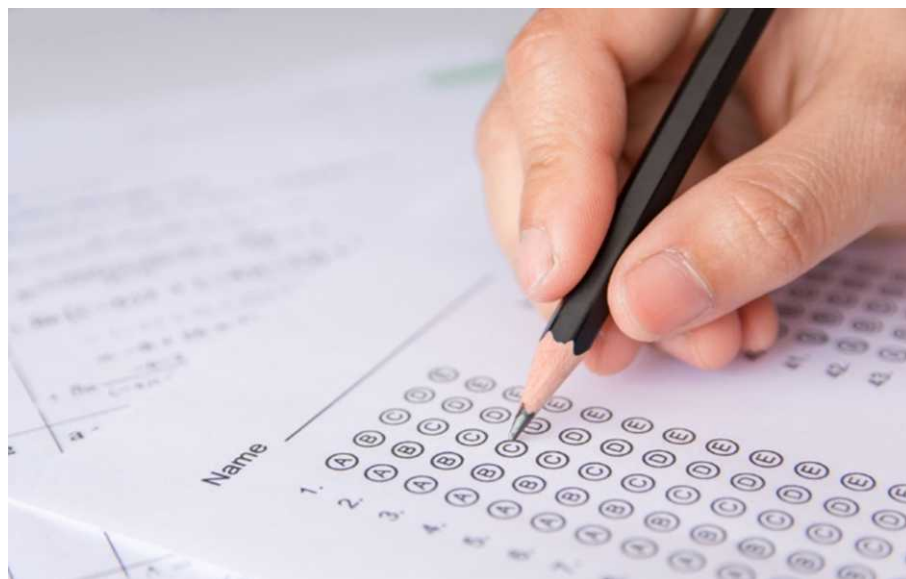




The RGS Gazette

Issue 3 - July 2021

Exam Season in a World of Chaos



By Oscar Panayi - Year 9

For all of us it will be fairly obvious that the last two years of school have hardly been ordinary, with the plethora of new rules constantly emerging in the interest of our safety and the safety of our school environment flipping the norm of how we learn. This left many students and teachers stressed about how their school and classroom would be altered in a way that ensured school safety while giving everyone a fair chance.

These changes, whether individual to the school or nationwide, have been especially difficult to deal with in regard to exams, with the entire system being shifted often on short notice, from large scale course cuts and adaptations in assessment style to, for older students, reliance on mock results and a shift to teacher predicted grades. This has been especially true for Year 11s and 13s, with this change from externally assessed official GCSEs to Internal

exams and teacher assessed grades having the largest impact on them and their experience of exams. Even students who have not had official exams have also felt the effect of this with, lockdowns, exam restrictions and syllabus changes having an impact on all of our school lives and exams.

While this has significantly calmed down this year with the easing of restrictions and introduction of the vaccine, most students still have felt the long and short-term effects of COVID in this exam season, it being undeniable that the last two years have left a mark on every student's academic life, despite the best efforts of our school and others.

For this reason, we chose to conduct an interview with a Y11 student, who, as per his request will remain anonymous: our aim being to investigate the complicated issues older student have gone through

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BETTER
BIDEN**

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Will McLaughlin tackles the perplexing issue of why audiences love to be terrified. Can he make sense of the mad attraction to horror.. find out on page 10

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during COVID school student. In doing this, we found out the extent to which the changes may have had an impact on Y11s and Y13s, getting some insight into what life has been like for exam year students over the past few months.

From this it became clear that the changes over the past few years have had much more complex and deep effects on exams than may have been obvious before the interview.

One interesting thing we discovered from this was that it was clearly not just the actual exam changes which left a mark on this year's exam season, more long-term causes such as the two stay-at-home periods over the past few years having a massive effect. While our interviewee had a mostly positive experience of these lockdowns, feeling that they worked well in the independent environment and saying that "lockdowns indirectly aided my experience": accelerating their progress more than hindering it, it is obvious that this varied across different students where the pupil mentioned difficulties; as their year's "collective motivation waned", exam revision stamina likely decreased over these periods.

This was furthered by the fact that in the later term of exams due to course cuts and changes, there was less new content and more repetition and re-revision taking place meaning that "stamina was far harder to maintain".



