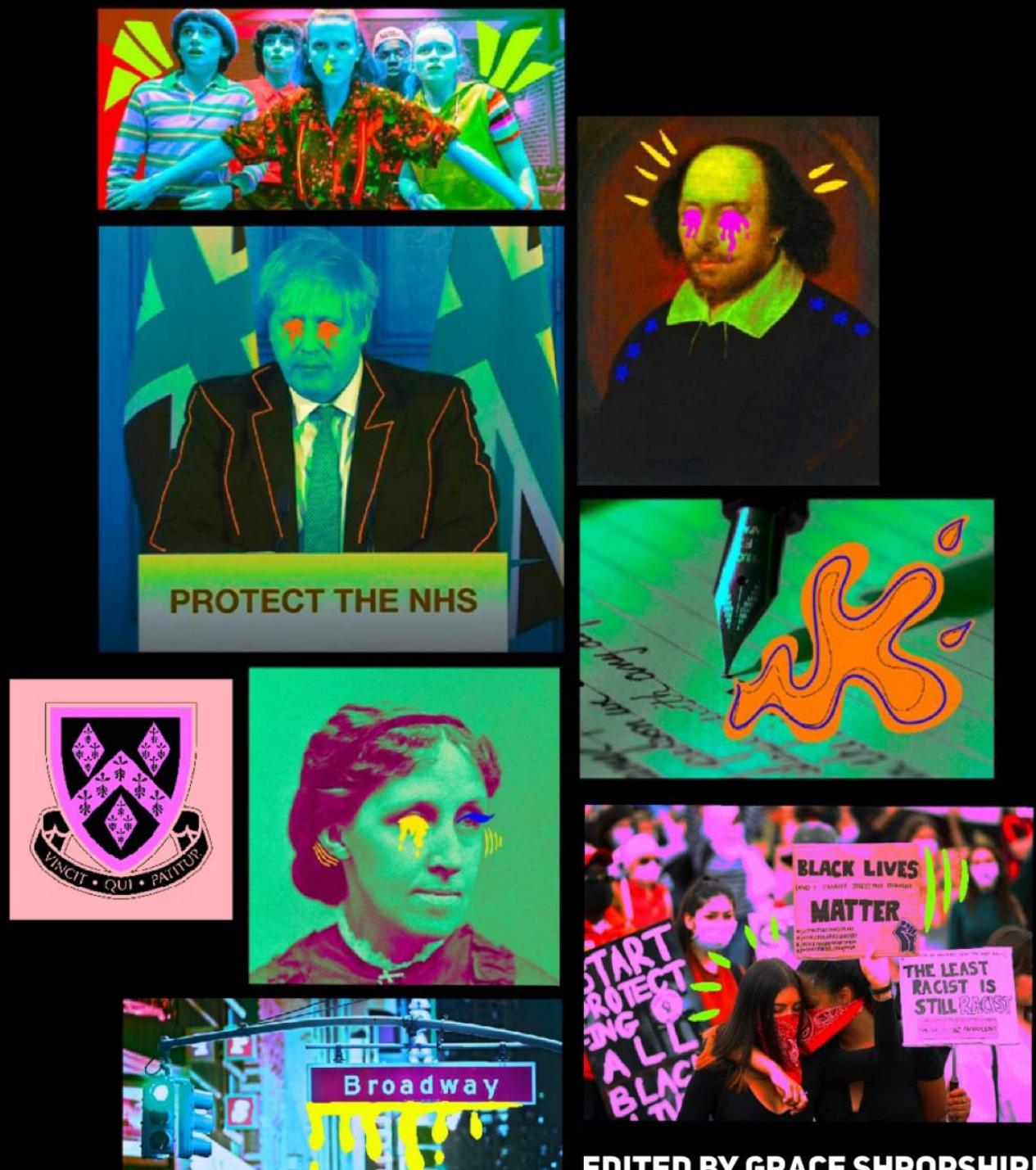


LIKE, LITERARY

THE STOCKPORT GRAMMAR SCHOOL LITERARY MAGAZINE



EDITED BY GRACE SHROPSHIRE

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Welcome to Like, Literary

Welcome to this edition of Stockport Grammar School's very own literary magazine, Like Literary. The concept for this emanated from a deeply held view among the English staff that there was some great literary potential within our pupils which we should showcase. It turns out, we were absolutely correct! As you will see, we have all manner of genres here from high level academic criticism to film review, theatre reviews to contemporary comment and of course, creative writing. We believe writing is such an important way we are able to express ourselves as humans and as critical thinkers, that every child should be given the opportunity to do so. What you see here is a small selection of what the English Department at SGS gets up to on a regular basis.

Mr Johnson and I would like to thank all our amazing Sixth Form editing team who have attended meetings, made the final selections, edited and written section introductions and generally shown themselves to be excellent editors and leaders. We are so grateful to them for the way they continue to inspire our younger pupils. We would like to pay particular thanks to Grace Shropshire, our Magazine Editor and Designer, for her creativity and inspiration in putting together such a professional magazine.

We hope you enjoy reading this as much as we enjoyed putting it together and that, through it, you find some expression of this sentiment:

“Writing is the painting of the voice.” (Voltaire)

Ms Roberts

Literary Criticism & Book Reviews

If you want to be inspired by the impactful poetry of Maya Angelou, or delve into the visions of Alfred Lord Tennyson, you've come to the right place! I myself am interested in literary criticism because it is such a great tool to truly understand what you read. This section is a collection of pupils' and teachers' ideas about how acclaimed writers have confronted issues in society through their work, including by depicting dark Gothic worlds to highlight the flaws in our own society. Read on to find out about the first and second years' top three recommendations of dystopian thrillers (if the real world isn't post-apocalyptic enough for you these days...). Enjoy!

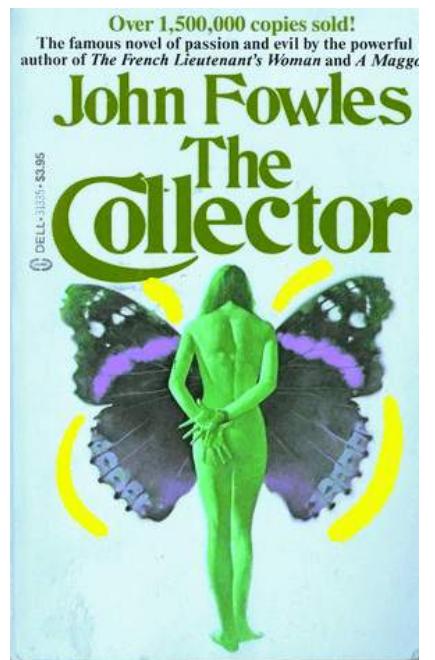
Editor Zoë Shah

Should we judge past literature by our present moral standards?- Zoë Shah

From ‘Don Quixote’ and Homer’s ‘Odyssey’ to Austen and Atwood, literature gives psychological insight into the moral standards held by people in the past. The matter of how to cast judgement on literature written in the past when the moral standards upheld were different from ours remains labyrinthine. However, in my view, we should judge past literature by moral standards which we hold today. This does not mean we should condemn literature for failing to meet modern standards; we should remain open to appreciating the other values of cultural artefacts.

Moral standards have been transformed over the centuries, and literature can be used as a tool by which to explore this progression. In fiction, a skilful writer has methods for subtly interweaving their own views into their work, allowing us to see the moral standards that may have been held in their lifetime. This is powerfully demonstrated in the novel ‘The Collector’ by John Fowles, in which Fowles initially denies the reader any insight into the thoughts of the kidnapped and imprisoned woman, instead unravelling the story from her captor Clegg’s morally vacant viewpoint. This could be likened to ‘Lolita’, in which Nabokov’s writing is so seductive and elaborate that it masks, without fully concealing, the monstrosity of Humbert’s paedophilia. Whilst I was angered by reading about the horrific treatment of both of these women, my anger was directed at the fictional oppressors, not the writers, since I feel both Fowles and Nabokov imply disapproval for their protagonist’s actions. Fowles employs double perspective to give the oppressed female a long-anticipated voice, and her account of the utter degradation she faces illuminates the fact that it is with her that Fowles sympathises. Correspondingly, Nabokov informs us in the second sentence of the book that Humbert will die prematurely in prison, which could be viewed as a case of poetic justice.

In both cases, the writer arguably engineers events in order to critique a character’s actions. Thus, literature has the ability to express the moral standards held by people at a particular point in time, even when writers choose to communicate the plot from the perspective of a narrator who holds different moral standards to their own. However, upon deciphering what these standards may be, how should we judge a past writer’s work if their moral stance clashes with our contemporary ones? When we are analysing past literature that is, for example, blatantly racist,



should we simply accept that a white supremacist standpoint was fairly standard during many past decades, or should we allow our perceptions of characters and the writer themselves be influenced by more liberal contemporary standards?

I believe that the latter is the best course of action. This is because I think that moral standards have in general advanced over a span of centuries, as a result of higher levels of education and prosperity. This advance is why it is helpful to judge past literature by modern standards; we are able to recognise the moral defects of our past, and question how far we have really advanced since then. It is vital to acknowledge the wider destruction that immoral actions may have inflicted, regardless of whether such actions were being condoned at the time they were immortalised in literature, and we can only do this by applying modern ideas of morality to past cases. By claiming that discriminatory language (which today would be largely considered immoral) is acceptable when seen in past literature because such attitudes were ‘normal’ at the time, we are refusing to fully confront the darker side of our history.

Whilst there are many advantages of taking this attitude towards standards and judgement, it presents a difficulty for the contemporary reader: it seems harsh to cast judgement on past writers who could not feasibly have met or perhaps even comprehended our present standards, just as we cannot be expected to know what moral standards will be held by people in the distant future. We must still give credit to writers if they held innovative standards ahead of their time, even whilst we are able to appreciate that their views could be challenged in today’s society.

An example of this is the characterisation of Portia in ‘The Merchant of Venice’, who Shakespeare presents as not only possessing beauty, as is typical of romantic heroines, but also admirable intelligence. This is demonstrated by her masterly understanding of the law system, which allows her to save Antonio in an inversion of the ‘knight in shining armour’ literary convention. However, ultimately it is only by hiding her feminine identity that she is able to exploit the potential of her rationality. Although Shakespeare was writing long before the birth of feminism, he displays impressive understanding of a woman’s plight. He is often celebrated for his advanced way of thinking about gender, even though we might also consider his demonisation of other strong women such as Lady Macbeth as misogynistic.



If we are successful in judging all of literature based on today's moral standards, we are lead to question both past standards and our own present ones, which in turn leads to contemplation about the development of morality throughout history as a whole. It is obvious from current events from the Black Lives Matter movement to the Extinction Rebellion that humanity's collective sense of what actions are of a

reasonable standard is far from flawless.

However, there is still hope. When we discuss the nature of 'present' moral standards, I believe that the 'present' does not have to be seen as this one stationary moment in time; the 'present' is constantly extending into the future, and each new present brings about its own set of standards, subtly moulded from the last.

Therefore, we can hope that future generations will be able to recognise and make amends for the defects in our society, preserved in literature written today. Thus, the evolution of moral



standards in literature continues.

Still I Rise by Maya Angelou- Tiane Mull

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard

You may shoot me with your words,

You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors
gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the
slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

Maya Angelou uses her poem 'Still I Rise' as a mouthpiece to explore the themes of prejudice and injustice. She wrote this poem in the following decade of the civil rights movement (1970s) to support equal rights. However, it is applicable to modern-day issues, as some racist beliefs are still being tackled in the present day. Angelou uses this poem as a beacon of hope for the oppressed and marginalised, empowering the reader by





advocating self-respect, confidence and resilience. Her poetry - perhaps most of all 'Still I Rise' - is a passionate response to injustice.

