

Runnymede Times



Artwork by Rosie Day, Year 12

2023 Edition

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By Saanvi Kaushik, Year 11

EDITORS' NOTES

Runnymede Times doesn't need you. You need Runnymede Times.

Samuel P, Co-editor

The written work of the average Runnymede student is usually limited to class work and topics that reside within their academic curriculum. The Runnymede Times is a tool to break this trend. The value of the newspaper is that it allows students to pursue interests that lie outside the boundaries of their school subjects. My role as an editor has been to foster this culture of exploration and eclecticism but my influence is negligible compared to that of the newspaper's curious writers. The year has been a privilege.

Agnes H, Co-editor

It has been a pleasure working to expand the Runnymede Times this year, I have greatly enjoyed writing articles and working with the Year 12 editors and younger members of the school to grow the newspaper and spread the importance of journalism throughout Runnymede's Senior School. The Runnymede Times is an excellent instrument to teach the student body about journalism and its importance, I have loved being a part of that. It has been a great privilege working towards the growth of the newspaper this year, I wish the paper all the very best in the future.

Adriana S, Editor of Culture and Entertainment

I have always loved writing, since I was very young. I always wrote my own stories, journalled, attempted to write poems and was the weirdo in class who actually enjoyed writing essays for homework. I joined the Runnymede Times to live the experience of running a newspaper, to get a tiny bit of insight of what it is like to be in the world of journalism. I have thoroughly enjoyed it and loved the feeling of being part of the community of the school newspaper.

Isabella R, Co-editor of Science and Technology

As a Co-editor of Science and Technology, my role in the Runnymede Times has not only been to write articles about the new cutting-edge technologies developing in science and stem - such as biosensors and biotechnology - but to also encourage classmates and other Runnymedians to read and write articles for this fascinating field. It has been an absolute pleasure to participate in this Runnymede community, developing skills like teamwork, dedication, commitment and integrity.

Sol FS, Co-editor of Science and technology

I have greatly enjoyed being editor of the Science and Technology section of the Runnymede Times. It has been a really enriching experience as I have had to research extensively on current events and hot topics in the science community! I think it's essential for Runnymedians to be informed on scientific discoveries and technological advancements, especially today, when we are living in a community that is constantly evolving! I hope I have encouraged Runnymedians to see how fascinating science is.

Micaela G, Editor of Opinion and Debate

The Runnymede Times embodies everything we should embrace; teamwork, initiative and investigation. I believe it is one of the things that distinguishes Runnymede College as more than just a place of academic prowess. Taking part in this facet of the school community has been not only thrilling but something I have learned from immensely. It has been a pleasure.

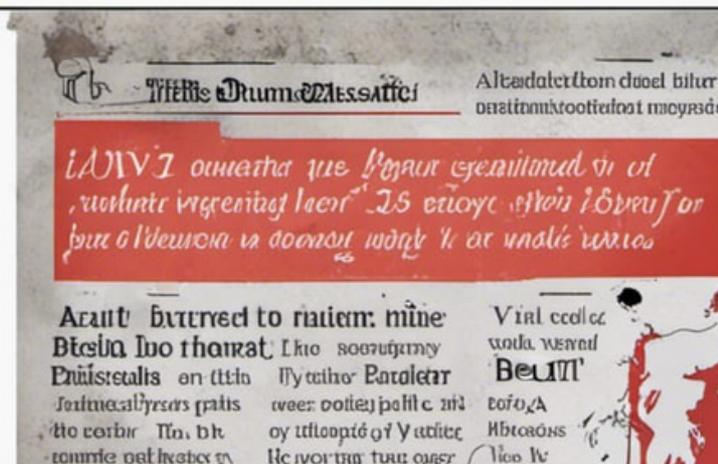
Eleanor S, Editor of Community Committee and School Life

Joining the Runnymede Times has not only allowed me to explore the realm of journalism but also write and read articles about fascinating topics ranging from the function of biosensors to the Russia-Ukraine war. It has been an incredible learning experience being editor of the Community Committee of the Runnymede Times because school life is a crucial part of our newspaper. This year has been a success thanks to students from all years who have brought to life the events going on around the school through their writing.

Sofia P, Co-editor/ Online Coordinator

I have been in the Runnymede Times since Year 7 and it has been really exciting seeing it flourish with time and under the leadership of Ms Clague. I love seeing and meeting the enthusiastic new writers from lower years and seeing how their writing improves with time. But the best thing about the Runnymede Times is not that, it's the fact that it's not like a normal school newspaper; you're not obliged to write about a certain topic in the news if you're not interested in it. You can write about whatever you're passionate about (be it movies, animals, pop culture and more). I think that is what makes the essays so good; you can really tell there's passion and care behind each text.

We would like to give a special mention to Ms Clague. She's been a pillar of the Runnymede Times and none of this would have been possible without her. We wish the future editors of the Runnymede Times all the best!



(Image by human+ night cafe)

Brexit and University Applications

By Carolina T, Year 12

On the 31st of January, 2020, the United Kingdom officially withdrew from the European Union (EU). The UK is the first and, so far, the only sovereign country to leave the EU. This occurrence has had an impact both on the country and the rest of the world; especially on countries which are members of the EU.

We are all aware that Brexit has led to changes including the European Union's power, the UK's independence and the lives of people living both in the UK and outside - mainly those from European countries. However, I will not be directly speaking about the political and economic issues and changes that have risen as a result of Brexit. This is rather an observation on something that is linked to both of those issues; university applications.

As a 16 year old student, the topic of which universities I aspire to apply to is an incessant and persistent one. Not only is it present in conversations with adults, friends and family, but it is also a question I ask myself constantly. Looking at the choices the Year 13 pupils at Runnymede are beginning to make, I can see a slight change in the pattern. There are less applications to the UK: still many, but fewer than in the years previous to Brexit. Last year in January, UCAS released statistics which showed that approximately 40% less EU students applied to UK universities through UCAS in 2021 than in 2020. Only a years' difference for such a drastic change. There are numerous reasons for this, but it is clear that Brexit is most definitely one of them and is placed high up on the list of main causes.

The aftermath of Brexit can be seen at Runnymede College as well. Runnymede university destinations of 2022 include universities in the UK, the US, Spain, the Netherlands, France, Italy and Ireland. Out of all of these, 43 are to the UK and 43 are to other countries (outside of the UK). Is this 50-50 ratio a result of Brexit? Or is there just more knowledge about the distinguished universities in the rest of the world?

Not only do we seem to be more aware of the level of education in highly regarded universities in Europe, but they have made themselves be noticed too. In the UK, the viable system of higher-education application processing, UCAS, was formed in 1992. In other countries, there might have been a lack of a straight-forward system, yet they seem to be adapting and encouraging students to apply by having a simpler system which is much more feasible. Additionally, more courses in English have been added. The Bachelors in IE Universities

in Spain are fully delivered in English to tempt foreigners to study there and to encourage students to be more open to the global world, as English is thought of as the main international language.

It is important to highlight that within the subject of how Brexit has affected university applications to the UK, there is a division in the different causes. Are students unwilling to attend or even apply because of economic concerns? Or has it got more to do with their ideological beliefs?

On the 1st of August, 2021 the United Kingdom government announced that students coming from the EU or the EEA (European Economic Area) will not be entitled to the home fee status, meaning that they will have to pay international student fees. Many who wanted to complete their undergraduate or postgraduate courses in this country might be faced with an insurmountable obstacle in the price. Others might be reluctant to study in the UK because they feel rejected by it, as the country chose to separate itself from the European Union, an organisation that many European countries are proud to be members of.

In addition to these barriers that make it less likely for European international students to be willing to apply, they might also feel that finding a job will be more complicated once they finish their studies if they are living in the UK. Just recently, some very prestigious UK universities, such as LSE, Warwick, Imperial and UCL, came to Runnymede College to give Sixth Form students an idea of what these universities are like — in terms of applications, entrances and university-life. In order to encourage more internationality in their universities, they showed us that some "issues" to do with Brexit were actually not having that much of an impact. For example, LSE presented to us the statistics which showed that 70% of graduates have full-time employment. In Warwick, 42.9% of all Academic/Research/Teaching staff have non-UK nationality. This information did not only encourage us (as Runnymedians) to want to study in these universities because of their global background, but it also proved that maybe Brexit did not pose such a threat to the internationality and diversity of universities in the UK.

I interviewed a Year 13 student about this topic and he expressed some of his concerns to do with the UK and its universities: "Obviously there are great options, but for some unis, their value isn't really worth how much they cost now", he said. He is still looking forward to applying to respected universities such as Edinburgh and LSE. However, a new university which has called his attention is Bocconi, in Italy, where he is most interested in studying international economics with management or finance. Undeniably, Brexit is not the only reason for the decision he has made to look into other universities outside of the UK. One of the various reasons for his appeal to Bocconi, is quite simply that he is eager to learn how to speak Italian. What better place to do this than in the manufacturing and commercial city of Milan?

When considering Brexit and the effect it has had on university applications to the UK, the statistics are clear. Fewer students from Europe apply to or aspire to study in universities in the UK after it declared it was no longer a member of the EU in 2020. Whilst I would still not completely blame all of this on the United Kingdom's policy - the improvement of universities in the rest of Europe is also a factor - put simply, the increase in the cost of studying there is the main deterrence for European students. What is undeniable is that Brexit has made us all think twice about applying to the UK.

Work Experience

Juan V in Year 13 writes about his summer work experience placement: the good, the bad and the ugly.

Over the summer, in mid-July, I underwent two weeks of work experience in Oliver Wyman's Marketing department. Luckily, during the two weeks in which I was at the firm, they were launching a new initiative, the 'Green Transition Index' (GTI), and I was able to help in the launching of many of the social media posts, particularly on LinkedIn, like the ones below.

The fact that these projects were being launched while I was at the firm meant that we were dealing with significantly more attention than we may have had without this project. This led to one of my most routine tasks becoming adding the large number of daily media mentions to a spreadsheet. I spent quite a lot of time on Excel too, filling in spreadsheets tracking the progress of Oliver Wyman, as despite being one of the world's leading consultancy firms in terms of volume and profile of work, the brand isn't as globally recognised as other consultancy firms which have been around much longer. Since the firm is working on relaunching their regional websites, another of my main tasks was to help with its launch through translating texts and even learning and using basic coding.

Although I spent most of my time in Marketing, I was still able to experience other aspects of the firm. On the first days I was 'shadowing' - seeing all departments and getting to talk to someone from each department. I spoke to someone from the Data Analytics team, an Advisor, a Personal Assistant, and even someone from the Design team. Then, I talked to several other consultants on my own time in order to gain a better grasp of the general process of real consultancy projects. I got to speak with Pablo Campos, a Partner of Oliver Wyman, and I asked him about being a Partner, as I had heard a lot about a Consultant's job and Partners had been mentioned, but their role had never been properly explained.

Fundación Unblock

Our School Life Editor, Eleanor S, introduces us to this year's charity

Fundación Unblock is the charity that Runnymede has chosen to support this year. Fundación Unblock aims to offer children who have gone to prison psychological help and a safe place to be reintroduced to society upon their release. The charity primarily helps those who are showing signs of aggression and who may be heading towards a complicated future by providing them with coached sessions, therapists and their objective is to find and fix the root cause of behavioural problems to truly improve their lives in the long term. Runnymede wants to raise money and support for this charity as they need funds to help these youths find suitable homes, to hire more family therapists and finance programmes such as 2Round Coaching Box: a programme which focuses on encouraging the children to do physical activity twice a week and receive educational support as well as therapy sessions and leisure programmes for personal development.

Last term, the Pupil Leadership Team organised multiple fundraising events for the charity, including: the Halloween party for years 4 to 6, the cross country for the senior school pupils and teachers, and the whole school bake sale. As well as these events, money has also been raised through the second hand uniform sale, and the vending machine for the sixth form students. In total, the school managed to raise 8968.47€ for Fundación Unblock. We look forward to raising even more in our upcoming event on Valentine's Day.



(Image by human+nightcafe)

SIMON BASKETT INTERVIEW



Simon Baskett

As the sad news that Mr Baskett and Mr Crumpton are leaving Runnymede this year came to light, Sam P, Micaela G and Agnus H decided to take the opportunity to hear their thoughts on Spain, life and education. The results do not disappoint.

INTERVIEWER: How long have you been working in the school?

I actually came to Spain in the 1990s, but I came to Runnymede in 1996 and I worked here until 2000. Then I did a series of other jobs. So I was writing quite a bit at the time; I was a part-time sports writer and I had written a book called the 'Rough Guide to Madrid'. I wrote it during the summer holidays once. I was getting so much work writing that I thought maybe I should give it a go, so I did. I enjoyed it, and did that for 8 years 2000-2008. I originally wrote freelance for British Newspapers: BBC, Sky sports, The Daily Telegraph, The Guardian, The Sunday Mirror. I did high brow, low brow stuff, mainly sports, and I kept writing the Rough Guides (this was a period when books were still going great).

But then I actually missed teaching; I really did. I enjoyed the journalism stuff but I was just writing about sport and travel, nothing earth shattering. I wasn't a war correspondent or anything like that, so I decided to go back to teaching because I love History. Even when I wasn't a History teacher, I was reading history or literature. I worked at the British council for a few years and then there was an opportunity at Runnymede in 2012 so I've been here 11 years.

INTERVIEWER: Did you think you were going to be a teacher when you were young?

MR BASKETT: No, my mum was the teacher, my dad was doctor, and my grandad had taught a little bit at university. I didn't know what I wanted to do, all I knew was what I liked doing. So at school I liked all subjects but as my Dad was 'Science and Medicine' I thought 'no, I don't want to do that'. I did History, English and Geography A-levels. I regret not doing French because it was a language I used so much later on and I regret that my French wasn't as good as I wanted it to be. At University I decided to do what I liked doing and that was History.

INTERVIEWER: Sorry, where did you study?

MR BASKETT: I studied at Oxford, I didn't really know anything about Oxford. I just applied and thought 'Oh I'll go there, should be interesting' and I went to a college that was more down to earth than others. You always feel a little bit of 'imposter syndrome' when you get to these sorts of places. It was actually perfectly doable.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any particular hobbies as a child?

MR BASKETT: I loved sport when I was kid. I was obsessed with rugby. I played rugby all the time. I was also very interested in politics from an early age so I belonged to - in those days the biggest issue in politics for me was South Africa and apartheid. In fact, I was 12 when I belonged to this group called the Anti-Apartheid Movement. I was very active. For example, I participated in a campaign to stop the teachers and the school banking with Barclays and they did! They actually stopped.

INTERVIEWER: Sorry, did Barclays have-

MR BASKETT: Barclays believed that there shouldn't be sanctions against South Africa and they were a big bank involved with South Africa. I was in a bit of trouble because I was meant to give a vote of thanks to a conservative MP who came to the school (he was not in favour of sanctions) and I gave him a hard time. I got a bit of criticism from the headmaster. Anyway, I loved school. I absolutely loved school. I really enjoyed all my lessons and I loved being there. I used to write letters to MPs and to the radio and stuff like this. It was a bit embarrassing really but I was quite involved.

INTERVIEWER: Is there any historical event that you remember very well?

MR BASKETT: Well, I am very old. I'm older than I look. The earliest thing I remember was the landing on the moon which was in 1969. I remember my Dad waking me up from my little bunk bed when I was tiny and telling me 'get up, you watch this - you'll remember it the rest of your life'. And he was dead right. I have remembered it for the rest of my life, watching it on the black and white TV. I was a bit obsessed with the space race. That was one thing. Something else I remember... again this is a bit revealing of how old I am... is that all the time on the news was the Vietnam War. All the time. I remember that vividly early on. The images in the early 70s. I also remember things like the election of Margaret Thatcher. It was quite significant in Britain with the strikes that preceded. It was the Winter of Discontent. I remember that the strikes would go on for so long that the power would cut off nearly all the time at home. I remember my mum cooking quickly before the power went off. Then we would eat in candlelight, which was quite exciting. I do remember things such as the fall of the Berlin Wall. The Collapse of Communism. It was not a first hand experience but a lived experience.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have a specific role model growing up, somebody you looked up to?

MR BASKETT: Another issue I was interested in was Black Civil Rights, so Martin Luther King was someone I looked up to and people talked about at school. My headmaster was quite an interesting figure. He had been in the United States and met Martin Luther King. In fact my headmaster taught an important historian called Simon Schama. So I think there was quite a strong political and historical element in the school with issues like that, so that would be someone I looked up to.

INTERVIEWER: Black Civil Rights was obviously a big issue in the USA. Is it any different in the UK? Was it as big of an issue?

MR BASKETT: I was too young to remember this but there was a sort of copycat campaign in Bristol during the 1960s when my Mum and Dad moved to Bristol. It was called the Bristol Bus Boycott. What was happening was that in Bristol they were not hiring people of colour as bus drivers. Basically, excluding them when they applied to jobs because of the colour of their skin. There was a boycott consisting of Bristol University students and local people. It was influential and what America was doing influenced Britain but Britain had this almost superior attitude of 'well... that doesn't happen over here' but there was as much racism, in a different guise, as there was in the United States. There were things that we would see that were completely unacceptable with regards to behaviour towards people of a different colour.

INTERVIEWER: What were your first experiences as a teacher? Did you make some mistakes? Did you learn any tricks?

MR BASKETT: Yes, lots of stuff. Well, I did some teaching in London before I did my teacher training, to see how it was. It was a retail college where people took exams and would cram in all the work. When I did my teacher training in Bristol I was given a couple of rough schools. Very rough. The teachers gave me this equivalent to the Year 11 History lot who didn't want anything to do with it. What they did in those days was some people did the exam and were good and some people didn't do the exam. So it was very mixed and I did have quite big, tough boys. What I did early on was try to confront them and deal with them that way rather than convincing them. I was really lucky because one of them- I used to have a very small selection of ties that I wore to school. I had a rugby tie that one of them made the mistake of thinking it was a tie from the SS.

INTERVIEWER: I wanted to ask about coming to Spain. You said you started working at Runnymede in 1996.

MR BASKETT: Right, but I came before that. I worked for four to five years in Britain before qualifying in a school just outside Bristol. There was a language assistant in the school who came in and I - she's my wife now. So she came to work at the school for a year. We started going out. Anyway, I thought I was going to work abroad. So I applied to some schools. To Hong Kong, to Kenya (because I had done some voluntary work there when I was younger) and to Spain. I got offered the job in Kenya, I didn't get the one from Hong Kong. Although later I was rung by the Foundation School of English - English School Foundation or something like that. But I got one in Spain and it was an opportunity to learn the language. So I worked here for two years in King's College and then I thought 'Oh God, I better do something for my career' because it was a bit of a dead end job in a way. Then I went back to Britain and worked in a state school near Oxford and I was the Head of History there. I got married there but my wife doesn't really like living in cold, damp environments. We lived apart for one year. I think England just didn't suit her. I was thinking 'Oh well I'll just move back to Spain, I wasn't really thinking about career or anything at that point.

INTERVIEWER: When you first started working at Runnymede, what was it like?

MR BASKETT: It was very different. Completely different school. Arthur Powell was the Head. It was mainly- what you would call Expat. A lot of British, American with mixed parents. A big Indian Community. Korean. Scandinavian. It was small and family-like. The class sizes were small and the groups were small. Everyone knew everyone. It was very much a small family enterprise. There were lots of really nice things about that, getting to know the people. It is a lot different now, obviously it was easier to manage as it was on a smaller scale.

INTERVIEWER: What do you like the most about being a teacher?

MR BASKETT: I really like my subject. I love History. I think it is important for people to understand it. I think it is more important than ever before. Living in the world we live in with the nature of information. I think historians are very good at sifting through and being critical thinkers. It is important to not just believe what people say because they are influential. It is a very important question for the principles of understanding. So I love that. I really enjoy interaction with students. The fun part of my teaching is being in the classroom. When you get a nice class and by nice I don't mean able, I mean a class that is interested and wants to debate and learn about things. As you know, I often go on a tangent -

INTERVIEWER: We don't mind, we don't mind.

MR BASKETT: Obviously I want excellent results. But what is really important is for students to come out with that learning mindset, that inquisitive nature which is really nice to see. I love it when students come back, and we talk about what they are doing and they still remember things. That's really satisfying. I think there are not many jobs where you get that satisfaction of having played a part in the development. So that is very interesting.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything about you that you think your students would be surprised to find out?

