

# Like, Literary 'Viewpoints'

The Stockport Grammar Literary Magazine 2022



Edited by Millie Job

# Contents

**3. Welcome  
Letter**

**4. Contemporary  
Affairs**

**16. Book  
Reviews**

**22. Literary  
Criticism**

**29. Literary  
Figures**

**36. Television  
& Film**

**42. African  
Literature**

**48. Creative  
Writing**

# Welcome

## Editors Letter

For this year's edition of the Stockport Grammar School Literary Magazine the team has looked at the idea of different generational viewpoints. Several of the section editors have chosen to have articles written about the same topic from two different viewpoints, allowing us to showcase multiple opinions about the same topic. We focused on using different generational perspectives with many of us contacting teachers, parents and older friends and family to aid us in creating 'Like, Literary' for 2022. For our theme this year I chose to collage 1970's household objects to represent the differing generational outlooks we are trying to showcase. I chose a bright, bold, colourful theme and have replicated this throughout the magazine. It has been such an exciting journey creating this year's magazine and I am so thankful to all the section editors and their writers for the hard work that has been put into this project. Thank you to Ms Roberts in addition who has done a brilliant job at organising the magazine and keeping us on track! We, as a team, hope you love this year's literary magazine and cannot wait for you to see the outcome of our work.

## Willie Job - Editor

### Magazine Foreword

The eclectic pieces that appear in this year's Literary Magazine highlight the diverse range of passions and interests embraced by our pupils and staff. Pupils have worked independently to plan, edit and select the topics for each section, under the inspirational eye of Mrs Roberts. I have always admired the way that pupils at SGS engage with debate, both in the classroom and through co-curricular activities.

The 'Contemporary Affairs' section demonstrates the writers' ability to delve deeper into controversial topics, rather than accepting received wisdom. The book reviews and literary criticism reflect the wide range of autonomous reading and research our pupils embrace, with their chosen titles including some of the books from the entirely pupil-led weekly Sixth Form Reading Group. The female focus of the 'Literary Figures' section highlights some familiar and also less well known cultural icons, of special interest to me as a resident of Christie's Marple! Intersectionality is also the lens through which some of the African Literature has been explored, with biography, close analysis and genre considered in this section.

Jonathan Bettridge's impassioned defence of TV and film as art forms is justly supported by the sophisticated analysis of popular adaptations that he has selected and written.

Perhaps the talented creative writers who feature in the final section may one day see their own work on the screen, as well as in print?

Congratulations to the team for another truly unique publication.

## Mrs Cope - Head Of English

# Contemporary Affairs

## **Contemporary Affairs Foreword**

Arguably, the ‘Contemporary Affairs’ section of this magazine epitomises the title of ‘viewpoints’. Various pupils and staff members have written articles expressing their thoughts on topics currently, and recently, seen in the news. The range throughout this section hopefully gives you a flavour of what issues staff and pupils have felt are most important in our current society and highlights the school’s interest in society globally. Afaf has done an excellent job of creating the section and we hope that you enjoy learning about the wider interests of the school.

**Written by Millie Job - Upper Sixth**

**Contemporary Affairs Editor - Afaf Noor, Upper Sixth**

## **Boris Johnson: A conservative or a political chameleon? - Mr Leng, Head Of History**

In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Benjamin Disraeli wrote a book titled “Sybil: or the Two Nations.” The focus of this book was the huge divide between the rich and the poor in Industrial Britain. The rapid growth of the British economy and the huge social change that occurred led many to fear that the Industrial revolution may in fact lead to actual revolution. Revolution was something that conservative minded members of the British public wanted to avoid at all costs. A new notion was born in Disraeli’s book, One Nation conservatism. Despite the changes and the disparity between rich and poor, the new policy would be one of ruling these two sections of society as one nation. A nation where the wealthy would aim to improve the socio-economic status of the most vulnerable in society. Consequently, Conservative Prime Ministers since then have often talked about being ‘One Nation’ conservatives with an aim to display to the British public that their pro-business and pro-capitalist party will also have a focus on policies that lessen the gap between the wealthy and the poor.

In recent decades the Conservative party was split between those who were ‘one nation’ in mindset and the more traditional Thatcherite conservatives who were much more about freeing up the economy and less socially minded. Thatcherite policies were immensely popular during the three terms of Margaret Thatcher from 1979-1990, with the economy booming during this time. However, the ‘one nation’ part of the party became a minority and many felt that the party had become ‘toxic’ and as Theresa May put it the Conservatives were perceived as the ‘nasty party’. Hence, in recent years Prime Ministers such as David Cameron and Theresa May have transcended the factions within the party to take the best bits from both the more centrist ‘one nation’ faction and the more right wing ‘Thatcherite’ faction. Consequently, the Conservative party have been in government since

2010. Perhaps this ‘pick and mix’ pragmatic approach is the key to their electoral success.



Boris Johnson’s rhetoric is too one of ‘one nation’ conservatism. If you listen to any of his speeches the tone and language aims to deliver compassion and the policies are seemingly geared towards ‘one nation’ type policies. The notion of ‘levelling up society’ and employing a ‘Levelling Up’ Minister in the form of Michael Gove is the perfect example of 19th century Disraeli policy in a 21st century context. However, just like May and Cameron before him Johnson too is essentially Thatcherite when it comes to the economy. He believes unequivocally in a free market and in creating wealth for Britain. However, Boris Johnson lets the ‘one nation’ language dominate his speeches and policy launches.

Yet, is Boris Johnson neither a ‘one nation’ conservative or a ‘Thatcherite’? Could it be the case that he is simply a populist? Prior to becoming Prime Minister he embraced populist stances on issues such as Brexit and immigration. The context of this being the fragmented political environment of post EU referendum Britain. Brexit put Johnson front and centre of British politics. When the referendum result came in during the summer of 2016 he was no longer portrayed as the ‘one nation’ figure he once was. He went into the 2019 election declaring that he would ‘Get Brexit done’ and consequently would introduce an ‘Australian Immigration style’ system. This was a far cry from the ‘one nation’ principles of consensus, paternalism, co-operation, and internationalism.



Victory in the 2019 election and winning 'red wall' seats from the Labour party in Northern England is proof that Boris Johnson is a populist. He appealed to an unusual coalition of voters across the divides of our society. His populist policies and rhetoric cut through to the people and he won a landslide. A mixture of a 'left leaning' interventionist economic programme, such as the 'levelling up' policies, and more 'right leaning' economic and social targets proved the perfect populist mix for him to become the Prime Minister with a large majority in parliament.

The more his time in office continues the more 'populist' Mr Johnson becomes. In the aftermath of his 2019 victory the Prime Minister declared, "we must recognise the incredible reality that we now speak as a one-nation Conservative Party." This seemed to mark a return to more 'one nation' terminology, however the consequences of the 2020 COVID pandemic have led us to question what sort of conservative he is. Since 2020 Boris Johnson has departed even further from non-interventionist Thatcherism and has embarked on a costly programme of policies which have subsequently led to higher levels of taxation being declared. In effect this is very 'un-conservative' and has gone beyond even any 'one nation' conservative would do.



It was very easy to categorise previous Conservative party leaders. Thatcher leaned to the right. May and Cameron had a foot in the right with an eye on the centre ground of politics. However, when it comes to Boris Johnson it is much more difficult to pin him down to one form of conservatism. It is probably much simpler to describe him as the 'archetypal populist politician' akin to Donald Trump or Nigel Farage. He has an adaptable approach. Johnson adopts the language of 'one nation' when he needs it. He adopts the language of Thatcherism when he requires it. He is the chief political chameleon of his time.

## What is the future of patients suffering from long term COVID illness? - Priscilla Vemulapalli - Upper 6th

For the last three years the world has become accustomed to dealing with a new disease called COVID-19. Initially lingering in Wuhan, China humanity was unaware of the devastating impact it would have in the long term.

COVID-19, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 Virus, became a pandemic affecting the world community and forced changes to social, political and economic habits on entire state levels. Even though the apparent effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are slowly subsiding, it has ingrained its image into the daily lives of many people of different age groups and is drastically affecting their personal, family and work lives.

But what is the future for those who will suffer from the virus long term?

Acute COVID-19 infection is when signs and symptoms of Covid-19 last for up to four weeks and anything after this time period is called Long COVID. Post-COVID-19 syndrome is when signs and symptoms develop during or after an infection consistent with Covid-19, present for more than 12 weeks and are not attributable to alternative diagnosis.

In the UK alone, there are estimated to be two million people who have had persistent symptoms for more than 12 weeks following initial COVID infection. More than 80 Long COVID clinics have been established around England but we need to better understand, diagnose and treat this new disease as inequalities in access to and provision of Long COVID care have already become apparent.



So what is the ongoing research on presented signs and symptoms?

According to a research study funded by a group called Applied Research Collaboration North Thames, Elizabeth Murray and her team suggested that up to 10% of people who have had COVID-19 go on to develop Long-COVID, symptoms of which can include feeling breathless, anxiety, loss of appetite, tiredness and fatigue.

However, even after establishing diagnosis of the illness, Skyes Domiic L and colleagues (November 2020) concluded that clinicians currently do not know who is at the greatest risk of developing long COVID, but it is recognised that there is little relationship between the severity of the acute illness and the likelihood of developing Long COVID.

You would think that breathlessness, fatigue and anxiety are enough burdens for one to carry, yet there is still another spiteful symptom ready to torment its vulnerable victims.

Pain, which is said to be so extreme that it is effectively disabling. It consumes its patient's time, strength and energy and hinders them from engaging in the most basic activities or in work. In a recent study from Italy, for example, one-third of COVID long-haulers had symptoms of fibromyalgia or widespread muscle or bone pain. Health care professionals who work as an advocate for people with pain hear familiar themes when talking to those newly adjusting to life with pain from Long COVID. Unfortunately, many feel misunderstood by family, friends, and employers; some have lost jobs but have been denied Social Security and other benefits. How would it feel to lose your job and not have access to any services when needing to feed your dependant family?

A six-month cohort study was performed by Cholin Huang and the team on consequences of COVID-19 in patients discharged from hospital. They interpreted that at 6 months after acute infection, COVID-19 survivors are mainly troubled with fatigue or muscle weakness, sleep difficulties and anxiety or depression. Patients who are most severely ill during their hospital stay had more severe impaired pulmonary diffusion capacities

and abnormal chest imaging manifestations –these patients are the main target population for intervention of long term recovery. However, the studies reported that patients with COVID-19 discharged from the hospitals might have persistent symptoms, impaired lung functions and poor quality of life. The representativeness of the studies and the explicitness of provided information were insufficient due to small number of cases and the short duration of follow up (up to 3 months after discharge). Unsurprisingly, there were limitations to the study – the long term health consequences of discharge patients with COVID-19 and the associated risk factors were unknown.



How do we take care of patients who are diagnosed with long COVID?

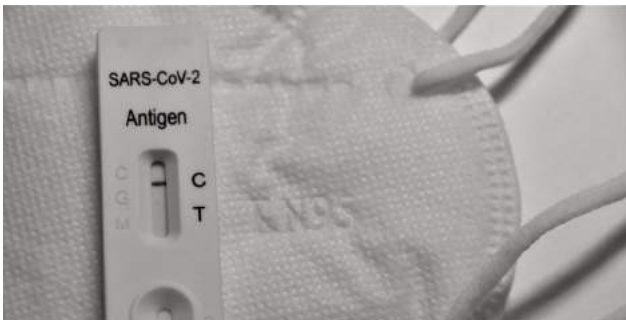
Taking care of patients suffering from the disease should include discussion with the patient and family, offering the support and rehabilitation they need and how this will be provided. It should also include advice on self management, support from different departments such as integrated and co-ordinated primary care, rehabilitation and mental health services. A different level of support may be needed at different times depending on the severity and fluctuation range of symptoms.

Even after putting such support systems in place, is there a cure for Long COVID?

Patients and health professionals continue to face difficulties in knowing what to do for long COVID. A comprehensive study, like STIMULATE-ICP is needed to look at the big picture and improve patient access to the right care at the right time in the right place.

Suggestions to improve care are service organisation, deploying multidisciplinary clinics and rehabilitation services. Clinicians don't have protocols in place of seamless care instead, referral pathways need to be integrated in primary and community care. The aim will be to deliver timely high-quality care close to people's homes with community-based diagnostics but access to specialist input when needed.

Outbreaks of Covid-19 disease are now limited with precautions and vaccinations. However, the main problem now is those suffering from Long COVID and with thorough research having been carried out so far, it can be concluded that there are no definitive treatment measures for people suffering with Long COVID symptoms. Much more research and cohort studies need to be carried out to formulate different care pathways which will initiate treatment for Long COVID symptoms.



However, it can be acknowledged that NHS research departments have initiated a few studies which will not be completed for another two to three years. This is an extremely long wait for patients suffering and it will have massive implications on health and lifestyle.

Therefore, I propose the need for more Government funding to aid treatment plans, therapies (for example Physiotherapy and Occupational therapy), counselling and psychological support and opening of multi disciplinary COVID clinics. The overall aim would be to improve health and quality of patients suffering from Long COVID.

## The Dangers of Greenwashing to the future of Sustainability - Kate Horsley - Upper Sixth

By the end of 2021, over 85% of adults in Great Britain reported that they were concerned to some degree about climate change. Widely acknowledged as the climate crisis, climate change and global warming are perhaps the biggest modern threats to ever face our planet. With greenhouse gas concentrations at their highest levels in over 2 million years, it is evident that change is required; both inside the home and at a global level. Yet as the issues of climate change are becoming more widely acknowledged, so are the demands for more "green" and sustainable alternatives. People across the globe are increasingly opting for eco-friendly products, but perhaps less are aware of the misleading marketing strategies used to take advantage of consumers. Many businesses are adopting more sustainable outlooks in order to gain favour with customers. And, whilst this is theoretically a positive thing, many large corporations have simply formed a facade of sustainability while continuing to engage in harmful activities that cause more waste or greenhouse gases.





# Contemporary Affairs



Coined in 1986, the term “greenwashing” arose after American environmentalist, Jay Westervelt, noted how at a hotel he visited, there were signs asking guests to reuse their towels in order to “save the environment.” Westervelt considered the vast amount of wastage he had encountered throughout the rest of the hotel, where there were no obvious efforts being made towards sustainability. Instead, he concluded, the hotel was simply trying to reduce costs by limiting their towel washes but were in fact trying to market these economically viable tactics as environmentally conscious behaviour.

Sadly, in many ways, little has changed since 1986 and cases of car manufacturers manipulating emission tests and food producers using harmful “biodegradable” plastics are just a few examples. One study found that 95% of evaluated products employed at least some form of greenwashing. And whilst advertising regulators do exist, the biggest loophole in sustainability is that it does not have a clear, quantifiable definition. The lack of universally accepted definitions for terms such as ‘sustainable’ means that large corporations can market an item as ‘green’, often at a marked-up price, without adhering to a clear definition of that term. Indeed, as it stands, terms like ‘ethical’ or ‘eco-friendly’ have no legal meaning, so the law cannot hold companies accountable for their actions, or lack thereof. This nuance surrounding sustainability is partly due to the lack of empirical data and government funded research on fashion’s impact. Brands can take advantage of the lack of regulation and public education to continue spew-

ing false information, misinforming and manipulating public perception. Greenwashing continues to happen at an increasingly high rate due to our changing consumer habits. In other words: being socially conscious sells. In fact, a recent study reported that 34 percent of those surveyed in Generation Z (aged between 16 and 24 years) said they would pay over 20 percent more for an ethical product. Many brands have recognised this environmentally friendly shift, yet use greenwashing to convey the same sentiments to us without making real change. But a company that uses greenwashing means that its goal is selling products, not protecting the environment.



Take H&M for example. The Swedish multinational clothing-retail company introduced a recycling scheme allowing customers to return old textiles in exchange for a coupon - to buy more clothes. But all is not as it seems. It takes H&M up to 12 years to use just 1,000 tons of clothing waste (which is roughly equivalent to 6 million t-shirts.) Whilst on surface level this may seem like a substantial effort, but in that same time H&M would produce 36 billion brand new garments, perpetuating the endless cycle of fast fashion. The majority of these unwanted clothes are sent to developing countries where they're unable to be processed, meanwhile, H&M are producing the same volume of new clothes in a matter of days. It's a scheme deployed to convince you, the ethical consumer, that H&M are taking big steps to help reduce clothing waste when in reality they're still a huge part of the problem.

So how do we avoid being sucked into the facade of green? Commonly used phrases such as “moving towards zero waste”, “we recycle our packaging” or “we aim to reduce our carbon emissions by 50% by 2022” are often loose claims and require you to take a further look into these vague promises. Find sustainability reports to verify the green claims and look for statistics or any relevant information that can support and prove the statements. It is also helpful to check the reliability. If there are eco-labels or third-party certifications, then check their trustworthiness. With that being said, it is also very helpful to focus on brands with a holistic approach to sustainability. Support brands that integrate sustainability into everything they do — not just one collection or a handful of pieces. Although it doesn't always feel like it, as consumers, we have tremendous power. The purchases that we make every day can change the way manufacturers produce and sell items, which is why it is more important than ever to have the knowledge and the tools to identify greenwashing.

## **Roe v Wade – a symbol of a polarised America? - Ms Roberts, English**

Ruth Bader Ginsberg, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, famously said “the decision whether or not to bear a child is central to a woman's life, to her well-being and dignity. When government controls that decision for her, she is being treated as less than a fully adult human responsible for her own choices.” Margaret Atwood, writer of the *Handmaid's Tale* believes that “enforced child-birth is slavery.” There is, of course, equally strong feeling on the other side of the debate. Alito believes that Roe “relies on an erroneous historical narrative” which, to be fair, even Ginsberg agreed with. Trump declared the reversal “the biggest win for life in a generation.” So, how do we navigate such polarised views? Should we even try?

A good place to start may be to examine where we believe life to begin. Yet, even this is complex.

Jewish tradition, for example, has a great deal of debate about when ensoulment occurs. Generally, the Talmud refers to the fetus as a part of the mother's body. Muslim scholars too have a range of positions on abortion. Some believe it should never be permitted, and many allow it until ensoulment, which is often placed at 120 days. 56% of US Catholics believe abortion should be legal despite the official teaching of their church. Thought among the Southern Baptists has changed since the 1980s - even the language around abortion has changed to a stance where “abortion ends the life of a developing human being.” Using the words “human being” clearly demonstrates this shift and makes this issue much more emotive.



