Like, Literary

HEALS THE SOUL

Contents

Editor's Letter

Welcome to the 2023 Stockport Grammar School 'Like Literary' Magazine!

As we pieced together initial thoughts for this year's edition, the idea of literature as a healing force and books as medicine gave us an avenue to focus our work on. Along with the poetry pharmacy, where poems are seen as remedies to emotional conditions, we explored elements of contemporary medicine, including the use of AI and the effects of caffeine on the human body, outlooks into the science-driven methods to heal a sick soul.

The impact of film and TV in an increasingly modern world may, at times, feel like a replacement of the classic forms. Yet, the shared qualities across these forms, such as the role of drama in TV, assures its place as another medicinal power in the Doctor's office for body and mind. Turning towards literature has never been as important or easy as today, and the following prescribed articles should show just how much there is available out there to be read and enjoyed.

Brought together by the artwork of design editor Alex Hartemink, the help of Ms Roberts' tireless organisation and planning, and the overarching theme of literature 'healing the soul', we hope you find your personal antidote amongst these pages.

Grace Ensor-Adams, Editor

Magazine Foreword

The therapeutic effect of reading and literature is no better represented than in the marvellous sun mural currently adorning the Library window. Here, my colleagues and I have shared their books of choice, which they will be delving into over the summer when away from school. Be it in the garden, on the plane or ferry, on a sun lounger or sat with your legs dangling over the edge of Kinder Scout, many of us will choose reading as one way to clear our minds and souls after a busy SGS year. The eclectic mix of titles and authors proves just how individual and original our choice of literature can be. Some read to learn, some read to escape and some read to laugh. I hope to be inspired when I pick up The Extra Mile by Kevin Sinfield. As a rugby fan, learning about the devastating impact of MND on former Springbok Joost Van Der Westhuizen led me to read Doddie Weir's autobiography My Name'5 Doddie. Kevin Sinfield's fundraising feats in support of his best friend Rob Burrow have arguably surpassed both of their record breaking rugby league exploits for Leeds Rhinos, England and Great Britain. But before that, my first read of the summer will be this year's edition of the SGS LitMag, which is a credit to the student-led editorial team and contributors, ably supported by Ms Roberts. Let the therapy begin here!

Mr Stone, Head of Sixth Form

Psychology

Psychology is a tool that allows us to learn from people, study their behaviour and the inner workings of their mind. To heal one's soul, we must first understand who they are at the most basic level, understanding their struggles and successes, and relate to them empathetically. Psychology is the study of people, and a better understanding of people allows for us to easily help those around us.

Ben Rouse, section editor

The Anatomy of Violence
Ben Rouse, Lower Sixth

Adrian Raine is an Oxford graduate specialising in neurocriminology and the genetics of crime, who writes about the evolutionary links and explanations to crime and violence of all kinds. He argues that something as simple as a person's DNA and physical makeup can be the cause of a life of crime entirely. However, due to the nature of such topics, it goes without saying that his writings could be seen as triggering due to the violence it contains, and therefore, so will this article, being based around them. *Should this sound like something that may negatively affect you, please stop reading.* Additionally, Raine often writes on Human evolutionary characteristics, that could be seen as reducing human behaviour down to very generic bases, however it should be kept in mind that these reductionist results are still valid and shouldn't be taken as stereotyping of certain groups. This article shares its title with a book written by Raine and comments on biological research into genetic psychology in humans and its effect on crime and violence. This article will contain an introduction to such theories and research.

Violence and aggression in modern day standards are commonly looked down upon and seen as maladaptive and aberrant, so to see either as adaptive may be hard to fathom. However, biological psychologists think otherwise, seeing both attributes as a way to gain resources, the name of the evolutionary game. Resources are needed to live, reproduce and care for offspring. This is the main reason for aggression on its most basic level, to create offspring and raise it, the most important part of almost all organisms, the adaptation to pass on genes and survive. The mating game for males is about developing a desirable status in society, gaining reputation for aggression not only increases the status in one's social group and allows more access to more resources, but also deters aggression from others. And that, it is suggested, is true whether we are talking about a child in a playground or an inmate in a prison. The biological proof can be seen in infants, before culture and rules take over, they are selfish and take what they want without a care. In that untamed, uncivilized period of a person's life, they are standing on the threshold of a life of crime. Selfishness can often be seen as life's "cheating tactic", taking more for oneself can allow them to progress the social ladder and/or gain more resources for creating offspring. These individuals will eventually die off; however, their selfish genes will continue to exist through their children, down from generation to generation.

It all boils down to how 'fit' a person is, not physical fitness like being able to run marathons or lift heavy weights, but how many children they can produce. The more

kids that are genetically theirs, the more copies of their genes there will in the following gene pool. That, and that only, is success in the gene-eye's view of the world. A male for example has two options. He can nurture a few kids that he can guarantee are his, while also guaranteeing their safety and the continuation of his own genes. The other option links back to life's 'cheating tactic', a man can spread his genes around, maximising the number of offspring, without really doing very much to support them. This way of thinking can also be used to explain some cases of cheating, where men subconsciously have an aim to spread their genes further than a single partner. Women may cheat for similar reason however on average cheat less than men. This is due to mate support and resources being critical to women from an evolutionary point of view as, once fertilized, they are lumbered with their progeny. They make a much larger investment into raising their offspring and so are on the lookout for men who can come up with the goods and make a long-term commitment.

This idea of passing on genes makes a big link into studies of parents killing their kids. For example, it was found that only 1% of children in the UK live with a stepparent, however 53% of baby killings are perpetrated by a stepparent. We know that at times stepparents can selectively abuse their stepchildren, such abuse being a parental strategy to minimize the resources given to him, and instead maximise those given to genetically related children. Such actions from stepparents can thus be comprehensible from an evolutionary standpoint, but what's more interesting is baby killings of biological parents. The basic concept to keep in mind here is the idea of investment. When a person has a child, they invest time and effort and resources into

them, the older they get, the more investment there is. This means if a person wants to back out, they ought to do it early, which is exactly what can be seen. In a study of mothers and fathers in Canada, it was found that in the cases where parents killed their biological offspring, an astounding majority of them were perpetrated in the first few months of the child's life, with the homicide rate dropping as the baby ages before plateauing.

Now that the basics of genetics' effect on psychology is out of the way, a great example of its effects on crime is Jeffrey Landrigan. This boy, born March 17th, 1962, never knew his father and was abandoned by his mother at day-care at the age of just 8 months. However, little Jeff got lucky, and was adopted into a loving family. However, a dark shadow was had already formed over the baby, that was to effectively seal his fate. By the age of 2, Jeff was known for temper tantrums and displaying emotional dyscontrol, began abusing alcohol at the age of ten, and got his first arrest at the age of 11 after burglarizing a home and attempting to open its safe. He continued to abuse alcohol and drugs, steal cars, skip school; he was hurtling into a life of crime. This behaviour seemed to come to a head when he stabbed a close friend outside a bar at the age of 20. he would then start a 20-year sentence for second degree murder. However surprisingly he escaped, however he went on to kill again before being sentenced to death. However, while on death row, Jeff was told he was the spitting image of another con: Darrel Hill. After further investigation, it was found that Hill was Jeff's biological father. But their similarities didn't end with looks. Hill also started his life of crime young, was also a drug addict, also killed two people and also escaped from prison. Not only this, but it was also found that Jeff's grandfather had

a similar criminal background. This would have to suggest a genetic component to crime, with the argument of nurture being void and Jeff never knowing his father yet imitating him throughout his life. This would all suggest a genetic predisposition to crime.

Using Psychology for Academic Peak Performance
Mr Serefin, psychology teacher

As it is not on the national curriculum, Psychology is a rare GCSE; however, when students have the opportunity to pick their subjects at A level, psychology becomes the second most popular subject choice in the country, behind maths and a little beyond biology. It is also one of the most popular degree choices. I think this is because students think studying psychology can help them understand issues that are important in their own lives, make logical choices, plan big life decisions, and live a little better.

As a student, when it comes to psychology, you are likely particularly interested in if research into the mind can make you a more effective academic performer. In their book 'Peak Performance', Brad Stulberg and Steve Magness apply psychological theory to their fields of business and sport. The following is an adaption of their key ideas to help you with your studies.

1. The Power of Deliberate Effort.

Deliberate effort is thinking actively about the information you need to learn, not passively looking over everything, so rather than mindlessly slogging through books, focus on the subjects or areas where you struggle most. This is adapted from the concept of "deliberate practice" popularised by psychologist K. Anders Ericsson. For example, if you find a particular maths problem tricky, focus on understanding the

There are many arguments for and against the cause of genetics in psychology and the conflict of nature vs nurture, but the proof is all around us. Whether genetics are the key to psychological research, or just a key component to a much more complex machine that is the mind is up for debate, but an interesting topic to examine.

concept behind it. Break it down, solve similar problems, and test yourself.

The deliberate effort method includes strategies like active recall and spaced repetition, which are techniques adapted from cognitive psychology to enhance memory and understanding. This targeted effort helps you to develop mental models and deepen your knowledge, turning weak areas into strengths. For example, use flashcards for active recall, this is testing yourself by saying out loud the answer before turning over the card. Spaced repetition is having shorter revision sessions but repeated across multiple days. This way, you're not just reading—you're actively engaging and wrestling with the material.

2. Balancing Your Academic Load

In Peak Performance the authors give a simple yet powerful formula: Stress + Rest = Growth. Psychologically, this concept is based on the principles of the Yerkes-Dodson Law, that an optimal level of stress can boost your performance. A lack of stress results in a lack of motivation, too much paralysing anxiety. A moderate level of "good stress," or eustress, can stimulate you to absorb knowledge more effectively. However, like any organ, the brain needs downtime for recovery and consolidation of information, a process linked to the cognitive neuroscience of memory.

As a student think of your study schedule as a marathon training plan. You don't run full-out every day; instead, you alternate

hard days with easy days. So, if you have an intense study session one day (stress), balance it with a lighter study day or even a day off (rest). This could look like spending one day focused on a challenging subject and the next day reviewing material you're more familiar with. Finding the right balance between challenging study sessions (stress) and sufficient rest can result in optimal learning and academic growth.

3. The Upside of Pressure

It's not just the amount of stress that is important to consider, according to the biopsychosocial model of challenge and threat, how you perceive stress can determine its effect on you. If you view stress as a challenge, it can enhance your performance, keeping you focused and motivated.

Next time you're feeling stressed about a big exam, try reframing it. Rather than thinking of it as a threat, think of it as a challenge that can help you perform at your best. So, if you're feeling the pressure the night before a test, remind yourself that this stress is actually preparing your body to tackle the task ahead. It's putting you in the optimal state of alertness and focus you need to perform well.

4. Building a Strong Mind

The field of positive psychology emphasises resilience as a key characteristic that helps individuals overcome challenges. Use techniques like mindfulness and meditation to enhance your mental resilience. These practices have been shown to reduce anxiety and improve attention and cognition, creating a mental environment where learning can thrive.

Practising mindfulness can make a huge difference to your mental resilience. Try setting aside 10 minutes a day for a mindfulness exercise, like a guided meditation. Or, if you're feeling overwhelmed during a study session, take a five-minute break to focus on your breath and clear your mind. Building this mental strength can help you stay calm and focused, even when you're faced with tough academic challenges.

5. Discover Your Purpose: The Drive of Intrinsic Motivation

According to self-determination theory in psychology, having a sense of purpose can fuel intrinsic motivation - a strong desire to engage in an activity for its own sake. When you connect your academic pursuits to personal goals or interests, studying becomes more meaningful. This intrinsic motivation can drive you to continue in the face of academic challenges, resulting in not just better performance, but also a more fulfilling learning experience.

For example, if you're passionate about the environment and you're studying chemistry, focus on how understanding chemical reactions can help develop new ways to combat pollution. When your subjects are connected to what you care about, your motivation to study becomes stronger and more personal.

While there are no psychology quick hacks that can give you a photographic memory, and high achievement in any subject is likely to require a high level of focus and effort, the lessons from psychological research can help you work more effectively, and help build the mental resilience needed to perform at your best.

The case of Genie Wiley
Macy Stones, Lower Sixth

Psychology is the scientific study of the human mind and its functions, especially those affecting behaviour in each context. My topic of interest is the case of Genie Wiley. There have been several cases of feral children raised in social isolation with little or no human contact but only a few have captured public and scientific attention like that of Genie.

Genie's case is significant in psychology as she was a child who was born healthy but raised in an environment with sever neglect and abuse. Due to this she was unable to learn how to speak and function in society. Genie is used as an example of feral child syndrome and has been studied in development psychology.

Genie, born in 1957, is the pseudonym of an American feral child who was a victim of severe abuse, neglect and social isolation. Her circumstances are prominently recorded in the annals of linguistics and abnormal child psychology. When she was 20 months old, her father began keeping her in a locked room. During this period, he *almost always strapped her to a child's toilet or bound her in a crib with her arms and legs immobilised, forbade anyone from interacting with her, provided her with almost no stimulation of any kind, and left her severely malnourished. The extent of her isolation prevented her from being exposed to any significant amount of speech, and as a result she did not acquire language during her childhood.

Her abuse came to the attention of Los Angeles County child welfare authorities in November 1970, when she was 13 years old and 7 months old, after which she became a ward of the state of California. Psychologists, linguists and other scientists almost immediately focused a great deal of attention on Genie's case. Linguists saw her as an opportunity to gain further insight into the processes controlling language acquisition skills and to test theories and hypothesis identifying critical periods during which humans learn to understand and use language. Throughout the time when scientists studied Genie, she made substantial advances in her overall mental and psychological development. Within months, she developed exceptional nonverbal communication skills and gradually learned some basic social skills, but even by the end of their case study, she still exhibited many behavioural traits characteristic of an unsocialised person.

The study of Genie tells us that although certain cognitive and behavioural skills are hardwired (nature) they must be enriched through the practice of loving and caring environment (nurture). Genie's case also illustrates that the brain has critical periods of development and if these periods are missed, the individual is unlikely to develop normally in those areas of life as once a child has reached the age of ten, their brain begins to reduce some of the connections between brain cells. Furthermore, a feral child such as Genie can teach scientists that socialising and talking to a child is very important for their development. Starting from a young age, children should be spoken to continuously for the part of their brain which helps them speak to be stimulated.

Does social media truly have negative psychological impacts on our mental health? *Phoebe Ferris, Lower Sixth*

Social media has dramatically changed the way we communicate with each other. We now have access to endless information by clicking a few buttons. It has enabled us to connect with people from all over the world almost immediately - helping us break down geographical barriers. Young people can use these platforms to express themselves and speak about issues that are close to their hearts. Over recent years, psychologists have begun to research the impact of how social media can have both positive and toxic effects on our personal wellbeing.

To begin, social media isn't all horrific! It has made socialising and reconnecting with others a simpler and instantaneous task. It can additionally be used as a motivational tool to influence others to make healthy lifestyle choices such as regularly attending the gym or quitting habits such as smoking or gambling. In fact, one research study discovered that social media, in particular posting on Facebook, can actually decrease the effects of loneliness. This study tested the psychological effects of posting status updates on Facebook using an experimental design. For one week, participants in the experimental condition were asked to post more than they usually do, whereas participants in the control condition received no instructions. Results found that in the condition where participants were asked to post status updates more frequently there was a significant decrease in their loneliness compared to the control condition. This major decrease in loneliness was due to participants feeling more connected to their friends and other Facebook users on a daily basis.

Making friends isn't just confined to the school playground, park or neighbourhood – many are making new friends via social media. In a report by Amanda Lenhart covering the results of a survey (conducted from September 2014 – October 2014) it found that 57% of teens have met new friends via online gameplay and 29% of these teens have made 5 or more friends in online venues. Yet obviously this can present safeguarding issues too.

However, social media can have exceedingly detrimental impacts, even unknowingly to our mental health. According to Pew Research Centre at least 92% of teenagers are 'active' on social media. This subjects a considerable amount of the population to an increased risk of feeling anxious, depressed, or ill over their social media use. As we pick up our phones our brain releases small amounts of dopamine. Dopamine is a 'feel good' hormone which is why we cannot resist those notifications and 'buzzes'. It motivates us to seek out what we want and then increases when we receive that instant gratification of the desire. The problem with dopamine is that it's boost is temporary. Having too much dopamine concentrated in some areas of the brain is linked to being more aggressive and having poor impulse control. Moreover, a recent University of Pittsburgh study of young adults suggested that heavy social media users were three times more likely to be depressed than occasional users. A Canadian study from the Centre of Addictions and Mental Health examined data from over 10,000 adolescents, found that young people who use social media more than two hours per day were significantly more likely to rate their mental health as "fair" or "poor" compared with occasional users. On the contrary the Harvard study (January 6, 2020) conducted by Mesfin Awoke Bekalu, discovered it was the ways that people are utilising social media that may have more of an impact on their mental health and wellbeing than just the frequency and duration of their use.