The writer uses lots of imagery to address the struggles the African American society went through and the hatefulness showed towards them. In the first line, 'You may write me down in history with your bitter, twisted lies', the repeated direct pronoun 'you' refers to the racist oppressors, as a collective with an accusatory tone. This refers to how, in the past, only white men had the power to decide what became 'history' and what was forgotten. In the first stanza, Angelou talks about how they may try to neglect some events of the past, but that will not stop her from getting back onto her feet. Furthermore, she uses an array of aggressive and violent verbs and combines them with abstract nouns; for example, in the phrases 'shoot me with your words' and 'kill me with your hatefulness', the 'words' and 'hatefulness' are the weapons used by her oppressors.

However, they are intangible nouns, which possibly signifies that their negativity could never bring her any real harm.

Later in the poem, Angelou describes herself as 'a black ocean, leaping and wide. Welling and swelling [she] bear[s] in the tide.' The use of the verbs 'welling' and 'swelling' are consonantly rhymed, to possibly mimic the movement of the oceanic waves. However, this metaphor also conveys the hardships and triumphs of African American people because of slavery; an ocean is never still and constantly moving and changing, which could signify how black people still struggle to change the deeply embedded racist beliefs which are 'rooted' in society. The 'black ocean' could also be linked with the reference to 'teardrops', which could in this instance symbolise the tears that her people have cried due to the pain and suffering of slavery and the discrimination they have faced for hundreds of years. However, an 'ocean' is vast, and is an unpredictable, powerful and unstoppable force, so another interpretation could be that the African Americans are a reckoning force who find strength in numbers, and that it is their oppressors who lie in danger.

Angelou uses structure and form to convey her ideas as a civil rights activist, and to highlight strength in the face of hardship. The poem has an almost formal structure at the beginning in comparison to the end, where Angelou subverts the form, in opposition to the reader's expectations. This contrast makes the reader appreciate

that the oppressor's ability to humiliate her disappears as her strength rises. The change from the regular use of the quatrains to one long final stanza at the end, and the fact that she no longer addresses the oppressor in the final stanza, shows the power and confidence Angelou has standing alone. Also, the shift in meter from a falling rhythm of trochees to a rising meter reflects the rise of the speaker herself. This is crystallized by the repetition of 'I rise' in the final stanza. These short, one-lined sentences create a sharp tone, to embed the idea of fighting prejudice and injustice into the reader's mind.

Finally, Maya Angelou advocates female empowerment to fight for the equality of all genders, as well as races. Angelou uses lots of domestic imagery, which is stereotypically associated with women. However, Angelou turns those references to the home, which is traditionally viewed as a woman's place and is patronizing, into a site of productivity and power. The poem depicts her asserting her dominance 'cause [she] [walks] like [she's] got oil wells Pumping in [her] living room'. 'Oil wells' are very expensive, so the simile shows that her new attitude is as valuable as oil, and she is ready to face her oppressors. Furthermore, she asks her oppressors if they want to see her with a 'bowed head and lowered eyes', which is an expression of obedience. She is trying to reinforce that she will not be submissive to abusers and misogynists now, as she retains her positivity and self-belief. Moreover, she wonders if it has come to their surprise, that she 'dance[s] like [she's] got diamonds at the meeting of [her] thighs'. In 1978, African American women were often told to repress their sexuality and confidence. However, a 'diamond' is a very rare stone, which emphasises that her sexuality is precious, her own and should be celebrated, not abused; this could link to the sexual abuse Angelou suffered from her stepfather when she was a child. Here, Angelou is demonstrating her new positive attitude, and trying to inspire similar positive changes in other women.



In conclusion, Maya Angelou tries to tackle issues surrounding her womanhood and prejudice against the black society. The wider message of this poem is to rise above oppression and to be victorious over hatred, as well as treating everyone equally regardless of race or gender. She speaks her message to herself, to anyone oppressed and to the systems that permit oppression. Especially seeing the current events in the world, this poem is definitely still relevant today, and is something we all can learn from.

'Fight Club' and the Gothic- Mia Hutchinson

There are many elements that characterize a piece of gothic literature, the main being: atmospheres of mystery and horror, supernatural beings and the idea of a nihilistic way of life. Gothic novels are often set in a dystopian future; however, not all Gothics are as easy to spot as 'Dracula'. An unusual piece of literature in the Gothic genre is the 1996 novel 'Fight Club' by Chuck Palahniuk, which is a novel apropos of hypermasculinity and violence. Its fast-paced, action-packed opening entices you to read on, whilst also remaining satirical through the use of dark humor.

'Fight Club' offers ideas of anarchy and disruption, where violence is promoted as the way forward. Violence (unsurprisingly) is a common theme in 'Fight Club', the plot of the novel being two men starting up an underground club where other men come to brawl. The men choose to fight to escape their ordinary, mundane lives. However, things soon get out of hand when the group of men become anti-capitalist terrorists, causing havoc in order to free themselves from their 'cruel' lives. The themes of aggression and danger are clearly seen as the novel begins with 'Tyler pushing a gun into [the narrators] mouth'. This creates a sense of endangerment and confusion; why has the narrator got a gun in his mouth? This sense of confusion brings mystery to the book, another ubiquitous trait of gothic novels.



Mystery is also evoked by the prevailing sense of gloom in the novel. The use of pathetic fallacy with the setting being described as 'Cold... Cloudy ... Dark' is a simple, yet effective way of reinstating the despondent atmosphere. 'Cloudy' and 'Dark' in particular portray mystery, and the possibility of danger ahead. The absence of light also symbolizes the difficulty of seeing the 'truth' of life, which is a problem that the men face. Another easily missed hint of mystery in 'Fight Club' is the simple fact that the protagonist's name is never revealed. This leaves the reader thinking about how they could be anyone, making the novel all the more intriguing.

The nihilistic view of the narrator is made apparent by his pessimistic outlook on life, for example when he states that 'You don't understand any of it and then you just die'. This gloomy view adds to the dismal setting, strengthening the dystopian feel of the novel. Another example of his downcast attitude is the phrase 'You are not your hopes', which suggests that you should not believe in yourself, as your dreams will never come true. The simple statement 'You will not be saved' is an effective way of reminding the reader that life is not everlasting— it will come to an end, as 'We will all die someday'. These dejected comments project a grim and dreary prospect of life, which may help the reader to understand the reasons behind why the men turn to such extreme measures.

'Fight Club' can be perceived in many different ways – a novel about terrorists, fascists, masculinity, love... or maybe just a group of men looking to alleviate boredom.

A woman's voice and her art. An examination of Tennyson's *The Lady of Shalott*- Mrs Suttle

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And thro' the field the road runs by
To many-tower'd Camelot;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
Flowing down to Camelot.
Four grey walls, and four grey towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow veil'd
Slide the heavy barges trail'd
By slow horses; and unhail'd
The shallop flitteth silken-sail'd
Skimming down to Camelot:
But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shalott?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
Down to tower'd Camelot:
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers "Tis the fairy
Lady of Shalott."

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott.

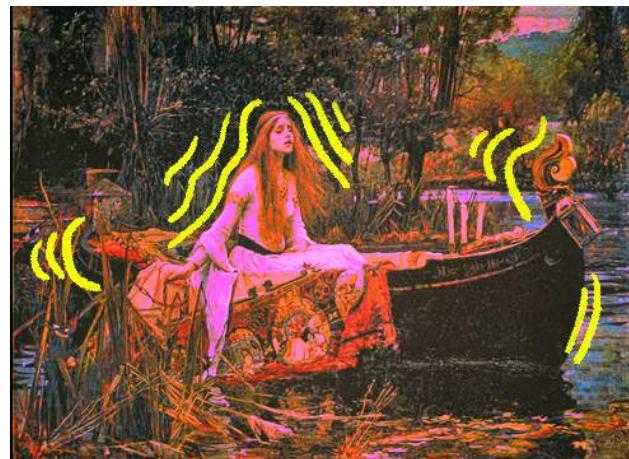
And moving thro' a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot:
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,
Goes by to tower'd Camelot;
And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often thro' the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights,
And music, went to Camelot:
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed;
"I am half sick of shadows," said
The Lady of Shalott.

(Parts one and two out of four in the poem)

The structural mirroring and repetition in *The Lady of Shallot* highlights the Lady's reliance upon Camelot; such dependence strips her of autonomy and emphasizes her entrapment. The Lady's title and, therefore, her identity as the sole inhabitant of Shallot, are intrinsically linked to Camelot through the manipulation of the poem's rhyme scheme. The verses are contrived to end with "Shallot" but this refers to both "The island of Shallot" and "The Lady of Shallot"; by making the Lady synonymous with an inanimate object, Tennyson is undermining her value as a human and an individual. Consequently, the Lady is tied to the island, trapped by Tennyson's structural use of reflection.



The internal rhyme in the verses extends this idea to show that the Lady and her island are reflections of Camelot. The rhyme scheme of the poem links the fifth and ninth lines of each stanza, which are separated by three lines which rhyme only with each other. The ninth line, therefore, is dependent upon the fifth. In nearly every verse Tennyson rhymes "Shallot" with the preceding "Camelot"; the implication of this is that the Lady and her namesake are clearly marked as reflections of Camelot but there is an enforced distance between them. The rigidity of Tennyson's structure – each verse has the same rhyme scheme – entraps the Lady in a position of dependency within the poem.

Importantly, this suggests that the world of the woman is dependent upon, but irreconcilable with, that of the man, which is representative of the social situation in Victorian England. As Lyn Pykett, a twentieth century critic, writes: "Biomedical discourse was instrumental in constructing and maintaining the domestic ideal and rhetoric of the separate spheres, both of which were predicated on a view of woman as inherently different from and complimentary to (rather than competitive with) man" (Pykett 83). Whereas Shallot is inhabited by a solitary Lady, Camelot is distinctly dominated by "Knight[s], Burgher[s] [and] Lords[s]" (160). The fact that the Lady is prevented from even looking at the masculine world of Camelot without the medium of the mirror strengthens the separation imposed upon her by the rhyme scheme. As in the quotation from Pykett, the Lady of Shallot "compliment[s]" the male world schematically but is too "different" to be permitted to enter that "sphere".

In her essay ‘Women Writing Women’, Pykett also draws attention to the fact that “women’s writing was, to a great extent, shaped by male controlled or masculinist institutions of publishing and by a gendered, critical discourse” (79). The Lady of Shallot’s weaving can be seen as her metaphorical “writing” as it is a form of artistic expression and an attempt to represent the world around her. Her view to the world, however – the mirror – is “male controlled” as it is Tennyson’s creation; in the same way that women writers in Victorian England had their work mediated by “masculinist institutions”, the Lady of Shallot’s weaving is curtailed by restrictions imposed by the male pen.



Reviewing Dystopian Series

'The Hunger Games', Suzanne Collins

'The Hunger Games' by Suzanne Collins is undoubtedly one of the most thrilling and exciting books I have ever read; it was number one best-seller in the New York Times. Once you start reading it, you won't stop until you have finished!

Although they say you should never judge a book by its cover, I instantly knew this was going to be a brilliant book from its front cover. When I started reading it, there was constant suspense, which made me want to read more and more. Reading this book is like being inside it, lost in the world of fantasy, and the only time you are taken out is when your mum shouts at you that it's lunch time! This book is on a different level to other books that I have read.



The story is set in the future in Panem, a city where North America would have been before the world as we know it was wiped out by a global conflict. It begins with a girl called Katniss Everdeen, who wakes up and hunts with a friend called Gale. It is the day of the reaping, where one girl and one boy from each of the twelve districts in Panem is picked out of a hat to fight to the death against all the other children in an arena. Sadly, the thing Katniss loves most gets chosen: her sister Prim. What will Katniss do next?

Read the book to find out more. Trust me; you are going to love it.

By Nima Mousavi-Khoshrou, First Year

'Gone', Michael Grant

In the town of San Perdido in Southern California, things have taken a drastic turn. In a flash, everyone over the age of fourteen has 'Gone'! To the horror and shock of the children remaining, an impenetrable forcefield encircles the area of Perdido Beach. 'Gone' is a thrilling, fast-paced tale about the stranded children and animals in San Perdido, who are mutating and developing special powers such as speed and gravitational control.

