



TWO ZERO ONE

ISSUE 8



ARTWORK BY ANYA BUTLER



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Editors' Notes

 Our community, as we're often reminded, is a diverse one 43 nationalities, if I'm not mistaken. But the word 'community' means more than a list of countries or languages. It means we're different, but we co-exist and work together in harmony. It means we celebrate one another, from art exhibitions like the one last term detailed in this issue, to competitions like the age-old Housman Verse Prize, the winner and two entries towards which are published also. And beyond our 'Bromsgrove bubble', community represents the world: the environment, which we must protect (turn to Jonathan Chan's article on conservation), and our own freedoms, which we must also defend (look to 'LGBTQ+ Activism' for inspiration). In a more theoretical sense, we discuss whether fitting in is necessary or good in this issue's thought-provoking essay responses. This issue is packed as ever, which is particularly fitting as the last for Co-Editor Ana and Publishing Editor James who will be sorely missed.

Alia Derriey

Finally, here it is... The end of the year. The end of a year. Just another year out of the decades we still have left. And still, sometimes, it feels as if what has happened this year, all those memories we have collected during it, are somehow going to be more defining than anything we have experienced before. Replay all your memories, think about everything that you have experienced since September, but don't cling too much to it: just how we, 201, will never cling too much to what has been written before, and we'll always try to redefine our magazine. So as you read this latest issue, think to yourself: how would you reimagine the students' voice at Bromsgrove? Meanwhile, we'll be back next year...

Anamaria Cuza



Should we fit in?

I can still remember how hurt I was when my sister first pointed out that I was half a banana. When she added insult to injury by exclaiming I was 96% chimpanzee, I was apoplectic. This was sibling name calling of the highest order! Except that it was not, but rather her working through some biology research on DNA. When she finally got to the point of accepting I might be a human being, she pointed out that as between all humans, we share in common 99.9% of those building blocks of life. And yet in that 0.1% of DNA difference is made the entire multitude of all the individual humans that have ever lived. As humans, we individually and collectively focus on our individuality. Our egos make our attributes, our needs and our beliefs consciously or unconsciously the most important. In striving for success, those who 'stand out' are rewarded over those who do not and in today's modern culture, we celebrate our diversity and difference in contrast to the grey suited conformity of earlier generations. Since the 1960s, reacting against the tight knit conservative communities of post war austerity, people have been allowed and encouraged to be themselves - in the countercultural phrase of the time, to turn on, tune in and drop out.

But where does this individuality get us? Is it useful? On the large scale, individuality is important. In evolutionary terms, individuality and difference create the base from which those most fit to survive will arise. Sadly, it also marks those out for failure too but overall it makes for progress and survival. Many of the great creative moments have arisen from the efforts of those who did not fit in with prevailing thought or practice. Galileo was tried for heresy and placed under house arrest when

he sought to champion the Copernican notion that the Earth went round the Sun. When Monet was first presented to the Academie Francaise, he was ridiculed for his poor 'impressions' of scenes in place of technically accurate representation. Darwin was scorned for believing man evolved from apes but now even my sister wholeheartedly agrees. But for the willingness of these individuals not to conform to the thinking or *mores* of their time, great developments in science and culture would not have taken place.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights makes it one of our fundamental individual rights to be free and equal in dignity and rights. This includes the inalienable right not to conform – 'fitting in' is not a requirement. Modern culture celebrates our diversity and difference and aspects of ourselves that once might have been repressed to align with society's norms can be freely expressed without challenge. Out of this acceptance has come significantly greater tolerance and understanding of difference. This dynamic has been shown to enhance both well-being, as people can be themselves, and team performance through constructive challenge. At a cultural and societal level, notwithstanding the news and some egregious outliers, we live in a world where persecution for difference has been significantly reduced and tolerance of it allows us to live and work largely in peace.

However, it would equally be wrong to conclude from this that rampant individuality is perfect. The English philosopher J. S. Mill was a proponent for individual liberty but was prepared to concede that such liberty needed to be restricted if it caused harm to others. His French predecessor Rousseau considered

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that in order to have a stable society we needed collectively to give up some of our rights by means of a social contract in favor of fitting in with the general will of the people. In order that human beings can live together and prosper, we need to ask everyone to participate in society and in so doing 'fit in' at the cost of some individual right to opt out. On these terms, if the price of exercising our rights to stand out as an individual is damage to the interests of the wider society to which we all belong and from which we benefit, then those rights must give way and we must conform. Equally, on a smaller scale, we have all in some way, particularly at our school, experienced the impact and power of the team. The scrum will not move forward unless all eight fit together tightly and push together, not individually. The choir will not sing in unison or balanced counterpoint if any one of them departs on a frolic of his or her own. And the Chicken will not deliver at its best without the combined talents of creative engineering, tight organization, focused marketing and skilled driving. By working together in a way that prioritizes the collective at the expense of the individual, better results can be achieved and achievements impossible for anyone alone can be delivered. 'Fitting in' in these circumstances outperforms individual brilliance or antagonistic creativity. Separate from the outcome is the common human spirit that participation in the team generates. There is something rather special in the shared experience of a collection of individuals working together, supporting each other and focused on a common goal. It reminds us that at our core we are a social animal that forms communities that look after those within them.

So, what then is the answer to the question, should we fit in? Perhaps it is the wrong question. For whilst the answer to the first question is not at all clear, the question that sheds better light on the right behavior is, perhaps, should we 'fit together'? To which the answer is absolutely "yes". For this way of looking at humanity acknowledges the importance to society of both iconoclastic individual brilliance and effective teamwork. In a wider society, we each have a role to play, either as an individual or as part of a team. Such society will work best when everyone can play to their strengths. We must fit together in a way that respects the contributions of all and enhances and maximizes our talents. Leaders are nothing without followers and breaking the mold can be as destructive as it is creative. Equally, an insistence on consensus and compliance leads to group think, indecision and the triumph of process over progress. So, let us indeed celebrate our differences and test the boundaries of the accepted norms where that is our strength but acknowledge that we are doing it for a wider good than our own and are likely to need the collective strength and support of a wider team to make things happen.

Aled Luckman

Earth, Our Prison

Michael Shablin

A drop of water in the
Howling winds of space
Is a place which
We all call home.

We all live there and
Pay for our need.
Build empires to conquer
And fulfil our lustful greed.

Earth is our prison
Which has no walls
Except our foolish wisdom
With many flaws.



An Echoing Voice

Jamie Cox

I set up a barrier
Why can't it cement?
Chains were gripping onto me
I had no power and my mouth was taped shut.

The next day was like before
Why can't it cement?
Surrounded by a distant laughter
Sarcastic in tone honest, but honest in mind.

That tedious tone they spoke it once made me laugh
It finally began to dry.

All I could do is listen to the solidarity
Those arguments clipped behind ignorance.

Memories were painted by someone who couldn't see
He painted with scissors and a broken canvas.
And the innocence of lies built what I see
a delicate facade, a mirror of me

A wall is meant to protect, isn't it?
To help hide what's inside?
To help pursue what I couldn't see
To protect the truth concealed in my eyes

My screams roared with restrain
As time built the fence
I found a reprieve and
Fear and woes silenced by a tap!

I set up a barrier
To find truth in a blight
Because I began to find a voice
I continued to write....

Should we fit in?

A community is a group of people, usually living in the same area or conditions, who share similar characteristics and interests.

Therefore, asking the question “should we fit in?” is like asking “should we all comply with the expectations indirectly laid out in any given ‘community’ scenario?”. I believe that the concept of ‘fitting in’, if *all* people need to follow these expectations, is a closed view of the world; in this essay, I will explain my thoughts.

