

# The Invictus



## It's no illusion - virtual reality is going to change the game in healthcare

*Eshaan Ali (Y8) examines the impact of virtual reality in the healthcare industry, arguing the new technology has far-reaching benefits that are set to change the medical profession for the better*

George is critically ill. Sat on the hospital bed facing his doctor, he begins to grow pale and clammy. His breathing becomes irregular and frantic while his heart rate slows. Time is running out. A diagnosis is needed quickly before the situation deteriorates. In the worst-case scenario George could die. Luckily, if that happens, the student doctors treating him will reboot the software they're using and try again.

George is the creation of virtual reality (VR) software provider Oxford Medical Simulation (OMS). He was designed by a team of



artificial intelligence specialists to look and sound like a real patient. Virtual reality was first developed in the mid-1960s and is essentially where the user wears a headset that displays a three-dimensional image or environment that can be interacted with in a seemingly real or physical way.

In the medical environment, VR allows for doctors to practice their skills in a low-pressure, zero-risk environment. They can listen to and assess a patient's heart-rate, administer anaesthetic and even practice complicated surgery without fearing dangerous reprisals if an error is made. Until VR, student doctors had to work with highly sophisticated mannequins or donated cadavers. They're expensive to set up, complex and limited in how many students they can reach. With VR, huge groups of students can repeat scenarios again and again. As well as being a far more convenient and accessible method of training, there's also evidence that VR scenarios are effective teaching tools. A 2019 study by Oxford University's Simulation, Teaching and Research Centre, where the OMS software is used, found that they were equal to or outperformed classic teaching methods.

In addition to training doctors, VR software is also being used as a way to calm patients prior to surgery and rehabilitate them in the days after an operation. Joe Albietz, MD, Medical Director at Child Life, Children's Hospital Colorado, said on VR, 'it can be used in place of general anaesthesia to help tolerate pain, and in fact, it is having a profound impact on the quality of life of our hospitalised children. We are seeing children who used to require general anaesthesia, now able to be fully awake with minimal medications.'

What Albietz and other medical professionals have found is that VR can be used as a calming distraction to help patients recover after undergoing an operation. For instance, if someone has a broken left arm, to help with physiotherapy and recovery after the operation they can choose to play a game on the VR system that uses a bow and arrow. In this game the child is encouraged to bend and move their arm back, these movements encouraging the muscles to strengthen and repair after surgery. In this way VR can be seen primarily a distraction tool to help manage pain. It relieves anxiety and aids relaxation and breathing.

**'VR allows for doctors to practice their skills in a low-pressure, zero risk environment'**

**'Users learn they can cope in these situations and behavioural changes can be transferred to the real world'**

By using VR as a calming distraction, several patients have been able to undergo procedures whilst awake, cutting down lengthy recovery times, and reducing the need for medication. A survey was put out by Health Europa, and more than two thirds of respondents said that technology and smart devices are currently having a positive impact on their abilities to live healthier lifestyles.

VR technology is also being used to help people overcome a wide range of phobias. In February 2020, for example, Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust introduced virtual reality treatment to its Wellbeing service as part of the treatments it offers patients suffering from phobias ranging from needles, flying and spiders to agoraphobia, heights and claustrophobia. VR's ability to create simulations of the scenarios in which psychological difficulties occur makes it a far more accessible form of therapy. Situations that are impossible to build into a course of therapy — flying, for example, can be conjured at the click of a mouse.

The reason why VR works as a form of psychotherapy is because the simulations it presents are not real, and in this fictional universe individuals are more likely to try things they might otherwise avoid in normal life. Yet although the computer-generated environment is artificial, our mind and body behave as if it were natural. By completing tasks, users learn that they can cope in these situations and behavioural changes can be transferred to the real world.

There are now more than 20 specialist simulation centres across the UK using these techniques to train those across the medical profession, from surgeons to GPs. While VR is still in its infancy it is surely only a matter of time before the technology becomes part of the medical training programme. VR may be a new game in the healthcare industry but I'm ready to hit play.



# Museum or Mosque? Why it's right the Hagia Sophia has finally returned to its Islamic roots

After centuries of conversions and divided opinions, Zara Javed (Y7) explains why the Turks are justified in turning the Hagia Sophia museum back into a mosque

The Hagia Sophia, a 1,500-year-old structure located in Istanbul, Turkey, was originally a Byzantine church built in the sixth century by the Roman emperor 'Justinian I' when Istanbul was known as Constantinople. On May 29th 1453, Constantinople was conquered by Sultan Mehmed II and his Ottoman army of Turks. On this day Mehmed II conquered the city in which the Roman Orthodox Christian church was located and began to build his empire from here. This began with the conversion of the church, named the Hagia Sophia, into a mosque. The Hagia Sophia is therefore a symbol of the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, it represents the large numbers of martyrs who fought bravely with Mehmed II and is a landmark visited by many to embrace and appreciate Islamic history.

In 1934, the Hagia Sophia was opened as a museum for tourists to visit and understand the history of Istanbul and in 1985 was made a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Being a

world heritage site certifies the building as highly prestigious and culturally precious, but it also raises the question as to whom the site belongs to. Is it to the nation where it is situated or does its beauty, value and significance go beyond national ownership?

For Turks, the answer is clear – the site belongs to Turkey. Last year, Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan displayed this ownership to the world by transforming the Hagia Sophia back into a mosque. It remains open as a site for tourists to learn about Islamic history but also operates as a typical mosque where the call to prayer, also known as the Adhan, is recited five times a day.

However, this conversion was met with scorn by both the Orthodox Christian community and UNESCO leaders. For Orthodox Christians, the Hagia Sophia is a symbolic reminder of the loss of a spiritual homeland and there have been numerous attempts over the centuries to preserve the site as a church for this reason. On July 11th 2020, a day after Erdogan announced his decision, Professor Ioan Saucă,

the interim Secretary General of the World Council of Churches, sent Erdogan a letter expressing "the grief and dismay of more than half a billion Christians around the world". Saucă claimed Erdogan's decision to convert the Hagia Sophia back into a mosque "reversed that positive sign of Turkey's openness and changed it to a sign of exclusion and division". This was supported by Pope Francis who claimed that he was "pained" by Turkey's decision to convert Istanbul's Hagia Sophia back into a mosque. Many in the international community argue that the monument belongs to humanity – not to Turkey – and should have remained unchanged. They say it was a bridge between two faiths, and a symbol of co-existence.

However, because Turkey is now an Islamic country it no longer belongs to the Orthodox Christians and therefore the Turks own the Hagia Sophia and have the right to do with it as they please. The 1,500-year-old structure is a monument for the many Ottomans who died to conquer Istanbul and Mehmed did turn the church into an Islamic place of worship, meaning that this building reminds Muslims and Turks of their conquest of Constantinople.

Furthermore, Turkey is a predominantly Islamic country with 99.8% of its population identifying as Muslim and it is important that these people are able to practice their religion. The conversion of the Hagia Sophia back into a mosque therefore marks the fulfilment of a long-held dream of restoring a symbol of Ottoman grandeur and it is right that it will once again echo with Muslim prayers.

**'It is a landmark visited by many to embrace and appreciate Islamic history'**

**'It is right that it will once again echo with Muslim prayers'**



# Connor's Chronicles #2: How Mandela ended apartheid and created the Rainbow Nation

Connor Baldwin (Y9) explores how a man from a rural African village challenged the prejudices of the 20th century and became a unifying force in a country divided by apartheid

Nelson Mandela is, without a doubt, one of the defining figures of the 20th century. He became a modernising leader of Africa, a continent struggling with the legacy of Europe's colonisation in the wake of the World War II. He was an icon of freedom, rescuing South Africa from the grasp of an oligarchical ruling class towards a new age of freedom and racial justice. Through his imprisonment on Robben Island, he became a martyr of equality, and as the leader of South Africa he began to reconcile a nation divided by race and class, becoming known as the 'father of the nation' and, as Rita Barnard states, 'one of the most revered figures of our time.'

Though colonialism is often seen as a figment of the past, it remained long into the 20th century, defining much of Africa's recent history. The

British Empire had acquired the Cape Colony in 1806, and did not abandon its final colony, Zimbabwe, until 1980. It was into these conditions that Nelson Mandela, born Rolihlahla, meaning 'troublemaker' in the Xhosa language, was born into on the 18th July 1918 into the village of Mvezo. As a child, he was sent to a Methodist school by his mother, a devout Christian, where he was given the name of Nelson. It was here he developed an interest in African culture and history and was influenced by the anti-imperialist ideas of those around him.

In 1937, he attended the University of Fort Hare. There, many of his friends became involved in the African National Congress (ANC), who wanted South Africa to be independent of the British Empire. However, Mandela did not involve himself. After his studies concluded,

'An icon of freedom - Mandela rescued South Africa from the grasp of an oligarchical ruling class'

'He was born Rolihlahla, meaning 'trouble-maker'

Mandela moved to Johannesburg. In Johannesburg, Mandela joined the African National Congress where he embraced the view that the fight against racism should be fought solely by black Africans. However, in the 1948 South African general election (in which only whites could vote) the openly racist Herenigde Nasionale Party was voted into power, soon forming a new National Party. Under their leader, Daniel Francois Malan, they expanded racial segregation by expanding apartheid laws - apartheid being the system of institutionalised segregation that allowed a minority white population to dominate South Africa socially, politically and economically.

In 1952, the ANC began the Defiance Campaign against apartheid, during which Mandela addressed a crowd of 100,000 people. For this, Mandela was briefly arrested, which further boosted his political status. After this, he was made President of the ANC in the Transvaal, a region of South Africa. In July, Mandela was arrested, having been accused of communism. He was sentenced to hard labour, but his sentence was delayed, and never carried out. Further incarcerations occurred over the following years, culminating in an arrest on 5th August 1962 for inciting worker's strikes and leaving the country without permission. Despite gaining international condemnation for his imprisonment, Mandela was sentenced to life in prison, and moved to Robben Island, where he was to remain for 18 years.