Sleep also be negatively impacted due to the amount of time spent operating electronic devices. A 2018 British study linked excessive social media use to decreased, disrupted, and delayed sleep, which is associated with depression, memory loss, and poor academic performance. This shows that extreme social media use can not only detrimentally affect our mental wellbeing but also significantly impede the users' physical health directly.

To conclude, I do believe that social media can psychologically impact our mental health and even effect our physical health in general. There are some highly beneficial aspects associated with social media, such as making us feel less isolated, maintaining relationships with friends and family who live a distance away or even elderly individuals with physical disabilities limiting their mobility and interaction with others. A common problem amongst young people is a reluctance to talk to people closest to them about their problems, so many are turning to social media for a diverse range of advice including topics such as contraception, acne treatments and relationship guidance. Despite this, spending too much time scrolling through social media platforms can cause people to become less connected to reality and cause severe mental health problems immediately and in the future.

So, what can you do to ensure safe and informative use of social media? Obviously, it's pretty impossible and not even desirable to prevent all social media use in this technological advanced world. However here are a few helpful suggestions to integrate social media responsibly into your daily life : have a positive purpose (try avoid comparing yourselves to others online), follow encouraging accounts that inspire you and unfollow those that are leading to upsetting thoughts, think before you post (use social media for good/ share positive content), take a social media break

(if you're feeling overwhelmed it is important to take time away from your phone) and finally balance the time you spend offline and the time you spend online, make time for friends and family in real life!

"Don't use social Media to impress people; use it to impact people." Dave Willis

Are Psychopaths born or created?
Sophie Roberts, Lower Sixth

The question of whether Psychopaths are born or created is something which has fascinated psychologists and the general public alike. Whilst there are many arguments for nature being the defining factor, I personally believe that nurture is the main factor. Psychopaths can be made which means that you could be born with the genetics of a psychopath e.g., lack of empathy. Whereas a psychopath can be created through childhood trauma that could consist of abuse or neglect. Evidence to support my view of psychopaths being created comes from the article 'crime traveller' where it states that 'the number of psychopaths who also suffered from childhood abuse, usually violent or sexual in nature is the norm and not the exception'.

Firstly, an example of a famous serial killer with a background of childhood abuse is John Wayne Gacy. Gacy had a difficult relationship with his alcoholic father as he repeatedly beat his siblings and him with a razor strap, and it was said that his father physically assaulted his mother too. This would have meant that Gacy would have seen this behaviour as normal and as a result conformed to his childhood environment when he was older. From this trauma, Gacy would have learned to suppress empathy or suffered damage to areas of the brain that controls emotional impulses. Gacy murdered 33 young men and boys which could have been reflection of his anger towards his father for beating him or that he saw it as normal to be violent. He also sexually assaulted his victims because of the trauma from his father and his confused sexuality which could have been the result of his father sexually abusing him.

There is further evidence from Elizabeth Kanden and David Freed who reviewed evidence of frontal lobe damage and antisocial behaviour. People with such damage tended to show impulsive behaviour, emotional instability and the inability to learn from their mistakes. The frontal lobe is associated with planning behaviour. This supports the idea that brain damage may be a causal factor in offending behaviour. This shows that traumatic experiences in childhood can lead to frontal lobe dysfunction, causing poor impulse control. Gacy's lack of empathy resulted in a lack of remorse for his murders in which he states, 'I have no remorse, clowns can get away with anything, clowns can get away with murder'. This reinforces how Gacy had emotional instability and an inability to learn from his mistakes as he had no remorse for them. It was also said in the Netflix documentary about Gacy that he was conflicted about his sexuality which led to his hatred for gay boys. In the documentary the detectives stated that they found books saying 'Gay boys must die' in Gacy's house. This shows Gacy's anger and how he let it out through the only way he knew while he was growing up.
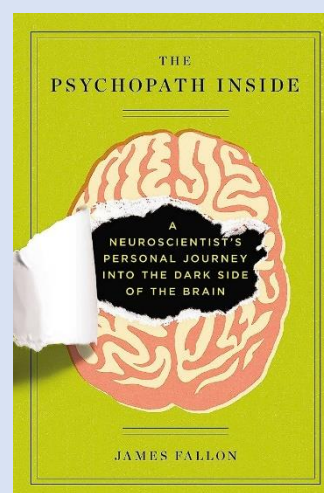
Also, adoption studies are key in the determination of the 'nature vs nurture' question as the child shares no DNA with their adoptive parents, but their adoptive parents provide all their environment. This enables researchers to study the causal impact of parental input on behaviour. Your

ability to socialise can be directly impacted by whether your parent was abusive or if you were abandoned, leading to feelings of isolation. If you are surrounded by hostility growing up; your brain will develop in a negative way and you learn to adapt and becoming tough and hostile, which is shown through the example of John Wayne Gacy.

However, many would argue that psychopaths are made, as twin and adoption studies can be used to investigate whether these behaviours are influenced more by someone's genes or their environment. Identical twins share all of their DNA, whereas fraternal twins only share half their DNA (like other siblings). If a characteristic is more likely to be shared by identical twins than fraternal twins, this suggests that genetic influences are important in explaining individual differences on that characteristic. An example of a psychopath who was born with the brain of a psychopath is James Fallon, writer of the book 'The Psychopath inside' and had done a TED talk. James stated that Epigenetic stressors during early childhood can make genetic traits like the hallmarks of psychopathy turn against someone in a bad way. James is said to grow up in a loving home environment which shows how psychopaths are created. However, the positive, nurturing environment helped direct his genetic tendencies in a more positive direction. Twin and adoption studies have suggested that unemotional traits in childhood have a genetic basis, and that anti-social behaviour coupled with unemotional traits is more influenced by genes than anti-social behaviour alone. However, adoption findings strongly indicate that the genetic vulnerability is not a destiny but can be counteracted by protective environmental influences. This reinforces how psychopaths can be created but counteracted also through their environment.

In addition, although Psychopaths being made because of their genetics is a contributing factor, I think that nature is the main reason. To support this view another study, published in the journal 'Psychological medicine' examined 333 males and females to see how maternal and paternal bonding and childhood physical abuse had an impact on developing a psychopathic personality at age 28. It also looked at whether children separated from their parents in the first 3 years of life were more likely to be psychopaths 25 years later. The researchers found that disrupted parental bonding was associated with an increased level of adult psychopathy, with a lack of maternal care being the most important aspect.

In conclusion, I think that nurture is a contributing factor, but it has been shown through my research about James that it can be counteracted through a good childhood environment. Nature is the main factor as the environment a child grows up in influences their behaviour as they see their parents as their role models and the way they act the child will conform too and mirror later in life.

THE
PSYCHOPATH INSIDE

A
NEUROSCIENTIST'S
PERSONAL JOURNEY
INTO THE DARK SIDE
OF THE BRAIN

JAMES FALLON

Film and TV

I decided to be a editor for this section as I believe that film and television is the natural evolution of the literary form. It has the power to spread messages, ideas and not dissimilarly to books, they can heal. It is an art form worthy of the same level of critique as literature and we are fortunate enough to be living through an era of mass media production, giving us the expectation of year-round, high-quality entertainment delivered straight to the big and small screen. Through these articles, the writers try and explore the power that film and television hold over their audiences: the power to make us laugh, cry or fear, and how this bleed into our everyday life and the world. Enjoy reading!

Kai Spooner, section editor

Euphoria: HBO's Glamorisation of Sex, Drugs & Mental Illness.
Kai Spooner, Lower Sixth

"When you think about those 'don't do drugs kids' kind of messages, they know that's nonsense. They know that's a moralistic point of view. What 'Euphoria' shows is the reality of addiction."
~ Scott Turner Schofield, show consultant.

Euphoria. Since its premiere in 2019, it is almost impossible to be unaware of its impact on television. The show follows the lives of high school students in America's suburbs, the quintessential teen drama of recent years, the hit show 'Euphoria' is HBO's second most watched show since 2004, behind 'Game of Thrones', and regularly draws in over 16 million live viewers each week. Its risqué portrayal of teen life has catapulted the show to fame, causing it to come under scrutiny from a variety of groups: parents and critics amongst others have expressed concern over the show's subject matter whilst others have praised it for its unflinching and sharp writing. With 16 Emmy nominations in 2022, countless TikTok trends and becoming the most tweeted about show of the decade, it is certain that the world has been taken by storm with its madness.

A show like 'Euphoria' being contrasted with the most popular teen TV shows of previous decades is very revealing about the population of today. The 90s had 'Buffy The Vampire Slayer' a cult-classic which followed the supernatural adventures of a teenage demon hunter; the 2000s had 'Gossip Girl', following a group of New York socialites having their every move monitored by the anonymous and titular character, and the 2010s had 'Riverdale', a modern take on the Archie Comics of the 60s, revamped as a sexy, murder mystery. Each decade, what is popular changes, but the trend is demonstrating a dark trajectory. The target audience of 'Euphoria' is Generation Z (those born between the mid/late 90s even to the early 2010s), and it is possible that this generation has decided that it's finally time for raw and realistic depictions of issues that teens face. After all, there is no central storyline in the TV show. No blogger stalking the protagonists, no murders to solve, and no vampires to fight. 'Euphoria' is bigger than that, it's an exploration of the teen psyche, packaged as an aesthetic, tightly plotted yet sprawling melodrama, with the ensemble's main character – played by Emmy winning, Hollywood actress Zendaya – a teenage girl, a recovering addict who struggles with sobriety.

It is evident that 'Euphoria' aestheticises drug and alcohol use and characters arguably face minimal consequences for the actions which they choose to participate in. For example, the long-awaited season 2 premiere saw the characters attend a New Year's party, from the very beginning: gratuitous nudity, casual sex, illegal drug usage paired with the typical underage drinking that is to be expected by these characters is how the show welcomed us back into their world. It was a visual spectacle, with a $13 million budget for this hour-long episode alone, its viewership was so high that it crashed both the HBO Max website and app in the middle of its runtime. The cinematography is undeniably beautiful, with Sam Levinson – the creator of 'Euphoria' – blaming the need for the 'perfect shot' on the reason for which it takes around two years to produce a single eight-episode season. But the question is raised, why does teenagers engaging in illicit activities need to look so good? Whilst the show doesn't necessarily advocate these things, it far from discourages it. The New Year's episode concludes with 'loveable' drug dealer Fezco smashing a bottle on Nate Jacobs' head before repeatedly punching him in the face in a violent scene which leaves Nate looking almost unrecognisable. However, this is framed as almost a reclamation of teenage justice as the viewers know of the reprehensible deeds that Nate's character had committed in the first season. Here, the show's New Year's party has crafted a microcosm of Gen Z and the fact that they buy into their own inflated sense of self: they can play judge, jury, and executioner, whilst engaging in and excusing their own immoral acts.

During an interview with Insider, Dr Barbara Nosal, a teen addiction specialist, reasoned that 'Euphoria' could put impressionable teens at an increased risk of self-destructive activity. "Teens are looking for a way to escape and numb their feelings and they may get ideas or think doing these things [on the show] could help them feel better," Dr Nosal said, alluding to the glorification of the erroneous past times that these new TV role models indulge in. However, it must be noted that 'Euphoria' does have its moments of narrative clarity in which it reduces the activities of the characters into its most basic and raw forms. Namely the 5th episode of season 2, with this marking Rue's – Zendaya's character – lowest point as a drug addict: she resorts to theft, engages in a violent confrontation with her own mother and severs ties with her close friends and girlfriend, Jules, in a desperate, final attempt to obtain opiates to suppress her withdrawal symptoms. This episode received acclaim from critics and audiences alike and is currently the highest rated episode of the series on the platform IMDB, scoring an almost perfect 9.6 out of 10. It is important to add that the creator and writer of 'Euphoria', Sam Levinson, is himself a recovered drug addict who affirms that Rue is a manifestation of him as a youth, a hard-hitting truth to all those who claim her character to be over the top and non-representative of teen addiction.

A universally agreed upon thing about the show, however, is the accurate representation of the complex mental health of adolescents. With an ever-increasing dependency on social media and disheartening world-affairs, the mental health of teenagers is in a crisis that escalates year upon year – a theme addressed in the series. Characters depict anxiety, depression, OCD and eating

disorders in an accurate and respectful way which doesn't detract from their arc as a whole but instead displays the struggles of living with such a complex issue.

A show like 'Euphoria' cannot dismiss its own cultural fervour, its audience definitely hasn't, and heightening its awareness to its own influence is critical to whether this series can cement itself as teen television greatness or a damaging attempt at social commentary. 'Euphoria' themed parties, makeup and fashion are widespread amongst teens, with the impact being so significant that when a piece of media trends in this way, it is literally called "The Euphoria effect". The show's cultural relevance matched with sensitive subjective matter has dire consequences on a generation that is so easily influenced by the media, and so the compelling HBO drama should perhaps be more mindful of the messages it subliminally and overtly plants in viewers minds.

Though it has lots to answer for, the overall success of 'Euphoria' elevates it onto a platform which has the capabilities of making immense change. This show has proven that you can change the way we talk about, understand, and address mental health, addiction, and sex, laying the foundation for important conversations that teens should and must have.

"Say My Name", The Rise & Fall of Walter White, Heisenberg
Ben Rouse, Lower Sixth

"I am not in danger, Skyler. I am the danger. A guy opens his door and gets shot and you think that of me? No. I am the one who knocks!"

Walter White, played by Bryan Cranston, is one of the most recognised characters in TV history. Breaking Bad is one of the most watched shows ever made, depicting Walter White, a chemistry teacher diagnosed with inoperable lung cancer, deciding to go into a life of methamphetamine cooking and dealing to pay for his medical bills. His character develops greatly over his many crimes across the 5 seasons, until he fully takes on his alternate identity, Heisenberg. This article will explore this growth, diving into the deepest moment of Walt's transformation into his dark alter ego.

Obvious spoilers for 'Breaking Bad' ahead.

Firstly, the name Heisenberg, although not explicitly explained in the show, does have some significance: it is a reference to the German physicist Werner Heisenberg who is famous for the 'uncertainty principle' which states that the exact momentum and position of a particle cannot be known simultaneously. On a deeper level, as Heisenberg, he can commit heinous crimes that Walt would never have been capable of. It's a form of psychological compartmentalisation that allows him to distance himself from his evil acts, and still see himself as a good person. Additionally, this makes him a human representation of the 'uncertainty principle', as his momentum into an evil underground increase, he loses his position as a family man with a strong moral code.

The pilot and first few episodes start off the series in an immense way, the pilot itself being a microcosm of the whole series, the discovery of his cancer, the recruitment of Jesse Pinkman to cook meth with, and the 'cops' arriving after his failed suicide with an unloaded gun all have their wider links to the rest of the show. Mainly towards the end, his suicide parallels his failed attempt at pleading with Jesse in the final episode to end his life as he's finally dying. The cops would then soon arrive, however, in contrast to the pilot that ends with his arm outstretched with a gun pointed forward, the final episode closes with Walter lying on his back: dead as the cops arrive. The opening to the season continues to develop the character of Walter White, with the first view into Heisenberg coming with the murder of "Krazy-8" – a mobster Walt and Jesse had trapped in their basement. This was after Walt attempted to convince himself that freeing the criminal would be a good idea as he didn't want to murder him, but after realising the rival dealer didn't plan on letting bygones be bygones, he strangled him with a bike lock. This occurring so early on really gives the viewers an early taste of his capacity for brutality, drip feeding it through his reluctancy, showing the kill was out of necessity for his life rather than his new criminal career.

