



## China's hidden secret: the Muslim concentration camps concealed from the world. Until now.

*Safa Rehman and Minahil Masood expose the inhumane practices forced upon Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, China. Their exploitation in so called 're-education' camps has been hidden from the world, until now.*

China, with a population of over 1.4 billion people, consists of a minority group of Muslim Uighurs, equating to 0.13% of China's total population. Xinjiang is located in the North-West of China, bordering countries such as Mongolia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. It is home to around 12 million Uighurs, who are living in constant fear of the Chinese government. The state government, in an attempt to curb the rise of Islam amongst the Uighur community, is actively funding a regime of ethnic cleansing by constructing



mass concentration camps and forcing prisoners to sing songs of praise to the Chinese communist party, endeavouring to brainwash them and eradicate any extremist thoughts. Over 2 million Uighur Muslims have been detained in a massive internment camp that is shrouded in secrecy. This group of Uighur Muslims are facing the most extreme injustices, torture and threat to life ever witnessed in the modern world.

Inside the camps, men and women are held against their will in so called “re-education camps”, while their children are sent to mass kindergartens, where they are taught that their beliefs and cultures are wrong and the only right belief is in the communist government. Women are raped, forcefully married with other Chinese men, separated from their children and sterilised to prevent them from increasing the Uighur population. Uighurs are forced, against their religious beliefs, to eat pork, drink alcohol and denounce themselves as Muslims as well as having their organs harvested, being part of medical experiments and memorising propaganda songs. The director of the Uighur human rights project, Omer Kanat, states that this is a “crime against humanity”, as mosques are being demolished and people are not being allowed to practice

their religion freely.

A prisoner, Ömir Bekali, states, “They shackled my hands and put black fabric over my eyes. My feet and hands were tied up with iron shackles and they beat my hands and back and stomach. They put needles in between my nails and fingers, they put iron sticks into my body.” It is clear that Ömir was severely tortured as he tells us that his knuckles were hammered like instruments and he suffered long periods of time on a Chinese torture mechanism, known as the tiger chair. Ömir, amongst millions of other Muslim Uighurs, have suffered this same abuse and violation of human rights. In a BBC interview Ömir stated that, “They wouldn’t let me sleep, they would hang me up for hours and would beat me. They had thick wooden and rubber batons, whips made from twisted wire, needles to pierce the skin, pliers for pulling the nails. All these tools were displayed on the table in front of me, ready to use at any time. And I could hear other people screaming as well.”

The Chinese government are leading the international community to believe that these atrocities do not take place and the concept of ethnic cleansing is a fabrication of the truth, yet they openly deny international reporters and journalists from

reporting in Xinjiang. When asked to clarify the leaked footage of the Uighur Muslims being inhumanely blindfolded and constrained of movement on a train station in Xinjiang, China’s UK ambassador, Liu Xiaoming, claimed that there is “no such thing as concentration camps” and that in China we “treat, every ethnic group as equal.” Furthermore, these actions are believed to be necessary measures against terrorism and shaping young unruly minds. In reality, there is extreme brutality and discrimination occurring to these innocent people who have been detained against their will since early 2017.

There is a growing international criticism of China’s treatment of Uighur Muslims but, as of yet, no country has taken any action beyond issuing critical statements. The Chinese government has consistently denied the existence of these camps, despite the clear evidence of their presence. It is completely unacceptable that current president, Donald Trump, the leader of possibly the most influential country in the world, supported the horrific treatment of the Uighurs, stating it is, “exactly the right thing to do.”

When we live in a society that strives for equality and justice, how can anyone call themselves equal when these innocent lives are being denied basic human rights? I urge you to ask yourself is this the world you wish to live in? The greatest crimes of the 21st century are taking place right in front of our eyes, and yet millions of these innocent people are suffering unnoticed.

Why are these crimes against humanity allowed to take place, at a time where Black Lives Matter movements are highlighting social injustice and the Holocaust is compulsory on the national curriculum? People bend their knees and bite their tongues but little is done to raise awareness of the unspeakable atrocities China is committing against the Muslim Uighur community.

**‘Inside the camps, men and women are held against their will in ‘re-education’ camps’**

**‘People bend their knees and bite their tongues but little is done to raise awareness for the Uighurs’**

# How AOC is changing the face of American politics

Dira Stinton explores the impact Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has had on American politics

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez - known to many as simply AOC - is making revolutionary waves in US politics. AOC is a democratic Congresswoman representing New York's 14th congressional district. In 2018 she defeated 10 term incumbent Joe Crowley in what has been described as 'the biggest upset of the 2018 elections' in the US. Born and raised in the Bronx, AOC is the daughter of Puerto-Rican immigrants and until she became involved in politics, worked as a bartender. Aged just 29, she is the youngest woman to be elected into Congress. Her groundbreaking policies are changing the game of politics as we know it and making way for progressive democratic reforms to be made.

AOC is well known for breaking down demographic barriers and ensuring many young people know how and why it is important to vote. Why are young people so attracted to her policies? This is partly due to her social media presence which allows her to connect with her younger audience. She has 6 million Twitter followers and 8 million Instagram followers. During the 2020 US election, AOC hosted a livestream of her playing the popular online game 'Among Us' on gaming platform Twitch. The stream was to raise voter awareness in the US for the 2020 election. At its peak, the livestream had 435,000 viewers - the third most views of a Twitch stream ever. In 2019, AOC starred in Netflix documentary 'Knock Down the House' which focused on the political careers of many new Congresspeople and included AOC's defeat of Crowley.

AOC's views are extremely progressive, favouring policies seen in the UK, Sweden, Finland and Norway. AOC advocates Medicare for all, a federal jobs guarantee and abolishing the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), an agency whose practices have been called a "human rights catastrophe" by Amnesty USA. Environmental concerns are also top of her agenda, where she has called for putting in place the Green New Deal. This is a plan by Democrats to phase out fossil fuels in order to sustain net-zero carbon emissions. Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and Cory Booker - prominent members of the Democratic party - have all endorsed this plan.

However, AOC has faced much criticism for her radical and progressive policies, especially from senior members of the Republican Party. Senator Lindsey Graham has called her "a communist" and President Donald Trump has told her and the other members of the squad to "go back to where they came from." Many misleading stories of AOC have circulated, resulting in her receiving frequent death threats. Fox News, A fierce critic of AOC, discusses her policies frequently - at one point mentioning her name up to 75 times per day. In 2020, US Representative Ted Yoho swore at AOC using sexist slurs. In response to this, AOC took to the floor to condemn Representative Yoho's actions. "I am here because I have to show my parents that I am their daughter, and that they did not raise me to accept abuse from men," argued AOC, highlighting the issues of male privilege and systemic



**'Aged just 29, AOC is the youngest woman to ever be elected into Congress'**

**'AOC is what politics needs right now: a fiercely progressive political activist'**

sexism in the viral speech.

Despite criticism, AOC has continued to strive for progressive policies, making her a well-known figure in the Democratic party. Many celebrities and senior politicians have called for her to be a candidate for President, although she cannot legally do this until 2024 due to age restrictions on the Presidency. AOC is, in my opinion, what politics needs right now: a fiercely progressive political activist. AOC is on the streets with her constituents - she knows what their lives are like because before she became a politician, she was like them. She gives the under-represented a voice. I believe that AOC's re-election is truly revolutionary as she is breaking down the stereotypes of politics and making way for new policies that help all members of society. Constituents who vote Democrat and Republican will both be heard as AOC is about bringing people together to create solutions rather than polarising and pitting people against one another. There is no doubt that AOC's actions will continue to change the face of politics in the US and internationally. I cannot wait to see what reforms AOC will bring next.



# Why we must take up the baton in the fight to end child labour

Diniyah Rehman discusses the deep entrenchment of child labour in society today and argues more must be done to combat this abuse of human rights



*'The change starts within each one of us, and ends only when all children are free to be children' – Craig Kielburger*

Children belong in schools not workplaces. Child labour deprives children of their right to go to school and reinforces intergenerational cycles of poverty. Child labour acts as a major barrier to education, affecting both attendance and performance in school – We need to do something about this.

Around 1 in 10 children are subjected to child labour worldwide, with some forced to work under hazardous conditions. This means around 152 million children globally are subjected to child labour. Many people around the world face poverty and in some places, it comes at the price of a child's future, safety and even their life. Children are often subjected to violence, abuse and other human rights violations and some may be forced to break the law. The consequences are

staggering. Child labour can result in extreme bodily and mental harm and even death. It can lead to slavery and economic exploitation. And in nearly every case, it cuts children off from schooling and health care, restricting their fundamental rights and threatening their futures. In some countries child labourers can be found in a variety of industries: in brick making, carpet weaving, garment making, domestic service, food and refreshment services (such as tea stalls), agriculture, fisheries and mining.

According to UNICEF it has been estimated that 1 million children around the world are behind bars because they were forced to commit a crime. Many are held in unsanitary conditions, deprived of education and regular contact with the outside world. Some children are in prison for acts that should not be a crime at all, such as skipping school or running away from abusive parents. Some have never been tried for their alleged crimes; others are tried as if they

were adults and, when convicted, sent to adult prisons.

