

A Worth Literary Society publication

Heart & Soul



2021

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“What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from.” TS Eliot, ‘Little Gidding’

From the Editor

Dear Reader,

With another school year coming to a close, we warmly look forward to summer and welcoming you for the first time to the Worth Literary Society’s debut publication. With the uncertain times we have faced, reading and writing have, perhaps more so than ever, been a great source of inspiration, escapism and joy for many, pushing us out of our comfort zones to explore new ways of creating masterpieces. As you turn these pages, we hope you enjoy the journey we are leading you on through creative writing, book reviews, art, photography and interviews.

For the team, gathering all these works has been a particularly fulfilling part to the year, providing a reflective insight on the different minds at Worth; we felt it was important to cherish this and include all year groups and teachers alike to reflect this.

The Literary Society has aimed to branch out beyond this publication and touch the lives of the community at Worth, such as across a broad range of competitions and World Book Day assembly, and from this, we hope that the Society will go from strength to strength. A fun part of the process was our collaboration with Mr Howard Griggs, to whom we owe a big debt of thanks for all the unwavering support and guidance he offered us!

In Heart & Soul, we hope that a little part of our hearts and souls stay with you, in writing, to capture the art of all members of the school.

Zoë

ZOË BLAKE-JAMES, EDITOR



Writing from Austin House

*Creative writings:
Trapped*



Austin House

Students in Years 7 and 8 participated in a writing competition earlier in the year where the challenge was to create 100 word stories that fit within the theme of 'Trapped'. You will find the entries that were declared to be our school winners on the pages that follow.

Additionally, Andrew Ballard has shared a book review on *Born to Run* by Christopher McDougall.

Finally, this section ends with Zane Sekhon's piece from the Columban Competition. This piece was named as a runner-up in the national competition run by the Columban Missionaries.

"Start writing no matter what. The water does not flow until the faucet is turned on." Louis L'Amour



Eisa Omer – Year 8:

‘Leave it if you want to’ – that’s what I tell myself at least. At night, unconsciously I always end up at my stash. With no intention of harm, that drink is the only thing keeping me alive for now. Trying everything to escape the trap that I created, I always end up lower than ever. The never-ending nightmare that just keeps on going. Decades spent on these drugs, years of life wasted. Waking up every time, moodier than the last. I couldn’t stop, and that’s when I knew I was trapped forever..

Alexander Ballard – Year 8:

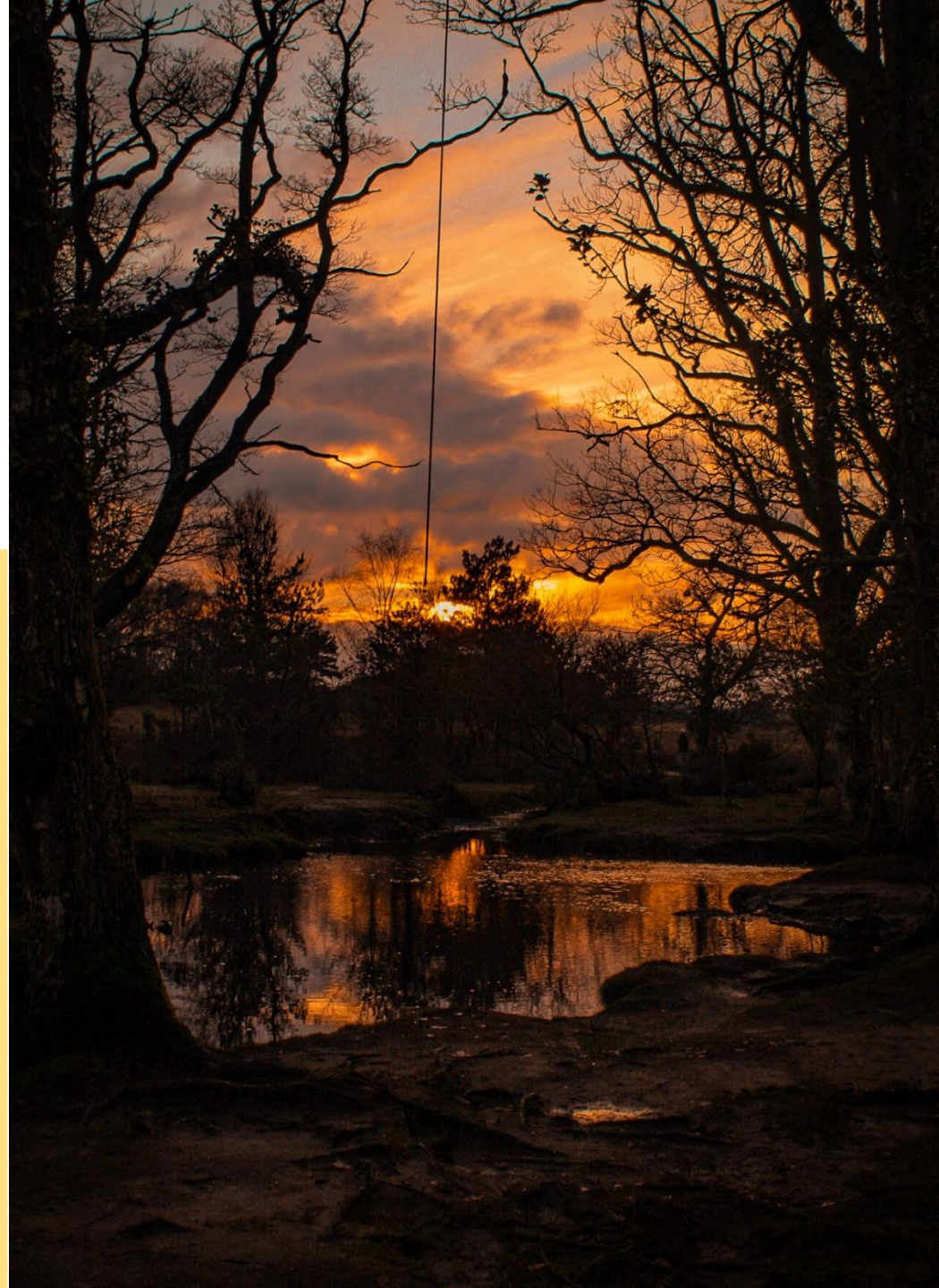
I opened my eyes not really knowing what to expect to see. I sat up, feeling a sharp pain down my back – I must have landed hard. My head was dizzy and I could not see straight. I finally found the courage to stand up. A horrid sense of uncertainty burnt through my soul. It had twisted my very being again to the point where I couldn’t control myself anymore. It had torn through me making me take it, and if I didn’t, I could think of nothing else. I was behind bars again because of it; I was trapped.

Maria McSharry – Year 8:

I pushed against the cold hard walls of the cell I was trapped in, crying out for help until my throat was dry. “Help,” I shrieked, “Someone help!” Screaming and screaming until it even hurt my throat to breathe. I realised there was no going back from here – no-one was coming, so I let out a moan and sank to the floor, letting out a shaky sob. I don’t remember the days after that clearly: time seemed to work differently in here. Just a constant cycle of sitting against the wall, staring into space and trying to fall asleep.

Max Hopwood – Year 7:

Trapped. The vines curl around my arms and legs, pulling me into the endless, alien jungle. Plants and creatures seem to croak and scream around me. They sound trapped too. I start to feel claustrophobic inside my own space suit. The head up display flickers, making me jump. The trees loom over me like jail cell bars, surrounding me on all sides. I trip on a rock. I flail my arms and fall on my sack. I’m left looking up at the canopy the thick foliage, blocking out all hope I have left. But I ignore fate; I go deeper.





Hope Mullins – Year 7:

Suddenly it was coming down fast. Too fast for my liking. I couldn't escape. The glass wasn't shattering even though I had been beating at it. What should I do? It's even closer now. I've only got a few minutes left. I should enjoy it, shouldn't I? How can I enjoy it when I only have less than a minute now? I want to say my goodbyes. But now I can't. I've had a great life and at least I'm thankful for that. I will watch over them with happiness.

Happiness.

But I really don't want to, you know, die.

Blake Martin – Year 7:

I was on the last return flight from Las Vegas; at first it was smooth until the plane became lopsided like one side of a seesaw. Suddenly there was complete silence. The plane was plummeting to Earth. I stopped breathing. All I could hear was the sound of fire, burning like the sun. I said my prayers and thus was the end for these one hundred passengers. I felt trapped in this missile – nowhere to go. The cabin crew were trying to save us, but I had no hope. The one thing I was thinking – 'I am trapped.'

Millie Back – Year 7:

I'm stuck. I need help. He is chasing me. There is no escape. I'm on the fifth floor and he is running up the stairs behind me. I frantically press the down button of the lift; it isn't working.

"Work!" I scream. Finally, it makes a soft beeping noise and the doors open. I jump in, but the strange man rushes in after me.

"Who are you? I need to know. Why can't you just leave me alone?" I ask.

He suddenly launches forwards onto me, and I push him off onto the opposite wall. Another beep. I leap out.

Andrew Wheatley – Year 7:

Snap! I have broken a few roots. Suddenly, they start grabbing me: with all my strength I break free. Now I am lost in a sea of trees; their branches twisting and turning from side to side. They tower over me like a giant. Leaves start chasing me. Without hesitation, I run the other way, not stopping. Eventually, I arrive at a waterfall; I have to jump or I will be consumed by the leaves. Without thinking, I jump.

Splash.

I wake up feeling alright. I am cold but I can't leave – I am stuck in the mud!



Born to Run

By Christopher McDougall

A book review by Alexander Ballard – Year 8

Star rating:



Is there a secret to running with no boundaries? To literally be able to run non-stop for days and in little more than some tyres strapped to the bottom of your feet? Maybe a secret elixir that can power you like a Duracell Bunny? These are all the questions that led the author (Christopher McDougall) to the depths of the Mexican Copper Canyons in search of a tribe that could be the most successful ultra-runners of all time.

His quest begins in the USA, when the author attempts to run (there should not be anything stopping him from doing so as he studies people in all kinds of sports for health magazines). However, every time he runs, he gets a new injury; his latest injury, plantar fasciitis, has led him into a pit of pain and no one can resolve it. After repeatedly getting turned down by multiple health specialists, the answer never seems to change; he is a heavy man with bad technique.

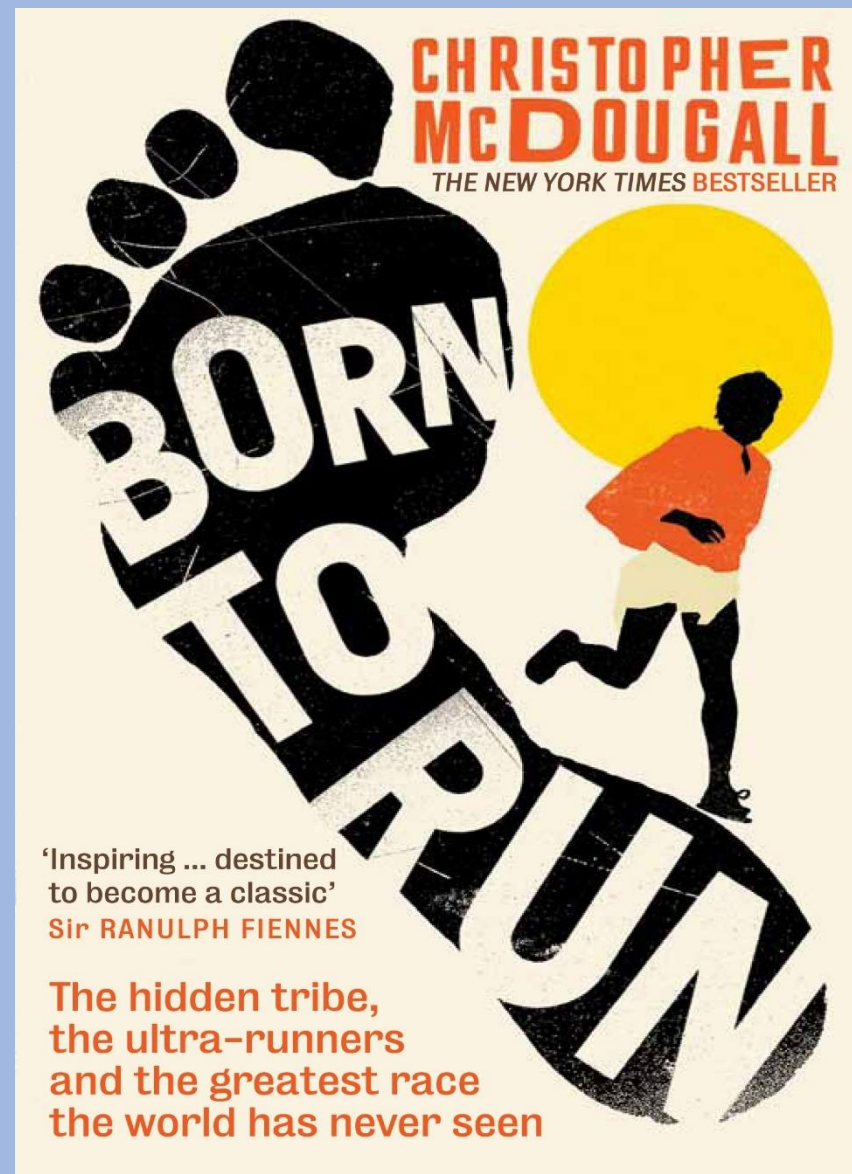
His journey finds you bewildered by his daring, as the “Barrancas” (the copper canyons) are not only home to the Tarahumara tribe but also Mexican cartel lords and runaway murderers that could be around any corner of the vaguely worn trails. He also hopes to track down a tribe that like to hide away from civilisation and have successfully done so for millennia! The chapters always end on a cliff-hanger and leave you asking questions like; will he make it and, furthermore, how will he uncover their secrets – the tribe are suspicious and run from any kind of threat; Could he keep up if they ran? Do they? How will this man, who seems a glutton for punishment, persuade these introverts to showcase their talents and how will he attempt to legitimise his claims that he has found the world’s best ultra-distance marathon runners? ►

He tries to befriend the tribe, a quest only completed so far by 'the White Horse' (Caballo Blanco). After repeated attempts to find this man, he is left where he started, with no one to take him to this lost tribe. All the answers on the whereabouts and appearance of this ghostly 'White Horse' seem to be different and describe his location as being hundreds of miles apart in a matter of hours. Does he even exist? The only way to fulfil his quest will be to find the Tarahumara without him and carry out the greatest race of all time. The race that could not be televised and very few have seen in person, the race against the Tarahumara and the greatest American marathon runners of all time.

This author's writing is beautifully descriptive; for that reason, he provokes a host of emotions in the reader along this journey. You feel you truly get to know the characters although their uniqueness is not something you can personally relate to. He writes passionately and with genuine interest. This story is gripping and takes you (like an explorer claiming a new land) into another world. However, one cannot help but feel a certain sadness that the tribe's newfound fame might eventually spell their demise. At times he is too descriptive – he seems to go off on a bit of a tangent and you can easily lose the plot. In the middle of the book, it can feel a little drawn out as you anticipate the conclusion. Despite this you still find yourself rooting for an outcome and that makes it a page turner from cover to cover.

I would highly recommend this book to more experienced readers, as in some areas it is quite hard to follow the gripping story line. As well as telling a story, this book explores the lifestyle differences between us and the Tarahumara. Two of my favourite quotes in the book explaining the lifestyle of the Tarahumara are: "every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up, it knows it must outrun the fastest lion or it will be killed. Every morning in Africa, a lion wakes up. It knows that it must run faster than the slowest gazelle, or it will starve. It does not matter whether you're the lion or the gazelle – when the sun comes up, you'd better be running," and "you don't stop running because you get old, you get old because you stop running." These quotes can help the reader relate to the life of the Tarahumara, as well as giving a contrast between their lives and ours. He also suggests that the more expensive the running shoe, the more injuries you will get; this seems very strange to us as our society is based around the idea that 'more expensive' meaning 'better quality' and 'cushioning'.

This book is very unique as this race has only been carried out once with only the author as a writer experiencing it. There are some other books that explain running, but not in the same way this book manages to. This book put me on the edge of my seat and made me think about the future of indigenous tribes as well as my own lifestyle choices.





Year 8 pupil Zane Sekhon finished runner-up in Britain in the Columban Schools' Competition with his essay titled 'Let's create a world without racism'. The results were released in the lead up to the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 21 March 2021. This is the essay Zane wrote

There are two types of racism I usually encounter: the 'cool covert', "I'm not racist but just checking where your loyalties lie - who do you support in the World Cup?" or the 'very cool', 'we're with our friends so we're just going to scream "Paki" at you and increase our street cred racism. Between these two there were many other blurred lines, things that white people say because they're curious but shouldn't. These are normally things that are offensive to brown people but they are so used to the questions they don't take offence - "where are you from? Not Surrey, where are you really from?"

