

THE YOUNG ARTS AND HUMANITIES JOURNAL

JANUARY 2025 | Issue 1



FOUNDATION DAY ESSAY PRIZE WINNERS: 'BOOKS THAT CHANGED THE WORLDIMY WORLD'

'AB IUVENTUTE, AD ARTEM ET CULTURAM: A JOURNAL OF EMERGING THOUGHT'

English to Art History to Religion to Film to Sociology to Politics to Music to Philosophy to International Relations
Drama to Law to Geography to Linguistics to Anthropology to Classics to Languages to Economics to Art to English

WELCOME TO OUR FIRST ISSUE:

Foundation Day Essay Prize-Winners: *‘Books that changed the world/my world’*

Welcome to the first edition of the Young Arts and Humanities Journal, an opportunity for students outside of STEM (already covered by the esteemed Young Scientist’s Journal) to extend themselves beyond the curriculum, promote Arts, Humanities, and Languages subjects, and show everyone what our pupils and students can do – particularly in areas where subjects combine. At Sixth Form level there has been the opportunity to do this more formally through the Extended Project Qualification, but it has been some time (since the days of the old Headmaster’s Challenge) that this opportunity had been formally extended to the whole school.

We hope you enjoy.

Dr Griffin, Amanda Orlovska, and Diya Bhatt

It was time for a change to all of that. So we decided to turn the first edition into a showcase for the Foundation Day Essay Competition prize-winners, writing on either a book they feel changed the world or a book that changed their world. This makes them the first contributors, setting the initial bar high, and inviting future contributors to sample a slice of what they can be a part of in future editions. Cambridge has the Apostles, Oxford has the Inklings, and now LGS has the YAHJ...

George R. R. Martin, the author of the *A Song of Ice and Fire* series, once said, ‘A reader lives a thousand lives before they die, the person who never reads lives only once.’



INTRODUCING THE WINNERS



LOWER SCHOOL

PREP

Winner - Hector Hodge- *The Treehouse Series* by Andy Griffiths and Terry Denton

Runner-Up - Shiv Vaghela- *You are a Champion* by Marcus Rashford

YEAR 7

Winner – Emily Gough – *October, October* by Katya Balen

Runner-Up – Kiyara Amrelia – *Wonder* by R J Palacio

Honourable Mentions – Shreeya Bhalla, Sophia Ashraf, Lucy Cornelio

YEAR 8

Winner – Amelia Caldecott – *Wonder* by R J Palacio

MIDDLE SCHOOL

YEAR 10

Winner – Alice Hawkins – ‘Books That Made Me Who I Am’

Runner-Up – Terisola Sunmboye – *Holding Up the Universe* by Jennifer Niven

SENIOR SCHOOL

YEAR 11

Winner – Aiden Cheng – ‘*The Oxford Reading Tree: Books That Shaped My New World*’

Runner-Up – Vamika Than – *The Book of Disquiet* by Fernando Pessoa

SIXTH FORM

Winner – Harriet Firth – *The Times Reference Atlas of the World*

Runner-Up – Divine Ibeji – *Moon Pie* by Simon Mason

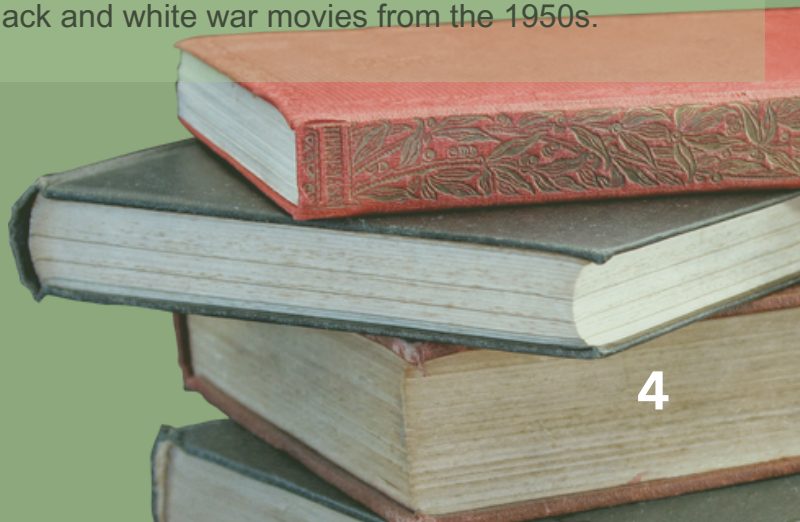
The Books that Changed Dr Griffin's Life



When I was growing up most of my books looked like this. Life on a council estate in the late 1970s and early 1980s was dull and overwhelmingly drab: the television was a rented black and white screen from Rediffusion, particularly unhelpful when watching snooker; clothes were unflatteringly flared and made from polyester; and the food was overwhelming brown and covered in gravy. But this world was lit up by a few colourful covers and titles like 'Riley's Rifle', 'Battle Waggons', and 'Scramble!'.

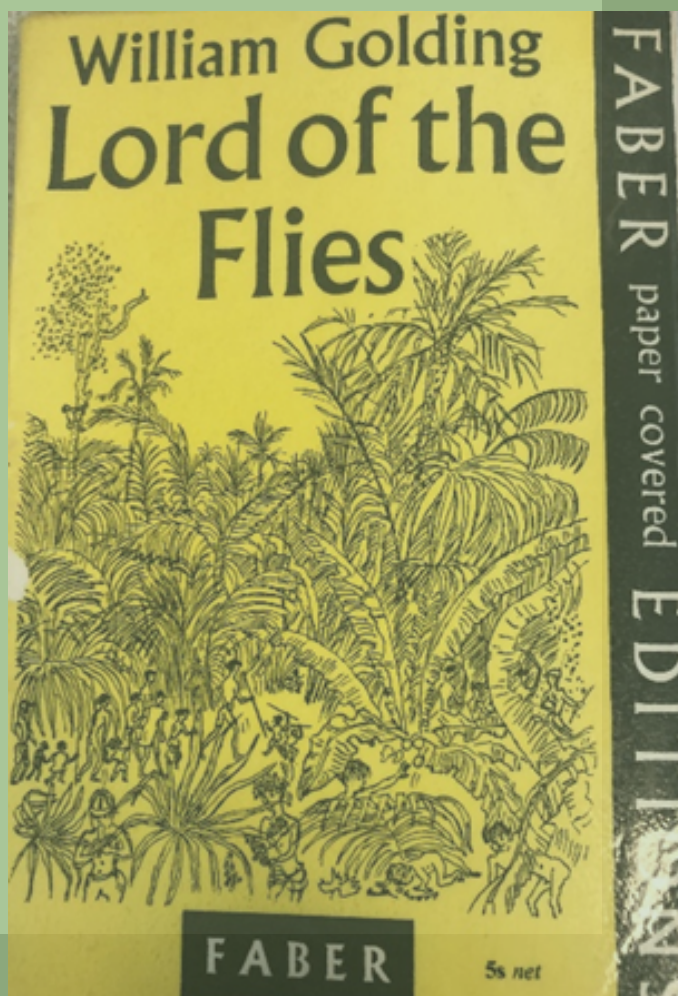
I liked them because they gave me a bizarre kind of comfort and safety in a world which was often far from it, a world where unemployment, blackouts, and finding a fifty pence piece for the electricity and gas meters was the difference between watching tv and going to bed early. I craved the certainty that the good guys always won, and the bad guys always reassuringly went 'argh!' or 'eieeee!' when shot by a ten-foot guardsman, paratrooper, or commando - my heroes when growing up.

However, whilst these books sustained me (and probably taught me a lot about narrative) they were not the ones that changed my life, reflective of a world that did not really exist apart from on a Sunday afternoon sitting on the sofa with my dad watching black and white war movies from the 1950s.



In 1982 I went to secondary school, and eventually I read the first book that changed my life and started me on the path to being the man standing before you today. I also had the luck to meet Malcolm Gray, the teacher who prodded me onto said path. Up to this point no book had really made me think anything, caught up as I was in my world of .303 certainties delivered at the end of a bayonet, but *Lord of the Flies* was different. It was a challenge to my comfortable world view.

I could not work out who was the character to root for – they all sounded like public school snobs to me, coming as I did from the tradition of those who did the work in the army rather than those who gave the orders. Ralph was a dull officer type, a chinless wonder with blond hair; Piggy was, well, Piggy; Simon was a bit of a waste of space dreamer; and Jack was just a bully, the type of person I had been brought up to despise.



However, in working out who I was not going to root for I suddenly discovered that not only could I enjoy a book that was rooted in uncertainty, but which challenged the very fabric of what good and bad actually is. Like many of the boys on the island in the novel I think I felt that life was pretty simple really but what I had driven home to me was that sometimes the 'good' guys were just as flawed as the 'bad' guys, and that rather than thinking about twelve-foot desert warriors, here I was seeing characters that were worryingly like me and my schoolmates, just wearing nicer blazers. The idea that evil could lie within us rather than a 'Beast' (or a guy who wore black, had a moustache, wore a monocle, and spoke a bit funny) was genuinely something that I had never considered. What is a leader? What is evil? How can little boys be brutal killers? What was Roger's deal? All these questions, which as an adult have been key parts of the lessons I have passed on from Mr Gray, formed, developed, and blossomed.

I suddenly discovered at the age of thirteen that I was quite good at this thinking thing and that maybe, just maybe, I was not going to have to work in a factory like my brothers, and that maybe, just maybe, it was time to put away the Commando war comics and Battle Picture Library and to start delving into real books that gave me the opportunity to think and occasionally be a little uncomfortable with what I found - that uncertainty was something worth searching for in a world where everyone always seemed so certain, and still does if you believe YouTube and TikTok.