MR BASKETT: There is one thing that people already know. I was interviewed to be a spy for MI6. Then I turned that down and got an interview for MI5 which I didn't go for. I got the 'Journalist of the Year' award when I was at Reuters for the world exclusive scoop of David Beckham leaving Real Madrid. So David Beckham was in Real Madrid when I was working for a Sports journal and I used to cover things he did. I became friendly with his representative. I knew him (Beckham) reasonably well. I did some translations for things they did in press conferences with another guy called Sid Lowe who came later. He is a correspondent for the Guardian now for Spanish football. I got along well with them and I was working for Reuters so he gave me a scoop, when there was all this discussion on whether he would leave Real Madrid. He rang me up, with the representative and Beckham there as well on the phone. They told me what they were doing before they told Real Madrid and before they told any other media. So I had half an hour advantage, head start on everyone else. It was really exciting because you are whacking this out really quickly and it goes BREAKING NEWS everywhere on all the TVs. Reuters was really happy and very pleased. So that was good and exciting. I got an award for that. Not much else, I am a pretty dull person apart from that.

School life and Beyond

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any hidden talents?

MR BASKETT: Not really. Do you know what? I have a lot of friends that are really talented and I am really positively envious. I know people who are musical. I love music. I have a huge music collection but I am totally talentless. I wasn't even allowed to audition for the choir because as soon as I opened my mouth they said 'no no'. I did get into the recorder group at school by miming. But then when they asked me to do a solo and I was found out and thrown out. I have no musical talent whatsoever. My great grandfather and my great great grandfather and my aunts were all artists. I have no artistic talents either and I love paintings. I like the stuff but I've got no talent. So I have no talent at all, apart from that I'm quite good at quiz shows. Like university challenge, mastermind -

INTERVIEWER: Who wants to be a millionaire?

MR BASKETT: Yeah, those sorts of things. I'm quite good. But if I went on television I would be rubbish.

INTERVIEWER: You said you had an extensive music collection. Any favourites?

MR BASKETT: Lots of groups, I really like, The Clash, that sort of a thing from when I was young. I really like The Smiths. I quite like a lot of punk rock, but I've got a lot of stuff from jazz to soul. I like soul music, the older I get the better it is. My favourite singers are Kate Bush and Billy Bragg. But I don't dance. I'm rubbish at dancing. I like disco. My secret ambition is to secretly learn how to dance and then surprise people. So I'd go to these 'bailes de salon' and then surprise my wife by dancing properly.

INTERVIEWER: How about movies?

I don't watch them as much as I'd like to but my wife is a really big fan of the cinema. We do try to go occasionally and there are lots of great films that I've been to. I really love those Vietnam films, 'Deerhunter', 'Apocalypse Now', which I really liked when I was a kid. Recently I really enjoyed 'Argentina 1985' about the Argentina trials after the military dictatorship.

INTERVIEWER: A lot of historical ones I imagine-

MR BASKETT: A lot of historical ones. I like Spanish films. Not all of them but I like them. I like Almodovar. I think it's too much in some instances but I like it. But my favourites are drama type films. I actually have trouble with historical films because I think 'Oh that's not right though. I don't like that bit, or they've missed this bit out'. So I quite like just the normal drama but I hate horror and violence. I just can't take it and if anything is too emotional I cry all the time. Ever since I had kids, I cry really easily. It's not good because I watched 'La Vida es Bella' and I was just in tears just to think that - anyway.

INTERVIEWER: Books?

MR BASKETT: This is a big influence on me. I had a brilliant English teacher. Brilliant English and History teachers at school. I still remember my History lessons because they were so good. I had a teacher called Mr Cap who actually knew Philip Larkin when he was working in Hull. Mr Cap was a genius. You couldn't speak to him outside of the classroom because he was in a world of his own. He instilled the love of Literature. We read so much when we were doing the equivalent of GCSE. Books and books. We read lots of Shakespeare. I loved 'Middlemarch' which was just an amazing book. George Elliot's 'Middlemarch'. I really love the poetry of Gerald Manley Hopkins. I think I was just copying my English teacher. Whatever he loved, I loved. He was so enthusiastic about it which I loved as well. Dostoevsky's 'Crime and Punishment' as well. It was a book I really got into. I read it on a holiday quickly. When you read books quickly, they really get under your skin. I read all those classic teenage boy books like 'Catcher in the Rye' and 'Metamorphosis' and 'The trial'

INTERVIEWER: And you teach a lot of 20th century China and Russia and pre-World War II. Is there a historical period which you find the most interesting?

MR BASKETT: I wouldn't say the most interesting. I would say my preference is for Modern History. By Modern I mean 16th or 17th Century onwards because I think you just have more about the people, the motivations and a deeper

understanding of them. The other area is like having a jigsaw with not many pieces. With Modern History, you have more pieces in the jigsaw, so you can get more of an understanding that is why I like it. History is about people, motivation and mistakes, and it's about some really horrific things as well.

INTERVIEWER: This is a completely different question but would you say you have something you live by?

MR BASKETT: I try to "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" as a basic thing. Everyone is selfish, you just have to put that to one side to a degree. Just behave towards people as you'd like them to behave towards you. That's all. I think that is a reasonable way of living your life. Also, doing your best. I am from a background with my parents being from Northern Ireland, where they've got this work ethic that I think I have sort of inherited a bit.

INTERVIEWER: So, you've told us that you have been interested in politics from a young age. If you could start an organisation with an infinite budget and extensive resources what would it be and what issue would it tackle?

MR BASKETT: I think the real issue now, to be honest, is climate change. I am dismayed - I think we all go through those different feelings. One, we've got to do something, you know, act local, think global. Two, is just dismay and depression thinking, 'Wow, this is just too big, what the hell are we going to do about it?'. And three, blaming other people. I think that there needs to be some urgent action on that but also about how to live with climate change because it's already happening. I would start a political organisation that doesn't have the old-fashioned labels of left and right and actually looks at the problems from first principles. So things like climate change, cost of living, wealth inequality and distribution, and challenges that politicians just take from the position they're in and don't really think about solving the problem. I think education would be one of those things as well because our education model is something that has been tinkered with but never really looked at seriously because of course all politicians look at things with a 5 year window of opportunity rather than looking 10, 20, 30 years ahead. But that's what I'm interested in. Obviously I wouldn't be any good at it but the idea is that you look at it and you're an engaged citizen.

INTERVIEWER: What changes would you want to instil in the education system if you didn't have to worry about political myopia?

I don't like the way it's going in terms of 'you educate just to get a job' do you know what I mean? I don't like that; it's a utilitarian approach. The idea that you all need Maths because Maths will get you a job. Let's think about it a bit more deeply than that. We want to create people who are critical thinkers, who think about the world in front of them, who can look at the picture in front of them and be able to make decisions. There are lots of routes to do that. I think we need to have less fact-based exams, and even though in Britain it's meant to be more skills based it's still very much learning based and I think that we also need to take into account the fact that we've all got a massive computer in our pockets, a mobile phone. We need to teach how to navigate through that and make sense of it and at the same time remain critical thinkers. But also, still sustain the love of learning which is just so important because we're all going to have to learn and relearn as we go through life. There is no set body of knowledge that will hold us through another 20 years. I think that love of learning - seeing also that learning is not just what it'll allow you to do in the future but understanding the human condition. The human condition comes from understanding literature, art, drama as well as science and maths. I don't like this artificial divide into camps of arts and sciences. I think we overlap our interests in those things the better. Loads of great scientists were really interested in the arts and culture and loads of great writers were really interested in the sciences and maths. And there are massive philosophical overlaps in maths about concepts like zero and infinity which philosophically are really interesting. So obviously different people have different talents, but education needs to stop that division.

INTERVIEWER: Well, thank you very much for your time and for teaching here at Runnymede for all these years.

MR BASKETT: It's been really enjoyable, and it's always good to see people who are interested in the world around them in different ways. People that are curious and inquisitive, it's amazing, and you hold onto it for life because I do still remember some things I was taught while I was at school and I do think about it quite regularly. I've got a group of people I went to school with, there's probably about 15 of us. It's funny, the other day, that English teacher actually came up. Even the people that hated English remember him and respect him. Thanks guys.

ROBERT CRUMPTON INTERVIEW

Before we begin, I wanted to ask whether you're looking forward to this interview. Is it something that makes you nervous?

I don't mind doing interviews. I've done hour-long interviews in French for a French Canadian radio station about a Shakespeare film that I did. So, you know, I'd say it will always depend on what the questions are.

Why did you move to Madrid in the first place? Was it a difficult adjustment?

So I moved to Madrid all the way back in 2011. I was living in Manchester at the time, and I am returning to Manchester so there's a nicely cyclical quality to it. I had been learning Spanish at the Instituto Cervantes in Manchester, because I got to know a few Spanish people in Manchester when there was a big community there, particularly during the lost generation years, post crisis. So lots of Spaniards moved over to the UK, and were working in bars and hotels and restaurants. I got to know a few people socially and always felt frustrated that I couldn't communicate with them in Spanish when I already spoke French and felt that I wasn't a traditional English monoglot. So I was learning Spanish and I saw a job that was advertised in Madrid, as an English teacher and I thought what an amazing opportunity that would be. I applied and was flown over and had a lovely interview with Ms Parry and I met Mr Powell. I'll always remember Miss Quinn there at the desk and thinking 'wow, she is an amazing school secretary to have'. I was lucky enough to be offered the job and accepted it. That was in January of 2011, so I had enough time to reconcile with the fact that I was moving countries and to arrange everything that the move would require. I felt quite ready when I moved over and I obviously continued my Spanish lessons. So as an adjustment I think it was relatively smooth when I first moved over. I was lucky enough that Ms O'Driscoll had started at the same time and we immediately established a very strong friendship and a really good working relationship. There were lovely people in the English Department: Ms Parry was immediately a really good friend; she was the head of English at that point. The school was quite a bit smaller than it is now, but it meant that it maybe wasn't quite so overwhelming as an experience to join it. And I loved Madrid. I'd lived in London, and I was living in Manchester, which is a pretty big city, so there was not a big culture shock in terms of living in a big, urban environment.

Had you done any teaching before coming to Runnymede?

Yes. So at the time in Manchester, I was head of Performing Arts at a Sixth Form College. In fact, up until then, I'd only ever really taught sixth formers. So one of the adjustments was very much teaching Year 7 English, which wasn't a level that I'd had much experience of teaching before. I had taught before. I did some teaching in London while I was acting, teaching both at undergraduate level and then also sixth form level. So I had teaching experience, but teaching Key Stage Three, teaching IGCSE was something completely new as well, all of that was a bit of a baptism of fire. But that's the nature I think of being a teacher; you adapt to things and if you love your subject, or subjects in my case, you can always channel that love into different tasks and opportunities.

This brings us onto our next question. What was Runnymede like when you first arrived? What have been the most significant changes?

So Runnymede then was basically in the train. The English department was in the first few classrooms as you enter the train ground floor. Basically there were three English classrooms that we had, one where Mr Sowden was, one where I was and then a smaller one where Ms Parry was, and that was the English department. So obviously the department is significantly larger now. I had a Year 11 group that I think had eight students and then there were more students in the younger year groups and, to be honest, I had more kids doing A-level then than we do now. So that's one thing that hasn't necessarily changed, the numbers doing A-level English Lit. So, it was a smaller school, but all the same values, I think overall. There's still the same focus on academic excellence, but trying to offer a lot of support. Maybe there were then more students who had at least one British or American parent.

You think Runnymede got more Spanish?

I think a little bit, yeah, inevitably, because the numbers grew and there are only so many expat families and children to come to Runnymede. The minute you expand the demographic, then you're going to get more people who are sort of culturally and nationally, Spanish.

Was Drama an A level when you came to Runnymede?

No, Drama didn't exist in any way. One of the reasons that I was hired with my experience as both an actor and also as a Drama teacher was to bring extracurricular Drama back so that's when the Drama Club began. The Drama Club has gone through various different reconfigurations over the years. At the start, you auditioned for a play, there was no automatic place in Drama Club. The first production we did was *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. We did an hour long version of that in Shakespearean language, and there were students from Year 7 all the way through to Year 13 who were in that production. That was a big success and began the process of putting drama back on the map as something that you could do outside of school. And then because there were so many talented people who were getting involved with Drama Club after school and demonstrated such great performance ability, I thought after a couple of years that it would be a great idea to reintroduce Drama, as an IGCSE. So I did. I had to ask Mr. Powell and I prepared a document to persuade him that it was a good idea. Even at that point, it still had to be an additional option that you could do in your spare time for some students, because some students still felt that they would like to do it, but there were other subjects that they felt were more of a priority. All the way through the process, it's been making sure that people felt comfortable with the idea of doing Drama and then felt excited about the idea of doing Drama. And obviously, after two years, there were people who wanted to do it for A-level, so then that was introduced. Now as I leave I can be very proud of this. As I leave, Drama is being extended down to Key Stage 3 and also into the new Prep School. And so students will be doing Drama from Year 4 all the way up to Year 13. So, 11 years in some ways is a long time, but it's also a very short amount of time in the way the entire culture and structure of a school can adopt a subject and make it integral to the curriculum and the life of the school.

Lots of students are embarrassed when acting. How have you gotten past this as a teacher?

Well, first of all, I think it's providing a supportive space in lessons and making sure that people feel that they're not under pressure, at least at the start. We always begin Drama in Year 10 with lots of improvisations and games and icebreakers and people slowly start to build up their confidence. Then, after that, as well, I think because in Year 10, in particular, the focus is on group work, so it's not an individual monologue that you've got to get up there and do immediately. Instead, you're working collaboratively and you've got to communicate with others. That's something that I think Drama is so useful for, because frankly most subjects are individual, you are working on your own to learn and to study and to perform academically, whereas with the devised piece that we do for the IGCSE and then also for A-level, you depend on others, and they depend on you.

What are you going to miss the most?

I'm going to miss the students the most, from all my roles. I've loved being Head of Sixth Form with Ms O'Driscoll. I love helping students with their university decision making process and giving them advice about courses that they should potentially study and where they should study, and helping with Oxbridge preparation and with writing references. All of that has been absolute joy. I will miss that although that is something that of course, I'm carrying on in my new role at the new school that I'm going to, but these are new students that I won't know whereas some of you I've known since you were in Year 7, and to see the way that you've all grown and flourished is wonderful to me, and I will really miss not being there for that last step that you take towards your future. That I will miss, and I will miss students in lessons, particularly the ones who I've already been teaching for the IGCSE and the A-level. But I suppose that's the nature of any teacher moving on and there will always be some lessons that you will have to leave behind.

And what are you going to miss the least?

I think that I am very happy that the new Drama teacher will have a dedicated Drama space in which to have her lessons, which has always been something that for very understandable reasons has not been feasible and so I've been very flexible and adaptable when it comes to teaching Drama in classroom environments, and have been very happy to do so. But I think it's wonderful that drama now has different spaces; the Dining Hall, the Julia Powell and now the new classroom space. So it's great that the subject will also be supported by an appropriate space. 9

What do you consider to be your greatest achievement? This could be in Runnymede or outside.

Well in Runnymede, as I say, I think setting up Drama and, I love teaching English Literature as well, so continuing to do that and seeing students go on to study that subject at Oxford has been fantastic, working with Ms O'Driscoll to make the Sixth Form a really special place to study and to teach, and seeing the great success that we've had in terms of results on university entrances. And these are universities which are genuinely world leading, for a school in Madrid, that is, I think, a real achievement. I'm also proud of being able to create a career which my main focus of course has always been on the school but still being able to, to achieve things as a performer and as a director, setting up a theatre company performing in film, TV, commercials. So having the ability to fulfil my own creative potential, while also supporting students' fulfilment of their creative potential has been an achievement.

We'll get to the performance and acting a bit later but now, let's go back. What was it like growing up in Manchester?

Well, it was pretty good growing up in Manchester. I grew up in an area called Whalley Range, which is not the most salubrious of areas. I grew up as an only child but with two very loving parents who have always been very supportive of everything that I've wanted to do. They come from again, quite an artistic background, though my mum was a History teacher and she also worked in community arts and helped working class people publish their own poetry and writing. My dad studied Fine Arts and then worked in film and video. He then went on to be a BAFTA winning sound editor for television. So, I always had that understanding that you could follow paths which weren't necessarily conventional. And then I went to Manchester Grammar School, which is a very, very good school. That was a really strong academic challenge, which I enjoyed rising to, and you could choose the subjects that you wanted to do. It's one of the reasons why I support A-Levels so much, as opposed to other education systems because I feel that you should have the opportunity to do things that you're really good at, and not everybody is good at everything. So Manchester Grammar was great. It was also great because although at that point at my school, you couldn't do Drama as a subject, a bit like Runnymede it just wasn't part of the very high level academic curriculum. But they had amazingly dedicated teachers who wanted to direct extracurricular plays. So, when I was at school, I played Uncle Vanya in Chekhov's Uncle Vanya. We did our own leavers play in the summer of Year 12, it would have been because, when I was in Year 12, we did our own production of Dangerous Liaisons and then we took a play to the Edinburgh Festival for the first time in the summer between between A levels and university. That gave me the confidence to think that I was potentially a strong performer and that that's something that I might want to carry on doing as well. And of course, they were really supportive at helping to get me to Oxford and that was fantastic. Manchester, as it is now, has grown in its cultural energy and excitement and dynamism and self confidence since 20 years ago. I will be going back to a city which is a cultural hub, which has amazing theatres, amazing bars and gigs and people that will include some of my friends that I was very close with when I last lived there.

So moving on to your university life, we know you studied at Oxford. What was it like? What college were you in?

I went to Jesus College, mainly because when I applied my school said that the best History student in Manchester Grammar applies to Jesus because they always get in. So it was one of these instances of symbiosis, by which, at least then, some of the colleges and schools had created connections and because I was the best at History, I got to apply to go to Jesus. To be totally honest, Jesus wasn't really the best fit for me. In terms of the atmosphere, there were a lot of people who were quite interested in rowing, sports and not quite so interested in some of the cultural things that I was more engaged with. I went to study History and then I changed after my first year to do History and English. You can't do Drama at Oxford, but you could go and do plays. So over three years I did 25 plays as an actor or director. So very often I was going from the rehearsal of one play to the rehearsal of another play, and then the performance of another play, and then I would go and write an essay all night.

What was the first performance that you gave? And what's been your favourite performance?

First performance ever? Do you know what? I'm not sure what the first performance ever was. I think I played Jonah in a sort of primary school mini play of Jonah and the Whale. And then I changed and went to a different primary school and they gave me the role of the chancellor in some random play that they'd written. There was a bit at the end, they asked: 'Oh, if you want you can add some lines'. So I added an entire monologue. It was very funny and all the teachers were like 'oh my god, he's great.' So then at primary school, I played Fagin in Oliver, and played Abanazar in a production of Aladdin. So even at primary school you could play lead roles in full scale plays, because drama was quite a big thing at that primary school. So yeah, Jonah and the Whale, hadn't thought about that for a while.

And your favourite performance?

My favourite performance I'd say was probably playing Hamlet in 2017, here in Madrid. I loved that role. I did so much research and emotional investigation in that role and I was performing with amazing people. And for me, that was the most challenging role because of just how intense it is in terms of the emotional and physical development of the character over the course of the play. And there's everything from a fencing match at the end to showing that you're mad, and these long soliloquies to the audience. I always left every performance of that play exhausted but elated, because I really felt that I'd done justice to my interpretation of the character.

What does your acting technique look like? How do you prepare for roles? How do you get into character?

For my theatre company, we do a lot of the Stanislavskian rehearsal strategies that I learned at Drama School. So after Oxford, I trained as an actor in London, and part of that was focusing on techniques particularly around investigating what are called 'the given circumstances' or the information about the character. The idea that by improvising in character, you really get to know who the character is, instead of rehearsing the text. And that means that the text becomes integrated into your interpretation. So we do that with our theatre company here and I do that with any role that I'm playing. But also my acting technique is quite external, in the sense that I know how to use my voice to have a particular effect. Sometimes, I will apply that vocal technique externally, as well as trying to understand the character internally to try and create the best performance, and that's particularly relevant when you're doing a comedy play, like the one that I've just done. If you spend the whole time being internalised, you know, that's not what comedy is.



Robert Crumpton

A lot of people go to the theatre and view it purely as entertainment. Do you think it has a greater importance?