Walter claims throughout the entire series that his criminal identity was there purely for the sake of family: making a substantial amount of money so that they are set up for after he dies due to his terminal cancer. However, it becomes clear to the audience that this is not the case. The first time this can be seen is when his former business partners, now very rich, offer to pay for all his chemotherapy and other treatments; nonetheless, Walt secretly denies this, having no reason other than pride. However, the episode this takes place within (Season 1, Episode 5) ends with Walt asking Jesse the question "want to cook?", indicating a greater reason for the denial of funds. The writers providing the protagonist with a Deus Ex Machina and having him deny it is a huge moment for the character. Furthermore, around the middle of season two, Walt's cancer goes into remission, but upon discovering this news, Walter goes into a blind rage in the hospital bathroom: he could no longer use his cancer to justify his criminal actions.

Jumping now to the end of season 3, the episode "Half measures" is the next time Heisenberg is dramatically portrayed. Jesse becomes aware of two dealers that have murdered his friend combo, he goes against Walt's wishes, making a plan to kill them at night. Here, Walt is torn between staying loyal to his new boss, Gustavo Fring, or his old partner Jesse. Ultimately, he decides on Jesse, swooping in at the last second, ramming the two dealers with his Pontiac Aztek, getting out and shooting the last of the two-left alive in the head, telling Jesse to "Run". Presented here is a monumental turning point in Walt's character, choosing to go against his new 'safe' role with Gus, and instead taking the more violent route and using this disconnect with his boss as leverage against Jesse, forcing him to kill the replacement Gus had in store for Walt. He openly decided on the most violent course of action, his arrogance coming through as one of his biggest character flaws.

Heisenberg continues to creep into his family life until it inevitably destroys it. His death is foreshadowed long before the event, Walt becomes obsessed with removing rot from the crawl space under his home – potentially a way of seeing himself as a family man again – yet in the process he wears the white overalls of Heisenberg to do so, bringing him into the home. He returns to

the crawl space later on in order to retrieve the money hidden down there that was supposed to fund a new life for his family, an escape. But after finding out his wife Skyler had given it all away, the camera looks down on him from above, his head framed in the opening to the crawl space, his crying turns into manic laughter, terrifying Skyler who looks down at a man who she no longer recognises. Walt is in his metaphorical grave beneath his home, his family, destined from this moment onwards to be a dead man walking.

The final confession comes in the last episode of the entire series. Walt's been on the run for the last year, finally coming home to take revenge on the white supremacist gang that took his money, killed his brother in law, and imprisoned Jesse, when he goes to see Skyler for the last time. Here he reveals his true feelings for the first time. No longer hiding behind any excuses, the cancer he had survived, the family that had crumbled before him. No, that was the moment Heisenberg had truly taken over, no more denial. "I did it for me," he tells Skyler. "I liked it. I was good at it. And I was really alive.", his entire character arc finishes here, he confesses for his true motivations, arrogance and greed, freeing himself from the monotonous life he had left behind all that time ago.

Finally, Walt faces off against a gang, setting up a machine gun to kill them all automatically through a switch, however, in the process he is caught in the crossfire. This is reminiscent of Shakespearean protagonists: causing his own downfall and peripeteia as a by-product of his own behaviour. In the closing minutes of the final episode, dying, Walter walks around the gang's compound, finding their meth lab; he collapses to the floor, spread out whilst looking through lifeless eyes into the sky, he rests finally in the place that made him feel inexplicably alive, a tragic yet inevitable death. As the camera pans out and into the sky, police file into the room and Badfinger's "Baby Blue" begins to play, both Walt and Heisenberg lie cold and alone, dead.

Tarantino's Tainted Legacy
*Oli Bird & Kai Spooner, Lower Sixth*

It is undeniable that in the past 25 years, cinema has been defined by the record-breaking career of director, producer and actor 'Quentin Tarantino'. Across his 10-film catalogue, he has accepted a variety of accolades: Academy Awards, Golden Globes, BAFTAs and the Palme d'or at the Cannes Film Festival are just scratching the surface of his acclaim. Commercially, his films have performed exceptionally, amassing well over 5 billion dollars at the box office worldwide. However, his success has not materialised without its share of controversy, due to the subversive content and subject matter of his work which has received countless reviews from critics with the objective of "cancelling" him, none have been successful. But to what extent are these attempts justified? What evidence have his detractors used against him and his media?

Tarantino has faced allegations of racism due to his screenplays and representation of black characters and their issues. His critics regularly site the 2012 blockbuster film 'Django Unchained' as an issue: the racial slur (n—r) is featured nearly 110 times and is spoken most frequently and noticeably from Oscar winner DiCaprio's character – a plantation owner. In fact, Tarantino's dismissal of these criticisms was even dealt

with in a problematic manner, with him remarking that "when the black critics came out with savage think pieces about Django, [he]couldn't have cared less" demonstrating his lack of understanding and empathy surrounding a word with such historical significance. Later adding "if people don't like my movies, they don't like my movies… it doesn't matter". However, it is important to note that the setting of 'Django Unchained' was a film following the adventures of a freed black slave – Django – in Antebellum America. But even from early on in his career, Tarantino had used the word in his screenwriting, with it featuring in the 90s cult classic 'Pulp Fiction' – more than an entire decade prior to the release of Django. Tarantino has also given the following message for those who have taken offence or been upset with the graphic violence and frequent use of the N-word in his films: "see something else" showing his lack of regret about the substance in his movies and the backlash it often gets from viewers and critics alike.

Tarantino's portrayal of women in his films has also been criticised for being misogynistic. Many of his female characters are written as victims of chauvinistic violence or sexual objectification. In films like 'Pulp Fiction' and 'Kill Bill', female characters are often brutalised, and their agency is stripped away through acts of violence. Additionally, Tarantino's use of gendered slurs in his films has raised concerns about his attitudes towards women as a marginalised community. There are also widely held concerns about the depth at which Tarantino is willing to explore the female characters found in his works. The only credited women in his directorial debut 'Reservoir Dogs' play characters such as "shocked woman" and "shot woman". Through these semantics Tarantino removes all sense of individuality of these characters and the "shot woman" character only further perpetuates his aforementioned obsession with depicting

violence against women. However, other respected critics in the industry have argued that it is important to consider the context of Tarantino's films in order to fully comprehend his intentions. For example, his use of hyper-violent imagery and language is often meant to be satirical and subversive, highlighting the absurdity and cruelty of certain societal norms. Additionally, many of his female characters are also portrayed as strong, independent, and capable of fighting back against their oppressors. In Kill Bill, the protagonist seeks revenge against those who wronged her, including men who sought to control and subjugate her.
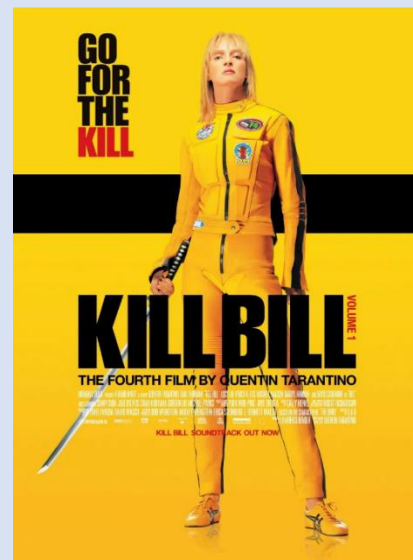
The safety on set has been a concern for many of Tarantino's adversaries, who have accused him of being verbally abusive and creating a toxic environment, while his supporters argue that his behaviour is necessary for artistic excellence. With some saying that he is simply expressing passion about his craft, going as far as to choke and spit at actress Uma Thurman during the production of 'Kill Bill' seems like a highly inappropriate and masochistic abuse of power. This is not even the full extent of what Thurman was subjected to, during the filming of the same project, Tarantino coerced the actress into performing highly dangerous stunts such as driving an unsafe car that resulted in a crash. This particular

instance was described by the director as "the greatest regret of [his] life" but this admission did not stop him from continuing to exhibit similar behaviour with Diane Kruger on the set of 'Inglorious Basterds'. Tarantino has also never shied away from defending the problem actions of other filmmakers on set. He has made public comments supporting Roman Polanksi, a film director infamous for sexually assaulting a 13-year-old, stating that the affair "was not rape". Tarantino also came forward to suggest he knew about the sexual misconduct of once heralded producer, Harvey Weinstein, long before he was held to account by the efforts of the '#METOO' movement.

Whether or not it is acceptable for Tarantino films to be promoted and enjoyed to such the degree that they are, is dependent on whether or not you believe there can ever be a separation of art from the artist. Tarantino is undoubtedly talented at filmmaking, but his natural abilities should not negate his sadistic on set behaviour. After all, Quentin Tarantino *is* the core of every Tarantino film.

The Office U.S.
Sam Williamson, Lower Sixth

After being described as the most successful and influential shows in British history, The Office UK set its sights on the States in an attempt to adapt the humour towards a new audience. The Writers of the Office UK, Ricky Gervais and Stephen Merchant were unsure about how successful an American adaptation of their workplace comedy would be, but they were sure Greg Daniels would be the right man to write it. Greg Daniels is an American Screenwriter who was confident in the adaptation and said to the executives of the Office UK, that this workplace-based show was "relatable" and was classic NBC. In retrospect, Daniels would be correct about the American version of the TV show, as it would go on to film 9 hilarious seasons, win 44 Emmy awards and be recognised globally as a 'comedy classic'.

Although many people say confidently that originals are better, Season 1 of The Office was disappointing when compared to the other seasons. The first season of the show was approved by NBC after long periods of pleading by co-producer Ben Silverman, who eventually succeeded in his request to make 5 shows past the pilot episode. Although the seasons following the first were structured with more than 20 episodes, the content filmed within, established a solid ground on which the show could build upwards towards brilliance over the next 7 years.

A highlight of the first season was the episode "Diversity Day", which is looked back on today as a sitcom classic but resulted in disappointment at the time of release. The viewership figures showed a great decline from the pilot episode, decreasing from 11.2 million to 5.9 million viewers, which, in an alternate universe, gave NBC a reason to not pursue the show further than 6 episodes. However, this

episode brought a big positive for the future, as it proved to both an American and particularly a UK audience that they could make completely new plots with brand new scripts that still captured the essence of what the Office is meant to be. When visiting his old middle school, Brian Baumgartner (played Kevin Malone in The Office U.S) was asked the question, "What is your favourite episode of the show", to which he responded, 'Diversity Day'. He then stated that his answer was met with crowds of laughter, representing the recognition of timeless comedic moments made from one singular episode.

The theme of comedy was key to the success of the award-winning series. Duos Greg Daniels' ethos was drawn towards not just having one funny person to bring the comedy, but to have a comedic duo, doubling the value. Often in Offices, people would play harmless pranks on each other for humorous purposes, but Jim and Dwight allowed viewers to relate to their 'friendly' rivalry with 9 seasons of back and forth 'workplace banter'.

Alongside preserving comedic value, the credibility of the series had to be maintained. For these reasons, the theme of love as central in the conception of the Office. Within any working environment there are always office romances. This idea is explored through Jim and Pam's relationship, one of the most iconic relationships in TV history. What makes their relationship so great is their relatability and realistic presentation, forcing the reader to wish they weren't just a fictional creation but a real couple.

With a charismatic attitude towards life and doing the exact opposite of the phrase, 'all work no play', Steve Carell brings to life the manager of the Pennsylvania paper producing firm, Michael Scott. Most episodes of the show are based around Michael's personal experiences with people

who have a completely different opinion to that of his own. For example, Michael often falsely interprets his co-workers as his 'family', highlighting his own unprofessional attitude towards his professional job. As Well as his own misinterpretations, Carell portrays Michael as an offensive, attention-seeking person, disregarding the feelings of his employees, despite his responsibility to be 'in-charge'. The theme of cringe was an essential part of Michael Scott's character, and as with many men before him in comedy, so was his mishandling of sensitive social issue. Although Michael comes across this way, Carell knew that he could portray the 'World's Best Boss', as having a kind heart and an intention to do good when looking deeper into his character profile.

For me, The Office is a show I could rewatch 600 times and still enjoy every minute. The show creates an idealised working atmosphere of an energetic boss and hilarious co-workers. Unlike other sitcoms created, The Office establishes complexity to the side characters' storylines, making their purpose not only to support the main character, but to make their own journeys meaningful and relatable to an audience. The show also quietly highlighted social issues of the time that most TV comedies avoided. For example, in the episode, "Gay Witch Hunt", the American writers were ahead of their time talking about same sex marriage in 2006, as it wouldn't be legalised until 2016, 10 years after the episode aired. This initiative to speak about political

issues through TV was not only very funny but was genius from the writers as it connected a branch with other minority communities like that of the LGBTQ.

The brilliance of the show is really demonstrated after the departure of Steve Carell and therefore Michael Scott at the end of Season 7, which shed a few tears across viewers. The restart of the next season would be tricky for the writers as replacing a character like Michael was an impossible task. However, the writers of theshow pulled together to create 2 more amusing seasons, demonstrating the versatility of the Office and how great ideas can come from awkward situation

Literary Criticism

Literature has always existed as a powerful art form used to express and cope with strong emotions for both the writer and the reader. Literary works almost always reflect aspects of their writers' lives, whose words in turn help readers to explore and realise their own emotions. The most powerful literature combines strong ideas and emotions with skilful artistic language to create works which are relatable to vast audiences.

Whilst literature can act as a source of comfort and healing, it is also often used by writers to express injustice or draw attention to problems within society, in order to express negative feelings such as anger or despair. Its power to influence wide audiences has been a crucial tool for writers to address social and political issues, and even create a sense of fear and warning through tragic and dystopian novels.

Anna Collins-Room, section editor

Painting with Words: The Power of Literary Symbolism
Anna Collins-Room, Lower Sixth

"Painting and writing … have very much in common. The novelist after all wants to make us see… All great writers are colourists." *Virginia Woolf*

Powerful literature invokes real emotions and intense feelings, conveying a deeper message beneath the surface of the words. The most powerful features are metaphors and symbols, which add depth and wider meaning to ideas. The complexity they add is essential for readers to connect with literature, creating a more engaging and memorable experience. Firstly, the metaphor is an effective literary device which links distant concepts through comparison. From the Greek 'metapherein', meaning to transfer, a metaphor symbolises a deeper idea, offering a unique experience for each reader. Metaphors are so powerful that they can be used with few words, for example in 'In a Station of the Metro', Ezra Pound uses the metaphor 'apparitions' to describe the people in the metro, connoting ghost-like and transient faces, all with a single word. This idea of precise and concentrated imagery presenting certain emotions is also shown in Williams' 'The Red Wheelbarrow', a poem famous for its short form and simple language, yet near-infinite depth. In the third stanza 'glazed with rain / water', it gives a vast amount of information about the wheelbarrow's environment, such as when it had rained, but could also be a metaphor for a fleeting moment: when it had stopped raining, but the wheelbarrow was not quite dry. These poems show the force of the metaphor, allowing readers to analyse their work in new and unique ways.

Another powerful literary feature is symbolism, where certain objects represent ideas that recur throughout works of literature. Symbolism makes abstract ideas accessible to readers by connecting them to something tangible and common, without losing depth. For example, in Macbeth, when washing the blood from his hands, he asks "Will all great Neptune's Ocean wash this blood clean from my hand?", the blood symbolising his guilt. Shakespeare goes on to use colour symbolism, saying Duncan's blood will "[make] the green one red",

polluting a pure green sea with Macbeth's red guilt. Some writers even create their own symbols, for example, in 'The Great Gatsby', Fitzgerald uses Dr Eckleburg's eyes, the oculist's advert, as a motif. Some interpret them as having God-like powers, such as when Wilson speaks to the advert, saying that it "may fool [him]" but "can't fool God", showing how he sees the eyes as a sinister and controlling force. Others see the eyes as a single point of reference in the midst of monstrous disorder, a motif portraying Fitzgerald's message about the evils of wealth and capitalism. Symbolism is crucial for writers to get their point across, whilst conveying a powerful message in a subtle way.

The metaphor and symbol are to literature as colours are to painting: the outcome would be dull and lifeless without them. Writers use them to express their creativity by linking abstract ideas, making their work powerful and relatable to readers. Metaphors and symbols have been universally used as a literary vice to create vivid images from the writer's palate. There is no doubt that these powerful techniques will be used in literature for centuries to come.

