

E-Zine

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HEADTEACHER'S WELCOME



Welcome to the latest issue of the E-Zine magazine! This edition is brimming with stories designed to stimulate your mind, provoke curiosity, and hopefully bring a smile to your face.

The E-Zine is part of a triad of regular communications from King Edward VI Aston School. Our weekly newsletters keep stakeholders updated on school events, while the Record serves as a permanent placeholder for the achievements of our students and staff.

Uniquely, the E-Zine is written by our talented students, offering personal reflections on life that often extends beyond the school environment. This magazine provides our learners with a platform to explore and write about topics that inspire them.

In this issue, we also celebrate the remarkable achievements of our students. Their ability to articulate the importance of global issues and equally reference the more amusing aspects of everyday life must be commended.

Additionally, we emphasise the importance of free speech and journalism. In a world where information is power, the ability to express oneself freely and responsibly is crucial. Our students are encouraged to explore diverse perspectives and engage in thoughtful discourse, fostering a culture of open dialogue and critical thinking. It is with great pleasure that I introduce their creative skills and accomplishments to you. Enjoy the read!

Mr M Brady—Headteacher

E-Team 2025

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SOCIAL CHANGE

In modern society, fighting for a cause often starts with a simple tap on a screen. A repost, hashtag or story and suddenly people feel like they have contributed to a movement. While raising awareness is important, the activism façade often stops at the screen, creating a false sense of progress without any real impact.

The younger generation are at the forefront of social change like never before. Generation Z, people born between 1997– 2012, are predominantly socially aware and extremely vocal. From climate change protests to movements for racial and gender equality, this generation is leading the charge. Yet the truth is that posting a picture on Instagram is not activism and the rise of cancel culture, where calling people out, has become mistaken for creating real change.

Performative activism is the art of coming across as ‘woke’ without actually doing the work. It is activism designed for likes and reposts rather than genuine change. The ‘Blackout Tuesday’ movement during the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests is a perfect example, where millions of people posted black squares on Instagram to show their support, but for many, that was where their activism ended. Consequently, it clogged important communication channels activists were using to organise protests and share resources.

According to a 2021 Pew Research Centre study, 73% of Generation Z identify as “activists” online, but less than 30% have taken part in real-world activism. However, this shouldn’t dismiss online efforts entirely as awareness is an important first step, but when activism becomes a trend instead of a commitment, it loses power and influence, reducing the change it can make, for example posting a quote about climate change won’t reduce carbon emissions. Real activism requires more than a “woke” social media presence. It demands action, discomfort, and sacrifice.



Cancel culture is often framed as a method of accountability, a way to challenge people, especially public figures and celebrities for their harmful behaviour. Ideally, this sounds like progress however, it’s often less about accountability and more about public shaming. One case is James Gunn, fired from directing Guardians of the Galaxy after decade-old offensive tweets resurfaced, amidst many apologies and a clear personal development, the internet demanded consequences. Ironically, after widespread backlash against his firing, he was rehired.

The question remains: Did cancelling him achieve any real social progress, or was it just outrage for argument’s sake? This isn’t to say that online activism or calling out harmful behaviour has no value. Awareness is the first step, however it the movement shouldn’t stop there. Change requires real action. Look at Greta Thunberg, who never stopped posting about climate change, with persistence and true activism she persisted and eventually led global strikes, this shows just how far a post on Instagram can go, while also encouraging this generation to do even more, which is especially important in terms of guiding such a malleable youth.

SOCIAL CHANGE

While social media can amplify important causes, it can just as easily spread hate, especially often under the guise of activism. What starts as a call for responsibility can quickly transform into targeted harassment and spiral further into threats of violence. Similarly, during the Johnny Depp trial, social media became a battleground of hate. What should have been a conversation about domestic violence and justice turned into toxic slander, with targeted bullying campaigns posing as support for one side, when in reality it was often immature online trolls instigating a reaction or inciting further conflict.

According to a 2018 MIT Media Lab study, content that triggers anger is 20% more likely to go viral than neutral content. Algorithms are designed to reward engagement, and nothing drives engagement like outrage. This fosters an environment that spreads negativity faster than facts, where young people, whose perspectives of life are still being shaped, can get swept up in the mob mentality, mistaking cruelty for courage. This leads to mindless followers of a herd, misunderstanding the cause they are fighting for.

Let's not forget the horrendous riots our own country witnessed last year with harmful and blatantly racist propaganda that spread like wildfire inviting extremely shocking violence and prejudice. This fire was fanned with fake news and hate messages on social media, so while platforms can be used to raise awareness, they have also been used to divide the people that matter the most, this generation. Social change is due so that mistakes like the riots never happen again, as people are much better than that and were misguided through the media, this should encourage people to go find out about the stories they hear on social media apps for themselves, promoting independent social change, where this generation are able to see the truth for themselves and do something about it, which is much more substantial than just a twitter (X) post.

If young people truly want to be the generation that changes the world, they need to do more than just be "woke" online. Social media can spark a reaction yet lack real world movement. True activism requires courage, persistence, and real-world effort. To conclude I'd like to encourage students and teachers alike, to commit to any problems they want solved. For instance, don't just post about climate change - cut down on your emissions, create a compost heap, because issues like climate change do not wait for you to post a shared message. To combat global warming, you must make a real change now. This goes much further than the environment though, as a generation that represents social change, we must embody this by physically trying to make the world a better place, encourage change where it is due, and have the courage to break away from the herd, and make a change. As the old Latin motto goes, "Facta non verba"; we need actions not words.

Vinayan Bojraj – Year 12



MYTHS & WHY I LOVE THEM

There are many reasons why I love myths. The first would be that they are stories but not just ordinary stories; at their heart there are cultural traditions. Hence, myths are rooted in local communities. When you are reading a myth, you are not just reading a story but learning about the people and place where it comes from. For instance, the myth of Odysseus and Circe shows that Greek minds had their beliefs rooted in magic and events that we now consider impossible.

I always find it interesting when I encounter myths in books. Not just books dedicated to compiling myths from different places, but when myths inspire those stories. I have read many books where the protagonist is the same crafty Loki—the very Norse God of mischief that sought to wreak havoc upon the world, yet in the end he saved it. It was also good to see Loki in flesh and blood as a child character in the book series, *Loki: A Bad God's Guide*. Myths continue to pack a punch as they find their way into different formats such as books, films, graphic novels and more.



Another reason I love myths is because they are connected, though they are parallel, using the same character in different skins, kind of like Fortnite. An example is Venus and Aphrodite—both are goddesses of fertility, beauty, love, and more. Or even how Loki reminds me of Esu, the Yoruba god of mischief. It is like meeting the same beings in different contexts, if you get what I mean.



While myths sometimes appear as simple entertaining stories, they often have bigger purposes. They have historical value as they remind us of a certain period of time. Myths show how people from the past were creative in the way they used stories to explain things they did not understand. They also have moral values like the one of Anansi the spider and the eight pots of food. The story goes that Anansi used to have thick, hairy legs like a spider until one day all his friends were making delicious pots of food, and Anansi went to visit each of them in turn.

They all asked him to stay and help with chores while the food was being made. Anansi, being the lazy spider, makes up different excuses but gives them pieces of string to tie to each of his legs and to pull when the food is ready.