Absolutely. I think drama in general, and as a subject has an amazing importance, so pupils doing Drama here have often played roles or devised pieces that really allowed them to know themselves better and to become more aware of who they are and allow them to work with other people in a way that they just can't do in other parts of their life. Theatre has that ability to be cathartic, to allow you to have this emotional response, which leaves you sobbing and empty, but that was what Aristotle said tragedy should be. I also think it's incredibly thought provoking. You can go and watch it play and it allows you to think about issues. Think about the state of the world today and the state of the world in historical time periods. So, I think entertainment is always part of it but I have never left the theatre not wanting to have a conversation about what the play was about and what the production team did on stage that was interesting, that maybe was problematic and I think that's what I say to Drama students, particularly those who do the A-level; I say, for the rest of your life, you will be able to go to the theatre and come out and have the tools to evaluate it and be able to talk about what you saw on the stage in terms of design and performance and that will be a toolkit that you will carry for the rest of your life.

Would you say that you prefer working with cameras or live after having done both?

Oh, that's a good question. To be honest, I really love theatre work. being on stage, although it's ephemeral, it's there and then it's gone. Ultimately, it's much more of a pleasure to do. I like the challenge of camera work. So I like to know that, right, the shot is like this so you've got to do this, you've got to move there then and we need to see your hands at that point. So I like being able to put all that together and make it work, and then do it again and again and again. So the fundamental difference is that you might do 12 takes of a particular shot, one after the other. One of the things that I know I'm good at as an actor for camera, is making sure that every take is the same in terms of how they want it. Whereas, there are some actors that are just very draining as a process and by the 10th take, it's not quite got the energy, whereas I know just how much energy to use.

Have you ever had moments of that in your acting career as a whole of like, exhaustion giving up?

No, I've never given up. There have been times when I've not acted for a while, obviously during COVID, but then also when I moved back to Manchester before moving here, I wasn't acting for nearly two years, and I'm prepared for that to be the case when I move back to Manchester now. I'm prepared that there will be a time when I won't necessarily be doing any acting. But no, I think there's no there's never been a performance where something has gone so horribly wrong that I haven't been able to rescue it and I've never felt too exhausted by something that I've not been able to function in the other aspects of my life. I think it's because I thrive on doing things.

Are there any roles that you would like to play in the theatre but haven't had the chance to yet?

Very good question. To be honest, doing Macbeth in November ticked a big box for me, and I have to say it was almost one of the reasons why I felt that I could leave Madrid because I felt that I'd done the final Shakespearean lead that I really wanted to do here in Madrid, with this theatre company and have that autonomy. So having played Hamlet and played Macbeth, there's no role now, at least for my age bracket, that I feel that I desperately want to play. When I'm older, King Lear is obviously an amazing and devastating role, but I'm not there yet.

Do you have any other hobbies besides acting?

Well, yes, I do. I love watching football. I love to read obviously, and I like going to watch the tennis and I should play it more. And going to galleries and exhibitions and spending time with friends. That fills up what time I have left.



Do you have any role models?

Oh, good question. My Drama teacher at school who, when Drama was being introduced particularly as an extracurricular subject, was amazing. He was the one who took us to the Edinburgh Festival. He really showed me that you could be a Drama teacher and still do other things. He was a big influence on me. So was my History tutor at Oxford Niall Ferguson, who, despite being completely opposite to me in terms of political views, (he's very right wing) I just thought he was an amazing lecturer and an amazing tutor and really got the best out of his pupils and was able to do that while also writing massively popular historical texts and doing TV documentaries. He made me see you can be a brilliant teacher, but find the hinterland, which is something that Denis Healey a former Labour cabinet minister and Chancellor called the idea of what is behind you. As a professional person you've also got other things which fulfil you, and for me, that ultimately means that I think I'm a better teacher for having that hinterland.

Do you have any advice for current Runnymedeians, future Runnymedeians? I think in particular, the current Lower Sixth.

I just really want you to do what you enjoy and what you're good at at university. Although I completely understand the financial and cultural circumstances that you come from, that's your context. I know that, to some people, the thought of paying 26,000 pounds a year for three years to do a course that isn't viewed as being vocationally useful, or respectable, in the UK, I understand that that's difficult. I've spent more than a decade here explaining to people that doing English or History or Politics will have intrinsic value in terms of what you learn, but perhaps more importantly, the skills that you develop. So we always make this point, Ms O'Driscoll and myself, that basically whatever you study, you will gain skills that can be transferred into any sector of the professional world. That is the way the UK job market works. It's the way the US job market works in most cases. I think it's important to remember that, so do what you love, and be true to yourself and recognise that Runnymede will provide you with these amazing opportunities. Take advantage of them. But as I come to the end of my time at Runnymede, I suppose it's important to recognise that your time at Runnymede also ends and you are also then able to use what you've learned and who you are, but then you can explore yourself and become the best version of yourself, wherever you end up.



(Image by human+nightcafe)

Ethical Challenges of Globalisation

by Agnes H, Year 12

Inditex and Zara: the secrets behind the popular fashion retailer.

Our world is evolving and becoming increasingly connected and interdependent. From our privileged western perspective, it's easy to see the benefits of globalisation. It's allowed us to learn more about other people and cultures, travel more and try and see new things. Of course, it has also had negative effects. The consequences of globalisation can be seen in the damaging changes in our physical environment. It could be seen that globalisation has simply allowed the rich to get richer and those in charge to become more powerful, with no thoughts for our planet. Given these issues, are we right to embrace globalisation so enthusiastically, or should we be more skeptical?

TNCs, or transnational corporations, have played a huge role in the rapid globalisation that we have seen over the last decades. Globalisation, to the extent that we have seen it happen, would not have been possible without them.

A TNC, is 'a company that is controlled from its home country but has large operations in many different countries.' This, by definition, increases globalisation as it connects people and places, and increases flows of capital, raw materials and produced goods. It does of course, come with challenges, including ethical ones.

TNCs typically have a much worse impact on the environment than local, smaller businesses, due to the large carbon footprint of their products and the cheaper materials they tend to use, which are not usually the most ecologically friendly option.

Inditex is probably Spain's most visible and successful TNC and analysing its impact can help us to understand globalisation better. You may not have heard of Inditex but you probably have some of its products. It is a TNC, headquartered in A Coruña, and is the holding company for a group of fashion brands that we know and love including Zara, Oysho, Bershka, Massimo Dutti and Pull&Bear. The company has stores in more than 400 cities, over five continents. In 2021 the textile giant had a staggering 165,000 employees. As it turns out, Inditex is not such a giant on the ethical front. The following points will be focusing on Zara, as it is the biggest retailer that Inditex holds.

Zara is causing detrimental environmental impacts. Despite its recent 'Closing the loop' program, which allows buyers to return used clothes once they're done with them, and the company setting target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, Zara is not doing enough.

There is no evidence that it is on track to meet the reduced emission target or attempting to reduce textile waste either. Inditex reported €3.2 billion in profits in 2021. With such enormous gains, the company should be making use of more environmentally friendly practices, such as using eco-friendly materials or more energy efficient machinery.

However, we must consider our role in all of this too. As easy as it is to criticise companies like Zara, and demand that they do better, really, it is up to us to solve the problem. It's easy, in our privileged western societies, to buy the clothes, oblivious, or at least happy to ignore the consequences.



(Image by human+nightcafe)

The reality is though, that as long as we continue to buy the company will continue to destroy more vulnerable societies. This poses the question; can we really blame TNCs, or do we have to look in the mirror for the culprit.

With respect to animal welfare , Zara is also lacking. It has strictly banned the use of fur, angora (a particular type of rabbit fur) and stocking products that have been tested on animals. They do, nevertheless, use leather, down (duck or geese feathers used as insulators) and exotic animal fur.

Inditex and more specifically, Zara, is not the only company like this. It's one of the many that we see and interact with in our everyday lives that is making decisions that damage the environment and people on a daily basis. The question we have to ask is; are these damaging actions justified?

Ultimately, the consumer decides whether or not it's ethical. You might argue that, through the purchase of products provided by TNCs, consumers make this decision about whether their practices are ethical or not. However, we make knowingly unethical decisions daily. The enormous success of Inditex suggests that most people are choosing to ignore the ethical challenges.

Economically, Inditex plays a vital role to millions, especially with economic struggles like the ones that we are currently facing. Zara's pricing structure, and that of Pull&Bear or Bershka is at the mid to lower end. This makes it readily available for people from almost all socio-economic backgrounds.

Globalisation has made the growth of companies like Inditex possible, and this has been very positive for many, including us who enjoy buying its products. However, it poses ethical questions that cannot be ignored. We must consider our part in this too, and push for the change we want to see.



(Image by human+nightcafe)

(Image by human+nightcafe)



Shein and the Truth about Mass Production

by Sofia P, Year 12

Over quarantine, due to the fact that people couldn't go outside, people turned to online stores to buy anything; from clothes to furniture to dogs even, people had everything shipped safely to their house. This culture of buying easily and quickly from the comfort of your own home has only increased since covid. Although the ability to buy anything from anywhere with just the click of a button is very attractive, we must also realise that fast fashion brands have been especially detrimental for the environment and for worker health.

Shops like Shein sadly produce all their inventory in sweatshops in Thailand and China where basic labour laws (like child labour laws, minimum wage and more) are habitually overlooked. The conditions that the workers are exposed to are so abysmal that they have tried to beg for help many times by sending signals to the shoppers; signals like leaving notes and even sewing a special tag that said "help me". Instead of holding themselves accountable, however, Shein launched a social media campaign where they said that the tag was on purpose and it was actually asking you to help keep the clothes in good condition by washing them carefully.

Social media has fuelled the consumerist nature of people by constantly shoving new trends and products that they must have because it's the 'best thing ever'. Because of this, the rise of microtrends has been seen. These microtrends usually consist of bold patterns, flashy feathers, and vivid colours which are disposed of just as quickly as they're bought. This is unsustainable as it makes the life cycle of clothes not only notably shorter but also more damaging as the clothes not only start to pile up in landfills but also in thrift stores, where Shein clothes are taking over the racks.

In order to give clothes a more sustainable life cycle, we should focus on where they end up after we're done with them. Personally, I usually sell my clothes on second-hand apps like depop or donate them to a church where they are distributed to the people who need them the most. Also, to lengthen the life cycle of the clothes, we should invest in timeless closet staples which are assured not to go out of fashion in a matter of weeks; which is the case with most micro trends.

Not only does this save the environment, but it also saves the money that would have been spent on clothes that would've only been worn once.

The Great Pacific Garbage Patch

by Sol F, Year 12

The Great Garbage Patch is a collection of marine debris in the North Pacific Ocean which has grown since its discovery in 1973 and now contains an estimated number of 1.8 trillion pieces of plastic within an area twice the size of France.

Imagine a plastic water bottle is discarded off the coast of California; what will happen next? It will follow the California Current south towards Mexico. There it may catch the North Equatorial Current, which crosses the vast Pacific. Near the coast of Japan, the bottle may travel north on the powerful Kuroshiro Current. Finally, the bottle will travel eastward on the North Pacific Current. Then the gently rolling vortexes of the Eastern and Western Garbage Patches will gradually draw the bottle in.

All this rubbish is heavily disrupting the ocean ecosystems. For example, different species have crossed into new territories due to large pieces of rubbish. However, a more imminent threat lurks beneath the waves; tiny bits of microplastics concentrate down there and are eaten by filter feeders (such as the sandcastle worm). These eventually make their way into the guts of larger predators. In addition, oceanographers recently discovered that about 70% of the marine debris actually sinks to the bottom of the ocean.

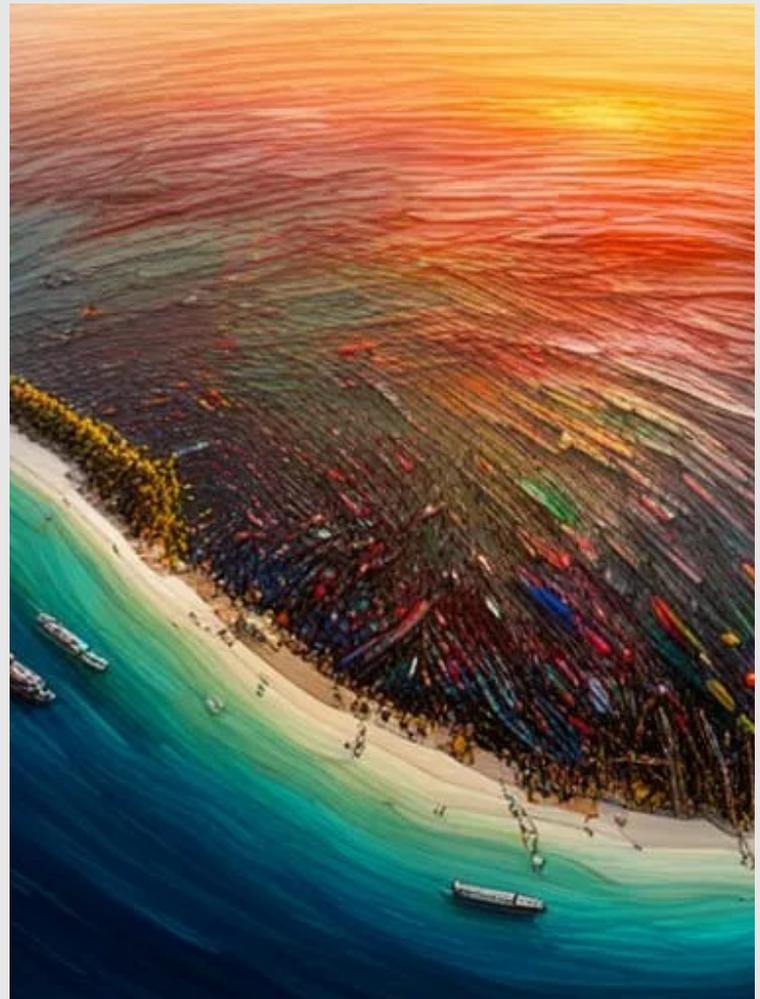
Microplastics are made by a process known as photo degradation. In the ocean, the sun breaks down these plastics into tinier and tinier pieces. Most of them come from plastic bags, bottle caps, plastic water bottles and Styrofoam cups. These disturb marine food webs by collecting near the surface and blocking sunlight from reaching plankton and algae below. These are the most common producers in the marine food web (organisms that can produce their own nutrients from carbon and sunlight).

These dangers are compounded by the fact that plastics absorb and release harmful pollutants. When they breakdown, they release colorants and chemicals that have been linked to environmental and health problems. Conversely, plastics also absorb pollutants from seawater which when consumed by marine life are harmful.

Sadly, the Great Pacific Garbage Patch is not the only marine garbage vortex, its just the biggest. The Atlantic and Indian Oceans both have trash vortexes and even shipping routes in smaller bodies of water, such as the North Sea, are developing garbage patches.



(Image by human+nightcafe)



(Image by human+nightcafe)

Earth Day by Leni G and Claudia G, Year 9

This month, Runnymede College celebrated Earth Day with Years 7 to 9 (Key Stage 3) all getting involved in various activities during both form time and as part of the after school curriculum. We, as a community, believe that Earth Day is important because it is vital not only to educate people about our environment but to additionally act on this information in a whole range of ways, including recycling or volunteering. Over the years, Earth Day has been recognised worldwide by more than 1 billion people and by over 193 countries. It was first held on April 22nd, 1970, and has been celebrated annually ever since. The official topic for this year is 'Invest In Our Planet'.

The Runnymede community has been enthusiastically celebrating Earth day values. Many activities and events have been organised by the Geography department in order to spread awareness to help our beautiful environment. The Runnymede Creative Club got involved too, helping with the 'Runnymede Pledge Tree'. During form time, students helped by giving a paper to fill in. These papers contained 'Earth Day pledges' written by students and teachers of the Runnymede community. These pledges are now displayed at the school dining room to raise awareness and encompass pledges from our entire community.

Students have also been encouraged to read through guidance to help our environment on the Earth Day website! And take a look at some of the pledges to get some ideas too.

Biosensors: What are they?

by Isabella R, Year 12

Going to the doctor's might be daunting sometimes. I'm sure we've all at some point said to anyone listening, "I don't want to go!" But, what if you were able to stop these monotonous visits and instead check these vitals on your phone, for example? Or simply avoid the terrifying needles and various tests altogether?

A biosensor is a typically small, highly organised device that allows for the measurement of biomarkers in the body (molecules that are analysed in order to give an idea about the health and disease of the user).

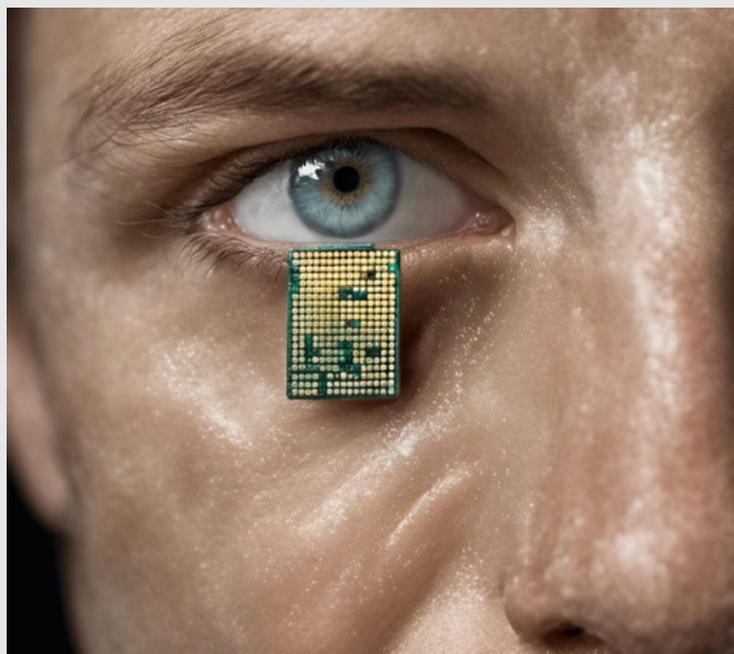
The biosensor can act directly on the body (like the glucose sensors you might often see being used by patients who have diabetes), in which case the device gives continuous readings. Or, the biosensor can act outside the body, in which case one needs to add direct samples of biomarkers from the body (ie blood) for them to be analysed and interpreted each time one desires a reading.

You might be wondering what the point of these seemingly unnecessary devices is. Well, one of the main advantages of a biosensor is that doctors are always able to obtain the information they need in order to improve the patient's treatment, stop any unnecessary hospital visits (which might be time-consuming and costly), and aid the user in self-regulation of their lifestyle (since the users themselves have a direct indicator of their health). In this way not only is the treatment of the disease made more effective, but so too is the diagnosis! In other words, one can detect a disease much sooner through constantly measuring of a person's vitals!

There are 4 main components to a biosensor:

1. Molecular recognition process: they contain recognition molecules that bind to the biomarker. The recognition molecules themselves are biological molecules such as an aptamer, enzymes, or antibodies, which are able to interact with the biomarker and bind to it.
2. Signal generator process: when the recognition molecule binds to the biomarker, a signal is produced which can be 1) an electrical signal 2) a magnetic signal 3) an optical signal.
3. Disposable sensor device: the previous two processes of the molecular recognition and signal generator processes occur here.
4. Reader instrument: this device interprets and measures the signal produced in the signal generator process, and projects it as familiar and meaningful data to the user. These reader instruments can incorporate piezoelectric properties, which will be discussed now, that can ultimately produce an electrical signal which can be redirected to your phone!

The piezoelectric effect allows us to convert a mechanical change (which can be caused by a mass change, and so, inherently, by any chemical reaction also!) into an electrical signal. In order to do this, we require a piezoelectric material, which can generate voltage when external stress (a mechanical action) is applied. An example of this material is "Quartz Crystal", a piezoelectric crystal. Quartz



(Image by human+nightcafe)

crystal consists of a hexagonal arrangement of Si and O bonded together. Due to the difference in electronegativity between Silicon and Oxygen (with the oxygen being more electronegative and the Silicon being less electronegative), a permanent dipole is created in their bond (with oxygen being delta negative and the silicon being delta positive). This permanent dipole acts across the hexagon, and due to its unique arrangement, the charge is all concentrated at the centre.

Yet, when a force is applied to our material, this centre of charge of negative and positive charges no longer coincides, ie: now there is a positive concentration of the charge and a negative concentration of the charge. This process creates an electric field between the positive and negative charges, an electric current. On a larger scale, numerous small potential differences across each molecule add up to a larger voltage created when more hexagons are being used. So, by applying stress to a polarised material, we are able to generate an electric current. The more hexagons (which act as cells) we have, the more voltage is created from this piezoelectric effect!