On Robben Island, where he became known as Prisoner 46664, Mandela was forced to sleep in a small cell with only a





straw mat. There, he was required to carry out hard labour, working in a lime quarry each day. Later, Mandela would say that he 'found solitary confinement the most forbidding aspect of prison life', though he occupied his time by gaining a law degree and beginning his autobiography, 'Long Walk to Freedom', which was smuggled to London. A series of calls for Mandela's release increased once again, though the apartheid government did not listen. Despite calls for his release being denied, Mandela was moved to Pollsmoor Prison in 1982, where the conditions once again improved. It was here Mandela expressed hope that there could be reconciliation after apartheid, learning the Afrikaans language that had become a symbol of colonial oppression.

During the 1980s, conditions in South Africa worsened; many believed a civil war would occur. Mandela was offered his freedom in exchange for rejecting violence as a political weapon. He refused and was later moved to Victor Verster Prison. Almost 27 years after he was first imprisoned. Mandela was finally released from prison on the 11th February 1990. Though he gave a speech expressing the ANC's fight was not over, he hoped 'there may no longer be the need for the armed struggle' against racism. Mandela spent much of the following months strengthening the ANC, eventually becoming its leader and president.

In December 1991, the Convention for 'A Democratic South Africa' began in Johannesburg. Mandela argued that the apartheid government was 'an illegitimate, discredited minority regime', though the CODESA talks eventually failed. However, second talks occurred in May 1992. In the aftermath of the massacre of 40 civilians by the government, Mandela argued the apartheid government had committed terrorism, and organised the biggest strike in South African history, showing the political sway that made him such a force for change.

Finally, in 1994, the ANC



and the National Party, under Frederik de Klerk, agreed to have another election, the first since 1948 in which black people could vote. The ANC won the election by 63%, and Nelson Mandela was inaugurated on 10th May 1994. Later that year, both de Klerk and Mandela were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their contributions towards the end of apartheid. Between 1994 and 1997, Mandela headed an interim government, with members from each of South Africa's major parties. During his presidency, Mandela emphasised the idea of a 'Rainbow Nation', hoping that South Africa could move beyond apartheid towards a democratic nation. This was, arguably, why Nelson Mandela had such a profound impact on history. Although he had been imprisoned as an innocent man for 27 years, he still hoped that the whites who had ruled as a minority could be reconciled and forgiven for the apartheid regime that had dominated South Africa.

Under Mandela, welfare spending increased, allowing South Africans greater access to healthcare, electricity, education, housing and water. Foreign relations also improved, especially with East Asia. However, his presidency was not without criticism – the AIDS

epidemic was largely ignored by Mandela's government, high levels of crime occurred, and many skilled South Africans left the country, though many illegal immigrants arrived. By 1996, Mandela was increasingly delegating work to others and finally stepped down from his position as President in 1997. In his retirement, Mandela established many charities, with the hopes to develop rural South Africa and combat the AIDS epidemic. He was an active philanthropist until his death on 5th December 2013, the result of a prolonged lung infection. His funeral was held on 15th December 2013 with representatives from over 90 countries attending.

Though Mandela did not fight in wars, or build empires, he is, without a doubt, one of the defining men of recent history. He is one of the world's greatest leaders. Despite his suffering at the hands of a racist regime that attempted to oppress him and his people, Mandela became a symbol of unity and democracy, using peace to, modernise Africa and improve the lives of its people. Mandela hoped and strived for a better future for South Africa's white and black citizens despite the opposition he faced throughout his life.

**'On Robben Island he was forced to sleep in a small cell with just a straw mat'**

**'Mandela still hoped that the whites, who had ruled as a minority, could be reconciled and forgiven'**

# How a group of Reddit users humiliated Wall Street and nearly crashed the stock market

Tristan Edwards (Y8) explores how a group on the online social forum Reddit helped to save the company GameStop from bankruptcy and take down Wall Street in the process

When the game and movie retailer GameStop's stock value decreased during 2020, many institutional investors, or hedge funds (for example Melvin Capital, and Citron Research) had been making money by betting against GameStop's share price. They did this by short selling GameStop stocks.

The stock market enables buyers and sellers to negotiate prices and make trades. It is also a place where investors can connect and sell investments and wager on the stock value change. This is often considered a risky investment, as many people have lost thousands of dollars on the stock market. Short selling is an investment or trading strategy that speculates on the decline in a stock price. It's perceived to be an advanced strategy used by experienced traders and investors to bet on the outcome of the stock price. In short, the trader is gaining from the misfortune of the failing company and in some cases, encourages the failure of those businesses.

GameStop was struggling and its stock value dropping. Hedge funds were betting against

the company, by short-selling substantial amounts of stock, attempting to force the stock price down again.

In retaliation against this, a Reddit group called WallStreetBets (which went from 100,000 users to over 4 million in a week) requested for people to invest in GameStop's stocks, thus driving up the price substantially. Reddit users flocked by the thousands to sites like RobinHood, sites for amateur investors in the stock market, and invested heavily in GameStop stocks. Consequently, the value of GameStop's stocks jumped at an exponential rate, resulting in short sellers, who had bet the company's stocks would fall, to lose vast amounts of money. This is called a short squeeze. The price peaked at \$347.51.

For the stock market traders this was a precarious situation. Investor sites such as Robinhood restricted trading of GameStop stocks, to protect themselves and reduce investors losses. These restrictions on trading imposed by these sites contributed to a sharp decline in the GameStop stock prices, although they were still worth around \$100 at the

time of writing. Many Reddit users felt that these sites had betrayed them by going against the very thing they stood for: giving small time, or amateur investors a chance to take part in the stock market, rather than exclude them. While many people will feel satisfaction at the "little guys" winning, was this really so much of a victory?

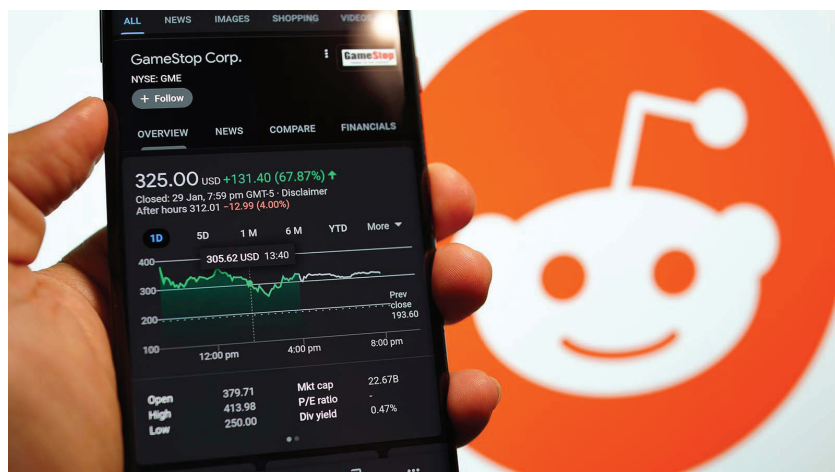
The price of GameStop quickly retreated from this price as buyers cashed in and new short sellers entered the market. A large number of late entry buyers lost a lot of money. Within a week the stock had dropped down to \$100, still substantially above its starting point.

This whole incident raises one question: did WallStreetBets really play the system any more differently than the real Wall Street would have done? Even though it raises some interesting questions on the ethics and legality of colluding online, it also showed the world how much power social media can wield, if used correctly.

This incident may also make companies think twice about going down the same path as the other hedge funds, due to the astronomical loss that they faced during this crisis. Hedge funds and investors will be less likely to bet against businesses they think are failing, and more likely to invest in companies they think have potential. These companies have lost thousands of dollars because of the short squeeze, and maybe this whole episode may have influenced them to make this decision. Should the hedge funds be in total control of the company's stock value increase or decline, or should the people get a say in what happens. Or is this just capitalism?

'Hedge funds were betting against the company by short-selling substantial amounts of stock'

'While many people will feel satisfaction at the 'little guys' winning, was this really so much of a victory?'





# Play to win or pay to win? Why children must be protected against gaming's loot box culture

Leonardo Watson (Y7) takes a look at how today's video games are encouraging young children into a gambling habit by employing the same techniques as casinos



While one pandemic sweeps across the globe, there is another smaller, but equally pressing, outbreak that we must address. This disease is one that affects children. It forces them to empty their pockets and lures them in with vague promises and dreams, and there's currently little being done to medicate this illness despite it affecting some of the most vulnerable members of our society. Yet, such is the case of problem gambling.

Around 55,000 children between the age of 11-16 classify themselves as problem gamblers, meaning they have an urge to gamble continuously despite negative consequences. While the first experience of gambling for 23% young people is playing on fruit machines, the gambling our children are engaging in is not on the slot machines down the seaside arcades or at betting stations near your local Tesco. It is on console games like FIFA and Overwatch that children are spending their pocket money.

One way game developers have begun to target children is through the introduction of

loot boxes. Loot boxes feature in many modern games, including popular first-person shooter Overwatch and football game, FIFA. The boxes are regularly given to players when they level up or accomplish certain tasks, and when opened give the player a random in-game reward. On top of boxes earned through playing the game, players can also buy them with real money, causing some to argue they are a form of gambling.

