

2019

THE OBVIOUS CHOICE

Nau mai, haere mai to our second issue of *The Obvious Choice*, a magazine produced by the English Learning Area at Onslow College.

It's been a stellar year for writing at Onslow. Two of our students were recognised in national writing competitions. Asylvia Redgrave won the Katherine Mansfield Short Story Award. Her amazing story 'The Log Woman' is featured on katherine.mansfield.com. Elizabeth Nahu was runner up in the Schools Poetry Award. Read her entry Te Pō on their website, and her beautiful sequence of poems – Mana Wāhine: The Power of Women – in this magazine.

Across the year levels our students have produced an amazing variety of work inspired by memory, history, fairy tales, science fiction, and ordinary life. Our students write about joy and placidity; they imagine backwards in time to Gallipoli and forwards to dystopian futures; they describe, analyse and critique the world around them. There are pieces in this issue about power and how it corrupts, Winnie the Pooh, multiple narratives in literature, the merits of soft cheese, the origins of religion, how to find love on reality TV, SpongeBob SquarePants, hip-hop artist Kanye West and poet Carol Ann Duffy. You'll find the Author is very much alive. Enjoy!

Acknowledgements

Thank you so much to our student writers for sharing their work. Eliza Williams (Y11) created the stunning image on the cover. Oliver Mitchell's (Y12) fantastical doodles are featured throughout the magazine (on pages 5, 10, 14, 36, 68, 69, and 98). Thanks to Mark Cleary who helped with formatting.

Contact us

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Characters in *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck

Taiichi Calderwood Y11

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Cuatos

Laila Patchett Y9

Roz stood at the top of the building that was the school and looked out over the land below. Three perfectly shaped domes circled the tall building, made of what looked like glass, but was fake except for the top floor. In all the four corners of the perfectly square city were coloured housing blocks: Red, Green, White, and Blue. These were the four frakts – the way they divided the citizens of Cuatos. Against the horizon projected on to the bubble encasing the city, there were raven black watch towers.

“Rozen Green,” Kyalhi said softly. Roz jumped, and turned quickly towards the sound.

“Kya,” he said, relieved.

“You know you shouldn’t be up here. If they catch you –” her breath caught. They both knew the consequences of breaking a rule even as small as this.

“I can’t lose you,” she breathed. He knew that if he was caught up here she would be punished as well, but it was his only getaway from the perfect routine of daily life. He took one last long look over the city and followed her back down the pristine white stairs into the school, and back to reality.

“Rozen, please proceed to white room 4,” a booming voice announced over a small white speaker. Roz’s heart started to race, and he quickly walked down the long marble corridors to the white door labelled ‘4’. Sitting in an all-white office was his frakt’s school supervisor, Ms Bialy. He stood with his hands behind his back while she came up and examined him lengthily.

“Where were you during study, Rozen?” she said with a chilly smile. He saw her impeccably white teeth flash and imagined that this would be how a shark’s prey feels just before the kill.

“I don’t know, maybe studying?” he replied sarcastically.

“We both know you weren’t studying, Master Green,” she said maliciously. “If you are absent from any class again, I will find out where you are going, and who you are seeing. Understood?”

“Yes,” he mumbled and shuffled out of the room.

He joined Kya in the lunchroom, where they were served salad, the same as every day. They sat at their usual lunch table and were soon joined by another boy and girl, their cheeks flushed.

“What have you two been up to then?” Kya asked cheekily. Roz was confused, why were they all looking so mischievous? Then, he realised. The ruffled hair, and the light dancing in their eyes; Roz could tell they had been forced to the R.P Hotel. He knew that someday he would have to walk along the grey stone path and be taken into the grey building that was the R.P Hotel. There, he would be forced to... Roz shuddered with the thought. As much as he tried to imagine the ‘wonders’ of the R.P Hotel, he just couldn’t do it. His hands shook at the thought of being made to do something many others wished for but had never appealed to him.

They both knew the
consequences of breaking a rule
even as small as this.

Looking up, something caught his eye. Making their way to their table was a guy, but not just any guy, someone unlike Roz had ever seen before. His blonde hair fell all over his face but somehow managed to look... perfect? His eyes were blue-grey and seemed to catch the light in a way Roz just couldn’t describe. “Hey” he said, and Roz’s heart fluttered. “Mind if I sit here? My name is Gaëten.”

His eyes met Roz's and they flickered. Roz made a gesture to the spare chair and Gaëten took it.

They talked and talked, Roz so mesmerised by the sound of Gaëtan's voice that he didn't even notice Kya get up to leave. He felt some sort of connection to Gaëten and was sure he must have felt it too. Suddenly, it dawned on him that he wasn't allowed to have these feelings for another boy. That was against the rules of Cuatos, and the Ararkii would punish him if they knew this was how he felt. The Ararkii were the commandments of the city and they were responsible for all the important life choices for

the inhabitants of Cuatos. Roz had only seen the Ararkii once, but their presence was so perfect, eerily perfect, that he could not forget it.

Roz knew that he had to leave the room before anyone noticed the way he was acting around Gaëten. Roz knew that they would both be punished but he couldn't bear the thought of not seeing him again. Feeling something touch his arm, Roz turned around to see Gaëten slipping out of the room, but a piece of paper on the table. It said: Courtyard at 10 - Gaët x.



Arabella Tries Y9

Come on! It'll be fun!" I sighed. Tom wasn't going to give up easily

"Fine."

Even I had to admit the water did look deliciously cold. While it was the perfect day to go fishing, and most of my family were doing exactly that, I just wanted to cool off. I yanked on my soon-to-be soaked life jacket and stepped out of the shade of the cabin. I didn't think it was possible for the heat to get any more intense, but apparently, it was. Aunty Kaye was already in the water, Splashing around and looking nice and relaxed. Well, that decided it. If it's cooler in the water, that's where I'm going.

I zigzagged around the rest of my family, who were all fishing. Tom was perched precariously on the edge of the boat, waiting impatiently for me. I clambered up beside him, anticipating the cold, cold water. I could almost feel it, cool and refreshing...

A loud voice snapped me out of my reverie.
"Five..."

"...Four..."

"...Three..."

"...TW-“WAIT!”

I almost toppled forward from surprise. *What???* But before I could ask any questions, Uncle Daniel continued.

"Uhhhh, Kaye, you might want to get out."

This made even less sense. What was going on?

"Why?" Aunty Kaye asked, voicing the question we'd all been wondering.

But we weren't left wondering for long...

"SHARK!!!!!!" came the yell from the other end of the boat.

I almost fell in the water again. Then everything happened at once.

But the worst thing about it was
its eyes. Dead.

Aunty Kaye was suddenly swimming double, triple speed. Uncle Daniel and my mother reached for her and lifted her clear of the water. Hudson yelled it was going under. I scanned the water that had seemed so tempting before, now

realising it wasn't nearly as innocent as it appeared.

Light reflected off the water, making it hard to see, but there was no missing that shark. Long, almost two metres, and *mean*. Its fin was tipped black, and it was a dull grey colour. But the worst

thing about it was its eyes. Dead. That's one way to describe them. Utterly devoid of life. It was just below the surface too. Exactly where Aunty Kaye had been moments earlier... And I would've been moments later if someone hadn't yelled out ...



Metaphor poem

Kathryn Eyre Y9

The book is a trap
Captivating, cunning, and capturing
Stealing, stealing you away
Whisking you to other Lands, where other people play

You go on adventures, make new friends
silent, slicing sword fights, sail far away

Laughter, fear, cunning, fun
emotions flooding in
manipulating flippantly

And when the book sets you free
you see the world differently



The crossing

Nikki Harris Y9

The blinking green man loomed above us with pitiful eyes. This had to be a glitch. There was no way anyone could cross the madness before us. But we had already been standing at the edge of chaos for five minutes, waiting for our chance. The grip on my hand tightened as Elora's usually rosy little cheeks reflected the pale moon as it dawned on us at the same time.

We were crossing this road, and the cars were not stopping for us.

I glanced over at the adults' faces, hoping for some glimmer in their eyes saying it was a joke and the cars would part for us soon. But their faces looked like I felt, frozen with terror. With four lanes each way, and no place to stop in between, there was no way our group would make it across alive. My knees turned to jelly as I stepped off the curb, and into my worst nightmare.

Motorcycles came from all directions, weaving in and out of cars like a wild dance, carrying everything from a dozen water coolers, to a flat

screen T.V. Lights blinded me everywhere I looked as vehicles rushed by and were gone again in an instant. A deep voice filled my ears, causing me to lose focus for a split-second.

“Stay going straight and at a steady pace!”

I shot a bewildered look at Ana, mentally screaming, “IS YOUR DAD TRYING TO KILL US?” But her eyes were busy darting from car to car. A foreign scream pierced through the humid air, as I whipped my head around in time to see a family of five on a glossy black motorcycle hurtling towards me. Blood rushed to my ears, making my heartbeat the only sound

despite the mayhem surrounding me. The family got closer...THUMP...and closer... THUMP... until they were a heartbeat away and ... THUMP.

I opened my eyes as the bike swerved, centimetres from where I had just stood, and disappeared into the jungle of lights. Adrenaline faded and jetlag took over, weak once more. My knees didn’t stop shaking until both my feet were firmly on the footpath. I took a shuddering breath as I turned to Mum who simply looked at me and said:

“You know we’re crossing that on the way home too.”



A story of gold

Cameron Pryde Y9

It's greed, it's royalty, it's a story of gold
Being woven from straw all covered in mould
The Miller's daughter was set an impossible lag
From the boast of her father's outlandish brag

So enters a dwarf bearing a wart on his nose
and an eye for a bargain and a deal to show
From straw he did spin a pile of gold,
In return for her necklace, as she had told

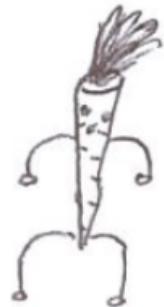
The King's greed was not quenched, so to a bigger room
He shifted the daughter, again threatened her doom
A death she would meet, if it wasn't all gold
So again she was asked by the dwarf being cold
The maiden did give her ring to the man,
who sat and began to spin as fast as he can
With the straw all gone and spun into gold,
the ugly little man left as he was told

The King he awoke and walked down the hallway
To the room full of gold, great wealth made his day

But the King couldn't stop, he wanted more gold
But this time not a threat, but an offer so bold
The King's hand in marriage if she could complete,
To fill the largest of rooms with gold oh so sweet

Yet again the dwarf returned with a bargain so wild
A room full of gold in exchange for a child
The daughter was honored and soon became Queen
But with the happier times she forgot what had been
That fateful promise she'd made to the dwarf
Had come back to bite her and would likely involve sauce

With the Queen's angst at giving her baby away,
The dwarf then agreed to give her three days
to guess what strange name his parents did choose,
otherwise her baby was what she would lose
On the third day he returned, to the castle's front door
Waiting for the meal in the cot that he saw
But the Queen she did greet him with a glorious grin,
My sad little man your name is Rumpelstiltskin
Booyah! said the Queen with a high five that followed,
so Rumpelstiltskin grabbed the baby, gobbled then swallowed!



Help me

Tuhina Sambhus Y9

All set to go?" the zipline manager asked in a thick accent. I glanced at the gnarled trees reaching for the light. Jitters filled my stomach as my conscience started whispering, making me more neurotic. I took a deep breath and composed myself for what was coming next. Standing from the elevated deck, I gazed at the forest of luscious greenery around me; it was truly an enchanting and picturesque moment. Before I could respond, he gave me a forceful shove. Whoosh! Everything started accelerating... I gripped onto the harness and I felt exhilaration build up inside me.

The sweltering heat of Fiji, made me sweat buckets. Adrenaline was zipping and zooming through me – almost imitating the zipline. My clammy hands clutched tighter as I made an extremely sharp turn; my skin skimming against the mahogany bark. Inexplicable anxiety absorbed all my emotion as I spotted a massive dip ahead. Instantly, my heart started thundering like a crescendo.

Piano

Forte.

Fortissimo.

As I approached the peak, I squeezed my eyes shut. Rapidly, I started charging downhill and the humid air stung my face. Suddenly I stopped.

Nothing moved

Blurs of emerald flashed in front of me like vivid hallucinations. Perplexed and shocked, dizziness swept over me. That's when I realised, I was stranded; hanging in the middle of abundant wilderness.

The abrupt stop made my nose smack against the metal rail. Darkness intruded into my perception and suddenly everything turned black.

No cicada chirped.

No leaves rustled.

The eerie silence bit at me.

The eerie silence bit at me.

A piercing shiver whizzed down my spine, making me feel numb. I was on a pendulum swinging towards eternity. Endless thoughts raced through my mind.

No signs of movement.

No signs of hope.

Shuddering.

Stuttering.

Screaming.

"Help me.."



The trials

William Mitchell Y10

The mansion is immense compared to the ground-scraping shelters we all called home. The grey walls around us seem to dim the setting even more, putting a dull mood over the capital. I am sitting on the highest point of the city, the radio tower. Not many people dare to climb up here, it's not usually something that crosses people's minds. But I guess I am different like that, I can climb. I can also run the fastest in my school, by a long shot. Probably the best in this entire sh*t hole. My best friend Albert is next behind me, always coming second. He and I were like that in a lot of things, he made a decent climber and he is coming up behind me right now. Probably trying to give me a scare, but his footsteps are so impossibly loud, I never take him hunting with me. I don't think he could ever be able to make me even flinch.

"Saved your life," he says quickly as he grabs my shoulders and gives me a slight shove to push me off the tower but abruptly pulls me back.

"Jesus," I say, genuinely scared. "I heard you coming from a mile away," I say, now calming

down and pulling two cooked rabbit legs out of my bag.

"Ha, how come you got such a fright then?" I hand him a leg and he sits down and dangles his stubby legs over the edge of the small mesh platform, suitable for having lunch.

"Well, I didn't expect you to almost kill me" Albert simply shrugs and bites into the tender rabbit. I grab the rabbit with one pale hand and run my other through my thin blonde hair readjusting it from Albert's little 'scare' I need to cut this mess, but there are no hairdressers and I don't trust anyone else to cut it, especially not Albert. My Mum thinks it looks good though, of course.

We're looking over the capital as Albert says something that we know has been on both of our minds, "So what are we gonna do, escape?" Our trials are coming up in a week, where we get drafted off into different jobs.

"Seems like the only option, there's no way I'm gonna serve that asshole," I say pointing to the top of the mansion. There are lots of possibilities

for work but all of them are hell, and you are stuck with it until you turn 60. You can work for the 'Police', torturing the public and those who are stuck with sh*t jobs, or you could become something else doing the same work around the

town every day getting tormented and tortured if not done correctly. You basically torture or be tortured. We let out a collective sigh and lean against the pillar behind us, stumped.



The last spoon of slush

Grace Stevens Y10

I dropped what would be the last spoon of slush being served today down carelessly onto a dirty plate, some of it ricocheting back at my apron and through my long, braided hair that was falling out of my hairnet. Working in the Eatery was dreadful, but it was the only way I would be able to get enough money to survive. It wasn't always this way; working five four-hour shifts a week, struggling to pull together enough money to buy food and basic necessities, going home to an apartment not much bigger than a child's bedroom, walls coated in mould and the water marks from neighbouring apartments' bathrooms. I used to be one of them, one of the Wealthers.

Wealthers, as we call them, are the privileged people in our city. They can afford all they want plus more, and live looking down on everyone else, treating us like nothing more than animals. When I was born my mother called me Vivienne, a name suited for the richest. She dreamed of having the perfect daughter who she could marry off to someone in the line of royalty, desperate for even a small piece of the fortune being royalty would bear. I grew up enjoying my entitled lifestyle, wearing pretty dresses and getting my hair pulled into the fanciest styles. But a month before I turned 15 that all changed, the day my dad died. My Dad was my hero. He taught me everything I know that didn't include my looks

or appearance. He died of a sudden, suspicious, heart attack. When he died I felt like I had lost a piece of myself, and being so clueless about it left me feeling in the dark. My mother grew nasty after that, getting snarly every time I did something that threw me out of place. We fought. We fought often. I began to rebel against her, to show my freedom from her and that I wouldn't follow her rules anymore. This was continuous for the month leading to my birthday. The morning of my 15th she was unusually quiet and haggard looking. Normally she held herself to the highest principals, not a hair out of place. This silence was confusing, although it didn't last long.

"You will be married Vivienne, next week," she said, sounding exhausted, yet cunning. "I will no longer put up with your rebellious behaviour. If you choose to argue you will be banished and no longer my daughter."

"Fine," I replied in a calm voice, sure to send my mother into a spin. I turned to walk away, but stopped.

"By the way, it's Vin. Good day Josephine," I said, smirking, imagining the look on her face as I wandered out of the room, and out of her life, so carelessly. At that moment I didn't care to think what would happen to me, although sometimes I wish I had.

10TUO Hunt for the Wilderpeople haiku

Was a good sausage
Yeah, not too many regrets
Tastes better than slug

Zoe Allen

They fight to the end
Out in a blaze of glory
Both yelling FREEDOM!!

Jacob Butel

Dead ranger in hut
Dead ranger is in my bed
Dead ranger isn't dead

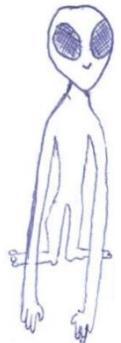
Alex Childs

A maze done by wolves
Two doors to choose from, which one?
The lolly one, duh

Finn McKenzie

Paula on the hunt
She is the terminator
Run Sarah Connor

Hughan Scott



Eagle's eye

Anuha Som Y10

I've spent days gazing out my window and seeing nothing but this old, broken structure of severed wooden planks and smashed glass. I always wondered what was at the top of this towering, lifeless building. Eagle, the potentate of Eagle's Eye abandoned the construction and I can't help but ask why? Today was the day, I couldn't wait any longer, just listening to white lies and filtered truths. I live by one thing my father told me before he perished, "One day Elie, you must defeat him, the man behind all off this," and he asked me, "Will you do it for me?"

I made him a promise

I made him a promise, never knowing why but that moment pricked my heart and till this day I think about it and him every moment. I could die, escape from this rundown locale, but I don't. I don't because of him. It brings my mother to tears. It makes everything darker and it makes me scared but enraged with anger. I see his eyes, sparkling, as a midnight blue spreads across the sky. I hear his voice in my mother's as she tells me stories about him. I see his smile in my dreams when I close my eyes and drift into sleep every night. Eagle killed my father and I will go to any extent to bring him justice.

Dawn's breaking. I can hear the soft scuttles of the rabbits running across the cracked concrete pavement. As the rays of the sun stretch their

arms around the town, I eventually haul myself out of bed. I dress myself in my garments, secure my brunette locks and make my way to my mother who's lying on the ground. You can tell she's in pain since father passed away. I can see her crying inside, her face so pale, she's sick and lonely. I plant a soft kiss on her forehead and leave. I amble for a bit and then see, perched on some jumbled rocks a tall, stocky boy little older than me. Colton. I've known him for my entire life, I love him but not in that way of course. He's dressed in the same attire as yesterday. I run up and throw my arms around him. His broad shoulders comfort me and remind me of how I used to feel whilst hugging my father. Our eyes lock and a serene wave of nostalgia engulfs me, as we prepare for our biggest day yet. I stand



Eliza Williams Y11

Awash of darkness envelops a street in its bitterness.

Gloomy, nondescript houses line either side of the road, each as dreary as the one before it. A single cast iron lamp post on the street corner flickers weakly. There is a distinct chill in the air.

A childish giggle echoes down the footpath, lighting it up. Happiness pulls a young woman along by the hand, both are beaming. Tousled yellow hair roughly frames Happiness' youthful face, with eyes that gleam like jewels in the night. Her golden slippers glimmer, barely touching the ground. Together they move fast, Happiness skipping and the young woman running to keep up. They laugh as they go, they just can't help it. Excitement pushes them both forward. Their glow is getting brighter. They light up the town.

An old woman is lost. She knows where she is; her house. But she's lost. She shuffles aimlessly, from empty room to room. She passes by one

there with a flustered expression painted across my face. I feel his rough hands trace my face and shivers rush down my spine. He strokes my face and comforts me with a reassuring nod.

Side by side, we walk along the deformed pavement in the impoverished part of town. People walk in and out of little hovels which attract nothing but negativity. Everyone, holding fear in their eyes, crinkled forehead and Eagle's power weighing them down. They're all in fear, anxious about what he'll do next. Who will be next to look down on us from up above? It's been years since I've seen someone's face portray the smallest smile. The weight of angst is carried around with every living soul all day and all night.

Joy

room and it's in an untidy state, toys haphazardly scattered across the floor, posters plastered on the walls. A young girl sits on the ground, talking to her toy tiger. She wears a golden necklace, with a thrush engraved into the pendant. The old woman knows this because she was the one who gave it to her. She inhales sharply and squeezes her eyes shut.

Too many memories. It's too painful.

She cautiously opens her eyes. The room is empty, a shell of what it once was. She lets out a heavy sigh and leaves.

At the end of the hall, she sees the same girl open the front door, push her scooter outside and leave. That was the last time she ever saw her daughter. Before she was - Stop it, she tells herself. Stop thinking about the past. Do something productive. She slumps into a nearby chair and starts clicking her knitting needles together.

A small house at the end of the street glows with a weak, but warm light. Happiness and the young

woman enter, the creak of the door announcing their arrival. The young woman inhales the nostalgic aroma of spices before being yanked down the hall by Happiness and into the living room. A wizened old woman is hunched over in a sunken chair in the room's corner, staring at the knitting on her lap. Besides this, the room is unfurnished. The walls are bare, besides the occasional shred of wallpaper. The old woman looks up in surprise at her visitors.

Happiness shoves the young woman forward. The young woman breathes in deeply. She takes off her necklace and hands it to the old woman. The old woman looks first at the young woman, in confusion, before examining the necklace's pendant closer. A soaring bird is engraved into it.

A thrush.

Suddenly it clicks. The old woman's face lights up. Happiness runs over and grabs her frail hands, helps her off her seat, and the pair dance around the room. The young woman watches this scene in amazement and delight. Happiness and the old woman spin round and round, sparks flying. The old woman then rushes towards the young woman and embraces her, tears flowing down her cheeks.

Happiness watches. A single luminous tear escapes her eye, but she hastily swipes it away, turning around and leaving in silence. The mother and daughter behind her gently glow.

Joy envelops them in its warmth.



Diamanté sand box

Rob Ryder Y11

The distant hum confounds the silence.
Dense clouds, pillow'd grey,
Scatter rain of ash
Towards me.
My scarlet mouth and throat gape.
I crumple and sink
Inert
On the slate tiles



Crossroads

Jayden Everest Y11

I look behind me, fondly reminiscing over the gold-tipped spires as they brushed against the heavens. A seemingly infinite world, full of life and opportunity. Where anything could've been over the next hill. Everything was radiant, tranquillity resonated from the warming waters. Trees, evergreen, were nestled along the shoreline. An era of discovery and peace. A time

where our thirst for knowledge, power and resources was quenched.

I glance to my right, as the sound of laughter dies. Plants, no longer blooming, lie dead in the ash. Silence, only broken by ripples brushing against embers, extinguishing their light. Everything still as night, as the icy air cuts through my ragged clothes. A single, meaningless plastic bag breaks the silence, separated from the rest. It drifts off

into the distance, now invisible against the grey, cloudless sky, only to be forgotten.

I look to my left, as light fills my perception. Boundless wealths of knowledge, telling all the stories of humanity, past, present or future. Secrets, no longer concealed, are now freely accessible. Everything I ever needed or will need, a click away. War, hardship, poverty, all barely memories now, too surreal to be thought of as the truth. An eon of unparalleled stability. A single speck of green breaks the red, rocky surface, the first of its kind. So integral, yet completely extrinsic to its surroundings.

We gaze to our left. Dreams and aspirations flash through us. Ending world hunger, unlimited energy, interplanetary civilisations. A world where suffering, pain and distrust is no more. Everything we ever hoped for, everything we asked for, everything we needed, only a step away. We stare at our own name, oblivious to the words and yet accepting them. Slowly, each of us steps to our right, still gazing to the left, blind to our choices. A society, killed by its own creators. The light slowly diminishes, until only a singular plastic bag remains to tell the stories of what used to be. Placidity.



When I first saw her

Sarah Hyslop Y13

When I first saw her, she was dancing softly between priests and churchgoers with her red dress floating around her. The men halted to watch as she twirled onwards and spilled down the steps rising up to the church. They nudged one another and murmured remarks into holy ears as her feet lifted off the ground like a divine disciple of all the things she would teach me.

When she landed daintily on the last step, the men eyed her up and down inhumanly, “What a wife she’d make!” I thought so too as I gazed gently at her mindful silhouette, mesmerized.

My father berated my lustful glances while he nodded and smirked with the other men; I even heard him gruffly make a comment of his own about man’s design of women. He said this while wearing his wife on his arm as a decoration. She didn’t react.

I saw her the next Sunday. This time the woman held the hand of a young child and stroked the back of his head motherly as she descended the stairs. Purity and the God’s men celebrated the colossal flexibility of this woman, blissfully unaware of her own successes and for that reason

alone, she was godly and granted praise from the self-titled messengers of the almighty manuscript. There was, however, always a catch. An inevitable question heavy in the air, that was not for her but her naked hand shimmering in the spotlight of onlookers.

“Where’s the father?” It was the priest who called after her behind, a tall man in power who wielded his strength like a weapon. He towered over the hushed crowd, penetrating the red hues of silence while the dangerous answer hung, suspended, known and unknown to be both truth and lie. The woman let the answer drop.

“Oh, there ain’t one,” she replied tentatively with a wavering but tender smile. “My – ” she stopped abruptly; “ – husband died.” The pause was long enough to give the impression that she was lying but the men naïvely believed her.

The last time I saw her was the last time she got to walk out of her angelic haven and warzone. She wasn’t dancing this time and instead her arms were locked across her chest in an effort to replicate the armour of a wedded hand. Her feet glided smoothly, almost floating above the steps. A miracle or a witch, either way she looked

lighter. It was no secret she had made a confession to the priest that afternoon.

"I feel free," we watched her mumble unconvincingly before she stumbled, and the wind tore a picture from her pocket. It fell at my feet and as I bent down to pick it up, I saw the fading image of her arms draped around another woman. I reached out to give it back, but the breeze plucked it out of my hands and the picture danced. Her grinning face was swept up by love and a cross-shaped hurricane.

In this moment and in my eyes, she was still godly but oh god was she sinful. Much the same is to be said about myself, though, as for not the last time my bosom ached for her red lips and mine to be tangled roughly together. She turned jarringly and our eyes met in longing and hopeless desperation; a connection truer than any I ever felt towards the unjust creator. And yet for months after that day, despite not returning to my holy home, I still knelt and prayed to who I was told my God was to repent my sins. I did whatever he ordered. I told him I loved him, even.

I found her later that afternoon, barely beyond the church. She lay mangled and sinking into the red depths below, eyes still open, indefinitely intertwined with mine. Condemned and beaten bloody, she was subjected to a blessed fate by a god I believe to be nothing more than the form of a man.

Her stomach was hollowed, uterus strewn beside her. They had laid her arms perpendicular to her body, grotesquely imitating Christ. Oh the irony; they worshipped Him and damned Her. He died for their sins heroically, and She died silently for hers. Scarlet dripped from her promiscuous lips, the red apple tinted, neon shade to silence all women.

Unnervingly I felt eyes on the back of my head, staring into my soul. They observed every intimate similarity between myself and the woman, and I wondered when I could expect my fate for surely, I was next.

It was the priest watching me through the trees, framed by the entrance to the church. His stone-cold face birthed and reborn from grace and candlelight, a halo twirling chaotically above him while his cassock billowed around him. Imposing.

The final Sunday I went to church we mourned her and then the Gods around me promptly forgot. My mother dressed in black for the first time, but still her pale skin shone white. She never failed to flash her wedding ring after that day and more than ever did what my father ordered.

The warning of that day was misplaced, and my mother and I took the weight of the angel's world above on our shoulders and breasts. The Church knowingly let us take the blame.



Tír na nÓg

Natasha Leniston-Bagnall Y11

The sun hangs low in the sky. A twisting path leads up to a huge house framed with carefully trimmed bushes and flowers. Rosy light spills from a stained glass window on the door which reads Tír na nÓg – the land of the everlasting youth. Warmth radiates from the home and the smell of roast

potatoes and gravy wafts from the kitchen. The bubbling of voices and hushed tones of a radio hum quietly in the background.