And this is where my second and probably last personal world-changing book comes in - *Practical Criticism* by I A Richards.

This is the actual copy I first bought at university, and whilst it does not seem much with a fairly uninspiring cover, the ideas it contained changed me and, by extension a number of you, forever. I had always been good at putting down on paper what I thought the teacher wanted to read, the answer that the book on the shelf told me was right - for some of you perhaps 'what's in the mark scheme'.

But for Richards that was not enough.

The vague ways I might have justified my readings of a text such as, 'it reminds me of the time when', or 'well, my mate Dave thinks', or 'as A C Bradley argued', or even 'the poet intended', Richards dismissed all of those as mnemonic irrelevance, affective fallacy, and intentional fallacy.

My critical certainty as an undergraduate was getting uncertain again. It was like I was thirteen again.

I was intrigued.

Richards pointed out in an experiment with Cambridge undergraduates that, when confronted by an unseen piece of writing, most actively misread texts because they could not fall back on a pre-determined 'right answer'. In his view their failing was that they had no routine which would allow them to rigorously interrogate a text, and which would give them the confidence to argue what they thought based on the words on the page in front of them rather what Professor Joe Shmo at the University of Saskatchewan told them was the right answer.

For me this was freedom.



Richards' book taught me that there was no one right answer (though there would be some spectacularly wrong ones along the way), and if I could justify it on the basis of the words on the page in front of me, I could say it. I had to be prepared for my supervisors to argue with me, but I grew to love those arguments. Occasionally I even won them.

Never again did I worry about what A C Bradley thought of Macbeth.

Rigour, discipline, and strict evidence-based argument became the cornerstones of my academic world from that moment onwards.

Thanks Professor Richards.
You set me free.

PREP WINNER: *THE TREEHOUSE SERIES* BY ANDY GRIFFITHS AND TERRY DENTON

By Hector Hodge

The series of books that changed my world is called *The Treehouse Stories*, written by Andy Griffiths and Terry Denton. This is a series of books that tells the story of three friends, Jill, Andy and Terry and their relationship as they go on a variety of weird and wacky adventures defending their treehouse from invaders.

The reason why these books changed my world is because they show how Jill, Andy and Terry make friendships, tackle obstacles and achieve things together. They reflect so many good characteristics that I myself believe in and admire.

Once such characteristic is kindness. A good example of this is when Terry and Andy are late finishing their book and can't deliver it to Mr. Big Nose (their publisher) on time.

If they failed to deliver it on time, Mr. Big Nose would never publish one of their books again and they would lose their jobs. Silky the cat, who can fly, gathers all of the other flying cats to help deliver the book for them.

Another example is when a lumberjack chops down the forest and Jill, Andy and Terry build a new storey to their treehouse, so that they can give all the animals a home.

Another quality that comes up frequently is Jill, Andy and Terry's ability to work together as a team, to be welcoming and to make the most of what people can do, rather than what they cannot do.

A really good example is the time when Andy and Terry were each trying to make a comic book. Andy was useless at writing and Terry couldn't draw very well.



To start with they were both envious of each other, which was not a good thing, but they soon realised that if they used their talents together, they could produce a really good comic. This stuck out to me because in real life people are really good at different things.

Also, Jill, Andy and Terry are always considerate to their friends and if they have an argument, they always try to reach a compromise, make up and say sorry at the end.



The personalities of Terry and Andy inspire me, they are amazing as they are unique, as well as being kind and considerate, they are fun and witty, which they show in everything they do. I also admire the fact their friendship is so strong and cannot be broken by anything, even by the biggest bumps in the road like when the uninventor (that is his name!) tries to take over their treehouse. They were arguing at that time, but managed to stop arguing, pull themselves together and defeat him.

I also love how on every adventure they go on they always make new friends along the way. Even when their evil doubles escaped they made friends with them at the end of the book.

Personally, I think there is so much to admire about their friendship and never give up attitude.

Trust and honesty are also strong themes in the series, which is based upon Jill, Andy and Terry's friendship and strong beliefs and encouragement for each other.

An excellent example of their trust for each other is when Andy and Terry go on holiday for the first time ever. One storey of the treehouse is full of animals that need feeding and caring for and another is full of penguins that also need looking after. They trust Jill to look after things whilst they are away.

When Jill broke the Mr. Scoop, the ice cream maker and Terry's favourite storey, she owned up immediately.

I like that Terry and Andy are not afraid to keep trying, even when it is difficult. A great example of this is when they were walking up a giant hill and Terry could barely walk but Andy took it upon himself to lift Terry up and carry him the rest of the way.

Each story involves something completely new. Jill, Andy and Terry aren't scared to try and experience new things.



These books have taught me so much over the years like how to be kind, to trust, to make friends and to believe in those friends and help them if they're in trouble or in distress. Those are the reasons why I chose these books as the books that changed my world.

Thinking about it, the qualities that hide in these books are very similar to the LGS school values: Respect, Trust, Courage, Curiosity and Community.

PREP RUNNER-UP: 'YOU ARE A CHAMPION'

BY MARCUS RASHFORD

By Shiv Vaghela

This book is about resilience, strength, kindness and dreaming big!

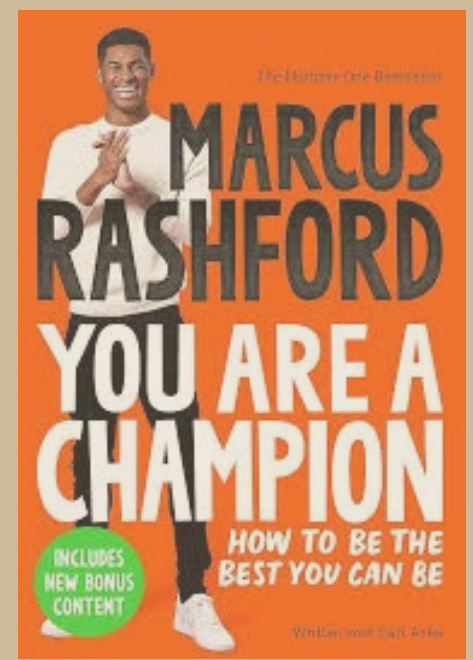
Reading 'You are a Champion' has really inspired me and changed the way I think about my goals. Marcus Rashford faced lots of challenges and had to conquer many difficult moments in his life. Marcus talks about having a strong mindset and mental attitude and that things that you may want in life will not always be easy. There were times in his life when he wasn't picked for a certain football team but instead of giving up, he worked harder. This made me realise that sometimes you have to work really hard for what you want and never give up. Also, if I don't succeed the first time to carry on trying and don't let it put me off from trying again. I also try to believe in myself as Marcus talks a lot about this and not letting fear and anger overcome you. Sometimes, some achievements seem too big for me, but I have learnt to think that I have to try and give this ago because I may surprise myself.

One of my favourite parts of the book is when Marcus talks about helping others, for example, he helped schools to get free school meals for the children who didn't have enough food. I remember him campaigning for this and I remember my mum saying what a lovely thing to do. This made me think about how I can be more helpful to others for example, donating to local foodbanks and giving to charity. It also made me think about being kind to others something that I try to be every day. Marcus said, "kindness costs nothing" this is very true, and it make the world of difference to someone's day.

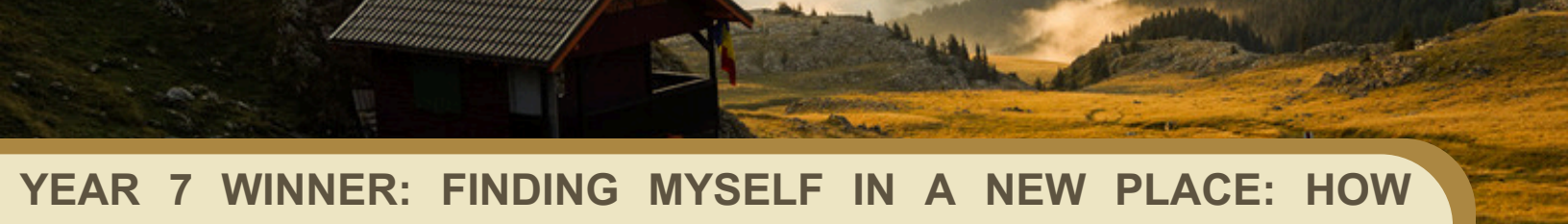
The book also taught me to be grateful, down to Earth and never forget where I came from. Marcus talks about how important it is to thank people who have helped you. I try to thank my parents, my family, my teachers and my friends for all there help and support they have given me.

Marcus also talks about dreaming big and reaching for the stars. I know that if I work really hard and stay focused and believe in myself, I can achieve great things.

This book has taught me that mental strength is far more important than physical strength and that if I am determined enough, I can achieve the best I can. One of my favourite quotes is "if you don't try, you will never know how good you can be." This is a reminder to myself to always try my best because I might just surprise myself.



"if you don't try, you will never know how good you can be." 9



YEAR 7 WINNER: FINDING MYSELF IN A NEW PLACE: HOW “OCTOBER, OCTOBER” BY KATYA BALEN INFLUENCED ME

by Emily Gough

Three years ago, I moved house from Kempston in Bedfordshire, a fairly busy town, to a peaceful Leicestershire village. In Kempston, there were almost five hundred people in my school so when I moved and there were only just over five hundred people living in my entire village, and only eighty in my new school, it was quite a shock!

