



# Bexley Grammar School Christmas Magazine 2015

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### **Merry Christmas from the Editors!**

*We hope you enjoy this 2015 edition of the BGS School Magazine, showing some of the highlights of this term, as well as contributions on a number of topics. If you would like to contribute to the Magazine for the Easter issue, please email a member of the Magazine Team or Mrs Johnson.*

*We would like to say thank you to everyone who contributed and wish you all a Happy New Year for 2016!*

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### **Mr Elphick's Christmas Message**

Welcome to the Christmas edition of the BGS magazine! I am delighted to welcome Mrs Johnson as our new Editor-in-Chief and would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mr Griffin for his years of dedication to this excellent publication. He has grown a wonderful team of students who will carry on his work under Mrs Johnson's leadership.

As the Autumn Term draws to a close, we look back over these vital first weeks and months of the academic year. Our new Year 7 students are now well settled into the life of the school and by half term their parents had met form tutors, attended a Music Concert involving every Year 7 student and enjoyed a BBQ here in school. Similarly, in the Sixth Form, about one hundred students joined our own students from many local schools and, together, quickly established themselves as a strong Year 12 group, including the largest IB cohort ever.

This is also the term where the whole recruitment process begins again. We held inspiring, vibrant and successful Open events for prospective Year 7 students and later, prospective Year 12 students, the latter leading to a dozen on-line applications by the end of the first evening and what looks like a record number of applications by the December deadline (over 850)!

Meanwhile, the rest of the school engaged in the plethora of activities typical of what we manage to cram into a term: visits, residential trips, conferences, two ECM days, International Week and, of course, a range of House events. The participation levels in House events are a real cause for celebration: we have had several sports events, the Harvest-box competition, cookery, and of

course, the hotly contested Drama and Music competitions. I am so proud of the talent, ingenuity and commitment of so many students.

We have held Parents' Evenings for Year 13, Year 11 and Year 8. We held our second 'No Pens Wednesday' to support our drive in Literacy, focusing on speaking and listening skills for a day, rather than writing. As this magazine goes to virtual press, our Year 11 and Year 13 IB students are taking their mock examinations before a well-deserved break.

The Drama production of 'Peter Pan', as promised, was magical! Mr Otley, supported by Ms Gabriel, directed a team of students to produce a festive celebration of swashbuckling fantasy which involved some carefully choreographed sword fighting and impressive flying (lifts). The imaginative staging enabled pirates, mermaids, Indians and fairies to come to life. It was wonderful to see our older students working alongside the next generation of thespians to produce such a memorable production. Thank you and congratulations to all.

I hope to see many of you at the Christmas Concert on the evening before we break up for the festive season. Have a restful Christmas break with family and friends and may I wish you every blessing in 2016.





## The Christmas Production- Peter Pan

On Friday the 4th of December, we were lucky enough to go to see the school's production of Peter Pan. Going into it, we felt that we may not have the aptitude to critique a play, but, having seen it, we can both say we have loads to say about it. Our expectation of a school performance would not be one of terribly high production values but we were quite wrong in this regard, as everyone displayed aspects that you'd see in professional theatre.

We were introduced to the play by a cohort of narrators, each tasked with several lines at a time, given with a slightly forced, but definitely amusing, British accent. The narration was very well delivered and tied the play nicely together whilst giving it a feel of an actual professional-level production. The play goes on to have many key moments, interrupted by said narration which helps slow down an otherwise fast-paced story.

We are first introduced to Wendy (a young girl who befriends Peter); John and Michael (the middle and youngest children of the family); the parents, a slightly eccentric father and very caring mother; Nana, the children's carer and nurse who also happens to be a dog and the maid of the family Liza, who is to be referred to as more than one person for reasons of snobbery. Lastly, we finally meet Peter with his fairy companion Tinker Bell, who acquaints himself with the children in an effort to learn stories to take back to Neverland. Each character is represented faithfully to the original. Their childishness is immediately apparent. We particularly liked the portrayal of Michael, with his accusing "father" complaints causing some laughs. Peter himself was loud, charismatic and endearingly ignorant.



As the journey to Neverland continues, we get an idea of just how big the scope of the cast is. From the groups of fairies to dog

handlers, credit must be given for organising this complex variety of roles. People would disappear off one end of the stage as a fairy

and enter through the other end as a pirate. We spent a lot of time after the play wondering how difficult it must have been to tie together and praise is due to everyone involved for managing it in such an effective manner. Many different departments and people spent countless hours in an attempt to perfect their work. The amount of effort put into this was clearly visible.

Other major aspects we noticed included the lighting and music. If someone mentioned to you a mostly teenager run production you wouldn't expect lighting to be on any priority list. However, the way it was handled in Peter Pan was to a surprisingly high standard. Whenever there was any moment centred around one character, the spotlight was immediately on them. We particularly found this impressive, as characters were often all around the stage, sometimes on top of props and sometimes below, yet the lighting was crazily accurate. Whilst watching the action scenes with tons going on and an exciting soundtrack accompanying, it's often first nature to imagine what the original was like. Well, as it turns out, this assumption wouldn't even be correct as the entire score was composed for this performance. That was pretty astonishing to us due to the sheer length and virtuosity of the score. The music was a major asset to the play.

The rights to Peter Pan are owned by Great Ormond Street Hospital and they allowed our school to perform it if we fund-raised for them. The event was very charitable and this only adds to the long list of merits that needed to be directed towards this production. We are by no means qualified to judge a play of this level but we can honestly say we thoroughly enjoyed our time that evening and were glad we were given the opportunity to watch Peter Pan.

**DEEPESH MARWAHA AND HONGRUI ZHANG  
YEAR 12**





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## House Report

This term has seen a few changes in the way some of the House competitions are run. The House Sports competition fixtures have changed, mostly one session every half term, but one very busy session. The first one in September was for Junior, Intermediate and Senior Boys' Football and Girls' Basketball alongside the Junior and Intermediate Table Tennis. At the beginning of November, we had the Junior, Intermediate and Senior Girls' Netball and Boys' Touch Rugby running alongside the Junior and Intermediate Badminton. Both occasions went smoothly and a huge thank you to the PE department for organising these competitions. The Heads of House and House Captains helped with the running of the competitions; everyone has had to be extremely organised to field teams, umpires and managers for all these events at the same

time.

The House Music competition was on 18th November, having been moved from its usual February slot. As a result, the House captains had less time to prepare their entry following on so closely from House Drama in October. This year there were only 2 parts to the Music Competition: Choir and Headline Act, with the instrumental part being included as a requirement within the two sections. Despite the lack of preparation time, the judges commented that the standard this year was exceptionally high. Mrs Triggs and Miss

Swadkin were impressed by all the entries and the points awarded to all the Houses were very close this year. Wellman were victorious in both House Drama and House Music. They will have to decide which of their winning entries to perform for the House Showcase in March next year!

Intermediate Cookery was held in October with Mrs Sawyer, a former member of staff, coming into school to help judge the process, presentation and taste of the Victoria Sponge cakes that were made by all the teams; Prothero were victorious. The Harvest Box Challenge was won by Kirkman with the 'Kirkman Express' made from recycled materials just beating the Mabbs' Wizard into first place. The House Quiz was compiled and overseen by Mr Murray this year, E.L.V.I.S. was a big hit, (a computer robot quoting lyrics from songs!), thank you to him for sorting this out and making it an enjoyable competition. Collins were the winners.

This term has seen Johnson and Prothero jostle for first place as the competition progresses. At the time of going to press Johnson currently hold the top slot.

## MRS J SNELLING

## Jack Petchey Awards

The first three winners for this academic year's Jack Petchey Awards have now been chosen. The September winner, although voted on by Collins House was won by Madison Wright a member of Mabbs House.

