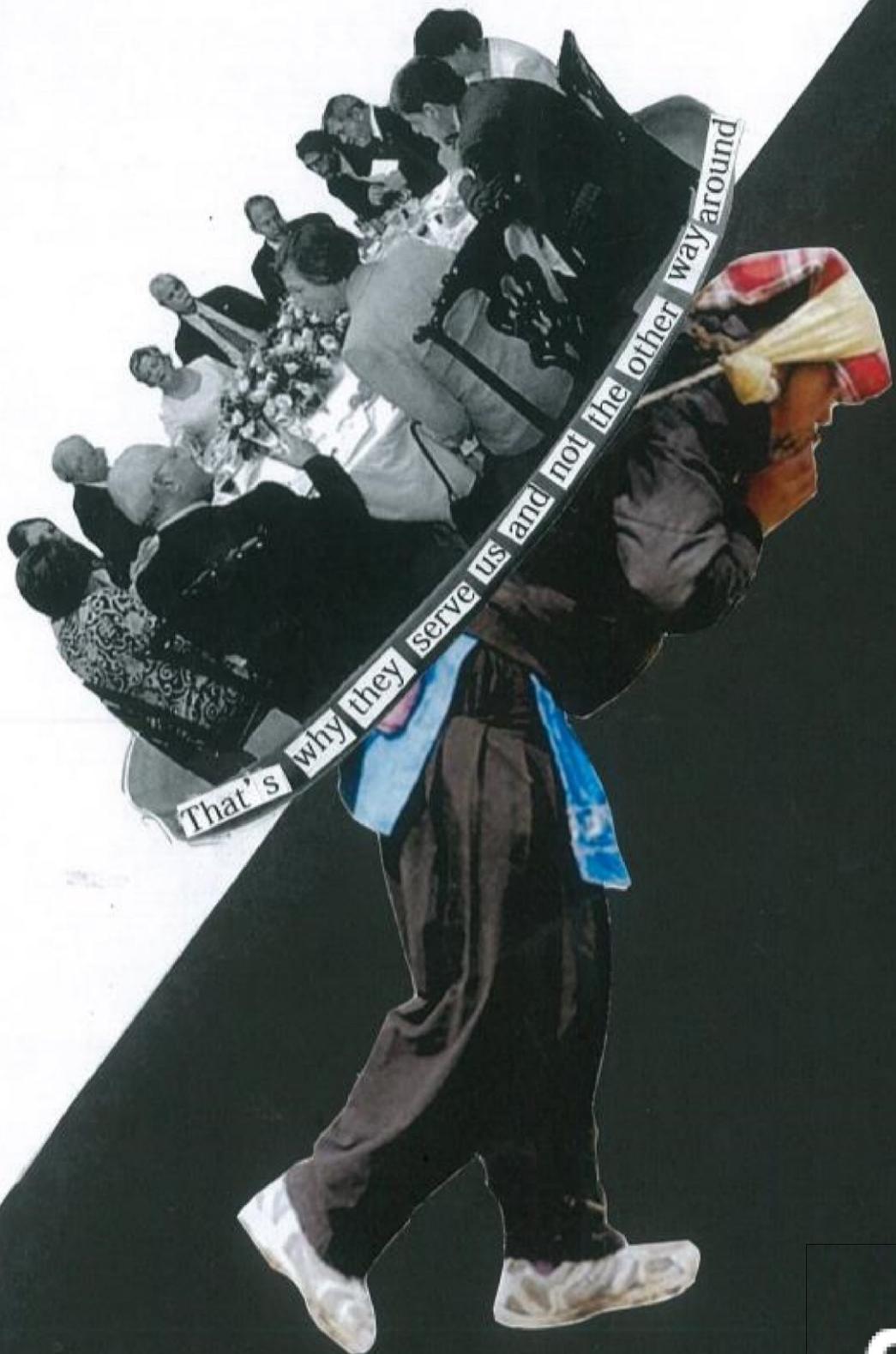


# THE **O**BVIOUS **C**HOICE



2018

Welcome to the first issue of *The Obvious Choice*, a magazine published by the English Learning Area at Onslow College.

As English teachers, we come across amazing work from our students. It seems a shame to leave it sitting in exercise books, on OneNote, or filed away in case of NZQA moderation. We want to share some of the fabulous work produced in our classrooms with the OC community.

In here you'll find work from across the year levels. There are hilarious re-writes of fairy tales and Shakespeare, beautiful descriptions of 'ordinary' life, dystopian scenes, and stories of guilt, redemption and sorrow. There are intelligent arguments about topics ranging from sexism to NCEA, and in-depth discussions of literature and film. Enjoy!

## Acknowledgements

A huge thank you to all the fantastic students who created the work on these pages.

Thanks to Ms Polaschek's year 9 English class, 9BHE, who came up with the name (the obvious choice!), designed the cover (using a stunning static image created by Maia Jackson), proof-read all the writing, and drew the headings and illustrations.

Thanks to Mark Cleary who helped with formatting.

## static Images

Cover - 'That's why they serve us' Maia Jackson Y11; Design Jacob Butel & Finn McKenzie Y9

Pages 2, 8, 12, 46, 53 and 61 – Drawings (Caterpillar, gingerbread man, 'English is awesome', butterfly, mountains, ghost) Bella Fraser-Nightingale Y9

Page 6 - Creative Writing Title Page Iona Wood Y9

Page 17 - Character Ilyasa Rahmaat Y9

Page 31 - Dystopia JJ Elwood Y9

Page 48 - 'Noughts are people just like us' Declan Cross Y11

Page 49 - 'It's a game and no one wins' Juan Triana Y11

Page 50 - 'Just fade out' Lauren Davies Y11

Page 51 - 'We know where we belong' Rosa Tse Y11

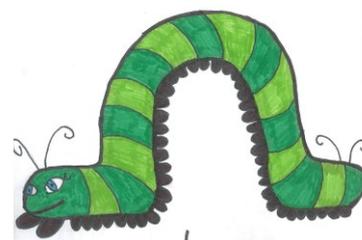
Page 62 - Formal Writing Title Page Sarah Tran Y9

Page 99 – Three Comics Ashlee Bowden & Grace Stevens Y9

Page 100 - Twelfth Night Storyboard Pepi Olliver-Bell Y9

## Contact us

If you'd like to contact *The Obvious Choice*, please email [bronwyn.polaschek@onslow.school.nz](mailto:bronwyn.polaschek@onslow.school.nz)



The Obvious Choice 2018

# Contents

## Creative Writing

Billy goats buff	
Anonymous Y9 .....	7
Parody of a fairy tale – The gingerbread man	
Zoe Allen Y9 .....	8
Our great king	
Olivier T. Shadbolt Y10 .....	10
A tattered masterpiece	
Emma Coleman Y12 .....	11
I accepted my mentor’s poem...	
Anonymous Y13 .....	13
Moon	
Freya Kelly Y10 .....	15
The wanderer	
Hughan Scott Y9 .....	15
Off the bus	
Anonymous Y11 .....	16
The shift from the vibration of the bus floor...	
Emily Butler Y11 .....	18
disconnected	
Rhea Denee Y11 .....	19
Final reveal rewritten ( <i>Twelfth Night</i> )	
Daniel Dar Y9 .....	22
Australian rewrite of the final reveal scene in <i>Twelfth Night</i>	
Callan Shanks Y9 .....	24
Modern rewrite of the final reveal scene in <i>Twelfth Night</i>	
Izzie Kemp Y9 .....	25
3% story: The shooting scene	
Francesco Martire Y10 .....	30
In a world of black and white	
Charity Ho Y10 .....	31

_Xenoharmony_	
Jamie Gordon Y11 .....	33
Morning and evening	
Oliver Berry Y11.....	34
The lake	
Dominic Rajan Y11.....	35
The subhuman element	
Finley Biggs Y12.....	36
My body was beginning to slump...	
Tia Bhana Y11.....	37
Middle hill	
Maddie Bramley Y12.....	38
Our grandad	
Lulu Reidy-Stubbs Y12.....	39
Rust bucket	
Felix Helson Y12.....	41
I took a man's life...	
Aidan G Y12.....	42
The night was awash with grim promise...	
Bianca Ellis Y12.....	44
Another layer of paint...	
Jesse Ewing-Jarvie Y12.....	45
The classroom then and now	
Carlos Mendonça Y12.....	47
Words slowly started forming...	
Josie Van Den Berg Y13.....	52
Raspberry spiders	
Ella Flavell Y13.....	53
Various colours of different shapes...	
Kimberley Lowe Y13.....	54
I've been absent from my skin...	
Emma Brown Y12.....	56
Leina Zarves	
Trixie Pena Y12.....	58

## Formal Writing

Why we need to stand up to sexism in the work place	
Isabelle Faulkner Y9.....	63
Personal response to <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	
Tarek Patchett Y10.....	64
The wreck	
Ed Sindlen Y10.....	66
NCEA is not working	
Rose O'Sullivan Y10.....	67
Rap is a 'superior' art form	
John Reeve Y10.....	68
Why I hate Batman	
Felix Crookston Y11.....	69
Sport is the new religion	
Matt Dawson Y11.....	70
Phones are not the problem...	
Max Wong Y11.....	71
To many, New Zealand is a lush nation...	
Thomas Roberts Y11.....	73
Poisoning le poisson	
Ela Hunt Y12.....	74
In our world today it is very unlikely...	
Tom Tribe Y13.....	76
Quentin Tarantino	
Lewis Johnson Y12.....	79
<i>Ladybird</i> film review	
Beth Williams Y13.....	83
Put your time and pens to Something Worthy	
Liv Sinclair Y12.....	85
Essay on the novel <i>Because everything is right, but everything is wrong</i>	
Emma Coleman Y12.....	87
Connections essay: What does 'human' mean?	
Emma Hogan Y13.....	89

CREATIVE

WRITING

## Billy goats buff

Anonymous Y9

---

Once upon a time there was the three Billy goats buff; Slightly strong Billie goat, Very strong goat and Big unit goat. Slightly strong goat and Very strong goat liked to pump weights in the gym. Big unit goat would watch tv and eat all day which made him very fat. These goats live in a town with a great gym, but this gym was shutting down. Therefore, they had to cross the road to get to the gym on the opposite side, because it was still in-service. Also, the Big unit goat wanted to cross the road because the gym had free Big Mac coupons and better tv reception.

First up, the Slightly strong Billie goat crossed the road and enter the gym on the other side. Click clack, click clack went his hooves as he crossed the foyer to the reception.

“Who’s that Click clacking over my foyer?” said the receptionist.

“It is only I,” said the Slightly strong goat Billie Goat Buff, “and I would like to enter the ladies Pilates class at this gym.”

"You have to be female to join, so go away," said the Grumpy receptionist.

"Who says I'm not female," said the Billie goat.  
"It is 2018 after all."

"All right then," said the receptionist reluctantly and he let her join the Pilates class.

After a while, the Very strong goat crossed the road and entered the gym. Click clack, click clack went his hooves as he crossed the foyer to the reception.

“Who’s that Click clacking over my foyer?” said the receptionist.

“Oh, it is only I,” said the Very strong Billy Goat Buff, “and I would like to enter the advanced body building course at this gym and also, buy some of those steroids that you deal under the table.”

“You can join the body building class, but no steroids for you,” said the receptionist “You have to be over eighteen to get steroids.”

“I am over eighteen,” said the very strong Billy goat, “in goat years.”

"All right then," said the receptionist reluctantly and he let him buy some steroids.

After a while the Big unit goat crossed the road and entered the gym. Click clack, click clack went his hooves as he crossed the foyer to the reception.

“Who’s that Click clacking over my foyer?” said the receptionist.

“Oh, it is only I,” said the Big unit Billy Goat Buff, “and I'm would like to get some of the free big mac coupons.”

“You have to enrol in a fitness program to get the coupons,” said the receptionist.

“Does that involve hard work?” said the Big Unit Goat

“Precisely,” said the receptionist.

“I don’t do hard work” said the Big Unit Goat and turned and left the foyer.

The Slightly strong goat and the Very strong goat lived happily ever after in their respective gym classes. The Large unit goat never got up off the couch again and came down with type two diabetes.

## Parody of a fairy tale – The gingerbread man

---

Zoe Allen Y9

---

Across oceans, across land  
A childless mother bakes a gingerbread man  
She sets it in the oven to cook  
Little does she know  
She forgot to take a look  
Once it's 'done', she opens the door  
To a shock that makes her drop to the floor  
Her gingerbread man crumbles into dust  
Burnt to the grain, it's left there to rust

She grieves for 3 days  
Then gets back on her way  
But something isn't right  
Whatever it is  
She'll put up a fight

An echo sung through the house  
As clear as a siren, as quiet as a mouse  
"Run, Run, as fast as you can!  
I'm going to get you, I'm the gingerbread man!"

She sprinted away  
Came to the barn, hid under some hay  
A cow looked, then spat right at her  
"Run woman run!" just as she murmured  
"Alright, alright!" as she ran out to the daylight"  
She escaped from the barn, got back on the move  
Quickly enough, she meets another four-legged hoof  
The horse neighed, down from the pond where it played  
"Next time you should make a cake for God's sake!"

"Stupid horse", she mumbled  
Just as she stumbled



Upon a dog, and a hog  
"Go! Go! Run to the fog!"  
"Shut up!" she screeched  
She grabbed a bucket of bleach  
And poured it over them each

She stopped for a breath  
Left them to deal with death  
Just as she heard  
The cackle again, squawk like a bird  
"Run, Run, as fast as you can!  
I'm going to KILL YOU, I'm the ginger bread man!"

She turns around, but can only see black  
Swirling, twirling, it's climbing up her back  
She claws at her face,  
Drawing blood, scraping bones, oh the disgrace  
The voice pounds like a drum, thrashes through her mind  
She gets on her knees, and screams, like a bull on its hind  
"MAKE IT STOP! I DID NOTHING! I'M NO PREDATOR!"  
LIAR!! LIAR!!, YOU BURNT ME! YOU KILLED ME! YOU MURDERER!"

Silence comes upon, as the demon leaves her to rest  
But in this case, rest is far from the best  
Her corpse lies in the woods  
Not too far from the hood  
There's nothing left, of her nor the spirit  
No matter how extreme, how harsh, he just had to do it.

The clock ticks, strikes twelve  
But the deeper they delve  
No one can find, how the woman had died  
Her corpse lays on the floor  
In the house next door  
Some people report to have heard her  
Those screams, the torture  
Who will be accused of this murder?

## Our great king

---

Olivier T. Shadbolt Y10

---

Come and see the robot king  
Giving to his people  
Calming down the servant's roar  
Provider of the people

Come and see the robot king  
putting on his armour  
fighting for the servant's roar  
protector of the people

Come and see the robot king  
Calling out their names  
Listening to the servant's roar  
Peace of the people

Come and see the robot king  
Strapped to his royal throne  
held captive to servant's roar  
prisoner of the people

Come and see the robot king  
Returning to the servant's roar  
He is an empty husk no more

## A tattered masterpiece

---

Emma Coleman Y12

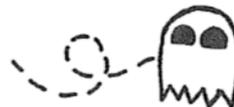
---

I saw her like she was a painting.  
I think that she saw herself like she was a photograph.  
Frozen, stiff,  
with the last traces of tone  
leaking from the film.  
It was as though she had cast herself into a role,  
without considering auditioning for anything else.  
But I saw her play every character,  
she fit seamlessly into every genre.

When she laughed, I saw  
the swirly coloured lines of her face swell  
with emotion and leap from her skin,  
and make the scenery around her light up on fire.  
When she screamed into the rain,  
she became a watercolour masterpiece,  
she dripped onto the pavement and the red swirls in the puddles  
melted into pink,  
and made roses bloom in their wet shallow graves of her anger.  
In her sadness, she was made of pencilled lines,  
heavy over the parts she had erased,  
traces of colour barely clinging to her frame.

She thought she was frozen into one spot, unable to move,  
but I watched her run across the canvas  
pouring the silver glow of the moon into each stroke.  
But she could not be convinced,  
believing herself to be the sun  
making the parchment crackled and dry  
like the skin of her lips.

So I watched her paint and repaint herself over  
And over and over again.  
I watched her spill acrylics from her eyes  
and obscure the perfect curved brushstrokes of her cheeks.  
By the time the fine detail points were splattered and smothered,  
it was too late for me to see  
that in trying to escape her photograph  
she had painted herself to something that stuck to the page  
she made herself into a mess to fix something  
that she couldn't believe was perfect  
I couldn't watch her destroy a masterpiece  
And when I left  
I took a photo of the artwork  
And framed it on my wall.



## I accepted my mentor's poem...

---

Anonymous Y13

---

I accepted my mentor's poem as well as their chore.  
Sat at the back of the bookstore I read their book  
by a man with a cravat, hair like Benjamin Franklin,  
rat eyes, rocking the brooding look  
of a man with nettle foreskin.  
I wonder if he began  
When he was around my age?  
Entering a competition to get recognition,  
Making a teenage boy think he's a wise man.

"Go on then child, tell us how the world works  
You'll need it for your portfolio.  
Write about Jim Crow Laws, society's flaws  
The beauty of the Gulf of Mexico.  
Write a poem where the coral reef should disappear  
I'm sure that the audience would shed a tear.  
Come on then, Show everyone  
the big words that you understand.  
Perhaps you are at the beach  
With your toes nestled in amongst the sand.

"Surely you have something to say about love".  
(You know, the topic has barely been explored.)  
"Write about somebody that makes you feel adored,  
And leaves you praising god above.  
A foreign lass, who's on vacation.  
Or someone who disregarded your admiration.  
An affair with the best man.  
A widowed gran.  
Dinner in milan.  
Surely you have something to say about love.

“Write about the political climate.  
There is a ladder to success and you ought to climb it.  
About taxes that you don’t yet pay.  
Maybe if we all held hands hate would go away.  
Find a war that is contemptible,  
But only a war where we’re the ones who are unethical.  
Since ‘below’ you there is nowhere left to piss,  
It’s important that you promise me this:  
Dump any wit, instead be crass,  
Shake that fist at the upper class”.

He ain’t that smart, forget the buzz  
He needs the art far more than the world does.  
As I look at that title I found ascription:  
This poet thinks he’s beyond description  
But it’s easy: *goddam wanna be*.  
Perhaps nobody is all that good at poetry.  
Perhaps if you need to write about fulfilment  
You need not write anything at all.  
Fulfilment is for those who can pay their rent  
And for those who’ll never know what it’s like to crawl

I’ve been compelled to be artistically free  
By those who protest ‘tyranny’.  
And I know I’m like the rest, I’m ignorant too,  
I used to think art was linear.  
So can somebody out there explain to me why  
The voice of my generation sounds so familiar?

## Moon

---

Freya Kelly Y10

---

poets should not compare a lover to the moon  
for the moon is consistent  
love cannot travel by rocket ship  
despite soliloquy, the moon is not made of love nor spoken word  
*it does not reminisce with lovers because it is made of iron*  
the moon is uncharted no love poem  
for what has been passed from lip to lip  
more than love  
from lover's lips

i cannot help but repeat myself, repeat  
words cluttered with empty space  
poems mass-produced unique love dripping from factory  
lines dissolving mint on tongue  
moon  
in  
sky



## The wanderer

---

Hughan Scott Y9

---

The wet cobbles glisten with the moonlight's gleam as my feet pad down the desolate streets. I round the corner onto Galley Lane and peer through the gloom. The houses are neatly packed together, each one holding perfectly normal people from perfectly normal families. All uniform. All boring. Except one.

At the end of the lane stands a lone house. It leans to the side as if trying to escape the monotony of its neighbours. From the top floor a blinding ray of light shoots out of a circular window. Inside is Matthew Smith. He sits bent

over piles of paper, inking into the night. His whole body looks as if some giant grabbed him by the head and toes and pulled him out like a child's plaything. His skin seems to struggle to cover his lanky frame, veins and bones protruding from below. His chin juts out from his face, holding a lazily shaved beard with hair sticking out at random angles. I know what you're thinking. Who is this person? What does he do? It's nice to know that you're on the same page as the rest of us. Some say he's a soldier who returned from far off lands and hasn't been the same since. Others offer that he was the son of

some nobility, sent out into the world to learn his place. Wild speculation. Hearsay, all of it.

His room is probably very lavishly decorated. Unfortunately, it is covered in books, charts and who knows what else. Stacks of papers teeter on the edge of collapse, scrunched up balls lie littered on the ground and a map of some unknown land takes up a large part of an entire wall. I look closer at the map, it's covered in pins and other markings and every town or city on the map has a small description. Something along the lines of: "Bakery is very nice, pub lacklustre" or "Booming trade economy, will grow." Peeling my eyes away from the map I notice the bed is surprisingly immaculate. Soft mattresses of cotton and down lie tenderly on a deep oak frame but a light layer of dust hangs over the bed, almost as if nobody has ever slept in it. The bench at which Matthew works is made of a rich mahogany, the wood swirls hypnotically back and forth. Blots of ink blemish the table top, scars from hours of use.

Matthew's mind is bursting at the seams. As his quill dashes across the page he dreams of recognition for his efforts, of finally belonging somewhere and of being someone important. Yet, deeper inside he dreads, has his life been for nought? Matthew's been a merchant, a messenger, a scribe, a mapmaker and an author.

---

He has amassed a small fortune,  
but he wants more. He needs  
more.

---

He has amassed a small fortune, but he wants more. He needs more. To reclaim his honour. His pride. For now, he's stuck in a loop. Going to a small town, doing whatever he was there to do, moving on to the next place. He craves the fame and respect he knows he will never get. He ages. He watches with bitterness as others make ground-breaking discoveries and are immortalised forever. He watches from the sidelines of history. Endlessly working. Just another would-be. Just another drop in the glimmering ocean. Just another.



## Off the bus

---

Anonymous Y11

---

Off the bus.

Dragon breath plumes from our mouths, foggy warmth in the bitter morning. The only sound is the ticking hiss of the bus pulling away from the curb. I check my analogue, cherry red, vanilla cream watch. 6:15.

We have 4 minutes to get out to the beach front. Our eyes meet. He lets out a 'aw shit,' under his breath, punctuated by a puff of steam.

And we run.

We go sprinting, laughing, whooping through the sleepy dawning of the day. Down the streets, past sparsely scattered silver cars without a person to

be seen. We run out to the fingertips of the city to the delicate tranquil setting of an untouched beach front.

We come to a wheezing stop in front of the abandoned garage. Breathlessly we climb the loose guttering pipe, and we sprawl over the small corrugated garage roof.

The sky is a pale blue canvas dotted with wisps of cloud, still enveloped in the last traces of dozing midnight.

And we sit, in silence, in awe, as the show begins.

Peachy tones begin to wash up from the silhouetted skyline, like an invisible water-colour brush staining the sky.

The ghosts of cream clouds become apparent.  
They are flower petals speckled through the  
breeze, touched blush pink.

Accents of violet begin to dance delicately,  
cabriole across the page.

A crescendo of colours.

And then the firefly of the mattina, Prima  
Ballerina, star of the exhibition.

She is a beautiful, radiant face concealed by the  
hands of the hill.

And she rises, streaming light billowing over the  
ocean. Cascading light dancing, glinting off the  
ripples.

We sit. And we stay. Watching clouds drift by,  
talking of happy nothings.

Then we begin to walk. We walk through the day,  
without the constraints of icy fatigue breathing  
down our necks, but with the constant warmth  
of laughter.

2:42pm.

We walk through the pulsing heart of city,  
through the gardens, up the sloping streets. We  
walk with purpose of our place, the look out.

Shrouded in shadowy trees we walk the mountain  
bike trail, out and into our opening in the forest.  
Our place.

Again, I look to my watch.

8:24pm.

We collapse to the plush pillow of green grass, as  
we look up to the encore.

And she sets.

Colours trickle down the sky, violent intense  
magenta. Flourishes of plum bloom from the  
veins of rose pink. Then bursts of violet, citrus,  
raspberry, tangerine all swirl through each other,  
a cocktail of fruity punch.

Dandelion yellow licks sketch over her portrait, a  
halo of glowing shadow.

Then she drops, a dove struck by the night,  
falling from flight. A beautiful dance turned to  
the slow death scene of sunlight.

Draining colours from the sky, reversing all the  
hard work of the day.

The blanket of night shrouding her away as she  
drifts off.

To be sealed away in midnight slumber, until the  
morning again.



Ilyasa Rahmaat Y9

## The shift from the vibration of the bus floor...

Emily Butler Y11

---

The shift from the vibration of the bus floor to the firm gravel road makes him shiver. Focusing to the light change his eyes are greeted by dry grass and rolling hills. It looks all too familiar for a place he's never visited.

The bus rumbles past behind him, unaware of the strange sensation in his chest. A bird making a nest between his lungs. Refusing to leave since he abruptly decided to cross-country and head to a place he had only heard of, a childhood story. His eyes skip over the landscape looking for some kind of sign. A sign that he is stupid that this is a bad idea that he should just turn tail and run back home.

He finds nothing but a weather-worn signpost pointing him down a long, steep, dirt driveway. Taahuhu Marae, it should have read had the 'T' not peeled off. 'Aahuhu' like a deep belly laugh. Even the sign is laughing at him; the bird nestles deeper in his chest. With the hope that moving would convince the pesky little creature to leave he strides across the street and starts down the driveway. Careful to not step on the dew-damp patches of grass.

Arriving at the bottom he can just see the wharenuī through the line of trees. The sight of the carved wood causes something to shift inside him, something that makes moving impossible.

So he stops and stands, planted to the spot, his past in front of him and his reality behind tickling his neck.

It calls him back to his cruddy apartment and the Chiefs Vs Blues and the case of cold ones in his lukewarm fridge.

---

So he stops and stands, planted to the spot, his past in front of him and his reality behind tickling his neck.

---

Turning around would be easy, turning around would be safe, turning around would right things, put his past back behind him and shove his reality in his face... He should turn around.

He doesn't.

He looks but doesn't touch, the flagpole, the messy pile of shoes, the tekoteko glaring down. He smells but doesn't move, the cut grass, the old wood, the frying bread. He hears but doesn't speak, the laughing, the singing, the language he lost.

He can't touch or move or speak, he doesn't know how.

So he stands.

Wooden, like carvings in a wall.

He stands.

With a feeling he can't place.

He stands.

Without warning, the bird erupts out of his chest and in the only Maori he knows he calls.

"Tihei Mauriora!"

## disconnected

---

Rhea Denee Y11

---

a baby cries while  
a mother desperately  
searches for his bottle  
somewhere in her  
overflowing purse.

a car creates a  
chain of honking so  
loud it reaches the  
far ends of the country.  
people rush past,  
muttering apologies when  
they bump into one another,  
not caring that they're  
losing their finite supply of  
sorries.

students cheer on the  
school basketball team.  
none of them care.  
they're just there for the  
popularity and the  
smell of sweat.

music streams from  
every store radio.  
no song is the same when you  
walk by and mixed with the  
rush of wind through your hair,  
the chaos hurts.

plates clang and conversations  
never seem to end  
even when the entire restaurant's  
mouths are stuffed full of food.  
it all feels so far away and besides,  
you aren't hungry.  
you're never hungry.

on the drive home you  
stop at a red light and  
you see a young woman  
asleep on the bus stop bench,  
hair matted and clothes torn,  
and a wave of  
nostalgia hits you;  
that could've been you.  
the amount of times this thought has  
invaded your mind is  
far too many to count on  
two hands.

does she know how lucky she is?  
does she know how unlucky she is  
at the same time?  
does she know?  
does she know?  
does she know that you are watching her chest heave up and down with every breath?

the neon city lights shine on  
her and your  
throat catches.

this is not the place that  
dead kids belong.  
in the streets of the home that  
ruined them,  
with full stomachs,  
gazing at the life of another.  
dead kids belong in the past,  
but you weren't able to stay there,  
no, you had to move on,  
hitch a ride to the next town of  
maturity,  
and you hardly notice your chest aching when  
the light turns green  
because  
the kid inside you wants to  
curl up next to her and  
steal what little warmth she has  
because it will be  
less than she deserves to be given,  
more than you deserve to be given,  
but that kid is  
dead and

cold

cold

cold.

*9.33*

## Final reveal rewritten (*Twelfth Night*)

---

Daniel Dar Y9

---

Characters:

Olivia 

Cesario/Viola  ♀ □

Sebastian  ♂ □

Duke Orsino   □

The Japanese Apprentice Butler (the Chosen One) appears.

A Demon Possesses Malvolio and tries to marry Olivia by force by

Attempting to kill Sebastian or Cesario/Viola

Duke Orsino's troops tries to stop him, but the demon is too strong.

The Chosen One Steps in

The Chosen One and the demon fight for the last time.

Storyboard/Script

[After Viola and Sebastian reunite and Duke Orsino proposes to Viola]

**Hebrew Apprentice Butler:** My Lady, sorry to bother you, but I think I see Malvolio in the dungeon acting crazier than before.

**Olivia:** What?! Don't just stand there, let him out.

[Unknown, scary noise coming from the dungeon.]

**Cesario/Viola:** What was that?

**The fool:** That's no man nor woman

**Olivia:** Oh for heaven sake, get rid whatever that's over there that is making that horrific, demonic noise.

**Sebastian:** What did you just say?

**Duke Orsino:** Something is not right, guards, protect the lady and the rest.

**Hebrew Apprentice Butler:** That was Malvolio.

[Malvolio somehow escapes]

**Malvolio:** You, you've made me like this! Do you have any idea on how I've been through?! Ever since I've been assigned to be your servant, I've been always been faithful servant.