Some children have recounted their personal stories about their horrific experiences as a child labourer, for example the story of Kyi. Kyi is a 10-year-old girl who lived with her family in Myanmar. She started working after her father broke both his arms in a work-related accident. Due to the financial strain on the family, she was forced to quit school, and found a job in a garment factory. The job was difficult. She explains, 'in times of high demand, the workers have to work all night' with a one-hour break for a nap on the concrete floor at dawn, after which they continued to work the whole next day. The family's financial situation left her feeling that she was unable to miss work, even when she was ill or exhausted.

When you think of child labour you may immediately think of child slaves who have to work all day in hard living conditions, but that is not the complete picture. Not all of the

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work that children do is bad. For example, it may well be that you have a part-time job after school, which is generally accepted as normal or even good for the development of young people. It becomes a problem when the work can potentially be a danger. The danger can be physical, mental or social. The bigger tragedy is it could also mean that you can no longer go to school because of work.

Listening to children is vital to achieving success in the fight against child labour and UNICEF is making sure that these children's voices are being heard. UNICEF is an organization that works to prevent and respond to child labour, especially by strengthening the social service workforce. Social service workers play a key role in recognising, preventing and managing risks that can lead to child labour. Their efforts develop and support the workforce to identify and respond to potential situations of child labour such as early identification, registration and rehabilitation and referral services.

UNICEF also focus on strengthening parenting and community education initiatives to address harmful social norms

that perpetuate child labour, while partnering with national and local governments to prevent violence, exploitation and abuse. Children removed from labour must also be safely returned to school or training. UNICEF supports increased access to quality education and provides comprehensive social services to keep children protected and with their families.

Have you recently purchased a soccer ball? Something embroidered? Something made from cotton? Chocolate? Clothes? Vegetables? If so, there's a good chance you've purchased something that is the direct result from child labour. Child labour and slavery is so entrenched in the production of goods and services from so

**'Child labour is so entrenched in the production of goods and services it can be an enormous challenge to avoid'**

many countries it can be an enormous challenge to avoid.

### **Here Are 5 Ways You Can Help End Child Labour:**

1. **Contact retail stores, manufacturers and importers.** Kindly ask them questions about the origins of their products. Let them know you want to buy products that don't involve child labour, and give them suggestions for ethical products and services they can offer instead.

2. **Buy fair trade and sweatshop-free products whenever possible.** Buy used when you can't. Or borrow, share, trade, make it yourself, etc. Look for certified fair trade labels such as Fair Trade Certified, Fairtrade America, and the Goodweave label to ensure that you're supporting positive practices that don't involve child labour.

3. **Contact government leaders.** Write letters to the heads of countries that permit any form of child slavery/ forced labour and ask them to strengthen and enforce their laws, and to increase educational opportunities for children and humane, sustainable business opportunities for adults.

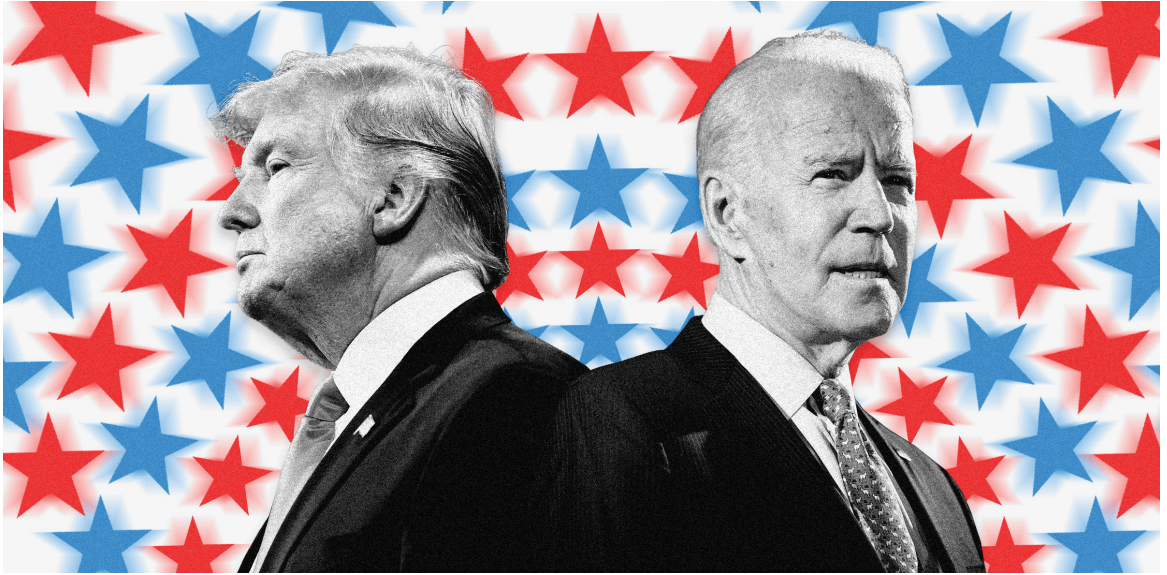
4. **Educate others.** Give presentations in schools, communities of faith, non-profits, and other groups to educate them about child labour issues and encourage positive action.

5. **Donate to UNICEF for their good work** <https://www.unicef.org.uk/donate/>



# Biden v Trump: How the recent presidential election shows democracy is dead

Benjamin Wilkins looks back at the uproarious 2020 US presidential election and questions whether democracy is the fairest system to ensuring every voice is heard



During the recent US election, I learnt of the frustrations in how overcomplicated, annoying and potentially unfair elections can be. The aggravation on the first day of the counting when Donald Trump was looking like he was going to win, despite Joe Biden having more votes, was overwhelming. It was plain that this system must be questioned: is democracy a thing of the past?

In the USA, people vote for members of the Electoral College. Before the election, a political party chooses people to represent it if they win the election in a particular state, the number of Electoral College members is determined by the state's population. The winning party's choice of people are then the state's members of the Electoral College. These people then vote. The winner in this vote is the winner of the overall election. A party needs 270 members to win.

When the USA was formed, the founding fathers debated for months over the system for

deciding the president with some arguing that Congress should pick the president, others instinted on a democratic popular vote. The Electoral College vote was a compromise between these two systems. "The Electoral College was never intended to be the perfect system for picking the president," says George Edwards III, Emeritus Political Science Professor at Texas A&M University. "It wasn't like the Founders said, 'Hey, what a great idea! This is the preferred way to select the chief executive, period,'" says Edwards. "They were tired, impatient, frustrated. They cobbled together this plan because they couldn't agree on anything else."

It is clear to see the imperfectness of the system. In 2016, seven members changed sides (this was later changed by Supreme Court, the highest court of the USA). It can also be a tie, as both parties can get 270 votes each – in this case Congress, the US version of Parliament, decides the result. However,

the frustrating problem is the potential that the Popular Vote – the votes across all states – and the Electoral Vote have different results. This happened in the 2016 vote between Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump. Hilary Clinton was more than three million votes ahead of Donald Trump, the ice-cap melting candidate who cares too much about the oil industry to bother about climate change. Trump's economic-centred policies are also one of the reasons why the US was one of the countries worst hit by the coronavirus pandemic. He pulled the US out of the World Health Organisation and the Paris Agreement, refusing to listen to the safety measures they advocated.

But, across the Atlantic, we are just as bad. There have been huge changes in our voting system over the course of history. The first system that elected a proper parliament (i.e. the king was not able to choose the winner) – was the Bloc Vote. This was created by Simon De Montfort.

**'It wasn't like the Founding Fathers said, 'Hey, what a great idea!' They were tired, impatient, frustrated'**





In this, every voter voted for every representative – but the party that came first often also came second. Therefore, it was replaced in some places by the Limited Vote, where the number of representatives was increased and the number of votes each voter had was decreased to one less than the number of representatives. While the aim was to make minority parties get at least one seat, a well-organised party could still get every seat. In 1884 under the reform act, those using the Limited Vote went back to the Bloc Vote. In 1918, we almost transferred to the Single Transferrable Vote (STC) but the government went back on its promise. Since 1950, under the 1948 Representation of the People Act, we have voted for a Member of Parliament (MP) to represent a local area. These MPs are part of the council of our towns and cities. There are 650 seats in the UK and in order to win a majority a party needs at least 326 seats. We've seen this idea before. Where? The USA Electoral College system.

In the UK, as there are more than two parties, there are many times when no party gets to 326 seats. In this case, a large party forms a minority government with a smaller party. In 2017, Theresa May lost her majority as the Conservatives only had 318 seats. They formed a

minority government with the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) of Northern Ireland. This is confusing, though can make the vote fairer.