For instance, I'm an average kid, no real hardships in my life, from an average family, living an average life. I love gaming, I love music and I love eating; this last hobby is a bit of a problem, leading to my being a tubby brown kid in a very posh predominantly white private school of athletic boys. I should have just got a 'rush me' sign and pinned it to myself, I was an easy target. This didn't deter me however from my love of chicken and eating it. I wished I would eat less but my insatiable hunger meant that just never happened. I go to a Catholic school, the ethos of fairness and sharing, of accepting and being accepted is wonderful to me. Why doesn't this always translate in our real world?

Being one of the only Muslims in a Catholic school didn't matter at all. It was an accepting place where the teachers would share and impart knowledge and I could draw comparisons directly with my own faith. In essence, it was learning the same thing, just in a different language. I loved this, I loved the peace you found in the notion of God, of things being preordained and most importantly that everything will work itself out in the end.

My gran calls me a coconut, apparently my privileged education means I might be brown on the outside but inside I'm all white. I get that a lot, at the mosque, at my cousins house 'posh white boy', at cadet practice I often hear 'don't blow me up terrorist! Shaan's a jihadi, he's got a gun'. So here I am, on a pendulum swinging from Paki to Coconut, unwanted to unfamiliar.

Not ever really being accepted by anyone hasn't made me think I should change or adapt, mainly I don't know where to start or how? How can I be browner? Or how can I be less brown? Sometimes the very question makes me laugh. I don't feel sorry for myself - it would be ridiculous - for the country is full of kids like me - third generation brown kids, who grew up sitting with their Indian grandfathers, watching them rooting for India in the World Cup while putting up the Christmas tree in otherwise English households. It bothered the English though - "why do you support India? You're English". I asked my friend born and bred in Surrey, "why do you support Leeds football club?" He replied, "because my dad does". Some things are just familial heritage, some things are just because India have a great team. Overt racism, though hurtful, is so much easier to deal with; you can answer back, confront, discourse. It's the covert one I hate, it leaves me seething inside, like someone lit a small match in the pit of my stomach and though the smouldering flame is burning me it feels rude to do anything about it.

"Why are all terrorists Muslim?" Well, the majority of terrorism is carried out by white supremacists but though they get cast as 'lone wolfs' (which I've always thought is quite a flattering macho term) any crime committed by a Muslim is an act of terror. I can address these overtly ignorant questions. Question like "Where are you from? Surrey? No before that, where are you really from; where are your parents from? Also, Surrey? No, I mean before that, where are your grandparents from?" This is the most ridiculous line of frequent questioning I ever encounter. Why does this question even get asked? What will you do? Do you think I have connections to cheap saffron dealers? Are you curious about the weather and food of a country that you have no idea about yet? What clarity will my lineage provide to you? Apart from assisting in making some form of biased opinion on what I must be like 'aha Saudi, oppressive, aha India, must do yoga, aha Morocco, what the heck does that mean?'

Other than these biases, I can't imagine why the interest. I'm clearly British, sitting on the fence - not out of choice - waiting to be embraced by my people, whoever they may be. I know lots of people who have suffered endemic and outward racist assaults that have left life-changing damage, so I feel a bit self-indulgent talking about myself in this way, but this isn't a once in a while attack; this is just how most brown kids live in England.

This is the average story of an average boy. I am the friend when people say, "I'm not racist, my best friend's brown". I'm the kid who is always explaining his lineage and I'm the kid always fake laughing when other kids ask if there's a bomb in my backpack. I'm the kid that gets rushed at break for no reason, I'm the kid who loves India as his cricket team, like it's a guilty secret, and I'm the kid who loves England because it's his home. I'm the kid who loves his Catholic school and his Muslim faith, if they can both coexist within me why can't I coexist in a brown and white world?



Year 9 and 10

Reflections from the Middle



Year 9 and 10

This year several Year 9 classes participated in the Henry Williamson Society Writing Competition. The theme for the competition was 'Nature, environment and conservation' and entrants were asked to write 500 words on one of two titles: The World is Waking Up or The Trees are Talking.

We also welcomed some diverseness, with Misha Hawksley's thought-provoking poems on remembrance and Libby Hester's book review on 'Six of Crows' by Leigh Bardugo.

Tying this all together is Mr Matthew Doggett's interview on his experience with his favourite book, 'The Count of Monte Cristo' by Alexandre Dumas.

"There are two ways of seeing: with the body and with the soul. The body's sight can sometimes forget, but the soul remembers forever." Alexandra Dumas, 'The Count of Monte Cristo'



Henry Williamson Writing Competition

The World is Waking Up

Several Year 9 classes participated in the Henry Williamson Society Writing Competition for 2021. This is a competition that is held every two years and was delayed this year due to the pandemic. The theme for the competition was 'Nature, environment and conservation'. Students were asked to choose one of the following titles: *The World is Waking Up* or *The Trees are Talking*. Read on for a selection of entries produced by our students.

Chloe Downer

An orange glow fans across the sky above the bottle-green Tortuga hills to the East. The sun is rising.

The air is almost fresh so early in the morning, without the damp heat that I have become used to. It was almost a year ago that, on an impulse, I jumped ship in the West Indies, fleeing the harshness of the Navy to begin my current dubious profession. As the sun rises, warmth floods the Earth. A light breeze plays across my face as I lay in my hammock just one minute longer. The boat shifts with the gathering swell of the water.

The morning is so still I can hear the birdsong from the island and the palm trees creaking in the wind.

I throw a bucket over the side and tip the water over my head, feeling the icy coldness of it pour down my back. I remind myself that I have it good. Icy cold for Tortuga is not icy cold for Portsmouth. I hardly need to dry myself. I look up at the blue of the sky and feel the warmth of the sun shining down on me.

I wake up my crew and we start the work of the day. We're not expecting anything exciting, but you never know. As the sails catch the breeze, the sandy shore and seaweed-green trees rush by. The flying-fish scatter; sometimes they end up on the deck as if asking to be caught. Like some of the merchant ships. The wind starts to blow stronger, but I don't care. I almost laugh with the power of it as we cut through the water, as if dividing the whole world with our vessel. The bow creaks and the sails billow. The rushing of the wake, creaking of the bow and the slish-slosh of the water up against the hull.

The wonderful weightlessness of being free and in charge of the world. On the port side, a seal pops up, shooting right up to the side of the boat and struggling to keep pace with us. It looks at me with eyes that shine like silver, its skin as slick as silk. It has just woken too, and wants food; I know that feeling, and there is some softness in me still. I throw it a couple of rogue flying fish and it disappears. I look down into the deep green water trying to see it but it has what it wanted and is gone. A fair-weather friend. I laugh – I was right, he is just like me. Jack is my only friend and my trust for him is because of the thickness of blood and the proof of the years. He will still be asleep, not knowing where I am.

Probably The Tempest will have returned by now and told him that I am a coward and deserter. Maybe one day I will get word to him, or even gold. With my mind I send him a message for his dreams, like a spell made of the waking morning, of the bright blue world that goes on while he is asleep and of his brother who has not forgotten him.



Margaryta Bogdanenko

From amid the cold sky, sweeping bird song breaks into a dance as the tip of the sun emerges from bare sleeping hills, shining the stars away. Patches of twinkling ice are seeping into the soil, that appeared textureless black in the light of the cool morning; small white flowers wake from the swirling melody, slowly stretching upwards to bathe in sun's final warmth. Blankets of mist illuminated with orange rays leisurely drip into morning dew and run down from the trees' finest branches to the tips of dripping icicles. The sun lifts above sparkling streams, that are tired from sprinting down stacked rocks and being cheered by purple blossoms dotted around the forest in ones and twos. Trees embed their dusty floor with fresh green moss, that settles on rocks and their roots. Tiny ants intertwine paths among one another, bubbling from underground like a busy crowd, ready to begin their scavenge; the buzzing air above them is filled by sleepy wings rushing to huddle around colourful petals. Waves of noises wash the silence away; crawls, taps, drips and calls lead the still air into a melodic dance that even flows its way under a tree, into a warm and hidden burrow, where a drowsy creature is shaken from its dreams by a slow rumble that vibrates the ground. A flick of a red tail dashes around the branches of a birch tree, that is swaying left and right to the rhythm of tepid wind. A breeze, slightly prickly with winter chills, rushes up into frozen mountains carrying the warm melody on its wings to shake the melody out from inside its icy blanket, echoing through cliffs to announce the wake of the spring.

Brendan Aczel

The alarm beeped and my eyes opened, adjusting to the light emanating from the window. Swinging my legs over the side of my bed I stood up, rubbing the sleep out of my eyes. I padded down the carpeted stairs and into the kitchen. The house was older, in desperate need of a fresh coat of paint. I wolfed down a bowl of cereal before preparing a tray with juice, eggs and bacon. Balancing it in my hands I clambered slowly up the stairs, careful not to spill the juice. Opening the door I saw my mum sitting by the window. She was wearing a dressing gown and a scarf elegantly placed around her head. I set down the tray on the coffee table.

“Mum, I made you breakfast as you weren’t up,” I said. Mum didn’t turn her head. Her eyes were fixed on the ancient oak trees, distant on the hill.

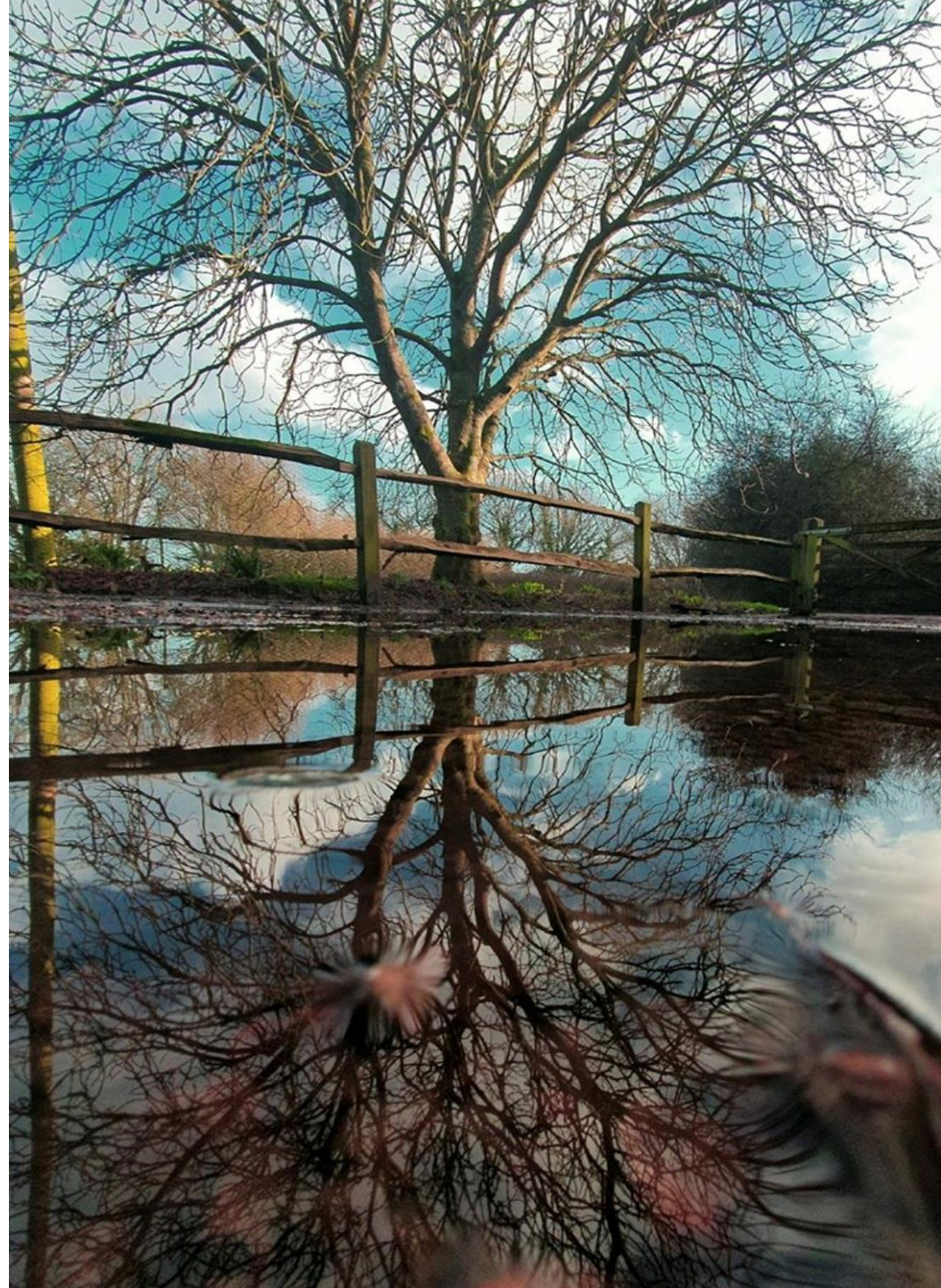
“Mum, I have to go to school, the caregiver will be here soon.” I spoke again, trying to grab my mum’s attention.

“The trees are talking, Samuel. We need to listen,” Mum said slowly, a bony index finger extending to point at the orchard of ancient trees. Tears welled in my eyes. She kept saying this as if it was important. Trees meant nothing to me while my mum was in this condition. Finally I left, blinking back the tears, grabbing my backpack by the side of the door to the house. I always walk to school as no one is able to drive me and I don’t have a bike. It doesn’t take too long, only 10 minutes.

I entered the gates to the school and another school day began. Lessons crawled by. Geography, another lesson on trees. “We need to save them; in 20, 30 years there are not going to be any trees and we will be in a dire situation.” History. People taking what they wanted yet never giving back, leaving that place ruined. Lessons carried on. The day finished and I did the same old walk back to the same house. Suddenly, an ambulance zoomed past me, sirens blaring. Interesting; why is it coming from my house?

Sudden realisation stabbed into my brain. I ran, following the ambulance where it came to a stop outside the hospital. I followed the stretcher into a ward. A doctor came up to me.

“Your mother is very sick and I’m sorry to say this, but I don’t think she’s going to make it. She is in a lot of pain; I would say your goodbyes.” Tears welled and streaming down my face as I walked into the ward and sat down in the chair next to the bed. I felt a cold hand grasp mine and I heard the last words my mum spoke as the monitor beeped rapidly. “The trees are talking. Listen to them.”



Soroush Jalaei

The world is waking up.

Our world has evolved and changed throughout time to a point we once thought was unimaginable. No less than 50 years ago, the technology they had was so little and barely able to fit on a desk and now we have something 10 times more powerful that can fit in our back pocket. But as we progress as a human species, we have also taken our world for granted. As we have progressed to gain all these luxuries, we live with the destroyed elements of the world too. We seem to overlook this because of the mild conveniences we gain, whether it be the newest shoes or clothes. But as we obtain these items, we are also destroying plants, animals, forests and wildlife.

Governments go on ranting about how we are experiencing economic growth and how that will make our world better; however, what is a good economy if there is no land to stand upon? If there is no clean air to consume? As a result of our greed to further ourselves as a society, we have forsaken the very planet we live on, affecting other people around the world. People who have no control over their lives and have no clean water or air. Men, women and children dying every day because of this.

For decades science and the earth have been giving signs of this change through global warming, the collapses of icebergs and the extension of wildlife through multiple means. But the world leaders still didn't listen.

We have reached the point now where the effect we have had on the environment has caused chain reactions which we can no longer control or stop. This shows we have caused permanent damage to our world which can never be healed, thus leaving the next generation with the consequences and fallout of this, with the hope of them being able to fix previous mistakes.

*(*Some elements taken from Greta Thunberg)*

Joshua Liddington

What does it mean when people say the world is waking up? For young people, that might mean global warming, since lots of people say that the next generation needs to help make a change. Is it the fact that the need for health care has gone up especially since COVID-19, or is it perhaps the cruelty of animal farming? When people say the world is waking up, they do not mean literally; but still, the world is waking up in lots of different ways. The world is waking up to achieve a better, more sustainable future. I am going to focus on the part about global warming and how this is affecting our future.

