
**BGS
BUZZ:
THE
SPRING
EDITION**



It is with great pleasure that I present this term's edition of BGS Buzz. This term, the edition is packed with articles from student leaders in departments; news from the many experiences and inspirational opportunities that have been set up by the school as well as articles which have been inspired by the world around us and the team's personal interests.

You will notice many articles where our student journalists have collaborated, sometimes across year groups to produce articles about their areas of interest and I am especially pleased to use this magazine to showcase the importance of student leadership in the school and to share with you the enthusiasm members of the school magazine team have for celebrating their peers' achievements.

It is little wonder that BGS is, officially, one of the happiest schools in the country when you read this magazine.

Mrs Dawson

Welcome to the latest edition of the BGS Buzz magazine. It's absolutely packed full of a variety of articles which range from updates on school life, observations on international relations, insightful takes on the issues which affect us all in today's society and more. It really is testament to both the ability of our student journalists and the vibrancy of life at BGS that we're able to produce such an impressive publication every term. I must say a huge thank you to the team of writers who have dedicated so much of their time and energy into producing their articles. Finally, I'd like to give a very special mention to Mrs Dawson, who has once again spent hours of her time advising the team and crafting their articles, an experience that I'm sure they will benefit from in the future. Without her expertise and commitment, we wouldn't have such a high quality publication for you to enjoy reading.

Mr Gilmore





FEATURES

The Impact of Stress

by Wiktoria Bzdyra

Can Money Buy Happiness?

by Precious Nwaekpe

The Effects of Climate Change on Extreme Weather

by Winter Smythe

Humans and Art

by Xiyuan He

Women in Hollywood

by Deya Dimitrova

Dreams: The Hidden Messages of your Sleeping Mind

by Deya Dimitrova and Caitlyn Osei-Tutu

The Effects of Climate Change: Women on the Frontlines

by Olivia Smith



FEATURES

Thanks to the Academy

by Rory Wynne

The Effects of the Trump Administration on Science

by Lucy Gowing

Canada at a Crossroads: Elections, Trade and Trump

by Hope Ng McCoy



The impact of stress

By Wiktoria Bzdyra

Stress is an inevitable part of modern life, affecting people in various ways, mainly through work pressures, personal challenges, or societal demands. Stress can trigger a large amount of physiological responses in the body, causing significant consequences for people's mental health. While we often hear about the immediate effects of stress—such as irritability or anxiety—its long-term impact on the brain is just as influential, impacting everything from memory and concentration to emotional regulation and decision-making. This article will talk about how stress affects the brain and body and ways to mitigate such problems

Biologically, stress is induced through the fight or flight response, which the hippocampus controls. However, when there is a prolonged amount of stress, it can reshape the brain negatively. It can lead to shrinking in the hippocampus and prefrontal cortex, which are responsible for processing memories and controlling behaviours respectively. These shrinkages can lead to an impaired memory. More specifically, in the hippocampus, a decrease in size can lead to disruptions in neuron connectivity, leading to hindered information processing. In contrast, the amygdala, which processes emotions in the brain, can increase in size when put under prolonged stress. This increase can lead to impaired emotional regulation.

Outside of the brain. Prolonged amounts of stress can lead to the heart being overworked, leading to a higher likelihood of strokes or heart attacks. Another example would be our immune system, in which it will constantly be prepared for a perceived threat due to stress hormones communicating there may be a threat. This prolonged exposure may lead to a weakened resistance, leading us to be more vulnerable.

These overall weakened systems can lead to an increase in several disorders, how can we mitigate these issues?

Aside from mindfulness and physical activity, more long-term ways of mitigating stress would be by creating realistic schedules. Don't procrastinate as this will lead to cramming and increased stress. Developing these time management habits will help create a more relaxed environment, and therefore less stress. Keeping a well connected social circle will also lead to less stress, due to being able to support you if you need help.

CAN MONEY BUY HAPPINESS?

By Precious Nwaekpe

Money has great importance in today's society. It's what we use to buy the goods and services we need - our necessities such as food, water and electricity, as without these we would find it difficult to survive. We also use it to satisfy our wants and desires, buying things that maybe aren't of particular importance but would definitely help improve our standard of living, such as games, books and sweets. Governments use money gained from taxation and other methods to stimulate economic growth and lower unemployment levels. The policies governments implement are with the aim to improve the lives of their citizens. In our world today, where goods are expensive and shrinkflation is popular among businesses, having more money would be extremely beneficial to improving one's quality of life. However, despite how necessary money is in our lives, it has often been thought of as the root of all evil. People always want more than they have, and this desire for more has often led to deceit and theft and in worse cases tragedies such as war, where greed has led to huge losses in human life.

Knowing how much money the country is generating is also important for governments as well. Around the world, governments measure GDP - Gross Domestic Product - usually through three distinct ways: income, output or expenditure. These help provide an image on how healthy the economy is and whether it is doing well or not. It can signify higher levels of production, consumer spending and employment within the economy.

Overall, the standard of living in that country has risen. Basically, a higher GDP usually means the country is doing pretty well for itself. Most countries around the world measure GDP through those three distinct indicators, but one country hasn't been looking at the money the country has generated as the most important factor and has been doing it differently.

Bhutan is a small country located in South Asia, next to China and India and unlike the countries around it, Bhutan measures its GDP through the happiness of its citizens.

Bhutan is known for promoting Gross National Happiness over Gross Domestic Product and by following this model it has been able to significantly improve its economic, environmental and social situation as well as making the lives of its citizens better. The small country has recorded an average growth in annual GDP of 7.5% since the 1980s, when it took GNH as an alternative to GDP and their poverty levels have declined from 36% to 10% in 2019.





In 2022, it registered that 48.1% of its population were happy, with more of them being in rural areas. The UNDP Human Development Report in 2020 had ranked Bhutan the highest amongst its fellow LDCs (Least Developed Countries) on overall human development.

Gross National Happiness includes an index to measure the population's collective well-being and happiness and became the philosophy of the Bhutan government on 18 July 2008. Fun fact - in the Kingdom of Bhutan's first legal code, written in 1729, stated that the purpose of the government is to provide happiness to its people. If it cannot provide happiness, there is no need for the government to exist. The term began to be more widely used in 1972, when the 4th King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, during an interview with the Financial Times declared GNH was "more important than Gross Domestic Product".



The king took inspiration from the country's long standing tradition of compassion and non-violence toward all living beings, which came from its Buddhist heritage and its values have underlying Buddhist teachings. Its purpose was to measure how prosperous a country was focusing on the happiness and wellbeing of its citizens.

Bhutan has let itself become a role model for other countries to follow, hoping to spread their message, which has helped to build up their own country.

GNH aims to be a more direct measure of collective happiness through emphasising harmony with nature and select cultural values. Bhutan has four pillars of GNH: good governance, sustainable development, preservation and promotion of culture and environmental conservation and nine domains of happiness which include subjective and objective indicators of happiness and they provide the foundation of the GNH.

The Bhutan GNH Index, developed by the Centre for Bhutan Studies and Oxford University researchers, has been used to measure the progress that the country has made and has been likened to the OECD Better Life Index from 2011 and Social Progress Index of 2013, with the difference being that Bhutan's GNH Index contains religious behavior components as the survey asks its citizens questions on their religious behaviour, for example how long they prayed. The index is then determined by the proportion of happy people plus the proportion of not yet happy people multiplied by the average sufficiency levels of not yet happy people.



V.S.



The data gathered is used to compare happiness among different demographics. Bhutan's 2008 constitution states that lawmakers must take all this information into account when the GNH Commission - the body charged with implementing policies that follow the GNH philosophy - determines whether to pass policies or implement projects on the basis if it will add to the happiness of Bhutan's population.

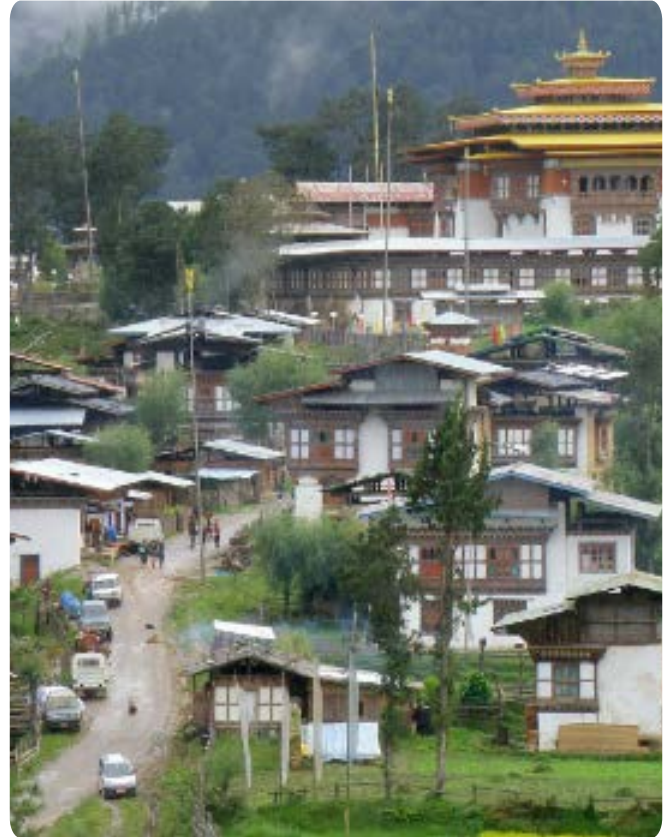


In the following year, the first World Happiness Report was issued and 20 March was declared as the International Day of Happiness by the UN.

In the west, adopting this approach may be of use, especially as many countries are wealthy and developed, but then fail to ensure their citizens are happy. GDP, as important as it is, fails to cover leisure time, environment wellbeing and the level of inequality in society.

It's evident that money can't really buy happiness: perhaps measuring more than money brings us closer to that state than anything else.

All in all, the country had proposed the notion that happiness can't just be measured by monetary success, but through a holistic approach, by balancing economic factors and the emotional wellbeing of the people. Bhutan's actions and behaviour with its holistic approach of improving the happiness of its people have pushed others to follow their example. In 2011, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution 'Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development' urging members to see Bhutan as a role model as it saw happiness as a 'fundamental human goal'.



The effects of climate change on extreme weather

By Winter Smythe

Climate change is a more pressing issue than ever before, and we have begun to feel its effects even in the typically mild UK. In the past decade, and especially since 2020, there has been such a dramatic increase in extreme weather in our country that it may seem like this is our new normal – but science suggests we could face an even stranger future.

A recent instance of an extreme weather event that comes to mind is Storm Éowyn – the cyclone that battered Ireland and Scotland with record-breaking wind speeds at the end of January. This was the most severe storm of its type in over 80 years and led to the biggest real-world use of the new emergency alerts system yet. Some people have suggested that this could be influenced by the effects of climate change (for example, warmer temperatures in certain areas could exaggerate the pressure gradients that lead to the formation of cyclones), but according to the Met Office and the RMS, this is hard to be sure about.

What is clear, though, is the effects of global warming on our average temperatures. This January was expected to be slightly cooler than last year's, which was the warmest on record, but in reality ended up being almost 0.1 °C hotter, or 1.75 °C warmer than the pre-industrial average. Although this may not sound like much, it reflects the worrying trend of increasing temperatures worldwide that are already leading to flowers opening earlier in the spring, wetter weather throughout the year, and other disruption to the natural world. In fact, 2022, 2023 and 2024 are all in the top four hottest years on record for the UK, and it now seems possible that 2025 may make the top five.

However, some climate scientists have suggested a possible future that seems counterintuitive: freezing cold temperatures and hostile winters across northern Europe, including across the whole of the UK and especially Scotland. But why would this happen? According to research, the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation – a system of ocean currents that transports cold water south and warm water north – could be slowing down and is possibly even at risk of collapsing entirely, because of changes in patterns in the water cycle. If this happened, our ocean temperatures would plummet due to not receiving warm water from the Americas, which would in turn lower our air temperatures by anywhere between 5 and 15 °C over time, leading to much worse weather in the winter while still being subject to scorching heatwaves (intensified by global warming) in the summer. It's still not a likely future, but it's also nowhere near impossible.

And in contrast to the stronger and blowier winds suggested by Storm Éowyn, researchers have found a correlation between global warming and slowing wind speeds; this was demonstrated recently in 2021 when the UK had to temporarily restart two previously decommissioned coal power plants due to the drop in power generation by wind farms.