MYTHS

They all pull at the same time, making his legs long and thin. The moral of the story? Work and you shall reap the rewards; don't work and you get pulled apart until you have 'spidery legs' like Anansi.

My favourite myth is a myth of creation, the Norse one to be exact, because it shows the complexity of the Norse people's minds when they wanted to explain the unexplainable. A taste of the full myth reveals that the Norse people believed that the universe was one big giant, and the Norse god Odin, born on a rock on the giant's body, slew it and used its carcass to create the planets and life. This is but a simplified sliver of the whole story.

There are many more things I would love to share about myths, but I stop here. I hope anyone reading will like to delve into the amazing world of myths themselves. They can be your ticket to new fun adventures...safe journey!

Mafoya Amogunla – Year 7

Creation Myths:

Many cultures have stories explaining how the world came to be, often involving gods or divine beings. For example, the Aztec origin myth of the Five Suns and the Mesopotamian myth of the Epic of Gilgamesh.

Gods and Goddesses:

Many cultures have pantheons of gods and goddesses who are believed to control various aspects of the world, from nature and the cosmos to human affairs. Examples include Greek gods like Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades, and Egyptian gods like Ra and Osiris.

Hero Myths:

These narratives often feature legendary figures who undertake extraordinary feats and embody cultural values. Examples include the story of Robin Hood, the myths of Hercules and Perseus, and the Irish myth of Cú Chulainn.

Underworld Myths:

Many cultures have stories about the afterlife, often depicting a realm where the spirits of the dead reside. Examples include the Egyptian myth of the underworld and the Greek myth of Hades.

Flood Myths:

Stories about great floods and divine intervention have been a common theme in various cultures, reflecting concerns about natural disasters and the relationship between humanity and the gods. Examples include the Noah's Ark story and the Pattan's Pumpkin myth from India.



ZEN AND THE ART OF MODERN RAILWAY MAINTENANCE

Having finished my GCSE's and now studying A-levels, life has been quite stressful and almost entirely filled by deadlines and writing. In my limited free time, I have undertaken the modification, detailing of, and maintenance of model locomotives, which is both a skill and an art, and one which I wish to share with others due to its calming, satisfying and generally enjoyable process and result.

Firstly, a word on the models themselves. Typically, ideal items for these projects are the older 'train set' type released by Hornby from the 1970's to 1990's. This is because they are simple in construction, often being made of only a few larger parts, durable (having been released as toys) and crucially they are cheap and plentiful online and at model shows. This gives me, the modeller, a blank canvas of sorts to work with as I can add parts, modify existing ones and add paint as well as transfers (which I will detail later).

For the purpose of this article, I will describe my process of fixing, detailing and modifying a 1980's Hornby 'Saint class'. This model has a sufficiently decent design and proportion that, with some work, it will look and perform in a manner nearly consistent with releases 30 years more modern (and should hopefully last a good deal longer also).



This is a photograph of an unmodified version. The one I have had already been somewhat modified (and was cheaper) with the wheels being fully painted black. There are several modifications worth making to this to get it up to scratch.

Cosmetic modification/ improvements

Firstly, as the previous owner deduced, the shiny exposed axles and tyres are a glaring issue with these models. Real engines had spoked metal wheels with the tyre being much larger and always filthy in practice, which means all visible areas of the wheels except those that contact the rails must be black in order to look realistic. One thing that I have found is that when models are right, they tend to look right, so anyone attempting this should research their prototype somewhat to achieve this.

Another major area needing improvement are the buffer beams. As the leading area of the model, these should look excellent at the very least (first impressions!), and on the original they are anything but that.

RAILWAY MAINTENANCE

The buffers are the wrong shape and non-functional, the paint is far too shiny-making the running number invisible and the hook and chain by which the front connects to trains is entirely missing. What is necessary are new buffers, a full repaint with a better red paint, a replacement number and a new hook. These changes, which are surprisingly simple to make in practice, can elevate a model from toy-like to realistic. However, coupling hooks, chains and new buffers can be quite hard to find so I have simply re-painted mine to cover the original print and left that area for the future. Shown here is a packet of details for a different engine, but they do share some parts.

A more subjective improvement that I like to make is changing the livery (that being the logo that tells us who owns the engine) slightly to make it more unique, as well as changing the running number to further emphasise this. Firstly, a livery change improves the basic look of the model as the Pressfix transfers required simply look better than the original prints. Even if I do not change the liver I recommend adding these over the originals. Secondly, it means it can be used differently. For example, the previous owner of my example had it in post-WW2 condition, meaning I was limited to its uses. I changed mine to the 1907-1927 livery (shown), which means I can use it with more varied traffic. I also like to change the number (and name) to a different member of the class as it adds a certain mark of ownership and uniqueness to the model. Furthermore, the GWR's use of brass plates means that printed ones do not do the trick for me, and real metal examples look far better. Here I have used plates produced by King's Cross models, who make very cheap and readily available ones (with the drawback of having to cut them out).



Other small improvements include swapping the coupling on the back for a smaller type, improving the suspension of disbelief, and removing the front one entirely; the buffers should be the furthest forward part of the engine, and I find this makes them look more balanced, and crucially, right. It is also good to add lamps. This is a very complicated area, but I have chosen suitable 3D-printed lamps (painted red as per the period) in the 'express passenger' formation as per the use of the real thing. This adds a lot to a model and can be a nice point of interest on an otherwise simple item. Finally, detailing the cab space can take a very exposed model like this up a notch, the presence of crew and other tools adds masses of interest and realism to a model, and frankly they look odd without.

Maintenance

These are functional machines, and models of this age need a service, rather like a car, if they have been unused for a while. There are typically 3 main issues which prevent a sturdy model like this from working, those being broken wiring, dirty electrical contacts and dry moving parts. In my case, the two latter issues were present with the first being rare but simple to fix. The first issue with this was dirty contacts. These run on electricity, which needs to be able to flow unobstructed between the wheels and motor. Grime build up on the wheel backs, wheels and the loco-tender connection will lead to much less power getting to the motor, meaning it will not work.

RAILWAY MAINTENANCE

Similarly, the motor's commutator is exposed on older versions, which means that it will be absolutely filthy, further preventing the motor's function. The way I do this is with a few cotton buds and lighter fluid, which can be absorbed by cloths and soaks up grime and transfers it from the metal to the cotton bud. Having done this, all electrical contacts were clean, allowing the circuit to flow properly.

The second issue was dirty/stiff moving parts. These older models have large gear trains in the mechanisms, which can become very stiff if not kept well lubricated. Firstly, I had to clean the gears (which made the cotton buds brown!) then applied some light plastic-compatible oil designed for models (WD40 is far too harsh).

With these fixes complete, the model works at a proper speed, runs smoothly at a reasonable speed and keeps moving properly, even over small dead sections of the track (where no power can be applied to a wheel because of a gap or plastic part).

The benefits

What I have found is that solving issues like these can be very satisfying. Rather like the ASMR cleaning videos online, polishing dirty wheels and cleaning gears brings enjoyment and relaxation, especially when the model then works.

Furthermore, the improvement of a model can give a distinct sense of achievement that can (in my experience) bring more confidence and general wellbeing to the state of mind of the modeller. When I need a break from studies or just life in general, I almost always turn to railway modelling for relaxation and enjoyment.

