



HAGGERSTON VOICES 2020

A CELEBRATION OF
CREATIVE WRITING AND
POWERFUL PERSPECTIVES

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Our Changing Environment

Climate Protest Poem, Edlira Kaloshi (Y7)

The earth is crying,
The earth is dying,
Slowly melting,
Full on sweltering.

Losing the meaning of the songs we have sung,
No one will listen because we are young,
Travelling the world to get our message across,
If the world ends it's your loss.

As the earth's clock ticks its last,
We take our time remembering the past,
Our oceans are flooding,
We've got to do something.

The wind slowly weeps,
While the fires never sleep,
Dear two thousand and forty-five,
I don't think we're going to survive.

Taliyah Jones (Y7)

Greta keeps telling us our house is on fire
Trump tweets on his phone calling us all liars
Meanwhile you use your plastic straws
Australia burns to its core

The hollow husks of tree carcasses screech in the eternal flames
Our world will never be the same
Iceland weep their tears in the immense heat
Our house is now in cinders

I can feel the smog rupturing my lungs, slowly but surely
Boris sits on his golden throne laughing at us with his herds of Tories
The rainforest morphs into the derelict pits of hell
Our house no longer exists

Mass genocide by noxious gas
Dead rotting corpses scattered across the land
Extinction Rebellion wrote "I told you so" in the sand
Our house is now Armageddon



What You Brought Upon Yourself, *Gustav Maass* (Y8)

Nature trembles and the echoes of the trembles shake the Earth. The people that mother nature had welcomed and cared for now will be her demise. Her last speech was spat out as a warning, or maybe an angry message, but it rang like this:

"Greed fills your heart and controls your actions; you destroy and burn your home for something that does not mean anything. Now the blood of mother nature is on your hands. Animals will cry out for retribution at the atrocities you have committed and the tears of icebergs will haunt you as your beloved, metallic monstrosities will be underwater; all of earth will burn with vengeance. Revenge is all that is in store as you and your ambitions have caused much pain and suffering. Now the blood of your home is on you. The blood of hundreds of species, trees, plants and even your own kind: blood is all on you. So you will change or nature will change you."

So now:

We rise for the animals crying out for retribution.

We rise to stop you and change the world you consider to be yours.

We rise to stop this because under the sweltering heat you send people to kill the thing that houses you and welcomes you.

Even as you chop away with gleaming blades, kill with blazing red flames and poison the planet with huge plumes of smoke.

And our tears we shed are for our planet, a planet that you do not shed tears for or care for, a planet that should not be in your murderous hands.

We are angry, as you just believe that this situation is fake even though you see it right in front of you with your deluded eyes.

This is the end of our message and we hope more will rise.

The Sun is Alive, *Luna Schneebeli (Y8)*

The sun is alive

We are its residents

The sun willingly gave you a home for free

Which we call our planet earth

The sun is alive

It created sights of beauty on our land

The sun provided us with trees, rocks, water, wind

The list goes on and on

The sun is alive

It has feelings too

The sun thinks over every day if we are worthy of this land

And this is why

We clog up free space with skyscrapers

We dig up toxic things from deep underground for electricity

We kill animals and eat them

We litter and sea creatures eat that litter and die then let off toxic fumes

We cut down trees which are a source of oxygen

We drive carbon running cars

The sun is alive
If we continue doing this
The sun will kick us out of the house
We are aggravating the person who gave us life

The sun is alive
You are making it do this
The sun has no choice
You are making this happen

Live mindfully so we can all live happily

Our Mother, *Alice Rose (Y8)*

She keeps us safe from natural disaster,
And what do we do straight after?
Tear apart her world through greed,
Turn it into a greenhouse with weeds,
The sun's heat shows no mercy, no care,
Instead, he screams "kill the spare",

She weeps her loss of all creation,
At the fault of our temptation,
The polar bears no longer in their icy home,
All animals must search on their own,
Time is what we run against,
We are the last defense.

Our Future, Our Earth, *Kotobuki Clarke Abe (Y8)*

It's my future
My life being thrown away
Because of you

Your daughter, your son, your grandchildren
It's our lives
We shouldn't have to fight for our future

It's our future
Mother earth doesn't want this
Neither do we
I don't want to watch the earth crumble
No one does

Help us
Help mother earth
Respect your home
Turn the lights off
Stop buying plastic
It's the one place we have
It's the one home we have
It's our future

Climate Change, *Che Forbes-Cummings* (Y8)

We are throwing ourselves into the deep end,
Yet we can't even swim,
Definitely not in ice cold water,
That has destroyed our homes.

But the polar bears can,
In fact they probably enjoy it,
Just how kids like to run,
But we can't run or swim forever,
Nor can they,
Especially when they have no home to return to.

Well you know what they say,
What comes around goes around,
Soon we'll be swimming with no home to go to,
And that's if we can swim to the top,
Before our homes take us down with them.

Then all we can do is pray,
Pray that if anyone is left,
That they re-create a society,
One where this will never happen again,
And that one day they will find our skeletons resting,
And that we are put in a museum where they name us,
Where we lived and who our families were,
While we hopefully are watching people looking at us,
Thinking "well if that's what happened to them,
Then we aren't making the same mistake",
So maybe you should try and imagine that,
The next time you book your holiday to Australia,
Before you see kangaroos bouncing on water,
Rather than an orange Mars-like desert.

Rise, *Ash Davey Creedon* (Y8)

Everyone saw the marchers.
Rule breakers.
Holding up their signs, walking, shouting
Reminding us
"There is no planet B"
"Save the polar bears"

Aren't they crazy?
Everybody knows climate change isn't real.
Plastic doesn't pollute the oceans.
The ice caps are fine.
Polar bears? Never heard of them.

Is that true?
I don't know.
That's just what I was told.
Why should I change my life, just to save one stupid animal?
Except
It isn't just one animal, is it?

I sit by the ocean, looking out to endless blue
But it's not blue
It's grey with the litter that people from far away put there
They probably do it a lot
They probably do it without thinking
And why should they think?

I gaze out of the car window.
Looking out to the endless green.
No trees, just fields
Mostly cows, the occasional sheep.
I wonder when they decided to put the cows there.
What did the forest look like before they cut it down?

The marchers are the only ones living in this world
Everyone else lives in a bubble
A tiny bubble with a forest inside
But the world around them is a desert
If only they could see it...

But they do see it.
I wish they would come out,
Onto the world they created.
Live there for a while.
Maybe then, their minds would change

Gothic Tales

Arthur Yerbury (Y7)

They trudged through the low undergrowth, yew branches protruding from the overhanging trees, beckoning them with arthritic hands. Walking into a clearing, James looked up and saw the rapidly changing skyline. It was midwinter, so darkness fell upon them more suddenly than in other seasons. The clouds transformed from their previous state to dark and impeding and, soon after, the rain beat down mercilessly on the shoulders of James and William.

An inhuman scream cut through the oppressive mist, followed by several more. The noise entwined with the foul stench of rotting vegetation. The moon cast shadows through the trees, creating merciless faceless horrors; the wind moved the branches almost as if casting demonic creatures, forever chasing after the two companions.

They turned left through the knotted brambles and came across a ramshackle bungalow. It was strange as the two boys didn't remember ever seeing the house throughout any of their years exploring this part of the forest. They made no remark on this however as they were too cold and scared to make any hasty decisions. William knocked on the door, but received no answer. He called through an open window, but to no avail. James approached the door, but a wind picked up and blew it open. The boys expected to hear an awfully dreadful noise as it opened, but the hinges must have been recently oiled as the door made no sound as it glided open to lead the boys to the depths of their demise.

Exchanging glances, James and William entered the house with caution. The inside of the house was deserted but, to their surprise, in the kitchen there was a feast awaiting them. There were meats and salads and fish and deserts made of fresh cream and exotic fruits they couldn't name. The meats were cooked to perfection and still warm. The salads were made of the most delicious vegetables. The fish were salty and crisp. There was no way this house had been unoccupied for less than a few minutes, but where was the owner?

It then dawned on William that he had never seen this house before and knew nobody who lived in this part of the woods. He also remembered his mother's words: "We have run out of food. Go out to the woods and see what you can find on the fruit

trees. But be careful, there have been sightings of spectres in our area.” That last remark really shook William. He knew what spectres could do: they lured their prey into a false sense of security before striking with utmost terror.

He screamed at James to leave, but there was no stopping him. Nine years of malnourishment was more than enough to send anyone into a state of oblivion when taken away from a plate of food. “It’s okay, we can bring some for our parents. You go home and I will meet you there.”

There was nothing William could do apart from shout, “Spectre!” from over his shoulder.

James chuckled. He knew how dramatic William could be sometimes, so he piled the rest of the food into his backpack and left the room. He was about to step through the doorway and into the forest when he heard a dark laughter and the door slammed behind him. It was the maniacal laugh of a spectre.

Michelle Delgernaran (Y7)

“Jane,” Marie asked while poking Jane’s arm, “are we lost?”

“No. And stop poking my arm,” Jane snapped.

In a childish manner, Marie pulled her arm away and kicked at the ground. Jane held her head high and marched forward, trying to ignore her sister who was pulling on her.

Eventually, the pallid moon rays that had lit up their path were dimmed by a swarm of grey clouds. The previously warm air grew cold, torturing the girls who lacked coats.

“Jane?”

“Yes?”

“Should we go back home now? I think it’s going to rain.”

“We should. Let’s go.”

“Jane?”

“Yes, Marie?”

“Can I ride on your back? I’m tired.”

Irritated, Jane knelt down so that the younger one could climb onto their back.

“Jane?”

“Yes?”

“Do werewolves exist? Emma said they do when we were in school today.”

“No.”

“Well she said that when there’s a milky and magnificent moon they come out and…”
But Jane had stopped listening and instead was thinking about how to leave here.

In reality, they were lost and had been for the last two hours but she didn’t want to concern her sister. Maybe if she yelled for help someone would come and help them. No, it’s too late for anyone to be around. Maybe if they walked straight ahead, they would eventually find the way through.

Right before she could think of another plan, it started raining so she veered towards the left of the path where the tall, trustworthy trees could shelter us from the rain. By the tree trunks, the young girls rested on the dirt.

“We’re lost,” Jane confessed. She took off her jumper and pulled it over Marie’s head. “Sorry.”

“It’s okay. Maybe a nice werewolf will come and rescue us,” Marie said, attempting to raise her sister’s morale.

“Maybe,” Jane whispered.

Suddenly, a rustle came behind them and they turned around swiftly to look at it. Out of the shadows came a silhouette of a man. He strode forwards into the light to reveal his features. He was quite tall, and his hair parted smartly; he radiated confidence, yet he lacked any muscles or physical uniqueness, and his confidence came off as arrogance.

“Hello, I have come here to save you!” the stranger declared.

“Thank you. Do you know where the exit is? We couldn’t find it for a while,” Jane replied.

“It is over to the left but it is far too dangerous for you to go on your own. I shall escort you!”

“No, we’re okay but thank you for offering.”