In many ways, success in FIFA operates much like football in real life. You buy and sell footballers to improve your team in competition against others. But unlike real life, you can also improve by getting 'packs', which contain rare footballers or other features. Packs are earned by accumulating 'coins' through game progression. A quicker route to success, though, is to spend real money in the FUT Store to buy 'points' – which can also be used to purchase these packs. And, just as in real football, money talks in FIFA. Those that spend the most generally tend to win the most. It is not surprising, then, that the

game has earned a "pay-to-win reputation". This is completely unacceptable. These children are victims of a loot box culture that encourages them to spend money on virtual rewards – and there's no promise the rewards will even be that good. It is shocking that a recent survey has reported 1 in 6 children steal money from their parents to pay for these addictive computer game loot boxes. It's not unfair to say then that FIFA is raising a generation of criminals.

Gambling is also not just reserved for the virtual world of gaming. If we take a look at the Premier League we will find that every Premier League team (barring only three clubs) began the 2020-21 season with some kind of association with a betting brand. Although the Football Association have rules in place which ban gambling logos on team kits for under 18, this does not tackle the fact that many children will be watching their favourite teams with gambling slogans plastered on the players' kits. This means that children are exposed to the persuasive language of gambling from a young age.

What can we do to tackle this problem? I believe that console games need to have a better system than what is currently in place and parents need to take charge and monitor the games their children play. Parents may turn to in game currency as a form of bribing their child, but it shouldn't work like that. They don't want to be accidentally making their child a full-time gambler! China has restricted the number of loot boxes players can open each day. Sweden is also investigating them. It's now time for the UK to take action and protect its youngest citizens.

'Every Premier League team began the 2020-21 season with some kind of association with a betting brand'

'Just as in real football, money talks in FIFA. Those that spend the most, win the most'

# Come along lads, it's time to reexamine the female experience of World War I

Amber Robinson (Y9) argues that the role of women in the First World War has been largely overlooked or belittled and that it's time to recognise their vital contribution



**W**orld War I – a conflict of bravery, trauma and tragedy. It is also a period in history we tend to view through the eyes of men: we look at the propaganda campaign that helped persuade young men to enlist, the horrifying experiences they endured on the Western Front and how, the few who returned, struggled to reintegrate themselves into a society which was itself lost and distorted. The female experience is largely ignored because we believe a woman cannot offer a meaningful account of the war, that they will over sentimentalise or belittle the wartime experience. It's true that a soldier, such as Wilfred Owen or Siegfried Sassoon, can write a more authentic account of the battlefield than some woman may, but women can offer an additional perspective of the war that these soldiers simply cannot.

Pre-war society in Britain was quite conventional of typical Victorian gender standards: women completing domestic roles, raising children, cleaning and maintaining the house for her husband, whilst men partook

in the more masculine spheres of politics and the workforce outside of the home. However, in 1914, when World War I officially began, all of this had to change. Men were sent off to fight and Britain was left without a huge majority of the workforce. Due to the economy being vital in any war effort, let alone sustaining a victory, a standstill on the workforce until the men came back was simply not an option, and so naturally, the women had to replace the men and get to work. Without any weapons and artillery no battles could have been won, without nurses and doctors and ambulance workers on scene to alleviate the injured, no army could have survived. Women were crucial to the war effort and the war could not have been won without them.

Women also made sacrifices, with almost one million women working in ammunition factories by 1918. Exposure to toxic materials such as TNT often led to yellowing of the skin and hair loss; women may not have been fighting from the trenches, but they were putting their lives at risk in the hazardous roles they

**'Women put their lives at risk in the hazardous roles they adopted back home'**

**'Throughout history women have been constantly underestimated'**

adopted back home. Not only did women have to quickly adapt to a completely different world from the one in which they had grown up in, but they also had to continue their domestic roles, as well as comforting and reassuring their children. Throughout history women have been constantly underestimated, but World War I offered women a unique opportunity to prove their capacity to work and provide. By replacing men in munitions factories, farms, banks and transport, as well as nursing they began to slowly change people's attitudes towards women in work. They were seen as more responsible, mature and deserving of the vote. This culminated in 1918 with the passing of the Representation of the People Act which gave some women over the age of 30 the right to vote. While this was only 40% of women in the UK, it was a step in the right direction.

Jessie Pope is a largely infamous poet and journalist who published much of her work during World War I, in fact during the war she was one of the most widely read poets. However,





she also gained much criticism from her contemporaries like Wilfred Owen, who wrote his scathingly indicting poem 'Dulce et Decorum est' as a response to her jingoistic poetry. Many, like Owen, criticise Pope for failing to acknowledge the true horrors of the war. They blame her and hold her responsible for persuading countless young men to enlist under false ideas of a game-like war. Pope is nothing but an easy target. Her sex meant that she could never experience the frontline, even if she had wanted to, and so she never had the opportunity to write authentic accounts of the war. Furthermore, before we critique Pope's stance on the war, we must consider the context of her writing, alas. We, the 20th century reader, have the benefit of hindsight when dissecting her writing. We have the knowledge of the unsanitary trenches, gas attacks and psychological traumas many men endured on the front line. Pope did not. Like her contemporary audience, Pope was not exposed to the horrors of war but this is simply not her fault. The blame sits with the government for encouraging writers to publish patriotic poetry. Indeed, in order to earn a fee, writers had to write this type of jingoistic drivel, whether they believed it or not. Editors would only publish poems that chimed in with the pro-war sentiment the government

wanted to disseminate to the public. Can we really blame Pope, an unmarried woman who was working in a time of great misogyny, for trying to support herself? If we judge Pope for her ignorance, we must also be prepared to judge the society that influenced her writing, as well as the government who published her work. And so, by failing to consider Pope's influence and circumstance would be to biasedly vilify, similar to the propaganda of which this assumption aims to criticise.

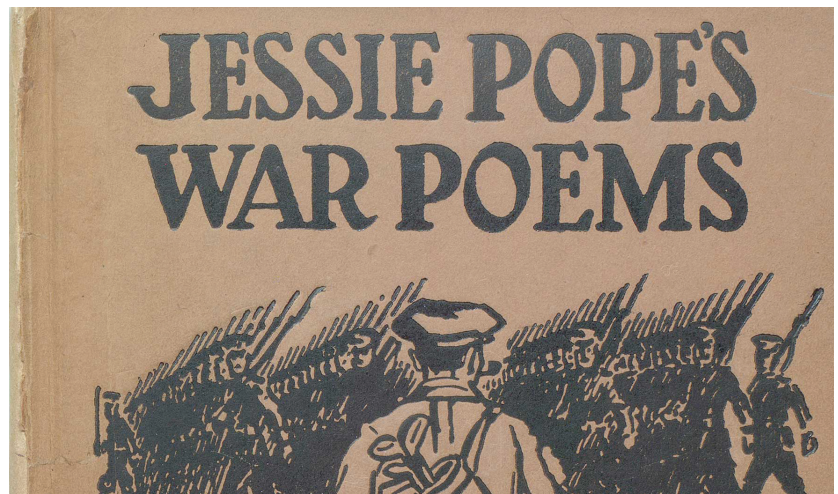
It should also be noted that not all of Pope's poetry directly promoted the war. In her lesser-known poem, 'Play the Game' she describes how 'war-worn, khaki-clad figures lie/Their faces rigid and grey' and in 'The Nut's Birthday' she describes how a family's gifts that are sent to a

'Pope's sex meant that she could never experience the front-line, even if she had wanted to'

'Pope was not a monster, she was a woman trying to survive in a male world'

soldier, 'some candles and a bar of soap' bring him 'untold riches' of comfort and satisfaction. Pope was not a monster, she was a woman trying to survive in a male world. The only way she was able to do this was to write poems promoting enlistment, after all an anti-war poem would not have been published in the middle of the deadliest world war in history would it? Pope also encouraged women to work and to pull together, she was a beacon of hope for many. Patriotic pride provided motivation to keep up morale at home, had the true horror been widely known, it would likely have haunted those at home, and hindered the productivity of the domestic war effort. How could women have continued to work, day after day with images of their male loved ones wasting away lingering in their minds?

One place where Pope is heavily scrutinised is in the classrooms of many schools. She is often studied under the pretence of being the bad woman who Wilfred Owen was telling off. For this reason, people make up their minds about what kind of a writer Pope is before even glancing at the page, grimacing at the mere appearance of her name. But if we want to find meaning in Pope's work, we must read her poetry for its own sake. We must not let other opinions cloud our view and we must remember to consider Pope in her historical context: a woman trying to survive in a male world.



# With a new TV show on the horizon, could Marvel's Falcon be the new Captain America?

Keira Gill (Y7) looks at the next release in the Marvel saga and questions what the TV show will hold for the future of Captain America and his sidekick

Due to be released on the Disney+ streaming service on the 19th March, 'The Falcon and the Winter Soldier' is an upcoming American television miniseries based upon the Marvel Comic Book characters Sam Wilson and Bucky Barnes. Wilson is a former United States Air Force pararescue airman who becomes The Falcon and Barnes is Captain America's best friend and sidekick, known as The Winter Soldier. The events of the series will take place after the film 'Avengers Endgame' (2019) and are set in the same Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), sharing continuity with the films of the franchise.

The series is due to revolve around Sam's decision whether to take over the role of Captain America from Steve Rogers. As seen at the end of Avengers Endgame, Steve Rogers presents Falcon with his worldwide famous shield with the intent that he'll take up the mantle of being the new Captain America. Made with the strongest metal on Earth, the vibranium shield was

created by the locals of Wakanda, home of the Black Panther. Stan Lee, the creative tour de force behind Marvel's comic book franchise, suggested that Captain America presented Falcon with this shield because he wanted his best friend, Bucky Barnes (The Winter Soldier) to live a life for himself rather than be forced into the role of Captain America. However, many viewers felt that Bucky Barnes, who was Captain America's oldest and closest friend, should have been the recipient of this shield.