Each year's "waned motivation" has had an impact on revision stamina

As well as this, we found that while course cuts, internally modulated exams and teacher-assessed grades may seem on the face of it like they had a positive effect on many people's stress levels in the lead up to exams, our interviewee and likely many other students found that there was "an additional pressure to perform well" with constant examination and continuing worries of rule changes meaning that "mental health was at an all time low"

Overall however, the student made it clear to us that, while complete GCSEs would obviously be preferable, the efforts of teachers and schools to get the process working in circumstances made the experience definitely better than it might have been and has been in other schools, stating that they were "overall satisfied" and that they "really don't have much to complain about". The teacher assessed grades still made, in this student's opinion, a good representation of students' abilities, doing justice to the work Y11s and 13s have completed over their time in the school.

The message we can get from this is that, whether your particular experience of school exams as a student or a teacher, was highly positive, negative or anywhere in between, it is a huge accomplishment to have gotten through exam season (and school in general) for these past two years, with the effects of COVID on our schooling being a unique challenge for every one of us.

With positivity we can all return in September a little wiser, a little more intelligent and a little (or lot!) less tired, from what has been a very long year.

Are You My Teacher, Mr Wallace?

By Bilal Raja - Year 8 and interview by Tom Sullivan - Year 12

What made you choose a career in teaching?

I think I was incredibly lucky in that I knew I wanted to do teaching from an age of perhaps 15 or 16. I loved the variety that school offered and the last thing I wanted to do was to be stuck in an office all day, which is ironically what I spend most of my time doing now! When I was 18, I went to teach at a school in Johannesburg and that really cemented teaching as a career for me.

What would you describe as your best teaching moment?

When I first taught here, I was teaching a group of year 10s in a lesson called P for C or Philosophy for Children. A heated discussion started over a topic I can't really

remember now, and the students were really into it, and getting quite animated when the bell rang. Normally by the time the bell goes, most children already have their bags packed, ready to shoot out of the door. But to my surprise, the entire group stayed in class and asked if they could continue the discussion over break time. I had to leave quickly due to an urgent meeting of mines but at the end of break a lad called Josh Quigley who's probably 25 now, if not older, came over to let me know how they resolved the conversation. So that was a very satisfying moment for me. I mean if you've got a class who want to carry on even if the teacher's not there; then you must be doing something right.

Why the RGSHW?

I played rugby for the Southwest Under 18 side and 12 of the members of the squad were from RGS including scrum-half Nick Duncombe who later played for England and sadly lost his life at a young age. And I remember looking down the team sheet and thinking: what is this ridiculous school where you've got 12 people playing for the same squad? Later, a job for the head of geography came up from the school and with that memory in mind I decided to apply. I was very fortunate to get the role of second in the Geography department with the original post I applied for going to Mrs Gazzard who was without a shadow of a doubt the right person for the position. When I visited RGS, it just felt like a lovely



Mr Wallace when he joined as a teacher at RGS 14 years ago

environment with really nice people. And I thought why not give it a go? Ever since then I've sort of fallen in love with the place and I think every day I've enjoyed it more and more.

Why have you stayed at RGS for 14 years?

I think I've been very lucky in my career that every time I was considering a move another role came up. I was head of year 10/11 for a few years and then the post of assistant head came up which I served for 3 years. Just as I was getting itchy feet, I was delighted to be offered the role of Deputy Head and five years later I still love that role.

What does a typical day look like for you?

My role as deputy head is the day to day running of the school which could be anything. For example, yesterday morning, I received my first phone call at six o'clock in the morning. It was Mrs. Forster ringing about another COVID incident. Lots of important decisions had to be decided in



Mr Wallace today, still as radiant as ever

response to the call. We've got trips going out. Can they still go ahead?

Another thing that takes up a chunk of my time is overseeing all the assemblies, making sure that they've got enough speakers and so on. That's my day-to-day stuff but a lot of things can come up in a school of a thousand and it always keeps me on my toes. You might be dealing with a student who has made a mistake and you're overseeing the exclusion. It might instead be a meeting with a disgruntled parent or an unhappy member of staff. It is crucial to be extremely organised and I'm lucky to have a superb PA who handles it all for me.

There's also lots of great things that I get to do as well, like handing out certificates to boys and popping into classrooms in my role as overseeing all the wonderful learning and teaching that happens at RGS.

What impact have you had at the school?

It's really hard to say. There's been various initiatives that have been

put in place during my career here like the Ethos of Learning and Make the Difference marking. I think one thing that we've had a major impact on is our recruitment. It's really important that we are appointing staff with the right character, and I would say that we're nailing that at the moment. The teaching staff we've got currently is the strongest teaching staff we've ever had in the last 14 years I've been here.

What are you most looking forward to in the future?

Together with my family, I'm relocating to a boarding school called Leighton Park. It's a very different school to RGS, focussed on Quaker values but I think that there will be lots to learn for me. I always want to keep learning throughout my career wherever I am. It'll be very interesting for my family and I to move on to the site and I'll strive to do what I've always tried to do here which is to be the best Deputy Head the school has ever seen.