This effect is caused by the tendency of global warming to heat the earth's poles more than the equator, which weakens the temperature differences that cause wind in the first place. If this trend continues, we could see up to 10% less wind by the end of the century, with untold knock-on effects on global weather systems, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

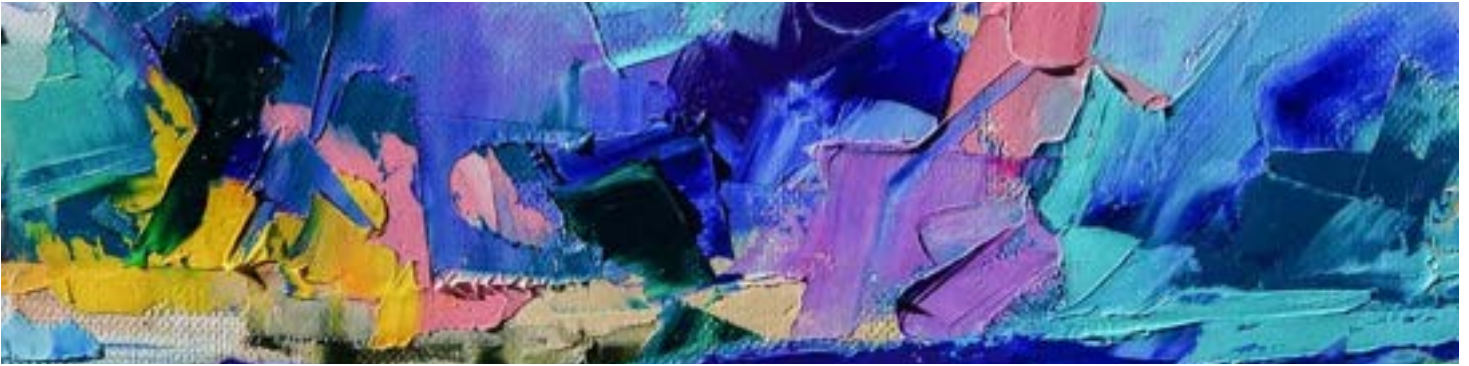
So what does this all mean? In short, if we continue to pollute the atmosphere at the current rate, there is of course the chance of a hotter future, directly caused by global warming, but also indirectly a possibility of the polar opposite: extreme cold, still winds and generally inhospitable conditions.

To me, this is even more reason to not only try to reduce pollution and waste, but also to prepare for the consequences we might have already caused.



HUMANS AND ART

by Xiyuan He



Humans have been making art since the beginning of our species' very first memories.

Language

Humans developed the capacity for language around 50,000 years ago: this means the cognitive ability to comprehend abstract concepts, or things that do not exist in reality in a tangible way. Language as a form of communication for humans is unlike those of animals: we are much more complex to the point that separation by geographical landmarks, or even just a decision to differentiate ourselves from one another, means our languages evolve.

The complexity of language also lies in the fact that we use symbols not signals to communicate. That creativity shows when compared to animals who do not combine smaller units of meaning into bigger ones, and then recombine them again in new ways, like humans do.

From this one can imagine the development of poetry where early humans used the rhythms in their words to tell stories; from poetry the mind can jump to the near cousin of poetry: music.

Indeed, if we can speak it means we also have the potential to sing. The oldest discovered instruments in the world - flutes made from bones and mammoth ivory - are over 40,000 years old. But that is the oldest surviving instrument: who knows how old the very first instruments were? Especially if we include the clap of our hands or the rhythm of our footsteps. From the very first steps humans have walked, we have lived by a path of rhythms.

Cave paintings

The earliest found cave paintings date to about 45,500 years ago in Sulawesi, Indonesia. We can not know the actual reason or meaning behind the artwork, but one can see for themselves that it is art. It is an image of a pig and a few hand-prints. Both common subjects for cave paintings, it speaks to the importance of animals, perhaps even their religious importance, in prehistoric human lives.



HUMANS AND ART



This religious aspect of art for humans has been consistent throughout the millennia with many people from across the world making art for religious purposes through history. Religion, for much of history, has served as the coming together of large groups of people: this does suggest these paintings could have been the coming together of early humans in their communities as well to communicate and express individuality and creativity.

Another reason for artwork production, proposed by those working in the fields of archeology and one that many of us can relate to, is the desire to be remembered, to leave a mark on the world. To ponder and understand the scale of the world. Those many handprints could show this innate wish to be part of something grander than yourself.

Graves

In archeology the many resounding discoveries of culture and art are often in graves which speaks to the meaning they carry. These discoveries, so carefully preserved, are fundamental to our modern knowledge of the past. The act of mourning is unique to few creatures that walk the Earth: humans perform perhaps the most complex rituals in memory of those who have died. Graves serve a purpose: to mourn the loss of a loved one.

The things buried with them are remnants of love, jewellery, mundane objects so that they can look after themselves in whatever follows death. When we dig up these graves we dig up not only how the people of the past attempted to deal with loss but also how we do too. The things dug up are all influenced by, if not literally, an artform. In art people try to conceptualise abstract feelings: one of the most profound is love and loss.

Paintings, music, poetry, art

Most of these stories of our species are lost to time and the few that remain. Tell us something about ourselves. That from the very first emergence of humans till now, we've communicated, expressed and have told stories. Far more complex than those of other inhabitants of this world. To understand our place in the world, now the expansive place that is the universe reaching beyond the sky. To understand ourselves, individually and as a community: to proclaim that we were here.

We turn to art in times of delight; at the sight of love blossoming in our hearts; in times of great grief: to give form to feelings that feel too big. This tapestry of our species' story shows that this experience of trying to understand and express what is tangible and not, is universal: it makes humans wholly unique.



WOMEN IN HOLLYWOOD

BY DEYA DIMITROVA

“All I want is to be loved, for myself and for my talent” - Marilyn Monroe

We all know Marilyn Monroe: her iconic blonde bombshell looks, her famous movies, and her scandalous affairs. But is there more behind her beautiful image?

Marilyn Monroe, similarly to many women in Hollywood, was often misjudged and underestimated throughout her career, her terribly short-lived career. Marilyn Monroe was the star of many iconic movies during her time in the spotlight, but was also the recipient of a terrible amount of backlash from directors, fellow actors, and the media.

Happy Birthday, Mr President

On JFK's 45th birthday, Marilyn Monroe appeared at New York's Madison Square Garden, in one of her undoubtedly most famous performances. Having had a rumoured affair with JFK, Monroe's singing of "Happy Birthday, Mr President" was watched all over the world. Appearing in her tight dress that had been sewn onto her body, her "seductive" tone shocked viewers over the world, and seemed to confirm her affiliations with Kennedy.

However, the unknown truth about this iconic moment stems from Monroe's tendency to arrive late to commitments, which caused tensions on film sets, and was the case for this exact day, on the 19th of May 1962. Monroe was simply running late, causing her to be out of breath. Combined with her provocative, flesh-coloured dress, her sultry (breathless) voice, this event was seen by the world as a confirmation of her mysterious affair, which seems to have been a defining event in her life from the eyes of the American public. This event was one of the many throughout Monroe's career that were wildly misunderstood, painting a false image of Monroe.



WOMEN IN HOLLYWOOD

BY DEYA DIMITROVA

This was one of her last public performances before her apparent suicide, and remains a reinforcement of her sex-appeal and blonde bombshell image: her dress sold at auction for over \$5 million, remaining the most expensive dress sold at auction so far. Her dress was even brought out by Kim Kardashian at last year's Met Gala: as she noted Monroe is one of the most "American thing[s] you can think of". I believe that this showcases the constant idealisation and dehumanisation that was faced by Marilyn, even after her death. However, Monroe, even being the Hollywood and blockbuster star that she was, was never treated as someone who deserved general respect, on a human level.

Alleged Suicide

Even upon her suicide, which seemed to be brought upon by her constant struggle and depressive state, an associate of Monroe mentioned that her 23 movies since 1950 had grossed over \$200 million, and asked "Does that sound like she was depressed about her career?".

"Fame doesn't fulfil you. It warms you a bit, but that warmth is temporary"

Her whole life, Monroe was misunderstood, seen only for her beauty and the fame it brought her: she was never appreciated for herself and her talent. Monroe was found at 3:00 am by her psychiatrist who had broken the window as he heard of her apparent suicide. She had repeatedly told her psychiatrist about her deep feelings of loneliness, and felt as though she could not confide in anyone.

Life as a Hollywood Star

Even though it is impossible to overlook the tragedies Monroe faced throughout her life, it is important to highlight the incredible success of her career. Monroe was able to overcome her early image as a dumb and seductive blonde, winning critical acclaim as a serious actor for movies such as "Some Like It Hot".

"If I am the star, the people made me a star"

She overcame her difficult childhood and eventually became one of the most famous actresses, if not one of the most famous women, of the century. This has led to the story of her life still being explored today, in the form of biographies, movies, books, articles and documentaries.



Dreams: The Hidden Messages of Your Sleeping Mind

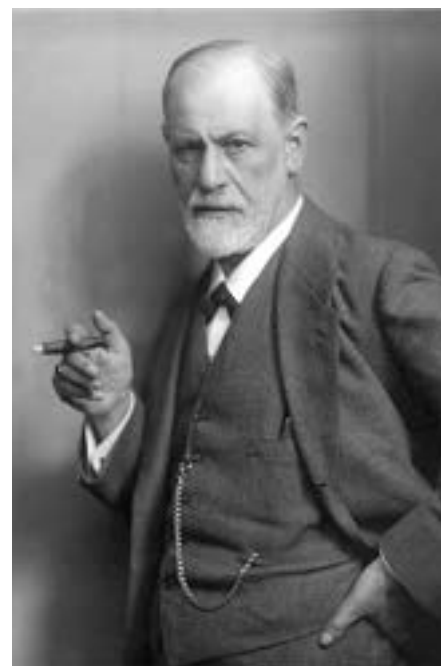
By Deya Dimitrova and Caitlyn Osei-Tutu

You're falling from the sky. The wind rushes past you as you plummet toward the ground. Your heart pounds; your breath catches; and panic sets in. The ground is getting closer: too close. But, just before impact, you wake up. Sound familiar? You're not alone. But what do these dreams mean? Are they just your worst fears and innermost desires, or do they have a deeper psychological meaning?

Dreams have fascinated us for centuries, from ancient civilisations interpreting them as divine messages to modern psychologists analysing their connection to our subconscious mind. Though we dream multiple times a night, only a few of these are remembered upon waking. Dreams occur during Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep. This is when our brain activity is almost as high as when we are awake. This explains why dreams often feel so vivid, bizarre or even frightening. Some people experience recurring dreams that play out night after night, often with the same themes, locations, or emotions. Others rarely recall their dreams, their fantasy world slipping away before they can grasp it. But why do we dream at all? The question remains: What purpose do they serve? Scientists and psychologists continue to debate the true function of dreams, yet one thing remains certain: they offer a mysterious and sometimes unsettling glimpse into the depths of our minds. Whether they are mere illusions of sleep or windows into our inner selves, dreams continue to captivate and mystify us.

While the exact purpose still remains elusive, a number of theories have been provided to explain why we dream. Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, famously proposed that dreams are a window into our unconscious desires, offering us a way to process repressed thoughts and emotions. However, modern neuroscientists suggest that dreams may serve a more practical function, like consolidating memories or helping us work through unresolved emotions.

Then there's the theory of "problem-solving," where dreams act as a mental playground for our brains to experiment and play about with solutions to real-life dilemmas. Another prominent theory, known as the activation-synthesis theory, argues that dreams are simply the brain's attempt to make sense of random neural activity during sleep. According to this view, the brain creates stories and images to give meaning to the chaos of electrical signals firing throughout the night. Perhaps, dreams are even a survival mechanism, helping us rehearse possible scenarios and dangers to gain the best outcome.



Dreams: The Hidden Messages of Your Sleeping Mind

By Deya Dimitrova and Caitlyn Osei-Tutu

No matter the theory, one thing is clear: dreams are more than just a random collection of images - they are an essential part of our psychological and emotional landscape

Psychologists suggest that experiencing recurring dreams may be the result of an abundance of unresolved emotions, persistent inner conflicts, or even a manifestation of subconscious fears we may not even be aware of. Of course, the exact meaning of the dream may differ from person to person, but there are many undeniable patterns that have been discovered. The most frequently reported dream is falling. People who experience falling in their dream may feel as though they are out of control and are going through a stage of instability in their relationships. This may symbolise a state of constant stress or anxiety, which is manifested through this sensation of free-falling with no end in sight.

But some researchers believe in the existence of a deeper psychological meaning

Psychological researchers suggest that these falling dreams occur when the brain registers a drop in blood pressure or muscle relaxation during sleep, triggering a sensation of free-fall. This presents the idea that these dreams may be initiated by a physical change in the body. A more unique dream that may be experienced is meeting a stranger, which may be a symbol of warning, or the acceptance of change, depending on whether the experience is positive or negative. A dream where a stranger warns you not to trust someone could reflect real-life uncertainty about a relationship or situation. Swiss psychologist Carl Jung proposed the idea of the “shadow self”, which refers to the idea that strangers in dreams represent unconscious aspects of our personality that we have not fully recognized or integrated.

