timing blew it there. The ball, battling the invisible wind, navigates itself to my opponent's forehand, and he's ready to gun me down. He drives it down the lane with pure topspin, hitting my side of the table and stinging my left wrist. The crowd bloomed in chants, but none of it was for me.

I stomp on the ball after it bounces twice on the floor, mocking me. "Ping", "Pong".