Sam Wilson's feelings on assuming this new identity are complicated, (naturally enough considering the notoriety of the role), and that character-driven choice is the sort of thing fans of the series want Marvel Studios to focus on. Making things tougher for Sam, the U.S. government appears to be less than thrilled with Steve's choice to give him the vibranium shield. In lieu of Sam, John Walker (a U.S Agent) appears to be their preferred choice. Initially presented as a foe for Captain America, Walker took over the heroic

identity for a time and served on superhero teams like the Great Lakes Avengers as U.S. Agent. His complicated past leads us to suspect his MCU counterpart will have an equally difficult path, which will no doubt lead him into fighting Sam before they potentially team up to fight a more shadowy enemy. Of course, it still leaves us with the central question: Will Sam become Captain America? This mysterious question will remain unresolved by the end of the series.

'The Falcon and the Winter Soldier' will occur sometime after the 'Avengers Endgame' film. How much later is still up for debate and that span of time is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, both Sam and Bucky are snapped away in Avengers: Infinity War and presumed dead for five years, meaning they will have to re-establish themselves as living people. While this may be difficult for Sam it will be a nightmare for Bucky, who has been declared legally dead since the 1940s.

In the Marvel universe Bucky Barnes also still has the label of being a mind-controlling, murderous Winter Soldier. Thankfully, one imagines the Avengers may have smoothed over some of that following the Endgame battle. However, even if that does turn out to be the case, Sam and Bucky still face acclimatising to a world which has moved on without them. It's something 'Spider-Man: Far From Home' glossed over, but feels like prime material for a limited-run television series. Are Sam and Bucky involved in their activities or are they, as it always seems, on their own?

'Many viewers felt Bucky Barnes, should have been the recipient of the shield'

'They will have to re-establish themselves in society, a nightmare considering both are considered legally dead'





# Don't have a clue what to read? Agatha Christie's Poirot is the lead you're looking for

Benjamin Fletcher (Y7) reviews Agatha Christie's famous detective stories and suggests why, nearly 100 years later, they are still engrossing readers of all ages



**H**ercule Poirot, Agatha Christie's famous detective, first appeared in 'The Mysterious Affair at Styles', published in 1920, and was then featured in a series of novels and short stories. It is difficult to attribute Poirot's popularity to a single characteristic, but we need to remind ourselves that when Poirot first appeared, the crime novel did not have the psychological and social depth it was to acquire in the second half of the 20th century. To English-speaking readers of the 1920s and '30s, he must have seemed something of an exotic. A Belgian, he had Continental ways, habits that would have seemed striking to the average British or American reader of the time. A perfect hero for the classic detective story, he is well-mannered and punctilious, with a marvellous ability to see through people. Aided by the actor David Suchet's portrayal of Poirot, we can easily picture him, with his tidy moustache and his neat, rather elegant attire. If we had a murder in our own house, he is

exactly the sort of detective we would wish to see in attendance.

In 'The Mysterious Affair at Styles', Poirot's first investigation, we follow the detective to Hastings where he is investigating mysterious events at a country house called Styles, which (minor spoiler alert) becomes the scene of a murder and a remarkable one at that. With twists and turns to keep you guessing until the final reveal, it is a masterpiece. Although I will admit, some Poirot novels require obscure contextual knowledge which is not easily obtainable these days, most simply rely on common sense and logical reasoning. There is a feeling of joy for the reader when they figure out just how wrong Hastings and Japp have interpreted the case, and a great sadness for all those harmed as a result of their inadequacy. The plots themselves are also fascinating, with Christie's attention to detail and technical knowledge, such as the inefficiency of strychnine as a poison, what makes for gripping reading. The reader's own investigation is toyed with at

'The reader's own investigation is toyed with at every moment'

'If we had a murder in our own house, Poirot is exactly the sort of detective we would wish to see in attendance'

every moment, we're encouraged to doubt everybody and trust no-one.

All of this is well and good, but I feel duty-bound to mention another detective series I have read and enjoyed: 'The Complete Adventures of Sherlock Holmes'. This is an incredible collection of all Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's writings on Holmes, and I must compare Poirot to it. Though I am not suggesting Poirot is particularly bad as a series, I would say that Holmes is also very interesting, and if you want to read a detective series but Poirot is not for you, then Holmes could be a good substitute. However, I believe that Poirot does have a certain beauty in its plot which I have not seen in a long time. The books are relatively easy to read, with few difficult vocabulary choices – except of course the occasional bouts of French left without translation!

My favourite book in Christie's Poirot series is 'The Murder of Roger Ackroyd', as it has an unexpected twist and makes excellent use of its unreliable narrator. It explains why I often call Poirot 'Porrot' (no spoilers!) and has a detailed and complex plot. The end is, however, incredibly tragic, I broke into floods of tears the first time I read it – a very cathartic experience indeed! I believe the Poirot series to be one of detective fiction's greatest successes. It is both incredibly logical in its reasoning and dramatic in its climaxes. It is simply one of the most interesting and mysterious series I have ever read. It is a riveting collection and one I would fully recommend to all the budding readers out there. They will certainly remember it for the rest of their lives.

# YEAR 8 REVIEW

## MACBETH

Lady Macbeth emasculates Macbeth and wants Macbeth to be confident in carrying out the murder. Macbeth feels the need to prove himself in his relationship as he does not want to be seen as weak by others, especially his wife. Lady Macbeth's toxic views push Macbeth to commit actions he wouldn't have done otherwise.

- Haashim Rahim

My favourite scene is where Macbeth contemplates whether to murder Duncan because I like the anticipation it creates. My favourite characters are Macbeth and Lady Macbeth because they are so controlling and naïve.

- Taylor Emberley

Macbeth shows the symptoms of PTSD in the way he deals with the deaths of Duncan and Banquo. For instance, he exhibits paranoia and guilt, which in turn results in his hallucinations. First it is the blood of Duncan and later it is Banquo's ghost. These hallucinations, coupled with his inability to sleep, would be diagnosed today as the symptoms of PTSD.

- Laila Boughaba

When reading Macbeth's 'tomorrow' soliloquy it reminded me of the rapper Juice Wrld who died at the age of just 21. Just as Macbeth muses upon the nature of mortality, Juice Wrld's states in his song 'Legend', 'ain't nothing like the feeling of uncertainty, the eeriness of silence' implying that you never know what is around the corner. Shakespeare may have been trying to tell his audience the fleeting nature of life while Juice Wrld could have been trying to convey the pressures fame can cause.

- Ameerah Ramzan

Lady Macbeth's toxic views of masculinity lead to Macbeth's downfall as he feels he has to prove himself in his relationship so he does not come across as weak. Her emasculating comments push him into committing actions that he would not have otherwise done. This is why Macbeth is often seen as the villain, even though he does try to fight against the commands of his oppressive wife.

- Bea Meredith

Personally, I really like the witches because they trick people and are associated with the supernatural world. The witches use equivocation to manipulate Macbeth into believing their prophecies. I really liked this because throughout the play it made me wonder what was going to happen next.

- Mikyle Khan

Macbeth reminds me of the character Tony Montana in the film 'Scarface'. Both men have too much power which corrupts them and use their power to oppress others. Macbeth murders other people in order to protect his kingship. In a similar way Tony Montana's goal is to rule the world and he knows he is going to have to murder a lot of people to do that. Macbeth can also link to Tony Montana because both bring up ideas of autonomy, you could say this is because they have both have made the decision to commit sin.

- Ismail Lone

Toxic masculinity is the true villain in Macbeth because it causes death and regicide. Lady Macbeth pressures her husband into being 'a real man' by manipulating him and his weaknesses. Her controlling nature displays how she pressurises her husband into being the 'typical man' that society is 'familiar with'.

- Lola Stringer

Lady Macbeth's emasculating, ruthless character is the external character that she uses to hide everyone from her hurting, afraid internal being. Perhaps emasculating her husband could also be her way of proving her dominance over Macbeth while disguising how she really feels: guilt-ridden and alone.

- Carly Perlz





**Unspoken Rules**

Sneakily slip the keys between fingers  
Automatically.

Just a precaution.

Check over your shoulder. Once, twice,

Listen for the whistling - it's coming.

Just wait.

The inevitable calls for attention. Just walking home -  
Alone.

Why do I have to be in fear?

If I were a boy I would be fine,

Not scared of this kind of crime.

All I want is to feel secure.

But when you get older, you don't anymore

- Wednesday Addis, Y9

**Foyles Young Poets of the Year 2021**

Foyles is looking for the best poems by young people aged 11-17. The deadline to enter your poem/s is midnight 31 July 2021. Entries must be written in English, but you can include phrases in your mother tongue or another language.

Please speak to your English teacher for more information.

**Miracles**

Some moments -  
like some places -  
are not meant to be seen,  
so for now it's best we  
just call them  
miracles.

- Insha Khan, Y7



# Mercia Poetry Corner

**The Disaster**

The earth shook as the wind blew  
The trees collapsed as the hail spat  
The oceans mumbled as the volcanoes struck  
The rivers rushed as the witches cackled  
The disaster has begun...

- Abdalnaser Abdulmannan, Y7

**If You Were In A Battle**

Look down there's blood on the ground  
Look around there's someone to be found  
What would happen to you,  
If you were in a battle

You try to live but no one can save you,  
You try to breathe but your airways are strangled,  
Imagine it was you who died,  
If you were in a battle

The world is a blood bath of bodies,  
Where families cry of grief,  
You would be dead,  
If you were in a battle



Your family mourns the death of their son,  
Wearing black as casual and nothing glamorous,  
Imagine that was your family,  
If you were in a battle

- Georgina Taylor, Y9



**Have a go at these maths problems and hand in your attempts to your maths teacher for house points.**

**Q1:** The number 987,654,321 is multiplied by 9. How many times does the digit 8 occur in the result?

A) 1 B) 2 C) 3 D) 4 E) 9

**Q2:** All six digits of three 2-digit numbers are different. What is the largest possible sum of three such numbers?

For example: 3 possible numbers are 12, 34, and 56.  $12 + 34 + 56 = 102$ , but this is not the largest sum we can make...