Obituary: HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh

By Ahmed Raja - Year 10

Queen Elizabeth's "strength and stay," the Duke of Edinburgh, died peacefully on April 9th 2021 at Windsor Castle.

The longest serving consort in British history, the Duke of Edinburgh was an influential man and a husband who supported the Queen throughout the ups and downs of her, so far, sixty-nine year reign. Although mostly known as a royal consort, it was Philip who, behind the scenes, created and supported many charities such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Duke of Edinburgh Award (DoFE), influencing both nature and young people alike.

Born on the Greek island of Corfu, into both Greek & Danish royalty, Philip's childhood was not as easy as one as expected for a young Prince. His family were exiled during his uncle's forced abdication in 1922. The family fled to Paris where he spent much of his childhood in and out of homes. His mother Princess Alice of Battenburg was institutionalised in 1931 and Philip's father, Prince Andrew of Greece & Denmark was away in the south of France, only visiting Philip during the termly holidays. Within eighteen months of the family's breakdown, his four older sisters were also married off, resulting in young Philip often being alone and simply "having to get on with it...as one does."

After joining the Royal Navy in 1939, it was during the royal family's visit where he met his future wife, Queen Elizabeth. They began corresponding through letters soon after. However, it was just after the Second World War where he was given King George VI's approval to marry the Princess. They were engaged in July 1947 where he abandoned his old titles in favour of adopting his mother's anglicised name, Mountbatten. The couple were married on 20th November 1947 and he was granted his British titles. They later had their four children; Charles, born 1948, Anne, born 1959, Andrew, born 1960 and Edward, born 1964.

It was during a tour of Kenya in 1952, where he awoke his wife to tell her the news of her father's death. Princess Elizabeth was now Queen. The couple flew back to England immediately and moved into Buckingham Palace. After the Queen's coronation in 1952, Philip withdrew from active naval service and never officially returned for the rest of his life, one of the few regrets he had. Although often the subject of rumours, the couple had a strong and healthy relationship that lasted until Philip's death.

Other than just supporting his wife, Prince Philip was supportive of many charities and events throughout his life. Patron of over eight hundred charities, throughout his life he also helped to establish many of his own, the most notable being the Duke of Edinburgh Award (DoFE). It was begun on the basis of children and young people having better starts in life as well as to help them. Even post-mortem, this award has helped millions of children since 1956. Today, many schools help children participate in the DoFE, including RGS, and it has become a recognised university 'qualification,' helping children even into higher and further education.

Prince Philip officially retired from royal duties in 2017, having supported and represented the monarchy in over 22,220 solo public engagements since 1952. It was on the morning of 9th April 2021, where Philip died peacefully of 'old age,' his wife by his bedside. The Duke of Edinburgh was not one to give up easily. The "longest-serving Royal consort in British history," Prince Philip was a credit to the monarchy.

Is the G7 Summit Really That Important?

By Tom Sullivan - Year 12

The 2021 G7 Summit was hosted by Prime Minister Boris Johnson in Cornwall to deliver on the Conservative's pledge to 'build back better', promoting an environmentally friendly and prosperous economic future following the damaging plight of coronavirus.

The post-Brexit UK presidency of the summit has proven fundamental for Johnson's government to rebuild trade outside of the European Union and have the platform to negotiate with other world leaders. However, the seven nations have come under strain in recent years after removing Russia from the former G8 and the turbulent Trumpian agenda that refused to ratify the summit's past pledges. Despite this, Joe Biden claimed that "America is back at the table" to reverse Trump's manifesto of 'America First' and reignite the influential international leadership to assist developing countries.

This summit appears to have made vital steps for progress, and while the proposals have been criticised as insufficient, they have the potential to spark action to tackle climate change, coronavirus and even impose a global corporate tax on tech giants.

Firstly, the most significant pledge from the seven nations was the timely delivery of an additional 870 million vaccine doses in addition to the 350 million from the US and UK. However, these plans have been heavily criticised by the World Health Organisation director, Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus, as he states that "we need more, and we need them faster", calling for a greater contribution from the elitist group.



Nine of the world's leaders met to discuss working on COVID-19 recovery, climate change, and free & fair trade

In addition, underlying tension between the UK and EU was evidently unresolved with no negotiation over the EU's hostility to the UK's self-indulgent vaccine greed or the disastrous Irish border antagonism. Regardless of Johnson's earlier all-consuming focus on vaccinating the United Kingdom first, the Prime Minister has begun to contribute a fraction of the vaccinations for third-world countries, but this move is likely to be disregarded after the honeymoon period of the summit as the Government aims to reduce foreign aid dramatically.