If the stranger in the dream is friendly, it may indicate self-discovery, personal growth, or embracing new aspects of yourself. If the stranger is hostile or threatening, it could symbolize repressed fears, anxieties, or unacknowledged emotions.

Ultimately, dreams remain one of the most mysterious aspects of psychology, offering glimpses into our fears, desires, and hidden thoughts. Whether they carry deep meaning or simply reflect the mind’s nightly wanderings, perhaps the best approach is to: embrace them, settle in and see what our subconscious has to teach us.



The Effects of Climate Change: Women on the Frontlines.

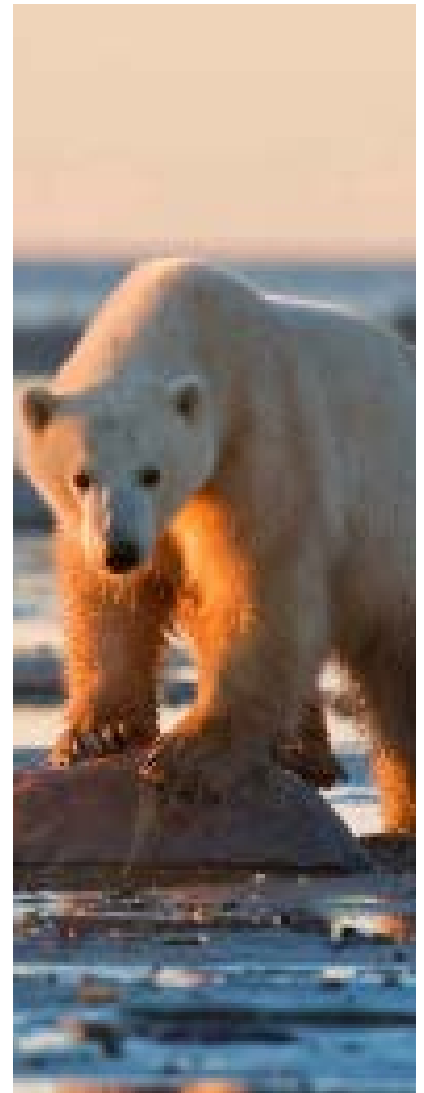
By Olivia Smith

**For the purposes of this article, equality means fairness through uniformity but equity means fairness through individual needs. When I discuss gender inequality, I mean to say that in an ideal world, everyone has their needs met fairly through equity not equality, and nothing can prevent that, not race, gender, religion, sex etc*

The climate crisis has had a number of impacts on both the physical and social environment, but what few people know is that climate change also worsens gender inequality as seen on various different scales including high income countries (HICs) and low income countries (LICs). However, from what I have gathered from the BBC, how women are treated is down to their status in wealth and their political power, depending on their country. For example, Jacquelyn Litt, professor of women's and gender studies at Rutgers University told the BBC that "More than half the poor families in [Orlando] were headed by single mothers" and that they are "reliant on interdependent community networks for their everyday survival and resources." This typically occurs after a natural disaster, which is predicted to increase in frequency and magnitude due to global warming and the rise in temperatures. Therefore, exacerbating the crisis of gender inequality.

Furthermore, this also means that warmer summers have created more hardships for women and children living in poverty, such as walking a further distance to get water, as lakes have decreased their carrying capacity due to higher temperatures increasing evaporation rates, resulting in less water in lakes. Actionaid has said that "more extreme and less predictable weather patterns, (means) less food, less access to safe water and (more)unstable living conditions", contribute to new threats experienced daily by women and young girls. .

For instance, more extreme weather can result in damage in housing, which is still the primary place for a woman to be, especially in LICs. Traditionally, and to an extent still, women are the primary caregivers and providers in the family. They are expected to procure food for the whole family and then cook it, whilst men and children eat the meal. Plus, the extent to which they must go to get the food differs from woman to woman, in country to country. Some have to walk hundreds of miles each day to get the food and drinking water, which isn't safe to drink. This takes young girls out of education, just so they can eat. Then, all of this is intensified by climate change impacts, such as droughts and floods.



The Effects of Climate Change: Women on the Frontlines.

By Olivia Smith

Did you know that the amount of women in power is on an increasing trend in the UK? The percentage of women in the House Of Commons is at 40% as of 2024, an all time high. However, that is in a HIC, a democracy with freedom of speech and isn't controlled by a strict regime. In the Lake Chad Region, the situation is dangerously different. The region has been controlled by the terrorist group Boko Haram since 2009, and negatively impacts women and girls by forcing them into marriages and sexual violence increased drastically. This led to the displacement of families in order to escape the terrorist group, and many rely heavily on Lake Chad, which 90% of it has dried up. This therefore has led to women and children being a vulnerable group, escalated by the climate crisis and terror organisations.

Overall, I believe that there is something we can do to reduce gender inequality through climate change. The bare minimum would be to donate to charities such as Actionaid that have clear goals on how they shall help displaced and vulnerable women and families in LICs. We can then tackle climate change, which is one of the main causes of gender inequality, by making an effort to reduce our consumer habits and use more renewable energy in order to make a difference.



THANKS TO THE



Being nominated for an Oscar is a prestigious honour for most film-makers and actors, and to actually win is something that they aspire to from the moment they enter the industry. The milestones celebrated by the awards reflect real life social change - for example, Parasite (2019) being the first film not in the English language to win the award for Best Picture was an enormous achievement. It's an undeniably vital platform for culture, celebrating one of the highest forms of art: cinema.

So why do most Academy members not give a damn?

Originally a group of 36 directors, producers, writers, and actors, over the years, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has expanded to around 10,000 members, all invited by two existing members from their industry branch.

While, yes, there are many members of the Academy, you would still think it would be incredible to be considered notable enough to vote on a series of life-changing awards year after year. Unfortunately, it has become increasingly apparent that many individuals don't feel any responsibility towards their task of voting. The most egregious examples of these can be found in "blind ballots" or anonymous interviews:

"I'm bummed because I haven't seen The Big Substance or I'm Still Here yet. The first Dune, I couldn't get through; I'm not rushing for another three hours of Dune."

- Academy Awards voter

This person is not the only one - several voters have admitted that they don't watch every film that's up for nomination each year. It's difficult for us to imagine being in such a position where we are entitled to a membership to a prestigious group of film-makers, let alone being in a position where we feel entitled enough to not take our role seriously.



Since 2021, all films in contention for awards are uploaded to a streaming platform exclusively for voters to be able to watch and accurately make judgements on which films deserve recognition, so what are their excuses? If they can't find the time, they shouldn't be voting at all.



THANKS TO THE



By Rory Wynne



Voters also let their personal feelings get in the way of their judgements:

“I despised ‘The Substance.’ It was gross, over the top, and I didn’t think Demi [Moore] was anything special.

- Academy Awards voter

The movie is a satirical body horror, fairly well received by critics and awarded for its practical effects and make-up. Especially notable was Demi Moore’s performance, for which she has now won a Golden Globe and a Critics’ Choice Award. Speaking personally, I am not a fan of body horror, but the film was undeniably incredible, and its ‘grossness’ did not take away from its cleverness and audacity.

This is where the problem lies - voters are dismissing films based on their own biases rather than artistic merit. This member was clearly not a fan of the horror aspect of the movie, and therefore ignored everything else about it due to their own queasiness.

The problem with voting is not only limited to the Oscars, it extends to the biggest music awards as well:

“Beyoncé will probably do great as always, even if I don’t respect her as an artist”

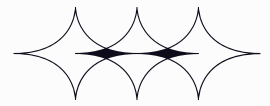
- Grammys voter

These quotes from a series of blind ballots reveals one of the main issues with the music industry in the 21st century - the tendency of people to take ‘sides’ in so-called ‘Stan Wars’. The issue is, these biases aren’t just among fans, they extend to the voters themselves, who should be making their decisions based on artistic achievement rather than personal allegiances. It seems likely that Album of the Year went to Beyoncé because voters deemed her to be deserving of the award as a consolation after losing out four times since 2009.

Letting individual problems with nominees stop artists’ achievements, at both the Grammys and the Oscars, is a huge, systematic issue with the current way in which voting occurs. Obviously, it is impossible for all members of either Academy to completely eradicate their personal opinions while voting, but it is evident that most voters make no effort to prevent them affecting their choices in the first place.

“Two separate voters who didn’t vote for [Ralph] Fiennes said they did not vote for him because ‘he won before.’ They both believed he won an Oscar for ‘Schindler’s List’ (1993), which he didn’t, as he lost to Tommy Lee Jones for ‘The Fugitive.’ They voted for [Adrien] Brody, who actually won an Oscar for ‘The Pianist’ in 2002”

- Variety article



THANKS TO THE

Academy

By Rory Wynne



This is lifted from a Variety article where members of the Academy were anonymously interviewed about their voting choices. Fiennes gave a career-best performance in 'Conclave' but was snubbed because voters wrongly assumed he had 'already won'—a mistake that could have easily been avoided with a Google search. Similarly to Beyoncé, Brody's win was likely based on the fact that he deserved a consolation for not winning before, but according to that line of thinking, Fiennes should've ended up with the Best Actor award instead of Brody. If two voters admitted to this mistake, how many others made similar errors? This level of carelessness could easily sway an entire category.

The Academy was also criticised for its treatment of the Netflix original musical 'Emilia Pérez,' which follows a Mexican cartel leader who aims to transition into a woman. Despite overwhelmingly negative reviews citing misrepresentation and stereotypes, the film received numerous accolades - likely because voters feared appearing transphobic rather than judging the film fairly.

Then, a month before the ceremony itself, old tweets from lead actress Karla Sofía Gascón gained attention for their racist and islamophobic nature. One tweet even mocked the 93rd Academy Awards, calling it an "Afro-Korean festival." While Netflix stopped funding her travel or fashion for the rest of the awards season, the Academy still allowed her to attend the Oscars this year.

It should be clear to the Academy that there needs to be a systematic review of conduct within the organisation, in an effort to reduce the bias that has infiltrated the awards ceremony. The Recording Academy needs to do the same, and encourage its voters to not let personal opinion affect their perception of the artists and their music.

It won't be easy to fix, and no one expects the system to change overnight, but at the very least, Academy members need to be reminded of what voting actually means.

Thanks to the Academy,
Rory Wynne





THE AFFECTS OF THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION ON SCIENCE IN THE US SO FAR.

By Lucy Gowing

Around the world, the Trump '2.0' administration has seen the signing of multiple executive orders by the new American president. This has caused a huge uprooting and circumstantial change to the US government. One of the big areas hit by these changes and budget cuts is science. The US' science programme is globally significant for a number of reasons. For one they control, manufacture or own a large proportion of global scientific equipment which has drastically been affected by these budget cuts. There are four main fields affected by this: climate, marine research, nuclear safety and medical research. For a president that calls climate change a hoax, Trump's policies are in some ways unshocking: their scope, however, is drastic. As part of his cuts, the Environmental Protection Agency has been forced to drastically downsize. President Trump has also tried to take back the \$20 billion appropriated to climate fund by Congress. In response, marches by scientists and civilians have been held across America. In a speech given at one of these protests by Gretchen Golman from the Union of Concerned Scientists, it was highlighted that food, air and water quality would be affected by these cuts, saying that people can and will die.

Marine research has especially been affected by the US controlling and owning 50% of the equipment globally for this field. As with many other fields this will affect data series' and records: with less data and less observation, the accuracy of the data we already have will be severely impaired and impacted. We will also struggle to follow as many trends and aspects of climate change and our natural environment.

Mass firings have shocked scientists and federal workers across America were shocked at these sudden firings and probations, the reasoning behind many firings was poor performance, despite many being praised for their work and some being offered promotions recently. Some 30,000 federal workers have been given notice since Elon Musk's DOGE: Department Of Government Efficiency has sought to make cuts to non-essential staff, as part of his alleged plan to raise \$2 trillion.





This has affected those across the US in multiple fields. Nuclear safety for instance has been jeopardized. As part of the mass firings, 300 workers from the NNSA (National Nuclear Security Administration) were fired in line with the new government's policy cut down on unnecessary workers and scientists. However this failed drastically when all but 25 were reinstated after a Congress led petition. This, for all intents and purposes, was a large scale security breach. Many of those fired had Q clearance- so had ample knowledge on the designs and systems of the US' nuclear weapons or worked as overseers of the nuclear weapons.

Medical research is a particularly worrying area: Robert F Kennedy Jr., Head of the department of Health and Human Services, is a controversial and in some ways strange choice for this role. He is a vocal vaccine skeptic who has endorsed and promoted unproven cures for diseases. Since assuming his role in Trump's administration he has been vocal against the whole research sector. He has called it "sinister" and compared it to the US agency intern naal, which itself has faced significant cuts. Another memorable quote coming out of this is "institutions are stealing the health of our children" and "make America healthy again".