“No, no. *I insist!*” the stranger was starting to get more desperate.

“No. I can do it by myself completely fine. Can you please just give us the directions?” Jane was slowly standing up and brushing off the dirt on her skirt.

“But… you’re meant to say yes, I escort you and I get praised,” he said, starting to walk towards her. “Now, let’s go and you publicly say that I saved your life.”

He reached out, trying to grab Jane’s shoulder when something flew at him. They jumped back and screamed. In front of them lay the stranger in a pool of his own blood with a large pile of fur on it. It’s limbs pinned down the man’s limbs.

Marie whispered under her breath, “Werewolf, Jane. It’s a werewolf.”

“Yes it is.”

The sisters watched in awe as the werewolf sped away and a dozen imps lined up in taking some of the scraps, dancing while eating the raw human.

“We should go back home.” Jane muttered.

The Forest, *Sophie Palmer (Y7)*

My eyes flickered open. Dark shapes swam in front of my eyes and I felt unusually cold. I lifted my hand to feel for the side of my bed: it wasn't there. The only thing that I could feel was cold, wet soil. I sat up. What I saw next was not my bedroom; it was not anywhere I immediately recognised either, although I had the horrible feeling I had been there before.

A great forest lay ahead. Towering, gnarled trees stopped any form of light from reaching the forest floor and mist was approaching. Standing up, I noticed something flickering in the distance. I ran up to investigate. I was indeed right- there was something flickering. It was coming from a very large tree, which was twisted at the roots. I moved closer and noticed that all of the branches seemed to be twisted together- entangling themselves- and forming some sort of hollow.

The flickering lights were in there, I knew it. Breathlessly, I ran round to the other side of the tree and gasped: I had been in this exact place before, many years ago. I had only been six years old and we (my parents and I) were camping in this very forest. I had gone to collect firewood when I saw this very tree. It had entranced me at first: it was beguiling, some could even have said it was magical. I had drawn closer to it, longing to reach the flickering lights. But my mother had pulled me away before I could even get close to it. She had said that I shouldn't go wandering off into the deep forest at night. But now I was here, by this tree again. The hole was still there. It was big enough for me to get through; I longed to get through it: so I did.

My eyes flickered open. Dark shapes swam in front of my eyes and I felt unusually warm. I lifted my hand up to feel for the shrubby forest floor: it wasn't there. The only thing I could feel was the side of...a bed? I sat up. What I saw next was not my forest. It was not anywhere I immediately recognised either, although I had a horrible feeling that I had been there before.

The Doppelganger, *Zoynal Ahmed (Y7)*

It was an icy, merciless battlefield.

The storm screeched a warning as I raced through the forest. The trees flashed past me in a blur as I wrapped my bony fingers around my dagger, slashing through the haze of branches and bushes around me. It was like the forest was alive, tracking my every move, holding me back from my dinner, trying to trip me over. Everything was against my will, even the storm, it's endless downpour showering billions of tiny, painstaking needles into my fragile back. My right eye was fixed straight in front of me, digging into the person's back while the other was constantly twitching, scanning the area for any other sinister beings lurking in the shadows... How could this be? And how on earth was my victim, a useless earthling, running so fast? I'd been chasing this extremely annoying human for fifteen minutes now! How! How-

I did not see that coming.

Leisurely, I opened my eyes and tried to stand up. I groaned. Cautiously, I touched my head. My hand was coated in a blanket of blood. Quietly swearing in my own language, I mustered the strength to pick myself up and try to take in my surroundings. I was bewildered in an instant. It seemed like one second ago I was surrounded by rows of heartless soldiers of wood and the next second I was somewhere completely different. There were tapestries of what seemed to be my family tree, objects and foods that I liked and, in the heart of the cave, a pendant of half a bat's skull hanging around a picture of - of - of - me. Furtively, I tiptoed closer to the pendant and held it against mine. No, it couldn't be. And then I remembered.

I turned around to see a reflection of myself. Someone who looks just like me. The person who I've been searching for all this time. No, not my doppelganger, my brother. The question is:

Does he finally forgive me?

Freddie Ros Thornton (Y7)

Everything was normal. Everything was how I wanted it to be. But life could never be perfect; could it?

I was only a child, around 7 years old. Nothing seemed strange or peculiar. Little did I know that I would eventually reach the day that would haunt me for the rest of my life...

Two years passed and it was Halloween. My friends and I were all dressed up and

going round the neighbourhood to ask for treats at neighbours door steps. We were just finishing our last round of wandering around the block when my friend pointed out a strange house that I'd never really come across before. I didn't know what to think; it was big, dark and rusting, but all my other friends agreed so I couldn't say no.

My friends dared me to ring the doorbell, just to see if anyone would appear. So with no fear, I slowly crept up to the strange house. My trembling, small finger slowly reached up to the button and as I grew in confidence, I pressed it. Just like that, the door slowly creaked open to reveal an entrance with no one there. Should I enter? I thought that I'd only have a small peak. So I slowly crept my head through the small hinge and as I reached into the house, it grabbed me.

I was never to be seen in that life again.

For so long, I have become tired of these same walls. For so long, I've wished to be free. For I have been stuck in this house for years and years, and still my friends have never come to me My hand: bony. However, still, I will wait.

All of a sudden, the door hinge creaked. I immediately turned my eyes towards the lock. The door that kept me locked in this house for so long was opening! Was I finally free?

I checked the lock, it was true! The moment I'd been waiting for all my life! Finally, I twisted the handle and pushed it as hard as I could. The world! Brightness! I was free from the dark. I stepped out of the house and entered the world I was born into. I was back. My Friends, I had been so angry with them. Never thought to rescue me? They would be my friends no longer.

Riad Benarouche (Y7)

The colours of bright grey caught my eye, it was the same colour as my hoodie. I twisted my head very quickly but it disappeared. I kept my eye out just in case, but I could not shake off the feeling of being followed. An oppressive fog had fallen. Its fingers swirled and curled about my head. They touched my face and stroked my hair.

Suddenly, I heard the sound of leaves and twigs being crushed like a shy ballerina dancing on broken glass. Turning around, I saw a grey flash go by. It was a person and for a second it looked familiar. I darted out of the forest but it was a giant maze with no ending. I felt a pinch on my neck and a hand covering my mouth. Bits of sullen, cloudy mist was escaping from my body as pure fear took hold of me. All of a sudden, I felt a strange heaviness where my heart used to be. I turned slowly to

look... and it was me! How could there be two? The other version looked up at me and had a deformed smile...

Micaela Sagy (Y7)

He was taking his afternoon stroll in the school's extensive gardens, waiting for Victor to finish his daily classes. As he was nearing the end of the blossomed garden, he noticed an unlit doorway, and although he attempted to distract his mind, he was convinced by his immense curiosity to cautiously approach the door. The grand, engraved gravel door was slightly ajar, revealing a beastly shadow. He faltered through the gap, reluctantly turning around to investigate the inhuman shadow and....

'Phew!' He let out an immense sigh of relief. He was relieved but oddly suspicious, and from now on could not shake the feeling of being followed. He was so shaken with fear that he hadn't noticed he was standing at the entrance to an extensive, darkly-lit cave, which he could slightly make out was covered in spiderwebs and sharp ice glaciers hanging from the tall ceiling. He was frozen. He had lived in this school for as long as he can remember, but somehow, this place was unfamiliar to him.

The eternal silence was only punctured by his shaky, heavy panting. He was struggling to see anything, and used his wooden cane for balance; he was still confused but determined to explore every corner. Every now and then, he jumped with fear as a hissing noise would creep upon him, but he could never spot a thing. He reached a corner of the uneven cave and suddenly, goosebumps crept up his arm. A cold drop of water landed on his exposed, bald head and he decided he'd had enough. He turned around to reach for the door but was stopped. He could see an olive face with a purple spotty nose, topped with a gruesome expression. He let out a glass-shattering scream.

It was a witch.

She glared at him coldly. He felt goosebumps of fear reappearing on his thin arms. Her faded indigo eyes glared into his lush green ones as he attempted to distract her with his crumbling cane, but she was determined. He could not move. She was as

still as the cave. He was quivering and so made a run for it, but her impossibly, long red nails dug into his hunched shoulders...

Rufus Vallance (Y7)

Another sheep had been stolen. Wilbur was fed up. Tonight he would stay up and hunt the thief down. Man or wolf, Wilbur had never missed. He lived on an isolated hill with his sheepdog and his herd. The cottage Wilbur lived in was a rotting excuse for a house. Mice scuttled through the walls; mould grew like his spite. He wouldn't be surprised if the roof crashed down on his head.

Seeking revenge on the thief, Wilbur loaded his rifle and found a place to sit. He wore a grubby dark red jacket and his old shirt was worn out. In contrast to his dirty appearance, his eyes were bright, with a spark of imagination. His long dark hair covered his face, and the scar under his nose visible.

Having been a lawyer, he knew of many reasons a human thief could be sent to prison. The law had never suited him. He much preferred settling scores violently. As the sun began to set, he nestled into position with his gun. The sheep began to sleep. Now began the wait.

It was a silent night. The full moon rose high. Only the wind brushed through the meadow grass. Suddenly Wilbur's hairs began to stand up: the thief was close. Then everything went black. Wilbur woke the next morning feeling sick and disoriented, his rifle lying next to him, bent and twisted. In an act of inexplicable violence, his dog was ripped in two, its blood painted on the grass. Another sheep had been stolen...

Tiger Watson (Y7)

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Zakkiyah Mirza (Y11)

The darkening mist cast a large shadow over the old man's view. That was what he was known as to everybody – just the old man. Nobody really cared about who he was or where he came from; he had always just been the person that nobody wanted to know. As he stumbled through the forest, which he used as an escape from reality, the soles of his feet ached and his body wanted to fall asleep and dream the nightmare of life away. The eeriness of the unknown forest haunted every soul that dared to enter, but to the old man, it was just another path that he walked through without people caring about him. He couldn't help but wonder how what was once a lively park had turned into a place of fright. The only source of guidance that the old man had was the illuminating moon; he had always believed that the moon and the stars were there to guide people.

As the old man ventured deeper into the woods, he caught the sight of something glimmering beneath the ashes of darkness. With each step that brought him closer to the light, he realised that it was a window of a small cottage, like a home which seemed to have been abandoned. He stared at it and, without thinking, he pushed open the cracked, ebony door. As he took his first step through the doorway, a huge hurdle of spider webs rushed into his face. Although the house seemed to have been deserted, the flickering light that had drawn him to the house gave the suggestion that there must have been somebody close. Closing the door behind him to stop the draughty wind from shattering an already shattered home, he crawled through the never-ending darkness. A billion questions blurred through the old man's mind and he couldn't seem to find the answer to a single one. Who did this place belong to? Why had it been built in the middle of the woods? Why had it been left abandoned?

The creaking floorboards beneath him led the man to another empty room. There were no tables, no chairs – nothing. He looked closer, and that's when he saw the picture frame.