Conversely, however, the G7 leaders have begun to make promises on tackling the environmental crisis by cooperatively pledging to contribute \$100 billion per year to poorer countries to combat climate change.



Stopping the funding for coal production in developing countries brings more serious problems

Despite this pledge appearing seemingly progressive, the G7 are instead reaffirming the \$100 billion contribution made in 2009, even with the climate crisis dramatically worsening. Biden led the proposals

to phase out coal burning during his first major international venture, with the G7 collectively agreeing to end the funding of new coal generation in developing countries through proposing £2 billion to prevent the use of this fuel. Despite these promises, environmental charities have criticised the funding due to the lack of substance for poor nations to fully cope with climate change in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.

Lastly, the G7 have ratified measures to target offshore tax havens for tech giants by implementing a minimum of a 15% global corporate tax rate. Despite being below President Biden's initial proposals for a 21% corporate tax, the 15% is the beginning of this dramatic move, with the G7 agreeing to elevate the proposal to the G20 nations too.

Furthermore, the UK capitalised on hosting the summit by agreeing a trade deal with Australia to eliminate tariffs on all UK goods to boost business and employment between the two nations. Johnson has even been able to initiate negotiations with the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, on the back of the G7, as further evidence of the benefits of the seven nations cooperating, even in this short period of time.



19th July: Will we finally be free?

By Srikar Kalachaveedu - Year 8

On the 19th of July, all COVID-19 restrictions will be relaxed. These restrictions are: wearing masks in shops, not being able to touch or be in close contact with anybody outside your bubble and finally, social distancing. This has been hailed a 'Freedom Day' by Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, and numerous other cabinet ministers. This situation has been made possible by the vaccines, made by Pfizer, AstraZeneca and Moderna, which have been game-changers in our fight against the pandemic. But, are we really going to break free from the shackles of a global pandemic?

Over the past few months, the Government has promised 'back to normal' by Christmas, which was postponed to 'freedom' by June 21st and this was also postponed to July 19th. Last year, when this pandemic started, though, we were told it was temporary and that lockdown would be over very soon. Instead, it has destroyed the economy, ended many lives and has separated families, destroying mental health. And finally, to even have the hope to get back to normal would be the most unexpected thought at this

time last year. This fleeting hope been enabled by the vaccines which have been made in a very short period of time. As a result, this has saved many lives and has given the world a route out of lockdown. But, with cases rising is it really correct to lift all social restrictions?

On June the 26th: the day of writing this, there were over 18,000 COVID-19 cases in the U.K. and the R-rate or reproductive rate, of COVID-19, is above 1 which means that the virus is now exponentially rising. In other words: the virus is spreading quickly. In addition, during the Christmas easing of restrictions, virus cases grew rapidly and it was the cause of a serious and critical second wave. Although there is a vaccine, there is no guarantee that transmission of the virus will halt and talks of a booster shot in order to have full protection from the virus really questions the effectiveness and purpose of having the vaccine when you have to take three shots in order to have full protection. Maybe, like flu, this will be something that we would have to deal with and take the necessary precautions every winter or every 'COVID-season'.

On a more positive note, hospitalisations of patients with COVID-19 are still relatively low as are the number of deaths of people who have contracted the virus. The patients who are in hospital are people who have not taken the vaccine, which although doesn't stop the transmission of the virus, drastically increases the chances of survival and drastically decreases the chances of ending up in hospital after contracting the virus. After the Government conducted their 'tests,' observing whether high-capacity crowds would have a correlation in high COVID cases. These tests were the FA Cup final and the England VS. New Zealand Test Match at Birmingham. The data shows that there was no major outbreak of the virus after the events.

On July 19th, the U.K. should finally be back to normal and hopefully we will not need another lockdown to curve an outbreak. But, whatever happens, COVID-19 will be remembered in history as one of the most important events in humanity and we can live our lives like before the pandemic.

Features

How has Japan changed from WW2 to the Present?

By Kayiza Mukasa - Year 9



Japan's booming post-war industry

Japan, also known as the land of the Rising Sun, has, for a long time, been known for its culture, its different types of media, and is infamous for its involvement in World War Two: a defining factor that has shaped Japan into what it is today. Foreigners nowadays have a largely different view of Japan than they did in, for example, the 1960's as Japan has spent decades trying to change its perception in the west, something that has mostly been successful.