**Q3:** The Grand Old Duke of York, he had ten thousand men, he marched them up to the top of the hill ... By 2pm they were one third of the way up. By 4pm they were three quarters of the way up. When did they set out?

**Q4:** Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, admiring his new digital watch which displayed hours and minutes only. He noticed that it was 15:21 when Jack and Jill set up the hill, but that when they later came tumbling down again his watch showed only 10:51. Humpty then realised he'd had his watch on upside down the whole time! How long did Jack and Jill take to go up the hill and down again?

**Q5:** In a café each table has 3 legs, each chair has 4 legs and all the customers and the three members of staff have two legs each. There are four chairs at each table. At a certain time, three-quarters of the chairs are occupied by customers and there are 206 legs altogether in the café. How many chairs does the café have?

## Maths

## House Point Challenge #2

15:21

10:51

# Who's really the serpent in 'Macbeth' and who's just the innocent flower?

Maria Raja (Y8) assesses which character from Shakespeare's Scottish play deserves the title as the play's villain and who is just the tragic victim

**I**t is easy to mistake a villain for a victim but who really is to blame for the tragedies in 'Macbeth'; is it the deceptive witches or the heroic Macbeth? Perhaps the blame rests on Lady Macbeth or could Macduff have gone too far in murdering Macbeth?

## Macbeth

Macbeth is one of the greatest tragic heroes of all time but what part did he play in his own downfall? Aristotle argued that a tragic hero must be responsible for their own downfall which is caused by their hamartia. For Macbeth, this could be his desire to prove himself worthy to his power-hungry wife, or perhaps his hubris which leaves him overly confident. Macbeth is also portrayed as a victim of toxic masculinity as he is pressurised by Lady Macbeth to commit "manly" actions. She constantly questions his masculinity, and when he begs to not proceed in the murder of King Duncan, she asks him, 'are you not a man?'. Macbeth's eagerness to protect his honour pushes him to murder and sin, which he initially never dreamt of doing. Nevertheless, Macbeth does have free will and could have refused to listen to his wife's murderous pleas. He is responsible for his own actions. As the play proceeds, Macbeth grows more tyrannical, he betrays his king, best friend and fellow comrades. He eventually realises his damned fate towards the end of the play, losing his wife to suicide and realising the witches have tricked him. However, this realisation only further motivates his unrelenting pursuit for power. When then should we sympathise with Macbeth at all? Well, despite Macbeth's very questionable decisions, his

values and some intentions were noble. For example, Macbeth teaches us to stay determined even when things get difficult, to be fortitudinous. He also shows the impact of pressuring, toxic behaviour on an individual's mental health and so, Macbeth, can be seen as both a victim and villain.

## Lady Macbeth

Lady Macbeth plays a vital role in Macbeth's downfall and therefore she is often cast as the play's worst villain. Her position as a woman in a patriarchal society immediately makes her a victim but should it excuse her devious actions? Contextually, in Jacobean society, women were seen as inferior to men, they were 'the weaker sex' whose roles were entirely confined to the domestic sphere. However, Lady Macbeth is the one who pushes Macbeth to sin and is the more power-hungry out of the couple. Her desire to be superior leads her to do unforgivable things which she later regrets. Like Macbeth, as the play progresses, Lady Macbeth suffers a mental breakdown but, unlike her husband, she becomes emotional and as a result loses her confidence, strength and willpower. Why is Macbeth's guilt not as debilitating as his wife's? Likely because Lady Macbeth's transgression would have been seen as worse than her husband's, she not only encouraged murder but refused to be limited by her gender. She usurps not only a king, but men in general. For this reason, Shakespeare's audience would see it fitting her punishment was more severe.

## The Witches

Also known as the 'weird sisters', the witches are the catalyst for the murderous events that take place in the play. Their

prophecies encourage Macbeth to sin and ensure his downfall. But can we really blame them for Macbeth's own actions? The witches recall the image of the Three Fates from Greek mythology, three old women who are also charged with the destinies of all living beings. Macbeth is initially cautious of the witches' prophecies but is encouraged by his own witchy wife to believe and pursue them. He visits them on more than one occasion to seek their advice and perhaps this pursuit of occult knowledge is again part of Macbeth's hamartia. The witches' use of equivocation intrigues Macbeth and while it is the catalyst for the murders of Duncan and Banquo, I do not believe they should be blamed for Macbeth's destructive behaviour. He did not allow 'chance to crown [him] king' but usurped the role of fate by taking matters into his own hands.

## Macduff

Many people see Macduff as the righteous hero but to what extent is he actually honourable? Macduff may have defeated Macbeth and avenged his family, but does this make him the hero of the play? Macduff is driven by vengeance for his family's murder and restores peace to the land with the help of Malcolm. His noble status and righteous beliefs mirror Macbeth's own rank at the start of the play and his merciless violence that results in Macbeth's decapitation also reflects Macbeth's ruthless behaviour. Perhaps in Macduff, Shakespeare was hinting towards a new Macbeth figure.

Personally, I believe Lady Macbeth is a manipulative villain and Macbeth is a gullible victim of toxic masculinity.

'Macbeth is portrayed as a victim of toxic masculinity as he is pressurised by his wife to commit 'manly' actions'

'Perhaps in Macduff, Shakespeare was hinting towards a new Macbeth figure'



# Be not afraid, the isle is full of men: How women are suppressed and silenced in 'The Tempest'

Harley Newton (Y9) applies a feminist reading to Shakespeare's 'The Tempest' and explores how women are objectified and oppressed by their male counterparts

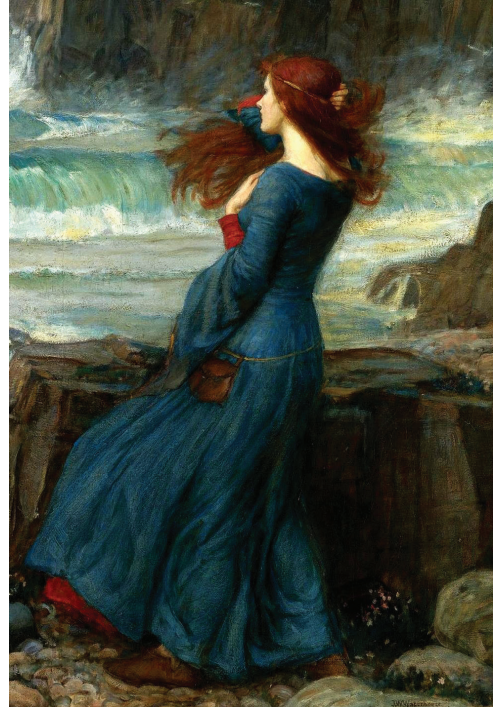
Shakespeare's 'The Tempest' is remarkable for its absent women; Prospero's adored daughter Miranda is the only human female inhabitant on an island that becomes increasingly populated by men. Besides her, the only other female character (if we can call her that as she has no lines) is Sycorax, a now dead witch who was the mother of the deformed creature Caliban. Shakespeare's image of women is then exemplified through an imprisoned maid and depraved beast. Misogynistic much? Sexist much? Just a little.

Throughout history women have been oppressed; their rights have been neglected and they have been seen as marginal members of society. Indeed, Shakespeare's stage should be seen a microcosm of Jacobean society: it reflects the gender roles of the time, which dictated women were subordinate to men. In the early 17th century, when *The Tempest* was first performed, women were not allowed to perform on stage. All female roles were acted by young men. This largely explains why the ratio of female to male characters in Shakespeare's plays are unequal. Despite Shakespeare creating around 798 male characters, his dramatic corpus contains only about 149 female ones. That's a ratio of roughly sixteen to three. Silent women on stage, silent female characters it seems.

In 'The Tempest' Shakespeare presents the typical male-female power dynamic through Prospero's relationship with his daughter, Miranda. Earlier in the play, Prospero describes Miranda as a 'prize', a metaphor which objectifies her as his property and assigns a certain value to her.

Indeed, her very name means something to be 'wondered' at, denoting how her worth stems from her appearance. Prospero's orchestration of her match to Ferdinand makes his daughter a pawn in a game to gain ultimate control over those who have wronged him. She is seen as a commodity to be exchanged, an object rather than a human being. On another level, Miranda is a 'prize' because she is a virgin. Ferdinand overtly references this when they first meet, and he asks her, 'If you be maid, or no?'. Ferdinand's first concern is with Miranda's chastity, her virginity is a necessary aspect for their relationship to be a success. Miranda, is aware of this, calling her virginity a 'jewel in [her] dower', demonstrating how she is also acutely aware that her purity holds value. Miranda has been indoctrinated by a patriarchal society into believing that her only 'worth' is in her ability to bear children.

The only other female character in 'The Tempest' is Sycorax, a witch who ruled the island before Prospero arrived. She is absent in the play and only referred to by Prospero who often exchanges her name for sexist slurs such as 'foul witch' and 'hag'. By describing her in this way, Prospero creates a stereotype of women and reinforces the views of a patriarchal society that serves to empower his own dominance over that of Sycorax. As Prospero's self-constructed opposite, Sycorax is a symbol of all that undermines him. Prospero is anxious about Sycorax because she symbolizes women in power, and that remains a fear for Prospero, whether he can consciously admit it or not.