Moving house is a big change for everyone, whether they change school or not, even if they've only moved a few houses down the road. But for me the change was remarkably, unimaginably different. It was not just the difference in the number of people, or from having many local shops and amenities in walking distance to everything being a twenty-minute drive, but a view of nothing other than houses and cars from my window changing to a view of rolling fields. I loved seeing birds of prey, especially red kites. I marvelled at the way they soar and glide. I could spend hours watching the changing sky, sun and shadows. In many ways, I loved the change.

Another really significant part of the move for me was that I really missed my best friend Isla. We had met up once during the first few months, but it didn't seem enough. Before we moved, I knew I would miss her but hadn't appreciated how much that would be. The next time we met up, Isla and I, she told me about a book club she had started going to. Because I love reading, I was immediately drawn in and wanted to know more. She told me that at the club they were reading a book called “October, October” by Katya Balen. From the title, I thought it sounded wonderful, hopeful, and vaguely mysterious. A few months later, I saw it in the public library and instantly picked it up, captivated by the artwork on the front cover and wanting to read about the wonders the pages held. I just couldn't wait to dive into the book and read each and every exhilarating page. I just knew this book would be simply phenomenal. The book is about a girl called October who lives in a forest. October loves the forest and the creatures that inhabit its environment, with all of the

looming trees and fallen autumn leaves. She knows every creature as if they are her family, she cares for the wildlife around her. She is grateful for the natural beauty of the earth she lives in, she admires every corner of it, just as we should all do. This forest is her home, and she knows it as well as we know which floorboards creak in our houses, or where each tiny mark on the wall is, or where cobwebs form. October is a kind, happy child who cares for nature and nurtures it. She even has her own vegetable patch in her garden. I personally think that October is very fortunate to live in this forest because it is as though she has avoided, or maybe even escaped the reality, of a stress-filled noisy, busy, chaotic, modern life. October lived in the forest with her dad. Her mum left when October was only four; October's Mum felt that she couldn't handle the forest lifestyle. After not seeing her mum for over six years, October felt like she had lost touch with her mum completely. It was as if a mother had never been in the family.



Disaster struck when October's mum returned to the forest for October's eleventh birthday. Unsure what to think, not knowing what to do, October tried to escape into the forest she loved so dearly and climbed her favourite tree.

October climbed and climbed. Higher than she'd ever climbed before. She climbed so high that she was unsure how to get down. In other words... she was stuck. Her father came out of the house to see where she had gone. He saw her in the tree, he saw she was stuck. Worried and concerned, her father climbed the tree to help her come down. But her father fell. Fell down the tree. The tallest tree in the forest.

Her father had to be airlifted to hospital. October felt it was all her fault. Her father would have been fine if she hadn't reacted in such a stupid fashion. He wouldn't have been stuck in a dreadful hospital with pipes enabling him to breathe and receive nutrients, having his heartbeat measured. He had to be injected and prodded by doctors.

But October knew the truth could've been even worse - her father could have died.

This book helps you feel empathetic, understanding how October feels on every page. The way October's feelings are expressed is truly amazing. You can understand how guilty she feels and how awful it must be to have a Mum who has abandoned you for years and then suddenly comes back as if she just went to the shops. Wouldn't you have wanted to run away into the forest you know and love so well just to escape this awful reality and challenge you had just run in to? Sometimes it feels like the easiest thing is to run away from a problem.

It was challenging for October having to go to live with the mother she hadn't seen for years, who for years had not been mentioned what-so-ever, and had caused this whole problem with her father's accident in the first place.

What made this even worse was that her mother lived in a long line of terraces in London. October hated it. October loved the forest back where her true home was so much. How could she ever adapt to the nature of the city?

This resonated with me, because when I moved house I found some things really difficult. I really missed my friends and the cosiness of my bedroom, as well as having many things that I could do and experience near my house. I had similar feelings to October, sometimes wishing we hadn't moved. However, October's change was the opposite to mine. I had

moved from a busy life to a quieter one whereas October had moved from a forest to noisy, crowded, bustling London. I thought about my move and what I missed and how much worse I would have found it if I had moved from where I am now to a town or city. Like October, I find nature calming and tranquil.

So now that I have a bigger garden with a lot of flowers and birds, insects, beautiful views and countryside walks, I've realised how much we should appreciate the wonderful natural world around us.

The way this particular book describes the beauty and peace of nature is fantastic and reminded me of all the benefits of being outside and how that is something we should all do for our wellbeing. I started to realise how much I love where I live now and even though the transition was hard I would barely change a thing about it.

I also appreciate my garden more and more every time I go outside, from the looking up at the hills and sheep or watching the clouds roll by or seeing the faint rainstorms in the distance .

It was not just the huge change in location that was difficult for October, not seeing her dad and living with her estranged mum was a huge transition for October. October's mother tried to rebuild a relationship with October but October was resistant and found this change remarkably hard. She had to go to school and struggled with the routines she had to get into school. She had never had to worry about the time before. Even worse, other than her father, she had never really talked to people before, so the social aspect of things seemed unachievable, impossible!

Making friends felt unnatural for October as she had never had anyone to make friends with. Slowly, reluctantly at first, October and her mother slowly become friendlier towards each other. October began to realise that her and her mother had a deep connection. October started to understand why her Mum left and she realised her Mum was not the enemy she thought. Furthermore, October started to think of her father differently as when she visited him in hospital, things didn't seem as deep between them now. She also made a friend.

At the time of reading this book, I was finding it difficult to make such strong friendships as I'd had at my previous school. The girls in my new class didn't really seem to get on well with each other and weren't always kind and there was no-one with similar hobbies and interests to me and my old friends.

This book helps us to think about other people's feelings and how what everyone thinks is important, and what they might be experiencing that we don't know about. It helped me think about how life can be complex and challenging and how important understanding people's relationships, cultures and connections.

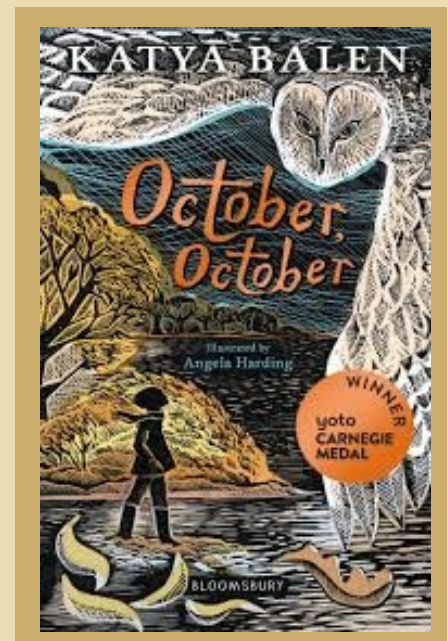
After spending more time with my new class mates, I learnt more about people in the class and their relationships and realised I could be friends with quite a few people, but would have to share my time with them, rather than us being all together as a friendship group. With patience, empathy, and love we can build stronger relationships, where we may not have thought possible.

Over time October managed to keep more control over her emotions and became more empathetic. She understood that neither of her parents were perfect and neither of the places her parents lived were perfect

but she realised that she could be happy in both worlds, no matter how different they seemed or which one she was more used to.

Even three years on from moving house, I still miss Isla and some of the places I used to go to with my family but I do now appreciate the move, understand the reasons for it and know that there are many positive things that have come from moving house and when I feel I need to go back to visit my old home town and friends, I can. Nowhere is perfect but we must appreciate what we have to be happy.

The book "October, October" is a moving book that explores relationships, coping with transitions and connecting with nature. It can inspire positive change and appreciation of what you have in life. It certainly did for me.



YEAR 7 RUNNER-UP: WONDER BY R.J PALACIO

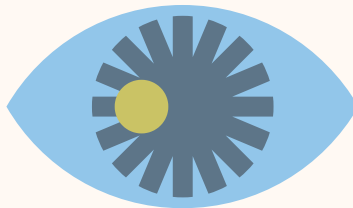
By Kiyara Amrelia

The story of Wonder revolves around August, a boy with Treacher Collins syndrome, a condition that has disfigured his face and has required special care. Because of his condition, August had been homeschooled by his mother for several years, but for the start of fifth grade, he began going to a school, a private school called Beecher Prep, for the first time.

Wonder significantly impacted my life, and helped me look at things from a different perspective, because it showed me that we are all different in one way or the other, even if we like to do the things other people do. There is no one in this world who is exactly like us, and that is what makes us unique and who we are. It defines us. In the book, although August looks different, he is still a normal 10-year-old child inside, and the book teaches us that we should not judge people based on their looks or their differences, but their personalities.

Diversity is vastly important. If everyone were the same as you or me, the world would lack diversity!

Imagine a world where everyone had the same hobbies, read the same books, and ate the same things. It would be incredibly boring! Differences are significant, and everyone should be respected for being different, because we are all different in our own special ways, just like snowflakes, because no two snowflakes are alike; each one is distinct.



As I was reading Wonder, it showed me how respect, compassion, and kindness are some of the most important things to have as a character. In the book, there were some particular lines that stood out to me: "Shall we make a new rule of life... always try to be a little kinder than is necessary? Here Mr. Tushman looked up at the audience. 'Kinder than is necessary.' He repeated, 'What a marvellous line, isn't it? Kinder than is necessary.' This part stood out to me because it showed me that it is not enough to be kind.

You need to be kinder than needed. Kindness is such a simple thing; it can be a word of encouragement, an act of friendship, or even just a smile. When given the choice between right or kind, always choose kind.