It is hard to believe that the Japan of the 1940s became what we see today; having invaded China in 1937, they signed the Tripartite pact with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy in 1940, attacked Pearl Harbour the following year, and quickly invaded most of Asia in an almost unstoppable frenzied expansion. Japan had, within only a century, gone from an isolationist kingdom to an empire, having the best army, navy, and air force in the Far East. It was not until 1945, after its surrender, that this turned around. The atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were defining moments in the country's conscience, and it was not until the

end of Japan's imperial ambitions that it could truly become a global and economic powerhouse.

The Japanese Economic Miracle was a period between WW2 and the end of the cold war that saw record economic growth in the islands, eventually making Japan the world's second-largest economy. Though Japan's economy is no longer in such a favourable state, the Miracle saw Japan's GDP per capita rise to 85% of the US's, becoming a truly western country. This kind of growth was only achievable with the US's economic aid and rebuilding effort, as well as Japan's unique culture and situation after the war, creating the perfect conditions for economic growth, something many countries have tried to emulate. Also, whilst the Japan of WW2 sought to invade and eventually exploit China, China now stands as one of Japan's most important trading partners, even if relations between the two remain cold.

Japan's culture and traditions were also heavily affected by the Post-War era; women were finally allowed to get involved in politics,

gaining the right to vote in 1945, and the effects of fascism and nationalism began to dissipate, allowing for more social freedom. In 1947, the Fundamental Law of Education was enacted, guaranteeing academic freedom and extending compulsory education from 6 to 9 years.

One of the most interesting cultural developments was Vocaloid, a voice synthesiser for songs. Developed by the Yamaha Corporation, the most famous voicebank for the app is Hatsune Miku, the voice of a virtual idol, who has 'sung' songs such as 'Po Pi Po' and 'Ievan Polkka', giving 'her' (or at least her image) the same treatment as a famous pop star in Japan. The technology was highly successful, making around 11 Billion Yen (70 Million Pounds) in 2019. The Japan of today is seemingly at the forefront of music technology.

However, Vocaloid's popularity waned as another creative medium's rose: Anime. Japanese animation, known as Anime, is famous for its unique style. Although Japanese animation has existed for much longer than Vocaloid- it didn't become popularised in the west until the early 2000s- and has been important in shaping how the west views Japan, with shows such as 'Fullmetal Alchemist', 'Code Geass', 'Death Note', and 'Bleach' (my personal favourite) being published throughout the decade. The world became hooked, and anime has been, and still is, one of the most popular mediums to exist, making more than 2.5 Trillion Yen (16 Billion Pounds) in 2019. Anime has been monumental in shaping the country's culture and stands out as one of the biggest developments since the war.

Overall, I believe that Japan has changed immeasurably since the end of WW2, and certainly for the better. It is hard to believe that such a pacifistic, modern, and westernised country could develop from the imperial military dictatorship that once existed almost 80 years ago, and yet could remain so connected and appreciative of its culture.



Our Changing Views of History through History

By Ryan Massey - Year 12

While history and its presentation in literature is relatively subjective, the physical construct of history is largely unmalleable. However, in the past century or so, opinions and values have been tampered with to such a great extent that our outlook on history is altering with them. In fact, a multitude of crucial fables in history that we in the present day can learn from are being scribbled over to erase our, admittedly, inhumane intentions in the past. The way in which we can learn from this is to answer the question: what is the history of history?

Well, one such factor of this change in historical interpretations could be the natural human inclination of different opinions. A good place to start with this discussion would be the opinions surrounding the terror in the Soviet Union between approximately 1920 and 1953. In this specific debate, two cliques represent the two different outlooks: the intentionalists and the revisionists. As the former's name suggests, the intentionalists believed that Stalin, the maniacal leader of Soviet Russia between 1928 and 1953, was the sole, controlling mastermind behind all of the USSR's nefarious plans.

No explanations, no excuses: he was the human Devil.

And this was, indeed, the most widely accepted perception until the late 20th century and the 21st century, when the revisionists, as

their name also suggests, attempted to revise the now outdated attitudes of Stalin's alleged despicability. Now, it was thought that Stalin may have set the terror in motion, but was not solely responsible, nor was he even fully aware that some methods of torture or terror even occurred. In short, neither of these opinions or outlooks have ever been fully proven, despite these opposing views being equally displayed in history books.

This is one example of history itself changing right in front of our eyes, and this is just from a 30-year period.



Stalin: bloodthirsty monster or unaware comrade?