She was chosen for: "being friendly, approachable and getting thoroughly involved in extra-curricular activities", one student wrote: "...there is never a day when she isn't smiling".

As well as this, Madison was an excellent support to many external students at the start of the new School Year, quietly checking in with them to see that they were ok when they were struggling, as well as being a practical support and directing them where to go at lesson time.



Sophie Chu was the October winner from Johnson. Sophie gives up her free time to volunteer at weekends and in school holidays to help support the elderly, keeping them company and helping out with general chores, such as assembling furniture. Sophie also volunteers at a British Heart Foundation charity shop.

James Green was chosen by Kirkman House for six years of contribution to House activities, his work as a House Captain, a great motivator, as well as getting thoroughly involved in a huge range of whole school events. He is respectful of others' ideas and is easy to talk to and he's always laughing! Through challenging times, he has remained an inspiration to the rest of the House. Their prize money has been used to buy costumes for the recent Peter Pan production, heart monitors for the PE department, a microwave for the 6th form Centre and to pay for the DJ at the 6th Form Prom next summer.

**MRS J SNELLING**

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### Battery Run: *Charity Run for Young Minds*



On Friday 27<sup>th</sup> November after school ended, my fellow sixth formers and I, along with some teachers, gathered together in Danson Park to complete a Battery Run.

This was in order to raise money to support the charity 'Young Minds', which provides resources for parents and carers worried about a child's mental health. Mental health is a subject which needs to be covered more in education, especially due to the amount of daily stress that young people face today. It is also important for parents to know how to deal with a child's mental health so both parent and child can benefit.

People walked, ran and cycled around the park in a variety of outfits. It was inspiring to see so many people from



Bexley Grammar coming together for this challenge to support such an important organisation. Afterwards, everyone gathered in the Sixth Form Centre for refreshments and to celebrate.

Overall, we ran 725km and raised over £1000, way above the target, thanks to sponsors from friends, family and teachers. This run would not have happened if it hadn't been for Romilly Bobby, James Martin and Hannah Araniello, who have all helped to increase the awareness of mental health by organising this brilliant event.

**RUBY OSBORNE YEAR 12**

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### Bexley Public Speaking Competition: First Place Finish

It was Thursday the 12<sup>th</sup>, and we shuffled nervously into the upmarket Bexley Civic Centre. We went to the front desk, collected our visitors' passes, and then went and sat down on the comfy green sofas, patiently awaiting the arrival of Our Beloved Leader – Mr. Husbands. As I watched Amy, Lara and Menaka frantically read and recite their lines I couldn't help but smile; I was the reserve, I didn't have to do anything. This initial feeling of relaxation was replaced, however, by that of unease as the other teams began to arrive.



I had never been much of a competitive person, but having witnessed all the work put into this speech – and believe me, there was a lot of work put in – I felt a burning desire to win.



Spirits were high as the competition began, the complimentary free water (very topical) and biscuits were definitely a nice touch. As we settled into our seats, our comfort was soon replaced by nervousness as the judges entered the room... and, soon enough, other schools began to give speeches. The competition, particularly from Chis and Sid, who gave an inspiring speech on the difference between the average British and Tanzanian life in regards to water, was very strong, and before long it was our turn to present. I, as the reserve, remained seated as Amy Lee, Lara and Menaka took the stage. Mr. Husbands and I were helpless now.

Lara provided a dramatic start, as she confidently called the judges "cold blooded killers" and 'fan-girled' over Matt Damon. The whole audience held their breath as Amy Lee, forever the wildcard, forgot her lines (unbelievable, I know), just as we have "forgotten the importance of water on Mars... no I mean Earth", but she recovered beautifully and within seconds the speech was flowing again perfectly. Menaka eloquently finished the speech, providing an enthusiastic look into the hidden wonders of rain clouds, and concluding on the line - 'we deserve to be more than just a splash in the cosmic pan.'

It was a rollercoaster to watch, with highs and lows, but within 15 minutes it was all over. It was impossible to call who had won, but I felt incredibly proud of my friends regardless – they'd given an entertaining yet important speech, and had performed fantastically. The interval contained more weak attempts at socialising, more free refreshments, and reassuring support from Mr. Husbands, but none of this could extinguish the nervous flames within our chest – we HAD to know who won!

At long last, after an exceptionally fun, entertaining talk from our glamorous hosts, Thames Water, the Judges returned, and the results began. "In second place..." We held our breaths. "Chislehurst and Sidcup" We exhaled. "In First Place...." "Bexley Grammar School!"

It was a fantastic evening, and I'd like to recommend to any younger years to try it when they get an opportunity (if you can, get the reserve spot, it's so easy).



Mr. Husbands really did tie the team together perfectly; he was the perfect leader. Also, Menaka, Lara and especially Amy Lee – who had the most to learn - tackled the challenge brilliantly. It was a brilliant event and I'm extremely glad I got to participate.

#### JOEY BEARD YEAR 12

### Bar Mock Trial Competition

Normally, no one would choose to attend the Inner London Crown Court on a snowy Saturday morning - but last Saturday was special. For the first time, Bexley Grammar School participated in the Citizenship Foundation's Bar Mock Trial: thirteen 6th form students tried one case of robbery and one of theft and deception in front of real judges in a real courtroom against other London schools.



Tomi Adeyefa, Sanjog Gharti-Chhetri, Mustafa Mohammed and Sam Sherr were outstanding as prosecuting and defence counsel (in correct

wigs and gowns); Dermot Cudmore, Delina Michael, Ope Ojo and Raman Rai were calm and convincing witnesses in the face of fierce cross-examination; Abu Garba and Roshan Htat were professional court officials; and Tim Etimiri, Jeyakrishna Jeyakumar and Kristine Tran acted as thoughtful jury members in cases run by other schools. However, this does not begin to describe the independent commitment, thought and teamwork which every member of the group has devoted to this project since the summer: everyone has practised in different roles, read more about the law, learnt their witness statements by heart and developed a great deal of understanding about how the law works.

We were helped by a practising barrister, John Robb of Essex Court Chambers, who devoted two afternoons to teaching the practice of advocacy, such as when one should not ask leading questions and when one very definitely should. He was a great help and a great encouragement, and said that our Mock Trial barristers were doing at least as well as qualified barristers do when they start out.

Although, sadly, we did not get to the final, the Bexley Grammar School won a moral victory - by winning all three of our cases in the heats. Mr Robb has given the school some of his old books about becoming a lawyer, and has promised to help us if we start a school Law Society. Students who are interested in joining: please contact Ms Stoddard.

**MS STODDARD**

## Trip Reports

### Surgical Skills Workshop at the Hunterian Museum

On the 18th November, 9 medically interested Year 12 students attended a half day surgical skills workshop at the Hunterian Museum, which was extremely useful and informative.



On arriving at the exhibit, we were engaged with the magnificent historical pieces and medical collection of artefacts and other objects of scientific anatomical importance. Objects ranging from the foetuses of marsupials to the skulls of Homo sapiens caught our eye especially. We then embarked on our surgeon led tour which started off with the group being led to a video room which demonstrated to us an insight into the different types of surgeries that surgeons underwent on a daily basis.

The first video demonstrated a coronary bypass, which improved blood flow and oxygen supply to the heart. Additionally, the next video presented the removal of a brain hernia, as a result of a tumour. The last video demonstrated an oesophagus surgery to stop an acid reflux.

These videos enabled us to see whether medicine is the right career for us, as the videos aren't for the faint hearted. Fortunately, we enjoyed watching the videos and found them very fascinating - we should be able to face open surgery.