In Defence of Daisy Buchanan
Charlotte Wilkinson, Lower Sixth

In the 1925 novel 'the Great Gatsby,' the controversial character of Daisy Buchanan is a victim of being portrayed as a cruel and self-absorbed woman, but not for the right reasons. The strong dislike readers have towards Daisy is not led by the fact that she hit Myrtle and left Gatsby to deal with the repercussions but instead the fact that she did not reciprocate Gatsby's' unachievable standards of love, standards she could never reach due to her place as a woman in the 1920s patriarchal society.

Daisy Buchanan was set up to fail from the beginning due to Gatsby idolising her in his mind for five years so that when they reunited, she, inevitably, 'tumbled short of his dreams.' The impossible standard Gatsby held her to can be seen in the motif of the green light in how once he gets Daisy, 'the colossal significance of the light had now vanished forever.' The light, used to symbolise desire, losing its meaning shows how Gatsby got what he wanted but still lives with reminders of the truth that he can never truly be with her due to the societal pressures of the time in that Daisy cannot leave Tom due to divorce being heavily looked down upon in the 1920s. Yet, despite divorce being looked down upon in the 1920s, Gatsby still put pressure on Daisy to leave Tom and, 'wanted nothing less of Daisy than that she should go to Tom and say: 'I never loved you.'' The unfair expectations Gatsby puts on Daisy demonstrates that Gatsby isn't so different from Tom in that both want an unfair amount of possession over Daisy that can be suffocating and disregards her view of the situation. Daisy cannot simply leave Tom just because Gatsby loves her and

Gatsby completely ignores the issue of the patriarchy at the time, in that Daisy is financially reliant on Tom due to women being unable to work high paying jobs like men, and with the added struggle of Daisy having a child with Tom, it is unrealistic to assume that she could leave him for Gatsby.

Dislike towards Daisy comes from the readers mainly due to her not loving Gatsby back, however Gatsby himself is not in love Daisy but instead the idea of her. Gatsby is in love with a past version of Daisy, which can be seen in the symbolism of the 'defunct mantelpiece clock,' which is used to depict that Gatsby remains in the past and his desire for Daisy is based on who she was five years ago as opposed to her present-day development. Gatsby refuses to truly love the present-day Daisy as he spent five years replaying their time together to the point where he is only capable of loving her previous self and his present-day desire for her is not about love but instead infatuation and a need to fulfil his unrealistic fantasy. When Gatsby notices Daisy's change in character and unwillingness to leave Tom, he is disappointed and confused and when Nick reminds him that he can't repeat the past, Gatsby is adamant that, 'of course you can!' The use of the exclamation mark alludes to a tone of blind hope or even desperation in that Gatsby isn't satisfied with the new Daisy and wants her to abandon the life she made for herself for a

man she knew five years ago. Daisy is also in an abusive relationship with Tom, with him physically hurting her, 'the knuckle was black and blue,' and cheating on her with Myrtle fully to her knowledge, so it is unfair to expect her to pack up her bags and leave Tom for Gatsby in that Daisy is scared to leave Tom as in many abusive relationships, even moving into the 21st century, it is hard to leave someone who started out deeply loving you and later gaslighting you after they hurt you and with the added child they have together, Daisy is in a difficult spot to leave Tom for someone who doesn't really love her either.

Overall, Daisy should not be viewed as the villain of the Great Gatsby for, although she left Gatsby to deal with her mistake of hitting Myrtle, the most hate she gets is due to not loving Gatsby back. Daisy was put in a position where she was forced to choose between her cheating husband of five years and a man who was scarily obsessed with the idea of her, and Daisy should not be blamed for choosing her husband as they had a child together and Daisy relied on him for financial support. Both Tom and Gatsby treated Daisy very poorly and Gatsby was merely obsessed with Daisy as opposed to loving her as many readers believe. In the end, Daisy was at the will of the men around her as she was a woman who never had the choice of who to marry as she was first banned from marrying the penniless Gatsby and later was unable to leave her abusive cheating husband.

How to Use a Paper Sword: as told by
Markus Zusak and Ray Bradbury
Grace Ensor-Adams, Lower Sixth

Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury was conceived as a dystopian, prophetic novel set during a vague moment in the future and occurring in an unknown American state. Markus Zusak's The Book Thief shares parts of its oppressive regime with the 1950s American novel, centralised around the burning of books to suppress ideas of the population and censor the flow of information in Nazi Germany to support the Aryan ideology. Both books, although not necessarily claiming a direct war setting, acknowledge the apocalyptic reality of a space without words and teach us how to harness literature to the best of our abilities, resisting and rebelling with a paper sword.

Liesel Meminger, a young and resilient orphan, arrives on 'Himmel Street' in times of relative prosperity. After some unease, she soon becomes a fixed family member and respected footballer amongst those who live up and down the rest of 'Heaven Street', a landscape loyal to its name with its deliverance of fierce community and prevailing love. Underpinning Liesel's movement into her teenage years is a prolific and prolonged book heist in opposition to the ceremonious burning of books under tyrannical leadership. Her story is narrated by an omniscient character that takes a God-like form, conspiring with other natural forces such as the weather and boasting the ability to be everywhere at any moment: Death. Zusak's choice of Death as a narrator allows for an introspective and deeply personal account of Liesel's story that otherwise shielded itself from outside light as a survival instinct. Whilst describing himself as 'amiable' and perhaps even showing enough sympathy for readers to agree with this epithet, Death ultimately underpins The Book Thief with the reminder of

enormous loss in the Second World War. Liesel's defiance to comply which is seen as the stealing of books tinged with the smell of kerosene from the embers of a celebratory fire, refusal to Heil Hitler, and the hiding of a Jew in her basement, comes down to a resistance of Death. Deep down in air raid bunkers, Liesel recites stolen and reclaimed words to terrified people who feel Death at their shoulder. Liesel arms herself with a black book, a sword or a shield or both alike, after the unexpected death of her brother. She models a paper sword, her love for literature, that becomes the very last weapon when Himmel Street is targeted by the opposition and, staying true to its name, is touched not by feelings of paradise on this occasion, but Death himself.

Bradbury showcases Guy Montag, another resisting gem who emerges from the ashes of supressed literature, in Fahrenheit 451. Guy works as a 'Fireman', who in this dystopian world starts fires and seeks these 'symphonies of blazing', flames that take with them history, instead of putting them out. Bradbury fixes the protagonist to the German word for 'Monday', at first being representative of the character's complacency to follow the rules of the state and work daily with blind obedience and satisfaction, but later becoming of a symbol of starting afresh by resisting state censorship, a Monday feeling of rejuvenation. For Guy Montag, books form a

sword that fight his former self, triggering a personal transformation and the realisation of the emptiness of his previous existence as a Fireman. Yet, drawing any weapon in this dystopian state warrants punishment, whether intended to harm others or to save yourself. Guy becomes a fugitive with other rebels and memorises books, wishing to impart such literature to future generations after breaking oppressive regimes. Fahrenheit 451 echoes apocalyptic ideas presented in The Book Thief as generations of knowledge and progression are obliterated by weapons of mass destruction in both novels, and it is the power of literature and resisting people who must rebuild civilisation, turning their paper swords into paper stones.

As issues of book censorship and freedom of speech collide in a modern America with over 1,600 books now banned across several school districts, most commonly those tackling issues of racial prejudice such as Alice Walker's 'The Colour Purple', we turn to the mantras of Zusak and Bradbury to remind ourselves of the power of literature. The bravery and resilience embodied by Liesel and Guy, in their respective portions of the past and the future, offer encouragement for a modern reader to mobilise a personal, paper sword.

The Evolution of Dystopian Novels: has Society regressed?
Lucy Smith, Lower Sixth

The late modernist novel 'Nineteen Eighty-Four' was written by socialist advocate, George Orwell, in 1945. Set in London in the year 1984, Orwell uses a third-person omniscient point of view to demonstrate the adversity of the protagonist Winston Smith in his conquest for love in the face of a totalitarian regime, imposed through the figurehead of 'Big Brother'. Despite his efforts, Orwell demonstrates the futility of Winston's plight for love and freedom; learning to love the collective identity imposed by the severe regime after being brainwashed in the infamous Room 101. The arguably satirical novel draws upon themes of totalitarianism, the struggle of the individual against a rigid collective identity, and the extremity of class struggles within a restrictive social hierarchy. Orwell uses the symbols of 'Big Brother', the Glass Paperweight and of the 'Red-Armed Prole Woman' to illustrate these key themes. The novel can be seen as a representation of Orwell's socialist viewpoint, as a result of his service as a militiaman on the Republican side against fascist general Francisco Franco in the Spanish Civil War. The influence of these anarchist critiques of Soviet Communism and Marxism are evident in the novel, through characters such as the denounced political traitor, Emmanuel Goldstein, drawing inspiration from the Marxist writings of Leon Trotsky. Orwell stated himself that "Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism."

The theme of totalitarianism and communism is evident throughout the novel through the presentation of 'Big

Brother' as an omniscient figurehead, symbolising the rigid authoritarian regime of the superstate 'Oceania'. Big Brother is presented as synonymous with the totalitarian government of Oceania due to it being controlled by the Party. The extent of the influence of this thought-child is abundant in the novel, with Orwell describing it as though "some huge force was pressing down against you". Despite learning that Big Brother is an invention of the Party to act as a scapegoat for trepidation, after being brainwashed Orwell describes how Winston "loved Big Brother." The use of a short statement demonstrates the finality of the victory of the totalitarian regime, almost certainly due to the creation of Big Brother acting as a catalyst for the creation of a theocracy. Similarly, the rigid social hierarchy and theocracy demonstrated in Atwood's 'The Handmaid's Tale' is shownthrough the presentation of the restricted roles of women, as well as through the depiction of 'The Eyes' as secretive enforcers of Gilead's laws, not unlike the mistrust created under the Nazi regime, encouraging friends and family members to report anyone who exhibited any behaviour that could be seen as not supporting the regime. Atwood demonstrates the sheer extremity between the roles of men and women within the rigid hierarchical society in Gilead. Whilst simultaneously elucidating that even good men have begun to adopt misogynistic views towards the female characters in the novel, Atwood demonstrates the extreme restrictions placed upon women through the character of Offred. One example of this is when the character states that "A thing is valued… only if it is hard to get.", clearly demonstrating the debased, objectified opinion of women as an item that can be discarded. Furthermore, Atwood uses frequent biblical references with inverted meanings, demonstrating the theocracy by

clearly highlighting the combination of the church and state. Both 'Nineteen Eighty-Four' and 'The Handmaid's Tale' refer to themes of a strict totalitarian and theocratic regime, serving as a warning for wider society of the consequences of unequal distribution of power.

Further comparisons can be drawn between both Orwell's 'Nineteen Eighty-Four' and other contemporary dystopian novels through the depiction of a strict social hierarchy with complete control of reality, alongside the presentation of the themes of love and betrayal. Orwell successfully depicts an atmosphere of suspicion and fear through the presentation of the extent of control the Party has on the population of Oceania. The Party is presented as an omnipotent force with the ability to impose terror within a population, achieved in the novel through the description of the presence of telescreens in every room, serving as a constant reminder of the observation they are under. This creates an unnerving atmosphere for the reader, with the extent of the Party's control almost unimaginable, perhaps serving as a warning for successive

generations. Furthermore, the destruction of love through deceit and betrayal is evident, demonstrated through the collapse of the relationship between Winston and Julia. Despite previously describing their love as "a pocket of the past where extinct animals could walk", the two characters betray each other. This serves as a painful reminder of the negative influence of power and its ability to destroy something presented as well-rooted and pure. Collins' 'The Hunger Games' presents similar depictions of a rigid authoritarian regime with the character of 'President Snow' serving as a figurehead for a regime with complete control over people's lives. The presentation of the Capitol as a minute proportion of the population with a disproportionate amount of influence not only illustrates an authoritarian regime, but also depicts Panem as a society with the top having complete control over the rest. This is made apparent by Collins repeatedly, for example, when the character of Katniss states that "We have so little communication with anyone outside our district", highlighting the extreme influence of the Capitol over the rest of the population. Moreover, the breakdown of the previously strong relations between the characters of Katniss and Gale being replaced with a false relationship with Peta forced by the need for survival in the Hunger Games further serves as a reminder of the ability of power to corrupt good.

Orwell also presents the plight of the individual against the desire to conform with a widespread collective identity. The totalitarian regime in 'Nineteen Eighty-Four' is presented as a small group obtaining power solely by denying the population their individuality, using propaganda to eradicate all individual thought. Orwell presents the character of Winston as attempting to assert his individual identity by engaging in a prohibited sexual relationship and keeping a private diary. The character initially insists that his version of reality is the truth, opposing the collective identity the Party dictates. This is starkly contrasted at the end of the novel, when after being brainwashed, the character accepts the collective identity vindicated by the Party. This is apparent in the novel, for example when Orwell describes Winston's independence as a "stubborn, self-willed exile from the loving breast!", illustrating the character's acceptance of the collective identity by illustrating his regret at fathoming independence. The futility of an individual battling a rigid collective identity is also presented in Ness' 'The Knife of Never Letting Go'. In the first instalment of his 'Chaos Walking' trilogy, Ness presents the struggle of Todd, a young boy battling against the collective identity of the recently colonised 'Prentisstown' to save a young girl being hunted. Much like Wilson, Todd lives in war-stricken world with seemingly the entire population conforming to a collective identity. Through aiding the character of Viola, Todd is rebelling against the constraints of a rigid belief that all must conform in order to survive. The extreme struggles of the characters Ness illustrates in the novel indicates the extreme difficulty of an individual attempting to maintain autonomy in the face of a historically enforced collective identity. Both authors are illustrating the colossal extent to which

an established identity can cause extreme difficulty to an individual unwilling to conform.

Many comparisons can be drawn between Orwell's late modernist novel and more contemporary dystopian novels, reflecting the evolution of dystopian novels in only eight decades. The presentation of the totalitarian regime in both Orwell's novel and 'The Handmaid's Tale', alongside the presentations of a rigid social hierarchy and the theme of love and betrayal in 'The Hunger Games' and an inescapable collective identity in 'The Knife of Never Letting Go' serve as a warning of the severe consequences of an improper distribution of power. The stark contrast between the political tension outlined in 'Nineteen Eighty-Four' and the struggle for survival evident in contemporary novels is a concerning demonstration of the regression of western society; it is no longer a struggle for societal development, but a battle for survival similar to presentations of complete annihilation in apocalyptic novels.

The Poetry Pharmacy

An Introduction to The Power Of Poetry
Adina Vidler, Lower Sixth

Why is poetry worth reading? It's undeniably easy to view poetry as a jumble of words tied together by rhyme, that you are made to analyse against your will in English lessons. But, William Sieghart's 'The Poetry Pharmacy' dissolves any presumed futility of poetry, rather filling it with power and, as you will come to see, medicine. This collection of poems has forced me to not only read the words of a poem, but understand their place. Language is a craft, and the use of a single word over another can create a magical effect that may aid one in a time of need. The front cover of the book describes it as "tried-and-true prescriptions for the heart, mind and soul" and I couldn't agree more.

How the Poetry Pharmacy works, simply, is you are prescribed a poem for the emotional problem you have. There are 56 poems for 56 conditions, and these are split into the sections: *Mental and Emotional Wellbeing; Motivations; Self-Image and Self-Acceptance; The World and Other People; Love and Loss.* Evidently, there is a huge range of poems and things you may be struggling with that the book covers, making it something you could easily keep forever. For each condition, one page is used to state the condition (and other suitable synonymous conditions) and Sieghart has also written an insightful comment on the issue and how his selected poem may be of help. The poem is then on the page opposite, and I find his layout to be very personal and effective.

At the start of the book, Sieghart includes a powerful introduction, as well as the history of the Poetry Pharmacy and how to read a poem. Sieghart's Poetry Pharmacy started around 10 years ago at a literary festival. He was in a tent, with two armchairs and a prescription pad; an idea set up by a friend. Sieghart writes of how the hours went by and queues persisted at his Poetry Pharmacy, he realised that suffering could be the gap in a person's mind, granting the medicine of poetry. He found that listening to others' problems and gifting them a poem, often left them healed or comforted in some way, giving him and me the confidence that poetry can change lives. He talks of how Poetry has been a source of aid through his own hard life experiences, concluding that reading a poem and coming to the joyous revelation that one has expressed eloquently how you have been feeling or has found a way to soothe it, is like a hand reaching out and reminding you that you are not alone or the only person who feels like this.

