

tractable material with considerable tact, and dignified simplicity. The language, while not always free from stiffness, is choice, and the versification correct. The poem enjoyed a high repute with the general public, as well as with poets and specialists: thus the great astronomer Hipparchus wrote a commentary on it in four books. The Romans also took pleasure in reading and translating it, e.g. Cicero, Caesar Germanicus, and Avienus.

Arbiter. An umpire; especially a judge who decides according to equity, while a *iudex* decides according to law.

Arcadius (Gr. *Arkadiōs*). A Greek grammarian of Antioch, who probably flourished in the 2nd century A.D. He was the author of a *Doctrine of Accents* in 20 books, an abstract of a work by the famous Herodian.

Arcās (Gr. *Arkās*). Son of Zeus by the nymph Callisto, and ancestor of the Aradians, who was translated to the sky by Zeus as *Arctūrus* = Watcher of the Bear. See CALLISTO.)

Archēmōrus (=leader in fate, i.e. the first to die). A surname given to Opheltēs, the infant son of Lycurgus king of Nemēa, who was killed by a snake during the march of the Seven against Thebes (q.v.). It was given him by the seer Amphiarāus, who foresaw the destruction awaiting himself and his confederates; and by it the child was invoked at the Nemean Games originally founded in memory of him.

Archestrātus, of Gela, in Sicily flourished about 318 B.C., and composed the humorous dactylic poem *Hedypātheia* (=good cheer), supposed to describe a gastronomic tour around the then known world, with playful echoes of Homer and the dogmatic philosophers. The numerous fragments display much talent and wit.

Archilōchus. A Greek lyric poet, especially eminent as a writer of lampoons. Born on Paros, he was the son of Telōsclēs by a woman, but was driven by poverty to

high value set on his art by the ancients, who placed him on a level with Homer, Pindar and Sophōclēs. For Archilochus had an extraordinary poetical genius, which enabled him to invent a large number of new metres, and to manipulate them with the ease of a master. He brought Iambic poetry, in particular to artistic perfection.

The many misfortune

had bred in his settled indignation in form and all vented itself in his friends, and abuse of his foes his lampoons, the promised and the Neobulē, hanged the despair engendered

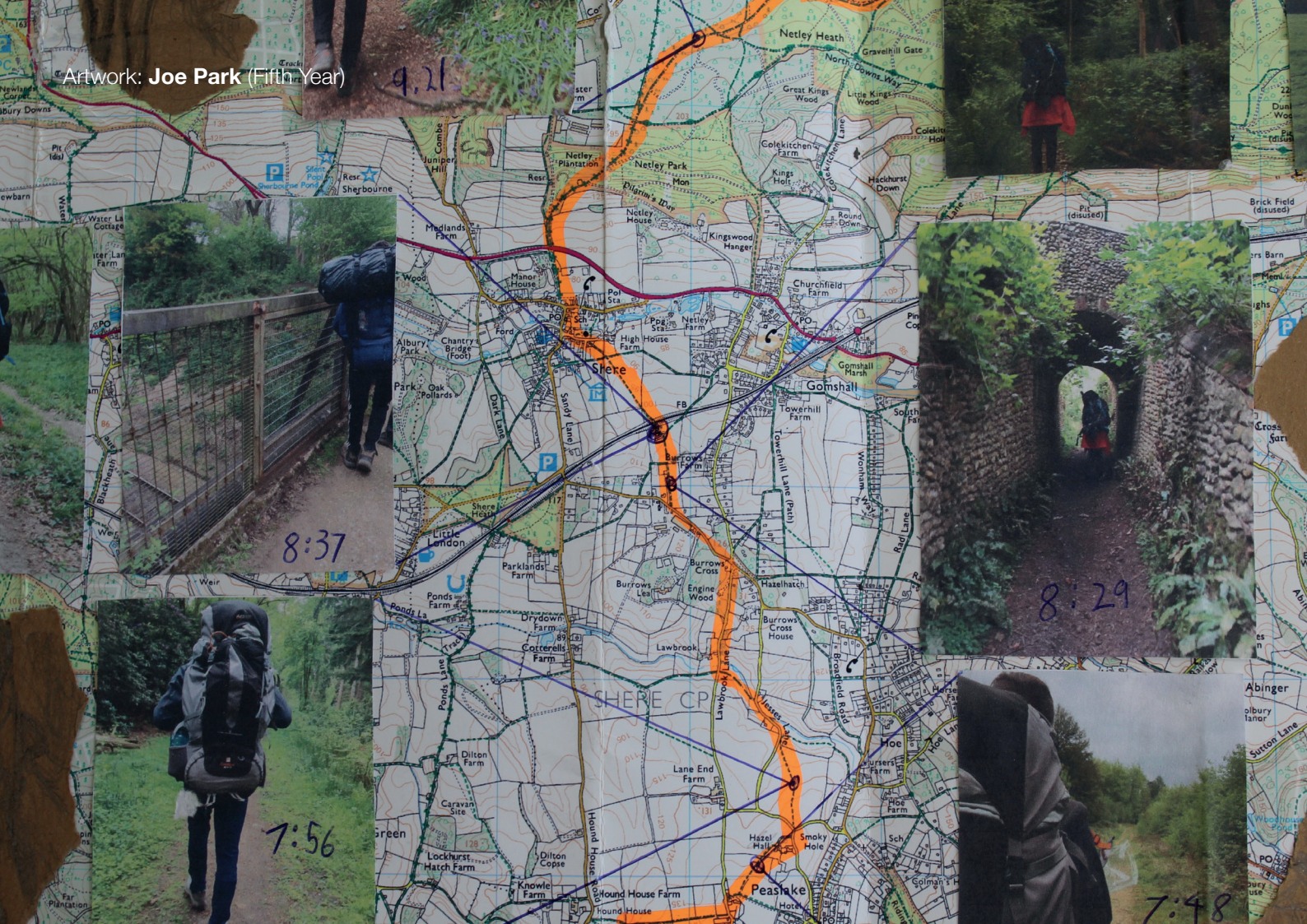
attacks. Of his poems, which were written in the Old-Ionic dialect, and taken from Horace for his model in his Epodes, only a number of short fragments are preserved.

Archimēdēs. One of the greatest mathematicians and natural philosophers of antiquity, born B.C. 287 at Syracuse. He lived at the court of his kinsman, king Hieron, and was killed (B.C. 212) by a Roman soldier at the taking of the city which he had largely aided in defending with his engineering. Of his inventions and discoveries we can only say, that he ascertained the ratio of the radius to the circumference, and that of the cylinder to the sphere, and the hydrostatic law that a body dipped in water loses as much weight as that of the water displaced by it; that he invented the pulley, the endless screw, and the kind of pump called "screw of Archimedes"; and that he constructed the so-called "sphere," a solar Orrery showing the motions of the heavenly bodies. Of his works, written in the Ionic dialect, the following are preserved: *On the sphere and cylinder, On the measurement of the circle, On conoids and spheroids, On spiral lines, The psammites* (or sand-



HAMPTON SCHOOL
CREATIVE WRITING AWARDS

Creative Writing Awards Evening
15 March 2018



Artwork: **Joe Park** (Fifth Year)

Creative Writing Awards Evening

We are delighted to welcome you to the second annual Creative Writing Awards Evening, an event that celebrates the talent of Hampton Boys from First Year to Sixth Form.

The Creative Arts is a very important aspect of our School and we are excited about this opportunity to celebrate our students' creative writing. This event is one of a number of initiatives to encourage Hampton Boys to enjoy the Creative Arts across different genres and in various media forms.

This year, we invited boys to enter the competition by writing prose or poetry related to the themes of Memories or My Life. All of the finalists' work is published in this programme; we hope that you enjoy reading it. Their writing will also be included in this summer's annual edition of Lion Print, Hampton School's Creative Writing Magazine (available during the Summer Term in print and online). Published author Saci Lloyd has returned to Hampton this year following the success of her workshops with last year's finalists. Earlier today, she led Creative Masterclasses for competition finalists and other invited students based on the topic of artificial intelligence, social media and communication.

As the judge of our Creative Writing Awards, Saci has also selected the overall winners and runners-up from the shortlisted finalists. Tonight she will present prizes in each of the following age group categories:

- Junior:** First and Second Year
- Intermediate:** Third and Fourth Year
- Senior:** Fifth Year and Sixth Form

Within the Junior Category, there will be both Prose and Poetry prizes due to the number of outstanding entries. We hope that you enjoy the evening.

Mrs Bartholomew (English Teacher)



Saci Lloyd

Saci Lloyd was born in Manchester, but raised in Anglesey where she spent a lot of time lost in nature or down by the shore.

Saci returned to Manchester as an undergraduate, but soon quit University for a life of glamour. At various points in the glitz she has worked as a very bad cartoonist, toured the States in a straightedge band, run an interactive media team at an advertising agency, co-founded a film company and finally wound up as Head of Media at NewVic. She's now stepped down from that post, but continues her association with the college.

Saci's first novel, *The Carbon Diaries* 2015, was shortlisted for the Costa Book Award and her third novel *Momentum* was longlisted for The Guardian Children's Fiction Prize. She has also written *The Carbon Diaries* 2017, *Quantum Drop* and *It's The End Of The World As We Know It*, a comedy set on a parallel Earth.

Saci is very aware of the market she writes for. She understands their day to day lives and that translates over in the voice of her novels. She is a very strong and vocal advocate within the education sector. Her experience of working with teenagers in East London has given her a very real and valid insight into how education policies affect the next generation.



Artwork: **Seb Khan** (Fifth Year)

But the Poppies Stayed Red

My grey helmet shimmered,
The sun reflecting off it,
Both sides were mirrored,
But the poppies stayed red.

Death was a poisoned cloud,
Showing no mercy
The guns cracked loud,
But the poppies stayed red.

As Blue Devils fell,
Parachuting to the ground,
Alive or dead?
But the poppies stayed red.

I loaded my gun,
Cocked it,
And fired,
But the poppies stayed red.

By **James Greenfield** (First Year)

What is a Memory?

What is a memory?
An inheritance of the mind,
That no man or woman, except one, can find,
Passed from one to another the way it was given,
Like an intricate game of Chinese whispers.

What is a memory?
A line of code that can be plugged in and downloaded,
From kilobytes to terabytes, the space it assumes,
Lost forever, in just one click,
Akin to death: treasures and tales lost in a moment.

What is a memory?
A posthumous cunning, forever locked in the grave,
The revenge of watching, waiting, witnessing,
Do not commit and it shall be your ally,
For all of eternity, yours to confide in.

What is a memory?
Experiencing the ups, the downs, the in-betweens,
Life's way of storytelling,
A doomed bestseller, destined for death row,
A gap in the atmosphere or sign of things to come.

What is a memory?
No one will ever know,
An unanswerable question, an indisputable obstacle,
But perhaps the explanation is ensnared in the memories,
Of someone long, long ago.

By **William Colvine** (First Year)

The Constant Sea

I remember an early morning bird singing up high,
To welcome the day.
The soft breeze caressed my face,
And rustled the leaves of the trees.

My steps made no noise beneath my feet.
I remembered the wonderful feeling of being free.
Hearing the faint sound of the waves on the unseen beach,
The taste of salt on my tongue.

The dew was untouched,
Sparkled in the sunlight,
The leaves raced each other down the path,
As if alive.

I was alone in the wood,
Free,
With the squirrels spiralling the trees,
And the birds taking flight.

Blackbirds hopped cautiously around,
Searching for unsuspecting worms.
Beyond the wood, the open fields laid out like a new carpet,
And now, just in view, the waiting water.

On the horizon,
Deep blue of the sky,
Met the shining sea,
The sunlight dancing on the waves.

As I took off my shoes
I remember the sharpness of the long, dry grass on the dunes,
And the soft, smooth touch of sand on my legs,
As step by step I sank slowly down.

Seagulls screamed up above,
Disturbers of the peace,
Soon drowned out,
By the crash of the waves against the beach.

I remember the pull of the sea.
Like a beautiful machine,
As it sucked in the pebbles of the shore,
The next wave rejecting the unchosen.

The beach was mine,
As if I lived on earth alone.
The sky, the sea, the wind and me,
As one.

By **Luke Trotman** (Second Year)

Younger Years

These are the thoughts that fill our brain,
A smile spread out for all to see,
We ran as one through falling rain.

A mother's shriek through shattering pain,
A younger you now comes to be.
These are the thoughts that fill our brain.

The joy of getting away on a plane,
A few days together have you and me,
We ran as one through falling rain.

I conceal myself, in fields of cane,
My mum runs past as I smile with glee,
These are the thoughts that fill our brain.

In the distance loitered a crane,
In the flowers buzzed bumble bees,
We ran as one through falling rain.