Our society is, or should be, driven primarily by madness, oddity, and diversity. Following this belief, humanity can progress, as people are naturally different from one another; we must therefore learn to accept each other. Yes, this all sounds cliché, but suppressing ourselves and each other by encouraging uniformity is far more harmful. Everyone has different thoughts, different interests, even different facial expressions. Social norms limit people to one boundary, whereby everyone must comply to the rules of an invented social system. Within this system, we must react a certain way when someone speaks, reply to questions with the same ‘accepted’ answers, and, above all, possess interests that are similar to our fellow community members’. This system makes it particularly difficult for any socially awkward person to fit in, as socialising is, in itself, a key part of the system. We live in an age with far more activities to participate in than ‘socialising’, meaning that socialising for the sake of doing so is quickly becoming extinct. If that is the case, you might wonder why this ‘social system’ exists in the first place; this rulebook of social norms and expectations should surely have been eradicated moons ago, especially if we are to progress in a world of declining ‘face-to-face’

conversation. I would be so bold as to suggest that this system is, in fact, a limitation to the art of socialisation. If we learn to accept others and their differences, the question of ‘fitting in’ becomes obsolete.

David Bowie was a prime example of someone unlimited by social expectations and norms. In fact, the first appearance he made in the public eye was as the founder for the ‘Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Long-Haired men’ in 1964. The expectation for men at that time was to have short hair and to dress formally. This ‘society’ that Bowie founded preceded the movement by the Beatles and the Rolling Stones to promote long-haired men in a more ‘rock-n-roll’ context. In 1970, David Bowie invented the character of Ziggy Stardust, a revolutionary breakthrough in both his career and in modern pop culture. Referring back to the ‘madness and oddity’ that I believe is essential in modern day life, this character that Bowie created did not comply with any social norms or expectations. If a man dressed like Ziggy Stardust in public, he certainly wouldn’t ‘fit in’. The music Bowie created during the ‘70s movement was equally out of the ordinary. He managed to relate each of his albums to a problem in the modern world at the time, whilst also experimenting with techniques unprecedented in music. David Bowie was living proof of how ‘living in a community’ works in harmony with ‘not fitting in’, or even being apart from the rest of society. Overall, Bowie proved, in his music and personas, that society is able to evolve effectively when people contribute new, different, or unconventional ideas into the social system that the world consists of. Being ‘different’ from the general expectations laid out in society should, if anything, make one more intriguing and enlightening,

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as opposed to dismissively labelled as 'weird' or 'strange'.

Another musician who questioned 'normality' and, directly linking to that, 'fitting in' within a community, was Jarvis Cocker. Cocker was a pioneer of the so-called 'Britpop' musical movement in the 1990s, with his music being, in his words, "a way of looking at the world and ordinary people". He wrote a song while he was in the band, *Pulp*, called *Common People*. The lyrics depict ordinary scenarios involving a "supermarket", "a flat above a shop", haircuts and work. However, despite the song's 'ordinary' subject content, is performed in a way that exaggerates these things; the tune and musical structure are unique and directly contrast with the lyrics. Cocker is also famous for ensuring that every record he made had written somewhere on it: "please do not read the words while listening to the recordings". This links the ordinary lyrics to the unconventionality of the tune that plays alongside them; perhaps this is a hint from Jarvis Cocker that, although society has its conventionalities, it is fundamentally driven by 'madness' and 'oddity'. Emphasising ordinary events allows Cocker to offer a different world view, as it shows that even the most everyday events are just as important as more 'significant' ones. In relation to 'fitting in' within a community, Cocker's perspective on ordinary scenarios demonstrates that uniqueness can work in harmony with conventionality within a community, as well as in ordinary situations. Furthermore, Cocker himself has said that he was always an awkward "glasses-wearing" person, and found that music was a good outlet for him to embrace this awkwardness. This is a key example of a person who was not necessarily confident in social skills achieving great success, even using his

'awkwardness' to his advantage. Everyone should be allowed to 'fit in' in a community, without having to comply with restrictive norms within the social system. 'Community' does not need to limit socialisation. 'Having a sense of community' usually means that you give back to others, are embracing of people involved in the same social situation as yourself, and are open to different kinds of people with varied interests. Indeed, if you are open and giving in a 'community' sense, the question of 'fitting in' would never be posed in the first place. In my opinion, we should embrace the 'madness' and 'oddity' in life. However, we should also celebrate and appreciate ordinary aspects of our lives, as proven by Jarvis Cocker in his music. These two aspects of a community should be able to work seamlessly without being questioned. Human beings are naturally different from each other, so it is vital that we embrace everything that humanity has to offer.

Ben Payne

What's your interpretation?

The Visual Arts are so important to our education and lives in general. Here at the magazine we wanted to incorporate them into our issues, but were unsure as to how best to do so. Luckily, Miss Barton reached out to us suggesting a series on interpretative art. It's a fun, stimulating way of involving art into our daily lives. The Art & Textiles teacher explains it far more eloquently than I could:

There is no one single way of writing or talking about Art. It can enhance, possibly to an intellectually and even emotionally transformative level. Never take something at 'face value' but question, think and reflect independently upon it. Creative interpretation can act as the little key to unlock the greatest treasures inside the Artwork it describes. It is another way of telling, it helps to put our ideas into context and make sense of our world.

Your Interpretation

What it this?

What is it about?

For our first edition of 'What's your interpretation?', **Anna Huang's** artwork (below) was chosen for interpretation. Accompanying it are a selection of thought-provoking questions for you to consider; feel free to send in your response/s to 201@bromsgrove-school.co.uk for the possibility to be published in the next issue. You may want to read the artist's own interpretation later in this edition - this allows you to gain a clear idea of what her ideas are about, whilst also leaving the opportunity for you to develop a personal understanding of the work beforehand. It's like a quiz with no right or wrong answer!



...the Artist's Interpretation

This piece consists of components from plastic bags which are melted together under the heat press. This fragment belongs to a giant plastic bag which I made of even more plastic bags, a symbol for the storage of our memories, knowledge and emotions in our brain. I used plastic to explore the issue of environmental protection and recycling. In my opinion, our body will be decomposed after death and our thoughts and opinions either die with us or get recycled and reused by future generations in the form of our art work, music and literature.

The colour of this particular fragment is very intense, a representation of our life, which is full of intense emotions and engraving experiences. Other pieces of my big 'brain' are less colourful and consist of white or transparent plastic bags, showing how I do not remember some parts of my life or how some experiences are less important. However, colour is also used by me to reflect certain moods. Black and dark colours may represent a 'down' phase of my life and sad experiences, and warmer tones and happier colours show happy moments. A very important aspect of these fused plastic bits is that they are not biodegradable, just like our knowledge and experience - they can either be temporary and forgotten, or permanent.

By Anna Huang



Should we fit in?

At first glance, this prompt seems clichéd and cheesy – I’m sure we’ve all heard exhaustive debates about peer pressure, being unique, sticking out. However, if we delve deeper into what it means to fit in, the concept is far more thought-provoking.

In fact, the notion of fitting in is integral to the theory of evolution. Species with more beneficial characteristics – often ones that better allow them to fit in to their environment, such as camouflage, or catch other animals for prey – will eventually, through natural selection, outlive those with lesser or lack of these traits: this is the survival of the fittest. But is this also true in human society?