One of the biggest concerns of the new policies is sadly censorship. The Trump administration has created a large list of words and phrases they wish to limit or avoid. This affects governmental documents, scientific research requests, websites as well as existing articles and research. One such article taken down was on vaccines for pregnant women, whose title alone triggered three flags from this new censorship with the words, vaccine, women and pregnant all of which appear of the list. This article was only put back up after a court ruling.

The list itself contains a large number of words, many that are contentious issues in America currently. Some of the most shocking include words such as: black, vulnerable, women, woman, female, females, feminism, Native American, birth, clean energy, obesity, victim and stem cell or fetal tissue research.

This censorship is causing concerns for a whole generation of researchers who are trained to self-censor for their research to be approved for grants and or be published: this will inadvertently lead to a redirection of research and limits the ability of scientists make change. This isn't only affecting America however. Because of America's leading role in manufacturing, funding and ownership of scientific equipment, international scientists depend on co-operation with their US colleagues: India is an example of this. Indian scientists have already taken websites down and changed the terms in papers and articles to comply and maintain their strong relationship with America.

USAID is a heavily relied upon humanitarian aid. Its freezing under executive orders, has had devastating consequences globally. It has already lead to job losses, and disruptions to food security, job losses, reproductive health e.g. within the first 2 weeks of the freeze around 2 million women and girls lost access to contraceptives. This has affected 1 over 50 of the 177 recipient countries: Ethiopia has suffered because of this as it is the largest recipient of US aid in sub-Saharan Africa. The freeze will also particularly affect HIV/ AIDS, as the freeze has lead to a disruption in treatment programmes. Syria is also disproportionately affected as its most vulnerable communities after 14 years of war are largely dependent of the USAID for survival. After the 90% suspension period, Marco Rubio (US Secretary of State), said that after the review the US was "officially ending" about 5,200 of USAID's 6,200 programmes, this is over 80% all programmes.

CANADA AT A CROSSROADS: ELECTIONS, TRADE AND TRUMP

By Hope Ng-McCoy

As Canada gears up for its next federal election slated to happen in October, external forces- particularly US politics, are shaping the nation's economic and political future.

Canada, a country of 36.3 million and a land mass of 9.9 million making it the second largest country, has come face to face with the turbulent Trump America First campaign like never before. After the January 6, 2025, announcement that Trudeau would resign as both the prime minister and leader of the Liberal Party after extreme economic instability and political crisis, upcoming federal elections and the decision for new liberal leader have higher stakes than ever before, representing a pivotal movement for national security, geopolitical strategy, and sovereignty.

Claiming the longest undisputed shared border in history with 100 years of alliance and agreement in wars, trade and backing for each other in Arctic matters, the democratic re-election of Donald Trump and the shift of US politics to an isolationist, protectionist, traditional, rightist movement has caused upheaval and extreme uncertainty amongst Canadian citizens over the security of their own country and the cost of living as US tariffs loom ever closer threatening recession and the economic collapse of Canada whose economy is inherently intertwined with its neighbour.



25% trade tariffs currently suspended until April 6th, have prompted Canadian approval ratings to dip significantly and consumer behavior to shift away from American products. Trump's persistent threat of claiming Canada as his 51st state have sparked fierce patriotism and want for the independence of the USA as they attempt to annex Canada from the rest of the world.

So, in Canada's upcoming election what's at stake?

Trudeau, while praised for his progressive futuristic approach to green innovative energy, greater freedom and provision of rights to Native Indigenous tribes and welcoming 3 million immigrants into Canada as well as improved social benefits like Canada Child benefit, has been plagued with issues of economic stagnation, structural, fiscal deficit, and increased government inefficiency.

Leading challengers for selecting Trudeau's successor include the current Canadian PM, Mark Carney, the former governor of Bank of Canada and England, hoping to use his economic expertise to boost Canadian stock markets and proposing dollar-for-dollar retaliatory tariffs that would hit the US hard but have minimal impact on Canada; Chrystia Freeland, former finance minister known for helping Canada renegotiate the free trade deal between US, Canada and Mexico, and has engaged in high profile clashes during first Trump Administration over the decision to impose tariffs in steel and aluminum imports in Canada.

The new liberal leader, Mark Carney, will face immediate challenges managing escalating trade tensions with the US, and the upsurge in Canadian nationalism in retaliation. On the other hand, the Conservative Party, who were predicted to have a major victory in October, 40% voters backing them, now face a rising liberal movement with 30% voters, due to their leader, Poilievre's Trump-like rhetoric amidst anti-American sentiment despite Trump's rejection of the parallels claiming he isn't 'MAGA enough'.

In early 2025, Trump imposed 25% tariffs on Canadian imports, aiming to pressure Canada into addressing issues like illegal immigration and drug trafficking with the fentanyl crisis having killed 250,000 Americans since 2018 and blaming its neighbours for imports. These tariffs pose extreme threats to the economic, social and domestic state of Canada, with analysts estimating a potential 2.5% decline in Canada's GDP by early 2026, 150,000 jobs at threat increasing unemployment to 7.9% by the end of 2025 and sector specific effects with Canada supplying 20% of US oil consumption, now reducing reliance on Canadian petroleum affecting export revenues.



With 74% of Canadians holding an unfavourable opinion of Trump, Canadians are taking matters into their own hands by consumer boycotts against American products with major backlash against US major grocery chains for allegedly mislabeling US products as Canadian to boost sales (known as maple washing), patriotic marketing, and travel reduction, with many Canadians cancelling trips to the US in protest whereas prior to tariffs, the USA had been the number one international travel destination for Canadians, \$20.5 billion into American tourism.

In the brief time since Trump has been reelected, the USMCA (United States- Mexico- Canada Agreement) which was established in 2020 and had supported mutually beneficial trade leading to freer markets, fairer trade and robust economic growth in North America, has experienced a rapid breakdown.

Areas like the automotive industry are at the forefront of Trump's attack on international trade, dairy and agriculture, digital trade and intellectual property, Mexico's Sheinbaum and USA's Trudeau have taken opposing approaches to the tariffs, with Mexico deploying 10,000 National Guard to secure the border while Doug Ford, the Ontario premier has become the face of new found Canadian patriotism and a conduit for popular anger at Trump. Not afraid to make comments on buying Alaska, wearing 'Canada is not for sale' t-shirts or cutting off electricity supply to the US, he is happy to face Trump's behaviour like for like. In the wake of the resignation of Justin Trudeau and disarray of the Liberal Party, Ford has filled the political vacuum.

Every day around \$1 billion worth of goods and services cross the border into the US and a trade war implicating Ontario's \$1 trillion a year economy, steel and automotive industry as well as agriculture and mining providing 40% of Canada's total GDP could be devastating consequences. Ford who is a regular on American TV networks and effectively the spokesperson for 13 Canadian provinces has used his appearances to emphasise the cultural historic and economic ties between Canada, Ontario in particular and US. While still a source of controversy amidst tame provincial politics in his selling off of green belt land in 2023, he provides a seemingly authentic voice of the people. So the future is uncertain for Canada. But then, it is for the rest of the world so we are all keeping pace.



STUDENT LEADERSHIP



Spotlight on BEES

by Aleksandra Valchynova

ACS Talent Show

by Oluwademilade Samuel-Onette

Positivitree

by Matilda Jackson

Acapella Group

by Rory Wynne

SEND Ambassadors

by Mrs Coller

BEES

By Aleksandra Valchynova

Growing up, whenever I told people about coming from Bulgaria, I was always met with confused looks before promptly being asked to explain who Bulgaria is. In all honesty, I didn't blame people for not knowing about a small country in Eastern Europe, and I still don't, but coming into secondary school I began to find more and more people of Balkan and Eastern European origin. Over the years, a little community began to form, and, in September of 2024, the Balkan and Eastern European Society, or BEES for short, officially formed. If you somehow haven't heard of us, then feel free to come along on a Monday after school in the Sixth Form Centre to experience one of our events! We have a range of events, with some being completely free to take part in, whilst others are run to support Rubikus, a charity that has been pivotal in aiding Ukrainian refugees make it safely into the rest of Europe and find new homes. For us, it is so important to be able to help in a conflict that is so close to home, whilst celebrating a culture that for the most part has been overlooked for so long.



Our first event of 2025 was Matryoshka (Russian Doll) painting, where we all got together, listened to both some traditional and more contemporary music, and had a great time being able to relax and take a break from the stresses of everyday life. It was a wonderful opportunity to connect with friends and paint a doll that we got to take home with us. Our next event was just in time for Valentines Day, and it was the BEES bake off, where groups of contestants had to bake heart-shaped cookies for our panel of judges (myself included), using their intuition and baking skills to guess at how much of each ingredient they should use, in typical British Bake Off Fashion. Special mention to the team Power of Friendship, whose extraordinary sportsmanship and delicious cookies earned them the victory. Next came our joint event with ACS, a charity football match, where two teams, one representing BEES and the other representing ACS, fought against each other to determine who would get to donate all the proceeds to the charity of their choice. It was a close match, with both teams being neck-and-neck for the majority of the time, until BEES won 9-8, allowing us to donate to Rubikus once again.

Last, but not least, was our Martenitsa (Bulgarian Bracelet) making, just in time for the coming of Spring (the 1st of March). This is a tradition found in Bulgaria and Romania to celebrate the end of Winter and the start of Spring, where people give red and white string bracelets to their friends and family as a way of hoping for health and prosperity. Traditionally, this lasts until the wearer has seen a stork, a bird that migrates into Eastern Europe around Spring, and then ties their martenitsa around a cherry blossom tree. Unfortunately, in England we don't typically get storks, so instead, you can tie your martenitsa on a cherry blossom tree at the end of March or start of April.

Hopefully this has inspired more people to take part in upcoming BEES events, such as the upcoming basketball match between us and SEAS!!

ACS TALENT SHOW

by Oluwademilade Samuel-Onette



BGS hosted its 3rd Annual ACS Gala, and it was an unforgettable event. The hall was elegantly decorated, with stunning details. From the moment guests entered, the atmosphere was electric, filled with excitement. The evening was full of memorable moments, truly making it a night to remember.

The night started with some phenomenal performances. We kicked it off with Year 13's own Leandrah performing an amazing mashup, accompanied by students from Year 13, 11 and 9. I want to give a special mention to Teondra in Year 13 who stepped in on short notice and truly delivered an outstanding performance.

Next, we were treated to the melodious voice of Soahasina from Year 12, supported by Francis with a remarkable saxophone performance.

Teondra came back for another performance with Marina and their harmonious voice serenaded the entire audience.

We were incredibly grateful for the encore performance by Leandrah accompanied by Ema; their performance was absolutely mesmerizing.

To finish off the performances, we were incredibly lucky to experience a concert-like display from the co-ACS president himself, Mr Naya, accompanied by Teondra, Leandrah, and Beth.

Although the special guest was unable to join us in person, we had an inspiring message from Ky-Mani Carty about the experiences of breaking out into the industry as a young black person.

Then it was onto the food, an assortment of food from our native cultures: jollof rice, fried rice, plantain, puff puff and more. It was truly appetising.

No ACS Gala would be complete without dancing on the dance floor. The energy was palpable and the atmosphere was electric. Afrobeats cultivated a community that I am so proud of at this school. The night was truly incredible - an unforgettable experience that everyone in this school should have the opportunity to attend at some point in their lives.

ACS raised a remarkable £2,400 for Sickle Cell Society and Access UK.

A huge thank you to the ACS team for organizing such an incredible event, and special thanks to the Year 13s who ensured that all the decorating and organizing went smoothly. In particular, Felicity, the Events Manager, played a key role in all of this.

The 2024-2025 ACS team truly went out with a bang and I am so grateful to have experienced their leadership and neverending dedication to creating such an incredible community where people of African and Caribbean backgrounds can come together, be themselves and be heard.



AFRO-CARIBBEAN SOCIETY

INTERVIEW

by Oluwademilade Samuel-Onette

Meet the 2024-2025 ACS Team and get to know them and their society better!

What is your name, your country of origin and your role within ACS?

Michael Ato, Nigeria, ACS President

When you were in year 12, what enticed you to join the ACS?

I've actually been apart of ACS since year 9/10. I can't remember properly but I was really excited to have a space to celebrate my heritage with like-minded individuals and learn more about African & Caribbean culture and history.

What were your favourite sessions of ACS and why?

I think that those who come to ACS will know my favourite sessions back then because now I get to decide what we're doing, I get to run them a lot. I love a split the room - spectrum where we debate a topical statement and we have a discussion with an agree side vs the disagree side - hoping to reach a synthesised conclusion.

What made you apply for your role within ACS?

Well, I've always been interested in leadership positions and had really looked up to a lot of the previous ACS Leadership teams. I thought that I had a lot of ideas of how to elevate ACS, add new dimensions and expand on the great work done by the people before me. And I hope that people would say that my team and I have achieved that.