Every day I kept this place as luxurious as possible, I follow everything you would say to me and this is the thanks I get?! Give me a letter about you in love with me, have me wear yellow stockings and have my legs criss-crossed and then throw me into a dark room?!

[Sir Toby and Sir Antonio snicker]

**Malvolio** [Voice Changes]: No! I won't accept this, this trickery, this madness, this humiliation!

**Olivia:** Oh Malvolio, I do feel bad for you, but this isn't my writing its Maria's. But I must admit that it's exactly how I speak.

[Possessed Malvolio chokes Olivia]

**Possessed Malvolio:** Liar! You have no idea on how humiliated I am. [Burns Letter with his fingers]

**Olivia:** This isn't the Malvolio that I know.

**Cesario/Viola:** Whoever you are, you're not Malvolio!

**Sebastian:** Let go of my wife you demon!

[Possessed Malvolio chokes Olivia harder]

**Duke Orsino:** Seize the wicked creature

[Malvolio Lets go of Olivia and attacks Duke Orsino and his guards with flames from his hand]

[Sebastian and Cesario/Viola grabs sword and tries to stop the demon, but places a burning pentagram around him and Olivia]

**Possessed Malvolio/demon:** Fools! You think that you can defeat me?!

**Olivia:** I promise you Malvolio, I wouldn't do to people innocent like you. I'm not lying

**Possessed Malvolio/demon:** If you really are not lying, then you must marry me if you and everyone else want to live

**Sebastian:** What?! Olivia, don't listen to...

**Possessed Malvolio/demon:** Or I'm going to kill you and everyone.

[The Hebrew Apprentice Butler steps in]

**Hebrew Apprentice Butler:** That won't be necessary.

**Duke Orsino:** What are you doing?! You have no idea how strong he is.

**Olivia:** Are you insane?! You're just an apprentice butler! You can't fight him alone. I'm responsible for all of your lives, I must marry him

**Hebrew Apprentice Butler:** I have no idea how strong he is. But if we want to rescue Olivia, then we must not doubt ourselves.

[Hebrew Apprentice Butler reveals himself as the chosen one, leaving everyone shocked, including the demon]

**The Chosen One:** Don't be amazed to see my return, it has been my duty to track this demon down and stop him.

[The Chosen One speaks in Hebrew Language]

**The Chosen One:**

ולתמיד אחת אותך אעצור אני, באת שממנו למקום תחזור אתה, שד לך אשר!

(As for you demon, you shall go back to where you came from, I will stop you once and for all!)

[The Chosen One forms a sword of light on his right hand]

**The Demon:** You may have returned, but you'll be the one who's going to die!

[Demon forms a scythe of darkness on his right hand the battle starts]

“-To be Continued”



## Australian rewrite of the final reveal scene in *Twelfth Night*

---

Callan Shanks Y9

---

\*Uncle Tobo stumbles onto stage with a small cut on his forehead\*

**Olivia:** "Oi someone shanked 'em up real good! Slave, help him."

**Duke Orsino:** "No worries mate, I'll 'elp ya." \*Orsino runs to nurse Tobo's wounds, but sees the blood and starts vomiting\*

**Uncle Tobo:** \*slaps Orsino away.\* "I'm fecking dying here, and I don't need that damned dingo infecting me!"

\***Sebastian** walks on stage brandishing a boomerang\* "Aye sorry luv I was forced to do harm to ya drunken uncle as he wanted a good old Aussie duel. But now that that's over, wanna go get married?"

\*Duke Orsino looks disgusted as vomit drips from his mouth\*

**Olivia:** "Yeah bud, my Pap's a priest and we can do it right now!"

\*An old man walks on stage dressed as a priest with a didgeridoo on his back\*

**The priest:** "So you guys wanna get married, huh?"

**Olivia:** "Yeah mate!"

**Sebastian:** "Uhh - okay?"

\*The priest pulls the didgeridoo off his back and starts playing it\*

**The priest:** (shouting) "You are now married!"

\*Olivia goes on her tippy toes to kiss Sebastian, but sees Cesario standing behind him\*

**Olivia:** "Oi Cesario, there's a bloke who looks just like you behind us"

\*Sebastian spins around and sees Viola\*

**Sebastian:** "Sis?"

**Olivia:** "What!?!?"

**Sebastian:** "Could it be?"

**Viola:** "Sebastian!?"

\*Viola tears off her fair dinkum crocodile hat and hugs Sebastian\*

\*Everyone else is visibly confused\*

**Viola:** "Ya bugger! I thought you died in the kangaroo attack!"

\*Before Sebastian can respond, Viola stops hugging him and runs over to Duke Orsino\*

**Viola:** "Oi, ya wanna get wedded, 'coz people do that in plays?"

**Duke Orsino:** "Yeah"

\*They run to the priest (who's looking red because he never stopped playing the didgeridoo)\*

**Viola:** "Can you marry us mate?"

**Priest:** "Yeah mate!"

**Viola:** "Rad."

\*The priest reaches into his bag and brings out a BBQ, some shrimp and a 6-pack of beer\*

\*Curtains close as all the characters kick back in lawn chairs, throw some shrimp on the barbie, drink beer and do other stereotypical Aussie things\*



## Modern rewrite of the final reveal scene in *Twelfth Night*

---

Izzie Kemp Y9

---

Olivia - Olivia

Maria - Maria

Violet - Viola/Cesario

Ollie - Duke Orsino

Sebastian - Sebastian

Malvin - Malvolio

Scene I

**Voiceover:** Ladies and gentleman, boys and girls, today you are going to experience the interesting concept of 10 year olds dating.

**Olivia** (whispers): Maria! Is Ollie looking at me?

**Maria** (peeks around book): Oh my god - I swear he was but he looked away as soon as I looked at him - wait, I thought you didn't like him?

**Olivia:** Of course I don't like him! I just like to be liked. And I really want a boyfriend.

**Maria:** Me too -

**Olivia:** Yeah, but not before me. I'm the most popular year 6 girl and I need to have the first boyfriend.

**Maria:** Do you like anyone?

**Olivia:** I like loads of people. But I like-like this one guy in year 8.

**Maria:** Like-like? What's his name?

**Olivia:** I'm not sure, but he sat up the front at assembly on Monday!

**Maria:** Is he cute?

**Olivia:** Of course!

**Maria:** You should talk to him!

**Olivia:** Are you crazy? No - you should talk to him for me and ask him if he likes me.

**Maria:** He might ask you to the disco!

**Olivia:** Oh my god! Oh my god - imagine if he asked me to the disco!

The two girls are approached by a young looking year 6 boy.

**Malvin** (blurts): Olliewantstoknowwhoyoulike -like.

**Olivia:** I'm not telling you who I like-like Malvin!

Malvin leaves

Camera cuts to Malvin and Ollie

**Malvin:** She said she won't tell me who she like-likes.

**Ollie:** That means she like-likes someone! And probably me! Go tell her that I dare her to tell me who she like-likes.

Camera cuts to Olivia and Maria. Malvin approaches.

**Malvin** (blurts): Olliedaresyoutotellhimwhoyoulike-like.

**Olivia** (giggling): I'm not going to tell Ollie who I like-like! It's a secret.

Malvin leaves

**Olivia:** Anyway, Maria-

Malvin returns

**Malvin:** Do you like-like Ollie?

**Olivia:** No. I like-like someone else.

Malvin leaves

**Maria:** What were you saying?

**Olivia:** Well-

Malvin returns

**Malvin:** Are you sure?

**Voiceover:** Pestering. An annoying but crucial aspect to the dating life of 10 year olds. How will Olivia deal with this inconvenience?

**Olivia** (shouts): MISS!!!!!!! Malvin and Ollie are ANNOYING ME!!!!

**Teacher** (without looking up): Malvin and Ollie, keep your hands to yourself.

**Ollie** (from across the room): I'M SITTING ACROSS THE ROOM!!!! I NEVER TOUCHED HER!!!!

Ollie starts crying and runs out of the room. Malvin follows.

End Scene

Scene II

Violet is sitting by herself, eating a sandwich. Maria runs up to her.

**Maria:** Do you like-like anyone?

**Violet:** Sorry?

**Maria:** Do you like-like anyone? I'm asking for my friend.

**Violet:** Aren't you like a year 6?

**Maria:** Duh, of course I'm a year 6.

**Violet** (in a high pitched voice): It's none of your business! Maybe!

**Voiceover:** Violet, in fact, had a crush on one of the teachers - but she wasn't going to let Maria know this.

**Maria** (singing): You have a cru-ush! You have a cru-ush!

Maria skips back to Olivia

Camera cuts to Maria and Olivia

**Maria:** HE'S IN LOVE WITH YOU!

**Olivia:** ohmygod! I hope he asks me to the disco!

**Maria:** He so will. You've basically got a boyfriend.

**Olivia:** Maybe my mum will take us to the movies for a date.

**Maria:** No way- ohmygod you're so lucky!

**Olivia:** I can't wait!

**Voiceover:** The two girls spent the rest of the lunch time planning Olivia and Violet's wedding. Awkward, seeing as Violet had spent the lunch fantasising over the teacher she was head over heels for.

Scene III

Violet sits at the kitchen bench, meticulously doing some maths homework. Her mum, Elizabeth, is slaving over dinner at the bench when suddenly the door slams open very dramatically.

**Sebastian:** MUM!!!! VIOLET!!!! I'm home!

**Elizabeth:** Hello darling, how was soccer?

**Sebastian:** Soccer was cool. I got a goal. But I want to go to a new school.

**Elizabeth:** Sorry?

**Sebastian:** I got a goal!

**Violet:** No, you dumb spoon. What do you mean? You want to go to a new school?

**Sebastian:** I hate my school.

**Violet:** Well you can't come to mine.

**Elizabeth:** Violet, you're only there for a couple more months before high school. I think you can handle your brother.

**Violet:** Fine.

**Voiceover:** Unbeknownst to them, their very similar looks would stir up some drama.

Scene IV

**Teacher:** Ok class, this is our new student Sebastian. Please make him feel very welcome.

**Maria:** Where's Olivia?

**Teacher:** She's at a dentist's appointment. She will return for lunch.

Time skip to lunch. Sebastian and Ollie playing chess alone in the classroom. Olivia enters.

**Ollie:** Olivia! This is Sebastian!

**Olivia:** I knew that.

**Voiceover:** She did not know that. She thought she was looking at the year 8 she was in love with, and she was pretending that she knew his name.

**Sebastian** (smiling): Hi Olivia!

**Olivia** (sits down beside him): Hello Sebastian. Did you know there's a year 5 and 6 disco next week?

**Ollie:** Yeah, Olivia I was going to-

**Olivia:** Shut up Ollie! Anyway were you going to ask me, Sebastian?

**Ollie:** What?!

**Sebastian:** Oh- ok.

Music awkwardly cuts in. Very romantic and dramatic song- Love Story by Taylor Swift. As Sebastian and Olivia look into each other's eyes, you hear Taylor's bridge. The movie is in slow motion as the music builds. Sebastian and Olivia's hands connect as the build-up turns into a key change and the final chorus plays.

They are holding hands, smiling. Everything is glowing.

The music cuts out awkwardly and sadly as Sebastian speaks.

**Sebastian:** I need to go to the bathroom.

Sebastian leaves. Moments later, Violet enters.

**Violet:** I'm looking for my-

Olivia, mixing up Violet and Sebastian jumps up and runs to Violet. She takes her hand.

**Violet:** Woah. Excuse me?

**Olivia:** But- we were just-

**Violet:** What's your name? Why are you holding my hand?

**Olivia:** But Sebastian? You just asked me to the disco-

Olivia starts crying. Sebastian enters.

**Sebastian:** VIOLET WHY DID YOU MAKE MY GIRLFRIEND CRY?

**Olivia** (stops crying): Huh? What?

**Violet:** You thought I was Sebastian?

Ollie is laughing so hard he starts crying.

**Sebastian:** Of course she didn't! You're a girl.

Movie freezes.

**Voiceover:** At this point in time everything clicks in place for Olivia. She realises she's had a crush on a year 8 girl. That Sebastian is not that same year 8 girl. And she makes the executive decision to not let Ollie, Violet or Sebastian know about her mistake.

Movie plays.

**Olivia:** Haha! Did you like my joke? Just pretended to mix you guys up!

**Ollie:** Wait! Who am I going to go to the disco with?

Tears well up in his eyes.

**Sebastian** (triumphantly): My sister! Violet- date Ollie.

**Violet:** What?

**Voiceover:** In just a split second, Violet decided she was going to give up on her dream of dating her teacher, and at least dating Ollie would make her some friends. After all, Ollie had a few.

**Violet:** Okay.

**Ollie** (abruptly stops crying.): Yay!

The screen fades to black. When it comes into colour, the best song in the world begins playing- which is, of course, Africa by Toto. We are at the school disco and watching our two couples dancing the traditional middle school dance- the girl with her hands on the boy's shoulders, the boy's on the girl's waist while they awkwardly sway side to side. The credits play, names of actors popping up as we relish in the perfect ending to our story.

## 3% story: The shooting scene

Francesco Martire Y10

---

The sole expression on my face has showed the commander that I'm different. By the time I've even processed this, I'm already being dragged, people watching carelessly at my screams as I get beaten and thrown into this dark, putrid van, with barely any oxygen to breathe. 'This is what it's like', I think to myself. 'To be helpless and hurt, and for people to watch without a flinch'. What hurts the most is knowing that those actions reflect upon me. For years the teachers showed me videos of the injections, feeding us propaganda, telling us that those people are lethal. And all I did was sit and watch, without the slightest concern. It's over.

Inside the van I find around two dozen people. There are a couple that stand out. A pregnant woman with her child who screams "They got him. They injected my husband". I can only imagine seeing your loved ones transform into the monstrosities that are caused by the DTRS. A middle aged man sits in the corner of the truck, angry and serious, obviously contemplating everything. 'How did he hide being one of us all these years?

---

"They got him. They injected my husband"

---

And the same applies for her, how did they do it? I think to myself. They could have helped so many. Then again they were still caught. A girl, about my age, sits at the other side of the van, by the only tiny window present. Surprisingly, she doesn't seem to care. Without warning, as if she read my mind, she says: 'I've had a good life. But it's still disgusting that they do this to us. They can't punish just us because we're different'. The van has now started moving. That's when all the panic begins. Though the people knew they were going to die, they obviously imagined some kind of hope, planning ways to get out, or even still

processing all of it. Now it has sunk in. We'll all be dead in a couple of hours.

The journey is supposed to take 12 hours, going to one of the most isolated places in the country for our massacre. After about 6 hours, I notice the terrain start to transform. I read about this in our geography books, but never experienced it. Here in the Republic of the DTRS we're not allowed to leave our assigned city. It's just another subtle reminder that they're the ones in power, and that we can't do anything about it. I start sensing something odd, dangerously odd. The van is taking an odd path, taking many turns and swerving to the wrong ways. 'The road is supposed to be straight, I read about it', I think to myself. If they've been teaching me the right things, then the path is wrong. Something is wrong. The van stops. I instinctively walk to the back of the packed van and sit down. I don't know why, but nobody seems to notice that something is odd except for myself and the girl. I'm about to ask her if she knows anything when the door opens and the guns begin to fire.

Gunshots. Screams. More Gunshots. Silence.

I throw myself to the ground and start playing dead. An excruciating pain is going through my left shoulder. I'm injured. From the corner of my eye I see the officers leave and make their way towards another truck, start shooting, then get on another and leave. As I get up, I feel dizzy. I see four more people get up, crying, but not too loud, fearing being caught. The sole survivors are myself, the daughter whose mother has passed, the girl, the middle-aged man and myself. I want to cry. I wish this would have never happened. But I remind myself that I would want to be strong, for my sister who was taken away when she was 16 just like I am being taken away now.

That's when it hits me. We're fugitives now. We have to go before they come to collect the bodies. We could make a difference, show them that they don't own us.

“We have to go now, I don’t know where but we have to go”, I say.

“I know a good place, the rebels are hiding there, my name’s Madison”, she says.

“Where?” I answer doubtfully.

Without hesitation she walks to the centre of the room, facing all of us.

“To the underground.”



JJ Elwood Y9



## In a world of black and white

Charity Ho Y10

**T**hey didn’t like how I looked. They didn’t like how my hair showed the colours of the sun. Didn’t like the way my eyes were the colour of the oceans. I had never seen the sun or the oceans before, of course, but I liked to think what they may have looked like.

They marked me wrong, They were going to dispose of me. But then, They thought of another way. They pulled out all of my yellow hair, and since, it has only grown out black. They lasered my eyes. Then, They told me I looked beautiful. And I thought I did. Like everyone else.

I was given to Jacques. He was to take care of me. And he did, I was healthy. Happy. I wore black pants, a white top, and grey jacket. I was proud of the shades I wore. Like everyone else.

I don’t remember whether I was ever told, but I’d always just... known. The Rule.

‘Any form of colour is forbidden.’

I never understood what colour was. I remember seeing the Guards pull out a patch of grass, when I was very young, that had messily grown out through a crack in the floors. They didn’t like grass. They said it was colour. Jacques had told me that his eyes were once the colour of grass.

Of course, I had long forgotten what grass looked like.

They told me if I broke the Rule, I would be punished. So I followed the Rule. Like everyone else.

Then, They said it was time for me to decide what I wanted to do. I thought time had caught up to me too fast. I wasn't ready to determine my future. But then I found out. And because I found out, I wanted to spend my future saving everyone else.

Everyone else. That's how we lived. Whatever we did, always cautiously looking over our shoulders to make sure everyone else was doing what we were doing too, because that meant we were doing it right. That was how They wanted us to live.

And now, everyone else was asleep. I should've been asleep too, it was past curfew, I could've - but Jacques was missing.

Jacques would tell me stories, if he was in a good mood. Stories of his childhood, the days of better, he'd say. Often, he would talk about his 'father.' I didn't know what that was. But he'd talk about it so much it almost drove me crazy, and I just about imagined him as mine.

---

I followed the Rule. Like  
everyone else.

---

It was foolish of me, of course. I didn't have a father. We were made in a lab. I didn't know what that meant, but that's what They taught us so that's all we knew.

Other times, he'd talk of the previous world. "I remember when the world was a green place," he'd say, "green and blue. Like your eyes. Blue like you've never seen."

"That's stupid". I would tell him. "Of course I've never seen blue before, it could just as well have never existed". Jacques always talked like such an old man, like he knew of everything under the

sun. He didn't, and his memory didn't help it; he always told the same stories, though I've grown to appreciate them.

We had to be careful of course, if They caught him talking about the world before ours, death would be a merciful act.

I spared another glance at his empty bed. I would be a fool to sleep tonight.

Area 2 was quiet, too quiet. The walls were lit a blinding white and stairs lined the perimeter. It smelt clean, so clean that it had become dreadful to breathe.

Echoes of the Guard's footsteps urged me to hide. I crept to a shadowed area, by the Gates. We were forbidden to pass through the Gates. They said it was dangerous out there.

Dangerous was a strange word. It called for halt, but at the same time brought curiosity. How could you know something was dangerous without trying it for yourself? All you could do was trust someone for their word, and I didn't trust Them even near enough.

A loud noise erupted from behind me, I jumped. The Gate was opening, and the Guards, they were marching towards me. Had I been found?

They never found me, the other kids. When we were young, we would play hide-and-seek. I liked to hide, seeking was too easy as in the cool light shadows were easily seen. I was good at hiding, the others soon got bored trying to find me. But then, They banned our games. They didn't like creativity. They said it encouraged rebellion.

I breathed. The Guards hadn't found me, they were just leaving through the Gates. They were permitted to, unlike us. One by one, they filed through the Gate, chipping at each other's heels.

Half running, half crawling, I followed the Guards. Out of Area 2.

How insane, I was insane, I was completely insane. But even without thinking, I knew that out here was the only place Jacques could be.

And Jacques, he was more important to me than the world.

Light from Area 2 faded behind me, the Gate shutting it firmly away. It was dark now, but my eyes soon adjusted. I wanted to laugh. How could escape be so easy?

I had never left the Area before, it was out of the question. But walking out, it felt good. And strangely, nostalgic, like I belonged out here rather than in my own home.

Home. Home was Area 2. It had always been my life and though the rules were harsh, it was still home. I never questioned it. I was thankful. We had food, we had beds. We had a home. As long as we followed the rules, life was good to us. We had all we needed and that was enough for me.

Until now. It seemed like something had shifted, and all of a sudden I longed to know what the 'dangerous' that They spoke of so often felt like.

At first, it didn't feel dangerous, but soon, the mossy darkness drugged my senses. I felt weary, faint. Angry. But it didn't matter what I felt. I had to keep going.

So I did.

And that's how I found Jacques. Back leaning against the bars of a murky cell.

He turned as I called his name.

And I saw his eyes.

His eyes, they were... green?

Blades of grass being ripped of their roots. So many years ago. The green. All coming back to me. It was like the memory had rooted itself in my mind, knowing one day it would be of use.

It was truly green. And it was so, so green that it hurt.

How could it possibly be that there are other colours too? Green was already enough to amaze me for my whole life. Some say seeing is believing, but even seeing couldn't convince my mind to accept that there was more in the world than just black and white.

---

His eyes, they were... green?

---

Jacques smiled. He didn't look surprised to see me, perhaps he knew that I would find him.

"They found out what I've been telling you." He said "I will die. But you must save the others. All that I told you, it was real, and you know now. That is what the world should be like. Whatever it takes, please escape this place."

I couldn't look away from his eyes. And looking at them, for the first time in my life, I felt complete. If a dangerous life would give me a life with colour, I would happily live as many dangerous lives as there were colours.

Because I wasn't beautiful. Nothing was. Not without colour.



## Xenoharmony

---

Jamie Gordon Y11

---

He awoke to the sound of his biomechanical harness being removed by the ants, the machine shell that kept him sleeping and prevented him from starving during the night taken away, layer by layer. With his limbs almost free, he took a shuddering step. His claws, now free, crashed to the concrete

below him, sending the hordes of green and blue ants below him scurrying. Another step, the ground quaking before him. Half the ants moved in formation with him now, the unneeded ones moving back, for their duty was done. He was awake.

A shake to his left. His sister – their only relation being that they hatched on the same day – moved

with him, the ants already moving on, having awoken more. Another sister awoke to his right, the exhale of her breath almost blowing the ants away. He looked forwards, if it could be called looking, towards the purple ahead, and moved again. He took a step outside the ants' sprawling colony and onto the grass. It was flattened beneath his legs, like most things were. He took a deep breath, and roared, as if to challenge the sun.

**T**he faint wisps of miasma that still clung on to him, remnants of the primordial ooze that life crawled from, faded away as the scorch marks on his body started to disappear, the black ash fading into the beige of his skeleton. Red blood – not his – dripped from the ends of his claws onto the floor below, mixing with his sister's green. New scars adorned her body, visible in the moonlight, although they wouldn't last. Behind him, the fires still raged, consuming the crushed remains of The Enemy's LEV tanks - their dead creations of metal and

flame, mangled and torn. Even The Enemy's jets were destroyed – swatted like flies, before they could attack.

As he took a step back into the colony of the ants, he watched them remove their green and blue carapaces and return to their glistening spires of metal and glass created by them, just like his kind. The Enemy's burning rage had not compared to his and his sisters' overwhelming hunger, their need to feed. The Enemy was dead, taken from their homes and crushed – or eaten. Any of The Enemy that remained were burned, killed in the razing of the city. His creators lived on, his duty was done. And as the harness was slipped back on, a single thought crawled to the front of his mind.

Another city had fallen.

Note: This story was inspired by the Xeno Titans from the game *Civilisation: Beyond Earth*.



## Morning and evening

---

Oliver Berry Y11

---

**M**y eyes peeled open to catch the soulless beams of light piercing the windows. The whistling birds outside on the old oak tree sounded like recordings. I pulled my tired bones out of my bed and fell into the kitchen. A distant meow greeted me followed by the sound of four paws under a small body leaping onto the floor. My one and only companion brushed past my leg and purred whilst I was making tea with the last of the rations. My other less furry companions departed me in the most abrupt of fashions. I still wonder what gave me an immunity and not her. Shivers crawled up my spine and my eyes became glassy. I promised not to think of them anymore, of her. My painful thoughts were soon interrupted by my vocal belly which was drawing me closer to

the rations. I swung open the cupboard door to find my possible stomach contents for the day whilst tending to a late tear with my sleeve. A large selection of gourmet options awaited me. An egg of an unknown age, 19 assorted pieces of pasta, some stale crackers, a rusty tin of bully beef and finally a can of condensed milk I was saving for my birthday. It was time I went out again.

I clambered into the driver's seat of our rusty blue panel van and closely reviewed my list. Squiggly lines scribbled down on a scrap of paper depicted the spoils I was to retrieve. I crammed the list into the glove box after my belly memorised half of it and planned my route. As I turned the key and rammed the old van into gear I felt a sense of dismay that no one would miss me if I went for good. However, it was relaxing

knowing no one would miss me if I went for good.

**L**ots of the other immune looters have cats I thought to myself as I peered at the 12 tins of cat food out of the 30 I had scribbled on the list. I was driving toward the flat orange sunset in the direction of our place. Dried blood flaked off my hands whenever I adjusted the steering wheel. The items on the list rolled around in the back of the van as I rounded the frequent corners on the neglected farm road. I took a glance at the list I had screwed up and left on the dashboard and shook my head.

Only 100 out of the 300 tins of baked beans, only 5 of the 10 bags of rice, only a half barrel of fuel

out of the three I saw last year at the petrol station. The lonesome pickaxe sat silently in the footwell next to me. The pickaxe was supposed to be accompanied by a spade, jackhammer, rope, and explosives I had for the final plan. 7 out of 10 shotgun shells on the list sat in my pocket. I left with 10. The other immune looters were getting more desperate, hungrier.

I did fulfil one thing on the list. An engagement ring. The sparkle of the diamond was dimmed with blood on my left hand's fourth finger. It was on the list since she was alive. I could only give it to a white cross in the yard now.



## The lake

---

Dominic Rajan Y11

---

**P**ace. Not a ripple in the lake. A mirror perfected by tranquillity as it reflected what Carlos had long desired. He had never felt this before. The muscles in his cheeks ached as they stretched into an unfamiliar expression. A smile. Chills filled his nostrils then lungs in a way that would normally be unpleasant but now, right now, was refreshing. Every breath was a relief from regret.

Snow began to fall, completing the tall pines with a crown of white. Beneath one of these trees was in Carlos's eyes, an angel. Her halo was her dark hair, and her harp was her harmonic smile. The glow she gave off brought warmth in this cool oasis. Carlos's light, Carlos's sunshine, Carlos's daughter. They embraced, sharing in each other's love. With this gesture, it bought a new kind of peace, Closure. Without saying a word, tears began to stream down their faces. Each drop carried such weight, as they fell, it released burdens off their hearts. Their gaze locked, staring into their reflections, glorified amidst the life of their irises.

---

Every breath was a relief from  
regret.

---

The angel suddenly let go of Carlos. Let go of his presence. She wasn't staring at him anymore but through him. Carlos's smile was emptied of meaning. He anxiously rubbed his head, trying to speak with no words coming out. The angel's hand grabbed a stone from the ground, and with all the strength she had left in her, flung it into the lake. It shattered along with all the peace. The air became heavy, and the snow turned into rain. Carlos's conscience melted by the weight of his shame and guilt, his inner groanings. The angel was shaking her head, shaking off every inkling of pride in her father. Each fragment, each regret, each disappointment that she shook off hit Carlos and struck him down until he was face down in what used to be glistening snow but was now mud. As the ripples of the shattered lake became closer to Carlos, all what he thought was right in him emptied and his vision became blurry, trying to shut off the memories of what he had done. The pine trees roots were being

ripped up and thrown down into the mud, diluted by the tears of the angel. And as the last shards hit Carlos, everything went black.

Carlos awoke. His eyelids peeled back, revealing grey walls, metal bars and creaky bed in which he lay. He felt pinned to the pillow unable to face reality as reality was facing him. Looking down at his bright orange clothes he began to familiarise himself with his surroundings. Carlos's gaze

settled between the metal bars. His now grey eyes were now dry of tears and life. Beside his bed was a mirror. He gazed at it with no emotion. He couldn't recognise himself. The tattoos had no meaning. The stubble was as grey as his conscience and his scalp as blank as his feelings. His gaze was stuck, staring at the shell of someone who once was but now isn't. Carlos was now only one thing. Empty.



## The subhuman element

---

Finley Biggs Y12

---

**D**r. Eric Lewis (PhD medicine, human biology, physics, computer science) made a terrible mistake.

He closed the door of his dingy apartment behind him and locked it. He didn't want anyone to interrupt him.

*Whatever Happened to Dr. Lewis?*

Doctor Lewis was praised by his peers upon the release of his "little project" as he called it, and when the public got word, it was a controversial topic, but an overall positive reception nonetheless. He published papers in the Journals Science, Nature, and any other journal he could get his hands on. He wrote books, he did interviews, the internet exploded (as it usually does). Dr. Lewis was world-famous.