The historical fulcrum of the 20th century was not solely influential for academics, but also for the general public, who's beliefs were

now catalysed by the rapidly developing societal campaigns concerning human rights, gender, and race. We have seen multiple instances of this cataclysmic shift in recent years, for example, with black rights, and also the way that history is taught in schools and higher education establishments due to these changing ideals. Indeed, the Civil Rights Movement has taught the world many important lessons, and the fact that the world now accepts the development of black rights as an influence for the topics taught in education displays the new acceptance of racial issues that would have before been seen as taboo or inconsequential.

However, at the same time, it is vital, in my opinion, for us not to eradicate the history that we once thought acceptable, as to understand the present, we must, brutally, embrace our history, even if said history is more comfortable to disregard.

In doing this, or rather not doing this, the change in history in the future will be benefitted by the present. Complicated, I know, but it is very intriguing how set actions or events in the past can be so misconstrued, purely down to the manner in which they are received by the individual.

And that is what makes history what it is today: a complex study of not just events in the past, but of society as a whole. The change in history throughout history is a complicated topic, but is representative of how we choose to live in peace, while also starting a war of information and inference.

The Importance of the Stonewall Riots

By Zach Wilson - Year 12



Grassroots activism at Stonewall marked the beginning of the modern queer liberation movement

In the bad old days of post-war America, homophobia was rife. There was a fervent desire amongst the American people to 'restore the pre-war social order' and hold off the 'forces of change'. As suspected communists found themselves in the American establishment's crosshairs, so too did the queer community.

Guided by the pseudoscientific belief that homosexuals were vulnerable to blackmail, President Eisenhower banned them from working in the federal government in 1953; not only did 5,000 queer people lose their jobs, but they were forcibly outed and subjected to horrific homophobic abuse by their communities. Many state and local governments followed suit with the President and banned gay people from regular employment.

Deprived of some of their most basic rights, many queer individuals sought refuge in gay bars. These private establishments were often the only places people with same-sex orientations and gender-variant identities could openly socialize, and they existed across Europe and the United States. One such bar in New York, was called the Stonewall Inn.

Like other similar bars, the Stonewall Inn was subject to frequent raids by the police, and the morning of 28th June was no different; at 1:20 A.M., nine police officers raided the bar. However, as the police ran into difficulties, a large and angry crowd began to grow outside of the Inn.

Eventually, as patrons were removed from the bar and into police transport wagons, one woman by the name of Stormé DeLarverie resisted. She fought with the police for ten minutes, looking at the crowd and shouting 'Why don't you guys do something?'. As she was finally hauled into the back of a wagon, the crowd went berserk. The Stonewall rebellion had begun.

Outnumbered by 500-600 people, the police retreated amid a hail of coins, beer bottles, and even bricks. The situation was made worse when ten police officers barricaded themselves, a journalist, and several handcuffed detainees, inside the Inn. Michael Fader, an attendee of the uprising, explained that 'we all had a collective feeling that we'd had enough...it was like the last straw'.

After the first night of demonstrations was finally quelled by riot police, a crowd gathered the next night for a repeat. For many, the thrill of being 'out [and] in the streets' -- as one witness put it -- was enough to attract thousands more than the previous night. The crowd choked the street and spilled into adjoining blocks. Drag queen Marsha P. Johnson, part of the original 'vanguard' of demonstrators, stood on a lamppost and smashed the windscreen of a police car with a heavy bag. The demonstrations were once again quelled, but smaller demonstrations would continue for another week, bringing the problems faced by the LGBT+ community into the public consciousness for the first time.

In-short, the events of Stonewall were nailed into the pages of history as the catalyst for the modern queer liberation movement. The rebels at Stonewall had proven that tradition is just the illusion of permanence; that centuries of repression and living as pariahs could be undone. That's why, one year after Stonewall, it was decided that an annual parade should be held in New York to celebrate the LGBT+ community, and fight against injustice and oppression.

Unfortunately, corporations have begun to co-opt pride to make a profit, and queer individuals face rising levels of discrimination even in so-called 'progressive' democracies like Britain and America -- never mind the seventy countries where homosexuality is still outlawed. Therefore, it is our duty to reflect on Stonewall, and return to the grassroots activism which did so much to further the rights of LGBT+ people for decades. As DeLarverie herself said, 'it was a rebellion, it was an uprising, it was a civil rights disobedience -- it wasn't no damn riot.'

The Arts

The Terrifying Appeal of Horror Films

By Will McLaughlin - Year 12

In 1975 a film was released that shattered box office records, became the first 'summer blockbuster' and induced a fear of deep water across an entire generation, all through a poorly made plastic shark. Obviously, this is referring to *Jaws*, though what is less obvious perhaps, is why record numbers of people volunteered their money to be left in a state of terror for 130 minutes. Almost half a century later, audiences are still chasing this fear, with over 42 horror films being released in 2019 alone. The question therefore must be asked, why do we love being scared so much?