After, we took part in a practical workshop where we had a chance to learn key basic surgical suturing skills and surgical knot tying techniques. This involved stitching up a dummy's wound and tying a knot. We are now aware that we need to work on our stitching skills! We were also given the chance to speak to working surgeons and find out useful information about medicine and, specifically, surgery as a career path in the future.

Overall, the trip to the Hunterian Museum increased our awareness of surgical techniques. It also enlightened us about some of the future procedures that we will have to undergo. We would like to take this time to thank Mrs. Stoddard and BGS for offering this great mind fulfilling occasion.

We advise any student interested in medicine to utilise this opportunity, if it is offered in the future. You will not regret it!

**OSAYUKI IGBINOBA & FABIAN AGUIGWO**  
**YEAR 12**



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## Pathology Workshop at the Hunterian Museum

On the 6th of November I went to a pathology workshop held at the Royal College of Surgeons. Upon arrival we decided to take a look around the museum, which was filled with



not only human anatomy but various other animals and species. There was a range from human foetuses to rat livers, all preserved from about 500 years ago when the museum first opened.

The workshop was based around discussing medical ethics. Before the workshop we were given a case study of a pregnant lady, Jane, whose boyfriend's grandfather had a genetic condition which caused him to be violent. For the rest of the workshop we had to decide whether Jane's unborn baby should be tested for the condition or not. For this we were put into groups of people who we probably would have never met before and began debating whether the baby should be tested. Along the way we also talked about other various issues that came up in pathology, such as if a patient is unable to give consent for a pathologist to take a tissue sample and the sample is needed urgently, can pathologists legally take the sample without his consent? After debating in our small groups we chose a spokesman for the group and met back in the small room where we voiced all of our opinions.

On the whole, the day was very enjoyable and I would definitely do it again. It was fun hearing different points of views on some controversial issues. I also learnt what Pathology is really about - diagnosing diseases from tissues, organs and bodily fluids.

**PRECIOUS OGUNDIRAN YEAR 12**



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## Year 8 Trip to the London Transport Museum

Eleven of us were lucky enough to go to the London Transport Museum and I learnt lots of things. We went on a

stamper trail and I managed to get all 13 stamps completed and learnt a lot at each section. We did a quiz as we walked around the museum. I found out information like, in 1901, the first electric railway opened. Also there was lots of other transport through the ages like underground trains, and air trains.



Afterwards we did some fun things like driving a game train, exploring and going in different buses. We all then had lunch together.

The trip was fabulous and I hope to go on another day trip soon

Did you know that in WW2 London transport was nearly completely destroyed and buses were first introduced in the 19th century? They used to have 2-3 horses pulling a variety of transport with a driver sometimes with only 1 passenger.

**DANIEL NGENEBO YEAR 8**



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## Year 7 History Visit to Rochester

On the 3rd and 6th of November, two Year 7 groups went to Rochester to visit the castle and cathedral, as a part of our History studies. We are studying the Battle of Hastings. Harold Godwinson (an Englishman) claimed the throne after Edward the Confessor died, even though Edward had promised it to two other



people, as well as Harold. The Duke of Normandy, William, sailed over the English Channel, to claim England for his own. The two armies battled at Hastings in the year 1066, with the Normans victorious.

We went to Rochester to see the castle, which was built on William's orders. The castle keep was made of stone, and half of it had been demolished in battle. It was built shortly after William had conquered the English. In the cathedral, we saw stained-glass windows and how the Normans had changed the architecture, to fit their fancy. We also learnt about the laws of this time, the cultures and how the monarch treated their citizens. At the castle, we climbed lots of stairs, whilst exploring the passages and hallways.

We could see over Rochester – it was amazing! It must have been scary to live through those times, and I am glad that I did not have to. All of Year 7 really enjoyed their first trip and we would like to thank the teachers who came with us.

**MADDY ELDRED YEAR 7**

## Year 11 History Visit to Berlin

During the half term break (from Saturday till Tuesday) a group of GCSE history students, including myself, went to Berlin to further our understanding of Germany during the Nazi regime and the Cold War period.

During our first day we spent eight hours travelling to our hostel and then we travelled to the East Side Gallery, which had the remnants of the Berlin Wall. This was particularly interesting as there were various artworks covering its entirety and whilst I didn't always understand the "meaning" behind it, it was brilliant to see.

On Sunday we were lucky enough to have a three-hour guided tour of some of the key places around Berlin, including The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, the Berlin Konzerthaus and ending at the incredible Brandenburg Gate. In the evening we got the chance to stand on the rooftop terrace of the Reichstag and look down on the streets we'd walked earlier in the day with the whole place lit up. Despite the cold weather it looked magnificent.



The following day we got the opportunity to walk around the Sachsenhausen Memorial and Museum which was a former Nazi concentration camp and we visited the House of the Wannsee Conference (where Nazis met to decide the Final Solution), this was a sombre moment for us all to think about what would have happened in the camp and in the house but at the same time it was surreal to be in those places.



For the final day we went to the Stasi Museum and the Topography of Terror Museum, both were focused on the ways that terror was used throughout East Germany and Nazi Germany. Personally, I found this to be the most interesting part, as things that I'd never been aware of before were brought to my attention and it was incredible to see and learn the extent that both the regimes went to in order to maintain power.

Overall, I would recommend this trip for everyone, it's incredibly informative and it's brilliant to visit places that have played such a huge part in modern history, if given the opportunity, I would definitely go again.

**ELEANOR JENKINS YEAR 11**



## Year 12 Geography fieldwork trip to Dorset



Between the 9th-12th October Year 12IB and A Level geographers embarked on an enriching trip to the Jurassic Coast, Dorset, on a trip which brought to life the very scenery we usually only witness in textbooks.

After arriving at the Townsend Centre, Swanage, we were greeted by Scott, a keen geographer, whose local expertise and insightful analysis were of great support throughout. We studied the river Swanbrook, the flood risk it posed and how, through river management techniques such as telemetry sensors, sluice gates and underground reservoirs, this risk could be mitigated. The river shall provide a useful case study for both IB and A Level students. The most memorable part of the trip was, without doubt, our visit to the coast. Here we were exposed to the astounding landforms of Durdle Door, Man O' War and Lulworth Cove. It was sublime. We even managed to bump into Countryfile, who were filming a Children in Need special. Miss Thurlow didn't hesitate to ask Ellie Harrison to speak to our group – Ellie encouraged us by explaining why Geography is a fantastic course to study at University.

As well as stunning landforms, the trip offered an opportunity to enrich our learning and develop case studies in the tranquil village of Worth Matravers and Putlake Farm, which has been diversified into an adventure farm. Feeding delirious goats and playing in the soft play area brought out the inner child in us all. We enjoyed our final evening at an authentic pizzeria.



Engaging geography, lovely weather and good company contributed to what was a very memorable field trip. I would like to take this opportunity to say a massive thank you to Miss Thurlow and Mr Elliott for organising and leading the trip. It is trips like these which contribute to the overall experience of BGS and create long lasting friendships and memories.



## SAM SHERR YEAR 12

### "Don Pasquale" - Music Department Trip

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of November, the GCSE and Sixth Form Music students headed to the Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury to watch a performance of the opera "Don Pasquale" by Giovanni Ruffini. For many, this was the first time they would have ever seen an opera, so everyone had mixed expectations.

The performance started with an overture from the Orchestra, which introduced many of the songs from the Opera – and was also used to introduce the main characters, through the use of a large, rotating set in the middle of stage, which would reveal and hide each person's room. We were then quickly dropped into the action.