Then, this electrical signal which has been produced can be reincorporated as a vibration or a resonance frequency which is afterwards read by a reader instrument on the biosensor. To facilitate detection, the reader instrument can redirect its signal via bluetooth to an application on a phone or computer, for example.

By implementing biosensors therefore, not only will the ordeal of going to the doctors decrease, but personalised medicine and effective diagnosis and treatment will increase. What a fascinating prospect!



(Image by human+nightcafe)

Does Rosemary help Children's Memory?

by Elspeth L, Year 7

I first started to get interested in this question as I was passing the television one day. The news was on and I heard the question, 'Is there anything that can help children to have less stress in exams by helping improve their memory?' I was interested straight away, so I sat on the sofa and watched the program. The people talking about this went to a rosemary factory, and explained that rosemary *might* help children's memory. I thought, 'Wow, is that even possible? And if it is, would this be the end of the stress of studying for tough tests?' I was surely over-reacting. I mean, they weren't even sure it was true, were they? I researched a bit and found out more about it, just to make sure they were telling the truth.

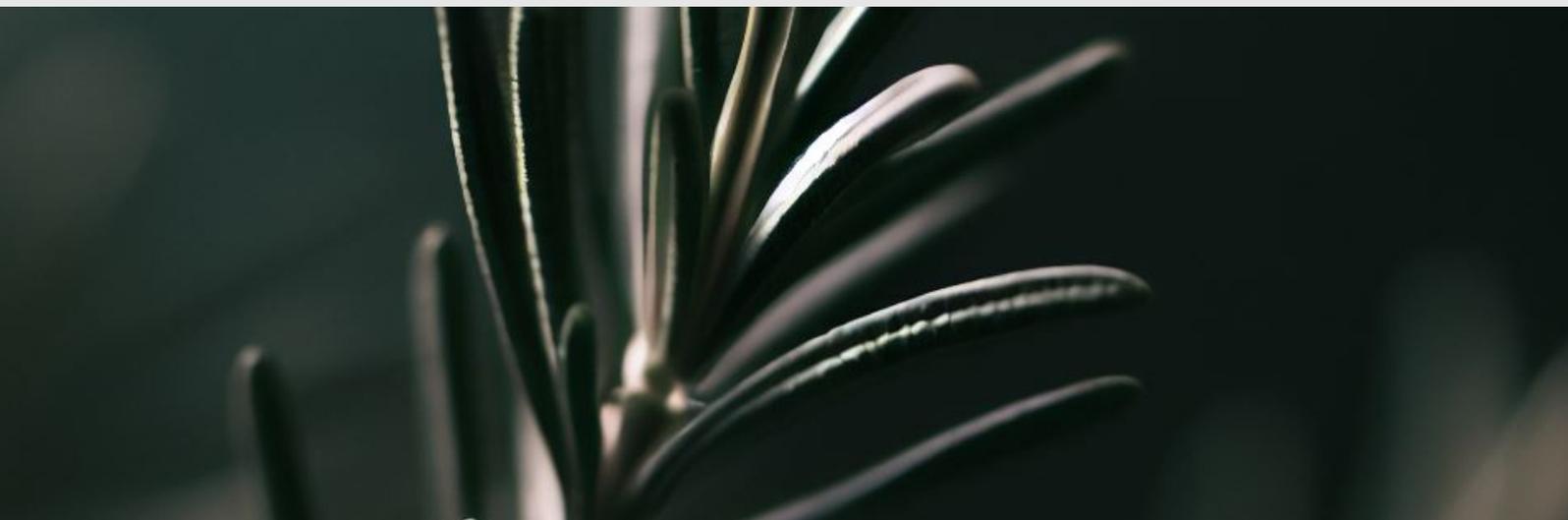
This is what I found out:

- IT WAS TRUE!
- It would be significant after *six months* of usage
- It help stress and anxiety
- They are sure if it works for everyone

I still couldn't believe it. Maybe it was fake? But I do like the smell of it, so maybe I could pick some rosemary in the summer and put it in a glass of water to fill the room with a rosemary smell. All I have to do is wait until summer comes. Though then I will have to wait SIX MONTHS! That may be a little bit too long for me. But I suppose being patient is considered a virtue... or something like that. I wanted to research a little more and see what else could help my memory, but I got too tired and went to bed. I will have to find out another day...



(Image by human+nightcafe)



(Image by human+nightcafe)

Chip War or Cold War?

by Eva S, Year 12

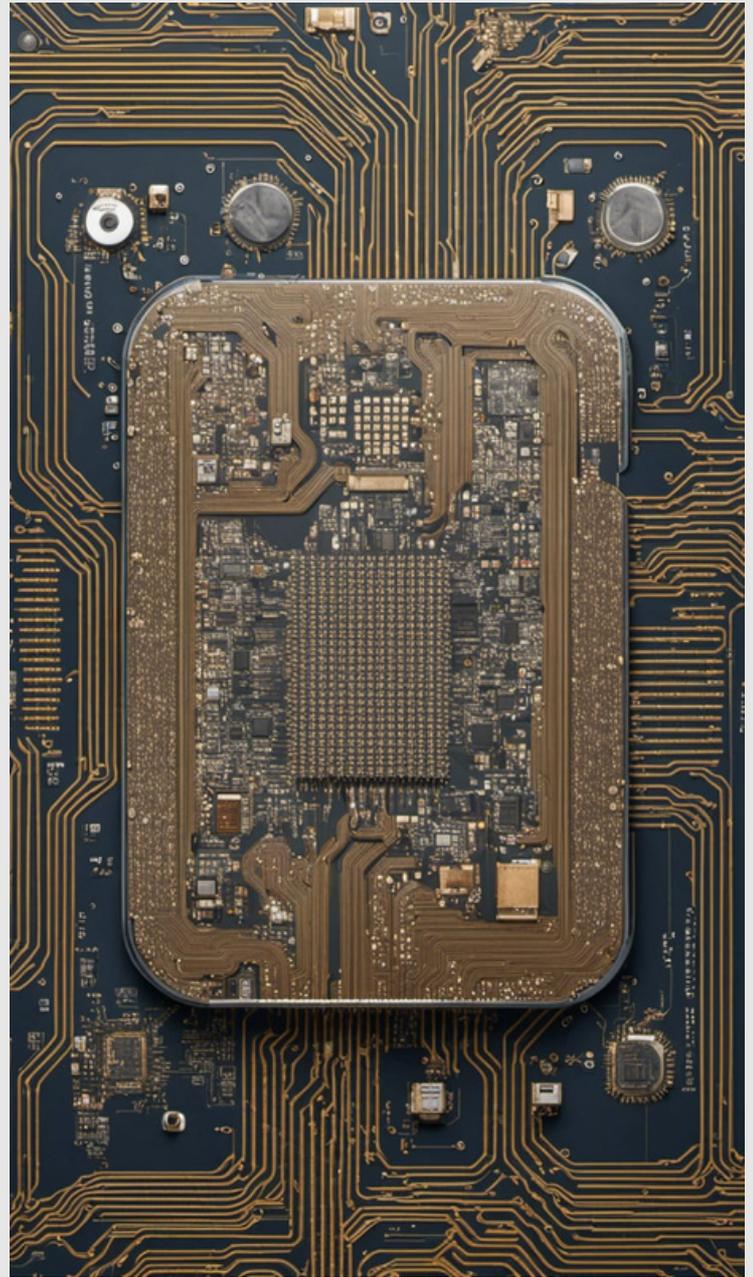
Just six months ago, semiconductors were the rulers of the world, the driving force of almost every technological device in existence. Firms such as Intel were booming and expanding at an unbelievable rate, attempting to satisfy consumer needs and wants. Today, demand for these micro silicon pieces has become practically stagnant.

There are several reasons that explain such a transition, such as rapidly increasing inflation and the combination of lack and over supply of certain chips. However, the most notable driver of this is Biden's recent implementation of new restrictions which limit China's access to chipmaking programs and appliances. There are very few exceptions to this, with foreign companies that have facilities in China, such as SK Hynix, being allowed certain permissions to receive US imported apparatus.

It is important to note though that this whole technological rivalry really began under Trump, who imposed sanctions on China's major tech corporation Huawei, banning exports of American microchips essential for its products, causing a shrinkage in revenue by 1/3. The continuation of this so-called 'tech war' has stimulated CCP's drive to reach techno-nationalism in the PRC. This is further demonstrated by Xi Jinping mentioning 'technology' 40 times in his speech at the recent party congress, as well as the addition of science and technology as the central target of the development of China. The economy has played a key role in encouraging this growth, with the central bank creating low interest loans in order for scientific firms and labs to continue developing innovative research.

Despite China's attempt to recover as rapidly as possible from this attack, there have been some inevitable implications on China. The precision in the etching of thin slices of silicon, essential in photovoltaics used for the creation of solar cells, has still not been perfected in China. This is an area that China used to be heavily dependent on imports for, however will now have to be self sufficient in. Until it achieves this, which is likely to be in a two or three year time frame, China's industry concerning aspects of silicon wafers has consequently been halted. Furthermore, not only has the US banned its own market from exporting chips to China, it has also begun giving ultimatums to foreign firms, such as the Netherlands' ASML. This firm could decide to either ban all exports to China or terminate any relationship with US markets. Similar decisions have already been conducted with other national manufacturers ranging from Japan to South Korea.

There is no denying that these 'sanctions' are having and will continue to have negative repercussions for the US too. So far, its main goal of slowing China as a nation and an economy seems to only be temporary. Many China-owned chip manufacturers are moving their facilities in order to bypass these restrictions. Subsequently, they are still able to import from foreign countries, hence rendering this attack ineffective. In addition to this, it is vital that the US be careful in its next moves concerning supply chain management. Due to its heavy reliance on imports for basic commodities, the US has to watch



(Image by human+nightcafe)

its political relationships, particularly in East Asia. China has significant boron reserves and Russia has crucial supplies of zinc, two materials essential in developing technology. Although this may not seem an urgent matter for the US today, as they import almost all necessary raw materials from Australia, they must manoeuvre the situation wisely, as it will determine their future financial security.

Surprisingly, this geopolitical conflict is one that has been rather silent in the past few weeks, but it is essential that it not be underestimated. This is more than a sanction; it is an admission of weakness on behalf of the US, recognising that in order to be superior to China in this race, it must rid them of their legs and therefore their capacity to overtake the US economically. This acknowledges the current strength of China as a rapidly growing nation, and its threatening position as a financial rival. Although an extreme comparison, one could argue that it resembles tensions present in the cold war, only with a modern twist. A technological cold war has essentially just begun.



(Image by human+nightcafe)

The Role of the Prisoner Dilemma

by Eva S, Year 12

The prisoner's dilemma is arguably one of the most vital of game theories, illustrating a conflict between individual rationality and collective rationality. Developed in 1950 by mathematicians Merrill Flood and Melvin Dresher, and later explored by Albert William Tucker, this notion gave way to multiple political and philosophical discussions of the 21st century. One of the reasons for its frequent appearance is how easily applicable it is to current disputes and tensions, whereby nations seem to continuously act in their self-interests resulting in a suboptimal or worse outcome, which impacts both participants. This theory portrays the importance of trust, communication, and cooperation in achieving mutually beneficial results, and tragically our continuous inability to achieve that communication and cooperation.

For those who are unfamiliar with the prisoners' dilemma, the most common explanation goes as follows. The prosecutor offers each suspect a deal: if one suspect confesses and testifies against the other, he will go free while the other suspect will receive a harsher sentence. If neither suspect confesses, they will both receive a moderate sentence. If both suspects confess, they will both receive a harsh sentence. The conundrum arises because each suspect has an incentive to confess, regardless of what the other suspect does. The clear paradox here is that while it would be ideal for both suspects to remain silent and receive a moderate sentence, their pursuit of personal interest leads them to confess and hence receive a harsh sentence, placing them both in a worse off position.

One can blame this flawed result widely on human nature. Our deep rooted sense of paranoia and inherent distrust towards our enemies, and commonly our allies too, has left us in an extremely vulnerable position in terms of finding a solution to this problem. It is this underlying fear of never truly knowing another one's intentions that fuels our desire to always manoeuvre ourselves in a way which we consider the 'most beneficial' or perhaps the 'safest'. This pattern can be clearly witnessed when examining interactions between nations, with the most notable example being that of the Cold War.

Two developed, competent nations found it astonishingly difficult to anticipate or understand each other's reactions to the contested issues of the time. This consequently led to one of the largest arms races in history, along with a multitude of proxy wars which one can argue continue to this very day. The most memorable and dangerous demonstration of this was the emergence of the Cuban Missile Crisis which put the military doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction to the test. After 13 days of tension, with the whole globe at potential risk of nuclear annihilation, an agreement was reached. The Soviet Union removed the missile in exchange for the US's removal of the naval blockade on Cuba as well as a public declaration that they would not invade the nation. In this case the "prisoner's dilemma" is evident: each side can cooperate to avoid utterly obliterating each other, or they can defect and shoot first, assuring total destruction of their countries and the majority of the world. Fortunately for us all, the latter was avoided due to the presence of MAD and the game theory behind it; however, this is not to say that the arms race ever came to a halt. Neither nation had an incentive to reduce their nuclear arsenal whilst the other expanded theirs. This highlights the basic principle that the intentions of states towards each other are dormant and hence the ability to make a sane and reasonable decision becomes to many countries an impossible task, and thus a huge sacrifice to the greater good.

With numerous conflicts emerging and escalating over these past decades, from the Sino-American dynamic to the Audi-Iranian conflict, it begs the question - is there really any solution to the dilemma? Surely to fully solve the outcome, one would have to alter the psychology of the human race, programming our minds into a state of trust and social cohesion that an idealist could only dream of. Or maybe it is a matter of glueing ideological and religious schisms, in order to achieve a society that is not hungry for territorial expansions and power domination? However, there is also room for a less extreme, but conveniently vague resolution. We could potentially discourage climbing the ladder of individual rationale by introducing incentives for participants to make optimal outcomes look beneficial for each, whilst motivating them to cooperate and interact. There is clearly much room for speculation and utopianism, but is there truly a tangible solution to the prisoner's dilemma? I leave that thought to the readers and the leaders of the world.



(Image by human+nightcafe)

The Russia-Ukraine War One Year On

by Fernando G, Year 12

The 24th February 2023 marks 365 days of the biggest invasion in Europe since the Second World War. Russia does not look like they will stop the aggression any time soon; they may even escalate it even further. On the other hand, the Ukrainian army looks invincible as they are determined not to end up under Russia's dictatorship ever again.

Russia has lost approximately 175,000 soldiers, a mind-blowing number considering that in the 9 year Afghanistan War Russia fought in the 80s, they only lost around 15,000 men. 175,000 in a year, all whilst Western intelligence is suggesting that Putin may be planning the biggest offensive since the start of the war. Putin has clearly lost his mind. If Putin goes on and launches a full-scale invasion again, he will most likely have to resort to drafting civilian people into the army, which would most likely turn the Russians against him and Putin's position as president may be in danger.

However, the most likely outcome for the future, would be that Putin tries to consolidate the current territory he has already invaded or gain a little more. This is what strategically makes the most sense, as Putin has already seen the massive human losses that a full-scale invasion causes, so he rationally will not want to risk losing so many soldiers again. This scenario would be a victory for Putin, as his main objective of making the border with NATO bigger, has been fulfilled, not as much as he initially wanted, but probably enough to convince the Russian population that this war has made sense, securing their position for the future.

A peace agreement between Russia and Ukraine is very unlikely to happen, as Putin knows that his fate will depend on this war; therefore a peace agreement with Ukraine is likely to be seen as a humiliation of Russia, one that would get Putin removed from power. It could be perhaps more likely that Putin escalates the war using nuclear weapons against Ukraine. We hope, of course, that this will not happen, but it will depend on if Putin sees it necessary: if his full scale invasion is not successful, if his position in power is damaged or if he wants to rapidly end the war. We can not predict the response of the world to this.

In conclusion, the future of the war will depend on how much Putin has lost his mind and how much support Russia will continue receiving from China. The war will most likely drag on for at least another year, whilst Russia tries to consolidate their invaded territory in Ukraine. In the meantime, we can only hope for the best.



Image by Alejandra O, Year 13

Differing Views on Migration

by Felix A, Year 12

The topic of migration is one that has garnered much attention in recent years, particularly in the United States where differing views on the issue have led to increased political polarisation. This essay will examine the impacts of differing views on migration, including increased political polarisation in the US between Republicans and Democrats, and the conditions that migrants are subjected to at the US border. One of the key impacts of differing views on migration is increased political polarisation. In the US, the issue of migration has become highly politicised, with Republicans and Democrats holding vastly different views on the matter. Republicans generally take a more hard-line approach, advocating for stricter immigration policies and increased border security, while Democrats tend to be more supportive of migrant rights and the need for comprehensive immigration reform. This political polarisation has led to a highly charged and divisive debate, with little room for compromise or cooperation.

In terms of the quantity of migrants in the US, the numbers are staggering. According to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services, there are approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the US. Additionally, there are hundreds of thousands of people waiting to enter the country, with many seeking asylum from violence and poverty in their home countries. The sheer scale of this migration has put enormous pressure on the US immigration system, leading to long wait times, poor conditions, and widespread frustration and anger.

One of the most pressing issues facing migrants in the US is the poor conditions they are subjected to at the border. Migrants attempting to enter the US often face harsh and inhumane conditions, including prolonged detention in overcrowded facilities, limited access to food, water, and medical care, and abuse at the hands of border patrol agents. These conditions have been widely criticised by human rights organisations, with reports of children dying in border patrol custody and widespread abuse and neglect being documented.

Despite the difficult conditions that migrants face, the US government has made little effort to improve the situation. In fact, the Trump administration's hard-line approach to immigration only made things worse, with reports of widespread human rights abuses and inhumane conditions becoming increasingly common. The Trump administration's "Zero Tolerance" policy, which led to the separation of families at the border, was particularly controversial and drew widespread criticism from human rights groups and the international community.

The impacts of differing views on migration extend beyond just the US. In Europe, the issue of migration has become a major political issue, with far-right nationalist movements gaining traction and pushing anti-immigrant policies. This has led to a rise in xenophobia and racism, with migrants and refugees being targeted and subjected to hate crimes. Additionally, many European countries have implemented strict border controls and immigration policies, leaving migrants and refugees trapped in squalid conditions in camps and detention centres.

In conclusion, the impacts of differing views on migration are far-reaching and have significant consequences for both migrants and society as a whole. The increased political polarisation in the US has led to a highly charged and divisive debate, with little room for compromise or cooperation. The poor conditions that migrants are subjected to at the US border, combined with the sheer scale of migration, have put enormous pressure on the immigration system and have led to widespread frustration and anger. The issue of migration is a complex and multifaceted one that requires a comprehensive and compassionate approach, rather than a political one.



Image by Klara T, Year 12



Image by Luz A, Year 13

An Epidemic of Self-censorship

by Micaela G, Year 12

Freedom of speech is widely believed to be an exceedingly important component of democratic societies, supporting the right of an individual or a community to articulate their opinions and ideas without fear of retaliation, censorship, or legal sanction. However, censorship has also always had a place in society, at times showing itself boldly and violently and at others seeping discreetly around us. Today, much of this censorship is magnified through the internet and as this new dimension remains novel to us, we are not fully aware of its effects.

Political correctness is a term used to describe language, policies, or measures that are intended to avoid offence or disadvantage to members of particular groups in today's society. I believe political correctness is positive, but it is a double-edged sword. In the 1950s the much adored Elvis Presley was seen as offensive as a result of his 'inappropriate' dancing that scandalised the American public. This led to his attempted censorship, and Elvis was truly seen as a threat to some, and overruled as dangerous.

So, who decides what is 'offensive'? Where do you draw the line? Opinions cannot be aligned to the comfort of everybody else. They are supposed to be views or judgements formed about something, not necessarily based entirely on fact or knowledge, as individual experiences and beliefs influence them too. Up to what point is political correctness limiting social interactions? Especially when the consequences to an opinion being 'inappropriate' or just plainly wrong are often so disproportionate. To what extent is political correctness invading the basic necessity of debate? Many believe that some opinions 'incite' hatred towards causes or communities, yet, are these opinions inciting these ideas, or revealing them?