As the day fades gently into dusk, sandy-footed children are ushered inside. They rush in, faces beaming as bright as the sun and proudly show

off shells they clutch in their hands. Thick curtains are drawn to keep in the warmth and meerkat statues stand watch at the door. Slowly, crowds of people migrate to the lounge, spreading across the floor as dinner is served. Winds batter fiercely at the walls but struggle to be heard over the chatter of voices.

Ten years later, the house is alone. Thick branches twist over the once clear path and forgotten statues lie hidden in tangles of weeds. The house sits amongst the wild garden, dark and empty. An eerie quiet echoes through its halls. All that can be heard is the soft howling of wind and the drip, drip, drip of water. Small spirals of dust swirl through the air as a breeze rushes quickly through the house. As the gust dies down, the

dust slowly settles back into a thin blanket across the room. The curtains are drawn but now it makes the room feel colder, darker. They hang heavily across the windows, blocking any light that may find a way in. Shells are scattered around shelves and tables like small reminders of the life that once ran through the house.

Now abandoned, the house aches of coldness. The silence of the lounge is heavy, crushing anyone who may dare to enter. The space is empty except for a single hospital bed stripped of sheets. It sits unavoidable in the corner, its looming presence crowding the room. Strong winds pummel and pound at the house and it shudders forcefully in response.



The Author

Rebecca Elder Y11

The Author straightened her skirt. They would be coming through that door at any moment. She took a deep breath, and sat on one of the two provided white chairs. Reaching into her bag, she took out the things she had brought - her three most popular books, some notes, and a box of biscuits she'd baked the night before in a fit of nerves.

"Incoming. One minute." The cool, computer generated voice announced. The Author sat up straighter, clutching the hem of her skirt.

"Incoming. Thirty seconds." Oh god. This was a terrible idea. What if they hated her? What if the wrong person came through? What if the door malfunctioned and sucked her through instead? What if -

"Incoming. Ten seconds."

Oh god.

The door's edges glowed bright white, like a supernova leaking through from the hallway. The Author stood shakily. No going back now.

"Arrived."

The door swung open, bathing the room in blinding light for a moment. A figure fell through it onto the floor, coughing harshly.

"What - the - hell?" gasped the girl - it was a girl, good start.

"I - uh - hi -" said The Author quickly. She scrambled for the explanatory pamphlet she'd folded up in her pocket. "It, um, it says here, you may experience some shortness of breath, um, nausea -"

And suddenly The Character was on her feet, looking The Author dead in the eye, only a foot apart and towering over her. The Author had described her many times, but the startling, almost golden colour of The Character's eyes had never occurred to her.

The Character drew her shoulders back, her eyes flashing.

"Who are you? What's going on? Who are you with?"

The Author burst out laughing.

“You’re just... oh my god! You’re exactly how I wrote you! Oh, aren’t you just gorgeous!” She stepped back, looking The Character up and down and beaming.

“What are you on about? What the hell is going on?”

The Author grabbed the pamphlet again. “Um, welcome to The Centre. You’re here because.. Well, I’m your author!”

Silence.

“My what?”

“Well, it’s kinda hard to explain. Maybe you should sit down.”

“I’m not doing anything until you tell me what’s going on here,” said The Character. She was at least six inches taller than The Author.

“Well...I wrote you. Everything you are came from my mind. You’re the main character in my stories. I wrote your world, your friends, your whole life.”

The Character was silent for a moment. She drew in a low breath.

“My mum.... She died when I was a baby. That was you?”

“Well, I didn’t physically kill her, but I guess I am the actual reason she’s dead. You needed a tragic backstory.”

The Character held up her arm. There was a bandage wrapped around her bicep. The Author could see dried blood crusting on the edges.

“I got this last week when the base was attacked. We barely survived. You did that too?”

“Well, yes.” The Author thought for a moment.
“Sorry.”

The Character was silent for a moment.

“Can I sit?” she asked hollowly, gesturing to the other chair.

“Uh, sure. Do you... want a biscuit?” The Author asked.

The Character sat. She eyed the biscuit container. After a moment her hand whipped out and snatched a biscuit. Then another. Then another.

“You did that too?”

“Mmf - these are good. I never get to eat stuff like this back home,” she said through a mouthful of biscuit. After a moment, she chuckled.

“You?” This caught The Author off guard.

“Uh... me?”

The Character laughed again. She had a pretty laugh.

“I mean... you wrote my story? You’re, what, 5’1”? You look as though you couldn’t say boo to a goose, and I’ve seen people die in unimaginably horrific ways back in my world.” She paused for a second. “Your world, I guess.” She sat back in her chair. “So why am I here?”

The Author read from the pamphlet. *“With new storytelling technology, this mission is a test run to bring characters out of fictional universes and into this one. If the mission is successful, a world of possibilities opens up for modern storytelling.”*

“How long do we have?” The Character asked.

The Author checked her watch. “This meeting lasts for another 7 minutes.”

“And... you control my whole universe, right?”

“Absolutely everything.”

The Character licked her lips, and leaned forwards.

“Can I make some suggestions?”

Summer and winter

Kiri Shibahara Y11

The morning is hushed. If anyone is awake all they would hear is the calm and constant waves and the breath of the wind in the trees. Along the deck is a line of sleeping figures, dreams flickering through their minds. The last of the stars blink out as the sun peeks over the horizon, slowly, then suddenly leaping out and setting the clouds on fire.

The first bird begins her song. More and more join in, adding their own melodies. Cicadas begin to hum, and soon the pohutakawa are alive in chorus.

I wake on the deck, my sleeping bag cast aside, not needed in the humid night. Closing my eyes again, I let the warm sunlight dance on my face, trying to enjoy the peace until – two pairs of already sandy feet come pattering around the corner. I feign sleep, but it's too late – They've spotted me. A shriek, and the chaos begins.

First – sunscreen. The smell never leaves us, but the sun is unforgiving. Then – a swim. Even in the summer the water is icy, but the endless ocean calls us. Next is sandcastles, then a reapply of sunscreen. A game of hide-and-seek serves as a rest – cramped up in the shed between the surfboards. They find me and give whoops of delight when they spot some boogie boards, and back to the ocean we go, giggling as tiny waves tower over them. The day passes in a blink, and soon we are playing bat-down cricket, sinking

and stumbling in the soft sand, when, once again, the sky is set alight.

Sleepy sandy children wander back to bed, their tanned and calloused hands gripping mine. The first of the stars wake up as we tuck them in, and the house is at peace, for now.

The howling wind wakes the family, but I don't want to get out of my cosy bed. My room is warm and bright, with fluffy white duvets on every bunk, so I snuggle down, hiding from the furious gusts that shake the house. The rain dances on the roof.

Outside the air is frigid and the skies grey. The trees are competing in an endless struggle to stay standing. The biting wind leaves pink cheeks and steaming condensation.

There is no life to be seen, save some half-drowned sheep searching for shelter under the flimsy trees.

Down on the beach, the high tide is angry. Roaring, the ocean scrambles forward, tugging at the exhausted sand dunes. Seaweed flails in the churning ocean like tentacles.

The only shelter is our house, with the crackling fireplace and steaming cups of tea. Inside, we gaze out at the storm. We laugh at the wind, taunting it, but we are safe and sound, glad we are in here and not out there. Smiling.



Elytra

Rei Denee Y12

He reached into the paper bag his friend handed over and pulled out a small picture frame.

"Do you want it?" his friend asked.

He turned it over carefully to see what was in the frame. Through the glass, he saw a beetle mounted in cotton, displayed along with a slip of paper that held its name. It looked like something good to have hanging in his room.

“Yeah, but why?” No one just gives away nice things. At least no one gives stuff away without a reason.

“Why, what?”

“Why are you just giving stuff away?”

“Oh,” he paused, “I just don’t need it.”

It was a non-answer, a truism, something people say just to get people to stop asking questions without lying. *That’s not enough*, he thought. If there was anything he knew about his friend, it was that he liked to talk.

“Wait, so why don’t you need it?”

“Just take the whole bag. Maybe give back the 3DS games.”

He turned the frame around. There was a mark in the back, like someone tried to open it up with ballpoint pen that ran out of ink. Whoever made

it gave up after one try but still managed to leave pinholes in the cardboard.

“Are you sure?”

“I think you’re asking too many questions for free stuff, dude.”

He looked through his friend’s bag, wondering what else was inside. It was clothes, mostly, and ruffling through it wafted up a scent he didn’t recognise. The smell and the fabric – it was decidedly feminine to him. He had more questions, more thoughts to investigate.

A car pulled over next to them. “My ride’s here,” his friend said.

He looked at the beetle. Its wing casings were a sickly yellow. A few writhing brown dots came from under it. He felt sick. *Maggots*, he thought.

“Carlos,” he called out, handing back the bag, “I’ll keep the beetle.”



Bad conductor

Cate Flavell Y12

There was once a young man named Kennetharia, Kenneth for short, Ken for shorter. Since Ken had been a young boy, it had been his dream to become a conductor on the trams. This passion for the job continued to burn in him until he was in his twelfth year of high school. It was at this point that Ken felt he had been educated substantially and he decided to drop out to pursue his dream. Seventeen years young and filled with excitement for this next step in his life, he signed up for training at the Tramway Trainee Association - TTA for short.

Six months into training, Ken was finally employed to clean the interior of the trams. Proud of his new job and eager to continue his training, Ken swept and mopped the interior of the trams with precision and passion that the manager had never seen before. Ken also took to

tightening the bolts on the seats when they were wobbly. This was not in the job description but no one else would do it, so Ken took it upon himself. This further impressed his manager, so much so in fact that Ken was granted a promotion after just three months, instead of the usual six.

Ken’s perfect track record of doing his jobs to and beyond the highest expectations continued; as a result of this he was rising through the ranks rapidly. Soon, Ken had served as a tram interior cleaner, tram window cleaner (interior), and tram window and sides cleaner (exterior). All of these promotions had been obtained in almost half the time it would usually take for a TTA pupil while they were still in training. Finally, after his third month cleaning the exterior walls and windows of the trams, he was offered the second highest position on the trams. He’d finally be working in the field. His dream was almost coming true. He

signed the contract and a week later he was donning the uniform of the assistant tram conductor.

Ken pulled his instant camera out of his backpack and the manager of the tramways took a photo of Ken with his toothy grin standing perfectly upright in his navy and white uniform next to John, the conductor of tram No. 08. John was a pot-bellied man in his sixties, with a bushy moustache and a cheeky grin often plastered to his face. The man had an air of pride about him that wasn't very common in tram conductors. This was a large part of the reason Ken had been paired with John, the manager recognised the enthusiasm in both of them and correctly assumed that the two would get on like a house on fire.

As assistant conductor, Ken's job was to learn the ways of the conductor's job and blow the whistle for the people to clear out of the way of the tram when it would start to move along the tracks.

One day, Ken's boss, his idol, the love of his job, died. And so it was with great sorrow that Ken stepped into his dead boss's shoes and accepted his dream job: The Conductor.

After the funeral of his old John, Ken started to get over the older man's death and enjoy his new job; he viewed it as carrying on a legacy. On his fourth month as conductor on tram 08, it happened.

There was an elderly lady, deaf in one ear, crossing the tracks. Ken didn't see her so he gave the driver the all clear. The tram began to move. Tragically, the old lady lost her life: death by tram. Her poor cat was left hungry and alone at home.

Ken was tried and sentenced to death by electric chair.

He was allowed to ask one request before he was to be shocked. And his was to have a banana.

Ken took the banana in his left hand and peeled it from the bottom in four strips: left side, then right side, then back, then front. He then took the banana in his right hand and threw the peel with his left hand over his right shoulder. He then ate the banana, holding it with his right hand in the middle, biting from either side - left, right, left, right - and with the last chunk, he mashed it in his palm before swallowing it whole.

He then told the person running the electric chair that he was ready and to tell his family that he loved them.

The chair shocked him for 45 seconds.

He was still alive.

Legally, if the person didn't die, their record was cleared and they were allowed to go back to living as they had before. So Ken returned to his old house, where his parents were. And after he'd spent some time with his family, he decided to continue pursuing his dream. He returned to the TTA.

Once again he rose through the ranks. And soon, he was once again a conductor. One day, Ken didn't see a small boy step into the path of the tram. The boy was run over. And sadly, he passed.

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He was still alive.

Once again he was allowed to leave, and his record was cleared. Despite concerns he went back to the TTA to follow his dreams and he was the only person who had applied for the conductor's job, so he got it.

Over the next five years, Ken accidentally killed 7 people in his job as a tram conductor. A teenage boy, a middle-aged truck driver, a school janitor, a university student and his professor, a professional dog walker and 3 dogs, and a chimney sweeper. Each time, he was sentenced to death. And each time he went in the electric chair, he requested a banana.



Plimmerton

Felicity McAvinue-Northcott Y11

At the beach I am an idle, painted ship, perusing watercolour oceans. Dogs abound on sun warmed sand, ocean spray mixing with bark foam. If I could think, I'd think about the warmth settling on my legs, or the schwish of a fresh can of raspberry fizz. But I can't and I won't, so I wander onto rocks while black dogs play and lay my mind to rest in a small aquatic garden. If the sun speckled sea exists for any other reason than to cast thought away, I don't want to hear it. And if my thoughts exist to make sense to anyone but me, I don't want to think them anyway. My puppy plays tag with the gentle tides, welcoming strangers happily with constantly wagging tails as they walk by. Salt and sand curl her coat, flouncing as she bounces back toward me. When fried potatoes waft delicately, and parents laugh, and the sun dips low into the sea; when dogs flop, and trains trundle past, and

Each time, Ken repeated his banana eating ritual.

He then told the person running the electric chair that he was ready and to tell his family that he loved them.

He was still alive.

Each time the chair shocked him for 45 seconds.

And each time he was still alive.

After the eighth time the electric chair had failed to kill Ken. The person running the chair asked him "Hey man, I don't understand. How have you not died yet? You've been in the chair 8 times now, and each time you do that thing with the banana. Did that help you somehow? I don't get it."

And Ken looked the man in the eye and said, "I dunno man, I think I'm just a bad conductor."

salt smells so sweetly, I wouldn't want to be anything other than a perfectly idle ship.

Plimmerton beach in the winter is to my dog as deeprot is to a ship's captain. She cannot fathom why her beloved sand has turned to sludge, though she suspects the relentless waves are involved. My own ship, however, is unmoved, weathering the wind's bitter bite. The heaviness of the winter sky suffocates my thoughts, shifting my view to the drenched dog. She battles harsh winds as it matts her long fur, her high pitched yelps disappear into the howling gusts. She chases the damp nipping at her tail, fades into immense fog. When my puppy returns, rat like and shivering, winter air rattling through her teeth, mine shall too. Salt is sharp, pinpointing my mind to the slick rocks' jagged edge, tugging at the leash while my fingers worry at the bit. Will

it be dark when I return, shadowed like the sea's volatile depths? Can I remain unscathed by the fluorescent lights that will overanalyse my beach ridden thoughts? Will my deadlines seep past, like the sun through thick fog and choppy waves?



Buffalo on a beach

Dominic Rajan Y12

It was supposed to be a normal holiday. The beach. The sun. Shells and sandcastles. Long summertime casitas. In some ways it started this way, Dad, George and I carving through the waving auburn hairs of the hills. George waved back from his car seat, giggles creasing his face.

“Are we there yet?”

I thought it was obvious. We couldn't see the familiar rising and falling, of dunes and waves alike. Nor could we see the gaping horizon, jagged cliffs or hear the cries of gulls. Maybe George was prompted to ask such a ridiculous question in response to the greeting of that salty aroma that with windows down could now be found gliding through his nostrils, mouth and mind. The very scent has preserved the millions and billions of memories, crystallized in time.

Dad hummed a simple tune, driving one-handed, performing a familiar routine with the other, running his fingers along the floral pattern on his hat. We continued through the crests of the hills, the morning changing to midday. Until finally George's questions were answered with a “Yes”. George wriggled round in his seat, pinned down by his belt. Dad came and released him, and George flew off down the dunes like an insect set free from cupped hands.

The sight before me warmed my mind with nostalgia. Arrow beach was perfect. Not any other family, couple or lonely stranger in sight. Just us.

And the Buffalo.

Feet are fearful of stumbling, so I pull and pace along the tide, beckoning to my pup, promising her the sand will return. Promising Plimmerton will return to its warm idle haven.

George stopped. His bright blue bucket fell to the sand. We all stared in disbelief. I rubbed my eyes and looked again. Still, the Buffalo stood there, knee-deep in the ocean, with a gaze at George that seemed to pierce his very soul. George tilted his head, staring back. The moment felt sacred, a sort of holy tension hung in the air. Dad charged down the dunes, holding on to his floppy floral hat cautiously, yelling warnings at George, and just like that the moment collapsed.

We set up camp directly opposite to the Buffalo, by George's request, taking frequent stops to just stare in disbelief. Dad explained that we were to not approach the beast without him, unleashing groans from George.

“But it's a nice cow Dad!”

George and I would normally be digging holes, splashing in the water, tackling Dad to the sand. But the Buffalo was all we could focus on. Before long, the three of us began approaching it, hearts beating in rhythms of fear and awe. Our feet now submerged in sparkling seafoam we could see the Buffalo in all its glory. Intertwining light and dark brown fur dressed the bulging slopes of its torso. Its face sunk within this fur, strong and sharp. My eyes then fixed to its curved crown, ivory of the gods, aged and matured with wisdom. We didn't dare to say a word. There was no need, we were all feeling the same thing. George's mouth gaped open, as almost to absorb as much of the thing as possible. The Buffalo's eyes stayed locked with George's. The deepest of brown meeting the brightest of blue. George looked the most awestricken I'd seen him in my life. I transferred

my eyes to the Buffalo. Unlike George, the Buffalo's eyes were deeper, melancholic in its stare. Its brow was pushed down, and iris wide. Something wasn't right.

It bugged me the rest of the afternoon. We departed from the Buffalo reluctantly and began to seep back into the familiar routine of our holiday, all the time pausing to see if the Buffalo had moved, changed in any way, which it never did. I couldn't enjoy playing, eating fish and chips, collecting shells like I used to. I thought maybe it was because the wind was picking up but even laughter felt hollow. It was those eyes. That concerned look that the Buffalo had held. The fact that he had not stopped staring at George for two hours. I wondered if Dad felt the same way, watching him fixated on the stitching in the hat. Although this was common these days, I thought his manner more intense than usual.

The scorching beams of light eventually beckoned us to the sea. Maybe a swim would do me good I thought, I could let go of this churning within me amongst the wild motions of the waves. We again hand in hand approached the Buffalo, walking down the increasingly reflective sandy floor. Dad directed our course away from the Buffalo to the left, much to George's disgust. But the complaints from George soon dispersed as the Buffalo began to move. This time not just moving his eyes, tracking George, but his whole body. Moving. Towards us. Although its legs were slowly cycling through the waves now splashing up to its knees, it seemed to glide gracefully towards us with some pace. We stood there paralyzed. It completed its final steps blocking our path, sheltering us from the wind.

Dad was the first to break from this dreamy languor. Reaching his hands towards mine and George's he attempted to move past. The

Buffalo, as if in sync with Dad's thoughts, responded in symmetry to our movements left, obstructing our way. Dad pulled us closer, stepping back, and trying another attempt to swing widely around. It was again feeble. As graceful as the last step, the Buffalo yet again stopped us. Dad again became restless, attempt after attempt, the Buffalo stood strong.

And then the wind.

Dad's head was stripped bare as the hat flew beyond the Buffalo. Dad grasping thin air moaned watching his treasured hat sink through the air, into the waters below, which were now becoming rough and wild. I glanced at Dad watching agony sweep his face, his knees collapsing into the shallows. George rubbed his eyes, cheeks red and puffy.

"I NEED IT DAMMIT! I NEED HER! I NEED HER BACK!"

Silence. The waves still surged. The wind continued whipping the water. But there seemed to be no noise. The unsettled feeling within me became paralyzed, replacing it with a strange numbness. But something had changed. I watched as Dad lifted his head. As the Buffalo gently stepped aside. As Dad rose, tears in his eyes and moved forward. As George followed gingerly. I looked into the Buffalo's eyes. And the numbness wore off. Not a tear fell down its sharp cheeks, but it knew it was crying. Weeping. Mourning.

I watched as Dad picked up the hat. As he shook off the water. Studied it. Confided within its stitches. I then watched as a wave grew from out of the waters beyond. Towering over George. Casting shadows. Ensnaring him. I watched as it crashed over him pulling him beneath. He was gone.

Perfection

William Kho Y12

She is an angel;
a being of such divine beauty.
Grace becomes her, like leaves falling in the Autumn air;
Her jet black hair flows forth like the Yangtze river.
Tranquillity and Serenity, *she is perfection.*

But with perfection comes unattainability;
Such is the nature of all perfect things.
For perfection is in the realm of the divine,
and it is our imperfections that keep us human.

This newfound knowledge does beg the question,
is it better to pursue the flawless?

Knowing that we cannot ever grasp it,
should we instead be satisfied with the flawed?

***Accepting that no matter how high we may reach,
we are still at a height, beneath the clouds.***



An apology and the black string

Isabella Radka Y12

An apology is a complicated thing. By definition, it is typically a remorseful acknowledgement of inadequate behaviour in which the committed is regretful when faced with the consequences of such actions.

But of course, an apology is a complicated thing. As humans, we have learnt possibly the most deceptive and poisonous skill against all other living organisms; lying. A lie can snake from one's tongue in a venomous Black String, hot flames spewing from the outer threads. It can curl itself around the chosen victim, each

suffocating letter slowly entwining throughout their being.

A lie is deathly and perhaps even worse, contagious.

But lying is not just the way that the words escape from our lips, it is the way our actions convey an accurate representation of the said expression. If you are experienced in the field of falsity, you would know how to conceal the Black String. Eye contact, but not too much. A quick response, but not too fast.

Apologies should be nothing but truthful; simple. What is the most typical word to say during an apology? 'Sorry'. 'Sorry' is the easiest word to say.

‘Sorry’ is the only word to say. And what does one say when they’ve said ‘Sorry’ too much? ‘Sorry’.

‘Sorry’ is the most lethal Black String of them all. Hence, an apology is a complicated thing.

Your first mistake was that you did not see me.

Shattered explosions of soot-smothered clouds suffocated the skies, seemingly seconds away from cracking. You sat hunched between the thin glass panes of the bus shelter, eyes trailing the first drop of rain that slithered slowly against the translucent barrier. As a subconscious instinct, your hands flexed against each other; index and thumb straining against each individual finger.

Flex. Inhale. Flex. Exhale.

You caught the movement from the corner of your eye as I stalked over to you, shifting your posture quickly in response. Pursing your lips, your eyebrows creased into a frown. I watched the skin around your throat shift uncomfortably as you tried to conceal your nervous swallow.

This was mistake number two.

The wind was suddenly quiet as I slid into the space next to you. It took several moments before I realised that without the presence of the continual harmonious whistling, silence really did have a sound. You squared your shoulders, tilted your chin upwards and looked me in the eye because I had indeed taught you well.

Softly, the rain commenced.

The slow, rhythmic pattering of the fall was accompanied by pungent petrichor, its tranquil, almost narcotic scent evidently diffusing the tense atmosphere of the enclosed area.

You sighed.

“Why did you do it?”

One... two... mistake number... three. Too slow.

“I didn’t mean it,” you said.

And the curves around your eyes were screaming, *truth, truth, truth*, while a Black String wrenched and distorted deep within your irises hissing, *lie, lie, lie*.

“Why did you do it?”

I had taught you well, but not well enough.

We sat there for a minute, listening to the rain as it drummed against the steel roof. I held my quietude meaningfully. Our unspoken words conversed between us, rolling off our unparted lips and into the roadside gutters; another raindrop lost at sea.

“I just wanted to apologise.”

I blinked apathetically and you failed to return my stare.

“I’m sorry.”

I smiled. If only you could see the Black String, how it curled out from your lips in a single line of an infinite opaque abyss, how coils of smoke danced from the edges before dispersing into nothingness throughout the air. I wanted nothing more than to reach out and let the String lace around my fingertips, letting its dark flames lick against my palms. I wanted to ball it within my fist, hoping that maybe, just maybe, the threads would break, and the fire would die. Instead, I watched it grow darker and deadlier than already possible as your eyes turned to mine, unwavering.

A lie is a beautiful thing, really.

Nothing is more beautiful than the coalescence of an apology and the Black String.

And so, I said simply, “I forgive you.”

An apology is a complicated thing.

Lady Macbeth's diary

Fiona Bogunovic Y12

Ifear I am going insane.

What may have been the signs, if I had the foresight to look for them? The self-contradiction which my present condition embodies. What's done is done, I said.

Why, then, does the guilt torment me so? The mulish certainty that death embodies finality seemed sensible. O, how many things seemed – if not sensible, then seeming that they would end well for us. Why, then, does the memory of a deed undone by me unravel my mind day by torturous day? My hands have never been more raw.

My husband has long past retreated from my confidences, or I have been expelled from his. Now he busies himself in the particulars of his station, while I fall apart in solitude. No, not true solitude – in the few moments left for conversing I have observed his mental state slipping as surely as mine. It is a weak, sputtering comfort gained from knowing one is not alone in accursed misery. He seems to be doing his damnedest to blow it out.

Indeed, while I weaken, he seems to only grow stronger. Will we continue down this path until he is left the iron-fisted tyrant while I waste away not knowing the fruits of my efforts? A pathetic end. All my scheming, all the wretched deeds in the world, and they all seem to be very quickly approaching null in all the good they did. May we not have it both ways, that the plans I put into motion end with not my death but with security?

No, surely not. Would the curse of ambition have befallen somebody else, if I had abandoned my husband to his morals? Would, perhaps, it have been better to do the deed myself, or would it have only broken me more surely? Trapped in

this prison of a mind, all I can do is contemplate. Questions and questions and pathetic wishes for a better ending.

Still. Certainties must be the pillars my character rests on.

I do not regret what has been done. I do not think I ever will. If encroaching madness robs me of that certainty, then let this diary be found as damning testament to my deeds. Let it condemn me to my own actions, instead of vague accusations of witchery and evildoing. I did no more or less than what I intended to. The blame is held aloft between me and my husband.

He would not have done it without my involvement – this is another certainty. He was, perhaps, a good man once. And yet not good enough. I truly do not know what has become of him, now. It may be my own fault for misjudging him. Another crime to owe to.

My hands have never been more
raw.

Our downfall is looming – this is not a certainty as much as it is a wish, an ill portent, an aeolian scream stretching into the darkness. The dark curtains part, and for a second all I can see is blood behind them.

Rage will not warm me, and so I do not dwell on it. Fear does not shield me, and yet I lose myself in its embrace. My grave will not be that of a queen, I am sure of it now. It will be that of a traitor, a heretic, a witch – as much as any woman is a witch. It will be a ruin on accursed land. The blood will stain the stone as it stained everything while I lived.

Though I have not died yet.

Now, I must retire for the night. I may write further on the morrow.

The truth about Mars

Maia Jackson Y12

I'm looking at the proximity scanner when I see it. It's a small red dot that is heading towards our ship. Confused, I call to Axel to come to see. He floats over from his seat and I see his eyes widen. "Everyone back to their seats! Taylor, put your helmet on!" Panic rises and I scramble back to my seat, "What the hell is that?" I yell as I fumble with my belt. "A meteor" Axel shouts. Dread fills me. This wasn't supposed to happen. The proximity scanners scream as I shove my helmet on. "What's going on?" Ronin shouts as he rushes in the door. He glances over to the scanner. "Shit." Forcefully, he pushes himself to his chair and puts his helmet on.

"Astronauts Ronin, Axel and Taylor. With only an hour before your boarding, can each of you tell us why you are going on this space mission to Mars?"

Ronin: "Kids are always told that you can do whatever you want to do. You can be whatever you want to be. They want to be firefighters or ballerinas or policeman when they grow up. I wanted to be an astronaut. I actually painted the solar system on my bedroom room walls. I loved all the planets but Mars was always my favourite."