Or does it? The party with the most seats may not be the party with the most votes, as in the USA. Parties that target a specific area often get more seats than a party larger than it that 'wastes' votes. This means that a party does not get enough votes in an area to get a seat and so the votes from that area become worthless. One example is in the 2015 general election, when almost a quarter of people voted for the Green Party, the Lib Dems and the UKIP, but they only got 1.5%

**'The frustrating problem is that the Popular Vote and the Electoral vote can have different results'**

**'Around 7.3 million votes accounted for only 10 MPs - how is this fair?'**

of seats. Around 7.3 million votes accounted for only 10 MPs, or around 730 thousand votes per seat; the Conservatives – who won the election – received around 11.3 million votes, and won 331 seats, meaning they had around 34 thousand votes per seat. How is this fair?

Our democratic system is fairer than that which came before it, which favoured politicians from wealthy land-owning establishments. But we must once again move on to a fairer voting system.

There is another option – proportional representation. This democratic system elects the party that wins the most seats, where the number of seats is based on the total number of votes they receive. This means the winning party will always be that which gains the most votes. However, elections would still have the fairness of minority governments if a party won without reaching the 326 votes needed for an overall majority. Under proportional representation, every vote counts, not just those given to larger parties. Furthermore, the political strategy of targeting a few areas would be useless as seats would be won based on the total number of votes won. Who wouldn't support the idea that their vote would count – if not, then what's the point of voting in the first place?



# Are witches coming out of the dark and towards the light in literature?

From cackling crones to intelligent sorceresses, Celia Hesketh examines how the image of witches in literature has evolved over time



Witches and magic have featured in storytelling and folklore for centuries. In her earliest incarnations, the witch served as a warning about women with too much power. Or, to quote the novelist Madeline Miller, a woman with “more power than men have felt comfortable with”. Nowadays, though, the witch is often praised as a feminist figure who pushes boundaries, breaks the rules and punishes patriarchal authority. ‘Buffy the Vampire Slayer’s’ Willow Rosenberg and Disney’s ‘Maleficent’ are two often-cited examples of the feminist witch. Marion Gibson, professor of Renaissance and magical literatures at Exeter University, says the image of the witch has become “a shorthand symbol for persecution and resistance – misogyny and feminism in particular”. In a #MeToo world, where Donald Trump – a fan of the term “witch-hunt” – is US president, it is really no surprise that female writers are examining the role of the witch in new ways.

Historically, tales of witchcraft have presented witches as

malevolent beings, intent on bringing destruction to those who cross their path. In 1606, William Shakespeare wrote the play ‘Macbeth’, which has one of the most well-known representations of witches. In this play Shakespeare gives the witches male characteristics, such as beards, to distance them from the ideal of feminine beauty. Their influence is one of disaster, with the prophecy they tell Macbeth instigating his murder of King Duncan and as a result, his own ultimate downfall. Furthermore, the constant accompaniment of stormy weather with the witches associates them with malevolent power, chaos and destruction.

The narrative of the evil witch has prevailed over the centuries. From the cannibalistic witch in the Grimm Brothers’ ‘Hansel and Gretel’ to, more recently, the presentation of the diabolical Grand High Witch in Roald Dahl’s ‘The Witches’, there are very few representations of empowering witches in literature. Perhaps one of the first texts to look at this possibility was L. Frank Baum’s ‘The Wonderful

Wizard of Oz’, which portrays witches as both good and evil. The good witch is literally called ‘The Good Witch’ and is described in ways more akin to a fairy godmother than haggard crone – this stereotype reserved for the Wicked Witch of the West who appears with traditional black dress, pointed hat, hooked nose and warts.

Recent literature has begun to move away from the image of cackling crone, broomstick in hand, to a more modern view of what a ‘witch’ may be. Witches have taken on benevolent characteristics such as Hermione Granger in J.K Rowling’s Harry Potter series. Hermione may not be the title character however she embodies how a witch can harness her magical skills and intelligence to overcome dark magic for the greater good. Similarly, although in a book entitled ‘The Worst Witch’, the series’ protagonist, Mildred, shows how witches can work for the purpose of good even if they have a few encounters with darker forces. This modern representation of witches could be a reflection of a society where women are challenging patriarchy and harnessing feminine power.

The modern witch is anything but stereotypical. Writers today are championing the image of witches who are intelligent, powerful but also feminine – embodying feminist values in stories for a modern generation of readers. These witches prove that female power is not just reserved for the ugly crones or pretty fairy godmothers but can be found in the outcasts and reformers intent on challenging the social quo.

‘Witches and magic have featured in storytelling and folklore for centuries’

‘Nowadays, the witch is praised as a feminist figure who pushes boundaries’



# Off with their head! History needs to axe the Tudors and decolonise the curriculum

Zahra Ali criticises the lack of focus on foreign culture in the English curriculum and explains the importance of foreign history having a place in our classrooms

Nowadays, people only seem to care about American-English history. In fact, people inherit all these sorts of stereotypes about foreigners from the world around them, so even I have caught myself watching some Asian drama and thinking that the storylines are copies of Spiderman, Captain America, and video-game characters such as Red Hood and Mario. But what if they were created by Asia first? We need to imagine the situations of people in other countries. What if we have inherited things from them?

Sometimes, I will catch myself imagining one of my normal, go-to Americanised English dramas in another language, and thinking how cheesy it would sound. This is an example of bias and racism and I am very ashamed to say that I have been the culprit – many a time – of these discriminatory views.

I am not actually English. I have a half-English, half-Asian ethnicity. When I grow up, I would like to be an archaeologist

or anthropologist as I have a fascination for the history of other cultures. Ironically, the UK is a melting pot of other cultures yet very little attention is given in the English curriculum to their histories. We learn about the fates of Henry VIII's doomed wives, explore peasants puking from the plague and read tales of the hardships soldiers faced in the trenches – but nowhere do we learn about the histories of people of colour. A literal whitewashing of Britain's colonial past, if you pardon the pun.

We seem to just dismiss other countries' amazing histories and artefacts. For example, I only learnt about the Rosetta Stone a couple of weeks ago when I asked my mum about how archaeologists managed to decipher hieroglyphs. The Rosetta Stone was created in the Ptolemaic Period in 196 BC and is one of the most significant objects in the deciphering of ancient Egyptian literature as it possesses the key to understanding Egyptian hieroglyphs – a script consisting

of small pictures and signs that were used originally in ancient Egypt for religious texts. Over time, the knowledge of how to read hieroglyphs was lost, until the essential discovery of the Rosetta Stone in 1799 and its subsequent decipherment.

The fact that I had never known about this crucial element of ancient Egyptian history got me thinking. What else is the English curriculum hiding from the innocent minds of children? The Rosetta Stone is just one of the fantastic examples of foreign heritage. Young children should be free to research and have their own opinions of history. I hope people open their eyes and wake up, now because when they do, they will be able to witness the true beauties of the Earth.

British school children should be taught about the history of the realities of British imperialism and colonialism. This would include the history of people of colour as components of, and contributors to, the British nation-state – rather than simply as enslaved victims of it.

**'We learn about peasants puking from the plague'**

**'Nowhere in the curriculum do we learn meaningfully about foreign culture'**



# TikTok, time's up! Why social media needs to take its duty of care more seriously

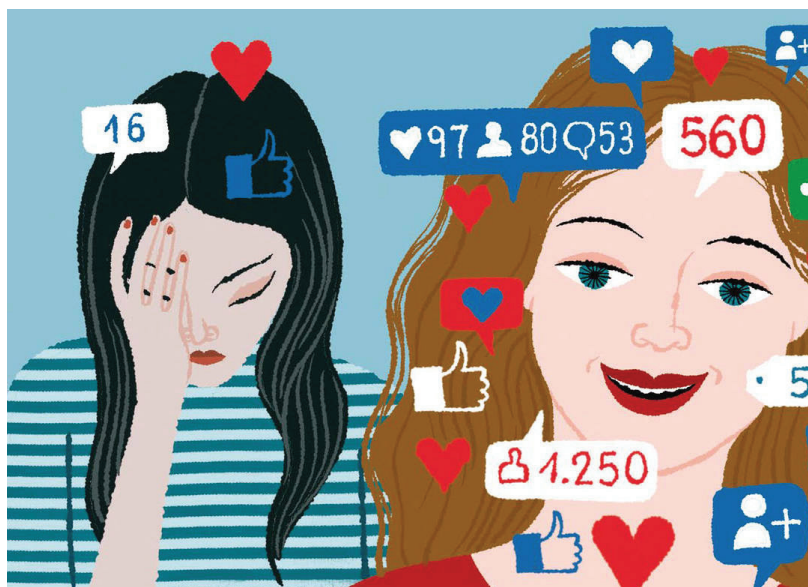
Elvie Garrill blames the social media giants for a lack of intervention and care in preventing today's teenagers from suffering abuse and harrassment online

Three billion people, around 40% of the world's population, use a form of social media – and we're spending an average of two hours every day sharing, liking, tweeting and updating on these platforms. That breaks down to an insane half a million tweets and Snapchat photos shared every minute.