The plot revolved around the elderly Don Pasquale, a wealthy old man looking to find a wife in a woman much younger than himself. After disinheriting his nephew, Ernesto, as he refused to marry since he was already in love, the trio of Ernesto, Norina (Ernesto's Lover), and Malatesta (Pasquale's Doctor) decide to teach Pasquale by having Norina disguise herself as Malatesta's sister, and marry him.





What follows is a story of deceit and love, expressed through slapstick comedy.

While the plot was a bit ridiculous, it was hard not to be captivated by the performers. Everyone on stage sounded amazing, showcasing the characters beautifully. Vocals would blend together perfectly, producing great harmonies with one another, complemented by the orchestral score beneath. The standout performance had to be Norina, who was able to hit, and sustain, notes that didn't seem possible.

Overall, it was a fantastic performance, and a brilliant chance to see a great Opera live.



#### AARON HARREX YEAR 12

#### 'Composition for a Screen' at the British Film Institute

On 7th October, the A level and IB Music students visited the British Film Institute on the Southbank to partake in an event about composing for the screen, which was run as part of the London Film Festival. Upon arrival we went into an auditorium where a panel of professionals in the film music industry (including John Altman – who arranged music for Titanic, as well as working on The Life of Brian and Goldeneye; and Vasco Hexel – composer and lecturer at the Royal College of Music) gave us an insight into their careers, and how they succeeded in the industry.

In the afternoon, we had two lectures from both Altman and Hexel. Hexel explained the reasoning behind composing for film, and showed us the impact music has on the way we see film today. Following this, Altman showcased a wide variety of different works,

and presented his thought processes behind them. Overall, we had a very insightful day where we were able to experience a whole other side of the film industry, see

the different pathways and choices made by some of the best in their field, and gain inspiration to further develop our own compositions.

#### AARON HARREX & DARCEY GILSON YEAR 12

#### Anthropology of Health in Africa- IB Anthropology trip to SOAS

On 10<sup>th</sup> November, our Social Anthropology class hopped on a train to SOAS for an afternoon programme on Anthropology of Health in Africa, organised by the London School of Health and Tropical Medicine. This was a series of informative sessions for students, led by researchers and anthropologists in the field. On arrival, we were pleasantly welcomed and introduced to the topic of Public Health in Africa by an anthropologist, Gemma, who had spent time in Kenya herself. Gemma discussed some of the theories of global health and how social factors impacted the management of illnesses in some African countries. What particularly struck us about Gemma's session was when she started relating her personal experiences in Kenya. We learnt about a man from the rural west of the country called Atomic, who despaired after finding out about his HIV status. Gaining an insight into the dreams, sufferings and individual experiences of an actual person was moving; it lent emotional understanding to the faceless facts and digits that we are so often used to when it comes to discussing illnesses and crises.

We later learnt about the Ebola outbreak in more detail, in a seminar led by another researcher, Fred. It was intriguing to better understand some of the cultural difficulties in dealing with the disease. The people living in the villages of various African countries often have different understandings about Ebola, which can cause conflict and disagreement with certain policies. In particular, we learnt that many were unhappy with the rule prohibiting the burial of the dead (one of the most significant rituals in some West African areas), a job assigned to the burial team appointed by the Ministry of Health. Honouring



the wishes of the dying is considered important amongst people in the region; health workers that do not carry these wishes out may cause family members to feel discomfort and that they may be somehow punished in future, as the price for not fighting for their sick relatives. Some regard the team with mistrust and fear, as relatives cannot help in the procedure and do not know what the team will do with the body. Families sometimes just risk washing the body and burying it, despite the potential dangers. We then discussed in groups how anthropologists could combat these challenges. Learning about these factors deepened our understanding and realisation of the complexity of the outbreak.

After lunch, an activity was held in the main hall where we were all gathered, and we were given a situation called "Friends like how?" in which relationship ethics were brought up and questioned. The circumstance was that the informant had provided the anthropologist with information in confidence, expecting it not to be revealed to anyone else. However, this piece of information had the potential to have a significant impact on the anthropologist's data collection. The question arises – should the anthropologist release the information, or not? Much debate ensued and I can say for sure that it was an opportunity to hear arguments and points of view that I would not have expected when considering the story. Even more intellectually enriching was the question and answer session that took place with the two anthropologists that had worked with us earlier in the day, and two others. It was incredibly fascinating listening to how they found that they wanted to be anthropologists and the funny stories that came along with them, as well as learning about the ins and outs of their profession and how much they've enjoyed their journey. One of them said that she tried as hard as she could to stay away from anthropology as a career choice, but, through many ups and downs, ended up there anyway; she also said she was 'enjoying it more than ever', and that 'it was the best choice she could have made'.

Many thanks to SOAS and LSHTM for hosting these wonderfully eye-opening workshops, and special thanks to Miss Contini for, after much difficulty, securing us all places, as well as giving us constant encouragement throughout the day and keeping our spirits high!

To learn more about the Anthropology course, careers in Anthropology, or how Anthropology can help you in your future career plans, then be sure to attend the annual London Anthropology Day held on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2016 at the British Museum's Clore Centre.

**ASHITA CHAWLA AND DANIYA  
BAIGUZHAYEVA YEAR 12**

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### Year 10 ECM Day



The Ai Weiwei Exhibition was a very different experience, the art created by Ai Weiwei had a very detailed and emotional story behind it. The exhibition had eight rooms, each room had different pieces of art, created by Ai Weiwei, describing or referring to different parts of his life. One of the most interesting pieces, in my opinion, was a large chandelier-like structure; there were strings with crystals hanging off of the rims of bikes placed over one another. Another interesting piece was when Ai Weiwei created miniature rooms, displaying a part of his life when he was in prison.



After the Exhibition, we walked over to Hyde Park, it was very cold and was raining. However, when we got to Winter Wonderland we didn't really care. There were decorated food stalls, Christmas styled rides and stalls where you could get souvenirs. Music was playing in every section of the park and overall it was a very joyful atmosphere. After an hour at Hyde Park, we met up and walked back to the station and took the train back to school. Overall I think the day was very eventful and interesting, many people came in the next day talking about how much fun they had.

## Language Department News

### 6th Form Japan Day

On the 5th of November 2015, 4 IB Japanese students, including myself, went to the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London to attend their 6th form Japan day, hosted by the Japan Society of the UK. The day was organised by SOAS to aim to inform and educate students on studying Japanese at a higher level.

The day began with a speech by Susumu Takiyama, the managing director and Editor-in-Chief for Nikkei Europe. Nikkei are famously known for buying out the Financial Times. It was a real privilege to listen to someone in such a high position and hear his take on international relations and the possibilities for us to get involved with them.

We were split into groups to give us the opportunity to interact with other schools.

Our first workshop was a calligraphy taster by Yukiko Ayres, a Dojin in the Nihon Shodouin Calligraphy Association. Admittedly I don't know exactly what that is, but I'm given to understand it's a very prestigious title. The session itself was surprisingly intuitive, yet still incredibly hard to get a nice looking result. Art was never a strong point of mine but I'm proud that I managed to produce relatively nice Japanese characters in a calligraphic style. There was also the kid that spilled ink on himself which was definitely a high.

Our next workshop was titled Yosokai Soren. This was a popular style of Japanese dance. The first half of the session was a brief overview of the history of the dance and the instructor's experience in learning it in a rural Japanese village. We then went on to try it by ourselves. The dance was simple enough and we got to wear cool jackets and use shakers. Whilst I felt like I was doing it alright, I'm sure to any outside viewer it looked like a group of teenagers frantically flailing around trying to stay in time with a very peculiar Japanese folk song.

We then spent the next portion of the day in a lecture hall. Many lecturers from different universities basically advertised their universities. Most were fairly simple explanations of the courses they offered and the area they were situated in. Except the guy from Oxford. He decided to spend his speaking time subtly hinting at why every other University was a poor life choice. He was by far the best.