Wonder is an inspiring book, and it taught me so many important lessons, most importantly, accepting people for who they are instead of how they look or their differences. Everyone is different and our lives will improve when we respect that, even if you might not agree with it, because our strength lies in differences, not in similarities.

"Our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and test of our civilization."
— Mahatma Gandhi

YEAR 7 - HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Although these didn't make it to the final lineup of winners, we thoroughly enjoyed reading them.



'THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES' BY CHARLES DARWIN BY LUCY CORNELIO

I think that Charles Darwin's book "On the origin of species" changed the world. Think about it. We use the theory of evolution, which is what this book is all about, to explain how humans became the species we are today in loads of schools all around the world. Before, different people believed lots of different things depending on their religion or culture. Of course, lots of them still do, which is great, but every theory about this is important and Charles Darwin spent a lot of time and patience testing his ideas and even if you don't agree, it's important that we all respect the things said in his book.



'THE BOY, THE MOLE, THE FOX AND THE HORSE' BY CHARLIE MACKESY BY SHREEYA BHALLA

In this clever book, there are many morals but no plot. It keeps the reader engaged with some hand drawn illustrations and it keeps you wanting to read more even though the book is about nothing in particular. This amazing book taught me to never give up in any challenges and always, no matter what, try your best. You can always ask for help when you are suffering or lonely and know that it is okay to do this. All four characters in this book represent different emotions of the same person. Firstly, there is a gentle and curious boy who has lots of question to ask. The boy doesn't have a name, and you can never see his face from the front.



'THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES BY CHARLES DARWIN BY SOPHIA ASHRAF

The reason it had such a big impact is that for a long-time people had firm beliefs that that God had created humans, earth, water and everything else so a lot of Christians rejected Charles Darwin's ideas because of a strong belief in the Bible. On the other hand, many people, including Christians started to firmly believe in Darwin's theory. As the list of demands became big and books were selling out quickly. The results were people moved to two sides. They either believed in the Bible and creationism or had a new understanding and belief about evolution. But this new understanding became a strong belief, this was hard as some people who believed in it were still Christians and were judged by others.

YEAR 8 WINNER - *WONDER* BY R.J. PALACIO

By Amelia Caldecott

This book has inspired me to always be kind to everyone no matter what they look like or who they are; Never judge a book by its cover.

Wonder is a moving story about a boy called August Pullman who was born with a severe facial deformity, Auggie had endured 27 operations by the time he was twelve. August lives in New York with his older sister Olivia, Via, his parents and his loving dog Daisy. For most of his life August had been homeschooled by his mother. Although his mum is desperate for him to go to school August's dad is more hesitant, he thinks the other children will bully him due to his appearance. Mum takes Auggie to a Beechers Prep; a local school to look round where three children take him round the school, Jack, Charlotte and Julian. On the first day of school Auggie experiences people's reaction to seeing him and Julian teases him. The English teacher Mr. Browne gave each student a precept every month to think about. The first precept was about kindness. When reading Wonder, you feel all that August goes through in words. Auggie makes friends with a sweet girl named Summer and a boy named Jack. However, during Halloween, he overhears Jack telling Julian and his friends he wishes that August would just stop following him around and talking to him, he was a freak. Hurt and saddened, Auggie questions whether he should be in school at all, he doesn't even want to go trick or treating; his favorite time of the year.

Part 2 of the story is told from Via's point of view. Since Auggie's birth Via learned to be very independent and let her needs come after August's. As Via enters high school, she feels like a stranger to her former best friends Miranda and Ella. Miranda had also been a great friend for August and gave him his astronaut helmet which he wore for several years. Auggie tells Via about what happened at school on Halloween, but Via just tells Auggie to suck it up agreeing that school is hard and, in the end, do go trick or treating.

Part 3 of the story is told from Summer's point of view. Summer explains how she took August to be her friend despite all the criticism from all her other classmates.

Part 4 is about Jack's point of view from the story, he recalls about genuinely liking Auggie as a friend. Eventually Jack works out why August had been avoiding him and feels guilty about lying to his friends about not liking him. Later in the school hallways Julian calls August a freak and Jack punches him meaning he was suspended until after the winter holidays.

I chose this book for my Foundation Day Essay because it tells a story to always be kind to everyone no matter what background, ethnicity, religion, or what their appearance is.

Throughout the story August gets bullied by other children due to his appearance, because of this he develops hatred for himself looking the way he does. All around the world this happens to people getting shamed for how they look, there is no correct way to look, everyone is entitled to their own individuality and should not be ashamed to stand out.

Everyone is unique in their own way, so why should that be discriminated and be a bad thing in humanity?

Y10 WINNER - 'BOOKS THAT MADE ME WHO I AM'



By Alice Hawkins



When I was three years old, I read a book.

I do not know what book it was (my best guess is one from the 'Biff Chip and Kipper' series), nor do I have any inkling as to what it was about. All I know is that at some point, I must have read a book for the first time.

The content of a primary-age book is nothing extraordinary, and I doubt that 'the cat sat on the mat' was anything at all surprising for three-year-old me. Yet, the first book I read changed my world because it was a book that I read. It marked the point in my life when I became able to read sufficiently. Knowledge is like a building, it comes in all shapes and sizes, and this book was the cornerstone.

For being able to read has unlocked so much for me, I have built up this figurative building,

each layer of bricks allowing me to lay the next. And in the eleven years since, I have come to see reading as a gift, and fallen irrevocably in love with it.

For me, books serve many purposes. Curled up in bed after a long day, I enjoy fantasy books purely for escapism, a distraction from the mundane rhythm of life. The characters in books have been there for me when I felt utterly alone. And whilst they are merely fictional, characters such as Percy Jackson and Hermione Granger shall forever hold a special place in my heart.

George R. R. Martin, the author of the *A Song of Ice and Fire* series, once said, '*A reader lives a thousand lives before they die, the person who reads who never reads lives only once.*'



Through books I have ridden dragons, sheltered in basements whilst bombs fell and experienced life in the English Civil War. These stories have enriched me, and opened my mind to perceptions, ideas and issues beyond my life, and made me a more mindful and educated person as a result. For this widening of my perspective on the world, I am eternally indebted to books.

The ability to read and interpret texts has unlocked a vast treasure-trove of knowledge. I have the entire knowledge of humanity at my fingertips. As much as I love fiction, I adore non-fiction. Not only do non-fiction books entertain, but they enrich my mind.

In my lifetime I have read books covering topics from memory sport to the Roman Republic (quite a lot of the latter). This broadens my learning, introduce me to topics outside my curriculum, and build my understanding of the world around me. Ever since I read that first book many years ago, my knowledge has grown and grown, and it will continue to do so for the rest of my life. Many know me as someone who always has a random fact up her sleeve, and this is due to books. I am forever indebted to books.

Sometimes I read books that challenge much of my pre-conceived ideas and acceptances. Books that go down to the very foundations of what I count as important, books that change who I am. One such book is Frankenstein (or The Modern Prometheus) by Mary Shelley. This was the first 'classic' book I ever read, and whilst I had some ideas as to what it was about (think typical Halloween Frankenstein's Monster, although contrary to popular misconception, Frankenstein is the creator of the monster, not the monster itself), the feeling it left me with was very unexpected. I adore this book; it was a very close contender for this essay, and for my Foundation Day Essay last year: 'My Idea of a Masterpiece'. It contains themes of belonging, loneliness, science and creation, nature vs nurture and so many more.



For me, Frankenstein conveyed an important message incredibly relevant to our world currently for a book published in 1818: the consequences of scientific advancement. The book's main conflict derives from the act of Dr Victor Frankenstein re-animating life, and the terrible circumstances thereafter. This can easily be applied to the current Climate Crisis; our rapid industrial and technical advancement may very easily cost us our planet. Frankenstein gave me a different perspective regarding the current predicament facing my world. It left me with many questions; is our constant striving for new developments in science worth it? It impacted the way I approach this issue and left with me with a lot of food for thought.

Being able to read in English has opened the door to so much more. I love languages, and currently am studying German, Italian, Latin and Classical Greek for GCSE (and previously French, I am very sad that I had no space to do it). There are many benefits to learning a language, yet the main reason I do so is because I enjoy it. Now I can not only say "I love books" but "j'adore les livres", "ich liebe Bücher", "amo i libri" and "libros amo." Learning languages has brought so much joy to my life, yet this wouldn't have been possible if not for that first book. I have come a miles in my linguistic journey, and that was the first step.

Overall, I would say that a single book itself didn't change my world. Books changed my world, reading changed my world. It is almost impossible to choose one, except my first book. It marked the beginning of something so important for me. It is often said that a room without books is a body without a soul, but Alice Hawkins without books wouldn't be Alice Hawkins. Books have made me into who I am.

Y10 RUNNER-UP - 'HOLDING UP THE UNIVERSE' BY JENNIFER NIVEN

By Terisola Sunmboye

I've always liked reading; it is never something that is a chore for me, it's a choice. I've never complained when told to read or resented it, which to be fair, is quite unusual for me regarding doing things. It's kind of my happy place, somewhere I can just dive straight into it and forget the world around me and imagine myself in the situations within the texts. If I'm being honest, I would like to believe I've read a lot of books, my favorites being the Malory Towers collection by Enid Blyton and all the books by Kim Slater as they are just remarkable books and hit the spot every time, but my advocacy for her books is a story for another day. However, no book that I've read has ever been written like this. It was like nothing I had ever seen before despite the number of books I had read.

Jack Masselin, the first character introduced in the book.