The dark side to this social media addiction is the mental health crisis it has caused amongst teens. In 2017, teenager Molly Russell took her own life after accessing graphic images of self-harm and suicide on the social media platform, Instagram. Since the death of his daughter, Ian Russell has become a campaigner against social media harm, blaming Instagram for its lack of safeguarding, stating 'I have no doubt that social media helped kill my daughter.'

It is true to say that the social media giants do not take enough responsibility vetting content shared on their platforms. In the case of Molly Russell, police have found difficulty trying to access the teen's social media accounts. Snapchat cannot disclose data without an order from a US court, WhatsApp has deleted Molly's account and Twitter is reluctant to handover material due to European data protection laws. These platforms have a duty of care to protect their users but are neglecting it in the most wilful way imaginable.

Cyber-bullying is another danger posed by social media. In a recent national bullying survey, carried out by the charity 'BullyingUK', 56% of young people said they had seen others be bullied online and 42% stated they felt unsafe online. This may be because in instances of cyber-



bullying, intervention is rare. An astonishing 85% of all cases of cyber-bullying go unaddressed. Mixed-race teens, those who are obese, gay or have a disability are more likely to be bullied than other children. But how can you recognize if someone is bullying you? Sometimes, people are afraid or unsure if they're being bullied so don't do anything about it. However, the experts agree: if you're being bullied, harassed, or teased in a hurtful way — or know someone who is — you shouldn't suffer in silence. In fact, you absolutely must report it to an adult you trust.

This is because anyone who makes threats to you on the internet could be committing a criminal offence. It's against the law in the UK to use the phone system, which includes the internet, to cause alarm or distress. It could also be against the 1997 Harassment Act. If threats are made against you then it's essential you confide in your parents, or someone

you trust so that they can make a complaint to the police. This is often easier said than done. People who are cyberbullied may feel embarrassed or reluctant to report a bully. Some may hesitate because they're not 100% sure who is doing the bullying. But bullying can get worse, so keep speaking up until you find someone to help.

It's true that amongst the dangers, when used responsibly, social media can have many positive effects. From helping friends to stay easily connected to combatting loneliness, social media can help increase individuals' confidence. However, this does not relieve those companies from their duty of care. They must do more to stop their sites being used as tools for trolling and abuse. Without quick intervention, the fear amongst many is that more tragic events, like that of Molly Russell could happen. Social media is causing a mental-health pandemic that needs its fire putting out now.

**'These platforms have a duty of care to protect their users but are neglecting it in the most wilful way'**



# The ugly truth about the mental health pandemic plaguing today's teens

Esther Tetenji examines how more adolescents are being diagnosed with mental health disorders and calls for greater awareness to help those suffering seek help

Everyone knows that adolescence is a strange and formative period of time for teenagers. Over the course of just a few years, teens are faced with many physical, emotional, and sexual changes that can wreak havoc on their mental health.

Studies have found that approximately one in five teens (aged 12 to 18) suffer from at least one mental health disorder, where those who live in poverty or with separate parents more likely to suffer than others. Generally, the rise of cyber-bullying is blamed, along with the pressure to perform academically in schools. These statistics are highly worrying as they imply teens are facing a mental health epidemic that looks set to spread if we do not intervene quickly.

One of the most widespread forms of anxiety amongst teens is that of body dysmorphia. This is a mental health condition where a person worries about flaws in their appearance that are often unnoticeable to others. Alarming, almost a third of British teenagers feel ashamed of their body, with imagery of 'idealised' bodies on social media driving this insecurity. Yes, it's

true that most of us care about our appearance. We like to be seen from particular angles and use filters on social media to get that Hollywood glow. But it is the point at which these concerns become an obsession – when the worry interferes with a person's life, that it becomes a disorder.

Eating disorders are also not uncommon amongst teenagers. For example, around 20% of girls and 5% of boys force themselves to throw up after eating lunch in order to create an 'idealised' image of themselves. There have also been cases where teenagers have taken laxatives in order to look 'fit' or have a 'better' body. Teachers, parents and carers need to teach children that there isn't a 'perfect' body and that all of us are different in a beautiful way.

Teens are masters at keeping themselves occupied in the hours after school. When they're not doing their homework (and even when they are) they're online and on their phones texting, sharing, scrolling, you name it. Of course, before everyone had an Instagram account, teens kept themselves busy too. But nowadays, teens are more likely to be chatting on their phones and comparing

**'We use filters on social media to get that Hollywood glow'**

**'Let them share as little or as much information as they want. Know your limits'**

themselves to this boy or girl who has the latest iPhone or new Nike shoes that came out last week. These comparisons take a huge toll on teenagers' mental health and its worrying how easily these symptoms are brushed off. For instance, many adults generalise adolescents' anxieties as 'hormonal'. This is an incredibly harmful viewpoint as it discourages teens from opening up about their mental health due to fear of judgement.

A tell-tale sign of someone struggling with their mental health can be a decline in grades, absence from school or refusal to eat properly. Early intervention is essential if we are to promote psychological wellbeing and protect adolescents from such adverse experiences. If we do not combat these issues, such teens are more likely to go on and experience greater mental health problems in their later years.

However, it's very hard for teenagers to open up about problems they may have. This is why schools and colleges need to raise more awareness amongst children and staff. We need to ensure that those suffering are not alone and that as a community we provide them with the support they need. To help someone you think may be suffering, listen without making any judgement and concentrate on their own needs. Ask them what would help them and avoid confrontation. Let them share as little or as much as they want, don't force them into talking if they aren't comfortable with it. Know your limits. By beginning a conversation about mental health, we can remove the stigma associated with it and help those suffering seek help and start on the road to recovery.



# MERCIA POETRY CORNER

honey is sweet  
sweet as it can be  
but we must give thanks  
for every bee who made it



Inspired by  
Rupi Kaur

Abdulnaser Abdulmannan 7F

don't hide your great idea  
share it with the world  
so every one will know  
they can share theirs  
with the world

Lily Marriner 7B

**Tree**  
don't chop me  
don't touch me  
I have a life just like you  
I grew like you  
so don't chop me  
don't touch me.



## Stealing

The most unusual thing I ever stole?  
A blanket.  
It looked warm and cosy;  
the colours of pink and white  
beaming into the cold moonlight.  
I wanted it.  
A blanket with a warm coating of fleece.  
I started by pulling it out of the bin  
It was as light as a feather,  
I hugged it to my chest.  
Life's weird.  
Sometimes I steal things I do not need.  
I break into houses just to look around,  
I go through people's electronics and take photos  
One time I stole a wig and thought I might try it  
on.  
I nicked a camera once and broke it  
but the blanket was the strangest  
You don't understand a word I am saying do you?



Mia Walker 7A

## Potatoes

I thought they had jackets but  
they did not  
what a shame this is

Insha Khan 7C

I am fire  
Tough enough  
To offer warmth  
Tough enough  
To burn it away



Inspired by  
Carol Ann  
Duffy



**Making A Change**

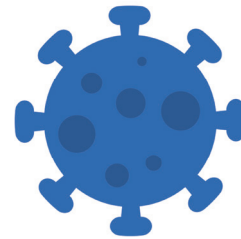
Making movement to change the world  
 Our polluted, pleasant Earth that is being destroyed  
 Swimming through the sea of plastic  
 I think of the countries that are having floods, heatwaves, droughts and lots more.  
 Icebergs melting trying to destroy our land overfill our seas.  
 Wildfires spreading from tree to tree  
 The sea taking in its black oil deep into the ocean,  
 The sun frowning down at the Earth for our horrible doings,  
 The sea rising like a giant waking to flood the citizens' land,  
 The lack of rain causing droughts  
 Plastic washing up on the shores of every beach  
 Sea animals trapped in the plastic we littered  
 Fish dying of eating plastic micro-bits.

Heer Younis 7B

**The Visitor**

In 2020 covid arrived  
 And large numbers of people died  
 The daily totals started to rise  
 It carried on going to our surprise  
 The government ordered a total lockdown  
 The young to old started to frown  
 It went on and on  
 For what seemed like ages  
 People protested and it led to rages  
 We missed school, people worked from home  
 Some elderly people were very alone  
 A second lockdown is now in place  
 But a vaccine arrived to save the human race.

Harley Newton 9B



## Maths House Point Challenge #1

Have a go at these maths problems and hand in your attempts to your maths teacher for house points. There are up to 6 house points available: 1 per question and 1 for excellent presentation. They can be answered by anyone in Year 7, 8 or 9 – you only need to know primary school maths!

**Q1:** Roughly how many seconds are there in a day?

**A**  $10^3$    **B**  $10^4$    **C**  $10^5$    **D**  $10^6$    **E**  $10^7$

**Q2:**  $98+76+5+4+3+2+10=198$

How many other ways can the digits 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 (in that order), with only addition signs between them, make a total of 198?

**Q3:** A 24-hour digital clock shows the time in hours and minutes.

How many times in one day will it display all four digits 2, 0, 1 and 9 together?