It was a black and white photo of two small children – a girl and boy, playing in front of the main door of the house, but that wasn't what caught his eye. It was what he had seen in the background that left him completely astonished.

The old man had lived in the same home, in the same town, surrounded by the same people for as long as he could remember. He also had the same routine that he carried out every day. His life was as plain as a soothing meadow. He knew everybody, even if they didn't know him, so how had he never seen this house or the people in the photo? He looked deeper into the background of the photo and stared at rows of houses that stood behind it. It was as if the house was in a completely different town. The confusion that soon built up in the old man's mind troubled him. The location of the abandoned home was in a deserted forest – what had happened to the town? That's when the floorboard beneath the old man's feet cracked.

Once again, the old man was left in complete darkness. He had shot through the floor and landed in what seemed to him to be a confined box. Not only was there nobody around to help him, but he was also still unable to process what had just happened. He screamed and shouted, but it was of no use. His own voice just echoed back at him. Breathlessly, he sat down and covered his face with his hands. That's when he felt a cold hand touch his shoulder...

Myths Reimagined

Medusa's Monologue, *Antonia Opera (Y7)*

I remember going to the sea, running my soft, nimble fingers through the rich, golden sand. But now, I cannot even feel the sand; my hands are too scaly.

People may be astonished when I say this, but it's not my beauty that I miss the most: it's my house. Just thinking about it makes my heart ache.

My beautiful, huge house, with its beautiful pastel pink walls that light up so beautifully when the sun seeps through the curtains.

Tragically, the snakes that are now embedded in my arid scalp won't tolerate an environment like that, so I must sleep in a cave; I feel like I am a ghost in a haunted house that nobody will ever set foot in.

I feel so defamiliarized and alienated. My soul burns with anger towards Athena for doing this to me but she can never know what I'm thinking, or she'll surely kill me. I am going to make sure that I turn everyone in all of Greece to stone and then she can come and kill me. Unless I turn her into stone too!

Medusa's Monologue, *Jimme Brotherhood (Y7)*

I cannot bear to look in the mirror, but I can see the hideous outline of my ever-moving, writhing silhouette. My beautiful, once enchanting hair has vanished and is replaced with hideous, wet, entwining snakes. My mind is struggling to cope with how my beautiful image has succumbed to this alien reflection of my horrible head. I used to be so beautiful that when a boy looked at me, he gasped in the sight of my beauty, but now when someone looks at me they turn to stone. I am disgusted at the thought of my unprepossessing body and now I unquestionably despise Athena!

I can't believe that jealous, green-eyed, ruthless and barbaric snake has turned me into her own reflection! I alone have become an image of her own hatred of her true image inside. That despicable woman thinks she alone has the power to turn me into the most grotesque, not even an animal but a monster, beast of mythical ugliness. Only a true monster would think that this is a worthwhile punishment.

For this I will have my revenge on that stubborn, puny, little girl and she will pay for what she has done to my beautiful body.

The Book of Marta - a Short Story of the Goddess of Fire and Water Told by Marta Herself, *Fione Ziesche Pacarada (Y7)*

I sat at the edge of the pool, which I had set into the entrance hall of my husband's palace (he was Michael, God of earth and air). Why couldn't I have my own palace? I twirled my hair around my finger, sending a stream of bubbles across the pool absent-mindedly. I was so bored of just sitting here. I knew I had my warriors to entertain me, but they were all still asleep. It was midnight and I just could not sleep. Something was keeping me up. Something was there, but I just didn't know what. The crackling of the fire in the hearth startled me. What was that? There was a blue, glass orb growing in the centre of the fire, being licked at by the flames, but seemingly untouched. Cautiously, I crept closer to the hearth. The fire went out. Lying there, in the middle of the logs in the hearth, the blue orb shone brightly, seeming to beckon me towards it. Gingerly, I put my palm on its shiny, smooth surface. Nothing happened. Quickly, I took my hand off it but as soon as I did, I felt myself being sucked straight into the orb. What was happening?! I felt like I was rushing down a never ending waterfall. Then everything went black.

Groggily, I opened my eyes and slowly sat up. The space was completely empty except for a large, crystal clear, blue lake in the centre and flaming torches lining the walls. I got up and started to explore. There seemed to be no entrance, but then, something caught my eye. Something glowing in the lake. I instantly knew what it was. The blue orb! It was my ticket out of here. But wait. It seemed like no one had found this place before me. No one knew that I was here. No one. This place could be my palace. This place could be my home forever. I would never have to sleep on a bed of leaves again. I would never have to sit on gnarly benches forged from trees again. I could be so happy here. I span around the vast space. It was so beautiful. I could make everything fit for me and my warriors to live here. Whoosh! A fireplace appeared in the wall in front of me and a roaring fire ignited in it. I just knew that this place could be called home soon enough. A hand grabbed me from behind.

Fiery pain seared through my body as I was pulled backwards, straight into the lake. Struggling to see, I saw a flaming figure in front of me. It reached out to grab me once again, but then, the torches on the walls extinguished. We were in complete

darkness. The only thing I could see was the glowing figure of flames in front of me. The realisation came down on my head like an immense weight. He was a fire demon. One of my kind.

“What’s your name?” I asked him softly.

A crackling voice came from somewhere in the depths of the lake, “Farid.”

A rumbling sounded from the base of the lake. I had forgotten about the orb. It was still there and I had to do something about it. Just as I started to get ready to dive down, Farid spoke once more.

“Do not break it. You will never see Michael again.”

He knew about Michael! I couldn’t believe it.

“I will summon your warriors.”

“Th-thank you!” I stammered in my delight.

Footsteps echoed in the depths of the lake.

“They are here. If you please, can I serve you as a warrior?”

“Erm... Of course,” I dove down to greet the seven girls.

At the bottom, I brushed against the orb and as soon as I did so, the lights ignited again. What was that all about? I hugged my girls tightly and we held each other as we swam to the surface. As we reached the brink of the lake, we saw Farid standing at the fireplace. He smiled and disappeared into the fire that was still roaring, there in the hearth. I have always wondered why he pulled me into the lake just before the lights extinguished and I still do not know why.

Months later...

The orb glowed on its pedestal in the centre of the lake. Someone was visiting! The doorknob on the door that was set into the side of the pedestal glowed purple and green. It was Michael. I sat at the head of the marble dining table as the Seven watched the door swing open and the lord of air and earth float to his chair. He surveyed the space and smiled.

“You’ve made quite an extravagant home for yourself, haven’t you!” he chuckled.

I looked at the sleeping quarters with the four poster beds for each of us and the red and blue plush sofas that were the main attraction in the living area.

“Well, it’s my home and that’s all I can say!” I replied.

Boris The Great: A Modern Day Myth, *George Dimbleby (Y7)*

Boris the Great battled King Jeremy
To win back the girl named Brexit.
He used all his force
To build a great horse
And captured the girl named Brexit.

Even after that war
The Gods wanted more
And sent us a terrible plague.
Poor Boris got it
Now the lord of the Brits'
Future seems awfully vague.

The Phoenix, *Alinda Patek (Y7)*

She rises from the ashes that others have made
Though hiding, she is not afraid
She sees the mistakes, she sees what's been done
With blow guns, handguns and shotguns

The phoenix they say rises from the ash
But she sees people living in the trash
Of the Taliban bombs
As she calms
Her fellow brothers and sisters

For they are too scared to stand up to the horrible Taliban
But then it began:
The threats,
The silhouettes
-of the deaths
The killings of our siblings
The stealing of our feelings

The phoenix they say rises from the ash
But the silence makes her cry
The quiet of her fellow neighbours
Enables the Taliban to bully more
But she couldn't stand it anymore

“Malala Yousafzai”
They would shout
“Needs to die!”
They would scream

But they didn't know
That they boosted her self-esteem

Poem Inspired by Icarus, *Kieran Moss-Grimes* (Y7)

One day my father Daedalus
Was thrown in prison
He was an inventor and a famous
Builder.

I was hatching a plan to free him but I got caught
We spent one year in a tiny tower
Sleeping in that place was like sleeping in a dog cage
We knew we had to escape soon

But my father being such a genius,
He collected bird feathers and some wax,
He was able to make both of us a pair of makeshift wings to fly away
But falling off that ledge was like sailing into a storm at sea

And I got to experience the water that glistened like diamonds close up.

Poem Inspired by Icarus, *Long Huynh Tran (Y7)*

Flying, flying, flying
As I ascend into the sky,
The birds start flying by
As the sun's rays get brighter and brighter

As I fly in the sky
My dad tells me not to fly so high
But I don't obey my dad,
Which made me go funny.

As time went by
My dad tried to convince me to go lower
But I was enjoying having this much power
But sooner or later I realised I messed up.

Falling felt like sticking my head out of a plane
After that, I knew I would decay
If I'd have listened to my father, I would have been ok.

But I didn't

So I accepted my fate.

Poem Inspired by Icarus, *Priscilla Mota (Y7)*

The ocean is a human connection,
Here, you feel like you've never felt before,
The sun is a selfless celebration,
Of someone else's joy you taught.

Feeling free is right,
It's better to do it at dawn, not night.
The power within you is rising.
It's all so surprising.

You are high up in the sky,
You say, "this feels alright"
When can you come again?
If you leave you'll think it's unfair.

Your father says time to go home.
But you'd rather stay there,
Even if you're alone.

Your father says make sure you're home in time,
But you caress the sand saying "it's all mine"

Poem inspired by Icarus, *Sophia Ghali (Y7)*

There was Icarus and Daedalus,
In the middle,
Too close to the sun, the candle wax will melt

He was falling to the sea

Like a tennis ball that you bounce
But doesn't spring back

The sea like a fly trap
Waiting to grab Icarus

And then he is gone.

My Son-A poem inspired by Icarus, *Majesty Mandeng (Y7)*

I loved my son,
So much, so dear
He was very talented
But he would not listen,
Insisted that he was a God,
He crashed into the sea

He tumbled down in regret
And left his poor father
To watch and stare.

My son. My son.
Oh why my son
You should have listened to me,
My son. My son.
Oh why my son
It should have been me.

Powerful Perspectives

Racial Equality, *Baffour Akoto-Antwi (Y8)*

Fellow students,

I am giving you this speech today to explain why having innocent black people judged by the color of their skin, and not by their character, is appalling.

Imagine a world where everybody is seen as equal. Imagine a world where people are not afraid of being looked down upon because of the color of their skin. Imagine a world where black young boys and girls can craft an identity that they desire without being judged.

The majority of black people say that they have experienced racism. Research suggests that 75% of people in movies are white, whilst the remaining 25% are from minority racial groups. This might not seem shocking, but one effect of this is that young black people have nobody to look up to. They don't see themselves represented on screen, which can impact the confidence of black people to pursue opportunities that they deserve.

Black people don't just protest because they feel like you did them wrong, They protest to show that they have rights and that they should demonstrate who they really are. Achievement is not skin deep, and regardless of if you're black or white you can achieve anything, but sadly that is not true in the eyes of society. We need a change! Most of us are given labels as Black, White, Asian, Mexican, Native American, Indian. But let me ask you a question: if there was no such thing as racial labels, what would we all be? We would be one big group of people from different backgrounds. We would be a community. We would all be together.