Shakespeare is a misogynist. Even in plays where he does give female character's atypical qualities like Beatrice's independence and Lady Macbeth's ruthlessness, it often comes at the expense of their femininity. Lady Macbeth for instance, begins the play strong, powerful and determined but has to be 'unsexed', her femininity removed, in order to possess these qualities. For Shakespeare, femininity and power just aren't compatible. As the only named author on the English curriculum, it is a tragedy that Shakespeare's plays lack strong, independent female characters. However, while we can excuse the Bard's misogyny somewhat for being a reflection of his patriarchal era, the true tragedy is that nearly 500 years later the battle for female equality still rages on.

**'Prospero creates a stereotype of women to reinforce the views of a patriarchal society that empowers his own dominance'**

# ‘Doctor Faustus’ is a cautionary tale to politicians and public alike

Toby Butler (Y7) takes a look at how, nearly 500 years after its publication, Marlowe’s play and its warning against greed and power is still relevant today

The legend of a man selling his soul to the devil seems to have particular resonance at times of moral crisis. Even though humanity has developed much since Marlowe wrote ‘Doctor Faustus’ in 1592, what hasn’t changed is how people are still driven by greed and ambition. The experience of the legendary Doctor Faustus, who sells his soul to the demon Mephistopheles in return for infinite knowledge and pleasure, has been treated as a metaphor for unholy political deals. He dabbles in necromancy because of his greed and this reckless pursuit for power can be compared to many modern political figures. The play can also shed light on contemporary political crises, from Brexit to the election of Donald Trump. It seems this 500-year-old folk legend still seems to resonate in times of crisis?

Faustus’ consequence for being blasphemous and experimenting with dark magic was that he

was dragged to hell by devils and had his bright future spoilt. The equivalent of this would be prison or some sort of restraining of the human rights. Sometimes this is not the case though because if you are in a powerful position then it is hard to restrain someone with such power. A significant example of this would be Donald Trump and how he has been able to use propaganda and speeches to manipulate his supporters into believing ‘fake news’. One event that caused public condemnation was when Trump ordered his supporters to storm the Capitol building in Washington DC. As a result, five people lost their lives and countless more were injured.

Furthermore, the play reveals that if you are too overly ambitious it can lead to harm. This is shown in ‘Doctor Faustus’ when Faustus gets too powerful by asking for endless things. This leads to him getting too powerful and he cannot repent to god. This happens in everyday life when

‘We still opt for immediate pleasure even in the knowledge it could have consequences’

‘Every notable historical era will have its own Faust’

you ask for too much and you don’t appreciate what you have like your family or friends. And as you start to get greedier, your friends start to become out of reach. This is because people have been educated to think money is everything. Also, they should not give into the temptation of power and money. Sadly, even though we think we have moved on from past historical periods, we will not leave the temptation of greed behind. This needs to change.

‘Doctor Faustus’ also mirrors our current quick-like of instant gratification. From credit cards to fast food, we opt for immediate pleasure even in the knowledge it could have consequences, such as debt or obesity. This is similar to how Faustus wants to derive his pleasure from making Mephistopheles serve his every whim. He asks to meet Helen of Troy, who in Greek mythology was spoken of as the most beautiful woman, in order to satisfy his sexual urges. Faustus does not pause to think of the moral repercussions of his hedonistic exploits. Technology highlights these Faustian choices: who reads the “terms and conditions” of their contracts? Smartphones make our attention spans fleeting, and we are like Faust, who promises to part with his soul for 24 years without paying attention to the small print of the contract.

“Every notable historical era will have its own Faust,” wrote the philosopher, Kierkegaard. And it’s true - the legend warns us to be wary of greed, the seductions of fame and the celebration of power. These are hollow triumphs for, as Faustus says, “what good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?”





# Crouch. Touch. Engage in the conversation surrounding Rugby Union today

Niam Patel (Y7) provides an overview of the Six Nations tournament and its logistics, whilst also tackling the brutal truths over whether rugby can ever be a safe sport to play

The idea of the Six Nations first began in 1883 when England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales competed in the Home Nations Championship. Professional rugby then took a back seat between 1940 and 1946 as World War II raged across Europe. When it returned in 1947, the Home Nations had evolved into the Five Nations as France joined the mix. The Five Nations continued right up to the new millennium before it was rebranded once again. This time it was the introduction of Italy that saw it expanded to the Six Nations. In 2000, England won the first ever Six Nations. Wales were the first ever team to win a Grand Slam in 2005. A Grand Slam is where you win all five games in the competition and so suffer no defeats. England have won the most titles of the Six Nations since 2000.

## Logistics of the Tournament

The Six Nations is played once every year. Usually, the tournament is held between February and March and lasts 6 weeks. Each team plays each other once, and whoever has the most points after this, wins! The 2020 tournament was the longest one yet because the COVID pandemic meant matches had to be postponed. This year's Six Nations has also been organised very differently due to the pandemic. One of the main differences is that fans are not allowed into the stadiums to watch the games, which means less of an atmosphere for both players and spectators.

## Reboot of the Six Nations

Personally, I think the Six Nations needs to introduce promotion and relegation to avoid the same result each year:



Italy receiving the wooden spoon (the metaphorical prize for the team who finishes last). Since joining the Six Nations, Italy have been trounced time and time again collecting just 11 wins out of 75 matches. If Italy are struggling, other worthy teams should be given the opportunity to take their place. For instance, Georgia is ranked 12th best team in the world, in comparison to Italy which is 15th. Georgia play in a competition called The Rugby Europe International Championships, which is in effect the second tier. They have won this competition for the past three years. If Italy can't be kicked into touch, then it's time for the ball to be passed on to Georgia. Introducing promotion and relegation would make the Six Nations not only more competitive for the nations playing, but certainly boost viewing figures and make for a more exciting finale.

## Can rugby ever be a safe sport?

As a person who plays rugby, I know full well how brutal the tackles can be. It's even worse at a professional level, where players, who weigh on average 16 stone, make collisions at speeds of up

to 20mph. Injuries, everyone accepts, are an inevitable part of the game but has rugby become too dangerous? Repetitive, concussive blows are beginning to be linked to dementia and brain damage. For instance, Steve Thompson, a former English forward, now suffers with dementia and has said he cannot remember winning the World Cup in 2003. However, rugby authorities are doing their best to make the sport safe. For example, junior players in the UK no longer clash shoulders like rutting deer when they engage in a scrum. Competitive lineouts are now introduced and, in some forms of rugby – specifically seven-a-side – there is a weight limit for players.

Much has been done to cushion the blows of rugby. Whether it can ever be completely 'safe' whilst still retaining the physical aspect of the sport is, however, a different matter. It is for parents and children to decide whether the dangers of playing rugby are outweighed by the benefits of fitness, self-confidence and camaraderie that many find in the sport.

'If Italy can't be kicked into touch then it's time for the ball to be passed on'

'Injuries are an inevitable part of the game, but has rugby become too dangerous?'

# How Francis Ngannou wrestled his way out of poverty to become ‘The Predator’ of cage-fighting

Eesa Hamid (Y7) explains how Francis Ngannou escaped a life of poverty to become one of the most successful cage-fighters in the Ultimate Fighting Championship today



Growing up in Batié, Cameroon, Francis Ngannou had a difficult childhood. At the age of six his parents divorced and he was sent to live with his aunt. His family had very little money and Cameroon had no free national education system. Ngannou was trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty. At the height of his hunger, Ngannou would rummage through trash looking for leftovers to eat. He told a reporter, “you would have to go to the market at night-time to go find food in the trash. Sometimes you’d argue with a rat in the trash.”

It was his family’s financial hardships that saw Ngannou, at the age of just 10, to be sent to work at a local sand quarry to make enough money to go to school. Battling against poverty and the pressure of joining local street gangs, the odds were against Ngannou escaping his socio-economic background. However, rather than succumb to criminality he instead decided to use his father’s negative reputation as a street fighter as motivation to do something

positive. He decided to pursue the sport of boxing.

Ngannou was at a severe disadvantage, having never played a sport in his entire life but, at 22-years-old, Ngannou went for it anyway. After three years of limited training the 6ft 4in heavyweight fled to France with less than 100 euros in his pocket. He was alone, an immigrant sleeping in the streets of Paris with no friends or family to help him. For three months, he was homeless. During that time, he trained at any gym he could get into, and spent his nights alone on the streets.

Needing money to keep him afloat, Ngannou got a job working security at a nightclub on the weekend. This was where he met coach Didier Carmont, who saw the 6ft4, 250-pounder’s physique and convinced him to train in Mixed Martial Arts fighting, better known as MMA or cage-fighting. It was here that his road to the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) started. In 2013, he started fighting around France and quickly made a name for himself. That’s right, in the same year Ngannou discovered

what MMA was, he also made his pro debut in the sport. Then, after five impressive stoppage wins and just one loss, Ngannou reached the pinnacle of his MMA career when he was signed by the UFC in 2015.

With a vicious uppercut knockout, Ngannou became known as ‘The Predator’ – and it’s true that he has pounced on his opposition like easy prey. He has won 10 of his last 12 fights – all but one ending by knockout or technical knockout. Yet, Francis Ngannou’s story is far from finished as he finds himself on the edge of a second shot of UFC gold. He will come up against Stipe Miocic, who denied Ngannou the belt 3 years ago. The rematch will mark an opportunity for Ngannou to achieve redemption.

While Ngannou is known across the fighting world for his imposing physique and powerful punches, he remains humble and sticks to his values. He often travels back to Cameroon and visits the sand mine he worked at as a child to remind himself of his incredible journey. He has also set up the Francis Ngannou Foundation to help others pursue their sporting dreams. The foundation is currently building the first official gym in Batié, Cameroon and are looking to build more gyms all across Africa. Eight years ago, Francis Ngannou was poor, homeless, and didn’t even know what MMA was. Today, he’s one of the top fighters in the heavyweight division, striving to show others what’s truly possible in life. His story inspires people living in poverty to never give up, to never stop trying to achieve your dreams, and to see that life is truly worth fighting for.