*What is Dr. Lewis' "Little Project"?*

Doctor Lewis rifled through his arguably mediocre DVD collection and pulled out Jurassic Park. Not his favourite, but that didn't matter – he wouldn't be watching it.

*What was Lewis Thinking?*

The doctor hadn't actually revealed his creation yet – he was letting the anticipation grow, letting the public get excited to see this marvel of medical science, this wonder created not by god,

but by man. Plus, he needed some time to teach it the basics – reading, writing, etiquette, how to talk, et cetera. This was, after all, the first artificially created sentient lifeform. It needed to be presentable.

*Is it Cute? Happy? Does it Like Music?*

Lewis' TV – acting as the only source of light in his cramped, two-room apartment – highlighted all the imperfections on his signature lab coat, the blue light of Robert Muldoon's taser as he shoots a rogue Velociraptor only brought to attention the large and numerous stains on a coat that at one point had been so clean. The beautiful sunlight of Isla Nublar showed a yellowing fabric – once a crisp white.

*Opinion: Scientists Should Stop Doing God's Work*

Doctor Eric Lewis had tried his best to make "Al" (which he named by abbreviating artificial lifeform) as human-like as possible, so as to combat any negative reactions towards it. And hell, he thought Al scrubbed up pretty nicely in a tie. The public did not.

*"It was Satan Incarnate" Recounts Horrified Onlooker*

Upon live TV reveal of Al, the crowd went wild. The vast majority of the audience screamed and fled. Those with weaker stomachs vomited, and at least three people straight up fainted. They didn't like its skin, which they likened to that of

an Eel or a Hagfish. What did they expect? That was necessary to keep Al hydrated. They didn't like its legs, which they likened to that of a Goat, with thick muscles tensing and relaxing beneath the thin, mucousy skin. What did they expect? That was necessary to support Al's weight. They didn't like its feet either, which they likened to that of a Frog, but was necessary to keep Al upright. They didn't like its small, beady camera-eyes, or its six bony fingers on each hand, its hairless body, or its imposing seven-and-a-half-foot stature. But most of all, they hated its single red fabric necktie, put on after the fact.

#### *Has Science Gone Too Far?*

Eric walked over to his kitchen as Alen Grant started to say something to John Hammond over a Dinosaur-themed lunch. Doctor Lewis picked up the first sharp object he could find - a small kitchen knife with a black handle and three metal rivets holding it all together – and sat back down.

#### *Washington State Law Declares "Al" as Non-Human, and Thus Devoid of Human Rights*

Within a week, most of Doctor Eric Lewis' private and public backers pulled their funding and publicly condemned him, leaving him with massive loans to repay and a lower-than-dirt

public image. In a desperate attempt to fight back bankruptcy, Lewis was forced to sell his patent and blueprints to anyone who was buying, and in just over a year, there were hundreds of “Als” put into slave labour and freakshows, where visitors would pay a minimal fee to abuse these repulsive creatures as much as they could in their allotted time slot. These were creatures of universal and international hate. Even normally shameless rights activists stayed awkwardly silent on the matter, even when a group of drunk men broke into Eric's lab and beat the original Al's head in with a ball-peen hammer. Conscious. Thinking. Breathing. Al.

#### *Jurassic Park 50 Years on: A Review*

In a moment of weakness - or maybe a rare moment of strength - Dr. Eric Lewis (PhD medicine, human biology, physics, computer science) ran the kitchen knife down the length of his forearm just as Ian Malcolm concluded his speech on dinosaurs with “you were so preoccupied with whether or not you could, you didn't stop to think whether you should.”

The irony was not lost on Eric.

Not for long, anyway.



## My body was beginning to slump...

---

Tia Bhana Y11

---

**M**y body was beginning to slump under the weight of the jacket. It felt wrong and misplaced on my scrawny shoulders. Its leather exterior reflected a lie; the truth of its possession resided with someone wealthier.

My fingers twitched beside me, keeping time with my thunderous heartbeat. Left foot, right foot. I looked down at my scuffed boots. They echoed loudly in the alleyway, causing me to grimace. Clock check: 8 minutes. Around me the pastel

colours of the alley were bleeding into a corroded grey. I itched to glance behind me, to see if anyone had noticed me stealing the jacket... No. I needed to concentrate. There was nothing to see. A whimper escaped my tight throat. Left foot, right foot. Clock check: 6 minutes.

The narrowing alley created places for scavengers to hide during the dark hours. I was keeping close to the wall; the soft scrape of the jacket was barely audible on the brittle brick. Ahead, I squinted to see shadows conversing in a gap in the wall. Oh, no. Their sudden presence made me

double step and sent my bony figure sprawling to the cracked concrete. I winced from the shock, my eyes scrunched tight in terror as I cursed myself for my careless behaviour.

The sky was darkening with the stars slowly peeking out from a black canvas. I didn't have long. The shadows had emerged from the gloom and were striding towards my huddled form. I scrambled into a kneeling position and straightened my back, head held high. The shadows separated out into two men. Their stocky forms loomed like oaks and the alley shrunk as they dominated the space. My breathing became shallow. Despite my efforts, I was a wounded animal caught in a trap. The man closest to the wall squatted in front of me, cracking his kneecaps violently. The sound mirrored my fears of what was to come.

Silence roared in my ears. The knelt man extended a callused hand towards my shoulder. He lowered his head until it was inches from my ear; "you alright there, fella?". His gritty voice conveyed a hardness that contrasted with the question he'd asked. I dipped my chin and spread my hands on the freezing ground – making a

show of getting up with as much ease as I could muster. I desperately tried to think of a response that wouldn't convey the fear burning in my veins. These men had the power to cause me trouble and I didn't need any – especially with the seconds I had left. I mumbled something about clumsiness before climbing to my feet. One of the men grunted and they both stepped back as if satisfied with my feign of easeful movement.

I gave a slight nod in their direction and shuffled past. As I turned the corner I took a breath and regained my composure. Left foot, right foot. Clock check: 2 minutes. Panic exploded in my brain. Above, the stars were glaring down at me. The pawn shop would almost be closed. The knowledge of this drove my feet into a sprint. I desperately needed the exchanged time. The icy flame of sweat licked against my brow and soared over my neck. My breaths erupted in gasps. The seconds of my life were dripping down into a dark gutter. Phantom hands of those dead before me grappled at my legs, pulling me closer to the inevitable fate of Dayton: when dying turns to death.



## Middle hill

---

Maddie Bramley Y12

---

**A**s long summer day stretched to long summer night and our tiresome hours of walking came to a close, I thumped down onto the porch of Middle Hill Hut. This little orange hut had shone bright in my mind for a while; a beacon of comfort and nostalgia, and now, surrounded by tussock and Manuka I felt that same warmth of memory return.

My younger sister cracked open the door and we crept inside. The unmistakable smell of open fireplace hung heavy in the air, we opened the two small windows and began to breathe life back into the place. Outside, the rugged hills

stared ominously down on us, their rocky shoulders draped in deep green bush cloaks. The sun had fallen behind the hills now and the sharp scent of Manuka smoke stung the back of my throat, making my eyes water. Our young fire crackled tentatively as it grew, lighting up our faces with a flickering orange glow. The call of a lone morepork echoed through the trees outside, a haunting sound, filled with the weight of sorrow. My memory flashes and I see myself, six years ago, sitting right where I am now, a young girl of 10, eyes glowing in the reflection of the fire. My father sits beside me, the creases by his eyes less pronounced in the youthful light. Being here now without him feels strange. The place in

my heart where he still lives aches. Glancing to my right, I saw my sister, tears silently streamed down her face. I pulled her into a hug, my own eyes clouded with sadness.

Later I lay in bed and a gentle rain had begun to fall. I held my warm tea close to my chest. I thought of all the people that have retired to this bunk after a long day like I do now and all the decades that this hut, deep in the Kaweka Ranges, has provided refuge for hunters and trampers alike. Their laughter fills my ears as I imagine wizened hunters, clomping inside, swapping out their rifles for a cuppa and slumping down by the fire for another night of card games and passionately exaggerated anecdotes.

This place has played host to many a fond memory, the isolation and striking beauty of the surrounding hills, a perfect escape from the noisy, shiny, cramped city. Dad had spent a lot of

time here as a child, stalking deer, foraging for food and making shelters from fallen trees.

---

Being here now without him feels  
strange. The place in my heart  
where he still lives aches.

---

He would spend days lopping around the hills; every ridge explored, every deer trail memorised, returning without fail to this little hut every night. He used to say he could always rely on this place to make him feel at home. Just before he died, he asked us to spread his ashes here, among the hills and the tussocky flats.

I crawled deeper into my sleeping bag, until only my eyes were exposed. I felt my breath, warm and sweet, on my cheeks. The rain is hard now, persistent and strong, pulling me down to the depths of my mind as I drift slowly to sleep. A morepork call echoes through the trees, a haunting sound.



## Our grandad

---

Lulu Reidy-Stubbs Y12

---

At first glance, our Grandad may come across as the composed type. The kind of man who is quiet and collected. Old fashioned and proper, perhaps. The way in which his flat-cap stays perfectly perched on his head for hours on end, his platinum hair twirling itself into beautiful bundles around his ears so precisely. However, our Grandad, he's something else; something greater. To my family and I, he's the epitome of enthusiasm. With anything he does, he always keeps a skip in his step.

Our Grandad's memories have moulded him into becoming who he is today; an open and enthusiastic fellow. Mischievous comments flow out of his mouth like the wind blowing through the trees. His restless words like the weather and

us the vulnerable land beneath him. He likes to believe he's smooth and professional in his speech, no matter how dramatically he may splutter once he begins to laugh. His lips curl into a crescent moon, his eyes squeezing shut as his belly begins to rock viciously.

Days-Bay Pavilion, his favourite spot. His serenity. I can still picture it; as he'd take a mighty leap out of his ancient, rustic Toyota into a beautiful abyss of greenery surrounded by hyperactive children waiting impatiently for their food. Grandad would always chuckle at them. He connected with them; their energy and optimism. It's not hard to grasp the bittersweet reality that he wishes he was still a kid. Arguably, he still is. The undeniable gleam in his eyes and spring in his step as he inches closer and closer to the door of the pizza parlour was a sign of enthusiasm that

one could never question. This was his happy place. Here with his family, here with the food. To say that my Grandad had a sweet tooth would be an understatement. His appetite for anything sweet is impeccable. At the slightest mention of dessert, his eyes would gleam like a puppy. The shimmer and sparkle reflecting from the white plate of delicacy held firmly in his hands was non-existent compared to the gleam that shone in his eyes. His wide blue eyes glistened with every reflection of light that touched them. His lips stayed pursed tightly, sealed, the smallest slit bared purely for inhaling the tiniest vital gasps of air. To anyone else, it must've seemed like he had never eaten before in his life. The way his feet shuffled forward and backward in a rhythmic pace was undeniably representative of his anticipation and admiration for sweet treats.

---

It's not hard to grasp the  
bittersweet reality that he wishes  
he was still a kid. Arguably, he  
still is

---

His charming, pitch-perfect humming would echo soothingly around the room, the delicate rhythm of memories playing over in his restless mind. Perhaps the lingering taste of decadent chocolate on his lips reminds him of his glory days. The days when he was younger; where his peach tinted mornings faded into quiet, cosy nights. The days where the sky was always blue and the air was consistently fresh and crisp. The cooler evenings where he sat silently at a park, his warm, fragile hands lovingly wrapped around my

Grandmother's shoulders. Basking in their youth, breathing in the sweet aroma of her perfume with each breath they took. The scent of love perhaps; tranquillity

After a long day, Grandad always slumps himself lazily into his favourite corner chair. The same dark green sofa with the golden detailing plastered all over it that he's adored for decades. It was something; something picturesque of the 70's. The chair looks exhausted, its seams fraying and cushioning diminishing. With every seat Grandad takes, you can almost hear the chair squealing and gasping for air. "That chair is a fighter!" Grandad chuckles, "It has had some love." He could stay seated in that one chair for hours on end, undoubtedly plotting a maleficent plan inside his sharp little mind. My family and I all know we must never sit in Granddad's chair. If he were to catch us in the act, he would look at us sharply with that same cheeky gleam in his eye. His pupils dilating dramatically whilst his lips begin to curl into that grin we all know and love. His wrinkles would become more exaggerated, carving the map of his life all across his face.

---

"That chair is a fighter!"

---

Each smile shared a journey, each glance shared a thought. Although not exactly intimidating, he had an effect on us. Our Grandad is one of a kind, an unpredictable fellow. His age could not and would never stop him from being this way, acting his age was never an option. As far as we are concerned, Grandad is one of the kids. He always has been, and by god, he always will be.

## Rust bucket

---

Felix Helson Y12

---

The ember of the earthy white and orange chemical stick crackles back with every inhale. The inhale shortly pursued by a violent wheezy exhale and a foggy bundle of smoke. The man raises his baggy grease smeared jeans, exposing his grimy knee caps as he plonks down onto the car seat. He leans in to start the engine of the rust bucket for further diagnosis. The man's squelchy black combat boots slip and squeak as he fumbles for the pedals.

Stinging orange rust flakes off as the hood is flipped up. Hefty black smoke heaves out the side of the engine and lingers around in the garage, like a genie in a bottle. It's a worrying sight. Scrambled mess of munted metal, picked for parts and put in its place. "Don't look in too good shape", murmured the man. He holds his hip in place allowing him to straighten his back a little. He lets the hood squeak and cry as it crashes back down, settling into place.

---

"That old thing isn't worth the effort"

---

Another chesty, whistling cough climbs its way out of the man, smeared onto a napkin. This time however, splotches of red were wiped from his mouth. He grunts in dismissal and reaches for his whiskey. Sloshing sounds fill up the small shot glass and without hesitation he attempts to throw the lot down his throat. He wipes his mouth again but does not achieve much as half the shot

is absorbed into the scrangly mess of hair beneath his chin.

"That old thing isn't worth the effort." The manager had taken one step into the garage and came to the conclusion that; "not much can be done to save it, if it were looked after properly then maybe". And with that he left. These gravelly words shook and rattled through the man's brain. He whimpered as his shaky arm strained to snatch a spanner off a shelf. He then doubled over and steadily sat himself on the cold stone floor. He eyed up the underneath of the car looking to see if he could apply the spanner somewhere. Splotches of a black liquid were dripping from the underneath. He reached into his jeans to pull out a napkin and wipe the dripping liquid. The engine was still running, and a muffled popping and crackling noise wheezed out the car.

Grimy tracks were left along the hospital floor as the man slumped his way down the corridor, meeting his doctor for a check-up. His rough hand reached out and gently opened the door. Through the window he saw wind howling through bare trees, beat down with no leaves and below the trees the empty graffitied street, with trash lined up along the curb. "Take a seat, Mr. Williams," said the doctor in a stern tone. "The results have come back Mr. Williams. I'm sorry, its terminal". Without hesitation the man shifted in his seat, staggered up and stepped out of the office. His heart sunk, the doctor's gravelly words shook and rattled through the man's brain.

## I took a man's life...

Aidan G Y12

**D**ear Mum,  
I took a man's life for the first time today. We were rowing across the choppy waters less than 100 metres off the shore of Gallipoli when it broke out. Fires lit up the ridgeline as the thundering of guns began. We rowed in a frenzy as the hail of lead began raining down on the ocean. Nick, the boy who had never left my side since training commenced in Egypt, fell over with a gurgle, blood frothing out of the hole in his neck. I had no time to mourn as we dropped into the biting water, wading toward the narrow beach lit up by the pulsating lights of constant gunfire. Upon arrival on the beach, we had no time to set up the base camp, charging up the steep hills as more men fell to the rain of bullets. The next few hours were utter chaos, screams of the wounded rang out as we secured the beach at a great cost. Before the first rays of light hit the Turkish peninsula, we approached the first ridgeline. I saw a Turk above me, running to the safety of the rim. I raised my rifle and pulled down the cold metal trigger. A deafening crack rang out. The Turk collapsed, tumbling down the hillside. I approached the fallen man; he looked at me drenched in sweat and gasping for air as blood seeped into his lungs. The Turk inched towards his gun, fingers scrambling for a solid grip. I stabbed him Mum; I executed a wounded man. I signed up to defend against the Germans and here we are, invading a country and killing the men who are trying to protect their homeland. I would give anything to be at home, eating supper with everyone. I miss you all so much. I keep focusing on Anna's, Mary's and your faces and voices, to try to keep me sane, but the sounds of screaming are already beginning to drown out the memory of your voices. I know what you told me about being strong, but I despair that I am not as tough as you think I am. Please tell me what you and the girls are

up to, to give me the strength to carry on. I fear I'm going to die on this cursed peninsula,

I hope to hear from you,

Johnny.

**O**verwhelming fatigue has caught up to me again as I slept under the thundering storm of bullets. We still hold Quinn's post somehow, even after the hell storm we charged into after we landed on that blood-soaked beach. The network of trenches snakes outward within mere throwing distance of the Ottoman's. The flies swarm to our entrenchment attracted by the disgusting heat causing the stench of rotting corpses to become all-pervasive. Desperation has driven me into eating the hardtack, after driving the flies from its surface. My parched throat craves another drop of water. I almost wish I was one of the many unlucky sods with dysentery or a bullet, just for the chance of being rescued from the front lines and eating a decent meal and a glass to stave off my dehydration. The booming shock waves of shells exploding, and the ringing gunfire, snap me back to reality. I am never going to crawl out of these trenches into a boat sailing home. After the Turk's relentlessly throwing themselves against our trenches day after day, only to be cut down by the detached spray of gunfire, our commanders have had the brilliant idea of shoving us through the snaking, biting, barbed wire of no man's land and into the maw of the Ottomans. Under the cover of darkness, gunfire will light up the still night as my remaining friends and comrades fall to never be picked up again. I have seen too many good men pass over the past months, but I had always held hope that I would stand in New Zealand again, but now I know that ... my time is approaching.

To whoever finds this journal,

Find my family in Auckland and say goodbye from me,

Charles Anderson.

**H**ello my love,

It seems I will be returning to you shortly. A few days ago, we began the most significant push of this whole campaign. The Aucklanders moved to take Chunuk Bair in the mid-morning. They were mowed down by heavy machine-gun and rifle fire from the reinforced Turk positions; then, we were ordered to move forward to our certain deaths by the Brigadier-General. If it weren't for our Lieutenant Malone's insistence that we wait till the cover of darkness, then I would be lying in the bottom of a Turkish trench rather than an unspeakably comfortable bed. We ascended the steep slope of the Sari Bair range before the sun begun to rise over the peninsula. Most of the Turks had hightailed it in the night, probably from the haunting Māori Hakas from our boys in the battalion, so with little conflict, we finally captured the ridge. Chunuk Bair was a wasteland, covered in hard rocks, surrounded by steep slopes, and in clear line of fire from several Turk hills. Soon after we scraped shallow trenches into the hard ground, a fierce counterattack commenced. Using the precipitous bluffs, they could slither close to our lines, where they launched an unending wave of bloodshed. I sprayed lead out of my rifle until the wood of the stock burned my dishevelled skin. When the Turks reached us, a bloody mêlée broke out, I lashed out with my bayonet trying to fell the attackers; good men dropped like flies but for some reason, I remained standing. The air was soon filled with the metallic scent of blood. With backup slowly trickling up the hill, I was allowed brief respite. I watched as the sun rose up into the sky, rays of light reflecting off the alluring waters of the Dardanelles; it was the most beautiful sight I had seen in many a horrifying month. My eardrums felt like they had burst as an eruption of heat swallowed me. What followed next was the agonizing pain of shards of shrapnel piercing through my leg. The warmth subsided, and numbness took over. I could

faintly hear yelling in the distance as soldiers rushed in to drag my limp body away. The next few days were blurry; all I can remember is the doctors saying they had to saw off my leg, and that I was a very lucky man. Lucky. Apparently, it took a few days to get down to the beach and then many more on a hospital ship to Egypt. I am now wrapped up in a bed that feels like royalty compared to the cold rocky trenches my buddies are lying in; although I have not been told how the war efforts are going. Apparently, if I had been any closer to that shell, I would've lost a lot more than my leg. With Malone holding Chunuk Bair I hope the Anzacs were finally able to make some successful pushes and that this campaign will be over soon. Luckily for Johnny Turk, I'm not going back to Turkey. My ship should not be long now; I can't bear to spend any more days without you and to see our son for the first time, but I will be returning to Wellington soon,

With all my love,

James.

**T**uesday 21st December. We are finally returning home. The evacuation started less than a week ago on the 15th; I remember streams of melancholic but hopeful soldiers wordlessly trickling down the hills, making their way back to Anzac Cove. A cold wind whipped the frail bodies of the tired soldiers. By the fourth day the support troops, reserves, and most of the fighting units had escaped, leaving behind a web of bitter cold trenches and too many lifeless mounds to count. Everything felt so eerily empty; the last of the soldiers were quiet in agitated anticipation. The icy breeze brought the sounds of hushed conversations, and the distant sounds of the explosions of the self-firing guns triggering, over to my frostbitten ears. I recall the sound of my boots crunching against the frozen ground, the noise echoing down the barren trenches and gullies as for the first time since I had arrived on

that damned boat I was alone, only catching the occasional glimpse of other veterans. It felt unnerving, after months of sitting in close quarters with other bedraggled soldiers or skirmishing with the Ottomans face to face, attempting to get the first stab, I felt peace and quiet. Then my own thoughts and sorrows began to engulf my mind, flowing into the absence of mindless action. I heard the distant yelling of the Ottomans as I neared the cove, which in my harassed state scared me into an exhausted jog to the ship. Once both of my feet were on the deck

of that ship it felt like a huge weight had been lifted off my shoulders, though it is not completely gone. Even now I can still hear the sound of explosions, of the screaming of the wounded, and I grieve for all those we had to leave behind. I don't know how I will ever go back to the young man I was at the start of this year. At least I can try to get some rest knowing this will be my last entry about Gallipoli.

Signing off,

Edward Osborne



## The night was awash with grim promise...

---

Bianca Ellis Y12

---

**T**he night was awash with grim promise. Watery moonlight bathed the ground, providing a bleak source of light that seemed dull and lifeless.

Even the wind had died down, it's angry shriek now a mournful drone that hummed through the fields and over the treetops.

Heavy boots tread on the compact dirt floor, weighed down with drink and blundering with excitement. For them, the night is alive with the promise of another gamble, another brief thrill. Their chuckles boom with malice, rattling the metal cages scattered near the tin walls. From the bars gleam the light of fire in today's contestants. They're already prepared - the fury whipped up inside them so they feel nothing but an urge to inflict pain, to lash out. Their bellies growl; it gives them an edge for today's fight - the smell of blood will rile them up more until they crave nothing but the snap of bone between teeth or the rich tang of blood on their tongues.

As the crowd swells around a hastily constructed ring, the profit is dealt and the owners shove their priced prodigies into the lit stage. On one side, a stocky pitbull stands his ground, eyes flaming with the fire that fuels machines built to win.

Steely muscles ripple beneath his charred markings, smooth and untouched of any marks or imperfections. He is the ideal specimen, presented like a perfect joint of meat.

Across from him stands a larger brown mutt. He's well known, well rehearsed in this dance. The spark of glory and fury that earned him victory after victory in his prime has dimmed, replaced with a sickly feeling of dread and despair that suffocates him. He yearns for rest, to sink into a long sleep and have the sting of his wounds melt into blissful oblivion.

Perhaps he sees himself in the youthful dog planted across from him, the raw, unstoppable power. He is but a shadow of that form these days. He's tired. Sore. Weaker. His own muscles, once bursting beneath his skin like a gleaming coat of armour, are damaged and aching. His shaky body is crossed with a multitude of old scars and fresh scratches. He is scarce of protection, the solid, stocky body withered and gaunt.

It's quite possibly his last fight. He knows this; his owner knows this. He will fight until he is damaged beyond repair- although in some ways, he already is. They all are. Puppies, with a nature sweeter than any honey, were taken and stripped

of a loving gentle nature. Curiosity replaced with cruelty. Loyalty with loathing. Manufactured to succeed; those puppies are abolished in wake of the machine like beasts that know only pain and anger.

---

His shaky body is crossed with a multitude of old scars and fresh scratches.

---

Drunken snarls echo the dogs as they fight, the money hanging over each of them in cruel encouragement. Eventually, the mutt slumps to the floor. Heaving, his mouth flecked with foam and blood, his eyes meet his owners for a brief moment. After so many successes, surely now he

can rest? Bathe in the pride of his owner for serving him this well? He hopes, as the others do, that maybe he is cared for. Just a little bit. But the moment is fleeting, and the dog drops his head to the floor in defeat.

The pitbull has won for today - a small victory in a system of losses. Undoubtedly he too will be beaten one day, his fleeting glory dashed in a lifetime of agony.

The roars of the crowd are thunderous, a loud chorus of ecstatic and disappointed betters. Their craving for violent, bloody entertainment has been satiated. Although soon they will be back, stumbling and yelling in a half drunken state, gripping fistfuls of cash tightly.



## Another layer of paint...

---

Jesse Ewing-Jarvie Y12

---

**A**nother layer of paint. Broad brush strokes sweep across forlorn walls. Decades of life, hidden beneath a skin of 'Alabaster 4b'. To be forgotten. Without any longing for preservation, she paints over childhood promises scrawled in orange crayon. Over the darkened marks from posters long since torn down and a phone which hadn't rung in years. With each brush stroke, she slashes away her roots buried in this home.

It hadn't taken long to pack up the last of her belongings. Half-finished books, her sister's wedding photos, items unloved and dust coated. Sitting in crumpled boxes, watching her from the corners she shoved them in. They wouldn't be coming with her.

One last item she had yet to gather the nerve to pack; a family photograph still in its ornate frame, the image faded and grainy, which sits centred on her mantelpiece. It appears almost naked without the surrounding bits and pieces of porcelain sets. Through the dust she can still make out the face

of her late grandmother, flanked by herself and her sister; Grandmother Rosie stiff and proud, the two of them still young and strong in their bond. At first glance an onlooker might see an unorthodox but distinguished family, missing perhaps the way her eyes were a little more sunken than those of her sister. Not quite seeing the way Grandmother Rosie's hand had crept over her shoulder, bony fingers digging in painfully. She flips the photo face down with a snap.

In the kitchen, her grandmother's clock hangs on the wall, face cracked from the night before. Its ceaseless ticking had made her heart twist. She clenches her lined hands at the memory, purple and blue now beginning to bloom across her knuckles. But no longer. Now it screams its silence, and in the stark morning light, she finds peace once again. Silence roams the bare hallways and settles her mind. With a groan, she clambers to her feet. Knees stiff from crouching she pauses to gaze at the surrounding room.

Empty. Blank. For a moment her lips pull into a shaky smile.

“Nice work, Agnes,” she says, and her voice lingers in the air like a promise.

After all these years, all those people come and gone. It’s time to give up the fear that had settled on her shoulders like a shawl, that she clutched to in desperation. For her whole life, the world has hurried feverishly past her, but she has remained. Stagnant. Decaying. Terrified that if she steps past what she knows, she’ll find only bitter disappointment. But her bones creak and groan that they aren’t long for this world, and her heart wheezes a plea to walk this land for a time at least before it fails. The endless ticking echoes in her mind.

Hoisting the scuffed handbag at her shoes to her shoulders, seams straining to hold on, she whispers.

“Just hold on a little longer, please.” She quashes the thought that maybe that reassurance was as much for her as the bag. Resisting the urge to walk one final loop around the house she heads for the front door. Had this hallway always been so long?

At the door, she slides on shoes worn soft by use. A click, and the door swings wide open, yawning like a mouth ready to swallow her whole. Her breath catches. Shuffling up to the threshold, her heart thuds as if it is trying to push her back. No. Come on. Just one step and you’re out. Just one step, and she swears it’s the length of sixty lifeless years.



## The classroom then and now

Carlos Mendonça Y12

---

**T**hen

I sit at the Lino table and examine the page. "Jamil" is spelt correctly but the A is backwards, and the self-portrait could only be described as surreal, I suppose. The caption below my piece reads "My name is Jamil and I can speak Portuguese speak Urdu". I don't understand the English words Mrs. Moore has written on my picture, but from the expressions on the faces of my friends when they read it, I collate that I should be proud.

I walk over to the table with the crayons and grab a handful, returning to my desk thinking and feeling the insoluble crayon melting and contouring to my hand from the heat. This is good I think to myself. This is really good. Because I am six, and because self-gratification is not nearly quenching enough, I turn to my classmates for their perspectives and appreciation for my work. Interrupting Ben and the girl whose name I don't know, I thrust the A3 piece of paper in front of them without speaking, the primary school equivalent to presenting my own beating, bleeding heart on a silver tray. Aorta and all. From beneath melted butter hair, two sets of blue eyes look up at my portrait. I don't manage to derive a "cool" or "nice" however the silence screams to me their admiration of my work, I think.

Ben clasps the skin colour crayon across his palm while the girl watches him. She is waiting for the same crayon to use for her picture after Ben is finished, so are five others. My portrait looks different from the others in my class, but I don't mind. I even enjoy the significance. At least I don't have to wait in line to use the same crayon as everyone else.