Luckily, this hobby can be quite accessible with some knowledge. Obviously simply going online and buying the latest model by Bachmann or Hornby will yield a fine item, however it is both unsatisfying and obscenely expensive. Instead, it is much better to get older versions that sell for fractions of the modern prices, and then simply improve them with a few parts that can all be purchased for the price of a meal deal or a haircut. Even the model itself, if sensible, will never exceed the price of a very cheap pair of trainers (think Sketchers reduced at Sports Direct), and are usually less. The best part about these is that, if well kept, they will last for decades, many of my models were built between 1970 and 1995, and they still work and look good because of the small amount of effort I put into them.

At the end of the day, railway modelling is fun, relaxing, accessible and well worth trying as a way to de-stress or just as a hobby, and I can give it my full recommendation.

Peter Harrison-Smith – Year 12

Click below to see the Saint Class engine running on the writer's model railway:



Model in Action.mov



Saint Class.mov

INTERVIEW WITH PETE WATERMAN



Peter Waterman OBE DL is an English record producer, songwriter, and television personality. As a member of the Stock Aitken Waterman production and songwriting team, he co-wrote and co-produced many UK hit singles. An avid railway enthusiast, Waterman is the owner of significant collections of both historic and commercial railway locomotives and rolling stock. Aston student, namesake and fellow railfan Peter Harrison-Smith asks the questions:

Leamington Spa took a very long time for you and your group to build; which aspect of it would you say you enjoyed the most?

The research and studying the real thing. History and politics all there to unravel to make it as perfect as a model can be.

Leading on more broadly, do you enjoy making models or using them more?

It's all about the modelling for me; there's always more to do or redo and get better.

How do you balance realism, practicality and fun when modelling railways?

It's always for us about time and the knowledge that you cannot build the space you don't have!

On the subject of Making Tracks, have you had any ideas for number 5?

Already started.

Would you ever consider making a different line in the style of making tracks, such as the East Coast Mainline or Great Western Mainline?

My 0 gauge is the GWR main line.

Finally, what is your favourite class of engine (or multiple unit) and why?

I have never had one, it changes every time I look at the next model I'm going to build. I've been modelling since 1955; it's the way I've relaxed, worked out life and kept going when all around was not going well. I've been lucky to build teams around me that can make dreams come true!

ANIME

Anime is an animated world full of imagination and creativity. It is so much more than cartoon images and it can take your mind into another universe for your entertainment. It originated in the early 20th century with Japan producing its first animated films in the 1910s. These films were influenced by Western animation techniques. There are different genres of anime ranging from action and adventure to romance, horror and science fiction.

To this day people from around the world create anime. Anime can be watched on screen or read from the page in a comic format. The comic version is called manga, and it is linked to earlier Japanese art. The manga version is often just black and white, but trust me, once you start reading, you will never want to stop.



Over the years, the popularity of anime has skyrocketed worldwide. There are over six hundred anime studios in Japan and over eighteen thousand different titles. This just goes to show how people have been inspired to create anime and how much imagination and effort is put into editing and creating the story lines. Somewhere in the region of 90-100 million people regularly watch Japan's most prominent entertainment export. According to statistics, 36% of the world's population have encountered anime at some point.

The anime fandom is much more than a large group of people who have a shared passion; it is a culture that supports people's creativity and imagination. Many fans of different animes dress up as their favourite characters in what is known as cosplay. They might change the style of the characters costume, body features or hair and then adapt the script for a role play. This allows many fans across the world to express their love for anime while at the same time showcasing their ability to act in a certain way to make the experience as real as possible.

There are many platforms on the internet specifically made for people to submit their anime artwork such as DeviantArt and Pinterest. Many people get excited for a new season or chapter in different animes where a story is expanded upon. Just for people's imagination and curiosity, they sometimes like to create their own alternative ending to someone else's artistic and creative work.



ANIME

Age ratings may change due to which manga or anime you are reading or watching. For young children you may want to choose something friendlier and more appropriate. One such option may be Pokémon which is very child friendly and is based off adventure and curiosity. There are also many more options available for a young person to move onto such as Dragon Ball Z (age 10+). Some good animes for older people would be Jujutsu Kaisen (JJK) which is based off cursed spirits being born into the world from negative emotions.

There is also Demon Slayer which is based around a teenager called Tanjiro Kamado where his family is killed in the first episode and his sister is turned into a demon. While trying to save his sister, he ends up finding himself joining the Demon Slayer Corps which is a group dedicated to killing and fighting demons. In another anime called Bleach, a teenager can see ghosts who accidentally gains the powers of a Soul Reaper, he is tasked to protect humanity from evil. On his journey to protect humanity he encounters many evil spirits and fights them. Another good anime is Naruto and it is about a young ninja wanted to be the most powerful and strongest. However, he is an orphan which means he forms strong bonds with his friends and teammates along the way.

Minhazur Rahman - Year 7

Top 5 anime in the world:

Attack on Titan. 2013 – 2023TV – MATV Series.

One Piece. 1999 – TV – 14TV Series.

Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba. 2019 – TV – MATV Series.

Jujutsu Kaisen. 2020 – TV – MATV Series.

Vinland Saga. 2019 – 2023TV – MATV Series.



3D PRINTING

One of the things I like most about this school, is the range of opportunities that are available. The fact that we are able to learn about 3D printing is good by itself, but we also have the opportunity to use real 3D printers on site via the 3D printing club. This is really interesting, especially when you realise people have started making printers big enough to make entire houses.



3D printers are already a big deal in today's tech world and there is no doubt that they are going to be really important in the future. It is revolutionary how you can design anything on your computer and then print it out for real. A lot of people think 3D printers are just for making small toys or gadgets, but they can do a lot more - there are actually 3D printers that can print other 3D printers! Depending on your printer, you can make things like a 10 x10 cm cube, but with bigger machines you can 3D print buildings using concrete. There are currently some attempts to build entire neighbourhoods that are 3D printed. It all depends on how big the printer is.

To print something, you need a filament called PLA that comes in a roll and you put it into the printer. This gets moulded into the shape of your design. You can get a machine that recycles plastic by melting it and turning it into strips of filament for the printer. This is an eco-friendly way of recycling regular plastic bottles that have been discarded.

Another reason 3D printers have the potential to be environmentally friendly is that they can be used to help people fix broken toys, furniture and household items. This is better than throwing broken items out. It could be cheaper and cleaner than using factories with fossil fuels and electricity.

But there are some downsides. When the printer switches colours, some filament gets wasted. Also, when you print bigger stuff, you need some support pieces (called "overhangs") to hold things up, and those can also end up in landfill as they are a waste product of the end design. There are websites where you can buy 3D printed stuff like earrings, jewelry, or keychains. You can send your design to these sites, and they'll print and send you what you want. It's a good way for people to make money selling stuff they print.

It is actually very easy to get started. I only spent a couple of hours learning the website and I was able to make something quite complicated...a MacBook Pro motherboard!

Marcel Borcuch – Year 8



BREXIT

- 5 YEARS ON

At 11pm on the 31st of January 2020, the United Kingdom left the European Union. Now, it has been over five years of our economy going into a downwards spiral and of our former European counterparts far surpassing the former 'Great' Britain that we once were.