After lunch we returned to the hall to listen to Professor Hiroshi Yoshida from the Ritsumeikan Centre for Game studies to learn about what he researched and the areas of study possible at Ritsumeikan University. To be perfectly honest I didn't understand what his research was about but it was related to the aesthetics of video games and he played many video game clips to explain his points, with which one can't really go wrong. The next thing on our schedule was our last workshop: Origami with Steve Biddle. Steve has appeared on multiple TV shows and produced many Origami books. He was extremely friendly and the whole workshop was just a relaxed experience. The main thing I took from it was that people are quite inept when it comes to simple instructions on how to fold paper. We made boxes, jumping frogs and a butterfly.





The day ended with a 30 minute talk from Matilda Smith, a final year BA Japanese student who studied in Japan. The talk was about her experience there and what she's gone on to do after. The main point I gleaned from it was that the food is great and everyone has to try it. In terms of work, she described it as very relaxed with lots of fun activities and events the University plans for you. We were let out after that. The day as a whole was a very educational and enjoyable experience and I would recommend to anyone aspiring to study Japanese after school. The main negative was that the Subway at the train station was closed, which was a pretty big shame but you can't win them all. The event started at 10 AM and finished at 4 PM and is held once a year at SOAS.

**DEEPESH MARWAHA YEAR 12**

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### Review of Europa Town

On Friday 27th November, Bexley Grammar School held its annual Europa Town event for Year Six pupils from two different local primary schools.

When the schools first came in, they were given a passport to fill out in order to get into Europa Town, and after going through passport control and answering a few questions, they were allowed into the area to shop and eat and speak lots of French!

Teachers and Bexley Grammar School students worked hard together to set up the mock town, which was comprised of a doctor's surgery, cinema, patisserie and ice cream bar, with real ice cream and croissants. The BGS students were friendly and really encouraged the children to speak in French and get properly involved, and the children loved being rewarded with stickers and bookmarks. The clothes shop was a firm favourite and the fashion choices showed some interesting combinations.

As well as that, the Year 12 language leaders put on a puppet show of 'Goldilocks and The Three Bears', which was entirely in French with a script written by the Year 12 Students. Even though we had such a short space of time to practise the show, we managed to pull it together

and give a show that the Year Six students really enjoyed. With each round we really grew comfortable with our roles, allowing the event to run smoothly and really engage the students - even though the performance was in French, they understood it really well. All in all, the day was a success, with everything turning out well and the primary school students having a fun and educational experience.

**JUSLEEN GILL YEAR 12**

## PE Department News

The PE department has started a new series of **Sport Science** lessons, for students in KS3, this year. With the popularity of Sport and Exercise Health Science at IB level, we are exploring ways of helping students develop their understanding of the subject, and showing them how an inquisitive, scientific mind can help to answer performance-related questions for athletes. Students in Year 7 and Year 8 have been learning about physiology, psychology and biomechanics, and have started carrying out their first investigations, since the beginning of this half term. 7JCM looked at the correlation between the height and speed of an athlete, and conducted a very successful investigation, with plenty more fantastic ideas to come – we are all looking forward to the next one!





Our sports teams are off to a good start this academic year, with many students attending training, even in the harshest of weather conditions. The new **Athletics Club** has been particularly impressive, organised by Hannah Araniello (Year 12) and Ethan Akanni (Year 12), and had a very good turnout despite the pouring rain. Many thanks to them.

A new **Dance Club** was recently started by some other Year 12 students – Kirsty Grant and Kitty Williams – where Year 7 and Year 8 students had the chance to trial a variety of dance styles, over a six week period, this half term. Many lower-school students enjoyed the club, and worked hard to improve their creative ability.

Hope Hui and Lisa Clinch (both in Year 12) have also taken over the **Girls' Basketball Club**, which takes place on a Friday morning. The club has been well attended and the coaches have focused on developing some key basketball skills, such as shooting, dribbling and passing.

In **Netball**, we have had a record number of students attending training this term, from across all year groups. The Year 9, 10, and 11 Bexley League has started with some solid performances from everyone, especially those in Year 10 and Year 11, who remain unbeaten. The Year 11 Girls won the Bexley Borough Netball Tournament – a superb result for the

talented team, who were against very strong opposition from local schools. The Year 10 team were just pipped to the post in their Bexley tournament, very narrowly coming 2<sup>nd</sup>, due to goal difference.

In **Football**, all year groups have shown great dedication and commitment to training this term, as per usual, and have performed well as a result. The Year 9 Football Team is through to the next round, in both cup competitions, under the management of Mr Martin.

It's been a great start to the 2015-2016 football season, for the Girls' Football Team. At present, they are at the top of the Erith Seven-a-side Football League, having beaten Welling (7-2) and drew with Harris Academy (3-3). The older girls have also beaten Greenwich New School, in an eleven-a-side friendly. Training continues every Monday, with a lot of girls attending.

In November, a Girls and Boys team (from Year 10) were entered into the Bexley Schools Badminton tournament. Both teams did extremely well, winning the majority of their matches, and thus being crowned champions of Bexley. The two squads now go on to represent Bexley schools in a London tournament. Good luck guys!

Some students in Year 10 attended a trip to the **University of Kent**, in October, and displayed a huge amount of effort for a **Sports Science Project**, working in partnership with the university. A presentation evening took place in late November. Well done to: Daniel Birch, Katie Britton, Megan Jenkins, Codie Jones, Sam Lacey, Robyn Lisle, James Pullen, Jake Rodrigues, Mia Shepherd, and Lewis Stickings.

Our initial visit from Hannah Beharry (Female Boxing Champion) also took place, for the **Sky Sports "Living for Sport" Project**. Hannah gave a practical boxing master-class, to our Year 10 and Year 11 PE GCSE groups, and provided us with inspirational background stories, aimed at motivating the pupils.



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## Human Rights: Write for Rights

Year 8s are currently learning about Human Rights in FBCS, and situations where they are being breached. We took part in *Write for Rights*, an Amnesty International initiative which aims at showing solidarity to a number of people across the world, whose human rights have been terribly violated.

This initiative consists in sending them a personal message of support, to let them know they're not alone and to encourage them not to give up hope.

This photo shows us year 8s holding the cards we've written and drawn ourselves.



**8LMO**

Each group gave a short presentation on their assigned person and read out their message in their card. It was very upsetting to learn about some of the awful ways people have been treated, but inspiring to see how strong and brave some people are.



**A SELECTION OF THE YEAR 8 CARDS**

We hope to bring some hope and support to the people receiving the cards, and to let them know we are with them.

**KATIE HENDERSON 8NEA**





# #PARIS

BY: Charlie Janusch 7EKR

**On Friday night, in Paris, 8 terrorists, men filled with hatred, working for IS, caused carnage all over Paris. They did it for, what they called revenge.**

On Friday 13<sup>th</sup> of November 2015, men filled with hatred decided to kill innocent people. They had been planning these attacks for a long time. During three separate attacks, using high-powered guns and suicide bomb vests, 8 terrorists wreaked carnage on the French capital. All the terrorists died the same night. IS, also known as ISIS or Islamic state, have admitted to causing it. The group mainly based in Syria and Iraq, killed around 130 people and injured around 300 people. France has declared an emergency and 1500 soldiers are now helping police across the city.

1 group of terrorists drove a car near bars and restaurants firing out of the windows at people, eating and drinking.

Another group, tried to enter the stadium, where France and Germany were playing a football match. The French president was at the match. Although they had tickets they were, fortunately, not allowed in the stadium. Realising they wouldn't get in they blew themselves up.