Now I'm grown up I drink champagne,
And think of the things that made me me,
These are the thoughts that fill our brain,
We ran as one through falling rain.

By **Sebastien Abercrombie** (Second Year)



Memories that are Not Mine

Memories, memories, memories,
Memories flood my mind,
Sometimes they haunt me,
Others just taunt me,
And some, I leave behind.

Down the street I went, looking for something to do,
Somewhere to go, "Maybe the Battle of Waterloo!"
So there I headed, straight through the country,
Towards the battlegrounds,
And there, lay something that would shock most people,
You could even say it astounds.

Memories, memories, memories,
Memories flood my mind,
Sometimes they haunt me,
Others just taunt me,
And some, I leave behind.

As I stepped onto the mud and dirt of the field,
I found myself picturing a shiny shield,
The mangled limbs of the tree,
Reminded me of a forgotten destiny,
These memories were not mine,
But I could still see them, just fine.

Memories, memories, memories,
Memories flood my mind,
Sometimes they haunt me,
Others just taunt me,
And some, I leave behind.

I quickly ran from the haunted place,
And still, remembered the terror-struck face,
These memories would not leave my brain,
Not the ones of a soldier who died in vain.
This curious condition impressed the doctor, and worried my wife,
It was not solved, but caused me little strife.

Memories, memories, memories,
Memories flood my mind,
Sometimes they haunt me,
Others just taunt me,
And some, I leave behind.

By **Tomas Escobar** (First Year)

Existence

Sometimes I question the existence,
Of the people to which I have said "good riddance",
Or if the existence of me,
Was even meant to be.
Sometimes I let the world revolve around myself,
And wait a whole year to see an elf,
But the world is in such a rush 365 days clear,
The "magic" of Christmas may soon be with us the whole year.

Sometimes I feel completely alone,
Despite the fact I share a home,
Despite the fact I am rarely on my own,
Not despite, yet despair, I feel is my clone.
Sometimes I feel the way I turn if I need someone,
Is blocked off by only one thing,
Only one thing is blocking my path,
And that one thing is my being.

I am responsible for the despair and stress I feel,
I am accountable for my fears and my feelings,
I am the one who lets things get the better of me,
And I am the being who feels alone, yet he is not.
Sometimes I feel very alone,
Sometimes I feel despair is my clone,
But to solve it, I must consult him on my own,
He who has the power to let me just be me. Me.

By **Zac Dowlatshahi** (First Year)

I See No Reason

Looking down now,
I know I will die,
My time has come,
Finally.

It is said that when you leave,
This wonderful world,
Your life fleets,
Right before your eyes.

You should hope,
To never leave this way,
Tied over a fire on a stake,
Thinking about this life.

When you feel strongly,
About a worthy cause,
I wanted to do something,
And gave my trust to traitors.

When the day eventually comes,
And you're over the top,
Right in the moment,
I never expected to be caught.

Standing underneath,
With all the gunpowder filled barrels,
And they come in to drag you out,
Because your friend betrayed you.

Knowing that the worst will come,
You fight and scratch and bite,
But all in vain,
For I am here now, about to die.

I have been tortured,
Hung, drawn and quartered.
Clinging to my dead body,
I still felt pain.

But it has now gone,
Leaving everything numb,
You will feel at peace with all,
Just like I have done.

Some place or time in the future,
I hope this cause will be righted,
And my attempts to stop this corruption,
Will become legend and folklore.

I can feel the joy of life slipping,
Right under my nose,
I am now free, I realise,
And willingly enter the void.

Years later
November, November, the 5th of November,
Gunpowder,
Treason and,
Plot....

By **Harry Spencer** (Second Year)



Keep Fit for the Over Sixties

It was during half-term, when all my friends were at glamorous ski resorts among glittering alpine scenery, that I was left with my grandparents. It wasn't a bad experience, and in fact quite entertaining.

The previous day my parents had been having trouble putting up some curtains so I was left with my other grandparents, who took me to a brick museum. You may think that there is nothing to be learnt about bricks, but you are wrong. Anyway, that's a story for another time.

The next day my parents were still fiddling with (the same) curtains and there were some stern words and awkward glances over who was to blame for buying the wrong curtain pole. While things were fixed by two more trips to Ikea, I was left with my grandparents to be occupied. However my grandparents had already made plans for the day, which they fully intended to keep.

We arrived at the village hall car park in time for the Over Sixties Keep Fit Group in my Grandma's miniature Skoda while being told that I would be 'banished' to another room so that I would not disturb the session, or more importantly, not be able to laugh at the Over Sixties keeping fit. However, as soon as we arrived Sue, the instructor, instructed my Grandma that because I was there I might as well keep fit with them.

At the village hall, the fitness fanatics were gathering. As soon as I stepped in, a thought hit me: only one of the over sixties appeared as if they were about to do any form of exercise. Most were dressed in shirts and dresses with handbags slung over their shoulders. I was very puzzled.

One exercise involved using giant colourful elastic bands. It turned out that each colour of band had a slightly different resistance to them. The pink ones were the weakest so the over sixties scrummed for them. Sue, according to Grandma, was ‘fitter than it is healthy to be’. This week, as it happened, Sue had an injured arm from “over-fitness” - Grandma.

Thereafter followed some serious training for the village pancake race (it was Shrove Tuesday and the event would take place immediately after the session). The pancake race is always taken very seriously but this year there was some competition in the over sixties category, so the keep fit teams had to train harder than last year. According to the gossip, the teams of chefs from a local

restaurant, the estate agents, and grocers have been training for weeks. The chefs were the favourites to win (Grandad's rotary team had won it the previous year). Each contender grabbed a balloon and did a few laps of the 'gym' while bopping it into the air and then they quickly declared that they were then better at pancake races.

Twenty minutes into the session, still nobody had broken into a sweat, and various people were having conversations about the price of cat food and denture glue. We were creaking out bicep curls when it became apparent that the 84-year-old in front of me was approaching it enthusiastically in a rather lop-sided way, by only raising one arm instead of both. This was because Sue's demonstration was limited by her injured arm, and the lady was deaf so she had missed the vital explanation. I thought I could help the awkward situation by catching her attention with a grin and clearly demonstrating that the exercise could be done with both arms. "You're doing it wrong young man," she shouted "look at Sue."

Soon the non-puffing participants started to enquire about a tea break. A crescendo of support gathered pace, and Barbara sprinted through the back door. The whole hall sprang to life. The mysteriously large hatch in the wall swooshed open to reveal Barbara and friend already pouring steaming mugs of tea and revealing plates of chocolate hobnobs. Despite the irony of eating biscuits during a Keep Fit session, it certainly got us all moving. A crowd of fitness enthusiasts gathered in anticipation. Talking about being ironic, there was much enthusiasm about the annual Keep Fit fish and chip supper which had taken place the previous week.

After the equipment was put away I had to be introduced to the whole room, one at a time. I had to listen to a variety of anecdotes on the topic of when they last saw me and how much I had grown since. During a conversation on the latter subject my phone pinged with a couple of texts from my mum. "Where are you? Can you bring pliers?"

By **Giles Mowbray** (First Year)

The Swimming Lesson

RIIINNNGGGRIIINNNGGGG!

"Arrghh," I groaned, as I tried to slap the alarm clock into silence. 'Oh great,' I thought as I looked at my calendar. Saturday: Swimming day.

"Come on, wake up," my Mum impatiently insisted. "We've got to leave for your lesson in about an hour." I scowled at her, like I did every Saturday morning, and then reluctantly rose out of bed and went downstairs for breakfast. I was an expert at stalling, taking minutes between mouthfuls. But eventually, the bowl was finished. Just before we got into our car, I attempted the usual, 'I've got a bad tummy ache' routine however, my embattled Mum did not fall for that nonsense. Slowly I got into the car...

As my Mum started the engine, I had to kick a crisp packet out of the way and move a mouldy banana skin off my seat, before I could even secure my seatbelt. The car journey was always horrible, not just because of the appalling state of the car (definitely nothing to do with my car snack habit) but because it allowed me time to dread. To dread meeting Karen. My swimming tyrant of a teacher. Karen had a grotesque face with skin that was a sickly, grey colour and hung in wrinkled folds. She had false teeth (probably because of her 'vending machine Twix habit') that clicked when she moved her lips. Her eyes were flinty grey and like a hawk, never blinked - constantly watching. Her mouth was in a permanent sneer, as if she was waiting to cackle at your inevitable mistakes. I hated my swimming teacher, she was hideous inside and out.

As we were driving my Mum switched the radio on: 'A few hours ago, in Florida, a menacing alligator was found in a local swimming pool near the deep end and immediate help was needed as ...' Suddenly, the radio crackled and I couldn't make out the rest of the story. I gulped and my stomach somersaulted. 'Was that true?' I wondered. "What happens if there is an alligator in the deep end of my pool?" I thought, biting my nails.

As we approached the pool building, I glanced through the steamed grubby windows, where I could see Karen was having a row with one of the parents, whose child was in tears. "Come on," pleaded my Mum as she pointed to the changing rooms. I rolled my eyes and then ventured, holding my nose, into the world's most disgusting set of changing rooms.

As I walked into the changing room, I saw two kids who had snot running down their chins. I covered my eyes before I saw any more, then slipped into the room. It smelt of sweat and stained toilets. As I put my trunks on, I could see some grubby toenail clippings scattered in the corner of the room and clumps of brown hair lying on the benches.

I put my hand over my mouth, and retched slightly. I darted out of the changing room. I saw Karen coming over to me so I quickly slipped into the pool before she could remark on how tiny I looked. I was only in the shallow end, but my ankles were already freezing to death, my teeth were chattering uncontrollably and the scent of the sickening chlorine made my stomach churn. Karen saw me and gave me a half smile, half 'you'd better do what I tell you' glare. I sweetly smiled back and then she said, "Go get a woggle. We are practising swimming in the deep end." I nodded back nervously; however, inside I was on the verge of a total breakdown, as thoughts of the Florida alligator swirled round my mind.

When I got to the deep end Karen told me what to do, “Ok, we’ve been practising front crawl in the shallow end for long enough. So I’d like you to do me a whole width of front crawl in the deep end.” She ended this with a thumbs up and a winked eye like this was the easiest task ever. I was dumbfounded and thought she was mad – I had practised the stroke for barely a week, was terrible at it, and had never swam in the deep end before.

Taking a deep breath, I dived in making a huge splash (hopefully soaking Karen with cold water). As I hit the water, my head was suddenly submerged in the frightening, icy cold waters. I could just make out the floor 3m below me. I lifted my head and took another breath before carrying on swimming. I looked forward. About 10m to go. I was already exhausted and could feel my legs slowly dropping down into the pool, as if I was drowning. 'Nearly there', I thought. About 6m to go. As I put my head down into the pool, while kicking the water like crazy, I saw something that was green and was weirdly illuminating the eerily dark waters at the bottom of the pool. I looked forward again. Only 4m left. I looked down only to see the green thing again. It was resting there and stirring slightly with the currents in the pool. An alligator. Like the one from Florida. My fear had transformed into terror. I desperately tried to scream but my mouth was full of water. It was coming closer. And closer. And closer. Only a couple meters left now. I wasn't even swimming now, just slapping the water to get away. Suddenly, I felt something grip my foot. I was seriously screeching for help now. But, I had to get to the end. With my arm fully outstretched I could feel the edge of the pool...

I jumped out of the pool and collapsed into a shivering heap. I saw Karen coming over to me smiling for the first time in her life. Still breathing heavily, I glanced round to see the lifeguard pulling a large green pipe from the pool.

Phew.

By **Vishal Saha** (First Year)



My Life

The last thing that I can remember was playing a nail biting game of rugby for my club, Ealing Trailfinders, against our arch enemies Rosslyn Park. It was a freezing cold day, with a wind that whipped across the ground, and mud that clung to my boots. Their team had two massive players, almost six foot tall, who were built like trucks! We were doing well, and had kept them from scoring for over five minutes when suddenly Jack, one of our players, stole the ball. He made a long pass to me across the pitch, and I started running at full pelt. Picking up speed, I ran faster and faster, until I was tackled by Rosslyn Park's full back. His head thumped into my chest, causing me to fall backwards onto a hard patch of frozen ground with a loud thump. Darkness.

I woke up with a jolt. I wasn't in my bed or on the rugby pitch, I was in a hospital. All around me were bright lights, a hive of activity with doctors running around staring at the heart rate monitor and other machines bleeping away. But what worried me the most was that I was staring down at my body unmoving in a hospital bed. I could see my parents worriedly looking in through the small windows on one side of the room. My mum was white as a sheet and crying.

