

Bexley Grammar School Easter Magazine 2016



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The Headteacher's Easter Message

Welcome to the Easter edition of the BGS magazine. My diary tells me that we will have completed eleven weeks of school since Christmas when this is published. Where did that time go and how did we manage to fit so much activity into that relatively short period? Yesterday (at the time of writing) marked a four-year anniversary – the whole-school photographs. We took one of Years 7-10 (about 750 students) and one of Years 11-12 (about 600 students). The logistics of this are non-trivial (as our mathematicians say) and I have nothing but praise for the way our students responded as they waited patiently for nearly an hour in a chill wind! Year 11 students remember the event from when they were in Year 7; how they have changed and what they have experienced in those four short years! You will have an opportunity to purchase a photograph for posterity from 'Tempest Photography' after Easter; keep an eye on the newsletter.

The Spring term flies by as students in the upper school settle to some serious preparation for the examinations ahead of them. We've had two ECM days, four Parents' Evenings and an additional evening for Year 9 parents to explain the opportunities that the IB will bring as students choose their GCSE options carefully to prepare them for the Sixth Form. We arranged for groups of external students who have applied to the Sixth Form to come into school and meet our current Sixth Form students and quiz them on what it is really like here at BGS – the staff withdrew to allow them an open discussion under the chairmanship of my Senior Prefects.

Three overseas residential trips took off over the half term break: a Classics trip to Rome, the bi-annual Economics and Business trip to China and the annual Ski Trip by the PE department, this year back to Italy. I was fortunate enough to travel to Japan over the break, sponsored by the Japan Foundation as the Headteacher of a school teaching Japanese. Malcolm Tidmarsh in Year 13 interviewed me about my fascinating experience and writes about it elsewhere in this issue.

The House 'year' ends at Easter and once more the best of the Music, Dance and Drama competitions are about to be showcased and the winner of the House Cup awarded. Participating in House activities continues to bring out the very best in our students, their courage, commitment and cooperation. At the time of writing, it was a week ago that I was one of the Dance competition judges and the winning Prothero entry, a moving interpretation of 'Romeo and Juliet' was a powerful metaphor of student leadership to represent the deep influence of our House system in the school – we don't even teach Dance formally in our curriculum!

Our Music and Drama departments have continued to impress audiences. The KS4 Musical Showcase celebrated the talent and hard work of our GCSE Music students; we have been treated to recitals for exam pieces at KS4 and KS5 and the Spring Concert looks set to impress yet again.

The A Level Theatre Studies examination performance this term was simultaneously polished and unsettling, a powerful example of the way the Drama department manages to inspire students to create original pieces with the tools they are given. The GCSE Drama performances again wowed the moderator who awarded top marks all around.

My thanks to every member of staff for their sustained commitment to our wonderful students. And to our students – thank you, keep focused and build on your successes. Happy Easter to all!

Happy Easter from the Editor!

I hope you enjoy reading this Easter edition of the BGS School Magazine, showcasing some of the fantastic opportunities and amazing achievements of this term, and including a couple of punchy articles on current affairs, as well as reviews of a diverse selection of TV, film and music from our Year 12 writers. If you would like to contribute to the Summer issue, please email Mrs Johnson. I would like to say thank you to everybody who contributed, and wish you all a very Happy Easter!





School News

World Book Day

Thursday the 3rd of March 2016 delivered another World Book Day at Bexley Grammar School, carrying a comet-tail of chapters and costumes in its wake. Festivities were underway early, as the school was visited by Sarah Mussi, and treated to some performances of Shakespeare's plays.

On Thursday, BGS celebrated literature in a variety of ways throughout the day, with participation from teachers and students alike. We had fictional characters of all genres parade through the corridors and in the English Department, with personalities ranging from the Tin-man, to Hermione, to Gatsby.



At 2:45pm, the bell rang cueing the 'drop everything and read' segment of the day, where usual lessons made way for a mass 20 minute reading session across classrooms; many thanks to the prefects who ensured that all students had a book to read by distributing library stock to classes! At the end of the school day, lecturer, Dr Grant, kindly came in from the New College of the Humanities to give an interesting talk on the novel and its purpose and history. All in all, a successful day at BGS to celebrate books and their impact on us!

*Daniya
Baiguzhayeva,
Year 12*



Little Hearts Matter

On Friday the 12th of February, our school took part in a non-uniform day in support of the charity Little Hearts Matter, organised by Year 9 student John Wyllie. To take part in the day all one had to do was wear an article of red clothing and bring in £1. Despite expectations of people wearing normal clothes or just including small items of red, a staggering amount of people turned up in support of the charity. The school definitely had a collective feel on the day as everyone went around in red.



Little Hearts Matter is the only national charity that offers specialist-level support to children and their families, diagnosed with single ventricle heart disease (having only half a working heart). Over 600 parents face this every year, and because of the numerous surgeries that sufferers have to go through, they will always find themselves more tired than friends, find school work very tiring, have to take medicine every day, and have an ever-increasing chance to need a heart transplant as they get older. Little Hearts Matter helps families feel less isolated and gives them more of an understanding of the condition.

I was actually able to speak to John about the day and how it came about. He told me about the support meetings he attends, and how, of his own accord, he suggested the idea of holding a fundraiser there. They were incredibly supportive of the venture. He then sought permission from Mrs Gradley, head of the school council, for the charity event and she was on board. All that was left was for the day to be publicised. Every year was spoken to in assemblies held by John Wyllie and his friend. John cited his friends as a big support to him here. It can be incredibly nerve-racking speaking to a large hall full of people, and having support from friends is one of the best things to help you through it.

Speaking with John really puts things into perspective. Dealing with the problems of ventricle heart disease is something I can only imagine to be exceedingly taxing, and it's not something that goes away. I certainly admire how John is able to very nonchalantly talk about the issues of ventricle heart disease and how he deals with it.



The day was a massive success, with around 160 little hearts, made by R. Snelling of the DT Department, being sold in addition to the metal pin badges, provided by Little Hearts Matter. This raised an impressive amount of £1762.25. John told me that even they were a little surprised by the amount sold. I hope this day does set a precedent for future fundraisers. Instead of the usual non-uniform day, having something like wearing an article of red as a requirement feels a lot more meaningful.

Deepesh Marwaha, Year 12

Young Voices 2016

On January 25th, the Junior Choir, accompanied by Miss Simonis, Miss Love Davies, Mrs Snelling and Mr Mackle, attended Young Voices 2016. It was a completely exhausting day, but extremely fun nonetheless. We left school at around 12 o'clock, all very enthusiastic for the day filled with fun and excitement to come. Once we arrived at the O2, we were greeted by hundreds of children all split into their respective schools and taking their seats in the huge arena. Just like last year, our seats were right up at the very top, which was slightly daunting, and it emphasized the enormity of the event that we were about to take part in. After waiting for a while, and settling down (which can take a while with over 7000 school children) we started the rehearsal with our brilliant conductor - David Lawrence. Rehearsing eleven high-energy songs is tiring, especially as it takes so long, but the teachers from our school were fantastic at urging us to stand up and enjoy all the brilliant medleys! After hours of perfecting the timings and actions for each song, it was time for the

concert to start. Everybody regained their energy and used the cameras as motivation to sing the well-arranged songs. The special guests who sang with us included Laura Wright, Tom Billington, and a champion beat boxing trio, which was so much fun! Overall, the experience this year at Young Voices was as impressive and amazing as always, and I know that even though we were tired at school the next day, the Junior Choir will agree that it was worth it to be part of something so special.

Rosie Burrows, Year 9

Under 13s Bexley Borough Netball Competition

On Thursday the 25th of February, the Year 8 netball team went to the Bexley Schools' Netball Tournament. The tournament was held at Chis & Sid. There were eight teams there, but two of them were from Chis & Sid.

We played seven matches, the first of which was against Haberdashers. We played quite well as a team. Everybody was passing and intercepting well and we went on to win. However, we played our best match against Bexleyheath Academy. Everybody was getting into the space, in front of their marking players, and we were making good passes to the right people. We won this close match 2-1. Overall, we came 4th in the tournament, which was very good. The experience was really great, and being able to compete and see our weaknesses was eye-opening.

Katie Henderson, Year 8

Young Art in Bexley Competition

Between the 13th of February and the 13th of March, six Year 8 BGS students had their work submitted to the Young Art in Bexley Exhibition. The event, celebrating its 40th year, exhibited the collection of works in The Stables Gallery in Hall Place. The Gallery featured the very creative works of students from Reception to more realistic and refined pieces by Year 13s, with each age group containing work submitted by various schools across the Borough of Bexley.