So why can't we solve global warming in a day? It is like how "Rome was not built in a day,"; it is going to take a long time to change. People must change their habits, and we need to adapt to the economy in order to survive without fossil fuels, which are the main reason for global warming. Furthermore, the name "global warming" makes it obvious that since it is occurring all around the world, it will take a global effort to stop global warming. There are some people who have been helping stop global warming all by themselves; these are people such as Greta Thunberg, a Swedish environmental activist who is internationally known for challenging world leaders to take immediate action against climate change. Or perhaps somebody like Elon the owner of Tesla who has made a huge impact on global warming, but especially on pollution. He made his first big hit with electric cars that help prevent the pollution of petrol fumes. We also have the browser Ecosia, which is attempting to stop deforestation which, in turn, will help in stopping global warming. This browser plants one tree for every 50 searches on the internet.

However, all their efforts are destroyed if everyone does not try to act. For example, in India they are refusing to adapt because they do not have a strong enough economy and refuse to give up fossil fuels because it is helping them grow their economy; it is relatively cheap and efficient and can be used for lots of different things. Trying to change now would destroy them economically, so then a global debate between different countries springs up about what we should do. For instance England, Australia and the EU all wish to put a stop to global warming, in order to save the planet from dying, but if they are saving the planet and India is polluting the planet, we cannot get anywhere. Some are debating whether global warming is real or just a hoax when we need to be fighting for our planet and changing for the better. We know how to save our planet but people refuse to give up their old habits of burning fossil fuels and won't switch to an eco-friendlier electricity.

We need to act now to save our planet.





Fire of war **By Misha Hawksley**

Sun light streams in through the trees, enriching the graves it rests on.
Motionless memorials, row after row, grieve over their lost sufferers.
Pawns to the King, slaves to their Masters, victims to their accuser.

Honour lies beside each name, respect by each number, yet sadness at each foot.
Devastating millions, robbing them of life, the cruel, shifting winds of war sweep across the Belgian battlefields as if the soldiers are merely dust.

The shocking reality of battle silently creep up to society, crumbling it into ruin and wreck, left only for us to repair.
Until unto us it reveals, exposing the horror, uncloaking the truth, finally letting go of its tight grasp of conflict.

Yet out of these ashes, roses bloom; ugliness to elegance, conflict to calm, war to peace.
Until a spark becomes a flame, a flame becomes a fire and a fire that would burn enduringly.

Still that question afflicts us all;
it hangs on us, burdens us.
It makes us afraid of what tomorrow may bring,
It is the extra strain when we step back into reality:
“Will I add to the fire or demolish it?”



Lest we forget

By Misha Hawksley

In the days of old gone by,
The fearless, the frightened, the fallen.
Brave men seeking recognition until into the face of death they stare,
Remembrance Day it will be,
Lest we forget.

Into the abyss of oblivion they shoot, nescient whether it will take a life,
Courageous cavaliers bearing on their shoulders such weight of their
country, vulnerable to being snatched away by the hand of fate, heedless
of the driving motive for this dreadful war.
Remembrance Day it shall be,
Lest we forget.

Exposed to the toxic air, dense with the cries of the lost.
Unwilling to commit the dreadful deeds,
Sunken hearts unable to float,
Heavy hearts unable to fly.
“Get off the ground my pretty bird”,
That is what they said.
But now they are gone, and the poppies are red.
Remembrance Day it must be,
Lest we forget.

Never did once the white flag of England fly high,
Yet neither the thought of victory ever pass by.
Days will come,
Days will go,
In Flanders fields poppies grow,
It is Remembrance Day,
Lest we forget.



Six of Crows

By Leigh Bardugo
(Book One of the Six of Crows duology)

A book review by Libby Hester – Year 10

Star rating:



Trigger Warnings: Addiction (gambling and drug), Child trafficking, Gambling, Genocide, Sexual abuse (discussed not displayed), Slavery, Violence (graphic)

Six of Crows is a fantasy novel that sets itself within the Grisha Universe (often referred to as the Grishaverse) by Leigh Bardugo and does not need to be read along with – or after – any of her previous novels, although further reading may improve the already captivating experience. The novel's gritty and wicked atmosphere takes hold of you on its own and the twisting streets of Ketterdam are new territory that crave exploration.

The plot is solid: established on prolific world-building loosely inspired by Amsterdam, Antwerp, Las Vegas and London. It is the strength of the plot and universe that consecrate the novel's appeal, but the characters are unmistakably the reason behind the universal beauty the book possesses. Six of Crows delves into the lives of six diverse and driving characters, with chapters from the perspectives of five out of the six, largely following the experience of one person – Kaz Brekker.

Known as Dirtyhands because there is no job too dirty for him, Kaz is a criminal prodigy that understands the streets of Ketterdam better than anyone. That is until something changes in the cogs that rattle outside the city's limits and the threat of a new drug is revealed to Brekker by impossible people who demand impossible things. The infamous Dirtyhands is offered an unthinkable heist, that becomes evermore thinkable as the wealth of the reward piles up. Now he has to form a crew of criminals, mercenaries and runaways that can pull it off with him. They are a crew of in-depth characters that form some of the most incredibly well-developed, honest and realistic relationships (platonic, romantic or otherwise) that I've ever read. ►

However, there is one aspect I value most when reading any sort of story - the arcs and evolutions of each character. I was surprised by how fully Leigh Bardugo exceeded my expectations. She dived into the back-story of each person throughout the book and fulfills their arcs with unexpected developments and new motivations. As readers, we are persistently exposed to their flaws, drawing parallels with common issues faced in our own reality and evoking close bonds between readers and characters. The world that exists on the pages of *Six of Crows* is masterfully built and I could not have asked for better sanctuary during the pandemic. One feature of the novel that may let some readers down is the pace of the book. As the characters are so fully developed, the plot takes time to progress and the actual heist does not take place until the second half of the story. While this was not a problem for me, it may be for those who struggle to immerse themselves in a novel. However, my dad finds it difficult and overly time-consuming to finish books but still rated it four out of five stars, and used the audiobook instead.

I would recommend *Six of Crows* to most readers, new or old, as it has established a fixed place amongst my other favourite prose fiction such as 'Girl, Woman, Other', 'Lord of The Rings', 'Radio Silence', 'Harry Potter' and 'The Hate U Give'.



*To read or
to re-read?*

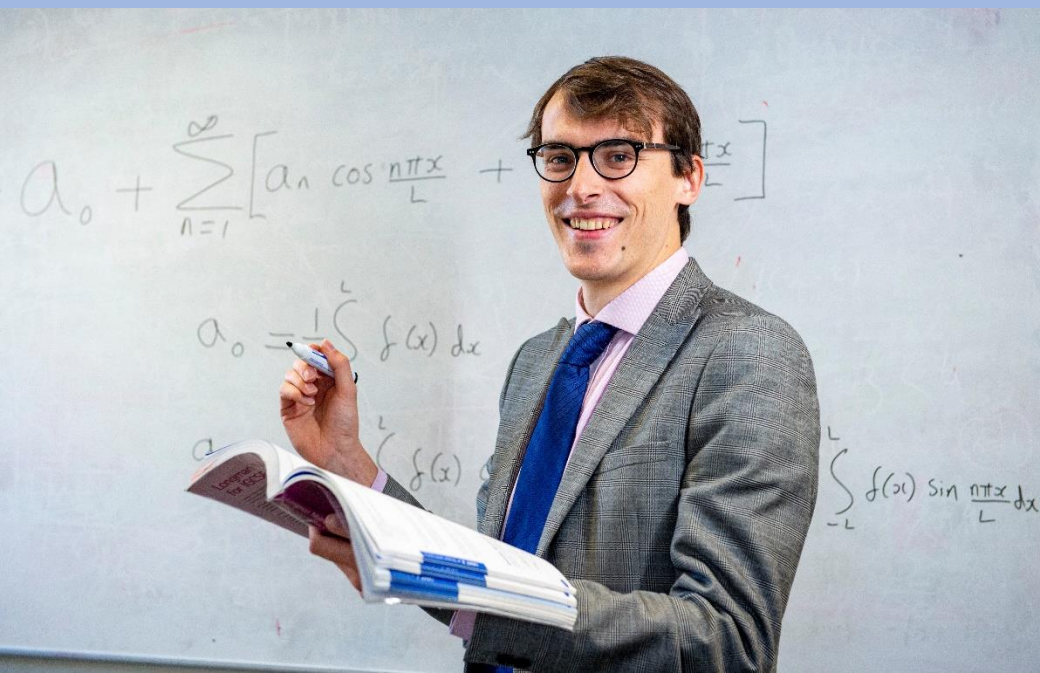


That is the question Year 11
student Freddie Bosshard
put to Head of Mathematics,
Mr Matthew Doggett. ▶

Year 11 student Freddie Bosshard explains why he had to speak to Head of Mathematics, Mr Matthew Doggett, about his favourite book.

I have never re-read any book; once I read the final page and return the book to my shelf, I never come back to it – I've always felt if I come back to a book (and I have tried), I can't look at it with the same awe and wonder as the first sitting. The biggest problem for me is that since I know what happens, I can't relate to the characters in the same way; sure, some books use plot twist to catch a reader in prologue, or first chapter – just look at 'The Secret History' by Donna Tart, which opens with the death of Bunny. Nonetheless, I just can't look at a book the same way once I've read its final page. However, that isn't the same for everyone, and especially not for Mr Doggett.

A little while ago, I heard a tale about him; my English teacher told me that Mr Doggett – Head of Mathematics at Worth and Cambridge alumni – read the same book again once every year. Immediately, I was perplexed: why would a teacher – or anyone for that matter – read the same book every year. Surely the twists and turns woven into the plot wouldn't carry the same punch on the second reading, or even the third. It really didn't make any sense to me. With this new-found confusion, I opened my emails and wrote to Mr Doggett with a few questions to soothe my spinning mind.



What is the name of the book, and who was the author? Furthermore, why do you keep on coming back to the book?

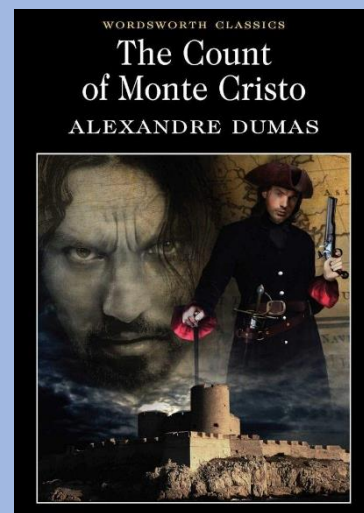
The book is The Count of Monte Cristo by Alexandre Dumas. I first read the book when I was around 15 years old and was captivated by all the interweaving plots and the way that the plans come together at the end of the book. There are so many different ideas to be drawn out of it, with many of the different subplots covering different aspects of the human condition. While the overarching theme is revenge, there are ideas of morality, love, ambition and many others. I find something new and different in it each time I read it.

If you could change anything about the book, what would it be?

The book is exceptional and I love it, but it is definitely not perfect. There is a block in the middle where the pace of the story slows, and it takes a while to get back up to speed. Some of the sub-plots also don't contribute quite as much as others do.

Do you recommend the book to other readers?

I would definitely recommend it to other readers, but I would suggest having a block of time set aside for it. At over 800 pages of very small text, it takes some getting through, although the fact that it was written as a serial means each chapter leaves you wanting more.



“Until the day when God shall deign to reveal the future to man, all human wisdom is summed up in these two words, - Wait and hope.” Alexandra Dumas, ‘The Count of Monte Cristo’





Ghost stories

Pia Middleton and Zoe Blake-James were lucky enough to interview author Theresa Gooda on the process behind ghost writing for her series *Thrown Away Children*, in which she ghost writes behind Louise Allen. The interview provides an insight into various modes of writing and different inspirations.

The first question, which many people would be curious about, is what exactly is a ghost writer and what do they do?

Many times when you see a big celebrity best seller memoir on the shelves in a bookstore, the chances are that, in fact, they haven't written it themselves and that instead they will usually have employed a writer to put together a book for them. However, it certainly ranges from ghost writer to ghost writer; whilst I do not currently work with celebrities, I do work with various people who would like their story told. Currently, I am working on telling the story of foster carers and, interestingly, in the past I have also worked with foster children who have many interesting stories to tell. What I enjoy about being a ghost writer for these people is that more often than not they have been too busy surviving in the harshness of the real world to get an education and so, consequently, they do not have the literary skills to write their own stories; my vocation thus lies in helping tell these stories. I remember the first story that I wrote was for a young man who came through the care system. We worked well together, with me recording him as he spoke and I later transcribed what he had described to me into a coherent narrative. Currently, I am writing a series of books, of which I am close to finishing the fourth, from the point of view of a foster carer, Louise Allen. She writes a little bit of the story herself, however I help with the main story writing because, once again, she was not given the opportunity for education in literacy. I would describe it very much as a creative nonfiction, because although I write her story, I am able to imagine the past lives of the children before they reach her care; it is almost like writing a novel, where I know the outline of the events and am able to expand upon it with lots of artistic flair.

So what is the process of the ghost writing (i.e. interviews, gathering notes)?

The process involves a lot of research! The series I am working on at the moment is called 'Thrown Away Children', where each child in foster care has a different story to tell, with a tragic background of abuse. Of course in order to do this, research is the most crucial part to begin the process with. I am usually able to access records from social workers and files and so after the

factual evidence, a lot of my inspiration springs from this and manifests itself in the voice of the foster carer that I lay down in writing on paper. I am also in regular contact with Louise Allen through email in order to ask her questions to fill in any gaps in the narrative; anyone can tell a good story, but it's difficult to sustain that over 70 or 80 thousand words. After all, my task is to make it readable for the public whilst also staying true to the story!

What authors influenced your writing the most? Was it a ghost writer?

That is such a good question! I wanted to be a writer from very early on but I didn't have encouraging teachers who told me I could be a writer and so I felt I couldn't be one. I was a voracious reader and I loved reading as a child and carried on reading, leading me down the path to become an English teacher. If I were to name some authors I read, I would say Margaret Atwood, Ian McEwan and Thomas Hardy. I loved Bernadine Everisto's book she published last year, 'Girl, Woman, Other'. I spent my time writing short stories and poetry as well as some young adult fiction, publishing a few things here and there. However, I had no knowledge on ghost writing until I stumbled upon it by accident; I was really influenced by a writer called Matt Whyman, whose children I had taught. He has ghost written all sorts of things, such as a celebrity book and even, I am pretty sure, the biography of the dog Pudsey – he jokes about it but got well paid for it!

Would you say that there is a difficult part to the artistic process of writing?

The difficult thing is that you don't have overall control, since of course you are writing through the voice of somebody else. I can write something that I believe is utterly brilliant, but ultimately the person I am writing on behalf of has the final say and is entitled to completely change it! I find that hard; surrendering something that you think is the right way to go, because ultimately it's not your decision. It's very different from your own writing, where you have all the control on what is written.

What do you do to overcome the slump/motivate yourself to overcome writer's block and find ideas and inspiration?

It's very difficult because writer's block is certainly very real. There is nothing worse than sitting there with a blank page on the desk in front of you. It is one of the most horrible, frightening things. My advice is very simple; you just have to write. I know that it sounds like an easy thing to say, but what I do is write myself out of writer's block, so as to jog my imagination. I might even sit down with my blank page and start writing nonsense; for me, it's like emptying those difficult thoughts out onto the page, to make sense of what I'm feeling. Eventually, something will emerge from that rubbish – I will discover what it is I'm thinking about or I'm preoccupied with and use that as a starting point. It might be something thematic or a conversation I overheard – it very well could be anything. But ultimately, the only way to get out of writer's block is to write.

What advice would you give to younger students who are thinking about taking a career path in writing or in the literature world?

To aspiring writers, I would say that the idea of just writing and practice is key. You should aim to write pretty much every day and carve out a writing habit. Even if it's just 10 minutes at the end of the day you have to make time to do it. I also journal all the time; I never leave home without a notebook or pen and I think lots of writers would say the same thing! You need that notebook and pen with you, because from my own experience, some of the best things have come from overhearing something on the tube in London or noticing something, which has sparked the imagination. You also have got to read; you cannot be a writer without having read extensively! I think it was Stephen King who said that if you don't have time to read, then you don't have the time or the tools to write. I find that that's very good advice – reading others' work is how you learn how to do it! I like to find someone I admire and try to figure out what it is they are doing and how to



Zoe Blake-James and Pia Middleton, who interviewed Theresa Gooda

write like them. I would say also, you must separate the creative writing from the editing process. They are two totally different skills that are often blended together and I believe that you have to let everything out and train yourself to do the editing separately. Don't let the critical voice take over at the same time you are letting your creative one sing. They are like two different creatures on your shoulders and being able to manage them will prevent any internal conflict you feel and marginally improve your writing. A final piece of advice for you is to put yourself out there and enter competitions. The society we live in now is great for publishing work and entering competitions, because it's important to have an audience. I also like to remind myself that there is nothing like a deadline to jog the writer's block!

On the subject of students, how do you juggle daily life/being a teacher with the writing?