The main characters are Sam Temple and his nemesis Caine. Sam is a natural, humble leader, who stands up for the weakest children. Caine, on the other hand, is the biggest bully in Perdido Beach, seeking power and complete control. Sam and his friends Quinn, Edilio and Astrid, attempt to restore order.

With some hard-hitting scenes, 'Gone' is not for the faint-hearted. But there is no doubt that it delivers a powerful and exciting read. I recommend that any teenager gives 'Gone' a read and dives into the five-part series!



By Robert Ferguson, Second Year

'Divergent', Veronica Roth

'Divergent' is part of a three-book series that I have thoroughly enjoyed reading, because it is thrilling, imaginative and engaging. It is a fast-paced and enjoyable book set in a dystopian world where everyone is split into five separate factions. The book centres on the life of Beatrice Prior and her two best friends as they deal with the impacts of their choices.

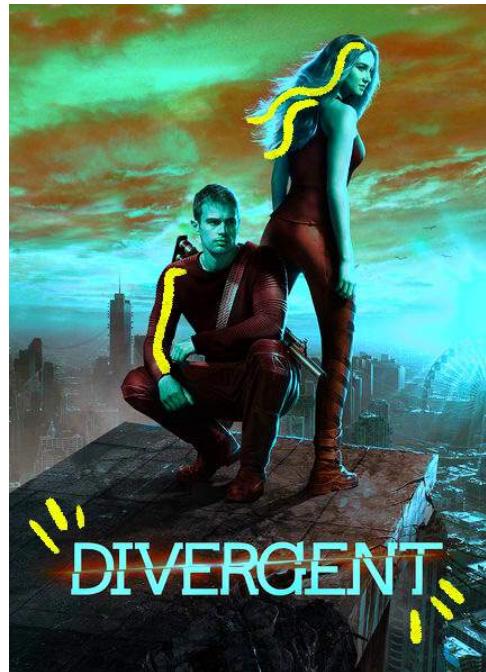
Sixteen-year-old Beatrice Prior lives in Abnegation, the faction of selflessness. The beginning of the book shows us that Beatrice isn't enjoying the dull, grey life that Abnegation provides for her. She is fed up of being told to keep her mouth shut, being called a 'stiff' and hiding her emotions with a blank mask. She feels she is different from her mother, father and brother, who seem satisfied with Abnegation life. Beatrice doesn't want a life of wearing grey and restrictions, but she can't have both her family and a different life. Beatrice was also right about being different from her family, but she has a secret that will almost certainly lead to death if she lets anyone find out...

Then comes the choosing ceremony, where you can change from one faction to another. Beatrice surprises herself as well as her family as she chooses to start a new chapter living with Dauntless, the brave. This transfer from Abnegation to Dauntless is very unusual, but Beatrice proves herself a worthy competitor, as she is the first to do part one of initiation, which involves jumping off a building into a net

below. This new life suits Beatrice, as she is described as a fierce, passionate character. But her fiery temper and sharp tongue don't always gain her favour, as she learns when she starts training to become Dauntless. Throughout the highly competitive initiation that follows, Beatrice renames herself Tris and struggles along with her fellow initiates and new friend Christina, to live out the choice they have made. Together they must brave physical training and horrific simulations to avoid the terrible fate of those who fail.

I would highly recommend 'Divergent' to people who like plot lines with unexpected twists and action, set in a dystopian world. I enjoyed this book because it was gripping and I couldn't put it down. Whilst I was reading the book, I realised that although people are judged by what colour clothes they are wearing or how they behave, they may actually have a side to them that you didn't notice before.

By Maizie Farrar, First Year



Creative Writing

All of the pieces included here are real achievements, and we are delighted to have such a range of creative writing in the magazine. Tobin Rose's historical fiction is well-researched and engaging, whilst Ella Clayton's inversion of the 'highwayman' archetype is well-realised and very amusing. Annabel and Stephen complete the set here with two contrasting and well-constructed pieces of writing. Very well done to Phoebe Mason and Darcey O'Hara, who edited this section with enthusiasm and a great sense of inclusivity.

Mr Johnson

Ambush-Tobin Rose

We were ambushed on that bitterly cold night of autumn in 1942. My battalion were pounced on by hordes of German tanks bearing swastikas, their gun-metal grey armour splattered by the quagmire of churned earth. The rain had lashed down in our faces and trapped repetitively on the metal of our helmets. Grim-faced, we huddled together in the trench we were meant to be defending on the outskirts of Stalingrad. Small reservoirs of blood, mud and rain had accumulated in the sodden depths of our trench and yet all was eerily quiet. Splintered trees stood dramatically on the streets and ruined bricks sprawled themselves unkemptly across the city. We waited as a never-ending torrent of rain cascaded down on us and our hands were bitten by the bone-aching cold of the Russian Autumn. The cold filled our trench

with its depth, prodding and clawing at us through our sodden uniforms. We clutched our rifles in our arms as we perched precariously against the edges of the soil trench which had been hurriedly constructed to defend our position. All was quiet. No birds sang in the dying hours of the day, as little light that made it way through the dark blockade of clouds slipped away from us leaving cold and darkness to shroud us. All was quiet.



But then it came crashing down to replace the rain. German mortar explosions surrounded us sending shrapnel and brick chips flying all around. My ears rang in a dizzying fashion as bombs whistled down on us and I pressed my hands fiercely over my head dreading the impending explosion. My comrades scrambled as we scuttled around the trench, panic-stricken, readying ourselves for the attack. I peered over the dirt ledge of our trench to see the blaze of muzzle flash from vicious, malevolent machine guns that roared at us like a pack of angry wolves. My comrades opened their mouths to shout orders and prepare for battle but no words were heard. Their voices were never received by my ears but instead replaced by the sickening sound of war that was entombing us. I lifted my rifle over and shot wildly at the oncoming soldiers. Many of them falling to the cold-stone ground like dead flies on a windowsill. Bullets rained down on us, whistled past our ears and hurtled themselves into the ground around us spending small flecks of dirt into the air. It was chaos. But the worst was yet to come.

The gruelling silhouette of a tank turned the corner and stood there not twenty metres away, its large metal plates bristling with hatred and anger. Time dilated as I was filled with fear. Adrenaline coursed through my veins and I froze out of pure panic. Leaping from its gun, a burst of brilliant orange flame danced magically in the air, its heat caressing my face for a brief moment, before it was reduced to nothing. A cloud of dismal grey smoke replaced it and of course the gleam of a huge, golden shell the was sent, splitting the air, to our trench. To my position.

The explosion crumbled the structure of the trench and the earth that was sent flying up came down like a tombstone, suffocating me with its sheer weight. Dirt crawled into my mouth, filled my nose and I could taste the repulsive, metallic taste of blood and soil in my mouth. Dampness sought its way down my throat making me gag and suddenly I shook my head wildly and thrashed out of ground. Bodies lay around me. Those who had lost limbs, bleeding gushing from their legs and arms like a crimson torrent, as they looked in utter shock around them seemingly unknown to their injuries. Others dead. My comrade officer lay, partially buried in a shallow grave of dirt, his pale skin, as white as fresh wool, glowed eerily against the black dirt around him. A small trickle of sticky, bright-red blood poured form the corner of his mouth like a stream, as his eyes stared aimlessly at the sky, the black abyss of his pupils were swollen and dilated with fear. But he saw nothing. He was dead. I was torn from his body, his corpse cradled in my arms, by a German soldier who had breached by trench and killed the rest of my comrades. Dragged to my feet I was walked at gun point, arms in the air, my rifle thrown down askew amongst the cobbles of the street, to the back of a vehicle were I was packed in with ten other men, their grubby faces looked down lifelessly at the floor, and chains were put around my legs. The door was slammed shut and I was plunged into darkness unknown to the horrors that lay ahead.

The Worst Highwayman-Ella Clayton

"Stand, and ... what am I meant to say again... err... err... oh I remember: stand and deliver!" roared the black shadow.

"Never, I will defend my cash with my life!" replied Lord Harrison from his expensive, black, horse drawn carriage with gold rimmed doors.

"Just as well." cried the black shadow, who then reached his hand into his pocket to produce his pistol. "Wait a minute, where's my pistol gone?" he questioned with a confused look on his masked face. Lord Harrison rolled his eyes. "Oh yes, I remember I put it in my other pocket!" he exclaimed triumphantly pulling out a well polished, wooden pistol.

"You're holding it the wrong way." Lord Harrison pointed out.

"So I am." said the black shadow turning the pistol the right way round.

While the black shadow was absorbed with preparing his pistol, Lord Harrison was pulled off along the woodland track by 2 soft, grey horses with long bushy tails.

"Not again," complained the black shadow, "they always get away!" With clenched fists and muttering under his breath, he turned in the opposite direction and the black shadow rode off into the woods on a sleek black horse.



Uncontrollably, the black shadow came galloping out of the woods and onto an uneven dirt track. If it hadn't been for the fact his hat was on back to front, with his red cloak and a leather belt with a money pouch on, black mask covering his eyes and cream trousers, he would of looked quite menacing. As it was the middle of autumn, the air was cold and leaves of fire were scattered on the track. A cold, angry river rushed through a steep sided valley on the right hand side of the track. Old and fragile trees were all that could be seen on the left hand side of the track and beyond the river; they were as tall as skyscrapers! Suddenly, from around a corner, came, riding on dark brown muscular horses, King George's men!

"Oh no what am I going to do?" thought the black shadow "They are always on the lookout for highwaymen!"

Thud.

Not being a very good horse rider, the moment of panic had caused him to fall off his horse. All he could think to do was roll into the trees and hide. Sadly, he had

rolled to the right hand side of the track and before he could say ‘Geronimo!’, he was rolling down the side of the valley to the threatening river below.

Splash.

He had landed in the icy cold river. Amused faces, which belonged to King George’s men, looked down on him from above.

“What are you doing down there?” one of them shouted. The black shadow tried to answer but cold water rushed into his mouth. As quickly as he could, he swam towards the bank. With a huge sigh of relief he scrambled up the bank towards the men but dread replaced relief as he thought what might happen to him.

As soon as the men could hear him he pleaded: “Please don’t hang me!” but his pleas were just ignored.

“Search him.” one of them, who was obviously in charge, ordered them. When they found his pistol, all they said was “We’ll take this.”

“It doesn’t work by the way.” commented the black shadow. The one who had confiscated it took a test shot at a nearby tree and it worked perfectly.

“How... what” he stuttered.

“You hadn’t put a bullet in,” explained the one who had confiscated “so I put one of my own in.”

“I knew there was something I had forgotten.” murmured the black shadow.

“Check for money.” instructed the boss. After a 2 minute search they had found the money pouch.

“Well how much has he stolen?” snapped the boss.

“Nothing.” The searcher told him.

“What do mean *nothing*?” the boss exclaimed.

“I mean he hasn’t stolen any money.” replied the searcher.

“Let me see!” demanded the boss. Immediately, the searcher handed him the pouch. As soon as the boss had opened the bag an astonished look on his face appeared.

“This means we can’t arrest him.” piped up one of the other men enthusiastically “article 153 sub-section c: no person with no money or suitable proof may be arrested for robbery.”

“I know very well what it means!” growled the boss rudely. The other man look very taken aback.

“Go then!” yelled the boss. So off the black shadow went, into the woods, thankful, that he hadn’t been arrested.



The Masked Figure-Annabel Huxley

Big, blue machines, designed for one special purpose, capturing people's innocent faces and hiding people's true identity. They don't stop the virus getting in, they stop the words getting out. But not just any words, the secret.

I have the secret, and it's rotting my insides, turning me bad, with no return. Two strands of elastic rub against my ears – preventing me from saying anything, hearing anything; reminding me not to touch anything. Without it, the secret would contaminate me, and slowly I would rot, the secret taking my soul.

Desperate for breath, I questioned, 'why me?' I tried to stop myself, but ink touched paper, I could feel myself beginning to reveal the secret; the scratching of the pen carving into the book was loud in my ears.

The words lay on the paper, 'I have...'

But miraculously, the rest never appeared.