The last group, entered a theatre called the Bataclan, where an American rock band, "Eagles of Death Metal," were playing. They shot many of the concertgoers and took many hostages. When the police entered, the terrorists shot at them then blew themselves up. Around 90 people were killed and more than 100 were injured.

POTENT QUESTIONS ARE: Why were innocent people killed? Who are the terrorists? Should we be afraid? What will we do now?

We do not know much about these people, but that they are people who use violence to impose their ideas. They're even willing to die for it. They say they are acting in the name of their religion and Islam and want to impose it by force. These ultraviolent people don't show what Muslims are like; they're just an extremist group. It seems as if they had planned it in Belgium and travelled over to France.

France is at war with Islamic State in countries including Syria and Iraq; that's why they are taking revenge. The terrorists were looking to terrify everybody. They thought they could do this by randomly killing people. Everybody thinks, "It could have been me," which is what they want.

The best way to respond to this act of violence and madness of these men is to continue living normally, whilst being vigilant.

Three days of national mourning have been announced in France.



# Headtalk

A column on mental health

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## The Elephant in the Room

The elephant in the room sits squashed between us, trapped within the confines of ignorance and fear. It's getting sulky. Who's going to address it?

Mental illness is a well-fed taboo, and arguably one of the most detrimental ones out there. It doesn't seem socially acceptable to talk about it; it's a shame dispenser, a bad word that's never quite bold enough to reach the lips. The term is held on the periphery of conversation – 'I'm feeling a bit under the weather' or 'There's been a lot going on recently' - but it's rarely brought to the surface and faced absolutely, overtly head on. Let's not beat about the bush here: mental illness exists, and it's very probably in the same building as you.

One of the most debilitating things about dealing with mental illness is the stigma. Nearly 9 out of 10 people facing mental health issues say that discrimination and stigma negatively impact their lives. Stigma can prevent people from speaking out about their problems and receiving help, for fear of the apprehension and disapproval a diagnosis may generate. There seems to be a degree of shame in admitting to psychological ill health, as if it's a secret and self-inflicted wrongdoing that now requires cleaning up. But that same shame is rendered almost void in many cases of physical illness – how many asthmatics would dread 'outing' their condition to their acquaintances?

Reflections on mental illness often cultivate words like 'violent', 'unpredictable' and 'dangerous', and those affected may be attributed to asylums and wards in some faraway place. The reality is, however, that it is very close to home: people impacted by mental illness are sitting next to you in class, serving you at the checkouts, and addressing you on YouTube. There seems to be a case of 'othering' psychological disorders, as if they solely impact a set group of people out there.

However, statistically and realistically, it's not a case of they, it's more a case of we.

Aside from the shame, speaking out about your mental health is often greeted with

judgment. The topic seems to go hand-in-hand with neediness and, frankly, being attention seeking. It's custom to be economical with the ugly details and emotion - concealment is a golden social currency! Hail 'I'm fine' for all its masking powers and flippancy! Revere 'I'm just tired' for its universal propriety! Or, at least, that seems to be the general societal consensus. However, opening up about psychological ill health is not only important, it's healthy, and it shouldn't be taboo. Our tradition of silence and social suppression perpetrates the belief that mental illness is shameful and rare and shouldn't be talked about. It is a sidestepping of the elephant in the room; it is saying to people 'Look how alone you are. Everyone else is just fine.'

A common media narrative presents mentally ill people as criminal and dangerous; more to the point, they are seen as unable to live 'normally' and cope with daily life. However, despite the debilitating nature of psychological disorders, many people with mental health problems manage their illness from day to day or recover fully. Those experiencing such problems are more at risk of being attacked and hurting themselves than harming others, like common social discourse seems to suggest. 'Mental illness' does not automatically spell total dysfunction, incompetence, and breakdowns. Sometimes it means bobbing beneath the surface for a while or steadily managing a long-term condition. Perhaps that's what makes the prevalence of psychological disorders so surprising, the fact that it is not always as drastic or obvious as the media presents.

So why should mental illness be taboo? It's more common than you think. 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health issue within their lifetime. An estimated 450 million people in the world have a problem with their mental health. Therefore, having a mental illness does not make you alone or a social rarity. There are likely plenty of people that understand how you feel, that have experience, and that are willing to help. So speak out – it's not a dirty word.

It's time to calibrate societal assumptions with the reality. Let's lift the taboo. Let's combat the myths and stigma. Acknowledge that there's an elephant in the room.

**DANIYA BAIGUZHAYEVA YEAR 12**

# What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia

is basically a language difficulty that affects the way information is processed, stored and retrieved. It can also impact on the person's memory and organisational skills.

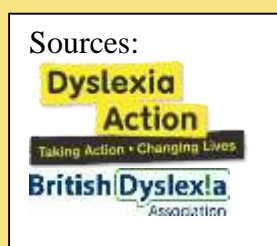
Some pupils with dyslexic difficulties may experience visual disturbance when reading, such as letters looking distorted or appearing to move on the page or becoming blurred.

White paper or backgrounds can appear too dazzling and make print hard to decipher.

Dyslexia is NOT the same for everyone: it can be mild or severe.

People with dyslexia often have strengths in reasoning, in visual and creative fields.

Dyslexia is **NOT** related to general intelligence!



## Did you know?

“You will see a lot written about the Dyslexics’ ability to process information in a three dimensional spatial context, but what does this mean and what are the implications?

Well in other pages we have identified the speed of dyslexic thought. Whereas the average person summons around 150 images per second, the dyslexic can muster from 1500 to 4000 images per second. But the fact that this can also be done on a three dimensional basis makes the Dyslexic skill set very special indeed.

Dyslexics are over represented in the top ranks of people who are unusually insightful, who bring a new perspective, who think out of the box.

The dyslexic’s gift of mastery: once they have learned something experientially, pictured and mapped it three dimensionally they understand it on such a deep level that they know how to do things intuitively without thinking about how.

The dyslexic’s abilities have been recognised by NASA (North American Space Administration) Over 50% of NASA employees are reported as dyslexic. They are said to be deliberately sought after because they have superb problem-solving skills and excellent 3D and spatial awareness.”

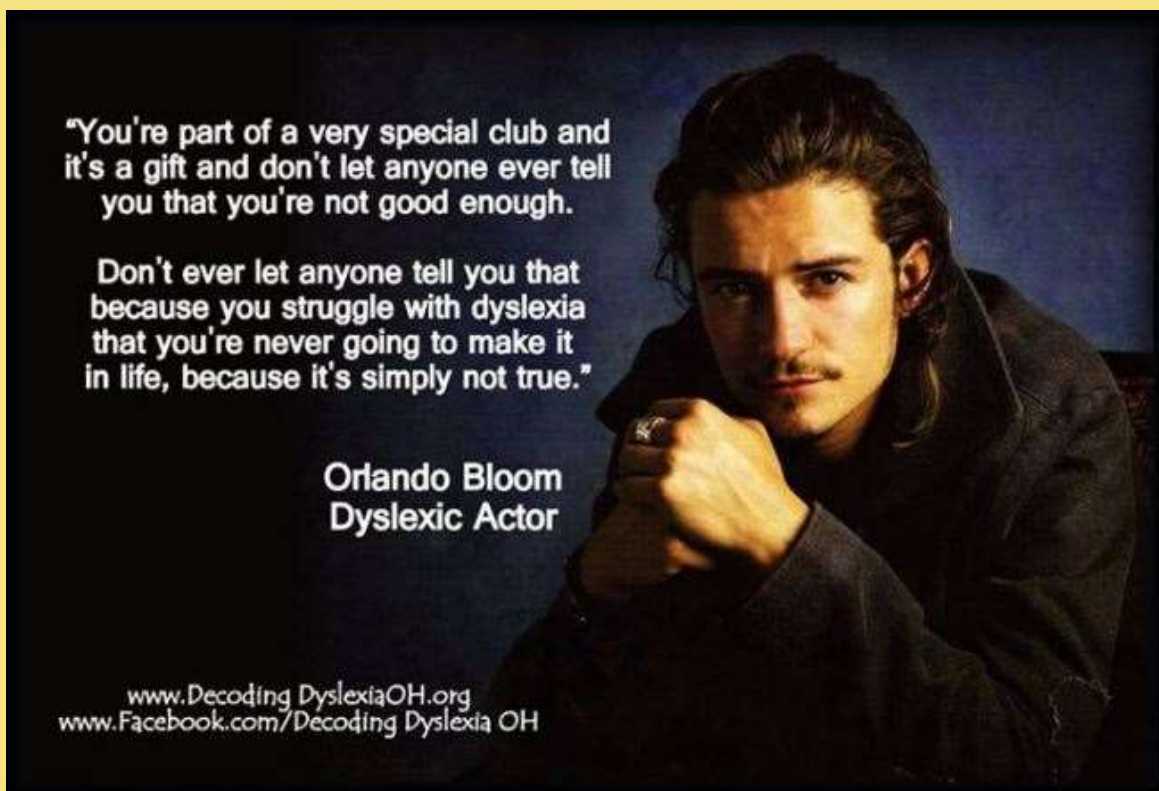
Extract from: <http://www.dyslexia-aware.com/dawn/dyslexic-thinking>