The meteor hurtles towards us, it's so big. It's only a matter of seconds now before the impact. "Brace yourselves!" Axel yells. My teeth grind together and my knuckles are white. Will this be the last time I see my crew? I close my eyes and that's when I feel the impact.

Axel: "I've been training for the last 20 years, I had to work hard to get here. I've been

wanting this day for as long as I can remember. This has always been the most important thing in my life. I'm going to be one of the first people on Mars."

I open my eyes. The wall in front of me is destroyed revealing cables that spark as they swing back and forward. I can't see Ronin but there's blood on what's left of the floor. Collision alarm lights are flashing and sirens are blaring. My mask is beginning to fog from my panicked breathing. Out of the corner of my eye, I see Axel try to reach for the controls, but the pressure is too strong. We're being dragged down to Mars. "When we crash I'll find you." Axel shakily calls. I try to say okay, but nothing comes out.

Taylor: "Just think about being on another planet. I think I can speak for everybody, when I say that we all want to go to Mars and be the first people to live in that new environment. I am living the astronaut life here."

I wake up to find myself lying on my back. I don't have my helmet on. I wait for the pounding sensation of oxygen deprivation to set in. But I feel great. I realise that I can breathe on Mars! Sitting up, I look around. Crystal blue waters flow smoothly down a stream beside me. I reach down and dip my fingers in, it's warm! The ground beneath me is bright orange and spongy. I feel like I could bounce on it. Tiny white butterflies float delicately around me. It's so beautiful here. There's a warm haze over everything, and yet there's something I can't quite remember. But it's so calming that I eventually fall asleep.

Something touches my shoulder, I open my eyes and see Axel. "Oh hi, how are you?" I ask. Axel says he's feeling great. "Have you seen the beautiful landscape?" I ask. Axel says he has and that he thinks it's amazing too. "I like it here. I

might stay for a while and rest. Will you join me?" Axel says he can't stay with me just yet but he will be back soon.

I don't have my helmet on.

Axel's ears are ringing as he peels open his eyes. He is lying on his back on a rocky surface. His whole body aches as he sits up. Something warm starts to drip down his forehead. Axel looks at his oxygen tank, 50% left. His crew are nowhere to be seen. Grunting, he stands up and looks around. Mars is just as he expected. A harsh landscape of jagged, dark red-brown rocks. He starts to walk along the barren wasteland and sees something glinting in the distance. It's a

spacesuit. It's Taylor! As Axel gets closer he sees that her helmet has a huge crack in it. Her hands are covered in her blood and flies circle and land on her. She's dead.

Taylor: "Space travel is risky business. You have to take it seriously or you will die. Even though the risks are great, I believe that the rewards are so much greater. Space is a dangerous place, and I'm giving up a lot for it but there's so much good that can come from this mission."



Suburbia

Tom Lewis Y12

The suburban avenue is lifeless. Afternoon sun beats down on the concrete footpath, cracks cascading across its uneven surface like safety glass. Trees spaced evenly alongside the road are dry, mummified by heat. What once may have been lush oak are now only monoliths to their former glory, vivid green leaves replaced by dead undergrowth. As nest-like as the foliage looks, no birds chirp from the branches. The street services an everlasting line of mansions, made to the same specifications, perfect mirrors of each other. None have well-kept gardens, and "For Sale" signs litter the barren earth passing as grass. At a point, there were big plans for this street, and the stench of what could have been lies just below the surface. The American Dream could have lived here. White picket fences, "happy" families, PTA parents, lacrosse playing sons. House parties gone too far, privilege and oblivion meeting in one place. All this however, not meant to be. Perhaps for the best. Perhaps not. Either way, only a suburban wasteland is left.

Breaking the oppressive silence, a car slowly drifts under the dead leaves, beside the dead grass. It seems as if infected by the drained environment, in absolutely no hurry to get to its destination. The sedan, with windows tinted a deep black, isn't from here. It seems from a place with influence, power, prestige. Even as an inanimate object, it seems to carry itself with pride, as if its steel frame was supported by a comfy upbringing and daddy's money.

The sedan cruises to a stop beside one of these rundown mansions, the crisp lines of the car sitting in stark contrast to the broken windows and ivy-covered walls of the house. From a splintered upper window, a child's face peers down at the car, examining it as if she'd never seen one in her life. Cracking open the driver door, a weak-chinned man in a pressed suit steps onto the cracked pavement. Seeing this, the child's face disappears from the window. He takes off his glasses and squints up at the house, reacting to the sorry state of it with a grimace. To him, it seems completely desolate, empty of life. Steeling himself, he strides up to the front door, and knocks three, precise times. The sound echoes

throughout the house, stirring absolutely no movement. Disappointed but not surprised, the man in the suit reaches through the broken frosted glass of the door and opens it from inside. Our man in the suit steps inside, taking care not to scuff his leather shoes. The interior of the house is just as dilapidated as the exterior implies. Holes, mould, and exposed beams accentuate plasterboard walls, which frame empty rooms with a certain vacant ambience. Thin walls mask very little, so a small creak from upstairs is heard by the man in the suit brutally clearly. Smirking, he strides his way upstairs, making no effort to hide his heavy footfalls which reverberate with every step.

Upstairs, the man in the suit continues to step purposefully through the maze of rooms, searching methodically for the source of the creak he heard below. A musty smell leads him through, guiding his way between boxes of clothes, empty mattresses, and disposed cans. Following this smell, he arrives in a front room, bathed in golden light of the evening. This is the only room so far to have a bed frame, or any furniture at all, though it seems almost crumbly due to rust. As he steps into this room, a low, subdued sob is heard from beneath the bed which is then quickly muffled. Disdain fills his face as he kneels down to search below the mattress. Staring back at him, fear and desperation pouring out of them, an unshaven man and his weeping daughter lie below the ruined mattress. Her father's hand is still clamped over her mouth. All this warrants to him is a small shake of his head.

"Sorry," he says, but he doesn't mean it. All to be seen in his eyes is apathy.

The police arrive within ten minutes. The man in the suit hangs back when they arrive, only seeing the father and his daughter again as they're escorted out of the dilapidated house. He gives them a nod and a sly smile. All he thinks they deserve. From the back window of the car, the daughter stares at him with a melancholy acceptance. Her gaze burrows into him but runs into a brick wall. He stands, unruffled. She keeps staring, even as the patrol car pulls away into pink haze of the sunset.

Watching the car pull away, the neighbourhood begins to change. The mansions lining the street fix themselves, glass reforming, vines receding, paint recoating, gardens manicuring themselves. These testaments to the American Dream stand tall, mighty and proud once again, having lost their sheen of neglect. The trees, whose broad trunks still dominate the avenue, drop their dead leaves and regrow lush green foliage in its place. Birds chirp from the branches, and the street glows with the renewed life it has found. Cascading cracks in the footpath retreat into themselves, leaving the asphalt smooth and fresh. Cars bigger than necessary fill the driveways of the houses, the hustle and bustle of privileged suburban life echoing down the street once more. Sons who play football, daughters on the cheerleading squad, the PTA mother and the business father, families of perfection reside here. Nothing less. Floating high above his dream, the man in the suit grins. He can't wait to get started.



A supermarket

Emma Coleman Y13

As a teenager, I worked for eleven hours a week in a supermarket full of linoleum and lies. It sat upon a hollowed out, flat piece of earth where hills rose on one side, and

on the other, a valley dropped precariously away from the asphalt of the carpark, like a strange purgatory between heaven and hell. On the dark, starry nights when I stood, two hours still from finishing, clutching a line of trolleys, the sky would arch overhead in an almost suffocating

dome; as though a child had gleefully placed his glass over an anthill, so he could watch them scuttle and try to escape. On nights like that, when the sky was so huge and encompassing, but at the same time so suffocating, it became hard to tell which was which, heaven and hell, which side the saviour and which the downfall.

The hills that rose to the right were smothered with houses that glowed an uncomfortable, artificial orange, where families sat in front of their televisions and fermented in the placidity and unwavering beat of life. On the left, the valley was dark, deep and ominous, silent and watchful and hoping to swallow whoever ventured down into its bog of bird calls; completely void of routine and sanity.

But no matter what lay precariously up or down, the supermarket sat in-between them and caught the unrelenting surge of humanity like a light trap for moths.

For eleven hours a week, there was little to do but be submerged in the tenacity of regular people. It was as though I lived to the beat of a metronome, each new swing, each new tick, a new person who infiltrated my life for a mere second before they were replaced by the next one. Unchanging, constant, depressing. The shallowness and criticism came easily, as a way to pass the time; to stay rooted and stable in that surge of life. But such thoughts began to disfigure everything and everyone I saw until only the vague silhouettes of humans remained, morphed into beautiful, ugly creatures of my own devising.

Unchanging, constant, depressing.

Each person had a world slowly constructed around them, a new identity, a branding of my own division, woven into my life abruptly and without either parties' consent. They would leave, but my disfigurement, my almost picture

of them, remained, a version of those people that now lived with me.

I could not stand to see a barren truth of the world so constantly. So, slowly, a separation would begin between me and the person on the other side of the counter.

I thought that the separation protected me from the dull thrum of humanity, created an obscuring glittering barrier that I could walk away from at the end of the day. Tick. Gone. I saw myself a silent observer, a judge that rudely and abruptly inserted myself into people's lives but never dared to get close enough to get fully involved.

I left their worlds there at work, in the great moth trap, and then slid easily back into them when I returned, a visitor in their worlds. Sometimes it was hard to tell if I was protecting myself from some scary, grim, exciting reality of those people's lives, or if the exposure to the masses, the snapshot of people with no guards up, was so unbearably dull, so depressing, that I needed to keep up the childhood idea that life was going to be exciting. I needed the separation, the judgement, the fantastical, critical, big brother view to protect the notion that I had a purpose, that adventures still lay ahead of me. That I wouldn't become like the grey and dead who shuffled forward with trolleys before going up the hill to the squares of orange, not down into the exhilarating darkness.

But the metronome kept going.

Tick.

A young girl who came in with a pregnancy test and a packet of tampons, as though she were flipping a coin.

Tick.

Men who couldn't scowl, or flirt with their wives anymore who decided to take it out on the underage girls behind the counter (When are you getting off darling? Need a ride home?)

Tick.

A mother who couldn't afford a basket of groceries, who leant toward me with a sour smell and clammy hands, while their children rushed around her feet and whispered that she just couldn't cope.

Tick.

The grandmothers who hand-rolled their cigarettes and patted my hand when I gave them papers, filters, tobacco.

Tick.

The bright blinding lights of such a cold cavernous space exposed the best and worst of the abnormally normal people who felt no need to pretend in front of strangers. People who purchased, scowled and cried in the isles, the fluorescent glare elongating the shadows of their faces. All overseen, all observed by the blinded, dreaming eyes of the workers, stuck forever in a place where they were forced to watch their futures play out before their eyes, over and over again.



A measure of time

Amy Cui Y13

To be a survivor meant pain. Day upon day of endless guilt. It meant bearing the weight of hundreds and thousands of eyes, eyes that stared with longing, searching for their loved ones. Eyes that became empty and void of emotion when they discovered that far too few survivors had stumbled out of disaster's way. Far too many siblings, lovers, parents and friends lost to catastrophe. That pristine room, devoid of any furniture was ironically so full. It held so many stories, so many voices that echoed and resonated with her despite the silence of the vast space. Those cries belonged to many unnamed, anonymous people. People who were now suspended in those strokes on paper and canvas or reimagined in little coloured pixels. She explored that gallery of frozen time, immersing herself in every frame, each captured measure of the past.

Nanjing, 1937

Horrifying. That was the only way to describe the scene in front of her eyes. Horrifying, and sickening. Death had descended upon this town of innocents, in the form of the so-called noble warriors who now caught and cut down the many weeping and fleeing citizens. It was only a matter of time before she too, was caught up in this

lethal game of cat and mouse. Maybe for now, she was a bystander, but weren't they all? That woman over there, begging for them to spare her son, wasn't she also crudely and abruptly cut off by a flick of that deadly silver? No, she too would become a victim of this sick game. It had been a month already. A month of death and killing, only a month to fill dozens of those mass graves that pockmarked the landscape. A month to stain the dirt red and scent the air with that metallic tinge. Not even a year of rain could rid the dark mist that seemingly clung to everything. Yet still, those soldiers were hungry for more and who was she to stop them? All she could do was watch, weep, and silently document this horrifying piece of history.

Hiroshima, 1945

Fire, debris and dust. That was all that remained of this city. All the buildings razed to the ground; the horizon oddly devoid of structures that had all been ravaged by the explosions. The thick, black smoke writhed around the site of the crater and choked those people in its hold. This war had gone on long enough. It pained him to have committed this act of violence, but a war was a war and it had to end somehow. He had long since embraced the numbness, the guilt that came with killing. A chilling silence had struck

the city along with the devastation that he had struck it with. There was an absence of living things. As he guided his jet over the smoking remains, he could see that only rubble was left of what used to be a bustling city. War meant loss. He too, was a survivor, a survivor of the massacre that the people of this nation inflicted on his hometown. It was revenge, he supposed, for something that was out of the control of most citizens. But revenge didn't have to be justified. Just as his family had been ripped away from him, he'd reaped what the Samurai had sown and taken back those lives lost. A trade. Smothering the seeds before they could grow.

Sumatra, 2004

That violent rocking of the earth and the low rumble that came with it split open the ground, crevasses spreading out in all directions. Those buildings that had seemed so sturdy and strong yesterday now seemed so feeble in comparison that unstoppable forces. As the ground shifted under her feet and structure after structure fell, a sense of hopelessness began to take over. Before her eyes, walls and foundations crumbled, swallowed up by those yawning cracks in the ground. Cries of fear filled the air as people wept in terror and those crevasses wept too. Great pools of brown mud that bled out as the earth's skin was wounded by those tremors. She cowered away from that sheer power. She wanted to run, but where to? Her house no longer stood, nor did any other shelter. It was fortunate that she lived on a mountain, for those houses and their inhabitants on the plain were doomed. A great tidal wave now approached the pitiful little shacks, their supports as effective as brittle matchsticks against the water. It was too hard for her to watch, so she squeezed her eyes shut and blocked out the screams that now filled the air and prayed. She prayed that her own life, as well as many others might be spared from the wrath of mother earth.

Incheon, 2014

Anger. That was all he felt. Where was the captain and the rest of the crew? There were students aboard this ship, passengers whose lives should be put before their own. There was a sense of betrayal too, since he could only see one other crew member besides himself who had remained to evacuate the people on board. They had disregarded the protocol and saved themselves first, a despicable act for people who were supposed to be concerned for those onboard. He could hear many panicked shouts from the children, teachers and other passengers aboard the doomed ship, but there were no lifeboats. The captain had taken all except for two and there were more passengers on this ship than could fit. He could give up his own life and offer the boats to the children, but more than half the passengers were students, and how could he choose to leave some of them for dead? He couldn't take responsibility for the actions of the other crew members either but there was no other target for the accusations, so he could only bear the brunt of the hate and try to save as many as possible. It was unthinkable, unacceptable that young, vibrant individuals would lose their lives today. The fast-moving currents had begun to pull the ship down to the depths before they had even had time to sound the alarm, but by then the few life boats on board had already been pilfered by the rest of the crew and there was no way to get to Jindo Island. There was no phone signal either, judging by the hundreds of distressed cries and frustrated yells. No help would come. They were all doomed, pigs lead to the slaughterhouse by corrupt farmers. They would all drown.

Present

Footfalls soft against the wooden floor, she moved in front of the last photo. She stretched out her hand, as if to hold on to those moments. It was something she would never forget. The screams, the gunshots and the frenzy of fleeing

people from the mosque. She was a survivor like many others in the past. Others might forget the horrors or those measures of time, but she

wouldn't. There was a permanent mark left on her soul, an invisible scar.



How to feel again

Miro Macdonald Y13

Make arrangements with a female acquaintance

Perhaps the young fawn new to your office cubicle will do.

Love Is A Song, 1941.

Play it sweetly from the stereo as you disappoint her deep into the night

In your lemon parked in an empty lot.

A Faline for a Bambi,

An Eilid for a Damh.

Let her glitter on your shoulder

As she lays to rest beside you

Collect her tears and put them in a jar.

Never stand tall. Always crumple.

Your cholesterol spreads thick while

Your gut hangs low.

Dog ear every corner.

Your ink blot offered by

Your psychiatrist. What do you see?

Blotted ink, you scoff.

She no longer provides her services to

Yours truly.

Deposit your new goldfish directly out your window.

Watch him amalgamate with the lichen on the footpath.

After all, he never did pay his half of the rent.

Show honour to all divine power.

Continue the legacy of Dionysus

Wake up each day bleary eyed with

Titanomachy raging between your temples.

Your Koutsoyannopoulos never makes it to Kerbside Collection.

Convert to Forrest Gump and pray daily at the 2008 Cathode-Ray Tube.

Life is like a box of chocolates in the way that

Life is like a box of shit,

Brown and reasonably consistent in taste.

You always know what you're gonna get.

Your new-found religion is unorthodox.



You are on an undocumented path of improvement.

You are Buddha defined.

Your sanskrit edicts echo as far as your ten blog followers,

The disciple's discounted subscription to Bullshit Monthly.

The Dalai Lama's pasty flesh ferments into a

Chartreuse green.

Reincarnated as a

jackass in a red robe.



Of bloodied hands

Cole Fletcher Y13

I stare at the board intensely, considering every move and predicting each countermove Inisami may take. My pieces are starting to run thin. Though I still have stronger pieces. I must limit my losses from now on. Ah! There. If I fork her bishop and rook with my knight, she is going to have to lose one of them. I'll probably have to lose the knight in the exchange, but that is an acceptable trade. I steal a glance at her pale incorporeal form. "Now choose, Inisami. Your rook or your bishop," I say, moving the knight accordingly.

"I'll take the third option," she says before repositioning her bishop with an ethereal arm to check my king. Hmm, a slight lapse in judgement. I had my knight there for a reason. "Check," she smiles, though I'm not sure how she can be so relaxed with a deity watching over us, and the prevention of war between our two kingdoms at stake.

Morning sun streamed into my room to greet me from my slumber, filtered by thin curtains that flowed gracefully in the light breeze. Tensions were running high. Yet another war between the Kingdom of Theylia and the Kingdom of Nekkha was eminent. The wounded would flock to my temple of Zehir once more as I tended to soldiers from the previous fight, trying to alleviate the pain with what little magic I had left in the afternoon. No, I would take it upon myself to end this war before it began. I walked down the Theylian capital's streets, royal banners floated in the wind. The markets bustled, children ran around and gawked at all the bits and baubles, curios and toys. While their mothers tried to keep pace. It would not be like this for long. These people would drastically change into shallow husks of their former selves. Newly-widowed and gaunt faces would stare into nothingness, as their children weep. Cities would burn and crumble. Formerly husbands would come back disfigured, if at all. Having forgotten how to live as a person. But only if I failed, I

could stop this war. I shall grovel before merciful Zehir. I could only hope she would oblige in this selfish request of mine.

I unlocked the small wooden back door of the temple and slipped inside. I did not bother lighting the candles or drawing the curtains open. Instead, I headed straight for the upper section, reserved for solely myself as head-priest. I lit the incense and fanned the smoke before I knelt in prayer. Almost immediately, Zehir spoke to me: "Yes, you have come, as I predicted. So you wish to resolve the war, yes?"

"Please grant me this selfish request of mine, o merciful one. I cannot bear to see this land at war once again."

"So it would seem. I shall permit this wish of yours. However, I have one condition."

"But of course! I would—"

"Then you shall play once, the game you mortals call 'Chess.' It has recently come to my attention, and I very much enjoy it."

"You would have me play against you? But a man of such little standing such as myself—"

"No, you shan't, the other 'player' shall arrive shortly. Both you and Inisami are familiar with the rules of chess, correct?"

"Inisami? Well, yes. But she resides in the capital of Nekkha. Does she not?" I waited in silence. I had not met Inisami for a long while now. We would share the occasional letter or two, but since another war has been brewing, no courier would dare enter the other kingdom. I recall once, between some war and another, we would often meet at a small hill. We played a game of chess once, we had to work out each countries' rulings and alternate moves as we went along. All in all we had fun back then. A ghost-like apparition formed before me, it was Inisami- but then, was she? "Fear not, mortals. It is simply an illusion to bridge the physical gap. Here is your 'chessboard', play wisely." An elaborate board,

the same faint blue as Inisami, appeared before us. The pieces were elegant and beautiful. Not the casual set you'd find at a street market. Inisami's pieces were a slightly darker hue. "I suppose, I start then..." Hesitantly, I moved my pawn forward.

With my king in check, I have no choice but to move my own bishop between them. If she were to trade, she would lose one of her two strong pieces, but if she doesn't she'll lose the other anyway. Frowning, she captures my bishop, checking me again. I move my king to capture hers, and in that time, moved her rook out of harm's way. This is a losing battle, she simply has too many pieces. It is then I notice that her king is boxed in by her own pieces. And so I slide my own rook to pin the king down. She does not realise this, and swipes a pawn off the board. I lean out and let out a sigh of relief, then lean in again to push forth my second rook. "Checkmate!" Zehir exclaims, "Thank you for this most amusing bout. As I have promised, I resolved the brewing war, for now." Inisami jolted round as if something had just broken behind her, then both she and the board vanished, probably just pouting about having lost the match.

I lie in relief for a few minutes, I wish I had more time to speak with Inisami. That is fine, with the war aside, there will be time, despite our duties as high priest/priestess. I feel tired, but rise to leave. There is a ruckus outside, the afternoon sun lazily making its descent. Descent? But I had only just entered the temple not an hour ago. How long had passed? Theylian soldiers were marching into the city, war banners raised, reciting a victory chant. What was going on? I join the crowd. An old acquaintance of mine, Tharris, stares at me, as if he'd seen a ghost. "What's wrong?"

"Y-you, where've you been this entire time? You disappeared on the day we declared war, and I was worried you were out on the—"

"Declared war?" "Wha- on whom?"

"The Nekkian kingdom, who else?" My thoughts scrambled, I couldn't think straight. But why? Zehir should have-

"How long! What day is it?"

"13th of Last Seed, 4E MDLXVI."

"You're saying... That I have been gone for six years."

"And you suddenly turn up as soon as the war ends. It was close, you know, they outnumbered us three-to-one, but our superior equipment and tactics pulled us through."

I feel nauseous, my head wouldn't stop spinning. A vicious idea intruded my thought

"So you wish to resolve this war..."

It can't be. Chess. It can't, two kingdoms, forever at war. Outnumbered, just like I was... Ridiculous, impossible. Where was Inisami now?



Ashes

Jasmine Teahan Y11

A woman stood at a distance, dainty hands clasped together. Her eyebrows pulled together exaggerating the wrinkles in her forehead, a sign of her laborious life. She could remember her bare feet brushing through the soft blades of grass, excitedly chasing through an endless field of ranunculus. The blush flowers were like roses, their petals paper thin, swirling into a dark centre. The waft of them would often remind her of her own mother, a kind woman, although a strict woman at times. On warm days, their days would be filled with picking them, always sparing some to adorn their cottage.

With reluctant steps, the woman approached the centre of the field, her scuffed leather boots crunched the Earth with each movement. The ashen ground blended in with her shoes, the dirt she used to roll in no longer visible. An excruciating pain hit her stomach, memories swirling in her mind. Horrible screams would

I cannot bear it any longer. I flee the street. Tharris calls out for me, but I cannot hear him. Running into the open fields, beyond the farms. It's impossible, right? No God has the power of manipulating people with a mere game. Inisami, oh where are you. I need to see your face, your smile, hear your laughter. That's cruel, that's simply too cruel. Why? After all these years, I've devoted myself to the faith. And yet, and yet. I caused all the suffering. Six years of suffering, an entire kingdom destroyed. I sought to prevent the war, and casually brought it about. How many lives I wonder, how many thousands, hundreds of thousands, have I stolen, maimed, belittled. How many houses burned? How many? I sought to prevent the war. And now I have become death, killer of men, slayer of children, depraved of soul. I need to find her, for until then I shall forever haunt these empty fields, or they, me.



often invade her dreams, a place that would often be considered a safe haven, an empyrean for some, violated her sanity. The heat struck her fragile body once again. A torture beyond imagination. Smoke entered her lungs, but as soon as it came, it left.

The woman tilted her chin upwards, a comforting constant that always cleared her head. A hazy mist bled into the ebony atmosphere, glimmers of pale specks dispersing gradually across the landscape. Multi-coloured swirls of indigo and cobalt orchestrate themselves into the sky, seamlessly birthing a painting like scene. She perpetually pondered what was up there.

*Is this where the Gods resided? Did the Gods despise us?
Is fate so cruel?*

Her mind drifted away, a child-like trait that stuck with her. She clasped her mother's wrist in her hand, barely wrapping all the way around, giving her a toothy grin. Her mother chuckled, pinching

the child's rosy cheeks. Both lay on the field, the clothes on their backs wet from the evening dew, but they didn't care. The innocent twinkle in her eyes gave her mother hope. She caressed her daughter's hair, crushed garnet strands slipping through her fingers. A gesture the child was very much used to.

In spite of the golden pin wound in the woman's tresses, she unconsciously patted her hair down. Her sombre eyes locked onto a stone, engravings covered the surface of the smooth granite. With her breath lodged in her throat, she knelt down, covering her bare knees in soot. With gentle hands the woman placed a bouquet of ranunculus, tightened together with frayed twine, onto the dying flowers.