In your experience, what does it mean to be Afro-Caribbean, both within your community and in a broader, multicultural society?

I think even in my short lived life, what it means to be Afro-Caribbean has already developed so much to me. At first, it was just a point of facticity but now it's such a fundamental part of my identity. And this part just becomes ever pertinent in our community and society. I think it's not a thing where we want our communities to be colour-blind but instead being knowledgeable of our differences and still not allow them to divide us. But if I had to sum up all of that in a sentence: Being black gets better and better everyday and society is starting to really know it.

What advice would you offer to young people from Afro-Caribbean backgrounds who are navigating their cultural identity in today's world?

Finding yourself is not easy and it will take time. People will have perceptions of you contrary to how you perceive yourself, even more so because you're a minority. But you have to overcome these stereotypes - good and bad - don't define you. We can only ever be who we make ourselves to be. And that's the greatest beauty of it. Find avenues to explore your cultural identity, societies like ACS are great for that. Bottom line, engage with like minded individuals, ask questions and seek answers to these questions, and above all: make your own history.

MICHAEL: PRESIDENT

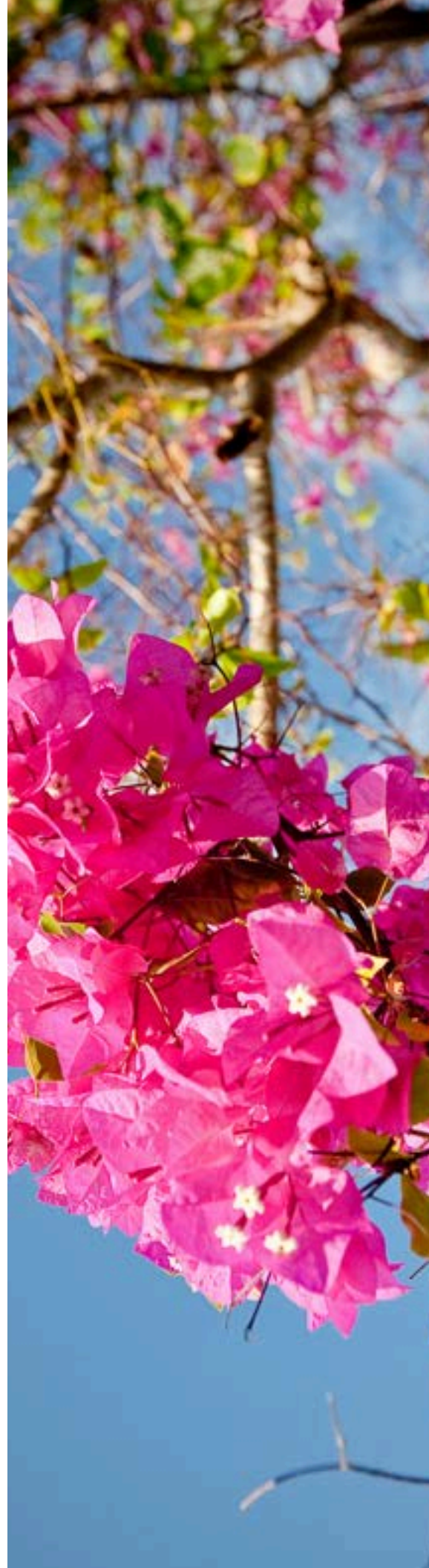
The Positivitree

Earlier this term, BGS was visited by The Times to speak to members of staff and students about being one of the happiest schools in the country

by Matilda Jackson

Early February within the school council we were discussing ways to spread love and positivity throughout our school on Valentines day. I pitched the 'Positivitree' and was lucky to get a really great response. The idea was to get lots of students within BGS to write what they love most about the school on a post-it note and we would display them by reception. My original idea was to create a cardboard tree, but after speaking to the Art Department, we decided to use an actual tree from our own school field. After lots of painting, hole-punching and tying we were able to create something honestly quite beautiful, with notes commending the school atmosphere, community and our 'beautiful BGS bubble'.

I then had the wonderful opportunity to speak to a news reporter from the Sunday Times after BGS was named as one of the happiest schools in the country, they took interest in the 'Positivitree' and it was featured in the article. It was so fun talking to the reporter about how great it is to be a student at BGS, but of course the highlight had to be being photographed by the tree. This award could not be more well deserved, as I am sure every other student here would agree. And I am glad to say I am very proud to be a student here at Bexley Grammar School and I still can't believe a small initiative to spread some positivity became such a big thing!



Acapella Group

Myself (Rory Wynne) and my good friend Kelsi Joseph decided to start an Acapella Group this term - something that has been a dream of mine for quite some time. Here's some things we had to say about our efforts so far, and what we hope to do in the future:

What inspired you to start this group?

RW: I've wanted to be part of an acapella group for some time, ever since I fell in love with the original Pitch Perfect movie and became obsessed with the soundtrack. I thought it was so impressive that people could recreate the music of popular songs just with their own voices, and so I decided that I would love to create a group within our own school to explore the magic of acapella.

KJ: Joining the school as an external, and as a higher music student, I wanted to contribute something to the department. I wanted to create something that anybody could get involved with, regardless of how musically knowledgeable you are. It's an amazing talent to be able to learn a new skill, and when Rory came to me with the idea of an acapella group, I knew it would be a perfect opportunity to do exactly that.

What hopes do you have for the future of Acapella Group?

KJ: I really hope that more people join - right now we're mainly sixth form-only, and it would be great for the group to become more rounded and exciting for all students who would like to come. Hopefully we will be able to perform at a concert soon, and display all of the hard effort we've been putting in to perfect our pieces. We're currently working towards performing "Girl from Ipanema" at the Jazz Evening in July, so you may catch us there!

RW: My main goal is for Acapella Group to become a new staple at BGS. There are so many avenues to explore when it comes to the world of acapella, and hopefully all of our efforts will be worth it if we come back in a few years and see the group still going strong. We're very inspired by Samba Group, who have been student-led for quite some time, and I hope to be able to perform at concerts just as they do. (Another goal is for us to come up with a clever name - something we are yet to figure out!)

BGS SEND AMBASSADORS

We are delighted to introduce our first ever SEND AMBASSADORS

They Are:

Ben McCarthy Year 8
Ewen Warwicker Year 9
Caitlyn Osei-Tutu Year 11
Sophie Fosh Year 11
Louis Luckman Year 11
Charlie Furlong Year 11
Alice Black Year 12

Our aim will be to continue raising awareness of all disabilities and seek opportunities to celebrate Bexley Grammar's diverse community.



YOU CAN CONTACT THE AMBASSADORS VIA EMAIL:
SENDAMBASSADORS@BEXLEYGS.CO.UK



SCHOOL EVENTS

House Drama and Dance

by Caitlyn Osei-Tutu and Deya Dimitrova

The Bar Mock Trial

by Rowan Threader and Deya Dimitrova

Austria Ski Trip

by Darina Mitkova

Business and Economics Trip to China

by Emma Murati and Evie Nguyen

World Book Day

by Aqua Trumci

By Caitlyn Osei-Tutu and Deya Dimitrova

House Drama and Dance

On February 5th, all six houses competed to determine the winners of a major house event: House Dance and Drama. The competition was judged by Mr Otley, Mrs Ellis and Mrs Denyer. This year, the theme was fresh and unique - Aesop's Fables.

Aesop's Fables are a collection of short moral stories attributed to Aesop, a storyteller who was believed to have lived in ancient Greece around the 6th century BCE. These fables convey life lessons or moral values. Many of them are widely known and have been passed down through generations - which would explain why we still talk about them today! Some of the most common of these fables are: The Tortoise and the Hare and The Boy Who Cried Wolf.

The stories chosen by the houses included: The Divided Body, Of Mice and Cats, and The Jay and the Peacock. The performances showcased a diverse range of acting styles and dance forms, from ballet and contemporary to hip-hop and street. After an exciting competition, the results were announced: Wellman claimed first place, followed by Mabbs in second. Prothero and Kirkman tied for third, with Collins securing fifth place and Johnson finishing sixth. The dedication and effort displayed by all the students was truly remarkable. Participants from Years 7 to 13 devoted countless hours to rehearsals: arriving early in the morning, giving up their breaks and lunches, and staying long hours after school. Their perseverance, teamwork, and passion brought the performances to life, making this year's House Dance and Drama competition an unforgettable event.

This House event further demonstrated the importance of our House system at BGS, which greatly inspires inter-year communication, as well as a way to showcase your possible leadership skills and exhibit courage by stepping out of your comfort zone. All whilst fostering a sense of community, these House events also inspire friendly competition between Houses and, of course, all the performances were absolutely spectacular! The Year 13 House Captain Teams worked tirelessly to organise the participants and to make sure they all had a role to play in their performance. Every performance focused on a different aspect of their chosen fable, and every aspect was unique. Especially since each House Captain team was tasked with the job of writing their own script, every performance was turned into a completely different experience. It was such a pleasure to be able to watch all of these performances, which had all been so intricately put together and performed by students from all years!

THE BAR MOCK TRIAL

BY ROWAN THREADER AND DEYA DIMITROVA



The Bar Mock Trial is a prestigious national competition run by Young Citizens, where schools from across the country form their own legal teams to present their advocacy skills in a real courtroom in front of real legal professionals. This year, a group of 18 Year 12 students stepped up to the challenge; facing off against other schools to show off their skills of argument, persuasion and logic, all battling to win their trial as the prosecution or defence. There were two cases to prepare for the competition day: one surrounding an assault case and the other the possession of drugs, which provided an interesting and exciting platform to showcase our skills in advocacy.

The lead up to this event started in October last year: there was a lot of preparation to be done as we were tasked with preparing both the prosecution and defence for both cases. Every Thursday, the group that were given the drug possession case (R v Speed) met to structure our case. As a witness, I was tasked with the role of learning the characterisation of Ash Morgan inside out. Ash Morgan was the teammate of Vim Speed- the defendant- who was alleged to have been in possession of illegal substances, who claims that the drugs belonged to Morgan and that the charges were motivated by jealousy. Witnesses had to be meticulously prepared for cross-examination by the opposing counsel, ensuring that our responses remained consistent with our legal personas and the case facts.



THE BAR MOCK TRIAL



The barristers, on the other hand, were given the task of constructing their own opening and closing speeches, whilst addressing the jury and quoting the real laws surrounding drug possession. The barristers also had to write their own questions in order to get an answer from the witnesses that supported their side (prosecution or defence). The barristers were required to confidently control their examination-in-chief and cross-examination, pressing opposing witnesses into providing definitive answers that could be leveraged to their own advantage.

My group, who all worked together on the R v Speed case, even replicated the courtroom in L6, by setting up the tables in accordance with the official British Court layout. With the help of our usher, we ran the whole court case as it would actually occur, and were able to practice the barrister's opening and closing speeches. We had the chance to practice in front of Year 13s who participated in the Bar Mock Trial last year, receiving constructive criticism on how to refine our strategy.

Working collaboratively throughout this whole process taught us the significance of collaboration, role distribution, and meticulous preparation in legal proceedings. Every single member of our group had to regularly attend meetings and actively participate in order for our arguments to be cohesive, well-structured, and persuasive. Finally, the long-awaited day of the Bar Mock Trial Competition arrived...

The day:

We arrived at the Inner London Crown Court early on the 25th January, ready to take on the competition ahead of us. After entering the building with our teams, mentally running through their statements over and over on the journey to court to make sure they could give the best performance possible, we were able to enter, many of us for the first time, a Crown Court. We were finally able to see what we had been trying to imitate in L6 for the last three months: the judge's bench presiding over the entire courtroom; a panel of seats for the jury to observe from, and the tables where our barristers and witnesses would be sitting as they were fully immersed in the cases they had spent so long preparing. We were informed that we would compete in 3 heats: the first acting as the prosecution for the R v Hinton case against Chislehurst School for Girls, the second as defence for R v Speed against Tring School, and finally as the defence for R v Hinton against Ashmole Academy.

THE BAR MOCK TRIAL

We would be judged on every part of our performance: the opening and closing statements, questioning of witnesses and even cross examination. A group of actual legal professionals and judges were there to rule over each heat and provide key feedback on how we could improve our legal skills, and at the end of the day they provided a Q&A session telling us about their legal career and their own journey in the courtroom.

For the first case, my group was selected to act as the jury in a case between other schools, while BGS's other group competed, which was one of my favourite parts of the competition. We were given the responsibility to listen to both sides of the case being presented, and after each team had given all of their evidence to try and convince us to rule in their favour, we retired to discuss how each jury member felt, and finally voted on whether to decide whether the defendant was guilty or not guilty. This discussion taught each of us the significance of the judicial system and the importance of listening to each other's opinions to get a right verdict, and many of the jury members switched how they felt as we discussed, before we finally landed on a unanimous decision, which in this particular case was not guilty. The judge in our courtroom asked us to explain why we had come to this conclusion, enabling us to understand our own reasoning, and then be able to communicate it, which really helped to appreciate the strengths of each team and how we could incorporate what was great about each of them into our own strategy for the coming rounds.