He's your standard lad, tall, confident, and has a bunch of solid friends too. But underneath the image he's created for himself with all these positives aspects in his life, he is just a boy who just lacks love from his family, by hiding his disability as something to be ashamed of rather than to seek help for it and needs the extra support navigating the big wide world with his family and friends. When I first was introduced to him in the book, he portrays himself as a weak and vulnerable person by the way he talks about himself to the reader about his disability. He uses the term 'Freak' which has several connotations of a monster, someone you should run from and someone who isn't normal which isn't the case whatsoever. The author, Jennifer Niven writes his struggles with prosopagnosia using identifiers, which is his way of categorizing people by their hair, voice or stature to 'defeat' his disability



The disability Jack has is called prosopagnosia which is “a neurological condition characterized by the inability to recognize the faces of familiar people”

On the other hand, there's Libby Strout. The so-called “Fattest Teen in America” who has a lot of PTSD from her past experiences with her weight. Niven portrayed Libby with the mindset that Shes only recognized as the 'Fattest Teen in America' even though she has lost weight at the present point of the novel, which she believes is her own personal identifier in this case, and that no one will ever 'love her'.

Her mother passed away, which contributed to the significant weight gain, and because of this she was cut out of her house using a crane and this was reported on the news, hence giving her the name 'Fattest Teen in America'. These events significantly affected her as she was only known by her physical appearance, and she wanted a way to break free from that. Niven portrays Libby's struggles and worries of herself by repeating the adjectives 'fat' and 'ugly' several times throughout the novel, emphasizing to us that Libby really believes that she is obese and has a lot of body dysmorphia.

Jack Masselin and Libby meet, and they don't get off to a great start, they end up in a bit of a physical fight and as a result they must do group counselling sessions with one of the teachers. They soon discover their feelings for each other and Libby soon learns that Jack has prosopagnosia. As the story goes on, Libby eventually finds a laboratory that is studying prosopagnosia patients, and they drive there. Jack soon learns that he cannot be 'fixed' and that he won't ever be normal.

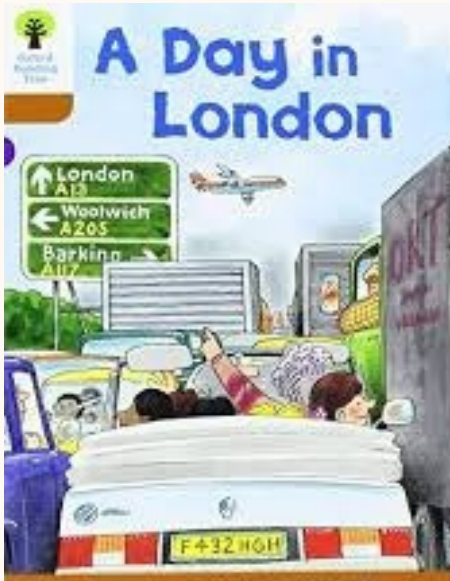


Finally, Jack overcomes his state of self-doubt and realizes that Libby makes him happy and helps him get away from all his worries. The same thing occurs to Libby as she takes her passion for dancing further and realizes that her weight doesn't define what she can do, and that Jack accepts that.

This book changed my world as their relationship developed, they started to understand each other better and they became more comfortable in their own selves. Within the final scene, Jack overcomes his prosopagnosia and recognizes Libby as her true self, like any other person would, without identifiers.

In conclusion, this book changed my world, as it brought disabilities and insecurities together and really raised awareness about people's hidden struggles regarding how they feel or how they look. This book changed my world as it encouraged me to always help those who may have those struggles around me. It really impacted me as it shows how mentally tough those with disabilities or insecurities are and how much of an effort other can contribute to help make their lives easier by making them comfortable in their own selves or adapting certain things to make their lives easier for a better world.

YEAR 11 WINNER - 'THE OXFORD READING TREE SERIES' By Aiden Cheng



Growing up in Hong Kong, I was gifted the Oxford Reading Tree series about the age of three. Every night I would read it (mostly looking at the illustrations), picking a couple books out of the dozens, reading them over and over again. I adored it. Only at around the age of nine did I really give it up.

The series is a collection of everyday events for a family, focusing on Biff, Chip and Kipper, around my age at the time. For many people here who read it growing up, it was a fictional yet mundane parallel of their lives.

However, it was different for me, living in an excessively urbanised environment that was nowhere reminiscent of the small houses and countryside of that other world.

From these little books, I learnt that those people in the books had tiny houses, not skyscrapers; lots of parks, not endless buildings; even something called ponds- the most similar things I saw in real life were the puddles on the road or that concrete fountain in the middle of my housing estate. Even more fascinating were the Victorians, the Vikings, the story of Robin Hood, the monster under the bed, and the fact that rainbows were apparently made by some giant machine: amazing stories and creative ideas that the uncompromising Hong Kong way of life did not present to me.

Each story always left me mesmerised. When I got three little stuffed dolls of the family dog, Floppy, the stories cemented their status as my favourites.

It seems inconceivable that a set of children's books, really designed to teach basic English, would change somebody's life. Whilst it is not a single book, instantly memorable and life changing, in many ways it is the same and even more. Like any fictional book, the series creates a foreign environment, and the events. More importantly, the number of words in the hundreds of books add up to no more than an average chapter in an adult one, yet the events within are just as broad as any fiction is detailed. And so, the illustrations and succinct words of each little book have changed my view of this other world- as one whole story, painting, book.

The world of the Oxford Reading Tree was different, and no short of rebellious. Younger me was certain that my teachers would have shaken their heads disapprovingly at the characters- Anneena crashing a golf cart into a bush, or Kipper making a mess of a 'mud pie'. The children staying at Gran's to do 'homework'- studying wild mushrooms and making a plaster cast of a paw print- would be scandalous in my rigorous primary school.

It was different to the children's books in Chinese that the school library had. Monotonous would be an understated criticism: the villains were this school bully or that naughty child that wrecked the house; the heroes kind, obedient, doing-their-homework pupils. Wilf driving the homemade go-kart was Superman in comparison.

As I grew older, I could distinguish more between the fantasy books I read, and the ones set in real life. The series for me was always an amalgamation of both. I knew it was real life for those British people who lived on the other side of the world (then I had never been anywhere even near Europe). Yet it was always a fingertip away from my world of concrete ponds and skyscrapers. That only made it even more exciting, knowing that my fantasy world really did exist.

In 2021, my family and I moved to the UK. We had given way the three Floppy's that had sat on the shelf for years (which I'm still irritated about), but the world of Floppy at that point became real life. The big move across the world was incredibly momentous for the twelve-year-old me- new language, new school, not even one of my relatives or friends. I am still a conservative, shy and stubborn person.

Had I not read the series, the change would have been especially daunting- a life amongst the foreigners, as my sceptical grandparents deemed it. But no, it was the world of the Biff and Chip and Kipper that I could rely on to be optimistic-like the trailer of a fantasy film. I realised how amazing their lives were- watching ducks in the river and visiting castles- because the positivity I associated with the foreigner world was so strong- for me those illustrations epitomised an idyllic but also adventurous life. It took the life of the three fabric Floppy's and my grandparents and urban comforts gently out my hands, and put the new, foreign but subtly familiar world back in.

Judging me as shallow, for considering some illustrated books for five-year-olds as influential, would not be unreasonable. At least I can claim that unabashedly, because books help people in different ways. Mine was how these stories filled the void of a childhood here in the UK. The lives of the children I read about have absorbed into my own, and thanks to them I feel more connected, and that things are relatable (especially how everyone craves summers at the beach and complains about the weather).

These stories aren't the only thing I appreciate my new life through now, four years on, but nonetheless they are important to me like the good old days of primary school are to everyone.

Most of my primary school friends and their families that moved here not long after me sometimes still crave their old lives- all Hong Kong people are very inward looking, creatures of habit in the city environment. But not me: for that I consider myself very fortunate I was exposed a new world, before the old one was irrevocably shaken by the city-wide protests of 2019. I remember these stories as a guidebook to my new life; and so, they have changed my world in that I can look forward to every new thing.

I rarely think about those books now. I no longer see my life through comparison to my old life, or those illustrations. Yet to this day, the golden glimmer with which I saw my new world, from those stories to my real life, has not fully faded; this perspective still subconsciously hovering in my mind.

I much prefer my real, non-concrete pond now, thanks to Biff and Chip.

Y11 RUNNER-UP - *THE BOOK OF DISQUIET*

BY FERNANDO PESSOA By Vamika Than

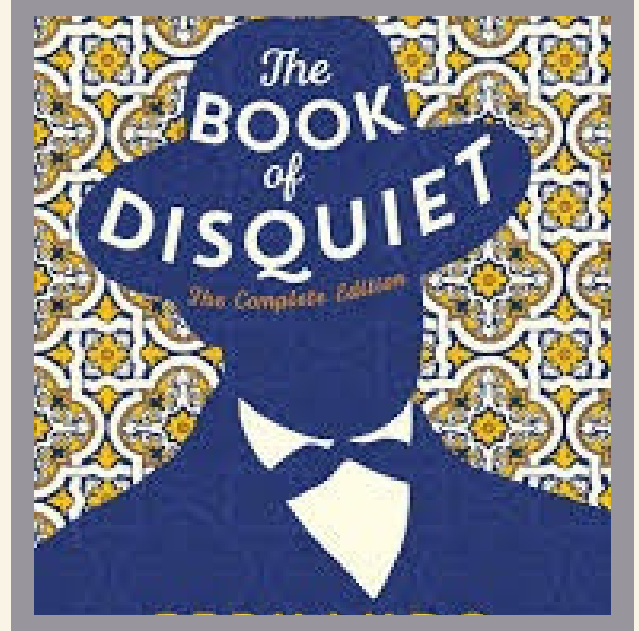
I've always hated how I look. How could I not? My primary school was of white majority. My year consisted of 4 pupils who weren't; I was in a school where being brown was strange. If you weren't blonde with fair skin, you weren't invited to birthday parties and those silly little weddings at breaktime; even at that young age I was exposed to a prejudice that I didn't yet know was racism.