Gallipoli

Jana Patete Y13

Dwelling

In the great dusk of the unknown he waits

For a fate unknown

Pondering possibilities to distract from the surrounding nervous buzz

The paddles below

Beat their continuous rhythm

onto the surface of the sea

As these vessels of death

Move forward, move closer

To the land

A new land

Approaching, beckoning

His mind

As inexperienced as the shiny new bayonet

In his hands

A fate unknown

Chosen for pleasing a father far away

Mixed emotions dancing between faces as eyes desperately search their surroundings

The boy moves

His neighbour scowls, a man, too old to be here

Here, with

The lapping waves

The nervous sighs

The weight of a pack
The boy's damp hands entwined and twitchy
The darker patches on his top proclaiming his fear to his comrades
He squirms
In his uniform
Clean and crisp
Scratchy and damp
He looks up
A distraction so clear and bright
So different from the darkening faces below

He is a child
So far from home
Lost in a sea of wonder
Drifting endlessly forwards
But what will happen when he reaches
The land
And the other people on
The land
Ready to fight
Ready to die
A child's cry no one will hear

He is answering
Mother England's call
But unknowingly replies
To another
One he does not understand
Waiting, arms outstretched
Ready
For when he finally falls

He sits tensely
All alone in an overcrowded boat
He looks down
At his uniform
Proud and fitting

Scratchy and tight
A shuddering breath let loose as he desperately tries
To hide the tears
Keep a brave face
Mask the fear
Like a mountain strong and balanced
Unchanged from the waves of time
Drape him in green
Protecting him from piercing eyes
The strength of generations behind
Flowing through
Help him rise above
His darkening cloud of despair

A face drained
A colour gained
The land closer
The conflict beginning before they even reached
The sand that would soon soak in their blood
Condemning many to a watery grave
A trail of red staining uniforms
Gunshots swiftly deciding
Who stays and who goes
A bullet released
A breath stifled
His hands growing damp as he scans the surrounding boats
The oars
The bodies
Dipping in and out of sight
A long boat once crowded
No longer
Tangaroa calms the chaotic waves
As they prepare to leave their boat
that delivered them
To this moment
To this place
A piercing whistle, a target hit

Another man limp
Another son gone
His splash his only goodbye
And yet their paddles
Continue to disrupt
The sea
Engulfing the consequences
Of gunshots

His engulfing helmet shakes as he
Moves over, moves on
And grabs his late neighbour's oar
Gritting his teeth
Arms heaving
Hands barely big enough to grip
As like fireworks
Badly aimed
Bullets descend
Reaching the shallows
His pack not the only thing weighing him down
Uniforms wetting as feet plunge
Into the churning layers of water

He jumps
A shaky landing
A shallow seabed
The shore nearby
So close
But so far
His feet uncertain as he urges them
To move forward
To move closer
To the danger
To the anger
To the wild roars of men
So sad and so desperate
To live and to die

For their families'
Protection
For their countries'
Glory
For their own story
To be written and remembered
Around tables and bedsides
To be heard
By their children
so young and bright

He races onwards
A scattered collective
In front and behind
Pressing on into the heart
Of the blood staining beach

Oversized boots
Make for uneven footing
As he stumbles over terrain
Over the fallen
His shiny bayonet
Feeling dirty
His uniform
Feeling dangerous

Another boy nearby stumbles
he runs
They run
Together yet separate
Their paths running alongside one another
Over and around
Dodging and swerving
Both boys trying to make it
but the other boy falls
A patchwork of red blossoming, spreading
The boy stops and looks

At his comrade
Someone he has never met
A small hand rises from the ground
Flailing, reaching
Desperate for someone, anyone
But no one is there
The boy turning
Re-joining the group
A survivor
Not a hero

Tears leak down as he thinks
of that boy
All alone
On a foreign beach
The straps of his pack
Rubbing his shoulders
a weight heavier than him

They continue on
The enemy closer and closer
His home further away with every shaky step
his father, he thought
his father would be so, so proud.
The gunshots in stark contrast to the natural rhythm of the sea.
So, so proud.

he was a child

Mana wāhine: The power of women

Elizabeth Nahu Y13

1. Karakia

E ngā Atua wāhine,
E ngā tupuna wāhine

To Mother Mary
And her daughter saints

To mother earth
E te Papatūānuku,
Gaea,
Manga Mater,
It Bunoo,
Tatei Rurianaka,
Máttaráhkka,
Mother of all things living

Hear our karakia

Whakamanawa mai
Whakatapu mai
Manaakitanga mai

Homai mai ki te kaha
Ki ora
Ki whakapuawai
Tihei mauri ora

Bless us
Protect us
Give us strength
Till the hour of our death

Haumi e, hui e, tāiki e

2. Body

I want to talk about
My body

I want to rejoice
In how it feels
To live in it

Sand between toes
Wind nipping skin
Water dripping over my scalp

Stretching
Out and up
Like a primary schooler

Rubbing
Hands up and down
Bare skin
From boobs to bare legs

Running
Over hills and through valleys
No thought but away
But free

I wish to observe
My ever changing patterns

From how stress is a tight knot
In my stomach
To how it relaxes
With tea and a book
To my monthly cycles
And parts that hurt

To how exercise tired
Is different from waking up tired

And I wish to learn
All the names
And ins and outside
Their hows and whys
And whakapapa
Even when the world doesn't want
To give it

The cruelest trick they played
Was to try and convince me
My body
And its stories
was separate
From my feminism

Because this body
Is mine
To command
and maybe
The only thing
I can really
Ever own

3. Whakapapa

They're burning the witches again
Stripping us of our bodies
Because control is all they know
They've never heard of
Good relations

And they know

Women bought them all into this world
Grew and birthed him -
Why else is the whenua a mother? -
And we are her mokopuna

And we can take them back
out
Mō nā te whenua, nā te wahine, ka mate te tangata -
Why else is death Hinenui-te-pō?

But don't they know
That they were bred
To fight and die
While we evolved
To fight and survive
Lessons passed down
Since Eve and Hine-Ahu-One
On how to walk on hot coals
your whole life
And hold your head high

Behold
Mō tenei te whakapapa
O te mana o ngā
Wāhine

4. Tikanga

I was the one born
in this body,
you know
In this world

My tūpuna had tikanga
Rooted in generations

of purakau
And whakapapa
To navigate it
But tāne pākehā took that away
Turned te awa atua
Into mate wāhine

So, I built my own
Learnt through trial and error
Some listening to other women
And then working out
What works for me
Because we all aren't
The same

But you missed that
With your one size fits all
Solutions
Half of which, frankly, don't fit
Anybody

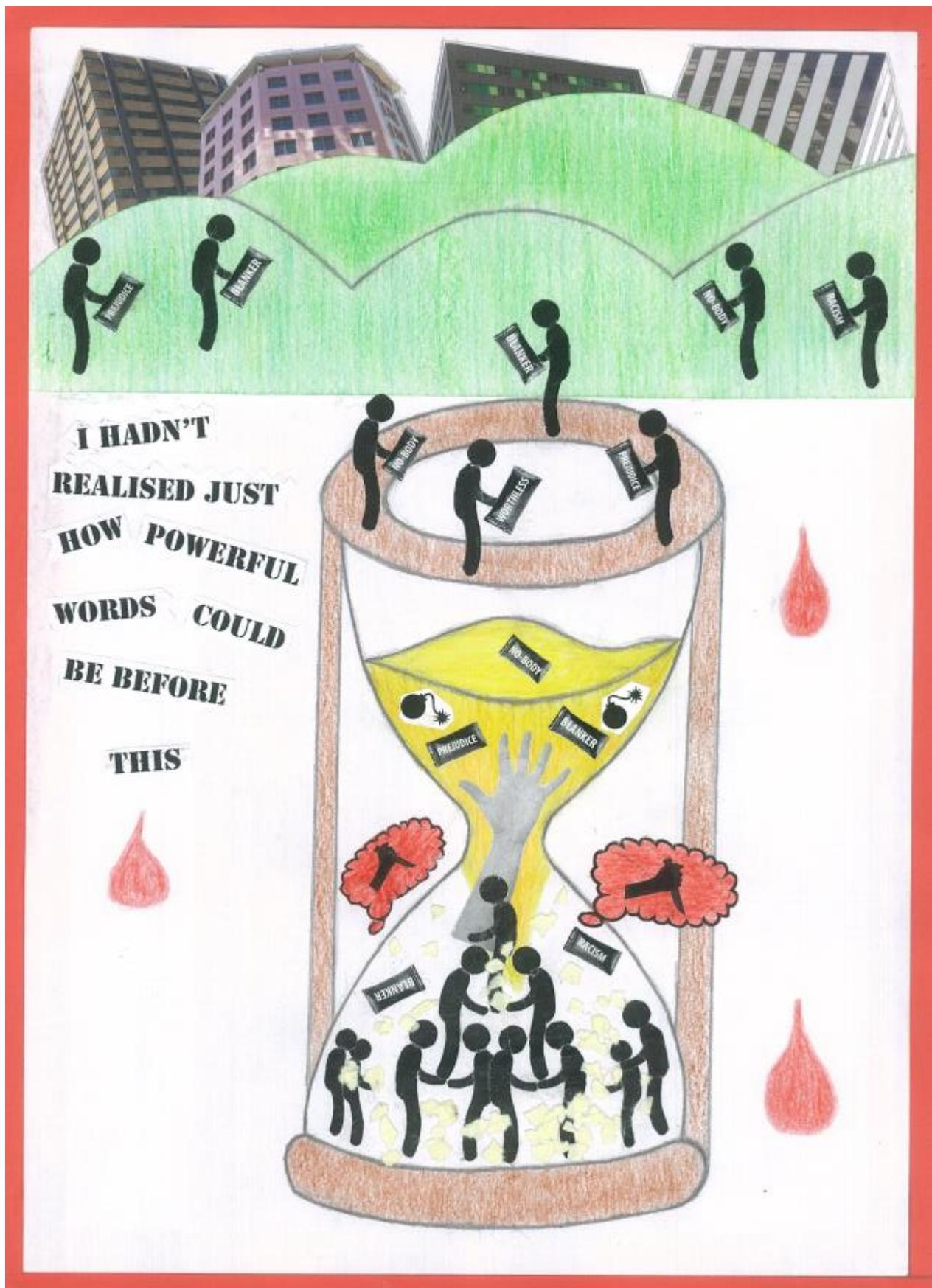
And it shows
You were born
In a different body
A different world
And so I'm going
to ask you
-with a pretty please because that's my tikanga-
E noho
Whakarongo mai
And then
Leave my tikanga to me
And

Fuck off



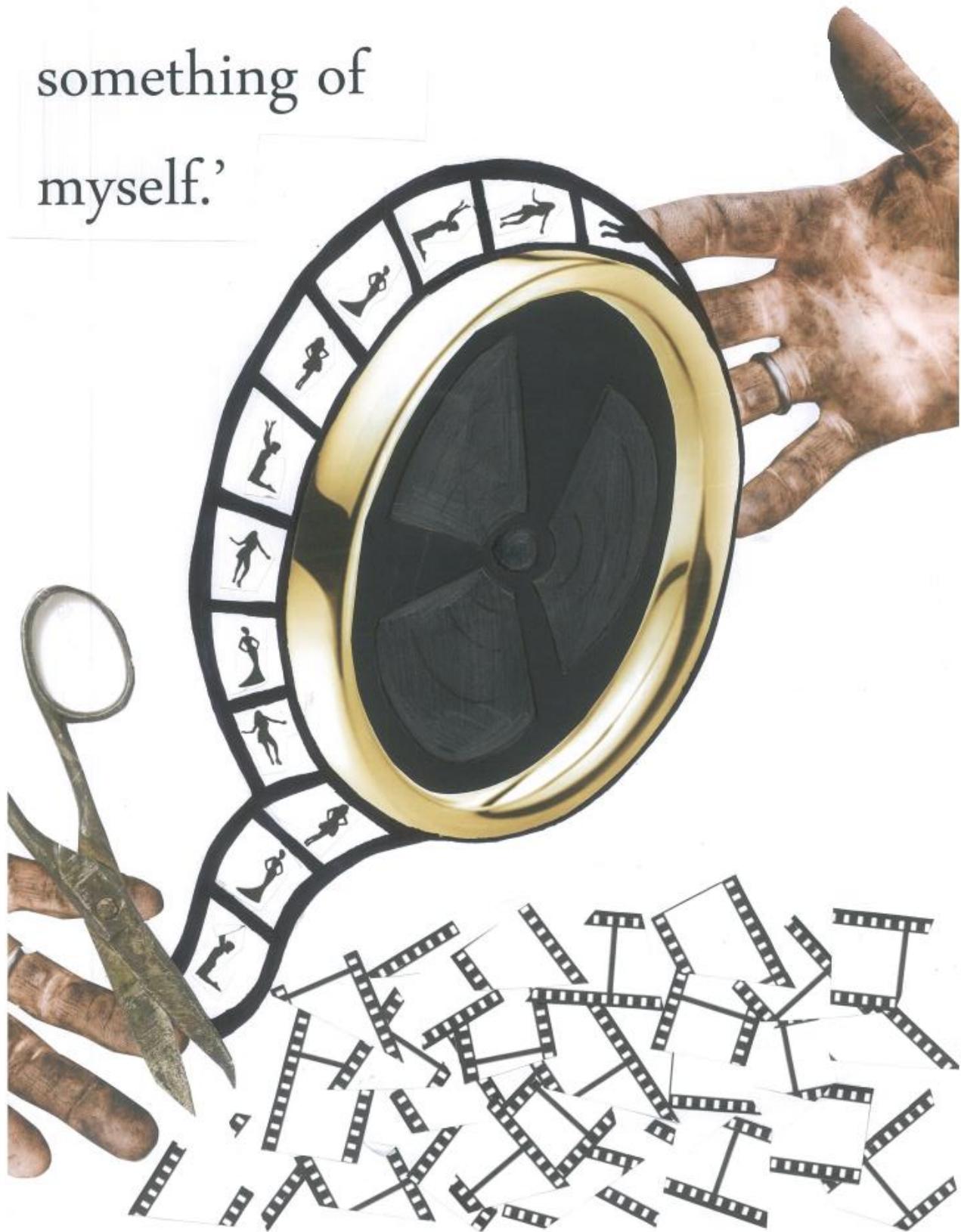
"My soul has
grown deep like
the rivers "

Del Huang Y11

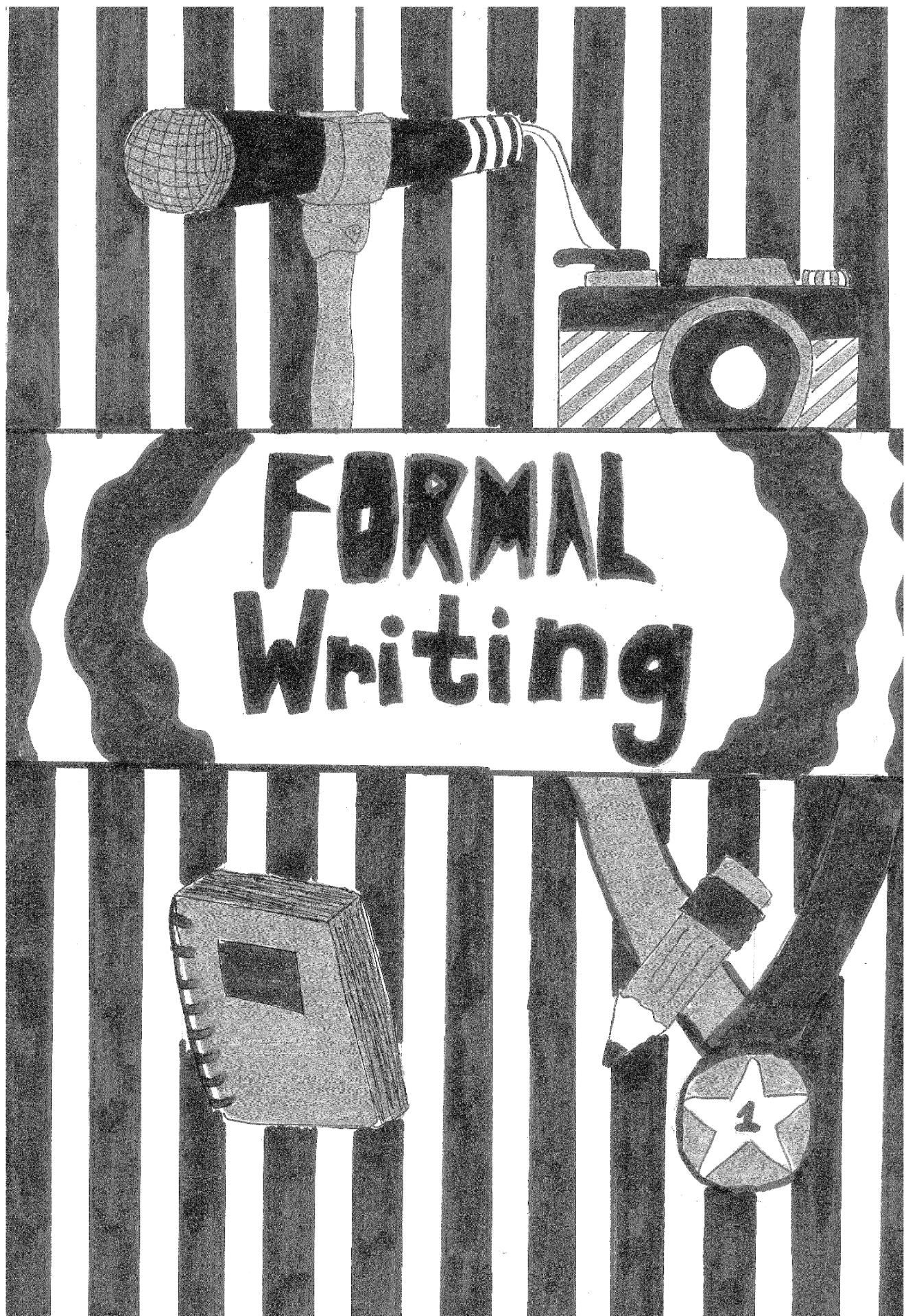


Serah Wong Y11

'I coulda made
something of
myself.'



Sophie Wellington Y11



Absolute power corrupts absolutely

JJ Elwood Y10

Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely".* The historian and moralist Lord Acton expressed this opinion in a letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton in 1887. Although this thought was not created recently, its principles hold true today. In this essay, I will show how the texts *Macbeth*, by William Shakespeare, *Animal Farm* (1999), directed by John Stephenson, *V for Vendetta* (2005), directed by James McTeigue, and *1984*, by George Orwell, explore this idea. They provide a warning about totalitarian political systems that is equally relevant today and they highlight the crucial importance of dissent and how necessary it is for people to have the means to bring down a corrupt leadership.

In *Macbeth*, William Shakespeare portrays how power corrupts. Before his encounter with the witches, Macbeth was a noble, honest man. He was a trustworthy person. The witches gave Macbeth the choice of having power, but he could only attain it through doing evil deeds. Macbeth subsequently murdered King Duncan, someone who trusted him and thought that he was loyal. His action of taking the life of his king was an abuse of his power as host and subject, and he paid with his sanity and his life. He betrayed his friends for the crown. He pushed everyone away from him and still took advice from the witches, whose corrupt ways were what set him down his path in the first place. Following Macbeth's inauguration to the throne, he relentlessly and unscrupulously pursued more power. This can be seen in Act 4, Scene 1 when he calls on the witches to answer his questions: "I conjure you by that which you profess - howe'er you come to know it - answer me... answer me to what I ask you". He has entered dangerous territory, the witches' territory, to find answers. Nothing would stand in the way of getting what he wanted. If Macbeth hadn't been as power hungry as he was, he

wouldn't have gone to the witches and would've tried to find another way out. And regardless, consulting with an enemy is definitely considered corrupt behaviour. Later in this scene, when he is denied his requests he responds with, "*I will be satisfied: deny me this, and an eternal curse fall upon you*". When he doesn't get what he wants, Macbeth starts to make demands and tries to blackmail the witches with empty threats, further showing his desperation to stop Macduff and his army and to hold on to his power. Macbeth was first corrupted by the temptation of power, but once he got that power his corruption got even worse. Macbeth proved to be a paranoid and vengeful king; he was afraid of losing his position and started killing to comfort himself. *Macbeth* shows that when a person has lots of power, they could abuse it and become more corrupt in the process.

Animal Farm (1999) shows that even those who obtain power through honest intentions can be corrupted. Animalism started as a system where "all animals are equal", but as the story progressed, these honest intentions turned sinister. Animalism, similar to communism in Soviet Russia, started out as a just system but was later corrupted to suit particular individuals' needs. The slippery slope of corruption in *Animal Farm* can be seen in this quote, "*It was about this time that the pigs suddenly moved into the farmhouse and took up their residence there... It was absolutely necessary, he said, that the pigs, who were the brains of the farm, should have a quiet place to work in. It was also more suited to the dignity of the Leader to live in a house than in a mere sty*". In this quote, the pigs and Napoleon (as the Leader) are directly violating the fourth Animalism commandment, "*No animal shall sleep in a bed*", which are the rules that all animals are intended to follow. This type of behaviour is dishonest and done solely for the personal benefit of the pigs, which is textbook corruption. Napoleon first uses force to gain control of Animal Farm and subsequently uses

fear to keep it, whilst changing the commandments of Animalism completely so that they would better suit his wants. Ruling over the farm by fear means that Napoleon thinks that without their fear holding them back, they would revolt and take control. Napoleon, out of fear of losing control, goes to even further extremes to hold on, such as denouncing Snowball as a traitor, whilst becoming more corrupt in the process, just as Macbeth had done. *Animal Farm* shows us that systems can start innocent and corruption free, but the actions of only a small group of people can corrupt the system in its entirety.

Absolute power corrupts absolutely is an important idea in James McTeigue's *V for Vendetta*. Norsefire is the political party that rules the UK, and at the beginning of the text, they have almost absolute power. Just like Macbeth and Napoleon, Norsefire started without any power and then committed atrocious acts to gain it, including releasing the "St Mary's Virus", subjecting people to cruel inhumane experimentations, and eliminating political opponents and cultural minorities. Norsefire was then relentless in doing whatever it took to hold on to power. They spied on people, suppressed people and the media, and as I mentioned earlier, they eliminated political rivals and scapegoated cultural minorities. They also abducted, tortured and killed their own citizens, which is similar to the absolute corruption in *Macbeth* - who tried to hold on to his throne by killing any rivals, even his own best friend – and Napoleon – who eliminated Snowball as a threat, effectively stole food from the animals of the farm, and forced the animals to work on the windmill, which ended up being the death for some of the animals. Ultimately, for each of Macbeth, Napoleon, and Norsefire, it was their corruption that was their downfall, none of them would've been overthrown if they had been fair and just rulers. In *V for Vendetta* McTeigue powerfully comments on the power of the people to

overturn a government in the quote, "*People shouldn't be afraid of their government. Governments should be afraid of their people*". In *V for Vendetta*, this is the people overthrowing Norsefire, but the quote would work equally as well in *Macbeth*, as his death at the hands of a revolution would also be very fitting. In *V for Vendetta* McTeigue shows audiences what could transpire out of any one group having too much power, and also that people have the power to revolt.

1984 by George Orwell again explores how absolute power corrupts on multiple levels – from physical corruption, to the corruption of historical records, through to the ultimate corruption of Winston's innermost thoughts and feelings. The Party's control of historical records is explained in the quote, "*Every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book rewritten... History has stopped. Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right*". The Party created a world in which the only truth is its own word. This makes rebellion impossible as, if the people aren't aware that they are being oppressed, they have no reason to revolt. The Party has full control over everything in Oceania. However, what distinguishes the Party from Norsefire is that the Party also has control over almost everyone's thoughts. The Party's systematic brainwashing leads to their full control over everything, this concept is explored in the quote, "*If both the past and the external world exist only in the mind, and if the mind itself is controllable - what then?*" By controlling both the historical record and the thoughts of the people, the Party can effectively have complete control of reality, or at least reality as it exists in the people's minds. The reason that the Party succeeds, and Napoleon, Macbeth and Norsefire ultimately fail, is because the latter don't truly have absolute power. There is always something that they cannot control, but the Party, through its control of thoughts, can effectively control everything. The Party is the only one of these groups that truly have absolute power, and because of that power, they are absolutely

corrupt. The Party can do whatever they want, without any restrictions. There is nothing and no one to stop them from acting corruptly, and so that is what they do. This is the main message that Orwell is trying to convey through 1984; when a group has absolute power, it is impossible to resist. This idea is shown in the quote, “*Until they become conscious they will never rebel and until after they have rebelled they cannot become conscious*”. Winston believes that the only way to stop the Party is for the people to rise up against it, but he is driven to despair by the feeling that only by rebelling will people become empowered enough to understand that they are being repressed. They are in an impossible, paradoxical situation; nothing but the act of rebellion will make them aware there is a need to rebel. Orwell wanted to challenge the reader and show that if a group truly has unlimited power and can control every aspect of society - including thought - then resistance is impossible.

Macbeth, *Animal Farm*, *V for Vendetta*, and *1984* each express the idea “absolute power corrupts absolutely” in their own unique way. Each provide their own fresh ideas and perspectives

and add new thoughts into the mix. In this essay I’ve used *Macbeth* to show the basic principles of the idea that power can corrupt. I’ve used *Animal Farm* to show how corruption can arise from honest intent. I’ve used *V for Vendetta* to show what could ensue from one group having too much power. And finally, I’ve used *1984* to show the impossibility of a revolt if someone has absolute power. The aforementioned texts also show another idea, that people will go to great lengths to hold on to power, and in contrast that people will go to even greater lengths to bring down a corrupt leadership. I believe we should take great solace in this. There will always be corrupt, power hungry people in this world, but there will also be people hungry to take them down.

* I define “corruption” as having or showing a willingness to act dishonestly for personal gain. Therefore, absolute corruption is an unrestricted willingness to act dishonestly for personal gain. I define “power” as the capacity or ability to direct or influence the behaviour of others or the course of events. Therefore, absolute power is the ability to direct or influence the behaviour of others or the course of events without any restrictions.



The purpose of multiple narratives

Sophie Crozier Y10

Texts that contain multiple narratives are very complex yet effective. Multiple narratives are unlike traditional texts as they follow more than one storyline and use special techniques to communicate the moral of the story. This tactic is used by authors to show that we are all connected, to prove that there are two sides to every story, to allow the reader to compare different characters, and to prove the relevance of the main message. The structure of a text that includes multiple narratives is unique as it doesn’t follow a plot line. This means that the stories can seem to be arranged in a random order but have been well devised and thought

out. This structure enables the reader to piece together the different stories to form their own conclusion and lets you view the different perspectives within the text. It teaches you to understand each individual aspect before encountering the main idea. A multiple narrative is like a painting, up close you see the fine details that make up each stroke and when you step away, it has the full picture which possess purpose and meaning. This essay identifies the purpose of multiple narratives and why creators use them. *Mother’s Day* directed by Garry Marshall, *East of Eden* by John Steinbeck, *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* by Mitch Albom, and *Station Eleven* by Emily St. John Mandel, are very diverse texts that utilize the multiple narratives

ability to hook in the reader, by encouraging them to link the stories.

The depths of human connection – our actions have effects:

The famous idea that all humans are closely connected is often discussed between philosophers. We live in an age where our small actions have large effects. The lesson that our actions have impacts is a common term used in our society, but what is its true meaning? Multiple narratives use their different stories to link characters and have their stories intertwine. They show the reader the importance of thinking before you act and how there is no scale to what can happen to who. These texts introduce the concept of valuing your life and teach you to take risks. Multiple narratives show human connection by telling lots of different stories with an item or person who connects them all.

When writing the book *East of Eden*, John Steinbeck wanted the reader to not only think about each character's actions but to understand why and how it led to another event. An example of this is when we learn about the characters Mr Edwards and Horace Quinn. At first the reader wonders why these characters' background stories are in the text, as they are not the main protagonists. Then we see that without these characters Cathy (main character) and Adam (main character) wouldn't meet. Mr Edwards was introduced as a man that had no purpose in life and was aging quickly. He was manipulated by Cathy and started an affair with her. When the truth was revealed that she was using him for his money and not love, Mr Edwards physically abused her. This led her to Adam who took her in and helped her heal, out of kindness. If Cathy hadn't been injured by Mr Edwards when she met Adam, then she wouldn't have consorted with him. This is shown when Cathy says to Adam **"When I was hurt I needed you. But you were slop. And when I didn't need you anymore you tried to stop me."** (By stop me,

she means stop her from leaving). Therefore we can come to the epiphany that without including Mr Edwards' narrative, there would be no storyline. Mr Edwards also contributed to developing Cathy's character as the actions she took against him were portrayed as cruel and malicious. If Mr Edwards' narrative wasn't included in the text, there would be a gap in detail and in the storyline. The character Mr Edwards took actions that had large effects on Adam who is classified as a stranger to him. This means that through the multiple narratives, John Steinbeck wanted to display that characters that don't have a relationship can share a large common connection to a person. In simpler terms, he used Mr Edwards to create a dynamic action that would impact a complicated character like Adam. Steinbeck wrote *East of Eden* as a multiple narrative to not only add more detail to the text, but to create a loop in his fictional world. He used the characters like puppets to play off each other and to prove the point that you can have more in common with a stranger than you think.

Multiple narratives show human connection by telling lots of different stories with an item or person who connects them all.

In *Station Eleven*, after the collapse of civilization, we are shown that the actions from the deceased have an effect on the new generation. This is shown in the quote **"She was thinking about the way she'd always taken for granted that the world had certain people in it, either central to her days or unseen and infrequently thought of. How without any of these people the world is a subtly but unmistakably altered place, the dial turned just one or two degrees."** This quote addresses how many lives are changed with one person missing, so when a large mass of them pass away, there is a collapse in society. The moment in the text when the quote was displayed, was when the

character Kirsten had an important realization. The quote was introduced in the scene when she was looking over images of the actor, Arthur and thinking about how her life would've been different if she hadn't had his wife's comics to influence her. Emily St. John Mandel orchestrated the narratives to have them all include the character, Arthur. This is shown when Arthur Leander impacted Jeevan's life on the night he died. When Arthur passed away during a theatre performance that Jeevan attended, Jeevan decided that at "**moments when people could only stare, he wanted to be the one to step forward.**" Later in Jeevan's narrative, we learn that he became a doctor after the flu outbreak. This proves that without Arthur being a part of Jeevan's narrative, he wouldn't have become a doctor. This is one example on how Arthur linked the characters in the multiple narratives as he was an essential part of each story, representing change. In some narratives, authors use the technique of linking the narratives through a common character, to put all the stories together. Emily St John Mandel did this to show the different stages people go through in crisis as she used Arthur as the change between normal civilization and a destroyed society.