**N**ow

I sit at the Lino table and examine the page. Being stuck on the very first question of an exam is an unusual experience for me, however being

stuck filling out the personal information before the clock starts ticking is completely foreign. The heading at the top of the first page commands "Biotechnology". Good my frontal lobe whispers. I had studied and prepared to be challenged by biochemical reasoning, although I didn't anticipate filling out the personal information to be equally confronting. It is fair to say I'm not used to challenges that cannot be solved by studying.

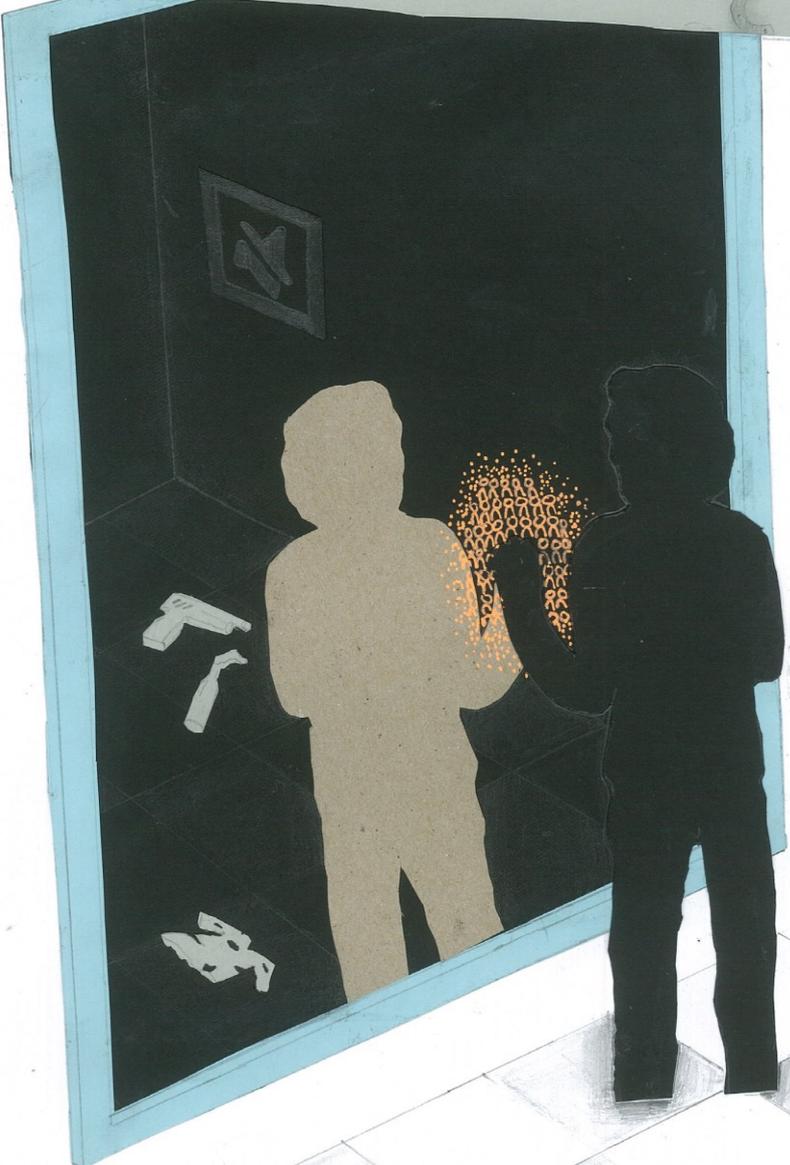
Beneath the title, I stare at four small ellipses which reciprocate. The question tells me to "please choose one" by filling in the circles. Each ellipse is labelled Asian, African, New Zealand European and other.

Three continents represented by three little ovals and the rest of the planet thrown in the fourth. I pinch my pen between my fingers while the ballpoint lingers between the Asian and New Zealand European options. The pen descends as I begin to "choose one" but somehow, I can't physically bring myself to blotch the ink onto the fibers of the paper. In the movies these moments of identity are supposed to be defining, but I don't feel any lurch, or jolt, just a constant picking at the back of my brain to generalize cultures and to stop wasting time. My eyes flutter and flicker down the page hoping to see the half or three-quarter mixed-race option that I know won't exist. It doesn't.

Imagining the fixed eyes and craned necks of my Anglo-Indian father and Chinese mother staring at the test and me, I can't choose. Unsure whether I am avoiding favoring one culture, partitioning both or trying not to waste time, I move onto the next questions; the ones in which I am acquainted with the answers.

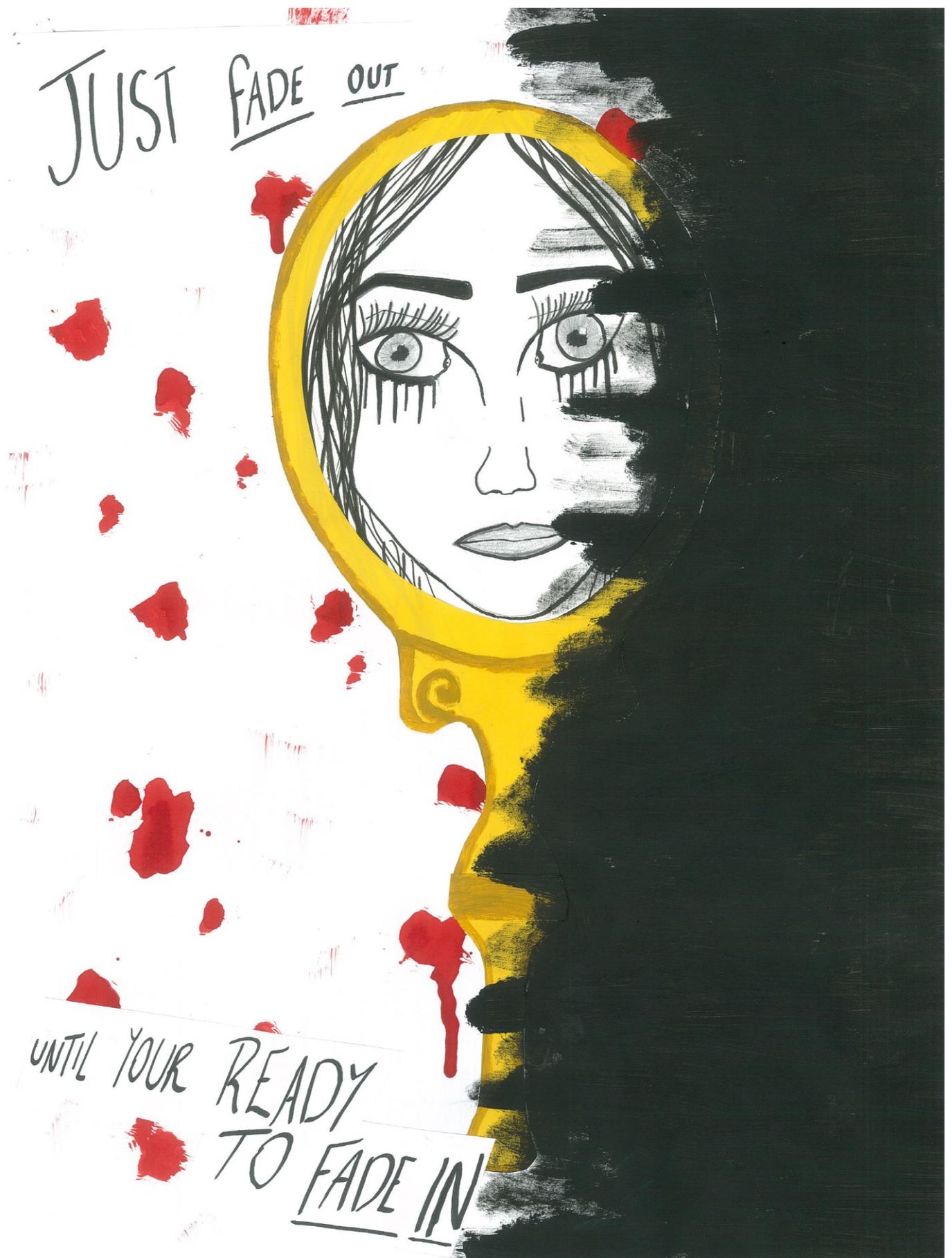
Surrounded by my friends in biology class, thinking about my parents looking at me, I feel finally, really, completely, alone.

"Noughts are People  
Just like Us"

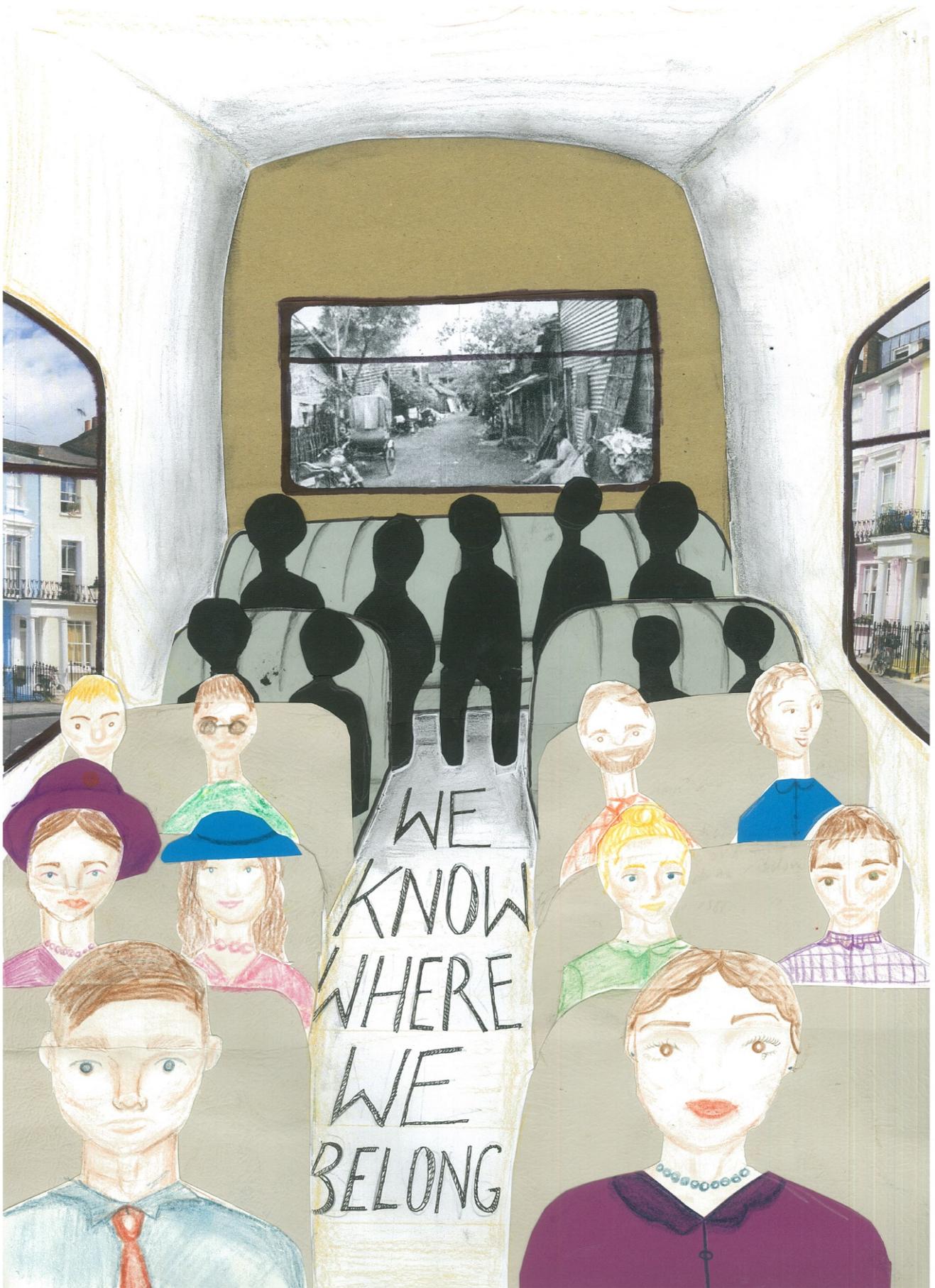


Declan Cross Y11





Lauren Davies Y11



Rosa Tse Y11

## Words slowly started forming...

Josie Van Den Berg Y13

Words slowly started forming as Alex re-focused his attention to the woman behind the counter, Julie, her name badge read.

“... and what will you be doing this valentine? I should take an interest in your life, seeing as I just babbled my whole love life out to a stranger.” The woman, Julie, giggled as if she had told a joke.

“I’m going on vacation,” Alex watched as the woman, Julie, scanned the tag on the box of chocolates, “to Fiji.”

“Oh, I assume with a lucky girl?”

“Yes, I - ah, we’re going for the weekend.”

“Well then, have fun” the woman, Julie, finished scanning his groceries, smiling like he was a friend. The conversation fell silent as Alex paid, then left, leaving the woman behind him.

The whole weekend was planned out. Alex had spent years perfecting it.

They had reconnected after high school, Alex had bumped into Penelope at the airport. She had been on her way to Fiji... with her boyfriend. Alex had been surprised that she didn’t recognise him at first, but as he had elaborated on the many classes they had shared, he had seen the familiarity grow within her. Penelope had visibly relaxed, shifting her weight onto one leg as she hefted her backpack onto her shoulder. Alex made a few jokes, they had exchanged numbers, promising to get back in touch. And they had. Friend requests were sent and accepted, Instagram accounts followed, and memes were shared.

When Penelope got dumped, he was there. An old comfort. Eventually they grew closer, and now they were off to Fiji. Again. How fitting.

It was a half hour before the couple was due to check in, when Penelope announced her need to

use the bathroom. As she walked towards the blue overhead sign, complete with a woman in a triangular dress, Karma seemed to strike. When Alex looked up from retrieving a book from his carry-on bag, he saw Penelope conversing with a tall, blonde man. The same man who she had gone to Fiji with 3 years prior. Anyone else would have considered it a coincidence, but Alex didn’t believe in coincidences.

He was watching, curious as to what the interaction would entail, when his girlfriend gestured towards him with a fond smile. This action in turn caused the blonde man’s pale eyebrows to draw together. A frown disturbing his neat features. Alex waved cheerfully as the conversation seemed to pause, then proceeded to open his book to a marked page.

Watching over the top of his novel, Alex observed the two figures. Penelope chatting happily, oblivious to the decreasing space between the blonde man’s brows. With a final laugh, Penelope rested her hand on his shoulder for a moment, then continued her journey towards the white triangle lady. Leaving the blonde behind her, she didn’t look back.

The couple had been in Fiji a day and a half when she was found. Alex had been down at reception, inquiring about the seemingly broken phone in the honeymoon suite when it supposedly happened.

The maid entered the room to change the sheets, during her statement she had recalled being told to come in later, as the couple had wanted to sleep in. Alex knew he should feel bad for her, discovering someone in that state. It had been purposeful, limbs strewn casually across the room. Multiple, deep puncture wounds decorated her chest. Blossoms of crimson flowered on the white bedsheets and were scattered across the plush, beige carpet.



Bella Fraser-Nightingale Y9



## Raspberry spiders

---

Ella Flavell Y13

---

**M**y drink, fizzing and popping and sweet, tastes foreign. The familiar bright pink liquid a child's medicine stinging my tongue, my throat. The street hushes as Nathan makes a beeline for our table, headphones blaring, hands in hoodie pockets. I am suddenly aware of my sticky hands and my heart playing hopscotch in my chest. Here we are, as we have done for years, meeting outside the corner store with our raspberry spiders. This was our small safe space. Where we would laugh and dream as the world sped by. It's claustrophobic now.

"Hi", Nathan said. A little too loud.

"How are ya?" My voice cracks as I search his face for any hint, anything that might give me a peek of the hour before.

"I'm okay. You?" His face is a mask, his blue eyes clear and empty. My fingers twist at my dress as my mind strains for an answer. I could play the game, tell him I am okay, or I could tell the truth – I'm terrified. The weight of my whole life squeezes the air out of my lungs. "I'm okay," I whimper, a little too quiet.

Jackie sidles behind our table, "Your usual?"

"Yup". Nathan looks up at her, flashing his brilliant smile.

"Got your letters today?" Jackie continued.

My heart trips as I look down at my feet, Nathan busies himself with the tablecloth. "Yeah" we speak in unison.

Her eyes flicker between us searchingly. "You two make us all very proud," She says eventually. "You'll let us know how you did when you are ready!" She bounces away, free of the weight compressing the air around us. Three hundred pairs of eyes burn the back of my neck. Our table is a stage. People cough in the audience.

"You first," I croak.

Nathan glances up at me, uncertainty plastered on his face. Jackie returns and places his drink in front of him. My fingernails dig into my palm and I bite on my tongue. I taste metal in my mouth. "Kath... I'm, well, um... I got in."

"Oh."

His grin fades as he studies my face.

Air hisses out of my lungs. Tears press against my eyes, fighting to be released. My heart sinks, struggling against the weight of the future. Our future. Nathan drops his stare and I force myself to look at him. His large hands reach across the

table, smothering my trembling fists. “Kath... I can stay. Kath... I can.”

My legs twist painfully under the table. The same table we perched at five years ago when I convinced Nathan he was good enough, that he should come with me. The naivety of those days. Life seemed as sweet as our fizzy drinks. Anything was possible. It is now. Just not for me. I twist my face into a smile, and pull free from his clutch. I place a clammy hand on his arm. “No. You are going. I’ll... I’ll be just fine, don’t you

worry.” We lock eyes and the table stretches for a thousand miles.

Nathan slides his hands out from underneath mine and stands up, eyes still locked. I follow suit, wobbling to my feet. His long arms wrap around me. “I’ll see you soon. Be safe.” My damp face stings in the cool evening air as he slips away, pacing down the street. I turn my back to him and begin to walk. Every step a hundred miles, as our raspberry spiders sit, unfinished, on the table outside the corner store.



## Various colours of different shapes...

---

Kimberley Lowe Y13

---

Various colours of different shapes and sizes flew past Zaina as she gazed at the fogged and smudged glass on her right. A flinch from the other passengers indicated that a booming voice was announcing the next destination, which cued the blurred images to transform into a familiar formation of houses. One had brightly-coloured laundry hanging out of the window as well as basketballs, frisbees and skipping ropes scattered across the front yard. Another had pink curtains that were the exact shade of its door, roof and undoubtedly a large number of furniture inside the house. One even had a superhero-themed mailbox. As the houses went on, so did their unique personalities. Eventually, the houses transformed into nothing but blurred images once again. However, Zaina kept the still image of the street in her head because of a nagging feeling that wanted her to remember something... the skipping rope.

In her mind’s eye, the image of the street morphed into something brighter with a sense of serenity. It was as if she was observing the street through a filter. Zaina stared at another version of herself, amazed at the smoothness between her eyebrows. She was gripping onto one end of a skipping rope with excitement and

enthusiastically moving it in a vertically circular motion while the other end was tied up to a fence. In the middle of the rope was a human figure, skipping in time to the rope’s beat. As Zaina focused on the figure, their features slowly became more and more distinguished. The figure was a small girl with hazelnut eyes that were overflowing with joy. Behind the girl flowed a stream of untameable wavy, thick hair. The steady rhythm was abruptly brought to an end when the rope caught onto the little girl’s shoe. Surprise took over the tiny, yet pure hazelnut eyes as she stared at the skipping rope with disbelief, as if the skipping rope had just committed the worst crime imaginable. When the little girl turned to stare straight at the Zaina who had just let go of the rope, both girls broke out into identically goofy grins. Meanwhile, the Zaina that was observing the memory stood transfixed by the interaction. The two girls were surrounded by such a dense bubble of innocence that it was enviable. It seemed... peaceful.

As if knowing that Zaina was contently lost in a heart-warming memory, the rain attacked, sending vibrations through the window to steal Zaina away from it. Now that Zaina was distanced from the nostalgic memory, she remembered what happened the day after; what

happened after Zaina dropped the little girl off at primary school; what happened when Zaina went to pick her up. “It was an accident,” they informed her in what she thought was a desolately hushed tone. “It could have happened to anyone,” they claimed, attempting to console her, but it didn’t happen to anyone. It happened to the little girl with hazelnut eyes that had such a wonderful future ahead of her. It happened to Ashlynn, her little sister.

They said more after that but Zaina couldn’t be bothered to read their mouths. Instead, she politely nodded and walked home. Without fumbling, she unlocked her door and sat down on the couch in the living room and told herself that Ashlynn was just playing over at her friend, Sami’s house across the road. Once Ashlyn was done playing at his house, she’d be home in time for tea.

In the present, there was another flinch from the passengers before everything stilled. The doors opened. People came and left. The doors closed. The blurs returned.

Her little sister was dead. Zaina had denied that fact for so long but knew she couldn’t deny it anymore. People had already started to ask her about the funeral and pretending that she didn’t understand what they were saying wasn’t going to work for much longer. She felt like she was trying to jump into skipping rope that moved as an unpredictable blur, unable to choose a single spot. Once she was certain enough of its pattern, she would jump, only to find that the pattern changed and she would end up completely tangled in rope. Ashlynn was dead. She couldn’t be, but she was. There will be no more pizza Fridays, no more ice cream after school and no more stories good night. What would Zaina do instead?

Zaina felt as if there was a butterfly trying to escape her stomach. Only, it was much larger than a butterfly. Why did Ashlynn have to die? Why didn’t one of the other children die instead? They were also dropped off at same school at the same time, so what was so different from them and her Ashlynn? Zaina turned her thoughts to one of Ashlynn’s best friends, Sami. Why didn’t he die? Maybe it was because Sami had higher grades or had a better ethnic background or something ridiculously insignificant like that.

---

Why did Ashlynn have to die?  
Why didn’t one of the other  
children die instead?

---

Without a flinch from the passengers, everything slowed to a stop. Curious, Zaina looked around. There was a sheltered playground full of children Ashlynn’s age outside. Speak of the devil and he shall appear. Why didn’t any of them die? Her thoughts no longer followed logic. Instead, it was as if her thoughts had turned into a ball and was being used for a game of monkey-in-the-middle by abnormally large children. They should’ve died instead.

Slowly, the image of the children, as well as everything around it started to move, faster and faster until Zaina could no longer make out the image in front of her. The children were gone. They had turned into blurs, just like so many of the images that she saw through this very glass. They were exactly the same... exactly the same as her Ashlynn. The monstrous butterfly suddenly went still. Zaina realised that yes, there was no difference between those children and her Ashlynn but that didn’t mean that they should’ve died instead. Rather, she should treasure them just as much as she treasured Ashlynn’s life.

## I've been absent from my skin

---

Emma Brown Y12

---

*November*

*London*

Grandma, I wanted to tell you. I wanted to tell you that we are back in England for the first time in half a decade, to see what of our family is left behind. That I am wearing shorts even though the temperature is low. That Heathrow is still alive at 5 am on a November morning. My Earl Grey tastes bitter and somehow right. We're sitting on the cracking leather armchairs. The air is tannin and smoke; my vision clouds with it and dry eyes sting with newness.

I stand now on the same ground you lived and died on. (I wanted to say) that every breath I take in this damned country stings and roars with ugly red grief, as much as I taste hope somewhere at the back of my tongue.

I wanted to tell you how it goes.

So

It goes like this:

At home, the summer is the best it's ever been. The sun has not slept for a thousand years. Here, the light fades away before the afternoon ends and even then it is endless grey horizons.

I never missed New Zealand when I used to come here. When I visited, it was honeysuckle on the radio, and the taste of Ella Fitzgerald in the garden, and I'd sit on your walker and skid across the hardwood floors. Now, I have no wifi. No way to contact home makes me feel even further away from the other side of the earth. Any last grip I had on the worn rope that leads to my past is fraying.

I think of someone back home who has my heart, maybe. But we are in the metropolis. There's no rest for this wicked city.

London is sleeping on a thin mattress, and the steamed up single glazed windows of coffee

shops. I see the world in a series of pictures, all taken in low lighting. The walls dance with multi-coloured spots; the beige edges crack and curl. Grainy. Pretty. Like a teenage fever dream.

I walk from Covent Garden to the East End. I leaf my fingers through racks of second-hand men's shirts in fashionable shops. The bottoms of them have been chopped off, and they are now women's wear, oversized and cropped. New and old. We catch a snow flurry. Fluff hangs in the air, and my cheese sandwich gets too cold.

As ever, the first part of the holiday comes to an end. London is a cruel mistress. She plays with the boundaries of time.

*December*

*Devon*

We drive to Devon.

We see Jeremy and Celia: uncle, aunt, and chosen godparents of your favourite little atheist. There is a rowdy Christmas party in a sleepy Devon village called Bere Ferrers for Celia's park volunteers. I sit silent amongst drunk pensioners. Knitted paper chains and apoplectically flashing red Christmas lights droop from low, beamed ceilings. Prosecco is proffered, and I snaffle one of the glasses of peach and snow. A man catches his beard alight while smoking and a group down the patchwork of tables descends into a near hysterical rendition of London's Burning when he returns. I watch my knees. Eventually, we step out into the tranquillity of the village night. Ink falls sideways and drips along my hair, and even then I can see the world is getting brighter with every second that I am still living on it. We look across the estuary, and I'm trying to soak up every ounce of silence in the far reaches of the air. "... the salt of the earth" my Uncle says into the rain.

In mid-December, we see great aunt Kim. She is living in a home, is bent far too close to double,

and is *still* older than the Queen. She is also mercilessly cheery. But every time I look at her my lungs collapse and drop from my body as they fill with salt water. No more too sweet jam, no more shelling peas in a sprawling garden. Another person I loved so much, and she is slipping from my grasp. What can I do, Grandma? I know I am at the worst of beginnings. I can't take another death in the family.

It's my first winter Christmas. At Jeremy and Celia's watercolour and spiced lentils townhouse, I play the same songs that the shops have on loop. I deck the halls. I try and ignore the lingering sadness.

We have a real Christmas tree.

The world is clear, and oddly pretty, lit by the dim glow of tea lights. I don't remember the last time I saw life in colour. Every day the days grow darker, and the world is so bright I scrunch up my eyes to see. Everything is beautiful, and all of it hurts. Every breath.

Mist hangs on the sage green moors. It's below zero degrees.

*Not long after New Year*

*London*

The end of the trip looms as we return to London. She beckons to me from the M25, winks and turns away. I chase the anonymous smoky bustle of the city like I always do. This time, I let the grief come with me.

Night has fallen. I am sitting on a large bed with white sheets, in an air-conditioned room, and am thinking of the future someone else wants and of the future that I might give up for her. The Shard is dotted with rubies in the distance. The leafless trees are strung with outdoor fairy lights, little

fires that hang above the pavements. Nothing ever dies here. Not the pain, not the happiness. The rich red blood of life is suspended in crystal.

I put the radio on in the apartment and let it cleanse my skin. Velveteen colours strobe across the sky. The beat courses through the Ikea furniture and shatters the floor to ceiling windows. Waterfalls course down the highrise and onto grubby pavements.

I go back to the East End. Back to the vintage stores and the earnest graffiti.

We fly home to New Zealand, and I am ripped apart as I leave you again.

*Late January*

*Wellington*

The first morning home we go to the farmers' market. Scarlet capsicums swim in rays of golden sunlight. I am overwhelmed by the warmth to my senses. A stall sells Fougasse: oily and rosemary specked. We buy vegetables in reusable bags, and I look too long at the pretty girl wearing all cotton.

Is it true that you used to be a chef? The sky is cornflowers. Someone turned the saturation up a notch whilst I was absent from my skin.

I can only ever write the truth. So this is your granddaughter, and I'm leaving things here. This is the truth: vapid and leaf green. This the secondhand version of knowing you that I cling too: thin linen and fuzzy photographs. This is the world getting brighter. This is the thousandth time I choose to write about you because I can only ever write about the truth.

Note: This piece was a finalist in the Katherine Mansfield Short Story Awards, 2018.

## Leina Zarves

---

Trixie Pena Y12

---

I stare. Sapphire eyes stare back along with bold letters reading, *Zarves daughter commits suicide*. My world stops spinning on its axis as a gaping silence slams into me. All colour fades away turning the cheerful yellow walls into a muted grey. Those four words will forever be etched into my mind and ingrained in my soul. Today, they burned a hole where my heart used to be. Emptiness rushes into my body and with it, a thick fog settles around my mind like a protective wall. I cannot feel, cannot think when my brain feels like sludge. I like it this way, my stoic state is my glue keeping me together both physically and mentally. I'm disappointed when I figure out that my brain is not dead enough to block my memories of her. Reminiscing our past will be the final shove that sends me careening off a precipice into an eternal darkness, never to see the light again.

Leina Talin Zarves. That was her name. The girl who befriended me when no one else bothered, the girl who saw me for me, the girl who was the sun to my gloom. My best friend. A memory from two years ago pushes its way through the fog into the forefront of my mind with startling clarity. Her pale hand extended and eyes focused on me in concern. A scarlet river had flowed onto the concrete from a nasty gash on my head while footprints were being branded onto my back. My throat was raw from screams unheard and at some point it transformed into pitiful sobs. All of a sudden, a voice boomed through the school grounds and announced, "Piss off you idiots! Go or else you'll soon find your limbs in a place where the sun doesn't shine." The last word hadn't even left her mouth and I was already alone on the courtyard. From my perspective on the ground, I had thought a goddess had descended from the heavens to take my poor soul to the lands of eternal peace. With the sun at her back, Lei was glowing as if she had eaten it

whole. I didn't hear a word she said afterwards, but I had managed to smile - which may have looked like a creepy grimace with all the blood in my mouth. Next thing I knew, I was slung onto her small back like a large backpack and was whisked to the infirmary on the other side of the school in record time. That was her first day of school and the environment had already fit her like a glove.