I have found this book very useful in my own life, and without doubt know it will be of help in many years to come. In the following articles, others have chosen a poem within the book, that resonates with them and will talk about why the said poem has acted as an ailment in their life. Never underestimate the power of poetry!

Adina Vidler, section editor

Condition: Unkindness
Alice Thomson, Lower Sixth

'It happens all the time in heaven'
By Hafez, Translated by Daniel
Ladinsky

It happens all the time in heaven,
And some day

It will begin to happen
Again on earth –

That men and women who are
married,
And men and men who are
Lovers,

And women and women
Who give each other
Light,
Often will get down on their knees

And while so tenderly
Holding their lover's hand,

With tears in their eyes,
Will sincerely speak, saying,

'My dear,
How can I be more loving to you;

How can I be more
Kind?'

Kindness is a quality, a very human quality, that I think we would all agree is underappreciated and, sadly, is often overlooked and taken for granted within a person. When used selflessly and transparently, kindness can take on a power that drives positive change in a way that most wouldn't expect. After all, it is infectious, dispersing warmly through society. However, unkindness, self-

confidence's bitter enemy, damages a person more severely than is usually admitted or displayed. When on the receiving end of any level of nastiness, it can often feel to a person like the world is caving in around them. Unkindness eats away at self-esteem and reminds one of all the incorrect reasons they will never reach the level of worthiness that they have conjured up, based on the ridiculous expectations of others. Therefore, this condition was certainly a worthy choice to be in 'The Poetry Pharmacy', due to the fact that it is universally experienced and suffered from, yet can often have a simple and easy antidote.

This poem in particular eases the pain in a person's soul. This is because of the way it encapsulates kindness so beautifully, so tenderly, that it becomes impossible for the reader to overlook the importance of this quality. 'It happens all the time in heaven' was written an impressive 700 years ago, by the great Persian poet Hafez. His poetry is characterised by Medieval Islam and the genre of Persian love poetry. I understand that in reading only a translation of his work, I will never be able to appreciate it fully in its original and true form, but I shall do my best to correctly interpret the poet's beautiful message. In the Ghazel tradition, his poems are considered the epitome of Persia. They are – to this day – heavily used by vocalists in Iran, and the tomb of Hafez in Shiraz is a popular pilgrimage sight. This poem recognises the vitality of kindness and it provides irrefutable evidence that goodness, selflessness, and care are far from recent inventions. They have in fact been holding the universe together perhaps since the beginning of time. Kindness has always been fundamental in understanding the humans around us: the connection that it allows to flourish is something that people have desired, longed for and felt lost

without, well, forever. This shows the reader that, although we may feel so distant and detached from those who lived and walked our very footsteps hundreds and hundreds of years ago, the core features and inner workings of human souls and minds are fundamentally the same, no matter the environment they find themselves in.

What I find particularly interesting about this poem is its structure. It uses a cyclical structure in terms of the stanza lengths, having the longest stanza in the middle of the poem. To me, this mirrors the speaker's process of increased overthinking about maintaining a relationship and making amends, but then the stanzas shorten again showing the resolution that the speaker comes to, as they realise that the only thing that is required is displaying kindness. This is shown beautifully as the poem filters to an end point with the enjambement of 'kind', helping to convey further that kindness is the only true thing we need to deepen and nurture a human connection. I would also suggest that the poet has structured the start of the poem in a way that replicates a letter, beginning with 'My dear', creating the notion that kindness and care and good communication are love letters to the soul. What is also interesting about this poem is the use of the word 'heaven'. This word connotes a higher power or something pure and holy, conveying the idea that kindness makes us fundamentally good, and is a God-given gift that humans have been granted to use, despite what hardships we are faced with. This poem also mentions physical expressions of love, as well as verbal, such as 'holding their lover's hands' or 'with tears in their eyes'. By including these, the poet not only further creates a tender and powerful depiction of love, but by ending the poem with conversation also, cleverly shows that communication and empathy is really what you need to hold a connection with others together. It is clear that the speaker has to realise this throughout the poem, as they learn that words can do a lot and have a huge impact - good or bad.

To conclude, I believe that this poem is a wonderful presentation of not only what relationships and human connections must be fed to be kept alive, but also the importance of the quality of kindness and how big of an impact it can have on a person. This poem, when read, is healing for one's soul as it soothes the sting that follows any level of unkindness. It shows how even in small actions, words and questions, we can become better and much more empathetic people. We can create and grow beautiful connections with the use of kindness.
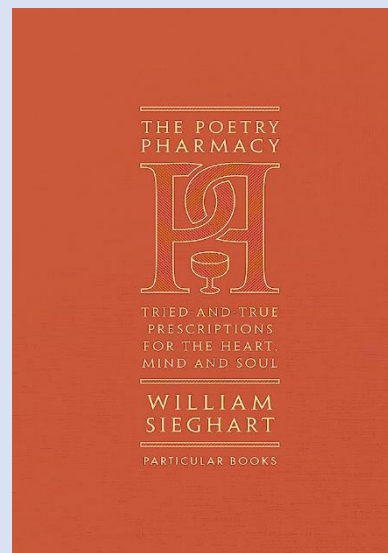
After being introduced to this book recently, 'The Poetry Pharmacy' as a whole has been a miraculous discovery for me and I believe it is a brilliant and fascinating idea that should be shared with as many people as possible. Whilst I could have chosen any one of the prescriptions in this pharmacy, as they are all so poignantly chosen and the conditions they heal are so universally felt and suffered, I know that I have written about a very special and moving piece of poetry, and I feel very grateful for this opportunity to share my love of poetry with anyone reading this

Condition: Defeatism
Harriet Thomson, Third year

Thinking - Walter D. Wintle

If you think you are beaten, you are;
If you think you dare not, you don't.
If you'd like to win, but think you can't,
it's almost a cinch you won't.

If you think you'll lose, you're lost,
For out of the world we find
Success begins with a fellow's will -
It's all in the state of mind.

If you think you're outclassed, you are;
You've got to think high to rise;
You've got to be sure of yourself before
You can ever win a prize.

Life's battles don't always go
To the stronger or faster man;
But soon or late the man who wins,
Is the one who thinks he can.

This Poem was written in 1905 by a man named Walter D. Wintle. He was an American poet who was fairly unknown at the time so records of him are very little. His name may not even be correct but we know he wrote 'Thinking'.

In the pharmacy, William Sieghart prescribed this poem to the condition 'defeatism' meaning self-doubt, pessimism or low self-esteem. I thought this condition was important as I know that so many young people and teenagers have very little confidence in themselves or what they can do. Sometimes when you are growing up, you see others doing things that are amazing in comparison to yourself. This can often cause a sort of jealousy to cloud your mind and create a negative mindset. You may think that you are never going to be *that good*, when in reality, if someone else has the ability; so do you. But we are only human and a defeated attitude can get the better of us. We think we cannot do it so give up.

The poem means something to me because it relates to things I do. For example, I do climbing, which is a sport that needs the correct mindset all of the time. If you are doing a climb and the next move is a large reach or jump, absolutely everything in you has to believe that you can make it, if you don't, you will back out of the move mid-way and fall off. As well as this, sometimes when bouldering you will see something you want to do but then think 'oh I can't do that, so there is no point - I will just fail and embarrass myself' causing you to miss an opportunity to push yourself, all because your head is saying you can't. If you keep doing things that are easy and you know you can do, no improvement will happen. This relates to many other things though, whatever sport someone is playing or things that people are trying to achieve. As the poet declares, "it's all in the state of mind".

I like the way the poem is written because it is so direct about what it is saying; there are no metaphors and decoration (which can be very good in poems) and it is very stated and understandable for all. The repetition of 'If you think' is very effective in engaging the reader because it gives the poem a rhythmic tone, emphasising the message of the poem as well as adding to the simplicity of it.

Overall, I think it is a very motivational and down to earth sort of poem which gives meaning to everyone no matter age or life situation. So, because this issue of defeatism is so large in our society, William Seigheart made a good choice, truly reaching into this struggle of the human condition. When reading the poem I found myself encouraged and calmed, which is why I chose to write about it.

Medicine

As medicine continues to advance, new opportunities and areas of interest arise. This section comprises articles with insights into different areas of medicine. It encapsulates the importance of health, an essential aspect of life, as well as the use of technology within medicine. And its growing role in the quest to 'heal the soul'. I hope these pieces of writing can serve as informative insight to this field. A huge thank you to all the aspiring doctors and scientists who helped bring this section to life.

Khadija Sohail and Aimee Manson, section editors

Can Base Editing & Designer Cells Be The Cure For Cancer?
Rachel Tracey, Lower Sixth

Bases are the language of life. The four types of bases - *Adenine*(A), *Cytosine*(C), *Guanine*(G), and *Thymine*(T) – are the building blocks of our genetic code. Just as letters in the alphabet spell out words that carry meaning, the billions of bases in our DNA spell out the instruction manual for our body. Base editing allows scientists to zoom into a precise part of the genetic code and then alter the molecular structure of just one base, converting it into another and changing the genetic instructions.

How can designer cells be used to treat cancer?

Previous therapies have tried to add new genes to correct a defect whereas this concept of designer cells edits those already there.

The tremendous advances in the gene-editing technology CRISPR allow scientists to easily manipulate DNA since it acts like a pair of molecular scissors. The all-female research team (Emmanuelle Charpentier and Jennifer Doudna) that developed genome editing (CRISPR) won the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 2020. The microscopic scissors are used to precisely engineer the DNA inside a donor's immune cells. The cells are designed to seek out and kill only leukaemia cells and be invisible to the strong drugs given to patients. The designer cells are then injected into the patient, and they then need a second bone marrow transplant to restore their immune system.

This is not yet a cure and this type of treatment needs monitoring for years after being carried out to ensure no cancer returns, but technology is advancing, and this method could be enhanced further to produce a cure. Re-arming the immune system to target cancer and a wide range of inherited disorders is in the sights of doctors.

How can base editing be used to treat specific types of leukemia?

T-cell acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (type of cancer) is an aggressive, fast-growing type of leukaemia (blood cancer) in which too many T-cell lymphoblasts (immature white blood cells) are found in the bone marrow and blood. Doctors can use base editing as a tool to engineer a new type of T-cell that is capable of hunting down and killing any cancerous T-cells. Cancers can be tricky for T-cells to spot since they are a corrupted version of our own cells and thus subtle, whereas a virus is distinctly different from the human body and can be identified easily (most of the time).

Process of battling T-cell leukaemia with base editing:
First of all, doctors modify donated T-cells.

This is done by the primary base edit which disables the T-cells already present in the body, so they do not attack a patient's body. The secondary base edit removes a chemical marking (called CD7) which is present on all T-cells. The tertiary base edit acts as an 'invisibility cloak' that prevents the cells from being killed by a chemotherapy drug. The final stage of genetic modification instructs the T-cells to hunt anything in the body marked with CD7 which in return, destroys every T-cell in the patient's body (including the cancerous T-cells). Therefore, meaning the marking must be removed from the therapy otherwise it would destroy itself. A second bone marrow transplant is required to restore the immune system or else the patient would be very prone to acquiring any communicable diseases and must be kept in isolation.

For this cancer, each of the base edits involves breaking a section of genetic code so it no longer works. But there *are* more nuanced applications where instead of switching an instruction off, you can fix a defective one. *Sickle-cell anaemia*, for example, is caused by just one base change that could be corrected. There are already trials of base editing underway in sickle-cell diseases, as well as high cholesterol that runs in families and the blood disorder *beta-thalassemia*.

What more is there to nicotine besides recreational use?
Aimee Manson, Lower Sixth

In this article, the multidimensional use of nicotine is explored in hopes of presenting it as more than a "cancer-causing drug" and in a positive light on its possible uses in the future.

What is nicotine?

Nicotine is a naturally produced alkaloid in the nightshade family of plants (tobacco. Cauliflower, potatoes). It can be used recreationally as a stimulant and anxiolytic, which is highly addictive and is commonly used in smoking and vaping. Nicotine, however, has many other properties that are massively overlooked due to the stigma surrounding smoking and vaping culture

The Effect of Nicotine on the Brain

Nicotine is also a well-known stimulant and, therefore, has many uses in activating the parts of the brain that are still functioning.

Nicotine binds to nicotinic receptors, initially intended for the neurotransmitter acetylcholine – an essential chemical for attention, memory, and cognitive functioning. It may be a cause for concern that this chemical is being mimicked. Still, nicotine has the same effects as the naturally occurring chemical acetylcholine, but at a much higher rate.

Attention, working memory, fine motor skills, and short-term memory (episodic) functions are particularly sensitive to nicotine's effects. Imaging studies have been vital in identifying this increased activation of the brain regions. More research on the dynamics of all neural networks after activation by, or withdrawal from, nicotine holds great promise for our growing understanding of the complex effect of nicotine on human cognition.

The Link Between Alzheimer's and Nicotine

Alzheimer's disease is thought to be caused by the abnormal build-up of proteins in and around brain cells, but it is still not widely understood in the medical field.

It all began when it was recorded that many individuals with a long smoking history suffered less or less severely from Alzheimer's. Through investigations, it was found that nicotine administration can improve cognitive impairment in Alzheimer's disease, dyskinesia (involuntary movements), and memory impairment in Parkinson's disease. For Alzheimer's patients, the increase in cognition due to nicotine intake would cause their standard of life to be kept at a higher level for longer. They would have more memory retention (episodic memory) and reduced symptoms, such as dyskinesia.

At the Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Michael Zagorski and his colleagues began to search for the answer to this irregularity. They discovered that nicotine prevents the aggregation of beta-amyloid, a protein that goes on to form plaques between neurons, disrupting brain cells functioning in Alzheimer's patient's brains. The researchers added nicotine to a solution of beta-amyloid. They observed that nicotine binds to the soluble protein and prevents it from aggregating in a form found in Alzheimer's plaques. It was a commemorative finding as Alzheimer's remains one of our least understood diseases, although it affects many people.

However, it is important to note that only small studies have been done on nicotine and amyloid proteins, using much higher amounts of each than would be found in the brain. This is a new and exciting direction that could be further explored.

All the research done on the link between Alzheimer's and nicotine is in its very early phases, and it is unlikely that we will see it in use in the next coming years. Although it shines a fresh light on nicotine, the view of it is changed from a "cancer-causing drug" (nicotine is not a carcinogen) and simply reinstates it as another chemical compound.
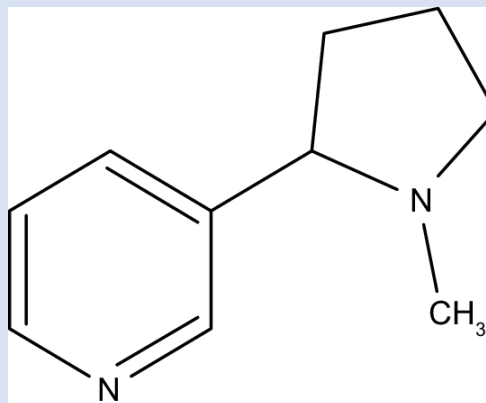
The Importance of Rest and Recovery in Muscular tissue.
Alex Hartemink, Lower Sixth

In life, people use their muscles all the time, whether that be for running a marathon or making a cup of tea, humans have adapted to cope with their environment from the day they were born. The ability to walk, talk and see the world are all by-products of muscular contraction, we couldn't live without it.

Muscles are soft tissues made of cells which are banded together to make fibres which can contract to produce movement. When we expend energy for movement, the oxygen we breathe is used in cell respiration. A product of respiration, ATP, allows muscle fibres to slide over each other and contract to perform a movement by either shortening the muscle (concentric contraction) or lengthening the muscle (eccentric contraction). This allows muscles to contract in opposing directions or to work in groups to perform a specific action. When a movement is under high resistance, in strength training, for example, muscles develop microtears within the fibre. When properly recovering, muscle will grow back with more endurance and density, making them appear larger (hypertrophy). With

more muscle fibres, an athlete can increase the resistance in order to create more microtears. This continual tearing and recovery process is called progressive overload: the muscle can resist more but gets progressively stronger.

When muscles are recovering from microtears there are 5 key components that can speed up recovery: sleep, time, vitamins and minerals, protein/carbohydrate intake and lactic acid build-up management.

Sleep is the most important as most muscle recovery is completed when you are sleeping, as energy is not being expended elsewhere and the trained muscle groups are not being used.