The Five People You Meet in Heaven focuses on the small actions we take and the large effects they have. A chapter that shows how we are all closely connected is the narrative about Nicky. We learn that Nicky loses his car keys at the Ruby Pier theme park, which is later revealed to be the item that caused one of the rides to malfunction and kill Eddie. This means that a small action such as dropping your car keys, can lead to either a life being taken, or a life being saved. Mitch Albom used the multiple narratives to show how death is unpredictable, through using the idea that small actions have large effects. It proves that our actions have consequences and that these consequences are unpredictable too. When introducing Nicky, the author said "**No story**

sits by itself. Sometimes stories meet at corners and sometimes they cover one another completely, like stones beneath a river." When writing this quote, Albom was trying to explain why he wrote his book as a multiple narrative. He wanted to showcase how one story can spin off into another and how two very different narratives can be very similar. Mitch Albom was also very clever by having the multiple narratives lead up to the huge event, when the reader finds out what the items were that Eddie left behind. The items were a black tie (from the blue man's funeral), a Chinese restaurant menu (from Marguerite's wedding), an old deck of cards (that signifies Ruby meeting Eddie's father), a letter with an army medal (relating to the captain), and a faded polaroid of Eddie's birthday party, with children (relating to the young girl from the fire, Eddie's love for children, and the reason he stayed at Ruby Pier). These items all had some significance to each person's narrative and when brought together they exemplified the connection all the characters shared. It also is a symbol for each of the lessons that the five people from heaven taught Eddie.

All three of these texts show human connection but for different reasons. *East of Eden* explored the idea that strangers could have significance to one another, *Station Eleven* addressed how through linking characters it shows a different perspective on an event/situation, and *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* depicted the concept on how small actions can have large effects. Though these points of purpose are very broad/different they all involve using a character or an object to link each narrative. This means that to show human connection, each of these authors needed a central item that each narrative could link back to and to bring the plot together. As mentioned earlier, the characters Arthur, Eddie, and Mr Edwards were the linking characters for each text. Authors use these commodities to give the reader a way to understand how all the narratives fit together. These objects/characters then go on

to teach how everyone is all connected. *Mother's Day* was unlike these three texts as it didn't involve a linking object/character or show human connection through using its multiple narratives. Garry Marshall directed *Mother's Day* to focus on a famous event that people share but didn't utilize the multiple narratives' ability to show how characters can impact one another. He didn't do this because his core goal for the movie was to teach the lesson of why Mother's Day is important, not to show how humans are connected. Overall, most texts that contain multiple narratives teach the moral lesson that each person in our society can have a large impact on others.

The concept of comparing:

The general population subconsciously compares themselves with others. It is a vital skill to have and is a fundamental need. Our species is designed to understand ourselves and has a large capacity for self-reflection. So, to help us understand certain concepts, we observe others. Comparing is one of the main things that a reader does when studying a text, so it makes sense that a creator would want to allow the reader to do that as much as possible. The more opportunities we are given to compare, the more we learn and can evaluate. Multiple narratives are designed to let the viewer/reader compare the different stories and to grasp the new ideas. Through comparing, a reader can look at the different perspectives and form their own conclusion on each character.

Like most multiple narratives, each protagonist in *Mother's Day* had a situation to overcome and their own story. As stated previously, by seeing each narrative individually, the audience can think about the differences between each character and the similarities. It is important for human beings to compare as it helps people get a better understanding of situations and it is a natural form of thought. For example, the audience can look at the two characters Sandy

and Jesse with the extra information they have gained from the multiple narratives and compare the lives of their children. The viewer can also compare their overall situation and decide which protagonist had the worst issue to face on Mother's Day. For example, you could say that Sandy had it easier on Mother's Day as she didn't have to face racism from her mother in law, like Jesse did. The viewer can see why they make great friends as they both have the same style of dealing with a difficult situation. When something is hard on them, they will seek advice from a close friend. These two are very similar which is convenient as they share the same type of problem, which is the fear of losing their children. Without the story being set up as a multiple narrative, the viewer wouldn't have been able to come to the realization that one of the biggest fears mothers face is losing their child. Garry Marshall decided to have multiple narratives as they are the best way to compare characters. Multiple narratives allow the reader to retrieve more information than you do with other texts and you are comparing/contrasting stories within the plot. He wanted the viewer to compare the characters so they would realise that all the narratives included an overworked mother.

East of Eden's narratives were set in many different points of time. So, it is an intriguing thought to know that the character Cal is a reincarnation of the character Charles. These characters share the same blood but come from different generations (and have never met before.) In *East of Eden*, John Steinbeck developed Cal to be just like his ancestor Charles. We know this because when comparing the two narratives Cal and Charles have many similar traits. Some of these traits include that they are both the 'Cain' of their narratives. John Steinbeck based his book off of the story Cain and Abel, from the bible. He did this to show that the way people acted in these ancient scriptures, still occur today. This links to the idea of comparing, as John Steinbeck used all the different multiple

narratives to prove that this story line is continuing today but has been modernized. It secondly shows that people from different eras in time can share a lot in common. Cal and Charles were similar in the way that they were both jealous of their brothers, due to a lack of compassion on their father's behalf. A specific moment that theoretically links the two is when Cal gave his father money, as a gift and when Charles gave his father a pocket knife for his birthday. When Cal gave the money, his father didn't accept it which lead to Cal taking out his anger on his brother through verbal abuse. Charles had the same happen to him except he tried to kill his brother, Adam, instead. Another way the reader could compare narratives is by looking at characters who have completely opposite personalities. Samuel Hamilton is portrayed as the essence of good and Cathy as his polar opposite. When Samuel and Cathy's narratives intertwine, Samuel describes his first interaction with her saying "**Only twice in my life have I seen eyes like that—not like human eyes.**" If the reader pays specific attention to this quote, they can go back to earlier in his narrative when Samuel watched a mass murderer get executed. John Steinbeck went into deep detail about this criminal's eyes for the purpose of comparing him and Cathy. The author made a connection within the text for the reader to figure out, using the information they were given. Through analysing this quote, Cathy is revealed to be a dangerous character early in the story. In this text, multiple narratives allow comparing between generations and show devised comparisons from authors.

Character development is an important element for narratives. When there are multiple narratives, authors can link characters without being in the narrative together. This means that you can have two separate stories and one event that links the two. Through using this method, Emily St. John Mandel was able to not only connect Arthur and Clark but to use one

character to develop the other. Arthur is developed to be a character that lives life without a care but then goes on to regret his decisions. A moment that shows Arthur's careless actions is the dinner party that he throws, that Clark attends. The joy and electric light that Clark remembers from the party, inspires him to not give up on civilization and could be the reason that Clark survives the epidemic. Although Arthur was a weak and corrupt protagonist, the small party he held, gave another character purpose. Like most human beings, Clark had a few sinful moments but compared to Arthur was an inspiring character. Overall, without Arthur throwing that eccentric party, Clark wouldn't have been driven to see the joy and lights again, after the epidemic. This is shown at the end of the book when Clark explores his past/present and concludes that "**If there are again towns with streetlights, if there are symphonies and newspapers, then what else might this awakening world contain?**" Clark's hopeful persona was developed at Arthur's party and without it, he wouldn't have cared for the future. Readers can also conclude that the way *Station Eleven* was written, had a significant impact. Arthur's narrative was presented right after Clark's narrative, to make it easier for the reader to compare the two. Emily St. John wanted to emphasize the point that Clark and Arthur had completely opposite personalities by putting the narratives close together. This is an effective and strategic choice as by having Arthur's narrative right after Clark's, it develops him to be an extremely 'good' person. Multiple narratives can help develop different characters by comparing.

It is important to understand both sides of the story and by comparing narratives/viewing the different perspectives, you can achieve this. Both *East of Eden* and *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* investigated the important lesson that there isn't always a right story and a wrong story. In *East of Eden*, this concept comes into play after Charles considers Adam to be selfish for re-enlisting in

the army instead of coming home. At first the reader may agree with Charles, but the multiple narratives help the reader to understand that the reason Adam re-enlisted was because the army had changed him, and he didn't feel like he had a place to call 'home' anymore. This is shown when Adam says "**I just couldn't stand it. Didn't have no place to go. Didn't know nobody. Wandered around and pretty soon I got in a panic like a kid, and first thing I knewed I'm begging the sergeant to let me back in - like he was doing me a favour.**" Therefore, it was the longing for belonging that made Adam decide not to return home, not the idea of upsetting Charles by staying. Adam didn't have cruel intentions, but the action was portrayed as that from a certain point of view. There was already some animosity between Charles and Adam which lead Charles to think that was why Adam didn't return. Overall, the miscommunication between the two characters lead to a huge controversy, when neither Charles nor Adam were at fault. Another example of using comparing in multiple narratives, to understand that there are two sides to every story, is the controversial storyline in *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, when Eddie gets shot by the Captain. The multiple narratives gave the reader the opportunity to understand why the Captain shot Eddie as there is always depth to a story. We learn early in the book that the Captain made himself the promise "**No one gets left behind.**" So, when Eddie ran into the fire because he thought he saw a person in the shadows, the Captain shot him to keep him alive. Through Eddie's narrative we have sympathy for him and feel that it was a sinful act that the Captain shot him. But through learning the Captain's story, the reader gains important information and understands that his motives for shooting Eddie were valid. Without both sides of the story, given through the multiple narrative, the Captain would have been portrayed as a cruel man instead of a hero. A sentence from the text that reminds us of the Captains acts is "**I got to keep my**

promise." Both of these texts involve a character that is portrayed as malicious because of a misunderstanding. Readers sometimes assume that a character did an 'evil' action because of a lack of detail. This is a common problem that happens in our society. Multiple narratives teach the moral "innocent until proven guilty" and use character comparison, to prove this point.

To summarize, comparing is a key part of human thought and has more importance to the decisions we make, than we think.

To summarize, comparing is a key part of human thought and has more importance to the decisions we make, than we think. *Mother's Day* addressed the basics of how comparing characters can help find the moral of the story. *East of Eden* connected different generations and showed how significant similarities and differences are. *Station Eleven* involved gaining character development through comparing texts. Finally, both *The Five People you Meet in Heaven* and *East of Eden* proved the importance of learning both sides of the story and how comparing narratives relates to that.

Developing the main message – proving its relevancy:

All texts are developed around the main message as it is a key part to every story. Main messages are the central ideas that authors/directors want to express and teach the reader/viewer an important life lesson that relates back to the story. Multiple narratives can help develop and introduce the key concept by having all the narratives share the same message but with a different plot. Life lessons are crucial as they can change lives. Passing down these valuable lessons through stories help evolve character, influence people's view on life, and cultivates

values/perspectives. This means that it is essential for multiple narratives to contain main messages and most of them have more than one.

Mother's Day uses its multiple plot lines to establish the larger theme. The main message that Garry Marshall expressed was the importance of keeping our loved ones close and how love is eternal. The movie also addressed how racism/sexism shouldn't affect love and why we celebrate Mother's Day. Some of the narratives the text used to share this message was the character Jesse who had to face racism, Sandy whose ex-husband got remarried, Bradly who had lost his wife and was struggling to raise his daughters, and then there was Kristine who was afraid to get married because of abandonment issues. All of these share the similarity that a relationship between two or more people in the family had been severed. The multiple protagonists all had different situations they were facing but they all learnt the life lesson that a mother's love is everlasting. Examples of this is when Jesse said to her mother "**No matter what's happened between us you're always my mother.**" This means that no matter how much they argue, their bond of love is strong enough to overcome that. Another quote that supports this statement was when Sandy got told "**There is no way that the bond you have with your kids, can ever be broken.**" The creator used this method to tell the story because it showed the viewer that a lot of people are learning this life lesson, whether it is in movies or real life. It doesn't matter the situation you're facing; the connection of love is the most common in the world. Each narrative included this life lesson, furthermore, proving that this main message is common and that all the characters from the text, share it.

Throughout the book *East of Eden*, the storyteller repeats the quote "**I believe that there is one story in the world, and only one. . . Humans are caught—in their lives, in their thoughts, in their hungers and ambitions, in their**

avarice and cruelty, and in their kindness and generosity too—in a net of good and evil. . . . There is no other story. A man, after he has brushed off the dust and chips of his life, will have left only the hard, clean questions: Was it good or was it evil? Have I done well—or ill?" What is interesting about this quote is how it starts with "I believe there is one story in the world, and only one." Throughout the book the theme of good vs evil and 'timshel' - ('thou mayest') meaning that someone has the choice to right their wrongs, is shown. So why would the author say there's only one story when they used multiple narratives? It is because each narrative supported the statement that the only story we follow is good vs evil. The multiple narratives proved that even though we have different paths we follow; we still learn the same life lessons and have the same choices. Even though each character experienced a different situation, they had to decide between evil and good. Examples of this are Adam's choice of who he acquainted himself with, Cathy (evil) or Samuel (good). We also see Cal struggle between his good nature and his bad nature. Cal's evil actions came out of jealousy and his good actions were shown when he fixed his mistakes. Like *Mother's Day*, each narrative had a different plot line but shared the same main message as the other narratives. By doing this, all the plot lines could be linked together to make a story.

Both the texts *Mother's Day* and *East of Eden* used its multiple narratives to express the main message. But how did they do that specifically? As mentioned earlier, these texts had each character's narrative focused around the main message but with its own plot line. Authors show the main message continuous times instead of once in a story to emphasise that the main theme is important and relevant. These creators use each narrative as 'evidence' to prove that their main message affects more than one person. So, when authors use multiple narratives to share the main message, they are setting up the text to

prove that the main idea is relevant to our society and has significance.

Conclusion:

Multiple narratives have more purpose than just being in a text to make it more intriguing. It is a strategic style of writing that captivates the audience through showing human connection, allowing the reader/viewer to compare narratives, and by helping develop the main message. Not many texts include this writing structure which is a shame as the ideas they produce are eye opening. This writing style is both challenging for the author and the reader which is a great thing for all types of

readers/viewers to experience. Multiple narratives need to be promoted and used more in texts, as people gain a large variety of new ideas from viewing these texts. The overall purpose of multiple narratives is to get the reader to think about each sub-purpose and how it relates back to society. Multiple narratives are a fun and enjoyable story type and explore the basics of philosophy/human thought. Multiple narratives can be best described by the quote; **“That each affects the other and the other affects the next, and the world is full of stories, but the stories are all one.”** – Mitch Albom, *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*.



Hard cheese is no Gouda

Simon Lee Y11

Imagine you were in the supermarket, walking past the milk, the yoghurt, and of course the cheese. You look up at the splendid yellow creamy wall of dairy goodness, and suddenly an earthquake strikes. Cheese tumbles everywhere. Sadly, you enjoy eating cheeses like cheddar and edam and you are knocked out cold by the brick-like objects. Your skull is cleft in two and you bleed to death on the dirty floor. It is truly too sad that this incident could have been avoided. Why did you have to look at the hard cheeses? Hard cheeses such as swiss and parmesan are ruining our dairy industry, and you must stop eating them.

It is true that hard cheeses can be extremely tasty. I have eaten many in my lifetime. But in the above example, hard cheese is evidently too hard. If a block of gouda leaps from the heights of your fridge and clobbers you face on, what will it mean for you? Stitches. Plastic surgery. Expensive medical bills. Possibly your lifetime in debt because of them. If such an event happened with a soft cheese, such as camembert or brie, the impact wouldn't leave a single dent. A block of

brie would bounce blissfully from your un-battered body. What's more, when cutting hard cheese with a simple butter knife, it can be difficult. You could be at a picnic, and all you have is some flimsy plastic cutlery. How will you manage to cut something like a slab of Colby with such futile tools? Recent research shows that soft cheeses are 50% softer than hard cheeses, meaning you could even tear a wheel of ricotta with your fingers as you wish.

If a block of gouda leaps from
the heights of your fridge and
clobbers you face on, what will it
mean for you?

The hardest cheese in the world is called Dhurka. Originating from the Himalayas, it has a moisture content of 10.22%. Compared to your average block of cheddar, which is at 37%, this cheese is as hard as a rock. To eat Dhurka, you must hold the cheese in your mouth without biting it so it can soften, then you chew it like gum until it dissolves. Unless you want chipped teeth and deep mouth abrasions, I would recommend that you consume softer products. Eating hard cheese

is somewhat suicidal, as your mouth could bleed for ages and your teeth could be non-existent within seconds. It may also surprise you to know that cheddar cheese, on average, has between two to four percent of ash in it! You don't want to eat finely burnt pieces of wood with your crackers! Meanwhile, calm camembert contains a moisture content of 51%, making it creamy for your consumption, plus, it is certainly scrumptious.

James Creamer is the descendant of a cheese scientist (Lawrence Creamer) and is a cheese lover himself. I asked him recently about his thoughts on soft cheese versus hard cheese. Much to my pleasure, Mr. Creamer agreed with me, stating that he prefers to devour delicate dairy delights over rigid rotten Romano any day.

'A high-class individual deserves high-class cheese', he also remarked. This is true. At your local countdown, tasty cheese from Mainland costs two dollars and fourteen cents for 100 grams, while a wheel of brie from the same company will put a dent in your savings at four dollars for 100 grams. One can infer from this that since soft cheese is more expensive, it is of higher quality.

At the end of the day, when you return to your home from a day at school, you now know what to snack on. Settle down to a tangy treat that won't tweak your teeth in the slightest. Pick up a lavish wheel from the supermarket and feast away, for you now know that soft cheese is better than hard cheese.



My granny's fairyland

Louise Anscombe Y11

There were mysteries in my grandmother's garden. Shadows of claws in the stream. Kaka that screeched with mirth at us. A sunlit glen where my parents were married, an unclimbable lime tree that dappled the grass. Rhododendrons like the floaty tulle skirts of ballerinas. A clearing, refuge from pursuing creatures. Grandpa's blue eyes; the dog's brown, old and experienced. The lemons hanging from the tree like yellow jewels. A swing, whose folds hid monsters, huge spiny wetas and spiders, malevolent eyes glinting.

I barrel through the undergrowth, crashing into as many things as possible, cousins at my side. We carry sticks, our weapons with which we thrash bushes, letting out high pitched war cries. Within a minute our frenzied war is over and we are on the hunt for goblins, then are on the run from werewolves, scrambling up trees desperately. A slug is found. Consequently tormented. Jack the Jack Russell is brushed and pampered. There is the begging for the sacred

sweetness of Bundaberg's lemon lime and bitters. Hours are spent, ending in a tired collapse on the lawn, near the avenue of white roses. Things may have changed, the garden is smaller, I am bigger, the dog is dead. But the boundaries in my brain have not changed.

But the magic isn't just for me.

I've had my birthdays there, dinners, lunches, Christmases. I've met my new cousins, remembered those forgotten. I've eaten countless roast vegetables, grown in the garden, watched over by the rotting straw scarecrow, replaced by the recycled metal rabbit. My Granny's garden and house have been a gathering place for far longer than my lifetime, when my granny bought her childhood home and raised her family, not just within its walls, but in fairyland, too. But the magic isn't just for me. Every year the garden tour terminates in the most glorious of gardens. The brass band serenades the walkers with buoyant tunes as they wander and marvel.

Now the towering leafy men who have watched over me my whole life are seen through a lens steeped in memory; over saturated, too colourful.



Every time I return, I see the fairies that I left behind; once more.

Traversing the pounamu highway

Tarek Patchett Y11

I gaze up as the sides of the canyon rise ominously above, snow coated mountains standing tall as pillars of the sky. I am just a mere mortal, amongst this pantheon of gods. We are all soldiers, marching defiantly through the trenches, over hills and weaving our way into the bush. Calloused feet in our boots trek the track of many who have come before. A library of history, with ours being solely one page in a million chapters. I turn and stare back down the valley at where we have come from. Far off in the distance, I see other travellers, fighting the same battles that we have had to endure. These valleys are a cauldron of deafening silence, and yet they are so alive with life. It feels like we are speckles of dust, on a microscope of those above.

These greenstone valleys are of an ancient mould. Sculpted, as if from the hand of a master craftsman by the fringed, glistening glaciers that used to fill the basin. I know that this place has a special significance to the iwi of the region. It is their taonga. The local hapu used this as an expressway to the greenstone on the west coast. Pounamu, a rock rich in nature shimmering like starlight off the surface of a lake. Now it is not just the Maori who traverse this valley. It is a stone-lined commune, bringing together peoples from all walks of life.

Here it is. The final hurdle. A jagged titan reaching an outstretched hand to touch the tips of the clouds. The view from up there would be spectacular. The whole valley lying flat like a chart to study. But we must get there first. All the

trial and tribulation up to this point has led here. Legs decrepit, mouths dry, voices hoarse. The heavens have opened above us. Maybe they're crying. Maybe the rain is tears of pain, of all those that have tackled this behemoth saddle. For us the rain is bliss. Its touch soothes the skin aflame. As we rise through the bush line, I feel elated. We can push through the pain. At the end of the tunnel, there is a light. At the end of this pain is success.

The heavens have opened above
us.

Time saunters along at a dawdle as we approach the crest. The tussock has thinned out. This monument has been scaled and now we may breathe in the slice of heaven above. Waterfalls flow like luscious locks of hair down the mountainside and the wind is eerily still. We are at a ceasefire. For now, the saddle will let us have our victory. But this valley always wins, in the end. Its grandeur draws you in. But you will not be prepared for the slings and arrows it sends your way.

Looking back at it you can trace our passage on a map. Funny how something so extensive could be simplified down to a square of paper. It looks so innocuous lying flat on the table. You never really get a sense of its magnificence. We will value these moments for years to come. These are the tales you utter as the embers of the campfire smoulder away, rising like a cluster of fireflies into the night sky. That's why I am grateful for that dazzling greenstone valley.

Are phones really as bad as teachers think?

Ed Sindlen Y11

In your pocket right now, is arguably one of mankind's greatest and most useful inventions, of all time. The cell phone, invented in 1973 by Martin Cooper, was a marvel of its time. No longer would you need to stand by a wall confined by a wire leash imprisoning you in your house. Suddenly you could go outside, call anyone, anywhere...for about 10 minutes until the battery ran out and then you had to charge it for hours. Not to mention that it was the size and weight of a brick. It is safe to say that cell phone technology has come a long way since its debut. What you can do on your phone today is almost limitless. We have internet, games, apps like Netflix and other video streaming services like YouTube. We also have texting which gives us the ability to contact people covertly and without having to really interact with them. But with all these uses can they be used as classroom tools?

Now at first, this may seem an easy question to answer. As for years and years, (well actually more the last five or six years) teachers have made it very clear their stance on classroom cell phone use. Cell phones are weapons of mass destruction, intent on destroying their classroom structure and robbing students of their attention and therefore dumbing down the human race, ensuring our absolute destruction! The main arguments against cell phone use in classes is that they cause a distraction, and there are other, better suited alternatives for in-class learning.

But there are also many argued pros for cell phone use in classes. For instance, if your computer isn't working, a cell phone is a good alternative, as I said before cell phones have come a very long way since their debut. Most modern cell phones are capable of the same features as a computer, in fact as I write this now, I can see two people working on phones because their computers are broken, or they don't have

one. Another way they can replace a computer is if the school Wi-Fi is down, as many computers are unable to use mobile data whereas mobile data is one of the most useful aspects of a cell phone.

But cell phones don't have to be and should not be confined to an emergency alternative, as phones can be used even while also using a computer. Many students, if not most, use their phones to listen to music during class. This helps them focus and drown out other distracting classroom sounds. Listening to music during strenuous activities such as tests has also been shown to improve the quality of the work and help with memory. In fact, as I write this now, I am listening to music and as you can see my quality of work is impeccable.

But with great cell phone power
comes great cell phone
responsibility, said Yoda or
someone

But with great cell phone power comes great cell phone responsibility, said Yoda or someone; I haven't watched those films in years. With cell phone use there is an element of trust involved with using it appropriately. As I previously said they can easily become more of a distraction than a tool. But who says the same cannot be said for computers?

Mobile phones have their pros and cons, but should they be used in classroom? From the evidence that I have collected and presented here today, I say yes. Yes, phones should be used in classrooms but not as a replacement to the conventional laptop but more as an accessory, able to be used in conjunction or as an alternative to when there is a problem with the main device. Cell phones have their problems but if used correctly they can be a great device in and out of class.

The power of protest in young people

Olivia Cowley Y12

Previous generations have all had their moments of unity and justice. Huge movements such as the Nuclear Freeze Campaign in the 80s, and the Black Civil Rights Movement in the 60s, have paved the way for how we live our lives today.

I believe that the new generation, Generation Z, should be able to voice their opinions and stand up for what they believe in. As a generation, we can change the future by acting now. We have seen what a difference our ancestors and elders have made to society by speaking out and standing up for what they believe in. An example of this is Rosa Parks, and how her defiance of the Jim Crow segregation laws led to the formation of the Montgomery Bus Boycott in December of 1955. Had she not refused to stand for a white passenger, the boycott may never have happened, and the Civil Rights Movement may never have gotten the traction it so desperately needed. This movement completely changed the lives of the people living in America at the time and to this day. This is just one of many examples where people have stood up for what they believed in and helped to initiate change.

As a generation, we can change
the future by acting now.

I wholeheartedly believe that this can happen again in our generation. We have strong people such as Greta Thunberg, the leader of the School Strike 4 Climate. On March 15th 2019, over 1.4 million students from all over the world went on strike, with the common goal of raising awareness of climate change and urging

politicians to start doing something about it. As just one of those 1.4 million people who participated in the strike, I believe that my voice helped demand action to prevent climate change, even as small as that voice may seem in the world. If every person in the world spoke up and used their voices for change, how strong would that make a movement? With 1.4 million strikers at School Strike 4 Climate, we made one hell of a noise, and the rest of the world watched us. I am certain that we will be able to witness a change in our lifetime against climate change, because of the actions we took when we were on strike. The older generation can try to silence us, but they're not going to be around when we are left to pick up the pieces from their mess. Their mistakes, both past and present, are our future. Why does it take over a million students going on strike for them to start listening to us?

It's great having people of all ages speaking up, but it's so important for young people to speak up as they are the new generation, and the legacy being left. If they just sit around and wait for change to happen, there's a chance that maybe they're not going to feel like they're able to speak up later down the line when it matters. Since the voting age is still 18 in New Zealand, most teenagers can't voice their opinions in any sort of election. This means they need to find other ways to make their voices heard, such as striking.

The new generation in this world is aware, and ready to fight for what they believe is right. They will be role models, and the generations to come will look up to them. I'm so proud to be a part of this diverse group of people, and I'm ready to continue fighting for change in our world.



Patarau

James Lawson Y11

The roar of the ocean. The mane of sun-baked grass on rolling hills. The snaking tail of the Patarau river, hiding behind the powerful body of the limestone cliffs, and the jagged teeth of stone outcrops all come together to form a beast of nature. I clamber up onto a boulder, one of the paws of the great beast of Patarau. I look around, my eyes running over the spine of a ridge and the edge where the hills meet the untouched bush. Fantails dip and dive around branches, singing songs of sun and sand. A solitary kingfisher darts around the rocks at the mouth of the river. All of nature coalesces into a beast, a huge guardian, standing watch over the open ocean, and the rugged south.

A tear in the earth, descending
into complete darkness.

Patarau is a place with a very wide history. In the 1600's it was fought over by several Maori tribes, each settling for a few years then being forced out by another tribe wanting the land. In the 1850's gold was discovered in the rivers, which led to a gold rush. A mining town called 'Muttontown' was created, and people came from as far away as China to pan for gold. 1866 saw the discovery of coal in the hills, and in the 1900's the miners were joined by hundreds of men looking to work in farming industries. The local economy flourished, and more and more people flooded into the remote settlement. Then WW1 sent all the able-bodied men and women overseas. With no-one to work, the mills, mines, and farms closed, and people moved back into the cities, never to return.

We wake at seven to get ready. Once we have our helmets, overalls, thermals, and gumboots on, we clamber into the back of a four-wheel drive and take off down the dirt road. An old farm building marks our destination, and a pair of huntaways bark "Hello!" from a kennel. We climb over a fence, and follow a valley, winding deeper and deeper into the mountains. After a few minutes, we arrive. A tear in the earth, descending into complete darkness. This cave is only known to a few people in the world at any given point, so we tread carefully. Single file, we trudge down the gravelly slope, leaving the sun behind. Our headlamps are necessary now, as sheer drops and sharp rocks are around every corner. We abseil down to a trickling stream, gasping as freezing cold water finds a home in our boots. After a few climbs, clambers, and crawls through the winding guts of the Patarau beast, we arrive in a chamber called the amphitheatre. 15 metres from floor to ceiling, it was created millions of years ago. A huge crack on the far wall than snakes its way down the length of the wall is the only reminder of the event that made its home. A scar in the rock. The amount of people that have been here are in double digits, and will probably stay that way for many years. I explore down a small passage, and unknown to me, I'm the first person in all of human history to be here.