Due to racial discrimination and harmful stereotypes about black males, some ignorant people may see me as a violent person before they even know my name. People may think I am incapable before they even know me. I am fed up of being put in one category. I am fed up of being judged. This needs to stop. You may think after years and years of black slavery that racial injustice has ended, but, no, it has not. There might not be slavery still going on, but there is still racism which needs to end.

Yes, there might have been progress towards racial equality, but there is still more to be done. Black people can't do this on their own. Whatever background you come from, we all need to work together. We all need to be part of a unified solution.

Thank you.

Body Positivity, *Chelsey Nguah (Y7)*

Fellow students,

I'd like you to take a moment to imagine a world where everyone, regardless of their shape or size, was made to feel beautiful. Imagine a world where the size of your waist was not seen to be the size of your worth. Imagine a world where talented, courageous, intelligent girls were taught to value their brains and not their bodies.

Tragically, in 2020, this is not the world we live in. Tragically, in 2020, we live in a world where we are made to obsess over our appearance. Is shape and size something children should be made to worry about? Does a size 6 equal a small brain or does a large brain equal a size 14? No should be the answer. Bodies should not be turned into a battleground for debate, so why do we allow this to happen?

I'm giving this speech today to call for males and females of all shapes and sizes, all over the world, to join together to fight for size inclusivity. If we work together, we could be the generation that dispels the idea that skinny somehow means superior.

Imagine a world where size cannot determine our future or our worth. I am asking for your help. We are all a part of this battle.

We must improve this issue before it eats us up.

Thank you.

Are Racism and Sexism a Thing of the Past?

Roheya Davis (Y9)

Imagine a world where women were catcalled, wolf-whistled and felt obliged to look “nice” all the time. Or imagine a world where people were discriminated against because of their skin colour, accent or culture. Where people were prejudiced and discriminated against because they couldn't pronounce a word in English, or because their accent made it hard for people to understand them. What if I were to tell you that the world I just described is the very world we are living in now: 2020 Britain.

I have recently been enthralled by John Steinbeck's “Of Mice and Men”. As a class, we have been paralysed with fear of 1930's America due to the explicit examples of misogyny and racism. To illustrate, black people were not referred to by their names. Instead, they were all identified by one racist discriminatory word. Women were forced to be domesticated, to look nice all the time, and to cook and clean. After reading the book it made me question: how far have we progressed from these racist and sexist views?

I can tell you the answer. Not very far. You say racism is a thing of the past and you know that's a lie. Why? Because over 70% of ethnic minority workers say they have experienced racial harassment at work. But you are telling the truth when you say that women are still treated as second-class citizens. I want that to be a lie. Not just because it's not promoting equality, but because of the gender pay gaps. In order for a woman to take care of her family she has to be financially stable. Yet women are getting paid less than men, not because of their efforts, but because of gender inequality. For example, male newsreader Huw Edwards collects a salary of £550,000 while female newsreader Sophie Raworth is among the lowest paid news presenters with a salary of £150,000.

How would you feel if I did the things you do? Cuss and harass you everyday because of your skin colour or your accent. Or if I told you that you can't do something because you're a boy, or if I said things like ‘man up’ or ‘you throw or run like a girl’. How would you feel? Not very good, I know. And that's why you should stop excluding people from your activities because of their skin colour or gender. Everyone is defined by much more than this. I know for sure that if your mum, sister, auntie or any other female relatives were being discriminated against because of their race or gender you wouldn't have it, and the same if it was happening to you.

The golden rule is to treat others as you would like to be treated yourself. So if you would not want to be targeted or bullied because of your race or gender, don't do it to other people.

If you really wanted to make the world a better place you would stop all this discriminatory, racist and sexist nonsense and treat everyone as equals because that is what they are. If in God's eyes we are all equal, then in everyone else's eyes, everyone should be seen as equal as well.

No one is better than anyone else. No matter the race, gender or culture we are all human, we are all the same.

Loneliness is a Disease, *Lucia Krohn (Y9)*

Fellow pupils,

I'd like you to take a moment to imagine a world made up of likes and followers. A world where the internet is the primary platform for social interactions, where people spend over 6 hours on Snapchat or Instagram, scrolling their day away, lost in a world of fake smiles and performative friendships. Imagine a world where people quantify their self-worth based on how many likes their latest selfie has received. Well look around; sadly that is the world we are living in today. That wistful, bitter world is what you are living in. Get used to it because I doubt it's going to change anytime soon, unless you help make that change.

Everyday you scroll down Instagram watching what a happy life people share. Do you think that is the reality? Everyone seems to be laughing and smiling. The truth is, we are all scared of the realities we choose to keep hidden, aren't we? The broken homes, the stretch marks engraved onto our skin, the scars. We always try to cover it up. We try to cover up how lonely we are. We are pressured to be perfect. It doesn't matter if you have 2k followers, because no matter how many followers you have, you still feel lonely.

Does having 300 views or 2000 followers make you feel popular? Because let me tell you, it doesn't mean anything. You are just as lonely as the girl who gets 10 views or who has 30 followers. I know you don't want to believe it or might not even think about it, but it's true.

Being a teenage girl, I spend a lot of time online. It makes me laugh. Texting my friends, reading memes, watching videos of people going on dates to chicken shops.

But think about it: for every happy, joyful image that is posted online there is a private sadness that is never shared. Everyone is lonely in their own way.

Being lonely is a dangerous state of mind to be in. It's like you're trapped in a room with everyone you know, and then they slowly start disappearing. No matter how much you scream and shout, no one is listening to you. You are alone in the darkness. It's like you're falling down from the sky. You don't know how you got there, you don't know where you are, you don't even know who you are. You're just alone, falling through the clouds.

Studies have shown that loneliness can increase the likelihood of inflammation, heart disease, dementia and it has increased death rates. How daunting is that? Baroness Barrar, the current Minister for Civil Society said loneliness “ touches almost everyone at one point.” Let that sink in for a moment. A study by The Co-op and the British Red Cross revealed over 9 million people in the UK across are lonely. 9 million. Sometimes doctors are the only people to witness a patient die. Because they have no family, or no one to support them. Even more shockingly, it has also been proven that 300,000 to 600,000 people die in a year due to loneliness.

When you leave this assembly hall today I'd like you to think about what you can do to help fight this social disease. This could be as simple as talking to a neighbour, or picking up your phone not to scroll through Instagram, but to call a friend.

Remember, we're better together.

Society is Fractured and Hierarchical, *Dexter Cleary (Y9)*

“Those who do not know the past are destined to repeat it.”

Modern society has been divided, fractured, because we can't learn from our mistakes. Mistakes like The Great Depression, pointless wars that ended with a divide into two sides: the Fascist against the Socialist, the pessimist against the optimist, the powerful against the defenceless. Governments refuse to help those on the side of the weaker, the ones who could become stronger but don't have the means to do it. The people who could make a difference if things were different.

As a child, I was never fearful of being mugged or stabbed because that wasn't the world I lived in. But since becoming aware of this divide, this fracture, a fear has

arisen. In the park late at night, I'm scared, gripping my phone, walking at the fastest pace I can. 70% of people in the UK are worried about the increase in crime and the looming possibility of homelessness. Politicians of this world are destined to repeat the past, they are the same egotistical, megalomaniacs that ruled a hundred years ago. A fear of the past is a fear of the future.

Picture yourself as a migrant worker waking up in 1929 to the news that all your money has vanished overnight. Having to leave your family, leave your home, to survive. In this world the upper-class rule, in this world the fortunate benefit and the unfortunate are forced into work following the largest economic crash ever seen. In this world, they said this would never happen *ever* again.

Fast forward to 2008, the entire world has just experienced a financial crisis due to greed from those higher up. The Great Recession was the result of a reluctance to pay those lower than themselves. The Great Depression sparked an era of reform, The Great Recession, however, was forgotten.

69% of Britons are feeling pessimistic about the state of national unity. 72% believe that within a year, Britain will be more divided than it already is. Only 20% of Remain voters feel very or fairly hopeful of the UK's future.

These statistics show a decline in hope, a decline in unity, a decline in democracy. It's time to change, time to tip the scales in our favor and stand up and say "Hey, Stop it!"

To all those who neglect the less fortunate, we don't need a dreamer to fix reality, we don't need a head up in the clouds, we need to fix our eyes on the streets. We need change.



"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to **repeat it.**"

Is School Pointless? *Scarlett Sheehan (Y9)*

An investigation into why we go to school.

History shows us the importance placed on education through the trials, tribulations, sacrifices and success of many distinguished individuals. Education can be traced as far back as one cares



Bettisia Gozzadini (1209-1261) the first female university student to graduate.

to look, however, it was not until Bettisia Gozzadini earned a law degree, from the University of Bologna, that we saw women in education. Bettisia then began teaching law after university, two years later. Gozzadini's degree came 632 years prior to 'The Edinburgh Seven', the first British women to enter university. They began studying medicine at the University of Edinburgh. However, they were unsuccessful in their fight to graduate and therefore, unable to qualify as doctors. Their fight, though, won the attention of national headlines, earning them the support of people like

Charles Darwin. This support led to the right of women to gain a university education on the national political agenda, which eventually resulted in legislation to ensure that women were able to study in universities in 1877. 59 years prior, John Pounds set up a 'school', teaching poorer children reading, writing and basic arithmetic, without charging fees, although one of the first pitches of tuition-free schools had been made by Edward VI, in Tudor England. Edward reorganised grammar schools and instituted new ones so that there was a national system of 'free grammar schools', in theory giving free tuition to children whose parents were unable to pay. Despite this being in the mid 16th century, under the House of Tudor, the first school board was not founded until 1872 and, in order to help children of working-class backgrounds,



Robert Raikes (1735-1811), popularised the 'Sunday School' movement,

earn an education, Robert Raikes popularised the 'Sunday School' movement. By the mid 19th century, around two-thirds of all working-class children, aged between 5 and 15, were attending Sunday School.

Education is compulsory for children in the UK and other nations globally. In a survey I conducted, of 25 people, 17 of them claimed that their education provided them with, what they saw as, 'ample' opportunities in life after school. Many of them also said that their level of education played a role in the amount of opportunity available to them. Despite this, one participant commented on how the education system lacks 'life-lessons' and doesn't necessarily set young people up to be well-rounded adults. Academically, the vast majority of schools do everything in their power to set pupils on a path to future success. However, it could be argued that the national system, set down by the government, is lacking the additional focus of life skills to help young people with life beyond education.

Is further education imperative? The first answer that comes to my mind is: yes, of course, further education automatically sets you up for success. In my aforementioned study, 64% of participants attended university and a further 20% of them, went on to further education after university. However, when asked 'are you happy with your success?', 80% of people said overall, they were happy with their success. Although 'success' is subjective, many people commented on the fact that they deemed their current careers to be successful. Additionally, only 57% of those who attended have careers which are directly linked or influenced by their degree. Therefore, yes having a 'successful' career may be easier with the help of a degree, but it isn't necessary that you achieve a degree in order to be successful.