What many states in America have already done is “triggered” legislation for immediate effect, 30 days from the Supreme Court ruling . This means 26 days from now, some women will be forced to travel to a different state for an abortion, seek help from a doctor (who then risks their license) or try to end the pregnancy themselves. Some of these women may be actually teenagers; some may be struggling financially, emotionally, physically or mentally; some may be in abusive relationships. Yet they will not be able to access help. In many of these states, the only exceptions are when the mother's life is in danger. Some make exceptions for rape or incest; many do not. None - as far as I can tell – are offering financial support to women forces to have babies they would otherwise not choose to have.

On social media, many are comparing this ruling to Gilead – the fictional new America in Margaret Atwood’s dystopian fiction “The Handmaid’s Tale.” It is a fair comparison. In Gilead, women of child-bearing age are forced to give birth by the state. They no longer have control over their own bodies. It seems scarily familiar. Even Atwood herself commented in *The Atlantic*: “I invented Gilead. The Supreme Court made it real.” She thought she was writing fiction but repealing *Roe v Wade* has made Atwood’s imagined future seem frighteningly present.

It would be so easy to categorise this struggle as simply American politics and a mark of its polarisation, but I think it is more than this. The reason Atwood chose America for the setting of her novel was deliberate for it was here a new, Puritan theocracy was born. This new world – or new Eden perhaps, although that is in itself another story – became the foundation of the modern America we see today. Tom Holland, writer of the book *Dominion* claims that “the divisions satirised by *The Handmaid’s Tale* were in truth very ancient. They derived ultimately, not from the specifics of American politics in the twenty-first century, but from the very womb of Christianity.... There had always existed, in the hearts of the Christian people, a tension between the demands of tradition and the claims of progress, between the prerogatives of authority and the longing for reformation, between the letter and the spirit of the law” and perhaps he is right. Maybe what we see today is an extreme tension between two versions of Christianity: the version that fights for the right of the unborn baby (and other issues considered “biblical”) in order to fight for the vulnerable and the version that fights for the rights of the woman in order to protect the vulnerable. Perhaps both are simply two sides of the same coin, both from the “womb of Christianity itself.”

Ultimately, though, wherever we stand on this debate – and it is full of murky grey areas – to deny women choice can surely not be the way forward in 2022. A baby can be a great gift when it is

chosen but, as Atwood says: “A gift can also be rejected. A gift that cannot be rejected is not a gift, but a symptom of tyranny.” A person who believes ensoulment begins at the time of conception should not have an abortion and that would be their choice. But to insist that same choice should be made by everyone when they may not share those same views is something I cannot accept and I do not believe the state should force us to do so.

## **Social hierarchy. What is it and why are you suffering because of it? - Magdalena Zalazny, 5th Year**

A Hierarchy is defined as a system in which members of an organisation or society are ranked according to relative status or authority, whereas social means relating to society. Therefore, a social hierarchy is ultimately a ranking of people in all aspects of their being and, as you could probably guess, the battle to the top is far from pleasant. But what happens to those that do reach the top and those that get left behind? Don’t be fooled, this goes way beyond high school popularity, but just how far?



# Contemporary Affairs

Theoretically, the pyramid of society leaves most of us at the bottom in order for those at the top to shine. In the microcosm of high school, this is where often less sporty or outgoing people fall and they often stay in that category due to the low self esteem that is caused by being seen as inferior by their peers. Of course, the jokes at their expense far from promote self-love too. This often leads these people to miss out on their youth as they dislike socialising in fear of being judged and it can also cause feelings of depression and anxiety to develop. This detracts many as they go into their adult lives as they tend to lack the social skills and self-confidence required, not only by employers, but also to endure the challenges of life. On the other hand, they may be pleasantly surprised when they realise that in real life, nobody cares about how popular you were in high school. This idea liberates many of those who were condemned to the hierarchal system and they often begin to gain confidence, however, the damage done to their self-perception cannot be undone, especially considering the development the brain undergoes during one's teenage years. Some can reach towards drugs and alcohol to numb their pain, which develops unhealthy coping mechanisms for their adult lives, however this affects both those more and less popular. On the other hand, life outside the public eye often salvages those who are deemed as unpopular from the judgement and peer-pressure associated with those who are on top of the pyramid. Finally, it is usually easier for these people to adjust to the strain of adult lives as they learnt to face their issues, often on their own, in their youth.



Oppositely, those we deem as popular appear to be ranked above the majority of people within the hierarchy. This comes with benefits such as living a seemingly perfect life with more friends than one can count, however, life on top comes with many difficulties too. The glitz and glamour of this life is clouded by the toxic friendships that develop due to people living on superficial values. Many 'popular' people don't even like each other, which begs the question of why others seem to worship them for their social lives. This too juxtaposes the definition of popularity which is described as the state of being 'well-liked'. Moreover, there is added pressure that comes with popularity as more people spectate the life you live; every choice you make, good or bad, seems to be broadcast to countless others as you become the subject of gossip. This can tear apart friendships and, similarly to those at the bottom of the pyramid, can diminish self esteem. Moreover, these people are often more vulnerable to the dangers of peer-pressure as the idea of popularity is fragile enough to be broken by whether you do what others do. This can range from silly school rebellion to more dangerous involvement with mind-altering substances to the pressure to take part in sexual acts, simply to feel as though you 'fit in' with your friends. This is a complete sacrifice of one's personal values which can foster feelings of guilt too. Furthermore, often these groups of people feel the communal need to belittle others in public ways in order to make themselves look more desirable, which creates a toxic environment for everyone.

# Contemporary Affairs

All of this is worsened by the digital-age of social media in which it appears as though one's popularity quickly be assessed by others. This leads to feelings of worthlessness when you don't have as many followers or likes or comments as your friends. On the other hand, popularity comes with perks such as seemingly immaculate social skills and a fun experience of one's youth as well as a somewhat sickening inexplicable power over those of lower levels of popularity. However, these people stereotypically tend to struggle more in their adult life as they fight to adjust to the responsibilities involved as well as adjusting to the drifting of their large teenage friend groups as people mature and start up their own lives. This can cause feelings of loneliness to develop in the early adult years of these people. In addition, some may feel more entitled to things due to the ease with which they seemed to get what they wanted in their youth. This can manifest as difficulty within employability as often these people believe they are suited to leadership roles and they almost feel offended when they are placed in lower ranking positions at the start of their careers. It is also worth mentioning that these people can develop addictions within their teenage years due to the pressure of looking 'cool' which are likely to continue into their adult lives.

Of course, popularity is a complicated spectrum rather than black and white antagonists. This means that many people will fall somewhere in between and whereas this may seem ideal, as humans, we always want what we cannot have. This means that these people too can be just as vulnerable as both those at the top and at the bottom of the hierarchy. Many of these people are simply effortlessly likeable people who pay no attention to what others think of them, however some make a conscious effort not to be deemed as undesirable. This climb from the bottom of the pyramid up often involves altering multiple aspects of oneself: both physical and mental. This effort to maintain a persona can be draining and make the person seem artificial or like a 'wannabe' for simply wanting to be liked. It can also make the person feel as though they are a societal impostor of sorts and as if they do not belong anywhere. This state of social limbo

can often promote negative feelings, and isolation too which often continue into their adult lives as they feel the need to pretend to be someone they are not. Fortunately for these people, however, often as they mature and their lives grow more private, they begin to regain their sense of self and they realise they can be loved for who they truly are.



To conclude, modern society is seemingly reverting back to the brutal social Darwinism as we viciously fight to be deemed desirable by others. Everyone feels lonely and helpless yet few are brave enough to admit the deep rooted systemic issues which manifest negatively for all. High school popularity contests grow into the social stratification of categorisation based on other socio-economic factors such as race, income and education. This means, that the bare bones of society are set up in a way in which no one can be happy with who they are or what they have in a seemingly unbreakable chain that spans through generations. Humans are social animals and we are evolutionarily created to live in groups with a leader, even prehistorically, so the issue is not exactly recent. Moreover, no one has been able to successfully address the repercussions of the system despite the universality and recognition of the issue by countless novels and films. Many idealists have tried to make both ends of the spectrum work as we see societies drift between socialist and capitalist ideals, but neither seem to be successful. So, I challenge you to think of a way to make a difference, to change the way you construe others and to break the chain of toxicity which tears communities apart from the inside.

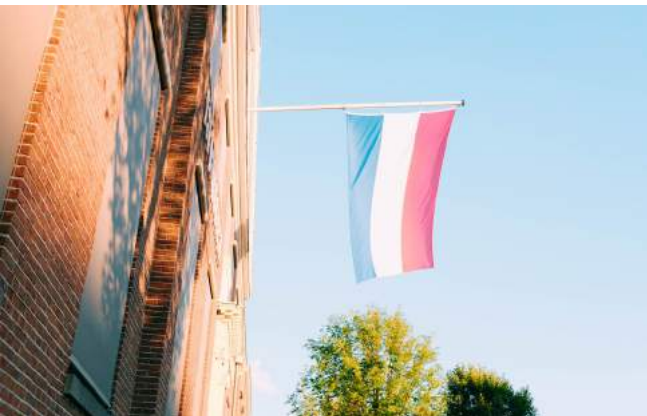
## **‘A trans woman isn’t a woman.’ How would you respond if a person in a position of authority made this contentious comment? - Priya Burrow, 5th Year**

In recent times, transgender rights have been brought to the forefront of our attention, through the LGBTQ and transgender rights movement. Similar comments to the one in question have provoked heated debate from those holding opposing opinions, such as J.K Rowling, who was criticised for defining a woman as ‘people who menstruate’. Therefore, there is an undeniable inflammatory nature to claiming ‘a trans woman isn’t a woman’. This deviation from orthodox social norms is often labelled as transphobic. This can isolate opinions and fail to foster an environment of courteous debate. Arguably, the repercussions of this comment are exacerbated due to the influential nature of a person in authority, who’s aim should be to cultivate a pluralistic society. Such a definitive statement proposes three main responses from myself and a venue for conversation:

What would you define as a woman?

What was your intent and aim in making such an inflammatory comment?

Do you recognise the implications of the claim, which you have made?



Furthermore, it is highly important to consider the context in which this comment was made. For example, the interpretation of such a comment would

be different in a public speech or a television programme, when compared to a biological discussion. There is a distinctive difference between the biological narrative and the socio-political narrative of this debate. By considering this factor, the appropriate dialogue can occur. Deeper consideration of each viewpoint allows for the progression of the argument and the aforementioned pluralistic environment.

The definition of a woman is crucial to the conversation at hand. From a purely biological perspective, it is incontrovertible that a trans woman lacks the xx chromosome, which defines a woman’s sex. In this context, logical reasoning would lead one to accept the remark as a perfectly valid statement. However, gender identity arguably supersedes biological identification. Although the gender identity of a transgender woman may not be congruent to their anatomical sex, research demonstrates that the structure and functional activities of the transgender brain resemble that of their chosen gender. The dismissal of this argument is problematic. If we fail to recognise the neurological similarities between cisgender women and trans women, we cannot address the anxiety, stress and gender dysphoria experienced by many transgender women. Secondly, sexual dimorphism suggests that certain character traits, appearances and social actions are ingrained into the framework of the sexes. However, research suggests this is simply untrue. According to Clark Spenser Larsen, an American anthropologist, many characteristics which are perceived to make a male masculine (such as aggression) and a female feminine (such as a higher pitched voice) are not linked to evolutionary progression, but rather social and cultural environments. Research indicates that humans only demonstrate limited sexual dimorphism (>15%). If we can establish that a selection of the characteristics that are commonly perceived as biologically ingrained at birth, are in fact socially constructed, then we can also postulate that sex is not definitive and rather occupies a range of masculine to feminine. Accepting the concept that sex is a spectrum, allows the possibility that transgender women are born with the emotional and cognitive processes of a female and therefore have the right to identify a female.

Secondly, I would question the intent of a person in authority in making this comment. I believe that by stimulating a debate, we run the risk of offending. Canadian Psychology professor, Jordan Peterson, himself not a stranger to controversy regarding trans rights, suggests that offence is a necessity for the progression of society and the pursuit of truth. He argues that these uncomfortable conversations allow the recognition of opposing opinions and evaluation of the best possible outcome. Offence itself does not facilitate furthering of the argument, but offence may well be a component of an argument thoroughly investigated. Freedom of speech should be allowed to express controversial viewpoints, where offence could be a consequence of conversation. If the overall aim is to offend, the argument is alienated before the conversation has begun, and purposeful progression is unlikely to occur. Only when we have the full context in which the comment was made, can we then establish one's motivations. I can identify only two possibilities:

- 1) The person was deliberately trying to offend.
- 2) The person is attempting to stimulate a debate.

Arguably, if such a comment were to be made in a philosophical or political based discussion, such a statement would be made to open a conversation, on a topical issue. Debate encourages critical thinking, which is applicable in wider society. In this light, I would deem it an appropriate comment. However, if such a statement were made in a workplace, national or international stage, the person would be accused of attempting to influence impressionable minds to socio-political congruency. I would question the necessity for this comment in this context. I believe it fails to create an environment of individual thinking and could possibly threaten an environment of mutual respect, which allows topical conversations to occur and the progression of society. As a person lower in the social hierarchy, it would be uncomfortable to question and confront someone who occupies a senior position within society. However, the necessity to question people's viewpoints in a courteous manner is essential, despite the comment being slightly confrontational in nature.

Thirdly, it is crucial for the person to consider the consequences of making this comment. Those that occupy a senior position in society must recognise that they determine the nature of discourse. Words matter. Unguarded sweeping comments risk unnecessary offence.

I would like to highlight two consequences of making this comment in this way:

Certain viewpoints will remain unexpressed for fear of ostracism.

The claim that a trans woman isn't a woman immediately isolates the LGBTQ community. If such a perception were to be adopted by a wider community, it could possibly result in the victimisation and bullying of the LGBTQ community. In society, those in power should lead by example and nurture a diverse spectrum of opinions. The maltreatment of the LGBTQ community fails to benefit any involved parties. If the person uses their authority to dictate an ideology, they are failing in their role as a person of influence and power. They suggest that the subject is not open to debate and implicitly suggests what is and what isn't acceptable social expressionism.

I believe we also have to question the ethical nature of such a comment.

Immanuel Kant suggested that we treat people with respect for persons, to create an environment of mutual respect. The 'a trans woman isn't a woman' comment is likely to provoke a reaction. I believe that such a comment can easily cultivate an environment of hatred, resulting in the marginalisation and prejudice against the LGBTQ and transgender community. The principle of treating others with respect is crucial to modernised society. Although freedom of speech is highly important, this right should not be abused in order to offend.

Despite its inflammatory nature, with skilful mediation, such points could still be discussed and debated with consideration. It is important that we hold people accountable for their words and not recoil from difficult conversations when we consider remarks cruel or immoral. Therefore, I believe a discussion in which the definition of a woman, the intent of the person and the consequences of their actions were considered, it could possibly be beneficial to both debating parties.

# Book Reviews

## Book Reviews Foreword

I chose to run the section on book reviews as I feel passionate about books and reading, and the emotions that they can invoke from the reader. I was really interested to see the views of others through their book reviews, as I think that these reviews will really open up different perspectives and topics of conversation. Reading is an important part of everyday life and it's nice to be able to share the love of reading with our school community through these book reviews and the magazine. It is also intriguing to see which books were chosen to write about as it really gives an insight into what people enjoy and creates excitement over books that you may not have otherwise read. It gives people the chance to find something new to read if they enjoy a particular review, making this section a great opportunity for both readers and writers alike. I hope that these reviews inspire you and create more excitement towards reading throughout the whole school community.

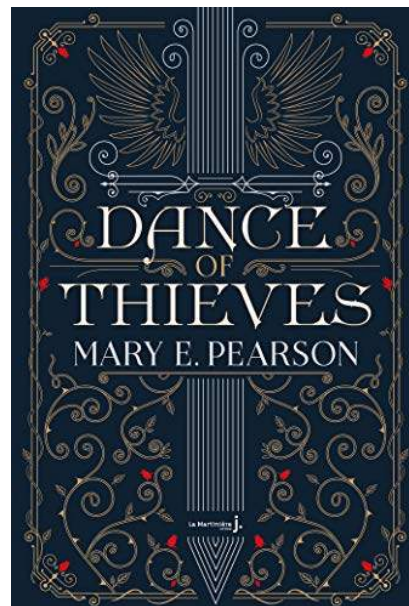
**Olivia Firth - Upper Sixth**

### **Dance Of Thieves - Mary E. Pearson - Gaby Owen, Upper Sixth**

Dance of Thieves is the first book in a duology that takes place in the Remnant world. It is a book on illusion and having to "blink last" but may also contain some mature themes that can sometimes be disturbing. The book is extremely enticing and full of so many of the best possible tropes. Kazi and Jase are the two protagonists who have equally compelling character arcs which we see develop throughout the book. Kazi Brightmist grew up alone and a thief after her mother was taken from her. As she grew so did her skills and she earned a spot as a member of the Queen's most elite soldiers, the Rhatan. She is sent on a mission to another kingdom to find a missing war criminal, however she gets entangled with more than she may have bargained for.

Jase Ballenger is the new Patrei, head of the Bal-

langer clan, trying to keep his lands protected and safe. Yet, this transition into power will be difficult but will his family be enough to protect him from the real truth of the world? Will he be able to restrain from falling in love with the trickster? After arriving at the Ballangers land, Kazi learns that there is more to Jase than she thought.





# Book Reviews

As unexpected events start to spiral out of control, bringing them closer together, they continue to play a cat and mouse game of false moves and motives to fulfil their own secret missions. While Kazi and Jase have contrasting moral and correct conduct they have one leading similarity with their dedication to family and duty. This book has everything you could ask for: fake dating, no strings attached, enemies to lovers, deciding between duty and love and spying which is all perfectly intergrated into an intricate plot full of scheming, betrayal and murder. However, still managing to have romance with every twist and turn of the adventure.

This book balances romance and action leaving you constantly on edge and engulfed into the story you won't want to put down. The book has a little bit of a slow start but once you get a few chapters in you will feel like you are part of the mythical kingdom. I absolutely love that the main character is a strong female who doesn't rely on anyone. The addition of riddles into the book really encapsulates Kazi as a character as she loves tricks and being left just out of reach from people, keeping within the shadows. This book is easy to read with lots of detail, so you will always know what is going on, which will have you reading for hours as you just have to know what is going to happen at the end. The book does have a bit of a twist at the end in which all the questions that you are left with are answered in the second book (Vow of Thieves) which is just as alluring as the first. I thought that this book was magical and fantastical in a new sense which is very interesting. I thoroughly recommend this book to those who enjoy romance and action combined into a nice package of a fantasy book.