When I got my publishing contract, I actually had to go part time as a teacher. I now work six days a week divided equally between both, however even in my teaching days I make sure that there I keep writing, normally early in the morning. I like how peaceful it is so early in the morning when no one is around, I think that's a very creative time. When I was younger, around your age, I was more of a night owl and it was then that I felt creative, but it definitely changes when you get older!

How do you put yourself into the person's shoes and write about their emotions and feelings and how hard would you say it is to write someone else's story that isn't your own?

That's another really good question! In this particular series of books I'm writing, I write around 20 to 30 thousand words at the start which are very much in the style of a fiction novel, where I have to imagine the backstory of the foster children before Louise's voice. The freedom that I have here is ►



good to draw out my creative ideas. As I'm sure you have heard before, it is easy to be inspired from your own experiences, to empathise with another's or create your own story. Although I have never been through the abuse that the foster children experienced, I still draw on moments in my own life to help put this into words. For example, one of the characters I had to write about was trying to bring up a baby under really difficult circumstances in a messy house with people smoking and drinking, with cigarette butts and debris from the nights before littered everywhere. Interestingly enough, I remembered my days as a student in a student house and I channelled those moments. In describing Louise's life and her day-to-day existence with the numerous children around her, I picked out little moments in my own life with my own children to evoke this familial sentiment. For me, it's about weaving what you know into what you're trying to imagine.

I was also wondering if your writing style has changed. Did you prefer writing fiction or non-fiction and has that changed?

You are very right; I originally preferred writing fiction, however after my discovery of ghost writing, I also really like nonfiction writing and have even begun winning prizes for it which I never would have expected before the world of ghost writing I entered. So, yes, my preferences have really shifted dynamics. Despite this, I think that in whatever style you write, the drafting, editing and creativity needed is still the same skill of writing.

The final question to wrap all this up is, as a writer can you tell us about any projects you are currently working on? Is there anything you are working on that isn't ghost writing?

I enjoy writing a lot of academic pieces; in fact, last year I published about 15 articles, with different academic research in relation with teaching. What forms a big part of my career as a writer is that I always have things like that on the go. Alongside this, I am in the final stages of my doctorate PhD thesis and working on a poetry pamphlet; I have about 20 poems I am hoping to publish in 2021. This is a very exciting period for me, because I have only written odd poems here and there, so the thought of publishing a whole sequence of them is exhilarating. This is a very busy time for me, with lots of things going on. 'Thrown Away Children', which is the series I am writing, which we planned to make into 12 books (of which I am currently on the fourth), has been impacted by the recent upheaval of Covid-19. Unfortunately, my publisher has been made redundant so we are waiting to see whether there will be more books in this series. This is a really tricky period for creative industries, both for publishers and writers and so I hope that this will soon blow over. Publishing three books with no book launch or face-to-face meetings was a very difficult thing to go through as a writer. We can all only hope for the best!

*"Memories are their own
descendants masquerading
as the ancestors of the
present." David Mitchell,
'Ghostwritten'*

Year 11

Raising our voices



Year 11

This section features several articles written by Year 11 students about 'Let's Create a World without Racism' in response to the prompt set by the Columban Missionaries. Students read a series of essays from 'The Good Immigrant' and then conducted their own independent research to respond to this essay prompt.

Mrs Alice McNeill, new Deputy Head (Academic), shared her educational philosophy in an article entitled, 'Plus est en vous - Purpose, self-belief, change and creativity – What Matters in Education'.

*"The world breaks everyone
and afterward many are
strong at the broken places."
Ernest Hemingway, 'A
Farewell to Arms'*

A black and white photograph of a person sitting on a bed, looking out a window. The person is seen from behind, sitting on a quilted bedspread. The window is large and has patterned curtains on either side. Bright light comes from the window, creating a strong silhouette of the person and casting shadows on the bed. The room is dimly lit, with a lamp visible in the background on the right.

Columban Writing Competition

Some students in Year 11 prepared pieces of non-fiction and reflective writing for the Columban Competition for 2021. The title of the work for this competition was 'Let's Create a World Without Racism.' This gave the writers a chance to reflect this age old problem within society and offer their own thoughts and solutions. ►

Envisage a race, perhaps with five, maybe seven others including yourself. Now, as you step up to the starting line, you notice the distance between your own line and the rest. It starts, almost, half the way back as everyone else. This may provoke you, puzzle you, vex you. Why should you have this unfair drawback when you have undertaken the same requirements as everyone else? What have they done to get further ahead of you? With distress, you ask the starter why this is. He looks at you, almost with incomprehension and states: 'that's just the way it is.'

Currently, there are still people who are blind to this reality. The reality that some start the race with favour in their hands. The reality that Black women are two to six times more likely to die from complications of pregnancy than white women. The reality that our world is conflicted with an unjust distortion. This distortion that benefits some and crushes others. A privilege and a handicap.

We are all products of society - a society which encompasses inherent racism. Systemic racism is interwoven into our criminal justice and education systems, employment rates, housing wealth and voting systems. It is necessary for white individuals to dismantle the systems of oppression our ancestors built that we maintain and benefit from, for benefitting is oppressing. Jim Crow laws were oppressive systems which legalised racial segregation. Reform slowly started in the 1950s and by 1960, the resistance had evolved into the civil rights movement. Martin Luther King Jr. believed religion was at the heart of the civil rights movement and that intertwining justice and religion would bring peace. This amalgamation of the church and justice was reflected through Rev William Barber's words: 'there is not some separation between Jesus and justice.' I think many struggle with the concept that our religious values are not only bound to the church building but the wider world, as Harriet Jacobs opines from 'Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl': 'if a man (...) pays money into the treasury of the church, no matter if it be the price of blood, he is called religious.' Here, Jacobs deals with the inherent hypocrisy of calling oneself 'religious' and partaking in the brutality of the slave trade. This led me to reflect on the identity, 'religious' and what it holds. What does this name mean if it only initiates when it pleases? We should not have to turn this illusory switch on and off. Christians should feel obliged to take their moral knowledge into critical world issues, concerning not only the neighbours they favour, but the most vulnerable among them.

Implicit bias convolutes our everyday lives involving individual and systemic conditions. Predominantly, people with skin-privileges are too quick to assume that they are 'not racist.' It can evoke indignation and defensiveness if one is called out for racism. It is a defence behind glass – easily broken. Claiming to be 'not racist' establishes nothing, we have to be actively anti-racist; confronting systems of oppression every day. Too often, instead of learning, people steer away from the topic in hope to not get 'too political.' But this avoidance, this rejection is turning away from a cry. It does not solve the problem; it holds it in place. Such that white fragility (1) is holding racism in place. It is tantamount to suppressing deleterious emotions for a while and subsequently having them emerge graver than before. We cannot afford to suppress the situation any longer. To change, white people are going to have to feel 'uncomfortable', for this 'uneasiness' is solely a matter of white fragility – 'when you are accustomed to privilege, equality feels like oppression'. It is now our obligation to interrogate our own implicit biases, call out racist comments and raise affairs concerning racism and prejudice in our everyday lives. 'Feeling comfortable' is stalling justice – break out of the racial hierarchy instead of staying protected within it.

1. *White fragility is the term used to describe discomfort on the part of a white person when confronted by information about inequality and injustice*



Sam Hardwicke

Racism has been an established problem throughout the world stretching back through time and an issue that none of us should have to accept. The recent upsurge in rightful outrage has highlighted the need for change but has further allowed us to appreciate the work of those pioneers that have come before us, and work that's being diligently done throughout the world today. But to look into how to build up a world without racism, we must acknowledge the injustices of the Church in the past, and have an uncomfortable conversation 'with our leaders about working to heal these injustices, and striving for unity and understanding.' In this essay I will try to understand the mistakes to be learnt from the past, and try to address possible solutions or ideas to help build this ideal world, through the prism of the Catholic Church.

Historically the Church has neglected the ideals of human rights for all. For instance, in 1492, it is taught that a 'new world' was discovered' by Christopher Columbus with the encouragement of the Church. The countless atrocities performed by the colonizing Europeans were often supported by the Church. In 1452 a papal bull was set in motion titled, 'dum diversas' which granted the Portuguese the ability to 'invade, capture, vanquish and subdue all Saracens, Pagans, and other enemies of Christ to put them into perpetual slavery and to take away all their possession and property'. This is one of many instances in which racism and greed has shaped church policy. Pope Leo XIII denounced slavery in 1890; however, it was just under a century later before this condemnation appeared in an official document, *Gaudium et Spes*. We can find examples of Catholic upbringings being founded in prejudicial teaching and anti-Semitic views; right up until Vatican II Catholic school children were being taught that Jews were a 'rejected' people and cursed 'for all time', obviously not reflecting the Catholic ethos. ►



The modern Catholic stance attacks racism from three different perspectives. The Church condemns all racism as evil and against the principle of the unity of humanity and as a sin. It does not tolerate racist ideas or theological arguments. In 1999 St John Paul II called on the US “to put an end to every form of racism” and that racism is “one of the most persistent and destructive evils of the nation”. Even though individual people being racist is definitely a persistent problem, racism also transcends into the thoughts and actions of people when those racist concepts permeate a society or become policies of some institutions. Obvious 20th century examples would be the explicit systemic racism in South African apartheid and the Jim Crow laws in the U.S.

That being said, the Church perceives that fundamental racism happens through policies that don't expressly allude to race and yet are racist because of their effects. The U.S. Bishops for instance have consistently highlighted the manners in which fundamental racism exists in many walks of life, like housing, employment etc. Since we can see the grave injustices that racism brings, the fact that it exists in a country in such countless structures implies that these prejudices are issues needing adjustment. There is also a difficulty around implicit bias. The Church doctrine provides a helpful way of understanding implicit bias. Catholic morality outlines the need to educate our consciences. To build a better world, by eradicating racism, the Catechism teaches that educating our collective consciences, ‘is indispensable for human beings who are subjected to negative influences’, and should be an ‘ongoing task in your life’. People have been so moulded by the negative influences around them that they have been malformed to believe racist ideas without even fully realising they have considered them.

Those attitudes can pour into their words, their votes, and their decisions. Thus, “implicit bias” does not continuously remain or even begin at the individual level. It further has systemic effects as well. A reason for this could be the underrepresentation in the media of ethnic minorities as role models. If we are to build a world without racism, I would argue that an increase in representation of these groups should be instituted to enable a younger generation to have the pride that they should associate with their background and history, as well as drawing specific links between themselves and their ‘represented’ heroes on all form of media, at a young impressionable age. I would also reason that having a Pope who represents the larger and faster growing Catholic communities would help provide such a role model. The fastest growing Catholic communities are in Sub-Saharan Africa, going from 1% in 1910 to 21% of all Catholics in 2010, and the largest Catholic communities are currently in Brazil, Mexico and the Philippines. Europe has gone from 65% of all Catholics to 24% over the same period. However, over the past 100 years, Pope Francis is the only and first non-European pope.

What is it to be actively anti-racist though? To commit to be actively anti-racist one can't have the ideology of simply saying that you won't say racist things or act in racist ways but instead should be a combination of the continual combat against racism within yourself, and the making of a conscious effort in practising the actions of racial equity in your life. We should try to make an active effort within societies, including but not restricted to seeking to bring about racial impartiality where racial injustices are present. With all things considered, I believe that if we take a stern and active role against racism we can and will create a world without racism.

Akshita Jain

August 25th, 2020, and the group of people sitting outside the studio is large. The people interact as one would expect strangers to; cliques are being formed with the one obvious similarity amongst the participants being their visible race or gender, half of them are on their phones, and six of them are reading travel pamphlets. The ideal we are planning on addressing is carelessly preserved in the hallway. It must be acknowledged, however, that comfort is found in the constants.

At midday, all the volunteers for our event are organised and we call in the first one. She is studying at Harvard, she says, and we have to remind her to tell us her name too. Once Nandini has settled in her seat and given us an awkward thumbs-up, we ask her how she defines racism. She seems surprised, for some reason.

“Racism? Well, I guess it’s the conscious and unconscious bias against people of a certain race? I mean, I don’t really know how to define it, but I know what it is,” she pauses for a moment, before continuing, “I guess it’s the way all the advertisements for my parent’s apartment have white models and despite being in central Mumbai, it seems like the most natural thing in the world. I guess,” she shifts and gestures a little, “if I were to ever see any South-Asian person modelling in an ad I’d be really surprised, and I probably wouldn’t buy the product. Even though I’m from India. That’s racism, I think.”

We ask her some more questions, and it’s obvious that race is an uncomfortable topic. Nandini is polite when she leaves after we thank her for her time.

“What is racism?” We ask Thomas, a middle-aged man with a mother from South Korea and a father from France. He has three children and a house in the suburbs.

“Um,” he begins with utmost eloquence, “I can’t really say. Obviously the recent unjust murders are steeped in racism, especially when you look at the statistics. Black people suffer worse punishments for doing things less harmful than white people.” He doesn’t know what to say after this, so we move on.

“Have you ever experienced racism, subtle or obvious, in this country?”

Thomas looks like he wants to laugh, and we can’t blame him. “Yes? I’ve experienced racism, I don’t think a single person of colour hasn’t, I mean I’m sure many of the times they didn’t mean it to be offensive but the thing is, some stereotypes have become so ingrained in modern culture that we tend to perpetuate them without being aware of the consequences,” he stares into the room’s corner as if remembering something he wants to say, but then appears to change his mind.

When he leaves the room, we do not ask if Thomas was the name on his birth certificate.

Volunteer fifty-seven is a teenager with electric blue hair and a ‘punch-a-fascist’ pin on the lapel of their yellow blazer. Alex introduces themselves with their pronouns.

“How do you define racism?”

They squint at us, before pulling their phone out from the blazer's pocket. Alex opens their mouth and begins rattling off Dictionary.com's entry under 'racism', pausing to look up and make sure we're listening when they get to the part about institutional, structural, and systemic racism.

We are.

"What are you doing to fight this, then," we ask next, and I think our eagerness to hear their answer was hidden very poorly. We needed to hear that we were doing enough a little too badly.

Alex shrugs. "I learn. About other cultures, histories, I try to see things from their point of view. I don't want to unintentionally hurt my friends just because my education taught everything from the victor's perspective. And the internet is accessible to almost everyone here, so people don't really have an excuse anymore."

And then they tell us about their friend Esther and how they celebrate Haitian Independence Day together and spend the day after that watching movies and reading – folk tales, her cultural history, everything. They tell us about the fireworks keychain they gifted An for Chinese New Year. They tell us about other volunteers outside and how Rusmiya's name always autocorrects to Russia. "I'm not saying that's racist in itself, but it has racist origins. If a Bangladeshi designed the autocorrect algorithm, her name wouldn't have the squiggly red line underneath it. In creating resources used internationally but with firmly Western roots we erase other cultures – rather, we force the eraser into their hands and tell them to rub themselves out."