**Q4:** How many three-digit numbers are there in which any two adjacent digits differ by 3? For example, 141 and 963.

**Q5:** Zainab lists the integers 1, 2, 3, ..., 2020, with each integer appearing in the list exactly once. The digits 0, 1, 2, ..., 9 appear many times in the list. How many of the digits in this list are odd? For example: 8 odd digits appear in the list 1, 2, 3, ..., 11 (they are 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 1, 1, 1)

# Connor's Chronicles #1: How a small, French dictator tore apart the political rulebook

Connor Baldwin delves into the life of Napoleon Bonaparte and examines the historic impact the statesman had on European politics

Despite being only the son of minor Corsican gentry, Napoleon Bonaparte would rise to great things. He would be First Consul of the French Republic, Emperor of the French, and King of Rome, and he would reform France both socially and economically. He would preside over some of the greatest French victories in its history – Austerlitz, Jena-Auerstadt, Friedland – but he also presided over some of its greatest defeats – Trafalgar, Waterloo, Leipzig – and his final defeat would assure Britain's global hegemony for much of the 19th century. Napoleon changed the face of Europe, experiencing one of the greatest rises and most disastrous falls, history has ever seen.

Napoleon was born on August 15th 1769, on the island of Corsica. His birth came only

months after the Battle of Ponte Novu, during which the Corsican army was defeated by the French. This marked the end of a fourteen-year period of Corsican independence. Corsica had been under Genoese rule, but had been effectively independent since 1755. However, the island was sold to France, who successfully invaded the island. Napoleon's father had been involved with the rebellion but swore loyalty to the French after their defeat. Napoleon was the second of eight children who would live to adulthood.

Napoleon finally gained military recognition during the siege of Toulon, a French port town which had been captured by the French. He also published pro-Republican writings during this time. During the siege, he captured the town and was promoted within the army.

**'He would be First Consul of the French Republic, Emperor of the French, and King of Rome'**

However, Napoleon only gained true fame during the events of 13 Vendémiaire, a royalist uprising in Paris. Napoleon was given command, and defeated the rebels, leading to further promotion. During this time, Napoleon became involved with Josephine de Beauharnais, and married her in March.

After his marriage, Napoleon was given command of the Army of Italy, a secondary front of the War of the First Coalition. He led the army to victory in battles such as Castiglione, Arcole, Lodi and Rivoli – the last of which forced Austria, the main enemy of France, to withdraw from the war. These victories under his belt, he invaded Austria, forcing them to sign the Treaty of Campo Formio, which humiliated the Austrians and left Napoleon a hero. During this time, Napoleon also supported a political purge in France, demonstrating his wish to become involved in the politics of the French revolution.

Two years later in 1799, Napoleon overthrew the French Directory during the Coup of 18 Brumaire (9th November, 1799) and seized power with the help of his brother. He declared himself First Consul for ten years, establishing a dictatorship in all but name. This would continue throughout Napoleon's rule – while the regular elections would give an appearance of democracy, they were always rigged to end in Napoleon's favour.

In 1804, Napoleon released the Napoleonic Code, a collection of civic and legal codes to govern France. While he is remembered primarily as a conqueror, it is the Napoleonic Code that has survived so long after his death. One of the only documents to influence the entire world, the







civil code had a great influence on the legislation of many countries in Europe. Even Napoleon recognised that the Napoleonic code could never be undone, ensuring his legacy as one of the greatest men of European history.

Napoleon was so effective as, within the Grande Armée, the men worked in corps, which had their own cavalry, artillery and infantry. This meant they could work both as individual armies or larger bodies. Furthermore, Napoleon's armies were swift, allowing him to defeat his divided armies before they could overwhelm him.

Under Napoleon, France enjoyed a period of prosperity, though war was inevitable. Over the years, the alliance between Tsar Alexander and Napoleon had broken down, and on 24 June 1812, Napoleon crossed the Prussian-Russian border with 685,000 men, only 400,000 of whom were French. It would prove one of the great armies ever assembled until the First World War, and one of history's greatest follies. Without the disastrous retreat from Russia that would come months later, Napoleon may never have been defeated.

However, this would not be the end of war in Europe.

Sensing Napoleon's weakness, the enemies of France formed a sixth coalition (from which the wars take their name) comprised of Prussia, Austria, Sweden, Russia, Great Britain, Spain, and Portugal. Napoleon fought at the Battle of Dresden, and secured a French victory. However, this would prove the last of his great victories, as in October 1813, 365,000 men of the Coalition defeated around 195,000 of Napoleon's men. Napoleon was offered surrender, but refused.

In March of 1813, Paris surrendered to the Coalition, and Napoleon abdicated in favour of his son on the 4th April, accepting an exile on the island of Elba. Despite having seemingly accepted his fate, Napoleon's time on Elba would be brief. In February 1815, he escaped Elba on a ship, and arrived in France. The army was sent to capture him, but instead joined him. He soon entered Paris, while his enemies - Great Britain, Russia, Austria, and Prussia - all declared him an outlaw.

On the 18th June, the Battle of Waterloo was fought. The battle began evenly, with both Napoleon and the Duke of Wellington fielding around 70,000 men. However, Wellington fared better, with Napoleon unable to make any

**'Napoleon experienced one of the greatest rises and most disastrous falls history has ever seen'**

**'Regular elections would give an appearance of democracy but were always rigged in Napoleon's favour'**

progress against his army. The battle was truly lost when over 30,000 Prussians arrived, under the command of Blücher. Had Napoleon won a greater victory at Ligny they might have been forced to retreat - ultimately, however, his last victory would only worsen the finality of his last defeat. Napoleon's army dissolved into chaos, and Napoleon fled soon after, recognising he could not offer further resistance.

On the 22nd June, Napoleon abdicated for the second time. He was forced into exile on Saint Helena, surrounded only by a few companions. He wrote during this time, both on his life and on history, but his health deteriorated, and the former Emperor of France died on May 5th 1821, likely of stomach cancer, the disease which many believe killed his father.

It is hard to understand the impact Napoleon had on history. While in the end, his victories were undone, he provided France with much stability in the aftermath of the turbulent Revolution. He saw France triumph over their enemies' time and time again, changed the politics of Europe forever, and introduced laws that, in one form or another, still survive to this day. For that, at least, he should be remembered.

# A warning from 1984: Big Brother is watching you and there's no escape

Amir Ali explores the enduring relevance of Orwell's classic dystopian novel and its role in warning society of the dangers of totalitarian rule

In writing 1984, Orwell's main goal was to warn of the serious danger totalitarianism posed to society. He goes to great lengths to demonstrate the terrifying degree of power and control a totalitarian regime can acquire and maintain. In such regimes, notions of personal rights and freedoms and individual thought are pulverized under the all-powerful hand of the government, Big Brother. Orwell was a socialist and believed strongly in the potential for rebellion to advance society, yet too often he witnessed such rebellions go wrong and develop into totalitarian rule. Specifically, Orwell saw such developments during his time in Spain and in Russia, where he witnessed the rise of communism and the accompanying destruction of civil liberties, honest government, and economic strength.

During a time when much of the Western world was lauding communism as a step towards human progress in the development of equality in government, Orwell clearly and definitively spoke out

against the practice. In 1984, Orwell presents a dystopia in his creation of the perfect totalitarian state. In composing this novel, Orwell gave the world a glimpse of what the embrace of communism might lead to if allowed to proceed unchecked. The Party is unflawed in its universal control over society, as evidenced by its ability to break even an independent thinker such as Winston, and has mastered every aspect of psychological control, largely through utilizing technological developments (allowing for inventions such as the telescreen) to their advantage. At the end of the novel, with Winston defeated in every sense of the term, Orwell clearly suggests that there is no hope for quelling the expansion or growth of such a perfectly established regime. And, more importantly, Orwell warns that this outcome was within the realm of possibility as long as the world supported and embraced communism.