I am tempted to argue that no, of course we do not need to fit in to succeed in life, to be happy and to feel belonging. After all, it is the people who stick out in a crowd, who take a risk and do something different and unprecedented, that are accepted to that dream college, offered that prestigious job, or even catch the interest of that person. As Dr Seuss says, “Why fit in when you were born to stand out?” I am a firm believer in being passionate about something, anything, and being unafraid to express that passion, regardless of what other people think.

But maybe this perpetual temptation to be different isn’t always helpful. What if I’m wasting time trying to stick out and ‘be myself’ rather than getting on with things, with pursuing passions regardless of whether or not they are different to others’? I remember when the *Hunger Games* books were first gaining popularity, I refused to read them for fear of being just like everyone else. Fast-forward a few years and I was hooked, an avid fan of the books and

blockbuster films alike. Yes, a lot of people liked them, but that doesn’t automatically detract from their value. In fact, not doing something purely because everyone else does is pointless, and arguably just as ‘mainstream’ – you’re not unique for revolting against the ‘crowd’; there are likely a lot of people with the same idea.

Furthermore, fitting in is sometimes necessary, a part of life in a society with its many customs and norms. When you see someone you know, you smile and say ‘Hello’. Is this so bad, so harmful? Does your creativity feel oppressed every time you eat at prescribed times or get dressed in the morning? If not especially beneficial, many social norms exist to make life easier, to narrow the overwhelming decisions that we must make every day of our lives. You could hardly argue that this is a bad thing.

So, in conclusion, don’t feel pressured to do something in order to ‘fit in’ if you don’t want to (to a certain extent – clothes are mandatory), but equally, don’t *not* do something for the same reason. Strive to make your decisions based on rational (and naturally, emotional) considerations. In the words of William Ernest Henley, you are “the captain of [your] soul”.

Alia Derriey

Should we fit in? This is an age-old question that is being asked more and more. With the advent of mass media and the availability of more free time, people are asking themselves what really makes them happy and more people are diverging from the socially accepted norms in order to truly be themselves and thus truly be happy.

Everyone should have the opportunity to make themselves happy whether that involves fitting in or not, as long as they are not harming anyone else. The pursuit of happiness is the most rewarding goal to have but it is a personal pursuit and you shouldn't rely on anyone else to ensure your happiness; only you know what makes you truly happy. As a child, I was desperate to fit in – I didn't want to stand out for any reason be it good or bad – but my parents would always tell me to do what made me happy and not care about what anyone else thought. This was incomprehensible to me because I was scared if I stood out, I wouldn't have any friends, but as I've grown older I've come to realise how right their philosophy is; when I'm older I want to look back at my life with happiness and not regret. I don't want to waste my time on fake friends - only people who really have my best interests at heart and not just their own gain are worth my friendship, and of course the same applies to me. However, there are situations where we are expected to fit in. In school and work, for example, we have to fit in to these institutions to maintain order and success by ensuring that people's primary focus and motivation is working hard and excelling. However, the 21st century provides a multitude of choice; thus, if someone finds such institutions oppressive and obstructive to their happiness, they are fortunate enough to choose a different path in life that allows them to avoid such institutions: for example, some colleges actively encourage their students to experiment in order to discover their true selves.

“There are always more followers than

leaders.” This popular saying has always stayed with me because it contains such an important message – it's okay to fit in if that's what makes you happy. It is clear from history that the majority of people are more than happy with fitting in and they should not be lambasted for this. However, some people will never fit in and that's okay too because in order to progress and innovate we need to push the boundaries.

When minorities are persecuted and legislated against, nothing good or constructive comes of it. Alan Turing played a critical role in inventing the enigma machine which arguably helped the Allies win the Second World War. Until 1967, male homosexuality was illegal in the U.K., and as a gay man Alan Turing - who should have been venerated as a hero - was imprisoned for his sexuality, contributing to his eventual suicide. This is just one example of many regrettable consequences of needlessly oppressive laws. As young people, we are so privileged to receive such a quality education, and thus it is our duty to identify the failings of the past and realise that it does not matter whether people fit in or not. Moreover, it is more important that people are given the opportunity to excel and devote their time to things they're good at in order to make the world a better place. We should not point out other people's shortcomings or live in fear of change and the unknown; let's strive to improve not only our lives but others' too. There should be less focus on the idea of 'fitting in', identifying people by stereotypes and separating people into groups; instead, there must more focus on co-operation – we are all humans and we are all equal - in order to create a better world and ensure everyone is privy to opportunity.

By Katie Akers

Our Wall

Stop. Breathe. Think.
You're a basic student in school,
With a dark uniform that stands still,
Beside mediocre grades and friends, careless and cool.
While fate and fortune dictate your will.

You began as an infant,
Whether pink, yellow, brown or black,
Sprawling helplessly like an earthworm,
While life prepared to attack.

At that age with a simplistic cycle,
You stumbled through the beginning,
You knew nothing, and lacked desire to know,
Your sin was emptiness.
Your wall; ignorance.

With time a flower bud opened;
To the knowledge of life; brightness of day,
And with friend's and family's support,
Eased into a world of comfort.

Stop.
Then came anxiety, baring its fangs,
Its teeth poisonous, its breath stank,
A wall of predation, it consumes and confiscates
Leaving in its wake, changes and deadlines and academics and—

Breathe.
Peer Pressure seeps in. Friendly as always,
An acidic wall of suggestion you can't refuse,
An idea becomes a shout; a shout, a chant.
And slowly you do things you don't want,
Like that one party you hated,
Or those old friends you spoke to with hatred,
Till you look in the mirror and scowl at the person you've become.

I know what it's like to be yo--
Actually I am you.
As I am everyone
And everyone struggles just like you.

So Start. Live. Act.
Because you may just be a basic student in school,
With a dark uniform that stands still.
But your grades are careful, your friends; cool.
And only you can dictate your will.

Is death a genetic disorder?

By Timofei Chernega

What is life? To me, life is like a time limited arcade game, for certain species, such as flies, the time limit is short. Whereas for other species, like humans, time is not as limited. Evolution is the owner of this arcade and decides whether we should live for hundred years or hundred minutes, but the thing that we know for sure is that we are going to die, and if we know that for sure then why are we afraid of death? Well, the fear of death is instinctive and we can't do anything about it. But if fear of death is an evolutionary advantage then why did we evolve to die? Well, we don't know exactly why we die, however looking at the 'immortal' jellyfish that can undergo transdifferentiation, or in other words, survive any injury, and at the quaking aspen which just celebrated its 80,000 th birthday, we can say that evolution is definitely not a friend of ours and doesn't want us to play in the arcade for too long. Despite that, not all our cells age and die, otherwise our children would be the same age as us and we would not be able to use stem cells to grow new tissue. So what do stem cells and germline cells have that other cells don't? The Telomeric Theory of Aging can answer this question.

Why do we die?

The Telomeric Theory of Aging suggests that the reason for aging and therefore natural death is in the shape of the chromosomes. Our chromosomes are linear which means they have ends and these ends are called telomeres. The telomere base sequence in humans is TTAGGG and it is usually repeated 800-2,500 times depending on age, but what's more important is their function. Telomeres are like the plastic tips on shoelaces that stop them from unraveling, they protect our chromosomes from sticking to each other and from destroying the genetic information they contain. Every time a cell carries out DNA replication the DNA is shortened by about 25-200 bases. This happens because the enzyme that carries out DNA replication cannot start the replication from the first base as it needs a primer to attach itself to the strand of DNA. The good news is that the part of the DNA that is lost only contains telomeres, which means that the actual DNA is not damaged. However each time a cell divides, 25-200 bases are lost from the end of telomeres, which eventually become too short to be able to pro-

tect the DNA. In this case a special gene makes a cell commit suicide. This telomere shortening is equivalent to aging because as our cells age we age. Therefore the length of the telomeres is shown to be a very good predictor of lifespan.