By now, many people have forgotten why they voted 'leave' in the referendum. Well, let me remind you of that. We were told that leaving the EU would save us the £13 billion that we were contributing to the EU each year, that we would be able to control our own law and policies more freely and most importantly to be able to take back control of our own borders and reduce immigration into the

country. All of these points are very valid and just knowing the benefits of this decision make it seem like a straightforward one.

However, what we were not told, were the reasons why we should remain in the EU. Being part of the EU gave us: the security and protection of having a whole continent supporting us, the ability to travel freely within the EU and trade ties with some of the largest economies in the world, with very limited tariffs and fees. Now, all of this has been taken away from us. And when you consider this, you think to yourself, was it even worth leaving in the first place?

Image 1 (below) illustrates just how devastating leaving the EU has been on our economy. This table created by the BBC shows that we have a potential to gain up to £13.98 billion a year from deals that have come after leaving the EU. However, it also shows that we are losing over £100 billion a year from losses in trade with the EU, after taking into consideration the fees. This puts us at a minimum loss of £86.02 billion a year from this decision.

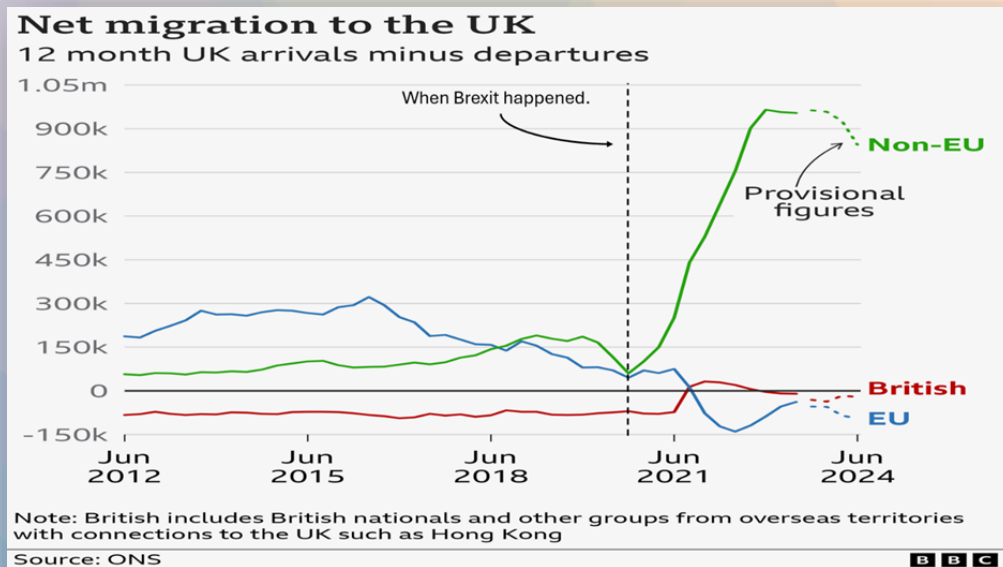
Brexit trade deals official impact assessments		
Trade agreement	GDP boost/impact £bn/year	% of UK GDP
CPTPP (11-nation)	+2.0	+0.08%
Australia	+2.3	+0.08%
New Zealand	+0.08	+0.03%
Possible US-UK	+1.6 to +3.4	+0.07 to 0.16%
Possible UK-India	+3.3 to +6.2	+0.12 to 0.22%
Brexit impact	-100	-4%

Source: UK government impact assessments



BREXIT

People were told that leaving the EU would allow us to control our own borders and reduce immigration into our country. However, as the graph below shows, this has not been the case. Even though we have met the first part of the statement about controlling our borders, we are far from meeting the second half of the statement - reducing immigration into the country.



Another major downside to leaving the EU - which will soon come into place - is the lack of having the privilege to travel, live and work freely across the continent. This will make it far harder for British citizens to travel across the continent - due to increases in costs and having to be subjugated to the ETIAS visa (European travel information and authorisation system visa). This change may be relatively small, but to some, it will be at a massive detriment.

"In May 2023, Kemi Badenoch - the Trade Secretary at the time - announced only 600 EU laws would be axed by the end of 2023, external, with another 500 financial services laws set to disappear later", as quoted and reported by the BBC. However, later in the same article, the BBC said that "many of them had been superseded or become irrelevant." This shows how little impact removing 1,100 laws actually had.

Another downside to the UK leaving the EU is, even though we are not paying as much to the EU, we are still paying into their funds. The UK has paid over £14.9 billion since they have left and will have to pay another £6.4 billion over the years to come.



BREXIT

But, these last few concerns have not been close to being as detrimental as the increase in the cost of daily products. Since we left the EU, the cost of food in the UK has rocketed by 25%. Researchers calculated, that if the post-Brexit trade restrictions were not in place then this increase would be only 17% – nearly a third lower. Adding up the impact on all British households has suggested that they have paid an extra £6.95 billion as a consequence – according to the Guardian. This has had a massive impact on the common person – increasing some people's grocery shops by over £100 a month.

I think that Brexit has been the downfall of the British economy and I think that we should try to re-join the European Union. Leader of the Liberal Democrats, Ed Davy, agrees with my views on us trying to re-join the EU. British Prime Minister Kier Starmer also thinks that we should try to rebuild relationships with the EU. Even though he does not go as far as saying that we should re-join, it is one step in the right direction. Even though we have had a democratic vote on the matter, as people were miss-educated and miss-informed on the consequences of their vote, I think that the government should be allowed to reconsider whether or not we should re-join the EU.

Personally, I firmly believe that we should apply to re-join the EU and go to each of its member states to convince them to allow us to re-join. However, if they do not allow us to re-join, I think that we should at least work really hard at rebuilding ties with the continent, like Prime Minister Kier Starmer is trying to do. The only difference being how much more importance we put on the matter. So, I leave you with this question. Has Brexit been the downfall of the British economy and should we try to re-join the European Union?

Armaan Currim – Year 10



CHEESE

Cheese is a delicious food that is key to many recipes like pizza, mac & cheese, cheeseburgers and even cheesecake. Cheese is normally made from milk, salt and other seasonings. The milk for cheese most commonly comes from cows, sheep, goats or buffalo. While it is not clear who first invented cheese, it can be found all over the world. To make the many different consistencies and flavours cheesemakers follow the same general processes.

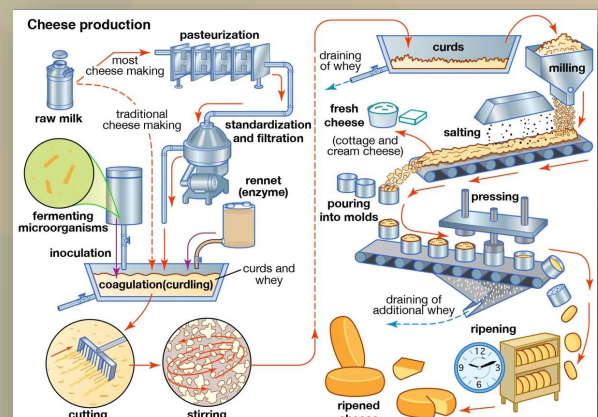


They start processing the milk by adding cultures so that the milk ferments and becomes more acidic.