## **The Way I Used To Be - Amber Smith - Liv Firth, Upper Sixth**

'The Way I Used To Be' is a cleverly written book based on the sexual assault and coping methods of a teenage girl named Eden McCrorey. I found it a somewhat difficult book to read due to the heart-breaking reality of Eden's circumstance. In the beginning, I think it's easy for readers to relate to Eden's character as an innocent young girl who is

viewed as a perfect student and generally nice and friendly person. However, this swiftly changes throughout the four parts of the book as we see Eden vastly change into an unrecognisable version of herself, who allows her trauma to take over her life and change her into someone with an unhealthy relationship with alcohol, drugs and sex. She becomes careless and stops caring about anybody, hiding her feelings away and shutting herself away from the world. As we see this transition, it gradually becomes harder for the reader to see, as the character that they initially identified with becomes quickly unrecognisable and unlikeable.



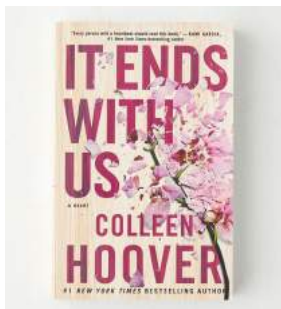
Smith has written this book in such a way that the reader really gets an in-depth look into the mind of a survivor and victim. I believe that it is an educational novel as well as a great piece of fiction as it really allows the reader to understand the coping methods of a victim in ways that you never would've thought they would be affected. Smith shows the reality of being assaulted by somebody that you know and how tragic and harrowing it is to deal with obsessive thoughts, doubts, blame and worrying about other's reactions. She effectively shows that it is not as easy to come forward as it may seem to someone who has not been through the same experience and shows that certain coping methods are not always conventional or healthy.

# Book Reviews

I think this book was really well written although hard and uncomfortable to read at certain points. I enjoyed seeing the character development throughout with a somewhat satisfying ending to the book, however I think the book would've benefited from an extra chapter or two at the end to truly show the ending that readers have been waiting for. I think 'The Way I Used To Be', truly focuses on Eden's journey in an extreme way, yet also portraying a feeling of hope from the very beginning. I think Smith did well to bring the book full circle and I would recommend this book to anyone to read as it is a truly eye-opening read and gives readers a level of understanding that I think is rare to find anywhere else.

## **It Ends With Us—Colleen Hoover - Chloe Olajide, Upper Sixth**

This book is unlike any I have read in my many years of reading. I went into it completely oblivious to what 'It Ends With Us' is about or the raw emotion that comes when reading the book for the first time. What makes it so incredible is the realism, authenticity and relatable nature Colleen Hoover communicates in the book. It isn't like the cliché romance books which convey the fantasised perception of love everyone dreams about; it shows the reality of many relationships, and the side of love that is not romanticised in movies and novels.



'It Ends With Us' portrays a powerful message and can leave even the most emotionless people with goosebumps by the end. It is moving, and although it will make you think of things that may be uncomfortable to think about, it without a doubt will change many people's perspectives on topics they may not have appreciated or acknowledged. It has definitely been heavy on my heart since the day I read it and occasionally I find myself thinking about this book and how powerful and consuming it is (in the best way). I certainly cannot say the same about ANY other book I have read, no matter how good they have been. Alt-

hough it sounds like an extremely intense book, I assure you there are many happy, light and hopeful moments which will make you smile. This isn't necessarily a 'sad' book but more of a strength book because dealing with the issues in this story took a lot of strength from all the characters involved.



Many people may say that this book is based on a love triangle (and I personally am not the biggest fan of love triangles) but I wouldn't even say that it is one. It is a lot more elaborate than that and going into the story expecting a love triangle may make people feel that they have to pick a side but as you venture deeper and deeper into the story, you find that this isn't the case at all.

Another excellence about the story is that the main character Lily is such a beautifully written leading lady and growing with her and being part of her journey is something I loved. I felt like her best friend in a way and can only wish I could know her in real life. I wanted to jump through the pages of the book into her world and give her the biggest hug and at the end, because of my emotional attachment to her, I felt the absence of not only her but the whole book.

There are many lessons I have taken from this book and many quotes which I use for both myself as I go through life and as advice to others. One that particularly stuck with me is: "All humans make mistakes. What determines a person's character aren't the mistakes we make. It's how we take those mistakes and turn them into lessons rather than excuses."

It was impossible to put 'It Ends With Us' down and I read it in less than 24 hours. I will keep recommending this book as it NEEDS to be read.

# Book Reviews

## **My Year Of Rest And Relaxation— Ottessa Moshfegh - Grace Shropshire, Former SGS Head Girl**

**Content warnings for this novel: Mental illness, drug abuse, alcoholism, SA, terminal illness, abortion.**

'My Year of Rest and Relaxation' by Ottessa Moshfegh follows a young woman in the early 2000s, navigating, or rather avoiding, New York City. She makes it her mission to fall into a deep, self-medicated sleep for as much of the year as she possibly can. Thin, blond and privileged, the leading lady of this novel is the epitome of annoying. Able to survive on her inheritance, unemployment benefits and money earned through renting out her parent's home, the protagonist is free to indulge in her self-destruction with no further consequence. I had no expectations of the novel when I began reading, only the knowledge that the book seemed to appeal to Gen Z in a post-pandemic (yes, I am still banging on about the pandemic), social media driven (yes, I am also banging on about social media) world.

Following the explosion of the 'sad girl aesthetic', catalysed by social media culture in the age of the pandemic, the story of Moshfegh's self-pitying protagonist rapidly gained attention. A story of a young, educated woman (who looks like Linda Evangelista), wallowing in her NYC apartment and sleeping all day. How romantic. Her hobbies of purchasing expensive lingerie and Chinese food whilst blacked out due to a cocktail of designer drugs hardly sounds like the struggle she feels it to be. The lure of this lazy yet luxurious lifestyle did not go amiss as the book gained traction with an audience who were similarly confined to their homes, just with less drugs, money and desire to stay inside. I want to address genre of content that was dominating the internet at the time of the book's peak popularity. If you cast your mind back to the atrocity of the 'Imagine' video, created by Gal Gadot in the hopes of cheering up the world from her multi-million dollar home, you may remember that many people were trying to force uplifting content down the unwilling throats of the western world. The foil to this jarring positivity came in the form of... you've guessed it... romanticising mental illness. With Bo Burnham's YouTube special 'INSIDE' providing a more relatable, digestible message, social media's cynical

youth was engulfed by a general desire to feel like rubbish. Sort of like eating a 'Toxic Waste' sweet as a kid; We wanted a sharp moment of suffering that had a delicious relief to it. People wanted to feel their sadness, to nurture it as a means of coping with the strange events going on around them, much like the protagonist of the story. Thus, Moshfegh's 2019 novel found itself to be remarkably poignant, almost a year after its initial publication.

With the context of the book's popularity out of the way, I want to address my first impression of our narrator. I hated her. Working as a receptionist in a sleek and sexy art gallery in the big apple, after receiving a degree in art history from Columbia, she has the 'it girl' lifestyle, yet she is miserable. Her passive income as a landlady and a sizeable inheritance, on top of her effortless beauty, is not enough to satisfy her and this unfortunately makes her detestable. Not to mention her crude and casually racist inner monologue which openly berates people for their lesser appearances, class or general personality. She is a nasty piece of work. It is clear from the beginning that she is suffering from many forms of mental illness, something that money and good-looks simply cannot appease. Nevertheless, Moshfegh crafts her an utterly stinking attitude that cannot be overlooked, even by the most sympathetic of readers.



But then, (everyone saw it coming) we learn of her relationship with her parents. Her father, an educator who never really made time to get to know his daughter, died of cancer, just a short while before her mother dies from drug abuse. Heavy. One of my favourite aspects of this novel is the brutality used in depicting both of her parents. Moshfegh personally removed the rose-tinted glasses from my face and trampled on them. Her mother's lifelong abuse of alcohol and drugs is not wistful and tragic and her father's illness is not cushioned by flowers and 'get well soon' cards. Both of these deaths rattle beneath the story we are being told.

# Book Reviews

This theme of general 'death' continues as our narrator's...friend?...acquaintance?...something like that, Reva, attempts to confide in her about her mother's battle with cancer. Reva is a bulimic alcoholic. In a perfect example of the novels distinct humour, our narrator watches her closely as she sips from a 'Mtn Dew' can, topping it up with tequila each time a fragment of space is made available by her sipping. The two women showcase two very distinct modes of mental unrest: High functioning and low functioning. Reva diets and drinks and visits her dying mother and exercises and works and parties and sleeps with her married boss who also happens to have children and AHHHH. All whilst her co-star floats away into her meticulously planned escape. Reva idolises her friend. Naturally thin and only getting thinner, God-given beauty, wealthy. Perhaps this is why she remains loyal, despite how poorly she is treated. As I mentioned, she attempts to seek understanding in regards to her mother's sickness from a fellow child of a cancer patient. I should rather say that she drinks alone and talks to herself after work as her friend lies, barely conscious, on her expensive couch.

The final character I want to talk about is Dr Tuttle. The narrator finds her in the Yellow Pages in her pursuit of the shadiest looking psychotherapist who can prescribe pills. This woman has to be one of my all time favourite characters in modern literature. Often seen wearing a mysterious neck brace, Dr Tuttle potters around her roasting hot office, sporting kaftans and sweating as her frizzy hair gradually fills more and more of the real-estate around her head. All it takes is for the narrator to spin a fabulous account of her dreams about her VCR eating her to be prescribed a plethora of anti-psychotics and other anxiety medication. She secures her ammunition for her war on cognition with ease.

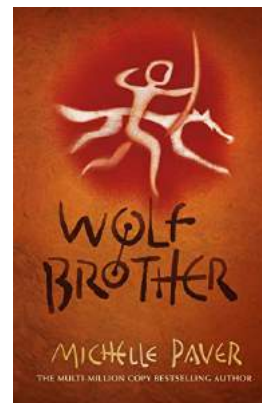
So, did my hatred for our narrator disperse as I read her story. Quite frankly, no. This proves to me that Moshfegh is a master of capturing the essence of wasted privilege. However, I did begin to develop sympathy for her as she gradually revealed her trauma, which there is a lot of. I encourage you to read this book, particularly if you are a young woman attending SGS currently, as it is briefly existing in a sweet spot of context (blah blah pandemic, blah blah social media). It's narrative is far from laborious and the humour inter-

weaved with the tragedy is dark and snappy. If you were to ask me if I enjoyed the novel I wouldn't be able to provide a clear answer as it is less of a story to be enjoyed, and more strange insight into an incredibly damaged mind. I do enjoy Moshfegh's unique tone as it reflects confessional feminist writers of the past and present, making the voice of this book is hauntingly familiar. She explores the most gruesome aspects of modern-day womanhood with no bells or whistles and, if I am to be completely honest, her narrator's ignorance reminds me of the worst aspects of myself.

As a final note, in an attempt to encourage you to read this novel, you get one spoiler: About half-way through I realised that the story is set in New York, 2001, and Reva is working at the World Trade Centre.

## **Wolf Brother - Michelle Paver - Robert Lord, Second Year**

Wolf Brother is the first book in a series of 6, and tells the story of Torak, a 12 year old boy with an abundance of determination, on a quest to seek the Mountain of the World Spirit and kill the malevolent, demon possessed bear, which brutally murdered his father at the start of the story.

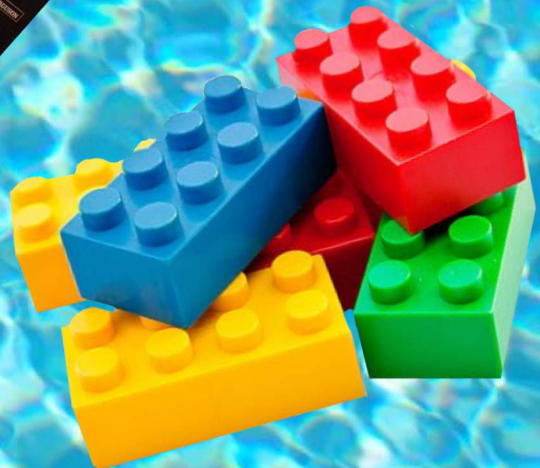


As soon as I read the first page, I was hooked and knew that I was reading something special. The pages are filled with exciting and mind blowing descriptive vocabulary and, as well as being dark in places, there are a number of really touching moments involving Torak and the characters he encounters, especially the orphaned wolf cub that becomes his constant companion.

# Book Reviews

Torak is constantly on the move throughout the book - desperately trying to escape the demon bear while hunting for the Mountain of the World Spirit Mountain - which makes this thrilling story fast paced and action packed from the very first page to the very last. I felt that the story (set 6,000 years ago) was well thought out and I was often tempted to flick through the pages to try and find out what was going to happen next. Throughout the book there are references to Torak's extended family and their own stories, which helps the reader to understand why Torak is now in the position he is in and allows us to discover more about him and his family. I liked that each character in the book is a member of a clan and each clan worships a clan animal.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and went on to read the full series, which did not disappoint. I would recommend Wolf Brother to those who enjoy a mix of adventure, fantasy and horror, but perhaps not to those who are easily frightened, as there are quite a few gory, gruesome and horrifying moments which may scare the more nervous reader!



# Literary Criticism

## Literary Criticism Foreword

Welcome to Lit Crit!

I have always thought that literature is designed to be pulled apart, analysed and pondered over. After reading a good piece of literature, I often find myself re-analysing societal constructs, the past and future, human nature, and certainly aspects of my own life. The reason that literary criticism is powerful to me is because a good novel always intends to send the reader off with a message, whether that be a warning or sentiment, intended or unintended, original or something you have never even considered before.

### Rebecca: a generational perspective - Hannah Cope, Upper Sixth

-My own perspective

-My dad's perspective

Rebecca is a piece of gothic fiction written by author Daphne Du Maurier. It follows an unnamed heroine who marries 'Maxine De Winter', a widowed, wealthy man. However, throughout the novel, the name of Maxine's former drowned wife, Rebecca, seems to be on everyone's lips, haunting the house, and never being too far from the terrified heroine, through the housemaid (and my dad's ultimate favourite character) Mrs Danvers, who is described beautifully and hauntingly by Du Maurier throughout the novel: 'great hollow eyes gave her a skull's face' (clearly, every bit the gothic figure). *Du Maurier's novel is, in fact littered with little descriptions like this that give the book its gothic edge, another example being 'insidious fingers' to describe the vines of nature in a desperate attempt to claim back what was theirs, which obviously contributes massively to the mystery genre that the book falls into.* Amongst this are other prolific quotes, which reminded me, upon second read, of the narration from Fitzgerald's 'The Great Gatsby'; both tend to explain situations in overarching quotes which directly give the reader an idea of what is going through a character's mind, without being too forceful over it, therefore retaining that element of mystery. An example of this is 'I could fight the living but I could not fight the dead'; here, Du Maurier directly references Maxine's former wife. It brings me on to a question I was pondering throughout the

Our job is to analyse these intentions, find meaning in pages of hard craft and utilise them to learn from our mistakes and change our lives for the better.

I decided that it would be interesting to show generational differences when writing a piece of literary criticism. Often in a publication like this, one only gets the perspective of young people, and I think it is important to be aware of the value that people of all ages can contribute to any piece.

Enjoy!

## Hannah Cope - Lower Sixth

entire novel, and one many critics have also pondered:

Why does the heroine remain nameless?



Right from the beginning of the novel, Du Maurier is constantly hinting and somewhat confusing the reader into a territory where although they understand what is going on throughout the novel, the twist near the end still comes as a surprise. Maxim tells the unnamed heroine 'You have a very lovely and unusual name.' at the start of the novel, but the reader never actually learns this name, nor the character's maiden name. From the start, Du Maurier cleverly hints at the heroine's loss of identity. Essentially, she is competing for the right to bear her title of Mrs. de Winter throughout the novel; she never can escape the infamous, dangerous figure in the background that is Rebecca, who despite her death remains a key figure in the house; seemingly lived by all, and drawing the heroine's identity away from her, *with Rebecca's name constituting the book's very title.* Rebecca seems to even overpower the heroine at times; this comes to a head in the poignant ball gown scene, in which the heroine decides to wear Rebecca's dress which she wore at her last costume ball. The dress serves as a symbol of the hero-

# Literary Criticism

*It was Mrs Danvers first gave the heroine the dress. It becomes clear in chapter 18 why Mrs Danvers gave Rebecca the dress from her quote 'You tried to take Mrs. de Winter's place'. It also shows the flaws of Mrs Danvers character; she is shown, upon the heroine getting to Maxim's home and settling in, as a terrifying, looming character, a superior to the heroine. The reason why I like the character is not only for her fierceness in the face of this new situation, but also her carefully hidden flaws that Du Maurier carefully drops in. For example, it becomes clear as the book progresses that Mrs Danvers is isolated, in the midst of despair, and primarily, in denial about Rebecca's death. She clings on to the memory of someone who likely did not care about her at all, so naturally acts defensive when she is mentioned. Her devotion is her downfall.*

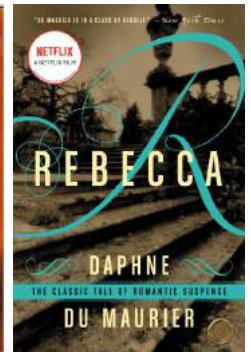
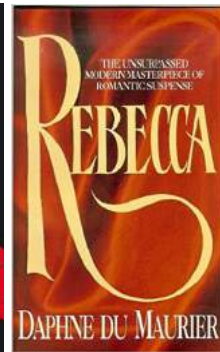
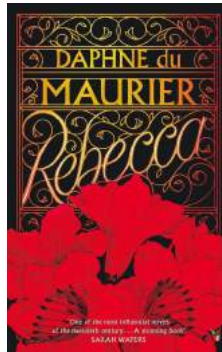


There is also an element of juxtaposition between appearance and reality in Rebecca, which contributes to the reasons as to why the protagonist's name remains hidden. Just as Mrs Danvers appears to be hiding a feeling of loneliness under her hard, stubborn demeanour, the way the story is presented to the reader is a juxtaposition between appearance and reality. *Although reader is constantly aware of some kind of mystery surrounding the death of Rebecca, the ending still serves as an shock.*



The narrator is writing from memory, so naturally drops hints about the eventual twists and turns of the novel's ending, but most importantly, Du Maurier takes this idea of memory further, by using the theme of memory to show the loss of the heroine's identity. The entirety of Maxim's house is a memory of Rebecca, so much so that with every step the heroine takes, she walks in Rebecca's footsteps. It is suffocating for the heroine, so much so that she loses her identity completely.