When we came out of the courtroom, we learnt that our team had received a guilty verdict from the jury and had won their round, which really boosted morale and made every person from BGS more confident in both their legal abilities, and that our collaborative efforts leading up to the event had paid off. As we progressed into the next round, my group watched our own barristers and witnesses compete in the R v Speed case. As they did their final preparations a real sense of pride washed over me and suddenly I didn't care what the final result of the day would be: I just felt proud of all that we had achieved so far and our strong team spirit that had only grown since we started in October, and I felt so fulfilled watching the barristers my team had worked with every week to improve and refine performing so confidently and knowledgeably in such a nerve wracking scenario. This sense of pride was only built on when the jury decided our defendant was not guilty: we had won the second round!

As the third round took place, our entire team was brimming with anticipation to see how our final group would perform as the defence in the R v Hinton case. As soon as they emerged from the courtroom and told us that they had succeeded in convincing the jury to vote in their favour, everyone erupted into cheering, not only because we were happy to have done so well in the competition, but also because we were so overjoyed that everyone had had their opportunity to shine and show off all that they had learnt from our experience.

Although we left the competition without winning overall, each and every member of the Bar Mock Trial group felt that we had given our all to our preparation, our performance and even our great team spirit. The experience taught us so much about the legal system and was amazing, and we would definitely recommend getting involved next year!

AUSTRIA

SKI TRIP 2025

BY DARINA MITKOVA

This February half-term around 50 of us travelled to Austria with True North, to a beautiful area called 'Zell am See' - the landscapes were absolutely mesmerising, and as we arrived, we were greeted with the most beautiful sunset on the way to collect our ski boots and helmets.

Immediately on day one, we were split into groups depending on our ski experience - every group received a ski instructor. My ski instructor was called Lotte, and she massively improved my friends' and I's confidence and abilities; previously being full beginners, we managed to successfully ski down a variety of red slopes by the end of the trip, which was a massive accomplishment for all of us! Some of the top groups were mostly skiing on red and black slopes every day, and even got to ski down the other side of the mountain. Regardless of everybody's abilities, the 5 hours we spent, 6 days a week, was totally worth it, as we all improved in some type of way, and had so much fun doing so!

GLACIER, TOP OF SALZBURG

On our second to last day of skiing, all of us travelled to the top of the nearby glaciers, where we spent the whole day skiing surrounded by the most picturesque views! We tried out so many new slopes, and had the best time skiing together; the glaciers were very unique, as there were no trees surrounding any of the slopes, unlike our previous mountains. Around noon, all of the groups gathered together to have lunch on the glacier, before continuing to ski to our next destination.

Following lunch, we all took a few gondolas even further up the glacier to the top of Salzburg, where the landscape was immaculate! We were able to see all the mountains below us from such a high point; all of us took many photos and videos, but ultimately couldn't wait to ski back down again!



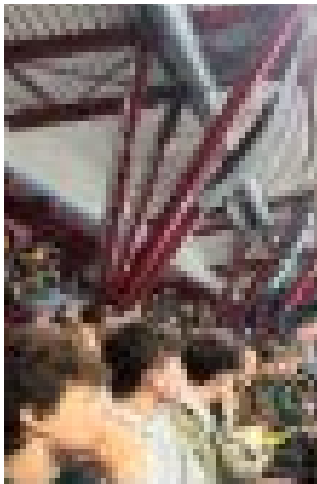


AUSTRIA

ACTIVITIES

BY DARINA MITKOVA

Every evening back to the hotel after skiing was arguably just as fun as the skiing itself - as the hotel had so many amazing facilities available, we were ultimately never bored. One of my personal favourite rooms was the beach volleyball room, which was a massive sports hall filled with sand, and two large beach volleyball nets! Lots of us booked a court every evening to play on, and our teachers had also organised a beach volleyball tournament for one of the nights; we were all split into around 8 teams, and had so much fun participating in the friendly competition against one another.



Other activities we did on site were rock climbing in the hotel's massive bouldering room, as well as lots of football and basketball (of course).

Additionally, our teachers took us to watch an amazing ice hockey match, where unfortunately Zell lost 8-7 - nonetheless, it was a very different experience to any sports we have here in the UK, and everyone enjoyed it!

On the last night of the trip, we travelled by coach to the Tauern spa, which was exactly what we all needed after a whole week of skiing; inside the spa there were a variety of indoor and outdoor hot tubs and pools, where we all relaxed and enjoyed our final evening.



Business and Economics Trip to China

By Emma Murati and Evie Nguyen

During the half-term of February 2025, a group of 40 Business and Economics students, accompanied by Mrs. Harris, Mr. Joe, Mr. Dhir, and Mr. Cheuk, went to China. We started our trip in Beijing, the country's capital, visiting the giant pandas at Beijing Zoo shortly after landing. Pushing through the crowds, we saw China's national animal. We later visited Tiananmen Square, surrounded by both historical and political buildings. We learned about the Monument to the People's Heroes, which honors those who fought for China's independence, and the Mausoleum of Mao Zedong, where visitors can see the preserved body of China's former leader. Walking across the square, which can hold up to a million people, we passed the portrait of Mao Zedong, standing 6 meters tall and 4.6 meters wide, and entered the gates into the Forbidden City.

The Forbidden City consists of 180 acres and nearly 1,000 buildings and is one of the most well-preserved wooden structures in the world. One of the highlights and a long-awaited attraction was the Great Wall of China. Despite its steepness and mountainous terrain, we all attempted to climb the Wall, reaching checkpoints along the way. The majority of us climbed to the top and were rewarded with breathtaking views from above. We traveled to many other places, including the Huiyan Juice Company (where we saw the growth and timeline of Huiyan Juice), the Silk Market (where haggling was developed as a skill), and Hutong (where we walked through parts of old China).



Our next stop was Xi'an, the old capital of China, where we took a bullet train, traveling 1,134 km in just under five hours. After arriving in Xi'an, we visited Huaqing Hot Spring Park, where the Emperor and his beloved concubine Yang used to stay. This area had hot water fountains that were said to make the skin smooth, so of course, we had to try it ourselves... and it was true! Another terrific sight was the Terracotta Warriors in the Army Museum. Thousands of them have been pieced back together and are still being uncovered to this day. Vastly housed in three pits, they were all destroyed in a rebellion against the emperor and came in many different forms, differentiated by their hair, armor, and shoes. These warriors were also accompanied by horses, and some even had colors such as purple, red, and green. Shortly after, we experienced the Tang Dynasty dumpling banquet, where we enjoyed a wide variety of dumplings with different shapes, colors, and fillings, some resembling animals and flowers. We watched a show performed in lavish silk costumes inspired by ancient court attire, accompanied by a live orchestral performance. Our time in Xi'an ended with a walk on the city wall, which is the only remaining intact city wall in China, and a visit to the Muslim Quarter to explore the food stalls and bustling markets.

Business and Economics Trip to China

By Emma Murati and Evie Nguyen

We then took a flight and landed in Shanghai to see a variety of other landmarks. First was the Volkswagen factory, which demonstrated the lean production process of making cars. This Just-In-Time production system allowed us to see how the newest cars were pieced together before moving on to be test-driven. Shanghai's most recognizable landmark and a symbol of its rapid modernization and influence, the Oriental Pearl Tower, gave us an amazing opportunity to see a breathtaking 360-degree view of Shanghai's skyline. Standing 259 meters above the city, we walked across the transparent walkway and saw the bustling city below our feet. However, despite being in a large, innovative city, we visited many gardens that preserved China's historical culture and architecture. The Yu Garden, located in the heart of Shanghai's Old City, provided a glimpse into classical Chinese garden design, with ornate pavilions, ponds, and rock formations. Our time in Shanghai ended with a scenic day trip to the nearby city of Suzhou, known as the "Venice of the East." We sailed across the narrow waterways and under stone bridges, taking in the picturesque views and 2,500 years of history.



We all had a fantastic time and our students were a delight to take on this adventure. Students have reported that this trip was “life changing” and “the best thing I’ve ever done” and I’m incredibly grateful that we have been able to offer this experience to so many young people.

Mrs Harris



World Book Day

by Aqua Trumci

The History and Importance of World Book Day

Every year book lovers and avid readers all over the world unite to celebrate the importance of World Book Day, a cherished tribute to the power of reading! Established by UNESCO in 1995, this special day promotes reading for pleasure while offering every child and young person the opportunity to have a book of their own. Inspired by Spain's tradition of honouring Miguel de Cervantes and William Shakespeare (both famous authors), it has evolved into a worldwide phenomenon. Schools just like ours, bookshops and libraries come alive with events and giveaways to encourage young minds to dive into the adventure of reading. To me and many others in our school, reading ignites imagination and passion, so even though World Book Day has ended, still grab a new book and enjoy the celebration!

One of the widely celebrated aspects to World Book Day that our school hosted was the opportunity to dress up as your favourite book character for Year 7s and 8s! This event has been looked forward to by many throughout our school as it allows people to be able to express themselves and relate to one another through the means of sharing similar interests. Teachers and English Prefects also took part by sharing their favourite books (which can be seen in the reception area all year round) and bringing in props associated with their books! I'm sure many of us found that we liked the same book as one of the teachers, and if you haven't yet been sure to go and check them out, or simply ask your teacher to recommend you a book as you might find that it becomes your new favourite!

As well as spotting students waving wands, donning camp-halfblood t-shirts or carrying round props, in the reception area we also had a Guess the Prop game, where students had to match up pictures of books with props on the table. The challenge was fun, and we saw many students excited to take part.

Throughout the day, English lessons included quizzes testing students' knowledge of famous books, characters, and authors. The enthusiasm was contagious as students competed to see who could answer the most questions correctly.

There were a **series of World Book Day competitions** that were judged on the day by English Prefects in the school library. These included: a post-it note story competition where students wrote a story on a post-it note; the Ultimate Book Reading Challenge, where students sent in pictures of themselves reading books in unusual ways and places, and a challenge to name the book titles based on the clues! Congratulations to Radhika Dhorajiwala for her excellent short story, and Isida Manolakou for somehow finding the most painful looking way to read. Also congratulations must go to Saanvi Trivedi for deciphering the clues and naming all the book titles correctly. The winners of these competitions won £10 book vouchers!



World Book Day

by Aqua Trumci

All Year 7 students also took part in the 500 word Short Story Competition (an idea 'borrowed' from the BBC!). Five Y12s deliberated long and hard over the shortlisted stories, and finally agreed on a winner. **Congratulations to Lily Popova in 7ACR for her fantastic story *War Men*.** Well done to the winners and everyone who took part. The English Department, Mrs Carey and the English prefects were all really impressed with the creativity and imagination of all of the entries in the various competitions.



One of the most exciting parts of our World Book Day celebrations was the Author Visit. Stephen Saleh, published author of the graphic novel *Dark Lines of London*, gave a Year 7 assembly and workshop. It was a unique opportunity to inspire our young readers and writers to explore their own literary talents.

Bexley Book Quiz

Eva, Tishe, Safaa, Oviya, Emilia and I went with Mrs Carey to Townley Grammar on Tuesday 4th March for the Bexley Book Quiz for Year 7s. Five other schools were there, including Townley, Chis & Sid and Blackfen School for Girls. Once we arrived we were shown to the library. It was bigger than ours! We ate our lunch and then we got started. The first round was authors and we did really well! There were 5 other rounds - two trivia rounds, 'Where in the World', guess the book character and film adaptations. We did really well as we came first place! We were really happy and we received certificates, a £10 book voucher and a trophy! Overall it was such fun to do and all of us enjoyed it.

Jas Randhawa 7ACR

A massive thank you to all the students, teachers, and staff who made this day so memorable especially: Mr Griffin, Ms Adegas and Mrs Carey. World Book Day is all about celebrating the joy of reading, and this year's events certainly lived up to that goal. Keep reading, keep imagining, and see you next year for another incredible World Book Day!



NEWS FROM THE DEPARTMENTS



MFL: The Russian Anthea Bell Workshop

by Aries Maksym

SEND: Your Words are Heard and Felt!

by Charlie Furlong

Anthropology: Trip to Goldsmiths

by Poppy White and Rory Wynne

English: Lecture from Abi Falase, ex student and Doctor Who writer

by Caitlin Gorman

Music Department News

by Rory Wynne

PE Department News

by Jack Perkins, Marvel Onyekachi

FBCS: Arguments for and against the existence of a Higher Power

by Safaa Abdul Aziz

Business and Economics: Young Enterprise

by the Young Enterprise team

RUSSIAN ANTHEA BELL

WORKSHOP

by Ariés Maksym



On the morning of the 17th of March, a group of GCSE and IB Russian students travelled to the City of London School to take part in the first ever Russian creative translation workshop run by the Queen's College Translation Exchange (Oxford University) that awards the Anthea Bell Prize.