## Some Famous Dyslexics

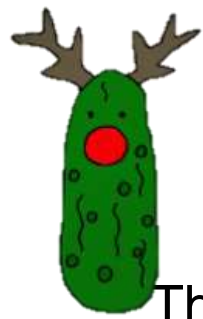


They have all either inspired, entertained or educated us in some way or another and certainly have not let Dyslexia hold them back!

- Mrs Coller







# The Happy Pickle Pages

TV, film, music, and books

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## A Review of 25 by Adele

'Hello? Can you hear me?' Good, because I'm about to tell you all about Adele's new album 25.

The north London girl we all know and love has struck again, this time with a sound more mature and candid than ever before. Four years ago, Adele well and truly obliterated the 'Second Album Syndrome' with 21, and now, its long anticipated follow-up 25, has been no disappointment either.



The simplicity, yet also the sincerity and honesty of her new music has been vital to the album's success. Her first single, *Hello*, reached 1.1 million downloads within a week. Of course, the raw emotional and nostalgic edge that underlies all of her greatest hits (and the thing that captures all of our hearts) is still prominent in her stunning and unique sound.

Her album titles make clear that Adele likes to snapshot meaningful and defining periods in her life, and as in her previous two albums, themes of time and age run through 25. But what I love is that the albums don't indicate radical changes from era to era, but, instead, highlight for her listeners a slow and ongoing march of time. This is why so many people can resonate with her lyrics and 'old-soul' sound. 25 is not just another album and heartbreak though. Instead, it's an album about

relationships, motherhood and growing up. Mix in this newfound maturity with Adele's spine-tingling vocal range and powers, and you have 48 minutes of musical gold.

*Hello*, although maybe overplayed now, will be our generation's go-to shower song. *Love in the Dark* is yet another one of Adele's anthems that hits you in all the right places. But by far my favourite song, *When We Were Young*, where her true voice comes through most on the entire album, is a song that I feel we can all relate to - whether you are living your teenage years now or you are middle-aged looking back on them, *When We Were Young* makes us wistful and nostalgic for our youth.

Like any of us would, I find it hard to critique someone with so much talent (which is both overwhelming and intimidating) and of whom we have such high expectations because, all in all, Adele has lived up to our expectations once again. 25 obviously has its flaws, but she's Adele, so, like, whatever. As a die-hard fan, I can only sit here and bask in her glory.

**SOPHIE TAYLOR YEAR 12**

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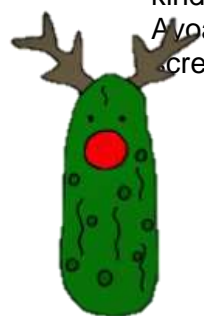
## Submarine - a review

Submarine (2010) relates the coming of age of hilarious, thoughtful and self-absorbed Oliver Tate – a 15-year-old boy from Wales. In the film, Oliver traces his courtship with pyromaniac Jordana Bevan, and his attempts to preserve his parents' relationship, with the arrival of his mother's ex. The film's soundtrack is crooned throughout the scenes by none other than Alex Turner of the Arctic Monkeys – who would've thought that leather-clad Turner would come up with ~~something as~~ ~~sappy~~ such docile harmonies and lyrical sensitivity? I don't know, but I like it. Anyway, Submarine is Richard Ayoade's first directorial film (a debut, if you will), and I think it's a pretty good 'un.

Having grown up on a diet of US centric depictions of teenager-hood (Prom! Homecoming! Midnight trips to Walmart!), I think Submarine hits the water as refreshingly British. The film fosters a moody and reflective atmosphere at times; at others, the indigenously dry humour and, to use the technical term, *cheeky banter* exchanged



between Oliver and Jordana reminds us how chronically multifaceted adolescence is. Despite Oliver's theatricality, Ayoade's portrayal of teenage drama is tasteful and well measured, in contrast to the clichéd, polarised adolescent reactions we are so often faced with in film and literature. In further denouncement of Hollywood glitz™, it's comforting to see that both Oliver and Jordana are not textbook examples of conventional attractiveness, and, more groundbreakingly, they actually *look* like teenagers! In a film about teenagers! Revolutionary! This is the kind of cinematic consoling I appreciate, Ayoade, teenage-looking teenagers on the big screen – top notch.



Presented by Ben STILLER

## SUBMARINE



From an artistic standpoint, the film is stylish and unorthodox in execution; it has a distinctly retro feel to it. Ayoade peppers the scenes with vintage-looking title and transition screens, relatively archaic screen effects (such as fading and grainy textures) and the use of Futura font. From the tasteful inter-titles in the opening credits to the aesthetically pleasing end scene shot, Ayoade weaves together a cinematic mosaic of film styles and periods, establishing Submarine as visually timeless and contextually ambiguous. Elements of the

film are reminiscent of Wes Anderson's oeuvre, with the centralised shots, aesthetic colour palettes, and distinctive set and characters. As a work of art, I loved Submarine. The natural lighting in the scene under the bridge, the Welsh landscapes and sunsets, the use of colour, are all, quite frankly, beautiful. Even the most wrathful of critics can't argue that it's a gorgeous film, and a naturally gorgeous one at that.

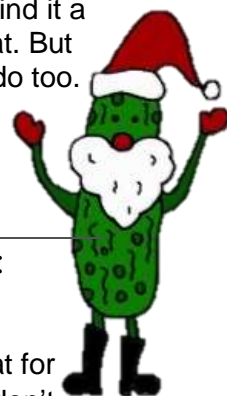
Overall, I'd crown Submarine with an 8/10. It's stylish and unconventional and British (which is always nice). The set and execution are visually stunning, offering some juicy film stills ready to be christened with profound subtitles and exercised as examples of the Teenage Experience. I wouldn't say that the film is completely realistic as a coming-of-age story, but that stems from adolescence not being a wholly homogenous experience for everyone; even so, Submarine is both funny and sad, hopeful and forlorn, and ultimately three dimensional. Be warned, though: the film is a 15 and not particularly family-friendly. It's also slow at times and not really in the ballpark of a GRIPPER - it doesn't pose cardiovascular threat to pensioner viewers (however, the colourful language has potential). Perhaps it's for more niche viewing and some may find it a little lacklustre, and I can appreciate that. But all in all, I liked Submarine. I hope you do too.