Vitamins and minerals help metabolic processes take place in the body to speed up cellular reactions/synthesis of new proteins, so transport is faster. A high protein and carbohydrate intake allows the body to replenish glycogen stores in muscle tissue and to synthesise new muscle fibres for muscular hypertrophy. Lactic acid may make your muscle feel achy or tender when applying pressure, but the more lactic acid that is pushed out the muscle through massaging the muscle, cryotherapy or foam rolling, the faster it can be broken down by the body.

Overall, the optimal recovery period between training with a high resistance is anywhere between 48-72 hours to avoid overtraining, this can slow progress if the athlete trains for muscle hypertrophy or can fatigue muscles if they train for endurance. Nevertheless, all physical activity builds and maintains muscle. Remaining active and recovering from activity is often taken for granted despite providing such a necessary role in everyday life.

Exploring the impact on sleep on brain function and cognitive performance.
Ebony Murdoch, Lower Sixth

We are told that sleep is an essential part of life and that we can't go without it. The average person sleeps one-third of their life, but why is it so important? Can we function correctly without a total of eight hours every night?

There are two types of sleep: non-rapid eye movement (non-REM) and rapid eye movement (REM), during which dreams occur. However, it is divided into five stages, the most vital part being stage three, which allows our body to repair cells for recovery and aids in memory development, also known as 'deep sleep.' N3 consumes most of our sleep cycle, as it is when repairing hormones are released to restore muscles, bones, and tissues throughout sleep and also for memory consolidation.

From birth, we sleep 14–17 hours a day. This figure slowly decreases through adolescence (8–10 hours), then to 7–9 hours in adulthood, yet 10–30% of adults struggle with chronic insomnia. Approximately 71% of people don't get the recommended amount of sleep for their age group, meaning most are sleep deprived. Sleep deprivation has been proven to cause an inability to perform efficiently in their physiological and psychological needs,

leading to cognitive function impairment and altering the performance of memory, attention span, and decision-making. Research has also shown that chronic sleep deprivation has a more significant effect on physical health than you may think. There is an increased risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and other conditions. With continued research, a link between lack of sleep with a dysfunctional immune system has been discovered. During sleep, inflammation is associated with a protein released by body cells called cytokine. It can enhance non-rapid eye movement sleep. However, in those with sleep deprivation, production is limited, which explains why the immune system of an individual, who sleeps less, is worse and why they become ill more often.

Additionally, sleep deprivation impacts mood and mental well-being. There is a correlation between insomnia and mental health deterioration, creating irritability and mood swings daily. However, it is also linked to disorders such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, where it can stimulate manic episodes. In a study on 3140 patients with bipolar disorder, sleep deprivation triggered mania for 20% of participants and 12% of participants into a depressive episode. As a result of sleep deprivation, cognitive impairments can exacerbate poor mental health symptoms, which makes it more difficult for an individual to function in daily life.

These days, the average screen time of an individual can be as high as 9 hours a day. The amount of blue light technology emitted suppresses the body's melatonin production, which regulates sleep cycles. However, lack of sleep is common; work,

school, stress, or finances are daily problems that impact sleep quantity and quality, but which is more important? Both quality and quantity are vital for our health and well-being. Sleep's division into 90-minute cycles means it is better to sleep for 7.5 hours rather than 8, as it doesn't disturb the ultradian rhythm of the sleep cycle to a detrimental extent, leading to grogginess and fatigue. The ultradian cycle is linked to the production of hormones such as cortisol and melatonin, which regulate metabolism, sleep, and mood, improving sleep quality.

In conclusion, sleep is significant for brain function and mental health. It is essential to prioritise and maintain healthy sleeping habits to enhance performance, reduce stress, improve mood, and maintain optimal mental and physical health.

Performance-enhancing Drugs
Georgia Arthur, Lower Sixth

Competitive sporting and exercise culture has inspired a great sense of community and passion for millennia and is generally associated with its wide range of health benefits and inspires a positive community health legacy. However, performance-enhancing agents are threatening these benefits through their caused injustice, unfair and dishonest advantage, and their posed known or unknown health risks. The potential effects on the cardiovascular system by directly altering metabolism, myocardium, and vasculature are dismissed by their users due to their enablement to transcend normal physiological limits.

Additionally, the covert research for performance-enhancing agents yet to be recognised by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) is a cause for concern. Athletes are subjected to unmonitored trials whose efficacy and safety data are little to none, allowing for a time period for

said athletes to exploit these drugs with relative immunity to drug testing.

Institutional-sponsored performance-enhancing drug (PED) programs are becoming increasingly routine due to the contribution of sports to national identity, the fixation from athletes and pride of winning. The economic returns prove this to be an excellent investment, but in order to achieve this, athletes must display a rare mix of obsessiveness, skill, and favourable genetics. This intense desire leads to the reality that some feats performed may have been assisted by the usage of PEDs.

Many of the athletes who were victorious in their sports have become infamous due to revelations of their methods utilised to succeed. Lance Armstrong (2000) was stripped of seven Tour de France titles due to his use of blood transfusions and testosterone injections. Ben Johnson (1988) tested positive for an anabolic steroid and his gold medal from the 100-metre dash was taken away. Sun Yang (2020) served a three-month ban in 2014 after testing positive for trimetazidine and in 2018 the three-time Olympic champion refused to allow anti-doping officials leave his home with a sample of his blood and was consequently banned from competing at the Tokyo Olympics.

This realisation of the extent of dishonest elite athletes has led to the increased use of PEDs among recreational athletes. Therefore, suggesting that instead of promoting the extensive health benefits regular exercise provides, it is the worst aspects of professional competitive sporting that are being emulated in the community.

The forced use of PEDs in underaged athletes has been occurring for decades. Publicised cases from both East and West Germany in the 1970s exemplify these issues which continue to this day.

A National-run program, the Staatsplanthema (1974) in GDR (East Germany), was a classified plan that stated doping was part of the athlete's training process. Both adults and minors were put on a systematic 'vitamin' diet by their coaches. The vitamins they took were Oral Turinabol (male sex steroids). Each tablet contained 5 milligrams of testosterone, and a test now shows their testosterone levels were 37 times that of an average woman at the time.

There is an extensive list of once celebrated champions that now suffer from liver failure, kidney problems, and crooked bones and joints. Former female athletes developed male secondary sexual characteristics, and some saw their clitoris grow into a small penis. Depression, bulimia, suicide, miscarriages and infertility were all common. The children of said athletes that were born suffered with partial paralysis, clump feet, or Down Syndrome. Others died before the opportunity to conceive.

West Germany's doping policy had no official name or specific plans, however, it was later proven that West German politicians knew doping was provided for minors and encouraged it. The study showed the West German government spent an estimated ten million DM on 516 scientific studies into the performance-enhancing qualities of anabolic steroids, testosterone, and EPO. Coaches pressured athletes to take the drugs: whoever refused were denied vital competitions.

Heptathlon athlete Birgit Dressel was part of this unofficial program in West Germany and passed away in a hospital in Mainz in 1987 when she was 26, screaming in agony. Investigators found 101 different preparations in her system, ranging from vitamins to illegal muscle enhancers. Her joints were inflamed, her bones crooked.

The list of potentially PEDs and performance-enhancing supplements used by competitive athletes is extensive. The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) allocates many of these commonly detected substances to either a banned or watch list. Despite assertions that drug cheats will be caught, many of these substances are indetectable with routine drug testing or the Athlete Biological Passport.

Despite the fact that cardiovascular side effects of some of the drug classes can be anticipated, using athletes will employ multiple agents and the knowledge of combination side effects is virtually non-existent.

Some of the most commonly abused agents and their cardiovascular side effects are: Oxygen-carrying modulators such as Erythropoietin which can cause Thromboembolic events, Myocardial infarction, and Stroke Hypertension; Oxygen dissociation curve modulators such as CobaltRSR13 can cause Cardiomyopathy; Anabolic agents such as Human growth hormone or 5-androstenedione can cause Dyslipidemia Hypertension, Pathological cardiac Hypertrophy, Cardiac fibrosis or Arrhythmias.

As aforementioned, there are also many untested performance-enhancing agents, such as Phosphodiesterase type 5 inhibitors such as Sildenafil, and selective androgen receptor modulators such as Thymosin beta 4 which both have largely unknown side effects in athletes.

Oxygen-Carrying Modulators and Dissociation Curve Modulators

For endurance athletes, the most efficacious PEDs appear to be those that increase oxygen availability to the working muscles. This is achieved by increasing oxygen content in the blood, improving cardiac output, or improving peripheral oxygen extraction.

Blood doping (usually consisting of transfusion of autologous blood) has been used for decades, quite dramatically improves endurance sports performance and is notoriously difficult to detect.

In 1987, recombinant erythropoietin (EPO), which stimulates haemoglobin production, was introduced to the European market, resulting in a rapid and dramatic transformation of endurance sports. Research trials have shown mean values of participants' haemoglobin and haematocrit climbed steadily over the ensuing years with a simultaneous increase in race speeds. Different EPO formulations, direct EPO receptor agonists, and micro-dosing techniques have enabled athletes to continue to use these agents with minimal risk of being detected.

Anabolic Agents

The WADA list of banned androgenic anabolic steroids (AASs) is extensive, and the identification of these substances is responsible for approximately 60% of positive doping results. They represent one of the oldest classes of drugs, and accordingly have been thoroughly investigated in order to perceive their effects and to conceive our ability to detect them.

Combined with exercise training, AASs increase muscle mass, strength, and reduce fat. A common misconception is that they are used exclusively by strength athletes, however, they are also used to aid in recovery and strength in endurance pursuits. The combined usage of anabolic agents with EPO is common both in strength and endurance athletes. These agents allow them to train harder and faster.

Mortality among athletes abusing AASs is estimated to be 6-20 fold that of clean athletes, and approximately one-third of these deaths can be attributed to cardiovascular causes.

Synthetic androgen receptor modulators (e.g. thymosin beta 4) are a newer class of drugs, designed to dissociate the androgenic and anabolic effects of AASs, thereby making detection more difficult. There has been little research into these alternatives, but it is likely that both the performance enhancement and side effects are less than AASs, however, nothing is known for certain.

Recreational Usage

There is evidence of increasing use of PEDs among recreational athletes. The health implications of the off-label and unsupervised use of PEDs is potentially of greater significance than among competitive athletes. Drug surveillance programs may have been utilised in an attempt to eliminate the use of PEDs among professional athletes, recreational athletes have fewer constraints on use, less surveillance of health effects, and easy access to an industry profiting from misinformation.

Most recreational athletes employing these drugs have no real conception of how, when, and why to correctly and safely utilise PEDs. They are unaware of the potential side effects, how to recognize these effects, and when to stop.

However, the use of PEDs can be done in a safe and controlled manner if done correctly. The infamous historical cases of PED abuse have come from the incorrect usage of them. This stems from incorrect dosage, utilising the incorrect drugs based upon gender, and incorrect build-up.

Whilst micro-dosing is a popular way to pass drug testing in competitive athleticism,

it is also the most safe way to administer PEDs and reap the benefits. Additionally, different versions work better with different genders. Whilst giving females male sex steroids may have boosted their performance unfathomably, it is unsustainable from a biological standpoint as shown in the cases from Germany in the 1970s.

It could be argued that the biggest threat in the fight against drugs in sports is not what we know, but what we do not know. Athletes should be afforded the same safety standards as the general population, and PEDs should be less widely available for the unprepared recreational athletes.

How Caffeine Fuels the Brain
Hamza Noman, Lower Sixth

As students in the 21st century, we can all agree that our use and dependence on caffeine is unhealthy, but do we understand why? Understanding how caffeine works is the first step towards making more informed choices and behaviours.

Before understanding how caffeine works, we must first understand how the systems that caffeine affects work.

The first of these 'systems' is our circadian rhythm. Circadian rhythms are around 24-hour cycles that compromise part of our body's 'internal clock,' with many hormonal cycles synchronising to our circadian rhythm. One critical mistake many of us

make when trying to understand our circadian rhythms is assuming they're entirely dependent on environmental cues (such as sunlight or lack of sunlight).

However, a study was conducted by Professor Nathaniel Kleitman, and his research assistant Bruce Richardson, who spent six weeks deep in Mammoth Cave, Kentucky, the world's largest known cave system. Professor Kleitman conducted their research in one of the sections of the cave, which was so deep that not even sunlight penetrated all year round. Their experiment aims to see whether their rhythms of sleep and wakefulness (circadian rhythms) would change when cut off from the daily cycles of sunlight.

The pair spent 32 days in complete darkness and established two key findings. Their first finding was that humans develop their circadian rhythm when withheld from sunlight – shown by the fact both Kleitman and his assistant expressed regular and predictable repeating patterns of sleep (averaging 9 hours per 24-hour cycle) and wakefulness (around 15 hours per 24-hour cycle). The second finding was the repeating sleep cycles and wakefulness was just over 24 hours (an average of 24 hours and 15 minutes). Now, with a broader understanding of our circadian rhythms, we can move on to how caffeine works.
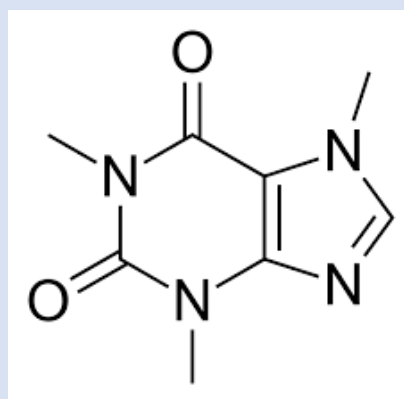
Adenosine and Caffeine

Adenosine is an inhibitory neurotransmitter that leads to 'wake-promoting' brain regions becoming less active when its concentration increases and initiates the inverse effect on our 'sleep-inducing' regions. Naturally, adenosine constantly builds up in concentration while awake and is broken down and removed while we sleep.

Taking caffeine disrupts our cycle of sleep and wakefulness. Caffeine acts as a psychoactive stimulant, artificially inhibiting adenosine from binding to its

complementary sites in regions of our brains. It achieves this by working as a competitive inhibitor of adenosine, thus attaching to the adenosine receptors in the brain, thus preventing adenosine reception. Once bound to the adenosine receptors, the 'sleep signal' sent out through adenosine reception is significantly reduced. Hence, caffeine gives us a feeling of alertness. Now we understand how caffeine gives us that 'buzz,' we can move on to why this is unhealthy…

Caffeine and Our Sleep

We must understand two topics when discussing caffeine's effect: what happens to adenosine while caffeine is active and how long caffeine is active for post-consumption.

Although caffeine reduces the effects of adenosine build-up, it does not prevent adenosine from building up. When all the caffeine we take is finally broken down and removed, all the adenosine building up during the removed caffeine's active hours will suddenly become active and start binding to its complementary receptors. This sudden overload will give us a much more enhanced 'sleep pressure' effect than the usual adenosine concentration. It is what causes the infamous 'caffeine dip.' To follow the enhanced alertness period caffeine intake provides us with is the enhanced fatigued period the adenosine build-up causes.

Although caffeine's effects can differ depending on the individual consuming it,

due to individual differences in how fast our livers can completely metabolise the caffeine, caffeine levels in the blood usually peak 30 minutes post-consumption. However, do not mistake this 30-minute mark as the end of the consumed caffeine's active period. Caffeine is stated to have an average half-life in the body of 5 hours, meaning it will take the average person 10 hours to metabolise the consumed caffeine completely.

Now knowing of the prolonged effects of consuming caffeine, we can begin to understand the impact of our caffeine intake on both our resting and working hours.

AI Within Medicine
Ayan Farooq, Lower Sixth

At present, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) within medicine is not only prevalent but widespread throughout. AI has been used within healthcare as early as the 1970s when MYCIN, an AI program used to treat blood infections, was first developed. Since then, AI has been used in many aspects of healthcare and is continually improving to provide better services to healthcare professionals.

Artificial Intelligence, in essence, is using computer systems to resemble human intelligence for needs such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and curiosity, but

expeditiously. The first demonstrations of AI can be dated back to the 1960s when a man named Joseph Weizenbaum developed ELIZA: a basic, interactive computer program that could hold a conversation with the user. Since then, Artificial intelligence has been used in various instances, including media and industry, and has been more implemented in our lives than we might initially consider.