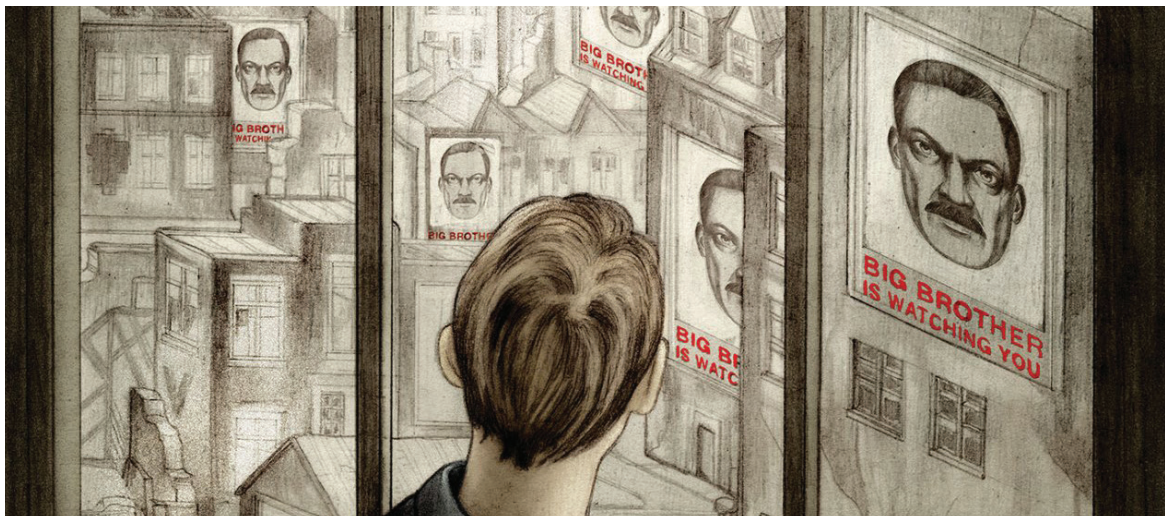
1984 is just as relevant today, with many totalitarian states such as North Korea leading

*'Individual thought is pulverized under the all-powerful hand of Big Brother'*

*'In 1984, the collection of data is both secretive and purposefully mysterious'*

private lives. In North Korea tourists (if any are even allowed in) are only permitted to see what the government wants them to see. This relates to the very existence of the Ministry of Truth where Winston and others skilfully rewrite the past to suit the needs of the Party. And what of the infamous Big Brother watching over us? Telescreens' hounding, harrasing, stalking our every breath? A thing of mere dystopian novellas, right? Think again. In the UK, there are approximately 5 million security cameras snapping our every action. Big Brother is still watching you.

In 1984, the collection of data is both secretive and purposefully mysterious, designed to instigate fear and prevent citizens from participating in illegal activities. The intentions and strategies of intelligence agencies in the 21st century is no different. The many totalitarian needs of the Party show how similar both timelines are, with rulers requiring many aspects of power over their state's population.





# From taking the knee to breaking glass ceilings - the inequalities facing us today

Umayya Qadir takes a look at the inequalities facing the modern world today and argues more needs to be done to tackle these problems



Rosa Parks was a civil rights activist who refused to surrender her seat to a white passenger on a segregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Parks ignored the bus driver's continuous insistence for her to give up her seat to a white passenger, a dangerous protest that landed in her arrest. It was this defiance that led to the well known Montgomery Bus Boycott, which highlighted the racial segregation prevalent in the American public transportation system. Its success launched nationwide efforts to end racial segregation of public facilities.

In her act of taking a seat Parks was perhaps a forebearer of the taking the knee we see today. Yet it is worrying to acknowledge that more than 50 years since Parks' demonstration, racism and other forms of discrimination are still widely felt in society. Today we still have to battle a range of different hate-crimes, including homophobia and racism that exists in many institutions.

**Islamophobia:** Islamophobia is one of the most deplorable acts that should be stopped. It has led to a huge rise in crime against

Muslims. Particular targets have been women wearing hijabs and premeditated attacks on Islam itself. Islamophobia can be seen as an act of racism or fear. People view both racism and islamophobia as an overlapping and continuous problem.

**Racism:** Racism is another horrific form of discrimination. George Floyd was a black man who had his life taken by a white police officer who knelt on his neck, leaving him unable to breathe. This atrocious action, caused by a man working for an institution designed to protect and enact justice, sparked waves of riots across the world. Racism needs to go and we need to seek justice for the people who died because of this.

**Women's Rights:** Women's rights are human rights. We as people should know what's best and stand up for equality not inequality. Equality is an important issue under the topic of rights because as human beings we have a right to all things, we have a right to freedom and non-violence. Why are we seeking rights for women if all human beings

are the same in equality? This deplorable situation needs to be spoken more about and defended against.

**Homophobia:** This encompasses a range of negative attitudes, hatred and feelings toward homosexuality. We as human beings should accept everybody for who they are - not for what they believe in. If they are gay or lesbian that is their decision in life and they should not be treated any different to other people.

**Anti-Semitism:** Defined as hostility, prejudice and discrimination against Jews, antisemitism is another form of racism. The term anti-Semitism was coined in 1879 by the German agitator Wilhelm Marr to designate the anti-Jewish campaigns under way in central Europe at that time. It may take the form of religious teachings that proclaim the inferiority of Jews.

*'Rosa Parks was perhaps a forebearer of the taking the knee we see today'*



# Reading, recitals and routines: A day in the life of a Mastery Tutor at Mercia School

Ms Bolton reports a typical day in the life of a Mastery tutor at Mercia School and reveals what goes in to shaping Sheffield's hardest working children

**7.15am:** I aim to arrive at school with some time to spare for getting organised for the day that lies ahead. In terms of Mastery time, this can include reading ahead in our class reader to consider any key vocabulary or important topics for discussion. Every Monday morning, we start our Mastery session with a five question Do Now to recap what we have learned over the past week - and beyond! Plenty of House Points are up for grabs here and it's so heart-warming to see how much my Mastery group are willing to push themselves to remember.

**7.30am:** Year 8 seem to appreciate their beauty sleep slightly more than the other year groups, but slowly they start to trickle in from around 7.40 onwards. It makes me laugh how the same people will always arrive at the same time, before

sitting at the same table as they always do! We really are creatures of habit at Mercia. Breakfast is a great time to check in with our pupils and their Mastery tutors, too. We can check everybody is feeling okay, are ready for the day ahead and tackle any issues that may arise together. Coffee, Cheerios and chatter with the kids as they trundle in fuel my early start.

**8.20am:** The whistle is blown and pupils make their way to line up. This is when Mastery tutors will get to have their first check in with pupils; ensuring that uniform is the very best that it can be and that pupils are ready for the day ahead of them. It may also be the time that I critique 8C's ability to maintain a straight line, perhaps using the phrases "wonky donkey" or "snaking around" in a poor attempt to get a few giggles. On Fridays, we recite our school

*'Coffee, Cheerios and chatter with the kids as they trundle in fuel my early start'*

*'At least 8C have Aya to rely on 1st place for the year group House Points'*

poem: Invictus. It honestly gives me goosebumps to hear our students remind themselves that they are the 'masters of their fates' and 'the captains of their souls'. Once per week we will hear the latest House Point totals, with pupils' (and staff's!) hearts in their mouths. Fawcett are yet to come out on top... but at least 8C, usually, have Aya to rely on 1st place for the year group! This fuels further competition in our Mastery: is anyone capable of knocking her off top spot?!

**8.30am:** Morning Mastery is dedicated to half an hour of uninterrupted reading time. It is pure bliss and a great start to the day. As an English teacher, of course I encourage reading, but it really is so rewarding to hear Science, Maths, French and all other subject teachers discussing their class readers out and about around school. The start of Year 8 is dedicated to dystopian fiction, which has felt apt in certain parts of 2020. Thus far this year we have read Fahrenheit 451, Floodlands and The Giver. Our festive read, The Turn of the Screw, is sure to be a hit across all five Mastery groups.

**11am:** Period 1 and 2 inevitably fly by and the House Points are already rolling in for our pupils. Breaks and lunches have been a little bit different for us this year, meaning that Year 8's social time bubble reside up on the basketball courts. It's fair to say, it seems to be a new favourite sport for them! Alas, of course football remains a firm favourite with a significant number of our lads, too. This makes it all the more tragic when, inevitably, the ball is launched over the fence and Mr Webster has to go rummaging amongst the woodland for it...







12.15pm: Back out upon the courts after the third lesson of the day, pupils are sure to be feeling the rumbles of hunger as we wait our turn for split lunch. A few quick games of netball - or even some basketball shoot outs with Mr Jewell - soon finish and we await our signal to enter into the Family Space. This year, Covid-19 restrictions have meant that pupils sit in Mastery groups, which seems to have gone down an absolute storm. It's great that Mastery tutors are able to move between tables, discussing the daily topic with each other. Revolving around our theme of the week, we have discussed: Why does Remembrance remain so important today? What bad decisions have you made before and what can we learn from them? How can we prepare for assessments? and so many other thought provoking conversations. The food, however, has not changed, as it remains delicious and balanced. Nothing says joy like the faces of pupils when they realise it's brownie for dessert!

1pm: Once our tongues have wagged, food has been devoured and tables wiped down, pupils are then given the opportunity to show their appreciation. A truly heart-warming part of our everyday routine.

1.15pm: Afternoon Mastery is probably one of my favourite times of the day. It provides such variety in terms of what we may be doing. Typically we will be working our way through our Mastery booklets, with reading and discussion points surrounding that week's topic. However, when Showcase looms we may be perfecting our poetry recital or choir performances. When a new half term is around the corner, pupils will be informed of the available Enrichment choices and then submit their preferences. Popular choices so far this year have been Musical Theatre, Ethical Issues in Sport and Stage Combat.

New to our curriculum, Thursday and Friday's session see us studying Religious Education. We are currently learning about Judaism and I'm sure our pupils will agree that we have learned so much already.