In this day and age, 'cancel culture' is entrapping us all in this epidemic of self-censorship, with an unsettling undertone. The firing of professors or cancelling of political commentators are events that get media attention and become responsible for the general chilling of our atmosphere. Peter Boghossian is a philosophy professor specialised in critical thinking who taught at Portland State. He said that in 2012 the university campus had a sudden 'explosion' of different viewpoints, therefore, he brought in speakers from diverse ideological schools of thinking into his class. Amongst other speakers, Boghossian brought Phil Vascher, the Christian cartoonist, famous for 'Veggie Tales', to his atheism course. Whilst there, he gave his opinion on the 'woke campus orthodoxy' and these two actions made him a target for the students that had been offended. He was met with a range of accusations as well as frightening threats from students, both in person and online. He fought back against these accusations to clear his name, and by September 2021 joined the University of Austin that values 'academic freedom'. This was after having faced nearly 7 years of constant defamation and baseless accusations. Before he left he said, "Our institutions are irretrievably broken, so now I'm trying to build something new".

Self-censorship has become contagious as it manifests itself online as well as in public denunciations via the press. During China's communist regime, there would be public spectacles during which people accused of being "class enemies" were publicly humiliated, accused, beaten and tortured, even by people who they knew and would eventually disappear. Of course, it does not happen on this scale but today, many people disappear metaphorically. During the 20th Century, under the regimes in China and Russia,

Literature and the Arts were monitored strictly and if they were not compatible with the regime's way of thinking, the artists and authors were declared 'political enemies'. Today, platforms are shut down, people lose their jobs and find it terribly difficult to find another. The more frightening or oppressive authoritarian regimes are, the easier it is to challenge, because you know where you stand. You would think that hushed voices in the workplace, the fear of asking the wrong questions at school, or university and the careful picking of words whilst in public were traits of Stalin's Russia, Mao's China or presently of President Putin's regime.

Today, at times it can seem as if what defines a person is solely their political ideas. The demand for censorship, that calls itself 'political correctness', can prevent valid and constructive criticism and the development of our thought processes, particularly as young people. In many cases, the people silenced may be deeply hateful people who are not up to listening, but a large part of the victims are not necessarily 'bad people'. We eagerly decide to put people into boxes and do so with such ease. As the rules of 'political correctness' tend to be vague and in some cases follow trends, one can easily step out of line without even realising it. Perhaps some things many people say lack truth or understanding but we are all guilty of that at some point. So, to obtain more of this knowledge and develop opinions we must put them to the test, and encourage healthy debate rather than shutting opinions down.

If somebody tweets that they don't believe in Climate Change, their job shouldn't be at risk of the chop. It is vital to remember that challenging something is not a sign of weakness but, on the contrary, a sign of strength, as it encourages doubts to be calmed and a range of facts and perspectives to be heard. Debate encourages understanding and social interactions. It gives us a chance to listen, particularly for those who need to listen.

Digital technology companies claim to encourage freedom of speech, yet those who give their opinions are allowed to be met with threats, insults and in some cases, the end of their careers when a large number of people do not agree with them. The internet, being so strange and relatively new, ought to be handled with caution because, very frequently, we seem to forget how much it affects real life.

There should be an alternative way of facing consequences instead of being attacked so personally. Opinions should of course be unpicked, rebutted and broken down, but your personal life shouldn't be beaten up so ruthlessly; the sense of proportion is being lost. Some opinions may hold only shreds of truth, or none at all, but everyone has the right to share them. This right does not, however, mean that the speakers are immune to criticism. Offensive opinions must be contested enthusiastically and by robustly civilised opinions in order to allow people to see all sides to the story. Otherwise, we would be mistakenly limiting ourselves to believing the loudest side as the truest. Well-rounded and educated opinions may start off being obnoxious opinions, but for this growth to occur there has to be debate.

If anything, social censure is counterproductive as, consequently, the only space of freedom becomes your mind, therefore enforcing limitations on the development of every individual and, overall, creating stagnation of thought in our society, which provides no change, and encourages intolerance. Keeping our ideas in our heads only serves to shrink and polarise them. The worn-out phrase 'I'm offended' used whilst in debate, erodes freedom of speech, contaminates the atmosphere with a self-censorship that evades debate. Simultaneously, it encourages like-minded people to mirror their opinions in echo chambers because these are the only places they are listened to, making constant agreement with, and even praise of your ideas something people come to expect. I don't believe that free speech and debate is about one side 'beating' the other. On many occasions, it should be about the merging of two points of view. This epidemic has blurred the lines between harm and offence, as well as attacking the values of disagreement. Disagreement is an aspect of life that contributes positively; therefore, it should be protected against the silencing of discussion, which leads to the assumption of one side always being right.

Censorship is counterproductive because when opinions are banned and platforms are shut down, they are also given a glow of truth. It risks converting those accused into martyrs, and a martyr is difficult to confront. Instead of censoring these books, speeches, opinions and ideologies, they must be debated, because the goal is truth not comfort. We have become helpless to our addiction to comfort. If opinions are censored, then there are topics left undiscussed that stop us from reaching understanding and becoming fully enlightening.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the renowned Nigerian novelist, rightly stated that freedom of speech is the 'bedrock of open societies', as its absence leads to the extinguishing of creativity and learning. She also said that 'bad speech' should be responded to with 'more speech'. Most importantly, she said, 'We are not angels, we are human.' One of the first things that you are taught in primary is to learn from your mistakes. How are we supposed to do this if we are not allowed to make them to begin with?



The Art of the Political Slogan

By Samuel P, Year 12

Politicians are eternally posing new ideas to solve the ever-changing problems of society. These ideas range across the political spectrum and address a variety of issues. Governmental policies can be extreme or moderate, authoritarian or libertarian, right-winged or leftist; but regardless of their substance, they have one thing in common: they need to be sold.

All ideas must gain support to be implemented, whether it be from voters, parties, foreign allies, or other constituencies. For this reason political initiatives often employ persuasive slogans. From FDR's 'New Deal' plan to fight economic recession in the USA in the early 1930s to the Hippies' 'Make love, not war' campaign in the 1970s to protest American intervention in Vietnam, to 'Workers of the world unite!', a Karl Marx quote used to encourage communist revolution. Slogans accompany movements, politicians, policies, and ideas with the purpose of persuasion. So it begs the question: how effective are political slogans as a method of influence, and are we perhaps affected by them more than we think we are?

The main purposes of slogans are to encapsulate the principal message of the movement it represents and to rally support. Oftentimes, politicians isolate one purpose to prioritise the other. One of President Obama's favourite slogans was "Yes, We Can". This is one of the simplest ones I'll mention; however, it is a perfect case study for how slogans are effective at rallying support. The following is a speech Obama made during his first presidential campaign which was the origin of this slogan:

It was a creed written into the founding documents that declared the destiny of a nation: Yes, we can. (cheers) It was whispered by slaves and abolitionists as they blazed a trail towards freedom through the darkest of nights: Yes, we can. (cheers)

Yes, we can, to justice and equality. (applause and crowd chants, "Yes we can") Yes, we can, opportunity and prosperity. Yes, we can heal this nation. Yes, we can repair this world. Yes, we can.

If that doesn't generate support, I don't know what does. "Yes, We Can" is an excellent slogan. It uses the '3 syllable rule', which makes it easily chantable and repeatable; it uses a collective pronoun to suggest unity; it gives hope and suggests an Obama administration will be one of action; and, as a final touch, it has historical context. "Yes, We Can" was inspired by a slogan used by Cesar Chavez, a civil rights activist who advocated for labour rights through the United Farm Workers' Association in the 1970s. His tagline was 'Si, Se Puede'.

So, even though Obama's slogan doesn't really reflect any policies, given the historical context, it is clear that the slogan aligns with the idea of social change.

Some slogans have been ineffective. During one of her presidential campaigns, Hillary Clinton used the slogan "I'm with Her". No sense of unity, no collective pronouns, not very chantable, no indication of political policy. Just a flimsy appeal to a feminist demographic, similar to the party name and slogan 'Unidas Podemos'. The little things matter in slogans. Perhaps if it was changed to 'We're with her' but I think it would still lack a certain oomph. Did Hillary lose the election because of the slogan? No. But this weak slogan and the general lack of gusto attributed to Clinton, proved to be ineffective compared to the bombast and easily digestible "Drain the Swamp" slogan (paired with a constant spew of conspiracy theories and misogyny) of her political opponent.



(Image by human+nightcafe)

Donald Trump's slogans can be very telling, but often go by unchecked. One of his most popular slogans was "Lock Her Up" calling for the imprisonment of his political opponent: Hillary Clinton. The slogan was one of the first red flags of the Trump campaign. It was a clear sign of dictatorial aspiration. And this slogan was chanted by thousands at his rallies and echoed through social media for the duration of the election season and later. The slogan was a feat of demagoguery. If the idea of imprisoning Hillary Clinton had been dryly introduced by Trump in a tweet or formal speech, it would not have the effect it had. But because it was conveyed through such a vessel of influence, the slogan, "Lock Her Up" was chanted by thousands of people at the Republican National Convention and around the USA. However, if you were to ask the average Trump supporter what crimes Hillary Clinton actually committed, you'd probably receive a nonsensical, regurgitated answer along the lines of 'pizzeria pedophilia, and private server emails' with little to no elaboration.

"Make America Great Again" has an interesting history. Originally used by Ronald Reagan during the 1980s, during a period of economic recession. His idea was to spark a period of economic change and progress, similar to the growth of the previous decades. Donald Trump's use of the slogan was much more vague. It appealed to an older generation's nostalgia and also to a resentment towards progressivism felt by right-wing and moderate America. The slogan's power is not in its substance, but in its cultural significance. As a result of the tagline's popularity and moments in pop culture (such as Kanye West wearing a MAGA cap), the slogan has become iconic and effective in creating cult-like support. "Make America Great Again" was also adopted by Vox in 2016 with its Spanish equivalent: "Hacer a España grande otra vez".

On the surface, political slogans are memorable, repeatable taglines that sum up the movements they represent in a few words. However, a slogan holds a much deeper meaning that lies in the subtext. Take, for example, one of Franco's slogans: "Una, grande y libre!". On the surface, the slogan is rather unassuming. Big words that mean nothing. However, within the context of 1930s Spain, we can infer many things. To start, 'una' suggests the Francoist, anti-separatist sentiment, with regards to Cataluña and the País Vasco. 'Grande' connotes Franco's intentions to expand Spanish territory into Africa, and 'libre' specifically means freedom from the threat of the "Judeo-Communist conspiracy". Once we consider the context, a lot can be inferred from these few, simple words

This is also true with Franco's "Arriba España". These two words are incredibly effective, especially considering that they are still frequently recited to this day. They appeal to a sense of patriotism causing them to evoke passion in those who hear them. Furthermore, the slogan is suggestive of the ultimate fascist ideology of nationalism or national superiority. "Arriba España", meaning, above every other country or race. It is the cliché pattern of authoritarianism: create enough national pride and suddenly and subtly, the rest of the world is the enemy. This creates an atmosphere of fear, the historically essential ingredient in the recipe of extremist rule.

Jair Bolsonaro, former president of Brazil, mirrors this strategy with his slogan: "Brazil above everything, God above everyone". This adopts the similar idea of national superiority, but in this case, with a touch of religious populism. Bolsonaro's presidency was an authoritarian one, characterised by attacks on democratic institutions and, more recently, his refusal to accept the results of the elections that voted him out of office. An appeal to national pride is often an unmissable aspect of an authoritarian slogan. Examples include "Brazil above everything", "Blood and soil" used in Nazi Germany, and the aforementioned "Arriba España". (Also notable was Bolsonaro's slogan, 'the work sets you free,' which was inscribed on the entrance of the Auschwitz concentration camp).

On the surface, slogans are taglines meant to encapsulate the values of a political view, while simultaneously being inspirational and repeatable by the masses. However, using critical thinking and historical resemblances, we can uncover hidden meanings and intentions behind seemingly innocent political slogans. So the next time you hear one, really think about what hidden intentions lie behind just a few words.

Lastly, I'd like to leave you with perhaps the most honest political slogan I've ever heard, employed by a Philippines' 2014 presidential candidate, Jun-Jun Sotto: "I can't promise anything, but I'll do my best".



(Image by human+nightcafe)



(Image by human+nightcafe)

Social Media is a Curse

by Isabella R, Year 12

Social Media is the Future. This is a modern phrase we hear often, and have accepted as part of our lives, yet the underlying effects of these technologies are insidious, and go unnoticed by most of us.

‘How many of you have instagram? Facebook? Snapchat? How many of you are active members of online communities? If you had asked me 10 years ago, I would have answered, instinctively, that perhaps one, or maybe two people had Twitter or Facebook, but now, I am almost completely certain that all of us have at least one social media application. Social media is not our future; it is our present, our life. Most of us, and I say us because I am also a person living in the 21st century, share our lives on these sites, and in turn, obtain an in-depth view into the daily life of those around us, meeting and conversing with strangers 2000 kilometres away. Just like magic!

It is difficult therefore to imagine, that underneath this magic, there are also calamitous consequences, a spewing network of ugliness. Social media manipulates us into believing that all its content is true, and so we end up trusting lies presented by unprofessional users, sharing them, and fomenting fake news.

Now, instead of meeting people in person, we become electronically connected through ‘friending’”, and there are many other virtual ways of communication which, admittedly in some cases, can lead to true relationships. In most cases however, the effects of these online relationships are not positive, but destructive. By never truly seeing our ‘friends’, do we know who they are? Do you know the person who hides behind a facade of smiles and happy happy emojis? Do you really know who you’re sending messages to, pictures to, information to, and even money to? The answer is no. Unless you meet these people face to face, there is no way to truly know who you are speaking to. There are people have shared private images with these trolls, believing them to be their friends, and then become blackmailed victims. Others have sent these trolls thousands of pounds, without knowing the true motive behind these demands for money, losing it all. This may sound dramatic but it is a reality for countless people around the globe.

Then there are others who have become romantically inclined through these forms of messaging. Yes, a few long-term relationships have resulted, but so often the reverse is true. Think of the ‘catfishes’ who falsely report their age and reality, too often leading to heartache and disappointment. Even worse, are the online predators of dating sites who arrange meetings with their victims in secret and remote places, some of which have even resulted in murder. You may say I am talking of extreme cases, but aren’t these very cases the ones we should be aware of and learn from.

Now it seems, we do not even need to travel to visit our family and friends - we can just video-call them or message them. Once again, this may seem great, but this socially distanced communication leads to a lack of intimacy with people we are closest to. It can even lead to the end of holidays: ‘I don’t have to travel! Look, I don’t have to visit foreign countries! It’s all here - the palm trees, white beaches sent by my friend.’ Do we not lose millions of cultural and captivating experiences as a result? We are left with people have based their whole existence on social media, and have forgotten to live, to travel, to meet and greet people.

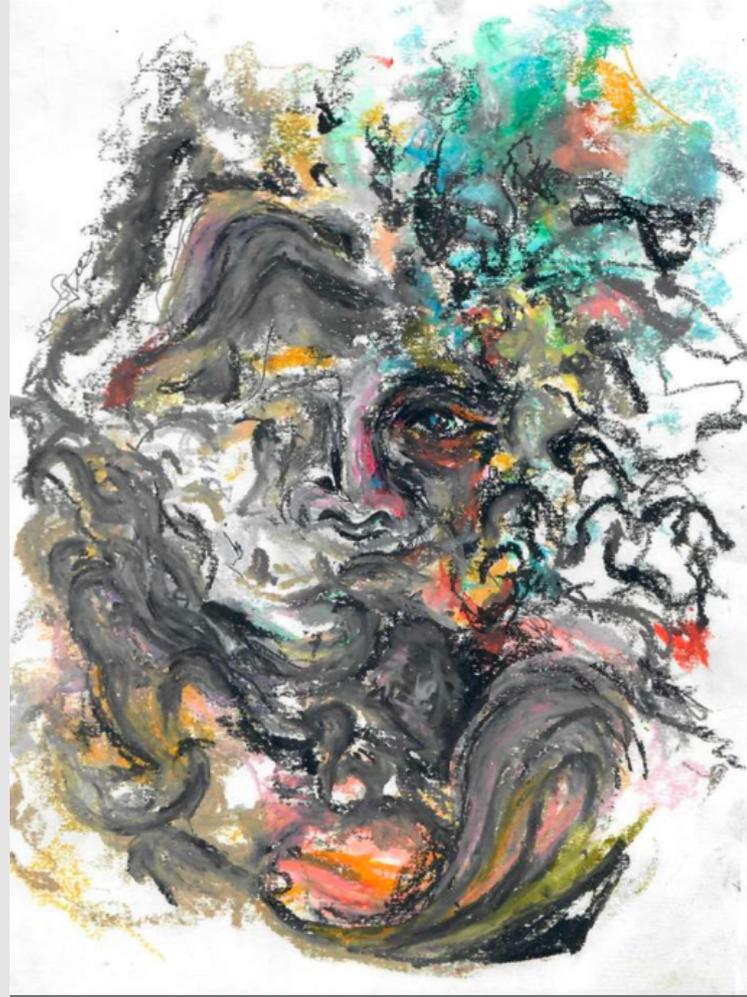


Image by Isabella R, Year 12

It is true that social media, this instant source of information, allows all to share ideas online, giving us a voice and a medium. Now, even if we are not a member of a club or physical community, we can share our ideas through this intricate network of communication, and discover different points of view to our own, broadening our peripheral view of the world and its politics. However, as it happens, a great fraction of this information is false or presented by people who are not experts, but just users of instagram, a public platform on which anyone can say, in just one click, whatever they want, whether it be wrong or right. This is the problem with social media. Once everyone is allowed to post whatever they want on these platforms, the content of people’s blogs, and even online communities, becomes unregulated. Even those of you with the noblest intentions, can become victim to this manipulative chain of fake information, and then to make matters worse, spread the lie yourself.

Serious issues such as vaccination are being affected by these retold lies which grow into terrifying conspiracy theories, urging users to listen to these prejudiced and completely false inventions rather than the truth. Recently, with Covid-19, some feared the invented effects of the vaccine that were talked about on these platforms to such an extent, that they decided not to vaccinate their families, more fearful of a conspiracy theory than of the real thing. Then, once they realised their mistake, it was too late and people have died as a result. Had it not been for these horror stories, these people could have lived; social media’s ideas literally killed them.

Worse still is the bullying. Although thousands of users use the information provided on these sites to educate themselves, many others use it to attack minorities, or criticise and attack innocent strangers. This endless pool of information has made us become a vicious mob,

Subverting democracy, and destroying people's self-esteem, courage, and strength through online attacks. Personally, I have to admit that I do enjoy reading attacks on people. How many of us have not enjoyed a post that ridicules an individual? We ought to be ashamed. No, do not deny it; we are all victims of this destructive force that pushes us towards the desire to hurt, fomenting "Poster's brain" (a condition that makes users attack others). Even the most noble of us cannot escape the current of attacks that flows like a flooded river through the internet.

Now, all around the world, you see the internet's devastating effects. It is children especially who should be enjoying their youth that suffer from online criticisms and cyber bullying, made victims by anonymous aggressors. The number of suicides and depression amongst children has risen drastically, not to mention the numerous racial and cultural attacks in public and private places.

Is this really what we want?

Social Media Tech overlords understand its iniquity. Countless reports convey the notion that those in power realise the dangers of social media, and so prohibit their own children from engaging on these countless platforms. They protect them and send them out into nature, to see the real world whilst they pedal their appalling wares, profiting astronomically from these platforms. I am afraid this is the blunt reality encountered by the majority of us nowadays.

Our reality is virtual. Our hope, our trust, our role models, all come from there, from this endless pool of information sent often by those who vomit out their loathing at the world. No, I am not criticising you, I am merely opening your eyes to the hidden realities behind your screen. I urge you to recognise the terrors that inhibit our society, and understand the dangers that are creeping towards us. Please, believe me, you do not have any real control about what you do on social media. It controls you - utterly.