The University of Edinburgh. (Founded in 1582)

We have already acknowledged that 'success' is subjective, but is success directly linked with happiness? 20 of 25 people

said that they were definitely happy with their success – either career-based success or goal-based life success. One's version of 'success' may be constantly climbing higher and higher on society's ladder, but how do you know when you've reached the top? How do you know that you're successful? When will you be satisfied? Though effort, hard work and perseverance help to achieve success and this success will generally bring a greater deal of happiness vs instant gratification, preventing yourself from feeling successful, by failing to recognise your achievements, will ultimately cause you to feel as though you aren't good enough, have low self-confidence and feel unhappy. So yes, feeling successful and proud can directly link to your happiness, as well as your self-confidence and self-esteem. Also, feeling happy and good about yourself will help your mindset, encouraging you to work harder, ultimately leading to greater success.

Academic achievements can help to boost children's self-confidence and self-esteem, however school provides children with so much more than just academic achievements. School trips provide cultural experiences and can give young people an education outside of the

classroom. Additionally, school-run sports teams help adolescents get a sense of teamwork, togetherness and, by extension, a sense of responsibility. Some children may not have a support network at home, however the vast majority of teachers have a student's best interest at heart and therefore may be the only support that some students receive.

A brief history of education has been explained, four previously asked questions have been answered, now to answer the question looming over all of us, especially in the current climate: is school pointless? Though some may disagree, it is apparent that there is a point to school. Though some may not thrive in the academic field of education, there is much more to school than just learning. School gives you 5 days, of a 7-day week, to see, converse and socialise with your friends. School gives you a network of supportive adults that, otherwise, one may not have. And schools are stepping-stones to success. No, schools aren't perfect. Yes, they can be hard, but ultimately, what we get out of school, and our education bears significant importance to our overall success, self-confidence and ultimate happiness!

By Scarlett Sheehan

Is Democracy Fair? *Uygur Haji (Y9)*

Imagine living in a world controlled by the rich, the lucky and the corrupt. Imagine having to pick up the endless pile of rubbish left behind by the privileged. Imagine being manipulated into thinking you have power but you don't. You may not know it, Year 9, but this is our world. This is the corrupt world we have grown up in. It is time we broke free of our naivety, our ignorance and our reluctance of learning the truth. It is time we figured out how cruel our society really is. It isn't controlled by us, not at all. It is the misconceptions put in our head by the privileged that control us. Would you like to serve the rich and their selfish wants? If not, then open your eyes. Journey the cruelty of our world with me. Let us know what is really happening. Let us understand what power really is. Let us change the world for the better.

Recently in our Year 9 English class we read the book "Of Mice and Men" which was written by John Steinbeck in 1930s America. Steinbeck himself was quite a lucky man so didn't have as many worries as the average man, however he came to realise the harsh truth of reality when he worked at a ranch. This book was based on that experience and the hierarchical system we still have in place today.

In Steinbeck's story there are two key characters that have faced prejudice. The first is an intelligent, hard-working and proud black man named 'Crooks' who is segregated from the rest, and has to fight the nightmares of loneliness in the barn. He has no choice when it comes to whether or not he is allowed in the bunkhouse as the boss, Curley, is the one in charge. This is all due to racism, but more generally, due to a corrupt hierarchical system put in place by the wealthy. Furthermore, a woman who is only referred to as 'Curley's Wife' also faces prejudice. She is a female who is looked at as a nuisance and just a 'wife'. The sense of inferiority that Curley's Wife has to suffer through is because of the horrible system in place at that time which caused women to be almost the 'property' of men. On the other hand, Curley's wife does have some power over other marginalised social groups, as shown when she threatens to have Crooks lynched. In this way, Steinbeck suggests that, no matter what your financial or academic status is, if you are black, you won't have any power. Is this power real power? What does power mean to you?

Nowadays, we have a more evolved democratic system in place. On the one hand, democracy is good as it allows power to be distributed throughout the country instead of to just one person. On the other hand, that power isn't enough to create and sustain the idea of 'fair power' as a lot of people demonstrate biases when talking about statistics and voting. Even with democracy set in place, 69% of Britons are pessimistic about the future.

How could this be if voting was for the people? This is because false promises and lots of misconceptions are spread around when voting. This is started by corrupt parties who just want votes. These rumours may not seem too dramatic however it really is as it clouds our judgement of what is right and what is wrong. This means that our power isn't controlled by us, it is in fact manipulated and exploited by those higher up in society. Think about this dilemma. It isn't only affecting you or your family, it affects everyone. Do you want to continue turning a blind eye to this matter or do you want to fight and shed light?

Remember this truth, don't abandon the truth, bring forth the truth. Don't let the selfish wants of the rich concern you. Do not be manipulated into thinking you are wrong. Be the soap that cleans the world. Be the rain that helps hope rise. Be the solution that rids the world of problems. Don't let your ears fool you.

Don't Get Me Started!

Texting is the Worst, *Alice Ross (Y10)*

As we face the Coronavirus pandemic, I have had surprisingly little time to think of anything else, or anyone else for that matter- except grandparents and family with health problems. In light of this, now feels like the exact, perfect time, to think and whinge about something other than being locked in doors with four other people whom I'm likely to lose the plot with. Ah, the arguments to come.

Aside from doing online class work and looking at the memes circulating around student group chats (heavily Corona based), I've suddenly been hit badly with the realisation that since this partial lockdown (likely to extend to a full one very soon) people expect me to text, even when I've made it perfectly clear, and built up the reputation, that I am a non-texter.

Us non-texters fit into 3 clear camps - divided but united - in our common cause to create a society in which people who want to be antisocial can remain so, within the comfort of our own homes. This basic human right, set out in the declaration of human rights in 1948, has gained significant prevalence in recent years due to the rise in social media legitimising the texters and messagers to pounce at any time on their unsuspecting prey. No, I do not care about your avocado on toast and nor do I wish to care that Sharon kissed Tyler at that party last weekend.

The 3 groups go as follows:

- 1.The ghosts
- 2.The anti-socialites
- 3.The lack of thumb or technological ability people (usually those over 50- but there are exceptions)

The latter group are the poor souls treated best by the internet community but worst within their own homes. The internet flowers, organically grown, light hearted, nicely formatted, memes about this group, especially noting the recent Winnie the Pooh reading parent meme which is a prime example of the light hearted nature of the

community. The group are stereotypically those over 50, lacking the technological equipment to text or the ability to do so effectively and quickly, leading to particular discriminatory acts often performed within their own home, a place that should be safe. A law finally passed in parliament in 2018 has made the ill treatment of such persons a criminal offense, possibly resulting in a sentence of up to 10 years. These include laughing openly about their technological illiteracy or joke-texting about them to another texter within the same room, right under the nose of the non-texter.

The anti-socialites have surprisingly gained public sympathy in recent months, growing from the misunderstood and hated to, now, being exactly on trend. Observed as laid back, relatable, unbothered and simply “vibers” they are seen in their natural habitat when in a dark closed bedroom, under the covers, watching Netflix. Now and then they will stick their heads out to cancel plans and revel in their success of doing nothing. By simply keeping up the appearance of making plans, they often go undetected for weeks, or in some cases, months, before being publicly revealed to be cancellers, whom you can never make plans with, and eventually go into social exile.

I, personally, was diagnosed a few years ago with ghost syndrome and was lucky that my doctor picked up on some of the key symptoms before I got into the later stages of the illness: a mere observer in group chats, very rarely participating in the conversations, never posting, completely out of reach (responding hours or even days after messages), yet people knew I was there. We are the most hated by texters, but fortunately, after extensive treatment, I have begun to recover and now have used 12 of my 500 texts this month so far - a vast improvement from the average 2 forced out of me by my Mum when asking what I wanted for dinner.

So why all this shame? Our society has become wrapped in digital communication, where we can no longer hold a conversation without whipping out our phones every 5 minutes- and not to sound like a group 3- but it seems that rarely we can hold a full conversation. Even my Grandma complains about my non-texting condition, but she’s very active on social media, mainly posting anti-Trump and anti-Johnson stuff, you get my point, it’s no longer ‘Alice get off your phone’, it’s ‘Grandma we’re having dinner’. Amid this Covid-19 crisis, the non-texters have faced even more discrimination for their supposed shame. According to a recent study conducted by Oxford University, self-isolation has increased texting by 220% due to an increase in

boredom and lack of face to face interaction. This has highlighted our exact 'problem' and led us to spiral into further shame.

In conclusion, non-texters should be left in peace, left to not text, left to not have the weight of the expectation to do so, because we are face to face talkers, grandparents, parents and hermits.

Wasps are the Worst, *Jackson Compton (Y10)*

Wasps are the most wretched creatures to ever buzz, breathe or sting on this otherwise spectacular planet. This planet is full of mesmerising wildlife that ought to be preserved and protected at all costs, but these vile beasts are the exception to that rule!

I have had several traumatic encounters with wasps that have scarred me and will stay with me for the rest of my life. I honestly and sincerely believe that they have given me borderline PTSD.

Honestly, what purpose do they serve? Silence? That's right. Wasps have no purpose apart from causing people pain, trauma and immense suffering. I was once told that they are vital to ecosystems, but I am yet to witness what wasps bring to the table. Besides annoying people to death, what can wasps do that bees, ants or snails cannot?

Even if they are vital for the ecosystem, I cannot tolerate the amount of trouble and agony that wasps administer. Equally, I'm sure the bees of the world wouldn't mind a bit of extra work here and there. Even the great and illustrious Athenian philosopher Plato was cited as saying - on numerous occasions, I might add - "Wasps be goneth".

If I had £1 for every time I've been told "*just stand still, they aren't interested in you,*" I'd be rubbing shoulders with Jeff Bezos and Bill Gates. I can also report, from first hand experience, that they are very much interested in me, because when I completely ignore that advice and run away in a massive panic, they seem to follow me for miles and miles. I can only assume that I sinned in my past life, because the wasps of the world definitely have a personal vendetta against me. I could've sworn I heard one of them laugh as it flew off after stinging me. These beasts have tormented me for long enough.

It's fair to say that I have inspired terror among my younger cousins and never has so much panic ensued as when a wasp flies within 25 metres of someone's Appletizer. My encounters with wasps will shape the man that I become for better or for worse. An English beach holiday wouldn't be so without being attacked by a wasp on at least several separate occasions (along with needing a square mile to get in and out of a wetsuit, go in the sea for 30 seconds and promptly realise it's far too cold and scurry back to the strange multicoloured windbreak that every English family seems to own).

I can deal with every single other insect: tarantulas, (exquisite) or scorpions (all harmless), and bats- in my opinion, rather cute. I would genuinely rather be stuck up a mountain in a haunted hotel with Jack Nicholson than on a beach with a single wasp that has it in for me. Their tyranny must end and let's face it, if every single wasp was wiped off the face of the Earth they wouldn't exactly be missed.