Now, although at a school where no one cares the amount of melanin my body produces or the accent that I have, my friends wonder why I am so precious about the colour of my skin, how fair or dark I am throughout the year, that I seem almost obsessed with appearance and how others perceive me, and making sure my hair is never described as black but rather brown because they think I simply can't stand that thought of accepting that I am not white, how insane I am to act the way I do - yet perhaps they're right. Perhaps I am.

Because from such an early age I had the all-white ideal driven into my head. I wasn't cute enough if I wasn't skinny, not pretty enough if I wasn't blue-eyed, and made to hate every part of me that made me so unique.

I gained weight when I was rather young, partially medical, partially because I was simply a kid enjoying life. Yet I felt it when people stared, when I matched outfits with my friends and I never looked as good as them, when we all shop together and I'm the one who must pull aside the person helping us and ask for the next size up.

That's when reading became everything to me. I had always been ahead of my peers in that sense, I learnt to read young yet to my parents' dismay writing was always a struggle for me, I wasn't the child prodigy they had hoped for when they saw me read Biff and Chip at 2. I could form the letters and words, but they never seemed right. They always ebbed and flowed like river trying to find the sea and I suppose that's what I was. I was trying to catch up to those around me, trying so hard to fit



in that I forgot I had to learn who I was first. I struggled with that a lot moving to LGS, I found it difficult to make friends and I drove poor Ms. Mould up the wall once or twice with my disregard for socialising. Ironically enough, I'd sit with a book instead.

When I heard this essay title, I thought that it would be easy, because for someone who reads a lot, the only problem should surely be picking just one? Turns out, it was much harder than it seemed. I sat with a pen and paper, I uncapped my pen and wrote a title and the date, I dotted my 'i' and crossed my 't' and underlined everything and then... Nothing.

Because nothing I could think of had ever truly changed me. I thought and thought and not a single book was good enough. My initial reaction was to pick a mediocre book and simply talk until I baffled both myself and the poor soul reading this, but for some reason this meant something to me. I said I'd think about it overnight but being the girl I am, I only sat down to write this several weeks later. And I still had nothing.

I was half-tempted to be that one person who says that no book ever changed their life and go on about the inconsequential-ness of it all, the existence of the human race in the grand scheme of things until I got a notification from Pinterest about a pin I had commented on years ago about a silly little book I had read called 'The Book of Disquiet.' I had read it when I was probably around 8 or 9 years old and I was far too young to understand the true meaning but I saw the quote that I had commented on and it hit so insanely close to home that I felt like perhaps someone had known I needed that small like on that small comment on that small app to suddenly make everything click into place. In the space of 3 days I seemed to have some sort of epiphany, and of course I picked up the book and read it once more and I understood that I was not to blame for my hatred of my looks, nor my friends nor their friends, in fact the entirety of our race was to blame, and I think Fernando Pessoa summed it up pretty damn well.

'Man shouldn't be able to see his own face – there is nothing more sinister. Nature gave him the gift of not being able to stare into his own eyes. Only in the water of rivers and ponds could he look at his face, and the very posture he had to assume was symbolic. He had to bend over and stoop down to commit the ignominy of beholding himself.'

Even at my big age of 15 I had to go look up what ignominy meant, and found it means public shame or disgrace, which sums up pretty well how the invention of the mirror made me feel. I hate how I look. That is an undeniable fact that is so sad yet so common in our modern society that it would never seem out of place. Most people hate how they look. Because in a world where we are held to unrealistic standards and healthy ideals, a world where we are told the human race is getting uglier, no one stops to think 'What if we're just getting crueller?'

Throughout this book, Pessoa poses many good questions about life in a way that doesn't seem so boring, he doesn't ask 'Why we exist?' but rather 'Why are we conscious enough to question our own existence?' He struggles to come to terms with who he is, and although he never finds himself, he takes us on a profound exploration of the human psyche. It was a refreshing new look on the world that I adapted within a week and suddenly everything seemed to bother me less. I am a teenage girl and friendship problems are in the norm, but I suddenly realised I didn't care anymore, because I was more interested in understanding the grand scheme of things.

Pessoa questions our mortality and the transience of existence, he walks us through his own self-doubt that ultimately powers existentialism and I was amazed. Fernando Pessoa made me think, through his talks of a symphony for a soul and hope and faith within us as human beings, it raised the question of why we write. Why create poems? Unfortunately, Pessoa didn't have an answer for that in his book, and I am not in the habit of practicing necromancy but turns out I didn't need it because I figured it out myself. In an English lesson on an utterly random Monday, I realised humans write out of passion, out of need, out of the very desire to leave our mark on this world and to never be forgotten. Although many of Pessoa's 1920's ideals did leave me with many counterarguments, we are in absolute agreement in one thing.

***' Nature gave him the gift of not being able to stare into his own eyes. Only in the water of rivers and ponds could he look at his face, and the very posture he had to assume was symbolic. He had to bend over and stoop down to commit the ignominy of beholding himself.'* - The Book of Disquiet**

SIXTH FORM WINNER -*THE TIMES REFERENCE ATLAS OF THE WORLD*

By Harriet Firth

I don't think I can remember when I first picked up an atlas or bothered to flick through one, but most likely I was forced to in some primary school geography lesson. It certainly wasn't love at first sight, and it took me rather a while longer to fully appreciate an atlas and all it was worth.

My parents owned a rather battered copy of The Times Reference Atlas, but from 1997, so it wasn't exactly up-to date. After the odd session spent browsing the pages and actually realising that there was something special going on here, I decided that I was fed up with an atlas which was so inaccurate and so out of date, leading me to ask for my own, more modern copy instead. The crux of my interest lies in the fact that it is not a static book, it is instead constantly evolving and changing in tandem with our planet. It will forever be growing and developing with our physical world, for it really is just a portable representation of the planet.

When I first opened my own, up-to-date, holy grail of geographical knowledge, I was so grateful that I finally could look at a map which was honestly representing the current world and political climate, and that would change my entire perspective.

What changed my world the most was the greater world view which an atlas offered me. Up until that point my global outlook had been pretty narrow, limited to the odd country chosen as a topic in class, or somewhere I had been to on holiday. Skimming through the atlas my eyes glanced across unpronounceable names and confusing colours and shapes. I knew the world was vast and different, but I hadn't quite anticipated just how vast.

Who knew of places with such fantastical names as Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky or Ouagadougou (which, incidentally, is the capital city of Burkina Faso).

The arrival of the atlas opened my childish mind up to an entire planet which I had never even considered before. It is oh so easy to stay trapped in a small, closed society, where the only things which matter are those which happen in your own country, but that is far from true, and by venturing inside an atlas I learnt that there were places I had never heard of, never even seen mentioned. I came to the realisation that the world is wide and it all matters. Since learning of all of these new, different and fascinating places I have been inspired to learn more, read more, and travel more. To be able to see the places which I have been fixated on for such a long time is an ambition which I would never have had, had I not opened up an atlas.

You might think that an atlas is 'just maps', but actually, it isn't, or at least my copy isn't. Before the 'map bit' there is a detailed table holding a wealth of information on each county, and secretly, this is my favourite part of the atlas. Amongst other fascinating data, honestly it is fascinating, we can learn about the countries' main languages and religions.

For someone interested in the human and societal element of things, this, to me, is a treasure trove. I would compile reams of information from this table, ranking the world's most spoken languages, the most adhered to religions.

It mesmerised me. Never before had I known of religions such as Kimbanguism or Kirat, of languages called Cebuano and Chuukese. I don't believe that my atlas inspired my love of languages, but it certainly helped. I quickly became engrossed in knowing every county which spoke French, every country which speaks Italian, and made it my mission to be an expert on such a subject.

Meanwhile, on the religion side of things, I was soon able to recognise not only the main religions in each country, but also able to understand the political and social ramifications and debates which came with each. Whilst my atlas was unfortunately not solely responsible for this, it has, though, spurred me on to discover more about the way in which our world functions, with harmony between so many different cultures, tongues, and beliefs seemingly impossible.

The detail which one can reach in an atlas is astounding, with tiny places, some with no more than 10 people represented in its pages. Each settlement is designed in painstaking detail, everything from the font, the colour and the lettering size thought of.

This level of unparalleled detail has allowed me to see or hear a name in a news article, or whatever the source may be, and to immediately flick to the index and look it up. Just being able to do this, and then see the world in which this place lives, is joyous. To have the moment of realisation when you finally work out that Görlitz is on the border with Poland is wonderful, at least in my geography-mad mind.

My atlas is not only limited to the 21st century world either.

If you look far enough into it you will see the older maps of days gone by, and can compare the borders of then and now. To see how much has changed, and how much has stayed the same, taught me that the world is constantly evolving, and will continue to change for years to come. At the start of the atlas, other gems of information, such as average climate charts, and physical landmarks are plotted out in detail. In addition, the map of immigration in the past ten years, and population statistics will continue to entice me to look even closer, if that's really possible. Such a level of data fostered a love of the world in me and encouraged me to always seek a higher level of understanding. There is always more to see, always something you have missed out, and the best part? When you find a mistake.