Furthermore, according to this theory the reason why some cells like germline or stem cells can replicate an infinite amount of times is due to the enzyme telomerase that adds telomere sequences to the ends of chromosomes. This process therefore maintains the length of telomeres and stops cells from aging and therefore dying. But the reason why other cells can't multiply and avoid aging is that telomerase is not active in somatic cells, so strictly speaking all that we have to do to stop aging and dying is to activate the telomerase and stop telomeres shortening.

The reason why it hasn't been done yet is the fact that this enzyme was only discovered in 2013 and therefore hasn't been studied much. There are theories that the activation of telomerase in somatic cells can lead to cancer, however not all scientists share these worries; some think that the activation of telomerase will lead to better memory and a longer lifespan.

How can we stop aging and death?

There are two ways in which we can stop telomeres shortening and therefore aging, the first one is changing your lifestyle. Almost 50% of the telomere length loss is due to lifestyle factors such as diet, smoking and stress. This can be easily prevented by a healthier diet and exercise, but the effect is huge. This change in your lifestyle can increase your lifespan by 12 years. The second way is a bit more radical; activating telomerase in your somatic cells. This can be done by adding biological or chemical activators in your diet or even by gene therapy. However it is not quite possible yet due to the risks associated with that, but some companies like Isagenix®, who have already started manufacturing telomere support products, are working on biological additives that would activate telomerase. So hopefully in the next decade we will be able to increase our lifespan by at least 100 years.

Grapes of Wrath Review - John Steinbeck

“The quality of owning freezes you forever in ‘I’, and cuts you off forever from the ‘we’.”

Oklahoma 1939. Soon after the great war, the Joads are forced to flee their home in Oklahoma due to the great dustbowl, a natural disaster so great it threatens the lives of millions of helpless Americans; through this historical setting, we gain an insight into the terrifyingly real situation many migrants are forced to face every day. While the Joads are obliged to abandon their farm, they are also deprived of their dignity, their ancestry, their roots. We witness a heart-warming example of the unbreakable human spirit, of how it is only in the hardest of times that our true characters reveal themselves. This book emphasises the triviality of money and the danger of being blinded by greed; ignoring the damage we are causing others and ourselves drives us apart. Money cannot buy you friendship, love or happiness. Those who seek to sacrifice the poor, the people we deem ‘unworthy’ in pursuit of money will realise that in the end, the number in your bank account does not make you rich, but rather will the love, humility and contentment you surround yourself with. Greed will always drive us apart but in unity we are strong and those who only serve themselves are weak. “In the evening a strange thing happened: the twenty families became one family; the children were the children of all. The loss of home became one loss, and the golden time in the West was one dream.”

The Grapes of Wrath is a tale of a family who were forced to leave the security of their home because of the

excessive desire for profit that had possessed men and caused them to trample on their brothers, plagued by a “monster greater than themselves”. Honest, hardworking families were uprooted by the government with a heartless and cold disinterest in how they would survive. The treacherous journey to California almost ripped the Joad family apart, but they were kept together by a strong sense of love, pride and solidarity. The family was greeted with ruthless hostility and prejudice even though they were only victims of circumstance, and what they were asking for was so little. A portrayal of how our capitalist society may benefit a few, but greatly.

The idea that we always blame others, particularly those above us, is potent and still relevant today especially as there is an instance in the book where one of the family’s close friends ends up destroying their farm just to feed his family. His response is that it is not his fault but the banks’, and he is only doing what he must, regardless of the consequences. It is very easy for us to slip into the mind-set of just blaming the construct of society for our problems; easier than accepting what we are doing is wrong and that we need to make a change. We never have to exploit the poor but we do so because it is easy and it is what we have been taught to do. I admire the audacity of the narrator to question the selfish morals our very community is based on, and how if there is no one to blame but ourselves, we also often turn to blaming God instead of



realising why what we are doing is not acceptable. We are too proud to accept the responsibility of our flawed way of living.

I was appalled at the way the Joads were so inhumanely treated but it struck me that this still happens every day to the migrants that have been forced to flee their homes; that even I myself did not consider their plight, but just accepted and ignored their suffering. Even now in countries like India and the Philippines children are grossly exploited with back-breaking work and incredibly low wages. Often the rich exploit the poor for profit and justify this by dehumanising them; the migrants in *The Grapes of Wrath* were called the derogatory term “Oakies” and they were ridiculed as if being poor was a choice, which is very similar to our situation today.

A standout character in the novel is Ma Joad. Although often overlooked and forgotten, she is the determined backbone of the Joad family that keeps them together and fighting. She is never one to let their standards slip; they are Joads, so they better act like them. Her selfless attitude towards caring for the good of the family is commendable although it sometimes appeared a little harsh. She worked hard to shelter the family from pain and sadness by denying herself those feelings. We are left amazed at her solid, calm, unflappable strength and how she

coped in an extremely difficult situation without complaint. One of my favourite quotes from Ma Joad is “I’m learning one thing good...Learnin’ it all the time, ever’ day. If you’re in trouble or hurt or need – go to poor people. They’re the only ones that’ll help – the only ones.” It is an intriguing concept that it is those who have the least to spare that give the most. Tough situations can either bring us together as one or tear us apart; it is strength of character and resilience that defines who you are. Ma Joad certainly shows determination and should be respected for her love of her family and the sacrifices she makes for them. She represents the stubborn persistence we all possess, and how sometimes, all you can do is try again.

The Grapes of Wrath is eye-opening as to how influential and important money is to us, how pressurised we are from a young age to get a well-paid job, and how the poor are considered lesser. It upsets me that our worth is judged in how much land we own, money we have or where we live, not how kind or compassionate we are. This book has inspired me to reevaluate how I view those who have less, teaching me to be kind and generous to all people regardless of their current situation; we should always help someone in need as it could just as easily be ourselves. We are all just victims of fate.

“All of them were caught in something larger than themselves.”

By Gemma Calthorpe

Claire de Lune

By Gemma Calthorpe

Drip, drip, drip. The repulsive results of the cloying heat slide down my spine and pool in the hollows of my back clouding my mind, my senses. Though the room is stifling hot, a shiver creeps down my spine, along my arms and to the tingling tips of my fingers. The slight tremor in my hand, the only evidence of my growing trepidation. The room is so quiet, so still; it seems a sin to break that solemn silence and the calm that has descended in the heavy air. All I hear is my thunderous pulse thudding in my ear. I dare to take a hesitant step forward, boots scraping slightly against the dilapidated floor. Suddenly I wonder whether I should turn back to face these memories another day. The broken keys wink at me from across the room and my fluttering fingers gently reach down to caress the slumbering notes, softly, softly just as mother taught me. I realise I am home. My hands run delicately along the length of the piano and ghosts of melodies whisper in my ear, my fingers yearning to perform the dance they know so well.

The stool cries, faintly objecting to the sudden weight after such long abandonment.

I begin, the notes a mere whisper, hesitant at first, the blues and purple of the melody a lullaby, an answer. I loosen a shaky breath as the sun from the oncoming dusk floods into the room through the dusty panes, pooling on the piano and trickling onto the keys. The gold of the sun blends with the melody, creating a new tune entirely. My heart leaps, overwhelmed with the joy of playing, the joy of being alive.



I introduce the rich vibrant base notes of crimson and brass. There is no room for hesitation. They steal the air from my lungs and fill the ache in my heart. I am unchained. My fingers, so fluid they could be mistaken for dancers, miss not one step. United in their elegant descent, wild twists and turns bring changes in the rhythm. Turquoise and gold, exotic and jubilant I reach the deafening crescendo and plummet down the scales. Notes tumble over and over each other.