It is no secret that artificial intelligence is used abundantly throughout medicine. A typical example is the ability to remotely diagnose and prescribe medication to patients due to the COVID-19 pandemic. AI is mainly involved in aiding with administrative tasks alongside more hands-on objectives. A prime example of this is the invention of Pharmabot in 2015: a paediatric generic medicine consultant chatbot that can prescribe medication and deliver advice on medication. However, AI is also used in more complex examples, such as robotic surgery, where robots have been programmed to carry out the same operations as surgeons or in generic models, such as virtual nurses designed to monitor health.

Now you may be thinking, what is the point of having AI do these duties if humans can do the same? One word. Efficiency. With AI lacking human error, any chance of mistakes is significantly reduced. For instance, AI can interpret mammograms 30 times faster and more accurately. In terms of surgery, studies have shown that robotic surgeries can have up to a 5-fold reduction in surgical complications and errors. These statistics ultimately show that AI is advantageous and crucial in the future development of medicine and treatment.

What does the future of medicine mean by the involvement of AI? Firstly, AI is set to strongly increase the efficiency of drug discovery and development by helping companies through meta-analysis of large amounts of data, predict protein structures,

and thus develop more targeted drugs to make the process cheaper and more efficient. This will allow for healthcare to be more efficient and more accessible to the general population, specifically those who are unable to afford it. It can already be seen with researchers estimating that simply implementing AI within the healthcare industry could lead to savings of between 5–10% (about $200 billion-$360 billion) per annum.

AI will also benefit gene editing. Specifically, CRISPR/Cas9, a lab tool primarily to cut into DNA and "edit" so new genetic material can be added. Currently, gene editing is considered inefficient and expensive, but with the assistance of AI, gene prediction and detection, it will become more apparent. CRISPR/Cas9, alongside AI, will revolutionise molecular biology and increase our understanding of cancer. It will also treat hereditary diseases such as certain cancers, Huntington's disease, and HIV, all of which have little to no cure.

AI's current market size value in healthcare in 2022 is $14.6B, estimated to reach $102.7B by 2028. It is not unknown whether AI will make up a large part of medicine. Many wonder whether AI will overcome human ability and whether AI should be in healthcare in the first place.

While AI supports medicine to expedite diagnosis and treatment, it isn't advanced enough to take on more complex tasks. In essence, it can be said that AI was never developed to compete with and replace humans eventually; instead, it was created to serve the purpose of helping people. A study done by Cornell University reflects this. When identifying metastatic breast cancer, if AI collaborated with diagnosing pathologists, there would be a higher tumour localisation score and a reduced human error rate by 85%. We shouldn't have to favour one over the other but use each for their strengths to provide a better healthcare experience.

Like with all new treatments in medicine, problems are bound to arise, especially considering AI's complex yet amateur nature. The issue of ethics is widespread throughout medicine, and it's no different when it comes to artificial intelligence. A recent survey by the Pew research centre found that 60% of Americans would feel discomfort by a healthcare provider who relied on AI to confirm a diagnosis. Furthermore, only 38% felt that using AI to diagnose a disease or recommend treatment would improve health outcomes. Regarding these statistics, it can be argued that we may never see the full-fledged implementation of AI in medicine, but rather only alongside humans for aid and minor tasks.

While the use of artificial intelligence in medicine is limited, We are only in the inceptive period using this technology. In other words, we haven't begun to scratch the surface of the potential uses of AI within this field. With technology developing more rapidly than ever, it is only a matter of time until medicine relies entirely on AI and is put into practice in all branches. Whilst many people may disagree with the level of responsibility that AI will hold in coming years, I have confidence that AI will be used for the greater good of humanity and will be advantageous to our understanding of medicine, no matter the costs.

Creative Writing

Each year lower school pupils are invited to write for the W.S Johnson creative writing prize, an opportunity to showcase imagination and literary skills outside of lessons. Guided by the theme 'at the crossroads', entrees could, literally, take their pieces wherever they wanted. The range of ideas that have been expressed, each fully fleshed yet completely unique, feels indicative of the role of literature as a personal prescription, with each young writer seeing the prompt as something totally different to the next. I hope you enjoy reading just some of the lower school's talented writers' works.

Grace Ensor- Adams, section editor

Theia Birmingham
First year

"A life well lived." That's what I hope they say about me now. Or maybe they say, "Good riddance, what a God-awful girl!". There is simply no way to know. If you really think about it, there is no way to know anything. I have pondered this a lot during my time here. I ponder everything. I used to think I would ponder until the day I die, but I guess my pondering outlived my death. Maybe they call it my "untimely death." Maybe they wished it would happen sooner.

The sky above me was an unordered swirl of blues, greens and greys. The ground was hard-wearing and unpleasant to sit on, though I did it all the same. There was a signpost above me that screamed at me in large, xanthous letters and an old, yellowing map blew in the wind next to me. There was not a cloud in the sky, but I have come to see that as a thing of dread. It reminds me that not a day has gone by since I got here. Time has no meaning here. Nothing has meaning here; everything is open for the mind's interpretation. Someone may see a tree, while the next sees a dog. Nothing is real. Maybe I am not real. The only thing that is truly real are the two paths splitting off the road.

They both pull me in different directions until I feel like I may split in half. One tugs at my heart and plays with my feelings, a chance to regain my old life from where I left it. The other makes me stop and think.

Where does *that* path go? If it leads me to my death, maybe that is the choice I should take. Could it be any worse than waking up to looks of disappointment and mutters of annoyance? Yes, I have people who sit by my hospital bed and leave flowers but would anyone sit by my grave?

In my life, I was never much liked – I was pompous and smug. I walked with my head held high and looked down on anyone I could. Really, I wouldn't have liked me either. People came and went in my life, most only there for a short while. It stung, but nothing a plaster couldn't fix. It never cut too deep, so I carried on. Everyone else was stupid: they thought I never heard the snickers behind my back or the reluctant conversations and greetings which had no real meaning behind them. Still, I walked on. My life was lived with one purpose, a never-ending fuel that drove me forward, to be better than everyone else. If I couldn't come out on top, I wouldn't come out at all. That was the motto I lived by. That is the motto I died with.

I caught a fatal illness, something so far along it was incurable. The last thing I remembered were the wilting roses on my bedside as I languidly closed my eyes for a

final (final?) time, alone, alone. Even that is fading – I seem to forget more every day. And every day the signpost with the large, xanthous letters seems to scream a bit quieter. I ponder, how long do I have left to make my decision before the decision is made for me? I am certain I would not like the results.

I focus on the path to my right, a second chance. The weather is completely different – numbingly cold, storm-wracked and dank. The path is uneven and unpredictable, twisting and turning, dancing a sorrowful, sluggish waltz. It is full of impossible obstacles, towering boulders and swerving traffic cones. If you reached it to the dingy, gaping tunnel at the end, you would be greeted with the screams of others passing through. It was possible, but it would certainly be a struggle. Should I go to such a struggle for people who would not do the same for me?

I turn to the path to my left, eternal rest. The sun seems to have taken a liking to it, shining down on it in pride, with scintillating beams of welcoming light. The road was smooth and easy-going, it smiled and embraced you with refreshing, tarmac arms. People laughed and pranced. Everything seemed at peace, so relaxed. The warmth made my whole body tingle and I couldn't help but smile along with everybody else. It seemed so perfect.

Should I go back to the people I love, even if they don't reciprocate, or should I put myself first, giving in to fatigue and longing?

Arshma Butt
First year

The sky, a murky river, engulfed any form of light allowing only darkness to descend upon the earth. Sorrowful and full of sympathy, the clouds comforted each other as tears rolled down their faces, creating pools of water to emerge below. The wind was an injured wolf howling in pain as the trees shook and quivered in fear. Down below, Violet sat on the wooden cold bench as the priest in front of her chattered on with quotes from the bible. Her eyes brimmed with tears; Violet stared out in front of her. There a coffin lay, as still as a statue, while she hoped for any signs of life. Her companion for life, her supporter who was always there, was gone. Violet felt as if her other half had been snatched away from her, leaving her as hollow as ever. Lewis, her only confidant, that she entrusted with everything was murdered. Her eyes flashed as she recalled the last moment, she stood with him.

(1 week before…)

They had both been returning from their tiring day at school, when they arrived at a traffic light. Violet always seemed to surprise her brother Lewis as she always had energy left after school to chatter on about nonsensical topics whereas he could barely manage to take another step. As always, Violet and her brother Lewis stopped to a halt at the sight of a traffic light. Turning left to right, Violet skipped on without a care in the world, taking no notice of her brother's shouts. Suddenly, Violet felt her breath cut short as she was knocked over. Goosebumps pricked her skin as she whipped around only to see a horrific sight that would scar her forever. Lewis lay on the hard black tarmac where all signs of life drifted out of him. His eyes, a glassy green, stared out above as his mouth was

stretched out as if he was going to cry out. Violet's normally flushed face had turned into a pale chalk white colour. The sounds of ambulance sirens and terrified screams surrounding her were blurred as she slowly played the moment again and again in her mind trying to recollect what had happened. Lewis had only knocked her down to save her life but only to end his. Tears stung her eyes as her hands scrunched up into fists.

Thoughts clouded her mind causing the world to spin. She deserved to die not her caring brother. Dizzy with fear and nausea, Violet felt her leg buckle with weakness. Just as she was about to fall for the second time that day, a strong hand gripped her shaking shoulder and led her into an ambulance. Soft voices whispered in her ear attempting to comfort her but it was no use. Violet slowly let the world around her disappear, as she let her eyes rest drifting off to an uneasy sleep.

Tap. Tap. Violet snapped out of her thoughts, as a gentle hand patted her shoulder in sympathy. Slowly turning her head around, Violet gazed up to see her mother's unsure yet brave smile. Torn with grief and loss, she hadn't even bothered to ask her mother how she was feeling, not even talked to her unless answering in simple answers such as yes and no. Ashamed, Violet managed to smile briefly at her mother hiding away all of her sorrow for a short moment.

At that very moment, Violet felt some warmth fill her as if she was stood directly in front of a sun. Her eyes widened in shock as she felt a small fragment of happiness inside of her. Finally, for once, she knew what she wanted to do. She reached her hands out and enveloped her mother .As soon as she did this, she felt warm droplets of water drop onto her dark brown hair. As

she glanced upwards, she saw her mother crying. Not tears of sadness but happiness.

"I know it's going to be a hard, enduring journey from now but I know we can do it together." Violet's mum spoke pausing every now and then to stop emotion from taking over.

"I'm sorry, I know I've been difficult lately but it's just that…" Violet paused.

"I know but it's not your fault these… (taking a break) things happen but it's our job now to think what would Lewis want." Mum replied

With these words Violet's mother broke away, leaving Violet alone to think. What would Lewis want? With those words an answer lit up inside of her. Her brother would want her to live her life to the fullest and enjoy every moment and step she took. With that, a faint smile arose onto Violet's face. She was going to make Lewis proud.

Through the darkness of the sky, a small light escaped through the once menacing clouds shining straight onto Violet.

Innai Bjedov
Second year

Validation. Something so close but so far away. Even with the best grades, it was never enough for them; I could never reach those expectations. It's my goal in life – to make them proud. This goal seems impossible, however. My life – a competition. If I'm not the best of the best, I'm nothing. If I keep disappointing them, I'll lose my worth. A wave of loneliness surrounds my thoughts occasionally, but there's no time for friends:

wake up, study, go to school, study, go home, study, sleep.

Thud. I let my textbooks exit the grip of my hands, falling onto my desk. It's another exhausting day in this dystopia. The content sounds of laughter and conversation distracts me from my studies. Oh, how I long to be like them. Smiling, talking, not caring about their grades. Unexpectedly, a tall figure appears beside me, "Is this seat taken?" I glance at him, stunned by the breath-taking beauty his face holds. His lustrous, sage green eyes watch me patiently, waiting for a reply. "No," is the only thing I am able to utter at this moment. I observe him as he settles down next to me. His silky, brunette curls sit peacefully on his head; he seems almost perfect. That dazzling smile, complemented by his deep blue braces, is bright enough to light up this prosaic room. It's concerning – I don't usually feel the desire to be friends with somebody. But he's different. His eyes are filled with kindness, his smile so soft and delicate, his words are compassionate and pleasant. I wish for him to befriend me, for us to spend every day in each other's company.

—

Raindrops cover the dull classroom windows. Even the enormous doors are unable to fight the floods of wind escaping through the hallways. I scan my eyes around the herd of students, each with the same expressionless face, glaring at the screen before them. A monotonous tone continues in the background – I should try and concentrate. My mind drifts again, looking to my left, admiring his eternal perfection. How can he sit there so effortlessly, and still look flawless? How can he take away my concentration, with merely his beauty? My brain can sense that I'm distracted, but it doesn't do anything to help me stop. I need to achieve my goal, and he is in the way.

"There will be a paired assignment, please work with the people sitting next to you." came from the same dreary tone.

 A knot forms in my throat; I can't even look at him. What if he thinks I'm boring? What if he sees how bland my expressions are? My legs quiver uncontrollably, I don't have a fun personality, I don't know how to socialise. All I've ever known is how to study. "Are you okay?" That tender, euphonic voice again. My eyelids fold as I attempt to steady my breath, "Yeah, I'm fine," I reply, gazing deep into his mesmerising pupils. A pair of ethereal hands place a sliver of paper in front of me. I look at him, a perplexed expression cast upon my face. He mouths, "My address, idiot," with a captivating smile. Surprisingly, a warm feeling fills my stomach; this never happens to me. I panic. Why am I not focusing on my studies? I need to make them proud, I can't get distracted by a stupid classmate.
'I. Do. Not. Need. Friends.' is engraved in my brain, but he is chipping away at 'Not.'

—

"Here you go," he places a bottle of ice-cold water on the table. The dining room is immaculate, with the aroma of fresh lavender drifting through the air. My eyes pace around the room: expensive leather seats, porcelain dish sets, fresh Juliet Roses in every shade of purple. A light thud stops my observation of the room, "Let's start the project." His demeanour stays exquisite, even when working; it's impossible to take my eyes off of him. After a few minutes, I constrain myself to finish the assignment... "Finally, it's over," we both sigh, as his virescent eyes meet mine. Those alluring orbs make mine seem dirty and polluted; drained of pretty colour. It feels as if the world has stopped spinning, just us two smiling and talking, without a care in the world. We continued like that for hours – laughing, carefree, just being teenagers. I never realised how much I needed someone like him. Someone who made me feel like a person, who cared about my feelings, not my grades.

 With a cheerful appearance, I climb into the front seat of his car. The sun lowers, painting the clouds with a pink flame. A gentle breeze rustles the leaves on the cherry blossoms – I don't want to leave; I want to stay with him forever. The car engine roars as he commences the journey towards my house. We sing-along to the songs, blasting them on full volume. I've never felt so safe in my life. He makes me feel comfortable, reminding me that I'm not being judged all the time. Splashes of rain suddenly begin to land on the windscreen, blurring the view of the road. Vigorously, he

starts pressing the windscreen wipers button, but it's not working. He continues, not seeing the crossroad before him. "Stop!" flees from my mouth.

A blanket of light blurs my view – where is he? I tug at the seatbelt, unable to escape its rigid grip. Is he safe? The smoke snatches my breath; I'm suffocating in my own mess. After finally defeating the seatbelt, I manage to free myself of the car, leaving through the shattered window. I search for him frantically, with just an ounce of hope keeping me going. As I rummage through the burning car, a pool of blood catches my eye. My heart shatters, each piece falling deep into my stomach. How could I let this happen? How could I let myself survive? Why didn't my body fail; not fight back? I drowned in the torrent of my tears. It's impossible, I don't understand – why him? How could the universe let such a unique soul disappear? My knees tremble as I lower myself next to him, cradling his head. The silky, brunette curls are now coarse and crimson. His lustrous, sage green eyes, now blank and covered in gore. I shut my eyes, pretending none of this happened.

Validation. Something Jake offered me, but I didn't take in time. He was the only one who could save me, but I couldn't save him - the temporary spark in my life has faded too quickly. How am I supposed to continue knowing that my life could've been like the other teenagers, if I had just changed a tiny detail in the story? I guess I just have to go back to trying to achieve that impossible goal.

Politics and Current Affairs

Politics today seems to be a constant barrage of negativity and suffering. The suffering seen can down trod people's perception of our world as a festering of jealousy and inequality. The pieces within this section do bring light to these stories of suffering, but these stories need to be told. To live in ignorance is worse than to accept these stories. I propose that to understand the bad in the world allows us to recognise the good in our own life and to strive to make the world a better place.