Life under Lockdown-Stephen Monk

O for the muddy rugby pitches! All my mates out in shorts and rugby shirts on a cold rainy day, all diving on top of each other, rolling around like pigs in a mud bath; now that was the good life cruelly ripped away from me when lockdown began! Life now has my mother devising methods of keeping me engaged doing my schoolwork, amongst various types of torture to keep me occupied and away from electronics in my spare time!

I thought child labour was banned! There is even an UK act against child slavery. My mother must have missed this, as my mother has decided that child labour for manual tasks is a must!! Do not get me wrong, I have not been asked to clean a chimney by climbing up it (I might be too big for that anyway; a possible activity for my sister?!! I may suggest it to my mother!) I was lulled into a false sense of security by my mother asking me to help with jet washing the decking and then all the garden furniture. On this sunny day it was great fun at the start, however after an hour I seemed to have only cleaned half the decking and puddles of mud were everywhere, I had made a right mess! I had also managed to spray the windows with mud which my mother had cleaned 2 days earlier!

I knew I was in big trouble and I had not even started on the garden furniture. Drastic times called for drastic measures; I had to come up with a plan to defeat my mother's plans. Thinking quickly I thought that if I had no electricity then the jet washer would not work, so I plotted to get the wire caught in the door which would cut the wire when the wind shut the door. The gods were on my side and the wind duly shut the door and the wire was cut. What I had not factored into this cunning plan, was my mother was not as incompetent as I thought and she could rewire the cabling. An hour later I was back cleaning the rest of the decking and garden furniture.

Wet, tired, dirty and not looking as dapper as I usually do! I eventually fought through the boredom and finished the jet washing. And then comes the checking by my mother. She is like an army captain in one of those old films pointing out everything that could have been done better, the windows did look like they had been washed in mud and I had managed to get the paint off the newly painted woodwork – quite an achievement in my mind!! Then comes the fatal words, the decking is prepared now and once dry we will be painting. Oh no my worst fears are realised, as I can barely move but I now have my next task. My poor body is crying out with pain and my brain is so tired I cannot plot an escape yet. This working hard on manual labour projects has me longing for English lessons in school – anything is better than this!

Theatre & Drama

Theatre and live performance is, in my opinion, an integral part of the human experience. In a year in which the arts have come under such scrutiny, it is imperative that we take a moment to consider how theatre can influence life as we know it. Perhaps that's through a Shakespeare play you studied at school, or a West End show that you've seen...maybe you've even taken part in a production yourself! Theatre is method through which the most intimate and personal aspects of life can be discussed and experienced by a unified audience. This is why the characters that we see on stage can be so influential or relatable within our own lives. Live performance has a raw, unfiltered aspect to it that is incredibly hard to replicate on screen and that is why drama has always resonated with me as a consumer. You can live alongside your favourite characters either on stage or in the audience.

I invite you to enjoy the following reviews of various productions, submitted by members of the SGS community. I want to thank all those who contributed to this section of the magazine; I have had a lovely time reading through this work as I yearn to be back at the theatre!

Hopefully we will see a resurgence of our beloved theatre industry in the years to come.

Editor Grace Shropshire

Jagged Little Review- Grace Shropshire

Recently I had the pleasure of watching one of Broadway's newest debuts: 'Jagged Little Pill' which opened in December 2019. As suggested by the title, the show's soundtrack is made up of hits from Alanis Morissette's 1995 rock album by the same name. As a huge fan of the grungy and raw 'Jagged Little Pill' album, I was curious to see how this translated into musical theatre. Having been previously let down by various jukebox musicals, not naming any names *cough* 'We Will Rock You' *cough*, I was certainly apprehensive. However, the prospect of two of my favourite musical styles being fused to create something brilliant spurred me to give it a go. In hindsight, I am incredibly glad that I did.



The story, to my surprise, does not follow any aspect of Alanis Morissette's life and career. Instead, we're taken through a chaotic year in the life of the Healy family. The Healy's are your typical nuclear family who comfortably reside in the suburbs with little to no problems, or so it seems. The show opens with Mary Jane (or MJ), who is an all American mom, writing her annual family Christmas letter, immediately suggesting her arrogance. MJ uses the letter to brag about her eldest, biological child Nick's success in securing a place at Harvard university and her recent endeavours into hot yoga. She reflects on the terrible car crash she had earlier this year and we later learn that she has become addicted to the pain medication she was prescribed afterwards. We also learn of her adopted daughter Frankie who is an artist, poet but most importantly an activist. Mary Jane makes clear that she is proud of Frankie's artistic talents however, chooses not to include tales of her involvement in protests and suspiciously close relationship with her best friend Joanne. MJ's inability to accept the less perfect aspects of her family life and marriage brings about the main storyline of the show.

As MJ falls deeper into the grasps of her addiction, Frankie falls for a boy in her class called Phoenix and agrees to attend a party with him. Frankie's brother Nick is also in attendance and finds himself mixed up in some unfortunate consequences of teen drinking, leading him to witness the rape of his friend Bella. We then watch the conflict within the family as activists Frankie and Jo urge Nick to confess what he saw to the police whilst their parents tell him to consider the impact this might

have on his place at university. The show comes to a head as Frankie questions her identity as a black girl in a white environment and Nick struggles to make the right choice, all whilst MJ tries to keep her addiction concealed and preserve her marriage.

Although the entire cast was flawless, the stand-out performance for me came from actress Lauren Patten who portrayed Jo, Frankie's best friend/girlfriend. With outstanding rock vocals and complexed characterisation, she truly embodied the persona of a teenage girl who is struggling to convey her true self to her religious, unaccepting mother. Patten nabbed some of the greatest songs from the original album, most notably 'You oughta know' which comes after Frankie's disloyalty breaks Jo's heart. The rock ballad was absolutely electrifying and left the audience firmly in Jo's corner. Luckily, Jo's character arc allowed her to recover and meet a new girl after accepting herself truly as shown by an effective costume change. The ensemble were also particularly incredible. Made up of a refreshingly diverse and talented group, they framed the production well with magnificent choreography from Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui.

Overall I was pleasantly surprised by the integration of Alanis Morissette's original music into the show. The classic rock album has been given a new lease of life by Morissette and composer Glen Ballard and I commend them. The staging, set and choreography beautifully enhanced the rollercoaster of a storyline, keeping me engaged from start to finish. However, I would say that the storyline was occasionally muddied by various subplots and perhaps too much content but the ending managed to resolve the vast majority of plots and characters in the stunning finale, 'You Learn'. The book written by Diablo Cody presents impactful insights into issues such as rape culture, race and addiction leaving me an emotional wreck by the end.



Unfortunately, the show has had to close for now due to the pandemic meaning that it might be at risk of not getting the recognition it deserves. There is also a chance it may sacrifice some wins at the Tony awards. After watching the show and listening to the soundtrack I hope that this is not the case as it deserves much praise and attention... despite the fact that it was never revealed what Alanis meant by her misuse of the word "ironic" back in '95.

Chicago: 5 Star Review-Louis Le

Even after a month in quarantine, even after countless story posts from friends on Snapchat complaining about having nothing to do, even after burning through my whole library of Steam games, I am still unable to feel bored. However, whenever I find myself even remotely missing school (which I did once), I immediately go back to humming. Even after such a length of time, I can never daydream about anything other than that night. That show. Chicago.



An American musical originally written by Fred Ebb, Bob Fosse and John Kander, Chicago was reworked and performed by the teenage cast at Stockport Grammar School. It follows the ‘floozy’ Roxie Hart, originally played by Sarah Smith, who’s dreams of fame are unexpectedly given plausibility after murdering her lover who walked out on her. The original show also starred the talented Katrina Curwin as Velma Kelly, an inmate who’s superiority is quickly challenged as Roxie’s case is taken on by the silver tongued lawyer Billy Flynn, played by Andrew Williams. As Roxie rises into fame, Velma’s jealousy and desperation follows suit, all whilst Roxie’s husband Amos is deciding

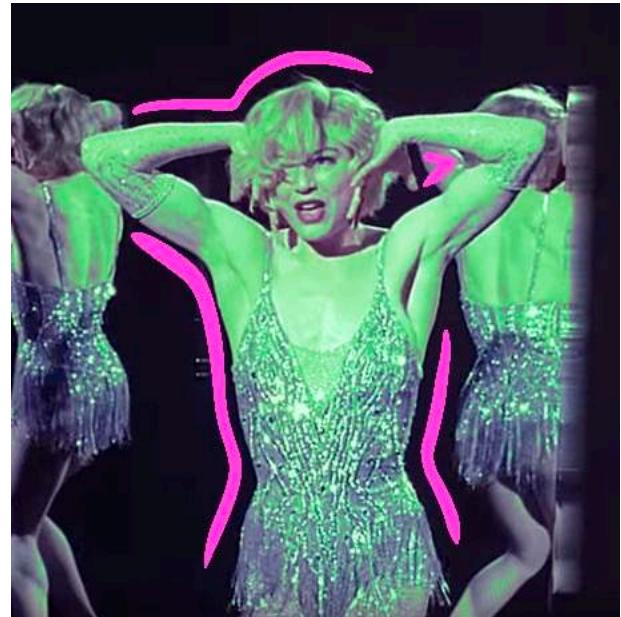
whether to help or condemn his wife in her case of infidelity. Despite addressing themes of crime and manipulation of the press, it has plenty of moments of light heartedness and, above all, entertains.

If there’s one thing I remember from the show it’s the music. Whilst little was changed from the original, the enthusiasm and young talent could be heard as the complexed tunes and high level melodies blew away the audience members. Every single number never failed to entertain, each conveying the multitude of emotions each character felt. They ranged from the heartfelt ‘Funny Honey’ to the jazzy and saucy ‘Cell Block Tango’. The voices driving such song’s emotions, were a testament to the talent, hard work and perfect casting behind the scenes. Each song had character and was memorable. I found myself rushing to purchase the songs on iTunes the moment I got home, diving into the urge to dance that I had been holding in for the past two hours!

The standard of acting was no less impressive. You wouldn’t have thought it was a group of teenagers but instead, trained professionals with years of experience. One performer who really stood out to me was Amos Hart, played brilliantly by

Gabe Keeble in the fifth year. Based on previous interviews, Gabe is a confident, capable young man making it even more impressive that he was able to pull off the role of a timid pushover who made the audience “aww” in pity and laugh at his naivety. His vocals were no joke however and his solo “Mr Cellophane” was highly catchy. He even spent the whole show speaking in an American accent!

Despite the quality of the performance, it isn't without its flaws-albeit extremely minor ones. The microphone cut out during one scene and the front seats to the side of the stage didn't have a very good view. Whilst the technical issues broke me out of the immersion temporarily, the seating issues didn't as much. At the start, the actors rushed around busily pretending to serve drinks to the front row which helped make it feel as if you really were in a 1920s speak easy.



Chicago was something that everyone needed. Something that rose our spirits when they were low, especially given the Covid-19 situation. Whilst the actors may be down because they were unable to perform for multiple nights, there is no doubt that everyone in the audience on that Wednesday was not disappointed but instead, inspired.

Wuthering Heights at the Royal Exchange: A Review- Ms Roberts

Before I begin this review, I should probably confess to the following personal bias: this is my longstanding favourite work of fiction and it is also my long-held view that it is not possible to transpose this story to stage or screen and do it well. So, with that caveat in place, what of the Royal Exchange's recent production?

This story is wild, rugged and passionate. It creates a connection with the reader which is lived and felt and probably unparalleled. It is the story of the intense, passionate but destructive bond between Heathcliff and Cathy which is symbolised by the moors and find its expression within them. Many know the story from the famous Kate Bush song!

As a character, Heathcliff is a dark, brooding anti-hero but yet in this production, he was a pasty, almost-skinny man whose opening scene in the bath tub did little for his characterisation. The director, Bryony Shanahan, did draw out his traumatic childhood well, artfully and empathetically demonstrating how the little, lost Heathcliff became the almost amoral character we know. Cathy was shown to be a wild and unconstrained child but I liked less her descent into madness which became shrill and ever so slightly grating. The key lines – most notably “Nelly, I am Heathcliff” - were not delivered with the earthy, desperate passion they deserve but instead seemed childish and superficial. Her early attraction to Heathcliff may have been believable but their dark, eternal, fateful connection was not.