My dad and I both agree on the idea that despite the novel being from the perspective of the heroine, the heroine is hardly a character in the plot. *The heroine is just a crucible for the main plot devices and themes, the main one, of course, being Rebecca herself.*



## **Dystopia: The many faced nightmare - Edward Griffiths, Third Year**

Dystopia is a genre that tells of worlds so different and simultaneously so similar to the one we live in. It is undoubtedly one of the hardest genres to write as it combines so many other styles at once. They are often highly political, encouraging people to see the danger of certain ideologies; usually sci-fi or fantasy, requiring large quantities of world-building; and, as fiction, always have to be creative and entertaining. On top of this they can fit into YA, action, romance, dark humour, as well as a variety of others showing the creativity fostered by writing in this style.

# Literary Criticism

*'It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen.'* The most famous piece of dystopia is undoubtedly 1984. It is one of the most influential pieces of writing ever, with its tentacles stretching to elections and even the way we speak. George Orwell's infamous novel follows a man named Winston (perhaps a reference to Winston Churchill), a man dissatisfied with the world around him. He is a party member of IngSoc, the looming shadow of a soviet invasion of the west and nuclear war which immediately followed the second world war. The world is divided between 3 super-powers that are constantly at war despite having the same ideology, system of government and living standards. Winston starts writing a diary, not technically a crime but something that if discovered would result in his death. He falls in love with a colleague also in the same legal predicament as the diary. He confides his deviancy to O'Brien, a man he believes to be a member of an organisation fighting IngSoc and working to freedom, who subsequently persecutes him as he is revealed to be a thought police agent. He is then moved to Room 101 in Mini-luv, essentially the ministry of justice, where he is tortured with his worst fear: rats. He is broken by the torture and set free, his thoughts having been corrected and his love dissipated according to O'Brien the thought police 'do not merely destroy our enemies; we change them.' The core of the novel examines the contradictions within all totalitarian societies. Mini-luv tortures; the ministry of peace, mini-pax, wages war; the ministry of truth - mini-tru - lies to the people with propaganda; and the ministry of plenty - mini-plenty - systematically lowers rations and starves the populace while having mini-tru modify records to make it look like they are being raised. Even the party's slogans are contradictory: 'WAR IS PEACE, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY and IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH' is engraved everywhere. There is strangely some truth in this as when Winston searches for freedom in O'Brien he becomes a slave to the party once more and the constant changing of allies and enemies in the war makes the lines between peace and war blurred.. The concept introduced as a remedy to this is 'double-think' believing two contradictory things at once. Big brother is a saviour, big brother is evil. The rations are getting larger because mini-tru says so but I know they are getting smaller because I'm

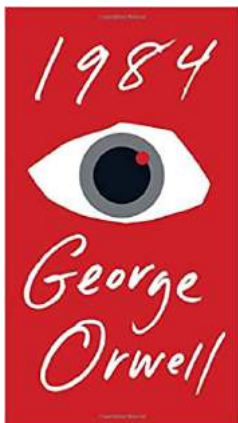
eating less. Oceania was at war with Eastasia, Oceania was never at war with Eastasia. The control the state exerts is so great that it can bend a populace's mind to their will and make them believe a multitude of contradictory truths. A statewide campaign of gaslighting, enforced with constant surveillance makes 1984's superstate one of the most formidable organisations in literature. Orwell's message here is widely anti-totalitarian and anti-surveillance but also emphasises the importance of thinking for oneself - 'Orthodoxy is unconsciousness.' - and the preservation of tradition and history. The fact our main character is unable to remember his own, pre-INGSOC, is again telling in how much control the state exerts but also is representative of how important the past is. According to Orwell 'Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past.' In his famous opening line Orwell tells us the true nature of authoritarian nations: blindingly bright but bitterly cold.

The other widely known dystopia novel is Brave New World; I read this book when I was 13 and it remains my favourite novel of the genre for reasons I hope to convey. Written 17 years earlier in 1932 by Aldous Huxley, this book focuses more on the dangers of consumerism and access to constant happiness. Our protagonist this time is Bernard Marx, an Alpha who works in the baby-making factories. No one gives birth, everyone is born through an elaborate system of cloning where large templates of people are designed to be (in decreasing order of intelligence) Alphas, Betas, Gammas, Deltas or Epsilon semi-morons, designed exclusively for manual labour. This on top of feeding citizens slogans that support the status quo means that citizens are at the complete disposal of the state. Instead of surveillance and batons, the world state here uses unlimited access to sex, abortion and drugs combined with a strange form of universal income that doesn't really rely on work done to keep its citizens blissfully unaware of their own enslavement. Bernard takes a trip to a "savage" reserve near the start of the book with a woman that is known for her sexual prowess so much so that she is referred to as 'pneumatic'.



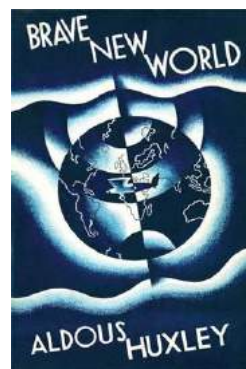
# Literary Criticism

Savage reserves were a product of 1930s racism; they essentially exist so that people of other races, namely Native Americans and other tribal communities, can be separate from the “civilised” world as they would be unable to change their culture so drastically. It is fortunate that they do not occupy much of the book as these parts are quite hard for modern readers to get through but anyway, whilst there, Bernard finds a child born of a woman that claims to be from the “civilised” world. The son and woman are taken back to London where the woman spends the rest of the book high on soma - the fictional drug with no consequences that simply provides happiness and has ‘all the advantages of Christianity and alcohol; none of their defects’, when enough is consumed at once the person is completely incapacitated in a state of bliss known as a soma holiday. Soma is latin for body though I don't particularly know what Huxley meant for us to infer from that. The son however is the interesting part so unused to this ‘Brave New World’ (an exert from a Shakespeare play) that he retreats into the forest after being sexually assaulted by the confused ‘pneumatic’ woman. There, discovered and hounded by the media, he hangs himself and the book ends with a description of the scene.



This society is so incredibly different from the one in 1984 that only in this genre could they be considered comparable. Some people have even tried to argue that this society is a Utopia: defined as ‘an imagined place or state of things in which everything is perfect’. Undoubtedly everyone here is happy, the only people not sex-addicted or drug-addled are sent to Iceland like Bernard to be kept away from where they might cause damage or a world-controller, the people in charge of this society, like Mustafa Mond who gleefully hordes books from the past, revealing the truth of this world to John the

savage when he is brought before him. The only time we see discontent among the poulace is when their supply of soma is briefly cut off so as long as the soma keeps flowing and they keep on getting paid to work and buy then nothing need change in the world. And nothing does. We are never given any sense of time in the novel it could be decades, centuries, millenia since the financial crash that caused the construction of this state. Though interestingly their are constant references to Henry Ford, ‘Ford’ semming to have replaced ‘Lord’ in phrases like ‘Oh my Lord’ suggesting an overarching worship of consumerism comparable to the society of 1932 and 2022 alike.



In conclusion I believe that these two books are some of the most important pieces of literature to date. Their influence is monumental yes but the way we can hold them up to our own world and use them to hold our own governments accountable in invaluable. If the societies here were entirely different from the ones we live in then they wouldn't have been written about. Huxley and Orwell both had their fears for how society would look in 100 years, I just hope we never let them down.

## The Importance of Crooks in ‘Of Mice and Men’ - Frances Walmsley, Fifth Year

Steinbeck includes Crooks in ‘Of Mice and Men’ to show the prejudice and hardships of being a black man during the great depression in 1930s America.

Crooks is used as a way to show the racism black people faced during the Great Depression. Crooks is completely segregated from the rest of the ranch workers.

# Literary Criticism

He sleeps in the 'harness room' in a 'long box filled with straw' next to a 'manure pile'. This shows how he is separated from the white men due to the Jim Crow Laws. Crooks also encounters a threat from Curley's wife. She says she could have him 'strung up so easy it ain't even funny'. This refers to having him lynched, which was a common practice against black people during this era. Curley's wife saying this highlights how low down in the social hierarchy Crooks is as he is even below a woman. Crooks also gets 'hell from the boss when he's mad'. This shows that, being a black man, he gets blamed and hurt for things he hasn't even done. He is also frequently referred to as a [N-word] and isn't allowed in the bunkhouse to play rummy with the other men. This shows the constant abuse Crooks and black people in general faced, and how it was completely normalised at the time.

Crooks' character shows the importance of friendship throughout the novel. Almost all we learn about Crooks is in one chapter showing the seclusion from others on the ranch. Crooks, to the other men, is seen as a 'proud aloof man' who 'kept his distance and demanded that others kept theirs'. However, the reader sees that this is just a façade put on by Crooks so that he doesn't seem weak, which is the least desirable trait by all men on the ranch. We see that to pass his free time he 'reads a lot' and rarely comes out of his room. Though they have both been there a long time, Candy says how it's the 'first time' he's been in Crooks room and 'only Slim and the boss' had been in before. Crooks truly feels extremely lonely, he says that 'a man goes nuts if he got nobody... gets sick'. This shows his honest feelings of desperation for a companion, and shows how lonely life in the great depression was as people were bitter and sour towards each other. This is highlighted by George and Lennie's importance and how human interaction and a community is actually necessary for survival. Describing loneliness as a sickness shows that Crooks physically feels the pain if not having any friends.

Crooks is important in 'Of Mice and Men' to show the futility of the American dream. The American Dream is the idea that anyone, regardless of their background can achieve the prospect of land, money and self sufficiency. Crooks shows that 'nobody gets to heaven... nobody gets any land'. He talks

about how he has seen many men come and go and never achieve the dream. He also shows how his race has stopped him from achieving the American dream, and that no other ranch would employ a black man. However, part of Crooks briefly shows hope. He 'dreamily' tells the story of his 'Old man's chicken ranch'. Crooks' hope lies in the past, he doesn't expect to encounter it in the future. He offers to 'lend a hand' to George and Lennie of their dream farm for 'no cost' showing how desperate he is. Shortly after, Crooks returns to reality and claims he was 'just foolin'. Later on at the tragic ending of the book, we realise Crooks is right, and that the American dream is unachievable. Crooks shows the harsh reality of 1930s America, and the 'American dream' is just an imaginary goal to keep people inspired and provide hope.

Overall Crooks plays a very important role in the novella, he shows the harsh discrimination and abuse that black people had to face, and the experience of segregation and what it does to men in the Dust bowl. He also shows the hopelessness of the situation, and how tough life is for a black man trying to achieve the American dream.

## Othello, Love & Control - Shanzay Hanuk, Former SGS Pupil

*'In the literature of love, men control women.' In the light of this view, discuss how Shakespeare presents male attitudes towards women in this extract and elsewhere in the play.*

*This is an extract from an essay written regarding the above question.*

In the tragedy Othello, Shakespeare shows the presence of the patriarchal society, as suffocating a woman's autonomy. Through the relationship of Othello and Desdemona, Shakespeare presents the power balance as unequal, with Othello, arguably indirectly, forcing Desdemona to become submissive and obedient, as highlighted by her reduced speech around him.

# Literary Criticism

In this way it can be argued, that through a marriage, a man can assert control over a woman, due to society's defined roles set out for a husband and wife. However, in Act 2 Scene 1, before Othello arrives and it is still uncertain whether his ship has survived, the audience sees Desdemona in a position of strength, confidently engaged in a battle of wits with Iago. Therefore, it can be argued that women are in power, controlling how men view them, adopting a passive persona, and allowing themselves to, supposedly, be controlled, in order to gain the protection and security that comes with having a husband.

In the extract, the relationship between Othello and Desdemona is presented as elevated and heavenly, shown by Othello's hyperbolic language to describe being reunited with Desdemona. 'Oh my soul's joy!' is exaggerated language to emphasise the intensity of their relationship. The use of 'soul' has religious connotations, and alludes to the idea of salvation, suggesting that Desdemona is this salvation for him, contrasting with the reference to Othello as 'a blacker devil'. Othello's reference to his soul, is a public show of his affection, showing off to a patriarchal society, and proving to other men his own value, based on the woman he's with. Othello's view of Desdemona as angelic, locks her into the role of the perfect wife, by declaring to everyone what she means to him. As Desdemona is Othello's 'soul's joy', it shows that this is the effect she must continue to have on him, as arguably, the husband doesn't need to fulfil an expectation in a marriage other than providing financial security, as it is more important for a woman to find a husband, in this society, than for a man to find a wife. When the audience is first introduced to Othello and Desdemona's relationship in Act 1 Scene 3, it is presented as a loving marriage between equals. However, the groundless nature of their love, allows Othello to create a perfect view of Desdemona, controlling her with an expectation of who he wishes her to be. 'Amen to that, sweet powers' is a religious reference, as if Othello is thanking the gods for the blessing that Desdemona is to him. Through Othello's perfect expectation of Desdemona, Shakespeare comments on how the societal expectation of women, is a form of control, as women will never meet these goddess-like standards, and, therefore, will be kept in a position of insecurity, unable to leave the marriage and immersed in guilt. 'For I fear my soul hath her content so absolute' alludes to Othello's insecurity, as he desires to keep this perfect ideal of their marriage, projecting his expectations onto Desdemona, and placing a pressure on her to not let him down. The use of 'soul' highlights deep emotion, and it is perhaps Shakespeare presenting Othello as going against the norm of a

'manly, emotionless' man, and celebrating the emotional side of his relationship. This shows that Othello controls Desdemona, through setting unrealistic expectations of her as a woman and as a wife, and allows Iago, in Act 3 Scene 3, to plant the thought in Othello's head, that Desdemona might have been unfaithful to him, bringing her down to the status of a person, rather than a goddess, in Othello's eyes. Desdemona's presentation as a pure, kind woman, and later as a possible adulterer, evokes the virgin/femme fatale dichotomy, and it is perhaps Shakespeare's comment on society's attempt to control women, either as wives or as outcasts.

## **Why will be going to University with a copy of Euripides' Medea in my back pocket -Rabeeah-Nuur Mohammed, Former SGS Pupil**

While I accept that the title of this article suggests Medea is a romantic coming-of-age comedy – it's not. Instead, think Bonnie and Clyde gone sour. In this Greek Tragedy, Medea takes centre stage as a deranged figure whose marriage to Jason took place after she helped him to retrieve the Golden Fleece, deceiving her father and killing her brother in order to do so. In recompense, Jason decides to marry Medea, removing her from what he considered to be a 'primitive land' and they have two children. However Jason soon sets his sights on a younger bride, Glauce.

Euripides' Medea, in my own opinion, represents the zenith of Greek Tragedy. It is a tale of revenge, lust, jealousy and immorality that in the eyes of a modern audience transcends our own circumscribed selves. We observe the consequences of female vengeance in response to marital betrayal and a newfound liberation in the absence of male authority. Jason's abandonment of his marital bed ignites a fire in our female protagonist that preys on masculine insecurities. Her unpredictability evokes fear and she is, as the nurse describes her to be, 'a passionate soul, implacable, stung by fortune.' In her bid to seek revenge on Jason, Medea sends her sons to Glauce bearing the gift of a garment; however upon wearing it, Glauce is burnt alive and her father tragically dies too as he tries to save his beloved daughter. Furthermore Medea kills both of her sons, as they too are products of Jason's selfish desires.

# Literary Criticism

Our knowledge of Western Literature has meant that we are unable to comprehend an Ancient World in which women demand mutual validation and emotional satisfaction from their partners. Medea uses societal expectations of men in order to justify her fury towards Jason whilst simultaneously transgressing them. She is expected to stay at home, look after the household and work at the loom. Jason is expected to provide for his family and pay off his debt to Medea after she helped him retrieve the Golden Fleece by staying loyal to her. Men are commonly presented as being unaware of the fact that women too, have emotions and desires. I would not assume that Euripides was a hyper feminist, but he does explore unnecessarily taboo subjects surrounding conflict instigated by unsatisfied women, notions which were otherwise foreign to Ancient audiences. This play is about a woman, and includes speech from slaves and other household help who would otherwise have had no participation in Athenian democracy; social minorities are therefore at the centre of this play and here we see the real impact of masculine desire on all of those around them. Medea is a foreigner and therefore by Greek standards, a 'barbarian.' A Greek audience would have heavily dismissed Medea as a woman whose foreign roots were incompatible with Grecian standards of morality, but this dismissal masks a real, underlying fear. As men attended the theatre to watch this production, how could the aristocrat be sure that his own wife was not at home plotting revenge on her husband? Jason was a quintessential Greek hero, a figure of admiration and respect, but nonetheless he was not immune to experiencing such marital discord. Then again, why would a wife want to seek revenge on her husband? I assume that the number of Greek aristocrats slowly leaving their seats in theatres to pay their wives a visit after watching Medea kill her and Jason's children implies there were many reasons for women to have sought revenge.

Now, I would like to make it clear that in no way am I suggesting Medea is a role-model, she isn't. In fact, she serves to teach us a lesson. Vengeance when felt in excess, like any emotion, can cause irreversible damage on a person's own wellbeing and that of others and in this play, we directly see the consequences of this. Medea knows that if Jason leaves her, she will be 'stateless,' a concept which the hero in Sophocles' play 'Philoctetes' calls a 'living death.' Having anticipated what her fate would have been, she rewrites it. Now while I would never endorse Medea's actions, we should be able to see the place from which they came from.

As I leave sixth-form to embark on a new journey, Euripides' play Medea will remain a close companion of mine. There has been significant progression in modern times surrounding the treatment of women but it is through reading female-driven plays such as Medea that we can appreciate and measure such progression. This play, like most pieces of literature, bridges a gap between past and present, but particularly in this instance, the Greek and Modern woman. Women, and men, still have the capability to control and rewrite their own fate (but perhaps no longer need to resort to murder in order to do so.) There are mutual expectations placed on both men and women regarding their roles in society, and we observe much healthier relationships as a result of this. My advice to those reading this; stay away from/don't become like Jason, invite your significant other to the theatre to save an insecurity-driven trip home and in your own time, read Medea!