As the RGS Gazette is a publication of high renown and journalistic integrity, I took it upon myself to perform an experiment, and went to watch the newly released 'A Quiet Place Part II' at the cinema. I entered with very scientific intentions, trying to keep a close eye on how I was reacting to the film, mentally noting my emotions, and remembering when I felt suspense, fear and relief. Unfortunately, these intentions were quickly thrown out the window as I was instantly swept up by the tension of the on-screen family having to remain completely silent or risk being ripped to shreds by alien creatures. I was lent forward in my seat, totally enraptured, and breathing as quietly as I could so as not to alert them to my location. Even though my actions were ridiculous, the film had worked exactly as intended, and as it reached its conclusion and I was finally able to exhale, I was met by an overwhelming sense of relief and joy. On exiting the cinema, I did feel slightly frustrated at myself for failing to maintain my experiment, though I quickly realised that this

experience had taught me much more about the true purpose of the horror genre than my original plan, and why so many people, including myself, love to watch horror films.

lack of control. In the words of Coltan Scriver, a PhD student at the University of Chicago, when watching a horror film, you are "choosing to feel anxious rather than anxiety being something that just happens to you", and as you are able to scream at jump-scars or



'The Shining' is one of the favourites among horror fans

It hardly needs to be mentioned that 2020 was a real-life horror film, and with the recent footage of the British health secretary Matt Hancock topping any horrors produced in the cinema, 2021 seems to be continuing the trend. Why then, has the horror genre reached its peak at the box office when we should be looking to lighter mediums like comedy to relieve our tension? The surprising answer is revealed in a study by the University of Pennsylvania, suggesting that people who experience higher amounts of anxiety are more likely to be horror movie fans. Even more astonishing is that empirical evidence seems to suggest that these films can actually make you feel less anxious. This stems from our need for control over our surroundings, and the fact that much of our everyday anxieties originate from a

hide behind cushions, watching a horror movie becomes "a socially sanctioned outlet for you to express your anxiety". Much like I felt after my visit to the cinema, the experience of being terrified can leave you feeling emotionally cleansed and relieved, able to forget about your worries for a short time and take back control over your anxieties.

In short, it is perhaps completely unsurprising why scary movies have become the favourite of so many, especially in times of COVID. The anxiety induced by the devastating effects of a global pandemic, the inevitable threat of climate change, or the essay you need to write in form time to avoid a detention, may all be slightly lessened by screaming your lungs out at a horror film.



Image of modern rapper Lil Uzi Vert

The Poetry of Rap

By Keshav Anand - Year 12

As an English Literature student, I often find myself skulking in the corner of my bedroom in the depths of night, dimly lit by the harsh blue light of my laptop. There, one can find me tactically waffling enough to salvage a satisfactory grade, running on nothing but caffeine and the terror of missing the looming deadline that was set two weeks ago by my totalitarian teachers. In these late-night scholastic endeavours, I generally enjoy listening to music, hoping the bombastic nature of hip-hop will lift my spirits when staring at an empty Word document meant to be filled with the verbose yet somehow concise ramblings of a genius. Thus, the titular question manifested in my head whilst analysing *Daddy* by Sylvia Plath and listening to Puff Daddy by JPEGMafia: is rap music poetry?

Poetry has been around for thousands of years. For example, the Mesopotamian Epic of Gilgamesh (~2100BC) is an epic poem regarded as one of the earliest surviving pieces of literature. Unsurprisingly, since then, poetry has continued to evolve and grow into a broad spectrum of stylistic range, from haikus to Shakespearean sonnets. Its definition is therefore hard to define, but as a general rule of

thumb, poetry is used to describe the deliberate use of language to evoke meaning, feelings or thought within the reader.

Likewise, rapping too can be traced back centuries ago, back to the griots of West Africa where the rhythmically told tales of their past were used to inform future generations of their heritage and legend. Rap as we know today began to gain mainstream popularity in the Bronx in the 1970s, and really started taking off in the mid-80s with artists like Run-DMC. These artists carried the torch into the golden era of rap in the 90s, where artists like Snoop Dogg began to gain extreme commercial success. The content of said rap ran borderline between bragging about the newfound success of their music to the more poignant verses highlighting social injustices faced by the black community. Consequently, rap resonated with many young African Americans and reflected the growing movement for equality in America.