5pm: After an afternoon of more lessons, a further break and either an Enrichment or Self Study session, pupils have well and truly been worn out by this point. For the majority of our pupils, this will be the end of their day, and after line up they will file out into cars, Carter Knowle Road and buses to make their way home. Pupils'

manners are always in full swing as they wish their teachers a good evening and thank them for the day that they leave behind. Miss Rothery and I particularly like this part of the day, as we get to bid farewell to pupils as they leave the school site while we wave at all the mums, dads, carers, siblings, family friends (you name it!) who have become our car park friends. Truly, the enthusiasm for our school extends beyond just us and the kids!

5.15pm: While detention is rarely perceived to be a positive part of the school day, at Mercia School this is where several important conversations with pupils continue. At this time, myself and many other teachers will be popping into detentions to see who is in there and for what reasons. We can share tips on how to get organised for detentions that can be easily avoided (many will often seek reassurance that they've got everything they need during breakfast in the following days!) and can use this time to iron out any further issues that may arise. The key part here is that we remind our children that they are not going to be tarnished by one detention and that we will support them in ensuring that they return to their 100% going forward.

Pupil Comments:

- Holly Pycok: 'I love the community and family our Mastery Group has created and the sense of friendship that we have with each other.'

- Ahmad Gning: 'My favourite part of Mastery Time is the intriguing and often funny conversations that we have. For example, 8C is always split in decisions!'

- Bea Meredith: 'I love Mastery Time because the books we read are very interesting. My favourite has been The Turn of the Screw. We learn a new word almost every day!'

- Adil Imran: 'I like studying Religious Education because then we have a better understanding of the world.'

'A few quick games of netball and basketball soon finish and we await our signal to enter the Family Space'

'We remind our children that they are not going to be tarnished by one detention'

# Why Nick Freeman's view on corporal punishment need a good old spanking

Leonardo Watson, Boris Vasilev and Alfie Amess hit back at journalist Nick Freeman's call for the cane to be reintroduced in the education system



In a bombastic and bigoted article (shockingly published in this century not the Victorian), journalist Nick Freeman argues that in order to restore discipline in our schools, corporal punishment is the only solution. However, this is a flawed argument that completely fails to recognise the long-term harm corporal punishment causes. Freeman's view only encourages violence and mistrust between pupils and teachers and is detrimental to the entire educational system.

Although often associated with Edwardian schooling, the use of the cane as a form of punishment does not originate from this time period. Jesus was flogged before he was crucified, and in the Middle Ages whipping was a common punishment for minor crimes. Later, in the 18th century flogging became a common punishment in the British army and navy. However, it was the Victorians who decided this was a fitting punishment for unruly schoolchildren. The teacher often had a stick with birch twigs attached to it and used it to hit

boys on their bare buttocks. It was a horrible form of abuse that left many with more than just physical scars.

It seems that Freeman's main argument for bringing back the cane is that it reinforces children's behavior and puts something in the "teacher's armory." He also suggests the cane curtails any opportunities for the misbehaved children to behave inappropriately. Between ridiculous arguments, Freeman makes an unsupported and incompetent statement that kids only understand "fear and pain." In our opinion, children do not only respond to 'fear'. Instead, rewarding children creates a sense of accomplishment, reducing bad behavior.

There is also a wild lack of support for the reintroduction of the cane. The BBC reports that around 53% of parents don't want to bring back the cane and our own interviews around Mercia School suggested a similar view. Year 7 student Aryan Gill told us, 'I don't like the idea. It's a cruel way of punishing students and isn't a good way to teach people

good manners. Detentions are enough in my opinion'. Similarly, science teacher Mr Rees told us, 'it can give a child social anxiety. It also disrupts the child and teacher's relationship'.

Freeman doesn't seem to think about the burden corporal punishment would also inflict on those forced to carry it out. While he may relish the idea of tormenting a child, many teachers would not want such a responsibility. Imagine the thought of hitting a child, hearing them cry out in pain, wincing at the sight of you. Not a very pleasant thought is it?

What is even more shocking to learn is that Mr Freeman was himself caned at school. In his article he acknowledges the "humiliation" and "shame" the caning he experienced taught him. This shows he is aware of the physiological impact, but he does not reference the mental scars that beating can cause. Studies have found that harsh physical punishment is associated with an increased likelihood of suffering with a mental disorder. It also an established fact that the abused are likely to become an abuser – perhaps this explains Freeman's reason for wanting to reintroduce corporal punishment.

We are writing this article to try and expose why this inhumane, painful, agonising punishment should never be brought back into the education system. Freeman is a headteacher of a school and so many may look up to him for guidance, yet he abuses this power by advocating a punitive punishment that does not focus on correcting the behaviour it is attempting to curtail.

'Freeman and his ideas need to return to the depths of Tartarus where they belong'

'Imagine the thought of having to hit a child, hear them cry out in pain, wince at the sight of you'



# Climate change is making poor countries poorer and rich countries richer

Saman Kayani reveals how the greenhouses gases emitted by the world's richest countries are causing irrevesible damage to the planet's most impoverished societies

Climate Change is having a detrimental and visible impact on not only our economy and environment, but also the wellbeing of humans. It is especially severe on the most vulnerable in society. Climate change will continue to affect us if we do not alter our lifestyles and work to limit our carbon footprint. By doing this, we will be able to have a more positive impact and live a sustainable life.

The biggest contributor to climate change is human actions, specifically the actions of the most developed countries. Despite low income countries (LICs) having a greater population of people, high income countries (HICs) are emitting more carbon dioxide as a result of rapid industrialisation. This is known as carbon inequality. The world's richest 10% produce around half of all carbon emissions, whilst the poorest 3.5 billion account for just a tenth. Although HICs are the primary producers of greenhouse gases, LICs and developing countries are the ones enduring the consequences of climate change in the form of extreme weather patterns that cause irreversible damage.

One of the many LICs affected by this, is the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The DRC is already ranked at the lowest level in terms of its development. Despite this, reports show that conditions in the DRC are expected to inevitably worsen because of climate change. The DRC will be subject to increasing temperatures and inconsistent rain. This means that there will be food insecurity, as around 70% of people working in the

field of agriculture will have crops failing and increasing levels of livestock mortality, in turn leading to greater malnutrition in the population. Ultimately, this will only serve to exacerbate pre-existing poverty and hunger. Moreover, due to inconsistent rainfalls, floods will damage infrastructure, displacing the rising population from their current location and creating climate refugees. This will be as a result of the competition created by the scarcity of food and shelter. Climate refugees will likely have to live in slums where diseases such as malaria and cholera will be common. This will thus, place immense pressure on the limited healthcare services and decrease quality of life dramatically as it leads to a negative multiplier affect.

Consequently, children will have to turn to informal labour sectors in order to cope with the innumerable challenges and support their families. An estimated 35,000 children in the DRC already work in perilous conditions to extract cobalt from the ground. The number of children working in the informal labour sector will only increase as a result of the adverse weather brought on through climate change. Working in these conditions means that children are exposed to dangerous and life-threatening circumstances, as they descend several metres underground into makeshift tunnels and shafts, never knowing if they will see their families again. Yanick Tshiwengu, a former miner from the DRC, has been a victim of the dangers, as he narrowly escaped two near death experiences at the age of eleven. Tshiwengu explains that working in the mines was 'living

hell as children were exploited and worked in dangerous situations.' This reveals how children are continuously taken advantage of in informal settlements, affecting their mental health enormously as they experience injustices ranging from sexual harassment to longer working hours - all for a meagre amount of money.

You may argue that the solution to these problems is bilateral aid. However, Zambian born economic geographer, Dambisa Moyo, argues that aid does not work effectively, as it is only a short-term solution and benefits HICs more than those in poverty. Aid does not support LICs in the long run. Instead, it creates a cyclical cycle for LICs as they depend heavily on the support of organisations and other countries. Despite this, Moyo is confident that the youthful population of Africa will become true pioneers and lead the way to a more sustainable future.

Overall, this demonstrates how one negative factor can lead to the destruction of innocent lives, the destruction of lives that are impacted often but forgotten about. To mitigate these problems, we must listen to the science which has been given to us for years and to adopt lifestyles that do not only benefit small communities but all of mankind. Additionally, we need to raise more awareness about the most vulnerable and how they are being affected as a result of our actions, perhaps this will convince people to act accordingly and encourage them to consider their impacts on climate change.

'High income countries are emitting more CO<sup>2</sup> as a result of rapid industrialisation'

'Low income countries are enduring the consequences of climate change in the form of extreme weather patterns'

# Single-use plastics and the permanent damage they wreak on our environment

Charlotte Sills examines the impact single-use plastics are having on the environment and calls for action to be taken to stop permanent damage being caused

**H**ave you ever wondered where all the plastic that you throw away goes? Do you even know how much is chucked away each year? Well, a staggering 295 billion is thrown away a year by the UK alone! Most of this is single-use plastic and cannot be recycled, it is not compostable (will not break down into natural elements) and will remain on our Earth forever. Surprisingly, 79% of plastic waste is sent to landfills or the ocean, while only 9% is recycled, and 12% gets incinerated. This means that between 4.8 and 12.7 million tonnes of plastic pieces are dumped into our oceans yearly, with 269,000 tonnes floating on the surface. We need to stop this before it gets out of hand.