The dark and brooding story line was reflected well by the music which almost brought the moors to the stage and punctuated the rise and fall of the story with a melancholy, often feverish passion. This was probably the most effective directorial decision of the play and when the music builds to reflect the rise of Heathcliff and Cathy's dark, immersive passion it is blindingly brilliant. It beautifully captured the tone of both the novel and its central relationship but it was not enough.

In the end, although this was a production that did have moments of pure creativity and connection, they remained moments and therefore no, I have not changed my mind: Wuthering Heights cannot effectively take the form of stage or screen show

and perhaps therefore will always live and breathe most effectively from the words of the novel. The words themselves speak and penetrate, so I will leave you with Cathy's words:



"If all else perished, and he remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger."

Macbeth comes to SGS- Jack Brown

Macbeth is a story of ambition, greed and murder. Through this classic play, Shakespeare explores timeless themes of loyalty and betrayal, gender and relationships and ultimately sends a message to his Jacobean audience about the dangers of regicide.

The performance of Macbeth at SGS provided a slightly more simplistic and humorous take on the classic story. However, it still retained much of the gravitas and drama of the classical productions. The acting was very expressive which some may describe as over the top, however, it was helpful in allowing the audience to understand and connect with the characters more efficiently in this shorter rendition of the play. The use of props such as flags and a balloon message spelling out "congrats", which became "rats", made the play more accessible to younger viewers. Macbeth's descent into tyranny was gradual and believable and Lady Macbeth was suitably driven and cruel. Although, the decision to make her pregnant was strange as it made her seem more traditionally feminine, going against her presentation as an unusual woman in the classic productions. All of the supporting characters were engaging however Banquo and Malcom being particularly strong.



Overall, the play managed to convey the themes of Macbeth to a younger generation, without straying from the Shakespearian dialogue. The touring production was more light hearted than other versions of the play and the use of audience participation differentiated it from other productions. It was not a groundbreaking performance in my opinion, however it was an enjoyable take on the classic story.

Film & TV

Filmed entertainment has been a huge part of our species' lives for nearly two hundred years, and we hope that you will be as interested with reading this selection of articles on the subject as we were with selecting and producing them. The pieces we have included in this section cover a wide variety of topics that should interest all, such as Sixth Former Isobel Gardner's intelligent review of the excellent Sherlock Holmes retelling *Elementary* and an interesting look at the recently released *Little Women* adaptation by Fourth Year Anna Collins-Room, where she compares the film and the original books with a charming and analytical eye.

As the country braces itself for further lockdowns, now is the perfect time to catch up on some entertainment you've missed or perhaps discover something entirely new to love. To help you do this, we as editors have put together a list of the best films and series to watch while we're all stuck inside with nothing better to do. We hope you have fun reading and hopefully these pieces will be at least a little bit useful.

Editors Mason Canny and Daniel Powell

Interstellar Review - Sci-fi at its finest- Mason Canny

When people think of director/screenwriter Christopher Nolan, the first things that come to mind are probably the mind-bending sci-fi of *Inception* or his dark, gritty take on the Batman mythos with the *Dark Knight* trilogy. All good films in their own right, but many people tend to overlook that fact that they were just preparation for the film he really wanted to make, *Interstellar*.

With *Interstellar*, Nolan takes the high-concept science fiction he honed with *Inception* and infuses it with the *Dark Knight* trilogy's beautifully written character drama and tense, close-knit sequences that will leave the viewer on the edge of their seat for their entirety. All this, coupled with a watertight script, a wonderful score by the legendary Hans Zimmer, and actors that are clearly as invested and passionate about the project as the director, makes for an immersive experience that will drag you in from the start and not let you go for the entirety of its justifiably long runtime. *Interstellar* is definitely the best sci-fi film of the 2000s and perhaps even of all time.



It all starts with the acting, in my opinion. There was no doubt in my mind that Matthew McConaughey and Jessica Chastain were good actors, but their performances as the reluctant astronaut Joseph Cooper and the adult version of his scientist daughter Murph completely blew me away. Even though they never actually share a scene throughout the entire film, their chemistry is so believable and touching that it puts other films, even ones that are focused on these kinds of relationships, to shame. To think that two actors in a sci-fi film could give off such a spellbinding performance when neither of them had ever worked with the director or done a film of this genre before is true testament to Nolan's pure commitment and dedication to his films.

The other main characters are mostly played by Nolan's typical acting pool, namely Anne Hathaway as Cooper's space-faring partner and Michael Caine as her ageing father, both of whom are the instigators of the interstellar mission that forms the basis of the plot (more on that in a moment). As always, they are both on perfect form, delivering an underlying sense of urgency and tension to everything they say and bridging the gap between the film's complicated science and its regular viewers at home. While Caine is only in the film for a criminally short time his presence is

always felt by the other characters, pushing the plot forwards and revealing new sides to the story that weren't really visible at the beginning of the film. This is especially apparent through his continued quoting of Dylan Thomas' poem *Do not go gentle into that good night*, at first appearing to be a simple gesture of good luck towards the astronauts but taking on a much graver and more serious tone as the plot's dark twists are revealed, even foreshadowing the dramatic and breathtaking final scenes of the film.

And what a story it is. Never known for creating simple plots that can be explained easily, Nolan outdoes himself here with a complex, multi-layered odyssey that spans time, space and even dimensions. What starts as a stereotypical "find another Earth" sci-fi movie quickly evolves into a life-or-death thriller as the crew of Cooper's spacecraft races to either make it back to Earth, or find another habitable planet, or die. The pressure is never off, and as the crew finally reach and observe

habitable planets - including one of the finest scenes in the entirety of film that takes place on a water-covered world - the film reaches its boiling point. The lack of fuel and the sheer distance from Earth leaves the crew with one option - to escape back home by flying through a black hole.

This black hole is one of the highlights of *Interstellar*, a huge, imposing mass that doubles as both a plot device and an absolute marvel of visual effects and sheer commitment, radiating danger and intrigue to anyone watching the film.

It's established early on in the runtime and becomes an integral part of their rescue mission, showing itself as just another example of Nolan's brilliant storytelling and scripting skills.

In short, *Interstellar* is certainly Christopher Nolan's best film, blending the huge-scale set-pieces that he's grown accustomed to using with a well-written, thought-provoking script that fits tightly around his highly original and ground-breaking concept. The use of CGI and visual effects are just as stunning as they were in *Inception* and they alone make this film worth watching for anyone looking to be entertained for the entirety of its almost-three-hour runtime.

My rating - 9/10



Little Women; The new film adaptation review- Anna Collins

In December 2019 we saw the box office release of Greta Gerwig's new adaptation of the classic tale of Little Women. With an all-star cast (featuring Saoirse Ronan, Emma Watson, Florence Pugh and more), the film thrived at the cinema attracting book lovers from all around the country. Whilst the original book was written by Louisa May Alcott in 1868, featuring many Victorian principles, the new adaptation has had an exciting, and quite feminist, twist put on it. The film expresses the plot from the first two books in the Little Women series, *Little Women* and *Good Wives*, and explores the characters of Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy in a heart-warming, coming-of-age way.

Little Women is set in 1868-1870, during the reign of Queen in the UK, on the East coast of America which contained a mixture of European cultures due to the immigration that took place generations earlier. The story is said to be based heavily on Louisa M. Alcott's childhood, who grew up in the same town with 3 sisters. Many people believe that the character of Jo is based on the author herself, a tomboy girl obsessed with reading and writing thrilling tales and looking after her sisters, and the anecdote-style book reflects many of the thoughts and feelings the author experienced in her life, but how far did the adaptation stray from the original tale?

The story is not told in a linear fashion

One of the most obvious differences between the book and the 2019 film is that the film is not told chronologically, and contains a series of flashbacks between Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy as teenagers, and as young adults. The film starts with Jo, who seems to be the main narrator in the film, trying to pursue her dream of becoming a writer in New York, whilst in the book we first meet the sisters in their home in Concord, Massachusetts, as young teenagers, facing the 'problems' of not having enough pocket money for pickled limes, or being scolded for whistling loudly. Watchers rely on looking at the clothes and way of acting of the characters to work out when the scene is happening as well as subtle titles reading '*seven years earlier*' for example. The flashbacks in the film are effective in showing how similar the experiences of the past are to the ones the characters go through in the 'present', and they really highlight how their recurring problems such as being poor or having a short temper affect their daily lives.



Aunt March features more in the film than in the book.

Aunt March is a character we hear a lot about in both the book and the film, and we hear especially about the sisters' opinion on the wealthy old lady, but we hear little from the character herself in the book. She plays an important part in trying to manipulate the girls and believes the only important objective in a girl's life is to marry well. In the book we hear about most of her opinions second-hand, but in the film, she is a real character played by Meryl Streep. Also, a small sub-plot is cut out of the film, involving Aunt March's quite obnoxious talking parrot, Polly, (which is a relief). The main character we hear moaning about Aunt March is Jo, who would be much happier reading an adventure story than reading aloud Belsham's essays, but the old lady must have seen hope in the peculiar behaviour of Jo, leaving Jo her house after she dies. Jo wants to do something that will make Aunt March 'turn in her grave', so she opens a school in the house, the tales from which further told in *Jo's Boys*.

Amy's Movie speech features a lot more women's rights issues in the film

After being turned down by Jo, Laurie tries to persuade Amy to marry him whilst in Europe. In the film, the character of Laurie is portrayed as being more childish than the girls, and upsets both Jo and Amy with his indecisiveness and sometimes blunt behaviour. Whilst in Paris, Laurie tries to persuade Amy to marry him, although Aunt March wants her to marry Fred Vaughn, a wealthy British man. Aunt March describes her as her 'family's last hope' for bringing money into the family through marriage, which puts a lot of pressure on Amy to decide who to marry. Her speech features some of the original ideas such as being 'great or nothing' at her dream of painting and becoming 'an ornament to society', but in the 2019 version the speech features ideas about marriage being 'only an economic proposition' and how when she marries all of her belongings will suddenly be the property of her husband. These ideas add to the inequality at the time between men and women, and the director manages to portray all the problems the March sisters faced, just because they were female.

Beth's Death is much more of a surprise in the film

One of the most heart-breaking moments of the story is the death of quiet, innocent Beth from scarlet fever. In the first book, Beth suffers from a bout of scarlet fever, but seems to get better. This appears to be because of the Victorian idea that if you



are good and please God, you will always get better. Also, when young Amy is sent away to Aunt March's house she begins to pray for Beth, which seems to magically cure Beth and to have more of a religious moral behind it. However, in the film and in the sequel, *Good Wives*, Beth does die. In the book there is a chapter titled 'The Valley of the Shadow' which shows Beth's deteriorating health and the predictable lead-up to her death. However, in the film, when Jo takes her to the beach, Jo is convinced it will make her better, so the watcher is also convinced she will get better. But, unfortunately, the second time she does not.

Jo becomes the author of Little Women at the end of the Film

One of the biggest changes made to the original story was how Jo, at the end of the film, wrote and published her and her sisters' life story. This change takes place at a point of uncertainty for Jo, when Meg and Amy have married and Beth had sadly died, and has an exciting build up to the conclusion of the film. We even see the book being printed and bound, which symbolises Jo realising what she wants to do in her life. Her conversation with the editor at the publishing company happens at the same time as Jo's moment of realisation that she loves Professor Bhaer, and she decides to marry off her heroin the same time as her real life romance is playing out onscreen. This alternative conclusion finishes the film nicely, whilst it does not include the other two books of the series, *Little Men* and *Jo's Boys*. The fact that Jo writes the book reinforces the connections between Jo and Louisa May Alcott and comes even closer to the feelings she faced whilst finding Romance.



This new adaptation of the classic book has really brought life to the stories of Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy, and has delighted readers and watchers worldwide, and the present-day ideas that were cleverly woven in shone a light on the issues of feminism not just in 1868, but also today. These life lessons really show us that we can all learn something from the lives of these Little Women.