Whilst the physical side of the atlas is no doubt fascinating, it is the human and societal side which is my passion. Underneath the country name and flag in the 'States and Territories' section is the date of their independence from a previous parent nation. When comparing the current maps of today with the ones at the back of the book you can see clear differences. Alone this information is valuable, but viewed in conjunction with the dates of independence, it is unique.

You may question the importance of knowing a date of independence, but there is more to it than meets the eye. That insignificant number reveals a hive of information, and after a bit of digging, you can finally understand the history and the political situation of a country, what makes it who it is today, I guess.

My main area of interest is probably the Soviet Union (or the Ex-Soviet Union more accurately) and using this as my example I shall take you through what the atlas' political and historical knowledge do to interest me.

Firstly; I can see clearly all the countries involved, the current spread of languages, the boundaries which they do and don't cross, the political and social problems which these bring and the place which these countries hold in our world today.

Secondly; Russia and its neighbours seem to be littered with, as the atlas oh so diplomatically puts it, 'disputed and unspecified territories'. You can see politics in action, international relations on paper, the world's organisations fighting for membership of certain states. The atlas' most significant impression on me is probably the political and cultural knowledge which it imparted to me, it fuelled my drive to know more and to appreciate more, in a way which no other book has ever done.





An atlas might just look like a collection of maps, but to me these maps actually mean so much more. The physical picture of our global landscape is changing, with climate change affecting every county, whether they notice it or not. If you find the Netherlands in an atlas and finally get your head around the rather similar-colour sea level key you will, then understand that nearly half of the country is actually under sea level, meaning that sooner or later, that half will not be there. This closeness to home shocked me when I first saw and understood it; a country can just disappear.

Further afield, the islands of the Pacific are already being submerged, with nations such as Kiribati suffering enormously. An atlas is truly a jack of all trades; it touches on everything from history and politics to science and geography. You can further see the damage and destruction which the power of mother nature can cause. The island of Montserrat had to abandon its de jure capital of Plymouth in 1997 due to volcanic activity, a fact which I had ever expected to learn. Creepily, my atlas will also follow some place names with the bracketed word of 'abandoned' (all in bold in my atlas), leaving me wondering what had happened? Some answers are obvious, for example Chernobyl, but others hide a deeper, more elusive history.

The atlas has made such a large impression me mainly because I never expected to find so much. I, like most, expected some dull mas of sea and land, but even after a quick browse you witness far more than you ever had anticipated.

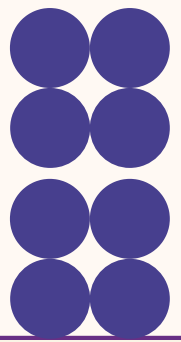
Looking towards the future for the atlas, I realise that it is not fixed. Whenever I peruse my trusty guide to our planet, I am always greeted by something new. Always. Without exception. Whenever I see a place name, or an island I had never noticed before, I will forever be learning. As our world changes, so does the atlas.

It is one of the very few books which is continuously being updated on a daily basis, and whilst my paper copy does not change in time, each new edition is always a vibrant remake of an old classic. And, by having numerous atlases, from numerous different years, as I have, you can even compile data comparing the population of, say Cuba between the intervals of 1986-1997, or from 2005-2012. Such facts and figures, alongside maps and graphs, diagrams and indexes, can keep someone eternally entertained, always seeking out more knowledge about our world, leaving me in awe of a book which can hold so much.

Our world quiet literally, holds an endless amount of information and, in a similar way, so too does an atlas.

SIXTH FORM RUNNER-UP - MOON PIE BY SIMON MASON

By Divine Ibeji



Within the finite world-view of my premature mind, eyes focused narrowly on the necessities of life: food, my bed, and my daily YouTube excursions of slime and unboxing videos, there were some books that changed me. Books that grabbed ferociously unto my young mind leaving it forever moulded into its current state.

I grew up an only child, in a low-income family. I can't really explain the state of our situation, as I was always so blissfully unaware of any struggles. To me life was simple: the TV would supply me entertainment, my parents would supply me love, and my fridge would supply me food. Where the supply was sourced did not bother me; whether we were one bad month away from a black screen, or an empty fridge, or whether my parents had to force open their teeth and exert their hearts to fill mine with sweet, ignorant bliss. None of this occurred to me.

I also want to point out that I was not a very big reader. In fact, I don't think I knew how to properly read until the age of 7, and God knows reading books did not make it into my task list for the afternoon.

However, a book changed this. The first book that, in the Summer of 2016, changed the way I viewed responsibility, the way I viewed struggle and the way I viewed people. It was a book called Moon pie (by Simon Mason): about a little girl (Martha) who had been thrown headfirst into the responsibilities of looking after her little brother and alcoholic father, whilst battling the own heartache of losing her beloved mother.

Yeah I know, quite a strong topic for a children's book. But I remember absolutely adoring the relationship between Martha and her little brother. That position of assumed responsibility and fortified strength in the face of difficulty, all for the sake of the one who needs you, the one you love. I often remember resonating with Martha throughout the book, but I realise now, more than anyone, I was her brother.



A little child floating in a tumultuous world, relying on nothing but the safety and care of her parents- her raft. In that sense, I think this book did change my world. It taught me at a young age that the way people presented themselves was not always reflective of their inner self; a myriad of struggles and pain could be hidden away in the tiny chamber of a human heart and no one would know. However, those able to smile fully despite these struggles are those strengthened through love. I reread this book multiple times, and I think each time I strived to be a little less of a complacent brat; more responsible, just like Martha. Only my parents can ascertain the validity of my efforts, but it was definitely the first time my 8-year-old brain thought of matters beyond my own personal comfort.

Further on in my life, perhaps at the age of 9 or 10, I encountered this phenomenal book named 'Wonder' by (R.J. Palacio). 'Wonder': a book about a boy born with a physical deformity that made him look different and his struggles navigating how others treated him because of this. I was reminded of the dark side of humanity; how cruel and twisted and mean people could be, for I too had been a victim of bullying.

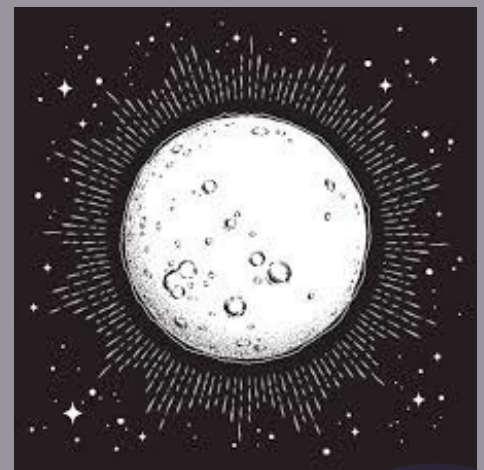
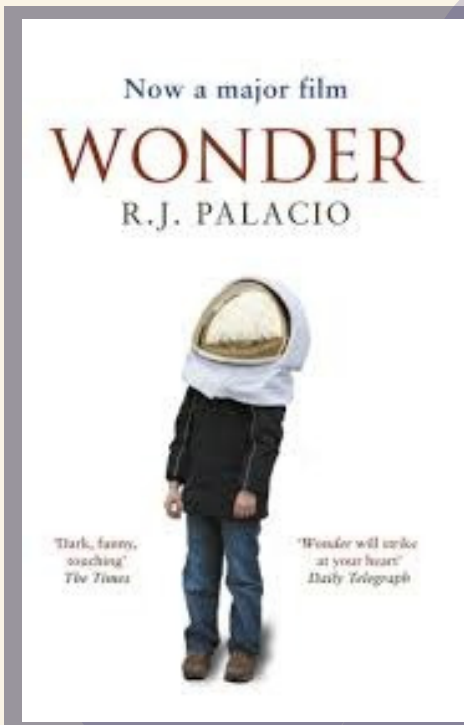
But this book changed the way I viewed things: it reminded me that it's okay to not be like the majority. Wonder helped me love the difference within others, the difference within myself, and to understand that the whole concept of normalcy holds no substance because to be human is to hold the idiosyncrasies and variations that make us unique.

I was quite different- I possessed a very eccentric personality, was one of the only Black girls in predominately White and Asian schools, and had a disposition to cry at the tiniest heartbreaks; yet those differences did not make me any less valuable.

They were (as with us all) something to be celebrated and loved.

It reminds me of a John Green quote from 'Paper Towns': "That's always seemed so ridiculous to me, that people want to be around someone because they're pretty. It's like picking your breakfast cereal based on the colour rather than the taste."

This mistake is what isolates people from knowing those with the most beautiful hearts. In that sense, the capacity for greater tolerance, kindness and the ability to embrace the uniqueness of the human spirit, is the gift I received from 'Wonder'.



That brings me unto the final book, the final book that permanently altered my young mind. You see, have you ever encountered a piece of literature so raw as to possess the sort of emotion and vulnerability able to be transferred between the pages and into your very soul. A book that bears in each page- in each word- beautifully written characters and themes, poignantly intertwining into the flow of the plot and telling a story artfully inscribed to make you feel.

Perhaps that is giving a bit too much glorification to the motives of a children's book. But there was a novel that made me feel this way, and that was the 'Goldfish Boy' (by Lisa Thompson). My love. The first book that made me sob, really sob. I cannot describe how it made me feel, but finishing the book left such a strong resonance upon my heart.

The tale of a little boy struggling with OCD, being heaved into a criminal investigation that forced him to break the bounds of his self-inflicted solitude. A little boy trying to shoulder the world of his trauma all on his own, dealing with the guilt of something he didn't do, the weight of a criminal investigation viscerally against his instincts, parents who didn't understand, and a mouth that refused to speak.