# Literary Figures

## Literary Figures Foreword

In December 2021, the literary sphere lost two of its most remarkable contributors. Passing within a week of each other, Eve Babitz and Joan Didion had a sporadic connection throughout the entirety of their careers. Both women, born and raised in California, lived in and documented Los Angeles around the same time, each reflecting on the nuances of their home state as well as the general patterns of American culture. The loss of these distinctive voices revealed the deep interconnection between the literature we consume, and the lives of those behind it – thus inspiring the title of this section.

Upon editing each piece chosen for this section, I realised that each author chosen was in fact female. Nationally, despite only 25% of English A-Level

## Eve Babitz- the life and advice of a 60's "it" girl - Maddie Corcoran, Upper Sixth

Eve Babitz was born in 1943 to Mae and Sol Babitz; an artist and a violinist for the Twentieth Century Fox Orchestra. In 1972, Babitz began writing *Eve's Hollywood* and it was later published in 1974. Immortalised as the nude beauty facing down Duchamp and as one of Ed Ruscha's *Five 1965 Girlfriends*, Babitz's first book showed her to be a razor-sharp writer with tales of her own. Described as a "confessional novel", the book was soon followed by *Slow Days, Fast Company* in 1977, *Sex and Rage* in 1979, *L.A. Woman* in 1982 and *Black Swans* in 1993. *Fiorucci, the book*, published in 1980 is perhaps one of Babitz's lesser-known works, alongside *Two by Two* from 1999. 20 years after the release of *Two by Two*, Babitz's emerged back onto the literary scene with *I Used to be Charming* in 2019, her last book before passing on 17th December 2021.



students being male, there is still a gender inequality prevalent in literature, albeit a narrowing one. Didion herself commented on the impact of gender roles throughout her life, famously illustrating her experience of writing in the 1960s by describing "A man who wrote novels had a role in the world, and he could play that role and do whatever he wanted behind it. A woman who wrote novels had no particular role." Each of these writers tells a story of a changing culture and changing attitudes toward women, and their influence can be found everywhere.

I hope you enjoy reading each of these articles as much as I have.

## Kate Horsley - Upper Sixth

The 60's: a time known for drugs, love and revolution. Babitz's observations captured the smoky LA scene as her short stories explored some of the adventures of Hollywood's "it girl". The self-proclaimed journalist, party girl, bookworm, artist and muse transported the reader into "Eve's Hollywood"- the first of seven books released by Babitz which offered a cinematic portrait of LA. Babitz's stories worked to both feed and abolish the idea of the movie lifestyle, written by a woman still hopeful to live in such a way. A frequent visitor of the Château Marmot, Babitz tells the story of her multiple day love affair that isolated her from the world. And, how she was suddenly pulled back into reality by her hotel room TV to the looted fiery streets of LA in protest to the Vietnam war. Babitz's nonchalant outlook on life is soon followed by a statement of her personal sadness as her favourite restaurant was looted. Babitz's writes "Maybe if I'd stayed home, none of this would have happened". Her collection of stories in *Black Swans* dive into the self-absorption of Babitz as she writes in an aware accountability of her past mistakes without denying her natural response, leaving the reader managing to relate to such a human and realistic reaction to distressing news.

# Literary Figures

The Hollywood fantasy of Eve's stories is further shown in "Black Swans" where Eve describes her tango lessons and desire to look like "one of those dancers" on the stage. The overall tone helps to take the book down a lighter road for a few pages compared to her raw and distressing "Free Tibet" in which she describes the discovery of her close friend being diagnosed with AIDS and then his sudden death- in which she was oblivious to. Throughout the sixteen pages, Eve goes through the mourning and acceptance of death as a fate, describing that "It's not that that kills people... it's the fear. I mean, its okay to die... we are divine", leaving a sense of comfort to those who have grown a connection to Babitz through her books.



When looking at the life of Eve, her rise to recognition began with the image of "Marcel Duchamp playing chess with a nude Eve Babitz". The freedom and sexual liberty that Eve portrays in this image summarises her outlook to life, which is echoed throughout her own books. It also recognises the contrast between Eve and other literary female figures of the time such as Joan Didion. Both women in the L.A author scene of the 60s were believed to be in the same social circle but contrasted beliefs quite drastically. Eve, although never married, believed in the idea that men should care for women. This idea was frequently supported by her many intense relationships. However, Didion believed in independence- a more modern approach for many women. Despite Eve's more "old fashioned" beliefs, her sexual liberty when facing the stereotypes of the 60s/70s was unexpected and revolutionary. Her book "Slow Days, Fast Company" explored her relationships with both men and women and her acknowledgement that, as a woman, certain things would overshadow her literary work- she couldn't be successful in the sense a man could- especially

in that time. A warning other unknowing L.A girls, Eve states "women are prepared to suffer for love; it's written into their birth certificates. Women are not prepared to have 'everything', not success-type 'everything'". Babitz's stance perhaps led to her showing off and owning her sexuality freely. Eve repeatedly spoke on her sexual relationships, which have always been an interest to fans, perhaps due to the incomprehensible idea of a women being able to find pleasure in sex and literacy equally. When looking at such images and portrayals of Eve, like the chess photograph, it is interesting to look at her life through a set of eyes which aren't hers. Although Babitz doesn't edit or twist her stories to paint herself in a specific way, the ability to see her in another light or to support our opinions on her as an author is always fascinating.



After learning of her passing in late 2021, many recognised the loss the literacy world had just experienced. However, as Eve herself put it: her books and her experiences often set lessons for those she has left behind. Overall, Eve's natural flair and sharp wit manages to tell her stories of a conventionally attractive "it girl" in the best way possible as she manages to bring the same fun, carefree outlook on life into her own writing style. Babitz, although sometimes portraying herself as oblivious and possibly ignorant by modern day standards, is the reason I, and many others, believe her books hold such a sense of fantasy and glamour that will forever uphold her legacy.

## Joan Didion - Kate Horsley, Upper Sixth

Best known for her scathing novels and literary journalism, Joan Didion was perhaps one of the most influential writers of her generation. Shortly before Christmas in 2021, Didion passed away from Parkinson's disease at the age of 87, yet her legacy remains deeply embedded within American culture as one of the sharpest observers of contemporary society.



In 1934, Didion was born to Eduene and Frank Didion in Sacramento, California. Frank Didion was a finance officer within the US army, and, after the second world war, a real estate dealer. As an army brat on her father's stations, Didion spent much of her childhood absorbed in the vast world of literature, later referring to herself as a "shy, bookish child." Didion's fascination with the literary world extended throughout her adolescence, tasking herself with typing out Ernest Hemingway's works to learn more about varying sentence structures. Indeed, her distinct voice of precision and elegance had been practised since her mother presented her, aged five, with a notebook and a suggestion that she should calm her anxious self by writing. With the aid of her writing, alongside acting and public speaking, Didion pushed herself to overcome social anxiety, but her juvenile fantasies set out in that notebook were contrastingly bleak, ranging from death in the desert to suicide in the surf. Didion's early education was perhaps also less traditional; the family were constantly relocating due to the nature of her father's job, meaning that she did not attend school regularly. In 1943, her family returned to Sacramento, yet Didion revealed

in her 2003 memoir "Where I Was From", that moving so often made her feel like a perpetual outsider.

During her senior year of college at Berkeley in 1956, Joan entered, and won, Vogue's "Prix de Paris" essay contest, having written a story on the San Francisco architect William Wurster. Didion was rewarded with a job as a research assistant at the magazine and travelled to New York to commence a writing career at Vogue - thus beginning a journey that would come to define her as one of her generation's most prolific writers. New York was, in many ways, the birth of Didion's career and allowed her to explore this newfound proximity to glamour. But it was her home state, California, that provided her with her richest material. Didion spent the first eight years of her working life at Condé Nast and eventually rose to the position of associate features editor. During this period, Didion began writing her first novel, "Run, River" which was published a year before her return to the west coast, in 1963. The text examined the disintegration of a Californian family, acting as both a portrait of a marriage and a commentary on the history of California. Writer and friend, John Gregory Dunne, helped her edit the book, yet 40 years later Didion turned a more critical eye on "Run, River" as she recalled writing it as a homesick girl. Didion judged her debut to be a work of false nostalgia, constructing an "idyllic myth of rural Californian life that she knew never to have existed". Didion and Dunne married in 1964 and left New York together that same year. After spending eight years in New York, "the idiosyncrasies that had once been a source of inspiration had become cliché". To Didion, New York just wasn't home.



# Literary Figures

After returning to California, it was here that Didion's writing truly flourished under the influence of her home state. In 1966, Didion and Dunne adopted a baby girl, whom they named Quintana Roo, after the state on the eastern coast of Mexico. The atmosphere of California provided the couple with ample opportunities for writing in the personal mode that became known as New Journalism. This revolutionary new style emphasized the search for meaning over the reporting of facts and employed various literary modes that were uncommon in the sphere at the time. Didion's first book of collected journalism, "Slouching Towards Bethlehem", was published in 1968 to critical acclaim, marking itself as one of the decade's era-defining works of literature. The book, her first collection of nonfiction, was hailed as a seminal document of culture and counterculture in 1960s California and established Didion's reputation as an intensely acute social observer and prose stylist. Didion's work was favourably received upon publication, but its popularity continued to grow and very slowly became a cult. As the writer Caitlin Flanagan remembered, Didion "had fans – not the way writers have fans, but the way musicians and actors have fans – and almost all of them were female".



"Slouching Towards Bethlehem" takes its title from the Yeats poem "The Second Coming", which opens the book itself. The influence of Yeats' poetry is seen across the globe, yet Didion's take on his work is perhaps one of the most recognisable. Each essay explored the chaos of Californian culture, acting as a self-contained commentary on life and its expectations within the 1960s. Whilst the book consists of separate essays, each focusing on different aspects or stories of American society, California itself is really the dominant character of the an-

thology, or at the very least the unifying theme. Didion's ability to see connections obscure to others, is reflected in her own words during the book's preface as she explains "my only advantage as a reporter is that I am so physically small, so temperamentally unobtrusive, and so neurotically inarticulate that people tend to forget that my presence runs counter to their best interest. And it always does. That is one last thing to remember: writers are always selling somebody out."

The acclaim which greeted her first work of nonfiction was regarded as instrumental in sending her second novel, "Play It As It Lays" (1970), to the top of the bestseller list and earning it a National Book Award nomination. Despite being so well received, Didion only ever published two fictional pieces- with "Play It As It Lays" being her last. Her true passion lay with the documentation of life around her, and she extended this inspiration in the form of her essays. Her next collection, "The White Album", was published in 1979 and, similarly to her first book, was composed of writings originally published elsewhere. Here, the title took its name from the legendary, untitled Beatles album, which Didion explained to have epitomized the 1960s for her. However, perhaps her most celebrated work was in fact her most personal. In late 2003, John Gregory Dunne, her husband of over 40 years, died of a heart attack at their dinner table in Manhattan. Dunne's sudden exit was detailed in Didion's searing account of grief and disbelief in "The Year of Magical Thinking". The memoir was critically admired for its clarity and honesty, receiving the National Book Award for Nonfiction in 2005. Didion delayed Dunne's funeral until their daughter, Quintana, had recovered from pneumonia and septic shock, yet tragically, her recovery was brief, and Quintana died just a month before the book's publication. Didion continued to document her experience of personal loss in the memoir "Blue Nights", a devastating account of her daughter's life and death. The book challenged how much tragedy one person can take, as Didion's heart-breaking prose laments over the passage of time amongst other wide-ranging observations on motherhood, mortality and the aging process.



# Literary Figures

In 2013, Joan Didion was awarded the National Medal of Arts by U.S President, Barack Obama, who described her as “one of our sharpest, most respected observers of American politics and culture”. Didion’s rich writing style of “haunting power and global vision”, was finely tuned and precise, with each essay reading like a work of fiction. Joan Didion wrote herself into the fabric of her larger California narrative and “even when she wasn’t on the page, her persona loomed over it.” Didion’s enduring relevance is evident today through society’s sustained interest in her work and personal life. Released in 2017, the Netflix documentary “The Centre Will Not Hold” followed the growth of her influential career, opening up Didion’s prose to a new demographic. Perhaps best summarised by her husband, “Joan writes because she writes”, and she remains one of the foremost chroniclers of social and cultural upheaval in contemporary America.

## Agatha Christie - Rebekah Nichols, Upper Sixth

Agatha Christie was a highly talented detective writer who was, and continues to be, the best-selling novelist of all time. She became renowned for her gripping stories and mystifying characters which remain recognizably outstanding in literature today. She became particularly well known for her novels surrounding the long-lasting characters Hercule Poirot, a private detective whose unmatched intellect was internationally admired by police forces as well as the character Miss Marple, who was based on her own grandmother, appeared in 12 of Christie’s novels and became renowned for her problem-solving skills and great understanding of the human mind.

This accomplished writer began her career whilst working as a nurse during the First World War. This is the time she started writing her first novel, “The Mysterious Affair at Styles”, which was published in 1920 (after the war) and introduced the incredibly gifted detective, Hercule Poirot. Although her debut novel was not directly based on a true story, she was greatly inspired by her background of attending to Belgian soldiers who suffered from the brutality of war.

Miss Marple was introduced in 1927, where she appeared in short story called “The Tuesday Night Club”, which was included in Christie’s collection titled “The Thirteen Problems”. The story follows Miss Marple and her friends through the alternating roles of narrator, where they each relay a real-life mystery which the other members of the group attempt to solve. Miss Marple’s first full-length novel appearance was in “The Murder at Vicarage” where she uses her observational skills to prove a couple innocent of a gruesome murder they had previously confessed to.



In total, Christie wrote around 66 detective novels including her one of her best-selling novels, “And Then There Were None”, which sold approximately 100 million copies after being published in 1939. This thriller follows the story of guests and staff as they gather to an isolated manor and collectively attempt to discover the murderer after they start being killed one at a time.

In 1955, she won over 3 awards for her intricate detective novels and due to her long-lasting influence in literature, was allocated the Anthony Award for Best Writer of the Century, 24 years after her own death.

On the whole, Agatha Christie was an influential, acclaimed writer whose creative masterpieces and original thinking are continually celebrated in today’s literary world.

# Literary Figures

## Alice Walker - Millie Job, Upper Sixth

Alice Walker is best known for her novel 'The Colour Purple' which was published in 1982 and made the author the first Black woman to win the 'Pulitzer Prize for Fiction'. The novel explores the themes of oppression, feminism, and race- all rather familiar to Walker due to her background in social activism as well as her earlier work about these ideas, written prior to the release of the novel.

Walker's first novel, 'The Third Life of Grange Copeland', was released in 1970 and, since then, Walker's works have ranged from poems to short stories, to novels. Her work allows the public to gain an insight into what it meant, and means, to be an African American woman and she is celebrated across the globe for this. Her activism, along with her writing, has established her as a literary figure. In an interview, when talking about her activism, she told the New York Times "I really have done all that I could do in this body, I really flung myself against the machine."



At the time of publishing 'The Colour Purple', Walker received criticism against the novel, yet the epistolary work has reached much critical acclaim since. Walker's childhood in the American South has been one of the main influences on her work due to her experience of the oppression and segregation experienced by the Black community during her adolescence. Furthermore, Walker's commitment to her studies as a child led her to winning scholarships to multiple universities and allowing her to become the great writer, we know her as today.

Another famous work by Walker is 'Revolutionary

Petunias', a set of verses in reaction to the Civil Rights Movement that became a 'National Book Award' finalist. Once again, these poems focus on the struggles of the Black community and are a true example of Walker's admirable commitment to activism. It is clear that Alice Walker is a literary figure who will be remembered for hundred of years to come thanks to her brilliant activism for women and minorities as well as her undeniable literary talent.

## Jane Austen - Nina Hedley, Upper Sixth

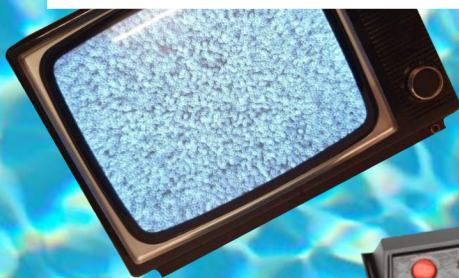
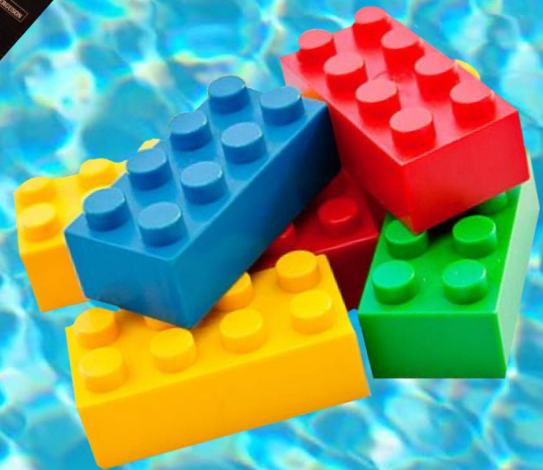
Born December 16, 1775, in Steventon, England, Jane Austen began writing stories as a teenager. She wrote plays and short novels, often parodies of previous literacy work. Written around 1793, Jane wrote a short novel called "Lady Susan", which was often referred to as her most ambitious early work. Most known for writing "Pride and Prejudice", Jane Austen is one of the most famous and influential authors throughout history. Throughout the years, her work has been translated into around forty languages. Austen's works have been adapted into films, tv shows and theatre productions, such as the 2005 Pride and Prejudice starring Keira Knightly and Matthew Macfadyen, and the 2020 Emma starring Anya Taylor-Joy. Not only has her work been directly turned into these film adaptations, but they have influenced many other well-known films such as Clueless, starring Alicia Silverstone, which is based on the book "Emma" as well as Bridget Jones's Diary which loosely follows the plot of "Pride and Prejudice."

While she is one of the most known authors today, originally, her works were published anonymously. Her first book, "Sense and Sensibility", was published anonymously under 'A Lady', and her next book - "Pride and Prejudice"- was published under 'the Author of Sense and Sensibility. Although she wrote six major novels, only four were published within her lifetime (Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice, Mansfield Park, and Emma). Her other work was published after her death in 1817, when she died at the age of 41.