The Top TV Shows to Binge While in Lockdown-Dan Powell & Mason Canny

Due to us all being stuck inside for the foreseeable future, we have plenty of time to catch up on some of the best shows that Netflix has to offer, both old and new. Whether you want to lose yourself in a classic boxset or discover a new favourite you may not have heard of, we've put together a list of our picks for some of the top shows you should put your time into on the platform to help you find your next big thing.

Bojack Horseman - A surreal and imaginative take on celebrity culture

This might just be the perfect TV show, which is strange as many people would probably be discouraged by the synopsis. This animated gem's main focus is to deliver genuinely hilarious comedic moments but also isn't afraid to tackle more heavy subject matter, expertly depicting heavy issues such as depression, substance abuse and the lonely nature of being "famous". As the sixth and final series aired on Netflix at the beginning of this year, now is the perfect time to delve into the misadventures of the titular anthropomorphic actor.



Schitt's Creek - A hilarious satire on the nature of wealth

Spawned by the creator's thought of "what if those rich people from reality shows were suddenly made poor?", this long-running sitcom hides a valuable message behind its expertly written jokes and tear-jerking scenes. The stuck-up, well-to-do attitudes of the Rose family clash perfectly with the more realistic, hardy personalities of the small, rural town where the show is set, and with six seasons available it's more than worth a watch.

Ozark - A darkly gripping crime drama

Jason Bateman's gritty, washed-out money-laundering thriller has elements of *Breaking Bad* in its DNA, but the well-established world and side characters carve out their own path in the story of a seemingly ordinary Chicago office worker forced to put his life on the line for the Mexican Cartel. There are currently three seasons to get lost in, but you'll certainly only need one to get sucked in.

The Last Airbender - Classic must-watch animation

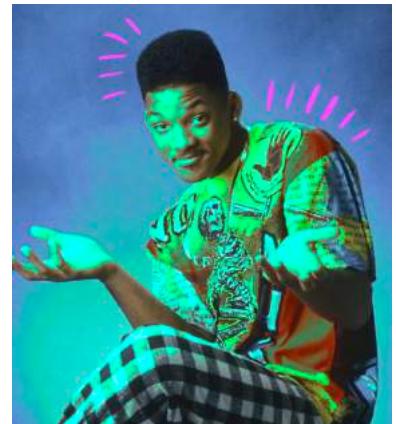
Many readers might remember this show from their childhood, and rightly so. The adventures of the young Aang as he learns to fulfil his destiny as the elemental Avatar was made for children but can be enjoyed any adult who appreciates excellent world-building, engaging characters and dazzling battle sequences.

The Witcher - TV fantasy at its finest

Adapted from Andrzej Sapkowski's series of novels, this pulse-raising fantasy epic takes from the source material in a faithful way but also adds its own interesting snippets of lore to flesh out the huge, expansive world that the characters and monsters alike inhabit. Only one season is currently available, but this story is certainly one to keep an eye on.

The Fresh Prince of Bel Air - The birth of Will Smith

While everyone probably knows Will Smith from films like *Men in Black* and *Independence Day*, his best role was definitely his first. He plays a poor, streetwise boy who's taken in by his extremely wealthy and well-to-do aunt and uncle, and shines as he slowly and hilariously adapts to a life of luxury. All six seasons of the long-running sitcom are available on the streaming service and are essential for anyone interested in the first ever role of one of Hollywood's best-known actors.



Stranger Things - Nostalgia-fuelled suspense

An obvious choice for any list about Netflix, this sci-fi horror 80s throwback garnered fans all over the world when it was first released in 2016, and for good reason. The Stephen-King-inspired horror and mystery underpins a heart-warming tale of friendship and love, how it's formed and how it survives through the most important years of a kid's life. If for some reason you haven't seen it already, all three seasons are available on Netflix with a fourth on the way.

Neon Genesis Evangelion - The original anime juggernaut

Nothing is as it seems when it comes to this 90s smash hit from Japan. While most Eastern animated series that released in the West were aimed at children, this is the obvious exception. It's mature, gritty, violent and spectacular, coupling the growing pains of a group of young adults with a dark sci-fi setting that was years ahead of its time. Due to its overwhelming popularity in America, Netflix has remastered and re-released all episodes of the show, with both the English dub and original Japanese audio available on Netflix.

Bad Education - Irreverent, relatable hilarious British comedy

The Inbetweeners opened the door for a huge amount of English schoolkid comedies, but very few that are focused around the teacher. Jack Whitehall's best role yet sees him as Alfie Wickers, a secondary school History teacher who knows absolutely nothing about his subject. His interactions with the amazing child cast members and the sheer insanity of the things they get up to is pure entertainment, and with both seasons on Netflix there's no reason to skip out on this.

Peaky Blinders - If *The Godfather* was set in Birmingham

One of Netflix's most notorious dramas, it's unlikely you've never heard of *Peaky Blinders*. This high-stakes gangster drama set in post-World-War-One Birmingham is perfect binge material, with episodes that seem like chapters in one long, overarching story rather than self-contained snippets. The exploits of the criminal Shelby family only get more and more shocking as the show goes on, and a stellar performance from Cillian Murphy as the head of it all, Tommy, is the icing on the cake. All five available seasons are on Netflix.



Doctor Who - The show that defined several generations

A worldwide phenomenon and pretty much required viewing for every resident of Britain, everyone seems to have their favourite Doctor. It's easy to see why; as the stylish filmmaking, inventive and unique creature designs fit perfectly with the expertly written dialogue and hand-crafted jokes to deliver one of the finest sci-fi shows ever to come out of Britain. Netflix holds a whopping ten seasons of the show, covering the tenures of the Ninth Doctor (Christopher Eccleston) through to the Twelfth (Peter Capaldi).

'Elementary' Review- Isobel Gardner

'Elementary' is a television series created by Robert Doherty and is a modern take on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's celebrated character Sherlock Holmes. Johnny Lee Miller stars as the eccentric detective and recovering drug addict, who moves to New York after his collapse in London and a stay in rehab. His wealthy but alienated father hires Joan Watson, (played by award-winning actress Lucy Liu) a former surgeon whose medical license was revoked after her patient died, as a sober companion for his ungrateful son. She is fascinated by Sherlock, finding out he escaped on his last day of rehab by his unconventional mannerisms. She follows him around New York, attempting to force him into healthy habits only to find herself encapsulated in perplexing and mysterious crime cases, seemingly unsolvable for the NYPD, but simple for Sherlock's genius mind to unravel. Sherlock realises that Joan brings out the best in him, or at least helps to direct his racing thoughts, and offers to share his apartment with her and employ her as his partner, where she can start to grow a new career. There are plenty of witty and comedic moments, as well as clever and unexpected plot twists, all the time delving deeper into both Sherlock and Joan's pasts. We meet Sherlock's brother, Mycroft, or 'fatty' as Sherlock unsentimentally addresses him, as well as Joan's mother and friends, and the strain her new work has on their relationships. As the series progresses, so does the rise of the

legendary crime lord Moriarty, as Sherlock once again restarts the hunt for his notorious nemesis. Sherlock causes the NYPD plenty of trouble, inducing a humorous Court scene, in which Sherlock cross examines his own defence witness, Joan. In a twist on the original story, Sherlock is reunited with his long-lost love, the beautiful and charming Irene Adler, kidnapped by Moriarty, allowing us to see a rare emotional side to the customarily clinical consultant detective. Johnny Lee Miller is excellent in his role as Sherlock, expertly navigating both the genius and flaws of his character, including tackling the difficulties of being a former heroin addict, and the pain it causes him



to have lost control of himself in that way, as well as being able to deliver witty scenes with a perfectly straight face. Aside from the larger picture of the development of the series plot as a whole, every episode is intriguing: despite the fact that they are often based around the idea of solving a case, each offer something new so, as an audience, you want to find out how it ends, the solution to each case, often marvelling at how the consultant detective pieced together clues that the no-one else could.

‘Elementary’ has 7 seasons, and aired between 23rd October 2012 and 15th August 2019; however, it is available on many streaming services. It has received 6 awards and has been nominated for 19 others. As well as brilliant acting, the television series also features some fabulous music in the soundtrack.

The best movies to watch while in Quarantine- Dan Powell & Mason Canny

With all of us stuck inside with nothing to do but schoolwork, we have a golden opportunity to explore the many amazing films that are dotted around streaming services. Here is a list of films from various genres, every one of them available on either Amazon Prime or Netflix. Whether you're a horror fan or a sci-fi nerd, there's something for everyone here.

For classic British comedy... **Snatch**

Guy Richie's plot-twisting, sharp-tongued English take on Pulp Fiction set the standard for British films for years to come, featuring winning performances from all of its huge cast.

For a hair-raising thriller... **Gone Girl**

Ben Affleck's best performance to date will make you question the happiness of any relationship you've had or ever will have. One of David Fincher's best.

For spine-tingling horror... **A Quiet Place**

Proof that Hollywood can still make genuinely scary horror, this film takes a simple concept and develops it into a tense, terrifying experience that will stay with you for days on end.

For something a little different... **Scott Pilgrim Vs the World**

A film that somehow fits into every conceivable genre, the adaptation of the famous comic book series balances witty dialogue with high-intensity fight scenes and moments of touching romance.

For a foreign language love story... **I Lost My Body**

This French gem was my personal pick for the Best Animated Feature Oscar due to its stunning hand-drawn animation and heart-warming romance that never fails to keep you hooked throughout its runtime.

For a classic romance... **When Harry Met Sally**

A witty take on true love and the progression from a friendship to a relationship, Rob Reiner's best Rom-Com is a charming and touching story that is clearly very close to his heart.

For an out-of-this world experience... **The Martian**

Despite the debates over whether or not the science is actually accurate, Matt Damon gives the performance of his career as he's stranded on Mars with one goal: Survive.

For a genre-defying action hit... **The Terminator**

It's not a stretch to say that action films were not the same after this one. With a franchise that is still alive to this day, the Terminator is a staple of the all-out action genre that won't be forgotten any time soon.

For a timeless religious satire... **Life of Brian**

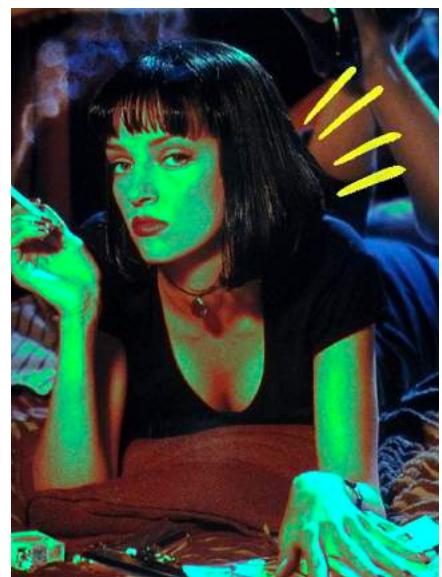
Now over 40 years old, the Monty Python crew's humorous take on the work of Jesus is still as relevant and rib-tickling as it was when it was released.

For an uncomfortable reality... **American Factory**

An incredibly interesting documentary following a Chinese billionaire as he moves his business to the United States, clashing with local workers as well as the Government itself.

For fans of *Spirited Away*... **Howl's Moving Castle**

One of Studio Ghibli's finest, this Japanese animated masterpiece is a fantasy tale like no other, throwing the viewer head-first into a land of monsters, magic and adventure.



For an exciting gangster flick... **Goodfellas**

Robert De Nero and Joe Pesci dazzle in the finest crime thriller even made. The life of a gangster has never been more interesting thanks to Martin Scorsese's expert writing and direction.



Something for the whole family... **How to Train Your Dragon**

Accessible for children of all ages but also an interesting and hilarious film in its own right, you'll get enjoyment out of this whether you've read the books or not.

For a musical delight... **La La Land**

This Oscar-winning masterwork features songs that are actually catchy but a story that doesn't sacrifice plot for music. It's an enjoyable flick with the best performance Emma Stone has given in her career.