Saying this book left me with a heart as swollen as my eyes upon my first reading would not be an exaggeration! Tears were formed which could not relate to, but could understand the experiences of this boy.

I think this was my first encounter with human sadness. Not being sad because I was denied something, or because I had watched a sad movie. No pure human sadness. The ability to empathise: a beautiful feature of my life that has helped develop the deep and nurturing relationships I have right now.

Having a heart that hurts on behalf of the pain of others is not easy. Yet it gives me a depth to life that cannot be obtained through passive indifference. And that's why I love my little 'Goldfish Boy', and that's how it changed my world.

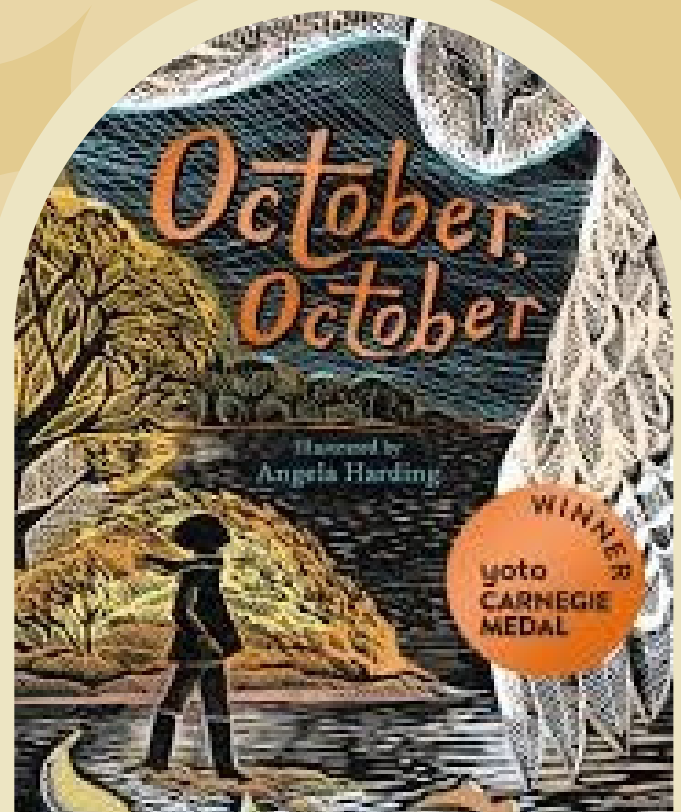
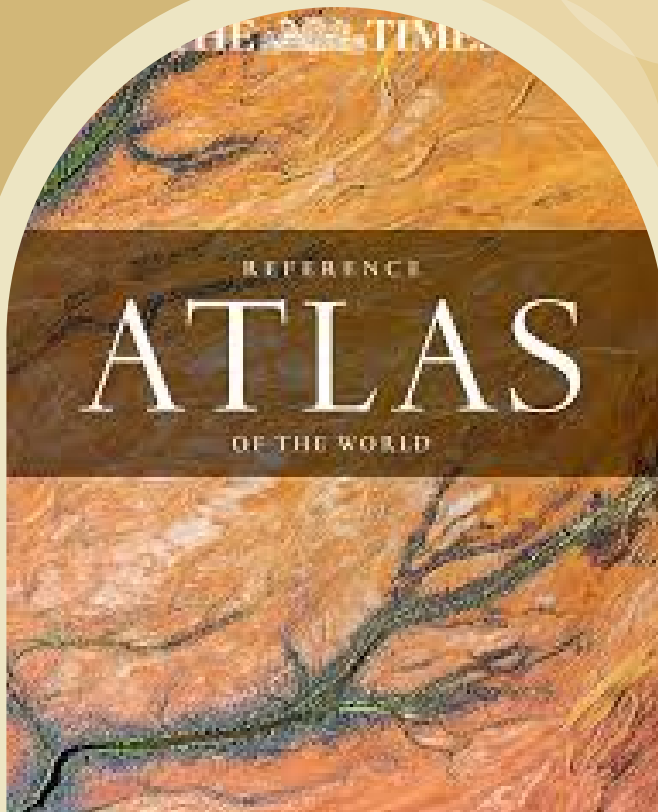
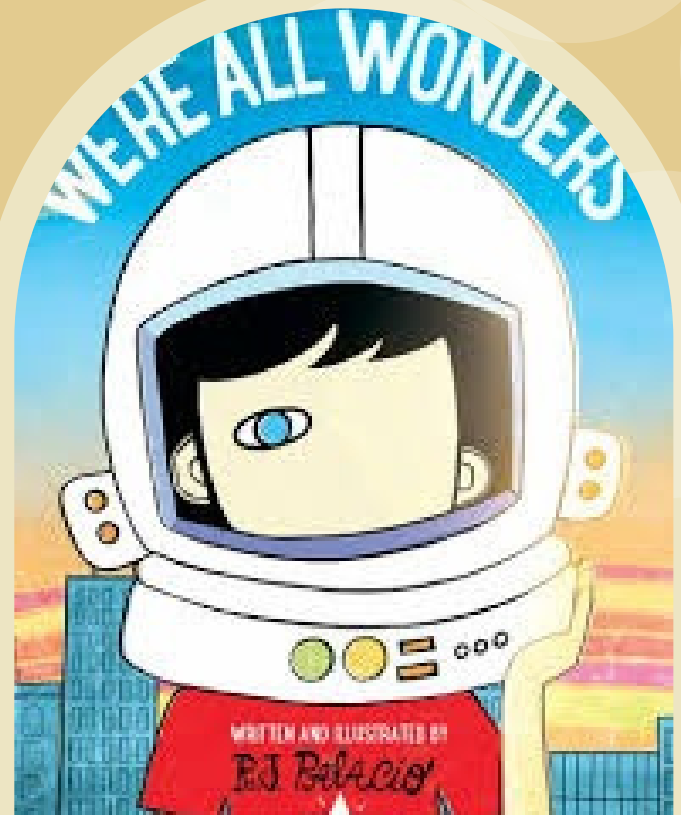
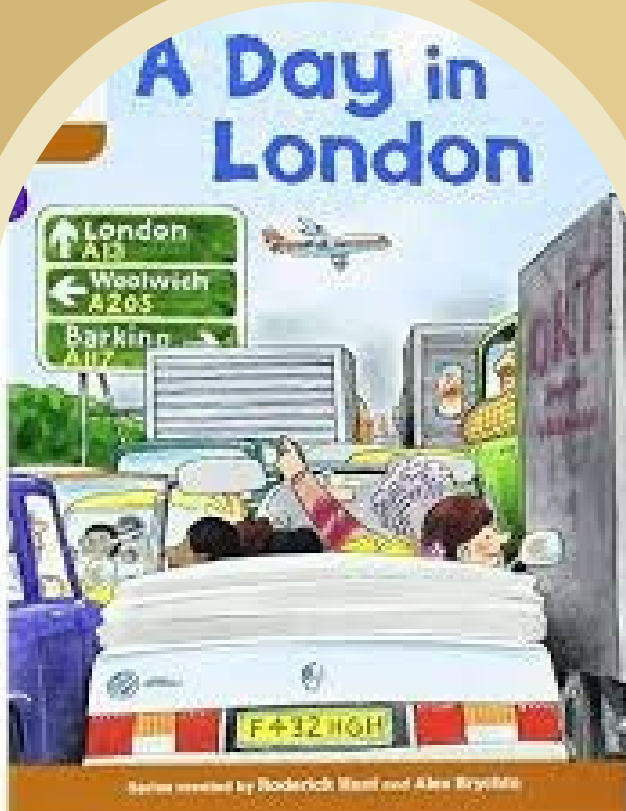
Furthermore, it is quite ironic that none of these 'life-altering' books were of greater maturity or were read in my teenage years. I suppose I could say that as I grew, books simply lost that magic.

But more convincingly perhaps, it was my own heart that lost the malleability and openness of girlhood required to experience such strong emotions and learn magical lessons. That is an area for change on my part. Nevertheless, I am so grateful for the tales that have been integral in shaping my past, my present and hopefully my future.

Upon the writing of this essay, I was able to undergo introspection and realized that many of the qualities people have told me I flourished in: kindness, patience, empathy, seemed to have been developed through the reading of these childhood books.

Thus, I come to the conclusion that books truly can make you a better person; they changed my world in a way that makes me better placed to change someone else's'.

BOOKS THAT CHANGED LGS' WORLD



THANK YOU FOR READING THE FIRST EDITION OF THE YOUNG ARTS AND HUMANITIES JOURNAL!

WE HOPE THIS HAS LEFT YOU WONDERING - WHAT BOOK HAS CHANGED YOUR WORLD?

JANUARY 2025 | Issue 1



And now, a message for the readers

Feeling inspired?

We are now taking entries for the next edition of the Young Arts and Humanities Journal.

We are aiming at sixth formers for our second edition - we are looking for good-quality articles, such as extracts from humanity-based EPQ reports, that we can include in the second edition of the YHJ. Or similarly to the Young Scientist's Journal - write an article about a subject that interests you, be it economics, law or any other humanity based topic -and submit via email.

Guidelines:

- Citations included in submission should be submitted in Harvard-style format.
- Ensure any articles submitted are on Word documents (.docx) or a readable PDF.

Send an email to youngartsandhumanitiesjournal@leicestergrammar.org.uk, if you are interested in submitting a piece to the journal or if you would like to be involved with editing.

English to Art History to Religion to Film to Sociology to Politics to Music to Philosophy to International Relations
Drama to Law to Geography to Linguistics to Anthropology to Classics to Languages to Economics to Art to English