All of a sudden the scenery changed and I was a four year-old having the time of my life, learning how to ski with my cousin Tom. I was on a gentle, but bumpy slope, with the sun reflecting off the beautiful white snow. We had massive smiles on our faces, smeared with a combination of sun cream and hot chocolate froth, as we skied towards a chair lift. Whoosh... and I was pulled back to the hospital.

This time things had changed. It was all so quiet and there were no doctors or members of my family in the room. All I could see was me, lying on the bed, unable to move. I could hear the steady beep, beep, beep of machines. I was so scared. I had a feeling that everything would be okay but all I could see was a sick twelve year old boy in a bed.

A moment later I was taken back in time to another favourite place. This time I was older and in Majorca enjoying a wonderful holiday in the sun. I could feel the warm, white sand between my toes as I walked along the beach with an ice cream in my hand and could smell the pine trees as they swayed from side to side. I swam in the warm, blue sea, hanging onto my Dad's shoulders, heading out to the nearest yellow buoy that was bobbing gently up and down in the waves. That afternoon we would make massive sand castles and play around with beach balls and floats.

Voices brought me back to the hospital room. I could hear the constant sound of machines monitoring me, but this time I wasn't alone in my room. All my cousins were there; one talking excitedly about the latest video games, another talking to me about my accident whilst putting cards around my bed. It was all very overwhelming as I was still looking down on myself, not really having control of what I was doing or saying.

A flash of light and I was in France, travelling up a mountain covered in flowers in a minibus. When we got out, I could see for miles and miles. On the ground in front of me was a parachute, perfectly laid out, without any creases. The instructor buckled me into a harness as the excitement built. On the count of three we ran forward, down the side of the meadow, and jumped off. We were in the air, weightless, and everything suddenly became a lot smaller; people looked like ants and I was flying alongside birds. It was amazing, exhilarating.

Back in the hospital it was dark and clearly night time. Looking around I spotted a clock on the wall and realised with a start that it had been over a week since my rugby accident. The good news was I must be getting better. I had no machines attached to me and I was breathing gently as I slept, and there was fruit near my bed, next to an empty packet of crisps and a half-eaten Kit Kat. A movement at the door caught my eye and I saw my parents peeking in and looking a lot less worried than before, which gave me a warm feeling inside.

This warmth spread all through me and I found myself in Cambodia, on a hot and humid day. I could smell spices in the air as I walked through the market. That morning I had enjoyed visiting temples and learning about the local history and culture and even got to ride an elephant. I tried lots of local food from the market stalls and drank from a fresh coconut.

"Matt, Matt, Matt" the sound of my younger brother dragged me back to the present. I was back in the hospital but this time in the bed and back in my body. It was so good to be alive! The past week had been horrible but I had clearly hung onto good memories of my short life. Even though I am only twelve I am already very adventurous with a love of sports and I enjoy visiting new countries and trying new tastes. I made a promise to myself at that moment - I will take advantage of every opportunity that I come across and live life to the full. You never know what's going to happen next!

By **Matt Venner** (First Year)

The Mission

My military uniform weighed down on my back. My hands were fixedly poised, holding my rifle, bayonet gleaming in the blazing sun. I lay prostrate on the hot desert sand, behind the dunes, my eyes fixed on the stone building where they were holding Arthur - my friend for as long as I can remember. He had been taken prisoner of war and we were now on a mission to rescue him - Operation Thunder.

The sweltering heat of the scorching desert blurred our vision and the building shimmered like a mirage. The wind screamed and slashed at our faces, the sand and grit swirling around stinging our eyes; a storm was brewing somewhere in the west. It was 0900 hours - we had been here for more than one and a half hours already, and there still hadn't been any sign of movement. My tired eyelids drooped as we lay in wait . . .

'Stanley? You have a visitor.'

My eyes opened and I could just about make out an unadorned ceiling. Bleary-eyed, I looked around the room I was in, bathed in the warm yellow glow of the sun. The lady, who was dressed like a nurse, handed me some medicines. Was this a hospital? Could I possibly have been injured?

'Did they save Arthur?' I asked her.

The woman's expression didn't change. She simply smiled at me, crossed the room and opened the door to let the visitor in. I sat up on my bed, still trying to make sense of what was happening. I saw a young man enter. He seemed vaguely familiar, but even stretching my memory as best I could, I simply couldn't remember.

He smiled at me, 'How are you feeling, Dad?'

I stared blankly at him. 'Have you got news about Arthur?'

The man wore a bewildered expression, shook his head disappointedly and silently left the room. I sighed in frustration. Where was Arthur? And why did the young man leave so suddenly? I saw him speaking to the nurse in the doorway, and some words caught my ears, ' . . . you should be more patient with your Dad . . . advanced state of Dementia.'

She came in with my dinner on a tray, with a note saying the time to have it. These days I struggle to remember things, but I surely wouldn't forget to have my dinner on time!

After dinner I sat on the bed. I couldn't get to sleep. I sat up, turning on the lamp beside the bed. Gazing around the room, my eyes came to rest on the clock at the foot of the bed. I watched the hands going around, the monotonous rhythmic ticking and my eyelids became heavy . . .

Everything was illuminated by the shimmering canopy of luminous stars in the moonless ocean of blackness. The silhouette of the stone building loomed large ahead. With a signal from Colonel James, we knew the final siege was a go. Stealthily, we approached the stone walls, and then came the gunshots, a barrage of bullets, the deafening cackle of the machine gun from the pillbox bursting into life. We started firing back, pushing on through the onslaught, advancing through the incessant, relentless fusillade, the haze of smoke and rubble. Two of our men fell, limp and lifeless. I could almost reach out and touch them, but the Colonel pulled me away. Corpses littered the bloodied battleground. My heart pounded against my ribcage. The overpowering stench of blood hit me; I could almost taste it, rank and foul.

Amidst the carnage, we found Arthur in a corner of a room - bleeding, bound and gagged - shaking his head frantically, his tearful, desperate eyes trying to say something as we approached. All the while I could hear a faint ticking somewhere, and only then I saw the bombs on the vest he was wearing. By then it was too late.

Frenzied screams filled the air - time froze, and so did I. A deafening bang filled the air and a blinding ball of fire threw me back. Everything went dark, and I fell . . .

I kept falling, falling into an eternal, grey abyss, an array of memories flashing past. In my desperate, futile attempt to grab a wisp of them, I was being sucked into a black hole of despair, overwhelmed by some kind of strong, invisible force. For a fleeting moment, I thought I had Arthur's hand, only to let it go . . .

By **Ishaan Das** (First Year)

Shadows of My Life

“Shu, I think you are going to be a great king” he muttered, his silky voice stroked the air like an angel petting a kitten. He turned the lights off, and headed down the dual staircase, that he and I would spend all day playing on, much to my mother’s discontent. I never saw my father again...

I remember the court’s hysteria. “King Hare is dead!” I heard the maids cry. I was only seven, but these images of desperation will always be painted in chrome colours at the back of my head. I remember standing there, clutching Tsuki-chan (my blue toy monkey), before running to Mum’s chambers. I stood in the king’s corridor, disbelieving my obedient ears. I would have pinched myself, but that feeling of horror that bellowed deep within my core was far too real to be a dream. I knocked on mum’s chambers, but her bitter response was, “Go away!” I felt tears build up at the corners of my eyes. “Mummy, it’s me, Shu!” I eagerly responded, my voice cracking up with sadness. “Is it true Mummy, is Daddy dead?” “Shu!” My mum cried. “Shu, leave IMMEDIATELY!” “MUM!” I cried. My eyes were water-pools of sorrow. “SHU FUDJIOKA!” She took a deep breath, and as the breeze changed direction, it became a gale. “Prince Shu Fudjioka, I am the Queen of Tamaroon. Do as I say!” She inhaled deeply. “Shu, please leave!” “But Mummy!” “YES, SHU, YOUR FATHER HAS DIED.”

I will never forget that day; those scenes are part of my DNA, my bloodstream. After a week or so, Mum unlocked her room, but the youthful flower that I knew as my mother never regrew well, scarred for life. A damaged soul, a broken heart.

That month, mum took me to the beach, which held strong memories of my dad and I having fun filled outings together. There were enough crabs in the rock pools to satisfy a young boy’s mind, and the sea was pleasantly mild, even in the coldest months of the year. I remembered hours passing by quicker than minutes, and my dad and I going on great adventures up the Ouran Coast. However today, minutes felt like hours. I sat in the shallows, letting the serene waves stroke my bare feet. I had my usual clothes on, a blue and white striped jumper (one size too big) and chinos. I felt the breeze play with my naturally white hair, and I looked out into the horizon, which was reflected onto the grey, crumpled surface of the vast seas. “Mum, can I swim over to puffin rock?” “No.” “Why not?” “Manners, Shu! I have the courtesy to bring you here, please listen to me!” “But it’s boring!” “Shu, I have found time in the royal schedule to bring you here, please respect that.” “Well, how did dad find time to have fun with me, do his schedule and be happy about it?” “SHU!” “You only hate it because you know it’s true!” “THAT’S IT!” She took a deep breath. “That is ENOUGH!” She took a deep breath, clenched her fists, and looked down at the pebbly beach. “GET IN THE CARRIAGES.” She uttered.

I have forever regretted saying that to her. I was immediately transferred to Kayaba Hall boarding school, and spent seven years with very little contact with my mum. I spent many nights on the rock hard mattresses, tossing and turning in my bed, thinking about my mum and all her bad luck, and how insensitive I had been to her.

I also thought about my dad, a lot. How we used to use bamboo sheinails and pretend they were swords. Dad always let me win, and say “Oh Shu!” then laugh, in his soft purring voice. “You’ll be the strongest king Tamaroon has ever seen!” Or how we used to go to royal appearances together, and I would feel like the most special five-year-old in the whole world!

About four months ago, I was studying in my chambers at Kayaba Hall when the postman walked in and handed me a letter. I thanked him then let him leave. I rather hastily opened it.

Dear my beloved Shu,

I realised immediately it was from my mother. I took a huge breath.

I have heard what a stunning young man you have become. I am so proud! I want you to come home and let your mother see for herself. I also would like you and your nine year old brother, Zen to become better acquainted. Very soon, on your sixteenth birthday, it will be your coronation. We have preparations to discuss and I have so much to explain. Love Mother

I didn’t know what to say. My mind went numb; I melted onto my bed, and cried.

This morning, four months after receiving my mother’s letter, I was home. I got up at six to walk my brother Zen to the herbalist plantation, he reminds me of my father every time I see him. Afterwards, I headed down to the ceremony hall, where even the walls were alive from the energy being put into my coronation. Then I saw my mum, who had relaxed into an armchair, watching the efforts. “Good morning,” I laughed, partially sneaking up on her. “Oh goodness, Shu. I didn’t see you there!” She smiled. It was the smile, the one that I hadn’t seen for years, that gleamed again, that melted my heart. “Happy 16th birthday, my dear!” She whispered, and then swiftly headed off. Her pride was palpable. Watching the preparations, smelling the smells wafting in from the kitchen, hearing the cheery laughter of the guards, my nerves danced on my tongue. This day will be a memory I will never forget, that I will cling onto, more than anything. The one I will feed off, giving me strength in times of pain. And as I become king, I hope that I will craft many, many more like this.

By **Thomas Bainbridge** (First Year)

The Piano – A Song for My Wife

My dearest wife,

As I sit here playing on our piano, memories begin to rush through my mind, making my heart beat faster than the wings of a humming bird. My most treasured memories are of you, my darling and I keep them close and stored safely in my mind, like a king protecting his precious jewels. I feel your warmth next to me now, as if you are here, sat right beside me. I know you are; your spirit is sparkling in the gentle, yellow glow of the lamp. I feel your delicate hands playing in sync with mine, just like we used to do every evening in front of the fireplace. How I wish we could go back to that time, so I could see your face again and hold you in my arms. Then, maybe my heart wouldn’t ache with such loneliness. I feel now, your warmth on my cheek as you turn and your soft lips kiss me gently. I know you have to go and that this is a kiss of goodbye. I am closing my eyes now as I hope that this moment lasts forever, but I know it can’t so I sit here, playing our song as you fade away into the darkness and I am all on my own again. I miss you, darling.

I know you are no longer next to me, but you can still hear me, I’m sure of that. I think of our life – the time we spent together and the time apart. I miss you now, like I missed you all those years ago, separated by bombs and hatred. A great sorrow fills my heart when I think of this time and I am telling you this now, wishing I had told you while you were still alive. It was you alone that got me through those dark, cold nights. You meant the world to me and I could not have made it through every single shot and bomb and explosion, every single loss and moment of despair, without you. You were my motivation to push through all the hard times. I can still hear the shrieks and cries as those bombs came whistling down. I would think of you often out there on the battlefield. In my darkest hour, when my best friend was killed and I had hit rock bottom, the thought of seeing you again is what enabled me to continue, to place one foot in front of the other and carry on. You were the only reason that I survived – my longing to see you again.