The idea of the workshop was that students work together to translate a literary text from a language and produce a creative response and translation in their own style. In our case we were exploring Russia's influence on other languages, particularly Ukrainian. The session was led by Nathan Jeffers, a writer and translator of Russian into English.

We were given a text in Surzhyk, which is a mix of Russian and Ukrainian - Surzhyk ironically being a type of flour made of two grains (wheat and rye) - and a glossary to help. In the first hour, students from Bexley Grammar School, Westminster School and City of London School were told to translate it as best they could literally to get the meaning across. The text itself was interesting, it was about a person remembering his childhood. However, a quirk of the text was that there was no punctuation, and some Cyrillic letters like 'и' were replaced with Latin 'i's and it was strange and chaotic all round, but it was understandable.

In the second part of the session, the students were told to retranslate it but this time creatively and add their own spin to it. We had a brainstorming 10 minutes where we all gave ideas on what we could do; I chose to do a spin on English intermixed with Polish poetry, to give it a sense of chaos, similar to the original text but in my own theme. One person wrote the translation as an interview of the character that remembered his childhood, while another BGS student wrote it in an American Texan Accent.

All in all it is an experience that I think more people should have as it was incredibly fun and entertaining, hearing people's responses to the chaotic text that was 'Childhood'.

Your Words are **HEARD** and **FELT!**

BY CHARLIE FURLONG; SEND AMBASSADOR

Following neurodiversity week recently, the opportunity has once again been opened to discuss the importance of considering how your words may be received by not just your friends, but anyone who may be listening or can hear your conversations.

The unfortunate, widespread term of 'banter', seems to act as a shield for the playful, but harmful use of derogatory language, for the sole purpose of humour. You might believe that your words are not taken to heart, that it is just a joke, but you can never be sure of how impacting this joke has been, and for how long it can reside in the back of someone's conscience as a reminder that their differences are not always accepted, even though they should be.

Understandably, in some situations you may not know that your words demote the meaning of a condition. For example, claiming 'I'm so ocd' when you are inclined to keep things neat and orderly, reduces Obsessive Compulsive Disorder down to stereotypes, negating the much harsher psychological effects it has on those who have to deal with it. Using diagnoses to label habits in your daily life, when it may just be traits seen within a condition, can lead those who do have these conditions to feel misunderstood and left in a box.

Instead, researching different conditions to better understand what different neurodivergent people live with on a day to day basis, can enable you to understand how stereotypes have been formed, and how they may be harmful; bringing us one step closer to a society in which neurodiversity is embraced rather than treated as a shunned topic.



Neurodiversity allows for the further development of different perspectives; for new ideas; for colour and life to be ever prospering. Therefore inviting these new perspectives should only ever be a positive, encouraged experience. Yet growing up in a society where neurodiversity is treated as a weakness rather than a strength, might discourage people from speaking their opinion, from being themselves. Jokes, banter, and humour, which aim to mock these conditions will only ever negatively impact people in the long-term, and hold them back from expressing who they are and who they want to be.

Having humour, laughing with friends, is all very important for your own mental health, but should never come at a cost to someone else's.

“*Yet growing up in a society where neurodiversity is treated as a weakness rather than a strength, might discourage people from speaking their opinion, from being themselves.*”

I implore you to find the humour within you and express it, without demeaning others. It is possible.

Different does not equate to worse. If anything, it links closer with opportunity. There are always people who will want to hear your voice, so with that you must consider the implications of what you say. Neurodiversity and differences should not be the root feeder to your humour. Use your voice to raise awareness, to converse, and to embrace.

Goldsmiths University Lectures

In the afternoon of the 26th of February, Anthropology students in Year 12 had the opportunity to attend a series of lectures at Goldsmiths University, which dealt with broad subject matter ranging from lizard people to why anthropology matters.

First, they took us on a small tour of the campus and showed us the different buildings (one of which was named after an anthropologist we study!), and told us all about the positives of choosing their university.

The speakers included students of the subject, who explained to us the joys of their degrees; this was particularly useful as they were open about the struggles of choosing a university and ultimately why they felt anthropology was the best fit for them. We had the privilege of two lectures given by lecturers who work there, one of which concerned how anthropology relates to the supernatural and paranormal, and how conspiracy theories are very easily spread because of humans' obsession with the otherworldly, but also how they are often rooted in bigotry and antisemitism. The other made us examine how museums and prisons can be similar, as they both relate to structural violence. These gave us great insight into areas of the subject which we don't learn as part of the IB course.

Overall, the trip provided a great learning experience for all, as well as a fun break from regular schooling activities, and we are very grateful to all the staff that worked together to facilitate the excursion - especially Ms Contini, whom on this trip we were amazed to discover had a first name!



English Department News



Abi Falase is a writer and director, who wrote the newest Dr Who novel, Eden Rebellion.

On Tuesday 18th March, they led a talk in K10 about their experiences at BGS as a student and how they got into directing and scriptwriting.

Not only are they a novelist, they have also written multiple scripts for TV shows and plays, including The Village, as well as being the director of Rush at the Almeida Theatre and Rift at the Immediate Theatre.

Abi gave us some tips on how to start writing, which included presenting your own views and to be authentic to yourself.

The talk was very compelling and inspired us all to pursue our interests, no matter how difficult it seems.

Caitlin Gorman, Y10

News from the Music Department

The Spring term has been a joyfully eventful one for the music department here at Bexley Grammar. From a trip to the opera, to performance at a choir festival, to one of our students receiving an amazing honour, there is lots to be proud of and lots to look forward to next term. I find sometimes that it seems as though the rest of the school aren't aware of how much effort the music teachers put in to make music at BGS the best it can be, so as you're reading this, think of the amazing work of not only the co-heads of the department Mrs Eacott, Mrs Casling, but also of Ms Klyuyeva, Mr Cooper, Mr Pack, Luke Montgomery, and all of the peripatetic music teachers who come in every week to teach students.

Opera Trip

Several students from years 10 to 12 had the pleasure of attending the department trip to watch the opera "The Marriage of Figaro" which tells the story of two servants who want to get married but are being stopped by their employer. Here's what some students who were on the trip had to say:

"The 3 and a half hour play started at 7 and followed the life of Figaro who was trying to get married to Susanna, but endless complications got in the way. The play features moments of comedy as Figaro must navigate through the ulterior motives of the count. This was my first time seeing an opera and while it did run late into the night with small seats, it was an enriching experience for me."

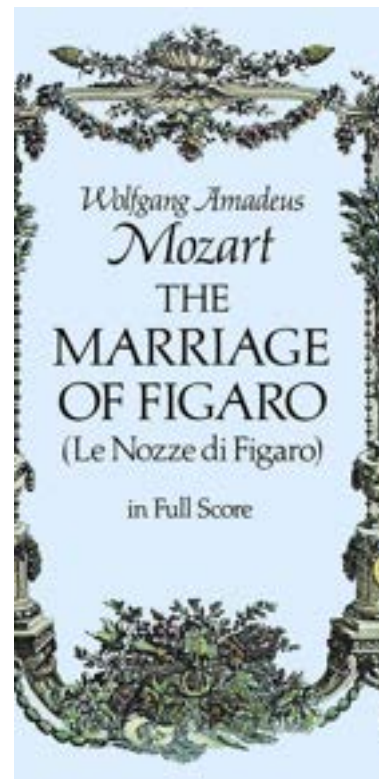
- Raphael Swaroop, Year 10

"I went into the National Opera House feeling worried that the show would be boring and that I might fall asleep in my seat. However, I came out of the building with my perspective completely changed. Like others on the trip, this was the first time I'd seen an opera, let alone set foot in an opera house, and the grandness of the theatre with its high ceilings and gilded balconies felt surreal. The performers' ability to project their voices over the orchestra was very impressive, and the slapstick comedy of the show made it extremely fun to watch. For a first experience, I thoroughly enjoyed the opera, and hope to go again sometime."

- Emily Chan, Year 10

"The music trip to watch the Marriage of Figaro was really fun. It was great to go up to London with classmates and friends to watch the opera, and I had a really nice time. It was also a good opportunity to talk to other people that I wouldn't usually talk to that are interested in music/the music department at school."

-Zac Stewart, Year 12



Performances

We've had two main concerts in school this term - the first of which was Jazz & Curry Evening back in February. This was a great opportunity for the school's several jazz ensembles to perform and show off their talents on a night dedicated only to them, instead of them being placed alongside the rest of the school's music groups. Big Band, Junior Jazz, and Improv Group, run by Mr Pack and Luke Montgomery, feature some of the school's very best, and it's a joy to see students encouraged to have their own solos in shows at schools. They played 'Mas Que Nada', 'Play That Funky Music' and one year 11 student, Ella Tyler, beautifully sang with Big Band.

More recently, our annual Spring Concert was held on the 25th of March, the theme this year being Music for Dance. I would venture to say that this year was one of the best, with an incredibly impressive range of music from all of our groups. Symphony Orchestra performed an amazing medley of songs from the Saturday Night Fever soundtrack, including hits like 'How Deep Is Your Love?' and 'More Than A Woman', as well as the traditional hymn 'Lord of the Dance'. Junior choir brought many mums in the audience to tears with their rendition of 'A Thousand Years' by Christina Perri. My personal favourite was Samba Group, who took a small step away from what they traditionally have performed, and it sounded absolutely amazing. And despite messing up some of our words, Senior Choir managed to pull through with our performances of 'September' and 'You Can't Stop The Beat' from Hairspray.

Additionally, our Chamber Choir was invited to sing at the Spring Sing Choir Festival in Eltham, which featured 3 community choirs and two school chamber choirs. This was a great display of talent in the local area, and we were all blown away by the talents of those we saw, just as they were pleasantly surprised to see us young people perform!

Next term..

Alongside all of this, the music department has been hard at work with rehearsals for the musical this year, The Hunchback of Notre Dame, with performances in the week starting in the week beginning 30th June. Additionally, we have Jazz & Pizza Evening in July, which is sure to have lots of not only jazz, but of acapella and choir as well. Starting next term, we will be rehearsing for the Music Tour which is in Prague this year, which unfortunately means most ensembles will pause until September - so from the Music Department, have a great Summer and see you next at Christmas 2025!!

Bexley Young Musician of the Year

Francis Montanari Brown, a student in year 12, was nominated for the title of Bexley Young Musician of the Year 2025, and after performing playing saxophone in front of judges and an audience, he beat seven other finalists and won the title, which came with a trophy which is to have his name engraved on it. This was an absolutely tremendous achievement, and everybody at the music department (and all of his friends!) have been so impressed with his hard work and determination in music. I asked Francis a few questions to find out more about this terrific honour.

What did you have to do to prepare for the night of your performance?

Once I found out I was nominated, I had to prepare 8 minutes worth of repertoire, which consisted of 2 pieces. John Williams' 'Escapades' from the film 'Catch Me If You Can, and a jazz variation on 'Paganini'. I practised with my accompanist Mr Cooper in the month leading up to it. On the night, along with 7 other finalists, we performed one at a time in front of a panel of 3 judges and an audience, which included friends and family. Then, after all the performances, the winner was announced, and I went up on stage to accept the award.

How does it feel to be honoured with such an impressive title?

I honestly didn't think I would get as far as being nominated, let alone winning. I hadn't even told any of my friends about the night because I didn't want them to feel bad for me if I lost. On the night I was in absolute disbelief, and couldn't fully process it until the next day. I will wear the title with pride, as I'm sure all of my fellow musicians who achieved this award have done, and I am beyond grateful to be remembered forever as a winner - I will remember the event and the process for years to come.

What does the future hold for Francis and music?

In truth, I have no idea what awaits me in the future, only that I'll continue to play, perform and compose music, in whatever form that may be. This time last year, I was hardly confident in my singing ability, but since joining Senior and Chamber choir, I feel as though I've unlocked a new talent and skill that I was previously unaware of. Additionally, I've had to learn how to play a bass clarinet for school, which shows how I'm constantly having to build on my musical knowledge and that I'm not relying on what I already know. From when I started learning my first instrument at the age of 7, I have had a passion for music that has only grown since, and shows no signs of stopping.

A huge congratulations to Francis for all of his efforts within music. As his friend, I am personally very proud of him, and even from an outside perspective, it is undeniable how impressive this feat is, and I implore you to congratulate Francis on this achievement.

Well done.