Of the six works submitted by the BGS Year 8s, five were awarded with a 'Merit', whilst one piece was 'Highly Commended' by the judges. All of the art created by the students displayed talent with colour and perspective, reflecting the more architectural side of art which was not so well explored by other submissions. Although the brief for the piece was the same for all students – a one-point perspective cityscape – their creativity resulted in a diverse set of works that range from more realistic to abstract and unique. Congratulations on your prizes, Year 8! Best wishes for your future in art.

Amelia Stevenson, Year 12



Asmiga Vijayakumar's piece

"I feel extremely proud and honoured that I am lucky enough to have my artwork displayed in an exhibition."



Amber Prior's cityscape



Bani Dhooffer's cityscape

"I felt it was an honour and a privilege to have my art chosen and put up in an exhibition! I would never have thought the day would come that my artwork was put in a gallery. I have a passion for art and will definitely continue to pursue it as a hobby, if not a career." – Bani Dhooffer



Maia Bourrelly's 'Highly Commended' piece

"I feel as if doing art can actually mean something for me, and that studying it will be worth it. It's also surprising, because I would never have thought that a piece of my art would have won anything. I absolutely want to keep making art, it makes me happy."

– Maia Bourrelly

The collection also included cityscapes by Elise Bull and Satie Polidoro-Thursby.

The King's Speech

On the 2nd of March, the Sixth Form gathered in the main hall to listen to the words of economist, author and columnist, Stephen King. I was amongst the bustling crowd, eager to hear what King had to say about his profession, as I (like many others in our Sixth Form) am curious about the elusive world of finance and what it may have to offer for a career.

If I am to be honest, my first impression of King was one of surprise, as he seemed humble, and not the pretentious city worker I had been expecting. He was a charismatic speaker, but in an articulate sense- as students weren't afraid to contribute their own thoughts to the discussion. I also found him to be very genuine, not trying to impress anyone with his expertise, only wanting to educate.

He began with his background: how he, like us, had come from a local grammar school and grafted throughout his A-Levels to successfully gain a place at New College, Oxford. Interestingly, King had never actually intended on taking Economics for A-Level, nor applying for it as his degree, as his passion had always lain with Music, with his original

desire being to play the clarinet at a professional level. This element of fortune was something he emphasised throughout the discussion, as he pressed the idea that you should (to an extent) see where life takes you and be more open to the unexpected. This is an interesting thought, because as Sixth Form students we go to great lengths to build a career for ourselves, but how do we know that we'll be happy at the other end? King was fortunate enough to have kept his options open, as, upon taking PPE at Oxford, he discovered his passion for economics and realised that the clarinet could only ever be his hobby. This idea, of someone rethinking their career path whilst at university, did alarm me, as for me, to burden myself with a student loan for a university place, only to change my mind when I get there, is frightening. However, in no way did it put me off, as King reassured us that the experience of university is invaluable and worth every penny.

King went on to explain how, upon graduating, he began working for the Treasury and then for HSBC, where his career unfolded. Despite not having learnt very much about what his occupation entails, it was inspiring to hear why he had chosen Economics as a career, and to see how a passion for something can entail success. We, as students, aspire to find where this passion lies, and to pursue this as an occupation; and so to hear Stephen King give a talk was encouraging. To best summarise my impression of King's address, it would be with a quote from the great Walter Chrysler: 'The real secret of success is enthusiasm'.

Emrys Luker-Brown, Year 12

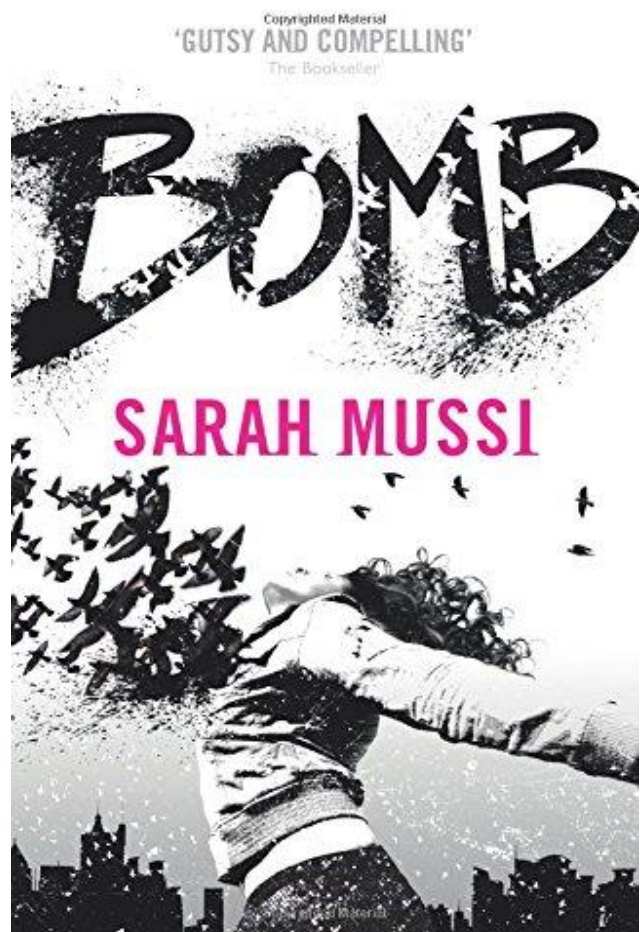
Sarah Mussi's 'Bomb'

Imagine being in the middle of Trafalgar Square on a sunny Saturday in June. It's crawling with people, and you answer a phone call from an unknown number. A voice tells you that you're strapped to a bomb, set to detonate in 60 seconds. Of course you don't believe it, until you hear a faint ticking coming from underneath your shirt. What do you do? Where do you turn to? Do you run, hide, or stay?

On Thursday the 3rd of March, Year 10 were fortunate enough to be visited by the award-winning author, Sarah Mussi, who spoke to

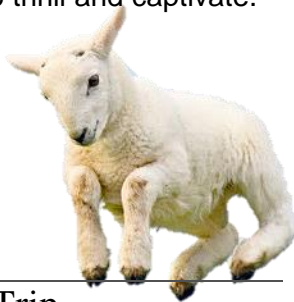
them about her latest book "Bomb": an intense and quite literally explosive tale about a teenage girl called Genesis, who, after being drugged on a blind date, discovers that her body has been hijacked by terrorists, who intend to use her as a suicide bomber. Every minute she spends alive is a minute gone from the detonation timer. She must now make decisions that will decide not only her fate, but that of those around her.

Although seemingly far-fetched, Mussi explained that the plot of her story was actually inspired by a news report she heard on the radio, about a 13-year-old girl who was given to the terrorist organization, Boko Haram, by her father, and refused to blow herself up in a displaced persons camp in Nigeria, following two other teenage girls in a coordinated terrorist attack. Mussi then said that many of her books have been inspired by news reports, as she wants to encourage young people to reflect on current affairs: "I want to raise questions, and get young people thinking. I feel there aren't enough forums or places for young people to have meaningful discussions and have their voices heard".



However, Mussi explained that she didn't want the terrorist organization in her story to be driven by religion, so she researched into many different extremist groups, from cults to political movements, even to football hooliganism. She also mentioned the army, and raised the question as to whether legitimised violence is acceptable, as seen with the UK's decision to launch airstrikes in Syria. These questions undoubtedly started some heated discussions amongst the Year 10s, but overall, the agreement was reached that, as in the case of the news report, it is important not to give in to oppression and to do what you feel is right, with one student saying, "We always think about our first world problems. I think it's important to remember what it's like for some people our age in other parts of the world". The most difficult issue raised in this story is that of identity. Who should Genesis decide to be: a killer, a victim, a coward, or a hero? The answer, of course, lies in Sarah Mussi's latest book, "Bomb", a topical read that is sure to thrill and captivate.

Amed Yones, Year 12



School Trips

Year 10 Battlefields Trip

This March, schools across the country were given the opportunity, by the government and the UCL Institute of Education, to visit First World War battlefields across Belgium and northern France. Their aim was for students to provide a legacy for the fallen soldiers by sharing their experiences with 110 other people, to match the number of soldiers who were wounded between 1914 and 1918, as a way to commemorate the centenary of WWI.

The first day in Belgium consisted of a visit to Lijssenthoek Cemetery, the In Flanders Fields Museum and the Menin Gate, where we were able to witness the 'Last Post'.

During the period of 1915 to 1920, the hamlet of Lijssenthoek became the venue for one of the biggest evacuation hospitals in the Ypres Salient. With thirty different nationalities represented in the cemetery, it was truly fascinating to witness the different graves, but also harrowing to see so many soldiers who

had died. Each had a mother, daughter, friend, loved-one, whom they had left behind.