Our school had a social hierarchy, where the beautiful and talented were royalty and the rest of us were mere servants destined to bow to their greatness. At the very top of the food chain was the snobbiest girl God ever gave breath to, her name was Ellie McBride, or as I like to call her Miss Panty – courtesy of her *very* short skirts. Her flawless complexion, silky brunette locks and high grades made her the flower of the school, but her rotten personality could have easily killed a garden.

---

Our school had a social hierarchy, where the beautiful and talented were royalty and the rest of us were mere servants destined to bow to their greatness. personality could have easily killed a garden.

---

So when Lei arrived she was practically given the crown and knocked Ellie down to second place. I wasn't the least bit surprised considering Lei's goddess-like face, lean body, top marks and – most importantly- her big heart. Wherever there were helpless people, Lei was sure to be there kicking butt with her wicked aikido. She had been their worst nightmare if bullies didn't leave at once. In the history of the school, she was the only queen I knew who used her influence with the students and staff to help those like me instead of humiliate, and I admired that. No wonder she was the person every girl wanted to

become friends with, the person every boy wanted to date and the person every parent aspired their child to be like.

Sometimes, I had found Lei beneath her favourite willow tree at the edge of the school grounds writing, reading, drawing, doing yoga and even staring at nothing and everything at the same time. During those moments she perceived the world with such depth, it had often shocked me that all the wisdom flowing out of her mouth was from a seventeen-year-old. Leaves had crunched beneath her boots when she paced and asked questions like, “Does truth evolve? Or is it the same yesterday, today, tomorrow and always?” Her endless supply of insight had even cheered me up on my most miserable of days. Lei once said this, “Emotions never discriminate. Every being feels joy and sorrow in different ways but they feel it all the same.” I walked away that day with a bounce in my step despite the rain, but almost immediately my feet became weights when I saw Ellie McBride zoom past me in her hundred-thousand-dollar car, splattering me with mud. After cursing my misfortune and glaring daggers at Miss Panty’s car I trudged home in the dark with my damp clothes and the wind slapping my face.

The more time I spent with Lei, the less I felt I knew her. When we first met, she had threatened to stuff my bullies’ limbs into their privates, so I thought that she was the bad girl type who hangs out with dodgy people in the dead of night. But the girl under the tree who wrote love poems and softly strummed a Fendez guitar was the complete opposite. I had always felt that an aura of peace surrounded that sacred spot. At some point during our friendship, I decided that she was a puzzle with no solution. On some days, I had seen her standing with some students laughing, teasing and even playing football with them, though she always won in the end. On other days, she would sit at the back of the classroom listening to music with a melancholy expression and stare out the window watching

other students go about their lives in the sunshine.

Though she was a puzzle, there were things about her that never changed, like her affinity with realistic wigs. Blue bob, ebony plait, purple ringlets, chocolate pony-tail, you name it and she’s worn it. I found it quite odd when everyone – and I mean everyone including the staff – never mentioned anything about it, like it was the most normal thing in the world to suddenly switch hair colour every day. Curiosity got the better of me one afternoon and I had asked her about her wigs, she replied with a question, “Just because I have one head, does it mean I cannot have more than one hair colour?” I had no answer because I never thought about it, all I knew was that her wigs were weird. That day had opened my mind because I mulled over the idea of conformity the whole day. By the time the moon shone bright, I came to the conclusion that just because someone is different, it doesn’t mean that their ways are wrong. In addition to wigs, Lei adored knee-length dresses. In the two years I’ve known her, she had never worn the same dress twice so she must’ve had a behemoth of a wardrobe. Later on, I found out that the colour of her dresses reflected her mood for the day. Upon learning that, I had immediately racked my brain to the frequency of which she wore each colour. Baby blue. Lei wore that most often and she told me that the colour represented tranquillity and peace. Only once had she worn a red dress- that was the day I got beaten up to the point of being unrecognizable. How she knew that the feeling of fury was in her near future, I don’t know. And now I never will. Usually when people pass away some light is shed on the life they had led, but Lei is ever the enigma.

After school, I had always tagged along with whatever Leina was doing and before long we had our own little routine. We would buy small trinkets at a quaint toy shop near the school and split the cost evenly between us. Squeals of delight and laughter filled the air whenever we

opened our backpacks to reveal the toys we bought for the parentless children. Those kids were practically our family, considering the countless hours we spent playing together outdoors and indoors.

---

How she knew that the feeling of  
fury was in her near future, I  
don't know. And now I never  
will.

---

Thanks to them most of my clothes were ruined, covered in mud, paint, glue and who knows what else – snot maybe? In addition to our Orphanage Mondays, each Thursday, Lei and I had visited a rest home where she would care for the elderly who had no one to share their last years of life. She would read books aloud with a soothing voice and play all the board games in the common room. I was never one for socializing with adults so I would sit on the side and watch her interact with strangers like she had always known them, giving them that small smile that could melt the thickest of ice. Because of her, I am a better person now and regularly do charity work. If I had never known her, I would probably be sulking in my bed, feeling sorry for myself and my miserable life. She had changed me by just being her, by allowing me to share her light that had followed her wherever she went.

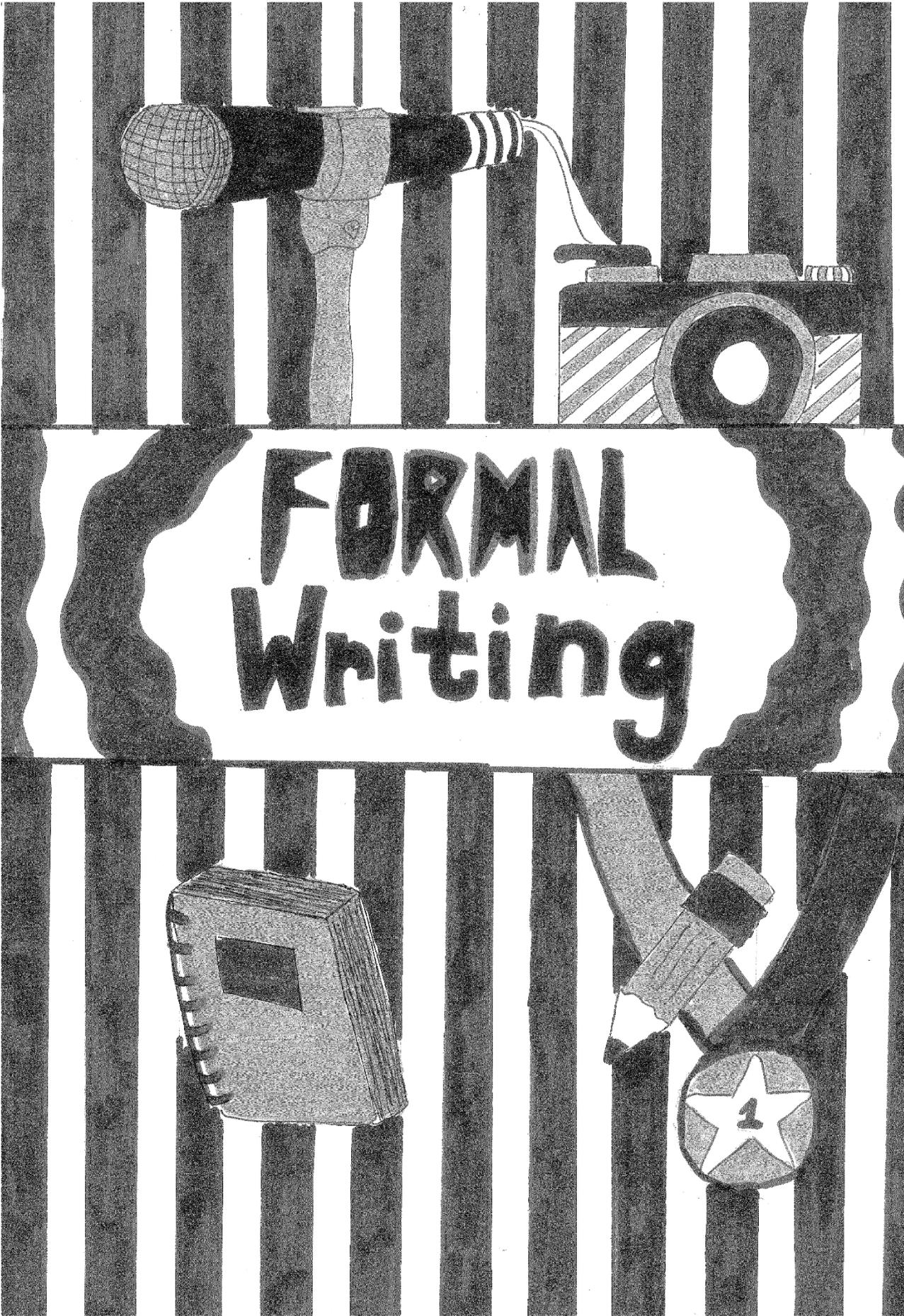
Two months ago, panic hit me when she didn't arrive at our usual meeting spot in front of Wigs n' Things – which, by the way, was her favourite store. Lei never missed her Elderly Thursdays. Not once. One million calls had been sent to her phone before I finally decided to hunt her down and demand an explanation. I searched all the places she frequented: the willow tree, Bill's Donuts, the orphanage, her aikido club, but she had simply vanished as if she never existed. As my panic reached its boiling point a seemingly trivial memory shoved its way to the front of my mind. The earrings she always wore. One golden moon and one silver star. Two months ago, on a

clear night I had wanted to hear her tinkling laughter so I asked, "Hey Lei? Do you know where the stars are today?" She had shot me her I-know-where-this-is-going glare but I continued anyway, "Well, I know one is lounging on your ear but I hoop they'll all come back!" After smothering a laugh under the guise of a cough, her face changed into a sad smile, then she told me about them, "I want to live there someday, someplace far away from Earth. So far that I can forget my past and start anew." The memory faded as something clicked in my mind and in an instant I had known where she was - the abandoned observatory. Sweat coated my armpits and feet were dead when I had finally arrived to see her sitting alone on the third-floor railing, swinging her legs slowly back and forth. Wide eyes met mine when she saw me standing in the car park looking up at her in both relief and fury. She and I had a long conversation that day. We talked about nothing and everything from school to the orphanage to the day we first met and our first impressions of one another. During our emotional heart-to-heart moment, I had felt that something wasn't quite right by the way she avoided eye-contact and spoke with a voice filled with regret and longing. I knew why the next day, her absence hitting me like a punch to the face. Considering the number of tissues I drenched in tears and snot, my room quickly became a snow-capped mountain with a tinge of greenish-yellow slime. All my texts, calls and pleas for a reply went unanswered for weeks. As I was wallowing in misery one day, purpose smacked me hard in the face. That was when I told myself that Lei was not truly gone and that one day I would find her no matter where she was.

A few more hours of numbness passed before I pluck up the courage to start reading that cursed article. Specific words instantly stand out to me, *famous actor, father, abuse, daughter, suicide*. Blind fury rages through my veins as I rip the paper into shreds again and again and throw them out the door. How could I have never known? Wait.

Those bruises from Aikido training. They were from her father? In an instant, a damp cloth extinguishes my flame and leaves me alone with regret. I should have pressed her more instead of dismissing my concerns just because she told me her bruises were nothing. My own concerns had taken up the entirety of my waking thoughts that I couldn't see through the façade of her perfect life. For a second time, disgust at myself rears its ugly head and leaves a bitter aftertaste. Lei. I had always called her that not because it was short for Leina, but because it was short for *teleious*, which is Greek for perfect. I was smug about my own cleverness when I first told her about my idea for her nickname. She was never outwardly bothered by it but on the inside she must have been screaming that her life wasn't perfect. Now I know that word will never sum up her true life, it only summed up the façade she wanted everyone to see. Including me. She once told me that, "Emotions do not discriminate. Every being feels joy and sorrow in different ways but they feel it all the same." I can't believe it took the death of my best friend to realize that there is no need for the poisonous feelings of jealousy and envy. The life I had once thought was perfect, was actually riddled with agony and pain. Reaching out to her with all that I am I think, *Leina, I'm sorry I never saw the darkness that plagued you because I was blinded by your light. I'll never forget your sweet smiles and deadly aikido moves. Even in death you are teaching me as you always have. It took me a long time to truly know why jealousy and envy have no place in this world but I have seen the light thanks to you. You would have been an amazing teacher and an even better mother. Someday I will see you on the other side and show you the person I have become is the person you always knew I could be.*

English  
is  
Awesome



## Why we need to stand up to sexism in the work place

Isabelle Faulkner Y9

**W**e need to stand up to sexist thinking in the workplace. Out of 2,235 surveyed women between the ages of 18 and 34, 1 in 3 have suffered from sexual harassment, or have been the target of sexism. Sexism puts people down, especially women. It is bad for the brain, and mental health and it is fundamentally wrong.

Firstly, gender inequality puts people down. Gender inequality in the workplace typically leads to low motivation, reduced performance and a tendency to want to get away from the workplace. For example, taking advantage of extra sick leave days, and staying home, all because the males at work are being sexist. When employees think gender discrimination exists towards them at work, their morale is lower than it would be if those same employees felt equal and confident. This then leads to a lower work standard and lower productivity. As a result, you only get males working, and people start saying that women cannot do the work. When women believe that their workplace is characterized by sexism and tolerance for sexism, then they tend to feel less accepted and more excluded. Why should they not? What would you feel like if all day long you felt you were beneath men, all because you were female? Would you feel less accepted? The answer is yes, this is a reality for a lot of women. Many have shared their stories online. One of these women is a woman named Aja. She was the only female worker at Vans Shoes when she was at High School. Her boss made her clean the bathroom by saying that it needed to be cleaned on Wednesday night, the night when only she was working. She told her boss that she did not mind cleaning it, but only if she was not the only one. Later, her boss pulled her shift supervisor aside and said "I don't care what you have to do to get Aja to clean that bathroom, if you have to drag her in there by her

hair, it better be cleaned" After Aja's shift supervisor told her this, she quit the job because she didn't want to work in such a negative, sexist place. Many women feel the need to get away, and some go as far as to quit their jobs. This is only one of the reasons as to why we need to stand up to sexism in the workplace.

Secondly, sexist behaviour is bad for the brain and mental health. You might think that only females are affected by sexist behaviour, but new studies have shown that men's mental health can also be affected by sexist behaviour. But why would men be affected by sexism? They are not the targets. A team from Indiana University performed a meta-analysis, a statistical analysis that combines the results of multiple studies. This particular one looked at the data from almost 19,500 male participants taking part in earlier studies. The males had answered questions that measured numerous indicators of sexism. The research team were especially interested in traits that are generally considered markers of 'traditional' masculinity. For example; winning, emotional control, violence, dominance, risk-taking, self-reliance, power over women, playboy behaviour and the pursuit of status. The result was, that the more a person harmonized with masculine traits on average, then the more likely he was to have bad mental health and the less likely he was to seek psychological help. Three of the traits - self-reliance, playboy behaviour and power over women - were more closely linked to the negative mental health outcomes. This likely happens because these traits are more commonly known as sexist beliefs. But sexism affects women too. One of the most distinct ways that sexism creates mental health problems is depriving women of their rights, and opportunities. If they are earning less than men, are not as legally protected, are not as free to make their own decisions and cannot rely on much career success as men, then they are more

likely to experience poverty and one of the biggest preconditions of severe mental health issues, stress. According to the National Women's Law Centre, women in America are 35% more likely to live in poverty than men. Data collected by the AAUW (American Association of University Women) says that in 2015, women in full-time jobs across America were only earning 80% of their male co-workers' salaries. How can women be expected to do their work efficiently if they are suffering from poor mental health, and for all their efforts only get paid 80% of their male co-workers' salaries? The answer is that they can't and sexism is to blame.

---

### Sexism is fundamentally wrong

---

Thirdly, sexism is fundamentally wrong. Why do we feel the need to make half of the world's population feel bad about themselves, and feel that they are lesser than their male co-workers or feel that they can't do something when they actually can? Manglin Pillay recently wrote an article in SAICE (South African Institute of Civil Engineering) magazine on this topic. Then afterwards, he was interviewed about it. He states that in countries like Norway and Sweden there is gender equity and actually, women tend to outperform the men in STEM subjects. He then says that 'More women choose care careers like

teaching, medicine, psychology, sociology and so on.' His point is that women should choose those types of careers and that engineering and mechanics is for men. His overall argument is that the engineering workforce should not actually be investing to attract more women. This is fundamentally wrong. Why can women not be engineers? Sure, a lot of women want to have families, but why can they not do that and then go back to work if they want to? There should be no limit to what someone can do, irrespective of their gender. Actually, a lot of men are single dads, and if they can work and look after a family, then why cannot women? Why cannot the male parent be the stay at home parent? Also, why are women paid less just because they are women? They do the same jobs but often get paid less. My own grandmother used to work as a lab technician. She worked with a male, who was ranked beneath her. She found out years later that even though she was a higher rank she was getting paid less than her male co-worker. Many women have similar stories. This is why sexism is fundamentally wrong.

These reasons are why we need to stand up to sexist thinking in the workplace. Sexism puts people down. It is bad for the brain, and mental health and above all, it is fundamentally wrong.



## Personal response to *The Handmaid's Tale*

---

Tarek Patchett Y10

---

**T**he *Handmaid's Tale* is set in the republic of Gilead, a dictatorship formed after the fall of the United States (similar to *The Hunger Games*). In this society, due to increasing infertility those women with healthy reproductive systems become handmaids to those wealthy men whose wives cannot have children. Their sole purpose is to have children for these men. Through the course of the novel we follow Offred, a handmaid assigned to the

commander and his wife. As an illegal relationship blooms between the commander and Offred, you learn more about life as a handmaid and what it was before the rise of Gilead.

One of the themes most relevant to *The Handmaid's Tale* is about women's rights and usage of the body. I think this is a relevant topic in today's society because of the controversy surrounding sexual assault and sexual misconduct in the world at the moment. In the

republic of Gilead, most woman are stripped of their rights, especially the handmaids who are forced to have intercourse with these men against their will. They are given new names and treated like the personal property of their owners. Everyone in Gilead is segregated by the colour of their clothing, with the handmaids dressed in red while the wives of the commanders wear blue. Segregation has been used throughout history, with the apartheid in South Africa, black segregation in America and this also made me think about people judging people because of how they dress or how they act and why do people judge others because of how they are. I thought this was interesting because it made me think about the class system and how it affects everyone's lives in different ways. A quote from the book is "A rat in a maze is free to go anywhere, as long as it stays in the maze". The handmaids could go shopping and go out (they have to have another handmaid with them) but they cannot write, read or own any possessions so they are still trapped and unable to do anything about their situation. By changing their name, they get stripped of their past identity. At one point one of the handmaids called Ofglen commits suicide and is replaced by a woman called Ofglen. This shocked me and showed how little the government values their life and individuality.

---

"A rat in a maze is free to go  
anywhere, as long as it stays in  
the maze"

---

The Gilead regime is a dictatorship like the Nazis but is more based around conflicting religion. A group called the sons of Jacob are the ones that overthrow the government and get rid of the constitution. They banned woman's rights (as well as limiting human rights) and made homosexual acts illegal. There are still lots of countries like this, including Russia, Saudi Arabia and Mauritania (obviously not as extreme as in the novel) that apply similar practices. One thing

I found particularly interesting was about Serena Joy, the commander's wife who is infertile. She effectively has to share the relationship with Offred and this made me wonder about how the wives feel about this. It made me think about how Maori chiefs would take different wives and I wonder how they would have felt, or maybe they wouldn't have minded as it was the accepted thing to do amongst many tribes. I also wonder how much the book inspired modern dystopic fiction. One that comes to mind is the movie *Children of Men*, about women becoming somewhat infertile due to pollution very similar to *The Handmaids Tale*. I would put it in the bracket of *1984* and *Fahrenheit 451* in terms of influence and maybe offering a different look at the future compared to most other dystopic literature. Margaret Atwood doesn't classify the book as science fiction instead referring to it as speculation fiction. This seems to show that she may believe that it could be possible to happen. It also shows mirror images of real world past influences (much like most dystopic fiction) with obvious references to totalitarian governments and other military/ religious forms of government. It reminded me of books like *The Hunger Games* in the way the republic of Gilead functions.

So overall I really liked this book. I like how fresh and different it felt compared to other things I read in the past. This is mainly due to the themes and the way it was written. The way the book is structured confused me a bit until I realised that it was structured in almost two separate parts, with half dedicated to Offred's story and the other are tales of a handmaids daily life. Once I figured this out the story made a lot more sense and you get to learn more about the life in captivity of a handmaid and it made them seem more real and you got a better view of the characters. I also liked the way the story built tension by keeping the main character Offred in the dark before hinting at the idea of a rebellion against the government. There is also a scene

with a doctor where he threatened to get her deported if she doesn't have intercourse with him, but if she is caught she could be killed. One of the best parts of the book is the flash backs that reveal more of Offred's past and her life before Gilead. This offers a contrast to what is currently going on in her situation. This also helps develop her as a character and actually gives her a backstory that is revealed throughout. In conclusion I thought it was a thought provoking

book because of its themes about freedom, human rights and the exploitation of a person's body as well as the historical link and the way it reveals things about the character. I would say it would be a relatively mature book, and I would recommend it to someone with quite a high reading level as the writing can get a bit jumbled at times but still a nice flowing style, I really enjoyed this book and I feel like I got a lot out of it.



## The wreck

---

Ed Sindlen Y10

---

**O**ur school has a problem. The Rec centre needs to go! Others might say that there are more important things to do but I believe that this is one of the school's most urgent matters that needs to be addressed immediately. The new Principal will need to make it a priority and by the end of this essay you too will be demanding action.

Our school has a problem. The Rec centre has been at our school since 1956 when the school first opened, and the appalling state of the facility certainly shows its age. It is cold. It is draughty. It is leaky. I would not be surprised if bats lived in the roof. It does not appear to have any insulation and when it rains you can't hear yourself think. Speaking of rain, the building periodically leaks which can be extremely dangerous for athletes. Slipping on a hardwood floor can result in injury and in some extreme cases death. Thousands die every year due to simply tripping or slipping then hitting their head. We shouldn't – No we cannot let a single Onslow student become another part of this statistic! Even worse than that, the sweat of generations has soaked into the very fabric of the building. Any one of these things would be enough to condemn the Rec centre but all these things combined create an urgent situation for the wellbeing of us, the students. Healthy

students are learning students and you can't have healthy students without a healthy and safe learning environment. Much academic time has been spent showing the clear and indisputable link between environment and learning outcomes. As the Ministry of Education's November 2016 report said: "Higher quality buildings and facilities are linked to better student achievement and engagement outcomes."

---

Either take it down or repair it.

---

So, what do we do about it? Easy. There are two obvious solutions. The expensive option is to demolish the Rec centre and to build it anew, a state-of-the-art sport and recreation facility. Free for all students to use. The second option is to fix up the existing Rec centre. I favour the complete replacement of the Rec centre with a completely new building. However, I know that schools don't have any money. So that is where the second alternative comes into play. By fixing the Rec we can use year 13 woodworking students for most of the repairs. Think of it as an apprenticeship. Not only are they learning new skills on a job site but they are to helping recreate a facility for the community. To top all of that off, community help looks great on your CV. In the same Ministry report as mentioned previously, it also said: "Evidence suggests that

cosmetic quality is more important to outcomes than structural quality [and] students are happier and feel more valued in a higher quality facility.” This statement is certainly true for not only classrooms but for sports facilities as well.

As is evident from what I have described above, the Rec centre is obviously no longer fit for

purpose. Something needs to be done. Either take it down or repair it. It is having a detrimental effect on student progression and seriously impacting on their learning. But whatever the solution, one thing is for certain: The wreck needs to go!



## NCEA is not working

---

Rose O’Sullivan Y10

---

**N**CEA was introduced to NZ in 2002 as a solution to the very real problems that existed with the arbitrary school certificate examination system. School certificate required that 50% of candidates in any year would fail. Many educationalists argued that it was designed to rank learners rather than to produce knowledgeable and skilful school graduates. By contrast, NCEA is a criterion based assessment system, and in theory all students who have the ability and who put in the effort to master the relevant knowledge and skills can succeed. However, has NCEA proven to be an effective and learner-centred model for the needs of modern New Zealanders? In this essay I will argue that NCEA, as it is currently practiced, has produced an obsession with assessment, rather than with learning, and resulted in a generation of teenagers who are more stressed and anxious than any who have gone before them.

One of the significant issues with NCEA is that it makes school become purely about grades, rather than learning. So often, students cram their heads with knowledge before a big test, but the second that test is finished they have practically forgotten everything that they had learnt. This is because students often don't get the chance to truly learn, but instead simply memorize, so they know for sure they have something to write down, even if they don't really understand it. One of the reasons they don't get to learn properly is because there is just not

enough time in between tests. If they have one part of the subject that they truly understand, and have taken to time to learn, there will be gaps in other areas which will lead to lower grades.

In a survey of nearly 6000 students taken in November last year it was revealed that a major issue students have with NCEA is that they feel that they are being taught how to “earn credits, not taught how to learn”, which leads to major issues once they leave for university. Many students see no point in getting their grades to anything higher than achieved, because that would be taking more of their, already stretched thin, social or study time, and not getting them any more credits. This further proves that NCEA has caused high school to become less about learning, and more about passing. Hawke's Bay Secondary Principals' Association chairman and Taradale High School principal, Stephen Hensman, says that while the flexibility of NCEA is mostly a positive element of the system, it has had some negative repercussions, as some students choose subjects based on how easy they are to achieve the credits required to pass. "Anecdotally, it seems that many students give up when they achieve the minimum credits required, so while NCEA is succeeding in generating external motivation in students, it seems to be at the expense of internal motivation and may undermine the joy of learning." Teaching students to learn to a matrix doesn't encourage them to actually learn, but to simply reach thresholds.

NCEA also puts massive pressure on teenagers, whose lives are already stressful enough. High school has always been a stressful time, no matter what generation you come from, but recently anxiety and depression levels have been rapidly increasing in Kiwi schools. "NCEA burdens teachers with a considerable marking load and places considerable stress on students," Mr. Hensman said. "It's possible there's never been a more stressful time to be a secondary student in NZ than now." Two-thirds of New Zealand secondary students who are taking part in NCEA identify stress and anxiety about assessments as a challenge to learning, and about half believe they are not taught how to study or deal with exams, according to a survey of nearly 6000 students in November last year. When stress and anxiety get to the point where they are a major challenge to a student's learning, you know you have a problem. But when two thirds of all NCEA students are having this issue, that is far past the point where you know that we have to change something.

---

We need a system that is invested in helping young people to move on to their next stages in life with all the tools necessary and that encourages a lifelong love of learning.

---

NCEA may be a strong system when it comes to the percentage of students passing and gaining University Entrance, both of which are at an all-time high, but it comes at the cost of students' mental wellbeing, and the teaching of the skills that students would have to know to succeed at those universities. NCEA is an extremely problematic system and, for the futures of our young people, we all have a responsibility to speak up and fight for a system that is not purely about statistics. Instead we need a system that is invested in helping young people to move on to their next stages in life with all the tools necessary and that encourages a lifelong love of learning.



## Rap is a 'superior' art form

---

John Reeve Y10

---

**R**ap music in 2018 is at the peak of art. We should all be more aware of the gift to humanity that is Kanye West and others like him. The reasons that 2018 rap is rambunctiously radical is the use of auto tune in music, the social messages in the music and the intelligence of these musical magicians.

Firstly, Kanye's use of auto tune in his music shows a devotion to his fans whom he wants to impress with each and every song. The album '808s & Heartbreak' which was criticized for no reason except for his heavy use of auto tune, sold 1.7 million copies. This shows that all of us are happy that he is turning his voice into that of a robot. This use of auto tune has also boosted his popularity and ego.

Secondly, Kanye and most other rappers in 2018 are making us aware of the most pressing topics and issues through their music. Some of those topics are behinds, breakup and babes. This is teaching young people that clearly the most important quality in a healthy relationship is looks and not something dumb like personality. Also, it's great that they don't waste our time talking about issues that don't matter like the environment, sexism and poverty because who cares about the poor people when you have enough money to buy an island and have a hired group of people to give fashion advice to your wife 24/7.

Lastly, Kanye West shows his heightened intellect to the world through his amazing quotes. Quotes such as: 'I am God's vessel. But my

greatest pain in life is that I will never be able to see myself perform live.’ And ‘I am not a fan of books. I would never want a book’s autograph.’ By saying this Kanye West is showing that he is a voice of the generation, and that he’s a smart guy. Not just because of the amount of brain cells he has to make those statements but also because he shows he’s self-centred and that is what we should all be striving for together (or perhaps by ourselves - because as a fan of Kanye West, I shouldn’t care about others.)

---

‘I am God’s vessel. But my greatest pain in life is that I will never be able to see myself perform live.’

---

In conclusion Kanye West and other people like 6ix 9ine and Drake are clearly the most responsible, influential, and stupid people on earth. Because really, we would all rather that literally anything was more prominent than auto tune rap!