‘The odds were against Ngannou escaping his socio-economic background’

‘Ngannou pounced upon his opposition like easy prey’



# Are the new driving rookies going to make it to pole position in Formula 1 2021?

Cian Wright (Y7) takes a look at the rookie drivers entering onto the Formula 1 circuit this year and assesses whether they have a chance to make it to first place

Lewis Hamilton is now the joint most successful driver of all time, having won seven World Championship titles that brings him level with the great Michael Schumacher. It's become an accustomed sight for Formula 1 viewers to see Hamilton, top of the podium spraying his less speedy rivals with his first-prize champagne. Does anyone have the ability to compete against the world's fastest driver or is Hamilton set to stay in pole position? Those hoping to make a name for themselves on the racing circuit this year by overthrowing Hamilton include Yuki Tsunoda, Mick Schumacher or Nikita Mazepin.

Italian driving team AlphaTauri signed Japanese born Yuki Tsunoda after he secured his Super Licence in the Formula 2 Feature Race at the Sakhir Grand Prix. He was the 2018 Japanese F4 champion and is a member of the Honda Formula Dream Project and the Red Bull Junior Team. He will be joining Formula 1 after just one year in the division beneath, Formula 2. His rapid rise shows he is a quick learner, but he also possesses the greatest one-lap pace of all those making the step up this year.

Competing against Tsunoda will be Nikita Mazepin, a Russian racing driver who currently competes in the FIA Formula 2 Championship for Hitech Racing. He is due to race for the Haas F1 Team in the 2021 World Championship. Brought to the attention of the media last year for some unscrupulous behaviour, Mazepin will be hoping to redeem himself on the racing track. He delivered two wins last year in Formula 2 – the same as the champion – and

finished fifth in the F2 standings. Mazepin is an aggressive driver, often picking up multiple penalties. He'll need to rein it in a little when he steps up to F1, but when he gets the level right it's definitely a strength of his. Mazepin reads the rules, interprets them and then tries to push them to the absolute limit.

The driver who has arguably attracted the most attention however is Mick Schumacher, son of the legendary F1 driver Michael Schumacher. Mick is going to race for Haas in Formula One and will be the driving partner of Nikita Mazepin. He began his career in karting in 2008, progressing to the German ADAC Formula 4 by 2015 and is also a member of the Ferrari Driver Academy. Schumacher has proven himself to be a calculating driver, one who works immensely hard both on his own driving but also with the team around him. Immersing himself with his team is a key part of his success, consistently trying to find more performance that doesn't always come to him instantly and pulling the team around him to

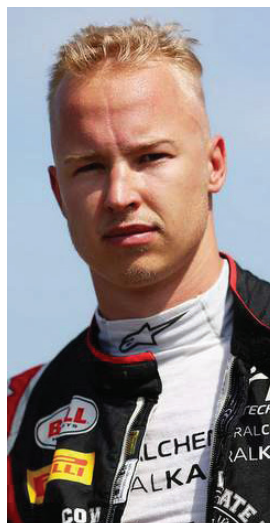
help achieve that.

On the other hand, Max Verstappen could be the man to challenge Lewis Hamilton's title streak. The Dutchman is a promising young star who is the youngest driver to win a F1 race, achieving that feat at just 18. Verstappen drives for RedBull, but kitted out with a glitzy hybrid Honda engine, his car looks speedier than last year and perhaps ready to give Lewis Hamilton's Mercedes a run for its money.

The coronavirus pandemic changed the 2020 championship and gave us surprising results, broken records and new race winners. I personally think that Lewis Hamilton will win the 2021 World Championship and become the greatest Formula 1 driver in the history of the sport. My favourite driver on the circuit is McLaren driver, Lando Norris. He is exciting on the track and fearless in his overtaking. I love Formula 1 and can't wait for the next season. Do the young and inexperienced rookies have what it takes to make it to pole position? Let's wait and see!

**'Yuki Tsunoda possesses the greatest one-lap pace of all those stepping up'**

**'Mick Schumacher is a calculating driver who works immensely hard on his driving'**



# Prisoners should be prioritised for the coronavirus vaccine if they are to avoid a death sentence

Sylvie Moon (Y7) argues that prisoners classify as a vulnerable population in a high risk environment and so should be prioritised for receiving the COVID-19 vaccination

Those who are in prison are by definition criminals. Packed together in cells they live in what can be constituted as a 'high risk environment' where infections, like coronavirus, can easily spread. Without allowing prisoners priority access to the coronavirus vaccine, we are signing a death-sentence for them. They deserve to be punished for their crimes, but as a nation that has abolished the death penalty, we should not seek to allow a virus to kill those who are incarcerated.

It is understandably a divisive question to ask whether criminals who have committed the most heinous acts should be prioritised for the vaccine over law-abiding citizens. On face value, the first reaction is to feel outraged at such a suggestion. These people have caused serious crimes and so why should they be allowed to jump the queue for a life-saving vaccine that so many others, who have not broken the law, have to wait patiently for? Take Levi Bellfield. He was found guilty in 2011 of the murder of schoolgirl Milly Dowler and was sentenced

to prison for life. Taking another person's life is surely one of the worst, if not the worst, crime a person can commit, and Bellfield has been given the maximum penalty available.

After news was spread that Bellfield was invited for his coronavirus jab, many felt outraged. This prompted the Ministry of Justice to tweet, 'to suggest prisoners are being treated any differently to the general public is completely untrue.' This is correct, prisoners are being given their vaccinations in line with the same eligible cohorts as the general population. They are not jumping queues. It is necessary they receive the vaccine because studies have proven prison environments to be high-risk. Professor Seena Fazel from Oxford University commented "prisoners are at high-risk settings for the transmission of contagious diseases and there are considerable challenges in managing outbreaks in them."

In the UK the death sentence was abolished in 1964, but some have argued that by not giving prisoners the vaccine we are in

effect issuing a death sentence. This is what the science argues. For instance, contact tracing in prisons is complicated by reluctance to disclose symptoms due to stigma, concerns about confidentiality, and fear of further restrictions, such as prolonged periods of medical isolation. Effective isolation and quarantine measures are difficult due to overcrowding, poor ventilation, sanitation and hygiene, which are also common in many prisons. As a result, prisons can easily become a reservoir for COVID-19 and transmission can occur at multiple points including via staff. Refusing to vaccinate prisoners is therefore not only a problem legally (should we just ignore the health of prisoners?) but prison environments are also far from cut off from the wider community. Think prison staff who commute daily into work, prisoners who are newly transferred in and out of cells, and numerous court attendances. Not giving prisoners the vaccine is putting the guards and wardens at risk of getting COVID and then passing it to their family when they get home. If the coronavirus infection is allowed to breed in prisons it is a problem for all of us.

Some people think of prisoners as only young men and women and so are at a low risk of contracting the virus. This is simply not the case. Prisons across the country are a ticking time bomb. They are a hotbed for coronavirus and the latest figures show a monthly jump in deaths of 51 per cent. This is not a question of morality but of safety. Doctors don't judge a person's history when giving healthcare and neither should we.

Effective isolation and quarantine measures are difficult due to overcrowding

Doctor's don't judge a person's history when giving healthcare and neither should we





# Why North Korea is the most oppressive country to live in - yet its people worship it

Archie Heard (Y9) looks at why, despite its oppression and brutality, North Koreans continue to support their state's hostile regime

North Korea is a mystery to the outside world. A country where its citizens cannot freely travel around, let alone travel abroad, and where listening to foreign music is considered a criminal activity. The North Korean state is focused on vilifying the international community and restraining its own people all for one reason: to maintain control.

Isolated from the rest of the world, North Korea has been ruled by the Kim family for three generations, and its citizens are required to show complete devotion to the family and its current leader, Kim Jong-un. This totalitarian regime is like everything else within North Korean society, a well-directed play. For instance, while the constitution promises a "right to faith", in reality there is no freedom of religion. Everyone is indoctrinated to treat the Kim family as something to worship. The very fact that every North Korean household is required to have a picture of both Kims hanging on a wall, conveys how the nation deifies its leaders. A North Korean resident said that 'Marshall Kim-Jong-Un is the embodiment of our destiny, he is our future and a father to us all.' The Kims are the only gods North Koreans are allowed to worship. Anyone caught with a religious text or practising religion can be tried for crimes against the state and face the 'Third Generations' rule, where if a person is found guilty of committing a crime, their children and grandchildren can also be punished or be publicly executed. Indeed, after Kim Jong-un took power as Supreme Leader, up to 80 Christians were

reportedly executed in a stadium for owning bibles.

Children in North Korea are an essential part of life and the structure of the country. The school curriculum is dominated by the country's political agenda, restricting their knowledge from a very early age. By focussing on the regime's ideology, the state helps to ensure indoctrination of its citizens happens at an early age. However, education is not an option for all of North Korea's children as many parents have to withdraw their children from school simply because they cannot afford it. Indeed, in North Korea, about 40% of the population lives below the poverty line.

The country promotes an ideology of self-sufficiency and does not import or export anything. Everything the North Korean people use is produced in their country by their own people. This is the state's way of encouraging its citizens to be the 'master of their destiny' and to act as the 'masters of revolution and construction.' This ideology in North Korea is known as Juche, which roughly translates as 'self-reliance'. Its core idea is that North Korea is a country that must remain separate and distinct from the world, dependent solely on its own strength and the guidance of a near-godlike leader. Juche also encourages North Koreans to view themselves as superior to all others. Even today, North Koreans are still taught that the first humans emerged there, and that part of the reason they're superior to other countries is because they've preserved their purity while others have become mongrels.