# Literary Figures



Jane Austen never married, though was briefly engaged in 1802 to Harris Bigg-Wither, but she called it off not long after. In a letter to her niece she states, 'Anything is to be preferred or endured rather than marrying without affection'. In society, it was expected that women marry, and while this theme is seen throughout her stories, her own personal views can often be seen within the writing along with her personal experiences. Her stories portray the differences between marriages, whether they occurred for economical reasons, out of necessity or to be lucky enough for real love. A quote from "Pride and Prejudice" perfectly sums up how Jane Austen felt about the reality of marriage within society – "Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance." Embedded within her writing you can see the critiquing of the way society views women and men differently. Jane Austen's work represents so much more than just a well written book to enjoy but is packed with wit and humour as well as deeper meanings to life and the roles society expects from us. Her work continues to inspire generations despite them being written over 200 years ago.



## Television & Film Foreword

Within this section there is discussion of cinematic greats, animation and smaller TV projects as well in a break from the usual discussion of literature analysis which usually only investigates written works. However, film and TV have just as much capacity for complexity and nuance as those written works and often can contain more. After all, the old phrase is “a picture speaks a thousand words”. TV and Film operate on a different level from written work however, as the artistry in making them can sometimes include massive interdisciplinary

### Shadow & Bone - Jonathan Bettridge, Upper Sixth

Back in 2012, Leigh Bardugo began writing the first instalment in what would soon become known as the Grishaverse; the book known as Shadow and Bone. Cut forward to the 23rd of April 2021 and after much elevator pitching and attempts to secure funding; Bardugo managed to get her Grishaverse onto televisions for the first time via Netflix. It tells the story of Alina Starkov, played by Jessie Mei Li, who is a young Ravkan girl who find out one day she is the Sun Summoner; a person capable a destroying what is known as the shadow fold, a rift of shadows and monsters that spilt the Russian inspired nation of Ravka in two. However, that is not the only story it tells.

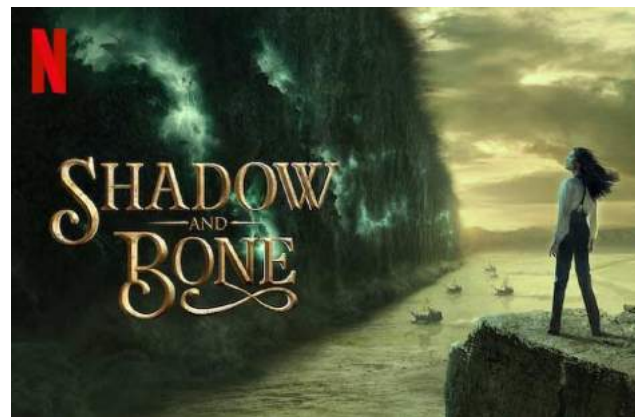
In between the release of Shadow and Bone book and it's respective Netflix series, Bardugo release a duology of books; known as Six of Crows and Crooked Kingdom. These took the fantasy book world by storm and thus in the Netflix adaptation, the infamous band of six known as the Crows appeared.

While not necessarily a revolutionary piece of media, it is a case study in an excellent adaptation of a book into a series. We see many times with pieces such as Harry Potter how adaptations of book to film can be difficult and often unsatisfying to die

projects that combine teams of artists so large it boggles the mind and produces genuinely staggering works of fiction and fact that astound in nearly every capacity from visuals to writing. I hope that within this section my writers and I can present a compelling case that TV and Film should not be relegated as an art form with no nuance but instead deserve as much merit as some of the great works of literature from the past and can genuinely tell compelling stories, with deep and complex characters that deliver a good and nuanced message for the modern age.

### Jonathan Bettridge - Upper Sixth

hard fans of the books and the time and finance constraints placed on screen writers often limits how much they can include when compared to the nigh on endless number of pages and endless amount of nuance you can fit into a series of books.



The Shadow and Bone TV series is slightly unique in the fact Bardugo was an executive producer on it and worked with Eric Heisserer who acted as showrunner, creator, head-writer and another executive producer. Together they adapted the two series off books into a singular narrative on screen telling a slightly different story than the one in the books. Where Alina is still the main character and her narrative is the main plot thread, the Crows also play an important role in pushing the show forwards and their narratives and internal relationships are

Heisserer did a wonderful job translating each of the characters quirks and internal thoughts onto the screen in massively subtle ways. Such as the Darkling's cold narcissism being shown through not only his words and action but his excellent acting, by constantly trying to place himself so he is higher up than everyone else and using his hands to grab at other people and control their movements giving him a creepy and unsettling air; especially around Alina where he is especially controlling and manipulative as she is a way to get what he wants and struggles to understand that it is not always about him. Small character moments are obviously Heisserer's bread and butter and the relationship between Kaz Brekker, the leader of the crows who is played by Freddy Carter, and Inej Gafah, a master of stealth and Kaz's confidant who is played by Amita Suman, is the perfect example of this. In the books it is explicitly stated that Kaz never takes his black gloves off around anyone due to his cold and nigh on isolationist nature; the only exception to this rule being Inej. However, in the show we only get a short scene in which Inej sneaks into Kaz's room and speaks to him while he washes his hands in which Kaz never acts to pull his gloves back on. Only giving a brief shot of Kaz's hands and a mild twitch before continuing. These small details mount up in the background of the show presenting genuinely nuanced characters that go beyond just their speech, all of which are emphasised by small actions and quick camera shots to otherwise seemingly unimportant moments.

What must also be discussed in regard to what makes the nuance of *Shadow and Bone* go beyond the books is the show's ability to construct a perfect atmosphere. The best example of this being the city streets of Ketterdam, a bustling industrial era Amsterdam inspired island city. Whenever we get shots of the Crows moving through the streets there is a constant air of nearly oppressive sinister-ness, where the set designs ranges from making the alleys and streets tight and cramped with many people trying to fit through small gaps; to areas thick with dense smog lying on the ground as it parts around our characters feet; to the incredibly dark lighting, occasionally too dark in some scenes, with the only set lighting coming from

small gas lamps giving off a yellow-orange hue to illuminate the dirtied brick and metal. The atmosphere is laid on thick between the in-set lighting and the set design producing the criminal and impoverished scenario which is seen in Ketterdam. However, the contrasting side of the set design is within Alina's story within the walls of "The Little Palace"; the place where the main character trains and hones their skill and fosters relationship with people with similar abilities. Within these sets we are treated to fantastic imperial Russian architecture shot within the Festetics Palace in Keszthely. The baroque interiors are perfectly complemented by Mairzee Almas work as director and Aaron Marton as director of photography to bring them truly to life. One of the most stunning scenes is the party scene, where Alina shows off her power in front of the whole royal gathering. There is an intricate play of lighting going on here; it begins with pyromancer characters throwing around a ball of fire above the crowd. Then the scene proceeds to the darkling darkening the room and Alina producing radiant balls of light and then filling the room with divine light. While it was touched up in post-production, all the lighting within the scene was done via a crane camera and a number of crane lights to move the lights over the crowd to give a realistic and tactile feeling to the characters powers, with only the texturing of the lighting done with after affects.

This stated ability of the directors to produce these tangible and realistic scenes really helps elevate this book to TV show conversion above many others as the small details which are usually lost in translation manage to make it across and the unique work done in the shot crafting allows for a whole new raft of subtext to be allowed and makes the magic side of the show all that more realistic without the need of complex and expensive CGI past an expected amount of post-production and after affects.

## How Invincible Uses its Fight Scenes - Marley Busby, Former SGS Pupil

Invincible is an adult, animated superhero show based on a comic by the same name that began airing on March 25th 2021. It follows Mark Grayson, the son of a superman type figure known as Omni Man, as he discovers his powers and tries to balance his new life as a superhero with his personal and school lives.

The first episode shows Mark discovering his powers and figuring out his superhero identity, as well as introducing us to Omni Man, the Guardians of the Globe, and a handful of other colourful characters. This episode feels like it's the start of a very standard superhero story, until the very last scene when Omni man kills the guardians of the globe, leaving their base a gruesome, bloody mess. This comes as a complete shock to the viewer as the episode has given them a kind of false sense of security up until this point, and nowhere is this displayed better than in the fight scenes.



The episode starts with the White House getting attacked by a pair of villains called the Mauler twins. However, their evil plans are thwarted by the Guardians of the Globe and Omni man. All of this is scored with a piece of generic hero music. In this fight, the heroes don't sustain any lasting injuries, or even shed a drop of blood. The worst thing that happens to anyone who's not a villain is Nightwing getting stuck under a tank, which is solved very easily. This goes further to reinforce

this sense of security that the show presents; it shows these heroes as these indomitable and borderline unstoppable titans, particularly Omni man. This unstoppable persona harkens back to the early years of comic books and comic book shows on TV where the heroes and villains were more one dimensional before a form of renaissance later in their lifetimes where they began to present more nuanced characters and stories. A trope this show explicitly plays with via this inherently generic first episode which goes a long way to set up the shock and twist at the end of the episode as previously mentioned.

Another scene that helps set a false tone is when Mark fights Titan, a common low-level thug on the street. Mark barely takes a hit during this fight; however, he does do a lot to cause massive amounts of damage which the show goes out of its way to demonstrate. This fight scene merely acts to set a precedent for the emotional core of the subsequent scene. This aforementioned scene is a heart to heart from Omni man to his son explaining the fact the Mark is unprepared to be a hero. This is once more a fairly generic plotline we have seen reiterated in modern media, particularly in superhero movies, time and time again which furthermore sets the precedent who a generic show with a false sense of security. We also see Mark's reaction to this conversation, which is dramatic and melodramatic to its core, it shows that Mark isn't ready to be a hero yet, both through the damage he caused during the fight and the damning remarks by his father. This further helps to present this story as if it's going to be a relatively feel-good superhero show about a teenager who gets powers and has to balance his personal life with his hero life.

This expectation is shattered at the end of the episode. The Guardians of the Globe arrive at their headquarters before a moment of suspense due to no obvious reason and then are attacked by Omni Man. The Guardians retaliate against Omni Man, and even this scene pushes a false sense of security for a bit. no one takes any serious damage, intense music in the background and a false premise of Omni Man losing. The first section of this scene makes it seem like the big twist is Omni Man being evil.

This is until he gets his hands on Red Rush who he disposes of in an incredibly brutal and graphic way by crushing his skull, that is the next hint that this is not yesteryear's superhero animation. This use of brutality is very rarely scene in the world of animation, even less so in superhero media and goes a long way to shatter that false sense of security the episode presents by completely changing the tone of the scene and the show going forward as any pretence of mercy we have is shattered as the truth of the violence that will be here is shown. We get a reaction shot of some of the guardians and the music cuts out. From here, he kills each of the Guardians; each death as gory as the last. Once all the guardians are dead, Omni Man passes out and the episode ends.



This fight sets the tone for a lot of the fights throughout the series, but why bother with setting up a false sense of security in the first place? Among other things, it helps the pacing. In the Invincible comic, we don't get introduced to the guardians until Omni Man kills them. They are supposedly the best superheroes in the world, and yet they all die in their first scene. We don't get to see them being heroes, so their deaths are much less impactful. Whereas in the show, we are introduced to all of these characters beforehand and shown small fragments of their lives to flesh them out as characters with unique personalities and stories. This small emotional connection, or at least curiosity, the audience is intended to form helps accentuate the shattering scene at the end of the first episode and force the audience to understand the chaos that unfolds in the show later down the line via having a closer connection to the events.

## A Review of "Lord of The Rings: The Two Towers" from the Perspective of the Youth - Jonathan Bettridge, Upper Sixth

I believe, for my part at least, it is incredibly difficult to say something about any movie or media surrounding Lord of The Rings that has not been said before. The impacts it has had on film, books, online and in everyday culture is rivalled by very few other pieces of media released since the beginning of cinema. However, I shall throw my hat in the ring.

I believe that The Two Towers is the best of the Lord of the Rings movies but by only a slim margin. This margin can be traced back not to the story which remains consistently good throughout all 3 movies given it is a consistent narrative, but to the film making that went into it. Nothing demonstrates this quite as well as the cinematography that Andrew Lesnie and Peter Jackson employ. The mix of wide sweeping shots via drone and helicopter, a relatively new film making practice at the time, gives us chance to survey the grandeur of Middle Earth and provides a scale that is replicated by very few films with modern budgets and modern film making effects. These wide sweeping shots, like the opening shots over Silvertine which is the mountain where Gandalf fell fighting the Balrog, matched with Howard Shore's ethereal score set the tone of this movie perfectly and presents the slightly darker tone going in as it leads into an extended version of the death of Gandalf which sets precedent for this being the movie where the heroes come closest to falling and faltering under the might of Saruman and Sauron. The other component of this film making is the use of gimble hand camera in the fight scenes, particularly in the battle for Helm's Deep. This brings the viewer right into the action as they are seeing it from the first-person perspective as the battle rages on around them.

The blood, dirt and rain are brought to the foreground and the viewer is made aware of the dire odds our main characters have in this battle. The chaos of the battle is further accentuated via the use of only a limited gimble and very little postproduction video stabilisation which preserves the shakes of the camera as the camera man runs. This shaking makes it hard for the viewer to focus on one particular detail as there is constantly so much happening all the time and everything is constantly moving and shaking around them.

The next component that brings this film ahead in the fantasy genre is the astounding costume design of Richard Taylor and Ngila Dickson and the Make Up of Richard Taylor, Rick Findlater, Jeremy Woodhead, Peter Owen, Janine Schneider-Marsan and Noreen Wilkie. This is most evident in the Orcs, both of Mordor and of Isengard. Who, apart from the occasional bit of CGI duplication, are all actors covered in a mix of prosthetics, make up and costume. The Orcs are immensely dehumanised to the point at which recognising most of the people who play the orcs as human is incredibly hard, this lends the Orcs a unique form of terror as anything that can be sympathised with is stripped away from them on first viewing even before you see their behaviour. Commendations must be further given to the makeup and prosthetics team as previously stated, a vast majority of the orcs were done with practical effects. This practical edge furthers their sheer ferocity as any chance of it falling in the uncanny valley due to CGI mishaps or the knowledge that it is CGI falls apart as those terrifying figures are real. On the other side of the coin; you have the design that goes into the humbler folk, the hobbits and the shire. The Shire is a simple and humble place with simple wooden houses dug into the earth, and thus the costume design and make up reflects this way of living for the hobbits. They are dressed in simple wool spun tunics and brown wool shawls. They wear no shoes, instead favouring to walk barefoot. This presents this warmth and friendliness to the hobbits that is not found in any of the other characters throughout the story as the rest of them dress in hard leathers or steels. On the point of the other characters, members of the kingdom of men are shown throughout the movie to be

decked in the aforementioned materials; this shows their martial inclinations and gives them the more medieval look that shows the more hardened life they must all live for the most part. These choices in costume design focus the viewer in and bring these characters to life in the small details in their armour and / or garb.



The final thing that must be mentioned is the Grant Major's work as the set designer for the movie. The world of Middle Earth here is made to feel as real and tangible as our own. From the humble wooden Celtic lodgings of the people of Rohan, to the fire pits and forges of Isengard, to the stark and barren stone of Helm's Deep. All of these environments, while built out of mostly natural environments, feel realistically constructed and filled with thousands of tiny details. In Helm's Deep alone there are piles of resources scattered in the caves and tiny marks of previous battles and erosion on the walls and on the keep itself. These environments act as what is known as "Environmental Storytelling" where no direct spotlight is put on the place the characters are in but the items and set decoration strewn around the set tells a story all unto itself and provides context to what is going on in the current scene without the viewer ever being explicitly told. This is what separates out Lord of The Rings from most other movies and TV series, the attention to detail and the reverence towards the source material. There are so many minor details strewn throughout all of the areas that realistically you can piece together most background characters thoughts and feelings in a given moment just by their surrounds and the environment they are placed in.



The Two Towers does represent something though, it is a landmark piece of film making which included revolutionary technology and is one of the best book to movie adaptations in living cinema history. However, it was before my time. I have only ever experienced the wake of this incredible movie and cannot begin to imagine what it must have been like for someone who held the books close to heart when these movies were released. Furthermore, I have only ever experienced how much these movies changed the film making landscape and only ever heard about their success in film making circles. Now I sit writing this article, thinking towards the future. With the literature of Lord of The Rings firmly behind us and no more movies in the works; I look to Amazon's upcoming Lord of The Rings show. I truly hope that they do something special with it and make it something to remember, but by what they have shown already; it seems irreverent to the source material unlike Peter Jackson's trilogy. I genuinely wish the best for this show and hope it creates a whole new generation of Lord of The Rings content, but I would be lying if I said I wasn't slightly hesitant about it.

## Why Some Modern Marvel Characters Feel Hollow Compared to Older Characters - Jonathan Bettridge

Marvel at its peak was known as a bastion of storytelling, artistry, filming invention and innovation. It pioneered some of the most common place Computer Generated Imagery (CGI) technology currently in use to this day, storytelling techniques and tropes that are commonplace all over many types of media and iconic scenes and characters that have been referenced in everything from advertisements to books. However, we are no longer in that golden age of Marvel from what we have been seeing of "phase 4" (the Marvel movies that have been released after Avengers: Endgame).

While the established characters have continued to be entertaining; thought provoking and wonderful to watch, such as Loki and Wandavision both of which are preestablished characters with ongoing

stories. There is a significant lack of brilliant new content that gives us new characters to latch onto after the loss of Captain America and Iron Man, the two poster children for the Marvel Cinematic Universe, in Avengers: Endgame. There is no better case for this I believe than Eternals.



Eternals released on the 18th of October 2021 to middling reviews, far lower than what Marvel was used to getting; clocking in at only an approval rating of 47% on Rotten Tomatoes and a 5.6/10 on Metacritic, both of which are aggregate scores from many places. This is due to the fact that the bit which made Marvel special, its characters, were lacking in this movie. While the visual styling of the movie was excellent and the ambition that went into making it was beyond compare; all of which coming from the ingenious mind of Chloé Zhao, the characters felt hollow. The film contains a main cast of twelve characters, and a run time of 156 minutes. That means there is around thirteen minutes for each character to have character development and become a fleshed-out character, and that is regardless of having the plot of the movie happen at any point. Then compare this to Iron Man, which is 126 minutes and has a main cast of five main characters leading each character to have around 26 minutes to have character development regardless of having plot happen; this time per character is double what the Eternals had!

Then we must look further at Ironman, as the movie is primarily about Ironman who gets the bulk of the movie run time to himself and gets the entire movie to have character development; where any member of the Eternals are fighting for screen time outside of the main members of Sersi and Ikaris which are followed much closer than the others. This leads to a problem of these characters having breakneck fast character development and lacking depth, such as Kingo who seems to undergo a substantial part of his character development off screen after he leaves the Eternals before the climax. Furthermore, a majority of the movie is not actually invested into making these characters anything more than celebrity cardboard cut-outs in a greenscreen as most of the movie is spent introducing these characters and giving the audience a surface level look at who these characters are. The problem then comes that the moment we begin to explore these characters the run time dictates that the next character needs to be introduced, leading to all of these characters feeling like they lack depth.