BGS SPORTS PREFECTS

This month at BGS has been filled with exciting celebrations and meaningful reflections, as highlighted in the articles written by the Sports Prefect on Neurodiversity Week, Culture Week, and International Women's Day. The articles showcased the school's commitment to inclusivity, diversity, and empowerment, capturing the vibrant spirit of each event. Neurodiversity Week emphasised the importance of understanding and embracing different ways of thinking, fostering a more supportive school environment. Culture Week brought the community together through food and traditions, celebrating the rich diversity within BGS. International Women's Day honoured the achievements of women, inspiring students to advocate for equality and recognize the impact of female role models. These events and the Sports Prefect's insightful articles reflect the positive and progressive initiatives that have made this month a truly remarkable one at BGS.



Influential Women in Sport: Roberta "Bobbi" Gibbs

By Isabelle

Roberta "Bobbi" Gibbs, born November 2nd 1942, was the first woman to ever run the entire Boston Marathon - however, if you were to search who the first ever woman to run the Boston marathon was, the name Kathrine Switzer would appear. This is because Gibbs was unable to register for the marathon, simply because she was a woman: "Women are not physiologically capable of running a marathon." Those were the exact words that Gibbs received in response to her official entry to run the 1966 Boston Marathon. However, Gibbs refused to give up - she was going to run that marathon. She began quietly training for the marathon in 1964, with little to no knowledge on what it took to run a marathon. And so, in 1966, she entered the Boston marathon disguised as a man. She expected the men around her to throw her out of the race when she took off her hood, but they said they would not let anyone remove her.

And so, Bobbi Gibbs became the first woman to run the Boston marathon. This paved the way for Switzer, who officially applied and ran the marathon in 1967. The bravery demonstrated by Bobbi Gibbs is representative of women across the world who are taking steps towards gender equality.

Neurodiversity within sport

By Tolani and Henry

Neurodiversity week was on the 17th-23rd March 2025. It is a very important week within our school community as we have several members who are neurodivergent. Several sports athletes are neurodivergent but they don't allow that to hold them back from enjoying their sport.

One of the most notable athletes with neurodiversity is Michael Phelps, who is often credited to be the greatest Olympian to date, with 23 gold medals across his illustrious career. He was diagnosed with ADHD as a child and when it came to being in a classroom, Phelps often was seen to be struggling to pay attention, just like many other children with the same diagnosis. However, when it came to swimming, Phelps's energy and hyper-focus worked to his advantage. He was able to internalize the practices and competition routine like a meditative state that allowed him to obtain his God-like presence in the water. Phelps has advocated for his accomplishments to lessen stigma against neurodiversity in sports. He, above all, demonstrates that neurodiversity does not limit an individual and can in fact help them excel within the sporting world.



Another world class athlete who is neurodiverse is the gymnast Simone Biles. She was also diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) as a child. Many people would think that this would negatively impact her and her ability to perform. However, Biles uses it to her advantage, making the challenges into her weapon to become such a successful individual. The struggles that ADHD entails can be heightened in sports such as gymnastics, which demands precise movements and a significant amount of concentration. She struggled initially with her training however, Biles and her support system used her ADHD and used the traits to help her become a stronger athlete. She is the most decorated gymnast in history with 11 Olympic medals and 30 World Championship medals only at the age of 28 years.

Culture in Sport

By Jack Perkins and Marvel

Football is a deeply rooted part of culture in countries like Brazil, Argentina, Spain, England and Germany. It's more than just a game—it's tied to national identity as it is one of the most viewed and as well as played worldwide.

MMA is a huge part of countries such as Brazil as well as the USA. USA: The UFC, founded in 1993, transformed MMA into a mainstream sport, blending Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (BJJ), wrestling, and striking. The American culture of entertainment and spectacle helped MMA grow through promotions, trash talk

Basketball is one of the fastest-growing sports worldwide, with different countries shaping its style, fan culture, and significance. From streetball in the U.S. to the disciplined, team-oriented play in Europe and Asia, basketball reflects the values and traditions of each nation where it thrives. It was invented in 1891 by a man named Dr James Naismith and Streetball has become a huge part of culture, Urban areas, especially in cities like New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, have a strong streetball tradition, with legendary playground courts like Rucker Park shaping the game. Cricket is a major part of many cultures across the world, especially in Australia, UK and South Asia. The sport's cultural significance extends to the way it is celebrated, for local street games, to major test matches at grand stadiums in front of 90,000 people. Cricket unites people and combines and shapes local identities.

Rugby has a unique culture, structured around respect and fierce competition. Currently, World Rugby is represented by 133 members, each of which represents a national rugby union. Across these countries there are 50 million fans, with 8 million of these also playing rugby. Rugby values qualities like fair play, resilience and teamwork, creating a passionate global following.



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Tennis contains lots of cultural heritage and tradition. The sport is known for its emphasis on etiquette and respect, promoting key values. Tennis players represent their countries with pride, while competing in major tournaments. At the minute there are around 3600 professional tennis players, which represents 113 different countries. Also, tournaments like Wimbledon are rich in traditions, such as Strawberries and Cream and wearing white attire.



Arguments for and against the existence of a Higher Power

BY SAFAA ABDUL AZIZ, Y7

Only seven per cent. That's the proportion of atheists in the world, which means 93% of humans believe in some sort of higher power. Clearly, the idea of a God appeals to the majority of humans. But why? What is it about believing in a higher power that humans find so attractive and compelling? Or, could it be that the masses have been misled by religious leaders hitherto? Why do people choose to believe (or not believe) in a higher power?

Argument for the existence of God

One of the most successful theories which argues for the existence of God is the 'Cosmological Argument'. There are two forms of it; one based on 'motion' and one based on 'cause'. The word cosmological means to do with the cosmos, or universe... basically everything. These principles were developed by Thomas Aquinas (1225 - 1275).

“*Aquinas said that the First Cause must be God.*”



Motion: the action or process of moving or being moved. For example, everything in the world is moving, from the Earth spinning or a football rolling towards a goal. This means that someone or something must have started it all to get things moving. The thing that ignited the motion must be something that doesn't move or change itself. If it did move, we would need something more to explain why it's moving. Therefore, Aquinas came to a conclusion - an Unmoved Mover. That would be something that started all the movement and change we see in the world, but is not moving; Aquinas claimed that the Unmoved Mover must be God.

Cause: a person or thing that gives rise to an action, phenomenon, or condition. Aquinas stated that e-v-e-r-y-t-h-i-n-g we see has been 'caused'. An example that an oak tree you see has been caused by an acorn that grew into an oak tree. But the acorn you see has been caused by an oak tree, because it grew from an oak tree. Now we see a chain of 'cause' and effect. Oak tree, acorn, oak tree, acorn, oak tree...

Consequently, at some point, every chain of cause and effect must have been set off. This starting point must have been a cause that didn't need to be caused. This is because if it did need to be caused, we would then need to ask what caused that. As a result, we come to the First Cause, something that caused all other things to exist. Including the universe itself. Again, Aquinas said that the First Cause must be God.

Some religious arguments for God's existence:

At a time when the science of Astronomy was still primitive, the expansion of the universe was described in the quran: We built the universe with 'great' might, and We are certainly expanding 'it'(quran 51:47) The fact that the universe is expanding was discovered in the last century. Even the renowned physicist Stephen Hawking in his book 'A Brief History of Time' wrote, "The discovery that the universe is expanding was one of the great intellectual revolutions of the 20th century." Therefore, the Quran mentioned the expansion of the universe even before the invention of the telescope!

The universe isn't empty; we can be sure that the things we perceive with our senses exist. We can explain the existence of these things in one of three ways: (1) All things are eternal and exist necessarily, (2) Nothing is eternal and exists necessarily, (3) Some things are eternal and exist necessarily, but some things are not. According to Maimonides, a Jewish philosopher, the first explanation is wrong: we see things come into existence one moment but perish at another. The second case is also wrong. If nothing was permanent, it's possible that everything might perish and nothing takes its place. Maimonides objected that the idea of an empty universe is absurd. So a necessary Being is needed to make sure that the universe doesn't become empty. The Being can't derive its existence from an external source, because if it did, its existence would no longer be necessary; it would owe its existence to something else. Therefore, the necessary Being must be independent of anything else. Maimonides thought that it's impossible for two things each to exist independently: they would have to share a common nature or essence - independent existence. To the degree they shared it, they would be part of a larger whole and no longer independent. Maimonides therefore concluded that only one Being derives its existence from itself, God. (Judaism).

Argument against the existence of God

On the other hand, some could argue that God is non-existent. There's no possible experiment people could perform that would prove or disprove God's existence. Russell's Teapot: Bertrand Russell admitted that it might be impossible to disprove God's existence, but remained an atheist. He pointed out that there might be a teapot floating around somewhere in space - you can't disprove its existence - and yet, since you can't see it, you would sensibly conclude that there is no such teapot because there's no evidence. In the same way, some argue that there is no clear-cut, convincing evidence of God's existence, therefore, the most rational thing to do is to assume that God doesn't exist. Another factor is multiplicity: since the Gods/Goddesses of various religions vary widely in their characteristics, only one of these religions, or none, can be correct.



Some more commonly-accepted arguments against God's existence:

The Problem Of Evil: Because evil exists, some believe that God can't be all-powerful, all-knowing and loving and good at the same time. **Pain:** As God allows pain, disease and natural disasters to exist, he can't be all-powerful, loving and good in the human sense of these characteristics.

Injustice: Pre-planned futures aren't given out on the basis of honour or (state where all things are equal). They're set apart and given out randomly, or on the way of thinking/basic truth/rule of "to him who has, will be given, and from him who has not will be taken even that which he has." So it follows that God can't be all-powerful and all-knowing and also just in the human sense of the word.

Simplicity: since God is invisible, and the universe is no different than if he did not exist, it's simpler to assume that he does not exist. Another view atheists take is that religious people don't appear to trust in God either: the followers of religion claim that God is their Saviour and who they put their trust in; if that really is the case then why do theists have insurance, look left and right before crossing a road, take trips to a doctor? Wouldn't a quick prayer to God solve everything? No, an atheist concludes, those followers of religion don't ask God for help and guidance because they don't trust in God because God doesn't exist.





HEAVY HUGS: OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

At the start of this school year, we were fortunate to be invited to the Young Enterprise competition. Every year, Young Enterprise runs a national program that gives students hands-on experience in building a business from the ground up. Participants form a team, develop a product or service, and manage everything from production to finance and sales. The program helps young entrepreneurs build essential skills like teamwork, leadership, and financial management, preparing them for future careers while fostering innovation and creativity.

Our Mission

From the very beginning, we knew that we wanted to make an impact on our community. Whilst sharing experiences and ideas, it was surprising to discover that many of us had struggled with the exact same challenges throughout our time in school predominantly, that was dealing with anxiety.

Anxiety and stress are tough to manage.

Often, it may feel like a sign of weakness, leading many to hide their struggles, even though these feelings are completely natural. Most people resort to burying what they're feeling and hoping that it will go away, but the truth is that that will only make it worse.

That's why we created a weighted teddy bear that blends comforting softness with gentle pressure stimulation, helping to ease anxiety and provide a sense of calm.

With Heavy Hugs, we've created a comfortable and reassuring weighted teddy bear. This combined softness and gentle pressure stimulation helps to provide comfort, reduce anxiety, and offer a sense of calm and security. It's similar to a weighted blanket, where deep pressure stimulation convinces the brain that it's in a place of safety, but with a cuter face.

Spitalfield's Market

Our journey kicked off at Spitalfields Market on February 26th, where we had the opportunity to showcase our weighted teddy bears and engage with customers while meeting other Young Enterprise teams. It was an amazing experience, where we got a real-world taste of business and developed skills such as how to interact professionally with customers. However, the highlight of the day was seeing the joy our stall brought to passers-by and the conversations we had with many interesting people.

At the end of the day, after seeing all the amazing things that other groups were doing, we are proud to say that we won the title of 'Best Product' at YE Spitalfield. Winning 'Best Product' at Spitalfields Market was a proud moment, recognizing the hard work and dedication we've put into creating a product that makes a real difference. We are very grateful for this opportunity to develop lifelong skills which has only been possible with the YE organisation and the constant help and support from Mrs Harris of BGS.



WHAT'S NEXT FOR HEAVY HUGS?

Final Thoughts

Through our journey with Young Enterprise so far, our team has learned invaluable skills in teamwork, problem solving, and business management. From product design to marketing and sales, every step has been a learning experience that has helped us grow both professionally and personally. Winning 'Best Product' at Spitalfields was an incredible achievement, but more importantly, seeing the positive impact of our weighted teddy bears has been truly rewarding. As we continue to develop new designs and prepare for upcoming events, we're excited about what's ahead.

We're just getting started, and we'd love for you to be part of our journey. Follow us, visit us at our upcoming events, and help us spread the word as we continue working to bring comfort to those who need it most!

Heavy Hugs on TikTok

Instagram (@heavy.hugs)



BGS BUZZ

SEE YOU

IN THE

SUMMMER!