My life with you was an adventure, my dear. I longed for adventure as a young boy but never imagined to be so lucky to have the greatest adventure of all - you. As I continue playing now, I think back to my childhood, when I was innocent and naïve, not knowing what my life would bring. At the age of eight, the same age as our precious grandson is now; I received the most beautiful, wooden hobbyhorse. I would ride around on that horse letting my imagination run wild. If I knew then, what I knew now, I would have savoured every moment collecting it like precious diamonds.

I have given it to our grandson, you know, that precious hobbyhorse. I see the same vivid imagination in him that was in me at his age. The joy I get from watching him play, full of youth and innocence. It fills my heart with joy. I often sit and watch him now and it takes away the sadness I would otherwise feel. I see you in him, my love and as I sit here now, as he gallops around the room, I hope. I hope that he too will find a soul mate when the time is right. Just like I found a soul mate in you. My one wish for him is that he finds someone who makes him as happy as you made me.

I taught our lovely grandson how to play the piano and he plays beautifully, just like you, gliding his little hands above the old, ivory keys. He plays your song and he plays it so well. I wish you could see him play, you’d be so proud. It is coming to the end of our song now and I know it is time I let you rest. I miss you with every ounce of my being but I will see you soon, dear, of that I am sure.

By **Leaneesh Sivakumar** (Second Year)





Intermediate Finalists

The End of an Era

It was a hot and stuffy afternoon in the class room. I swing back on my chair and stare outside the window and see the sun beating down on the school yard, the swings moving back and forward slowly in the gentle wind. The teacher murmurs on about the mathematic equations on the board. Then, we are dragged to the assembly hall. I think back to myself all the time I have spent either singing Christian hymns or looking blankly at the animated projector screen. I also think about all the school lunches that I have had, the square cut pizza, the greasy chips, the relationship with the cooks. A wide smile is drawn across my face. Then I think about the hurt that has taken place. The bleep tests, the ultimate test of how far I could push myself, the emotional films about relationships and the cold silence of the year group being punished. I sit still. Memories flash through my mind, the good and bad. Assembly ends. I am pushed forward by my annoying peers. They are something I will not regret leaving behind.

And just like the seasons pass, I move through to break. I play football on the cloggy, gravel pitch for the last time. I swing on the crossbar, expecting one of the teachers on duty to come and give a word of warning. But they don't. They just stand there, huddled around their coffee flasks, gossiping about the other teachers. The ball rolls to me and I instinctively boot it away, my centre back technique put into action. It then drifts into my head; I will never play with the team again.

A recollection comes to mind about a rainy Monday morning in the local park. I trudge along in my black, leather boots, looking up at the dismal sky. I look around, five red bibs standing in my way and four blue ones supporting. Nate, the A-team striker, is pressing me rapidly. I scan for the nearest available teammate, with Nate moving closer by the second. A timed run from our upfront player opens up a gap in the middle of the pitch, causing our midfield player to run in. I complete a chipped pass to our

centre midfielder, who wreaks havoc in the middle of the pitch, then he punches the ball through to the underrated striker on our team, Bill. He receives the ball. I hold my breath. Moments later the sound of the net being ripped rings out throughout the muddy grassland. I exhale. I recover my conscience. It wasn't the first time I had felt pressure in school circumstances, however. The whole class sat still. The papers are put down face down. I look side to side, glancing at my peers encouragingly. A digital clock pops up on the white board. It starts ticking down. A bead of sweat drops off my face and I begin. The maths equations appear to need little effort at first, but incrementally turn into complicated problems. Time is constantly marching on, dragging me with it. After 40 minutes of vigorous work, I complete the test with 20 minutes spare. But I am not satisfied. Being a perfectionist, I check, double check and scan through every minute detail of the test. It then strikes me. I find a fatal error with three minutes to go. Feeling as if my very existence was on the line, I realise I must stop thinking about what might go wrong but rather how to come back and fix the issue. Briskly, I travel myself back to the moment where I learnt quadratic equations. I picture a room filled with light and with my classmates huddled around with me on the carpet we are told how to find the solution. I come back to present day. With time not getting any longer, I just write. Using the knowledge, I know, and applying that to the question, I manage to overcome the challenge. And at the end, I got 100 percent in my maths paper.

And that is what my school did for me. It gave me all the experiences, the ups, the downs, and prepared me well to where I am today. Sometimes, I sit on the bench in the local park. Or I play football casually on concrete ground and kick it far away when I get it. Or, even at a push, I might sing Christian hymns to be able to reflect on my past! But whatever I do, I will never forget my roots, where I was nurtured and made into the human I am today. Primary school is one of the most Important and influential places in my life as it made me, me.

By **Sam Brewster** (Second Year)

Qasidah for a Pining Immigrant

A traveller stands in a town square,
He hears the sounds, he breathes the air,
Yet he is somewhere else, he is not here,
He is in his home, among his forbears.
Wistfully yearning, through his prayer,
He wishes to see his home, to be there.
A child approaches, young face and dark hair,
He speaks to the traveller, as they stand in the square,

“Does your heart still yearn for the beating sun,
Do native words form on your lips and tongue?
Do you regret the journey you have begun?
Do you dream of the time when you were young?

“How can your life here compare to that you left?
What's it like to live in a nation not your own?
Has your mind caught up and jumped across the cleft,
That separates you from your people, from your home?

“The memories you've made and the ones you ran from,
New friends, new faces, new loved ones,
Who you'd never have known if you hadn't come,
Stories never told, forever unheard songs.

“Hold your head up high,
As you walk through your land,
Both the one you were born in,
And the one where you now stand.
Let your heart roam free,
Through the fields of your youth.
Experience repose,
As you know the truth,
You are made of your past,
You are made of your tomorrow.
So don't be forlorn,
Nor feel any sorrow.”

**“I am happy and proud of the life I have built,
I made the right choice - I have no guilt.”**

Inspired by many conversations with my grandparents who left Pakistan in the 1960s, moving to Britain. A Qasidah is a classical Arabic form of poetry, often nostalgic.

By **Nayaaz Hashim** (Third Year)

Memories of Liberty

*“America is a glowing new land of freedom,
warmly welcoming myriad foreigners;”*

Chained like hollow dogs, we limp through barren grey;
Wading through thick blood of the ragged slaves before us.
Racked with fatigue, we enter the land of freedom's bay;
A trail of gaunt animals bound by rusted cuffs.

*“Liberty extends her arms to the nation,
comforting and nurturing all,”*

A slave out of line! A jerk of the chain!
A slash of a whip; a gargle of pain.
A looming Statue, whose lips feed lies
Of a new free land, whilst her stone hand reins
Invisible ties.

*“And she commands the Fathers of
America to voice the land of liberty.”*

How easy it is to sit at a desk or lie atop a throne,
And use poetry and power to paint a façade;
But if you too could feel the searing whip to your bone
Or the brand on skin like herds of cattle
You would not utter so easily
America: a land of liberty.

In response to Emma Lazarus' poem “The New Colossus”

By **Alex Upshall** (Third Year)



Acid Rain

The silent trees were beckoning; swaying in the soft wind, curled branches extending their gnarled hands towards him. The man turned his head sharply, wary of the growing din encircling the wreath of boreal forests. It was nearly time. The second he'd rung them his call had been monitored. He knew that. They were on him now.

Had they got the letter? He'd never know, but there was some solace in the deafening roar of helicopters overhead: it had to have reached Berlin by now, albeit via the infamously unreliable postal service. This postal service was also a resistance group. He imagined them, their eyes widening in shock and triumph as they pored over the precious contents.

His only thought; he wished he had never got involved. But where would that have left him? An indoctrinated lapdog of the regime. There was some bliss in ignorance though. No. The world would have to change. And his life was about to.

His thoughts were abruptly interrupted by the subdued whirr of a helicopter as it landed. Armed militia whisked him into an armoured van - and he let them, putting up a token resistance.

Perhaps they would kill him quickly. He doubted it. They would delight in slaughtering him for all the trouble he had caused. But there was nothing they could do, and as he was bundled into the van he allowed himself a wry smile. A brutish guard grunted something incomprehensible, his face like a ham, perspiring under the cramped conditions. Gunter squinted at the other guard's face in the dim light, trying to find fault in his standard-issue Polizei demeanour: crew cut, clean shaven, forgettable face, silent ruthlessness behind the dull watery eyes.

His job was done, and he lay back in the van. He knew he was different from them, and he smiled at this. This earned him a punch in the gut, which sent a rippling pain across his abdomen. Spluttering, he muttered a volley of guttural swear words. The guard's face exuded sadistic glee as he revealed a contraband combat knife from his Polizei pouch.

The man decided to make best use of the guard's anger.

"I could have you done for that!" he chuckled, weakly. His laughter soon morphed into a coughing fit, which sent spasms down his legs.

"Werner said I could, so you'd better shut that smart mouth before I tear it up," the guard explained smugly. This time he did shut up, but merely to gain some respite. His eyelids fluttered drowsily as his head buzzed with rosy visions of a peaceful life. They turned a corner and his face was shrouded by darkness.

Two days earlier

Spring was beginning to skulk out of the murky depths of a particularly cold winter, for the Department for Energy (which provided all heating and electricity for the houses in Munich) was bankrupt, and the Reich Chancellor, Heinrich Gottenburger, had issued a statement stating, "due to financial complications" there would be not enough energy to last the winter.

All power supplies connected to the DfE had been effectively cut off after the first few weeks. Many had died of pneumonia, but it had been quickly asserted that these were "anomalies", and that the residents must continue to power Germany's industrial heartland.

However spirits were high on this crisp March morning, and the factories billowed with smoke, which settled above the grey buildings. A cacophony of whirring had overcome the city, the sound of men at work — mainly captured Jews, who worked in the factories. The residents were told that they were illegal immigrants looking for work. This was widely accepted, and today Gunter believed it too. His office was on the 45th floor of the government administration building, and he took the lift.

Printers hummed as he stepped into his office. Secretaries usually brought him a mug of hot, sweet tea, but the flu was going round and Gretel was absent. Instead, a stern-looking bureaucrat brought him an enamel mug of lukewarm tea, and he sat down at his desk, contemplating fantastical ways of shirking his day's work. The phone rang, and he was summoned to see the administration chief, Hermann Richter; a stone-cold conservative, conforming to every rule of the Reich. He also had a ridiculous handlebar moustache.

"Gunter, I have had a number of urgent telephone calls from the Department for Defence. They need someone to sort out the number of workers at the factory in the business district. You know the one?" he said softly.

"I do. However surely it would be the red tape guys who do that and not the DfD?" Gunter grunted.

"Just pay them a visit. You know the drill," he pointed to the door wearily.

The 'factory' stank of human faeces. The walls were stripped bare and the carpet was faded. There were no workers, only small cages which reeked of body odour and dank, moist air. What on earth was this ruse all about? He recoiled, just as a portly man in a three-piece suit called his name in a sickly, sing-song voice.

"Gunter!"

He recognised the voice immediately. It was the head of the Ministry of War Crimes, General Birchhoff. Birchhoff was a very unhealthy man, with yellowing skin and brown teeth. "Birchoff! What a pleasant surprise!" He spoke politely to the man he so deeply despised.

"Gunter, how are you...? In fact I don't really care. I'll be straight to the point. These pesky Jews, as you know, are immigrants. I'll make no mistake in telling you it is a nuisance keeping them in overcrowded factories like this one was. Now, this is our problem, and I am delighted to say we are solving it. Or in fact, dissolving it!" he chuckled drily.

"Whatever do you mean?" Gunter asked incredulously.

"What I mean is that we have found an alternative solution. We now ship them off to camps, where they and their kind are exterminated. What we need from you is the gritty stuff. Signatures, etcetera."

Gunter felt sick. Birchhoff gave him an uneasy feeling, a crawling, invasive sensation.

"So, here are the documents. You'll oversee the shipment and the rounding up of all Jews in this district." He spat out the last word, and handed Gunter the papers.

"Off you trot."

"Yes sir."

He ran out of the factory, ready to retch. Never had he come across something as corrupt or distasteful as this. But then again he had never left his office. He felt exposed, exposed to the real world. A thousand thoughts ran through his brain. He had power. For the first time in his life. But he also had a conscience. These documents could change German history. Mass slaughter. Perverse. He was out of his depth. These papers needed to be given to the right authorities. He stopped himself. This knowledge could give the German people all they needed to break free of the chains. Gunter had contacts in Berlin, men who could really use this information. Gunter was patriotic; he wanted what was best for Germany.

He dialled the Berlin number. Someone picked up instantly. "Berlin Postal Service, how may I help?"