Then they add rennet, a coagulating enzyme which curdles the milk. Once the curds have formed, knives are used to separate them from the whey (the remaining liquid). Some cheesemakers salt their cheese, while others brine it in a salt solution before they shape it. The final part of the process is aging, cheese can be left to age for days, months or even years. The length of time the cheese ages can have a big impact on the end flavour.

Below are some examples of the many different types of cheese and where they were first created. How many have you tried?

- Cheddar is probably the most common cheese in this country and it comes from the village of cheddar in the southwest of England.
- Mozzarella is a non-aged cheese created in southern Italy that when melted can stretch into long strings. It is often put on top of pizza.
- Parmesan cheese was created in Parma and Reggio in Italy and is slightly salted.
- American cheese (the stuff you have on burgers) is a type of processed cheddar with a medium-firm consistency.
- Brie is a soft cheese named after the area it originates just east of Paris. It has a strong unique flavour.
- Wensleydale from north Yorkshire can often have cranberries, apricots and other fruits mixed into it.



CHEESE

- Gorgonzola was created in a town in Italy and is a type of blue cheese.
 - Blue Stilton is an English cheese that has a fungus called *Penicillium Roqueforti* introduced to it to give it a unique flavour.
 - Swiss cheese is well known for its holes which are caused by air bubbles.
 - Ricotta is a soft, creamy cheese from Italy.
 - Halloumi is from Cyprus and has a high melting point so it's easy to grill.
 - Paneer is a cheese made in India and is hard to melt, it can be used as a protein supplement in Indian dishes.
 - Gouda originates from the Netherlands and is one of the oldest cheeses still in production today.
 - Cream cheese has American origins and is easily spreadable on bread, crackers, bagels or other foods.
 - Edam is a cheese first created in the town of edam in the Netherlands.
 - Danish blue cheese is a blue cheese with a bold flavour that originated from Denmark.
 - Roquefort cheese first came from France and is a blue cheese made with sheep milk.
 - Menonita is a Mexican smooth, creamy cheese that is slightly salty.
 - Vegan cheese is a milk free alternative which usually uses vegetable proteins instead of milk.
 - String cheese is not an actual type of cheese as it is mozzarella made into a tube shape
 - Airag cheese is an interesting cheese from central Asia that is made from horses' milk.
- Just in case you hadn't noticed...I like cheese =]

Zac Smith – Year 7



BOOK WRITING

Writing has been a passion of mine since I was first properly exposed to it in GCSE English. I decided to pursue that passion further by producing a novel during the following summer. After many drafts, I was able to produce a piece I was satisfied with, also going as far as to print several copies for close friends of mine to read. During my EPQ in Year 12, I decided to centre my project on that novel, producing a fitting sequel while also learning how I can develop myself as a writer with the aid of Masterclasses and TED Talks from different authors. They highlighted the importance of storytelling, characters, structure and plot, worldbuilding and suspense when writing a novel, and I took this advice when producing my sequel.

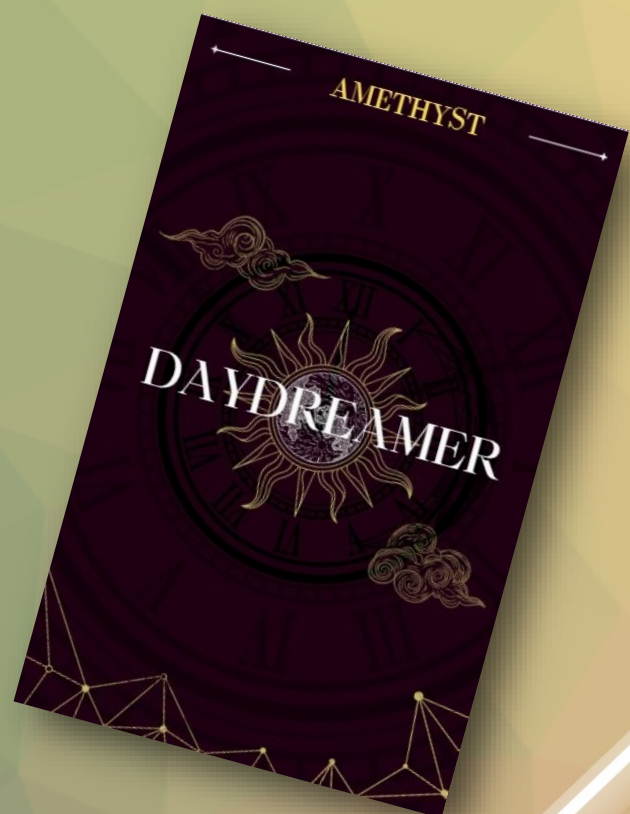
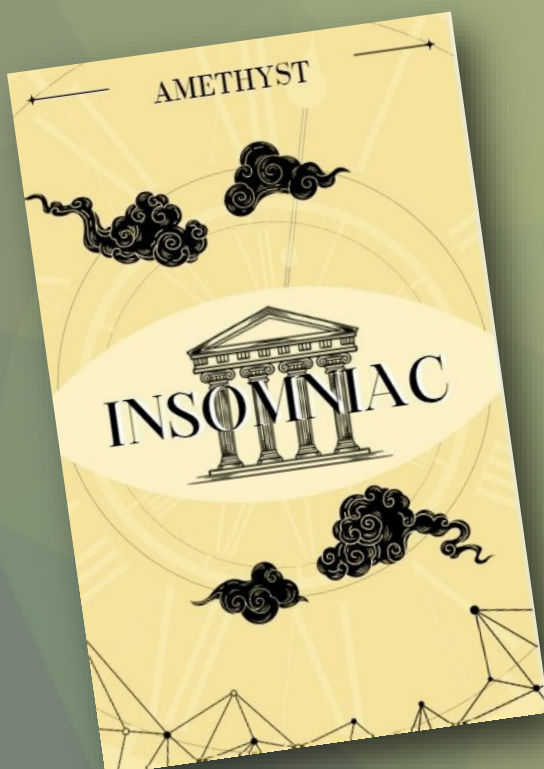
I also made covers for each novel. This highlighted key themes I wanted to explore in each of the novels. Once I finished all of this, I was able to present it to a group of people, where I could get further feedback. Going forward, I plan to return to literary agents over the summer to see how I can pursue this passion further, even taking additional Masterclasses and lessons along the way. Here are my books, albeit a bit aged. There are some cool ideas from when I wrote them in Year 11. I hope you enjoy reading them.



Ryan Matsheba-Bile – Year 13

 [Monotone.docx](#)

 [Daydreamer Manuscript.docx](#)



COOKING

Cooking has always been something I truly enjoy. It's not just about making food—it's about experimenting with new flavours and techniques to create something delicious. I find it really satisfying to take a few simple ingredients and turn them into a meal that brings people together. As I think about pursuing cooking as a career, I'm inspired by chefs like Gordon Ramsay, whose passion and dedication to perfection is something I really admire. His work ethic pushes me to want to improve and challenge myself in the kitchen. I hope to one day become a chef, work in a fast-paced kitchen, and share my love for food with others. Cooking is an art, and it's something I want to keep exploring as I grow.