Whatever these beasts do for our ecosystems (if anything), our governments and technology companies surely have the technology to create some alternative that could be used more effectively and efficiently than wasps? This would also prevent wasps from living out their unwarranted vendetta against me.

I think I have made my view very clear on these beasts. We have lived long enough under their tyranny and it must stop. Or possibly it won't, because no one harbours as much hatred as I.

Stockpiling is the Worst, *Sonny Addison (Y10)*

In times of crisis, some people feel they need to prepare for the worst. Things impulses that people feel include: be more secure - buy a gun; ensure you have a reliable place to stay - move to another part of the country; have plenty to drink - make sure you have enough water in your taps; have plenty to eat - get enough food to feed your family in the coming days. And finally, need to use the bathroom? Purchase 24 rolls of toilet paper for 1000 Australian dollars in a street auction. Because that is what one Sydney man has decided to do in order to have enough toilet paper to last during the time in which Australia will be on lockdown during the current coronavirus outbreak. In my opinion, that's a bit steep considering the local corner shop was only charging £16. And he's not the only one. Britain's finest mother of seven Tess Giddings has had an article written about her by the Sun newspaper in which it tells us that she has built up a stockpile of 800 nappies, 4000 wipes and 60 pints of milk – yes, 60 pints of milk. Considering milk only lasts about a week and people hardly consume less than half a pint of milk a day, she's going to have a lot of off milk in the fridge, and that's if she has the space.

In times like these some people have the great idea to capitalise on this: one man bought 18,000 bottles of hand sanitiser in order to sell them to people at a higher price and guess what, he did! 300 of them, and now there's a man out there with 17,700 bottles of hand sanitiser that he is unable to sell. I can only say that it's well deserved. Rationing things like hand sanitiser would have stopped this problem ever occurring in the first place.

This isn't the first time people have stockpiled though. For example in the first and second world wars when people could see that tensions were rising in Europe people bought mountains of food to survive during what was to come. Not taking the correct precautions whilst stockpiling can lead to some disastrous consequences. In 1558 when the Spanish Armada set sail, 30 of the boats of the 130 boat fleet were rebuilt in a rush because they had been destroyed in an attack from the English a couple years prior, when sir Francis Drake burnt 30 Spanish boats in an attack in the bay of Cadiz, known as the singeing of the king's beard. When the ships were rebuilt, the barrels that stored the food were built cheaply. This resulted in the food rotting six weeks before they reached England and caused many of the crew members to die. It could quite possibly be the reason the Armada lost the attack. So, the moral of the story is to always choose quality over quantity.

Stockpiling is quite possibly the worst thing to do in a time of crisis. It results in anger over who gets what, it makes people have too much of one thing and if everybody kept buying things normally there would be no need to stockpile anything because there wouldn't be such a high demand to buy something as soon as it has been restocked. So, I propose that we go back to the mid- 20th century and the idea of rationing. I know, I know it's old fashioned and quite possibly irrational, no pun intended, but think about it: the people with the greatest need aren't always the ones who can get the most. A single working class mother with three children might be working as a nurse and not have time to pick up essentials, whilst a middle class family might have more time and money to do so. It doesn't have to be strict, people can still buy sugar, meat, toilet paper, pasta and everything you might want to buy, but just let everybody have a chance at getting what they need. Also, with the prospect that we could soon be unable to get everything we need, with borders closing and countries going into lockdown, it is a way to ensure everybody has a fair amount of what they need is rationing.

Unfortunately, with an ongoing pandemic, things like this cannot be stopped and for now without any real change or government action, nothing can be solved. So I guess for now we will have to deal with these problems by beating everyone else to it and just pile on the toilet paper.

Discoveries

Rochester's Narrative, *Aleksandra Askeim (Y9)*

I awoke abruptly, with clouds of smoke swirling in my thoughts. I tried to cough but my throat was blocked with grey monsters. The smoke wasn't in my thoughts but in my room, consuming everything. I sat up to see blazing bursts of sandstone flames careering towards me. My heart stopped: Adele. Would she be strong enough to make it through the flames? Desperately, I wrenched my bedroom door open to see a trembling Mrs Fairfax, her usually cherry cheeks now pale with fear. She stood on the far side of the corridor and gestured helplessly through the open window with a look of horror on her face.

I quickly ran out onto the balcony to see a truly monstrous sight. Bertha was standing at the edge with a curious look on her face, her olive green eyes flashing in the moonlight. Knowing what was about to happen, I screamed at her not to jump. Deep within my heart however, I knew that she couldn't stay on this earth for any longer. A moment later, she slipped from my view.

I tripped down a small set of garden stairs. I remember them in particular because it was here that I would often find Jane and Adele looking up at the clear, powder blue sky. When I got to the bottom, I remember feeling as though fire was exploding in my chest. Then I ceased to feel at all.

I lay on the ground with bright white flashing around me, hearing voices ringing in my head from long ago. After a moment, I realised they were Bertha's parents:

"You shall be wed tomorrow. How lucky you are."

The Discovery, Fadillah Seedat (Y9)

It floated. Aimless. An object. Something like a ring lingered in the water. Behind it trailed a pale golden light. The only sign of its movements was a slight water ripple just about large enough to be visible. It glided past. Lost.

In a trance, I glanced around my surroundings. In everything that swam past my gaze, one thing in particular captured my attention. Something like a temple.

Layers of sand trapped colossal marble pillars firmly in the sea bed. They were leaning inward slightly and placed irregularly. Each was strangely dull and coloured grey. A weather-beaten roof was supported onto six of these pillars. I placed my hand gently onto the surface of one of the pillars and was greeted by a smooth, almost slimy surface.

Gingerly, I smoothed my hand over its surface. With this, centuries of dirt came undone and revealed a flawless, polished surface, undamaged by the wrath of the water surrounding it. Slithers of light entered through cracks in the roof and warmed the sand covered floor.

A cloudless sky welcomed only the sun on this glorious day. It seemed the perfect day to lay by the sea, warm waves lapping at my feet and sand seeping through my toes. I lay flat on the cool, solid ground of the temple. My face was tilted to see the sky clearly. I held the ring to my face. Light streamed through it and reflected a gold shadow on my hand. Warmth spread through me.

Maliciously, clouds rolled into the sky and masked the sun. My body tensed but my bare feet remained glued to the ground. I jerked upwards. Fear overtook my body. It streamed through my body and paralysed me. I could only look straight ahead.

The seemingly distant sea shore now grew closer. So close. Panic spread like wildfire and screams continued to grow louder. Nothing could be done. I clutched the ring tightly. The one my mother had given me that day. The day when my mum disappeared. I'd be able to find her now.

As waves consumed the city, I guarded my ring close to my chest.

All traces of existence vanished. At least, until it was discovered.

The Discovery, *Roheya Davis (Y9)*

Azalea swam around, starstruck by the prepossessing ruins she came upon. She gazed in awe at the statues on which no decay was visible to the naked eye. Her eyes glinted at the sight of the decaying temples and buildings. Lost in the movement of the ocean, she imagined what this city had once looked like either above water or before only the sea life occupied it.

Her imagination ran wild with images of mermaids, mermen, sea life and pristine houses, buildings and temples for the worship of Poseidon. She ran her fingers across the delicate walls and statues and examined them carefully. She knew from the looks of things that this place was ancient and carefully built as if by hand, or rather many hands. Once she came to, she realised she was marvelling at the lost city of Atlantis.

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As the silvery moon begins to set to allow the shimmering sun to shine, Poseidon waves his trident with an assertive thrust and watches with a contented glow in his eyes as he observes the waves form pulchritudinous buildings, intricate temples and winsome houses. He was extremely pleased with his creations and the fact that he was able to create a beautiful underwater haven for all aquatic life, including the merfolk, to live.

Poseidon left this as his gift to the world as he now knew that when it would be discovered not only would he be known by the world, but he would be admired and be the center of many discussions, archeological fantasies and more.

This was his legacy; for the generations that would come and discover.

The Discovery, *Kubilay Erdem (Y10)*

My eyes slowly unbolted and were soon fixated on the sizable and starchy bulk of fog which had engulfed the colossal wreck. I was soon presented with an image of thousands of miniscule ant-like people carrying tonnes of gravity-defying rocks as they dragged themselves barefoot across the rough cobblestone, which had been slowly cooking due to the scorching afternoon sun.

I sat there, looking over the kingdom which I had created! There had been many days where my uneducated and blinded subjects had doubted me - and been severely punished. I tended to ask myself on many occasions, "Why do these people, who should be thankful for what I have created for them, doubt me?" I asked many of my royal advisors the same question on numerous occasions and I never seemed to get a straight answer. I gave these people many things: food, health, housing and a chance to live in my utopia. All I asked for in return was that they worked harsh, thirteen-hour shifts - a small ask considering the things I had given them...

I soon decided to pay them no more notice and instead began to look on my works. As the thick and syrupy layer of fog slowly eroded with time, I began to see my great colossal wreck come together as my subjects rebuilt the damages caused by bloody turmoil from years ago. As my servants began to serve my dinner, I began to see a mighty tempest brewing over my palace, which was then followed by torrential rain (this rain was worse than rain I'd experienced on my many voyages).

Shortly after the Gods began feeding our crops with this rain I noticed that a great bolt of lightning had mercilessly struck one of the villager's homes not too far from my palace. This single event caused an eruption of boiling flames which spun for thousands of square metres. An entire village was engulfed by mighty flames and fumes which created a fantastic sky bathed in dark grey. I came to an agreement with my advisors that we should pay this no notice. It had surely been caused as those in that village had an unpaid debt with the Gods above...

The Discovery, *Aaliyah Larose (Y10)*

In the suffocating heat of the summer afternoon sun Tyreece, a small yet boisterous boy, set off sneakily from his house. He had always thought about what it would be like to be an explorer. As he walked upon the path that led him miles away from

home, he looked around, questioning why he had to be so small. The wind pushed past him whilst he dragged his pathetic feet. The sky was crystal clear and the sun shone down upon him. The exotic green trees stood tall and the leaves swayed beside them. He would hear the gravel groveling for the hot beaming sun to run along. The sound of the blue, clear water clashed against the rocks. Troubled, Tyreece kicked a rock in distress.

Without warning, Tyreece heard a snap followed by a deafening crackle. He turned and looked in the direction of where the noise was coming from. The heat filled the air with laughter. The dark red lava dripped down the side of the volcano as if a child were enjoying their ice cream; it spat whilst steam belched its way through the air. Lava was spewing from the crater. Tyreece was amazed as he has never seen this before, he had only heard stories. He ran with excitement towards the cantankerous volcano as rocks continued to be spat from the top.

It had only been a few years ago when Tyreece's father had told the family he would be off on a six week expedition. Tyreece was pleased that his father was exploring and asked him to bring something back to capture his experience. Tyreece's mum Kacey was never a fan of Tyreece's father's work. She always complained about looking after Tyreece and how she was never given a break. He never understood why his mum was so judgemental of him. Since Rio (Tyreece's father) had never returned, Kacey was always hard on him. Even though he was 10, his mum had high expectations.