"Acid rain." he whispered. This was the code word.

"I'm patching you through."

Silence.

"Gunter." A voice murmured.

"I have documents of great importance."

"What on?"

"The disappearance of thousands of Jews."

"Shit."

"I need to pass them on. I can't hold on to something like this. I'm in grave danger."

"Post them, discreetly, to 7 Freiburg Avenue, Berlin."

Guilt coursed through Gunter's veins, but he pushed it to the back of his mind. His intentions were clear.

By **Patrick Helm** piece (Third Year)



Fakebook

Fake news, fake memories.

I don't remember this.

I wake up in an empty room, devoid of any light, as if even the illumination of the day is unable to bear witness to my transgressions. As my inchoate memories swirl around me, I begin to recall my situation, why I am in this cell, how I have been stripped of the control of my thoughts. And then, suddenly, my disorientation returns, and the tenebrosity transports me back to the events of an earlier time...

I was hastily traversing Avenue 62 through the vicious storm, as though the heavens lamented the oncoming darkness. The teardrops plummeted to my feet, and yet my intense focus on my news feed, providing me with all the information I could possibly wish for, meant that I did not heed their warning. When I arrived at my departmental block, where I worked as an aide to a minister, as usual I went to ask them whether they wanted me to bring them anything. I slowly approached their door, and called out their name, and waited for the expected response.

There was no response.

I began to feel beads of precipitation forming on my forehead, and my hands were shaking as I gripped the handle of the door and gradually pushed against it. The sight which greeted me, of the cadaver of my superior lying there, on the ground, made me want to scream out in trepidation and panic, and I felt unable to breathe in recognition of the catastrophe which had occurred. How could this happen? More importantly, why? Who would have sufficient motive and turpitude to do this?

And then I realised that I would have to call the investigation unit. Whilst I had heard news of their successful work in dealing with incidents of this kind, I was cautious and uneasy about having to request their services. The investigation unit was an arcane organisation; nobody really knew what they did, or how they resolved issues, but everybody was aware that they accomplished results. However, my answerability took over and I decided I needed to involve the unit to deal with the situation, so I sent a message to the organisation through my phone.

They told me that I would need to come with them to give some further details and I innocently saw no fault in agreeing to go with them as I was in no way culpable for this crime.

I don't remember this. The chief officer informed me, once I had explained my narrative, that they suspected me of murdering my superior out of greed for his power and role, and a desire to become the prepotent political figure. I was horrified by this accusation and assured the officers that I had done nothing wrong; I was purely an office worker who was determined to help in any way that I could.

Then they showed me the social media footage of the incident. Broadcast from my own account.

The evidence, faked as I believed it was, appeared to provide conclusive proof of my sins, and they looked at me like priests, expecting my confession. When I had refused to do this, they took me into a confined and bare room, and left me there until they were ready to take me back to the interrogation centre.

I don't remember this.

I felt that I was beginning to realise what was happening, why I was being treated in this way, but with the benefit of hindsight, I know that I was in no way closer to the truth than I had been. Our society had been so blinded by the news we were provided with, the media which appeared to be so determined to confirm my trespasses, that we were incognizant of the truth about our lives, and the society which orchestrated the way we lived. We were all part of a game, being kept blissfully joyful, unless the leaders felt we weren't required, or until we could be a scapegoat for their own aims. And I had heard rumours of covert groups, subtly installing memories into their victims to force them, like an act of contrition, to announce their guilt.

They kept taking me back to the room, showing me more and more images and footage of my guilt. A transcript on my channel where I had supposedly explained my ambitious intentions, although I never did this. A video of me arguing with and threatening my manager as we stridently disagreed about future plans, although this had never happened. A photo of me with the gun that was found at the scene, although I had never seen or touched this gun.

And yet I knew I was innocent.

Or was I? Surely not all of this evidence could be spurious? What if some of it was true? What if I had stood there, with the thunderstorm cascading down the windows, and pulled the trigger?

Do I remember this?

Confusion overtook my mind until I lost all sense of where I was, and what time it was; I only knew my worries and my remorse. My dire situation was only augmented, with more accusing evidence from the media I had so admired, filling my thoughts with memories which I had never been aware of. And my dreams provided no relief from my harsh reality, only the evocation of an increasingly clearer defined recollection of the event and of my lust for power.

Crepuscular, insidious tendrils of guilt and ignominy plucked at my thoughts, and my vivid memory of the event became the only lucid part of my conscious brain, until my intense disquietude possessed me to kneel in front of the officers and declare my sins and seek forgiveness, before I fell deeper and deeper into memories that never were...

I remember this.

By **Matthew Cresswell** (Fourth Year)

Memories

There is a time I can't remember
Before I started school,
It's like an emptiness inside my brain,
A still and misty pool.

I cast a line and start to fish
For the smallest recollection
But nothing living seems to swim
Towards my bait's direction.

I know these memories exist inside me,
So why can I not find
A single star or ray of light
Within the blackness of my mind.

So many firsts I must have felt
First step, first word, first friend
And yet I cannot picture them
It's hard to comprehend.

The sun shines in the photos
The candles burn bright on the cake
The smiles are wide and joyful
But the memories still feel fake.

Yet just because I can't remember
Does not make them less true
They run right through the heart of me
Shaping all I say and do.

These memories are not mine alone
They're like rain on many faces
Shared and never separate
Leaving countless traces.

So when I'm old and grey
Digging for my past
Mining for a memory
As time has gone too fast.

I'll know life's not a solitary pursuit
It's not just I or me
But you and us and they and we
Down every century.

By **Theo Radicopoulos**
(Fourth Year)



The Alleyway

I saw a man today. He was lying in the alleyway and he was crying and he had no trousers but I didn't help him, because Momma says I shouldn't talk to no one round here and if I do, bad things will happen, like what happened to Jonny, and Rachel, and Sara. I don't want bad things to happen. So I don't help the man in the alleyway who is crying and has no trousers.

He's nearly finished. I can tell from his eyes, because they look old and the man is young. I can tell from his mouth, and the voice that cracks like poor tarmac after a downpour. I can tell from his touch, the way his hands softly caress his face and the ground as if discovering new features he never found in a wasted life, a wasted life I know is his because I have seen this man lying in the alleyway before. He's nearly finished.

The one lying in the alleyway, crying and with no trousers, who is nearly finished, which I could tell from his eyes, his mouth and his touch, and I have seen before, is gesturing at me. He points towards his trousers. I run away.

Momma was in the house when I went in. I told her of the man lying in the alleyway, crying and with no trousers, and I told her of who he was. He is the storyteller, the one who has no purpose, he who kills to survive. Momma shouts at me, and calls the man names, like 'drifter', and 'murderer', and 'coward', but never 'hurt' or 'finished' or 'broken'. When she turns I run back out, because I don't think the man is a 'drifter' or a 'murderer' or a 'coward'. He is nearly finished and is lying in the alleyway.

A while ago, the man got up. He has not stopped crying. I don't like the crying because it reminds me of the night and the sounds of the night and the men who bring the sounds to the night. The man is not lying in the alleyway but walking down, away from me and Momma and home. And I am glad, for the man is nearly finished.

I can't feel my body, but I know it hurts. It moans and weeps and cries and shouts and dies and lives, and still I'm not sorry. Should I heed its warning? It knows. My body knows, my body feels, my body hurts. Really hurts. And still I'm not sorry.

'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness'. 1 John 1:9. I can't remember when I learnt that. All I know is that, at the time, I thought it was wrong. In this alleyway, however, my perception seems to have changed slightly. God's now the judge and I'm the

defendant, and all those nameless faces are the prosecution. And the jury have reached a unanimous decision.

There's another line in that chapter. 1 John 1:10. 'If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.' That's probably why my body hurts so much.

Except I admit to it. My sins. My crimes. Other lives. But, I suppose that's not the same as a confession. Some God, this fella. He'll let you off the hook for one confession. Some people don't deserve forgiveness. Can't imagine he'll like me much.

A boy's appeared. I recognise him. I bet he recognises me. They all do round here. Jesus, I hurt. I can't see him clearly.

Drifting in and out of consciousness is relaxing. You always hear 'I can't tell how long it's been' and 'I don't where I am', but in truth, it doesn't matter. It's pain relief. And the boy's still there. He reminds me of the first. The following, down the road, and then the conversation. I used to tell them stories. And then... I'm sick, you know. I didn't want to do it. It's just, I like a challenge. No one stops me round here. Apart from today. And once you start, it's so hard to stop that you don't bother. I know I'm not the only one. If I'm addicted, someone else must be as well. There are too many screams and wails and bad things in the night for it to be just me. Or maybe I'm wrong. My body's pain feels too direct, too fraught with emotion, too intensified by hate. The people who did it, they were probably related to one of them, one of mine. I wonder how it feels to lose someone like that. I suppose I've already lost myself.

I need to get up. I feel an urge to perform. My trousers, kid. No, well I'll have to manage myself. I only realise now the state of my leg, and it's red and bloody and scarred and damaged, and red I suppose. The boy sees it too. He knows more than he should at his age, I think. He's felt hatred, anger, pain. Forgiveness. His eyes give it away, sunken into his head like bowls, and his mouth, set in a perpetual grimace. And his touch. No boy should feel like that, yet alone a man. Is that me, in him? Am I the cause, of grief and anger and hatred and pain?

Yes.

I look away, pull up the trouser leg and walk away.

By **Finlo Cowley** (Third Year)

The Clifftop

I stood there, feeling the bitter wind hacking away at my cheeks, I felt the icy rain mercilessly whip me, and the thunder screaming at me, like my father when I would come home from school in tears. I stared down at the city below, the city that had been so cruel to me. I saw my house, and my school, and the route I would take home, the route that avoided the crowds of people who didn't notice me, and worse, the crowds of people who saw me suffer, and laughed. I thought of all the times I hid in my bedroom, of all the times I hid in the toilets at school.

I screamed. No one in the whole city below noticed my screaming, no one cared. No change there. I stayed silent for a few minutes, letting the wind freeze me and the rain drench me. I thought about why I should turn around, and walk back down the hill that I had spent so much time walking up, but why should I? If I came home this late I'd only be beaten again, and sent to my room before my father got drunk with his friends. The only person I'd go home for is my mother, but she's forced to work such long hours she wouldn't even see me. I began to write in my diary. Someone would find it, up here, on the clifftop, and they would not recognise my name when they saw it. Why should they? No one cares about me. I wrote first to my father, as he is the reason I am up here.

"Bill, if you stay sober long enough to read this, or if you care enough, this is for you. All the times I came home from school, crying, limping and bruised, you did not help me, or try to fix the problem. You shouted at me for being late, and for getting bad grades. You tried to attack my mother, the only person I love, but you were too drunk to hit her, but you had no trouble hitting me. You never noticed all the times I tried to reach out to you and pleaded for you to help me. I know you were ashamed of me, all the times you sent me to my room when a visitor came and told

all your friends you had no children. I hope you're happy now, you won't have any soon and it's your fault. Before I left home for the last time I stared at you and looked into your soul to find a part of you that I can love forever. I found nothing."

I put my pen down, a single tear in my eye, not because I loved my father, but because I felt sorry for myself, about having such a bad one. I lay down, facing the sky, and embraced the rain that was drenching me, the last thing life threw at me before I left it. I was glad the weather was so bad, I might as well end my life as I lived it. I threw rocks down at the city below, to get petty revenge for what it had done to me. I picked up my pen again, thinking of everyone who had ever pushed me around.

"Monty, and your patriotic followers that never seem to disagree with you. I don't know why I'm taking the time to address you before I leave you, I owe you nothing. I don't know why you took so much pleasure in pounding me, and watching my eyes blacken and swell, but I'm glad you did. You're the only people that seemed to enjoy my company. I only have one thing to say to you. You are sadistic, you only hurt me because you are so shallow, you have nothing else to do, and my only wish is that the next person you pick on can deal with it better than me."

I started a new page, I only wrote five lines about my final person, ironic that the person I love the most is the person I spend the least time on.

"Mother, you are the only reason I lasted this long, you are the only person who cared about me, and you are the only person I care about. I love you, so I beg you, divorce that monster Bill. Thank you for sticking with me, I am sorry I couldn't stick with you. Good bye Mummy, thank you!"