Tom Stevens – Year 10

Recipe: Chicken Marsala with Creamy Mashed Potatoes

Ingredients for Chicken Marsala:

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 cup all-purpose flour (for dredging)
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp black pepper
- 1/2 tsp garlic powder
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 4 tbsp unsalted butter
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms (preferably cremini or button)
- 1 cup Marsala wine (a sweet fortified wine)
- 1/2 cup chicken broth
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1 tsp fresh thyme leaves (or 1/2 tsp dried thyme)
- Fresh parsley (for garnish)

Ingredients for Creamy Mashed Potatoes:

- 4 large russet potatoes (peeled and cubed)
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 cloves garlic (minced)
- Fresh chives (optional, for garnish)

Instructions:

For the Chicken Marsala:

1. Prepare the chicken: Start by seasoning the chicken breasts with salt, pepper, and garlic powder. Lightly dredge them in flour, making sure they are fully coated. Shake off any excess flour.
2. Cook the chicken: In a large skillet, heat olive oil over medium-high heat. Add 2 tablespoons of butter and allow it to melt. Once the butter is hot and bubbling, add the chicken breasts. Sauté them for about 5-7 minutes per side, until golden brown and cooked through (internal temperature should reach 165°F). Remove the chicken from the skillet and set it aside.



COOKING

3. Make the sauce: In the same skillet, add the remaining 2 tablespoons of butter and sliced mushrooms. Cook for about 4-5 minutes, or until the mushrooms release their moisture and become tender.

4. Deglaze with wine: Pour in the Marsala wine and let it simmer for about 2 minutes, scraping up any brown bits from the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon. This adds a ton of flavour to the sauce.

5. Finish the sauce: Add the chicken broth and heavy cream, stirring to combine. Let the sauce simmer for another 5-6 minutes, allowing it to thicken slightly. Add fresh thyme and taste for seasoning, adjusting salt and pepper as needed.

6. Combine: Return the chicken breasts to the skillet, spooning some of the sauce and mushrooms over them. Simmer for an additional 3-4 minutes, allowing the flavours to meld together.

Garnish and serve: Plate the chicken and pour the sauce over the top. Sprinkle with fresh parsley for a burst of colour and flavour.

For the Creamy Mashed Potatoes:

1. Cook the potatoes: Place the cubed potatoes in a large pot and cover them with water. Bring to a boil and cook for about 15-20 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender and can easily be pierced with a fork.

2. Mash the potatoes: Drain the potatoes and return them to the pot. Add the butter, heavy cream, and minced garlic. Use a potato masher or hand mixer to mash the potatoes until smooth and creamy. If you prefer a creamier texture, you can add more heavy cream or



5 FILMS YOU SHOULD WATCH

1. The Batman (2022) - 5/5

A gritty and intense take on the Dark Knight, this film follows Bruce Wayne in his early years of crime-fighting. Gotham is overrun with corruption, and Batman must unravel a sinister mystery while battling villains like the Riddler. With a dark atmosphere, thrilling action, and Robert Pattinson delivering a brooding performance, *The Batman* is a must-watch for superhero fans. The cinematography and detective noir elements add to its gripping appeal.



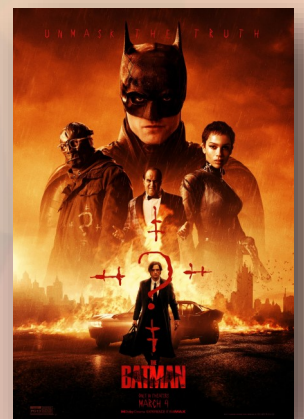
2. Dune: Part One (2021) - 5/5

A visually stunning sci-fi epic based on the famous novel *Dune* follows Paul Atreides as he navigates political betrayal and war on the desert planet of Arrakis. The story explores themes of destiny, power, and survival, as Paul discovers his unique abilities and his role in the planet's future. With incredible world-building, jaw-dropping cinematography, and an immersive soundtrack, this film is an unforgettable experience for sci-fi fans.



3. Spider-Man: No Way Home (2021) - 5/5

If you love superheroes, this is one of the most exciting Marvel films ever made. Peter Parker's identity is revealed, leading to catastrophic consequences. Seeking help from Doctor Strange, he accidentally opens the multiverse, bringing in iconic villains from past Spider-Man films. Featuring multiple Spider-Men, emotional depth, and thrilling action, this film is a love letter to fans and an unforgettable cinematic spectacle.



FILMS



4. Top Gun: Maverick (2022) - 5/5

Tom Cruise returns in this adrenaline-fueled sequel to *Top Gun*. Maverick is tasked with training a new generation of fighter pilots for an impossible mission, including the son of his late best friend, Goose. Packed with insane aerial stunts, great characters, and an awesome soundtrack, this high-speed ride keeps you on the edge of your seat. The emotional stakes and breath-taking flight sequences make it a must-watch.

5. John Wick: Chapter 4 (2023) - 4/5

Keanu Reeves is back as John Wick in another action-packed thriller. This time, he faces off against the High Table in a global battle that takes him to Paris, Berlin, and Osaka. With breath-taking fight choreography, intense shootouts, and mind-blowing stunts, this film pushes the franchise to new heights. If you love action films with stylish visuals and epic combat sequences, *John Wick: Chapter 4* is a must-see.



Gabriel Fernandez – Year 13



PROBLEMS WITH THE PET TRADE

The Pet Industry

Since the Victorian era the pet trade has expanded to become a massive industry, with millions of people around the world paying to own an animal as a pet. However, while owning a pet can bring joy and comfort to the owner, there are serious issues within the pet trade that often go unnoticed. From unethical breeding to environmental damage and human health risks, the pet trade is full of problems that can negatively affect animals, ecosystems, and even pet owners.



Inhumane Treatment

One of the biggest concerns in the pet trade is the way that some animals are raised, especially those that come from breeding mills. These facilities prioritize profit over welfare, keeping many different species in cramped, tiny cages and forcing them to breed repeatedly without proper care or rest. Many animals in these mills live in filthy conditions, with insufficient access to food or water. Veterinary care is often insufficient. This kind of abuse often leads to serious health and behavioural issues, which may only be noticed after these animals are sold to unsuspecting customers.

Exotic animals, such as parrots, reptiles, and monkeys, often endure even worse fates. Many are captured directly from the wild using cruel methods, such as bait traps, that leave a high percentage of them dead or injured before the rest ever make it to the market. Those that do survive are often sold to people who don't fully understand their specific needs. Exotic animals require certain diets, habitats, and social environments and these can be hard to replicate in captivity, leaving many of them stressed, sick, or suffering.

Environment

The environmental consequences of the pet trade are another major issue. Removing animals from their natural habitats, whether it's tropical fish from coral reefs or birds from rainforests, can have devastating effects on the natural ecosystems. Over time, this can lead to population declines or even extinction for some species.

The problem doesn't stop there. When exotic pets escape or are released into the wild, they can become invasive species that disrupt local ecosystems. A well-known example is the Burmese python population in Florida's Everglades. Originally brought in as exotic pets, these massive snakes are now wreaking havoc on native wildlife and permanently altering the natural balance of the ecosystem.