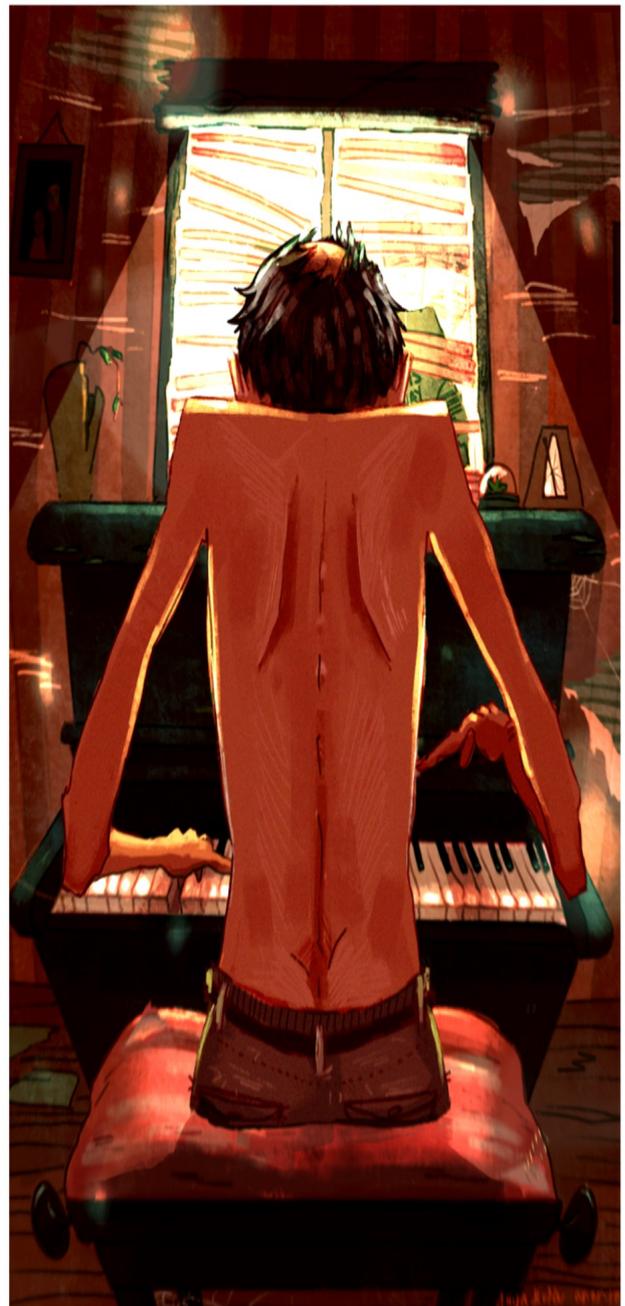
Each harmony more beautiful than the last, I weave my story in between the melody, wondering through memories, marvelling at the swell of the sound my heart in tachycardia. The tinkling laughter of a child, a rich summer breeze.

I am at one with the music.

The melody turns, becoming sombre and inky, a night with no stars as thick as honey. In the lowest depth of the tune there is sorrow, a broken promise, an unfilled dream. As I lightly coax the tender notes of white and grey from the keys, one lonesome tear slips down my cheeks and falls, crashing onto the piano as I release the last few lines of the melody. From quivering core, I throw my head back and sigh. A question. An answer.

As the final chord reverberates through the room I am whole and complete. The music has the power to destroy and heal, a light to banish the darkness and I have made it my own.

As I silently nudge the chair back into place I take one fleeting glance back into the room. It was like I was never there at all. I slip through the door without a single word. Never looking back.



One-Electron

One spring afternoon of 1940, famous physicist Richard Feynman received a telephone call. On the line was Princeton graduate professor John Archibald Wheeler who shouted, “Feynman, I know why all electrons have the same charge and the same mass!” Surprised, Feynman asked, “Why?”, to which the professor replied: “Because, they are all the same electron!”. This gave birth to a new physical interpretation of the universe called the One-electron Universe.

Briefly, it hypothesizes that all electrons and positrons are displays of a single entity moving back and forth in time. Theory suggests that world lines (paths of an object in 4-dimensional space-time, which trace the history of its location in space at each part of the time) are traced out by every electron. Wheeler suggested that all lines could be parts of one line (like a huge knot), traced out by one electron. At any given time, the object is represented by a slice across space-time dimensions, and it would meet the knotted line

many times. It is an object because each cross of the line represents a real electron at a given time. At those crossing points, half of the lines would be directed forward in time, and half would be looped round travelling back in time. The professor believed that these backwards cutting sections appeared as the antiparticle of the electron, called positrons (essentially the opposite of an electron).

One concern with the hypothesis was that many more electrons were observed than positrons, so first were believed to significantly outnumber them. However, Feynman claimed that he discussed this issue with Wheeler, and later believed that the missing positrons are hidden within protons.

Feynman was particularly amazed with the professor’s insight that antiparticles could be represented by reversed field lines, so credited it to Wheeler in his Nobel speech: “I did not take the idea that all the electrons were the same one from [Wheeler] as seriously as I took the

One-Electron

observation that positrons could simply be represented as electrons going from the future to the past in a back section of their world lines. That, I stole!”

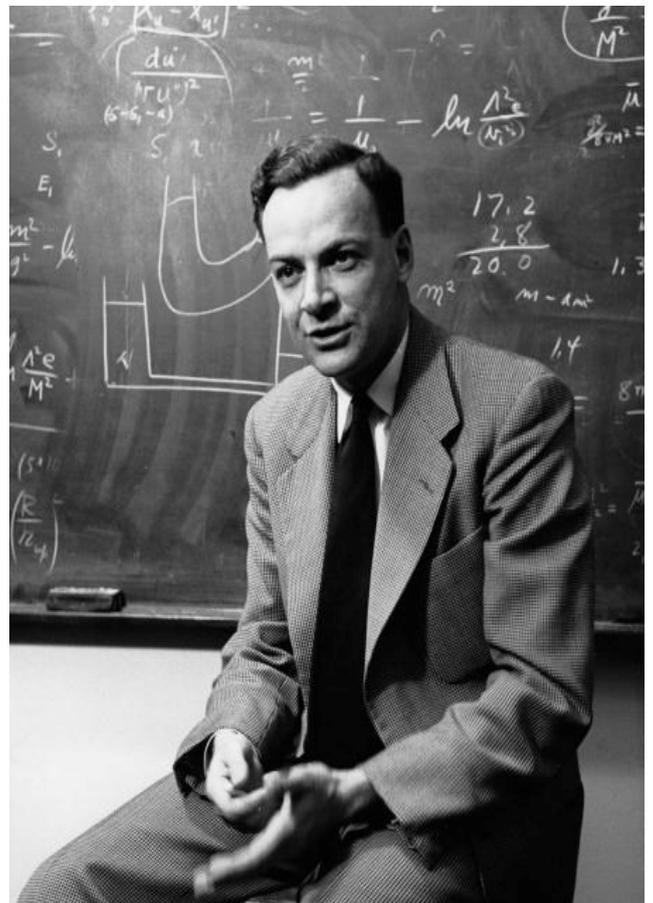
Richard later proposed this idea of positrons' nature as an electron travelling backwards in time in his paper “The Theory of Positrons”, published in 1949. Yoichiro Nambu later adopted this idea to describe the production and annihilation of particle-antiparticle pairs (what we know as “nothing” or “empty space”) by stating that so-called creation and annihilation of particle pairs isn't, in fact, creation or annihilation at all, but only a swap of direction of moving particles, from either future to past, or past to future.