The In Flanders Fields Museum had many interesting and insightful exhibits displaying how the people in Belgium, and those fighting, lived during the war. The interactive exhibit also allowed us to discover peoples' personal stories. The museum was located in the restored medieval cloth hall in the centre of the town. Ypres was flattened by artillery during the various battles that took place nearby and had to be rebuilt after the war.

We found witnessing the 'Last Post' at Menin Gate the most memorable and moving experience. Many people crowded round, in particular local people, who proudly remembered the courage and sacrifice of those who fell, defending their town.

On Sunday, we travelled to the Somme Valley in northern France, and visited the Ulster Memorial Tower and Thiepval Wood. The Ulster Memorial Tower marks the site of the attack of the 36th Ulster Division on the 1st of July, 1916. It was one of the only two allied attacks to succeed on that day. Opposite the Ulster Memorial Tower, was the site of the excavated and restored British trench system.

We also visited Thiepval Memorial, which looms above the trees on the hill where it stands. The names of more than 72,000 soldiers who fell in the Somme, and whose bodies were never found or identified, are inscribed on the memorial.

On the way back to Ypres, we also stopped briefly at Pozieres Cemetery in order to locate a great uncle of Helen's who was killed in action nearby. We paid our respects and commemorated his death. The walls of the cemetery blocked noise from the outside and created a sanctuary for people to come to remember, mourn and thank the fallen. We felt very humbled by the experience.



Throughout Monday morning, it was snowing heavily! After breakfast, we packed our suitcases and travelled through the thick snow to the centre of Ypres. Here, we participated in the 'Coming World Remember Me Workshop', making clay models of crouching soldiers hugging their knees. All of our clay models (plus 600,000 others) will go on display outside Ypres in 2018 in a similar fashion to the Tower of London Poppies Project.

We then travelled to Langemark Cemetery: a cemetery for the fallen German soldiers of World War I. The atmosphere here was very different to the Commonwealth cemeteries; the dark stones and the mass grave in the centre show a different type of remembrance.

Finally, we travelled to Tyne Cot. Being the last site that we visited, our stay seemed short. Our group gathered around the memorial and, in a moment of silence, remembered all the fallen soldiers who fought for their country, whilst laying a wreath as a sign of respect.

All in all, we are grateful to have been given this opportunity. We have learnt a lot, and hope to share our insight with other students shortly by completing our Legacy Project.



Helen Norman, Dylan Moody & Aimee Steele, Year 10

Classics Trip to Rome

What a week! I was amazed by how much we managed to fit in. We arrived at our hotel quite late on Sunday, but luckily we had dinner in the adjoining restaurant, with lasagna for our starter! I think that was the moment we all felt that we were definitely in Italy!

Our first full day in Rome was a busy one! We first set off to visit the Colosseum, which was

very impressive as it has been around since construction began in 70 AD and is the largest amphitheatre ever built. After that we walked around the Palatine and the Roman Forum, where it was surprisingly easy to imagine ourselves in the shoes of the Romans as the ruins were very prominent and a lot of the structures in the Forum were still standing. We then all went off to have lunch; most people went straight for an Italian pizza, which wasn't hard to find as there are pizzerias everywhere! We then finished the afternoon by walking around the Circus Maximus, Hadrian's Arch, Bocco della Verita, and other historical sights before having yet another filling dinner – this time with spaghetti and meatballs for our starter! After dinner, we visited the Trevi Fountain, which was one of my favourite sights of the whole trip as everyone was astounded by the beautiful water features and architecture.

On Tuesday we took the coach to Hadrian's Villa, which is hardly a 'villa' – it is more of a complex that is spread across almost 300 acres! The next villa we visited, Villa d'Este, was just as impressive, with a range of rooms, statues and fountains that made us strongly consider putting our money together to try and buy it! We finished off the day with a look at the Capitoline Museum and a quiz in which the wittily named 'Quizteama Aguilera' (spelled incorrectly) won, but it was well deserved.

Wednesday included the most stair climbing I think most of us have ever done, but it was all worth it in the end! The Vatican was another favourite of mine. From the outside it is spectacular enough, but the view from the inside is even more impressive, in my opinion. Then, we all foolishly agreed to walk up 551 steps to see the view from the top and then walk another 551 back down! It was a long walk, but once we all eventually made it up there, I'm sure none of us had any regrets as we could see some breath-taking views of Rome.





We continued with our foot tour of Rome in the afternoon, seeing sights such as the site of Caesar's assassination, Trajan's Column and the Pantheon, which were all very interesting. The day finished with the annual talent show, in which we had everything from poems and singing to plays and balancing coins on your hand or elbow then catching them (which is a lot harder than it sounds as Daniel and Miss Fisher know!)



We visited the Catacombs and Ostia on our last day. It was great as we all really got a taste of how the Romans lived in this deserted town, which served as the most important port of Rome. Sadly, it was then time to say 'arrivederci' to Italy. Although we were sad to leave, our feet were thankful! The trip was an incredible experience that was very beneficial in expanding our knowledge and opening us up to a different culture that none of us will forget in a hurry. I would definitely recommend attending a Classics trip as they are thoroughly enjoyable. I'm sure the trip to Sicily next year will be just as great. Also, a huge thank you to Miss Pearson, Miss Fisher and Mr Risdon for making this all possible – it was fantastic!

Katie Harris, Year 12

Year 12 German Exchange

I was eager to do the German exchange trip this year. I remembered the great experience from Year 9 when we stayed with a family for a week; it was one of the best experiences of my life! Having my exchange partner over this year definitely topped that. At first, I thought it was going to be a bit awkward, and that we wouldn't get along, but all the German partners were extremely friendly and welcoming. There were 3 days in which they came to school with us, one where we all went into London, and

one where the German partners went to London by themselves. On the last day, the English and German students went bowling together and it was a great way for us all to bond. I cannot wait for us to go over to Germany in April! This exchange has been a great experience so far and I wouldn't change a single thing about it!

Ethan Akanni, Year 12

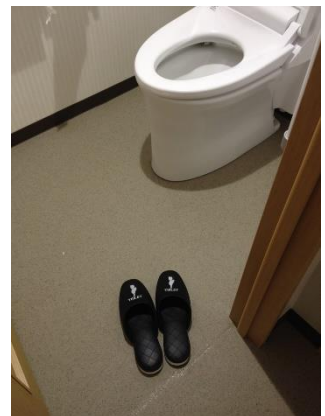


Mr Elphick's Trip to Japan

During the half term holiday Mr Elphick was invited along with other head teachers, from schools which teach Japanese at their school, to go to Japan in order to help promote the teaching of Japanese in British schools. The two cities he visited were the capital of Japan, Tokyo, and Kyoto, the old capital of Japan.

The first place Mr Elphick visited was Tokyo. As one would expect Tokyo is very a hi-tech city, lighting up like a Christmas tree during the night. The city was filled to the brim with people, especially at the crossroads where you'd see hundreds of people crossing the road at the same time in certain areas. He stayed on the 26th floor of the well-known "Tokyo Dome Hotel". As well as being a grand hotel, it also offers a choice of western and Japanese breakfast. Naturally he always chose the Japanese breakfast, eager to experience all various Japanese dishes that were on offer. The hotel also hosts a bar on the top (43rd) floor, where he got a jaw-dropping view of Tokyo to accompany a glass of bubbly.

Mr Elphick also got to visit several Japanese schools, both private and state schools where all the children gave the delegation a tremendously warm welcome despite never meeting any of them before. The schools were notably very clean, providing separate slippers for corridors/classrooms, the canteen and even



the bathroom (!) and only wearing shoes outdoors. In the state schools there were also no cleaners; when school ended the children would be assigned time to clean up, bringing out the mops from the back of the room and stacking the tables. There was also no gum to be found anywhere in the schools or indeed anywhere in Japan for that matter. Even the toilets were noted as being exceptionally clean, public toilets having standards which were possibly better than most people's home toilets.



Mr Elphick then went from Tokyo to Kyoto via the bullet train. The bullet train reminded of him of pictures he used to see as a child in the '70s which portrayed artists' impressions of what trains would look like in the future; they are almost a carbon copy. He was awed by the trains which offered not only high-speed but also cleanliness and efficiency, always arriving at the exact time stated on the board. As soon as the train arrived at its destination, instantly a crew of cleaners would board onto the train, swiftly cleaning the carriages, reversing the direction of every seat for the return journey and exiting within 7 minutes to allow new passengers on before the train departed. During the wait for the train he was able to explore the vast train station where there was a massive shopping mall (common at other big train stations in Japan too). Despite being largely underground, the shopping mall was vast, offering everything a normal shopping mall would, amplified by ten (ok, maybe more like two or three times but it has a right to be exaggerated). He was also able to join in on a meditation session run by a Buddhist monk and was amazed by how relaxed and calm he felt after the meditation. Although he didn't have as much time to adventure and embrace the culture of Kyoto as he would have liked to

have had, he still enjoyed what Kyoto had to offer such as the old buildings and shrines.