By **Jude Glasson** (Third Year)



Ode to an Atom

Protons, neutrons, electrons bare thee proud
Thou orbitals are whizzing fast around
Through quantised fields you move describe
probability wave functions do ascribe
The position of electrons doth fly

Oh W-Bosons! thou bind thee with
The short ranged force which comes with being Higgs
And with the other gauges which have mass
At last the world exists with purity
An altruistic gift: the gift to live

Yet when one tries to see the truth inside
The wave collapses thanks to Heisenberg
This particle duality give thee
Thou ability to ignore the light spectra
Allows thee to burn bright like great Vesta

Thy Higgs which terminates with such great speed
Has Vacuum Expectation value which
Due to these two vertices can have
An intrinsic value which exceeds all
Prior recordings, giving us this mass
Through quantum chromodynamics we have
The neutral white light of those blessed hadrons
Be but the red, the green, the blue of quarks
In mesons too! A quark and anti-quark
Bound tight by gluons with respective charge

Oh atoms! The mere spheres that you once were!
Hath evolved into a quantum state of
A group of quarks which hath formed baryons
But why doth thou leptons which have half spin
Rotate in orbitals: D,F,S,P?

Without these sacred leptons you will form
A cation to which it will collapse
If the great rule of general charge doth lapse
But let the charge be plus or minus three
And ions will possess stability

Be two up, one down or two down, one up
Through strong and weak force thou art united
Lambda and sigma be ever blighted
For pentaquarks can never be full formed
Antiquarks be not conjoined with thou quarks

By **Alex Metha** (Third Year)

A Monstrous Beginning

With one great gulp I ingest the liquid.
Pain envelops my mind, ceasing to wane.
Now my grotesque features are evicted.
Yet all the affliction does not refrain.

My demeanour split, a battle within.
Like poison it burns me, devastating.
Willingness to go on is wearing thin.
It fails to subside, my teeth grating.

My whole figure is enraptured in change.
A new manner emerges, body fresh.
Alternative thoughts quash that monster's reign.
His baleful frame hidden by my true flesh.

I have arisen, from the beast's abode.
A monstrous beginning I have rode.

A sonnet inspired by "The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde" by Robert Louis Stevenson

By **Sam Colvine** (Third Year)

Primary School

The red uniform shines boldly under the warm bright sun as you run from the car,
with the velvet cap showing everyone the true pupil you are,
as you walk through the small gate where your future lies.
At noon you hear the echoing chimes of the golden bell to commence lunch on the astro.
That was where my true colours were shown,
after the first kick of the black and white football I knew this was my sport.
This was where my first memories flourished at this school,
the desire, passion and love that would be a useful tool,
for not only my football but for my next dive into the 'academic pool',
when leaving for a bigger school.
Although the small, wooden gate is now closed,
the memories at that school will never be erased,
it's a reminder of the old fun days.
Emberhurst you have served me well,
and although the walls have fell,
I will always hear the echoing chimes of the small, golden bell.

By **Nat Woolaghan** (Third Year)



Letting Go

A spry wind sent shivers down her spine as Emma searched for the next handhold on the sheer slab of rock she was hanging off. She reminded herself not to look down; still not quite used to the sinuous void below her. Her partner, Joey, was faster than she was, scaling the mountain with a cat-like grace. She looked up and, almost in slow-motion saw Joe falling, his frayed rope dangling in the air. Her eyes open wide, she watched in silent horror as the man who had become the closest thing she had to family, was falling to his death. She reached out her arm in one last valiant attempt to save him, and miraculously, he caught it. “Joey! Hold on!” she said, trying to sound as tranquil as possible.

“Emma, just let me go,” he said, his voice eerily calm.

“No! If I can just reach my radio...” she said, trying to reach the radio strapped on the other side of her bag.

Joey squeezed her hand, “Emma it’s no use. Your rope can’t hold both of us. We both know that.”

She squeezed her eyes shut, she knew deep down that he was right. “I can’t. I can’t let you drop. If one of us falls, so does the other.” She said, trying to choke back the tears.

“Emma”, the strength in his voice surprised her, “let me go. Please Emma. I need you to live.”

She shut her eyes, memories flooding her mind. The day had started like any other with a promising sunrise over the top of the mountain. Emma pulled up in her truck, she knew Joey was already there testing the ropes. That was one of the things she loved about him, he was always worried about safety, especially hers.

She walked towards him, excitedly thinking about the new peak they were going to climb. Joey looked up as she approached. “Hey, Em”, he said, pulling her into a hug. “Excited?”

She grinned at her nickname, “I can’t wait. It feels like it’s going to be a great day.”

He squeezed her one last time before letting her go, “Let’s finish getting everything ready before we leave.”

As she watched him coil the ropes around and around like snakes, she couldn’t imagine a life without this man, but now...

Her thoughts were interrupted by a strong voice.

“Emma, do it.”

But she couldn’t, not yet.

It had been Joey who had invited her to come along with him and his friends as they climbed together. She envied them as they scaled cliffs and at the end of the day, when Joe invited her to try it out, she couldn’t refuse.

Climbing the mountain for the first time, with Joe as a guide climbing next to her, was an experience Emma was sure would never escape her memories. When she reached the top and stood there, looking out at the green expanse reaching below her, she knew she had found something she loved.

“How was it?” Joey asked when they reached the bottom of the rock.

“Indescribable.” she replied, grinning from ear to ear.

“Want to do it again?”

“Absolutely.”

From then on, Emma joined the climbing group as often as she was able. Soon it was just her and Joey scaling the rocks almost every week. After three months of climbing together as a group, Emma and Joe decided to become climbing partners.

The tears falling down Emma’s cheeks surprised her. How could she let go of this, of him.

Her mind brought her back to one of the best weeks of her life. It was a warm summer day last year, the kind when all you want to do is sit outside with a good book and maybe an ice-cream. Emma was at home that day doing exactly that when Joey pulled up in a Jeep she had never seen. She put down her book. “What is this?”

“Our Jeep,” he said proudly, “I decided since we were going to be climbing a lot more together that we should have a car that will be able to take us wherever we want to go.”

As she climbed into the driver’s seat, he explained his idea. “I thought it might be fun to drive to Colorado and go climbing. Just some quality time together since we’ve both been so busy.”

She heartily agreed and after packing a few bags they were on their way. Joey had made mix CDs of all their favourite music, mostly country, that they sang along to as they drove, the miles flying under their tyres.

They finally reached their destination; the mountain before them reaching past the low hanging clouds to the sun far above. They started the climb, putting one hand above the other, gradually making their way to the tip. They finally reached the flat ground at the top and Joey pulled Emma into his arms. She wrapped her arms around his waist as she stared out at the expanse of land laid out before her. “Thank you,” she said.

She didn’t have to see his face to tell he was smiling. “You’re welcome, Em” he said, “but this isn’t the only surprise I have for you.”

She looked at him quizzically as he pulled two sleeping bags from his bag. “We’re going to sleep up here?” she asked.

He nodded, laying the bags down. He pulled out other camping supplies from his backpack and she realised that he had carried all of this up the mountain just for her.

As the sun set, the two of them lay there, holding each other. It was at this point that Emma realised that she never wanted to let him go.

“Goodnight Em” he said kissing her on the forehead.

She let go.

By **Ben Holker** (Third Year)



Memory

Midnight.
Grizabella has left her friends at the Wetherspoons, and is walking back to her flat. The reason for her early night is neither her lecture at 9am tomorrow (which she has no intention of attending) nor her research project which must be submitted by Wednesday evening (she is twenty words in and Monday is just coming to an end) but simply that she has no further desire for company. She has had a single glass of wine tonight, but alcohol no longer appeals to her. Nothing can silence her inner turmoil.

10:39pm, earlier the same night.
‘Drinking game, drinking game!’ Skimble announces, rapping the table with his knuckle. Gus snorts before he can continue.
‘This had better not be another one of those ones you learnt from Railway Society,’ he says scornfully.
‘Shut up, Gus,’ Skimble shoots back. ‘You can hardly talk, coming here every week, regaling us with anecdote after anecdote about your little Theatre Club.’ Gus sulks.
‘Come on, then,’ Jenni says impatiently. ‘What’s the game?’
‘The game is this. Everyone takes their turn to say why they should get into Heaven, and whoever has the best reason wins. Everyone else drinks.’

There is briefly silence.
‘Sounds like a pretty dead game,’ Mistoffelees dismisses, not looking up from the deck of cards he is shuffling. ‘What, so there’s only one round. And everyone except one person ends up drinking. What is even the point?’
‘Trust me. This one’s not so much about the drinking. It’s really interesting to see what people say.’
Bella has been listening silently. She is never getting into Heaven. She knows that. Not after last Thursday. She doesn’t even especially want to be here, but her friends insisted she leave the flat. Normally the glamorous, sociable one, she hasn’t been to a single thing since it happened.

11:59pm, the previous Thursday.
It has descended into a shouting match, which is the last thing Bella wanted. More than anything she wishes Tessa would come away from the weir edge.
‘I’m literally begging you! This isn’t your only option. I promise.

Come away, just take my hand, Tess, I am begging!’
‘You can’t just change your mind all of a sudden!’ Tessa cries.
‘I’ve seen with my own eyes how little you value me! My parents only care about me to the extent that they want me to be as quiet and obedient as possible, and are probably glad I’m not taking up space in their house anymore, and my sister lives in a different continent! So tell me, Grizabella, who do I have left? Why don’t you tell me?’
Grizabella’s cheeks are damp with her tears. She can’t move forward. She can’t grab her. She fears too much to make any sudden move.
‘You know that you’re the best friend I’ve ever had,’ she says. ‘You know I love you more than anyone on this earth.’
‘Why do you never show it? You’re never around; you’re never there for me. How can you stand there and call me your best friend?’
‘Take my hand, Tess,’ Bella pleads, her voice a whisper. Tessa stares at her, unreadable. She makes her decision.
‘Goodnight, Grizabella.’
‘TESS!’
Grizabella screams and races forward.
The moon is the only witness.

10:53pm, Monday.
Bella finishes speaking. She was the last to take her turn. She has been explaining why she shouldn’t get into Heaven, and her friends’ expressions are pained. Mistoffelees is studying her. Gus’s eyes are red. Jenni has gently shifted next to Bella and placed a consoling arm around her shoulders.
‘Damn,’ says Skimble quietly. An attempt to break the silence. The silence returns.
People sip their drinks unostentatiously and glance at Bella, as if expecting her to give them permission to speak again. She doesn’t say another word.
‘I mean, I don’t think there’s any question of who wins that one,’ Deut eventually declares. Grizabella smiles weakly, unconvincingly. Half an hour later she leaves.

Midnight.
Withered leaves collect at her feet. She walks on.
‘If You’re there,’ she whispers, ‘I don’t care about Heaven.

Just let me see her one last time.’
She knows she will never see her best friend again. The moon knows. As the streetlights pulse softly above her head, she knows she must accept that she is guilty of all of which Tessa accused her.
She wasn’t there when she was needed the most. She barely demonstrated her love. She assumed Tessa knew, and that that was enough.
Knowing that it is fruitless, Bella nonetheless repeats it to herself, like a mantra. ‘Let me see her one last time…’
She hears voices. She turns a corner and sees, further down the pavement, three men shouting, garbled, at one another. As she draws nearer she realises they are not arguing.
‘I just, need, youguystoknowthat youare my best, my best, friends, in, the entiiire world,’ one slurs. Bella winces.
‘I’m, I’m getting old, I know that, I know I’m getting old. I just wanna, you know I wanna do something, you know. I wanna, I wanna do something I wanna go somewhere guys. With, with my friends. That’s you guys,’ another replies.
As Bella walks on, their voices fade.
‘You know before you know it we’ll be DEAD, you know, we’ve gotta, we’ve gotta do something.’
The night sky unsettles her now. She is alone with the same sky that saw her stand metres away as her best friend took her own life. The same sky that watched her lurch forward a second too late, that heard her scream until her throat was raw, that surrounded her as she collapsed, desperate, hopeless, helpless, on the weirs side and wept until the all-seeing, all-judging moon left her alone and dawn descended.
As she rounds the next bend she becomes aware of a faint glowing. Someone stands at the opposite end of the path, facing Bella. A vague, ethereal tinge outlines her figure. She is peaceful, still.
Bella approaches tentatively. The girl does not move. Her face comes into clear view.
Grizabella stops dead.
Has the moon lost her memory?

Inspired by the unpublished character ‘Grizabella’ by TS Eliot

By **Felix Elliott** (Lower Sixth)

The Riverbank

The leaves rustled, the lark sang, the river sauntered by,
An image of wispy clouds painted on an azure sky mirrored on the water.

Now everything has changed.

Last summer, under swaying willows, time slowed down.
I lay on the verdant carpet of the riverbank, with a sprinkling of daisies and dandelions encircling me, calming me.

My bare feet felt cool, as despite the warmth of the golden May sun sailing though the sky, an easing breeze smelling of elderflower wafted along the bank.

The swifts and the swallows were soaring;
their dance was silhouetted against the infinite sky.
The silent rivulet flowed through this magical grove, a silver mirror sliding past the trees, and the bushes, and me.