Overall, the One-Electron Universe is a physical hypothesis which is mathematically correct, and also a valid interpretation of the physics. The only difficulty with the theory is that it cannot, or can't easily, be tested.

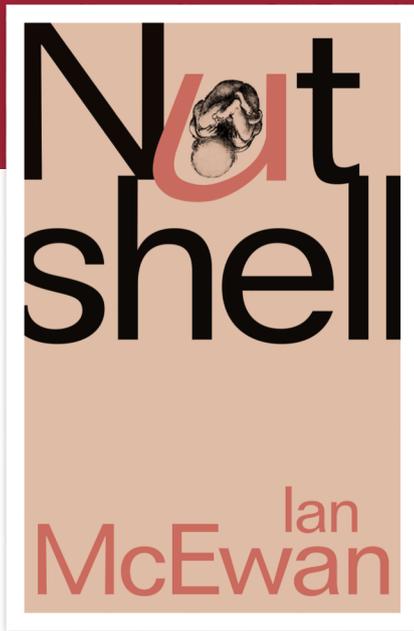
Nonetheless, this doesn't mean that it is wrong, but rather indicates that it will not be proven

soon (or possibly ever). Its verification (or disproof) remains a goal for humanity to strive towards.

By Andrii Iermolaiev



A Unique Perspective: *Nutshell* – By Ian McEwan



“So here I am, upside down in a woman.”

Intrigued yet? When I first heard about the plot, I was sceptical. Although I have faith in McEwan’s writing (the esteemed author has written from various perspectives), a book narrated by a foetus sounded tiresome. However, after hearing the author himself speak about and read from his book at an event, there was no question that I

wanted to read it (especially my signed copy!).

A foetus is just beginning to develop his first thoughts when he becomes aware that his mother and her lover (who he later discovers is his uncle) are plotting to kill his father. The book is heavily based on *Hamlet*, from names (Trudy for Gertrude; Claude for Claudius) to the plot itself, and sometimes even quotes:

Hamlet: *“I could be **bounded in a nutshell**, and count myself a king of infinite space.”*

Nutshell: *“To be **bound in a nutshell**, see the world in two inches of ivory, in a grain of sand.”*

Admittedly, if I hadn’t been told of this ‘influence’, I wouldn’t have recognized it – I haven’t read *Hamlet*. I also can’t say whether this is effective as a retelling, or if my lack of knowledge about *Hamlet* affected my experience. After doing some (limited) research, however, I could certainly recognise the resemblance.

Perhaps surprisingly, the least realistic aspect of this book isn’t the supreme intelligence of the narrator, but in fact the conspirators’ passionate – murderous, even – anger and resentment towards the offspring’s father. It is never explained why they, and in particular Trudy, feel so much hatred for him. Progressively through the book, I was confused about where the mother’s loyalties lay.

The deficit in character analysis (due to the narrator’s circumstances), which is such a crucial element in McEwan’s novels, lets the book down somewhat. Maybe as a result of this, the characters are largely caricatures – not credible, relatable, real. I only hope this is intended, portraying the foetus’ ignorance and inexperience with people.

Although McEwan’s distinctive rhetoric – including his dry humour – is apparent in the foetus’ voice, this is (for the most part) a welcome aspect. The narrator is not

believable, but this does not detract from the book’s narrative or overall realism. Sometimes, however, long rants with seemingly tenuous links to the storyline crop up from nowhere, and it’s clear that these are merely opportunities for the opinionated author to express his strong personal views. An example is when he rants about self-sheltered university students and their destructive politically correct ways. I appreciate that an author’s book is their place to do what they want (including communicating beliefs), but this only works if it is appropriate and not dropped in at random.

Finally, the writing style is confusing at times, with action and commentary jumping around. Perhaps this was for effect, but if even if it wasn’t, it was manageable; it didn’t hurt my reading experience.

All in all, I enjoyed *Nutshell* – hooked from the first page, it is one of the better books I’ve read this year. Compared to McEwan’s other books (at least those that I’ve read), however, it wasn’t his best. The ambitious choice of narrator mostly paid off, although did make for an unusual (and sometimes lacking) read. Read if you love *Hamlet* and/or Shakespeare retellings, you’re looking for a ‘quirky’ book, or you’re as obsessed with Ian McEwan as I am!

By Alia Derriey

Cultures Connect

The Unseen Colours of our Lives

We are fascinated by novelty, by contrasts, by the unexpected. You walk into this new school, surrounded by new people, you start hearing different languages, you start detecting small quirks that you and others have brought from home. In a seemingly completely globalised world, you sometimes catch glimpses of different clothing styles, you notice the subtle cultural tones of every conversation. Then, you stop. You stop noticing, thinking, reflecting on all these small details. Somehow, as they become embedded in your daily life's DNA, they are reduced to the unsurprising.

This year's Cultures Connect brought back that lost sense of magic of the place we live in. Just the way we only become aware of our breathing while meditating, the moment the lights were turned off in the room, and the event officially started, there was suddenly this sense of awareness of the people we were surrounded by.

The general murmur, as groups of people were gathering together, leaving traces of words in the air, the agitation of people moving around, trying to find their friends, a seat, trying to get their faces painted with flags, all of this

dissipated as the first performances started.

For the next hours, the magic of this melange of cultures we live in reappeared, making its way towards our minds and souls, from the words of poems, the rhythm of songs, the motion of dances. There were moments when we were all hypnotised by the passion that radiated from a Russian poem, when we all fell silent at the gentleness of emotions felt through Chinese songs, when we all started clapping in unison, wanting to become part of the lyrics of a rap song. Every single performance was brutally different from the other ones, their contrasting colours bringing to life the palette of cultures we live in. Out of the grey that we experience in our every day lives, Cultures Connect brought back the colours of cultures.

Cultures Connect will stay part of Bromsgrove. It already was, we just didn't notice its colours. It took a dedicated team of organisers, artists, and a supportive audience to shine a light on them.

By Anamaria Cuza

The Life Cycle of y

We often hear about how we have to recycle and utilize resources correctly, but do we actually know why? Very often, the answer is “Global Warming”, but in reality, there is so much more to it than just this. Our ecosystem is vital to human survival, supporting the growth of plants and supplying food for 7.5 billion people. Let’s follow the journey of the piece of paper you threw away today.

First and foremost, a tree will be cut down. Workers choose the thickest and oldest ones (usually around 30) - just one tree produces around 15,000 sheets. Last year alone, America produced 207 million sheets of paper, not including cardboard. When you do the maths, 13,800 trees were cut down just in the U.S. This leads to our first problem: deforestation. Around 6.9 acres of trees are cut down per year in the Amazon Forest. That means that in 14 years, an area the size of our 100-acre campus would be harvested. Animals native to the forest will lose their habitats or be forced to migrate into the forest where climates are different, potentially disturbing existing animals and even leading to their

extinction.

But that’s not all the impact you have had by throwing away that piece of paper! It will be delivered along with other garbage to a landfill site or be incinerated. Luckily, our school doesn’t hide our trash inside the earth, which causes many problems including ground water pollution. As rain pours down, water creeps through loose soil and sediment until it hits a dense surface. Usually when water goes through this process, it is detoxified by the minerals underground. However, researchers have found that waste in landfill actually contaminates water in wells, causing serious health effects such as hepatitis and poisoning. Some of the groundwater can also make its way into lakes and the ocean, soon affecting all aquatic life forms. Our waste is currently incinerated, the process of burning waste. This is a much better option than landfill because we can produce electricity by this. The garbage gets burned at 750 degrees and heats a boiler that turns turbines. This will generate electricity. Poisonous gases that our waste produces go through a scrubber

our Waste Paper

reactor that purifies the gas; finally, this is let out into our atmosphere. Waste irons are collected by an electromagnet to recycle later on.