Possibly one of the best things about Japan that Mr Elphick, as well as most people who visit Japan, comment on, is the food. No matter where you go, even in the most modest restaurants off the beaten track, the quality of the food is exquisite. From ramen noodles to ton katsu (fried pork cutlet) the food never disappointed without giving that bloated feeling as well as being healthy. However, he felt the best food was the fish, especially the sashimi and the teriyaki. Although the quality of the food was so high, the price always stayed reasonable, offering extremely good value for money. Despite having a small budget for dinner, he was never even close to touching that limit, even with extras such as beautiful and delicate patisserie.



After his trip Mr Elphick felt that perhaps we have a lot to learn from the Japanese. For example, the hospitality the Japanese give; they love to give gifts and marked the visits with carefully staged photographs. They are always polite, such as greeting customers when they enter a convenience store. The elderly were also highly respected among society. The schools were good example of this, as the longer a teacher worked at the school the more they were paid rather than for what they did. He also feels that perhaps as a society and even as a school we can try keep the places we live and work in more cleanly. Although we have cleaners in the school, we should treat our school with more care, like our homes. He was amazed to discover that in Japanese state schools there is no central heating and so students bring in things to wear on top or blankets in order to keep themselves

warm. He was particularly interested in this money-saving concept!

Finally, I would like to mention about studying Japanese. Although most may assume it is a hard language with a steep learning curve, it actually isn't as bad as people think. Starting off is relatively easy, and is also due to the very high standard of teaching that our Japanese teacher offers. The usefulness of Japanese is also increasing as there is more demand for translators from big Japanese businesses due to Japanese people not being as good at English as they should be. Japan is also an aging population and so it would welcome young people immigrating to Japan who can speak and understand Japanese very well, which opens up a number of different opportunities in going Japan. There also is a Japan exchange programme called JET which offers to take people who speak English fluently and speak Japanese to a certain level, to Japan to become assistant teachers for a year. However, this can only be accessed after university. It is still definitely worth looking into if you are interested in working in Japan. The link here will take you to the JET official site: <http://jetprogramme.org/en>

Malcom Tidmarsh, Year 12

Culture Club

This term, Culture Club organized trips to four very different shows, all of which were equally compelling and educational. It started off with the classic Shakespeare play, *Richard III*, followed by the phenomenal, *Cirque Berserk*, the opera, *The Magic Flute*, and the dazzling musical *Guys and Dolls*, on its return to the West End stage.

On Wednesday 20th January, we went to see the theatre production of *Richard III* at the New Diorama Theatre in London, directed by Mark Leipacher. This production presented an epic and thrilling take on a Shakespeare classic, with a talented company of 21 actors who



successfully portrayed the story to its audience. Culture Club member Ejiro Ovie-Okoro (Year 12) said, "Though its

complexity and depth was challenging, the play was still thoroughly enjoyable."

The next show we saw – on the 11th February – was *Cirque Berserk*, a jaw-dropping contemporary circus created especially for the theatre. I think it's fair to say this was the favourite of the Easter term as it left us with our hearts in our mouths and on the edge of our seats. The cast and crew of the show were spectacular and blended contemporary circus skills with exhilarating stunt action, as well as sprinkling a bit of comedy in there too.



On the 25th February, we travelled to the grand London Coliseum to see one of the most popular operas ever written, *The Magic Flute*. For most Culture Club members, this was their first opera, and it was very interesting to see something different to what we usually do. The staging was imaginative and the singing was astonishing; it was a thoroughly enjoyable performance.

The last trip of the term was to see *Guys and Dolls* at the Savoy Theatre; a tale of gamblers, gangsters and nightclub singers in 1920s New York. After 10 years off the West End stage, *Guys and Dolls* has made a comeback with a brilliant new cast, wonderful choreography and vivid staging. The musical score was the icing on the cake: it was varied, catchy and contemporary. We all left the theatre walking on air.



If you have the opportunity, get inspired and come along to Culture Club next term! Thank you to Ms Hanington and Ms Stoddard for organising this term's trips.

Sophie Taylor, Year 12





Year 13 Business and Economics Trip to China

Early on a cold Friday morning in February, thirty-one Business & Economics students and four teachers gathered in the BGS car park with our suitcases and travel pillows, and set off for the trip of a lifetime.



Three flights, a stopover in Helsinki, and almost a day and a half later, we arrived in Shanghai, a global financial centre famed for its business and seaports. Despite most of us being absolutely shattered, we soldiered on to the French Concession, an old part of Shanghai, where traditional buildings host modern interiors- a fascinating blend of old and new cultures in China. Needless to say, after roughly 36 hours of travelling, we were all excited for a decent hot meal; so when we were greeted with mountains of rice, oodles of noodles, and piles of sweet and sour pork at dinner, we were very happy to say the least! Feeling full up and much happier than half an hour previously, we gathered outside the restaurant for a walk around The Bund. Perhaps one of the most iconic and recognisable parts of Shanghai, this waterfront provided the ultimate opportunity to view the business district of Shanghai just across the river. The last activity of our first action-packed day in China was the Shanghai Acrobatic Show. For those of us who managed to keep our eyes open, what a show it was!

Day two began with a coach journey to Suzhou, a major part of the infamous Chinese Silk Road, it is a place of great beauty and historical significance. Our first activity was a cruise on the Grand Canal, providing the chance to explore the infamous waterways of Shanghai. Our next stop was a Silk Mill, where we saw the process of making and dying the different silk items, such as quilts and scarves. Dating all the

way back to 1342, our next destination, the Lion Grove Garden, takes its name from the Taihu rocks which form a large part of the garden. Our next stop was Tiger Hill, a garden where Yunyan Pagoda is the main attraction – known for its wonky stature, the pagoda is nicknamed “The Leaning Pagoda of China”. As the afternoon came to a close, we arrived in Zhouzhang, a small Chinese village with traditional buildings. After a coffee break, and some free time wandering in and out of shops, we headed home for dinner and a good night’s sleep.



On our last day in Shanghai, we visited our first ‘business’ part of the trip – the SAIC Volkswagen-Skoda factory, where we were taken on a tour to see the production line from start to finish. Next up was Yu Garden and the street markets in the surrounding area - lots of interesting new foods and quirky souvenirs up for grabs here! Our final stop in Shanghai was the viewing platform of the Oriental Pearl TV Tower: a view from 263m above Shanghai was a fantastic sight, and really captured the whole city in its true essence.

After a 2-hour domestic night flight, we landed in Xi'an. Our first day began with a coach journey to one of the most anticipated parts of the trip: the Terracotta Warriors. Such a crucial and famous part of China’s long and fascinating history, it was truly a sight to see, despite the crowds of tourists! After a stop for lunch, we visited the Huaqing Hot Spring Park at the base of Mount Li. The complex had exquisite views and a rich history, dating all the way back to 723, when it was built by Emperor Xuanzong. We had a fantastic time here exploring the expanse of the park, rinsing our hands under the spring water and throwing a coins into the lucky wishing pool.

The next day, we took the coach to the Great Wild Goose Pagoda, where Xuanzang, the

Chinese monk, who brought Buddhism from India back to China in 643, first began to spread Buddhist teachings. Then we rode bicycles around the top of the Ancient City Wall of Xi'an. Totalling 14km in length, it's safe to say that after an hour of cycling, we were ready to get back on the coach and then onto the bullet train for a good nap.



At half past nine, we arrived in Beijing, feeling excited (but also quite sad) as we reached our final city in China. The next morning, after a hearty and interesting breakfast in the hotel, we headed to perhaps one of the most iconic locations of our trip: Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City. After several selfies with the Chairman Mao portrait, we wandered around the square and the city, listening to our guide explaining the fascinating history behind all of the emperors who lived there and their many concubines - and many there were. We also discovered in the Forbidden City why some of the older Chinese doorways had an elevated doorstep. This is to prevent ghosts from entering the house, as it is a common belief amongst the Chinese that ghosts have no knees and therefore cannot step over obstructions. Next we headed to a traditional tea ceremony - an activity most of us avid tea-drinkers were very excited for. Ginseng oolong, lychee & rose, fruit, and jasmine were some of our favourites, and watching the lady pour tea with such elegance and skill was a great cultural experience. We followed up our tea drinking with the silk market, where we spent several hours (and a lot of money) haggling with the men and women of the market.