With this knowledge, it would be fair to suggest rap and poetry as innately similar, both using lyricism to convey “meaning, feelings or thought within the reader”. Rapper Jay Z also makes this connection:

“There’s thought behind it and there’s great writing in rap... you know, you never hear rappers being [called] the greatest rap writers of all time... some of the things that

Biggie wrote... if you take those lyrics and you pull them away from the music and you put them up on the wall somewhere and someone had to look at them they would say ‘Well, this is genius!’”

Indeed, rap employs various traditional poetic features, such as its use of verses, refrains and rhyme which are equally prevalent in many poems. Through this, one could argue that if you “pull [the lyrics] away from the music” you would simply be left with poetry. The vocality of music is no different to the ‘Spoken word’ subset of poetry which uses performance to augment a piece’s potency, much like how rap places an emphasis upon “flow” and cadence when assessing its quality.

However, there are equally arguments to be made that rap music and poetry should be kept apart. The most fundamental argument is how rap is made and constructed adjacent to music. Whilst Jay Z mentions isolating the lyrics, the instrumental is an equally integral part of the rap experience and could make or break a song to a listener. Undeniably, music is not always enjoyed in the same way as poetry, and this disparity seems to separate them. Perhaps comparing rap to poetry is reductive of the rap genre itself, forgetting the musicians that make up a vital aspect of rap performance. The musical nature enhances the poetry in the lines, and perhaps implies that though rap music is generally looked at by conservative critics as lesser than poetry, in reality, it is superior.

Ultimately, it seems due its musical aspect, rap is not poetry in itself. Rather it suggests itself as something different which incorporates poetic tradition. Its combination of metrical eloquence with rhythmic beats creates a modern form of self-expression that, at times, exceeds just that which is written on a page; rap becomes its own unique form of artistic expression which better resonates with our contemporary, shifting society.

Studio Ghibli: Anti-Capitalist Animation

By Daniel Hooper - Year 12

When it comes to cinema, Studio Ghibli is often seen as the pinnacle of storytelling and animation. For those who haven't seen films like *Spirited Away* and *Princess Mononoke*, it can often seem like anime - and animation in general - is a childish genre. However, I'd argue that these films are more relevant and more meaningful to adults, who can really understand the themes they explore, and thus not truly made for children; though these films seem like they come from a different era in animation, there is nothing old about their stories. Truly, the reason why Ghibli films remain so relevant even after two decades is because of the major theme which Hayao Miyazaki, director of many Ghibli films, wanted to explore: anti-capitalism.

The most important Ghibli film, to me, is *Spirited Away* - the most successful of Miyazaki's movies. Really, it is a difficult movie to understand; it seems random and



Original Poster of 'Spirited Away'

aimless at some points, but this is all in service to its main themes: Capitalism vs Spirituality, and the West vs the East. Chihiro's story is familiar to adults; though the world she enters is indeed fantastical, it can be boiled down to a young girl



being employed, doing her job well, and going home. Her struggle is that of someone growing up and moving from the ease and enjoyment of childhood into the hardship and banality of working - a struggle that the capitalist system forces upon people in the west, and which the film criticises for forcing upon the east, especially Japan. We are sympathetic to her - especially as young people. It is easy to fear being pushed into that same system, one in which we lose both the freedom and simplicity of life. The film shows us hardship; there's nothing good or fun about it, and it will always be relevant in a world that requires us to work to live.

The main villain in *Spirited Away* is Yubaba, a witch representing Capitalism itself. She is similar to the antagonist of *Princess Mononoke*, Lady Eboshi; however, it is hard to call her a villain - there is no pure evil in *Princess Mononoke*, there is merely flawed progress and nature: the conflict between the two is the real story. The film calls us to question human development at nature's expense, but it doesn't tell us to hate industrialisation; neither side 'wins' in *Princess Mononoke*; the war destroys both equally. The problem

is that everyone has a capitalistic way of thinking - they want everything: all land, all iron, all control, and it's easy to see how a real capitalist's similar way of thinking is destructive. There will always be people who think like this, and so the film will always remain relevant for taking a stance against this.

Studio Ghibli is certainly an anti-capitalist film house. Their stories don't make sense when we watch them through the lens of a capitalist, and if we ignore the capitalistic motivations of certain characters (making profit, industrialising, and occasionally war), we can't fully grasp the meaning or plot of the movies. I wrote this, having recently started watching Miyazaki's films, to advertise the two as some of the greatest films I've ever seen, and I hope anyone who hasn't seen them does so. You will find no higher class of cinema than Studio Ghibli, and the anti-capitalist sentiment they display only heightens their artistic and social significance.