I knew, despite its serenity, that beneath the surface was a metropolis of life: dragonflies and mayflies who would emerge in a few weeks and spend the summer skimming along the glassy water.

On the other bank, shaded beneath a great oak, was the heron, guarding the gateway to this paradise through which I must have stumbled: Perched on one leg, perfectly still, observing the wondrous beauty of this magical kingdom. It was bliss.

Now, though, the grove is in the grip of winter’s icy frost.
The grass crunches under my feet as the frost has not thawed.
The flowers have all withered and died, their paralysed corpses buried deep in the frozen earth.

The trees are bare, skeletal, emaciated, stripped of their glorious emerald cloaks like noblemen stripped of their titles.
The sky is a sheet of iron, void of any colour, of any life.
The silence which is draped over the riverbank smothers and suffocates the few creatures which survive in this barren wasteland.

Yet, despite the desolation, there is one who remains, and will always remain: standing on the other bank is the regal statue of the heron. He has seen the seasons ebb and flow like the river over which he reigns. He knows the sun will return, and from the frozen earth, there will be growth, and the riverbank will be transformed with an abundance of vibrant life.

But for now, he waits.

By **Alex Fagan** (Fifth Year)



The Day

Despite the transient and fleeting nature of memory, my grandfather can still remember that day in every detail. He claims that that one day was responsible for everything, every tiny thing that has happened since. I know no different so I can't challenge him on that but I suspect he is telling the truth. He calls it, "The Day Where The War Ended". I admire his optimism in this, for everyone else simply knows it as, "The Day The Bombs Fell".

My grandfather, now in his elderly age of 102 was only 13 at the time, yet he knew enough about what happened and why. He claims before they hit, the world had been in a horrible war over the last remaining oil reserves. My grandfather, although born already into this war, remembers vaguely the sight of his father leaving to fight overseas. He never returned.

He would tell us how, due to his father's admirable actions overseas, his family were given entrance into a nearby underground bunker that was located just south of the river. On the day the bombs fell, he told us of the panic that consumed everyone that fateful day. He told us of his fear for the future and carelessness and the terror. They reached the river but the one bridge over it had fallen to the many people all desperately trying to escape the village. All the shops were closed, the cars all stood in line. Far off, you could see a glimpse of the city where the nuclear bomb was destined to hit. Military was strewn all over, trying to maintain peace that day. I remember my grandfather, desperately trying to look for his dad that day, but never saw him.

Once they swam across the river, they raced down the dirt track on the outskirts of the town where they saw a fence and gate surrounding a field full of cattle with a platform in the centre. With turmoil in their eyes, my great-grandmother pleaded with the man at the gate to let them in, screaming, "We're on the list! We're on the list". After five minutes they let them through, just seconds before the bomb hit.

The great mushroom cloud surrounded the sky, making it hard to breathe and see as the platform raced down into a black nothingness. As the platform above them closed, my grandfather knew that was the only glimpse of the real world he would see for the rest of his life.

We asked him if he ever wanted to see the outside world now but he always replied back saying, "I can remember the parks, the shopping malls, the cars, the diners, the people, the lovers and the life. I have an untarnished view of the world. I would like to remain here, in this world that I have created." His memory of the time before had been so vivid, it had been hard to leave, to move on. He still dreams of the time before, the innocence, the tranquillity; but we know this was a thing of the past.

And now I walk along this battered road above the ground where nothing stirs. I feel fear and death all around. This radioactive land has no time for love and life. I think back to how my grandfather describes the world before, pleasant, perfect, untarnished. Then I open my eyes and dust surrounds them as I venture ever further into this wasteland. I try to picture the cinemas, the cars, the people but find I cannot. In this bleak, unforgiving wasteland there are no signs of hope, only ones of distress. And it is there I realise the power of memory. If only I had been there, maybe I would have remembered, then I could bear through this. But I can't. It's too far gone. This world has become our wasteland.

As I return home from a day of scavenging to find little food on the table, I understand what my grandfather feels. I sense his dread, anguish and hatred. I understand his sadness about never truly seeing his father once more as he wished. I feel sad for him for not living out the life he planned, do what he wanted. I understand that he must feel as if his life has been wasted, and no matter what I say to him, he won't let go of this world he has created, one that he remembers. I want to tell him to move on, yet I know he can't.

I don't blame my grandfather for not wanting to forget. I know I wouldn't.

By **Charles Maddox** (Fifth Year)

On Memory and Living from Sydney to London

Sydney:
Place becomes intangible. Rose-tinted, primitive, parasitic. Packaged and processed, sky is trussed, and wind-scent furled like ribbon. Distilled to something watery, some refracted fractured dream-scape that I grow to cherish. This is my first departure.

Day-break fluctuates across the wide brown land and the sky is a deepened coral blue, a radiant blue that slumbers in the morning haze, blue that sterilises the soul, that bundles light and makes air taste cloudless. The sky unrolls without blemish.

The dry, dry rainfall stirs primal dust. A harsher heart, scorched and racked by abrasive time and fortified by opalescent veins of ore, broods since time immemorial.

Foreign lyrics that grate as jargon stray into pauses, ratchet quick fire consonants to fling and scatter my present disillusion. Language is deprived of foundation. A language once understood becomes serrated. A continent reduced to consonants. A past with persistence.

Midnight sky as dark as oil leaks starlight around the horizon. But midnight there is midday here, and who can shelter beneath their eyelashes under midday's jurisdiction?

This is the illusion I am terrified to shatter. I have mingled sap and blood and time-reddened dust. I am bound to memory, to time, to the chorus of the damned.

With every recollection the breathless sky grows brittle. The synaesthesia reeks. That taste of youthful mirth attenuates, and time begins to turn to acid under my tongue.

I recognise the irredeemable, but how can I resist when memory binds person to place, and place to shifting air?

What bridges character between each heartbeat? Do we not bend and sway and tear with metronomic rhythm? Does change change one relentlessly? Maybe, he is still there, crucified upon the horizon.

Singapore:
Transitory.
The dewy warmth proceeds the rising sun, which kindles light diffused throughout the greying haze.

Unflinching concrete boulevards, manicured and absolute. A tropical exhilarance, when thunder cleaves the air in two and peals through the night. And tendrils of lightning lance brilliance through shimmering rain. The stagnant jungle swells with life.

This place bears past. It lingers in the lantern-light, in youthful mirth behind wizened eyes, in lively Hokkien babble. This place's past imprints upon me, and light solidifies memory.

Lingering. Already softening, liquifying. Already his face is consigned to mingle and meld with countless others.

London:
Present. Enduring. Compressing the individual. Here. Now. A little while. Sometime ago. Under the weight of yesterday, and the star-studded epochs that shaped life from heat and sound, this is the present. A little unbelievable.

London revolves beneath my feet, and the present renders life as tangible. Within the cocoon I revel in the conjunction of person and place. Like an infant I press together form and present, and delight in how they match. I am who I am now, but that is not all.

The fading day shirks from memory's vindication. We categorise, we compile, we saturate, we amplify, we mangle recollection ceaselessly. Necessarily.

School churns tirelessly and I grow tired keeping pace with the present.

I measure hours in breaths, and minutes in heartbeats, and seconds in star-death.

I can but sit and wait. Awaiting transformation, grey sky will soon condense. The bitter air tingles, anticipates the embrace of memory. Already now, the ground is slipping.

My words are sallow compared with what they mean to represent.

By **Zac Hale** (Upper Sixth)



МОЩНОСТЬ ПАМЯТИ

(The Power of Memory)

Alexei Brevnik hadn't always been a billionaire.

He took a last sip of vodka, swirling the glass' contents around thoughtfully before tipping his muscular, scarred neck back and swallowing it in a flash. Ahhhh.

Despite his abundance of wealth and possessions, Brevnik was a simple man. He enjoyed life's natural pleasures, and in his opinion a mouthful of pure, Russian vodka was the greatest and most pleasing sensation he could possibly experience. Just ahead of killing a man.

It was of his relatively newfound wealth that he thought now, reclining slightly in his custom-made leather chair. No, life hadn't always been this easy. In fact, it used to be almost impossible.

"Alex!" That was what his mother used to call him. "Alex! Your dinner's getting cold!" That earth-shattering, fateful day had been going just like every other – in the remote village of Sverdlovsk, deepest, darkest Russia, Alexei had become used to the grey monotony of everyday life. As he slouched down the stairs, anticipating his wholly unsatisfying supper of luke-warm cabbage soup, the teenage boy cast his eyes to the left, out of the cracked window onto the great snow-kissed peaks of the Russian Ural mountains. All was still, but for the gentle whistle of wind, which made the loose pane rattle slightly.

"We really must get that window fixed, Mama," he muttered as he entered the cramped kitchen and grabbed the bowl of non-descript greyish-green sludge from on top of the counter. "I know, Alex, and I'm sorry," she replied, looking up apologetically from her knitting, "but we simply can't afford it to be done at least until your Papa's next wages arrive! I'm afraid we can only pay for that or your food, and I know which one is more important."

Braving a first spoonful of the pitiful soup, Alexei wasn't so certain that they were making the right choice. They could never even afford bread to mop it up with, let alone something more exciting – fish, or meat perhaps. Alexei's father worked at the local power station, doing what he had once told them was 'extremely important work.' Other than this, he had never spoken about his work to anyone, even Alexei and his mother. He would come back each night visibly exhausted and mentally drained, leading Alexei to question why he wasn't paid more.

Just as he was pondering this, the vast oak door crashed open. In walked Alexei's father, back from work early – but something

wasn't right. His eyes were bloodshot and crazed, his grubby shirt collar hung lopsidedly, ripped from his shirt and he was panting heavily, fighting back a crippling smoker's cough.

"Anna... come here, quickly," he spluttered, glancing over at Alexei's mother. She looked alarmed, and instantly stumbled across the room to his side.

"Whatever's the matter?"

"Alexei... go away... go up to your room..." He made eye contact with his son, and something in his stare unsettled Alexei, told him that he should do as he was told without protest. Alexei got up at once and crossed the stone-paved floor, heading for the door to the stairs. Just as he placed his foot on the bottom step, something his father whispered made him stop dead.

"They're coming."

Alexei turned back to face the kitchen, placing his ear against the door in order to hear their conversation.

"I got them... the plans..." He could hear his father murmur. "It was all going perfectly until I started to leave. They must have seen me on those blasted new CCTV cameras... anyway next thing I knew, the alarms were blaring."

Peeping through a crack in the ancient kitchen door, Alexei saw his mother's eyes widen with horror.

"How did you get away?"

"I had to punch one of the guards on the gate... then I hopped on my bike and pegged it back here. But we're not out of the woods yet – it's only a matter of time until they realise who it was and turn up here. And they won't just want the plans back... they'll shoot us on the spot!"

Alexei's mother let out a high-pitched shriek – but it was drowned out immediately by a far louder, far more menacing sound.

BOOM. The front door swung open, almost blown off its hinges. In marched the most powerful man in Russia – he was known simply as the General, leader of the KGB and he sported the notorious olive-green uniform of the world's largest and most influential security organisation. No KGB agent had ever, to Alexei's knowledge, set foot in Sverdlovsk before, let alone the almost god-like figure that was its leader. He stared through the gap

transfixed with both fear and wonder, as this great brute of a man approached his parents. What in the world could be in those plans that was so important, so vital to the Soviet Union that it incurred this monster's wrath?

The General spoke quietly, in a manner that suggested that he was used to being listened to.

"Where are they?"

"I... I don't know what you mean, sir." Alexei's father's face was as stark white as the snow that lay outside their window.

The man barely blinked as he unloaded two shots from his custom-made pistol – one between the eyes of Alexei's father, another into the heart of his mother. They both keeled over like wretched rag-dolls, dead. Alexei tried to scream, but nothing came out – he recoiled from the other side of the door in sheer horror and disgust, knocking over a clay plant pot as he moved. It exploded as it hit the stone floor, spilling out soil and shards of clay, letting out a monumental CRASH. The General's head snapped upwards instantly, his grey, lifeless eyes attempting to find the source of the cacophony. Grabbing his gun, he stepped over the bodies and marched purposefully towards the door.

Alexei ran, as fast as his young legs could possibly permit him, up the stairs towards his bedroom. He could hear the General's rubber-soled boots pounding the steps below, making up ground on him every second. He burst into his room, crossed the floor in two leaps and manoeuvred himself so that his legs were hanging out of the window. He glanced back inside one final time, seeing the door burst open again, the General charging through, aiming his pistol... and then Alexei dropped, down, down, down – and landed.