PET TRADE

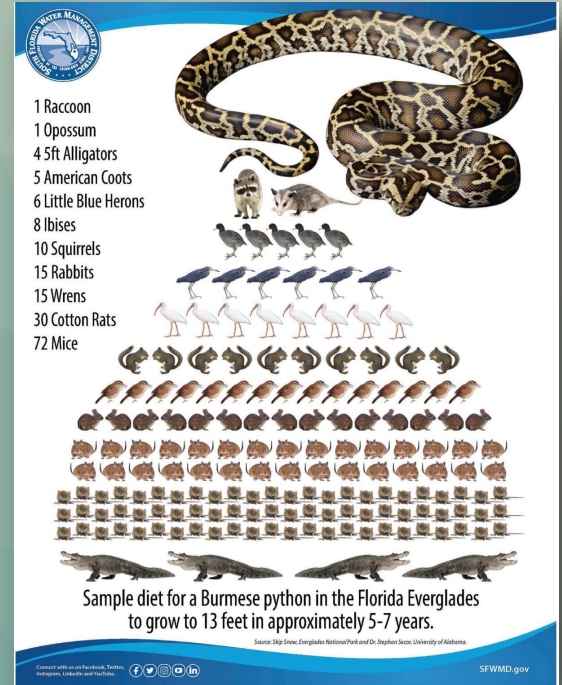
Risks to Public Health and Safety

The pet trade also brings risks to human health. Many exotic animals carry diseases that can be passed on to humans, such as salmonella or more dangerous viruses. Handling these animals without proper precautions can have serious consequences. The COVID-19 pandemic brought global attention to the dangers of wildlife markets, which have similarities to the exotic pet trade in terms of how animals are handled and sold.

There's also the issue of safety. Some exotic pets, like large snakes, big cats, and certain primates, are dangerous to own. These animals can act unpredictably, and when they do, the consequences can be fatal for owners or handlers.

What you can do

While it is important to be aware of the problems in the pet trade, if there is no action taken nothing will change and the cycle of animal abuse can continue. Potential pet owners need to stand up and show the pet shops that they will not support them if they get their animals from the mills. We can also take action by signing petitions online which put pressure on them and by considering rehoming from rescue centres as an option.



Zayan Jan – Year 8



THE FALL OF BASHAR AL-ASSAD

What happened

In the early hours of Sunday morning, on the 8th of December 2024, opposition forces declared Syria liberated from the rule of President Bashar al-Assad as they surged into the capital. This marked the end of 13 years of an uprising against an abusive and evil regime which corrupted and downgraded the once thriving country of Syria.

Is this good?

Yes, this is amazing. Millions of Syrians were displaced because of the war. Children of those who fled the country who wanted to go to Syria would normally be refused entry without proof of their parents' Syrian nationality. And if they were male and 16 or over they would have to get a Syrian identity card. It's a long bureaucratic process. Whilst waiting for the identity card, they could have pay up to \$8,000 to avoid being conscripted into the army.

So, the only way to enter was to already have a Syrian identity card beforehand or to try bribery. Even then, as a Syrian going into Syria would be a very tiring process, having to stop at multiple military check-points and having to bribe the soldiers to let you pass. All of this just to go into your home city and meet your relatives. These are just a few of many things you would have to be careful of and thankfully, this is all gone now.

Who was the old leader

Former leader Bashar al-Assad was the successor of his father, Hafez al-Assad. They came from the family name of al-Wahsh meaning the savage until they changed their name in the 1920s to al-Assad, meaning the lion. He was born in Damascus on the 11th of September 1965. On 17 July 2000, Assad became president, succeeding his father, who had died on 10 June 2000.



BASHAR AL-ASSAD

What was wrong with Bashar?

Bashar was leading a corrupt regime; he had inhumane prisons used to torture and kill innocent people who just said they wanted freedom. These weren't your typical tortures, think the worst one you could imagine, and they would have worse. One method was called the Makbas, meaning the press, which would put someone in between 2 big concrete blocks and would squash the person like a hydraulic press, killing them. These were found in the prison called Sednaya a name which would bring terror to people. Soldiers would blindfold and handcuff a person and beat them repeatedly and show them a picture of Bashar and ask them who is your god and hit them if they said Allah and not Bashar. They would also make them bow down with their head on the floor to a picture of Bashar. For religious people this is the worst sin you can commit. That is only some of the ways of torture. He had centers making chemical weapons and places manufacturing and selling an illegal drug called Captagon. He was a dictator and a tyrant.

What happens now?

Now the Syrian state is temporarily led by someone called Ahmad al-Sharah. He is leader of the free Syria army which was led by HTS. They are now forming a government and trying to create a new Syrian army and rebuild the country. It is now safe to go there and during the Easter break of 2025 I went with my family. Below are some of the photos I took.

Yusuf Makhzoum – Year 9



DHOL

The dhol is a double-sided drum played in South Asian music, especially in Punjabi Bhangra and folk traditions. It has a loud, deep sound that makes it perfect for dancing and celebrations. The dhol is played with two sticks, each creating a different sound. The thicker stick, called the dagga, is used on the larger drumhead to make deep bass sounds. The thinner stick, called the tilli, is used on the smaller drumhead to create sharper, higher-pitched beats. The sticks can also be used to hit the wooden side of the drum. This makes a high clicking sound that can add to the rhythmic interest.

The dhol player has to co-ordinate both sticks to create rhythms made up of high and low pitches. The most common beat played on the dhol is known as the chaal rhythm and the last beat of the bar is emphasised along with beat one. The beat can be varied during a performance, for example, sometimes one player sets up a call and answer pattern.

Dhol music is not usually written down so players have to learn the different rhythm patterns by ear. The teacher will vocalise different syllables to imitate the sound of the Dhol and then sing the rhythms. Syllables such as 'Dha', 'Na' and 'Ge' can be used to represent the different parts of the drum. The students listen to these vocal rhythms and then apply them to the instrument. Being able to memorise rhythm patterns is very important for a dhol player and the more advanced players will be able to play many rhythms from memory.

Traditionally, dhols were made from wood and animal skin, but modern ones often use synthetic materials. The instrument has also become popular outside South Asia, appearing in Bollywood, fusion music, and even Western pop songs. Its energetic beats make it a favourite at weddings, festivals, and parties. As the instrument is naturally loud, it is very much suited to being played in public.

Izaah Powels-Ali – Year 11



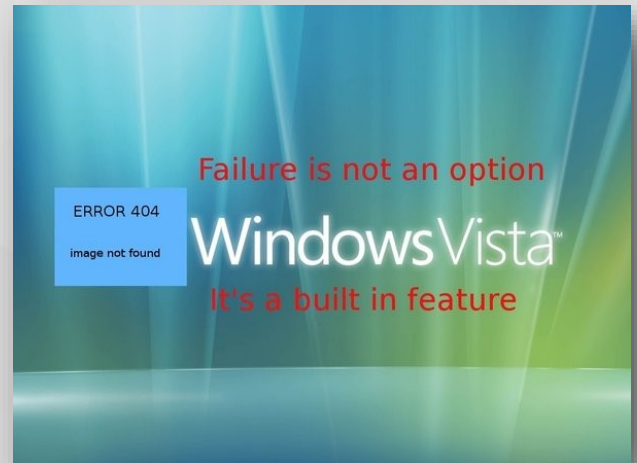
TECH FAILS

THE WORST TECH FAILS OF ALL TIME

When you hear the term 'tech fail', it is relating to products that fail to fulfil their promises. From frustrating to outright dangerous, here are some of the worst tech disasters in history.