However, this does not mean that these characters are bad; in fact, many of these characters have really good premises, but lack the screen time to actually flesh them out. The biggest point in this case is Druig, an eternal who refuses the doctrine of never interfering with their conflicts and saw what he could do for humanity and split from the group. Instead of exploring his opinion on humanity, conflict, his relationships with the other eternals or how he runs his isolated society; we simply get a brief introduction, some conversation and then the eternals are attacked by deviants which cuts any attempt at development to a minimum. This leads to an incredibly interesting premise being wasted for the sake of setting up every other important character in the movie.

Although, I do not believe this is the fault of the movie. It seems that the directorial and writing teams were forced to include all of these characters to set up the future movies and series these characters are going to be in, hence moving the focus of the movie towards introducing the characters and expanding the Marvel Cinematic Universe rather than allowing the movie to be a standalone film

and having fully fleshed out and developed characters with a coherent and well told story.

This has also become a prevalent issue across all of Marvel, where movies focus more on the universe and less on the people living in it and saving it. Originally when the comics for these characters were first released, they were exactly that; a story about a person with some side characters and each week people would buy the new issue to see what the character was doing and not the bigger world and comic universe was changing. Now, this isn't to say that the cinematic universe or comic universe is a bad thing; in fact, I think it is an incredibly good thing which acts as a revolutionary new media for people to work in and with. However, it should not be as dominant as it is where it takes precedent over actual good storytelling. When people come to watch these movies, they come to watch the characters and the cinematic universe is a nice addition; the nice addition should not be the characters to give way to the background.

# African Literature

## African Literature Foreword

This section centres on a less exposed component of the overwhelming sea of various types of writing... which is African Literature. The pieces I have included range from adept analysis to intriguing research on ancient Egyptian literature – all delightful pieces that have been crafted with attention to detail- so I hope that these pieces of writings can serve as a conduit which generates a connection between you and a foreign kind of literature.

Big thanks to those who participated in this section;

## Exploring Feminism - Hadiya Adam, Upper Sixth

### *Inspired by Adiche's We Should All Be Feminists*

I really enjoyed reading this book as it made me reconsider the engrained misogyny of the patriarchal society that we live in, without scrutinizing men for behaving in ways that society has deemed to be right or acceptable. She speaks about the experiences of unfairness she has faced and offers logical and reflective changes that should be made for an overall positive development in cultural and societal behaviours henceforward.

**“I don't remember what this particular argument was about. But I remember yet as I argued and argued, Okolona looked at me and said, 'You know, you're a feminist'.**

**It was not a compliment. I could tell from his tone – the same tone which a person would say, 'You're a supporter of terrorism'. “**

### Stigma

There is a huge amount of stigma surrounding feminism...I wonder why that is the

it was much appreciated!

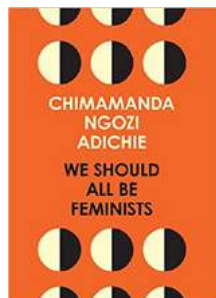
## Hadiya Adam – Upper Sixth



case? What is interesting, is that a study done in 2019 (by Scharff), shows that fewer than 1/5 women called themselves a feminist, which is in itself quite contradictory. Being a feminist in modern society almost translates to the image of a woman who does not care for herself. In Adiche's words, “you hate men, you hate bras, you hate African culture, you think women should be in charge, you don't wear make-up...” and so on. Numerous negative stereotypes are associated with the movement that collectively help to generate the image of feminist women being angry, unfunny and highly emotional. . I believe that there is a lot of misconception towards the ideology of feminism and what it represents, which is why it has an unfortunate reputation. A lot of people think that feminism is a movement that strives for women to more powerful and superior to men, when really it is a movement that strives for equality. Until our patriarchal society acknowledges this fully, it will be strenuous for us to progress. edges this fully, it will be strenuous for us to progress.

## Toxic Masculinity

**BOYS  
DON'T  
CRY**



Adiche criticizes the gender stereotypes of both genders that contribute to the gender divide and suggests, that “We must raise our daughters differently. {and} We must also raise our sons differently”. She recognizes the extremely toxic attitude towards masculinity in Nigerian culture, where men should be “hard”; the unspoken code of how to act for men, often drives them to become insecure and as a result they attain “frail egos”, as Adiche says. Men stereotypically suppress their emotions, are violent and threatening; it is expected of them to use their power to exploit women and other men who are weaker than them. They are introduced to these ideas from young ages where they are curious, innocent and are able to soak up information like sponges, therefore leading to these conventionalized ideas to become entrenched in their minds and difficult to unlearn as a result of that.

## Wole Soyinka - Millie Job, Upper Sixth

Nigerian playwright and Nobel Prize winner, Akinwande Oluwole Babatunde Soyinka (Wole Soyinka), was born in Abeokuta, Nigeria in 1934. He won the ‘Nobel Prize for Literature’ in 1986 and was the first Sub-Saharan African to be awarded the prize. Soyinka has written over two dozen plays, with one of his most famous being ‘The Lion and The Jewel’, which explores the ideas of corrupted African culture and how original African culture should be embraced

### His Life as An Activist:

Soyinka founded the ‘Drama Association of Nigeria’, and has had an active role in Nigeria’s history politically, due to his campaigning for Nigerian independence from British Colonial rule. He has been jailed previously, during the Nigerian Civil

War and eventually he escaped from his country in 1994. He has openly shared his criticism of the many oppressive governments Nigeria has seen and uses this oppression as an inspiration in many of his commendable works. Soyinka was awarded the ‘Europe Theatre Prize’ in 2017 and the reason behind this award, is for someone who “Contributed to the realisation of cultural events that promote understanding and the exchange of knowledge between people”. Throughout his life, Soyinka has demonstrated unnerving bravery to speak up against the corrupt social norms harming Nigeria, making him all the more a force to be reckoned with.



Soyinka’s work has been praised for showing a view of African, particularly Nigerian, culture that is not often shown to the Western world. Another famous work of Soyinka’s is ‘Death and The King’s Horseman’, a play based on a true Nigerian colonial event that he wrote during his political exile from Nigeria. Anticolonialism is one of the prominent themes in this play, like in many of Soyinka’s other works. Due to his upbringing in colonial Nigeria, where he watched his friends and family experience the brute of racism and injustice, Soyinka inevitably developed a “key sense of division”, as shared by Soyinka in the ‘Nobel Prize Conversations’ podcast. Wole Soyinka’s work is recognised by several nations due the important messages Soyinka presents through them, sharing his life experiences through plays, novels, poems, and essays. Soyinka’s work will be treasured and looked back upon for many years to come.

## A Poem Analysis of 'Answer' by Chinua Achebe - Hadiya Adam, Upper Sixth

*A Nigerian literary genius who has accomplished great fame as a novelist, a poet, a professor and a critic. Achebe Chinua is now considered to be one of Africa's most renowned contemporary writers. His works primarily surround his experience growing up in colonial Nigeria where he experienced the stark contrast between western culture and traditional African values.*

Within this poem, contains the story of a person freeing themselves of an inferiority complex, finally realising the beauty of their own culture and embracing it. Like many of Achebe's poem, he has cleverly crafted a narrative which reveals the profound mental and social effects of post-colonialism and the loss of familiarity with African culture through the process of westernization.

Achebe begins the poem in a tone of accomplishment by denoting the demolition of his enchantment and fear towards the unfamiliar group of people, whom were the foreign white colonisers. The adjective "terror" is used to personify his "fascination"; this is powerful and telling, as it immediately exemplifies the protagonist's natural and primitive emotion towards these new "crowding faces"- this could imply that a reputation of the white colonisers barbaric nature has already made them infamous in foreign lands, leading them to acquire a sort of supernatural attribute which has ultimately contributed to the protagonist's "fascination". The synecdoche "crowding faces" for the white colonizers further reinforces the idea of unfamiliarity and evokes emotions of uneasiness. Achebe generates a sense of insignificance through the phrase "shook it like a cheap watch", which happens to be the only simile in the poem. This is salient as it reveals the speaker's unconscious critical attitude towards his own culture – which is most likely the result of the entrenched disparaging perspective that society has crafted of black people, which is still conspicuous till this day – despite us living in a modern liberal world. The adjective "cheap" emphasises the inferiority complex that the speaker feels in comparison to the col-

onizers. Achebe points out the cultural dominance that colonization inflicted upon Africa, causing Africans in higher powers to make decision that would harm the majority, just to curry the favours of the white leaders as they thought it would increase their status and would aid them in gaining their favours. He employs a lexical field of severity through the adjectives of "roughness", "harshness", "grapple" and "prickly" to denote the arduous nature of the hard labour which many were exploited into doing.

Upon the last portion of the poem, the speaker experiences a revelation-like moment where he is overcome with love and patriotism for his country. Achebe demonstrates this through natural imagery of the speakers homeland. He describes ordinary objects in his life such as the "long-disused windows" and his "hut new-swept by rainbow brooms of sunlight", incorporating a sense of appreciation and fondness to communicate the extent to which he cherishes his home. The description of light echoes his epiphany, as it appears when he gains confidence in realising that he is not inferior to the colonial masters that have inhabited his land. Achebe essentially employs the protagonist as a structural device to remind to Africans, specifically Nigerians, to always appreciate their authentic culture, values and to be "proud" of it – even in a westernized world.

### Answer

BY CHINUA ACHEBE

I broke at last  
the terror-fringed fascination  
that bound my ancient gaze  
to those crowding faces  
of plunder and seized my  
remnant life in a miracle  
of decision between white-  
collar hands and shook it  
like a cheap watch in  
my ear and threw it down  
beside me on the earth floor  
and rose to my feet. I  
made of their shoulders  
and heads bobbing up and down  
a new ladder and leaned  
it on their sweating flanks  
and ascended till midair  
my hands so new to harshness  
could grapple the roughness of a prickly  
day and quench the source  
that fed turbulence to their  
feet. I made a dramatic  
descent that day landing  
backways into crouching shadows  
into potshards of broken trance. I  
flung open long-disused windows  
and doors and saw my hut  
new-swept by rainbow brooms  
of sunlight become my home again  
on whose trusting floor waited  
my proud vibrant life.



# African Literature

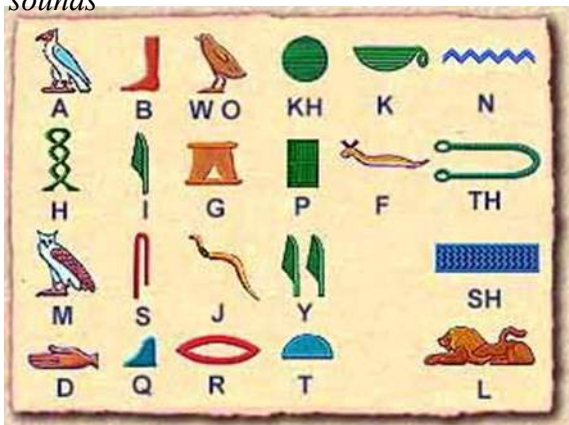
## Ancient Egypt -

### Hieroglyphics - Yusra Nawaz, Upper Sixth

Egypt has an extremely rich history, that predates written word, that is composed of spectacular stories of powerful gods and magnificent monuments that have made the country famous. Cattle over-grazing has been traced back to around 8000 BCE on the territory that is now the Sahara Desert. This evidence, together with artefacts unearthed, suggests that the region had a vibrant agricultural civilisation at the time.

#### So, what were hieroglyphics?

*They were characters used in a system of pictorial writing, which represented objects and specific sounds*



The word “hieroglyphic” itself, means “sacred writings,” and is a Greek translation of the Egyptian phrase, “the god’s word”. It is one of the oldest examples of literature; Historians aren’t exactly sure of when it arose, however it is said to have emerged in the late predynastic period – this is just before 2925 BCE. Egyptians used hieroglyphics as a method of communicating with each other.

Ancient Egyptian inscriptions were found on tombs, temples and obelisks where the information provided ranged from myths/stories/legends to more philosophical works such as poetry, hymns and autobiographies – as an essential part of everyday life, they were used by society for tasks such as shopping lists, letters, diaries and court records.



Although not termed "literature," the Offering Lists and Memoirs are the first examples of the Egyptian writing system in action. The Offering List was a brief instruction put on a tomb, known to the Egyptians as the hetep-di-nesw ("a boon given by the king"), outlining food, drink, and other offerings suitable for the person buried there. After a person's death, the autobiography was always written in the first person, as if the deceased were speaking. This is due to the profound power that the Egyptians believed names carried: if your name was remembered after you died then you would automatically survive in the afterlife.

### Pre-Colonial African Literature - Nawaal Awaisi, Upper Sixth

African literature is defined as literary works of the African continent. It consists of a body of work in different languages and various genres, ranging from oral literature to literature in colonial language (French, Portuguese, and English). However, the history of African Literature begins with pre-colonial literature, which refers to the period before ‘the coming of the white man’: more specifically before ‘The Berlin Conference, 1884’. This literature was written before the ‘Scramble for Africa,’ which was between 1881 and 1914, and is commonly referred to as the period for colonization.



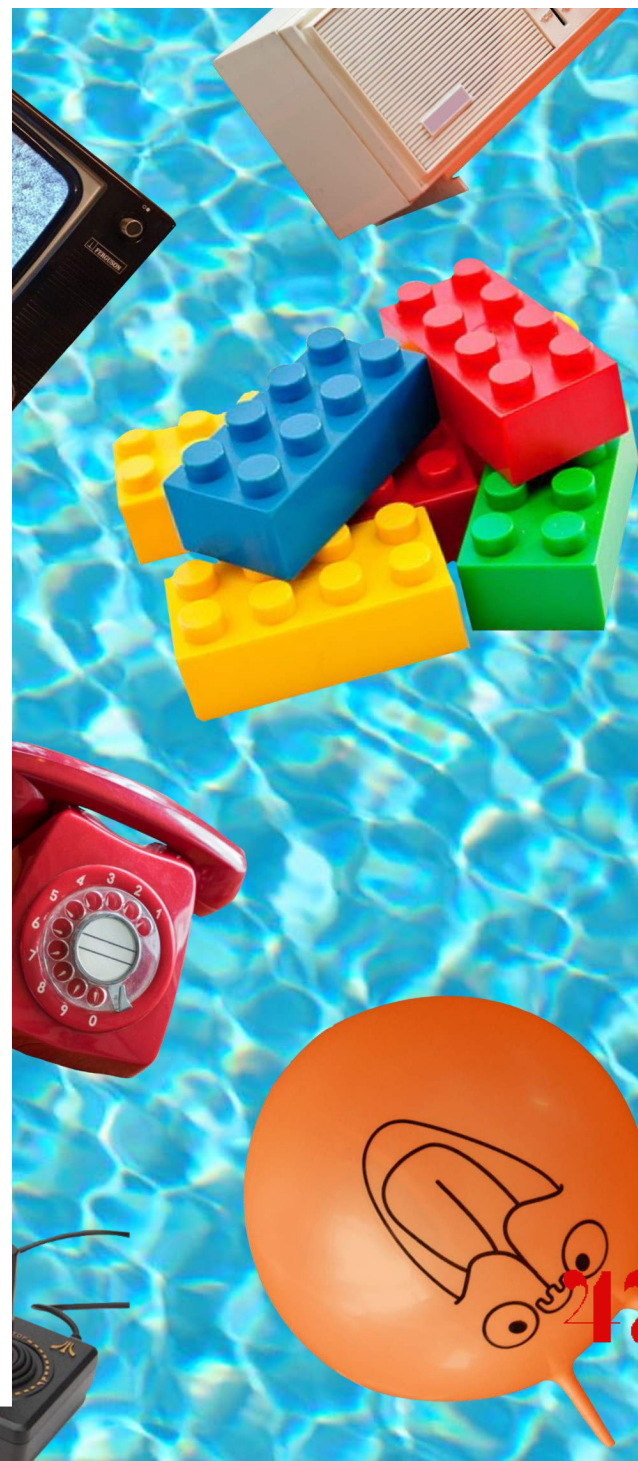
# African Literature

African literature was heavily inspired by day-to-day things that the authors experienced such as: livestock, climate, nature, culture, people, and witchcraft. It was- and still is- a significant aspect of collective African life, where it is was even employed as a tool to pass on education to children. Ugandan scholar, Pio Zirimu claims that “African literature is literature of and from Africa and includes oral literature and orature.” Oral literature was an incredibly important part of African tradition due to large portions of citizens being illiterate. It was valued as one of the backbones by which “societies educated, instructed and socialized their younger members.” Oral tradition was seen in many languages such as Swahili, Fula, and Hausa, usually told by elders of the village and passed down to young children to teach them about values, arts, and culture. Literature also became a huge part of entertainment in communal and cultural gatherings as they paid homage to their ancestors. An example of one of these stories is ‘Tsuru naGudo’: ‘The Hare and the Baboon,’ in which the hare beats the baboon through quick-thinking and calculation. This folklore is used in Western Sudan and Southern Africa. In Ghana, the greedy, mischievous spider ‘Anansi’ is mentioned in stories and in Nigeria and Cameroon a turtle is deemed the smartest animal – many countries in Africa have specific tales that are passed down from generation to generation, therefore generating a strong sense of community and connection between one another, principles, and their culture.



The ‘Call and Response’ method is often used when reciting the literature- as it invites engagement throughout the audience, allowing the stories to be much more memorable - as well as entertaining; we can see this method being used in Black Solidarity protests as well as many tribal songs - it establishes a deep connection between the crowd and reciter, uniting them altogether.

In Western Africa, the ‘Griots’ narrated their stories through their musical talents. The themes were often love, work, children, and many praised the mythical heroes and ancestral figure. In most African cultures, it is impossible to separate spoken word, poetry, dance, drama, and music as they complement each other and are used all together to portray an authentic, entertaining and vibrant story. Many would also claim that African dance could be considered literature, since it presents a narrative like written word does.