Bromsgrove School is currently supplied by 'My Copy Executive' for paper. 100% farmed, the type of paper that they provide isn't bad, as it doesn't take from the wild, and the company replants the trees. An even more eco-friendly option would be using a supplier like 'Cocoon', which sells 50 – 100% recycled paper.

Our school started recycling in 2013. You may have heard that it recently stopped doing so. Although the school has not completely stopped recycling, there has been a reduction in the amount of recycling waste which is due to staff and pupil irresponsibility. We tend to throw non-recyclable waste into the bins such as food, costing the school a ridiculous amount of money (400 pounds a month) which the school could not sustain long-term.

On the other hand, the school is looking for other contract providers and discussing better ways it could recycle. Hopefully, we will become

eco-friendlier in the future.

Meanwhile, there are many things that you as staff and students can do. It's as simple as thinking about what you're throwing away – taking the extra 30 seconds to put waste food in the right bin, using both sides of a piece of paper, not wasting food unnecessarily. The effects your extra efforts have will be worth it: just imagine saving a whole species simply by thinking a little more!

By Johnathan Chan



IB Art

Whilst attendees predominantly came to support their friends, many also enjoyed appreciating the art. Lottie Blessing admitted that the exhibition was better than she'd expected, not realising the impact art could have on her. When asked what art meant to her, she decidedly answered, 'where you express yourself', adding that she liked how the artists at the exhibition expressed how they felt. For her, 'art is everything that can bring out emotion in you – even the simplest things can be art if they have an intention'. Roxie Lette felt inspired by the exhibit, asserting that there should be more art offered as a subject school wide; that people don't recognise the value of visual art.

Looking around the exhibit and appreciating the art, I had the opportunity to speak to some of the artists presenting who were all friendly and en-

At the end of last term, diverse members of the Bromsgrove community gathered in the ADT department to celebrate the artwork of IB2 students.

By Alia Derriey



Leka Mpigi

What inspired your work?

I wanted to create a painting that is absent from all cultural signifiers. This one was influenced by Jean-Michel Basquiat. At first, the base piece was a portrait of a girl, but then I started to exaggerate the piece with line and colour, becoming more expressive with it. I'm not a traditional 'paint, draw lines' artist; I just like to be really expressive. My intention was to create a piece that no-one could judge or label - looking at this piece you can't say, for example, 'that's black' or 'that's white'; the worst thing you could probably say is that it's weird, which it is! But you can't give it a basic judgement.

And it's not following a particular style...

Yeah, it doesn't follow social standards. That's what inspired me; I really wanted to create something outside of all social standards. I just wanted to make something really interesting and colourful and bright.

And what about this one?

When I made this painting, I still felt like its effect on the viewer wasn't strong enough. It's like animation - people know how to receive it more lightly; we have cartoons with one eye! People accept it because in their head, it's a cartoon. When you put it on an actual human being, it's more relatable. They think that it's a person, so it's different. Because this one's more animated, people are likely to accept it more, but the fact that that's a person makes it more striking, more



So this one is to shock and move the viewer?

Yeah, and it was my last piece as well, so I really wanted to do something different to what I started with. If you see my work, it started really colourful, but became really dark - all over there [below] it's black and white.

Was there a reason for that?

I think it became dark because I started to look at people's environments, following the footsteps of the photographer Richard Barton - his black and white photography work is amazing - and I wanted to create an installation that says the same thing that art does: anyone can belong anywhere. That's why I called it 'The Piece Where I Belong'. When it's black and white, it's plain, it's real; you can't say that someone doesn't belong here. I could put anyone in the picture and all you'd see is the tone of their skin - you can't say 'that's a white person' or 'that's a black person'. When you see something in black and white, it makes it more real. Black and white is authentic, while col-



And they're never accurately portrayed...

Exactly; you're going to say 'this colour means this and that colour means that'. Black and white pictures don't give space for that; they're just like, 'this is black' and 'this is white'.

More generally, what does studying art and making art mean to you?

This is going to sound really cliché, but I love making art. For me, music and art go hand in hand. Sometimes it's a pain - when it comes to stitching for example, I hate to stitch -

Well you did a great job!

I like to paint a lot more; I find it more expressive. I love photography - it was the first medium in art that I really experienced, and then I went on to painting. Taking pictures is kind of like a hobby; painting for me is an escape. Stitching is a pain, but



Hao Nian

What inspired your work?

At the beginning of the term, everyone was tasked with exploring the relationship between humans and other things. A lot of people chose humans and disease, war, family, but I wanted to choose something more mundane and close to life, so I chose food. I did some research, because usually people think of food as something nice – we like food naturally, it's human nature – but in the modern day there is an excess of food, and people buy (and eat) too much. It's part of consumerism: you look in the supermarket and are overwhelmed by all the choices. I wanted to represent this sense of being overwhelmed in my art.

So this is about worshipping food?

Part of the junk food culture in the modern world: when people get sad, they don't go to church or chapel anymore – instead they go to a restaurant and drown themselves in food.



What drew you to choose Art as a subject in sixth form and in your life?

About four years ago, I wanted to be a doctor but now I'm scared of blood! I changed my mind to be an architect, and to do so I need Art. It's a most original story! But then it developed...

Have you enjoyed studying Art at Bromsgrove?

It's been mostly enjoyable. There are always restrictions, because the exam board has a lot of requirements – we have to write about our work, but we can't just do it on our own; we have to give it coherence. The creation is the most enjoyable.

Is the writing tedious?

Yes, tedious. Very tedious! You have no idea.



Bryony Ralph

What was your method?

I took them using slides from Biology. I took pictures through the microscope with a lens, so they're various magnifications. Most of them are plant cells, and they're based off these photos.

Some are PVA glue in a petri dish, dribbling ink to try to copy the picture - you can tell which one some of them are. Others are resin in a petri dish with ink, and then you have to wait for the ink to dry.



What inspired the biological theme?

I started with looking at people's cultures and identities. Then I went on to identity at a smaller level - DNA. Through that it moved on to Biology and other fields, like disease and stem cells, which are used to repair diseases.

What's the difference between GCSE and IB Art?

This has a deeper meaning; at GCSE it just looks nice, but this actually has meaning behind it.

Some people have said that the writing is kind of tedious – do you find interesting?

I think if you do your writing really well, it gets you marks because they actually know what you're trying to do. If you just looked at that, you wouldn't really know what it was; the writing explains it a lot better. I don't know if it was enjoyable but I found it easy.

A FAREWELL TO THE MONITORS

By Alia Derriey

Given that next year's monitors were formally signed in a couple of weeks ago, and Commemoration day is fast approaching, I thought this was a particularly fitting opportunity for the monitors of 2016-17 to look back on their time at Bromsgrove. Below, read some of the monitors' responses.



George Goodall

What advice would you give to current Bromsgrove pupils (e.g. how to survive to the end of U6)?

Get involved with as many things as possible, but also learn to balance your time; sometimes you have to tell a teacher that you can't do something in the nicest way possible. Other than that, enjoy your time, enjoy your friendships and enjoy the experience.

Isabel James

What is your favourite memory of your experience at Bromsgrove?