Day two in Beijing began with a trip to the Temple of Heaven. Here we saw lots of members of the elderly community playing various games - one involving a type of keepy-uppy, played with a large shuttlecock. We were then taken on a rickshaw tour of the traditional hutongs- residential neighbourhoods, which still form the heart of Old Beijing. We stopped off for

a cup of hot jasmine tea with the famous Mr Liu: a champion cricket trainer and fighter, who has successfully trained and bred crickets to hold the fighting value of nearly £10 000! He showed us a few (which the brave ones out of us were lucky enough to hold), as well as all the equipment used to train them. He then took us outside to show us his dog, cats, rabbits, birds, lizards & tortoises- animals everywhere!

Our last day in China included one of the most anticipated places of the whole trip: The Great Wall of China. After de-layering and preparing ourselves for the morning ahead, we were given two hours to get to the top and back down again. After an exhausting climb up stairs as high as our knees, most of us could be found in the cafés at the base of the wall, thoroughly enjoying a well-deserved ice cream or coffee. Next up were the pandas at Beijing Zoo. After many "ooh"s, "awww"s, attempted selfies, and spouts of laughter at one of the pandas having a poo, we went back to the coach to go to our last activity. We arrived at Wanfujing Road a short while later and the braver ones among us began wandering the road in search of weird and wacky food. Some of the fried street foods tried included: snake, scorpion, locust, cockroach, squid & chicken feet - several of which tasted like roast chicken crisps!

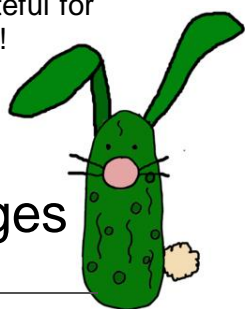
An early start on the last day was not very well received. After several hours at Beijing airport (and 20 laps of duty free) we gathered by our gate, and said a heartfelt thank you to the teachers. Arriving back at BGS just before midnight, we headed home to our own comfortable beds; exhausted and exhilarated, but happy to be home. We all had a truly amazing time in China, and are so grateful for all of the wonderful experiences we had!

Lucy Dunk & Monika Faulkner 13LRM

The Happy Pickle Pages

Year 7 Diploma Task

For my Latin Diploma I needed to make a mask and a play script. I decided to focus on the character of the slave, whom I named Lucius. In my play he was a cunning and clever slave who was determined to get his freedom; I wanted to show his character in my mask.





To begin with, I covered a balloon in papier mâché. I started this a couple of weeks before the deadline so it would have time to dry and harden. I then cut it in half so I had a spare one just in case it went wrong. I rolled up strips of newspaper to make the eyebrows, the lips, and the wrinkles. The features needed to be over-exaggerated so that the audience in the Roman theatres could see the expressions clearly. The nose was the hardest part, as it needed lots of layers of newspaper to get the structure right. The easiest part was painting the skin colour and glueing on the hair. The end result was a grinning slave who looked quite mischievous.

Throughout my play script the slave was tricking his master, who never realised. I hope my mask was able to portray the personality of this character.

Jacob Orchard, Year 7

Current Affairs

The Nuclear Family

Let's be clear, when I say "Nuclear Family" I don't mean the whole 'mum, dad, two kids' deal. I'm talking about the United States, Russia, and the United Kingdom. Maybe you're wondering why I'm throwing this very dysfunctional trio together. Three words: The Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The NPT is an international treaty with the objective of complete nuclear disarmament in

order to ensure the large-scale safety of the human race and environment. Under the treaty, no nation would create more nuclear weapons, and would ideally take conscious steps towards reducing its stockpile. It is also hoped that the success of the NPT would lead to more general disarmament and, eventually, peace.

Back to the Nuclear Family. These three have all agreed with and signed the NPT, so you would think that they would actually comply with its terms, right? Not exactly. Sure, they're not the only recognised nuclear states, and they're not the only proliferators. But they are the only nuclear proliferators that signed the treaty.

Let's focus on the UK. Ever heard of Trident? It's one of the most important social issues of our time that no one seems to be talking about. Although these missiles (armed with nuclear warheads) are carried by 14 US Navy submarines, it's Britain that is proposing a £167 billion renewal of the missiles, carried by four Royal Navy submarines. £167 billion. That's only bigger than the budget deficit. In other words, instead of having stable social services, world-class education, effective welfare and affordable housing, we can have brand new indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction! Essentially, Trident is Britain's Big Stick to shake at the scary nations.

Despite the fact that this is obviously a win-win situation, I was somehow angry. I was so angry, in fact, that on the 27th February, I attended my first protest march and demonstration. Organised by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, it was a call for the end of talks to renew Trident, and to recognise the UK's commitment to the NPT.



After marching from Marble Arch through Piccadilly, the protest culminated in a demonstration in Trafalgar Square, which many tens of thousands of people attended.

High-profile politicians, including Caroline Lucas, leader of the Green Party, and Leanne Wood, leader of Plaid Cymru, spoke on the base of Nelson's Column. Perhaps one of the most powerful speeches made was by Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland. She delivered the ever-pressing question "how can we expect to persuade countries to disarm or not to arm, if we send the message that our security relies on nuclear weapons?". "Trident is immoral" was her clear message, and it is one that rang true with all of the other speakers.

However, it was Corbyn's appearance that generated the most energy and enthusiasm. Outlining the disadvantages of Trident, such as its inability to protect the UK from modern threats, including natural disasters and terrorism, he also tackled one of the biggest pro-Trident arguments: employment. He reminded us that Trident workers need not become unemployed – through "investment and prioritisation", their skills can be applied to different areas, rather than lost.

The host of different speakers, including representatives of religious groups, union leaders and MPs, showed the diversity of support for Trident's decommissioning; how many consciences it weighs upon.

Cold War's over, folks. Let's get with the times.

Amelia Stevenson, Year 12

Everything You *Never* Need to Know About the U.S.A Presidential Election

1. Deez Nuts for president: Yes, you read that right. Deez Nuts is an independent politician running in the 2016 United States presidential election. Nuts (real name Brady C. Olson), a 15-year-old boy, has polled as high as 9% in a survey conducted by Public Policy Polling in North Carolina in mid-August 2015 – which isn't surprising, considering the simple but effective slogan that appears on his shirts, "Balls in your court, America".

3. Trump – predicted by The Simpsons?



Take a look at the above picture. You might be thinking "OK, so Trump's on the Simpsons, not like he's the first political candidate to appear on the show". However, the strange thing about the picture is not the fact that Trump has appeared on the Simpsons on an episode set in the future as a President – it's that this comes from the episode "Bart to the Future", which originally aired 19th March 2000 – over 15 years before Trump launched his 2016 presidential campaign. So how could the episode have predicted Trump's future run for President? Unfortunately, you may as well pack up your tinfoil hats – Trump had been running for the 2000 presidential vote as a Reform Party Nominee.

3. The Democratic dance-off:

You'd be forgiven for not knowing as many strange details to do with the Democratic side of the presidential election – neither Hillary Clinton nor Bernie Sanders have made any statements regarding making Mexico build a massive wall, whereas by the time this article gets published, Trump will have probably made yet another outrageous statement. That doesn't mean that the Democratic candidates are all serious discussions and actual politics. In fact, Clinton and Sanders seem to be caught up in a dance battle – and that isn't me being metaphorical. A quick Youtube search will allow you to see Clinton attempt to Whip and Nae Nae, whereas Sanders has joined the 'Hotline Bling' craze with a video of him dancing to the song appearing on Ellen.

4. Ted Cruz – the Zodiac Killer?

Recently, people have been linking the Republican presidential candidate's name with that of the Zodiac Killer, a serial killer who terrorized California for several years in the late 60s and early 70s, and who was never definitively identified. Some surprisingly convincing evidence has appeared on the

internet, including a re-arrangement of the letters on one of his logos, leading 38% of Florida voters to think Ted Cruz could be the Zodiac Killer. However, there is a slight issue with this belief – mainly

the fact that Ted Cruz was born after the killings began.

5. Oreos – America's greatest enemy:

During his presidential campaign, Trump has often been accused of generating hatred, but one comment he made a few months ago may have been a step too far. Donald Trump decided to boycott Oreos because its parent company is “closing a factory in Chicago and they’re moving to Mexico.” - “I’m not eating any more Oreos,” he promised. That’s right. Donald Trump won’t eat Oreos because they’re too Mexican.



And the reasoning isn’t even entirely valid – while some Oreo production is moving to Mexico, a downsized Chicago plant will remain, along with some other plants in the U.S.