## Creative Writing Foreword

This year's creative writing section is made up of some of the many entries for the W.S Johnson writing prize, completed by the younger years of SGS. The title for the creative writing competition this year was 'Across the Barricades'. Whilst it was announced prior to the conflict in Ukraine began, some pupils chose to use this as their inspiration. Throughout the section, alongside the essays, you will find some quotes containing feedback from

### Winner - Elena Patsias

Two days. That was all that had separated us. Those forty-eight hours in which we had not yet found each other. I was born on the 23rd of September and Mehmet on the 21st. Mehmet and Ariadne. A boy and a girl. A Turkish-Cypriot and a Greek-Cypriot. Even without our complications, we would be leading two very different lives. No-one could accept our friendship, we were both scolded for even thinking that the "enemy" could be anything other than cruel, but I will not let them stop me. Today, I go across the barricades, today everything will change.

I met Mehmet at the school we both attended, 1st Saint Dometios Primary. As I gaze into a picture which I hold close to my heart, I see two seven-year-old children, eyes filled with hope, fuelled with ambition for their futures. Within the worn frame, I am perched on a rock on one of Cyprus' many beaches, sitting next to Mehmet. My ebony curls shape my bronze face and my hazel eyes gleam with joy. One plump arm is wrapped around Mehmet as I stare keenly into the camera, bearing a toothless grin. Mehmet sits next to me, his thin legs hanging off the edge of the rock, his clothes draped over his skinny frame. He was forever the quiet one, his eyes twinkling with a wisdom that did not match his seven-year-old figure. His hair was identical to mine except for one hazel strand that fell into his eyes. Mehmet's olive skin radiated in the Sun, and he always kept to himself. This was the last photograph taken of us before the invasion, a mockery of what could have been.

I still remember. A menacing military aircraft droned endlessly above, releasing bombs that ex-

Mrs. Rayna Johnson – a former English teacher at SGS – which I hope will give further insight into each individual essay. The wide range of topics covered in the collection we have chosen to showcase highlights the creativity of Stockport Grammar pupils and indicates the talent we have. Whilst I am sad we could not place all of the essays in the magazine I believe that the ones we have chosen will be thoroughly enjoyed. -

### Millic Job, Upper Sixth

ploded amidst the chaos. The ground vibrated beneath my own two feet as I pounded them into the Earth, making for safety. Glass shattered from the impact; debris fell, destroying whatever safe place people had salvaged. Gunfire echoed through the destruction of my country along with muffled cries for help. Sirens shrieked as I dove under tables, chairs, wardrobes, anything that could save me.

**“An accomplished, ambitious and beautifully written piece, where sharp well-chosen detail is used intelligently to convey understated emotion. The story is personal and deeply affecting; the tragedy is handled sensitively and the ending is uplifting and hopeful.”**

Remembering is always hard, but the past is in the past and I must move on. Today, after I cross the barricade, I will find closure.

I walk to where I know I must go, one foot in front of the other. I have come to find my old house, the haven where I lived my early life, grasped from me too soon. As I reach the barricade separating the North from the South, I stop to stand in front of the rusting sand-filled barrels, whose flaking bottle-green paint has seen all the hardships and deprivation the invasion brought with it. This obstruction dissuaded the other side from crossing over, even after it was allowed.



It is not only this physical establishment that prevents people from traversing onto the other side, it is also: the warnings, the threats, feelings of disrespect and discomfort but above all it is a fear that is piercing into the leftovers of your bravery as your mind contrives the devastating truths you will find.

The guard nods to me, the kind that is considered mandatory and offers no comfort, before I take the step that will bring me home. I stifle a breath and recall every street and house from my childhood, despite the changing of all the street names into Turkish. I wander

through the roads, dotted with citrus trees which cast looming shadows in the August light, until I reach mine.

A wave of memories crashes upon me as I turn the final corner to my home: the pavement where I always scraped my knee as a consequence of our childish games, the park where Mehmet and I used to lay until the late hours of the afternoon, watching the Sun bleed into the sky and the fence I would climb over every morning to get to school, waiting for the cat we pretended was ours. I scan each house in turn, noting all the changes that have been made, when my eyes land upon the last beige brick house that I returned to every day after school. A lemon tree grows at the front, offering its last batch of the sweet looking fruit that hide their sour punch. The steps leading to the dark oak front door still bear the dent from when father dropped mother's favourite vase. But the car in the driveway is not mine and the fruit bowl in the window was once non-existent. I know that after the invasion they gave away our houses to the Turkish-Cypriots, but I still had a flicker of faith that maybe they had spared mine.

In that moment, a figure rounds the corner and ambles towards me, or rather towards my house. I look up trying to meet their eyes: two hazel orbs twinkling with a wisdom that finally match their age. Their limbs move sluggishly along the pavement, as if each step is too much to bear.

"Mehmet!" I gasp, as I race towards him and wrap my arms around his fragile frame. Tears gush

down his wrinkled face, worn with age and anguish. He awards me with the brightest smile, "They tried so hard to keep us apart Ariadne but we always found a way", he says. It was these words that tore down the barricades between our feuding families, our conflicting countries and gave me hope, hope that across the barricade, on either side, there is still good in this country.

**Elena Patsias - 3rd Year**

## Cara Bell

Home. It's a funny thing, that concept of belonging somewhere. As humans it's something we yearn for; we need it like oxygen. But humans can also be cruel, callous, and crooked and their oxygen is depriving others of theirs. It's a funny thing. Not in a humorous way.

Inhale; exhale. Repeat. Laboured breaths were the only thing to disrupt the interminable silence. We'd have looked like a freeze-frame from afar, if it weren't for Arjun, wagging his tail impatiently, staring at me with a quizzical expression. Yet I couldn't bring myself to tear my eyes from the black box that had just changed everything. Static erupted from its speaker as it struggled to form sounds. Lip trembling, adrenaline racing, eyes watering, I looked to my father for comfort. I found none. His stony eyes held the depth of a thousand conflicts, which seemed to form a resolution when he slammed his hand on the table. Shockwaves sent my whole system haywire, as the world spun.

'We leave in 30 minutes.' His solemn voice reverberated around the small kitchen as he marched from the room. '30 minutes' It echoed inside my mind like a million needles forcing my brain to implode. 30 minutes was all I had left of my home in Lahore, my friends, and my life.

I was only 9, but the partition of India took no prisoners.

Metaphorically. In reality, it took the lives of 2 million souls. Though I couldn't have known that then.

# Creative Writing

above, I knew I would never return. A scalding salty sliver of a tear ran down my face. No one needed to ask what was wrong: we had to leave the dog. I knew it seemed a silly thing to cry about in the midst of your whole country splitting in two.

‘It’s okay Pratap, the neighbours will look after him.’ My mother soothed.

‘But who will look after the neighbours?’ I muttered.

As my two older brothers, Lakhan and Mohan, marched on ahead, I stole one last glance at the I would forever call home. Hypoxia clinging to my skull, my breath felt snatched from me. Or was that my childhood? I couldn’t tell.

‘Sorry.’ Whispering into the still night, I trudged away, leaving not a footprint behind.

A mere few hours since the broadcast went out, announcing how India would now be India and Pakistan, we were 10 miles from home. Home that was now a ghost town. Home that was set on fire later that night. Home that tomorrow would resemble a pile of ashes.

**“This powerful, emotional and engrossing piece captures the panic, fear and dread of crossing the barricade with real skill. Pin-sharp detail and original imagery are used compellingly and evocatively to tell this absorbing story.”**

Dawn came, as dawn always tends to come. And with it came the mass migration of 14.5 million people.

Papa, a train is here.’ Mohan yelled as he pulled me from my half-hearted slumber. Grabbing my hand, my mother dragged me to the rickety platform as the five of us attempted to push through the throng of equally desperate families. Through sheer brute force, we managed to haul ourselves onto the train while I helplessly clung to my mother’s hand. Others were not so lucky, as they strained to climb the roof of the train. Or the poor souls who were too late and fell in the tracks while trying to jump aboard. Maybe it wasn’t an accident. Hypoxia does funny things to people.

CHUG CHUG CHUG

The ear-splitting scream of a baby’s wail penetrated any form of serenity there otherwise might have been.

CHUG CHUG CHUG

Heat clung to me like a vice as we struggled to find sitting space

CHUG CHUG CHUG

The sweet stench of cigars was accompanied by loud shouts from a group of Hindus, my father included, as they blamed the whole ordeal on Muslims. All of a sudden, the door to the carriage flung open, and a group of men stormed the train. A sliver of silver glinted from their pockets.

‘CHAKOO’ A woman screeched. Knives. Rounding us up, Lakhan herded the four of us to the next carriage as we sought refuge; papa was nowhere to be seen. Glass shattered, fragmented fractals flying across the carriages. It transfixed me, that beauty hidden in utter madness. I couldn’t look away, not even when the blackness consumed my vision and my body hit the floor.

I awoke this time, to silence. I was lying across my mother’s lap as she stroked my hair pensively. We had crossed the border; the violence had dissipated. Papa sat next to me, a dirty cloth wrapped around his head, from which crimson blood was seeping through.

Only Gandhi can save us now.’ He murmured.

When the train finally arrived in Bombay (now known as Mumbai), an uncle of mine was there to pick us up. I didn’t even know his name, and yet now he was taking us into his home? But he had a kind face, which had always been my form of judgement of a person.

My parents greeted him with immense gratitude as we were led to a fluorescent rickshaw. Giddily, I climbed aboard, my forlorn expression corrugating into a dim smile.

The first few minutes were breathtaking. Glittering ocean and sandy beaches. Suddenly this partition didn’t seem too bad.

# Creative Writing

Then came the city. Calamity was an understatement. Bodies lay strewn across the streets, buildings had huge chunks taken out of them. People cluttered the roads, indistinguishable from all the debris. They had all lost something: a home, family, faith in humanity. Perhaps all 3. My stomach churned for justice. Justice for Muslims and Hindus alike. I felt a burning desire to help those who were hurt.

We've made it, sighed my mother, tears shining in her eyes.

Little did I know I would be crossing barricades my whole life.

As the chaos ensued over the coming months, fighting between the Hindus and Muslims would only heighten. They wanted us out of Pakistan; we wanted them out of India. That's what we were fooled to believe. The East India Trading Company had got what it wanted.

This is the story of my Nana (grandfather in Hindi) . Today, Pratap Narain Kumar is 83 years old, living in London with his wife Kamlesh Kumar. Both worked in the NHS for over 40 years. They have two daughters, Manisha and Namita, and three grandchildren: Lily, Sachin and Cara. Mohan sadly passed away a few years ago and Lakhan currently lives in New Delhi, India. Their stories will not be forgotten. We will remember how they came across the barricades.

## **Cara Bell - 7th Year**

### **Rose / Amber McDonald**

The rain had finished falling earlier, and muddy puddles pepper the road.

Even in gloves, her hand is cold as I make our way through the crowd. Foreign shoulders and hands brush against mine and I strain to see through the thick, black smoke that leaks from the factories lining the road. The dim sky is as dark as the uniformed police, who are clad in protective gear, and border the streets like soldiers. They stand in the shadows, far enough away to give us some illusion

of freedom. My eyes briefly scan the guns strapped to their belts, but never daring to meet their gaze: the constant threat hangs heavy in the air. I move forward through the crowd, head down, hand gripping hers.

Tall, colourless buildings loom over the street, devoid of any posters and graffiti; nothing distinguishes one factory from another. Ten-foot-tall metal gates stand menacingly in front of them, barbed wire spiking in all directions.

The government-imposed curfew is stricter, and penalties even harsher. There have been riots recently, but those who participated were never seen again. All we can do is go along with it. For now at least.

My thoughts are interrupted as, somewhere ahead of me, a shout pierces the heavy silence.

Followed by immediate gunfire.

And beside me, a man in a dark red coat runs forward, breaking out of the monotonous crowd, and his hand reaches into his pocket, a brave and slightly unhinged smile on his face.

The man runs faster, and I don't have time to yell before he pulls out a handgun, and fires at the police, screaming as he runs at them, breaking the uniform formation.

And as soon as the line of policemen cracks, chaos descends.

All around me, gunfire mingles with the sounds of tortured screams, and I freeze completely, until she tugs on my hand.

'Quick!' She shouts, voice barely audible over the anarchy reigning around us. "Run!"

I am brought back to reality all too quickly, and my body moves quicker than my mind, adrenaline rushing through my veins like lightning. I duck as I shove through the bodies pressing against me, and head for the opposite side of the road, hand in hers. It is bare, and cold, and I realize her glove must've dropped.

The distraction is enough for one coherent thought to form in my brain: escape.

I duck and move quickly, pulling her behind me as I ditch stealth for speed, nearly at the edge of the road. So close. If we can slip through a gap in the fence, we could hide until opportunity presents itself.

**“A wonderful piece of which sustains the tension and drama right through to its shocking ending.”**

I don't have time to blink before I am suddenly knocked to the ground.

My heart pounds as I try not to get trampled in the stampede of frantic people. I dropped her hand amid the chaos, and I manage to get to my feet, eyes scanning the crowd for her, to no avail:

Then, with horror, I see the police have restored order, and are shoving people into two groups: those involved in the incident, and those not.

The next moments happen in a blur: a barricade is laid out across the street, and most people stand bloodied and bruised, some crying, and orders are barked at us to keep quiet, and stay still. Across the barricades, the rioters stand, some leaning on each other, and yet though they all look different, there is one similarity — they all have their chins up, proud and unwavering. Even as the barrel of a gun is put to each forehead.

All the while, I look for her, trying to see over the shoulders ahead of me.

Then, finally, I catch a glimpse of her —the face I know better than my own — and my heart soars. She looks unharmed, and happy and— My stomach drops.

Her eyes squint as she smiles, teeth flashing, even as the trigger is pulled.

Bang.

It begins to rain.

**Rose / Amber McDonald -  
7th Year**

## Ella Clayton

30/5/1940

Dear Diary,

It is now more than ever I am grateful to be able to write down my thoughts and work out my true feelings. With each passing day the dissonance inside me increases more and more; I don't know how much longer I can continue like this.

Side Note: the dreams are getting worse.

Piercing sunlight shone through the wooden rafters high above me, waking me from another restless slumber. As my eyes adjusted to the light, I looked around the abandoned barn my platoon had been lucky enough to find, remembering the horrors of the previous day. A wave of pain swept through my body, fatigue setting in as I regretfully sat up — the relentless pace we have been marching is starting to take its toll. The sunlight glints beautifully off the field I can see through the open doors. Despite the reason we're here, I can't help but admire the beauty of Northern France. Its dewy fields always seem to sparkle in the early morning sunlight, giving it an almost magical feeling, as if a fairy is any minute going to suddenly flutter across our path. For a minute I can almost forget what my orders are and the shameful memories of what I have done. Almost.

31/5/1940

Dear Diary,

I have only just woken up but after much deliberation, I have finally decided that I am going to write down my thoughts, because I swear if I can't express what I'm thinking in some way, my head will genuinely explode. I understand and accept what I'm about to say could get me killed if anyone was to find out, but I just cannot bear all these thoughts clouding my brain.

Ok, here goes...

# Creative Writing

First of all, I suppose I should make it clear for anyone who might find this in the future: I am an ordinary German soldier, I am 22 years old, it is 1940 and the war has been underway for about half a year. I signed up willingly when war first broke out, eager to help build a new, greater Germany—I was foolish back then, brainwashed by the Nazi's propaganda. Now I've seen things awful things no one deserves to witness, and I've realized the costly effect one deranged man's dreams can have.

The situation I am in is that I swore my oath of allegiance to the so called 'Führer' - like every other soldier I promised to always be obedient to him, and be ready to risk my life for his cause. However, my real predicament is that I no longer believe in the cause. I have seen the brutality of his most fanatic — the feared SS divisions — how they took no prisoners; without a second thought shot innocent people who refused to step down and let their land be taken over. Women and children as well. When marching for days on end, you have a lot of time to think about what is right and wrong. The conclusions I have come to are that civilians who are not even involved should not have to suffer for this pointless war — who are we to march, through these fields, sweeping through towns and villages like a raging sandstorm destroying everything in its path, claiming the land for Germany. They are just ordinary people caught in the middle of a war — that they have nothing to do with. What have they done wrong to deserve this? Well, I guess that's the price of war - an unnecessary one if you ask me.

Only a few days ago I saw my closest friend I have here shot straight in the head. I won't go into details, as I'd rather only have to live through that experience once, but at least it was quick I suppose — I'm glad he didn't suffer. My French cousin Pierre has also stopped writing to me; I can't help but fear the worst. The casualties of this war are unimaginable, but honestly what is the point, what is all this death for? I know what we are doing is wrong, but how can I break an oath I swore to god? For now I suppose I just have to keep going and try not to think about it.

Our orders have just come through. We meet up

with another platoon then proceed to a canal a few and 10 miles from Dunkirk, where British and French troops will undoubtedly be waiting for us.

A heavy morning mist hangs over the fields, reflecting the sullen mood. We all know the inevitable is coming and I don't think many of us are particularly keen about the idea. 30 minutes later once we arrive at the meeting point, we are informed the platoon before us had all been killed by machine gun fire. What a great way to lift the mood

The plan is to fire an incendiary shell to destroy the barn the allies are camped out in on the opposite side of the canal, in order to force them out into the open. From there let them retreat shoot them if they continue to fire on us. It's an appalling tactic and as a look around I see some of the other men looking are uneasy as well. Nonetheless we crawl into position behind the makeshift sandbag wall near the edge of the canal, facing the barn 20 meters from the canal on the opposing bank.

**“A powerful, compelling and engaging piece where the clear personal voice of the narrator fully immerses the reader in the situation and we feel the anguish and dilemma facing the protagonist”**

A loud bang behind us signals the shell has been fired, and only moments later the barn is up in flames. Desperately soldiers struggle to get out of the main doors I presume that have been boarded up on the inside before the building collapsing on itself. Dark wisps of smoke drift higher, blown by the wind towards the inferno at Dunkirk. Through the haze of cinders, I can just about see one soldier limping out of the building, disorientated and weaponless. The major gives the order to shoot.

"But they are injured," I hear someone say.

"Don't argue just fire." the major replied angrily.

# Creative Writing

It's now or never. I have him in my sights. All I need to do is pull the trigger. Pull the trigger and it'll be over, that's all you have to do. All of a sudden, the heart-wrenching image of my best friend lying dead beside me entered my mind. Everything becomes clear as the cloud of doubt and uncertainty finally lifts: I realize I cannot do this; this is wrong. So much for that oath, this is not right and need to do something, however small, about it. I lower my rifle knowing the repercussions for my actions will be severe. In all likelihood I will probably be court-martialed then shot, but at least I can die with a clear conscience knowing my last actions were ones that were right

**Ella Clayton - 7th Year**