When we leave the cave, I turn around and look back. It's strange to see the mountains now, because half an hour ago, I was inside them. I look at the green grass under my feet, and wonder what secrets and new stories lie just metres below.



Looking for love?

Lily Slater Y12

Love is ‘like a red rose’. This popular metaphor morphs into a symbol of unrequited love and lost opportunity through reality tv symbolism and the manufactured concepts that surround our notions of true love and the orchestrated fairy tale of what real romance should be. Are you the only single person in your group of friends, alone and left on the shelf of life? Are you tired of going on dates that never end up going anywhere spinning endlessly on the carousel of love? Are you sick of being the bridesmaid at every wedding and constantly wondering when it is gonna be your time to put on that ivory tulle dress you have dreamed of since you were a young girl and walk down the aisle towards victory like a prize fighter heading towards the ring? Well ladies and gentlemen this could be the opportunity you have been waiting for...

I bet you are thinking I am going to promote a cheap second rate dating apps like Tinder or Bumble that will solve all your issues and introduce you to your personal Prince Charming. But let’s be honest we’ve all tried that and found ourselves once again on the couch binge watching the Kardashians, licking our love wounds and drowning our sorrows by eating a too large tub of ice cream because that Tinder date stood us up. Finding true love on a reality TV show eliminates these issues and increases your chances of discovering your dream soulmate. When you’re having trouble finding your elusive second half, the last thing you may feel like doing is broadcasting your lukewarm love life so the whole overcritical nation can gleefully watch you get rejected and pass judgement on you. However there are many positive reasons why seeking out love on reality TV is the best way to find the special person you have been looking for all along.

‘Love Island’ is a reality TV show filmed in Spain based on the concept that a group of physically attractive people in their 20’s desperately seeking love are placed into a villa with no contact with the outside world. The aim of the show is for the cast members to get to know each other in a very intimate and intense living environment and form friendships but most importantly find and build a connection with a member of the opposite sex in hopes of finding true and everlasting love. Each week the cast members are made to “couple up” with another member of the villa. In most cases this is someone they can foresee a romantic future with. The person left without a partner is sent home in a tense elimination ceremony filled with long dramatic pauses and climatic cliff-hangers placed strategically before the commercial breaks.

‘Love Island’ is the perfect way to find love when you are losing hope that love lies in your future because you are spending 24 hours a day for many weeks on end with the same group of people with nothing else to do and no alternative but to get to know each other. You skip all the awkward first dates and uncomfortable small talk that you are used to in the real world and you are encouraged to get intimate and share a bed with your new partner, even on the first day that you couple up. The first few stages of a relationship, going on a few dates and getting to know each other, can take months in the real world. All of this for your partner to then simply and selfishly decide it isn’t working for them and put an end to your budding romance. This sudden halt can put you right back to square one on your quest to find your other half. However in the ‘Love Island’ villa relationships are put on fast forward and this traditional process is sped up significantly. Contestants have compared one week in the villa as one month in the real world. This means that if you choose to get to know someone in the villa and find it doesn’t work like you had imagined, it only takes a few short days

to come to this conclusion rather than the vast number of wasted weeks it could take in the real world. This gives you the opportunity to eliminate the relationships that aren't for you in a short period of time and gives you the opportunity to find your dream partner faster and without wasting precious time. Contestants express what they desire in a dream partner and new contestants matching these descriptions are brought in during the show to stir up the villa and make it entertaining for viewers as cat fights and dramas unfold. This also gives contestants the opportunity to meet love interests hand-picked from their dream partner wish list which would be extremely difficult to find unassisted in the real world as these people may be geographically distant from their real lives. Love Island provides the opportunity for people with similar interests to come together and meet in an artificially created environment where true love can grow.

Everybody longs to be loved and cared for but finding love in the real world can be a difficult and draining process

'The Bachelor' is another reality show that could help lead you to the love of your life. 'The Bachelor' is a show in which 25 girls compete for the love of one single and desired man. The bachelor (the lead of the show) takes the contestants on group dates and single dates to establish who he feels that he has a "connection" with. Each week the Bachelor presents singular red roses to the women who he sees a potential love and emotional connection with. The girl who does not receive a rose is sent home alone and forced to continue on her journey to find true love on her own back in the single world of boring first dates and awkward interactions. Going on 'The Bachelor' could be the opportunity you have been searching for. Having 25 attractive girls fight for your attention is absolute paradise when you have lost all faith in

romance and feel as if you will never find someone in this never ending game called love.

The main reason why you should consider applying to be the Bachelor from 'The Bachelor' is that you do not have to worry about being rejected and sent home without finding love. Instead you can enjoy your time in the bachelor pad and get to know these 25 attractive and resourceful girls who have been picked solely to match your interests and what you are looking for in a partner, all vying for your attention. It is all about you. As the Bachelor you get the chance to get to know 25 girls who could be the one for you. You spend quality time with each girl and have the opportunity and time to establish who you connect with the most and who is the best fit for you. This is not an opportunity that you can discover anywhere else. Sound pretty luxurious, right? But entering the show as a contestant isn't so bad either. Not only do you make a group of lifelong friends but if you win the show you have complete faith and trust in your relationship because your bachelor has had to reject 24 girls who were expertly selected and sent in to suit his ideal partner and yet he still chose you. 'The Bachelorette' is a spin-off of 'The Bachelor' where the roles are gender reversed and 25 attractive guys try to win the love of the chosen bachelorette. There is something for everyone.

Everybody longs to be loved and cared for but finding love in the real world can be a difficult and draining process that can frequently knock you down leaving you feeling lonely and worthless. Applying for 'Love Island' or 'The Bachelor' could be the perfect opportunity for you to find your second half without going through the struggle and hardship you're used to in the sad and single dating world you have been forced to endure until now. These reality shows eliminate the strenuous factors of dating making it easier for you to find what you have been looking for all along, true love as sweet and as pure as the red rose handed to you by that perfect bachelor or bachelorette.

Will modernity see the end of religion?

Mikayla Strahorn Y12

Religion has been an immense source of influence for the development of many of today's cultures and remains a cornerstone for the basis of human society. But in a rapidly technologically advancing world, where logic has supposedly taken root where faith once sat, how has it retained such an influence - and will it continue to do so? My interest in this study arose from my own poor understanding of how religion has withheld an upheaval in societal norms, and how monumental religious belief has been for almost every human culture that exists on earth. In this report, I will discuss the origins of religion and how human civilisations cultivated religious communities. In addition to this, why we believe in religion in terms of our cognitive nature, and, ultimately, how religion has been adapted to modernity.

What are the origins of religion?

Religion, whether it was recognised as such at the time or not, has been prominent throughout human societies dating back to hunter-gatherer civilisations. While these variants of religion do not necessarily align with the religion seen today, they formed the basis from which modern religious belief has stemmed. As investigated by University professors, Hervey C. Peoples, Pavel Duda, and Frank W. Marlowe, there were many ubiquitous traits assumed in these hunter-gatherer groups. Animism is an example of one of these traits, the concept that everything, inanimate or otherwise, has a soul or spirit. This trait would be the foundation of which further beliefs developed; "*Results indicate that the oldest trait of religion, present in the most recent common ancestor of present-day hunter-gatherers, was animism, in agreement with long-standing beliefs about the fundamental role of this trait.*" In saying that, we can

understand the vital role this attribute had in the initiation of religious belief; animism generated the curiosity of how those spirits come to be and what their purpose was. Thus, animism is most common in early civilisation as it provides infrastructure for future spiritual faith. Shamanism is closely linked with the emergence of ancestral worship, a denomination of animism; "*The minimum requirement for veneration of dead ancestors is animism and belief in the survival of the personal identity beyond death.*" The existence of a shaman to communicate with those recently deceased in a hunter-gatherer society would work to strengthen kin ties and promote community. This links with perhaps the most prevalent answer to why religion was initiated, and that is to establish community and moral order - although, different beliefs emanate based on the needs of a civilisation. For example, civilisations that struggle in obtaining resources and as such call for an increase in cooperation would opt for shamanism, as this strengthens familial bonds and community.

A punishing deity that is
watching when others are not
forces people to follow a set
moral code.

Likewise, the necessity of belief in a higher power, or a God, may arise as hunter-gatherer societies progressed and morality became an object of concern. A punishing deity that is watching when others are not forces people to follow a set moral code. In this way, gods are used in civilisations as more of a coercive belief, allowing leaders to build a stable civilisation, with the values they see fit. Peter. J. Richerson and Lesley Newson have theories that support that explanation, as throughout history religion was used as a means of unification. An example of

this being Roman civilisations: the leaders would have a religion they'd declare as official to unify freshly conquered regions. Robert Boyd and Richerson developed the "tribal social instincts hypothesis" which argues that the evolution of culture set in motion a process of group selection on cultural variation; As culture evolves, groups choose the versions of culture that suit their needs. This links to religion and what Peoples et al. argued about the sets of values that would benefit that group and are therefore selected by them. This process occurs multiple times over generations and religion, in a sense, forms to develop moral community. This explanation is valid justification of how religion came to be in human cultures.

We're far more inclined to believe in something that accommodates the psychology of humans.

Many of these origin traits can be seen today in various religions, which begs the question of why, in modern day society, have those traits remained necessary? From these articles it could be presumed that it's human nature. We're far more inclined to believe in something that accommodates the psychology of humans. In this way, perhaps religion was used as a means of manipulation: leaders that take advantage of humans' will to believe and as such will construct religions as a manifestation of their own agendas. It would be fair to say that religion as we see it today, as advanced as it is, is because of their leaders who adjust the moral code of Gods to suit what their civilisation needs.

Why do we believe in religion?

It could be argued that science does not provide moral reasoning; that it cannot generate a formula to decide what's right. A study by Onurcan Yilmaz and Hasan G. Bahçekapili revealed the moral objectivism that derives from religion. When given religious words in a sentence unscrambling task, subjects were more

readily accepting of moral objectivism. However, when given a persuasive text about moral subjectivism, they were less sure about the existence of a God. What this implies, is that perhaps one believes in religion because they're told to. Various cultures will pass down religious beliefs through generations that stay majorly unchanged. The way one is raised will often dictate what they believe in. Under different circumstances subjects' confidence in a God changes, despite their predisposed beliefs. With that, it would be safe to assume that much of religion could be the result of a herd mentality. If everyone around you is influenced by religion, the exposure could most definitely prescribe your religious position. Likewise, if you have authoritative figures in your life that are enforcing religious belief in their approach to raising you, you will be more likely to adopt those same religious beliefs. However, with such quickly changing mindsets, as seen in the study, regardless of the way subjects were raised implies that they were never originally confident with the opinions they had developed. What this insinuates is the inherent lack of assurance people have in their religious beliefs. Because nothing can be concretely proved, this is understandable.

It is for moral rules that religion originated and this same concept could be applicable today. Society needs guidelines to follow and with a punishing God, that monitors you when no one else does, these guidelines are not so easily dismissed; *"We expected a reciprocal relation between the idea of God and objective morality since God is one prominent way through which objective moral truths could be grounded and thus the lack of such objective truths might imply the absence of God who could set such truths."* (Yilmaz and Bahçekapili). There is clearly a relationship between religion and what is believed to be moral. Without having established what is right or wrong, chaos could ensue. The existence of a God provides a necessary moral objectivism that could not be defined via

scientific measures. Steven Pinker goes comprehensively into the ideas surrounding the psychology of religious belief. In the way of morality and religion, he brings up if we should genuinely be following and trusting the preaching of a religious text such as The Bible, which has an equal part in negative ideologies as positive ideologies. The Bible, for many, is a source of homophobia and white supremacy, encouraging a hateful attitude towards those who go against the teachings of Christianity. Can we claim that religion offers higher moral standing when these things are being promoted in a book which is a widely considered epitome of Christianity? Perhaps our morals were developed elsewhere and did not require the existence of a God to set objective truths, and as such, is not the reason we believe in religion.

25% believe in witches, 50% in ghosts, 50% in the devil, 69% believe in angels, 87% believe Jesus was raised from the dead, and 96% believe in a God or Universal spirit.

This links to the cognitive aspects in a human's ability and readiness to accept religion, despite an apparent lack of necessity. It should initially be noted that religion is a "human universal". It's common in every single culture, regardless of geography or developed values. Although there are variations in beliefs, the belief in concepts such as spirits, souls, and higher powers, are prevalent in most of these cultures. This perhaps argues for the idea that humans have a God gene, that because of our cognitive makeup, we are inherently religious. If it's a human universal, despite disparities in various cultures, then perhaps the only thing they have in common is that they're human. There is substantial belief in the supernatural in western culture. As Pinker claims- 25% believe in witches, 50% in ghosts, 50% in the devil, 69% believe in angels, 87%

believe Jesus was raised from the dead, and 96% believe in a God or Universal spirit. These are staggering numbers that raise questions on the mind's capability to accept irrational beliefs with minimal evidence. It could be argued religious belief is an adaptation, much like we've developed a fear of heights because falling off could kill you. There may have been, at a point, a genetic advantage in having religious belief. An advantage that allowed certain cultures to prosper and consequently allow religion to flourish. On a Darwinian level, religion could've been adapted for survival; as mentioned in the origins of religion, this is indeed a reason that religious belief came about in early civilisations, as the need for community became incessant.

On an individual scale, there's comfort in the idea that an all seeing, all knowing deity has a plan for you, that your life is not entirely dictated by your own actions. It reduces the suffering of simply existing - something that makes us feel better about the time we spend on earth. The issue in assuming that, though, is how does a belief in something that isn't evidently true offer us comfort? *"If you're cold, being told that you're warm is not terribly soothing. If you're being threatened by a menacing predator, being told that it's just a rabbit is not particularly comforting"* (Pinker). So, perhaps, this theory of adaptation isn't so valid - for what reason does one begin to believe in something that has never been proven to be there? In addition to this is the ubiquitous belief in spiritual beings, that ultimately does not have a place in modernity, however, still retains influence. Why is it, that spiritual beliefs were adapted in the first place? Is it not possible for general human emotion such as empathy or loyalty to be enough of a basis to bring a community together? What value do spirits have cementing community? As mentioned in my section on the origins of religion, Peoples et al. argue that shamanism was able to strengthen kin ties and familial bonding that inherently reinforced a community, however, Pinker offers another perspective.

Ancestor worship, which is often a branch of spiritual belief, could've been beneficial on an individual level. If one were to convince those around them that death would not separate them entirely, that even when they were gone, they would still be around in another form, it may provide comfort to loved ones - or mean they treat them better as to not anger them in the spirit world and cause harm. As such, that same concept could be used on a wider scale for manipulation purposes, much like what was done in earlier civilisations.

Intuitive psychology, the ability to assume one's thoughts and actions, and explain them based on values and beliefs, could be the reason we have a universal belief in a spirit realm. The ability to imagine one's mind could be done so to something that doesn't necessarily have a body, as Pinker explained, '*It's just one extra inferential step to say that a mind is not invariably housed in a body*'. There were many reasons to believe in souls before research was done to disprove it; dreams, which were talked about by 19th century anthropologist Edward Tyler as part of your body, your soul, being separate from your physical body during that time, which to many an 1800's philosopher, may have seemed logical. The same could be said of shadows and reflections, which have the forms of humans without the physical matter. This would've been phenomena during a time in which knowledge in light physics was minimal. Similarly, death is valid reasoning for belief in spirits. To be at one point a living, thinking, being, to then being a lifeless entity, could bring about ideas of souls. It appears humans have a tendency to see a spiritual aspect of things that cannot be explained logically. Having said that, Pinker does not believe in the concept that religious belief was a Darwinian adaptation to human civilisation, but more so a by-product of other emotional adaptations humans have taken on. A fear of snakes is genetically encoded. Monkeys that were raised in a lab and saw nothing of snakes were still afraid

of snakes when first introduced. Perhaps the same could be seen with religion, although for different reasons. Could one, without religious teachings, decide on some form of religious belief to explain the things around them? Of course, it wouldn't be so advanced, but it makes sense that one could turn to a supernatural cause if they couldn't explain it logically. This may not be so much a direct result of what could be a "God Module", but instead the consequence of the cognitive nature of humans, which primes us to believe. We are, ultimately, emotional creatures, which may predispose us to spiritual belief.

Death is valid reasoning for belief in spirits.

Beth Azar, an author at the American Psychological Association, is in agreement with Pinker that the cognitive nature of humans allows us to accept religion. Young children tend to believe in religious concepts without ever having been exposed to religious influence. There is an inherent belief that everything in the world was created for a purpose, Azar explains; '*If you ask children why a group of rocks are pointy, for example, they say something like, "It's so that animals won't sit on them and break them."*' If you ask them why rivers exist, they say it's so we can go fishing." This is very telling of a human's potential to accept religion, especially if they're unbeknownst to any scientific reasoning behind the fundamentals of the world. Children are malleable and more inclined to believe information regarding religion and spiritual belief. Introducing a child to religion is substantially easier than introducing it to an adult, who have perhaps formed a more rational way of thinking than assuming everything that can't be explained by themselves is the work of a God. By optimising this malleability, it becomes easy to raise religion into a child, to then retain this knowledge past adolescence. "*Neuroscience research supports the idea that the brain is primed to believe,*" says

Jordan Grafman, PhD, director of the cognitive neuroscience section at the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke" (Azar). This is perhaps definitive evidence that humans are indeed predisposed to believe. There is genuine research dedicated to the psychology of humans and religion, progressing the concept from solely theory, to a medically accurate standpoint.

Conclusion

The coexistence of religion and science has been an object of concern for modernity. Could the world possibly accommodate both a spiritual and logical way of thinking? Could supposed polar opposites endure modernity together? A common theory is that modernity brings about a decline in religion, though through my research into the origins and psychology of religion, I've decided this untrue. The secularisation of human culture is perhaps a myth, and by Peter. L. Berger's standards is one entirely emanating from a Eurocentric perspective on the matter. Despite what many believe, religion has a remaining influence on many cultures, particularly in African and Middle Eastern nations. Islam has seen a resurgence in recent years, in addition to a now 600 million following charismatic Christianity. With that being said, modernity is polemical; there are multiple modernities. Japan went through modernisation entirely differently to that of the western world. If one culture, through modernisation, adopts a more secular approach, that doesn't imply that others follow that trend. What is apparently seen by a process of secularisation, Berger instead sees "deepening process of pluralisation". This means that we are not seeing a decline in religion, but more so an increase in the ability for belief systems (or lack thereof) to coexist. Secularisation has been confused with pluralisation. We aren't losing religion, there's simply a surge in people living amid competing beliefs, values, etc, in harmony—an effect entirely different to that of secularisation. What I've discovered from these focus questions, including the origins of religion

and the cognitive makeup of humans that allow for it to flourish, is the part of human nature that aligns with a religious society. I would most definitely argue that secularisation is not inexorable, if humans have a cognitive mindset that allows them to readily accept religion, even going as far as to say it's somewhat of a default, then how could it possibly be entirely overridden? Even in a technologically advancing world, I see no valid reason as to why science and religion could not coexist.

Berger states, "*There is indeed a secular discourse resulting from modernity, but it can coexist with religious discourses that are not secular at all.*" Simply put, modernity will not see the downfall of religion. Berger has worked on projects in CURA at Boston University (Culture, Religion, and World Affairs) investigating Pentecostalism, which could be described as a renewal of Christian beliefs as a denomination of the Christian church. Berger was convinced by colleagues that instead of Pentecostalism being a counter-act to modernity, it's instead a "*modernising force*" itself. It isn't so much a reaction to disrupt what many see as a decline in religion coinciding with modernity, but instead something that is an enforcement of modernity. Religion is still part of a modern society. This could be proven by the sheer number of followers charismatic Christianity has gathered since its establishment, which was in a far more modern society than from which original Christianity was founded.

Whilst evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins (who in his 2006 book "The God Delusion" described religious ideas as maladaptive), as well as many others, would love nothing more than to see the collapse of religious society, I am far less sympathetic to the possibility of that notion. He holds a pessimistic view on the presence of all religion, that religious ideas cannot adapt to modernity and has restricted societal progression. However, having investigated this topic, I would conclude that despite an increase in rational thinking and scientific discovery, there

is an aspect of human beings that will always be receptive to supernatural ideas, despite whether one believes it's maladaptive or not. Modernity has proved it will not drive out religious belief, and by many standards it has adapted well, despite the actions of extremism - which is arguably not at fault of the religion itself. Religion has been about as adaptive as it possibly can be. To say it has restricted the progression of human society would be much like saying because humans cannot naturally fly, we have not been able to progress as much as we potentially could

have. Which is indeed true, however, what could we possibly do about it if our genetics do not predispose us to it like they do religious belief? There is place in human consciousness for secularity and scientific reasoning as much as there is place for religious belief. Secular discourse will continue to transpire with a plurality of religious discourse. All in all, secularity can exist whilst aspects of religion do so too. Modernity doesn't mean the end of religion, and from what I can see, never will.



Bang!

Hamish Doogan Y12

Bang! The loud crack was distant but still instilled fear within him. His next step was hesitant, fearful of the intense pain he could feel at any moment. Two people followed close behind, eyes fixed on the landscape in front of them. Such a bright, windless, lovely day. Under normal circumstances this would have been a wonderful day to go for a walk. To go out and spend a day in the sun. But these were not normal circumstances.

Bang, Bang, Bang! A flurry of fire broke the silence. All three heads ducked. Tense and waiting. Nothing. The gun fire was a lot closer, more concentrated. But not at them, so they continued their slow trudge forward. The sounds were intensifying. A large bank loomed ahead of him making him shrink back into his shell. Why should he reach the top? He could hear what awaited him, why should he do it? He waited. Deep in trance. He turned his head to look to the others. He caught the back of them moving away into the bush to his left. Alone. His hesitation left him abandoned.

Silence. The world fell airily still. Driven by a mixture of curiosity, fear and a small sense of purpose he took his first slow step forward. One

foot after the other. Bang. "Hit! I'm hit!" The rasp calling stopped him dead in his tracks. The hit man was no further than 20 meters he guessed. The peak was just an inch away. On his belly he slowly slipped his head over the edge. Only 10 meters down the bank and to his right lay the man calling. Facing the other direction unaware he was so close to receiving help. Other than that, nothing. No one. No sign of the culprits. The clear sky almost made him forget where he truly was.

No sign of the culprits.

Before he even heard the shot, dirt sprayed up around him. Into his eyes and hitting his face. He threw his body back quicker than lighting across a dark sky. His heart was pounding out of his chest while he frantically attempted to get the dirt from his eyes. Silence resumed; he lay still below the crest. Deciding what to do. In a sudden burst of courage, he lifted his heavy cold weapon. He shot at anything and everything but nothing in particular. He could see no one. Could hear no one. He fell onto his back, adrenaline pumping through him. Surging through his muscles. He summoned up the courage to peak again. Nothing had changed. Bang! Another flurry of shots whizzed inches passed his face. Dirt

kicking up around the crest. Once again, he launched himself backwards and lay hand shielding his face, alone on the bank. The man's voice called. Hit! Come to me! Come! He felt pressured, he couldn't do nothing. What would they think of him sitting here shaking, doing nothing? He inhaled. It wasn't far. He could make it. He leapt over the crest and scampered

as fast as he could. Bang! Bang! Thud! Thud! Extraordinary pain exploded in his upper chest. He hit the ground falling next to the man. Pain bursting through his body. He lay in intense agony. He glanced down to his chest. The mix of yellow and purple paint soaking into his clothes. Paintball, what a game.



Carol-Ann Duffy

Maddie Whitaker Y13

Poetry is one of the most simplistic forms of literature but conveys some of the most complex messages of all. Carol-Ann Duffy is one of those with an extremely distinct writing style, especially in her collection of poetry *The World's Wife*. I have decided to explore these poems and make links between them. The poems that I have decided to focus on are 'Darwin's Wife', 'Mrs. Icarus', 'Mrs Sisyphus' and 'Mrs Beast'. Although in the same collection of poetry, these four texts reveal and teach hugely different messages, and no same idea is taken away from more than one of the poems. 'Darwin's Wife' and 'Mrs Icarus' focus on the underestimation of the female opinion and the knowledge they possess that is never truly appreciated, while 'Mrs Sisyphus' and 'Mrs Beast' focus on women's dependence on men. The female opinion has always been underappreciated and even with the gaining popularity of the feminist movement, women are still deemed inferior to men, or as simply an 'accessory' to better them, which is something that this collection of poetry, and these poems, focus on in particular.

Carol-Ann Duffy's opinions on women are clearly revealed throughout the book, and it is explored how easily this can be undermined in poems 'Mrs. Icarus' and 'Darwin's Wife'. The women's opinions in these poems are extremely blunt, yet very correct. 'Mrs. Icarus' deals with

the dismissal of a woman until it's convenient to listen, and 'Darwin's Wife' explores the taking of a woman's opinion for use as one's own. Both display negative interpretations of women from the men of question's opinion, but positive in the audience's eyes. Mrs. Icarus, through her fun use of colloquial language, shows her clear opinion of her husband. The poem starts off by saying "I'm not the first or the last to stand on a hillock watching the man she married prove to the world..." which opens the poem immediately to all women who have ever watched a man do something stupid, knowing how it was going to go (which is most women). She then goes on to describe her husband as saying "he's a total, utter, absolute, Grade A pillock." Not only is this short, to the point, and extremely relatable for a wide audience, this is parallel to things that would be said in an argument between a married couple.

Her opinion was completely discarded (because of the time, likely because of her sex) until it was convenient for everybody else to take it in when they had already made a judgement for themselves.

What we come to understand through this, especially through her clever use of language, is that she knew the outcome of Icarus flying towards the sun. She knew his wax wings would

melt and she knew it would end in disaster, and chances are she told him this. However, chances also are, that he didn't listen, and neither did anybody else – until suddenly everybody agreed with her point of view because they could all see the consequences that his attempted display had resulted in. Her opinion was completely discarded (because of the time, likely because of her sex) until it was convenient for everybody else to take it in when they had already made a judgement for themselves. Because of Icarus's foolish, yet memorable, actions, she was now known solely as 'Mrs. Icarus'. Because of her husband's over-confidence, arrogance and brainless pride, she is known as a fool simply because she is married to one. What we come to understand is the pure undermining of women's opinions, likely simply because of their gender, resulting in them being hugely compared to their male counterparts and their husband's negative behaviour left on their shoulders. Similarly, is Duffy's other short work 'Darwin's Wife'. Again, through the use of colloquial language, Darwin's wife's opinion is revealed in only one stanza, consisting of four lines. She says, "... went to the Zoo. I said to Him - something about that chimpanzee over there reminds me of you." This, while only being three lines, is an extremely controversial statement, and reveals the thought that while Darwin is extremely well known for his theory of evolution, it is much less well known that his wife actually helped a lot with his studies, research and papers, but has received no credit.

She says, "... went to the Zoo. I said to Him - something about that chimpanzee over there reminds me of you."

This has shone light upon the forgotten side of the *Theory of Evolution*, and thus on Darwin's forgotten wife and her, extremely correct, opinion. This speaks volumes to me, and really shows just how women's opinions have been cast

aside to make room for those of 'superior status' (AKA men), and they have been left with no credit and no recognition, and the possibility of a women's opinion even being taken for use as one's own. Although we cannot be sure this is what happened in reality with Darwin and his wife, we can be sure that she received little to no recognition for the amount of work she did, and was therefore shoved aside to make room for her husband and 'his' incredible discoveries, and she had to sit in the background and watch him be successful. It reveals just how easily people come to accept a man's opinion over a woman's, simply because they are christened with stereotypes like being 'more intelligent', while their actual intellectual power is overlooked and assumed to be greater than a woman's. This leaves us swimming with thoughts of doubt about men. It seems that women cannot have an opinion, and if they do they are likely ridiculed for it, simply because of their gender. Both of the women in these two poems had extremely accurate opinions about their separate situations, but its validity was only acknowledged when told by men. Although these poems are set in such different time periods and the women have much different relationships with their husbands, their opinions were still undermined and led to society looking at them in a negative light for either having an opinion in the first place, or 'not having one', when actually it was stolen by somebody else. Although women speaking their mind is gaining traction in today's society, I can't help but think about all those that were pushed aside and beaten down for speaking their mind, only for their words to be applauded when spoken by the lips of a man. It is not only natural to want to be right, but it is within the human mind that we want to be above others, especially those who are weaker than us, which is exactly what has happened in this situation, and continues to happen today as minorities (such as women, gender diverse people, non-white people etc) are fought against, however it is important that we use these beatings down to bring

ourselves up and make ourselves stronger in order to fight society, fight the patriarchy and get our opinions not only heard, but validated and appreciated by those around us.