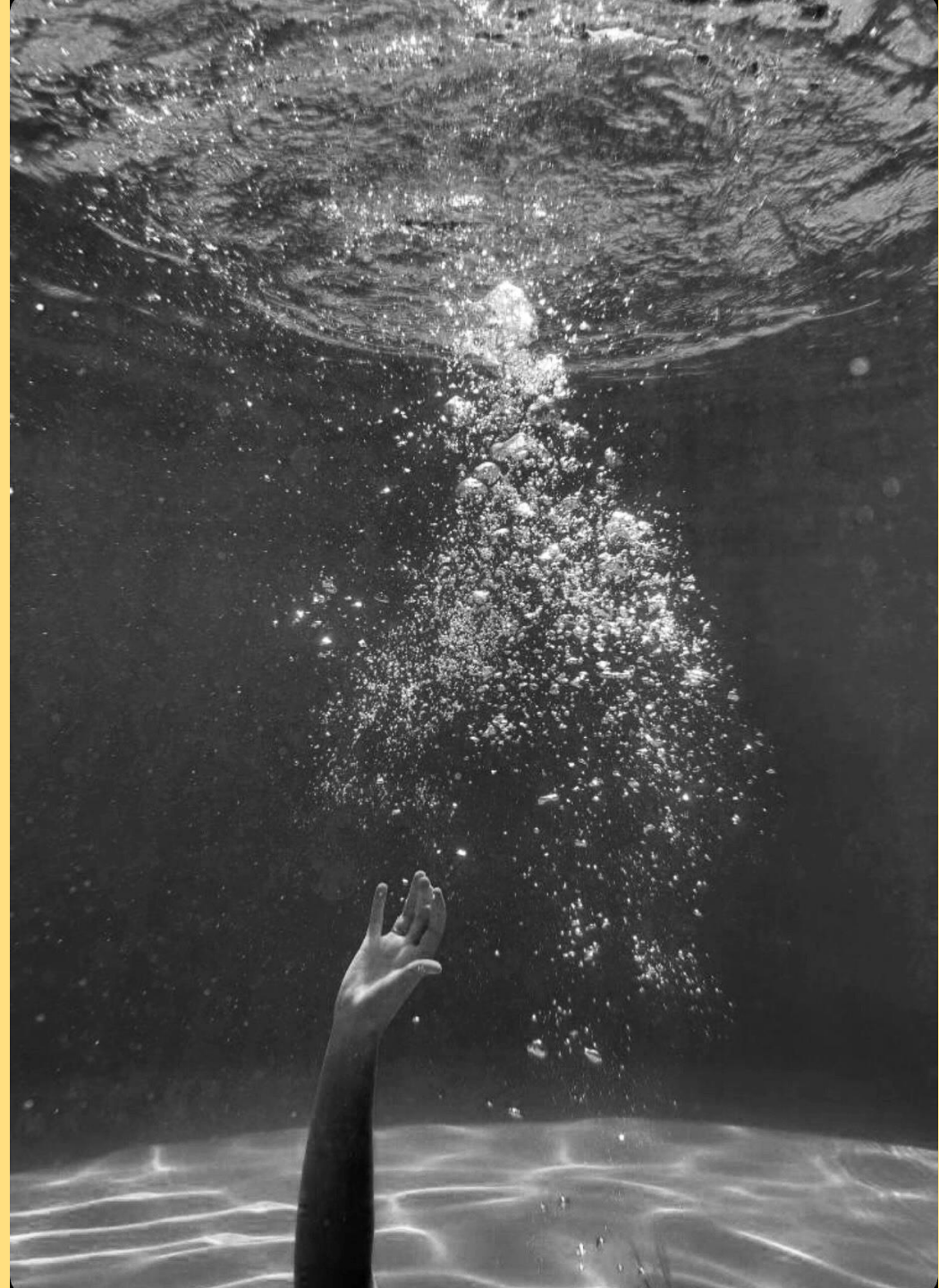
"Oh," we say. They're right.

When Gakere walks in his shoulders are hunched and his head is ducked into his chest. His surgical mask hides his nervous smile as he tells us to call him Gake because 'most people can't pronounce his full name anyway'. We spend the next thirty seconds taking the time to pronounce it right because that isn't something difficult to do; it's not a part of his heritage we can choose to take away.

When we ask Gakere what racism means to him, he's silent.

"My mother started crying while she was shaving my head the other day," he starts carefully. "The recent, uh, reawakening of the Black Lives Matter movement is really nice because I know where I can be safe but it's also made it more dangerous to go out, and it just makes me think that it's ... wrong, because why is this even up for debate? Why do people have to be persuaded that our lives are just as important as theirs?"

Deon Kay was shot on the second of September, and we aired our show the next day. Nobody noticed the rushed editing, and if they did no one commented.





Plus est en vous

Purpose, self-belief, change and creativity – What Matters in Education
By Alice McNeill, Deputy Head Academic

‘We pass through the present with our eyes blindfolded. We are permitted merely to sense and guess at what we are actually experiencing. Only later when the cloth is untied can we glance at the past and find out what we have experienced and what meaning it has.’ — Milan Kundera

The decisions that you make in your life only make sense in retrospect. Looking back, I can see that several chance events turned out to be decisive moments in my career and my thinking about education.

When I was very young, I was asked to represent my school in ‘The Gordonstoun Challenge’. Teams of about six ten-year-olds from every Scottish prep school had to travel to a boarding school in the middle of the Scottish highlands and take part in all sorts of challenges. For me, one of the biggest challenges was boarding for the first time. It was terrifying and highly competitive. We were desperate for our team to win. But the punchline was, no team won. Instead, at the end, we were all given a purple embroidered badge with a picture of a sailing ship on it. Underneath the ship it said ‘Plus est en vous’ which means ‘There is more in you than you think’. I have not seen the badge since I got it three decades ago, but I can still visualise it, because that message has shaped my entire educational philosophy. I believe that pupils are capable of so much more than they think are. We do not need to place artificial limits on what we can achieve. I don’t believe in ceilings or caps. I believe everyone is gifted and talented. It is our purpose, as teachers, to help pupils discover their gifts and talents.

Even though I am a fourth generation teacher, I never planned to be one myself (all teachers say this!). Having said that I have always relished the opportunity to teach. I went to an all girls’ school in Dorset, and then on to University College, London. It was very much a case of one extreme to another. Sherborne Girls’ School was very much like Worth: beautiful, rural, spiritual and very supportive, whereas at UCL, I was thrown into a very urban, secular and independent existence. Feeling a bit lost, I decided to sign up to teach in an inner-city primary school as a student volunteer. The pupil body spoke 17 different languages and the classroom was organised chaos. It was exhausting and I was only really a spectator. However, in that school, I found purpose, which had been missing in what might have looked quite a fun student life from the outside. I should have noticed then that I was being called to teach.

Armed with a degree and a new-found fluency in Russian, I felt like leaving university would be the time to get a ‘serious job’, and by serious, I mean well-paid. I landed a pretty decent job. My job was to organise events that would promote Russo-British relations and also to get British companies into Russia, which had recently opened up to the West. ►



I organised events in hotels on Park Lane and even organised the State Visit of President Putin to the UK. We had the Mall hung with alternating Union Jacks and Russian flags. We ate lots of caviar and I introduced lots of British companies to Russian markets. Interesting though the work was, I couldn't settle, and so I went to live in Barcelona and taught English to make ends meet. That's when I finally realised my vocation was to teach. St John Henry Newman said 'To live is to change, to be perfect is to have changed often'. These words keep coming back to me, as quite often we associate change with instability and uncertainty, but in these words, Newman gives the licence to change; to engage with others, to explore and to adventure. It is easy to stick with the status quo sometimes and not to embrace or seek change. If purpose continues to calibrate us, we should not be afraid to change the path that we take, especially if a new path seems to present opportunities to serve.

In my first teaching job, I had to do two things which I wasn't that happy about. The first thing was to teach the first team lacrosse and the second was to lead the school pilgrimage to Lourdes.

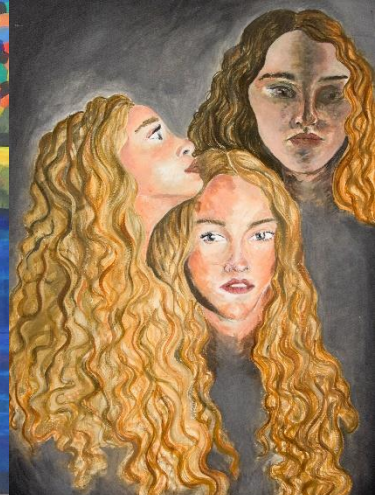
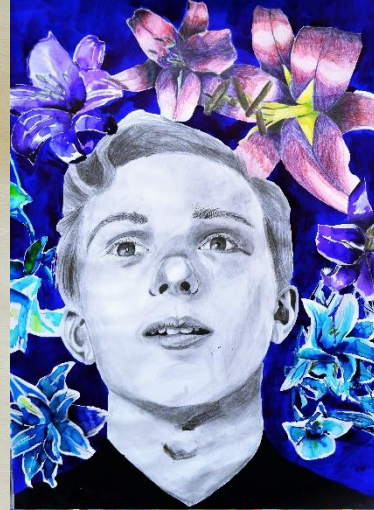
From the first of these experiences, I learnt that learning through doing is the most powerful way to learn and I learnt that it is so important to do things that make you nervous. Coaching the lacrosse team to unexpected victories, and gracious defeats, was one of the most rewarding experiences of my career. I had to learn from scratch how to be a sports coach. I think this is what inspired my love of project-based learning. Life is not a series of exams, but a series of projects, and the better we get at problem-solving, team work and creative thinking, the more it is possible to succeed. My Faith and Reason class has heard me go on at length about the great documentary 'Most Likely to Succeed' – I highly recommend it to anyone wondering whether it's worth doing a project, at any stage of life!

From the second experience, I learnt to turn away from scepticism and believe in the transformative potential of service. I did not know what to think about Lourdes and the idea of a site of pilgrimage where miracles could actually take place. My brother in law was from that area of south west France and had always bemoaned the tourists and shops full of 'plastic tat'. Then I experienced the place itself. And I have to say that it changed my life. Seeing the most rebellious and challenging sixth former volunteering to work the night-shift on a ward for the terminally ill, and then get up at 6am the next

morning to do it all again, was profoundly moving. We pulled old-fashioned bath chairs in the sweltering heat to the sacrament of the sick on a mountainside. A thunderstorm broke as we processed down in silence; it seemed miraculous respite that afternoon. Out of tears came laughter and screeching as everyone was soaked to the skin by the Mediterranean downpour. I don't know if it is possible to find a greater sense of fulfilment or happiness than through service. When I have had the opportunity to serve, I have found it something to be immensely grateful for. I hope to make as much space as possible for service within Worth's curriculum.

Education should be a lifelong pursuit. I don't think education should suddenly stop at 18 or 21. I'm writing my thesis at the moment. It is about the importance of creativity in education, and how students' choices can be wrongly shaped by false narratives around creativity. Students and subjects are wrongly labelled as either 'creative' or 'academic' when creativity is academic and creativity should be an educational universal. Everyone is creative, and creativity is as important as literacy and numeracy, and imbues all subjects. It is the only way to solve problems and to progress as a society.

About 10 years ago, I got the chance to go to the Philippines with all the Benedictine Schools of the world. We spoke about how Benedictine education is a gift to the world, in that its main mission is, and always has been, to create agents for change. It is the idea that a Benedictine education offers the invitation to serve. This can be done no matter what career path is chosen. This is a very noble goal for any pupil or school. I have been working for a long time on the idea of a Benedictine Baccalaureate, which in many ways mirrors the IB. It means that no matter what qualification is chosen as the culmination of a Worth career, a Worthian would leave with a baccalaureate celebrating their academic achievement, their co-curricular contributions and their service. It makes sense. Baccalaureate comes from *bacca lauri*, referring to the laurel berries from the wreaths that scholars would wear to signal the culmination of their education. A scholar would be rich in virtue, both moral and intellectual, and drawing ever closer to *eudaimonia*, true spiritual fulfilment. This is my wish for every Worthian, that they leave as scholars with the laurels of personal growth, self-belief and spiritual fulfilment, ready to go out and make positive change in the world.



Year 12

Eclectic snapshots



Year 12

In this section a variety of works from Year 12 students have been included in order to reflect the eclectic snapshots of the mind through writing.

There is a wide range from Suzanna Kumar's creative short story, Murdo Dutton's poem and finally Alice Grant's essay on what male pseudonyms represent in literature. This was an essay written for The Woolf Essay Prize from Newman College, Cambridge University.

Ms Juley Hudson piece 'Shapeless Days - a series of paintings created during lockdown' is a unique insight into her own development of art, inspired by everyday objects such as nets and more intriguing things, such as cells.

"Lock up your libraries if you like; but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind." Virginia Woolf, 'A Room of One's Own'

The Man

By Suzanna Kumar

As I stumbled blindly through the deep, black forest, a sinking feeling took over me: I had realised I had become disoriented and trapped, powerless in a sea of darkness. The trees towered ominously above me in the twilight; tall and dark with arms gripping on to me and holding me in the darkness forever, skeletal hands blocking every inch of sunlight in the world and leaving eternal scars embedded into my skin from their piercing nails.

Tears streamed down my face; leaving their bitter sweet imprints. Time was ticking, running had become my only option, my body had to keep moving, had to keep a distance between us, had to keep me safe. He was catching up to me, but adrenaline urged my feet to keep moving. Every bone in my body was screaming out in pain and my heart was pumping, faster than it had ever done before. I felt my lungs were going to explode and my chest began to burn, it was getting more and more difficult to keep going – but I had to keep moving.

As the sky wept, every inch of my body became soaked, freezing my nerves to stone. Thunder roared, but I saw no lightning as the trees swallowed up all of its light, keeping me locked in eternal darkness. Suddenly it dawned on me; was I going to get out alive?

Life had been so peaceful an hour before this nightmare. Relaxing under the Autumn sun, the lake looking magical as the sun danced upon the diamond like water.

Without warning, a cold breeze rushed past me and a sudden sense of danger coursed through my spine. The clouds were growing closer together and darkening by the second. Suddenly, a scream tore from the distance like a lightning bolt through the night sky. ►



Momentarily losing all my senses, I felt paralysed. My body turned to ice making my blood run cold. Instantly, I knew whose scream it was.

Adrenaline surged through my veins as I sprinted back home. The door was slightly ajar. I looked in carefully, only to see my mum drenched in her own blood. The next thing I saw was a figure standing in the corner with his ice-cold hands wrapped around a knife. The knife that had ripped the heart, life and soul out of my mum. The heart which had cared for me for so many years. One look at this man and my blood curdled. Knowing my own life was at risk, I raced out the house and headed towards the woods.

An hour later and my legs had not stopped, almost like a machine – unaware of fatigue or pain. He was catching up to me by the second. His cold breath ran down my spine, but when I turned around there was only darkness! Where had he gone?

I felt something cold wrap around my body. His hand and arms had taken hold of my childish body. He started to pull at me, tearing at my limbs like a child would do to a doll. A scream tore through my lungs like a shard of glass. Terror towering over me. I knew I was fighting for my life.

Struggling against his grip of steal, I kicked and screamed – harder and louder than ever before. Shoving him against a tree, he stood there paralysed for a second. This was my chance – except my eyes were closing, exhaustion had eventually caught up and was taking control over me.

When my eyes had finally opened again, I was still stuck in the forest. Confused I turned around. How had I survived? Looking around I saw how. The Man's lifeless body was slumped on the cold ground, blood flooding out of his chest, oozing into the cold ground. I fell silent. Still confused, I looked around only to see nothing. Nervously, I looked at my hands and I saw how he had died. My hands held on to his heart, still warm and blood still pouring out of it. My long nails were burrowed into it, almost afraid to let go, almost frightened of myself. Blood oozing out of the holes. He was dead and I was free.

PAST TIME

By Murdo Dutton

As Winters melody withers,
And the sun beats against the earth,
The day's drum falls short.

As a flower bursts through the seams,
Fighting for its chance,
It slithers through its humble means,
Following the drum's dance,

As the orchestras play their shallow dawns,
And the choirs sing their empty yawns,
How can our loves and labours have won,
As we are met with each day's drum.

A monotonous ballad to which we succumb.
How can we beat the day's drum?
As Autumn leaves and spring breaks,
An old thing dies and a new thing takes,
How can we anticipate with each new date,

We are already caught in tomorrow's snare,
Lost as each day departs.
We wait to see where life will begin to tear,
But surely we are just losing the art to dare?

Time marches to a slow beat,
While we hurry to finish the piece,
We are left in pieces, lost in repeat,
Tormented by a tick of clock,
A golden fleece.

The Woolf Essay Prize

The Woolf Essay Prize is open to all girls currently in Year 12 (Lower Sixth) at a UK school. It is designed to give students the opportunity to think and write about women in literature, history, society and culture, while developing their independent study and writing skills. As Alice is preparing to apply for Oxbridge, this competition from Newman College was ideally suited for her.

Alice Grant

Question 2

'Currer Bell, George Eliot, George Sand, all the victims of inner strife as their writings prove, sought ineffectively to veil themselves by using the name of a man'. Do male pseudonyms represent repression or liberation when used by female writers? You should discuss at least two writers in your answer.

A name, my name, your name, what do they all mean? The Cambridge English dictionary defines a name as, "the word or words that a person, thing, or place is known by". Do the words by which we associate one another actually mean anything or are they just words? Do they or should they define our character? William Faulkner sums up this ideology perfectly in his 1930s novel 'Light in August' when he says, "And that was the first time Byron remembered that he had ever thought how a man's name, which is supposed to be just the sound for who he is, can be somehow an augur of what he will do, if other men can only read the meaning in time." Does this apply to women? When we see a woman's name on something published do we immediately have a preconceived idea about the way in which it is written and what it will say?

The question asks whether or not I believe that 'male pseudonyms represent repression' – like George Elliot, George Sand and the Brontë sisters – 'or liberation' – like JK Rowling and Alice Bradley Sheldon. It is my belief that this is a grey area and one which has never been explored in much detail, particularly in more recent years because we now live in a society where gender is far more ambiguous. Writing under a name, which isn't your own, is now a very common phenomena, as many people identify differently to their birth names or birth genders. On this basis I think that it would be amiss to take my position on either side, I'm therefore going to explore both sides in depth in an attempt to understand the true motivation for wanting to be considered a man instead of a woman when it comes to being published.