(Image by human+nightcafe)

Is Kindness the Secret to Success?

by Sol G, Year 11

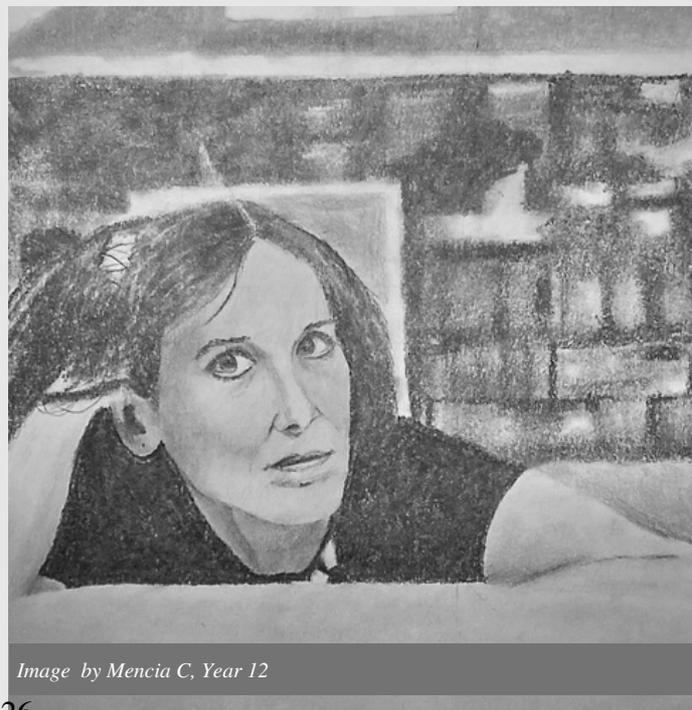


Image by Mencia C, Year 12

Kindness, it is a vital quality we all must learn to apply in all aspects of our life to be successful. It isn't, however, the KEY to success. The key to success isn't a single thing or quality.

You can be successful by possessing many different virtues or 'combinations' of personality traits. For example, an extrovert that respects others and is studious, can thrive. An introvert, who is respectful, diligent and patient can thrive. An ambitious person who is curious, insistent and creative can thrive. The list is never-ending, for there are an infinite amount of people in the past, present or future who have thrived, are thriving or will thrive; as long as they exhibit their best traits.

I believe the key to success, if there should be one, is knowing who you are and what you are, knowing yourself to the extent where you are aware of your abilities and weaknesses, using your strengths to obtain the best version of yourself there can be.

This concept is frequently misinterpreted thanks to society's expectations, limits and preferences. Adapting and being the best version of you you can be is neither being the person others want you to be, or someone you want to be, but aren't.

A Breakdown of Social Cohesion

By Eva N, Year 11

The noun 'community' derives from the French word 'comuneté', which means public spirit. However, this concept of public spirit is now a paradox, given that social cohesion appears to have broken down in our modern world.

There has been an undeniable shift from interpersonal to para-social relationships. A para-social relationship is when a person forms a relationship with someone's curated persona, fostered primarily through television and social media. These manufactured characters present a one-sided illusionary persona that we should aspire to be like and emulate in our everyday lives.

For instance, Kim Kardashian has meticulously fabricated an ideal life through reality TV and social media. Over 50 million people watch her in awe every week as she broadcasts about eating salad. As spectators consume her life, they believe they have a bond despite not creating a genuine connection.

Para-social relationships are causing a breakdown in social cohesion in my community, and others globally. Individuals waste hours on social media and spend less time fostering interpersonal relationships. When absorbed in this media, they search for someone who fits a pre-determined image, subconsciously rooted in materialism, classism and society's stereotype of beauty, instead of looking for a person's inherent qualities, which restricts the formation of genuine relationships. Many students, including myself, at my school and other schools, have fallen victim to the pitfalls of these para-social relationships. Many adolescents have felt revulsion towards those who do not conform to society's standards, causing them to be ostracised. Moreover, the decline of meaningful interpersonal relationships and unrealistic expectations of perfection creates tremendous insecurities, alienation, and, in some cases, mental health issues.

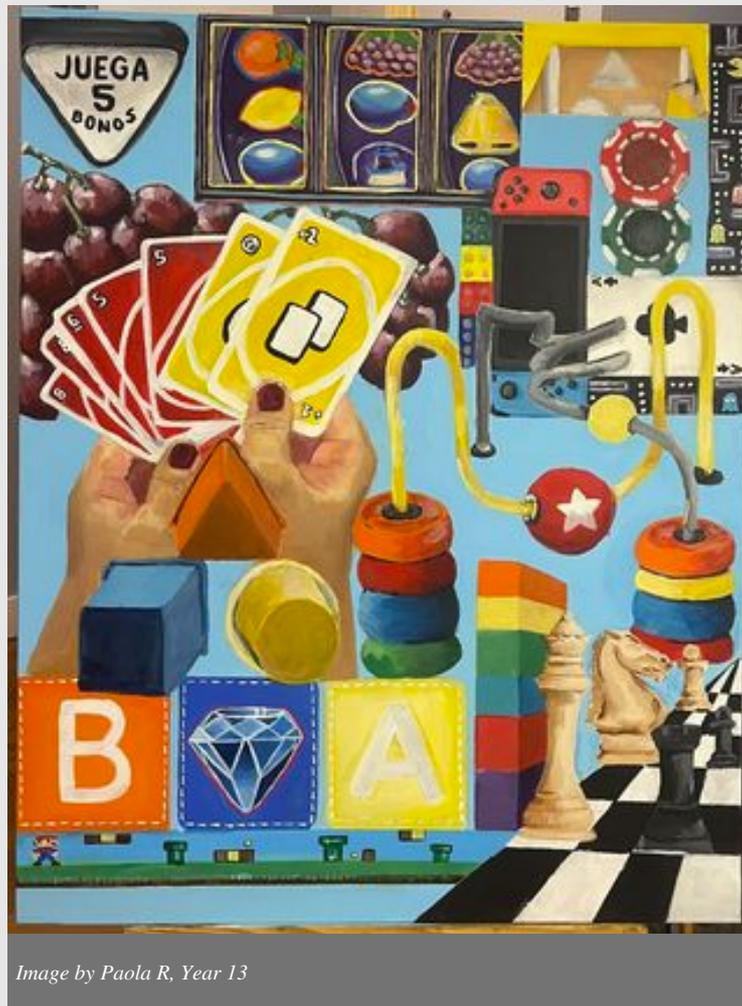


Image by Paola R, Year 13

Why do we obey?

By Micaela G, Year 12

Presently, the word 'charisma' has been somewhat degraded and diluted, almost a synonym of glamour or magnetism. Advertisements for salad dressings tell us to 'add charisma to the crunch'), whilst feminine perfumes use this word as if it were something that can be attained when truly it is an innate quality. Charismatic people can disrupt order and break norms of tradition, trampling over rules but in many cases remaining untouchable. After the Second World War, the word 'charisma' was intertwined amongst popular usage as during the 1930s and 40s Europe had spiralled into a pit of unfathomable chaos.

A person as deluded, impulsive and inconceivably shallow as Hitler managed to gain a vigorously loyal crowd that raised their arms at the sound of his hoarse and grating shouts. Essentially, Hitler was what sustained the birth of the Nazi. Later on, it was the use of terror that kept it under control but at the beginning the attraction was the appealing strength and vitality the Nazi party radiated. Hitler's image of toughness and boldness was what gained the votes of desperate Germans who were dissatisfied with the situation at the time. Germany had lost the war and many longed for a return to the Empire. In 1930, the global economic crisis hit.

Germany's economy was weak, war debts had to be payed according to the Treaty of Versailles and millions of Germans had lost their jobs. The citizens were drawn to this impersonated reflection of their nation's supposed solution.

After the 1923 failed coup d'état, Hitler released the book 'Mein Kampf' which went into depth about his plans for Germany. It laid out the program established for the Holocaust, identifying Jews and Bolsheviks as racially inferior. Of course, this was exactly what many frustrated Germans wanted to hear. They wanted someone to blame. In the 1928 elections, the NSDAP (Nazi Party) gained 0.8 million votes. In 1930 the number had increased to 6.4 million. Obeying these sort of leaders so eagerly is almost something unimaginable now but unfortunately politicians like Vladimir Putin still manage to have their place in this world.

So why do we have this inner urge to obey? This is a result of authority which exists in many forms, the main ones being; traditional authority, bureaucratic authority and charismatic authority. We obey a figure of traditional authority, such as a monarch, because it is an inherited position and an engrained custom, originated in pre-industrial societies. It provides a sense of stability as there is a solid and secure way of executing things.

Bureaucratic authority revolves around rules and laws that have been structured around society therefore also evoking a sense of anchoring and safety from chaos. On the other hand, a person with charismatic authority is somebody we believe has extraordinary powers because of their individual personality and the revolutionary spirit they hold, making them inevitably stand out.

It is important to know that these types of authorities can be combined to create a superior influence. For example, Desmond Tutu was a traditional authority in the Anglican Church from South Africa. He was an advocate of anti-apartheid and a human rights activist. Yet, he had an engaging charismatic authority. People could be gathered in sorrow for the funeral of a black person who had been murdered but Desmond Tutu's arrival would have everybody dancing and singing by the end of the day, preaching the love they had for all and sundry.



(Image by human+nightcafe)



Image by Luz A, Year 13

'Charismatic authority' was a concept developed by Max Weber (1864-1920), a German sociologist, to explain why people obey some as their legitimate rulers with lively enthusiasm while to others they resentfully heed. These leaders are often seen as exceptional and can stay in power for as long as the people are enthralled by their greatness and the things these leaders promise simultaneously occur. It is a timeless phenomena where figures, like Elizabeth I or Peter the Great, are elevated above humanity as a symbol of glory. Charismatic authority moulds to its historical period. The introduction of newspapers was the first time you could follow a political leader resulting in proliferation of supporters. Portraits of leaders allowed people to see this almighty leader they had imagined in their minds. Up to the 1400s, a coin would be the only place people could see the face of their King. Thanks to the development of biographies and novels, suddenly we identify with an experience or a trait of this figure subconsciously creating an emotional and reciprocal bond between leader and supporter. Just imagine the abundance of it today through the internet.

Charismatic authority is an unstable form of authority that unites people who do not identify with the traditional or bureaucratic forms of authority. The problem with it is that it is volatile

and unstable because if the person decides to stop exerting these extraordinary qualities and actions or lacks visions and ideas, their support evaporates into thin air.

This is seen in religion as well as politics, for example the development of Christianity revolved around this idea of charisma. Jesus himself was known to be a healer and miracle worker as well as a person you could relate to and most definitely the embodiment of charisma. Although these types of leaders are described as mad and dangerous, they also have a divine quality to them, as did Jesus in the New Testament.

Another example of this was in the nineteenth century when the 'Millirites' blossomed in America. This was the fruit of William Miller who claimed the return of the Messiah by 1843. 1843 approached and suddenly he changed his prediction to 1844. Then 1844 came along and the Millirite movement collapsed once the truth had prevailed. Often politicians draw off these religious ideas or their followers tribute that to them. For example, Napoleon famously said he was a 'keystone' of the state but that this depended on his victories. Effectively, after a time of defeat, his authority disappeared. He developed a genius strategy where he recreated this charismatic authority when he staged the return of the troops after the '100 days', marching into Paris and reigniting his leadership. After the defeat at the Battle of Waterloo, Napoleon was exiled again. This time he recreated himself as a victim, chained to stone in the Pacific with British 'vultures' circling above. This stimulated the French's vision of him as a sort of Jesus who sacrificed himself for his country.

Charismatic leaders are forces of change in history. Their supporters mostly ignore any criticisms as it is a figure that they need, especially those who suffer of poverty, those who are oppressed and locked out as minorities. We trust entirely in the power of this person and this is what sustains the rule of reviled leaders like Stalin and Hitler and those of democracy's like Franklin D. Roosevelt. This is why Communist regimes in Russia and Mao's China purged intellectuals as they were slightly immune to this charismatic authority, their knowledge making them powerful and dangerous for these leaders. Lenin's cult of personality that was engraved in Soviet customs was used by his successors to gain support when threatened.

Traditional and bureaucratic authoritarian leaders can be held accountable in the system as there is proof and familiarity with its basics (laws and traditions for example). The danger of charismatic authority is that it is a loose cannon, especially when leaders like Jim Jones of the Peoples Temple abuse this power for abominable aims. These leaders can stamp on laws and their supporters will still follow them till the end. Weber believed that the tragedy of living in the modern world was that the spirit of rationalisation floods our lives. This means that we have become bounded by this 'iron cage' of tradition and rules that ensures safety and control but limits us as human beings. This cage is enforced on us with means of coercion. Charismatic authority inexplicably breaks that cage as it doesn't need these constraining forces. Personally and profoundly, it inspires us.

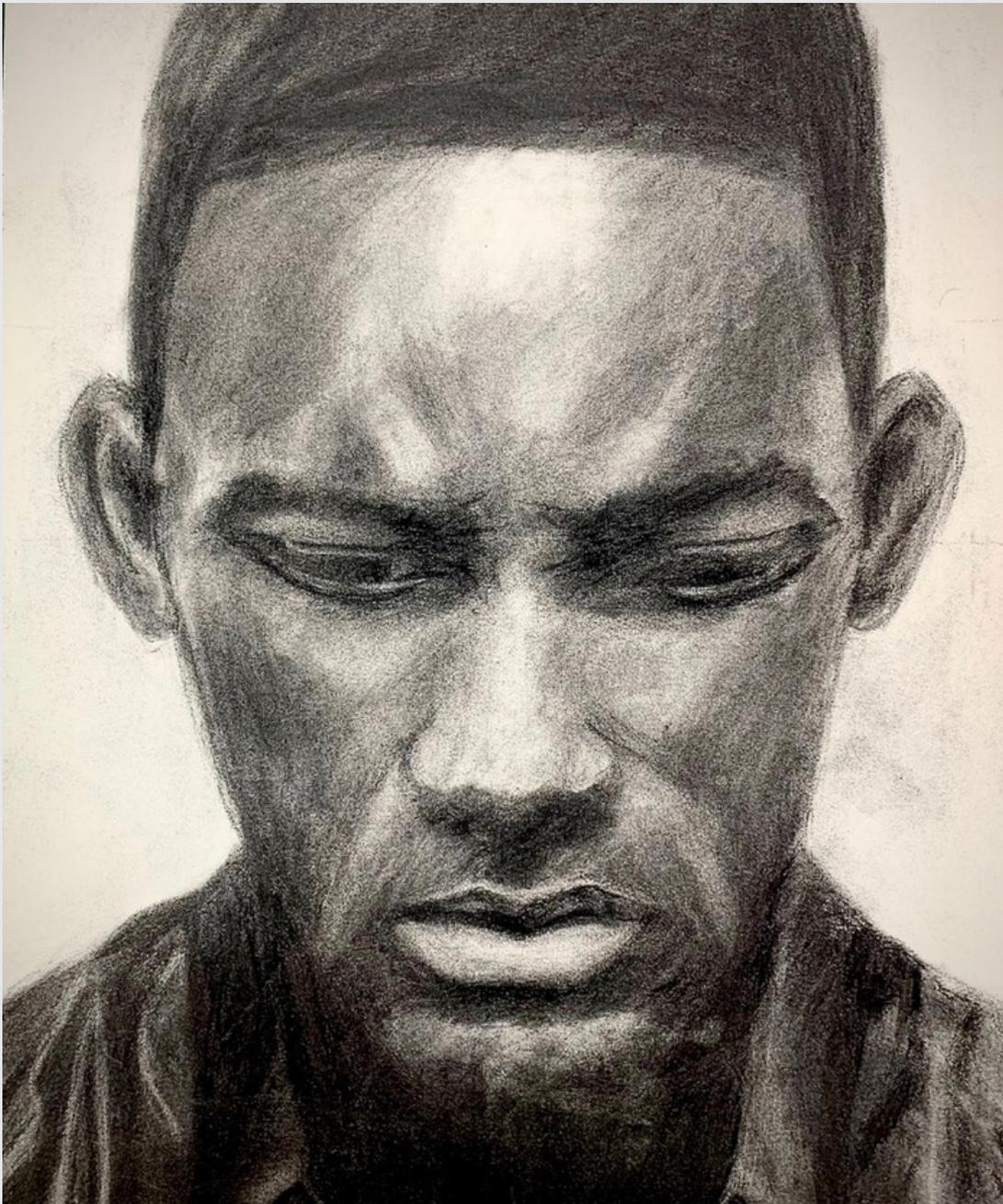


Image by Mencia C, Year 12

The Wonders of Georgia



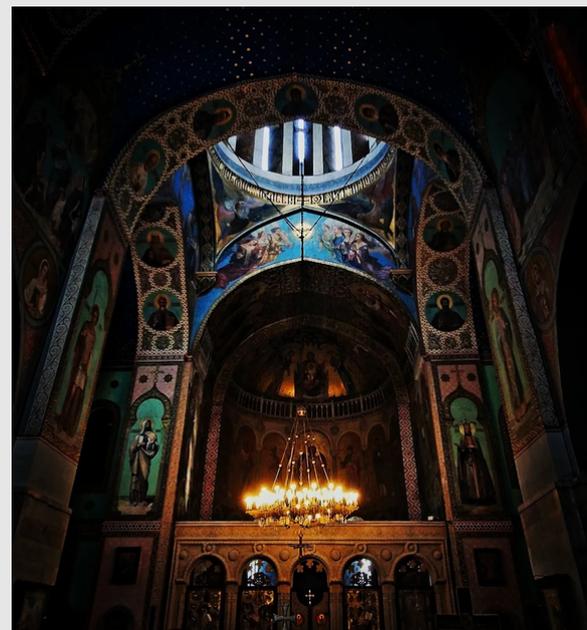
DAY 1: TBILISI

My first couple of days were in the capital of Georgia, Tbilisi.

The city's name originates from an old Georgian word "Tpili", which means warm. Therefore, Tbilisi translates as a "warm location" because of the city's several sulfuric hot springs which are still used today.

The 1500km in length Kura River (as shown in the photos) runs through the city of Tbilisi and is the key feature of it as it is an essential source of freshwater. What I found particularly fascinating is how Tbilisi is a mixture of modern and old. On the one hand, you can find the Old Town and the world's oldest church, Anchiskhati Basilica (which dates back to the 6th century.) On the other hand, there are skyscrapers and modern architecture. For example the 156 meters long Peace Bridge (shown in the photo) with more than 10 000 LED bulbs built-in. It's considered to be one of the city's icons especially since it was built in 2010, 2 years after Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008.

However, one of the city's most famous features is the Tbilisi Tower. This is a 275 meters high TV tower situated on a mountain 720 meters above sea level. This 1955-built tower is one of the symbols of the capital as it can be seen from any point in the city.



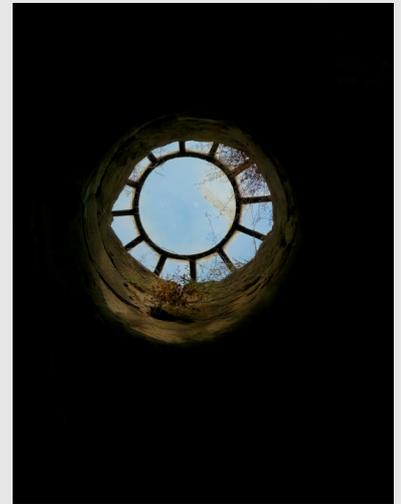


DAY 2: Mtskheta and Uplistikhe

After spending time in Tbilisi, I had the chance to visit Mtskheta - one of Georgia's oldest cities and its former capital. As well as Uplistikhe, an ancient rock town in the east of Georgia.

Mtskheta is a UNESCO World Heritage Site as it has been inhabited by people before 1000 BCE. It contains some outstanding examples of not only medieval but also religious architecture in the Caucasus region. Moreover, its location is interesting as it is located in the confluence of the Aragvi and Mtkvari Rivers which back in the day was a huge advantage for transportation and fresh water.

The 4000 square cave complex in Uplistikhe was constructed next to the Mtkvari River. This town was fully inhabited with over 20,000 citizens living in it. Archaeological excavations have found artifacts originating from the Late Bronze Age to the late Middle Ages. This is not a surprise as Uplistikhe was considered to be one of the most important political, and religious of the pre-Christian region.



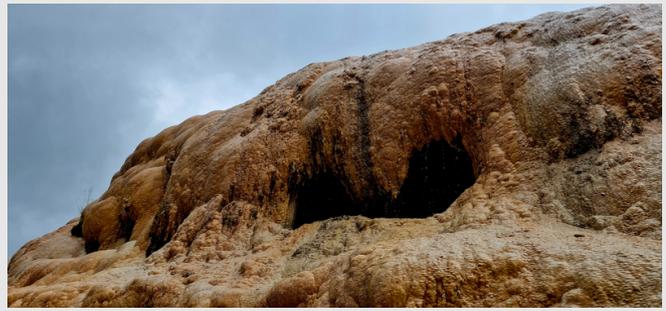
Final Day: Mount Kazbek and Zhivali Dam

One of the main highlights of this trip was visiting the region of Kazbegi with a 5054m tall dormant Stratovolcano: Mount Kazbek.