For a simple masterpiece... **Pulp Fiction**

What more is there to say about this film that hasn't been said already? The entire cast gives an amazing performance and do wonders with Tarantino's already amazing script. This is truly the best crime film of the 90s.

For a literal cult classic... **Apostle**

A Netflix original film, this is an intelligent take on cult activity in the early 1900s and poses very interesting questions on the nature of humanity and the virtue of religion. At over two hours long, it's perfect for a quarantine watch.

For an Oscar-winning performance... **The Revenant**

The movie that finally got Leonardo DiCaprio his sought-after Academy Award, and for good reason. This epic tale on American settlers in the 1800s will shock you with its multitude of twists and turns that you'll never see coming.

For an unexpected twist... **American Psycho**

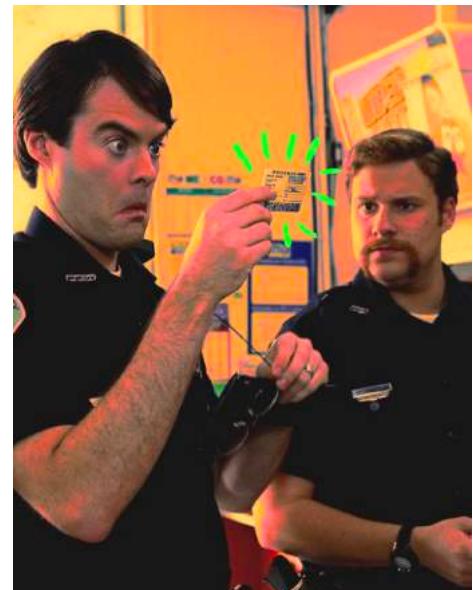
Christian Bale was put on the map by this film, which tells the tale of a wealthy Wall Street executive with murderous urges. His performance as Patrick Bateman is one for the ages and is one of the many reasons this is a must-watch.

For a very British apocalypse... **Shaun of the Dead**

The birth of the zom-com genre from the genius mind of Edgar Wright, this extremely gory comedy has perhaps the best jokes I've ever encountered in a film, making it truly stand out from the others in the Cornetto Trilogy.

For a hilarious teen comedy... **Superbad**

There is not a single bad performance here, with Jonah Hill and Michael Cera dazzling as two high schoolers struggling to provide alcohol for a school party. It's endlessly quotable and hilariously raunchy.



Life & Culture

As the editor of the life and culture section of Like, literary, my awareness of topical issues has been broadened, providing me with insights into topics I'd have never encountered otherwise. I have chosen pieces which tackle modern day issues within society and everyday life. Consisting of light hearted humour juxtaposed with serious topical issues, from the correct pronunciation of 'scone' to the Black Lives Matter movement, from Covid-19 to Alan Shearer's statue, the pieces here all make for a fascinating read. A huge thank you to everyone who contributed to the 'Current Affairs' section, we are all hopeful you will enjoy reading them as much as we enjoyed writing them and perhaps learn a few things along the way!

Editor Ellie Merrifield

Is It “Scone” Or “Scone”? - Gabe Keeble

Even though, on paper, that title contains the same word exactly twice, you will have pronounced those two words differently inside your head. And there is a reason for that – the pronunciation of the cream tea component sparks possibly the greatest debate in human history. It is a debate that is still, to this day, unresolved for many people and one that usually progresses to heated arguments, overshadowing politics and religion. I wish to settle these disputes formally, in order to avoid bloodshed, and let readers know the correct way to pronounce “scone”.

We'll start with scone (“skon”), the pronunciation with ties to the north (historically working class and Scotland) and therefore, the one expected to be heard more frequently within our area.

However, throughout my many times discussing the subject with locals, the chances of hearing a northern individual pronounce it this way are

seemingly 50-50. Supposing the historical records are accurate, reasons for this could be years of southern families traveling north and passing their dialect through generations or perhaps other influences such as TV shows/films that may have stars pronouncing it “scoan”. Whatever the reason, I hear both types posed within the phrase “You're only a proper northerner if you pronounce it “scone””.

Adhering to the second theory I proposed, it would be surprising that the influence of the most famous British baking legend, Mary Berry, is not more prominent. For, on TV, she argued the case that the correct pronunciation is “skon”, fuelling this side's legitimacy immensely with her professional reputation.

The word for the sweet treat derives from the German term “Schonbrot”, meaning “fine bread”, the pronunciation of which is closer to “skon”. It is not as if the spelling of the British word is too much of an irregularity with the sound as, within the English language, there are commonly used words such as “one” and “gone” which are undisputedly pronounced with a short vowel. There is even the word “shone” fighting out of this corner as the only (to my knowledge at least) word in our language containing two letters before the “-one”.

Despite this, when it comes to the English language itself, the pronunciation “scoan” takes the cake (or scone). This version, hailing historically from Ireland and the Southern middle class, is backed up by far more words with that sound and the same spelling scheme: bone, stone, drone, crone, hone, phone, alone, tone – to



name just a few! At the basis of our education, we are taught that the long vowel usually exists when a word ends in “(-consonant)-e”. Why, in this case, should it be any different?

Although this argument gains much traction for the case of “scoan”, searching up the word online presents another case. By pressing the audio cue next to the definition of the word on a standard Google search, one can clearly distinguish a man’s voice saying “skon”. At this point, when the argument seems to be solved, one can click the “Dictionary” heading, to be taken to the website, Dictionary.com. Here, when clicking the audio cue, a woman’s voice is heard, pronouncing it “scoan”. It appears that even the colossal giant of information – the internet – doesn’t contain a single, certain answer to our question.

This brings us to the idea that both pronunciations are correct. Articles online tend to come to this conclusion, and it may be the case that there is not one definitive, correct answer. Humankind’s most frequently debated topic - most asked question - remains unanswered. Both versions are acceptable it seems, and it can make us realise that sometimes there is not a black and white answer in life. Sometimes, we must be satisfied with the grey.

But obviously it’s pronounced “scone”.

8 Minutes and 46 Seconds That Changed the World: Protesting in Modern America- Grace Shropshire

As I am writing this, it has been two and half weeks since the senseless murder of George Floyd. George Floyd was a father of five and mentor of young Christian men within his local ministry. He was dedicated to steering young men away from making the mistakes he did in his past, earning him the nickname 'the Gentle Giant'. On May 25th 2020, Floyd was arrested for allegedly using a fake \$20 bill to buy cigarettes at a local grocery store. He was placed in handcuffs and held face down in the road by white police officer Derek Chauvin. Chauvin then kneeled on George Floyd's neck, despite him crying "I can't breathe" 16 times, for 8 minutes and 46 seconds, leading to his death.

Chilling video footage of George Floyd's arrest and murder reached the internet and immediately, speculation began. The initial autopsy conducted found that Floyd had died of cardiopulmonary arrest (a heart attack) and the toxicologist found evidence of fentanyl and methamphetamine in his system. The state determined that these traces of psychoactive substances were significant contributors to his death. However, Floyd's family commissioned a second autopsy by a certified forensic pathologist who found that the pressure on Floyd's neck and back had restricted blood flow to his brain resulting in asphyxiation. Due to the differing results of these autopsies, people began to speculate that the state were attempting to diffuse the situation by blaming Floyd's death on substance abuse and not the actions of Derek Chauvin. Consider having your neck crushed by a grown man's body weight for nearly 9 minutes. Do you think you would walk away? Regardless of a person's health, it's difficult to imagine

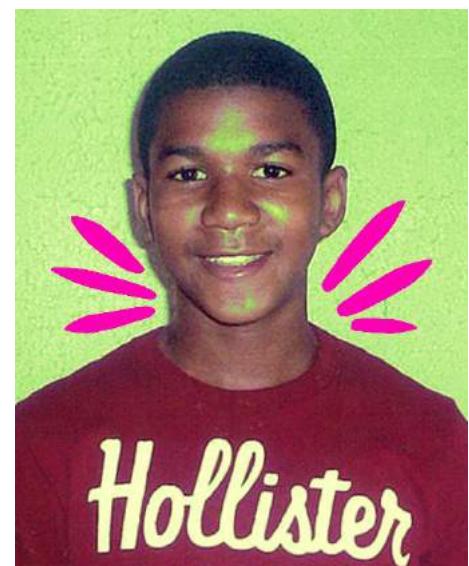
surviving this situation and after the past couple of weeks I can safely say that these attempts to transfer responsibility for Floyd's murder onto the victim himself, have not been successful.

Protests began in Minneapolis, where Floyd was killed, but quickly began to spread across the country and eventually the world. People called for Derek Chauvin and the other three



officers present at Floyd's arrest to be brought to justice and charged for his murder. But the protests were not just demanding justice for Floyd. Activists started to remind the world of many similar incidents such as the death of Breonna Taylor who was shot 8 times in the back as she slept after police entered her home by force, looking for two men suspected of selling drugs. The police claimed not to have known that these two men were in fact, already in custody. They also reminded us of Tamir Rice, a 12 year old black boy who was shot and killed in his front garden whilst playing with a toy gun. In both of these examples nobody was brought to justice. Both murderers currently walk free and hundreds of similar cases have resulted in the same devastating injustices. The words "Black Lives Matter" began to be heard around the world as the pain felt for these losses of black lives at the hands of police, became rage and impatience for the destruction of systemically racist institutions.

So, who are Black Lives Matter and what do they do? Black Lives Matter (BLM) are described as a collective of liberators who "are working for a world where Black lives are no longer systematically targeted for demise." They formed in 2013 after Trayvon Martin, a 17 year old black boy from Florida, was shot and killed by a member of a neighbourhood watch scheme on his way home from buying sweets for his step-brother. The shooter was later acquitted of second degree murder and manslaughter on the grounds that he acted in self-defence, despite the fact that Martin was completely unarmed. This injustice lead to global outrage and the formation of the BLM movement in response. Black people were having the colour of their skin weaponised by white people, leading to the unprovoked shooting of a child who was unarmed. BLM supporters have been at the forefront of recent protests against police brutality and white supremacy, kneeling, marching and even lying face down in the street, demanding change.



When discussing protests in 2020, I must remind you of a phenomenon that began in April, in the midst of the pandemic, where predominantly white Americans took to the streets demanding for the "stay at home" orders to be lifted. The Coronavirus didn't scare them, in fact, some groups even denied its existence. They wanted to be able to re-open the state for fear of economic collapse and grown-out haircuts. These self-proclaimed 'freedom fighters' were captured on video, spitting at police officers and attempting to push past them in the street. I must also add that many of

them were photographed carrying assault rifles. Nevertheless, the police did not respond with aggression or crowd control methods and President Trump went as far as calling them “good people” on his infamous twitter account. After a few days of these protests, many states made the decision to re-open despite the potential risks to public health.

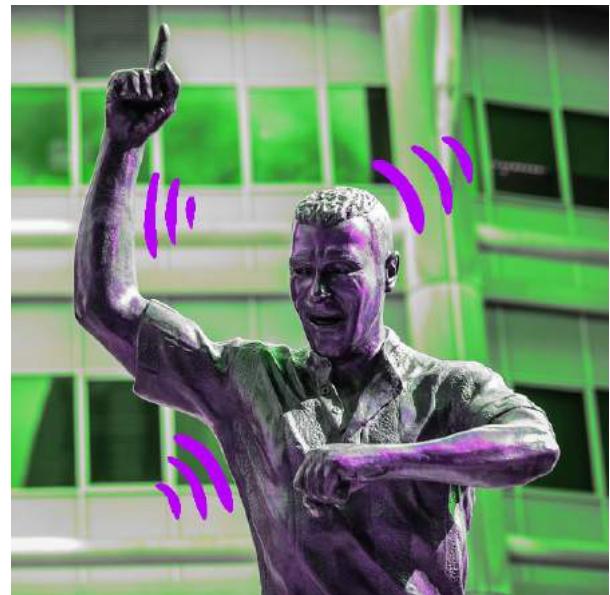
I am choosing to recount these events because when we return to the BLM protests a few weeks later, attitudes appear to be very different. Peaceful protesters have faced an onslaught of rubber bullets, pepper spray and tear gas, discharged by officers wearing professional riot gear. Sarah Grossman, a peaceful protester from Ohio, tragically passed away after exposure to these gasses and sprays. Moreover, rubber bullets have been deemed “potentially deadly” and many protesters have lost eyes after being shot in the face. Donald Trump once again took to twitter however this time, protesters were deemed “THUGS” and “ANARCHISTS” as he instructed mayors and governors to “call in [the] National Guard NOW”. Thus, we must ask ourselves what the reasoning might be for the differing responses to each of these protests. Personally, I feel that it is impossible for us to ignore the clear disparity between the types of people fighting for each cause. Whilst the white republicans were allowed to shove police officers and carry assault weapons without facing violence or aggression, the BLM protesters have had to endure brutality and unjustified imprisonment for, predominantly peacefully, exercising their right to protest. It’s clear to me that when confronted by an angry face, no matter how dangerous it may be, Trump and the police force will not run, shoot or employ riot control methods as long as that face is white.