But Trump’s so-called ‘patriotism’ clearly knows no bounds.

To conclude: This year’s U.S. Presidential election is looking to be one of the weirdest yet. But we must not forget that this is a serious business, and the American people must ask themselves who they want to give one of the biggest jobs in the world to – an amateur dancer, a serial killer, an Oreo hater, or DeeZ Nuts? Stay tuned, people.

TV, Film and Music Reviews

One Punch Man

My original intention was to not to write about the animé ‘One Punch Man’ but in fact another animé called “Boku dake ga inai machi” which translates in English as “The town where only I didn’t exist”. However, my eagerness to write about this animé was put to halt, one because the animé actually wasn’t finished yet, and two because a lot of people don’t watch animé.

With a story complex enough to even confuse someone who’s half Japanese and has watched thousands of episodes of animé, it wouldn’t be the best first impression to someone who has never watched animé. After sulking to myself for a few hours racking my brain for a new idea, I finally came up with One Punch Man.

One Punch Man is a relatively new animé which people have been going crazy about, instantly being a hit with not just people of Japan but around the globe. The action comedy animé revolves around a wannabe hero “Saitama” and his self-proclaimed student “Genos”. Within this animé the uniqueness is in the name of the animé - Saitama has incredible physical aspects in all areas, winning every fight in one punch but gets upset over this due to the lack of challenge. Saitama is also presented outside of combat in comedic manner, very dopey and similar to an expressionless Mr Potato head. However, in combat he lights up in a blaze, filled with determination. Frankly I find this more impressive than his ability to kill people in one hit. Genos, on the other hand, is half human, half cyborg who is respected among the Hero community as being one of the strongest, yet still he will constantly pester Saitama to accept him as Saitama’s student. Although his sole purpose was pretty much to enhance Saitama’s success to the viewer, he still is a very funny character due to his lack of knowledge of the human world, as well as the way in which he unintentionally steals all the glory from Saitama. The episodes in One Punch Man all seem to follow a similar plot just like shows such as Power Rangers did - bad guy comes, bad guy causes trouble, hero arrives, hero beats bad guy. In all honesty the plot isn’t exactly amazing but considering some of the garbage plots you get from so many movies, films and especially animés it’s not half bad.

Animé, being from Japan, is almost always littered with things such as morals, which at times completely hijack a whole episode which is fine ONCE in a while, unfortunately some creators clearly think otherwise so this happens on a regular basis. Although One Punch Man has morals, they aren’t particularly complex or detailed. It would be harsh to say they are put in for the sake of it but you can’t help but feel that way. In an animé where the story is basically about a bald guy who kills



people by punching them once, it's admirable to even include any morals and they do have a bit of power, so at least they tried, kind of. This may be more of a personal thing but being not too cringey is important to me. Despite the fact that it is done for comedic humour, the majority of the time there's only so much a man can take. I've watched animés where I had to pause every 2 minutes just because I couldn't bare how embarrassing it was and it can potentially make you give up on the animé. One Punch Man isn't even remotely cringey, most of the time you're simply immersed in how detailed the combat scenes are, which leads on to the best bit of this animé. Every attack, every animation is so extravagant and brutal. This, along with the music, gets you so pumped and excited. With each episode's fights only getting more extreme, it's good to know that there will be a lasting stream of adrenaline throughout the series. Of course, this animé does centre on its action part, but the comedic aspect of this animé is brilliant. Largely, because of how ridiculous all the characters are and its comically childish storyline, the use of the unexpected and unrealistic outcomes always makes me burst out laughing (This then proceeds to my parents telling me to shut up, but, hey, you can't win them all).



Overall, whether you have watched animé or not, it's absolutely worth watching. With its short simplistic story, being only 12 episodes in length and easy enough that my idiotic friend who'd never watched animé could understand it, it's probably one of the best animés to start off with. An opening which prepares you as if you were going to be the one fighting, rather than just sitting there for 20 minutes looking at a screen. Complex words and description just don't give this animé justice because it's about action and, to put it simply, it's just AWESOME in so many aspects. Above all else though, the one reason

I even wrote about this animé was because it's so memorable. I've watched so many thousands of episodes of animé and although it is relatively new I have probably already watched through another 4-5 other animés and I still remember One Punch Man as one of my favourites. Even if you don't trust my opinion, there are so many other people raving on about this animé, and maybe after watching this, you'll start to indulge yourself in various different animés. Please do - it'll mean if I ever make another anime review, I can actually reference other animés and make jokes about them (I will finally have people who understand me). Now go forth and enter the world of animé and let your imagination loose.

Malcolm Tidmarsh, Year 12

The Danish Girl

Tom Hooper's *The Danish Girl* tells the story of Lili Elbe (played by Eddie Redmayne), a transgender woman and artist who worked during the early 20th century. Lili was one of the first people ever to undergo sex reassignment surgery.

When we first meet Lili, it is 1926 and she is still Einar Wegener – a celebrated painter, who lives with his wife Gerda (played by Alicia Vikander), who is also an artist. The couple lives in Copenhagen, Denmark. They are young, charming and completely in love. But when Gerda asks Einar to help her with a portrait in which he must wear women's shoes, tights and a dress, their relationship begins to change. Einar is visibly moved by this experience. It is not until Gerda suggests that he dress up and act as a woman at a party, that he realises Lili is more than just a meaningless facade.

From here on in we are taken on an extremely poignant journey. As Einar begins to spend more and more time living as Lili, the pair grow further and further apart and Einar's career begins to dwindle, just as Gerda's is blossoming. After a great deal of turmoil Lili eventually meets a doctor who is willing to perform a series of surgeries, the first public male-to-female transition operation, which forces the pair to confront what this will mean for them as individuals and as a couple.

The changing nature of their relationship would never have been as well depicted if the couple

wasn't played by Redmayne and Vikander. As a fan of both of their previous work, I was excited to see what they would bring and how they would excel in their roles. For the most part, their acting was brilliant. For Redmayne, it was certainly one of the most challenging roles he has taken on. But he played it with dignity and poise, telling the story of one incredible person and pioneer for transgender rights in a time when it was unacceptable to do so. We needed to go deeper, though, and find out what becoming Lili Elbe was really like – to understand her thoughts and feelings – but we never do. There are quite a few times in the film when I thought we were going to delve into Lili's mind, but the complexity and challenge of her transformation and journey are often buried under a glaze of opulent set design and costume.



What also struck me, though, was how genuine and authentic Vikander's performance was. Gerda is a woman who must love the most important person in her life enough to let them go, and her portrayal of this was, for me, one of the best attributes of the film. However, I feel as though the audience was slightly deprived of Vikander's outstanding acting skills. At times, she seemed limited by the script, and is only ever allowed to express her anguish through tears and I know she has so much more to offer than that.

From an artistic point of view, the film is extremely well shot and transports its audience to a very realistic, timely picture of early-20th century Europe. Although it may have overshadowed Lili's story slightly, the costume is still meticulous and is a subtle, yet striking component that completes the film. Although I don't even want to know how much they spent on getting this detail right!

Overall, I enjoyed *The Danish Girl* a lot. It is a moving, humane and beautiful biopic about

one person's journey of self-discovery and self-acceptance. I certainly was not disappointed by Tom Hooper – a director whose films (like *Les Misérables* and *The King's Speech*) I adore. *The Danish Girl* is not an easy watch. Then again, there is nothing easy about Lili Elbe's plight. Although, we are yet to reach a point in the film industry where trans actors are routinely cast as trans characters in major motion pictures. Despite this, we have at least made a step forward in terms of trans visibility and awareness. We still have a very long way to go, but this film will doubtless inspire thousands.

Sophie Taylor, Year 12

Body Core

The Swedish based extreme metal band "Body Core" isn't exactly a household name, be it inside or outside of the metal community, which is a shame as their newest release "Human Ferox" (follow up to 2007s "Decrepit Within") brings a new spin onto what some are starting to consider a tired genre. This album takes advantage of the bands unique ability to change the style and even genre of their songs at will, without having the change of sound seem forced or out of place.

The song "exit 1-3" beautifully showcases the heart of their original style. The song starts with a violin backed acoustic guitar serenade, breaking out into a death metal esque bridge at around the middle of the song, before reverting back towards the end of the song into a clarinet based instrumental that wouldn't sound out of place at a local bar mitzvah. What sounds insane to describe in words works amazingly well in practice, matched with brutally descriptive, screamed lyrics that are in no way legal to place in this review.