## Why I hate Batman

---

Felix Crookston Y11

---

**B**atman may be one of the most iconic and celebrated fictional characters on the planet, but personally, I struggle to join that bandwagon because of what I understand about politics. The concept behind him is just so conservative. Alright let’s lay out the facts: he’s a rich white man, who owns a company which he inherited from his parents, which allows him to create and develop his own state of the art technology. So already we can tell what kind of person he is. A rich self-entitled playboy who benefits from the capitalist system. But more to the point, he uses his power and influence to crack down on street level crime. He will target the bank robbers, the purse snatchers, the drug dealers. But he won’t mess with the people up high, such as the business CEOs who abuse their workers, the billionaires who avoid tax, or the corrupt politicians who exploit their own nation. No, his idea, his concept, often summarised with the phrase “cleansing Gotham of the scum that lurks in the streets”, is to glorify it to its once “beautiful” consumerist/capitalist design, which benefits people like him.

But these aren’t the only conservative values he embodies. Batman supporters praise him for having anti-conservative values, such as being

anti-gun and anti-death penalty, but is he really? While he may have some sort of moral code against killing his enemies, this has not exactly been consistent, has it? Online Entertainment website Screenrant’s list of the 15 times Batman killed someone recalls 12 instances in the comic books where he has broken this code, with 3 spots saved for the cases in movies where he has killed far more than one. Tim Burton’s original Batman movie posed no moral dilemma to killing his enemies at all, the most recent adaptation helmed by Zack Snyder shows Batman murder numerous criminals in a burning down Warehouse, and while Christopher Nolan’s Batman series takes Batman’s opposition to killing, a little more seriously, is there any difference between murdering them, and deliberately letting them die? It’s like Euthanasia, but worse, he could actually save them.

Another claim regularly made as mentioned earlier, is that he is also anti-gun, which would surely mean he would be against the idea that everyday civilians exercise their second amendment rights in self-defence right? Well no, because that is exactly what he does. In fact, Batman takes this even further, and manufactures his own weapons – and while they may not be firearms, I have already proven that

he clearly shows no opposition to the death of criminals – and uses them to become a self-imposed vigilante crime fighter. He doesn't have a licence for these weapons; he just believes he has the right to do so, because he is rich, and he can afford it. This is also a very similar reasoning to that behind Donald Trump's recent ploy to purchase Scottish farmland and gentrify it into a golf course for rich upperclassmen. It is also well known that his stance against firearms isn't very consistent either, for there are far too many examples contradictory to this policy of moral judgement that it prevents it from upholding any credibility. So much for being anti-gun and anti-death penalty.

So ultimately Batman is the worst superhero. His idea of justice is one that favours the rich white men of Gotham, and his opinions of morality reflect that of a past day conservative. Even a modern-day conservative should be appalled

with the idea behind him. A modern-day conservative may uphold similar values as Batman such as gun rights, but murder and disregard for the law have long since been a past time in conservative politics. He believes that because he is rich, he can, therefore, break the law, while apprehending those who do the same. He is a man who changes his morals when it suits him. He imposes the idea that illegal should be accepted as long as the outcome is for the greater good. And so, because Batman's idea of justice is for the greater good, the people and his followers hold the consequences of his actions in complete disregard.

---

While he may have some sort of moral code against killing his enemies, this has not exactly been consistent, has it?

---



## Sport is the new religion

---

Matt Dawson Y11

---

**T**he resemblance between them is striking. And the power of each is unarguable. They both rely on the support from their passionate advocates and neither one could function without their believers. They provide what is natural to humans, a bonding over a common interest. Whether it be Christianity or the New England Patriots both provide a much cherished sense of community.

Sport is one of modern day's most powerful influencers with millions of people across the globe preaching LeBron James and Cristiano Ronaldo, among 1000s of others as their influencers and role models. These new era "saints" can cause widespread effects around the globe. The influence of athletes can be huge, much as the name of God can for many. With the effects of social media and the following that athletes have, 100s of millions of fans

perspectives can be swayed by the views of their idols. People often can take those views as their own given their blind faith in their heroes. This belief is reminiscent to people's faith in their God. Often whatever their lord preaches through their vessel people blindly follow in the end.

There are effects from sport that go beyond those of religion. In New Zealand the result of All Black games goes beyond simply sport but extends to have social, political and even economical effects. The results of test matches and world cup games have a resounding overall effect on the populations. Over 8 million dollars of profit were made during the 2015 world cup and in the case of a win there is even more political effects as well. The result of the world cup comes hand in hand with the popularity of politicians and the general view across New Zealand towards them is far more positive. However there are negatives that come with a

loss as well. After losses there is an increase in domestic violence at home. This does not only happen in New Zealand but around the world. In 2014 after the Fifa World Cup there was a 15% increase in calls to women's helplines along with 506 recorded domestic attacks which relate to the cup. The extremes in which people go to for sport are similar to how people act in the name of their lord.

“Religion is the opium of the people” as Karl Marx once quoted. Meaning it is used to keep the

masses calm and sedated. Sport can also in effect be interpreted that way. Sport is a distraction from the real world, a way to escape the harsh reality that we live in today. One of the easiest things in the world to do is simply sit in front of a screen and let the hours slip away from you.

---

Whether it be Christianity or the  
New England Patriots both  
provide a much cherished sense  
of community.

---



## Phones are not the problem...

---

Max Wong Y11

---

Phones are not the problem. We are. We've created our own recipe for disaster, by putting this power into anyone's hands. This power is Social Media. Something new to this generation. Something new to the entire world. Like it or not, it's part of our everyday lives, spreading like a parasite. Social media comes with many benefits, such as keeping in touch with people across the world, seeing what others are up to, or even using it as a marketing platform. But it also includes a multitude of negatives, one of which being anti-social.

We first need to understand the idea of being "present". Being present meaning a person is fully engaged in the current situation at hand. They have empathy, respect for others and are aware of their actions. Present people are ready for face-to-face, social interaction. In short, if you're not present, you're being anti-social.

Let me share a recent personal experience, involving a fantastic meal and a night of laughs and memories. However, I did leave feeling slightly unsatisfied because a few people's manners that revolved around their smartphones.

An extended family get together was happening, many relatives and faces I'd never met would be

there. People were flying from all around the world to be at this. A massive banquet hall was hired, and the table looked amazing. Now, once the meal was underway, the first clue to a potential issue was when a select few placed their smartphones on the table next to them. I don't often see this, and I believe it's to signify how important they think they are. As the phone sat next to their plates, they began to vibrate with notifications. This continued to interrupt the meal, and at one point 1 person even took and made a phone call! Some even tweeted what they were eating. Really? Forget the meal and the conversation that could have taken place, everything was about another world. A world outside this banquet hall.

In short, these people weren't present. Since they weren't present and not aware of the impact their actions had, they didn't recognise they were being rude. They were shielded by an electronic curtain, not realising the bad impression they were making.

I'm not trying to say these people are bad human beings. They just weren't present. The anecdote above shows the effects of not being present. But what's the cause? Social media. I'm sure you have seen cases yourself. It is my observation that when we become closely bound with technology or social media, we enter a hypnotic state where things such as manners, awareness and common

sense. We end up doing things without realising the consequences and behaving in ways that disregard the world around us.

---

We end up doing things without  
realising the consequences and  
behaving in ways that disregard  
the world around us.

---

The experience at the dinner was not unique. I've been in meetings with peers before, only to have them switch off from the discussion at hand and switch on their mobile phone. Or in class, with a teacher busy giving a lesson with a portion of the class scrolling through Facebook. I've almost been hit by people in the street too busy on their phones to even look up at their surroundings. I'm sure if you think back to similar instances, you will recall people with their head down engrossed by whatever a screen is displaying.

The main point I'm trying to convey is this: most of us were raised with a particular sense of manners, empathy, kindness and respect for others. We have been taught to be present at any moment with any company nearby (it's simply called paying attention). Somehow, somewhere along the way, many of us (myself included) have allowed this new age of technology to push aside the present moment, along with many manners developed at a young age.

As I stated earlier, social media isn't all bad. It's a great tool and effective platform when used the right way at the right time. But, like all good things, must be used with steady pacing and in moderation. The following is a list of dos/don'ts on social media. Don't put your phone on the table, if it's within sight, you're much more likely to check it. Pay attention to whoever is speaking, instead of

texting or browsing. It is rude and will be perceived that way by others. On that note, don't think you can hide the fact that you are surfing the internet or texting. It's obvious to everyone around you. Think twice before posting ANYTHING. This is the internet, once it's out there, it's out there for the world to see. Prioritise face-to-face time with people over messaging them. You don't gain any social skills hiding behind a keyboard. Get out of the mindset that you need to respond to texts and emails right away. There is rarely anything so urgent that you have to reply the moment you receive a message. Slow the cycle down. If you do so, you'll probably find your response will be more thoughtful.

Why should any of the stuff I've said matter to you? Being present is one of the greatest social skill sets you can have. If you read about any of the world's leaders or successful businessmen / businesswomen, their ability to be present has contributed to their success. In the short term, being present will help you as a student to do better in class, develop better relationships, and make great first impressions on teachers, mentors or other important adults. In the long term, mastering the ability to remain present could improve focus, attitude and even health.

To conclude, I wrote this fuelled by one main point and idea. The idea of being present. I find it extremely ironic something labelled "social" media is so counter-intuitive. Being present is one of the most valuable social skills. Real, face-to-face interactions. It's social media making these interactions seem less and less beneficial. My views may not change yours or how society chooses to interact with social media and technology, but I do hope you will give it some thought.

## To many, New Zealand is a lush nation...

Thomas Roberts Y11

---

**T**o many, New Zealand is a lush nation, filled with diverse and productive forests. Our wood goes into making high-quality wooden products like furniture, pencils and timber all over the world. The government has pledged to expand the forestry industry by planting 1 billion trees over the next 10 years. This may sound like a good investment move, but our forestry is stretched paper-thin as is. It lacks the basics needed for such an ambitious move – land, workers and money. Aiming to plant 1 billion trees is silly given the state of the industry.

Firstly, trees don't plant themselves. Having enough people willing to plant 1 billion trees is no easy task, and one that the government is failing in. Hundreds more workers are needed just for planting, let alone maintaining and harvesting the trees. The lack of people is primarily down to bad government engagement with the industry, something which isn't set to change any time soon.

It's hard to miss the bad press about forestry. Stories like that of Thomas Dixon and Te Oho Mauri Piripi – young men killed in forestry accidents – provide the worst possible press for the industry. For every person killed or injured in forestry, tens more are driven away from a career in desperate need of new workers. The government's response to these incidents has been lacklustre, and "the crown hasn't really engaged the industry all that well," according to the NZ Forestry managing director Jeremy Waldgrave. Farmers are one such disengaged group, fearing that too much tree planting will harm their livestock capacity.

As the government continues its trajectory of disengagement without changing, there seems to be little hope to find adequate numbers – certainly not for something as ambitious as this.

Imagining New Zealand, people don't often imagine vast tracts of unused land. Land and housing prices have increased immensely in recent years; New Zealand just doesn't have a lot of spare land. This is a second key issue with planting 1 billion trees.

This is exacerbated by the fact that not any land is suitable for planting. New Zealand forestry has had issues with planting in the past that continue to cause problems today, and "any tree anywhere is not the model we want," according to Forest Owners Association chief executive David Rhodes.

Even where land is suitable for planting, it may be owned by groups unwilling to plant. The government has ruled out buying land for planting, with Shane Jones saying "the state can't do it alone... I don't have the necessary money to scream around buying the land." This leaves the government in the unfortunate position of hoping that landowners who just happen to have the right type of land and just happen to want to plant trees on it. Recent estimates put the land required at just under 1 million hectares, between 9 and 10 times the size of Auckland!

---

Land is more scarce and valuable than ever before. Finding land is difficult enough as is. There just isn't enough.

---

Thirdly, the ever-present question of economics; how much money is too much? Trees don't come cheap – any labour or land the government is able to acquire will cost, and getting the private sector involved will require generous incentives – which also cost money.

The previous problems raised beforehand could hypothetically both be solved if the government threw enough money at them – just buying land and trees. But New Zealand doesn't have that type of money to do so. Incentives have already

been proposed to convince people to plant on their land, but given the reluctance of people to get involved, these incentives won't come cheap.

In fact, an immense 180 million dollars has been put forward for the project. This is 6% of regional development budget. The regional development budget funds projects as diverse as roads, pools and ski lifts. Now, 6% of its budget is being spent on trees. The government doesn't have unlimited money – every penny of the 180 million comes from somewhere. Economists have picked up on this – with ASB chief economist Nick Tuffley questioning “where do you get that money from? ...will we need to be reducing spending in other areas?” His insight into the economic viability is profound, stating

“we're growing a lot of trees, but money doesn't grow on the trees.” As a country with limited money, prioritisation is important. Grand, over the top projects have no place in New Zealand.

Getting the basics right is crucial for effective policy, but this one has failed. There is dire shortage of land without trying to plant a whopping 1 billion trees. And, naturally, nothing that comes in billions comes for cheap. This government has a lot of great policies – their pursuits to end child poverty and student debt are noble and wise. The money, time and people would be better put into dealing with the issues everyday New Zealanders have to deal with rather than stressing about a policy which just doesn't add up



## Poisoning le poisson

---

Ela Hunt Y12

---

**M**ore than a billion people around the world rely on the ocean for survival. Coral reefs provide food and a livelihood for millions of people and offer coastal protection to many more. They are home to thousands of species - more than a quarter of marine organisms require coral reefs to survive - and foster high levels of biodiversity. But coral reefs are dying. Every day that passes sees more dead, bleached coral and less chance for recovery.

Cyanide is a poison. In humans, it can cause severe reactions; seizures; an inability to breathe; lack of a heartbeat; death. In the Indo Pacific cyanide is commonly used to catch fish.

Cyanide is easy to use. Crush a sodium cyanide tablet into a pump bottle, top it up with sea water, give it a shake and you're ready to go. Simply squirt the solution at whatever fish happens to catch your eye and scoop it up when it stops moving. Cyanide impacts the ability to move and breathe, but if your concentration is right the fish

will still be alive and you can quickly sell it on to the next link in the live fish export chain. It's lucrative too.

The ornamental marine fish industry is worth an estimated \$US 200 million each year and requires live fish such as those caught using cyanide. Recently, however, an even bigger market has opened up to the cyanide fishermen. A growing fad in mainland China has led to cyanide being used to catch food fish. High priced speciality restaurants offer customers a choice of live fish to have specially cooked and prepared. Business has boomed and the live reef food fish trade is thought to be worth upwards of \$US 1 billion dollars. This is big money, demand causing the inflation of live fish prices to five times those of otherwise comparable dead fish. But what of the danger to human health if these fish are being eaten? Luckily for customers, the fish served in these restaurants spend weeks in transit between the date of their capture and the date of their consumption. Fish have fast metabolisms and any cyanide in their systems is quickly secreted. Unfortunately, not all fish survive their capture,

and those that die are often eaten locally. As they are dead they cannot excrete the cyanide from their systems, a result of which may well be that locals are ingesting the cyanide content of such fish.

When you employ cyanide you can catch more fish in less time with less effort at a greater profit. Unfortunately, this has its downsides. Overfishing is emptying reefs, making it increasingly difficult for many people to keep themselves both fed and financially supported. Reef fish make up an important part of the general diet for many fishing communities, but as many of the key food species become scarcer this may be set to change. In addition, many of the most highly fished species are also those with important roles in the reef ecosystem. Large predatory fish such as grouper are often the first to go, and the loss of top-level predators unbalances the whole ecosystem.

Coral reefs are beloved by scientists because they are an ideal location to study the relationships between species. On a coral reef, everything is interlinked and reliant on other species for survival. The loss of even a single species could have a huge effect on the overall health of the reef. Cyanide kills coral polyps and algae: It is thought that 1 square metre of reef is destroyed per fish caught using cyanide. This has disastrous consequences for the whole local ecosystem because corals provide food, shelter and breeding grounds for many inhabitants of the reef. Fish directly caught using cyanide suffer from a wide range of symptoms. Some die upon exposure, and still more die in transit. Symptoms suffered by affected fish include having difficulty with breathing and movement, mirroring the effects of high exposure in humans, and those fish that end up in aquariums have shorter lifespans and illegally suffer other ill effects such as cancer as a result of their exposure to cyanide. Cyanide can also kill other, non-target fish in the

area where the cyanide was used. These fish have the potential to die and be predated, therefore introducing cyanide into the food chain.

---

Fish directly caught using cyanide suffer from a wide range of symptoms. Some die upon exposure, and still more die in transit.

---

Cyanide is not the only way. There are sustainable fishing methods out there, viable alternatives to poisoning our planet's very lifeblood. Change is by no means impossible. Although cyanide fishing is already illegal in most places, government and law enforcement tend to be lax in policing of the ban. As such, an important starting point in the fight against cyanide use in the fishing industry would be an improvement in efforts to police the live fishing industry and weeding out of cyanide fishing. Community involvement and education are also vital - local communities are the most affected and have a vested interest in sustainable practices to ensure the future of their village and a livelihood for their children. They have a right to protect their resources.

The ocean affects us all. It covers three-quarters of the earth's surface. It keeps our planet warm and provides food and livelihood to a billion people worldwide. It is a vital resource, and one that must be protected at all costs. Cyanide fishing has negative effects socially, economically and environmentally. It's affecting millions of people, from impacting upon their ability to support themselves to damaging their health or cultural traditions. Environmentally it is disastrous, destroying some of our most critical and delicate ecosystems. Cyanide fishing must be stopped. It will be difficult, but it can be done. This is a step we must take if we want to preserve our reefs and therefore our way of life.

## In our world today it is very unlikely...

---

Tom Tribe Y13

---

In our world today it is very unlikely that any of us are not regularly exposed to news of current events during our day to day lives even if it is not a topic we are particularly interested or passionate about. Our constant and increasingly frequent consultation of social media and the internet coupled with traditional news mediums such as TV and newspapers mean that it is almost impossible for any of us to escape from. For this reason, I am sure you will not need me to describe the picture of the world that is presented by the media.

But I'm going to do it anyway.

Things are going from bad to worse. War, violence, natural disasters and corruption are on the rise. The Earth is running out of resources, while climate change is causing an upcoming apocalypse. The gap between the rich and the poor is only increasing while the conflict in Syria rages on. All this while Donald Trump sits in the White House apparently poised to begin World War 3.

Studies in America and the UK have shown that up to 90% of all news stories on TV and in newspapers are negative. The implications of these findings are that up to 90% of all reportable events in the world are negative. I don't know about you but to me it is impossible to believe that of all the noteworthy events taking place across the globe each day only a small proportion are positive. This realisation got me thinking. Why is it that the news presents an overly negative perspective on global events and what effects could this have on the people who are continually exposed to it? People such as you and I.

Now, I'm not for a second going to dispute the fact that all of the things listed above are huge issues. There are some massive problems in our world today adversely affecting the lives of

hundreds of millions of people. Terrorism is on the rise, overfishing and the pollution of our seas are real issues and the list of endangered species is only growing longer. However what I am going to argue is what the world's media seems to have forgotten. It is not all bad. While there are hundreds of problems in our world there are millions of people having a positive impact on society every single day that never get a mention. It is easy to be aware of the bad aspects of our world but much harder to be aware of the good. I'm not saying we should ignore the negative stories by any means but I am going to argue that this incessant stream of negativity is both overdramatic and misleading. Despite what most media outlets would have you believe there are plenty of reasons to be positive. Saying everything is fine is ridiculous but so is ignoring progress.

---

Studies in America and the UK  
have shown that up to 90% of all  
news stories on TV and in  
newspapers are negative.

---

Step by step, day by day, year by year the world is improving for the vast majority of human beings. Global poverty has fallen from over 60% to under 10% in the last 50 years. The number of primary school children missing out on education has fallen from 28% in 1970 to 9% today. Worldwide child mortality rates have plummeted from one in every six children dying before the age of 5, 50 years ago to 1 in every 22 today. Global life expectancy has doubled over the last 200 years and since WW2 we have been living in the most peaceful era of human history. Fewer people are dying in conflict this century than ever before. As a species, as a global society, tremendous progress has been made. So why is this positive version of events rarely reported on in the world's media?

It is because of the very nature of news that slow progress, however momentous, is not reported. The news has evolved into essentially a play by play sports commentary focusing on the most recent, discrete events. As positive and negative newsworthy events tend to happen on very different timelines with bad things happening quickly and good things evolving slowly over time, it is the negative events that get the most notice in the world's media. Stories about gradual improvements rarely make headline news even if they are occurring on a dramatic scale. If, say a newspaper was published every 50 years rather than daily, or even hourly, then these positive global changes would surely be reported. But with the nature of the world's media being as it is today, these positive changes often fly under the radar when opposed with the latest catastrophe. Our miraculous advancement as a society is way too slow and fragmented to ever be reported as headline news.

There is also the distinct possibility we, as the consumers of the news and media, have trained the journalists to focus on the negative aspects of the world as this is what gains more attention or sells better. People often say they would prefer to hear good news as opposed to bad news but is this really true? It has been discovered through various studies that humans have a natural and collective negativity bias. As a species, potentially as a result of our evolutionary history, we pay much more attention to dangerous or threatening statements than positive ones. We have evolved to react quickly and powerfully to potential threats. Bad news could represent a signal that danger is approaching and therefore it demands our attention far more than good news. Similarly, journalists are attracted to reporting bad news such as sudden disasters as they provide more compelling viewing. This leads to more attention equating to a greater profit for the news corporation. In the intensely competitive world of media, journalists and editors have obvious incentives to use emotionally powerful visuals

and increasingly shocking storylines to maintain an audience. The availability of bad news is also greater than ever before with billions of smartphones turning every individual into a reporter. This presents us with a question. Is it our hunger for negativity that has created the negative perspective of the world portrayed by the world's media or is it the relentless stream of catastrophes and disasters that has enhanced our thirst for ever more shocking stories? It is a chicken and the egg scenario and there is no definitive answer, rather it is likely both causes work together to push the news into a downward spiral of increasing negativity.

This brings me to my second question. What consequences does constant exposure to this unflinching negativity have on people both on a neurological level and on a person's well being? When we are faced with images or recordings of violence we know that what we are witnessing is categorically different to actual violence and therefore we don't process this input as threatening stimuli. However what we do internalize is the negative stimuli which can affect both our mood and cause us to feel more negatively towards the environment generally.

Seeing the world in an overly negative light can lead to general pessimism and world-weariness as well as the development of a fatalistic attitude. A person with a fatalistic attitude will believe that the future is set. In other words nothing they do will make any difference to the outcome of events. This can lead to general apathy within a population with people asking questions such as "Why should I vote or give money to charity? It won't make any difference" or else developing a belief that their opinion is not important. It is believed that this attitude played a key role in the high number of non-voters in both Donald Trump's election victory and the Brexit referendum in the UK.

On top of this, some psychologists argue exposure to negative and violent media can have

serious and long lasting effects on an individual's mental health that go far beyond pessimism or apathy. Studies have found that journalists who work in newsroom settings where they are constantly bombarded by images or accounts of graphic or uncensored violence scored higher on indexes usually constructed to diagnose PTSD. They showed a greater likelihood of avoiding social situations, general anxiety, higher alcohol consumption as well as depression.

These findings have been mirrored in the general population as well with heavy news watchers having higher rates of stress and anxiety. Negative media that puts an emphasis on suffering or on the emotional, human side of a story have been found to be the worst offenders and can significantly change an individual's mood.

Negative news can also distort a person's perception of reality. People are known to estimate the probability or frequency of an event by the ease with which instances of this event come to mind. This known as Availability Heuristic. In many aspects of life this is a reliable mechanism. However, it has been found that events that are gory, distinctive or upsetting turn up higher than they should in the minds figurative "search engine". Effectively people overestimate the likelihood of negative, shocking events as they are more memorable. For this reason, a study in America saw people rank tornadoes as a greater cause of death than asthma whereas in fact asthma kills 80 times as more per year. This is presumably because tornadoes make for better TV. In a similar way plane crashes always make the news whereas car crashes rarely do and therefore having fear of flying is common whereas having a fear of driving is rare. This is despite the fact that 1.3 million people die in car crashes on average every year globally compared to less than 600 in plane crashes.

---

People overestimate the  
likelihood of negative, shocking  
events as they are more  
memorable

---

I have now outlined how and why media portrays the world in an overly negative light and the effects this can have on us as individuals and as a community. So what can we do about it? Well... probably nothing if I'm being honest. It's all well and good saying that the media has a responsibility to portray an accurate representation of global affairs. However, in reality, the media outlets exist for one reason only, to sell themselves and make a profit. As long as negative media gathers more attention and sells better than positive stories, the media will continue to be predominantly negative. While bad things have not been eradicated from the world there will be enough negative stories to fill a news program, website or newspaper.

Therefore the best thing to do when viewing the incessant stream of negative news is to keep in mind that if a positive thing had happened in the world, would I have heard about it?? The answer is probably not. For every negative event, every war, murder or natural disaster there are countless more examples of human kindness and progress that do not make the news. Negative events are the exception rather than the norm and it is this beyond all else that makes them newsworthy. As long as it is the negative stories that shock and alarm us we can be assured that good in the world vastly outweighs the bad. Our society is not perfect, it is flawed and terrible things do happen every day all over the globe and this should not be ignored. But despite what the media would have us believe it is not the end of the world.

## Quentin Tarantino

Lewis Johnson Y12

Quentin Tarantino is a Tennessee born director, writer and actor who is widely known for his touchy subject matter, inimitable storylines and eccentric use of violence. He's a unique, hard-headed and interesting character who subverts social norms in an allusive manner. This is why I chose to research him. Prior to my research, I had the hypothesis that 'Tarantino has an individual style of directing and enforces it well to veer from the crowd of the directors of his generation.' This has been further supported by my questions of how he executes his style, how others feel about it and why he uses so much violence.

### How does Tarantino execute his unique style of film?

My sources have concluded that Tarantino takes his time to perfect his films and this is shown by the amount of detail and deeper thinking included. In an interview with the New York Times writer Charles McGrath, Tarantino said that he can lock himself in his house and just "eat and watch movies" rarely going outside for months at a time. His techniques used like broad soundtracks (western, 60s, 70s, rap, electric guitars), captioning, colouring (rich), shadowing, alternative endings, landscapes and camera angles are like art. These have created heroes and villains, given the films a narrative feel, presented themes of hope and opportunity and displayed aspects of our harsh histories. In *Django Unchained* (Text 4), there is a slave owner prowling up and down a cotton picking field. He is shot off his horse and we see a picturesque close-up of his blood spattered across these pure white cotton plants. This was powerful because it showed the beginning of an uprising. Death was paid to a deserved villain on their unjust territory and as said by Tarantino in 2012 promotional interview for the film (Text 5), black males were given "a cool folkloric hero that could actually be

empowering, and actually pay back blood for blood." Vogel adds that due to Tarantino's upbringing and lifestyle, there is an inclusion of blackness in his film. He quotes "From *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) to *Pulp Fiction* (1994) to *Jackie Brown* (1997), his films are populated with intertextual allusions to 1970s-era Blaxploitation cinema. His use of black music, including funk, R&B and hip-hop, all signify a particular conception of blackness that for Tarantino is both hip and camp; it embodies a kind of neo-Mailerian, postmodern black cool." Supporting this, there is a scene where Django (Jamie Foxx) is outnumbered in a large shoot-out. He has a gun in each hand and as he elegantly takes out multiple men, a Tupac Shakur and James Brown song is played in the background. This is an individual feature that can be seen as a tribute to the black community. As a small act of repayment, Tarantino is exposing America's prejudiced history. In *Inglorious Basterds* (Text 2), there is a scene where three important spies are sitting in an underground bar with a cunning Nazi. The American spy asks for three whiskeys using his middle three fingers to gesture. Germans use their thumb while displaying this, the cunning Nazi realised this and a large gunfight broke out. Everyone except one spy died in the room. This great detail played a pivotal role in the film and as Smollett mentioned in my interview with him, violent scenes are used to carry on the plot of the film. Smollett also mentioned that Tarantino seems quite hard headed and awkward (Text 6). This is why his cameos are cool; we get to see who is usually behind the camera and for those who already know about him, we see a different side to him because he is completely in his comfort zone doing what he loves. From this evidence, we can conclude that Tarantino's films are produced with a unique style that requires complex thought. He achieves this through an array of film techniques, detailed research and including

personal cameos. He also refers to different aspects of pop culture when relevant (Tupac Shakur and James Brown song). As a whole, these can result in films like *Inglorious Basterds* and *Django Unchained* re-telling history in a one-of-a-kind, challenging way.