His landing was cushioned by the results of a month's continuous snowfall, and he was completely unharmed as he scrambled to his feet, although slightly damp now. Already feeling the effects of the sub-zero temperatures and icy wind through his thin garments, Alexei did the only thing that seemed natural at the time - flee. He fixed his eyes on a point on the edge of the forest ahead of him and began to sprint, dodging in and out of both bushes on the ground and bullets flying through the air from his open bedroom window. He kept going for what seemed like an eternity, charging towards his goal of safety but glancing back every couple of seconds, anticipating the sudden thud, excruciating pain and certain death that a bullet in the back would bring.

Even all these years later, Alexei Brevnik hadn't managed to shake off that feeling. Throughout his life he had been constantly checking his shoulders, glancing backwards, ready for the stab in the back that could come at any second, signifying the end of the road. As he poured himself another glass of vodka, he supposed that it was this experience that had shaped his character, his personality, and his drive to achieve what he desired. It had made him ruthless and driven – and yet he still struggled to sleep at night, his dreams plagued with visions of flying bullets and running, running, running towards a safety that was never quite attainable, always just out of reach.

No quantity of money or possessions could ever erase that feeling that your next breath might just be your last.

By **Joseph Helm** (Fifth Year)



The Five Senses of India

I prised open my eyes. Another day in India. Even in the early morning light I could hear India waking up. The dogs seemed to bark louder than roaring lions and the hooting of horns began as the bustling streets started to fill. I could hear the tuc-tuc engines splutter into life like tired animals and then I focussed in on closer, more distinct sounds. The housemaids and the gardeners were chattering happily like little birds starting the day, without a care in the world. The sound of doors opening, hoovers droning and sprinklers whirring filled my ears. Suddenly, the daily wail of the call to prayer from the mosque began, signalling that the day had really begun.

I walked into the kitchen to see our housemaid, Vijaya, at work. She gave me a morning hug and the feel of her soft, silky sari warmed me, even though it was cool to the touch. It was so smooth and comfortable compared to the harsh wool I was used to. She put a strong, rough hand that was as coarse as an elephant's skin, on my face, her palm like sandpaper from years of housework and cleaning. "Go and play", she said softly.

I walked into the garden. The sun shone brightly...proudly, in the middle of the sky like a father watching over his children, its intense rays burning my face. I lay down on the dry, spiky grass that gave a thin cushion of protection from the hard, packed, dry earth underneath. I could feel the blades gently piercing through my tee-shirt like a friendly porcupine.

I walked out of the colonial-style gates of our compound and stared back at the immaculately tended, lush gardens and the pristine, white houses topped with orange tiled rooves. They looked majestic and magnificent, like small palaces. I looked forward into the street at the motorbikes that flew like cheetahs along the dusty, scorched roads. Tuc-tucs were weaving in and out of the traffic and everywhere I looked was excitement and vibrant colour. Stall after stall was lined up selling everything and everything. Pots and pans and exotic food and snacks were changing hands. India was alive... The bright, joyful faces of the traders and customers exchanging money and goods were interspersed with sorrowful, grave faces that were older than their years from a life of poverty and hardship. Their thin, bony hands were outstretched begging... pleading... imploring others to spare some money. Suddenly, the traffic was halted and the horns silenced as a cow ambled heavily across the road, proving his sacred place amongst the chaos.

The unfettered fumes from the ancient cars and motorbikes were masked by richer, more exotic aromas. The sweet fragrance from the flowers creeping along the walls fought with the multitude of mouth-watering smells that wafted over from the food stalls. The earthiness of chargrilled corns combined with the pureness of the spices and the seductive smell of yeast from the rustic stoves was overwhelming.

I handed over my rupees to the stallholder and took my exotic, eastern snack. The soft dough of the bread cooled the explosion of spice in my mouth from the chicken. The succulent vegetables crunched loudly in contrast to the smoothness of the soothing cinnamon yogurt that added a new dimension to the enhanced taste of India. I took a refreshing gulp of ice-cold water and sighed contentedly.

I savoured the last fiery morsel of my snack and then turned my back on the frenetic bustle of the street, leaving the smells, the sights and the sounds and walked guiltily back through the colonial-style gates to my little palace. What a contrast.

By **Henry Sheen** (Fifth Year)

The Town Came to Life

As my eyes struggled to adapt to the powerful sun's rays beaming down on me, threatening to force me into submission, I heard the rattling of an enormous trailer. It almost seemed to be wheezing, as if it too could not cope walking around on this majestic spring day. I saw a marvellous, vast assortment of rides and machines, which screamed at me to follow them, in a trance-like state.

It was only when I, a few hours later, saw the Sun beginning to be cradled in the burly arms of the tall oak trees on the Green, did I realise that it was the day of the annual town fete.

I dashed down the road, nonchalant to the passers-by, with one of whom I nearly collided like two rushing trains, that smash with devastating consequences. As I neared, my eyes glimmered as I saw the towering carousel before me. The gleaming, sparkling silver metal poles hung delicately down from a large green ceiling, which now was beginning to illuminate in the moonlight. The exquisitely carved elegant and authoritative horses bowed their heads, their tremendously neat, groomed maroon manes a sight of beauty.

My pupils became distracted and wandered towards the darting dodgems, and the unbearably loud shrieks and shrills coming from their senseless inhabitants. Each car was an individual, separated by their different bright colours and aggressive faces, which had been printed onto their bodies. The flashing lights and thundering music tried to attract me into taking a place in the elongated queue. I gave in and agreed, yet as time went on and my turn came ever closer, my lips began to quiver and my stomach to rumble, like a volcano about to erupt and spit out innocent-looking, fiery and ghastly pieces of rock. I politely declined to partake in the ride.

After that uncomfortable experience, I knew that I had to listen to my groaning belly.

Whack!

My nostrils were pleasantly bombarded by a succulent aroma, which began to weave up my head, dancing in celebration. I turned and joyfully saw a classy burger van, waiting for me. Pushing my way past other ravenous fellows, I suddenly arrived at the front of the line. Carelessly, I had not considered just how long my decision on what to order would take. I stared into the eyes of a lifeless pig, who was now being prodded with a nasty pair of tongs, so that it would be prepared for the uncompromising flames which would soon engulf it. Even in death and with a reddening body, it gleamed in an angelic way.

I managed to tear myself away from that unfortunate beast, and saw a gleeful clown grinning at me with a smile as big as the huge circus tent next to him. Whilst his bleached white teeth made me nervous at first, I soon saw that through his flawlessly painted face and Rudolph the Reindeer red nose, that any worries could be hastily dismissed. He was chomping on a piece of grizzly fat from the burger, so intoxicated by it that he was not stopping to breathe. I could just imagine the beautiful taste of the gorgeous meat, entwined within an unbelievable array of exotic spices. I gazed down towards his long and spotty shoes, which were bathing in a pool of crimson red ketchup that was sprinkling down from his mouth.

This made me even more ravenous and so forced me into buying a bag of popcorn. I rapidly opened it, and shoved the luscious caramel treat into my mouth. I felt the saliva trickling to the tip of my tongue, and so was delighted to welcome this taste. The soft texture and incredible "popping" sensation, worked as to efficiently spray the heavenly contents into all of the corners of my mouth.

A booming trombone signalled the start of the main event- the circus! Here, one could witness the stunning composure of the tightrope walker and the terrifying display by the lion tamer, which causes many people's nails to be ripped to shreds by their grinding teeth. The event was about to start, as I heard the rapturous sound of applause coming from the enthralled audience members, as the flag at the top of this seemingly imperious monument marched in the wind.

At that moment, I was relieved that my golden ticket clang onto my trouser pocket, as the street lamps lit up to guide my way to the entrance.

What a memory.

By **Paul Wilkinson** (Fifth Year)

The Secret Doubt

As I look upon towns of Cotswold stone
And the streams and the rolling green
I see flags rising and statues falling
And streets of foreign cuisine

And I remember the pictures of England old
The lanes, the castles and satanic mills
Of the kings, and poets of whom we were told
And the humour of the common people

But next to dreaming spires
Rises hell sprung jagged towers, born
Of the next trend and of fake radicalism,
Filled with art
Splattered upon whitewashed walls

And men, once tall and proud,
Kneel crucified in the human frame
In tar filled air on red brick flanked roads
Looking at yobbish, hoody clad faces

Remembering when humanity looked out, trembling, at the star filled sky
And dreaming of possibilities and dangers,
The stars came ever closer

Yet now, St George has slain every dragon
And all that remains is dragonless time
And the capriciousness of the progress driven young

For now the grand inquisitor sits across the Christmas dinner table
And tomorrow stands across the street
And soon sits atop the judges bench
Beneath an unknown flag

But though I will be the first to go
I know I shall not be the last
My inquisitors won't be able to stay
On this strange, predetermined path

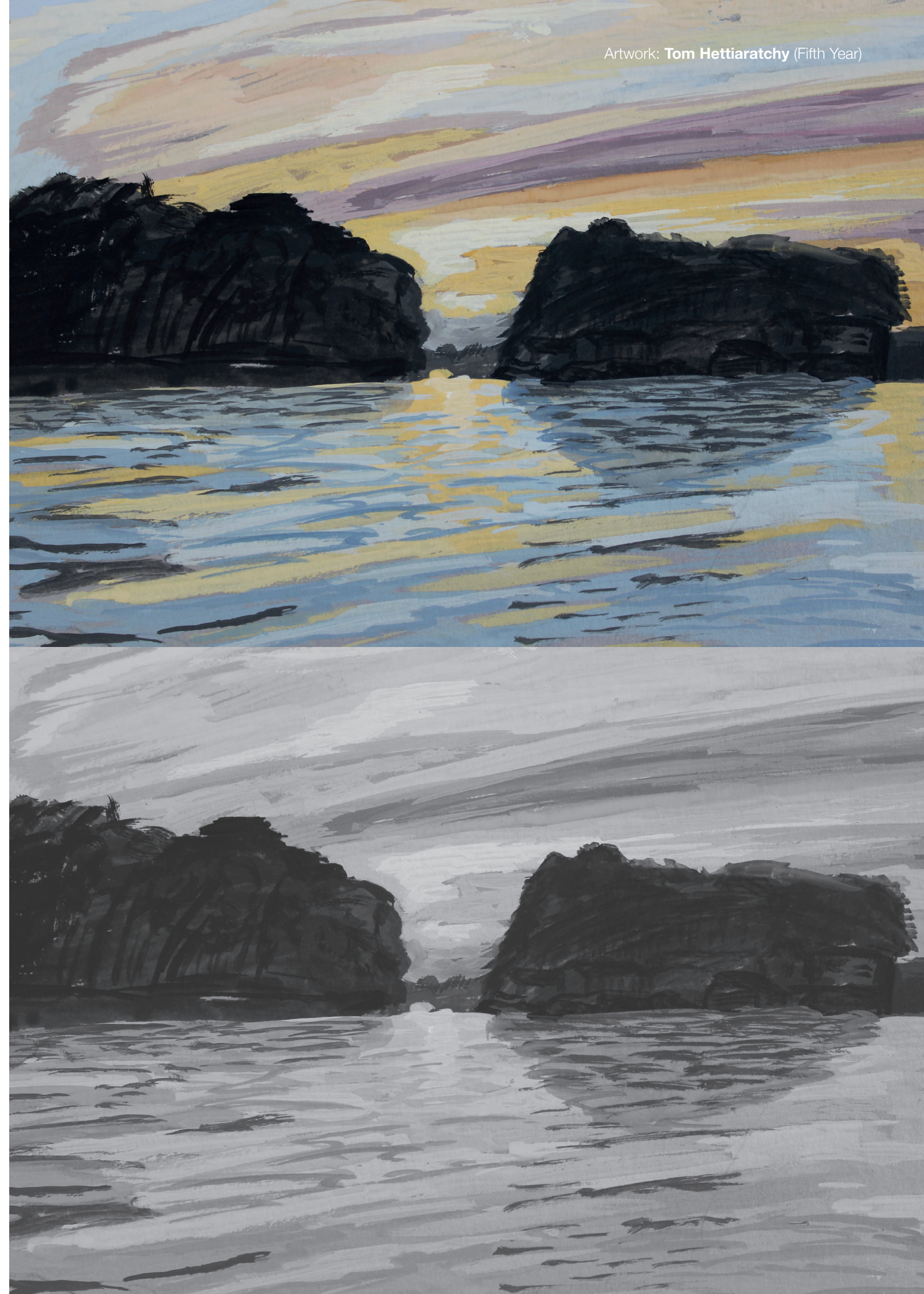
And soon the awful strangeness of the whims of god shall become apparent
As modernity wreaks its vengeance
Beneath a technicoloured, smiling face

And behind they see generations of dug up graves of bigoted forbears
And in front a wasteland,
Which they must call progress

For I am told in the new canon
That fair is foul and foul is fair

By **Alfie Watkins** (Lower Sixth)

Artwork: **Tom Hettiaratchy** (Fifth Year)





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