Although Duffy focuses on independent women in her book, she is also not afraid of portraying women who have husbands, or are connected to men. Poems 'Mrs Sisyphus' and 'Mrs Beast' explore the dependence of women on men, and how this differs between women, but how differently this is also portrayed to the audience. Although both popular and well known stories, the actual storyline of either woman / their connected man is not very relevant in Duffy's poems. Mrs Sisyphus reveals her secret dependence and love for her husband, whereas Mrs Beast explores her lack of dependence on the Beast. While these are polar opposite situations, parallels can be drawn between them and a very similar message can be learnt from them both. Mrs Sisyphus says "but I lie alone in the dark ... my voice reduced to a squawk, my smile to a twisted smirk; while, up on the deepening murk of the hill, he is giving one hundred per cent and more to his work." Both the metaphor of the deepening murk representing her constantly - damaged relationship with her husband, and the imagery she portrays, shows just how lonely and unappreciated Mrs Sisyphus feels. We have all been in a relationship where we feel we haven't been put first, whether that is romantic or platonic and we are being second – bested by work or something else, it is something most women have experienced, so we can completely sympathise with how Mrs Sisyphus is feeling. It becomes clear to us that although she is not an important part in his story, he is an extremely valued member of hers and something that she is feeling extremely upset about that he is / has been absent from recently. This proves that although having a woman connected to him is not something that Sisyphus is known for, or likely cares about, there are two sides to every

story, and the overlooking of women whose men are their world is not uncommon. Mrs Beast on the other hand, shows her lack of reliance on, or need to have, a man. She uses Ariel as an example, saying "... all for a Prince, a pretty boy, a charming one who'd dump her in the end, chuck her, throw her overboard. I could have told her - look, love, I should know, they're bastards ..." Not only is she calling men 'bastards', she's also insinuating that it's likely that all men are time – wasting, women – dumping users who aren't even worth the time of any of the princesses, which is an extremely strong and controversial statement. Belle (who I assume this poem is alluding to being Mrs Beast), has such strong opinions about men and princes that are almost completely polar opposite from Mrs Sisyphus's opinions. The Beast is somebody who is always thought about as having a female partner, and really isn't himself without her, however she makes it extremely clear just what she thinks about him and how little she cares. This carelessness really shows the audience just how we have been 'fooled' by Duffy's portrayal of what both women think. Beauty and the Beast is a story in which a woman is a huge part of, however she has a huge lack of love and affection towards her male half, whereas Mrs Sisyphus has a large amount of adoration for her husband but is not mentioned once in his story.

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It seems, through this analysis, that society tends to pick and choose in which situations women will be important, and this tends to be when they will 'better' the story or paint the men in a better light. Beauty and the Beast would not have been

the same without Belle, as the Beast would have been viewed the same at the end as he was at the start - cold, heartless and aggressive - whereas with Belle involved, his perception is changed and he is seen in a much more positive light. Sisyphus on the other hand, would have been viewed hugely negatively had his neglect of his wife and her feelings been conveyed in his story, so she was simply just left out of the picture. This seems to be a running theme in most of Duffy's poetry, and most media in general. Women have seemed to become just a vessel for the betterment of men, and are simply only acknowledged when they do something positive for the man in the picture. This is why it's important to have strong women like Duffy who aren't afraid to defy social norms and express the side of women that reflects badly on men - not because of the negative impact on males - for the clarity and transparency of women.

'Darwin's Wife', 'Mrs Icarus', 'Mrs Sisyphus' and 'Mrs Beast' are all poems in Carol-Ann Duffy's feminist revisionist collection of works. While all

containing such different content and conveying different messages, we can see just how underappreciated, undervalued and underrepresented women and their opinions are. The first two poems focus on the opinion side of the argument, and show the importance of appreciating everybody, especially the minority, and their opinion, because they often offer valuable insight into the situation which would otherwise not have been gained if it was only the majority that had a say. The second two poems centre around the false portrayal of women in terms of men, and how they are often only used to better their male counterparts, which is clearly very toxic and negative to us. Not only has Duffy questioned society's views on women, she has planted a seed of doubt in the reader's mind that not everything is as it seems, especially with stories told by men, and represented the importance of both listening to and truly appreciating women for what they are - their own beautiful person, who should not be defined, silenced or minimised by anybody, especially not those who will not listen to what they have to say.



Our lost society

Tia Bhana Y12

When I was your age..." How many times have I heard that? It's become a line played on a broken record. Play, rewind. Play, belittle, rewind. Every conversation I have with an ancient over forty brands disappointment into my skin. Their singing words are laced with malice, ready to pierce my exposed heart. Is it sad that it doesn't hurt anymore? My burning shame has long evaporated.

In an adult's clouded gaze, youth look not through eyes – but apps. "Glowing beacons of a lost society," they preach. Our skin is not a unique blend of heritage, but a transparent wash of blue light. My lips used to quiver at first; a

symptom of being branded as a conforming "teen." A vessel to a demon whose life revolves around a screen. Adults think hanging online is a direct comparison to hanging yourself. And maybe it is. But is it for everyone? Is it fair to label the entire adolescent population as a society lost to technology?

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I used to wear my dented armour every time I attended a family gathering. When I was younger, I would get told off for having a book out compared to a phone. "Put your book away and socialize!" Yes, my conversations with others

were limited, but that wasn't because of a screen. My childhood was filled with pages, the warm comfort of books. A defining factor of my character were the fantasy lands I visited in the hopes to escape the world around me. Yet I was no longer an individual when I attended events with adults. My attributes and aspirations were burned down to a topic of discussion that I didn't identify with: "bloody teenagers and their phones." I kept my guard up and evaded their jabs. Their relentless attacks on a child who wondered why adults felt the need to hold their authoritative power like a leash. An owner abusing children like animals.

I stood up for myself once in both defiance and despair. My glowing eyes were narrowed in anticipation of a verbal attack. Naturally, someone struck – an uppercut with the intent of ultimate destruction. It was slow and lazy, an attack executed with blind confidence. But I was prepared. With the speed of a bullet, I blocked and swept their legs out from under them, ending

the fight with their crumpled figure on the floor. They howled in horror, anguish alight in their gaze. A remark formed on their forked tongue; I was sure they'd slither to a stand and come at me again. Instead, they retreated and told those gathered that I was a wretched teenager with no notion of respect. I was punished miserably for "disrespecting an elder", despite their disrespect for me. I will never stand up for myself again. What's the point when no one will listen?

Living as a youth in today's age is like navigating a maze blindfolded. It's an endless fight against the stereotypes that threaten to engulf your individuality. Whether it's wearing headphones like a lifeline around your neck, or simply being an adolescent, your actions will likely guarantee you an eye roll or exasperated sigh from adults worldwide. By simply existing in our current society, you could be brutalized by the onslaught of opinionated clones in adulthood who are assumed to know better.



Kanye West

Tavish Dempster Y13

Introduction

In 2002, while driving home from a California recording studio, Kanye West was in a near-fatal head-on collision, in which he shattered his jaw, and was put in hospital for several days. While in hospital, he went under reconstructive surgery to wire shut his jaw. It was during this hospital stay that West felt inspired to write and record his first single *Through the Wire*, which would be on his *Get Well Soon* mixtape, released two months after his crash. Not only did the song play a part in his recovery, it helped shape the foundation for his first studio album, *The College Dropout*.

The album was originally planned for release in August 2003. However, after it was leaked

multiple times, West decided to use the reactions of the public to further remix and remaster the album, even removing songs due to bad reception. This consistent and meticulous perfectionism led to his album being delayed more than three times, until an eventual release in February 2004. Debuting at number two on the Billboard 200, *The College Dropout* experienced huge commercial success. It eventually becoming certified triple platinum in the US and amassed 10 Grammy nominations of which it won Best Rap Album. *Through the Wire* peaked at number 15, while *Slow Jamz* led to West's first number one.

The College Dropout was the beginning of what would become a prolific, and extraordinary career. West would go on to explore the ins and outs of production, pioneering the use of auto-

tune and the use of the TR-808 in hip hop, as well as paving the way for a new generation of self-conscious artists who rejected the typical rap braggadocio for more confessional, intimate, and introspective subject matter.

Production

Before recording and releasing *The College Dropout*, West made a name for himself through his production of beats. His career in production began in the mid-90s, primarily creating beats for local artists around Chicago, where he grew up. In the early 2000s, West signed for Roc-A-Fella records, producing singles for artists such as Ludacris and Alicia Keys. He would then go on to form a close bond with fellow rapper, and labelmate, Jay-Z, famously producing several songs on Jay-Z's *The Blueprint*, including *Takeover*, a diss track aimed at Nas, and *Prodigy* of Mobb Deep.

During this time, West developed his style, one that he would further build on during the creation of *The College Dropout*. This style, which involved speeding and pitching up vocal samples from classic soul records, would later become known as "chipmunk-soul". Nearly all the songs on his first album contained this unique style of beat-making; Spaceship samples Marvin Gaye's *Distant Lover*, Slow Jamz features Luther Vandross' *A House Is Not A Home*, and Through the Wire gets its melody from Chaka Khan's 1984 song *Through the Fire*. Each of these snippets would be sped and pitched up and down to a point that gave West's beats a warm, youthful, yet familiar feeling to them.

Although he wasn't the only rapper to follow this template, West was a pioneer in the art of sampling within hip-hop. 2004 was the height of the "bling era", a period in hip-hop where artists such as 50-Cent dominated the charts, and a digitized production style known as the "Timbaland sound", dominated the radio. He provided a very toned-down alternative to this sound and a change that hip-hop was asking for.

Once popularized by West in *The College Dropout*, he went on to follow the same pattern in his second album *Late Registration: Hey Mama* sampled *Today Won't Come* by Donal Leace and *Gone* sampled Otis Redding's 1965 hit *It's Too Late*. While he has sampled fewer songs in his more recent albums, West has always championed this style of beat production. Some of his most famous melodies were made by simply layering drum beats with vocal loops from old records, even to the length of sampling his own songs.

By 2007, West had established himself as not only a phenomenal producer but now as a legitimate rapper. Until now he had proven himself to the world, and his third album, *Graduation*, aimed to put him at the top. After touring with U2 in 2006, West had one goal in mind: to make music for stadiums. This meant changing his style, both in his production and his lyrics. He moved towards a more atmospheric, electronic-influenced style, drawing on sounds from distorted synthesizers and audio-effects, and sourcing help from acts like Daft Punk.

"I wanted to make a whole album like that. That just stands on its own. That's like... Love Lockdown ain't sampling nothing. Heartless ain't sampling nothing."

However, on his fourth album, *808s and Heartbreak*, West wanted to do something different: "I wanted to make a whole album like that. That just stands on its own. That's like... Love Lockdown ain't sampling nothing. Heartless ain't sampling nothing." The death of his mother and split from his long-time girlfriend and fiancée in 2008 had a huge impact on West. For *808s*, West sought a new sound, which fitted the themes of love, loneliness, and heartache that would fill his album. This time, instead of taking

whole samples from soul records, he utilized a piece of technology developed in the same period: the Roland TR-808. This allowed West to create a sound that would capture his thoughts and feelings at the time, even allowing him to recreate the same sounds as Phil Collins, who West admitted to being a huge inspiration. While the original purpose of *808s* was to capture his mindset following the events leading up to the album, many believed that he included the instrument on every single track for another reason, with journalist Jack Hamilton describing the album as “an explicit love letter to the instrument”.

West not only pioneered a change in the sound of hip-hop, but he also presented a new perspective for hip-hop artists to take; one that presented a more introspective view of the artist.

Content

West not only pioneered a change in the sound of hip-hop, but he also presented a new perspective for hip-hop artists to take; one that presented a more introspective view of the artist, and one that strayed away from what was championed by artists at the time: drugs, money, and women. He presents himself as relatable to the listener, focussing on topics that are familiar to those listening and staying away from the glamorous lifestyles portrayed by other artists of the time: “My persona is that I’m the regular person. Just think about whatever you’ve been through in the past week, and I have a song about that on my album.” Touching on issues such as his religious and spiritual beliefs, the death of his mother, and self-image, West explored areas that were new at the time.

One of the first examples of this is West’s inclusion of the song *Jesus Walks on The College Dropout*. The song exposed West to a wider

audience, as it touched on issues of faith and Christianity, despite industry executive’s predictions that a “song containing such blatant declarations of faith” would never make it to the radio. West responded to this criticism in the song:

*So here go my single, dang, radio needs this
They say you can rap about anything except for Jesus
That means guns, sex, lies, videotape
But if I talk about God my record won’t get played,
huh?*

Contrary to the predictions, the song, like the rest of the album, achieved great success, reaching the top 20 of the Billboard charts. After this was successfully done by West, rappers such as Chance the Rapper (in his mixtape *Coloring Book*) and Kendrick Lamar (songs such as *i* and his fourth album *DAMN* have recurring themes based around religion) followed, opening up about their relationship with God and Christianity.

West presented a new type of rapper by talking on issues such as Christianity and religion. While some issues that he touched on ended up being somewhat provocative (such as his position regarding religion etc.), West also explored areas that are somewhat trivial; issues that would be familiar to his listeners.

On *808s and Heartbreak*, West dives into topics much more personal than those he has talked about on his first three albums. Following the death of his mother, he moved in a new direction, ditching his project *Good Ass Job* in favour of a radical departure from the sounds that made him famous. The album delves into topics such as depression and self-image, as well as the impact that the death of his mother had on his life.

After West’s parents divorced when he was three years old he moved with his mother, Donda West, to Chicago. From then on, West developed

a very close bond her, devoting his love for her on songs such as Hey Mama:

*I wanna tell the whole world about a friend of mine
This little light of mine and I'm finna let it shine
I'm finna take y'all back to them better times
I'm finna talk about my mama if y'all don't mind*

Donda's death had a huge impact on West, and the theme of loss runs throughout the album. On Coldest Winter, a tribute to his mother, West captured the feeling of the album in just 3 lines:

*"On lonely nights,
I start to fade
Her love's a thousand miles away"*

West paved the way for hip-hop artists who felt that they didn't follow the hardcore-gangster mould. While it was criticized prior to its release, *808s and Heartbreak* was a huge influence, and had a significant effect on the genre, encouraging other artists to take more creative risks in their music. Modern rappers such as Travis Scott and Lil Uzi Vert are a testament to this, describing Kanye as an influence: "808s changed my life. It made me want to be like... I wasn't sad, cos I was young, but I wanted to feel that. That shit

changed my life." West changed hip-hop, and allowed for artists, including Drake, Frank Ocean, Future, J. Cole, Kid Cudi, and many more who lacked the interest and ability to form lyrical masterpieces about guns or drug-dealing. As Rosie Swash puts it in her article *Kanye vs 50 Cent*, "[*808s and Heartbreak*] highlighted the diverging facets of hip-hop in the last decade; the former was gangsta rap for the noughties, while West was the thinking man's alternative."

Conclusion

Perhaps the thing that Kanye West is most well known for is his ego. His views about his legacy within hip-hop, and beyond, remain as bold as ever: "Man, I'm the number one living and breathing Rock star. I am Axl Rose, I am Jim Morrison, I am Hendrix. [...] To even think they could tell me where I could and couldn't go is just ludicrous. It's blasphemous – to rock and roll, and to music.". This egotistical mindset is one that many hip-hop artists carry, however for West, the context is different. For West, there may a case to be made. From pioneering the use of sampling in hip-hop production, to creating the space for new artists with a more self-conscious mindset to thrive, he may indeed be one of the most influential hip-hop artists ever.



The role of a good writer is to challenge the audience's preconceptions

Emma Coleman Y13

It is true that a successful writer is one that is able to challenge the audience's preconceptions on society. Carol Ann Duffy, through her poems 'Medusa' and 'Salome' is exposing her readers to new perspectives by questioning the stereotypical ideologies and social expectations that the audience is predisposed to. 'Medusa' was used to explore the way that women in society who do not fit the desired beauty standards, as set by men, are

naturally destined to be vile, evil, and jealous creatures – a message that stands out predominantly in all media platforms and has become ingrained into our culture. Carol Ann Duffy's Medusa counters these outdated beliefs by using her confidence within herself as a weapon against societal backlash. Salome, in a similar way, has taken control of her own sexuality by taking joy from it, in a fashion that is comparable to the 'player' trope that is often attributed to men: in doing so she is rewriting the

preconceptions around women's sexual needs by making them into an unashamedly positive thing.

The Medusa in Duffy's poem is a contradiction to the typical preconceptions of western society. Often, the undesirable women – the ones who don't have the ideal body types, or don't fit into the small, limited, coffin-like boxes that have been created for us by men, are shamed as a result of years of systematic brainwashing through guises of media and politics. This type of belief system has become ingrained into our society, taught to girls at a young age through Disney princess films and then reinforced during adolescence by men yelling obscenities on the street. In such a misogynistic tended world, it is easy for the self worth of women to be limited to their outward appearance and 'value' as a sexual being- however this is something that Duffy has sought to challenge through her poem Medusa. Medusa, typically seen to be a horrific and ugly villain whose looks can turn to stone, is a character who, from the very beginning, has reflected the shallowness of humanity, while also commenting on the so-called 'fickle nature' of women – that they are jealous and superficial creatures, and for that they should be punished. Duffy's Medusa however, embraces all these typically negative traits associated with women. She is still 'flawed' and 'ugly,' but she has used these traits to her advantage in such a way that she has become perhaps what her oppressors feared – a confident woman who no longer needs a man to tell her own self worth. In stanza five, Duffy writes "I looked at a ginger cat/a house brick shattered a bowl of milk/ i looked at a snuffling pig/ a boulder rolled/ in a heap of shit." As the poem goes along, the language becomes stronger and more purposeful, changing from 'I glanced' to 'I looked' and finally 'I stared.' In this stanza, we can see that Medusa is becoming more confident in her 'powers' or in her new definition of what it means to be a woman – she is exploring the way that she can stay true to herself in the face of misogynistic expectations. More powerful

than 'I glanced' but not quite as determined as 'I stared,' this stanza has captured Medusa as she figures out who she is without Poseidon. 'Ginger cat' and 'snuffling pig' are also phrases that have typically cute images associated to them- such descriptions could be attributed to feminine and 'soft' outlooks on life. In destroying such childlike language, "shattered a bowl of milk/boulder rolled in a heap of shit" Medusa is confronting her stereotypes and crashing through them – she is no longer wallowing in self pity but instead is using her confidence to create something new about herself – no longer a little girl who needs help, but an independent, powerful woman.

Often, the undesirable women – the ones who don't have the ideal body types, or don't fit into the small, limited, coffin-like boxes that have been created for us by men, are shamed as a result of years of systematic brainwashing through guises of media and politics.

Yet, Duffy's poem is also exploitative of the destructive nature of toxic masculinity, and the danger of allowing preconceptions to rule society – after all, Medusa is a tragedy as in the end as she is killed by Perseus. "And here you come with a shield for a heart/ and a sword for a tongue... wasn't I beautiful/ wasn't I fragrant and young?/ look at me now." Duffy uses Perseus as an example of the harmful effects that these misconceptions of women can be on not only women but men – "a shield for a heart/ sword for a tongue" is representative of the reluctance for men to accept that anyone can take on the traits so often attributed to them – an unwillingness to open their hearts for change causes toxic masculinity to take over in instances of violence. In this way, men are just as much the

victims as women as they can no longer widen their minds to the idea of a deviation from the norm they have grown accustomed to. However, I believe that even at the end, Medusa is still refusing to give up her own unique feminine power, and is dying on her own terms while staying true to herself. “Wasn’t I beautiful?/Wasn’t I fragrant and young?/Look at me now.” She says, and in doing so she is ridding herself of the past that has so encumbered her – being beautiful caused her to ultimately be punished, just as her desire for love turned her into the beast that people were warned of. She acknowledges that beauty made her who she was, but those statements hold no remorse. ‘Look at me now.’ is the final message of an unapologetic woman who dies on her own terms, refusing to give up the terrible power bestowed upon her, refusing to forfeit her individuality for the conformity of society. Her acceptance of her death is her final stand in the face of adversity, her final ‘screw you’ to those who punished her.

The poem ‘Salome’ by Duffy is another that seeks to challenge the preconceptions of society around women, specifically when dealing with women’s sexuality. One of the great taboo subjects in history has been the sexual needs of women, particularly when such needs are posited in a positive light. While men’s sexual desires in comparison have been viewed as a normal, justifiable aspect of their lives, the sex drive of women has been constantly contradicted and controlled throughout history. In theory, a woman should stay pure and saintly through virginity – at least until the time comes to churn out babies for the rest of her life. The question of gaining enjoyment from sex was not one that was openly addressed until recently in history – nor one that was acknowledged in the slightest. However, as Duffy argues, not only should a woman’s sexuality be celebrated in the same way as men’s, but women have, in fact, been enjoying sex since the biblical times, in contrast to what was popular opinion. Duffy’s Salome is a strong

woman who is evidently comfortable in her body and her choices. Her very presence on the page is an immediate affront to the reader: she is a contradiction to the ideologies and stereotypes that many of the audience probably grew up with, and so the initial response to her character is one of distaste. “I’d done it before (and doubtless I’ll do it again, sooner or later)/ woke up with a head on the pillow beside me/ whose?/what did it matter?” the tone of the piece is not one of remorse or shame, but instead of vague boredom – one that signals that Salome is not only comfortable in her actions, but practised in them. “Whose/ what did it matter?” Shows the causal disregard that Salome has for her activities, and indeed the person on the bed next to her. Such opinions are similar to a trope that is generally attributed to men: that of a ‘player,’ which is often considered very popular and positive. The corresponding characteristics when applied to women however are considered negative, and women who chose to take on enough partners to forget their names are branded as ‘sluts’ or ‘easy.’ However, Salome, in a similar way to Medusa, has chosen to take control of these attributes and make them her own in a way that is not only unapologetic, but also confident and blasé. The audience’s immediate response to this brazen thought will be to consider her in a negative light, but Salome in her utter careless confidence forces us to question whether we would give the same negative reaction to a man – is it her sexual actions that offend us, or her sex itself? ‘I’ll do it again, sooner or later’ is also a very telling part of who Salome is – because it acknowledges that Salome is acting this way for her own benefit and her own pleasure and sexual needs, not to benefit anyone else’s.

Duffy’s poem is also exploitative of the destructive nature of toxic masculinity, and the danger of allowing preconceptions to rule society

Duffy also draws attention to the treatment of women throughout history using Salome, and using the judgements of the audience. “Strange. What was his name? Peter?/ Simon? Andrew? John?” Duffy used biblical names to strike a chord with the readers – how dare she treat such important figures in history as a joke? The names, so casually tossed aside mimic the treatment of women throughout history, but this time it might make more of an impact on those reading. It is perhaps harder to see names that held positions of power being used in such a sense, and so the opinion on Salome is probably one that is growing in distaste. Yet, perhaps this was Duffy’s purpose. She writes Salome so candidly that she incites feelings of distaste in her audience and yet she is only writing her the way that one might write a man. If we have accepted this type of behaviour from men in history, and indeed this glorified nature of men in society today through our sitcoms, media and news, then why can’t we accept that in a woman? It is a question that might have been asked of the readers and an uncomfortable question to grasp. Maybe we should be more focussed on condemning the actions rather than condemning the gender.



Winnie the Pooh and difference

Maddie Bramley Y13

The ‘Golden Age of Children’s Literature’ refers to a period spanning the late nineteenth century to early twentieth century where the perception of childhood underwent a paradigm shift. The focus on instructing children on the social responsibility of being a grown-up gave way to a romanticised view of imagination and innocence; associating children with the idea of a rich natural world free from corruption. One of the works created during this time was the quintessential *Winnie the Pooh* by A. A. Milne; produced succeeding the end of World War One, a devastated Britain

It is true that a successful writer is one that is able to challenge the audience’s preconceptions on society. Carol Ann Duffy, through her poems ‘Medusa’ and ‘Salome’ has been able to challenge her readers to widen their world view. Through ‘Medusa,’ Duffy breaks down the idea that unless a woman looks and acts a certain way she is inherently bad. Medusa has adapted her situation for the better, allowing her flaws to make her into a confident woman who no longer tries to impress anyone other than herself. Although ultimately this would lead to her death, perhaps it was better for her to die knowing who she was and refusing to compromise that. Salome in comparison has been used to counteract the supposed hierarchy that men have on taking joy from sex, with her blatant confidence within herself and her sexuality. Duffy’s success as a writer is that she enables her readers to question themselves and what they have been taught through clever characters and difficult scenarios. Her realism adds depth to her arguments, and her clever use of language is disarming and insightful as she brings light to arguments that have been cast in shadows for years.

desired hope and happiness and Milne’s books and poems provided just that. *Winnie the Pooh* is enjoyed worldwide by adults and children alike to this day. Not only is Milne’s *Winnie the Pooh* full of loveable and relatable characters, but it also subtly demonstrates how we should value a society that tolerates difference.

Sarah Shea and colleagues provide an interesting critique of *Winnie the Pooh* in their report “Pathology in the Hundred Acre Wood: a neurodevelopmental perspective on A. A. Milne” where they argue that behind these “seemingly benign tales” are stories of “seriously troubled individuals”. They claim that each character

represents a different psychological disorder and ‘diagnose’ each one accordingly. For example, they state Pooh has OCD, ADHD, and a binge eating issue, while Piglet has a generalised anxiety disorder, Eeyore has dysthymia disorder (also known as persistent depressive disorder) and our beloved Owl has a bad case of dyslexia. This critique was not well received by the public as you may expect, with many being concerned with how the report besmirches the much-loved characters and its nature which appears excessively pro medicating children, the critics’ opinion does not agree with my hypothesis. “Sadly, the forest is not, in fact, a place of enchantment, but rather one of disenchantment, where neurodevelopmental and psychosocial problems go unrecognized and untreated. It is unfortunate that an Exposition was never Organized to a Child Development Clinic.” Although this critique does not support my hypothesis, it helped me to consider that perhaps there is an aspect to the text that paints each character as different with their own struggles to create a diverse and contrasting cast. It is these interactions between the diverse characters that make for the captivating read. Shea et. al’s analysis of the characters limits them to their ‘condition’ rather than recognizing them as whole beings. This leads them to interpret the whole text with a deficit mindset, focusing on the flaws and downfalls of the text while missing its overall feel and message. I believe that although the differences between the characters in the text are evident, the key message is the underlying tone of love, forgiveness, and acceptance as the characters live in such harmony and peace with their differences. If a child were to identify with one of the characters in the books, it would be a positive thing, as all the characters are identified as equals and are also equally accepted by each other.

Rachel C. Smith’s (2015) analysis of A. A. Milne’s *Winnie the Pooh* in her report “Winnie the Pooh Characters and Psychological Disorders; An

Honors Thesis” points out that although these characters show clear symptoms of common psychological disorders. However, the way in which A. A. Milne’s penmanship crafts them demonstrates to readers that we should have less stigmatizing attitudes toward people with mental aberrations. She states that “Even though they [the characters] have many diagnosable characteristics, they are just like you and me. We all know people who are like Tigger, like Kanga, and like Eeyore, and they aren’t dangerous at all. This brings psychological disorders to a realistic perspective. There shouldn’t be a negative stigma around them, and instead, the stigma should be reversed.” What the critic illustrates is that these characters are not an exception, they are the norm. Smith shows us that if we can agree that the characters in the books are indeed harmless and do not pose as a threat, then we should be able to see people in our own lives that have aspects of/ have these disorders in the same light.

The complex character makeup
of the books calls attention to
how despite their differences the
characters are considered equals
among themselves.