What is repression? In the context of this essay, I believe repression to be a matter of not being allowed to be who one truly sees oneself to be. Unfortunately repression is a very common word when associated with women in literature and has been for as long as it has existed, but how would it feel to be truly repressed enough not to be able to put your own name on a piece of work that you have written and you have had published? I'd like to reference Mary Ann Evans, better known as George Eliot, as my case to explore the ideas of repression when writing as a woman in the mid-19th century. Evans used her pen name of George Eliot, not only to conceal her gender but also to disguise her irregular social position, she was an unmarried woman living with a married man. When explaining to her publisher, who didn't know her true identity, she said

that it was necessary to employ her pen name, “as a tub to throw to the whale in case of curious enquiries”. When looking at the reasons why she wrote as a man they are very clear in this instance. It was hard to be a woman in a man’s world, and sadly still is. For a woman to be taken seriously at all, drastic measures must be taken.

Virginia Woolf once said in her book ‘A Room of One’s Own’, “No need to hurry. No need to sparkle. No need to be anybody but oneself.” For me this encapsulates what it is to be free and what it means to not be repressed. To be unable to express who one is, is a scary proposition and one which Evans had to face. However, Evans is a fantastic role model, not just for women but for anyone who has an inner desire to be the best they can. Although Evans had to change her name she did so because she wanted to write, to her the fulfilment of her ambition was more important than the way in which she was viewed by others. When we look at Evans from this angle it is hard to see how she was a victim of female repression but it is clearly evident from the fact that she changed her name that she did so for a reason.

I believe that Evans wasn’t an anomaly. The preconceived conception of what a woman’s writings would look like meant some female authors felt bound to be someone different by becoming a man, by name. If a woman wanted to be published writing something that wasn’t deemed ‘ladylike’, the only way around it was to be a man. Louise May Alcott, the acclaimed author of ‘Little Women’, also wrote under the pen name of A.M Barnard. Despite already being well known as a female author Alcott used this name when she wrote ‘A long Fatal Love Chase’ and ‘Behind the Mask’, both sensational Gothic novels whose subject matter, at that time, was said to be ‘un-ladylike’. Were a woman to be seen to be behind a novel like these would be viewed as ground-breaking and radical, but not in the positive sense of the words. It would be seen to be swimming completely against the tide of what was expected as a female author to write. Although this seemingly appears to be a form of repression for both Evans and Alcott, I am not convinced this is the case. I believe that for both of these authors, it was much more about breaking the glass ceiling and an attempt to push themselves to the forefront of debate within society. It was much more about whether or not they could be accepted for being a man instead of a woman, and they were. This proves that these women weren’t discriminated against because of the quality of their writing, but instead because of the name on the publication, which I view as wholly insulting. Unfortunately it appears there was no way around it, as I said previously they were women competing in a man’s world. It is my belief that these 19th century female authors became numb to the idea of repression and in fact writing under a pen name became a form of liberation; it was a secret known only to them, and as a group they were humiliating their male audience who believed they were reading the work of a man. Imagine their horror if they realised they were enjoying the works of a female author. This introduces the concept of liberation, it is only through accepting repression that we can truly be liberated.

Virginia Woolf once said, “The truth is, I often like women. I like their unconventionality. I like their completeness. I like their anonymity.” I would like to focus on the idea of, “anonymity”, it gives these women the freedom and power to do and write whatever and however they choose. I think that this is an interesting idea to consider and is one that I am in favour of. Some key characteristics associated with women are, nowadays: strong, intelligent, independent, powerful, to name just a few, but people tend to miss this idea of anonymity and I believe that it is greatly important when looking at the attributes of a woman. Many would be insulted if they were described as being anonymous but I believe that when it comes to literature it is vitally important

to cover your true identity, especially for women. This is an area which I have already covered briefly; the fact that women get judged solely for being women. This applies to all fields of life, not just literature, therefore women must be anonymous in character to be able to compete and stand up to those who don’t believe in them. The critics cannot criticise if they do not know the whole truth.

A great modern example of a female author claiming anonymity is JK Rowling. We all know Rowling for her magical children’s series ‘Harry Potter’ but what many people wouldn’t expect is that she also writes under the male pseudonym Robert Galbraith. At one point she was even advised that she should attribute The ‘Harry Potter’ series to the pen name Galbraith, in order to target young male readers, who her publisher believed may be put off by a female author. This obviously didn’t happen and we can see that it doesn’t appear to have hindered the success and popularity of the series. Following the success of ‘Harry Potter’ Rowling explained her motivation to write as Galbraith for her crime mystery ‘The Cuckoo’s Calling’ in 2013, “I was yearning to go back to the beginning of a writing career with this new genre, to work without hype or expectation and to receive totally unvarnished feedback.” As a result, I believe, Rowling writing as Galbraith can be used as an expression of liberation.

It provided freedom from the critics; this freedom to be someone different, to write whatever she wished and without worrying about the consequence of expectation; this freedom created by writing under a pseudonym could also allow the writer to become a part of their own story and to live vicariously through it. Who wouldn’t want to experience this escape from the harsh reality of the real world?

Although writing under a male pseudonym does provide a huge amount of liberation, there does still exist a sense that disguising yourself as a man is surely more symbolic of repression than liberation, even in the 21st century. An example is Alice Bradley Sheldon, a graphic artist and art critic turned sci-fi author, who said, when talking about her choice to write under a male pseudonym, “A male name seemed like good camouflage. I had the feeling that a man would slip by less observed. I’ve had too many experiences in my life of being the first woman in some damned occupation.” In some ways this raises the idea that writing under a male name is liberating, but at the same time the motivations that Sheldon gives as being behind her choice are, “seemed like good camouflage” and, “a man would slip by less observed”, suggest links back to the traditional motivations of not being accepted as a woman. Sheldon wanted to be inconspicuous and not to stand out within a profession which is still considered to be largely male dominated. On the other hand we could also consider that Sheldon felt similar to JK Rowling by wanting to start again with a new identity in an alternative field of writing to that of where she is known best. This sense of reinvention has aspects of liberation but I still feel as though there are elements of repression within her behaviour – why should one have to change one’s name to mask one’s gender? Why not just change it to another female name?

This raises the issue of discrimination. The simple fact is that men fit in, they are the ones far more likely to be recognised and not questioned, they are not scrutinized because of their gender. This is something that needs to change. It isn’t fair that these intelligent and respectable women have to alter their identity so as to avoid being discriminated against purely as a result of their genetic make-up. It could be considered controversial but it is my opinion that this is something over which a woman cannot control. ►

From whichever angle you approach this topic there will be debate and argument. Whether it be because of how you personally perceive the inner fight for freedom; whether it be as a result of personal experience of either liberation or repression; or whether it be your gender which will of course partially cloud your vision either way. From the research and reading that I have done on this subject, it is my belief that you cannot simply argue the need to alter your name as a woman to a man's in order to escape persecution. Without more progress there will always exist a sense of repression when it comes to women and how they compete in the world, no matter the situation. This is down to the way that we have been educated and brought up, it is part of society and life that women regularly have to find loopholes in order to fit in, it seems so often that they always have to fight to be heard. Whilst I accept that this is probably repression, I believe that through all of this we can find true and inner liberation. It is only through accepting repression that we can truly be liberated.

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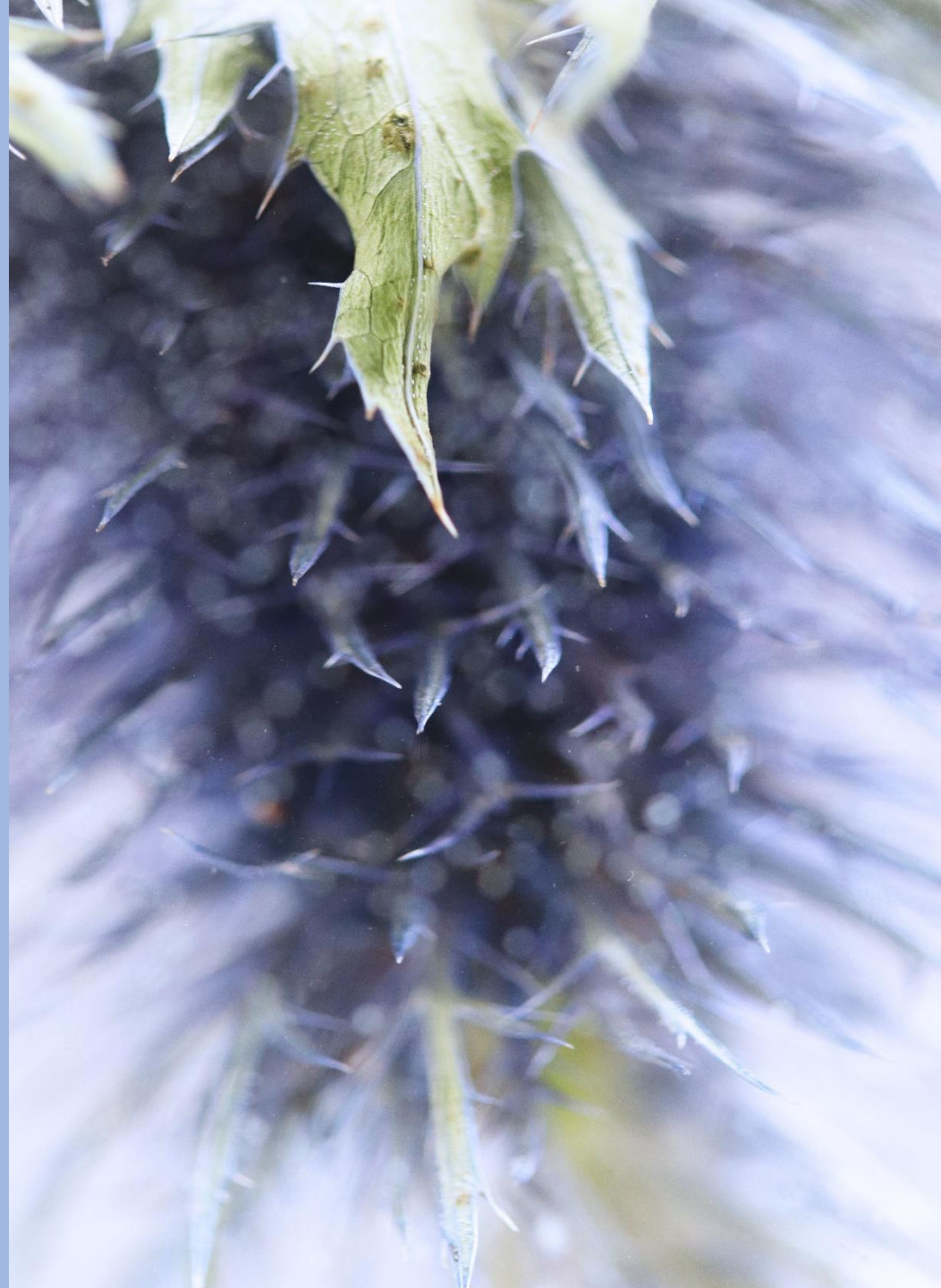
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Shapeless Days

A series of paintings created during lockdown

By Head of Art, Ms Juley Hudson

Since lockdown I have been creating a series of paintings initially inspired by a drawing of a net I found in an old sketchbook, which I recreated on my iPad (below left and right). Further inspiration came from nature; an installation of frost covered spider web drawings, which appeared in my garden one morning was a wonderful surprise of magical spun lines creating nets all around the garden (below centre).



Art books and magazines are always at hand and looking for artists to help me develop my compositions, colour combinations and brush marks is intrinsic to my creative process. My favourite St Ives painter Patrick Heron inspired by colour palette (below centre and right) and the Turkish painter Fahrelnissa Zeid, whose show at the Tate Modern 2017 was in my mind when building up these compositions (below left).



Working online meant lots of distant meets and I often found myself covering sheets of paper with automatic doodles of circles, spirals, marks and patterns unconsciously recording my feelings with looping spirals, grids and boxes, resulting often in 3d illusions These involuntary doodles like Graphology subconsciously analysed my feelings and mood, literally responding to that moment in time. Lockdown has made me conscious of the importance of freedom and these paintings have allowed me to escape from the enforced restrictions and feel free. At the beginning of each piece ►

the only thing I planned was the colour palette although this often changes as the multi layers of paint develop. These decisions are intuitive and naturally respond to the moment, which mirrors the current situation we all find ourselves in. Responding daily to the everchanging rules of the tier systems, Covid-19 testing, social distancing and mask wearing as the pandemic dictates.



As my paintings progressed my initial inspiration of nets evolved into more rounded, oval shapes hypothetically representing cell/virus structures. My aim in these works is to record the shapeless days we are all experiencing. Each painting is made up of a stream of unconscious lines and shapes representi the challenge of uncertainty and restrictions.



The continuous looping meandering lines and shapes create an illusionary space you can get lost in symbolising the anxiety and uncertainty of the twist and turns our lives are experiencing. They represent inner worlds and emotions creating a journey into the unknown allowing your mind to lose itself and your thoughts to be free. The contrast and pops of colours guide you back to the surface to the present and familiar.





Talking tips

Pia Middleton and Jack Fry had the privilege of being able to get in touch with Caroline Lawrence, children's author and winner of the Classical Association Prize for the prestigious series *The Roman Mysteries*, for an inspirational interview on her experiences as an author. Read on, to discover the power of historical fiction and classical works.

Which authors have influenced you the most?

Mary Renault was a huge influence on me and when I was younger I loved mystery stories especially Nancy Drew. I loved the idea of an empowered girl detective – I didn't realise it but she was an amazing role model when I was growing up especially since I was growing up in the 1950s and 60s. Her main motivation wasn't romance; it was being a truth seeker. Later on, I became interested in ancient Greece and Rome. I left Cambridge and became a teacher for younger students and then I thought I could write a book about a girl like Nancy Drew set in Ancient Roman times. That was my lightbulb moment. My idea took shape by becoming a series of different Roman or Greek stories incorporated into my books, and so the first book was then inspired by the three heads of Cerberus. In some of my books these stories are much more obvious such as *The Twelve Tasks of Flavia Gemina*. I have had lots of cinematic influences too and for that reason I try to make my books as cinematic as possible which can be seen especially in my first book. I use seven plot beats (problem, desire, opponent, plan/journey, battle, knowledge or prize) and that structure was taken from a Hollywood screenwriter. My character inspiration was taken from movies too, by realising all my favourite tropes have a lead, a faithful sidekick, a comedic character and a 'wild' character as well as a mentor figure.

Was it a conscious decision to have a female lead in the *Roman Mysteries*?

Yes! Harry Potter was just kicking off when I first formed my idea, so I thought I would have a girl lead character like Nancy Drew. I thought that I should include boys as well into the main characters. All of my characters are based on the four elements too: Flavia is air, Nubia is fire, Jonathan is earth and Lupus is water. I was also interested in changing the viewpoint narrative of – I actually got the idea from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* – and so in some of my books I cycle through the character's points of view.



What would you say is the most difficult part of your artistic process?

Sitting down and just doing it actually. I often say to people who want to be writers that self-discipline is what separates a published writer from a non-published writer. It is really hard, but you just have to write. I've written a book called 'How To Write A Great Story' and in that book I talk about the right and left brain, and that the left is the logical brain which loves structure and the right is the day dreaming part, it's the imagination. When you write you use both halves together because you use words to paint pictures. My theory is that the left brain likes to be in control and doesn't like sharing with the right brain and so there is a resistance with the left brain to sit down and can make it harder to have a creative process.

When you are struggling with writing what tricks do you use to overcome that slump or 'writers block'?

It's so hard because I'm really struggling at the moment actually, I'm working on my 35th or 36th book and it just hasn't 'clicked' yet. With all my other books, I start off with step six, with what my hero is going to learn which then leads to the problem and need. All the other steps fall into place after this easily. In short, there is no easy answer. I sometimes try to bribe myself by saying "I won't eat breakfast until I've written 1000 words" or I put a timer on. You just have to sit down and write.

What advice would you give to students who are thinking about going into literature or having a career in literature?

I would say get another job too, because there are so many writers now. The beauty of writing is that you can do it alongside any other job, as any world is one that people are going to be interested in. You can set any type of story in the world you are familiar with or 'your' world. My main tip is to train yourself to write everyday – make it a habit. If you can write an hour a day, you can write a book in a year. I would also say don't put all your hopes on being a writer, and my best tip for self-criticizing is when you have written something, read it out loud to yourself. You can always improve – and don't give up!

Who is your favourite character in the Roman Mysteries?