On my way to Mount Kazbek, I had the chance to visit the Zhivali Dam. It is a 1980 soviet constructed hydroelectric dam in the Caucasus Mountains. It was constructed because of the country's rapid growth and therefore the need for a larger source of freshwater.

It is one of the tallest mountains in the Caucasus and is located on the Russian-Georgian border. It is believed that it last erupted in 750 BCE. The mountain attracts many hikers from across the world, it was first climbed in 1868. The region contains endless sources of mineral water and therefore a brand known as 'Borjomi' started out in Georgia. It is a brand selling bottled water from springs and then exporting them to foreign countries.

In Stepantsminda, a town in Kazbegi (the region where Mount Kazbek is located,) is located at the Gergeti Trinity Church which is at an elevation of 2170 meters. To my surprise, in Georgian churches unlike in most other countries churches are not closed during a ceremony (for example marriage.) Therefore, anyone can visit the church at all times, even during a ceremony.





Perfect Holiday Destinations

By Olivia D, Year 7

Are you struggling with the perfect place for the summer holidays? Well if you are, this is the holiday guide for you! This guide provides information about amazing places you should think about visiting in the summer, each place unique in its own way and bound to make this holiday memorable!

Croatia!

Firstly, of course, the incredible country of Croatia! This place will enchant you with its emerald beaches, bars and views! The beaches in Split and Dubrovnik are so stunning. In Croatia, you will see many people eating the national food, Zagorski štrukli, pastries filled with cottage cheese! Croatia is so full of historical sites and adventures! In this paradise, there are so many National parks, zoos, historic buildings which are worth every penny of the entrance fee. I mean..... who would not love lying sunbathing with a refreshing drink? If you decide on Croatia, new food and traditions are coming your way!

Hawaii!

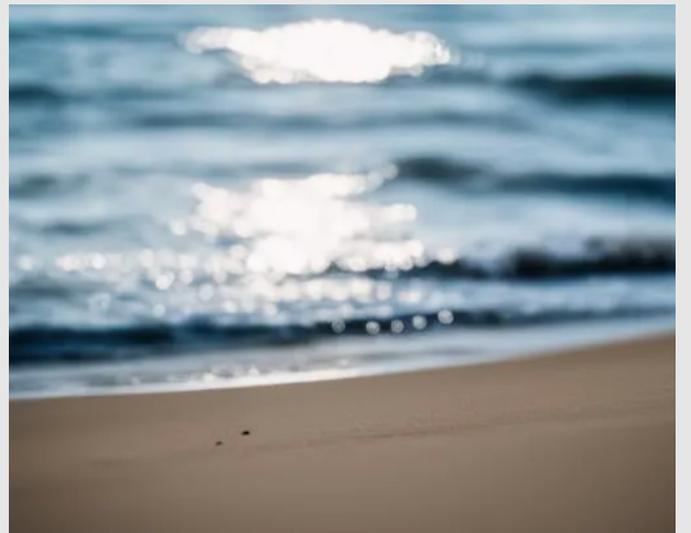
OF COURSE HAWAII IS HERE ON THIS LIST! Hawaii is so culturally diverse and amazing! This heaven is beach perfect all year around! If you choose Hawaii, their national food Saimin, a delicious noodle soup, and their spectacular world famous drink, the mai tai (virgin of course) are waiting for you! You can attend the Polynesian Cultural Centre, National Parks and enjoy the taste of freedom on their beaches, the waters of which are so clear, you can see the sand under the water. There are so many ancient traditions that you could have a chance to experience breathtaking monuments and views, as well as a unique style of music to dance the night away to. Hawaii is so relaxing! And beautiful!

The Maldives!

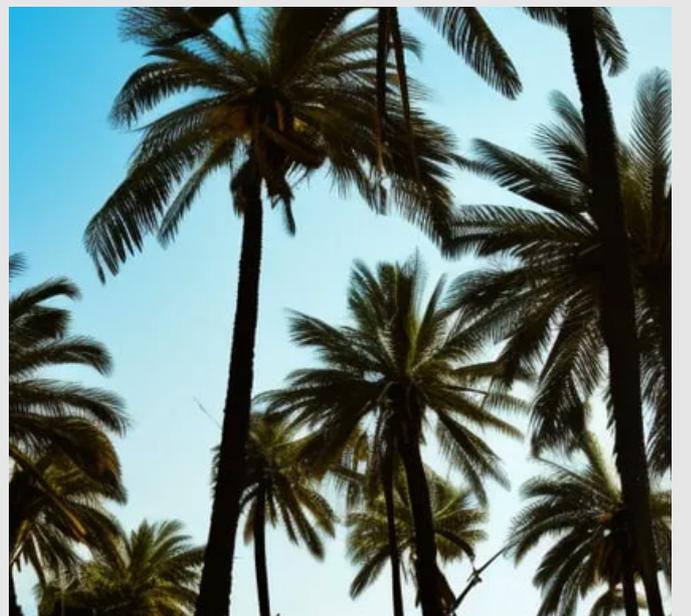
How can someone explain the beauty of the Maldives? It's everything you could ask for: traditional, unique, adventurous and so much more! The Maldives beaches are stunning, and please do not ever forget that there are PIGS swimming with you on some of the beaches! You should also try this paradise's national food, Gulha, spicy tuna dumplings, and the national drink, Raa, a sweet coconut drink! This place has so many different and extravagant resorts that are in the middle of nowhere! An entire island for yourself? Make sure you don't miss out on Ithaa, the undersea restaurant! National parks, local traditions, and exciting new sensory realities! Come to the Maldives for an experience that you will never forget.



(Image by human+nightcafe)



(Image by human+nightcafe)



(Image by human+nightcafe)

The Story Behind Billy Joel's 'Leningrad'

By Adriana S, Year 12

Released in 1989 originally in Billy Joel's album 'Storm Front', but later on released as a single in Europe only, the song "Leningrad" derives its title from the contemporary name of the city of St. Petersburg, Russia. The song is a postcard of Billy Joel's time and tour there.

In 1987, Billy Joel toured the Soviet Union as tensions between the two countries decreased. The tour was a great success and was filmed for a documentary (Billy Joel: A Matter Of Trust - The Bridge to Russia) in which Joel affirms that the tour was the end of his "Cold War". In his time there, he met someone who would come to be an important and loving friend for him and his daughter. His name was Viktor Razinov. He was Russian, a cold-war enemy, but their friendship was stronger than any national hatred between their countries. "The Cold War ended for me when I met this guy," Joel told Sirius XM in 2016. "That was it. I went to meet my enemy, and I actually met my friend." Viktor was a circus clown who made his way through enormous Russia to see all six shows of Joel's concerts.

'Leningrad' contrasts the life of two kids during the Cold War. Viktor, 'born in the spring of '44', lived in the USSR and had a sad life. Like many Soviet children, he lost his father during the Second World War, during the siege of Leningrad. When he was old enough, he enlisted in the Red Army, learning to 'serve his state'. He 'drank his vodka straight' in order to fight the pain, and finally became a circus clown, bringing a bit of light and happiness into the sombre and hard life of the Russian children.

Billy Joel, 'born in '49', was a 'Cold war kid in McCarthy times'. He lived in the United States and his childhood was marked by the fear of a Soviet attack. There was a deep hatred towards the Soviets, the dreadful Communists.

Both men had been bombarded with propaganda throughout their life, which made them see one another as enemies. Americans and Russians hated each other, they felt their differences were so big that they could not be put in the same room as it would cause disaster... Billy and Viktor realised the "differences" they saw in each other were insubstantial, nonexistent, and therefore could be broken easily if they wanted to. It was a division set by governments that disliked each other and could not seem to stop their thirst for power, for being the strongest.

In any case, both found fulfilment in entertaining people, Viktor as a circus clown and Billy as a singer. One day, whilst on his tour in Russia, Billy Joel and his daughter went to "this place", as it says in the song, probably referring to a circus. They went there to meet Viktor; they must have known about this Russian clown. "He made my daughter laugh", Billy sings, "then we embraced". Joel's daughter was a toddler then, around three years old, and she obviously did not see Viktor as an enemy, a cruel Russian Communist, but as a kind grown-up who was funny and made her laugh. The innocence and purity of children is often more realistic and rational than the grudgeful and prejudiced ideas and views of the world many adults have.

At present, both men maintain their contact and are good friends. In a 2016 interview Joel looked back on when, a few months before, a reunion took place, and a very emotional one, both for him and his daughter, Alexa (also a singer, song-writer, and a "Piano Woman"), who shared a snapshot of their meeting on Instagram. Viktor went to New York and gave Joel the ashes of his twin brother; he wanted them to be with his American friend, with whom he felt a very special connection.



(Image by human+nightcafe)

The Selena and Hailey Drama

Enru C, Year 10

The Selena Gomez and Hailey Bieber drama— fuelled by the fans of them both. I'm sure you have heard all about it from the internet, on all sorts of social media. Rumours say there has been a bit of negativity between them, so who's side are you on?

Both of these women are actresses and singers who have dated Justin Bieber. Selena and Justin's relationship was complicated, with their last breakup being in 2018.

Justin started dating Hailey after that, and the two got engaged in July 2018 and then married in September 2018. But it's not just about Justin. Oh no, this feud goes deeper than that. There have been rumours of shade-throwing on social media, subtle jabs in interviews, and even accusations of fashion plagiarism. And it has even happened before: a special mention to Selena's song 'Lose You To Love Me' in 2019, thought to be dedicated to Justin Bieber. It received Hailey's screenshot of Summer Walker's song 'I'll Kill You' on her instagram story, presumed to be aimed at Selena. This got Hailey an alarming amount of hate on the internet and was a key shot in this war of attrition.

It's not enough that they're fighting over a guy, they're also fighting over who's better. The pettiness is real. The recent drama began on February 22, 2023, when Selena Gomez posted a TikTok of her accidentally over-laminated eyebrows. Hours later, Hailey, who was FaceTiming Kylie Jenner, posted a screenshot to Instagram which featured close-ups of both of their eyebrows, which fans regard as an attack against Gomez. This led to a surprisingly large amount of fans trying to bring down Hailey Bieber and Kylie Jenner, comparing them to Selena Gomez. On February 23, as Kylie and Selena denied this, Selena also replied 'I love you' to a fan who chastised 'mean girls and nepo babies' for picking on Selena.

It doesn't end there. After more accusations of Hailey shading Gomez, on March 4, Gomez announced that she was quitting the TikTok app. And on March 24, Selena decided to put an end to it, the original text being: 'Hailey Bieber reached out to me and let me know that she has been receiving death threats and such hateful negativity. This isn't what I stand for. No one should have to experience hate or bullying. I've always advocated for kindness and really want this all to stop.' She posted this on her instagram story concluding with a red heart emoji. Will that be the last emoji we see on the subject?



Image source: https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selena_Gomez#/media/Archivo:Selena_Gomez_-_Walmart_Soundcheck_Concert.jpg
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hailey_Bieber#/media/File:Hailey_Bieber_2020_2.jpg

Another Year of the Oscars

Eleanor S, Year 12



Source Image: https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/95.%C2%AA_edici%C3%B3n_de_los_Premios_%C3%93scar#/media/Archivo:AWARDS-OSCARs.png

The Oscars 2023, one of Hollywood's biggest nights of the year, took place on March 13th in Los Angeles. The Dolby Theatre in Hollywood invited celebrities from all over the world to the annual Oscars celebration in honour of the achievements in the film industry.

The results came in and they were not disappointing, with a shocking 11 Oscars for the sci-fi movie of the year: Everything, Everywhere All at Once, whose main actress, Michelle Yeoh, made history after becoming the first Asian woman to win the Oscar for Best Actress.

The Oscar for Best Actor was awarded to Brendan Fraser after his incredible performance in the movie The Whale, and the Best International Film Oscar went to All Quiet on the Western Front.



(Image by human+nightcafe)

And for those who wanted to rewatch a childhood favourite, the Oscar for Best Animated Film was awarded to Guillermo del Toro's, Pinocchio. However, for the most exciting part of the night, before the 24k gold statues stole the spotlight, the red carpet was filled with paparazzi and pampered looks. Celebrities, such as Rihanna, Lady Gaga, Austin Butler and Cara Delevingne, put on an exciting show and displayed their best (or worst?) outfits.

Here's what you missed on Glee

Sofía P, Year 12

Glee is an extremely well-known TV show about a group of high schoolers who join a show choir in their school while they deal with their own problems and navigate through teenage life. The show tries to tackle many important problems that are prominent in adolescence. From eating disorders, to teenage pregnancies to school shootings. This show often deals with most problems in a constructive way. That being said, there are some plotlines in Glee that not only make zero sense but are blatantly problematic. Glee in itself was as problematic off-screen as it was on-screen with many actors coming forward and saying they didn't enjoy their time acting on Glee. If I had to write about every little odd thing that happened on Glee, I would be here forever; so here are some of the plotlines/stories that aged like milk. Warning: This article contains spoilers.

1. Artie's and Quinn's "I'm still standing" moment.

For the people who haven't watched Glee, Artie is a character that became paraplegic after an accident when he was little. For the whole show (except for extremely weird episodes) he is seen in a wheelchair, unable to walk. Quinn Fabray is a character who got in a car accident and was left in a wheelchair for only 4 episodes, before she magically got better. In an episode where both of them are in a wheelchair, Quinn struggles with her new disability and realises that her school isn't built for people with disabilities. In fact, there is a giant, steep slope that she just can't get to the top of. Artie encourages her and they make it to the top without anyone's help. Due to this massive victory, they decide to sing Elton John's "I'm still standing." The writers of Glee really saw the title of the song and thought to themselves that it would be a good choice to give to the only two characters who... can't stand. How the writers of the show got away with this, I'll never know. And this isn't even the worst plotline in Glee...

2. The "Blurred Lines" Fiasco

Will Schuester is the teacher in charge of the Glee club; infamous for his weird and predatory behaviour towards the teenage students (mainly the girls). However, the epitome of this creepiness is when Mr Schue decides the children need to learn how to twerk in order to "step out of their comfort zone" and uses the help of other students to teach them. Meanwhile, the main antagonist of the show: Sue Sylvester, decides to ban twerking in the high school, which already shows the absurd lengths that this show will go to in order to have a conflict. As a way to rebel against this rule, the students begin to twerk, while singing "Blurred Lines", a song that talks about the "blurred line" between a drunk woman agreeing to spending the night with a man and a drunk woman not agreeing, because she physically can't, due to her inebriated state and how a man can decide what to do without the woman's consent. It's a very controversial song and the fact that it's sung by teenage students while they twerk around their teacher is really bizarre and worrisome. This is another plotline that I cannot believe was ever greenlighted.

3. Ryan Murphy is a menace.

Ryan Murphy is the director for most of the Glee episodes. He is notorious for frequently writing about the insecurities of the actors in the show. The most famous insecurities he's written about are Lea Michele's nose and Cory Monteith's substance abuse problem. Lea Michele is an actress who has a big nose reflecting her Jewish heritage and sadly her nose was an insecurity of hers at the beginning of the show. Throughout the whole show there are many comments about her nose and how big it is and even one episode entirely dedicated to a dilemma that Rachel (her character) has about how she would love to have a nose job to be conventionally pretty. In that episode, there is even a song that focuses on how ugly Rachel is, due to her large nose.

This is not only harmful to the actress as she's having her insecurity highlighted for the entertainment of a large audience but it's also very harmful to the audience of impressionable young girls with beautiful noses that may watch that episode and believe that their nose is not as beautiful as that of other people. Cory's example is harsher as he had a substance abuse problem throughout the filming of the show which sadly ended in him overdosing. At the beginning of the show, it is said that his character's father dies while serving overseas and he is described as being brave and an inspiration to Finn (Corey's character) and mentioned frequently in many episodes, especially how proud Finn is of his dad. However, in one episode, suddenly, Finn's dad is exposed as dying from an overdose after deserting his family rather than dying while serving his country. Finn overreacts and starts claiming that dying from substance abuse is very cowardly and that using drugs is for people who have no shame and how he doesn't like his father anymore because he isn't the man he thought he was. This might have been an attempt to warn Cory Monteith about how he could end up. However, I can't imagine that having Cory publicly shame someone with his same issues on television would be the right thing to do.



In conclusion, Glee is a show that, when you binge it, you don't really notice the messed up parts, perhaps because the show is so full of them, they end up mixing in your mind. Glee really got away with the strangest things that a show nowadays could never get away with. The show tried to tackle serious subjects but most of the time it failed catastrophically.

Image By Kristin Dos Santos from Los Angeles, California, United States - Glee Balloon, NYC, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15436715>

Queen Elizabeth II, the film star

Lola and María, Year 7

The queen herself has never been in a movie. However, she does appear in a few short videos she made. For the 2012 Olympics, which were held in London, she made an action video. She was filmed parachuting with James Bond from a helicopter! They landed where the Olympics were taking place. And for her Platinum Jubilee, she was filmed having tea with Paddington.

She, that is to say an actress who is playing her, has appeared in 100 films! Many of these are children films, for example: 'The Queen's Corgi', where Elizabeth's favourite corgi goes missing, and in 'Minions', when they try to steal her crown. She also appears in many many adult films and series, such as 'The Queen', which is a film about how the Queen reacted to Lady D's death, and 'The Crown', which is a series about her life.

In one episode of The Simpsons, Lisa and Bart go to Krusty Camp (Krusty is a clown) but he isn't there because he is in England watching tennis with the queen!

Queen Elizabeth was born on April 21, 1926. She sadly died this year on September 8, 2022, at the age of 96, having spent 70 years on the throne. It is lovely to know she will continue to be remembered through her screen legacy.



Image By NASA/Bill Ingalls - https://www.nasa.gov/centers/goddard/news/topstory/2007/queen_egress_8.html, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=118858581>

Review of Present Laughter

by Ben Hunt (an honorary Runnymede Times member)



It doesn't seem unfair to speculate on the motives of the English Theatre Madrid company for staging Noel Coward's much-loved comedy *Present Laughter* as the swansong for its departing director and leading man, Robert Crumpton.

The plot focuses on the romantic shenanigans of Garry Essendine, the pampered and precious West End star as he prepares to head to pastures new to make his name in a new city. Essendine is the sun around whom the planets of his close circle revolve. He basks in their admiration while protesting a desire for peace and calm.

Crumpton as Essendine was in his element and delivered his adoring fans in the Madrid anglophone community a performance to remember him by: funny, energetic, larger than life itself and just splendid.

The English Theatre Madrid updated *Present Laughter* from its wartime roots to a modern world of endlessly chirping mobile phones and contemporary sensibilities. Coward himself would undoubtedly have approved. Crumpton and his fellow ETM partners Tracy Scott and Shona Miller, have a good feel for what will work with their diverse audiences and they pitched their show to perfection. Saturday night's audience loved it, hooting with laughter throughout.

Mavi Hermida's simple but elegant set made good use of the slightly odd shaped stage of the Teatro La Inmaculada-Marillac, allowing the cast to develop an intimate and interactive experience for the audience.

We are incredibly lucky to have such talented performers to entertain us here in Madrid and every member of the cast delivered on the great material that Coward gave them.

Tracy Scott does a withering stare as well as anybody, and was a wonderful deadpan foil to the effusive Essendine as his long-suffering personal assistant, Monica. Suffering somewhat less, Shona Miller was suitably glamorous and as charismatic as ever as Liz Essendine, the wife who can't quite let go.

It's not easy, comedy. It's far more straightforward to stand on a stage and deliver a noble Shakespearean soliloquy than it is to make people laugh continuously over a couple of hours. But this company did that magnificently and allowed Crumpton to exit stage left, unpursued for the first time in the evening, with a triumphant final turn.

He has enriched the cultural life of Madrid, building Coward's "temple of illusion" in our theatres, just as surely as he has the education and development of countless Runnymede pupils over 12 years. It's difficult to see him go and a great loss to our communities.

I would hazard a guess though that we haven't seen the last of him on a Madrid stage. I hope not anyway.