In the Pacific Ocean, there is a ludicrous amount of plastic caught in a current, known as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch

(GPGP). This was discovered in 1997 by Captain Charles Moore, when he was sailing through the North Pacific Gyre, one of the most remote parts of the Pacific Ocean. This gigantic plastic patch has an estimated surface area of 1.6 million square kilometres. That's twice the size of Texas, or three times the size of France. Why are we chucking such humungous amounts of plastic into the oceans, where it can be extremely harmful to animal habitats? You could argue that fishermen are to blame, as around 45% is unused fishing nets, called 'ghost gear' The results from recovered ghost nets are devastating, and show that it isn't only mammals that are at risk. The remaining 55% is many things, like plastic bags. I think that the expansion of this patch can be greatly increased, if we just reuse and recycle our plastic.

So what? Single-plastics

**'Between 4.8 and 12.7 million tonnes of plastic pieces are dumped into our oceans yearly'**

**'Single-use plastics harm the entire ecosystem we are a part of'**

not only harm the oceans and seas, but the entire ecosystem we are a part of. For a start, fish are swallowing the plastic and micro plastics we are harmfully chucking into the oceans. Additionally, turtles are swallowing plastic bags, mistaking them for jellyfish, which they usually eat. Is it really fair for the creatures in our lovely oceans to suffer entirely because of us?

As I have said before, it is not just the seas that are suffering. The birds that live on fish will also be digesting the harmful plastic (and we are too, the average person eats 70,000 micro plastics each year) and they may also get tangled up in things like fishing nets and get their beaks stuck in plastic six-pack rings. This would eventually kill them, as they will not be able to eat and they would die of starvation. It is not even just birds and fish that are killed because of our harmful actions. Swimming animals, like seals and their tiny pups, may get tangled, stuck and drown. According to the World Wildlife Fund, globally, 100,000 marine mammals die every year as a result of plastic pollution. This includes whales, dolphins, porpoises, seals and sea lions.

Now, this is all pretty terrible, but the most important question of all is how do we stop it? The WWF suggests that you can:

- Recycle everything you can
- Use your own cutlery, recyclable straws and food containers rather than disposable alternatives
- Participate in beach or community clean-ups

So, if everyone does at least some of these, we may be able to stop this.





# Sport's war on drugs is a dirty battle that needs a quick antidote

Esha Khan argues that doping in sport is an unacceptable form of cheating and that good sportsmanship is the only cure to overcoming this ethical issue



If you remain confident that the fight against doping in sport can be won, then please accept my congratulations. You are a member of an increasingly exclusive club. The biggest ethical issue facing sport today is that of doping, the taking of illegal enhancing drugs.

Doping is a form of cheating, as certain drugs can enhance an athlete's performance, increasing the chances they have of winning. Taking drugs may give you an opportunity of winning but it is not fair on others. If discovered, doping can lead to an athlete getting disqualified or even banned from a sport. Examples of drugs that athletes have taken include: stimulants, anabolic steroids, narcotics and diuretics.

Performance-enhancing drugs in sport need to be suppressed for three reasons. Firstly, they can damage an athlete's physical health, causing heart and kidney problems. Secondly, they can damage the reputation of an entire sport, as happened with professional cycling in the 90s, when no one who did not cheat

stood a chance of winning. Lastly, and perhaps worst of all, they make it seem that the only point of competing is to win. This is a hugely damaging attitude, although it permeates almost all professional and televised sports, where the financial rewards for winners can be quite grotesque. The issue with doping is therefore that it makes it seem like the only point of competing is to win, which is a hugely damaging attitude. Athletes need to be taught to want to win and how to lose gracefully.

Ben Johnson, a Canadian sprinter, used an enhanced steroid to help him win gold in the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games 100m final. He has since been stripped of this title. The issue is however definitely blurred as some forms of doping are allowed as forms of 'medication' (as the coaches would put it) to help athletes. Sir Bradley Wiggins reportedly suffers from an asthma that can only be treated with a steroid that has the serendipitous side-effect of allowing endurance athletes to

lose fat rapidly while maintaining muscle mass. A lighter body means less air resistance and the potential for quicker race times. It's almost as if Wiggins' asthma helped him to gain those eight Olympic medals. Every cloud, eh?

Coaches could be considered the catalyst of doping scandals. In some circumstances it is the coaches themselves who actively encourage athletes to dope, seeing this as a sure chance to victory. For instance, in 2017, Russian athletic's coach Vladimir Mokhnev was banned for 10 years for giving prohibited performance-enhancing drugs to members of the national track team. If doping is being accepted by coaches as a legitimate path to victory, what hope does sport have of overcoming this dirty war? The figures speak for themselves. If roughly 10% of elite athletes are doping, but around 1% of tests annually come up positive, then there is a whopping great disconnect. There is not nearly enough intelligence to take down drug suppliers.

Cheating in sports is not acceptable. It is unfair to other players who have worked tirelessly to perfect their skills in the right way. Good sportsmanship is key if athletes and their coaches are to clear the black cloud of doping hovering over sport. If another player is doing something wrong, then athletes need to do more to help them correct their ways. This could help sport get a better reputation it so desperately needs. If however, an athlete is discovered to have taken performance enhancing drugs, then I do believe it is right for them to be banned from competing.

*'Athletes need to be taught to want to win and how to lose gracefully'*

*'If you remain confident that the fight against doping can be won, then please accept my congratulations'*

# Why the introduction of VAR in Premier League football is a clear and obvious error

Cian Wright and Cernel Frederick criticise the introduction of VAR in football, arguing it destroys human creativity and flair in the game



**T**he Video Assistant Referee system, known as VAR, is football's first use of video technology to reach more correct decisions. The system was trialled in the FA and Carabao Cups in each of the last two seasons and has already been employed in Italian and German league football as well as the 2018 World Cup. VAR only intervenes in the course of a match when the officials have made a 'clear and obvious error.'

A close offside decision is the most common reason for VAR being consulted, but shirt-pulling and other infringements can cause goals to be chalked off. The concept of 'clear and obvious' errors does not apply to offside. A player is either onside or offside - you cannot be a little bit pregnant. Even if a player is offside by a matter of millimetres, the nagging voice of VAR in the referee's ear will command that the goal be ruled out. Furthermore, because of VAR, more penalties have been given than ever before. This season in the Premier League, after 28 games, there have been 20 penalties awarded. That means the average of penalties per match has increased to 0.71 penalties per game. That

is significantly larger than the previous 4 seasons.

VAR has faced a vicious backlash from fans and footballers alike. We interviewed Year 7 student, and avid football fan, Malaikha Hussain on the issue. She told us that, "VAR is bad as it makes the game too technological." Hussain felt that a game of innovation, skill and unpredictability was being compromised. It's true. Big-Brother watching VAR threatens to destroy any human essence of football, making it a robotic, stunted game. Consider some of football's most iconic sporting moments had VAR been used. Maradona's 'hand of god'? Wave goodbye to that triumph - obvious handball. Geoff Hurst's winning 1966 World-Cup goal? Absolutely not, never crossed the line. We all want a fairer game but taking away the unpredictability of football is not the right way of creating this.

Patrice Evra, a former Arsenal and Manchester United player, has also vehemently attacked the use of VAR in football. The use of video assistant referees is "killing the game", he fumed, before suggesting that, if he was still playing, he would have run over and smashed the

official's pitchside monitor. That, incredibly, was only the second most eye-popping utterance from a pundit on Saturday. The former 606 host Danny Baker used Twitter to first slam the "anonymous gargoyles who made these 'new rules'" before making the astonishing assertion that "this era of football is out of control. It will be looked at with as much validity as the wartime matches were."

But Evra's criticisms of VAR tap into a wider mood of suspicion and distrust over the use of technology in sport. For instance, a YouGov poll of fans found that only 49% felt it had improved refereeing decisions, with 25% saying it had made matters worse and 24% saying it had made no difference. But Evra is wrong and the science proves it. The biggest ever study into VAR, published last month in the Journal of Sports Sciences, found that it raised the accuracy of "match-changing decisions" from 92.1% to 98.3%. Similarly, Lago-Peña et al. (2019) found that there was a significant decrease in the number of offside, fouls and yellow cards after the implementation of the VAR in both the Bundesliga and Serie A. This may be due to less aggressive behaviour by players as with additional officiating, players become more careful with committing fouls, tackles and arguing back.

However, for us, the clear message is that VAR is killing football and should be removed from the sport. It makes what should be a beautiful game full of flair and creativity too technological. What counts as 'clear and obvious' is ironically anything but. We all want a fairer game, but football is not a game of robotics.

*'A player is either onside or offside - you cannot be a little bit pregnant'*

*'Maradona's 'hand of god'? Wave goodbye to that triumph - obvious handball'*