In conclusion, racism is alive and kicking. With extortionate numbers of innocent black lives being lost every year due to the systemically racist police force, change needs to happen and perpetrators need to be brought to justice. Thanks to Black Lives Matter and its allies, small changes are beginning to be seen. For example, the review and removal of monuments and building names commemorating slave owners here in the UK. People must continue to fight for the equal treatment of black and other ethnic minorities across the world and work towards equal representation in governments of the societies they stand for. Sometimes tearing down statues and lying face down in the road is the only way to grab the attention of onlookers who don’t consider themselves activists and despite some of the backlash that’s been felt, these acts of protests are working. I hope that George Floyd’s murder continues to be a catalyst, urging people to join the fight for equality, especially people who have privilege that they can use to incite change. It is no longer enough to not be racist. We must be anti-racism.

The lone and level sands: On ‘Ozymandias’, Edward Colston, and Alan Shearer- Mr Johnson

The year is 4996 AD, and the city that was Newcastle – initially engulfed by a Chernobyl-esque radioactive cloud in the Big Bang of 3452 AD, and later blazed to the ground after its tungsten bunkers became a rebel stronghold in the Intergalactic Skirmishes of the year 3999 – is now simply dust, sand, and neon-ivy covered rubble. Two hazmat-suited cartographers tie up their hovercraft by the shore at Tynemouth, and begin to trek inland. After ten miles of painstaking walking, avoiding the local packs of eight-legged turbo-wolves and their predators, the four-faced yellow cows, they catch a glimmer of bronze, jutting into the sky on the horizon, the sharp midday sun reflected across the plain. As the outline of a prehistoric man – jaw open, finger pointing to the heavens – reveals itself, one cartographer says to the other, ‘I think this is him mate, I think we’ve found the God of the Earthlings.’

The fate of Newcastle United legend Alan Shearer’s statue in a post-apocalyptic world has occasionally crossed my mind. Would the future overlords of the Globe appreciate his real achievements? 256 goals in 441 Premier League appearances remains an achievement unsurpassed in terms of consistency and predatory instinct, not to mention that the extent of his loyalty to his hometown club could provide a model of good citizenship to any fledgling intergalactic society. Or would Control Command, sat in glass watchtower over the mainland of occupied Neptune, see this finger-pointing, celebratory effigy as a symbol of hubris and the transient nature of all human things?



As a wave of destatueing begins to pick up momentum across Europe, undoubtedly a consequence of the increasingly influential Black Lives Matter movement, English teachers everywhere are reminded of Percy Shelley’s sonnet ‘Ozymandias’ and its portrayal of Egyptian King Ramesses II. Ramesses was a successful ruler by some metrics, expanding Egyptian territory further into the Middle East, quashing insurrections in outlying territories, and pursuing a huge building program

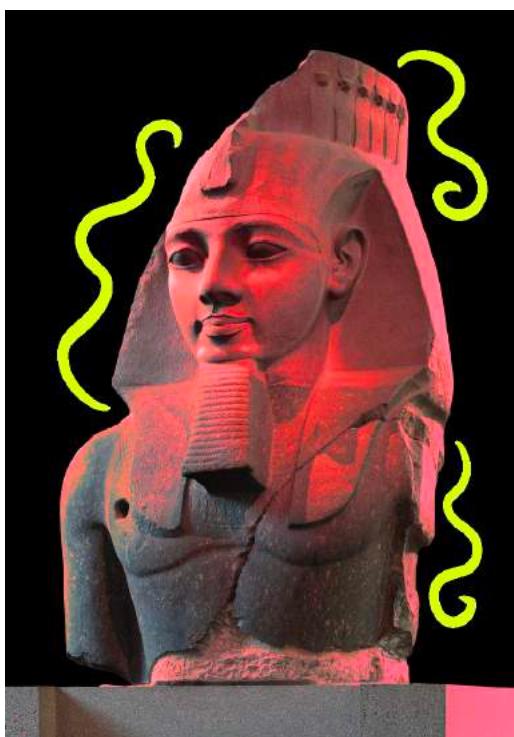
(admittedly, this consisted primarily of monuments to himself rather than useful infrastructure).

Shelley wrote the sonnet as a result of a contest with his friend Horace Smith, who stayed with the Shelleys during twixmas of 1817, prompted by the British acquisition of one of those millennia-old statues, The Younger Memnon. The occasionally-reported notion that Shelley was inspired by seeing the statue at the British Museum is most likely untrue: Shelley left England for Italy in early 1818, before the statue was unveiled to the public.

His presentation of Ramesses' 'sneer of cold command', then, is imaginative rather than historically descriptive: indeed, the statue was reportedly found face down in the Ramesseum at Thebes and there seems little chance of his 'vast and trunkless legs of stone' standing upright several millennia on from their abandonment, as Shelley suggests. The Ramesses of the poem is one forged in the mind of Keats as he wrote in rural Buckinghamshire that winter. If Shelley had seen the statue, he'd have seen that Ramesses' tyranny was belied by a boyish and cheerful countenance.

Critics, scholars and teachers have long argued that the Ramesses of the poem is not intended to function as the Egyptian ruler himself, but as an analogue for those

with absolute power in the Western Europe of the early Nineteenth Century. The notion of the state was in flux, most notably in France, where the abolition of absolute monarchy in the early 1790s gave way to military authoritarianism, in turn leading to the reduction of the royal prerogative when Louis XVIII restored the monarchy in 1814.



In England, radicals and Romantics looked across the Channel as an indicator of what could happen next in British government. Robert Jenkinson's government suspended Habeas Corpus in 1817 in an effort to quell growing demands for political reform, whilst the growing 'madness' of King George III and the establishment of a Regency minded to back

Tories in Parliament provided a pantomime-villain backdrop. Questions of power, who should have it, and how it should be used, were at the forefront of the British consciousness whilst Shelley wrote.

In the arts, dissenting voices were many and, despite his assertion in the preface to Prometheus Unbound that ‘didactic poetry is my abhorrence,’ Shelley’s was amongst the loudest. In ‘England in 1819’ and ‘The Masque of Anarchy’ – and elsewhere – Shelley was openly critical not only of the systems of power, but more importantly the character and behaviour of those with power.

As such, Shelley’s Ramesses becomes not a criticism of an individual ruler – although George III and Jenkinson’s Foreign Secretary Viscount Castlereagh were his targets elsewhere – but an indictment of power misused, or tyranny. Scrawled on the top of the page of his draft of the poem were the words, partly borrowed from Greek historian Siculus’ description of the monuments to Ramesses, which form the conceptual crux of the poem:

“Look upon my works, ye mighty, and despair!”

The inscription, vocalising the words of the long-dead ruler, is addressed to two audiences. From Ramesses’ perspective, the comment instructs his rivals, the ‘mighty’ to look upon his achievements, his expansion, his monuments, and his power, and to give up the fight. In the 12th Century BCE, this was probably quite intimidating. But the world of the poem is one in which power has shifted, from the dead to the living, from Thebes to elsewhere, and the shout becomes one which reveals Ramesses’ hubris, and his inability to see the transience of his own power, and ultimately his own mortality.

The second addressee of the command is external to the world of the poem – the power-grabbers and power-misusers of the Regency: Ramesses’ works are now ground into dust, ‘half-sunk’ amongst the ‘boundless and bare’ desert. ‘Nothing besides remains,’ as Shelley writes. If ‘remains’ here functions as a noun, as in the remnants of something which has died, Shelley is reminding the rulers of the early Nineteenth Century that nothing will survive of them, like all of us, other than their physical corpses. If ‘remains’ here functions as a verb, it suggests that nothing aside from the statue – the symbol of power – still exists. His actual power has dissipated long before the symbol of his power. Either way, the poem becomes a kind of affirmation of the ancient Persian adage, ‘this too shall pass,’ where ‘this’ is

the tyranny of misrule, and ‘pass’ is the ephemerality of all human existence, powerful or powerless.

And so to Edward Colston, the slaver whose statue was dragged down from its plinth in Bristol and flung into the harbour by a group of protesters. The political arguments rage on as to whether the means, if not the ends, were acceptable, but Shelley shows us that symbols are powerful ways of controlling a population, and the destruction of those symbols – whether by the ‘lone and level sands’ or by a group of citizens with tools – is a powerful marker of societal change. Colston’s was a life filled with the misuse of power – financial and social, rather than monarchical – and, like the gallery of discarded Lenin statues on the bottom of the ocean just off the coast of the Crimean peninsula, and just like the abandonment of the Ramesseum at Thebes, it does not mean that we are deleting history – it means that we are marking a new chapter of it.

Ultimately, Shearer’s is an anodyne statue, unlikely to be pulled down any time soon. And I like to think of him outlasting the slavers, the confederates, and the dictators, celebrating poacher’s goals with his finger pointed to the gods, well into the 5th millennium.



What has lockdown taught us about modern life?-Eleanor Merrifield

To begin, I think it is particularly important to consider where we would be without the modern day technology that is readily available to all of us. If it wasn't for these innovations, communication between friends and family wouldn't be possible and online schooling would no longer exist. Thanks to technology, students have been able to join 'virtual' lessons, alongside their classmates, in an attempt to try and keep them following a structured school day. Without this, primary, secondary, college, sixth form and university students would all be missing out on vital elements of their curriculum and in turn would have a huge impact on the results they achieve at the end of the academic year. Interaction between friends and family is a necessity, without it, people's metal health would be significantly impacted. And although we are unable to see them in person, the technology within our society allows us to do this.

On that note, the importance of people's mental wellbeing has been emphasised throughout the lockdown period. The promotion for the significance of talking to other's when you need help, whether that be a friend, family member, teacher or doctor, has been greatly expressed. Although a tragic implication of the coronavirus outbreak, includes an increase in the number of mental health incidents across the world, the time in lockdown has also meant there has been an increased focus of the seriousness of mental health.

Before the pandemic, I think a fair judgement to make is that many people have been consumed in their own lives, taking things for granted. Modern day life is chaotic, with bills to pay, jobs to attend and children to look after. Because of this, the population have been unable to appreciate what we do have. Losing a loved one is never easy, particularly under these circumstances, whether it is due to corona virus or not. Speaking from personal experiences, it has certainly taught me to hold loved ones closer and cherish the time you do have together. Even the importance of the dreaded family phone calls has certainly become apparent to me. Ultimately, the virus has forced us to confront the present. We cannot plan, we cannot dwell and we cannot predict. We have to take each day as it comes. We have no choice but to be resilient and overcome whatever obstacles we face, together.



Furthermore, a new found appreciation for job titles that may have been previously looked down upon by many people have in fact been holding the country together. Retail workers, bin men and women and not to mention nursing staff, have all been working tirelessly to keep the country running. I guess it's ironic that the people that have been assumed not to be a necessity, are in fact essential for our country during this pandemic. As a country we may have previously taken these job descriptions for granted but now we have seen just how much of a role they play in our daily lives.

So, although the coronavirus will leave both devastating social and economic effects on the country, I think one thing that we all can take away from it, is that sometimes in life we need to breath. Slow down. And take time to be thankful for everything we do have, because without it we would most definitely be in a much worse situation.