I love them all because they are all parts of myself or people I know, but Flavia is me as I would have liked to have been. I love Lupus because he is the 'Id' and I've always thought Nubia is the exact opposite of me, but the more I've written about her the more I've realised how similar we are. I think my favourite was and will always be Flavia. I think your main character should be your favourite or the one you most relate to.

"All the wealth in the world is no good if you don't have a family." Caroline Lawrence, 'The Thieves of Ostia'





*The Worth
Literary Society*

Sighing from the soul

Year 13

This final section features works from all those who contributed to making this publication come about, including poems, a short story and a book review by Joseph Steward on the book 'The Goldfinch'. We wanted to leave a little piece of our soul with Worth through this publication.

Finally, Mrs Dawn Clubb's article on one of her lockdown journeys to the Bermondsey Huts is a reflective piece celebrating the beauty of Worth and integrating aspects of corporate worship.

*"I shut my eyes and all the
world drops dead; I lift my
lids and all is born again."
Sylvia Plath, 'Mad Girl's Love
Song'*



Freddie Bosshard

I want it darker

I want it darker:
I was an actor.

The stage was bathed in limelight, sent down
From the heavens to the lowly stage.
Around me, specialists gathered, murmuring
Between each other as they circled and spoke.
They picked my thoughts apart. They picked
My feelings apart. They picked me apart.
I sat there and looked out - although hidden
By a veil of thick white light, I knew there was
An audience out there; they loved me -
I felt immortal on that stage. I felt as if age was
Beneath me: that I was too great to fall, as long
As they loved me. If only I could have
Dimmed the lights; extinguish the flames, and
Turn out to face them all. To see them all.

I want it darker:
I am an actor.

This theatre is even brighter; illuminated
By the lighting rig and the ceiling lights.
Around me, specialists gather again, requesting
Utensils and objects to be passed to and fro.
They're picking my brain apart. They're picking
My heart apart. They're picking me apart.
I lie here and look around - although the curtains
Block my view, I know there is no one watching;
Nobody to cheer for me - nobody to love me.
I feel all too mortal on this death bed. These
Wrinkles won't fade after the operation - age
Is far too great to overcome. If only I could dim
The lights; extinguish the fire within,
And turn away from them all. To avoid them all.

I want it darker:

Freddie Bosshard

The Hanged Man

He waits at the window: his long black coat
 Reaches down and brushes the stone floor.
 The windows are closed, but the coat still sways
 And flutters like the banners of the triumphant
 Revolution. The coat sways and flutters like
 The flags of a wrecked ship in the tempest's gusts.

He stands there idle, looking down at the streets below;
 He's waiting for a chance to escape - but whether he wants
 To escape the crime and punishment, or escape his
 Very existence - even he did not know. He scratches
 At the necklace that hangs loosely around his neck;
 It seems to be getting tighter.

They're getting nearer; he can hear the pawns
 Shuffling around the corner. Their little feet tap the stones.
 Their little hands bear arms too large to wield.
 The man pulls out a flintlock weapon from his back pocket:
 He knows his only option to escape is stained crimson.
 He's crying. He's crying.

He is breathing heavily. His hands are shaking;
 He aims his pistol at the only man he sees -
 The hangman in his reflection smiles back.
 Another tear trickles down his broken face. There isn't
 Much time left. His coat billows in the breezeless room.
 His weapon is shaking more violently. The noose is getting tighter.

The hammer snaps forwards: smoke. Tears and smoke.

To be the hangman and the hanged man;
 One who punishes others, and one who
 Punishes himself. The former holds the noose.
 The latter wears it. After all, this was almost destiny;
 For what else can a sinner choose
 When the noose is already around his neck?

Freddie Bosshard

New World

The boats crashed into the sands as the European jumped off;
 His long black tails floating down behind him. He was tall
 And light in complexion, with dark-red and bushy hair:
 He was everything an explorer should be. Alas, he would
 Outgrow that title with this voyage. He was to become a discoverer.

Before him sat... something. Far too short to be like him:
 While he stood proud and tall, the creature seemed to grovel,
 Picking at the sand while it squatted. It's hair was not light
 And curly like the explorers, but rather black and raspy:
 Thin like the coat of the decrepit and dying mut. A tuft of
 Feathers poked out like the remnants of a bird. And then
 His skin! My, what an interesting shade of white - not fair
 Like the sand it crawled on, but more like the bark of the
 Trees in the distance, or the mud they grew out of. It's clothes
 Were closer to rags; far too plain and cheap for the European.
 Maybe it was but a commoner, or a ploughman who dug
 The earth. The creature tilted its head, as if it was studying
 The refined explorer back. How strange and foreign this
 Species was; closer to a monkey than a man.

But as the European looked around, he spotted
 Something even stranger: out of the bushes came another
 Creature - just as dark in complexion, and just as short in
 Stature. Just as foreign. Just as strange. Then another.
 Then another. The discoverer looked around
 And turned back to the men on the ships.
 With a puffed out chest and a smile he said:

"My friends, I have found the New World,
 what a discovery I have made."

Freddie Bosshard**Resist Me**

The child wanders into the garden, and begins
 To search from the fruit she wants;
 She spots my hanging body from afar, and approaches.
 She sees my fair skin; my light ambrosia; my very essence.
 And as she salivates, I sweetly whisper, "Resist me";
 She plucks me from my motherland, and begins a feast.
 Desire is the sweetest drug to a child in God's orchard.

The man walks alone down the street - looking
 Glum - eyeing up the pavement;
 He spots a wallet on the floor from afar, and approaches.
 He sees us sitting inside; our legion of paper; our very essence.
 And as he runs his fingers through our layers, I kindly request,
 "Resist me"; he picks us from the leather, and takes off.
 Desire is the undeserved reward to the lonely stumblers.

The King sits among friends at the banquet, and starts
 To watch the ladies as they laugh and giggle;
 He spots my smile from afar, and approaches.
 He sees my soft hair; my fragility; my very essence.
 And as he takes my hand, I morosely announce,
 "Resist me"; he grabs me from my stand, and loses all composure.
 Desire is the fairest woman in a crowd to a King.

The barbarian army continue their conquest, searching
 For more innocent villages to slash their way through;
 They spot a young hamlet from afar, and approach.
 They see my harmless children; my sacrificing women; my very essence.
 And as they begin to charge, I sourly scream, "Resist me";
 They raise their torches - bitter flames roaring - and smile as they conquer.
 Desire is the memory of sour smoke rising through the dusk.

Olivia Saman**Society Unfazed**

Our society unfazed
 Uncovers suicide bombers
 Feeding into crimes
 Against religion
 Leaving the foundation
 Of churches blazed.

A mother instructs
 Her children ways to avoid
 Getting kidnapped
 And her daughters
 Prevention against
 A culture of rape.

"Boys don't cry"
 They said.
 And so the young boys and men
 Held in their sorrows
 In compliance with a societal standard
 Of masculine emotionlessness.

Throwaway attitude
 Attributed to inferiority
 In the nature
 Of the female sex,
 A complex in compliance
 Owed to the woman's stereotype.

I dream such horrors
 Through the night
 Of things which should not
 See the light.
 Yet from this sight
 Can I not wake
 I pray the Lord
 My soul to take.

Zoe Blake-James

Venus

I put on my favourite underwear, so
Why can't the girl in the mirror?
The closer I peer into myself,
The further away she sinks;
One weighs more when stripped
Down to battle scars and indelible inks.

Watch as she tugs at the
Fleshy fabric that carves into
Her skin: squeezing, crushing, moulding,
sculpting.
I trace the ridges
Down the side of a frame that can
Never belong to her, with a touch I know she
may
Never feel:

Perhaps one day,
I could show her Venus,
Beautifully incomplete as she is,
And whisper,
"What do you see?"

Perhaps one day,
With a new heart of marble,
She'll find my underwear to finally fit her
too.
But for now, I see her and she cannot,
For I am her and yet today she is not.

Off comes the underwear;
I cry at nothing in the mirror.

Zoe Blake-James

Ashes to ashes

You were my canvas,
My palate of paint, both now
And forever chipping and
Fading with your passing.

For orange, you shed your
Lion's mane until it melted with the sun,
Stripes of Icarus soaring through your hair.
Buds of blues and purples
Dyed your flesh like
Blooming flowers whilst
Frosty green watched the world through a
Harsh, untinted lens.

You were the yellow
In my life,
Until for red,
Steel bit flesh and I dragged
My pencil across a page,
To seal our love with
Farewell.

Still, your colour lasts.
Whispers of you float around my room,
As something more than hues;
More than the flower of the field.

If we could return to the days before,
I broke open,
When I was painted white
With childhood and spring,
Would I still catch your eye?

You, the catcher in the rye,
Whilst the last of winter's melodies, you sing.

The Queue

By Freddie Bosshard

The city life was still bustling by the time he exploded from the apartment-block doors and onto the street; his shirt billowed as he rushed down the steps and onto the pavement, noticeably untucked. His briefcase (almost comically) had papers sticking out of every gap and crack, some even being caught in the breeze and floating away behind him - follow that paper trail and you will find a man who forgot to set his alarm the previous night. Anyway, even with an untucked shirt and leaking briefcase, he was still set on getting to the office before the eight o'clock bell rang. That was, until he saw the queue.

He rounded a corner and nearly crashed into a stationary man - the late office worker had half a mind to recall every slur and blasphemous curse and stab them into the idle man in front of him; such action would only warrant violence. Instead, he inclined to a pacifist's countenance, and looked around the man. After all, he was not standing still in the street, but rather queueing; and who could blame an innocent queuer for the actions of those in front of him? The man was just a part of a greater queue - one which began far before him, seemingly somewhere around the next bend. From here, it didn't seem too long: just another queue that pops up here and there. The late-bird glanced at his watch again - he really should get going; seconds were ticking away as he stood deciding what to do. However, tapping in to his inner-detective, he recalled that around this corner was a new bakery - one that opened a few days ago, and that was already warranting critic's praises. With help from his inner P.I, he concluded that the man in front of him was not senselessly queueing, but waiting for a delicious patisserie treat; maybe a fresh cake, or a croissant? How enticing; the forgetful worker envied the man. But just then, his stomach started to purr like the kitten: soon, it growled like the lion cub, or the meak tiger. However, by the time he had begun to walk away, his stomach was roaring like the king of the jungle, or Simba after his climactic battle with Scar. He had forgotten breakfast that morning in his haste: maybe he could wait a moment for a sweet treat?

It was 7:59 as he finally turned around the corner onto the patisserie's street; the sweet aroma of baked goods wafted towards him, and he almost left the pavement and began to float nose-first towards the shop. He closed his eyes and took a deep sample of the powerful smells. You can imagine his shock when he finally opened his eyes and found that this queue didn't start or arrive at the shop, but rather stretched onwards - past every other shop on the street, and stretching three or four blocks down, where it finally turned off and vered left around another bend. The office worker shook his head, guffawing at this discovery; why, he had wasted precious time waiting in a queue that didn't even seem to end! He had a job to be at, and if he squandered any more time in this god-forsaken queue, he might just receive a citation. But, just as he went to forfeit his space in the line, he spotted someone else waiting further down - past the patisserie ►

and a few shops on. About forty placed down the line, his boss waited in the queue. 'Why is he waiting too?' pondered our office-man, as he gazed at the back of his boss's head; either way, his invested time had hooked him. Now, he wasn't waiting for a cake, but an answer. Looking behind him, the queue had engulfed another block of pavement.

It took almost thirty minutes for the office worker to travel down this stretch of the queue - although waiting is inherently boring, this queue moved just fast enough to stay interesting. On this leg of the wait, he had passed several more food stores (which didn't help with his insatiable hunger) a few small department stores and a bookstore: although only passing it for a moment, he happened to notice a deal on the works of Conrad, Joyce and (surprisingly) Franz Kafka. Anyway, he had hoped that at the end of this leg, he might just finally find the answer to the wait: a reason for any of his effort and time. This little adventure had sapped precious time from the late office worker, and yet he still searched for the answer. At this point, he was more furious than let down when he turned this corner and found that the queue still had no clear end (or start depending how you look at it), but now stretched one block further down, and then into the woods next to the city. The clearing looked like the mouth of a monster, lying in wait for gullible people to aimlessly wander into. Apparently, he wasn't alone - the man in front of him threw up his arms in disappointment and frustration. With the proof that he wasn't alone, the office worker made a similar gesture of his disapproval. Moments later, a rustle from behind confirmed that the next queuer held similar emotions. By now, the time invested the office worker had invested was too large for him to give up and walk off to the monotony of his office work; no, he was going to see this through. With this sudden burst of energy, he triumphantly planted his foot down and went back to waiting for the answer.

The mouth of the forest was just as dark as the rest of it; although this little clearing was meant to be bright and shadowless, as soon as the office worker stepped in he could feel that this stretch would be harder and longer than the rest. It wouldn't feel as rewarding, and his accomplishments would be swallowed up by the darkness around him. By now, his watch read 8:42; work was lost. All was lost. He was resigned to the wait. As chills began to crawl here and there, he truly began to ponder the queue; firstly, where had it come from? All queues have both a start and a finish - if they didn't, then those inside wouldn't be really waiting; they would just be existing. He supposed that queuing was not only the act of waiting, but also that of moving towards the finish; if there was no finish, then there was no queue. And since he was moving, he concluded that an end did exist... somewhere. The only way to answer the first question would be to wait some more, but that also caused problems. As he stood under the shadow-casting canopy, he questioned how anyone can commit to an idea when the proof for it was at the end; it seemed just so stupid. Such unscientific balderdash! It didn't make sense to him, but what could he do? He could believe that there was a reason for it, or that there wasn't - but he would rather not look the fool when an answer was revealed, so he stuck to the former.

His second question was 'why was the queue here?' - similar to the first, but critically different, this thought experiment asked why the queue had to trek through the thick and thin of the forest to get to its destination; since it did go through this forest, did not the creators think about this very problem? And could they not - at any point prior - choose to move the queue so that it went through a lighter area, or maybe avoided the forest all together! Why must this dark leg exist? It didn't make much sense to the worker, but then came his answer. After a quick conversation with the person in front of him (in which he was rudely sighed at and patronisingly told a theory behind

it all), the office began to think that maybe this stretch made sense once he had escaped the forest: once he could use a token of retrospect and look back with a new perspective. It must make more sense then. However, before he could finally confirm his theories, he was tapped on the shoulder and, incredibly, asked the same question he asked the person in front of him! This rude queuer behind him had seemed to neglect that this whole conversation had already taken place. He sighed and explained his theory to his interrupting peer. They smiled and nodded, looking off into the darkness and formulating a stolen theory on this whole situation.

By his third hour of waiting in darkness, he could take no more; he could hardly see the man in front of him, or the rude questioner behind. Their silhouettes reminded him of what he had gotten himself into, and he somewhat envied them - the man in front was closer to escaping the darkness and finding an answer. The person behind had entered the brooding forest after him, and had tasted the silky grace of light more recently. In both cases, everyone else was better off than he; he was just waiting in darkness - he hated it. Waiting in the darkness with light nowhere in sight, the late worker began to wonder if maybe there was another way - a fast-track which let him find his answer sooner, and return to the grace of the celestial sun; if he only forfeited his place in the queue, he could trail along to the front of the queue and learn the answers to all of his questions and queries. If only he took two steps to his right, he could escape the trial and torment. It was so easy, it was so quick. He could leave right now, and find the creator for questioning. He timidly tapped his foot, and raised it an inch above the ground. All he needed to do was stop waiting for his answer and move.

No.

All of his time - all of his effort - would be lost in such a hair-brained act; he would return to the office, neither richer nor smarter than when he had joined the queue. He would have lost his only shot at finding answers and doing it right. He would have lost precious hours from the calendar, and walked back out of that forest and old man. It would all have been pointless. And anyway, he was yet to find this creator; he would reap a million blessings if he waited for his answers rather than throw it all away and go back to his life. And so, he firmly planted his foot down again - he would wait. He would wait. He would wait.