---

“I demand the right to write any character in the world that I want to write. I demand the right to be them, I demand the right to think them, I demand to tell the truth as I see they are”

---

**How do the public and surrounding directors feel about Tarantino's films/style?** Although Tarantino has many in support of him, he has received a lot of criticism and backlash due to the delivery of his films. *Django Unchained* has received the most. Vogel writes in Text 5, “In the first wave of responses, the criticism of *Django* was most commonly centred around five issues: (1) its historical inaccuracies and anachronisms, (2) its use of the N-word, (3) its use of genre (i.e. the Spaghetti western/Blaxploitation) to address the horrors of slavery, (4) the white male identity, and sometimes inflammatory comments, of its director, and (5) the exploitation of trauma for entertainment.” Spike Lee has opposed Tarantino for many years now and *Django Unchained* “opened” the “floodgates” (Text 7). After reading the script, he refused to watch the film out of respect for his ancestors and expressed his strong opinions on social media and further: “It Was a Holocaust. My Ancestors are Slaves. Stolen from Africa. I Will Honour Them” (Text 5). Some perceived this as “tethered to old-fashioned notions of historical realism and identity politics.” In contrast, others agreed and added that, “it not only cheapened and reduced the experience of slavery, but that it’s storyline and characters largely conformed to old formulas and types, including “magic negroes” (*Django*), hypersexualized women (*Sheba*), Uncle Toms

(*Stephen*), and white saviours (*Dr. King Schultz*)” (Text 5). Spike Lee also criticises Tarantino’s use of the N-word saying in a 1997 *Variety* Interview, “I’m not against the word. And some people speak that way. But Quentin is infatuated with that word” (Text 7). Tarantino argues it is for historical authenticity and no one can say that it was used more in *Django Unchained* than in 1858 Mississippi (Text 5). IFC writer Ron Mwangaguhunga believes that it’s an “overly emotional argument” that gives an “almost sacred totemic power to the n-word” (Text 7). He doesn’t believe Tarantino is trying to display any personal racial superiority. Instead, Mwangaguhunga believes he is trying to utilise a hateful, terrible word to show the “moral decay” of characters like Calvin Candie. ”

Another person with a strong stance against *Django Unchained* is American talk show host Tavis Smiley. He says, “...If you can make that torment more and more palatable by putting the right soundtrack around it, by casting the right actors, by throwing in a few jokes here and there, you can make slavery easier to swallow, and you can sell it. But it completely distorts the truth about our history.” Many white reviewers have agreed. In an interview with Charlie Rose, Tarantino said, “I demand the right to write any character in the world that I want to write. I demand the right to be them, I demand the right to think them, I demand to tell the truth as I see they are. To say that I cannot do that because I am white, but black people can is racist” (Text 5). Black slavery is a delicate subject and I agree that Tarantino could’ve made changes to his approach with the film. I’m not aware of how he researched for the film or what help he received but I definitely think with such topics, outside perspectives and guidance should be sought. Others who side with Tarantino include Jaime Foxx, Samuel Jackson, Antoine Fuqua and public scholar Henry Louis Gates. Gates believes “anyone has the right to write about any subject available to be written about”, “that’s what art is

all about — that’s what the pursuit of truth and the representations of historical events imaginatively of necessity must be about.” He mentioned that having the right to write about a specific subject does not guarantee effectiveness. Tarantino was effective and broke down the wall of engaging in blackness is “perilous territory” for white American artists. Vogel included that “the fact that it frightened and enraged the sensibilities of most white conservatives only seemed to add to its efficacy” (Text 5). Mwangaguhunga suggests the problem may be generational. Younger African-Americans like Nas understand “organically” what Tarantino is trying to do with the film. “The controversy, of course, has not hurt *Django Unchained*’s underlying message” (Text 7). These waves and contradicting perspectives all back the idea that Tarantino may have a problem with his execution. I think he thoroughly thought through how to create *Django Unchained* and as described in Text 5, maybe he was ultimately revealing “the American desire to be done with slavery and its legacy once and for all rather than confront its complexity.” I enjoyed the film, I believe there is a flaw in his actions because slavery in film is a subject that requires guidance but my overall perspective coincides with the British journalist Krishnan Guru Murthy’s: “I think people need to look at things like this... I mean, I actually think that would be the beginning of healing—if people dealt with it more... it is a problem for both blacks and whites.” Tarantino is engaging in the topic and educating those who lack this knowledge of history. Many directors sway from this because they think they would be walking on eggshells but Tarantino faces it head-on. Some topics need to be approached in particular ways but I ultimately believe society has evolved to be more accepting and open-minded and I think the more we learn about this topic, the more we evolve ourselves.

---

Mwangaguhunga says violence and other controversial themes are a part of the “the palette of a writer”, they “chain” the characters and “harness” the story.”

---

### **Why does Tarantino use so much violence?**

Tarantino is widely known for his excessive use of strong violence. Whether it’s a blood-filled shooting, a scalping, heads being beaten with bats or the carving of a swastika into a Nazi head, the camera sees it all (Text 2 & 4). Smollett mentioned violence and other controversial themes are used to carry on the plot of the film and impact the storyline, as described earlier with the *Inglorious Basterds* bar scene. It is delivered for the shock effect and in a way that is unique to him as the gore is always ten times what it is in real life (Text 6). It separates him from most directors. It’s not often in a film that you see someone’s head get cut off followed by a fountain of spraying. This isn’t always the case though, he also uses violence to further build on themes and ideas. There is a scene in *Django Unchained* where two white slave owners sit and watch their Mandingo fighters wrestle. Without weapons, these two black men go full force with brutal punches and hits until one gets their arm snapped and eyes gouged out. The white slave owner orders his victor to “finish him” and the loser dies with a hammer to the head. The slaves are humiliated and this raw fighting is a sense of torture. In order to survive, they had to defeat their allies and go against their own cause. This use of violence gave Americans a clear image of their country’s harsh history and opened up their eyes. It led me to think about if this is occurring today in modern times and why someone would do this? In relation to Tarantino’s use of violence, Bell Hooks (Gloria Jean Watkins) wrote in her 1996 book “Reel to Real”: “Tarantino has the real nihilism of our times down. Here presents the ultimate in ‘white cool’: a hardcore cynical vision

that would have everyone see racism, sexism, homophobia but behave as though none of that...really matters, or if it does it means nothing 'cause none of it is gonna change, 'cause the real deal is that domination is here to stay, going nowhere and, everybody is in on the act...Tarantino's films are the ultimate in sexy cover-ups... They titillate with subversive possibility...but then everything kinda comes right back to normal. And normal is finally a multicultural world where white supremacy is intact" (Text 5). Smollett mentions that Tarantino "subverts expectation, looks beneath surface and flips the Hollywood story" (Text 6). Similar to this, Mwangaguhunga asks, "How can filmmakers accurately depict the darkness that exists in the world without descending into the ugliness and the muck?" This type of film exists to "expose flaws, to make explicit such greys that the black and white formula that mainstream Hollywood ignores" (Text 7). Tarantino has spoken of wanting to see the way blood looked spattered on cotton or the music of Tupac and James Brown behind an epic shootout. He has had a lifelong dream of recreating "cinematically that world of the antebellum South" and making it an "exciting adventure." Tarantino describes his process as "taking what already exists and riffing on it." This may not be the most considerate approach when delving into the topic of black slavery. He believes if you are to make a movie on a subject like slavery, putting a 21st-century viewer into that time period, the ugly things you see and hear are just a part of the parcel. If viewers don't want to see it, don't watch the film." Mwangaguhunga says violence and other controversial themes are a part of the "the palette of a writer", they "chain" the characters and "harness" the story." The use of this "holds the mirror up to nature and reveals great insight into characters of the film and its time and place.

We are forced to acknowledge that in films like *Inglorious Basterds* and *Django Unchained*, strong violence was a part of their era. These sources allow us to conclude that Tarantino uses violence to develop the film's storyline, characters, ideas and themes. The way he delivers violence is creative, stylistic and unique to him. I can't be sure of his thought process while developing the violence in his films but I hope he considered the flow-on effects. Black people for example, in *Django Unchained*, they are the black community are a brutal representation of what their ancestors went through, it may be inaccurate and this can be disheartening. When I experienced it, I cringed but didn't look away. This made me question when is too much. How much more can the average person tolerate? When does a film become so violent and gore-filled that it's a genre of its own? Is there a level of violence that shouldn't be shown on screen?

In conclusion, Tarantino is a unique director. My sources have proven my hypothesis to be correct but after reading about those critical of Tarantino, my viewpoint has been challenged. My perspective has become more complex and complicated because I've learnt both deeper reasoning to his actions and how the public and surrounding directors perceive him. Other people's opinions of him have developed my one. Overall, I enjoy his films and admire how artistic he creates them. They are powerful and dramatic but the way he has delivered them may need more consideration. As he delves into strong subjects like slavery, I think much research and exploration is required. His use of violence is an aspect of his individual style, it further improves his film and forces the viewer to think beneath the surface. He's a hard-headed, offbeat person and that is why I find him so interesting.

## *Ladybird* film review

Beth Williams Y13

---

Our lives are shaped by the opinions of our mothers. We are always trying to please them and be the person they want us to be. The time of transition between high school and university is one that we are going through. It is also during this time that we are trying to find ourselves and learn to stand on our own two feet, but first we must first understand where we came from. After seeing TV shows and films throughout my childhood which portray idyllic mother-daughter relationships, it caused me to question if there was something wrong with my own relationship. But there isn't. Every daughter's relationship with their mother is slightly different and different isn't always bad. Director, Greta Gerwig's debut film, *Lady Bird*, is an ode to teenage years and finding ourselves amongst the mess that is our lives. Finally, a teen drama done right.

Yesterday I went to the Victoria University of Wellington open day. I spent the whole day thinking of my future. It is crazy to think that some of the people I walked past might be my new friends next year. My whole life I have dreamed of travelling. The American chick-flick college films which are my guilty pleasure, depict teens travelling away from home for college. But I have come to the realisation that I will be staying right where I am next year. At home with my parents, who are controlling and strict. Deep down I know they want what's best. This isn't a dig at their love or parental skills, it's a way for me to better understand their side of the situation. And *Lady Bird* allows me to see that.

I can only imagine what the mothers in these films (and in real life) are going through. Their babies are becoming adults and leaving home, entering a big wide world full of danger. The film is set in the early 2000s. Security is very tense in the United States and Marion is worried that her daughter will be in danger when she is alone in

the world. She is also worried that *Lady Bird* will see how little they have and become even more embarrassed by her family. However, Marion is very bad at communicating these things to her daughter and comes across as passive-aggressive giving the assumption that she does not like her daughter very much. Marion insists that they can hardly afford to send her to a state school. In attempts to leave home for university, *Lady Bird* asks her easy going and good-humoured father for help. When secret gets out, it drives a seemingly irreparable wedge between mother and daughter. Resulting in very limited communication between the two for the remainder of the film. I found the lack of communication one of the most emotional moments. Marion does love her daughter but is very bad at showing it. Her fears for her daughter are shown through insults and criticism.

The film helped me to see where my own mother is coming from. The mum wasn't a bad person, partly because I saw aspects of my own mum in her, she was very caring and protective of her daughter. Nobody was a villain. They were all just struggling. The film teaches us a lot about teenage girls (like me) and encourages us to talk about our problems with our mothers instead of bottling them up. Because that doesn't work and only makes the situation worse.

I think that the film opens a whole new world for mothers and daughters. Throughout most teenage dramas and coming of age films, the protagonist is a teen portrayed as 'good' and the parental figure is shown as 'evil'. This film provided me with a refreshing experience in that it did not favour the underdog and instead there were no 'good' characters. All were flawed and in desperate need of seeing each other. *Lady Bird* actually helped me to see my mother through a different light. Quite often, we only see our parents as the enemy, but watching this film, I

realised that our mothers show their love and protection via rules and worry.

Being a teenage girl is hard. We must deal with society's expectations, mental health and the changing dynamics of our mother-daughter relationships. Body image issues are a big issue threatening the lives of many teenagers today. Especially teenage girls with their mother's off-handed comments. They may not realise how harmful these 'weight loss tips' are, but we certainly feel it.

---

Quite often, we only see our parents as the enemy, but watching this film, I realised that our mothers show their love and protection via rules and worry.

---

The mother in the film *Lady Bird*, Marion, is very controversial. Often raising the discussion of whether she loved her daughter. Although it may not be clear, Marion did want what is best for her daughter. It just came across as criticism and insults. To me, one of the most relatable mother-daughter scenes in the film was when Lady Bird and Marion are shopping for prom dresses. Lady Bird complains that the dress is too tight, and Marion offers little support to her struggles. "Well, I suggested you not have that second helping of pasta," Marion replies through the door. "Honey, you seem upset about it, and I'm trying to help," she adds as her daughter cries out in protest, "You're giving me an eating disorder!" Lady Bird is visibly hurt, "Why can't you say I look nice?" Marion replies, "I thought you didn't even care what I think... Do you want me to lie?" Lady Bird replies, "No, I just wish... I wish that you liked me." Marion's voice softens, "Of course I love you." Lady Bird comes out, looking at her mother with question, "But do you like me?" Surprised and faltering, Marion replies, "...I want you to be the very best version of yourself you can be." Is wanting what is best for someone and wanting them to be their best version the

same thing? I think so. Marion wants her daughter to be the greatest form of herself, however, she must realise that her daughter is not a copy of her. Lady Bird has her own style, which her mother might not see eye to eye on. She wants her daughter to be her idea of the best version. But that is not what her daughter is like. It is important for mothers to recognise that their daughters may have different likes and dislikes and it means the world to us if they also support these.

I think a lot of mums have trouble letting go and accepting that their daughters are their own person. They want to protect us, but at the same time, we are trying to figure out who we are, and the only way to do that is on our own and making our own mistakes. It helped me to see someone my age succeeding in their dreams, despite what might lie in their way. I think that this is an important film to watch with your mother, because it shows that you are not alone in this world, many others are going through the same thing and although you may not see it, our mothers love us so much. It is important for our mothers to realise that we are adults and we can live in the world without them. When we leave home or even grow as a person, our mothers think that we will stay the same, but we all change. And much to our mother's disappointment, we don't stay little girls forever.

Throughout the film I found myself hoping that both parties would come to terms with their love for one another. I felt sorry for Lady Bird because my relationship with my mum is better than theirs and I felt that they are missing out on so much. I connected with Lady Bird so much that I started crying and when I looked at mum she was crying too. The film brought us closer together in some ways. It was the first time I had said that she couldn't go out to see it with someone else, she had to go with me.

However, in some respects, I found the film almost too real. We go to the movies to escape

reality, but this film hit a little too close to home. It was like an out-of-body experience. I wasn't transported to some ideal world, where there are happy endings. To me, that was refreshing, because the film was so real and true to my, and I'm sure many other girls', lives. It reassured me to see that other girls are going through exactly what I'm going through. I'd sit next to my mum and almost every second scene related to our own relationship and conversations that we'd had in the past couple of days. Whenever these came up on the screen, mum would reach over and pinch my arm, see- every girl thinks that too.

Gerwig captured the essence of coming-of-age and mashed it with raw emotions and a tragic mother-daughter love story. Leaving many (including me) shocked at how relatable it was. The film is a portrayal of the ups and downs of a mother-daughter relationship and helps teenage girls to realise how we relate to one another, and how to do better. The film highlights the importance of familial love and helps us to understand that our parents also have lives and problems. It serves as a reminder that sometimes we need to take a step back and look at how we relate to those we love most. If, as a viewer, I can see that Marion loves her daughter, but Lady Bird doesn't think so, then it brings up the question;

are daughters blind to their mother's love during their teenage years? And when do we realise how much they love us?

---

We go to the movies to escape reality, but this film hit a little too close to home. It was like an out-of-body experience.

---

Lady Bird offers up a "bad mum" and explores the way a mother with limited resources (and like all mothers; a lack of patience) expresses her love and affection toward her daughter- sometimes in harmful ways. Thus, making the films unique in the emotional depth and the dynamics in which they explore. The success of Lady Bird reminds us that this story is universally relatable and all the other 'perfect mother-daughter relationships' are far from the median experience. We all fight with our mothers. Lady Bird relates to most of us and our turbulent, but loving relationship, with our mothers. I think that you, especially if you are a teenage girl nearing the time where you will leave home, should watch this film. If you have a struggling relationship with your mum, it really does help you to understand why it is that way and why they act in the way they do.



## Put your time and pens to Something Worthy

---

Liv Sinclair Y12

---

Oscar Wilde famously denounced sarcasm as the lowest form of wit.

While you critics of the humble pun may disagree (and claim the bun is the lowest form of wheat), deriding a person and then laughing at their expense is just cheap. Cruel sarcasm, derogatory one-liners, shallow toilet jokes, obnoxious noises and weird running memes: all squat on certainly the lower rungs of the humour ladder.

The best comedians can strike the right chords without resorting to the low struts. With wit and words (usually paired with impeccable timing and a clever gesture or two), they can reduce us to a guffawing, happy mess – without the collateral damage of some snarky remark.

We appreciate this type of crafted humour to varying degrees (depending on our personal sense of humour and character), but you'll agree most of us can laugh along with a few comic greats, and so we should. While good comedy makes us laugh, it also provides an ideal platform

to openly criticise our flaws, under the (relatively) safe guise of geniality. Often comedic sketches spotlight more than a few closeted skeletons.

As the world warms literally and politically, we should hold our ability to laugh at (and with) ourselves very dear.

Our enlightening and empowering sense, that is. For while we uncouth youths look to vacate the nest and impress society, we sometimes like to draw our privates on tables, and this is neither well-crafted nor funny.

Seriously bottom-rung stuff.

That we take pleasure in these pathetic little scribbles is embarrassing. I'm sure you know what I'm talking about. Who hasn't unwittingly discovered some dilated, disproportionate member drawn (or worse, carved) on their chair or desk?

Take any exposed public sculpture/mural/poster/vacant surface: some bright spark with a sharpie is just bound to have ruined it. Vandalism and contempt for property aside, for what purpose? They say the more something is withheld, the more (perceived) power and meaning it gains.

So, do such scribbles evoke a sense of pride?

Are they borne of fear, ignorance, or boredom? Dissatisfaction, envy perhaps?

---

As the world warms literally and politically, we should hold our ability to laugh at (and with) ourselves very dear.

---

I'm sure none of these are reasons we'd happily admit to if personally confronted, but it's a bit of a giveaway if some of us feel the need to draw

genitals everywhere. For holistic reasons (and just to show a bit of compassion), we need to call people out on this one.

Our crude little doodles are an eyesore. Often worryingly out of proportion and grossly exaggerated, they're potentially making room for unrealistic expectations and warped desires, and definitely implying we have them. It is equally disparaging for members of any sex to portray their own or others' body parts in this way: we are far more than the sum (and the size) of our parts.

Certainly, nude portraits and sculpture have been historically popular and widely celebrated. Indeed, no part of our bodies should be vilified: this just condones unhealthy perspectives and poor body image. But random, distorted depictions on desks are hardly artful, let alone appropriate. They demonstrate general carelessness and great lack of respect for our bodies, every unfortunate viewer and the public spaces we share, and this does not help us prove our maturity and independence at all.

Students, hear my rallying call to arms: let us wage a war on wayward willies and turn our brilliant minds to more pressing matters. Funnily enough, we can laugh without chucking each other under the proverbial bus, and impress without a blemish.

Let's step up the humour ladder, and put our might and sharpies to something worthwhile.

Note: Liv Sinclair was the runner-up in the Katherine Mansfield Short Story Awards, 2018 with the piece 'Gone to Sea'.

You can read it here: <https://cdn-asset-mel-1.airsquare.com/katherinemansfield/library/pdf/4.-gone-to-sea.pdf?201810172148>.

## Essay on the novel

### Because everything is right, but everything is wrong

Emma Coleman Y12

---

Because everything is right, but everything is wrong by Erin Donahue is a book that shows the readers a series of important messages that comment on the nature of humanity itself. Set in New Zealand, we follow the life of an NCEA student Caleb who has developed mental health issues due to the stress and pressure of the school system. This leads Caleb to create Casey, a fictional person who acts as his friend and confidant, and someone who he doesn't realize doesn't exist. The relationship the two share perfectly illustrates the desperation that we, as humans, have for companionship, the urge to not be alone, especially in trying times. We can see perfect examples of this desire, the integral part of who we are as humans, through scenes in the book such as when Casey assaults Caleb, and when Caleb finally realizes that Casey is not real.

The relationship that Caleb and Casey share is one that was forged out of desperation, and one that lead to a toxic and controlling end. When Casey first appears, we have her described to us by Caleb through first person narration, as with the rest of the book. Therefore we as readers are limited to Caleb's narrow view on the events in the novel, and we can only share the same experience as him, so we believe as he did, that Casey was very much a real person. She first appears shortly after Caleb starts year thirteen, where he feels lonely and isolated from his fellow school mates: "they laugh and smile and continue as though I'm not there." Casey is described to us as "a small pale girl I have never seen before. She has light brown hair that ends just before her shoulders." Her appearance is one similar to that of a ghost, fitting as Casey is merely a figment of Caleb's imagination, she's cheerful and bold, abrasive and brash. She represents all that Caleb used to be, and more importantly, she is a physical manifestation of his negative thoughts,

that he calls the fear, and the deadness. Caleb forms a strong bond with Casey, believing her to be the only one who truly understands him. "She asks the real questions". As humans we crave this kind of understanding. The knowledge that as bad things can get, we will always have someone on our side, an anchor in a storm. Without relationships, we would not be able to function, driven mad by the sense that we are alone. Caleb had convinced himself that he was alone, despite obviously having friends and a loving family. He believes, as many of us do, that his plight is one that only he knows. Casey is engineered to be someone who does understand his struggle, but also someone who is better than himself, and idealistic version of him. But as their relationship grows stronger, she becomes less of a friend and more of an abuser, taunting him, and convincing him that he is not sick. "Did they give you a sex change too? Are you on your period?" His mind rebels against him getting help, and tries to pull him back to how he once was, to reverse a change; and Caleb believes it, because he doesn't want to lose Casey. His human nature was willing to sacrifice his mental health if only he weren't alone again. This is similar to people clinging unhealthily to the memory of a lost loved one, refusing to get rid of furniture, not spreading ashes, if only to keep up the idea that they are not alone. Erin Donahue show us that Caleb was so obsessed with being understood that he would rather create an abusive figment of imagination rather than risk someone mock him for what he was feeling; not understanding that in order to be helped, Caleb had to reach out.

One of the scenes in which we can see the depths of Caleb's denial that anything was wrong, that Casey wasn't real, was in the scene which Caleb harms himself in a hospital, believing it was Casey who was hurting him. Humanity forms relationships with other living things quickly, and

are often reluctant to get rid of those bonds, at the risk of being isolated. While Caleb is in a mental ward of a hospital, Casey appears suddenly in the middle of the night and tells him to follow her. He does because “I swore that I would never let her go again” His longing for an understanding friend has become so strong, Caleb will go to great lengths to never lose her again, to never be alone again, a concept that he has convinced himself of. We as readers know that Caleb is not in fact alone, we know that his brother, parents and friends all care about him, but Caleb, has become conflicted. Despite instinctively knowing that he is loved, Caleb also knows that what he is feeling is somehow wrong. He believes he has no right to feel anxious or depressed, and yet he can’t stop the emotions. “The fear is heavy metal, loud and all consuming”. In a state of confusion over what he feels, Caleb has begun to punish himself for having mental health issues by driving people away, convinced he is hated. And yet his human nature can not totally block out the need to be loved, and Casey is born. However the confusion, fear, deadness are strong enough to overcome this urge to be close, and he instead punishes himself for being in a mental ward when someone else could need it more: “why haven’t I been thrown out, and someone more urgent take my bed?” Casey becomes his weapon of choice, she punches him in the stomach and ribs over and over saying “you don’t need to be here” And yet when the abrasions are discovered he doesn’t give her up. His fears and anger fight a battle with his human desire to be loved. Abusive relationships in real life are often like this, as the person being abused may have been conditioned into thinking the abuser is the only person who will ever love them. Donahue allows us a deeper insight into human nature, as we can understand through Casey that an urge to be loved can drown out any warning signs, vanquish any fears. Love can be powerful enough to act as both an antidote and a poison.

When Caleb discovers that Casey is not real, we are lead through Caleb’s thought process. We are also introduced to the idea that Casey is fictional in the same way that Caleb is. We are in his shoes. “Has anyone seen Casey?” This is a question not just asked of Caleb but of the readers. We can recall that Casey wasn’t on any social media. “I’m the 77th person called Casey Stevens and this one isn’t even female” and that “People looked at me funny as they pass” whenever he is talking to her. We come to this conclusion before perhaps Caleb does. We can feel his heart break. Donahue has tapped into our humanity. She has made us feel as though we are Caleb, so that we can better understand the heart break that follows. So that we have the utmost sympathy, but also so that we can achieve a greater understanding of the need to be loved, to not be alone. She shows us what could happen if it were just taken away. Caleb’s thoughts are bare and filled with raw heartbreak, confusion. “She’s real/She’s not real” his worst fears are realized, his nightmare coming to life. He is alone. And yet there is still the voice that tells him he deserved it. This self-loathing and heartbreak led Caleb to stand on the edge of a road, to walk into traffic. It is here that we as readers reach the great understanding, that to be loved, to not be alone, to be understood is so important, so integral to our human nature that sometimes without it, the alternative could be death. In New Zealand there is one of the highest teen suicide rates in the world, and for many it is because of a similar situation to Caleb’s. Yet, even in the face of all the betrayal and heartbreak, we are introduced to a new alternative by the author. The idea that even though it might seem like you can’t win, there is always a way out, and that way is shown to us through Zoe, a new character and Caleb’s friend who coaxes him off the road. “I’m here! I’m real! Don’t leave me!” Donahue has shown us in the end, that sometimes what we think we need isn’t always the case. Caleb thought he deserved Casey, he thought that he deserved pain, but he was wrong. We all deserve happiness, we all deserve our own

'Zoe' and Donahue shows us that sometimes we just have to wait for it, but it will come.

Because everything is right, but everything is wrong by Erin Donahue is a book with a lot of important messages which the author presents to us by immersing the readers into the life of the

main character Caleb. This allows us to understand the human nature of needing companionship, by showing us through different scenes that no one deserves to be alone, but more importantly, you are never alone, you just need to wait for the right person.



## Connections essay: What does 'human' mean?

---

Emma Hogan Y13

---

### Introduction:

One theme that has been questioned and explored universally by different cultures and people throughout human history, is the simple question of what 'human' even means. How this question has been asked and how it has been interpreted has changed as our understanding of science and our place in the universe has evolved. I wanted to analyse literature that asked this same question in very different ways and compare the opinions of the authors to my own views after reading each of their works. The texts I have chosen are all quite different. The first of them, Frankenstein by Mary Shelley was published in 1818 and is therefore written in a very different style to the more modern texts. Planet of the Apes by Pierre Boulle was published in 1963, as the French book La Planete des Singes, of which I have read a translation. Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep was published in 1968 and is an iconic example of science fiction literature from the time, and Clan of the Cave Bear is a 1980 novel by Jean. M Auel that resulted from her love of anthropology.

To better compare and contrast these four very different texts, I have developed three key questions to answer; "In what way did the authors explore the theme of what makes us human?", "What are the similarities and differences in how the theme is treated in these texts?", and "What were the conclusions of these authors and is the reader inclined to agree?".

### In what way did the authors explore the themes of what makes us human?

The first text I read is Frankenstein by Mary Shelley. Frankenstein tells the story of scientist Victor Frankenstein who discovers the secret to granting life to matter. At first he is enthusiastic and happy about the prospects of his new creation. *"A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs'."* However, upon finishing the creation he realises he has made a creature that is ugly and monstrous in appearance. After the monster escapes his apartment, it learns speech and kindness from observing a family of local villagers, and begins to do them favours to help them out. He stops stealing their food as he realises it will harm the family, and collects wood for them and leaves it outside their door. One day he musters the courage to attempt to befriend them. After initially getting along well with the blind father, the rest of the family sees his appearance, and flees in repulsion. In anger at his own ugly looks the creature becomes much more monstrous. *"When I looked around I saw and heard of none like me. Was I, then, a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled and whom all men disowned?"* He murders an innocent man and frames someone else to get to his creator. Once he finds Victor, he implores him to create a mate, similar in appearance to himself so that he can no longer be lonely. Victor eventually refuses despite the monster's threats to murder his loved ones, and after a number of

murders of his friends and relatives, the novel concludes with Victor chasing the monster to the North Pole where he eventually dies from hypothermia. Upon finding his body the creature realises he is now truly alone, and vows to kill himself.

Throughout the novel, Shelley describes Frankenstein's monster as a hideous, inhuman creation, and the reader is tempted to view him that way also. However, on closer inspection the creature does not behave monstrously at first, he merely mimics the behaviour of those around him. While living with Victor, he mimics his curious, scientific nature wanting to learn more about the world he has been created in. Initially his behaviour towards the local villagers is kind and unselfish as that is how he sees them relate to one another. It is only once he is rejected by the family he wished to befriend that he grows angry and truly becomes the 'monster' we associate with Frankenstein. After resorting to the monstrous act of murder to get to his creator, he reveals that he merely wishes to not be alone - a desire that is the opposite of monstrous. In fact, it is innately human. "*I am malicious because I am miserable.*" When denied the basic human right of companionship, he becomes the true monster of the book, killing many and seemingly without compassion.

However, by reading closely the reader can see that the author is questioning our definitions of monsters and humans. By describing a so-called monster that only learns its bad traits from being treated cruelly and observing the acts of humans, Shelley's creation does not represent something inhuman - it simply holds a mirror up to human nature and strips it of its human appearance. The overall impression left by the book is not that Shelley is suggesting that the monster is inhuman and therefore bad. She is instead suggesting that humans are the true monsters, we just don't recognise it until the same traits are made superficially ugly as well.