Amelie Batey, section editor

Why was the Turkish-Syrian Earthquake so deadly?
Evie Taylor, Lower Sixth

A 7.8 magnitude earthquake followed by a second of magnitude 7.5 struck Turkey and Northern Syria on February 6th killing more than 45,000 people and injuring tens of thousands.

On February 6th a magnitude 7.8 earthquake (considered major) occurred in southern Turkey near the northern border of Syria at 4:17am. Around 9 hours later at 13:47pm another major earthquake of magnitude 7.5 occurred 60 miles to the southwest.

5,700 aftershocks have been recorded as of Feb 18th and on Feb 20th, a 6.4 magnitude earthquake killed three and injured 213 in southern Turkey.

The quakes responsible for the destruction were caused by a strike slip movement; a break in the earth's crust where two plates slide past one another horizontally. In this case the Arabian plate was moving northwards and grinding agents the Anatolian plate, triggering the earthquakes which broke along about 62 miles of fault line, causing devastating damage to surrounding areas. The 7.8 magnitude earthquake that struck was the most devastating to hit earthquake-prone Turkey in more than 20 years and was as strong as one in 1939, the most powerful recorded there.

The power of the quakes whilst significant were not the only reason for the damage however…

The incident occurred in the early hours of the morning, when people were inside and sleeping, leaving them increasingly vulnerable as response is slowed and feelings of disorientation is heightened.

The sturdiness of the buildings is also a factor, many homes were declared to be 'earthquake-proof' until buildings toppled on Feb 6th, leaving many to be feared dead. Ronesans Rezidans was advertised as 'a piece of paradise' and 'earthquake-proof' when it opened a decade ago, now a pile of debris where surviving residents stand and wait for news of loved ones. The developer of the complex, Mehmet Yasar Coskun, was arrested at Istanbul Airport under suspicion of breaching building codes. Sector officials have claimed 50% of the total 20 million buildings in Turkey contravene building codes.
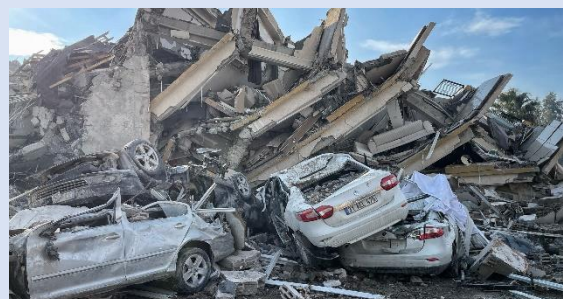
The lack of stable structures within Turkey and Syria have massively influenced the rising death toll, with reliable construction could damage to lives and infrastructure have been significantly reduced?

In addition to the thousands of lives lost and the emotional suffering, the Turkish Enterprise and Business Confederation has put the cost of the earthquake at £71 billion; £59 billion is from damage to homes, £8.7 billion from the loss of national income and £2.4 billion from the loss of working days.

The Red Cross charity is responding to the destruction caused by the earthquakes by providing warm and safe shelter to the thousands displaced as well as help reunite families divided during the quakes. Donations are still needed to suppose those whose life was destroyed by the earthquake and can be made on the red cross website.

The rise of toxic masculinity
Amelie Batey, Lower Sixth

The underlying perceptions of masculinity throughout our society and the media have been prevalent within western society for thousands of years and has presented itself in many different ways. However, the common theme is dominance. Dominance over women and "weaker" men. We see the focus on masculinity come in waves throughout the 20th century and early 21st century in correlation to movements of feminism in the same period. Recently the MeToo movement has met a similar response through the rise of masculine influencers such as Andrew Tate.

There have been many feminist movements throughout history and have been documented as early as the 3rd century. Feminism is often viewed as a modern invention but has been a consistent occurrence throughout history but has been silenced or undocumented. In the 20th century post WW2, the solidification of the traditional family was in direct correlation to the liberation and independence gained by women in the war. During the 1950s the archetype of the housewife and a culture of domesticity was enacted to limit female liberation by creating the presentation of the idyllic life for women was as a wife and mother. This highly effective presentation by the media meant that in the USA by 1960 the percentage of employed female professionals was lower than it was in 1930. Since the first wave of feminism, it has been argued there has been a further three, the 1960s and 1970s in the civil rights movement, the mid 1990s and most recently the MeToo movement.

The start of the fourth wave of feminism is argued but can be shown to be as early as 2006 in the establishment of the MeToo movement on social media. However, the movement gained mainstream recognition in 2017 after the high-profile allegations against the film producer Harvey Weinstein. Earlier in 2012 a major focus on rape culture, sexual harassment, and body shaming grew online and the tragic death of a woman in India who was gang-raped catalysed international protests against female violence. However, we quickly saw

the election of Donald Trump, an established misogynist, a clear reaction by the conservative right in America to the increasing mainstream feminist voice.

More recently the rise of hyper-masculine figures on the internet has attracted many, predominantly younger, men to idealise toxic masculinity as a way to earn fame, power, and most concerningly, women. The most prevalent of these men is Andrew Tate. Tate managed to gain at his height 4.3 million followers on Instagram and 5.1 million followers on Twitter. This huge social media presence was acquired through his inflammatory comments about women and his opinions on social dynamics between men and women. As well as his comments, his idea of a 'real man' appears to be incredibly harmful. The damage of toxic masculinity to women is clear as it is often a direct attack on our freedoms and even our bodies. But, the underlying cycle of repression is possibly more influential on men. In a system controlled by men it is impossible to enact real societal change without a shift in mindset by these men. These dangerous opinions have the ability to imbed themselves in young and naive boys and causes the cycle of toxic masculinity to repeat itself. Quotes such as: "The masculine perspective is that life is

war. It's a war for the female you want", and "nobody would choose to be a small weak guy who has to cry when he gets upset" clearly highlight the message of emotional suppression and female ownership. These extremely harmful opinions were able to circulate rapidly and possibly reach tens of millions of people due to the internet, where the eager Tate fanbase awaits to produce edits of the man moments after the publication of these ideas, motivated by gaining views themselves. The promotion of toxic masculinity is a real danger not only to feminism but the male youth who, due to Covid, have become increasingly isolated, now turning to these communities centralised around Tate, tailored to young men.

The rise of toxic masculinity is a real threat to the modern feminist movement that has recently come under attack, despite women being targeted both online and in the real world. So, what is the take away? Is it inevitable that there will always be a surge of resistance to female empowerment? Is modern feminism dead? No. Absolutely not. As long as there is inequality there will be a fight for equality. The banning of Andrew Tate on social media is proof of this, if we as a society continue to be outraged and vocal against toxic masculinity progress can always be made.

How social media are preventing crimes from being solved
Molly Atkinson-Lamb, Lower Sixth

Controlling social media has become a big challenge for police in recent years. Previously, the media has been used as a tool for police to appeal for witnesses or information from the public. Until recently, most people would understand that in an active missing person case, details released would be trivial and ambiguous. The police may not wish to give information that they would use to later establish a culprit or force a confession and would certainly be mindful of the feelings of the victim's family and ensure respect is given. Most people would have their curiosity overruled by empathy and the social maturity to comprehend the fact that details released would be limited for these reasons.

However, in the recent case of Nicola Bulley, the complete opposite happened-reported details led to mass speculation and theories that they may have overlooked. On social media in particular, there was an unprecedented level of speculation surrounding her case. Social media websites became overwhelmed with conspiracies and postulation as well as videos, posted to YouTube and TikTok, showing people joining in with searches around the area. People continued to show up to the site and surrounding areas despite being aware that anyone considered to be interfering with the investigation would be fined on public order offences.

The desire for attention-seeking people to provide false information to the police in order to become involved in high-profile cases has always been present. However, this was amplified to an unprecedented level due to social media, resulting in flippant reports and viral conspiracy theories. This overwhelmed the police with unhelpful information, undermining the fundamental principle of involving the media, which involves requesting assistance and information from the public. Consequently, the police were forced to issue dispersal orders to prevent people from trespassing into residential gardens, which wasted valuable time and resources and further impeded their efforts.

This change may not only be due to an increase in the social media usage but also a decrease in the trust in the police. One cause of this may be due to the systemic misogyny within the Metropolitan police with reports of not vetting officers or investigating allegations against them suggesting that there is an entrenched culture of misogyny and abuse towards women. However, it may be that the Met is an isolated case, nonetheless, it may have caused a level of suspicion around policing.

Perhaps, the case of Nicola Bulley has shown the worst aspects of human nature and the growing desire to access as much information as possible, regardless of how factual it may be. It also demonstrates an increase of people feeling like they are able to conduct an investigation more effectively than the police. So, is it a case of overhelpful civilians who truly want to help or people desperate for a few views?

Liz Truss – an own goal for the Tories?
Raayan Akbar, Lower Sixth

On the 6th September,2022, Liz Truss was elected as leader of the Conservative Party and would become the Prime Minister after a notably turbulent time for the UK and the Party. She won the support of the Tory Membership through her beliefs, especially on her supposed solution for the Cost-of-Living Crisis, but also through the idea that she remained 'loyal' to Boris Johnson. Moreover, her competitor Rishi Sunak resigned as Chancellor of the Exchequer and even implied that Government was acting 'incompetently' in his resignation letter, which was seen as a form of betrayal to the man who helped the Tories to receive their largest majority, within the House of Commons, since Margaret Thatcher. Nonetheless, Liz Truss truly won due to her fiscal objectives, which included cutting taxes and not giving 'handouts' to tackle the economic challenges. These ideas can be traced back to Thatcherism which has a home in the Free Enterprise Group who wanted to highlight their faith in a meritocratic society and to reduce Government intervention. This was shown through privatisation in the Thatcher years. There was still a key question though - what was Liz Truss trying to achieve? Simply, economic growth. Presently, it's evident that Liz Truss' approach was not only a failure, but detrimental to the Economy and the Party. Like in football, a poor manager could just have a bad run of form, or in this case, be tactically inept.


Before I start to scrutinise the work of Liz Truss as PM, it should be highlighted that there were great challenges from the very start, notably the Queen's passing. This was a unique, historic event that was unpredictable and one that would apply lots of pressure on any Prime Minister. The unfortunate passing of the Queen was seen as a celebration of her life and Liz Truss had to be at the forefront of that with her opening speech. As a result, this caused politics to be paused for 10 days as a sign of national mourning. An unexpected start for a new PM. Even if this was a hugely monumental period of time in British history, politics must continue. Little did we know, this was the calm before the economic storm, created by Liz Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng. Nothing was the same.

If you asked anybody what the biggest failure of the Liz Truss era was (albeit a short one), it would most likely be the Mini Budget. It composed of abolishing the 45p Income Tax rate, the abolition of the cap on Bankers' bonuses and even committed to no spending cuts on public sectors (such as healthcare). Basically, Liz Truss wanted to reduce taxes and keep Government spending the way it was before she arrived as Prime Minister. Evidently, the economy spiralled out of control. Market confidence was damaged, consumer confidence was damaged and the richest in society were benefitting. This was the birth of 'Trussonomics' something that would go on to die in its infancy, which Sunak foreshadowed. Disaster. In this case, this felt like a carbon copy of what Thatcher tried to achieve and Truss recited some dream solution saying that this was needed for the Economy, yet this still persuaded the Tory Membership to support her. Well, the real world is harsh. Dreams are not reality. Consequently, there were forty-five billion pounds of unfunded tax cuts. Forty-five

billion! I cannot repeat it enough times, the more I write it, the more it hurts. Experts were ignored prior to the announcement, a former Chancellor of the Exchequer was ignored and it almost felt like the British people were ignored as inflation soared and interest rates rose by 0.5%. Therefore, borrowing money to buy a house would become even harder, incentivising people to save their money rather than spend it, so businesses would have received smaller profits, contradicting what the Tories are renowned for – protecting businesses. This provoked a vital question. Are the Conservatives fit to govern anymore after 12 years?

'Live long enough to see yourself become the villain,' the Conservatives under Truss was a prime example of this for many in the Public after 12 years of turbulence. From austerity during the Cameron years to the false promises of the Brexit Campaign to scandals involving those closest to the Prime Minister, especially under Johnson. Restless, the public were even more infuriated with the constant lack of leadership, but this truly reached its pinnacle when Liz Truss became Prime Minister. All we ask for is accountability.
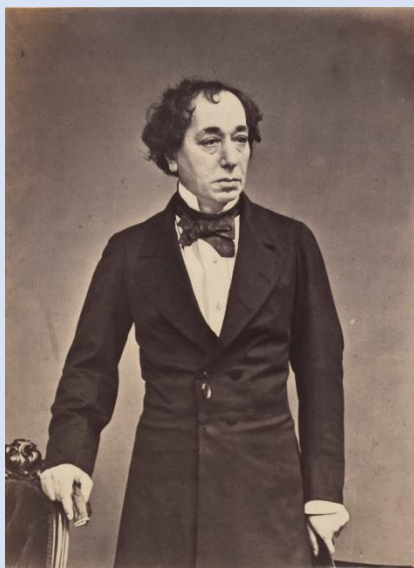
Benjamin Disraeli, in the 19th Century, established the idea of One Nation Conservatism which highlighted a pragmatic approach on the Economy, believed in paternalism (the wealthy supporting the poor) and even aspired to unify everybody within society to avoid revolution. Two centuries later, these ideals resonated with many Conservatives. Nonetheless, this was diminished by Truss. Was the Budget pragmatic during an economic crisis? Were the wealthy willing to invest in the poor? Did this help to unify the UK? Simple answer: no, no and no.

The promise of helping the Economy to grow at the same rate prior to the pandemic was unfulfilled. With no contextual analysis, any person would think that this was purposely trying to hurt the economy.

As a response to such a turbulent time economically and politically, many Tory MPs were faced with an enigma about whether they should support Truss and show political unity before a vital General Election in 2024 (as it stands) or rebel against such an atrocious fiscal approach. Divisions within the party were becoming more evident and there was pressure to reform this Budget before it was put to a vote. Appeasement was used to calm down the backlash from the Tory MPs such as Mel Stride who stated that the 'currency is under pressure and now is the time for transparency' and there is a need for 'fiscal responsibility,' but appeasement only buys time rather than resolve an issue, which was evident during the 1930s with Neville Chamberlain. Kwasi Kwarteng was sacked after amendments were made to the Budget. Truss thought that this could be enough to restore her support. Furthermore, Jeremy Hunt became Chancellor of the Exchequer and was a strong supporter of Rishi Sunak. The first

thing he did: reversed most of the fiscal measures within the Mini Budget. Additionally, Hunt declared that 'eye-watering decisions' had to be made to reduce the debt on public sectors that would involve an increase in taxation and spending cuts to be introduced. If Liz Truss was elected on the principal idea that she was going to help the Economy to grow and promise tax cuts, then suddenly feels forced to increase tax and cut spending, did she truly have any economic credibility? The answer became clear when she resigned approximately 7 weeks into her reign. This was a day after she used the infamous Peter Mandelson quote which implied that they were 'a fighter, not a quitter.' The irony of this was unfathomable, and has since been immortalised in social media trends and BBC Newscast's iconic introduction. Liz Truss left the Tory Party even more anxious about the prospects of winning the next election and will be known as the shortest-lived Prime Minister. The fighting spirit was not so potent after all.

Criticisms tend to arise when the public feel mislead or when many feel that it is time for change or when the Party consistently fails to meet their objectives in their manifesto. Nevertheless, none of the Tory failures were quite as unique than the appointment of Liz Truss. It showed the lack of leadership within the Party and how the Membership were entangled in economic fairy tales. Importantly, it really underlined how distant many individuals within the Conservative Party were to the life of the ordinary individual who would now be struggling to survive the Cost-of-Living Crisis that spiralled out of control under the watchful eye of Liz Truss. Constant division within the Party, a lack of professionalism and the massive economic failures is now a foil to the well-organised, unified and energetic Labour Party.

Presently, Rishi Sunak has the incredibly difficult task of gaining the trust of the nation, it is a matter of whether the Conservative Party will come together and show that they are still able to lead the country.

A disaster caused by their own party; this is like a Shakespearean story that starts in triumph and ends in misery. The Conservatives may have created their own downfall – not a fantasy, but reality. Time is slipping away for the Tories to regain their lead, but the amazing aspect of politics is that you never know what will happen next.