Body Core have found a brilliant unique sound that no other band (so far) can match. This album also distances itself from a lot of other bands of the same genre (Deathcore/Deathmetal) by refusing to give in to the current trend of having down tuned guitars chugging the same note repeatedly for a whole song, with a double bass drum playing at 400 beats per minute in the background. The guitar sections contain both melody and direction and the few chugging based sections in the album are kept fresh by adding small



licks and spins that break up the repetition. The drums (while not the most complicated I've heard) are all extremely well timed and smoothly match the guitar parts and song changes. Body Core refrain from having every song be a 4-minute blast beat fest on the drum kit. The drums in fact become particularly noticeable during the previously mentioned genre changes due to the removal of the lower toned guitars and bass parts (seen briefly in the song "The Pros and Cons of Breathing").

The one critique against Body Core I have would be that they didn't push far enough with the song changes and bridges. There appear to be a smaller amount of these changes (albeit higher quality) than previous release "Decrepit Within" which is slightly disappointing. However, this newest release contains more complex solos and metal influenced guitar breakdowns and bridge sections than the previous album.

A good way to describe this album would be a fusion of Chaos, and Body Core brings something new to the table, an album that is both as violently savage as it is strangely soothing and is a definite must listen to any heavy metal fan out there.

Matthew Hamilton, Year 12



DC's Legends of Tomorrow

Who doesn't love superheroes? I know I do, and judging from all the comics, and the movies, and the kid's lunchboxes, and the

everything else going on right now, it's fair to say I'm not alone. And while there's no doubt that Marvel is the king of the superhero film genre, I firmly believe that the small screen belongs to DC. After the reasonably big success of the gritty, down-to-earth Arrow, and then the much bigger success of the crazier, super-powered The Flash, DC came to a decision: "screw it", and they embraced all the crazy comic elements, which included time travel, magical artefacts and alternate universes! They just stopped caring about realism all together, and I'm glad they did, otherwise we wouldn't have 'Legends of Tomorrow'.

Now you're probably thinking: "so what is this show even about?" Well, the show follows Rip Hunter, a 'time master', who is a Doctor Who-esque figure (funnily enough, he's played by Arthur Darvill, best known for playing Rory, a companion to the Doctor) that rounds up a group of superheroes and villains to combat an immortal madman across time and space. He gathers (get ready for a long list of names): The Atom (played by Brandon Routh), White Canary (Caity Lotz), Firestorm (a fusion of Victor Garber and Franz Drameh), Hawkgirl (Ciara Renee), Hawkman (Falk Hentschel), Captain Cold (Wentworth Miller) and Heat Wave (Dominic Purcell)- all characters previously established on 'Arrow' or 'The Flash'. It's quite a big cast to juggle, and it serves both as Legends' greatest strength and greatest weakness. It is a delight to watch all the different characters and contrasting personalities that have been thrown together clash, but making sure all these characters have a decent amount of screen time means that there is a lot to cover in a small amount of time, especially in the pilot episode, where each character has to be established to new viewers, resulting in a rushed pace.

While we're talking about characters, most of them have well-defined personalities. Routh is wonderfully charismatic as The Atom, but also perfectly portrays his desperate need to make something of himself and to change the world for the better. On the other end of the spectrum are Cold and Heat Wave, two criminals known for facing The Flash. Both rogues steal the show with Miller and Purcell both embracing how over-the-top and camp the characters are, which is a delight to watch. That's not to say they're just joke characters, as in the third episode, Miller brings the most

emotional performance of the show so far, when he encounters his past self. Darvill, Lotz and Dramah also fit into their roles nicely, and give a solid performance, but one of the actors who was a bit short changed is Victor Garber, who fits into the character of the elderly Dr. Martin Stein (one half of Firestorm) well, but has been not given the greatest material. While he is delighted to go travelling through time, the other half of Firestorm, 20-year-old Jax, is reluctant, so Stein drugs him. He actually 'roofies' Jax, kidnaps him and drags him onto the time-ship. Not the best 'superhero' material, if you ask me. Maybe they should have called him Martin Cosby, if you catch my drift? But the weakest links within the group are Hawkgirl and Hawkman. Hawkman feels very one-note, his entire personality being that he's a jerk, while Hawkgirl doesn't seem to have much of a defined personality at all, and does very little, at least for the first three episodes.



Something 'Legends' has going for it, which also makes it stand out against 'Arrow' and 'The Flash', is the sense of chaos it creates. In the other two shows, there's a team of good guys, and they work together to stop the villain of the week. However, 'Legends' changes things up. For example, in the second episode, the team goes back to 1975 to stop Savage, and rather than everyone sticking to the mission, White Canary goes and gets stoned, Captain Cold steals every valuable he can, and The Atom leaves his 2016 tech behind in the 70s. This means that half the time their worst enemy isn't Vandal Savage, but rather themselves, and the chaos they create.

If you're looking for some down-to-earth, serious drama, then this is not the show for you, but if you're interested in something more light-hearted, with a healthy dose of crazy, comic book action, then 'Legends' is definitely a show you should check out.

Pilot (Part One), Pilot (Part Two) and Blood Ties watched for review. Currently showing on Sky 1, Thursdays at 8pm.

Alfie Cromarty Y12

Deadpool

Age Restriction 15

"Surprise – this is a different kind of superhero story."

Truer words have never been spoken. In recent years, Marvel has set the bar pretty high for itself: *The Avengers* was a focal point for the explosion of a superhero-film culture, with *Age of Ultron* being one of the most widely anticipated films of 2015. *Spider Man 2* was possibly the best example of 'how to do a sequel correctly', as it retained the atmosphere of its predecessor but explored a range of new themes, and although it just appeared to be a fun little filler during the wait for *Age of Ultron*, *Guardians of the Galaxy* became a much-loved masterpiece as it perfected the line between goofy, cool and heart-warming. With such a consecutive run of successes, Marvel was facing an insane amount of pressure, when it came to the cinematic interpretation of *Deadpool*.

Deadpool released in February, flashes between the past and present: an inventive way to effectively explain his origins and yet not get caught up in endless exposition (because people love *Deadpool* for the snarky remarks and impressive action – don't let the Valentine's Day release-date fool you). After being diagnosed with terminal cancer, mercenary-for-hire Wade Wilson (Ryan Reynolds) is approached by a suspicious organisation which claims that it can cure him. When he suffers life-threatening torture at the hands of Ajax (Ed Skrein), Wade finds that he has gained inconceivable healing powers. Creating the identity of Deadpool, he sets out to exact revenge on those who wronged him, save his girl and have a literal blast whilst doing it.

I feel that Marvel and Ryan Reynolds captured the personality of Deadpool perfectly: they fully took advantage of all the qualities that make him so memorable and beloved – in particular,



the breaking of the fourth wall. For those of you who have not read the comics, or played Deadpool's game (yes, he has his own game, which is equally awesome), Deadpool is utterly aware of his surroundings and frequently speaks to the audience directly: in this case, he knows that he's in a movie. Attempts to break the fourth wall can often fall short, and most of the time they are incredibly unamusing, but this is something that Marvel also managed to master. The jokes aren't crammed down your throat, at every given chance – they are smoothly integrated into the pace of the scene and beautifully complement Deadpool's personality. With his unstable focus, he suddenly goes from conversing with a character – or sometimes being in the middle of a fight – to cracking private jokes for the audience. It really keeps you on your toes, as you have no idea what might happen next, with the bad guys or with Deadpool. Ryan Reynolds knew exactly how to portray this and, if you consider the costume of Deadpool, which conceals his face, he could only rely on the tone of his voice when doing it. He is downright hilarious and has definitely redeemed himself from the train-wreck of *The Green Lantern*.



Even whilst Deadpool makes sure that he has stolen the entirety of your attention, I am particularly impressed by the portrayal of the minor characters, by both the writers and actors, who are easily memorable and loveable. They don't take the limelight away from Deadpool, but instead respond to his antics with an exasperation which is equally as entertaining. The two that stand out in this regard, are the X-Men members: Colossus (Stefan Kapicic) and Negasonic Teenage Warhead (Brianna Hildebrand), which is "the coolest name ever!" according to Deadpool. Not only are they very impressive when it comes to fighting, they also eloquently remind everyone how Deadpool is not a superhero – Negasonic watches him with general disdain

and apathy, whilst Colossus tries to recruit him to the X-Men, in vain. Sticking with the canonical X-Men universe, there are several references to the previous films, though no other actual cameos ("It's like the studio didn't have enough money for any more X-Men..."). They give you an amazing taste of what Deadpool would be like in the X-Men film saga, and it leaves me desperately wanting the 'Merc with a Mouth' and Wolverine to meet (and inevitably fight).