---

“I am malicious because I am  
miserable.”

---

The second text I read was Planet of the Apes by Pierre Boulle. This tells the story of humans on another planet that is very similar to Earth. However, on this planet apes have become the dominant species with humans reduced to non-verbal animals that are subservient to the apes. The apes have a high functioning society, including scholars, politics and social rankings. The novel depicts the journey of one of the humans, Ulysses, who is captured early on by the apes and struggles to become recognised as an intelligent human due to the language barrier. His friend, Professor Antelle, is reduced to the savagery of the other humans through lack of other intelligent beings to talk to, and at the end of the story is indistinguishable from the savage humans of the planet. Eventually Ulysses escapes, and travels back to Earth where much time has passed due to time dilation. Ulysses discovers that during this time the same events have taken place on Earth, and he is greeted by apes riding out to meet him. This novel is a story within a story, with Ulysses' tale being discovered as a manuscript in a bottle by two characters in a spaceship at the beginning of the novel, and then recounted. The novel concludes with the revelation that these two characters are also apes, who react in amused disbelief to the foolishness of a story depicting humans as intelligent. "*Reasonable humans?. No, it's not possible.*"

The primary intention of the author was for Planet of the Apes to be an essay on the dangers of technology. Boulle believed that humans were becoming too reliant on technology for survival and that eventually we would lose the ability to think and act for ourselves. However, a secondary theme in the novel is also the concept of what makes us human. By depicting the human race as lesser to the apes, Boulle describes a role-reversal that satirises our belief that we are special or different. "*I needed this intellectual exercise*

*to escape from the despair that haunted me, to prove to myself that I was a man, I mean a man from Earth, a reasoning creature who made it a habit to discover a logical explanation for the apparently miraculous whims of nature, and not a beast.*" Initially the reader may believe that the humans in the novel are not comparable to ourselves due to being on another planet, as well as devolved. However, the reduction of Professor Antelle to utter savagery simply through being kept in the same environment as the other humans shows that this primitivity is not as result of mankind's devolution but rather another side to genetically identical humans that we simply hadn't seen before. If mankind had truly devolved to reach this point, Professor Antelle would have remained intelligent and recognisably 'human' since evolution occurs across many generations. Additionally, the novel also concludes by showing that the same events had taken place on Earth, casting aside any doubts the reader may have had that the events described were applicable to us. The amused reaction of the apes upon reading a story about intelligent humans also serves as a pre-emptive response to any criticism that the book may have received about being unrealistic. Overall, it seems clear that Boule believes that what we see as human is only a self-centred belief that we are different, and that the truth is we are not that different from other animals. Essentially his response to the question "What makes us human?" is "a lot less than we'd like to think".

The third text I read, [Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep](#) by Phillip K Dick, was written at a similar time to [Planet of the Apes](#), but is much more traditionally science-fiction. The novel takes place in a post-apocalyptic world, with most animals dead or endangered and owning one has become an important sign of empathy, an attribute highly valued as human in this new world. The plot follows the character Rick Deckard, who signs on to a dangerous mission in the hopes that the money he makes will be

enough for him to afford a real animal, not the realistic electric animal he had as a cheaper alternative. This new mission consists of killing 6 escaped androids. These androids had gone rogue and escaped their owners on Mars, fleeing to Earth. As androids are almost indistinguishable from humans in this world, the way Rick identifies and takes care of these androids is important. In order to test who is an android, Deckard administers the Voight-Kampff test - a test that distinguishes between humans and androids by measuring the subject's responses to a variety of situations that should prompt concern for the lives of others. The basis for this test is that unlike androids, humans possess the unique trait of empathy. However, as the text progresses Deckard and the reader learn that more advanced androids are capable of empathy and that those that aren't only have that flaw because it has been purposely built in to provide a distinguishing feature from humans. This realisation forced both Deckard and the reader to reconsider the previously clear definitions of 'human' and 'android' in the text.

Initially the reader may be tempted to believe that Dick's thesis is that humans are unique because of our capacity for empathy. This is explicitly set up as the definition of human early on in the text and is the basis for much of the plot. But the true meaning of the text becomes most obvious when details about the Voight-Kampff test are revealed. The questions asked generally force the subject to consider situations in which animals are harmed. *"Now consider this. You're reading a novel written in the old days before the war. The characters are visiting Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco. They become hungry and enter a seafood restaurant. One of them orders lobster, and the chef drops the lobster into the tub of boiling water while the characters watch."* In the text a subject that does not immediately exhibit a satisfactory empathetic response to the lobster in this situation is considered an android. However, this situation has clearly been carefully chosen by Dick to be a commonplace occurrence in our

own world, and one that the majority of us do not think about a whole lot. The emotional response of the humans in the book is more of a result of them being raised to place such a high value on animals, and the state imposed religion, ‘mercerism’, dictating that humans must have this empathy towards all animals. Essentially, this empathetic response can not be said to be an innate trait of humans, but one that the characters in the text have developed through their experiences. If most of us took the same test, we would likely be diagnosed as androids.

Furthermore, the revelation that the Voight-Kampff test will not work on the latest android models which have been given the ability to empathise casts doubt on the definition of ‘human’. The initial response of Deckard is to believe that this simply means the test is flawed and that a better test is needed based on a new feature that is truly unique to humans. However, over the course of the text both Deckard and the reader is lead by Dick to believe that this conclusion was incorrect. The Voight-Kampff test is in fact fine as it is based on a definition of human that shouldn’t be altered. Essentially, if a being possesses the capacity for empathy, then it should be treated as human. Empathy is all that matters. Interestingly, at this point in the text Dick is treating ‘human’ not as a definition of a species, but as a term simply meaning ‘worthy of existence’. Previous android models have been less worthy of existence because they lack the capacity for empathy, but this flaw is a built in trait, not the ‘natural’ state of an android, and this revelation not only blurs the line between humans and androids, but ultimately shows that it is meaningless.

---

Essentially, if a being possesses  
the capacity for empathy, then it  
should be treated as human.  
Empathy is all that matters.

---

My final text was Clan of the Cave Bear by Jean M. Auel. The story is set roughly 18,000 years ago and tells the tale of a young human girl called Ayla, who is orphaned and left alone by an earthquake. After almost dying she is found by a tribe of neanderthals calling themselves “The Clan”, who take her in, return her to health and raise her. Throughout the novel Auel examines the differences between Ayla and the neanderthal group. While the book was heavily researched, much of the neanderthal culture is hypothetical due to our current lack of knowledge of their way of life. Auel describes a number of differences, including how The Clan communicates almost entirely through a sophisticated sign language due to their limited speech abilities. They also express little emotions such as crying, laughing and smiling and are confused when Ayla shows these emotions herself. One of the key differences between The Clan and Ayla is the way they treat females. While Ayla represents Auel’s own feminist views and is stubbornly free-willed, The Clan have strict rules about the place for women, and Ayla breaks a number of these rules such as handling weapons as a female. While women in The Clan are seemingly respected much of the time, they are also expected to submit to the men when asked, and there is a large imbalance of power particularly with regards to The Clan’s sexual practices. Towards the end of the book Ayla is raped by a member of the clan, who eventually becomes leader, exiling her to leave the group to seek her own people, leaving her son behind.

Clan of the Cave Bear describes Auel’s opinions on what makes us human by comparing us with neanderthals as Auel imagined them. Through these comparisons, Auel makes it very clear what she believes are the key traits that make us human. The greatest theme of the novel is arguably sexism, as it is the main cause of Ayla’s conflict with The Clan and therefore the main force driving the plot and character development. While other differences between

humans and neanderthals in the text, such as the differences in communication, are treated as of little consequence, sexism is very clearly where Auel draws the line. The Clan, as neanderthals, have much less developed frontal lobes than Ayla - something we know to be true of actual neanderthals. Auel suggests through the text that this makes The Clan less amenable to change, as change requires a logical problem solving process which they are less capable of. For this reason they stick to old traditions about gender roles unquestionably, while as a human Ayla is able to adapt, question the way things are done and come up with new ideas. *“Broud’s race was too static, too unchanging. They had reached the peak of their development; there was no more room to grow. Ayla was part of nature’s new experiment, and though she tried to model herself after the women of the clan, it was only an overlay, a facade only culture-deep, assumed for the sake of survival.”* Throughout the course of the text it is these differences that appear to by Auel’s answer to the question of what makes us human. This makes sense, for at the time the text was written the most common theory for how homo sapiens became dominant over homo neanderthalis was that we were more capable of adapting to change, and as a keen anthropologist herself, it seems logical that Auel would present the reason for our survival as our defining characteristic.

---

At the time the text was written  
the most common theory for  
how homo sapiens became  
dominant over homo  
neanderthalis was that we were  
more capable of adapting to  
change.

---

**What were the similarities and differences in how the theme is treated in these texts?**

While overall all four of these texts respond to the question of “What makes us human?”, they explore the answer in very different ways. These

are partially a result of the authors’ differing opinions, but also the times at which the books were written. Frankenstein is a very philosophical novel, as many were at the time it was written. Conversely, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep and Planet of the Apes both approach the question from a science-fiction point of view as both were written in the late 20th century when the general population was beginning to grow wary of technology. Clan of the Cave Bear is a different angle once again, and is also able to explore the theme using different ideas such as sex, which would not have been considered appropriate in much earlier fiction.

As explained earlier, Shelley approached the question in Frankenstein by comparing us to a so-called ‘monster’ and showing that humanity is really the most monstrous thing of all. In this way, Frankenstein differs in conclusion to some of the other texts, because despite Shelley’s pessimistic outlook on what it means to be human, she also clearly believes that that meaning is unique to us. Shelley would not have described another animal as a monster - she made Frankenstein’s creation human-like and had it imitate humans rather than animals for a reason. This is supported by one way in which Frankenstein differs to the other texts. The other texts compare humans to, although partially fictional, not altogether fantastic beings. Apes, androids and neanderthals all exist to a certain extent as they were depicted in their respective texts and in this way the authors were potentially more likely to conclude that humanity is not particularly unique after all. Shelley makes up an entirely new creature, so by saying that creature is human-like she does not have to compromise any belief that humanity is unique in the real world.

Contrastingly, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep compares humans to androids, which while not yet existing in the real world are something that feasibly could exist in the not so distant future. The novel is based on the idea that

most of us have that even if technology gets to the point where artificial intelligence is feasible, it still won't be human. Whether this belief stems from religion and the idea that we have souls that make us human, or just a general concept that consciousness can not be replicated by strings of 1s and 0s, most people still believe that we are not the same as machines. Phillip K. Dick's novel forces the reader to re-examine this idea. The main response of the novel in answering the question "What makes us human?" is that the defining characteristic of humanity is empathy. However, in contrast to the reader's initial impression this may not be unique just to us. Rather than Dick stating that humans are unique because of their ability to empathise, he is suggesting that anything with the ability to empathise should be defined as human.

Planet of the Apes is a different take once again. By comparing humans to well-developed apes the 1963 novel reflects what, at the time, was only a relatively recent change in scientific understanding of what humans are, and one that was still meeting much opposition from the general population. In many ways the novel responds to the question of "What makes us human?" in a similar way to Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep. While Dick compares humans to the controversial topic of artificial intelligence in his made up androids, Boule compares humans to an advanced ape species, a similarly controversial topic for many. The responses of both authors are similar, with both concluding that nothing much separates humans from the creatures they were compared to in the respective novels. However, while Dick goes on to suggest that anything that possesses emotive capacity should be deemed 'human', Boule simply stops at suggesting that humans aren't particularly unique.

Finally, Clan of the Cave Bear is significantly different to the other three texts. While all four texts represent the author's opinion on the subject and are therefore inherently biased, Clan

of the Cave Bear is the only one where the author's preconceived opinions about what makes us human seem to be the majority of the response. It is very clear to the reader that Auel believes gender equality is an important mark of our humanity, which makes little sense to the reader as an answer to the question. In a number of interviews she has emphatically claimed that homo sapiens had gender equality even in early times. "*Women do have power and respect in most hunter-gathering societies, because of the contribution they make to the society.*"[1] Of course gender equality would be very important to Auel, a female who grew up in the 40s and 50s when gender inequality would have been a huge issue for her personally, yet she presents no real reason for her suggestion that gender equality is a defining characteristic of humans. One could just as easily argue that race equality or some other issue is what makes us human. The response seems even more unsatisfactory when the reader considers that most species don't have gender inequality, and that humans did until arguably very recently even in the most developed parts of the world. If anything, the concept of equality isn't the human characteristic - the arbitrarily imposed rules that cause inequality are. The reader's impression that Auel is basing her answer of her own bias rather than any deeper thought process grows even stronger when considering that the entire historical basis for this in the story is now out of date. At the time the story was written it was indeed believed that an inability to change and adapt (as indicated by The Clan never questioning the logic behind their gender roles, unlike Ayla) was what led to the fall of the Neanderthals [2]. Nowadays, the most commonly accepted theory is that we weren't that different to them after all - we simply outbred them [3].

While these novels differ greatly in plot, the way in which they approach the question is very similar. All four texts question what makes us human by drawing a comparison with some

other type of entity. In Frankenstein, Shelley compares humans to monsters and questions whether we are any better. In Planet of the Apes, Boule compares humans to well-developed apes to satirise our belief that we are anything other than advanced animals. In Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep, Dick compares humans to androids, and questions whether something indistinguishable from us should still be counted as inhuman. Finally, in Clan of the Cave Bear, Auel compares humans to a closely related form of intelligent life, and questions what set us apart from them.

The novels also all have a different key question that they ask when drawing their comparisons, but some overall questions that are common to all the texts are also present. All four of them question where we draw the line between human and not human by attempting to blur it in some way. In some texts, such as Frankenstein and Planet of the Apes this apparent line is blurred by showing humans act more like what they are being compared to - monsters in the case of Frankenstein when the humans are abusive and cruel to the creation, or animals in the case of Planet of the Apes such as when Antelle eventually succumbs to animalistic behaviour. In the other texts the line is blurred by depicting the comparisons acting uncomfortably human, such as The Clan in Clan of the Cave Bear having similar ways of life to us including a language and belief system, and the androids in Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep becoming increasingly indistinguishable from us, even by the Voight-Kampff test, throughout the text.

One key question that these comparisons bring up is why the definition of what makes us human is important. All four of these texts demonstrate to varying extents and with varying conclusions that it is not particularly easy to define what makes us human - and two of the four (Planet of the Apes and Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep) conclude that there is nothing particularly special about being human anyway. Yet the same

question has been addressed by many novels written by different authors in different countries at different times, and continues to be a popular theme with readers. The question seems to be universal across cultures and times. Overall, the texts all leave the reader with the same open-ended question. If the definition of what makes us human is so unclear, why is it so important to us?

### **What were the conclusions of these authors and is the reader inclined to agree?**

While all four of the novels addressed the same question and in similar ways (through comparisons), the conclusion of each author was different. Two of the novels concluded that humans were unique, for different reasons, and the other two concluded that humans are not unique at all.

In Frankenstein, Shelley compares humans to a monster, and through the way the creation becomes the monster by copying and responding to the actions of humans, the reader can see that Shelley is suggesting that it is humans that are the true monsters. In this way she responds to the question of what makes us human somewhat pessimistically - she suggests that what sets us apart from other animals is not intelligence or reason or a soul, but the monstrous way we are capable of acting. While the reader may struggle to disagree with this conclusion in the face of human history and the number of events that seem to prove we are in fact monsters, a more optimistic reader might point out that there are also numerous occasions across history of humans acting utterly selflessly.

Similarly, Auel shows in Clan of the Cave Bear that she too believes humans are unique, but this time for a much more positive reason. Auel believes that humans possess an ability to reason, problem solve, and ability to adapt to change in a way that sets us apart from other animals, and even other hominoids. In contrast to Frankenstein, it may be tempting for the reader

to agree unconditionally with Auel's conclusion it would be very comforting to believe that we are here because we are in some way special or unique. However, as discussed previously, the rationale behind this conclusion is not laid out particularly clearly and the author's argument is unlikely to fully convince anyone. In some ways Clan of the Cave Bear and Frankenstein can be viewed as opposites - the former presenting the optimistic view on our humanity and the latter being much more pessimistic. Like with most points of view that are polar opposites, the conclusion of the reader is likely to lie somewhere in the middle, partially agreeing and disagreeing with both. Frankenstein might show that humans possess the ability to act as monsters, but Clan of the Cave Bear indicates that we are also capable of better.

The author's conclusions in the remaining two texts are different again. In Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep, Dick begins with a story that suggests humans are unique to androids through their empathetic traits, yet as the novel progresses it becomes increasingly obvious that this difference is an artificial construct built into the androids for convenience and not because of some fundamental difference. With new models of the androids being built with empathy towards the end of the book, the reader can see that Dick does not believe humans are all that special. However, in contrast to Shelley and Auel he does not spend a lot of the text dwelling over why or why not. Rather than giving a strong conclusion about what makes us human, he avoids the question and goes on to suggest that the ability to empathise with others is all that matters anyway. In essence, if the androids he imagines have the capacity for empathy, we should be defining them as human, rather than looking for a way of distinguishing them from us.

Because Dick redefines what "human" means in order to answer the question "what makes us human", it is difficult for the reader to disagree with his conclusion. Empathy is seen as a good,

valuable characteristic in most texts, including the other three studied here, so it is likely that the other three authors would also agree to some extent with Dick's assessment that the ability to empathise is a good mark of the worth of some being. It is perhaps interesting to note that Dick's conclusion is not that humans are unique because of empathy - he does not even suggest that all humans are capable of empathy. His conclusion that the ability to empathise determines the value of one's life therefore implies that even some humans with limited empathy are less deserving of life. Shelley likely agrees with Dick for this reason, as she too clearly paints human characters as inhuman monsters when they lack empathy for the creation.

Finally, in Planet of the Apes, Boule depicts humans as a devolved species with behaviour similar to apes as we see them in the world today, and thus concludes that not only are humans not particularly special, but that all that sets us apart from animals that we see as 'lesser' is a few minor differences that could be easily reversed if we were in the right environment. Once again the reader is tempted to partially agree and disagree. Today we know for a fact that much less separates us from the great apes than was once thought, and while this may have been a controversial topic at the time of the book's writing, it is widely accepted now. In this way, many readers may feel uncomfortable reading Planet of the Apes, whether for religious reasons or simply because they might prefer to believe we are more unique than we are, yet they are unlikely to completely disagree with the basis for the novel. However, the reader is also inclined to disagree with just how far Boule takes this idea. We believe, perhaps over-confidently, that we would not simply revert to animalistic behaviour just from being put in the right environment, and Boule's novel suggests otherwise.

After reading these four texts, my own beliefs about what makes us human differ slightly to all four of the novels. Reading the four different

texts, the way the arguments are established, and the various conclusions of the authors, has to me brought up a whole new question. While the texts I read address the question of “what makes us human”, the difficulty that each of the authors had in defining and answering this question made it clear that the distinction is not particularly obvious. This brings up the far more obvious idea of why we particularly care. The depth with which so many different authors from different backgrounds have addressed the exact same question shows how much the question and answer mean to us. Perhaps it says more about humans that we feel the need to repeatedly ask this question, than any actual answer ever could. My own perspective on what makes us human is not that we are monsters, like Shelley, or that we are problem solvers like Auel. I also don’t believe that we are indistinct from apes like Boule. I would suggest that what makes us human is simply our unique desire to find meaning in our own existence, our need to believe we are special or different, and this complex desire is epitomised by the authors’ search for meaning in all four of these texts.

---

I would suggest that what makes us human is simply our unique desire to find meaning in our own existence, our need to believe we are special or different

---

### **Conclusion:**

I chose four very different texts to study, all of them addressing the theme of “What makes us human?”. Because all the texts were very different, there was a lot of variation in the conclusions of the authors. Shelley shows in Frankenstein that she believes humans are monsters, while Auel shows in Clan of the Cave Bear that she believes humans are unique problem solvers. Boule in Planet of the Apes shows that he believes humans are just animals, and Dick in Do Androids Dream of Electric

Sheep shows that he believes any creature possessing empathy is just as human as we are. However, despite all the texts drawing different conclusions, there were a large number of connections between them. All four texts attempted to answer the overarching question with a comparison - by setting up a plot in which humans were alongside some human-like creature, and attempting to show that there either was, or wasn’t a distinction. Because of this overall similarity, the plots progressed in each text with a similar feel despite being entirely different, with contrasting conclusions.

Overall, the response I agreed with the most was Dick’s from Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep. Rather than attempting to answer the question, Dick avoids it by suggesting that we shouldn’t be searching for an attribute unique to us humans, but rather choosing what we see as valuable and defining anything with that characteristic as inherently human anyway. This conclusion resonated with me, because the overall feeling I was left with after reading the four texts, was one of confusion for why the question matters so much to us if the definition of human is so clearly vague. The concept of treating anything with empathy as deserving of life seems much less egotistical than blindly dismissing the life of anything not biologically identical to us. If we’re going to define humanity somehow, there are far less arbitrary ways to do so than biology. For this reason, I also disagreed almost completely with the conclusion of Auel in Clan of the Cave Bear. As much as it may be tempting to believe we are special and unique solely because of our genetics, the historic evidence, as well as the potential for artificial intelligence in the near future says otherwise.

In summary, the connections between these four texts are not just relevant to the texts themselves but also to a plethora of other novels, movies and poems, all asking the same question. It may not be possible to define humanity as easily as we would like, but if there’s anything that makes us

unique it might be our incessant need to keep asking the same question again and again, throughout history.

## **Bibliography**

### **Texts:**

“Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep” - Phillip K Dick, 1968

“Planet of the Apes” - Pierre Boulle, 1963

“Frankenstein” - Mary Shelley, 1818

“Clan of the Cave Bear” - Jean M Auel, 1980

### **Information about text publishing dates and authors:**

“The Clan of the Cave Bear” - Wikipedia. Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Clan\\_of\\_the\\_Cave\\_Bear](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Clan_of_the_Cave_Bear)

“Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep” - Wikipedia. Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Do\\_Androids\\_Dream\\_of\\_Electric\\_Sheep%3F](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Do_Androids_Dream_of_Electric_Sheep%3F)

“Frankenstein” - Wikipedia. Retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frankenstein>

“Planet of the Apes” - Wikipedia. Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Planet\\_of\\_the\\_Apes\\_\(novel\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Planet_of_the_Apes_(novel))

“Jean M Auel” - Wikipedia. Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean\\_M.\\_Auel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_M._Auel)

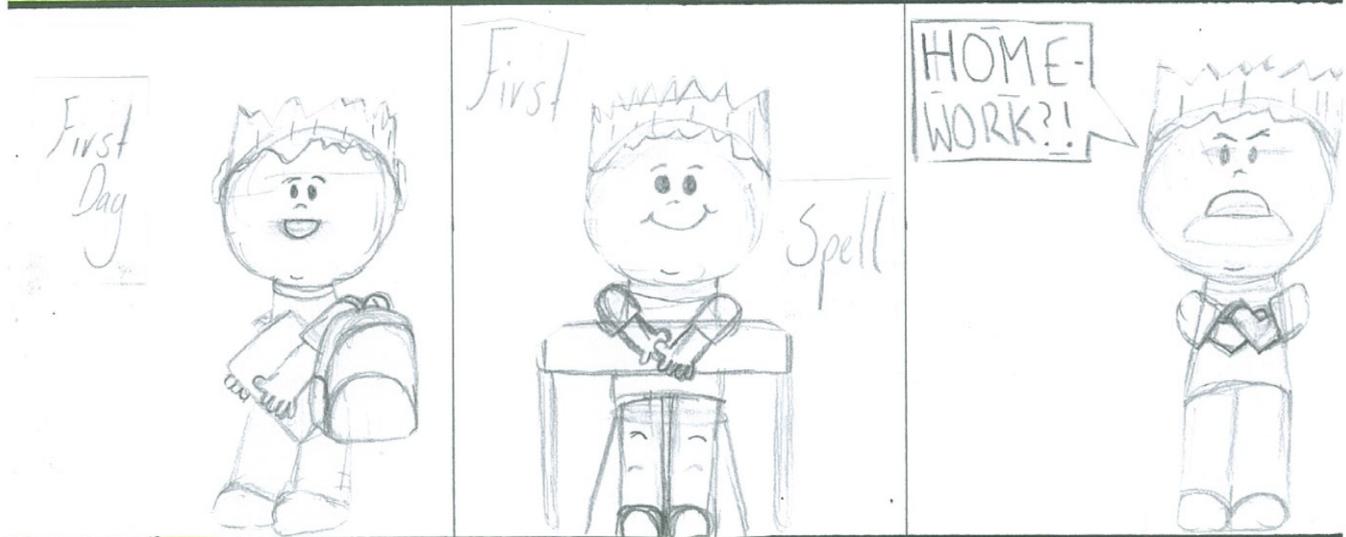
### **Other sources:**

[1] “Jean M Auel: What Prehistoric Attitudes towards Sex!” - James Kidd, 2011. Retrieved from <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/jean-m-aelwhat-prehistoric-attitudes-towards-sex-2254057.html>

[2] “Neanderthals Not Inferior to Homo sapiens” - AskWhy 2017. Retrieved from <http://askwhy.co.uk/dinosauroids/?p=4093>

[3] “Neanderthals Outbred by Modern Human Predecessors” - AskWhy 2012. Retrieved from <http://askwhy.co.uk/dinosauroids/?p=11582>

# 3 Comics for your enjoyment

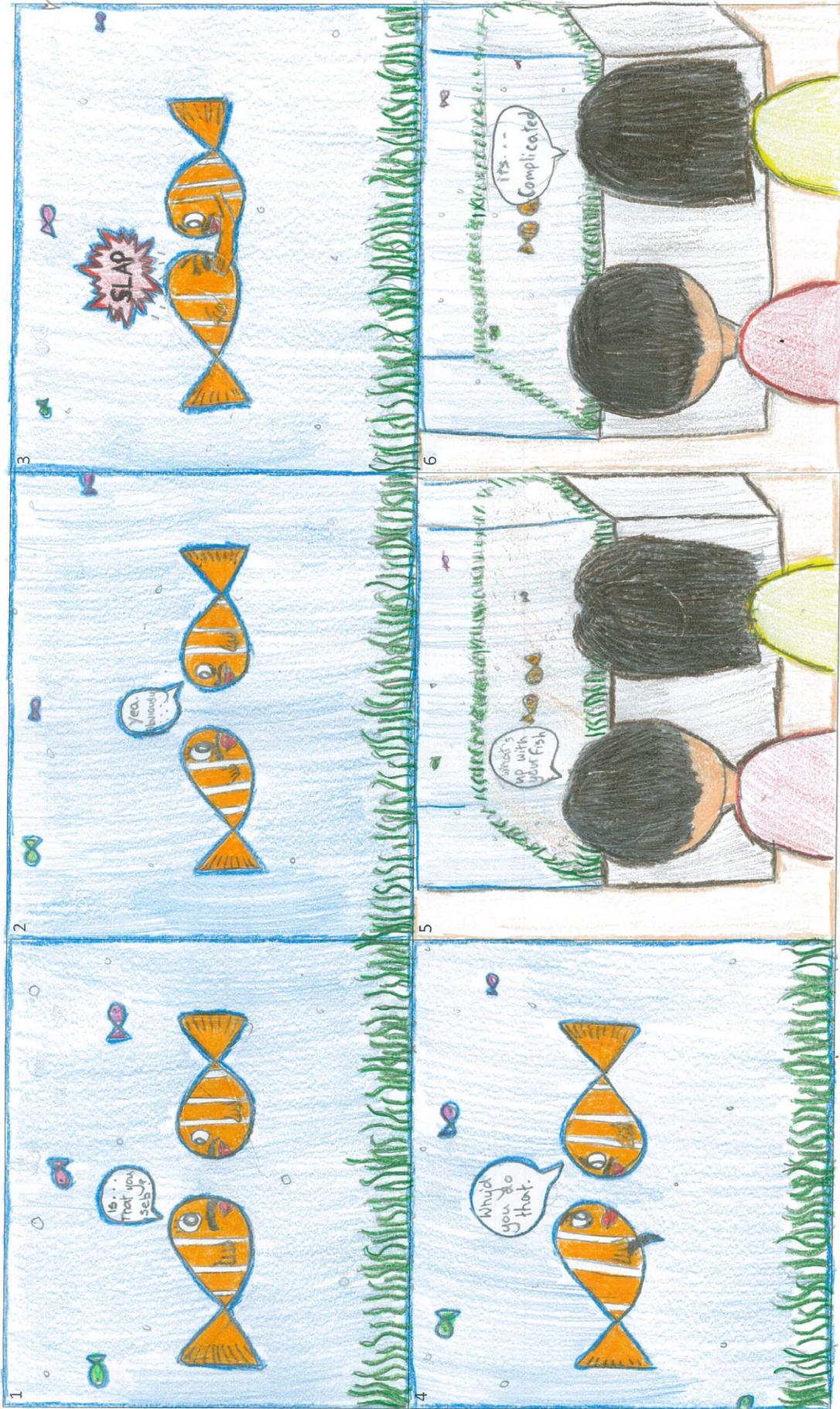


Ashlee Bowden and Grace Stevens Y9

3

Name: Pepi

# Twelfth Night Storyboard/Comic



Pepi Olliver-Bell Y9