The complex character makeup of the books calls attention to how despite their differences the characters are considered equals among themselves. Smith suggested that Milne did this to encourage the audience to change the stigma around people with psychological issues. Milne’s Arcadian depiction of the Hundred Acre Wood and its inhabitants, inspires a sense of nostalgia in his audience, bringing them back to a time of post-war innocence and peace and joy. I am of the belief he desired escapism and submerged himself in a reimagined childhood fantasy, a childhood that has an attachment to meaningful objects, which replace his parents to whom Milne had little emotional attachment. Smith speculates that the personalities of the characters he crafted

may simply have been exaggerations of the animal's characteristics (or stereotypes of them) they demonstrate in the real world. For example, bears can be seen as slow, sleepy and big eaters, stocking up on food for winter hibernation. "Pooh doesn't necessarily have binge eating disorder. He could just be a typical bear that Milne wanted his readers to love." Smith's perspective confirms aspects of my hypothesis and highlights that the complex character makeup of the stories may just be Milne's way of developing his characters' personalities based on the animals themselves (and stereotypes of them). Upon my analysis of the critique, Smith shares my belief in the idea that *Winnie the Pooh* demonstrates how we should value a society that tolerates difference and made me further question Milne's intentions in the creation of his characters. Furthermore, I find it hard to agree with Smith in this instance that the characters are simply anthropomorphized versions of the real-life animals, I believe instead Milne had motivations beyond constituting them that way. A close reading under my hypothesis can be a challenging experience, inviting the reader to contemplate the authors' intentions with crafting the story in such a way. This is unusual as often when reading children's books, people do not look for a meaning 'between the lines'.

Winnie the Pooh demonstrates how
we should value a society that
tolerates difference

In A. A. Milne's Autobiography, *It's Too Late Now* (1939) he addresses his evident childhood trauma while also defending it. This book is written with an underlying tone of misery and latency giving an interesting insight into the motivations behind his writing, which many have analysed with respect to the Hundred-Acre Wood. One of whom was critic Laura E. Bright, in her (2010) report "IDEALIZATION AND DESIRE IN THE HUNDRED ACRE WOOD: A. A.

MILNE AND CHRISTOPHER (ROBIN)" she explores Milne's intentions with writing *Winnie the Pooh* and gives background into his early life. Bright's writing creates interesting insight into my hypothesis, where she is of the belief that the Arcadian creation of Milne's Hundred-Acre Wood is a subtle balance between the idealistic and carefree childhood and the subversion of those ideals. "I am arguing, then that the Pooh books represent, on the one hand, Milne's conscious desire to idealize childhood and on the other, the unconscious need to compulsively represent the neglect and suffering he experienced as a child in narrative code." Bright believes that by introducing psychological problems into the characters' lives Milne (possibly unconsciously) subverts his intention to create the illusion of an innocent and carefree childhood. Bright's analysis of the text does not conform with my hypothesis however it does offer an interesting take on it. She agrees that the characters have problems and are damaged but instead of the belief that Milne was doing this to promote the value of difference and support in a community, Bright suggests that Milne created the characters in such a way to compromise the perfect childhood vision. This is indicative of his own, not so perfect childhood. Arcadia is 'any real or imaginary place offering peace and simplicity'. Some readers, perceived Winnie the Pooh and his animal friends served to undermine the Arcadian vision of the enchanted forest and reveal the forces of disorder and uneasiness present in real life. The balance between the creation of Utopia in the Hundred Acre Wood and its inhabitants offering to subvert it results in our final interpretation of the story coming down to the readers own moral standings and perspective. Furthermore, this explains the many opposing viewpoints and observations of critics reading these books. Coming to this conclusion helped me understand that my own moral position will have affected the shaping of my hypothesis significantly; others can read this text and get out of it a completely different message.

I postulate there is merit to Laura E. Bright's perspective and has led me to consider that my hypothesis may need to be revised to encompass the idea that the reader's own perspective and experiences may affect their takeaway from this story.

My hypothesis that the books 'subtly demonstrate how we should value a society that tolerates difference', provided an interesting insight into the intentions of Milne in crafting the text the way he did. Critics Shea et al. (2000) considered the Hundred-Acre wood to be a place "where neurodevelopmental and psychosocial problems go unrecognized and untreated." They came at the text with a deficit mindset, limiting the characters to their condition and overlooking the support and cohesiveness of the so-called 'broken' society. Rachel C. Smith (2015) highlights that the complex character makeup of the books calls attention to the how despite their

differences the characters are considered equals among themselves, thus normalising them. Smith suggested that Milne did this to encourage the audience to change the stigma around people with psychological issues. The final critic I looked at was that of Laura E. Bright (2010), she believed that the 'troubled' characters served to undermine the idealistic perfect childhood that Milne never had. Bright also indicated that the balance between the perfect world and the imperfect characters leads the readers own experiences/perspectives to shape their final interpretation of the book. I conclude that my hypothesis was an adequate starting point however, there were elements that were missing. To revise, the readers existing moral standpoint can have a significant influence over their interpretation of the *Winnie the Pooh* stories, nonetheless, I believe it still rings true that they demonstrate how we should value a society that not only tolerates but normalises differences.



A Marxist analysis of *SpongeBob SquarePants*

Max Tan Y13

Nobody gives a care about the fate of labour as long as they can get their instant gratification." This quote by Squidward Tentacles rings true. Not just in one of the most prolific animated series ever created, *SpongeBob SquarePants*, but in our world too. If *SpongeBob SquarePants* were real, we'd be angry. But we're not. Because the hidden, powerful messages that scope in on the negative aspects of our society are hidden by the fact that *SpongeBob* is a kids show and that to us, it's silly to react to a kids show. However, if we look at *SpongeBob SquarePants* through a Marxist lens, one of the most controversial theories of economic systems ever thought of, it's blatantly obvious. Marxism is a particular theory on different economic systems and in particular, capitalism. Robert Hessen, a professor at Stanford University,

describes capitalism as in which the means of production are not owned by the wealthy but by the producers themselves. It is the idea that people own their labour and get out the equal amount of product, value and resources. That way, people are not paid less than they produce so that others can profit off of their labour instead of off of their own. However, in order for Marx's theories to be implemented successfully, it cannot allow for corruption, organized crime, scam artists and the like. It has at its basis a very pro-human notion that assumes human nature is, to be honest and earnest at all times. Which are traits that a lot of the characters living in Bikini Bottom do not possess in order to achieve a functioning capitalist society. We see signs of a failing capitalist system in our modern day democracy and *SpongeBob SquarePants* helps us realise this.

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we'd be angry. But we're not.

The characters in *SpongeBob SquarePants* each represents an economic position within capitalist society. We'll start off with Mr Krabs. On the show, Mr Krabs is quite obviously the bourgeois business owner. David Prychitko, an economics professor at Northern Michigan University, quotes a bourgeois as "someone in the social class who owns the means of production during modern industrialization." In capitalism, the societal concerns are the value of someone's property and the preservation of capital to ensure the perpetuation of their economic supremacy in society. Mr Krabs is the self-entitled proud owner of the Krusty Krab. One of the best underwater eating establishments ever made. It doesn't take an idiot to know Mr Krabs is deplorably obsessed with money. He is the face of commodity fetishism. Marxist theory states that commodity fetishism occurs when social relationships become purely about profit. He unhesitatingly puts his social relationships aside for even a slight increase in personal economic value. Prichitko states that Marx used "commodity" as another way of saying "labor power". This is perhaps the reason why he is a single father and rarely shows any love and sympathy towards his fellow Krusty Krab employees, SpongeBob, Squidward and his daughter, Pearl. Mr Krabs is clearly one of the most manipulative people in Bikini Bottom and he values the preservation of his profit over ethics and morality. An example of this is when Mr Krabs enlists SpongeBob to drive the jellyfish population to near-extinction when he finds out that he can make a boatload of money through their jelly (*Jellyfish Hunter*. Season 2, Episode 37). This is clear symbolism to the cruel modern day battery farming of chickens and other farm animals. In New Zealand, battery farms can have more than 40,000 chickens locked inside small sheds that are about 19 metres squared. Mr Krabs has once tried to save 10 cents at the expense of

his own life when it gets stuck in the drain (*Squid Day Off*. Season 2, Episode 2) further confirming the unhealthy hoarding of his revenue. He even sold SpongeBob's soul without hesitation to the Flying Dutchman for a measly 62 cents (*Born Again Krabs*. Season 3, Episode 31). Mr Krabs obviously represents all the money greedy capitalists around the world whose only motivation is profit. Mr Krabs, like lots of bourgeoisie, are blind to the concerns of the working class. In the real world, we could compare Mr Krabs to Donald Trump. Trump, the president of the United States, has cut the rate of tax for the considered rich from 40% to 37%. Just like Mr Krabs, Trump has made a significant change that affects other people to protect and increase his wealth.

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There are two ways someone can react to Mr Krabs' disgusting ways, and his only two workers, Squidward and SpongeBob, each represent one of them. Squidward and SpongeBob are what Marxists call proletariats. Prychitko describes them as "the working class at the mercy of the capitalists." The proletariats are split into two different categories. The class-conscious worker and the non class-conscious worker. There is also a third group called the lumpenproletariats which I will talk about later. Squidward represents the class-conscious worker. Although Karl Marx himself did not talk about a theory of class consciousness, he mentioned the concept of the working class. Squidward is well aware of the miserable situation he is in under the control of Mr Krabs. Which explains his depressed and pessimistic attitude in life. He knows full well that Mr Krabs is manipulative and abusing his worker's rights. He starts a strike against him (*Squid On Strike*. Season 2, Episode 39) and quits

his job because of Mr Krabs' abuse (*Can You Spare A Dime?* Season 3, Episode 14). He constantly daydreams about living in a Fully Automated Luxury Communist State, an idea created by Karl Marx for a world where in which everyone has everything they need and are free to pursue their passions without the burden of work. Squidward gets his dream when he goes to live in Tentacle Acres to get away from his annoying neighbours SpongeBob and Patrick (*Squidville*. Season 2, Episode 12). Tentacle Acres is a private community that he's always wanted to live in. Squidward lives every day in Tentacle Acres how he always dreams. This is shown by how he bikes in the morning, goes to the supermarket to buy canned bread, participates in an interpretive dance class and joins a clarinet trio. Squidward's second day at Tentacle Acres is just like the first, a fact he enjoys immensely. However, as the days go by, each one exactly the same as the last, Squidward slowly loses enthusiasm for the endless routine. Finally, Squidward realizes one day, while once again performing with his fellow clarinet players, that his dream life wasn't everything he had hoped it to be. Perhaps this could be because Squidward is aware of the inequality outside of Tentacle Acres and wants to fight it. This would be consistent with his identity as a class conscious worker. This episode shows the idea of Marxist utopia and how running off to live in a commune doesn't solve anything, and the only way for people to achieve the better world they seek is to engage with it and agitate for change. Squidward Tentacles represents all the people across the globe who feel sucked in by the capitalist system and are pessimistic about the future ahead. Squidward himself is constantly left disappointed by the actions of his fellow proletarians. Especially SpongeBob.

Squidward is incredibly harsh and impatient with SpongeBob and if one thinks about it, he really has no sensible reason to. SpongeBob is kind to Squidward. He says good morning to him every

day and tries his best to bring joy into Squidward's life. As kids, we are led to believe that the reason Squidward resents SpongeBob is that he finds SpongeBob annoying or that he's envious of his happy and positive attitude. But once you realise the Marxist undertones of the show, the answer becomes clear. Squidward is frustrated that SpongeBob is not class-conscious.

Squidward is frustrated that
SpongeBob is not class-
conscious.

According to Marx, workers first become conscious of sharing common grievances against capitalist higher-ups and eventually develop self-awareness of themselves as forming a social class opposed to the bourgeoisie. It is clear that Squidward wants to have this with SpongeBob when he encourages SpongeBob to go on strike with him. Despite his boss' abuse and working conditions, SpongeBob is relentlessly optimistic. He is arguably one of the best, if not the best fry cook in history. An example of this is he manages to produce Krabby Patties at an absolutely insane rate for a hoard of hungry anchovies and saves Mr Krabs from the threat of his restaurant getting run down (*Help Wanted*. Season 1, Episode 1). Yet SpongeBob is paid ridiculously little by Mr Krabs in return. This further expresses the Marxist ideas in the show as SpongeBob's pay won't be reflected by his unprecedented skill, work ethic and talent. All the capitalist's profits must come at the expense of the worker. In this case, that worker is comrade SpongeBob. Even though it is clear as day that SpongeBob is the sole reason why the Krusty Krab is a successful business. He is cheerful about his condition because frankly, he is unaware. SpongeBob has a Stockholm-syndrome-esque relationship with Mr Krabs and sees him as a somewhat father figure which is a classic symptom of being blindly obedient. He endures horrific treatment because he holds onto his boss' empty promise of one day owning the

Krusty Krab and thus becoming the new bourgeois. When Squidward asks SpongeBob if he wants to go on strike against Mr Krabs, SpongeBob's response is jubilation and excitement, comically showing he clearly has no idea what a strike is (*Squid On Strike*. Season 2, Episode 39). This proves that SpongeBob has never been exposed to Marxist critique or any economic system critique in that matter. SpongeBob represents the idealist worker in a capitalist system. SpongeBob sees an end goal (albeit in his case, virtually impossible) and works hard towards it.

SpongeBob represents the idealist worker in a capitalist system. SpongeBob sees an end goal (albeit in his case, virtually impossible) and works hard towards it.

SpongeBob is manipulated into the idea that if you work hard enough, you can get what you want when really this isn't the case because he doesn't possess the power in the capitalist hierarchy to achieve it. Having said this, Karl Marx often quotes "religion is the opium of the people." Marx focuses on the most recognised religion, Christianity, but this could apply to any religion. He believed that religious proletariats were convenient to manipulative bourgeoisie because these workers would endure awful working conditions and long hours because they had faith in God that since they were good workers and therefore good people, they would eventually be put in a better place. SpongeBob may not be religious but he does possess the blindness of these proletariats to not see how badly they are being put through. This heavily contrasts Squidward who realises that everything he'll ever work for will be made redundant when he's gone. In our society, proletariats can be classified for every worker who does not own the means of production in the world. Each realising,

or not realising that they are 'trapped' in the endless class struggle because it is what society expects from them. The proletariats are compelled to sell their labour to the capitalists and the bourgeois for a wage.

Patrick Star represents what Marxists call the Lumpenproletariat. Jean Claude Bourdin, a professor at the University of Poitiers, says Karl Marx defines this group as the "scum of the decaying elements of all classes, which establishes headquarters in all the big cities, is the worst of all possible allies. It is an absolutely venal, an absolutely brazen crew. Every leader of the workers who utilizes these gutter proletarians as guards or supports, proves himself by this action alone a traitor to the movement." The Lumpenproletariats in our society include criminals, the homeless, the unemployed, etc. Patrick, for most of the series, is unemployed. He is left out of the class struggle and even if he tried to get employed, he'd be too stupid to do anything. One of the only times he ever gets a job is at the Krusty Krab (*Big Pink Loser*. Season 2, Episode 5). However, at the job, he fails to even do the simplest tasks. He eats customer's food while delivering it to them, he uses the wrong side of the broom to sweep up the floor and takes an embarrassingly long time to work out how to open a jar. In a separate episode (*My Pretty Seahorse*. Season 3, Episode 4), he manages to nail a plank to his forehead when offering to help SpongeBob build a stable for his new pet seahorse. Several critics have questioned Karl Marx's rejection of the lumpenproletariat and so have people in today's world, where we subconsciously devalue the homeless and unemployed. Jean Claude Bourdin quotes "Why is a section of the urban plebeians considered a lumpenproletariat, with no hope of ever joining the proletariat, when other elements have this possibility? One might hypothesize that it is not so much their place right at the bottom of the social ladder, their pauperism, which explains this, but the fact that they lack the means to

become organized and fight with an awareness of the ends and means.” The creator of *SpongeBob*, Stephen Hillenburg, uses the show to show good in the lumpenproletariat. Specifically in Patrick. It is clear to the viewer that Patrick does not care about money or power. He appreciates the simple pleasures of life and simply wants to just live it as peacefully and as smoothly as possible. Patrick once cheered up SpongeBob by showing the benefits of “glorious unemployment” and that being unemployed is “the best gig I know” after SpongeBob gets fired from the Krusty Krab (*SpongeBob, You’re Fired*. Season 9, Episode 11). He values his friendship with SpongeBob over anything else. Even once doing nothing but waiting all day for him to come back from boating school (*New Student Starfish*. Season 3, Episode 25). Patrick, despite having next to no money and constantly being classified as a fat “loser” by other citizens of Bikini Bottom, has captured the same cheerful optimism and joie de vivre of his best mate SpongeBob. It could be said that the only difference between him and SpongeBob is that SpongeBob has been reeled into industrial work. If this is the case, then Patrick is actually a conscious proletarian who realises flawed Marxist ideas. Patrick avoids manipulation by refusing to live above his means. Which might actually make him one of the smartest, not the dumbest, characters on the show. Many believe that Patrick Star is a bum but the truth is, he’s found a way out of the endless capitalist class struggle. Something that other Bikini Bottom citizens have failed to do. On a global scale, Patrick Star represents the millions of people around the world who are undervalued by society because they are unable or unwilling to be docile capitalist workers. Even though *SpongeBob SquarePants* can be seen as a Marxist show, it is also very critical of Marx’s theories, especially in the depiction of Patrick. In Marx’s theory, he would have simply written someone like him off. Whereas in the show it shows that Patrick Star the lumpenproletariat has more

admirable values like loyalty and genuine kindness compared to Mr Krabs the bourgeoisie. Patrick Star teaches us an important lesson about the people we tend to look down upon. That these are people with life experiences and intelligence and not just some bums who sit on the street.

After looking at the show through a Marxist lens, we are able to see that *SpongeBob SquarePants* is no longer some innocent kids series, but a show that subtly showcases the flaws of our capitalist society through Marxist ideas. *SpongeBob SquarePants* is a show that focuses in on society’s assumption that the only way to survive is to work. It teaches us about inhumane worker’s rights, to think about our attitudes towards the lower class and how our greed for money and power is ruining our world through its main characters. Karl Marx once proudly quoted “Workers of the world unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains.” The people in chains represent Squidward and SpongeBob, and Karl Marx believed that they could be happier if they, and proletarians all across society could be free of the shackles of capitalist norms. This show reels in on the failures of our capitalist society and showcases the abuse and miserableness of workers that’s actually easy for children to understand. It shows how some people are greedy for money and power and will do anything to get it and more importantly, it shows the endless class struggle that our society has succumbed into. *SpongeBob* teaches us to see all the problems with our modern society around us, more so than any of the characters do. The show has shown us the problem of our current system and now the world needs to apply what *SpongeBob* has tried to teach us.

“Workers of the world unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains.”

The nation of porcelain dolls

Hui Ling Vong Y13

Sexism. A simple word with an even simpler meaning. It is defined on google as “prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, on the basis of sex.” As a young woman who’s barely experienced life when compared to the seniors of our generation, I can confidently say that sexism affects me daily. But as a young Chinese female, my sexist experiences were always linked back to my culture; the Chinese culture. Growing up as a young Chinese girl in modern society, it served as an influence towards my mindset on sexism. It had opened my perspective and encouraged me to think differently. Leading me to the question: Does the Chinese culture promote sexism?

At a young age, I had already realised that no one is born equal. Sexism was inescapable, even in my own household. A place where it’s meant to be associated with safeness was turned to a place that trapped my identity. I was expected to be able to clean and cook, whereas my brother wasn’t. While my mother and I were doing the chores and cooking for the family, my father and brother would be watching television. While my brother wore pants, I was told to wear more dresses and stop wearing pants. While my brother was told to act like a man, I was told to act like a woman. I remember how my brother was allowed to play shooting games but when I played, I was told to stop because “they weren’t girl games.” Instead, the games I was ‘allowed’ to play were cooking and house cleaning games. This was not my choice, but a singular option assigned to me based on my gender. Time after time I’ve been told that I “should be learning to cook and clean for my future husband and father”, that I should be “wearing more make-up and dresses to look like a girl” and that I should be “behaving more like a woman rather than a tomboy”. But once I questioned all this, all I got in return was “because this is how we [Chinese]

do things.” The double standards between male and female were strongly instilled in my house through the old teachings of our culture. Males were expected to provide for the family, wear appropriate clothes and act masculine. Whereas females were expected to care for the family, wear dresses and skirts, look acceptable while acting feminine. These rules of how we act, dress and our purpose were considered definite, forever unchanging. Although, even when equally enforced on both genders, the rules favoured the males, giving them the power and control. Females had limited freedom, lacking any sort of power. Like many others, the culture’s ‘rules’ were used to define me, taking away my freedom. By doing so, it took away my identity as a female and as a person. It was used to mould me through stereotypes of typical Chinese women that did housework, wore specific clothing and acted obediently. It was discriminative and restricted my freedom of choice based solely on the fact that I was female. I was not given any choices, only bias options.

I was expected to be able to clean and cook, whereas my brother wasn’t. While my mother and I were doing the chores and cooking for the family, my father and brother would be watching television.

When stripped back further, to the very roots, sexism has always been linked back to my culture. Every sexist comment was always supported with the comment: “because it is how we Chinese do things.” Even my own culture, a culture I’m pridful of, promotes sexism like a billboard on the main street. Historically, Chinese culture has always had sexist traditions that separated men from women. An article, written by Patricia Ebery, titled ‘Women in traditional China’,

focuses on the Confucius principles and how it promotes sexist values. The Confucius principles built the foundation for Chinese traditions and moral philosophy. It depicted how each family member were to act as an individual and as a family member. From the male head of the house to his spouse and the children, everyone had a role to play in the family. A quote from the article shows the stark differences between the roles of women and men in the family: "Women's roles were primarily kinship roles: daughter, sister, wife, daughter-in-law, mother, and mother-in-law. In all these roles, it was incumbent on women to accord with the wishes and needs of closely related men; their fathers when young, their husbands when their married, their sons when widowed." It's saying that women are eternally bound to men, no matter as daughter, wife or widow. In every part of their lives, there is a male authoritarian counterpart that dictated their role in the family.

Confucius conceptualised the gender roles of women and men as yin and yang. As stated in the article: "Women were Yin, men were Yang. Yin was soft, yielding, receptive, passive, reflective, and tranquil, whereas yang was hard, active, assertive, and dominating." These features of personalities are often seen in the Chinese population, women were more tranquil and expected to be more forgiving and passive. Whereas men were the dominating figure that were expected to be assertive, strong and hard-headed. It depicted women to be below men in status, whether it was in the family or society. Thus, the Confucius principles strongly influence the sexist traditions of Chinese culture: the men led whilst the women tended to their needs, like a servant with a title.

Women are continuously instructed on how to act feminine, how to look feminine and how to be a female. But these were usually drilled to them by men and elderly, those who don't truly understand femininity. Men, such as my father and uncles who've told me several times to act

like a girl and look more feminine, have not experienced a shred of femininity. They have not experienced the extent of sexism I, and many others, have experienced. Without these experiences, how are they meant to understand what femininity really is? Elderly, such as my grandma and grandpa who taught me the proper etiquette on how to treat the males in the family. But the blame shouldn't be on them, it is hard to change a habit. Elders have always lived under those viewpoints; it is what they've grown up to know of and believe in. But just because they'd grown up with those ideals doesn't mean our generation should.

Chinese culture defined femininity with the idolisation of porcelain dolls. It used the doll to portray how women dressed, their appearance and behaviour. It was expected for females to dress appropriately, to have fair skin and cover all imperfections whilst behaving in the right manner. It was, in simple terms, a standard-issue rule book on how to be the perfect porcelain doll. But this isn't femininity. Femininity is more than just dressing up, covering up appearance 'flaws', imperfections and hiding behind a mask of submissiveness.

Femininity is more than just
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So, what is femininity? I believe femininity has many definitions, it is a word that invokes a personal meaning and understanding. Femininity means something different to everybody. However, it is often misunderstood. Femininity should be a freedom of choice to act, dress and appear however one wants to be seen. Whether it is choosing to dress in pants or skirts, or behaving more assertively than passively, or simply to being more boyish than others. It is the freedom to choose your identity as a human

being. It is an identity that shouldn't have any judgement or unjust input from others or traditions that stemmed from bias cultural perspectives. Femininity is a concept that may very well lead us to a future where there is true equality between humans; not as male or female, men or women but as humans.

So, does Chinese culture promote sexism? Although I am not proud to admit it, my culture does indeed promote sexism. I simply cannot pride myself on a culture that views women as objects with the only value being a display doll that cleans up after men. Our purpose, our roles in the family were supposedly always going to be governed by men. The Confucius principles, the foundation of Chinese traditions, fits flawlessly into the definition of Sexism. It determined the role of women based solely on their gender. Since they were female, Confucius stated that they must be soft and yielding under the domination of a male figure. Even when Chinese society is progressing at a fast rate, why do we still glorify

the Confucius principles that demean the value of women? As women, our only purpose isn't just to take care of men and stand below them.

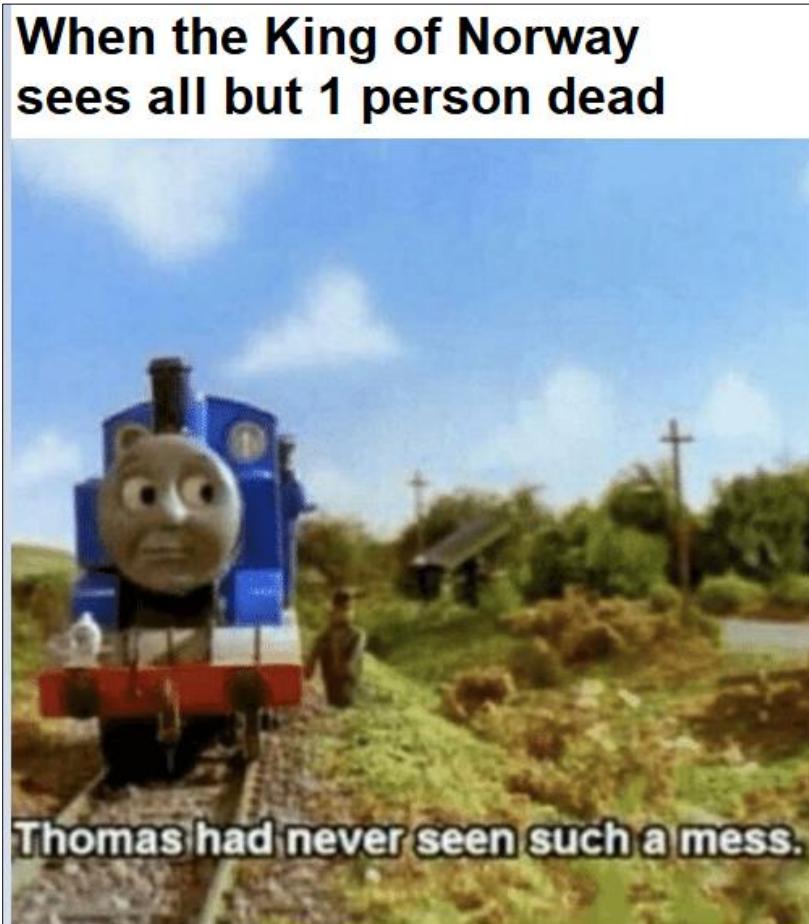
To the older generations of Chinese, it may be your culture, but it is also ours; the younger generation. We should be allowed to contribute to it and share it. Our culture should reject sexism. The unreasonable expectations that have continued through to modern times have always been unfair to women. It is overbearing pressure that is used to dictate their lives as Chinese. The lack of freedom to choose their own personality, actions and choices remove their identity as a human. There should not be any difference in treating men or women, we should all be allowed to choose our own identities. The Chinese culture should allow for a future where the younger generation can be pridful of the culture. It should be a culture where there isn't an inequality between women and men, where femininity isn't defined by a porcelain doll and where women and men stand on equal ground.



10TUO *Hamlet* Memes



Hughan Scott Y10



Lucas Homer Y10

10TUO *Hamlet* Memes



checking
who's behind the
curtain before
stabbing them

stabbing
anyway

Alisha Kansara Y10

**CLAUDIUS WHEN
GERTRUDE DRINKS THE WINE**



Rebecca Sa Y10