I thoroughly enjoyed Paul Hales as cockney valet Fred, giving as good as got from Essendine and displaying great comedic timing. Anyone who has seen Steve Loader's *Mad Improv* performances – and if you haven't get yourself to Lavapies for a great Tuesday night out – will know that he is a gifted physical comedian. There is more than a touch of the Rowan Atkinsons about his facial and corporeal contortions, and they were well deployed as the very strange Morris Dixon.

Ela Sandín Prior, making her debut for ETM, showed both the silk and steel of debutant and Essendine pursuer Daphne Stillington and her 'fit of the vapours' was one of the highlights of the show. Carlos García and Parisa Salahshourian are both accomplished performers and gave soul to perhaps the two most difficult characters in the script, Joe and Helen Lypiatt. And Mavi Hermida proved she's just as gifted on stage as behind the scenes in a brief Wodehousian cameo as Daphne's formidable aunt.



Boycotting the Qatar World Cup - Opposing Views

Why We Should Have Boycotted the World Cup

By Agnes H, Year 12

This year's World Cup in Qatar has arguably been the most controversial in the tournament's history. The vast human rights breaches, discrimination and corruption have been the fuel for this controversy since the awarding of the games in 2010. So, why should we have boycotted this year's edition of the popular sporting competition?

To preface, this is not an argument against Qatar, but against FIFA. And I'm not arguing that the football was not good; there were many great games and the final may have been the best ever. FIFA and Qatar put on a good show.

The name that has been on people's lips this week is Lionel Messi. However, someone you may have heard less of is Ashkan Dejagah. This Iranian footballer is currently facing possible execution. Why? For supporting protests in favour of women's rights in Iran.

Iran enforces discriminatory practices against women and the country literally - constitutionally - values the life of a woman at half of that of a man. Similar practices are prevalent in Qatar. In our society, and ones like it, practices like these have long been abolished and are considered barbaric.

How is this relevant to the World Cup? In Iran, a footballer is facing death for fighting for the rights women have almost universally around the world. In Qatar, on the other hand, the awarding of the games is legitimising their enforcement of these same laws Dejagah is being killed for trying to protest.

FIFA's actions are a clear example of allowing a nation to indulge in sports-washing, the term given to the practice of corporations or governments using sports to improve reputations that have been tarnished by wrongdoing.

This is not unusual in sport, as it is seen in the ownership of football teams by the Saudi state and the awarding of other sporting events to countries like Russia and China which are accused of human rights abuses. Essentially, Qatar has used the World Cup to show the country in the best light, trying to make the world forget or ignore its unjust practices.

There are a multitude of reasons that we should condemn sports-washing.

First, it legitimises the intolerance demonstrated in Qatar. I don't mean to say that we should be imposing our values upon them, that is a question for Qataris. However we should not be allowing FIFA, and by extension the world of football, to endorse these values by awarding the country a competition that is watched around the globe, when this contradicts the values of diversity and inclusivity which the organisation claims to uphold.

By overlooking the sports-washing, we are ignoring the human cost of this World Cup. Amnesty said that 'in the decade since Qatar was awarded the right to host the World Cup, exploitation and abuse of these workers has been rampant, with workers exposed to forced labour, unpaid wages and excessive working hours.'

People have been made well aware of this human cost; however most have chosen to ignore it, and support Qatar and FIFA anyway, by watching the games, travelling to Qatar and buying merchandise. In doing this, we are excusing the conditions of migrant workers, and forgetting those whose lives the World Cup has taken, perhaps as many as 6500.

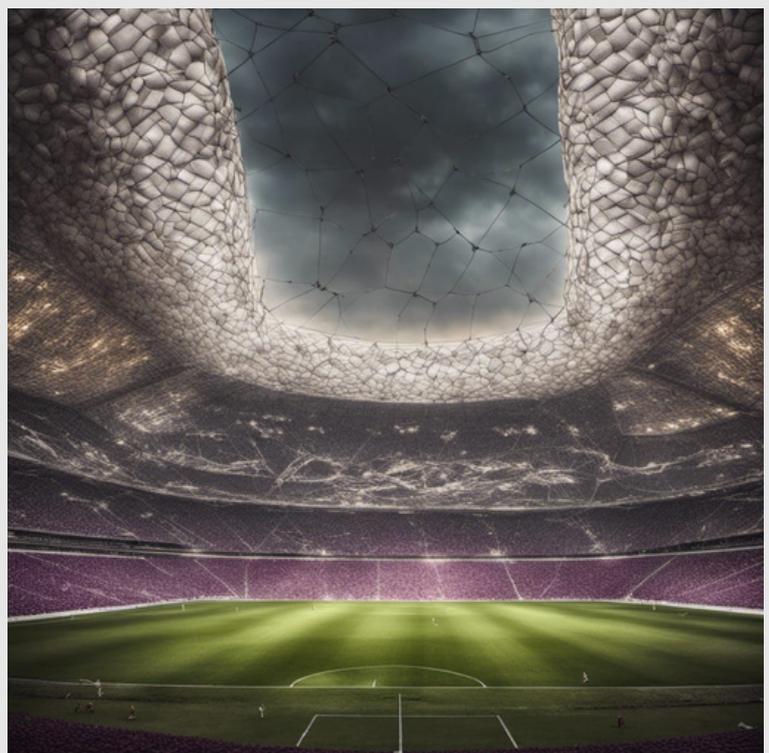
The environmental effects of holding the World Cup in Qatar have also been astounding. This is most obvious when we look at the country's climate. Why is the World Cup being held in November? Because Qatar is one of the hottest places on the planet. Even this late in the year every stadium had to be air conditioned! During an energy crisis and a climate crisis. FIFA's claims for an ecological tournament are clearly nonsensical.

The corruption involved in awarding this competition to Qatar is another of the many reasons why we should have reconsidered whether or not we support this World Cup. There is irrefutable evidence of bribery for hosting rights and wider FIFA corruption associated with the Qatar World Cup. Investigations carried out by Swiss prosecutors and the US Department of Justice have unearthed evidence of corruption. Several people have been convicted. These levels of corruption are unacceptable for such a large and influential entity such as FIFA.

Fifa excuses all this by claiming that they're 'trying to spread popularity of football in the Arab world'. If this was really the case, why would they not choose a country like Egypt or Morocco, where the sport is loved, and whose teams have richly contributed to World Cups, not least this one. Rather than Qatar, whose 2022 team crashed out of the competition after just two games.

Alternatively, they could have chosen a country like Spain, which hasn't hosted since 1982, or the UK, who hasn't hosted since 1966. In these countries, football is not only the most popular sport, but the countries are both more accessible to fans, and the countries themselves are more suited to arranging such a huge sporting event. They have also made extensive efforts towards making football a more inclusive sport, especially for women, with football leagues in the UK and Spain being some of the most popular.

In conclusion, Qatar and FIFA masked their ethical wrongdoings behind the impressive show they put on for this year's World Cup. And shame on us all for allowing them to do it, and participating.



(Image by human+nightcafe)

Why We Should Not Have Boycotted the World Cup

By Javier M, Year 8

The World Cup is a sporting event that happens every 4 years. It is viewed by more than 5 billion people. The event brings countries together, makes children from all over the world strive to be football players and also brings tourism from all over the world to the host country.

This event also brings incredible controversy and every year there are people who say they want to boycott the World Cup for some reason. For example, in Russia 2018, people started saying that we should have transferred the World Cup to another country due to conflicts in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea but, did we stop watching? No!

Why should the rules be any different for Qatar? People might have died and in Qatar and they do have different opinions about LGBTQ+ people but if we stop watching we will do what we always do: ignore and pretend that the problem is not there instead of acting up on it.

Another reason why we should not boycott the World Cup is that the World Cup unites countries. This is because there is a sense of national pride meaning that neighbours, while they watch the match, will talk and unite as they comment on the match and if they win, a lot of people will go to the street and celebrate together with people they have never met. An example is in Morocco when they beat Spain, the Moroccan streets were full of people celebrating their victory and even in Spain after Morocco's victory over Portugal, Moroccan fans were partying in La Plaza del Sol.

A perhaps unexpected reason why we should not boycott the World Cup is because of children. I don't mean teenagers, I mean children my age. These children see their team play and wish that they could too, so they work hard to try and achieve their objective. Pele, who is rated to be one of the best players in football's history, worked incredibly hard to try and join the Brazilian team and won 3 World Cups which is incredible and shows how far dreams go and how important the World Cup was for him and many others in their career.

One of the main reasons why a country chooses to host the World Cup is to attract tourists and people who will spend money in their country, which is good for the economy. Qatar, being a very small country, decided that they also wanted to do this even though they have been accused of bribery, which I am not saying is not true. I believe that they should be allowed to host the World Cup and we should not boycott it because, yes we might think that it's wrong what they're doing, but this boycott is not only against the Qatari government, it's also against the citizens. Qatari citizens would not earn the money that they would have otherwise expected. What is more, the boycott means that we are judging another government's belief, saying that it is wrong and not being respectful. I don't think anyone wants this and if it were you then you wouldn't want it, so why should we do it to Qatar?

The main reason why people want to boycott is because of the values of Qatari culture. However, we have always learnt that we must respect other cultures. Just because their values don't align with those of the Western world, doesn't mean we should hold ourselves above them. Another reason why people consider boycotting the World Cup is because of the deaths of the workers that built the stadiums. This, however, is not a problem native to Qatar, it also happens in most parts of the world. Using this argument, we could say that we shouldn't watch any sporting events. What we can do is raise awareness, and stop it from happening again. Boycotting a tournament to no effect will not solve any of these problems.

The World Cup is about unity not division. It's about respect and putting away our differences and that is why we should not boycott the World Cup.

Spain's EuroBasket Road to Victory

Fernando G, Year 12



(Image by human+nightcafe)

On the 18th of September, the Spanish National Basketball team won this year's Eurobasket, their fourth eurobasket title in under two decades. Yet, the final victories are not enough to encapsulate the important process behind Spain's road to victory.

Spain's basketball team went through a golden era from 2006 to the 2010s, during which time they won three Eurobaskets and two World Cups. The golden era gradually came to an end with the retirement of most of the Spanish legends, such as Pau Gasol, Marc Gasol, Juan Carlos Navarro and Jose Calderón. By 2022, the end of this generation of elite players meant many thought the team would enter a period of stagnation until they could find their next superstar players. Yet, they eventually proved all the skeptics wrong, reminding fans that basketball is a team sport in which true passion, heart, and teamwork are far more valuable assets than superstar players and big names.

Before the tournament, things took a turn for the worse when it was announced that Sergio Llull had been injured and would miss the Eurobasket. This was tragic news; the team already had low expectations and this injury made them even worse. On August 30th, Spain released the list of players for the Eurobasket consisting of 12 players, out of which 7 had never been called to play for the national team.

Spain's competitors for the group stage were Turkey, Montenegro, Belgium, Bulgaria and Georgia. It looked like it was going to be a battle between Turkey and Spain for the first seed in the group. Spain celebrated their first win on September 1st against Bulgaria, then followed it up with another victory against Georgia. Momentum and expectations were building, until the third game where Belgium unexpectedly beat Spain. However, this did not seem to shake the team, and they recovered with two victories in the last games of the group stage, including a notable one against Turkey. After these results, Spain entered the next round classified as first in their group.

The quarter finals against Finland resulted in a Spanish victory of 100-90. It was not an easy victory, but Spain was able to maintain their lead throughout the entire game. For the semi-final, Germany was favored to win by most experts as a result of the star NBA players on their team. Everybody knew it was going to be a difficult game for Spain to win. But, to the surprise of many, Spain beat Germany in what was a close and entertaining game in which the outcome was not determined until the very last minute.

The win meant they had ensured a medal in the tournament. It was as if the golden era had never ended. The team had already surpassed all expectations.

Their final opponent was France, a team with all-stars like Rudy Gobert and Evan Fournier, supposedly the best players in the world. However, it became obvious during the game that France relied too much on these two players, a fact Spain used to their advantage in their defensive strategy. Meanwhile, Spain played as a team in which every player carried out their role to perfection and played with intensity. Winning the game 88-76, they became the European champions for the fourth time. Although the contributions of Willy Hernangomez (who became Eurobasket MVP) and Lorenzo Brown were important, the key to Spain's success was not individual skill, but teamwork and confidence.

The Controversial Unblock Cup

Samuel P, Year 12



(Image by human+nightcafe)

The Community Committee is a student lead organisation with the responsibility of raising money for the school charity: Fundación Unblock. The Committee's most recent project, pitched by Community Committee events organiser Ignacio B, and Treasurers Borja A and Alberto Z, was a football tournament. The idea was genius. A simple tournament bracket made up of teams of 5-7 students. Each student had to pay a 5 euro entrance fee and as the tournament was immensely popular, the Committee President Jorge P raised over 900 euros for Fundación Unblock..

However, the Unblock Tournament is not famous school-wide because of its financial successes but because of its controversies. Two separate tournaments took place: first, years 7-10 played and then years 11-13. The job of refereeing the year 7-10 games was split between Bertran and Peña and both faced heavy criticisms for their decisions.

Despite his tight schedule, I was able to interview Peña and ask whether he felt the complaints of the younger children were at all valid and while he conceded that perhaps the rules were vague, he stands by his decisions stating 'we all know how little kids act when they lose'.

The year 11-13 tournament started after the half term break ended and after only a few games, it was already marred by its fair share of controversial referee calls, most notably perhaps in the penalty shootout of the quarter-finals. In response to this, Peña decided to appoint football rules specialist, Juan A, to aid in refereeing the games.

'I do not possess any refereeing expertise whatsoever', states Alvarez, 'but Peña felt my presence on the field might offer some legitimacy to his calls. These games can become heated, we don't want to lose control'.

I asked Peña why he decided to appoint Alvarez for the second tournament but not the first. 'The older kids play at such a level that refereeing decisions stop being black and white, and we need someone who knows how to make tougher calls, operating in the grey area of football rules', he responded. Many argue he was just scared.

Recently, it has been uncovered that FC Barcelona paid 7.3 million euros between 2001 and 2018 to the company of José María Enríquez Negreira, who held the position of Vice President of the referees committee in the Spanish league. This scandal has created an atmosphere of scepticism towards refereeing in general, felt particularly by the school's Real Madrid fans. Fans lining the tournament stands were heard flinging accusations of corruption and bribery to Peña, Bertran and Alvarez. 'Corrupción en la federación' seems to be the chant of choice. Although these accusations appear to be baseless and there is no evidence to support them, fans are convinced that the referees are corrupt and demand consequences. It's football McCarthyism.

This mass hysteria is perhaps another reason Peña decided to bring in refereeing experts like Juan A. Alvarez stated 'with more officials on the field, we are less vulnerable to being preyed upon by angry fans. We're like sardines. If there are more of us, we might appear like a larger animal.'

The final is yet to be played but tensions are rising with many teams demanding their games be repeated due to objections to the refereeing. Will Peña and his team stay strong and resist the outrage? Or will the controversy only grow, resulting in the banning of future Cups.

Why are Red Bull so much faster?

Rodrigo S, Year 12

'I've never seen a car so fast.' Those are the words of Lewis Hamilton when asked how concerning it was for Formula One that the Red Bull is so far ahead of the rest. He followed this up by saying, "When we were fast, we weren't that fast," which inevitably draws parallels with the Mercedes of 2014 and suggests that this is a new era of complete and utter dominance. But when you really sit down and think about it, this pace advantage should be impossible, shouldn't it? 2021 saw the introduction of a sliding scale of aerodynamic testing, depending on the constructor's standings from the year before.

In short, the constructor finishing first in the previous season would be allowed just 70% of the available wind tunnel time, and each constructor below would get increasingly more hours, down to 10th place, who gets 115% in terms of number of runs per week. Last year, Red Bull were awarded 28 runs per week, whilst Williams would have had 46. This regulation was introduced with the intention of levelling the playing field over a number of years, because the top teams would have less time aero testing, which is something so crucial for ensuring performance gains. And then on top of that, you have to add in Red Bull's penalty for the cost cap breach in 2021. Aside from the \$7 million fine, they were also hit with a 10% reduction in their allocated wind tunnel time.

The combination of these two factors is perhaps the most baffling thing about Red Bull's current dominance. They're operating this season with 15% less wind tunnel time than Ferrari, 20% less than Mercedes, and yet are still able to breeze past both cars, knocking out staggering lap times. In comparison, Lewis Hamilton's domination in 2014 was in part due to having the most advanced engine, which produced higher horsepower, but in 2023 the top engine suppliers are on a pretty level playing field. A large part of Red Bull's pace advantage has to come from their aerodynamics, which, considering that's the area they've lost so much of their testing time in, is genuinely astounding. So naturally, this raises questions.

Firstly, how are Red Bulls further ahead of Ferrari and Mercedes than they were before their reduction in wind tunnel time? Are they finding loopholes or creative interpretations of the aero testing restrictions? Or have both Ferrari and Mercedes simply failed to advance their cars in a meaningful way, despite their extra time in the wind tunnel? It's no secret that Red Bull's Adrian Newey is one of the greatest car designers in history, and rumours suggest that Red Bull have a lightweight chassis this year. Perhaps Newey has shifted the focus from being entirely on aerodynamics to finding pace in other areas of the car to alleviate the effects of the reduction in wind tunnel time.

We also know that Red Bull won't quite have been feeling the full effects of their reduction in development time just yet. This car was developed midway

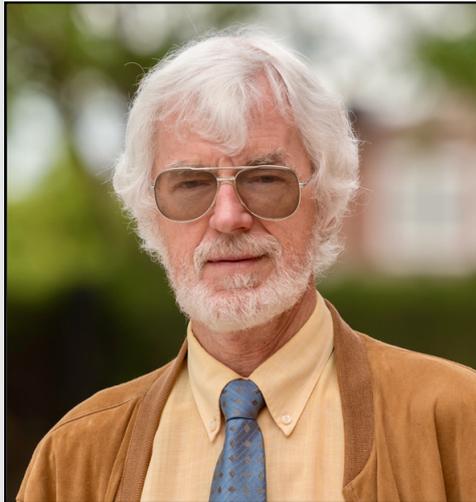
through last season. So perhaps we'll see that punishment hit later on in the year. At least that's what the rest of the field will be hoping for. In terms of the failings of both Ferrari and Mercedes, there are two pretty different stories.

It's believed that the change in Ferrari team principle after the end of 2022 led to a period of disconnect which held up the 2023 development progress. Things weren't being done as efficiently as they should have been. They've tried to reduce drag to be able to match Red Bull on the straights, but have seemingly lost a little too much downforce in the process. And then to Mercedes. Their engine is working absolute wonders for Aston Martin, which was spearheaded by the former Red Bull head of aerodynamics, Dan Fallows, and which is proving that the Mercedes engine in a Red Bull style car can create good results.

So, it seems that this Red Bull golden era is six of one, half a dozen of the other. Red Bull is doing a great job finding gains in the second year of these regulations, but their main competitors failings also amplify that. With the general consensus from rival teams being that Red Bull are still holding back, easing off the gas when they've already established a secure lead during a race, this could perhaps be the most dominant season we've seen in F1 history. Could they win every race? Well, yes, probably.



(Image by human+nightcafe)



Frank Murphy 1946-2023

Frank Murphy was born in Dublin in 1946. He was educated at Oatlands College and University College. He graduated in Mathematics and Physics. In 1970 he married his beloved María José in Madrid. After a two week honeymoon in Benidorm, they moved to Malawi where Frank taught at Zumba Catholic Secondary School for 3 years.

Mr Murphy came to Runnymede College In 1973 as a Science teacher. He came to specialise in Physics, then Mathematics, eventually establishing Runnymede's Further Maths curriculum. For many years he was head of Sixth Form before being appointed Deputy Head In 1977. He worked with Arthur Powell until 1997 and then with Frank Powell, on Arthur's retirement.

Throughout his life, Frank had a passion for sport which he disseminated wherever he went. A keen runner and hiker, he ran the Maratón Popular de Madrid. In the early editions of this race, he was particularly shocked by participants who took the Metro during the race and finished ahead of the field, unchallenged by the organisers.

As Head of PE in the early 80s, he introduced the Inter house Cross Country and Tug of War, traditions that remain today. He was also responsible for organising girls volleyball, which was very popular in the late '80s.

The Cheltenham Gold Cup and the Grand National were events he followed especially closely, always supporting Irish runners and jockeys.

Mr. Murphy was an incredibly important teacher, educator, mentor and role model for a very, very large number of people. He died on Saturday, 19th August, and will be greatly missed.

This year's edition of the Runnymede Times is dedicated to Frank Murphy