The North Korean



'Every North Korean household is required to have a picture of both Kims hanging on a wall'

'Juche encourages North Koreans to view themselves as superior to all others'

Government's endless abuse of human rights is inhumane, abhorrent, and repulsive. People convicted of political crimes are often sent to brutal labour camps, which involve physical work such as mining and logging. The state government calls these 're-education' camps in an attempt to conceal the horrors that take place inside. Detainees face torture and beatings by guards, and women are left especially vulnerable to sexual coercion and abuse. North Korea routinely rejects criticism of its rights records and has said its citizens "feel proud of the world's most advantageous human rights system." Perhaps they are happy. Perhaps they do feel proud. Perhaps if they were able to speak their views freely and without fear of reprisal, we might hear something different. The North Korean regime is propped up by fear, not faith, and until that fear is dismantled the international community can only hypothesise what life is truly like for those living in the world's most reclusive nation.

# Hungry for change: why fixing the failures in global food shortages needs to be top agenda

Lily Hosty (Y7) reveals how millions around the world are living in food poverty and explains why they are struggling to access a basic human need

Globally there are an estimated 690 million people going to bed with an empty stomach each night. Yet, others are able to dine out at Michelin star restaurants such as Gordon Ramsey's. Why do some people have to eat rations and beg for their next meal while others can scoff down a six-course tasting menu?

A shocking 26.4% of the world's population does not have regular access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food. There are billionaires but still the less privileged are not considered by those who have no idea how it is to be hungry. This is not equality speaking. It is inequality at its finest. The head of the World Food Programme warns that we are now on the brink of a hunger pandemic, with the prospect of multiple famines "of biblical proportions" within a few months, across three dozen countries. Coronavirus has only made this worse. Households already struggling to survive have lost the work that allowed them to put food on the table. Children, up until recently, were

missing the nutritious school meals they depend upon and quarantine regulations and transport issues are continuing to disrupt food supply chains. Estimates suggest that an additional 83-132 million more people will be chronically hungry due to the pandemic, and so the Sustainable Development Goal's call for ending world hunger by 2030 seems a far off pipe-dream.

So how can we get to a world where everyone is able to fulfil their basic food needs? Having the economic means to access nutritious food would be a good starting place. However, healthy diets are unaffordable to many people, especially the poorest members of society. Indeed, across sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, about 57% of the population is unable to afford a healthy diet. This is because healthy diets are estimated to be, on average, five times more expensive than diets that meet only dietary energy needs through a starchy staple. To increase the affordability of healthy diets, the cost of nutritious foods must come

down. The cost drivers of these diets are seen throughout the food supply chain, within the food environment, and in the political economy that shapes trade, public expenditure and investment policies.

In the UK we also have problems with hunger, with many people relying on food banks in order to eat. This is not just unemployed or homeless people, but many with low-income jobs or high rents to pay. As a result, there are many children whose families have empty cupboards, and don't know if they will get a hot dinner when they come home from school. This is one of the reasons why Marcus Rashford has been campaigning for Free School Meals to continue all year round. The photo of two blackening bananas set against a measly portion of fruit and vegetables (also not forgetting the three Frubes) will be one of the defining images of our times. Posted on Twitter by @RoadsideMum, it has been viewed 28 million times and shared worldwide. Hungry humans are not happy humans. We need free school meals to be on offer to all of those who need them through the school days and in holidays. Imagine your six-week Summer holiday not knowing when you will next eat.

The evidence is clear: children not eating a healthy diet will not perform as well at school as those who are well nourished. They are more likely to suffer from mental health problems and as they age they will be more likely to suffer from diseases such as diabetes and obesity. Tackling the food poverty crisis is our business. If we are to end world hunger then we must speak up for those who are most in need, now.

'The World Food Programme warns we are on the brink of a hunger pandemic that will be of biblical proportion'

'The photo of two blackening bananas set against a measly portion of fruit and veg will be one of the defining images of our time'





# The true cost of the coronavirus pandemic is more than just financial

Callie Watson (Y7) assesses the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on businesses and families alike by looking at the struggles people have faced during lockdown

**B**usiness holders are experiencing their biggest challenge yet as many face financial struggles due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Over the past year, many businesses, particularly those in the hospitality sector, have faced a financial catastrophe, losing sales due to being forced to close their doors. In order to save money to protect the business from collapsing, many have had to sack or furlough employees, meaning more people are struggling to find employment and provide for their families.

Studies have shown that over 750,000 jobs had been lost in the UK from the start of the pandemic to August 2020. Unemployment has increased by 5% and the government's economic watchdog has stated that it is likely to reach 2.6 million towards the middle of the year. Businesses like shops, bars, entertainment and travel companies decided that they were unable to afford to keep all their workers and as a result, this led to 395,000 redundancies.

What about the impact of COVID-19 on employees? Most workers are stuck at home with no idea what will happen to them. In a recent online survey, just 55% of workers said they had been given adequate information about returning to work, with just 44% saying they had been adequately consulted about returning. In addition, around a quarter of employees said work had a negative impact on their physical health, leading to an increase in stress and lack of physical wellbeing. After the Prime Minister's announcement of the first lockdown there was an immediate spike in the number of people reporting severe levels



of anxiety and depression. On the 23rd 16% of people reported severe depression and 17% reported significant anxiety, then only one day after 38% reported severe depression and 36% reported significant anxiety.

Parents have had an even harder time with children to care for in the wake of school closures. Not only have parents been struggling, but so have the children. Children and young people across the UK have had their lives turned upside down by the pandemic. Every young person has had to adjust to dramatic changes in their education or employment, routine and home life. For instance, 80% of young people agreed that the coronavirus pandemic had made their mental health worse. This is often related to increased feelings of anxiety, isolation and loneliness. Things like this are leading to mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. Furthermore, children (especially young teens) have been spending an increasing amount of time on their devices

*'Many businesses have faced a financial catastrophe over the past year'*

*'Children and young people across the UK have had their lives turned upside down'*

and social media, due to the amount of free time lockdown has given them. There are now 3.7 million active TikTok users in the UK alone and around 900 million users globally. Social media has proved a comfort for teens during the pandemic as it helps friends keep connected during the crisis, calling distant and isolating family members. Custom research in the U.S. and UK shows that 57% of consumers say social media has helped them feel less lonely during the outbreak. Just under half believe it's also contributed positively when it comes to stress and anxiety. So, while there are always ever-present concerns with social media such as cyber-bullying, in the pandemic these platforms have brought comfort to many.

Whatever happens in the future, we need to stay strong during this pandemic and not give up. Our resilience and fortitude, looking after each other and being sensitive to each other's needs will enable us to get through this chaotic moment in history successfully.

# Hitler, Mao and Trump: From plays to politics, introducing today's modern Macbeths

Ethan March (Y8) explores the similarities between Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' and modern day political tyrants, arguing that despotism never seems to get old

After the attempted killing of King James I in the Gunpowder plot of 1605, Shakespeare was inspired to write a cautionary tale about the perilous act of overthrowing political leaders. This play was called "Macbeth".

Whilst tyranny and coups seem to go hand in hand with Shakespeare's love of drama, they are not just ideas found in stories or medieval and ancient history. From the USSR and the Soviet Bloc, to ISIS in Iraq and Syria, political leaders still try to assert their control over others today, just like the character Macbeth did over 400 years ago.

There are many parallels between the actions of Shakespeare's eponymous Macbeth, and modern-day tyrants. For example, many attempted or successful dictators believe strongly that they have a valid reason for seizing control illegally. Macbeth has many reasons for killing King Duncan but central to his motivation was the witches' prophecy that he is to become King. Similarly, Hitler believed that he alone was the person to restore Germany to its former, pre-war glory. However, rather than pursue peaceful diplomatic means of achieving this, Hitler used oppressive and vicious strategies such as the killing and expulsion of many Jews residing in Germany. Like Macbeth, Hitler used violence as a way to assert control.

Opposition to illegitimate leadership and tyrannical abuse of power is another theme explored in Macbeth that is echoed in modern history. In the play, Macduff and Malcolm, who are loyal to King Duncan, are frustrated with the illegal dictatorship that Macbeth has asserted over Scotland and



plot his demise. A modern-day equivalent would be the infamous 1989 student protests in Tiananmen square China, fuelled by frustration and anger with the total control the communist government held over the country. Like the final battle in 'Macbeth' where Macduff takes decisive action to usurp the usurper, Chinese students took to the streets to call for democracy and greater freedom of speech. It is estimated that nearly 10,000 students lost their lives for a cause that many in China are still protesting.

Many dictators will try to hold onto power despite evidence that they took that power illegally, ignoring the rejections of their power by those they govern. This is like Macbeth who, as more people become suspicious of him, takes increasingly extreme actions against his enemies, killing Macduff's family for example. Even though it is clear that Macbeth is not going to triumph, he fights to the end despite the inevitability of his downfall. A similarly desperate

'We should  
take hope  
that those  
who seek  
to cheat the  
system will  
not go un-  
punished'

'Macbeth  
symbolises  
the typical  
usurper who  
believes they  
have a right  
to power'

attempt to hold onto power was made recently by the former President of the United States, Donald Trump. He made baseless claims of voter fraud and as his successor Joe Biden's inauguration drew near, his actions became more extreme. He incited his supporters to storm the U.S Capitol building to stop congress from confirming the Democrats win Biden acts as the Macduff in this analogy, defeating the tyrannical Trump.

Macbeth symbolises the typical usurper, one who believes they have a right to power and will use any means necessary to take it. History has taught us that the cycle of power-hungry, ruthless oppressors will repeat indefinitely as the desire for absolute power lays innate in some. However, if there is one silver lining to this despot cloud, it is that Shakespeare's play ends in redemption. The tyrant is defeated, and justice is restored. Perhaps then, we should take hope that those who seek to cheat the system will not go unpunished.