Filled with remorse, Tyreece realised his actions had been problematic. As he carried on walking towards the flaming thick lava, he began to wonder what his dad would do. But he got distracted. Now worried, he screamed in alarm as his leg got stuck between the rocks. His leg felt suffocated and trapped - he had no one around him. The air was beginning to heat up and sweat dripped down his head. The impatient lava was running towards him at speed. Tyreece kept trying to wiggle out his leg but it wouldn't budge. He started crying because he had left home and his mum had no idea if he was ok. Unexpectedly, there was a voice that seemed familiar to Tyreece. The voice was getting louder. He yelled for help and got a reply, "Tyreece!" he heard it again, "Tyreece!"

He looked behind him and felt numb and started crying. Then he answered, "Dad?"

Divyam Bari (Y10)

Silence...The desolate streets yearned for life. Clouds, bulged into a pale colourless grey, engulfed the azure sky. The stench of dead organisms smothered my senses.

I could feel the icy wind creeping up behind me, ready to devour my scorching body. I stood motionless, staring at the decayed and lifeless structures around me. My heart hammered my fragile chest, every beat agonising. Sweat perspired down my temple, blood sped through my veins as if they were racetracks. I was in Greece.

The eerie streets consumed my fears, my precious dreams lay crushed and demolished. The dark force of nightmares enveloped me. Solemnly, I gazed at the surrounding immense and corroded pillars.

An ocean of thoughts battered me as a fog set in. An eroded lamp was gradually immersed by a colourless grey haze, its light providing a miniature solitary ray in the desolate eerie street. My feet trembled. A shadow had seemed to consume the city. The cracked roads lead to a glistening pillar. The mysterious engravings lay untouched.

I raced through the perplexing thoughts which rushed my baffled mind, and I was back in the same desolate streets of Greece.

Now I am in my youth. The bustling streets of Greece roar maliciously. The deafening screams of people fill the atmosphere. The bright and vivid sky showers the ocean with light, while the colossal sun blazes down on the skin of my people. The pillar stands upright like a vicious beast. I stare momentarily at my home. Greece.

I had lost track of time. The only source of sound was my fragile heart, each beat delivered an ear-piercing blast. My feet trembled. My eyes watered, spilling miniature droplets of tears. I dropped to the ground. I could sense the end. I looked up with one last burst of energy to see the deformed pillar crumbling rapidly. I grasped onto dear life as my breath shortened. The desolate streets groaned helplessly with me. This was the end. Silence again.

Discovery Story, *Shannon Gradley (Y10)*

As the sun reared its head, rush hour set in. Cars moved frantically on the roads, zooming from place to place. Some of the roads were like rainbows, with vibrant coloured cars streaking down the lanes. Others were like black and white movies as monochrome cars charged by, roaring at the top of their lungs.

However different these roads seemed as the day went on, each road ended at a car-park, whether intentionally or not. As the streets hustled and bustled with people going about their days, no one noticed these car parks as they melted into the backdrop, boring and irrelevant. It must, then, have been a surprise when one car-park began to catch people's attention. As everyone went about their day, construction began on an ordinary car park, one which contained a surprise no one could have anticipated.

Sweat poured off the construction teams' brows as they worked tirelessly. It was the height of summer. As they dug, Dr Cooper and his team of archaeologists arrived, interested in examining what lay beneath the ground's surface. They began to delve deep into the unknown. They were at it with a Chisel and brush, gradually breaking away the sediments. Dr Cooper could feel the dirt brush gently against his trousers as he worked. It had been his long-life dream to lead a case, and finally it was happening. Dr Cooper felt every detail of the earth. Every piece he took fit perfectly in his hands. He could feel every fragment, the rough edges of rocks scratching his flesh. As he continued to battle with the elements, which seemed to be a war in and of itself, Dr Cooper's mind began to turn towards Richard III...

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The heat beat down on him and his men as they approached. Normally that would have been their biggest problem but they had more important things to face. The clanking of swords could be heard. The noise went straight through him making his blood boil. Vexed, he leaned over to his second-in-command and whispered, "can you please find out where that's coming from and discipline your men?"

"Yes, your highness" was the response.

Richard's orders were followed immediately. His men respected him. They followed him and many would lay down their life for him. As they continued, the sun beamed down, illuminating the regal crown that sat on Richard's head, defining his sharp features, from his commanding glare, which was feared by all who gazed upon it, to his well-built arms, that would have to do much heavy-lifting that day if he were to survive.

As they came closer, their opposition drew into sight. Richard raised his hand and everything came to a halt. "This is it men," he bellowed "For king and country". And with that, every man cheered and dove into battle at Bosworth's fields.

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A crash came from behind him, sending shock waves down his spine. It was just the construction team that knocked something over. All shook from what just happened, Dr Cooper continued to delve into the unknown. He brushed and brushed away the dirt. By now he was sick of the site. They had been working for hours and still nothing was found. "This can't be it" he said to himself "There has to be more." As he encouraged himself and those working alongside him, he found new energy to power through. As he did this, something caught his eye. There was unusual erosion in the newly exposed rocks. As he dug away further into the hole, it was revealed: the blackened, corroding, jagged bones of Richard III.

Writing Inspired by 'Ozymandias'

Aaliyah Seedat (Y10)

The scorching heat of the sun seared the ancient ruins as its light zigzagged from corner to corner, obliterating the peaceful shadows. Shrouding the abandoned area was the debris from the derelict buildings and the baked straw-like grass. What was left stood in spite of itself, defying gravity in its precarious way.

Against the blinding blue sky, the crumbling walls were nothing more than a ghostly silhouette of some previous existence. A gust of dry wind twisted through the relics of a bygone age, bringing with it the sinister sniggering of a distant ruler from the past. Standing alone in the vast, deserted area, a shattered stone visage lay; its wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command depicted his hubris, slowly diminishing into nothingness. Once a great statue, carefully sculpted, but now a colossal wreck decaying away.

"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: Look on my works, ye Mighty and despair!" The inscription on the statue's pedestal echoed the ruler's voice. A hint of arrogance; a hint of regret. The passing of time had caused his infinite power to become insignificant.

The sun veiled itself beneath the horizon as the last rays of light flickered and burned away: immortality was unachievable.

Anisa Abdulle (Y10)

The distant views of a desolate scene began to play in my mind. In the rubble, an abandoned, mysterious, colossal wreck stood silent and watched time pass as its comrades fell and perished. Fluffy white clouds on the horizon prevented the full brilliance of the sun from shining. The wind, harmonious, whistled a tune and birds flew past the ruined grandeur in a great flock across the sombre sky. The hills were like a choir and the grass which lay upon them sang, swaying whilst the gentle wind blew.

The battered ruin stood proud, wanting the world to know what had happened. Once this place bloomed with civilization, now, the site was full of destruction. Dust choked the air and the city once crowded and busy, was now a fallen victim of neglect. The remains lay peacefully, quiet, yet the sun's rays of joy still could not fill the atmosphere with comfort and harmony. There was something vaguely a miss...

The wreckage, shattered and broken, stood deathly still. The hairs on my neck stood up. I couldn't breathe, it felt as if someone was choking me. My heart was racing and all I wanted to do was curl up into a ball and wait for someone to save me. Lonely and afraid, the silhouettes in the sky formed a terrifying image. Soldiers fell one by one, like a row of dominos. Deafening gunshots caused the atmosphere to fall to a loud silence. Frantically, I tried to cover my ears in the hope that I could hide from the disgusting scene that took place here.

As a teardrop rolled down my cheek, the petrifying scene disappeared. I was shaken to the core; I longed for the comfort that I once felt.

Power, possessed by humans, had plagued the land and only this battered artefact remained.

Leona Maneechak (Y10)

Daggers aimed at my soul attempt to pierce through the barricades I've placed around my fragile heart. They stand around me, in my head like beasts, waiting for me to show a split second of weakness. All they need is one chance for me to waver and I'll be done. Their words of hate are carelessly thrown at me, but they hurt so much that it feels intentional, as if they wanted their words to hurt like weapons. Usually they bounce off my protective layer: my box. Their words echo around my ears, lurking around me, but I don't allow them to get to me. Instead, I sit ignoring the words - because that's all I can do. I want them to float over my head. Oh, how I wish to be ignorant. But I was the one who got myself into this mess. It was all me.

I wear my arrogance like a mask. I am strong. I ignore, but I don't retaliate, because they'll just twist my words, as always. The pain weaves through me like thread on a needle... but it makes me stronger. It only holds me tighter together, but sometimes it gets so tight I can't breathe. I just want to let the world go. I want to cut myself free of these ropes and I don't want to dangle in front of everyone anymore. But who is

there to cut me free? They've all turned their backs on me. The ropes that hold me are pretty; intricate twists and knots holding me in place. But when you step closer and look carefully, you can see the ropes burning my skin. The thing is, no one wants to get closer and I don't know why. That's what really hurts the most.

Sometimes I feel claustrophobic in this box and all I want to do is smash it open. I reminisce about a time when I didn't need a box to save me, a time when I wasn't dangling, a time when I wasn't the target of hate. I once laughed with people I called my friends, but now they're faceless. The memories of joy we once shared have been erased from their minds and replaced by clouds of thunderous grey. But I cling onto these happy but harrowing memories, even though they bring on tears of sorrow. I want to feel one emotion, at least. Not just a numbness.

I search for ways out of this situation. A way to let myself down from these ropes, but I see no options. Perhaps it is not about coming down, but it may be about letting go. My time of starving is over. I starved myself of love and food in the hope that others would like it. But I end this today, by swallowing a single substance, a terribly painless way to go. It's tragic. Their words are still lurking and floating in the air around me but the sounds are muffled; I slip through the cracks of reality. I only catch a few words,

“Die”

“Traitor”

“Liar”

“Slut”

These words have grown fainter and fainter. They've lost their meaning to me: I no longer care.

The grip on my hand loosens as I lose touch from the world. I panic. I don't want to leave just yet, but it's too late. I leave the world with more regrets than I planned. I am gone and it's what everyone wanted.

I left this cruel world and died. Insignificant.

Ned Corney (Y10)

It is a strange thought: millions of lives buried for hundreds of years.

Their memories, hopes and dreams lost to time.

This place is one of the few relics still standing. It simply sits as a monument to a bygone era. This place was once a busy and bustling area of commerce, where news, gossip and rumours, along with goods, were traded with others.

Or maybe, it was a place of worship, where devotees flocked everyday to pledge themselves to some ancient deity.

An empty feeling haunts the ruins now. A stillness lingers in the air, as if the Earth itself were offering respects to these graves of forgotten stories.

And inevitably, one day, we will join them. Our pillars of concrete and metal will replace the weathered stone of the ones that already stand here. Lonely, mute storytellers of a forgotten era.

Imaginative Fiction

Moad and the Elephant: A semi-fantastical report of young man's evening in Tangier, *Marcel Somerlinck (Y10)*

I was sat at a table in the centre of the Royal Mansour bar. A nice place but far from royal, take it from me.