Ryan Reynolds has hinted that a sequel is definitely a possibility (the Marvel trope of revealing an end-credit-scene was wonderfully mocked by *Deadpool*, as to be expected) – the huge response and praise that has already been exhibited, by fans, hopefully suggests that Marvel will work to release a follow-up for this wonderfully refreshing anti-hero. I believe that this quote sums up the movie rather well: "You don't have to be a fan of *Deadpool* to (watch) this, but by the end of it, you will be a fan of *Deadpool*."

Holly Morris, Year 12

Is this Kanye's Best?

In the weeks before the release of Kanye West's seventh studio album, 'The Life of Pablo', there was much controversy in the media surrounding West, for example him declaring on Twitter that he was 53 million dollars in debt and tweeting Mark Zuckerberg to ask him to fund 'Kanye West ideas'. Before hearing this album, I expected similarities to his previous album 'Yeezus', which used a lot of autotune and modern synth-based production, but 'The Life of Pablo' has a variety of sounds from Kanye's previous albums, as well as some that sound like Yeezus. Songs like the first track 'Ultralight Beam' are almost ethereal, with a great verse from Chance the Rapper and a heavy gospel influence which runs throughout the whole album. There are also songs such as 'Famous' and 'Highlights', which sound a lot like Kanye's 'My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy'. There is also the song 'I love Kanye', where Kanye raps about how people are nostalgic for his old personality and dislike the new 'always rude Kanye'. Much of this album, I feel, is trying to show that Kanye doesn't care what the media think of him, because the image that they create of him is

so warped into a caricature of celebrity that he's like an anti-hero in pop culture.

Many of the songs focus on Kanye's luxurious and excessive life, while also exposing his darker side. Kanye references using antidepressants and having a psychiatrist, as well as the song 'Real Friends', which is about losing touch with friends due to Kanye being caught up in his own life. For me, this was one of my favourite songs on the album because it felt like a personal and honest moment. Another song which I really liked was 'No More Parties in LA', which packs some quality bars. Kanye manages to have a much better verse than Kendrick Lamar, which I didn't expect. The only songs on the album which (in my opinion) seem weak in contrast to the rest would be 'Facts', where Kanye's hesitant flow lets him down and makes him sound like an Adidas spokesman. 'Waves' had a good beat but the lyrics weren't as strong as the standard set by the rest of the album, which meant it sounded somewhat half-hearted. One of my favourite things about this album is the production. The beats are consistently good and there are many great artists and producers featured on the album including Kendrick Lamar, Madlib, Rihanna, Young Thug, Andre 3000 and Metro Boomin. I wouldn't say that it was a classic, though, because if it weren't for some of the bangers like 'No More Parties in LA' and 'Real Friends' holding it together, the album would be a lot less impressive. Generally, it's not as good as some of Kanye's best work but I would recommend this album, as well as Kanye's older albums if you've not listened to them.

Rowan Glenny, Year 12

TV Drama- War and Peace

With the reputation of 'War and Peace' being what it is, it's no surprise that the BBC has once again pulled it off the shelf, dusted it off, and spun a dazzling web of grandeur, romantic drama, war-time horror and heart-rending sadness for our TV screens this winter. In contrast to the BBC's lengthy 1972 adaption, director Tom Harper's 'War and Peace' in 2016 expertly weaves the many strands of Tolstoy's epic novel into six episodes: the high-stakes atmosphere of Russian aristocracy and the brutality and savagery of war is condensed into 380 spectacular minutes.

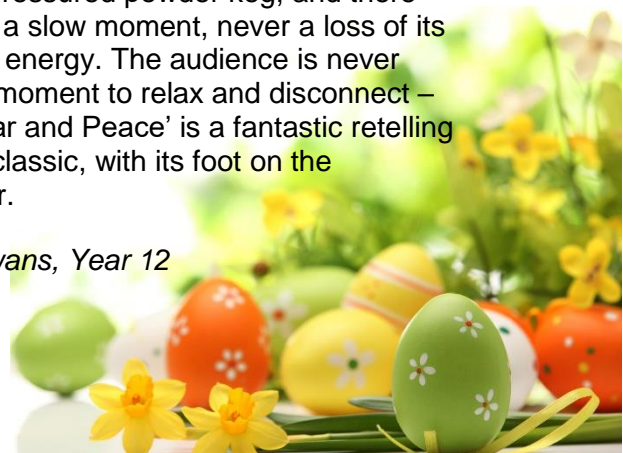
The drama follows the lives of three young aristocrats and their families in early 19th century Russia, against the uneasy backdrop of the Napoleonic war. We watch Prince Andrei Bolkonsky (James Norton) struggle with disillusionment and the futility of life; Countess Natasha Rostova (Lily James) face the perils that her naivety inevitably brings; and Count Pierre Bezukhov (Paul Dano) desperately try to become a good man in times of peace and war. As their lives intertwine and the cannon fire of war creeps closer, the audience experiences the resilience of humanity, and its ability to hope in the worst of times, through their eyes.



None of the feeling or charged atmosphere of the novel was lost, despite the series' brevity; the performance of every actor was at an incredibly high standard, and as such the emotion was palpable. Dano's Pierre Bezukhov was intricate and subtle, ensuring the complexity of the character – the illegitimate son of a Count, good natured but weak-willed – was preserved. Prince Andrei was perfectly portrayed by Norton: the tenacious, brave and irresolute character remained believable and relatable throughout. It could be said that Lily James as Countess Natasha offered the weakest acting performance, but she more than made up for it with her natural charm, brilliantly capturing the bewitching quality which the kind and effusive Countess is known for.

Although the shortness of this series left me, and many, wanting more, the choice to make it six episodes long was a good one: the series felt like a pressured powder keg, and there was never a slow moment, never a loss of its breathless energy. The audience is never allowed a moment to relax and disconnect – 2016's 'War and Peace' is a fantastic retelling of the old classic, with its foot on the accelerator.

Stella Gowans, Year 12



Black Mirror

Not many shows attempt to make you sympathise with someone convicted of crimes involving the murder of young children. Even fewer shows do it twice. And marginally fewer do so successfully. *Black Mirror* is a critically acclaimed British TV series created by Charlie Brooker. The show delves into "the way we live now - and the way we might be living in 10 minutes' time if we're clumsy" explains Brooker. The show has seen an increasing interest nationally, with well-known author, Stephen King, expressing his interest in the series, and actor, Robert Downey Jr., gaining the rights of the episode "The Entire History of You" to produce a film about it through his studio.

The recent resurgence in chatter about the show has come about because of the announcement that Netflix is shepherding the third season, and will produce 12 episodes alongside the creator, Brooker. That's more than the cumulative amount of episodes in the first and second season, including a Christmas special. Netflix is, in part, responsible for the show's popularity worldwide, especially in China and America, so the season's release is raising discussion.



So, how is a show with extremely questionable themes able to get such high scores, across the board, from a variety of reviewers? The show changes cast and set every episode, but retains a common theme throughout: advances in technology, and how they all fail. The first episode sets this up to be replicated in every following episode, but on a much smaller scale. Aspects that the pilot focuses on include the media and social platforms. Far-fetched is probably the last word to come to mind about this episode as the plotline seems very possible right now. Brooker doesn't stretch our imagination because he wants us to understand that the events that happen in other episodes, while technologically restricted

now, are "the way we might be living in 10 minutes' time if we're clumsy".

The stories in later episodes include more imaginative scenarios, from an authoritarian society, where income is decided by cycling, to a modern day parallel where a cartoon character runs to be a local MP. Every episode includes a twist of some kind. Sometimes it's trivial to the story, and sometimes it makes everything that has been set up for the past 40 minutes redundant. Either way, it's always hard-hitting and raises an ethical issue.

Black Mirror will leave you thinking about an episode long after it's finished, and finding yourself sympathising with someone you inherently shouldn't be. Many artistic forms of film or television are inaccessible to the average viewer- *Black Mirror* isn't. Its underlying themes are apparent, yet the show is still subtle in many ways. Whilst many describe it as a social commentary, the majority just agree it's a good bit of TV.

The most recent episode was a Christmas special called "White Christmas", released in 2014. Boasting a cast including *Mad Men*'s Jon Hamm and *Game of Thrones*' Oona Chaplin, "White Christmas" has been numerously marked the best episode so far. I can only agree. Hugely witty and well-paced, the special, set in a utopian world with all the conventions of modern society, is very unsettling. Things like this are what makes the show unnervingly real and applicable to real-world issues.

The release of the third season is expected to be later this year, with many episodes already written, and cast members leaked. *Black Mirror*, produced by the BBC, is easily available, and with a new season on the way, maybe now is a better time than ever to start watching.

Deepesh Marwaha, Year 12

Happy Easter!