DANIYA BAIGUZHAYEVA YEAR 12

### Best film of the Year - Birdemic: Shock and Terror

It's the Christmas season, which is great for those who celebrate it. But what if you don't celebrate Christmas? Or are just bored of Christmas movies? Well then, you are in luck, for I have witnessed something incredible! Gather close, so I may tell you the tale of *Birdemic: Shock and Terror*.

Released back in 2008, *Birdemic* is supposed to be an homage to the classic Hitchcock film, *The Birds*, hence the birds. This independent



film was the brainchild of James Nguyen, and had special effects by Yeung Chang (or Chan, as his name changes from the opening credits to the closing ones), which are just abysmal, as can be seen in this still from the film.

Has that sunk in for you? Just in case the screenshot wasn't clear enough, yes, that is four fully grown adults swinging coat hangers at birds that look like they were sourced from Clipart and added in MS Paint. And this was only made a year before *Avatar*. I mean, it is an Indie film, but there's still no excuse for this. And the birds themselves are just ridiculous. Whereas, in *The Birds*, the crows would scratch and peck at everyone in their sight, the eagles dive bomb and explode, whilst making plane sounds. At least the birds aren't in most of the film. That's right, it takes around fifty minutes for the eagles to attack, in this ninety-minute-film about eagles attacking.

And the special effects aren't the only things that suffer from the film's poor production. The editing is abysmal. The music, while not bad, is added in so sloppily. The opening sequence (in which the main character drives his car for five solid minutes) has the same song looped four times. How do I know it was four, I hear you ask? Because the song finishes, goes silent, and then starts again. And once we finally move past the not-properly-looping music, we move to our characters talking, with the audio continuously cutting in and out, seemingly at random. Not to mention every single line spoken by every single character has a second of silence, both before and after it, leaving this awkward gap between every line of dialogue, making every conversation fail to flow.

If you're thinking, "maybe the acting can redeem it", then your hopes are too high. The main character, Rod, is portrayed by Alan Bagh, whose acting history includes *Birdemic*, *Birdemic 2* (yes, there was somehow a sequel) and scenes that were cut from something called '*Ghost Shark 2*'. He is the most emotionless actor I have ever witnessed. Every single line out of his mouth is in the same monotone voice. An actual oak tree would convey more emotion than he does! None of the other actors are amazing, but none of them act as awfully as Bagh. I don't

know, maybe that's the type of 'shock and terror' they were going for?

But let's move away from Rod, because this movie has a whole host of bland characters that just randomly show up and are of no consequence whatsoever. They just show up, say something completely irrelevant and then disappear for the remainder of the film. My personal favourites are Jerry Owens, who shows up at Rod's house, installs one single solar panel, and just- poof- disappears! As well as this single best character in the movie, there is a man who puts a gun to Rod's head and demands that he sell him some gas, before having his neck slit open by an eagle flying past. There are many more, including a guy who lives in a tree and a guy who studies bird flu. Most of them simply exist to ham-fistedly preach Nguyen's environmentalist messages, which are strewn throughout the entire film, from the aforementioned solar panel scene, to Rod remarking how much he loves his "Ford Mustang, which is a plug-in hybrid". Fun fact: a plug-in hybrid Ford Mustang does not exist.

So, at the end of the movie, after suffering through meaningless characters, wooden acting and dive bombing birds that make plane sounds, we get to the thrilling climax! Our group of heroes are trapped, their vehicle is out of gas and there are birds nearby! So how does the movie end? With the birds retreating for literally no reason. They just fly off as the main cast watches them for five minutes. Quality writing.

*Birdemic*. What a ride. It's one of those films that really is so bad, that it's good. If you're looking for an amazing cinematic experience, this film is not for you. However, if you want a film that will make you laugh with its sheer absurdity, then I would wholeheartedly recommend *Birdemic: Shock and Terror*. And don't worry, you can watch the whole thing for free on YouTube, just look up 'Birdemic: Shock and Terror full movie'.

**ALFIE CROMARTY YEAR 12**

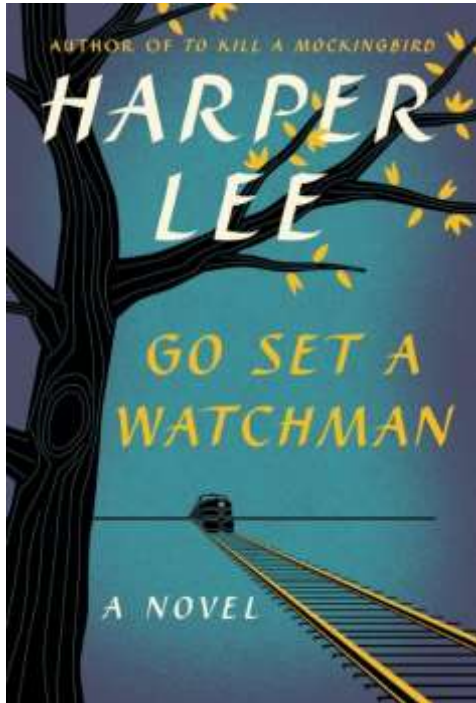




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## ‘Go Set a Watchman’ by Harper Lee

After being charmed by Harper Lee’s first book ‘To Kill a Mockingbird’, the news that another book of hers was being published excited me, and sure enough as soon as it was released I hopped straight onto Amazon to buy it.



The book tells the story of ‘Scout’ Finch, the protagonist of ‘TKAM’, who is now an adult and goes by her proper name Jean Louise, and her experience of returning to her childhood home of Maycomb County, where her father, Atticus Finch, and Aunt Alexandra live. The book looks at Jean Louise’s view of her father as a moral compass, and explores the theme of disillusionment as she discovers the extent of the bigotry in the very place, and amongst the very people, she grew up with.

Now, let me explain something about this novel which hasn’t been made very clear to people due to how it was originally promoted – while many people seem to have the impression that this is a new book written by Lee after publishing ‘TKAM’ as a sequel to her first book, it is actually written before her first novel and is the first draft of ‘TKAM’ that is only now being published. This has caused controversy, as some people believe that Harper Lee did not actually want ‘Go Set a Watchman’ to be published and that the publishers took advantage of the author’s vulnerability from her old age and declining health to release it without her consent.

Another controversy lies in the portrayal of various characters, some deeply beloved by fans of ‘TKAM’, with which readers of the first novel will be familiar. While it is interesting to visit these characters as older versions of themselves, for some it may spoil their previous view of certain characters – this was certainly a problem for me. While seeing the realistic development of the main characters in ‘TKAM’ was one of the most delightful parts of reading the novel, here the characters feel underdeveloped.

Another issue with the novel is that its plot is too simplistic and full of clichés and is rather sluggishly paced. The fact that this was written as a first draft to her first novel and hasn’t been properly edited since shows in the poor quality of the book’s writing compared to the original – while it contains the odd stunning passage, there are too many moments of bad dialogue and awkward descriptions which overshadow the rest of the novel.

Overall, I found the novel very disappointing, and I feel it would probably be very boring and unsatisfying to anyone who hasn’t read ‘TKAM’, as the only satisfaction for me came from the fascination of being able to look at the first draft of a book that is quite close to my heart. If you have read and enjoyed ‘To Kill a Mockingbird’ and the idea of seeing the draft that it developed from to become the book you know and love interests, then I would recommend ‘Go Set a Watchman’ to you. For everyone else, I would instead recommend you try out Harper Lee’s enchanting and widely acclaimed first novel which has much better writing and a far more compelling plot.

**GEMMA LAWS YEAR 12**