I wouldn't usually sit in the centre of a spot like this. I never wanted it to seem as though I was seeking attention but to tell you the truth, ever since I had found myself in Tangier I had begun to feel a strange and unknown desire to declare myself; sitting at a middle table opposite an unoccupied stool seemed a good place to start. Soon I was joined by someone I had not noticed upon entry because he was sat at the back of the room, alone as well. He sidled over to my table and perched himself on the stool opposite me, grunting as he did so. To be honest, I was kind of glad. Everyone else was laughing and chatting away and here I was - a mopey English kid, eyes concealed by a pair of aviator sunglasses I had received last year for my 15th birthday.

'Smoke' he said, I couldn't tell if this was an offer or a request, the way he spoke.

'I quit' I replied, this wasn't a lie - despite my lazy habit of deceit in such situations.

'Better off', he mumbled sullenly. I was unsurprised at his assumption that I was no local, the way and language in which he spoke to me.

He signalled to the waiter, noticing I didn't have a drink - not because I was shy to order but because I was stone broke and he knew it.

'Garçon! Deux thès majouns s'il vous plait!' He ordered.

In a hot moment two tall glasses of murky-green liquid arrived, steam rolling off their tops, accompanied by a plate of canapes of a similar hue.

I sipped the tea, not realizing until now just how thirsty I was. It tasted vaguely like something one might drink for a bet, but my friend gulped his like it was coke. He began looking at me very closely and it was then I felt a pang of inferiority to the man, He scared me, to tell you the truth.

I was the grubby old earthworm, squirming and wriggling about in an awkward yet hopeless attempt to escape the gaze of impending doom from the gliding, swooping buzzard that was he.

But before he could pick me up and devour me, he said:

'Sailor.'

'What?' I blurted, still half immersed in my buzzard sequence.

'That's your name isn't it?'

I focused my attention for the first time on his words, because they were true. 'Yes' I said with a stutter 'How did you know?'

'Oh that was an easy one. I'm sure you know mine.'

'You're Moad!' I blurted embarrassingly, causing heads to turn in the Royal Mansour bar.

'Pleased to meet you' he said with a satisfied grin, offering me his hand to shake which I did with enthusiasm - having just introduced a man to myself and vice-versa. Then, something that shot down rational thought and science happened. As he shook my hand he said:

'Sailor. May we converse elsewhere. You see, there's an elephant in the room'.

"You don't say", I sniggered.

As he continued to shake it, I noticed he was fixated upon my hand, my ringless ring-finger to be precise. Then I realised; tattooed on this finger was a faintly dotted elephant. A friend had done it with her grandmother's knitting needle earlier that year. 'No sailor, please...'

He began to sound weak and fearful, as though in a trance. Now he was the earthworm and I the buzzard.

'There's an elephant in the room. May we talk elsewhere', he began to speak with intervals of a horrified gaze that was still on my hand.

He continued to shake it. Slowly, I pulled it out of his grasp which had gone from firm to weak. As I did so he lifted his head and let out a whimper. His eyes grew large and round, as though seeing the devil.

I turned my head over my shoulder and pushed my sunglasses up so they were resting comfortably above my forehead.

An elephant sat at the table behind Moad and I.

He was a friendly faced, tusked creature; A West African beast - huge as ever - yet somehow able to sit comfortably in a small room like this one.

His grey behind drooped over the sides of the chair he was torturing and his single toenail (on the one foot) had gone straight through the wooden floor.

I looked anxiously around the bar expecting to see shocked, confused faces but everyone continued as before; drinking and shouting across tables, rushing the poor and presumably underpaid waiter who was no older than me.

How long had he been sat right behind us?

He seemed to transcend chronological understanding; he was simply sat there. A calm, omniscient presence. It seemed to be only the two of us who could see him, unless of course the comings and goings of great elephants was commonplace in the Royal Mansour bar.

He stood up and walked casually towards us, scraping his seat behind him, he dropped it beside me and sat down with surprising grace.

He leaned over slowly and whispered in my ear:

“The old elephant limps off to the hills to die. Man just makes money and complains himself to death, what an idiot.”

This was something I would later on tell my children, who would then tell their children. He laughed with a tremendous heart after he said this and we laughed with him. It was the greatest laugh in the world that echoed through the vast desert, only to return and prick the drowsy air with a quiver that was almost palpable. There was an overwhelming beauty about this creature, he spoke without accent or voice but with concise words of truth and romance that bit the hazed, Moroccan hasheesh air with a stiff, weighted trunk. His eyes were a living myriad of unnameable colours and reflections. I thought about asking what his name was,

But there was no need to. As he picked up his chair and left, I shouted:

‘Goodbye Hanno.’ He stopped and turned around, cracking me a warm, Sad kind of smile.

‘Goodbye Sailor, lucky guess by the way’.

I have – and always will – remember every single detail of that evening.

I’m still not even sure if it even happened, could have been something to do with that green tea. But one thing’s for sure.

I will never forget my dear friends: Moad and Hanno.

A Moment of Realisation, *Poppy Chottin (Y8)*

As the sun shone through the white and patterned curtains, I slipped on my dressing gown and picked up my glasses from the side of my bed. I walked down the brown grubby staircase sliding my hand down the handrail. Flashes of light illuminated the front door as the sun squeezed through the blue and green frosted glass. The sound of the boiler coming on echoed around the house, making it seem as if a creature was tip-toeing around the living room. The light floorboards talked in the house as I stepped from one room to another. The hairs on the back of my neck stood up straight as I maneuvered through the darkly cold kitchen. I placed small logs of wood that Thomas had fetched from the nearby woods yesterday into the shelf below the stove and then lit a fresh new match. I watched the flames burn through the wood as I shut the rusty iron stove door. I placed the old dented kettle upon the burning hot stove. As the steam came out of the spout, water began to spurt out and sizzle on the stove, evaporating. I poured the boiling hot water into my favourite china tea cup that had a pretty daffodil painted on it and placed a tea bag inside. Thomas came down, kissing me on the cheek and picking up the kettle simultaneously. He poured himself a cup of Nescafe coffee that I’d saved up to buy him for his 28th birthday.

I sat down at the kitchen table, sipping my tea. As I poured myself another cup of tea, there was a thud from the front of the hallway. It was the newspaper being delivered. I picked it up and gave it to Thomas, who usually read it within an hour of the morning, completing the crossword with a cigar in his hand. As I continued pouring my tea, I read the news headline written in large thick capital letters: "ANOTHER FAMOUS PAINTING WRECKED BY RUTHLESS WOMEN: THE SUFFRAGETTES STRIKE AGAIN."

I slammed the kettle down and snatched the paper off Thomas. The first paragraph of the article read: "Yet again, these women have ruined one of the paintings held in the Royal London Art Gallery. The incident took place around 2am this morning. It has been said that a woman named Yvonne Smith, age 24, committed the crime. The crime is still to be investigated and more information will be given in the evening newspaper."

My heart thudded in my chest and I could feel my body temperature going up. I slammed the newspaper back on to the table. "How dare they! Those women do not know what they are doing! All this disruption just for a stupid vote! Can't they rely on their husbands?" I walked across the kitchen, made my way to the living room and turned the TV on to the one available channel. The story was also being covered on TV. I heard Thomas get up from the kitchen and follow me in.

"It's okay darling," Thomas gently spoke, as he sat down beside me and placed a reassuring arm around my shoulder.

On the bottom of the TV screen was a picture of the destroyed painting. It was a picture of a girl lying down on a chaise longue, admiring herself in a mirror. Her hair was painted in a bright yellow tone. The chaise longue was made of velvet but painted on the canvas with a dark coat of burgundy paint. The lady was half dressed, her curvy body covered in a white piece of fabric. It looked as if the artist had thrown it on her. The mirror had a large golden frame making her look rich and glamorous. I had observed this painting many times in the gallery, making sure to note down all the types of colours, so I could attempt to recreate this masterpiece in my home studio. I would have been honoured to have featured in such a painting. It surprised me that a painting so elegant and feminine had been destroyed.

The sight of the ruined painting got me thinking about last week when I had a picnic with Iris and Samantha. It was Wednesday afternoon. I had made a beautiful lemon drizzle cake and mini cheese and tomato sandwiches - all wrapped in crisp parchment paper to avoid spillages in my handbag. I saw them near a tree and began to run towards them for fear that I was late. We sat down, said hello and proudly shared and showed off everything we had made. I sat down and kicked off my patent high heels. I noticed a rosette placed over Iris's left shoulder on her blouse. It read "Votes For Women" with green, purple and white stripes.

"Are you with the suffragettes?" I couldn't help asking her.

“Of course, ... do you not like them?,” she said surprised.

I didn't want to say anything, but I couldn't just sit there.

“No. I don't like them...,” I said. “They cause too much disruption. Why does it matter if we have the vote? Can't you just rely on your husband?” I wasn't embarrassed even though I felt myself going red. They both looked back at me.

“Well....,” Iris prepared herself. “You know we have opinions too! Us women deserve the vote! We can't just rely on men! WE HAVE A LIFE!” she shouted at me and stood herself up, picking up all her belongings.

The both looked at me in disbelief. She left Samantha and I . We carried on the picnic without her, despite the tense awkwardness that pervaded the air. I tried to start multiple conversations but Samantha just simply answered with yes or no.

I decided to calm myself down, remembering that the Suffragettes wreaked havoc like this every week. I got up and made my way to the shower. I had a shower and washed myself with a rich lavender soap. Afterwards, I got dressed into my purple blouse with white spots and put on a long light-weight navy blue skirt with my favourite pair of black tights. I went downstairs and made some porridge on the stove that was still hot from this morning. I ate it quickly and started washing up. Thomas came down the stairs and picked up a letter in the hallway and passed it to me. I stopped washing up and dried my hands on a pink tea towel that was on the handle of the oven. It was addressed “Mrs Amber Rose, 34 Barn Street, London, NP3 8TY”. I opened it, delicately unfolding the seal of the envelope which said “Cambridge University” in bold cursive writing. I had written to Cambridge to enquire about a place to study Art history. The letter read:

Dear Mrs Rose

I have read your letter of interest but must ignore it as women are unable to study at our university. These policies are set by the government and I have no control over this. We believe that women do not need to study at this level as it is simply unnecessary for them to have this sort of education. It's simply a waste of our, and your, time.

Kind Regards

Professor Lawrence

Cambridge university

I fumed. How could any man talk to a lady like this? I wanted an education and wasn't going to let my gender stop that. As the days went on, I became more and more saddened, eventually, I grew angry towards this terrible and trivial rule.

Some days later, I put my high heels on, wrapped my coat around my back and left the house. I needed to get some air. As I walked, I found myself heading in the direction of Iris's house. I wasn't going to let the ridiculous men in the government tell me what I can and cannot do. I knocked on the door and waited for a few moments, until the door opened and Iris was standing there.

"When is the next Suffragette meeting?" I asked determinedly .

She smiled back at me.