It was well past the nineteenth hour by the time he saw sunlight again; he had waited almost eleven hours in this queue, and had not felt one drop of hatred since eleven o'clock (or so). He had retired from philosophy and instead inclined to that of the fair-man; he would wait like every person before and after him, and not complain as long as they weren't. The man who joined the queue way back around the corner from that new bakery (and who was almost crashed into by our late-rising worker) had waited longer than the office worker, and he should therefore be met with respect for that. Sure, it wasn't exactly a skill, but the late worker still believed that those who came before should be treated as such. They'd get their answers before he did, but after all, they've dedicated more than he had. With a glance down at his watch, the office worker turned his attention away from the man directly in front of him, and instead towards the dancing sliver of gold that was far before him. Why, he had been in shadow for so long, he had forgotten how beautiful it was; one awkward shuffle forwards at a time, he moved ever closer to the light. His eyes strained as he stared into it, but the pain was only ephemeral: the reward would be infinite. As he stepped forwards just like the line of queuers that copied him on both sides, the light got bigger and stronger. Eventually, he could see through the opening and at what waited on the other side. ►

And my – beauty; a sapphire blue ocean awaited him – he was sure that if he lowered himself down to it, he would be able to taste just how perfect it was. Not the blue of the murky channel that his father would bang on about when he was a child; as much as he dressed up that sea, it was nothing compared to this. While that blue was akin to the overcast winter sky, the blue of this new ocean was so much cleaner; if he ever met Gabriel, the office worker was sure that even the angel's eyes would be secondary to this ocean before him. It seemed to stretch out as far as the eye could see – the horizon was the only thing that stopped this blue from carrying on forever. But, the queue didn't arrive at a boat or a pier to take the lonely waiter out to see the ocean; the queue didn't even arrive at a beach shack with a vendor to stand trial for the queue's existence. Neither was there a beach to sit down on and play with the sand that finds a way into every pocket and item you take with you. The queue reached a place high above the water – a windstruck clearing that jutted out over the sapphire sea below: a cliff. How had he travelled so far? For now, he was staring at land's end; but the queue carried on.

As he watched in horror, a queuer stepped up to the ledge; at first, the late worker pondered if this was the front, and if so, where did the queue actually go – all previously asked by him. He soon recognised this queuer to be his boss, who he hadn't seen for quite a while and had somewhat forgotten. The boss looked down over the ledge at the water below; the worker began to fear the worst, but just before the boss did the unthinkable, someone tugged at him from behind. A wave of relief washed over the worker as his boss turned around and smiled to the next queuer: he said something which the worker couldn't quite hear or understand. The boss visibly smiled again, and the worker thought all of the problem was over: just as he relaxed and breathed out in relief, the boss turned back around and threw himself over the ledge. He quickly disappeared from view. The worker's narrow eyes widened. His breathing grew short and raspy. His weak heart beat strong and quickly, and he began to shake.

One by one, the next queuers stepped up and threw themselves off. Again and again, human lives were forfeited right in front of the worker and the queue, but nobody seemed to take action – they just shuffled forwards, and copied the last action of their forefathers. They just jumped into the void, and plummeted into the ocean below. He almost didn't notice as the man in front of him arrived at the edge and stepped onto the pirate's plank.

The worker surged forwards and tried to grab his coat, but his finger slipped off the smooth leather; although he failed to grab the man, the action had the same effect – he turned around to face the worker. His wrinkled face contrasted with his smooth coat: as he lifted his eyes (as if begging for questioning) the wrinkles on his forehead began to multiply. His nose was sharp and bony like a knife's edge, but his cheeks drooped like a viscous gel; large purple indentations circled the underside of his sunken eyes. This moribund figure shocked the worker (as they had spoken mere hours ago, and yet his voice had been that of a young stallion, not a retired racehorse on its last legs) – the man spotted the worker's confusion and met him with a smile.

"Why?" spurted out the worker.

"To find an answer," the man replied.

With that, he gave what would have been a toothy grin, had not his mouth lacked the appropriate teeth to do so; he turned back around, and stepped off the land. For a second he was seemingly

frozen in the moment; but all moments pass, and before a watch could tick twice, he was gone from the cliff's edge. By the fourth tick, the sound of a splash had bounced up the cliff and met the worker at the top. He stepped forwards to get a better look, but the ripples had already died.

Suddenly, he felt someone trying to tug his coat, but they missed the tails like he had done. The worker turned around and finally saw the person who had been queuing behind him – a short red-head, with softer cheeks and freckles. The look on her face told him that she too was afraid and confused: she seemed to openly stare at his face like a child. Maybe she needed reassurance? The worker smiled to comfort her.

"Why?" she asked him, clearly rocked by the whole situation. The worker needed to calm her down; she feared that she too might jump off the ledge looking for answers – but she looked so innocent – so young. He couldn't allow her to do something so perilous for answers; he would have to do it for her – he would not do this for his own selfish needs, but to save her from having to do so.

"To find an answer," he told her calmly with a smile. She seemed to lose her fear in that moment, and stood still as he watched her for any more questioning. The late worker turned back around and faced the drop: he recalled the events that led him here – his time in the queue, and everything that came before rushed into his memory. If only he had left in the third hour or set his alarm clock last night for the right time, maybe he wouldn't be here right now. Alas, if he had done either, the woman behind him would have to die for answers – just like the man who came before the worker; what he was doing was best. With that, he took a step off the edge and let his momentum carry him forwards.

The sea rushed towards him.

The sky rushed away.

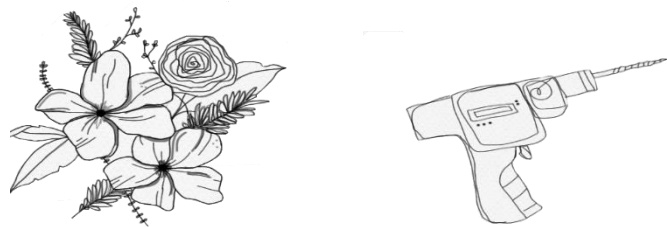
He smiled as he crashed into the wavy ocean: ripples spread out for a moment as a testimony to his legacy, but died off just as quickly as they had come.

Back at the top, a red-head looked down into the blue. Someone tugged her coat, and she turned around. They were scared as to what she was doing – she had to save them from the fate of her previous peers; she looked older now, maybe seasoned by sacrifice? Anyway, she answered their question with four simple words – a borrowed answer from someone earlier and wiser – and turned back to greet her end.

Pia Middleton

Grief

Experiencing a form of loss in young age is quite common, I think, and yet it seems impossible to relate with others on terms on death. Maybe this is due to the fact that death differs between individuals - that is the process of grief, it affects every single person at some point in their lives but always in differing ways. Death is as much a part of the human experience as love. We as humans try to cling onto everything we can, but part of life is the understanding that everything will be taken from us one day; this can take years to accept and process. I think that grief is one of those things that we are expected to 'get on with' in our society, and not show – but in reality there can be no 'normal' way to process grief and there certainly is no expiration date on it. Grief has no distance, it comes in waves, sometimes all at once and it can be all consuming. Sometimes relief can come from anything. I think escapism isn't given enough press and neither are coping mechanisms, we need to do more as a society to normalise grief and the mental side effects that come with it. Wounds can take decades to heal, quite often the side effects of a death can hurt more, and especially after a death when there is a hole in life where that person used to fill. Adjusting to this can seem impossible sometimes. Often in a weird sort of way, the best outlets from death end up producing growth; this could be through music, art, poetry or even personal growth – I think there is something oddly beautiful about this. No matter what happens, the world will always keep spinning and life will continue, but sometimes its hard not to dwell on the past and be swept up in all the emotions surrounding grief. The brutal permanence and inevitability of death is often daunting, but we must remember we are never truly alone in it - death is a factor of life and not something to be banished or feared but rather embraced alongside the inevitable sorrow that accompanies it.



Drilling

When falling asleep I tend to dream of,
 Drilling a hole in my head, a small one.
 Just enough to relieve all my pressures,
 And allow sunlight to filter in
 While my demons escape - wreaking havoc
 And polluting our earth with my thoughts.
 Maybe had we all proceeded like this,
 Tragedy could be prevented forever.
 But as the birds start to shout and call out
 I am brought back to reality, so,
 For now I shall only dream of drilling.

The Goldfinch

By Donna Tartt

A book review by Joseph Steward – Year 13

Donna Tartt's 'The Goldfinch' is a complex exploration of immortality, artificiality and addiction. Chapter one is titled 'A Boy with a Skull.' The title of this chapter more or less highlights the plot and key themes of the novel through conjuring images of death, decay. Theo, the main character in the book, is constantly fighting for the survival of a painting that he stole. When the painting becomes lost by Theo, these ideas of immortality and destruction are explored. Theo realises he can't protect the painting forever.

Theo is a character initially plagued by guilt and depression. The book begins with him in Amsterdam, as a man in his mid twenties. We learn he is cold, sick and tired. Before any of this is explained we are transported fourteen years into the past. Theo is followed through the events to which he came into possession of the painting. The explosion, the death of his mother, the death of Welty, and finally the taking of the painting from the museum. This can be seen as a kind of turning point in the story, or more specifically, a tipping point. From this point onwards Theo's main goal is to protect the painting. We follow him through his transition to living in California, his meeting of Boris and his life in the desert. After his father's death he returns to live in New York and begins to live with Hobie. The next portion of the story becomes a blur until Theo is older now, selling antiques and working with Hobie. He finds Boris again in a bar realises Boris had stolen the painting and lost it. They embark on a journey to find it and eventually the painting is found, somehow intact, barely escaping the clutches of destruction.

Theo as a teenager is explored and portrayed by Tartt as innocent, vulnerable and impressionable. After his father comes to take him to California, Theo meets Boris. Almost immediately they become friends. Tartt highlights the one thing they have in common: loss. They bond over their past traumas and soon Theo is dragged into a world of drugs and alcohol abuse. Boris invites Theo back to his for a drink and within the month of this they are drinking every night. Tartt uses Boris to show how impressionable and vulnerable Theo is, willing to take after anyone who provides any kind of shelter and support for him. Tartt's following of Theo throughout his teenage years and into adulthood is perhaps done to further explore the extent of the damage his mothers loss has had on him. She does this by systematically jumping in and reconjuring his past feelings. By the time the reader catches up with Theo again in detail he is drug addicted and lost, only comforted by the painting which he believes is still in his possession. Upon his realisation that the painting is lost Theo becomes vulnerable and exposed once again, left feeling as he did the day his mother died. Helpless. ►

Tartt uses Boris in this later part of the novel to arguably link back to portrayal of Theo when he first came to California. Playing on this idea of rebirth and reconnection as Theo and Boris are reunited. Arguably Tartt does this to mirror and foreshadow the way in which the painting will be saved, a painting thought to be destroyed, rebourne. When he realises the painting has been lost, Theo is told by Hobie that he lost something that should have been immortal. It dawns upon Theo, that he must find the painting in order to maintain something that should never be lost. Perhaps Tartt uses the painting to mirror the life of Theo's mother, a life that was cut short. Theo's mother loved the painting and so Theo carries the painting everywhere, arguably as a remembrance of his mother. When he realises that he has lost the painting, perhaps Tartt wants to highlight that he has also become out of touch with his mother and his mother's memory. It is this idea that causes him to become obsessed with finding it.



A Silent Liturgy Steeped in its own Mythology

By Head of English, Mrs Dawn Clubb

Weeks and months of 'locked down living' can reduce journeys and adventures to steps that can be counted each day upon day. These periods of enforced isolation and a seemingly shrinking world, socialising with only my own household forced me to dive into the fairy-tale like woods that surround Worth's idyllic campus situated on manicured green lawns. In this spirit I led my family on a search for 'The Bermondsey Huts'...

Clapboard, in poor repair and overgrown, a single cross the only explanation that it might be more than its exterior – these are the Bermondsey Huts.

It is not the front that matters, like many a council house, the wealth lies behind the façade. The cross: a symbol, a talisman for the faithful – a silent shout of something more; it remains the first proclamation in any service copied on our bodies in the same geometric pattern etched on the building – 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost...'

A scruffy field and two run-down buildings- how did they become the dust of a desired journey? Nowhere to go – yet we lived plopped onto hundreds of acres of private land –this beget a drive for EXPLORATION. Exploration became the mantra, the penance of those living with only screens for company over many hours of teaching. When the pain of teaching to static and often appearing and disappearing icons bled into frustration and confusion, it was time for a confession and absolution, a stretch in the air that was gradually moving from cold to warm just as the light was moving from little to more and more and finally to the majority of the twenty-four-hour cycle.

"We should walk to the Bermondsey Huts. It is a great walk over an old Victorian Bridge, through a pine forest – it is a beautiful walk." This prophetic promise of something more, something new, something different from the regular paths and haunts built the mythology of the mystical destination for a walk. Several attempts with me in the lead were undertaken, but no success was to be found. The destination had become Worth's Brigadoon or testament to my aging brain.

Like many a wandering pilgrim, the journey was fraught with wrong turns and mistaken attempts. A left turn and we made a large circle through the woods, only to lose the deer stalker trails and find them again further into the forest- no huts, but hearts full of gratitude that we were not the prey of early Sunday morning hunters.

Finally, the one who had not been and had not seen a map but who possessed an internal compass with needle true – he turned right. Suddenly the kaleidoscope shifted, the pieces of glass tumbled and from the haze a clear picture emerged. This time the destination would be reached. This time the liturgy would be complete. It was almost as if the Gloria whispered on the breeze as we moved forward.

Yet even now the journey brought some disappointment. The Victorian bridge was now hidden

behind fencing, suddenly its footings and passage considered unfit for the modern age. Is this a metaphor for many as they consider the place of the church in their lives in these days dominated by more questions than answers, more discussion and debate than ever before but somehow more worry and doubt as well? Is this a picture of what happens to that child-like faith as adulthood settles in, and suddenly that dependence on what we cannot quite grasp and understand, that contentment with mystery dissolves to be replaced by logic and cold, hard facts? Were these questions begetting questions the trolls that lingered below the surface of the water swishing under the bridge waiting to swallow the unaware?

We hopped down the alternative path – humans always seem to carve 'A Way'. This narrow track and bridge also skirted the small running creek, just in a far less grand and far more muddy manner. The path itself was chopped with the evidence of many steps taken, many feet wearing the grass and mud away. The many now reduced to the few and then the single one as they crossed the makeshift wooden beam with handmade handle that was currently taking the place of the grander wide stone bridge.

The way narrowed and then the path forked. We took the path that skirted the field containing the lambs who cavort with their fellows and bleat for their mums, blissfully unaware of their future. Do they dream of freedom, of going their own way? Lambs are so often used as symbols within the faith – symbols of obedience, symbols of sacrifice. Flashforward to the summer day when we repeated this walk. This day the stream and bank on both sides became a sea of fluffy cotton as the sheep liberated themselves from their field to pursue what they perceived to be the greener grass of fairy tales. If sheep could look pleased with themselves, these did as they pursued the cooling water of the stream and the shade of the woods. Lord, in your mercy...

Onwards through the padded and cool pine walk we revelled in the perfume of the woods, the silence of the trail. The silence wrapped about us and spoke words of learning, the lesson breathed in the oxygen pouring forth from the leaves. If the message lacked clarity, a quick look at the giant ant hills crawling with industry and the path peppered with the workers creating their own moving stream as they moved towards the colony, offered yet another form of the lesson; rest and peace can be found here, renewal even in the midst of certain plague can be found here. Those with ears, let them hear...May the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight – Our Lord and redeemer....

The woods thinned; the path strained forward and the scruffy field full of relics of forgotten forest school lessons emerged, a few dilapidated constructions the only testimony of the busy youths who like the ants made the path fairly move and hum with activity. The silent air listening even now for their call and response. The silent liturgy barren yet longing under the single proclaiming cross. Yea, come quickly, Lord Jesus, and restore us once again.



The Bermondsey Huts, left, Mrs Clubb, right, and overleaf The Bridge





The Literary Society team

*Mrs Clubb, Olivia Saman, Zoe
Blake-James, Pia Middleton
and Joseph Steward*



The Final Word

This year's publication could not have been possible without the aid of a fantastic few; Howards Griggs has helped massively in the layout and format of the magazine, as well as assembling it with us. Juley Hudson has shared her art and process for the society to use, and the magazine would just not be the same without it. Myfanwy Bournon has encouraged the younger years to get in touch with their creative side. Matthew Doggett's favourite book has been my favourite read (even if I can't bring myself to follow in his footsteps)! Alice McNeill's creative process and vision has also been an excellent addition and aid for the magazine and team. John Everest has been responsible for collecting photography from young Worth photographers, and Katie Camp has sourced images from artists and scholars. Thank you also to all the photographers and artists. Without them, the magazine would not have been anywhere near as fantastic, let alone possible.

Of course, we can't thank the writers who shared their creativity with us enough; the number of incredible stories and poems which we have received from students of all ages is astounding. Penultimately, the team; who have battled through adversity, edited many entries and who themselves have compiled their own works to be submitted – the legacies you leave will be hard to follow. And finally, a special thanks to Mrs Clubb, for bringing the society together and inspiring us all to make our first publication as good as it could be.

And to you, the reader, we wish to see you next year and hope you enjoyed the first publication of the Literary Society's 'Heart & Soul'.

Thank you for reading.

Freddie Bosshard
Editor 2021-22

*"My heart is and always will
be yours." Jane Austen,
'Sense and Sensibility'*





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