My favourite memory of Bromsgrove was the Lower Fourth Camp, which was when I began to truly enjoy my time here at Bromsgrove and feel part of the school - I remember playing rounders in the sun with the Lower Sixth, relaxing with everyone, and enjoying the time after the Lower Fourth exams with my friends.



Tiffanie Tseng

What do you hope to achieve after leaving Bromsgrove?

I hope to enjoy my university experience ahead as much as I have felt at home at Bromsgrove. I would like to be a successful architect after I graduate, building places that make an impact on people like schools, hospitals and community centres.

Echo Wang

What advice would you give to current Bromsgrove pupils (e.g. how to survive to the end of U6)?

Work hard, play hard. Fully concentrate when you're working, but then leave time to completely unwind free from any work and just do whatever you want.



Paige Corcoran

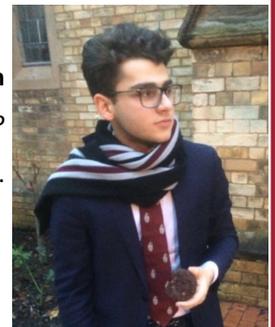
What is your favourite memory of your experience at Bromsgrove?

Anything drama - every school play has been so much fun, especially the friendships that I've made.

Suren Akopyan

What do you hope to achieve after leaving Bromsgrove?

Make Armenia Great Again.



Dina Körzdörfer

What advice would you give to current Bromsgrove pupils (e.g. how to survive to the end of U6)?

Stay yourself. and be proud of that. Don't get distracted from your long-term goal. Push yourself and aim high, but never forget to focus on your wellbeing first.



Lawrence Weston

What is your favourite memory of your experience at Bromsgrove?

"We'll go at half pace, around 70%" - Tony Windo



Esme Weston

What do you hope to achieve after leaving Bromsgrove?

To not regret anything that I wished I had done. Hopefully become a primary school teacher and inspire a generation.



Kara Doyle

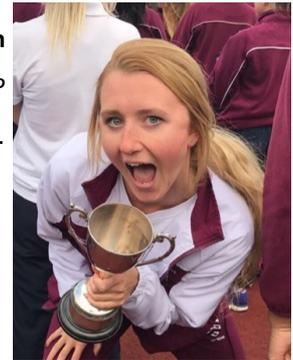
What advice would you give to current Bromsgrove pupils (e.g. how to survive to the end of U6)?

Involve yourself in every possible activity, as I regret not doing more activities (especially in L4 and U4 when the work load is less intense).

Lauren Brown

What is your favourite memory of your experience at Bromsgrove?

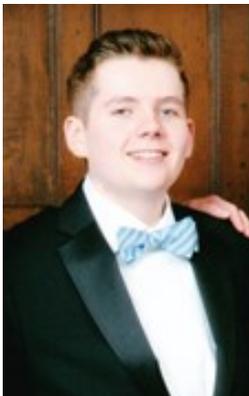
Making an obstacle course to keep younger years out of our study.



Thomas Muir

What do you hope to achieve after leaving Bromsgrove?

To become a politician within 10 years of leaving university



Sasha Johnston

What advice would you give to current Bromsgrove pupils (e.g. how to survive to the end of U6)?

Use your frees wisely... to catch up on all the sleep you've lost.



Beck Cutting

What is your favourite memory of your experience at Bromsgrove?

Meeting Tom Williams after hearing so much about his cracking chat.



Valediction...

Two short years ago, I stepped up to be the sole magazine designer and editor for Two Zero One, not knowing where any of this would take me. My time as editor has been one of excitement and experimentation; the first issue proved challenging as I had no other magazine like it to use as a model. I tried my hand at creating Issue 1 and looking back at it now, although there are some things that I could have done to make it look better, it stands as the inaugural issue and nonetheless contains one of my favourite looking articles: the *Joy* film review.

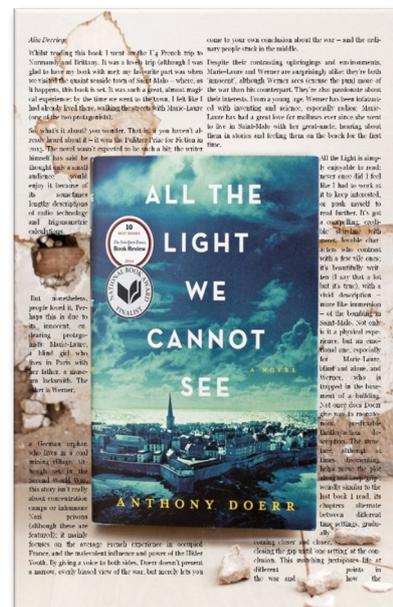


I want to say a big thanks to Ms Adams for creating this opportunity and to the help she has provided me with. And to Alia for helping to get everyone's articles to me for editing and basically being the backbone to this whole operation. Finally, I wish our new magazine editor, Will Edwards, well and I hope to see what fresh ideas he can bring to this magazine. Thank you for reading.

James Edge



However, my eye for detail is what drove me in further issues as I wanted them to look as flawless as I could make them. I am particularly proud of the *Far from the Madding Crowd* review and a book review of *All the Light We Cannot See*.



At this point of the year, my desk could actually be considered a work of modern art, showing the business, fast paced rhythm, with slight tendencies towards workaholicism of the life of a young adult. In one corner, a growing tower of notes and past papers are all shuffled together, constantly reminding me of the disorganised state of the knowledge from my mind. Pens, highlighters, a shameful amount of calculators seem to have started spreading their colonies all around my table, cultivating pieces of my dropped instant coffee, in the most unexpected places.

Our desks suddenly seem to encompass a world of their own, as we spend hours bent over them, constantly working - or so we are expected to. We are supposed to eliminate any distractions, any thoughts that might make our mind wander. Expressing our creative self is limited to the colours we use in highlighting our notes, while our energy is spent trying to get as many ticks as possible out of a past paper. An incorrect answer should make us tremble with anger, while a well-revised chapter should somehow fill us with joy...

But look a bit closer, shuffle around my papers for a bit, take a better look at my "notes", build up the courage to look through my opened tabs on my laptop. In between past papers, you will find stacks of paper filled with words that are gradually becoming a story I've been working on. Mixed with my revision flashcards, there are tens of them filled with all the ideas that I get while trying to concentrate on a dry physics past paper. On top of the textbooks I am supposed to devour, there

are three books that I am reading at the moment.

These are the details that I hope 201 will keep alive in its future issues: amongst the expected interviews with Old Bromsgrovians, beautifully crafted essays, well rounded coverages of school events, I hope that small acts of rebellion, bursts of not-so-universally-agreed-upon opinions, murmurs of conflicting ideas will stay with us. Living in a protected environment, amongst flawlessly trimmed trees, well-scheduled days, and perfectly fitting suits might give us a comfortable life - but it cannot serve as a substitute for pure joy, trembling anger, sheer frustration, for all these emotions that as we experience, reveal more and more about who we are.

If I could tell one thing to every future contributor at 201 it would be this: ideas, thoughts, even our sense of who we are, are not supposed to be nicely packaged in a box, with a ribbon, graciously ready to be delivered to the world. The ideas we use to construct our view of the world, our view of ourselves, are meant to be frowned around, cruelly stepped on, cut out and spontaneously glued back in a moment of inspiration. It seems counter-intuitive that the world wouldn't want our perfectly packaged gifts, our well polished work, our perfect grades in exams, but the truth is perfection is predictable in its nature - our eyes are always caught by the unpredictable.

Future creators, contributors and readers of 201 - don't forget to catch the eyes of the world.

Anamaria Cuza

Edited by: Aled Luckman and William Edwards