WINDOWS VISTA

Released in 2007, Windows Vista was supposed to revolutionise computing with advanced visuals, improved security, and better performance. Instead, it became one of Microsoft's most notorious failures. The highly touted Aero Glass theme required hardware that most users didn't have, making computers sluggish. Even new machines labelled 'Vista-ready' failed to run the OS smoothly. Businesses avoided Vista due to compatibility issues with printers, scanners, and older software.



One of Vista's most criticised features, User Account Control (UAC), aimed to enhance security but annoyed users with constant prompts for routine tasks. Many disabled it, defeating its purpose. Adding to the frustration, Microsoft abandoned promised features like the WinsFS file system. DirectX 10, meant to attract gamers, flopped as most games were still optimized for DirectX 9. Vista's six confusing editions only worsened its reception.

Apple capitalised on the backlash with its 'Get a Mac' campaign, boosting its sales. Microsoft redeemed itself with Windows 7 in 2009, which addressed Vista's flaws. Still, Vista's failure cost Microsoft \$6 billion, making it a prime example of overpromising and underdelivering.

GALAXY NOTE 7

Samsung's Galaxy Note 7, launched in 2016, initially dazzled with features like a 5.7-inch HDR display, water resistance, and an upgraded S Pen stylus. However, it soon became infamous for dangerous battery issues. Reports emerged of devices overheating, catching fire, and even exploding during normal use.



TECH FAILS

The most shocking incidents included a car fire and a pre-flight explosion. Tragically, a six-year-old boy suffered third-degree burns when a Note 7 exploded in his hands.

Samsung issued a global recall in September 2016 and halted production. A software update to limit battery power had little effect, and the Note 7 was permanently discontinued. The fiasco cost Samsung \$17 billion and a 15% drop in sales, cementing its place as one of tech's greatest failures.



THERAC-25

The Therac-25, a radiation therapy machine introduced in 1982, caused multiple deaths due to programming errors. Unlike earlier models, it lacked proper safety checks. Faulty software sometimes delivered radiation doses hundreds of times stronger than intended. Patients described it as an 'intense electric shock', followed by severe burns and radiation poisoning. Several people died as a result.

Error messages like 'MALFUNCTION' offered no guidance, leaving operators unaware of the danger. Investigations revealed the software was reused from older models and poorly developed by a single programmer whose qualifications were unclear. The fallout included lawsuits, AECL's damaged reputation, and the end of its partnership with a French collaborator. The Therac-25 serves as a grim reminder of the importance of safety in technology.

Ali Imran – Year 7



WEST MIDLAND RAIL

Travelling by train is one of the best ways to help the environment as it helps to reduce the carbon emissions. The UK has many trainlines linking towns and cities. West Midlands Trains (WMT) is one of the major British train operating companies.

It operates passenger trains between the West Midlands and London and was created as a consortium of three companies, Abellio, JR East, and Mitsui & Co. There are also diverse types of trains such as Class 730, Class 196, Class 323, and the Class 172. The Rail consortium consists of 16 local authorities including Shropshire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire.



WMT services is split into two businesses, which run under two distinct sub-brands. Train services running on the West Coast Main Line, including those running to and from London Euston, Liverpool Lime Street and Crewe run under the London Northwestern Railway brand. This name was chosen in tribute to the former London and Northwestern Railway (LNWR), the company that ran services on the route between 1846 and 1922. Branding of trains and associated publicity use a green colour scheme with a logo made up of the letters L, N and W.

Services running in Birmingham and the West Midlands region – previously operated by London Midland under the *London Midland City* brand – are operated by WMT under the *West Midlands Railway* brand. WMT have chosen to operate these services as a distinct business unit in order to ease a potential future devolution of these services from the national DfT to the West Midlands Combined Authority.

In September 2021, following emergency measures to deal with the budgetary impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department for Transport awarded WMT a direct contract until 20 September 2026, replacing its existing franchise agreement.



WEST MIDLANDS RAIL

West Midlands Trains were one of the several train operators involved in the 2022-2024 United Kingdom Railway Strikes, which were the first national rail strikes in the UK for three decades. Its workers are amongst those who are taking part in industrial action due to a dispute over pay and working conditions. West Midlands Trains has only been capable of operating a very minimal timetable on any of the planned dates for the strikes due to the number of staff involved.

As of 2025, West Midlands Trains operates a penalty fare policy requiring passengers to purchase a ticket before boarding. If this is not possible, passengers must make themselves known to the conductor at once while boarding.

Fun Facts about West Midlands Railway:

- Each Train has designated space for 3 bikes.
- Trains call at 176 train stations.
- WMR owns 146 stations.
- The length of the West Midlands Railway is 867.4 kilometres (539 miles) in distance.
- Birmingham New Street station serves as a central hub for the West Midlands Railway, connecting passengers to various destinations within the region.
- To signify its connection to the wider West Midlands transport network, the West Midlands Railway uses an orange and purple 'WM' logo, part of a shared branding initiative with other local transport modes like buses and trams.

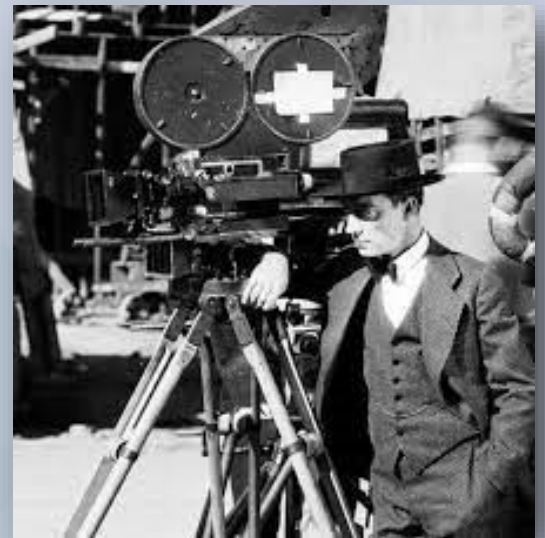
Anon



THE END OF CINEMA?

Has streaming spelt the end of cinema?

For well over a century, going to the movies been a part of many people's lives. A place to escape the mundane cycle of everyday life, cinemas provide an opportunity to sit in front of a big screen for a few hours with complete strangers and experience a range of emotions together. But this haven for collective emotional experience is now under threat from streaming companies such as Netflix and Amazon. The availability of new releases so soon after they've been released in the cinema has had a major impact on the industry. Understandably, many people would rather watch the latest film from the comfort of their own home rather than go out and spend money at the cinema.



According to the Northwest Londoner, cinema attendance rate has dropped by 30% since 2019 with 100 UK cinemas being shut down between 2022 and 2025. It is not just the UK that has experienced these trends as 1,000 cinemas have shut down in the USA since the pandemic. Sky news reported that 45,000 workers at Cineworld have lost their jobs since the Covid-19 Pandemic with 6,000 of them being in the UK.

The decline of the movie theatres inevitably means that film companies will make less money from the box office. Oscar-winning screenplay writer and actor Matt Damon has stated that the rise in streaming has already caused the death of the DVD "The DVD was a big part of our business, our revenue stream, and technology has just made that obsolete". Movies do not make as much money as they did 20 years ago and this has caused production companies to give the green light only to movies that they think will make large amounts at the box office rather than invest in movies that may have more artistic value but appeal to a smaller crowd.



CINEMA V STREAMING

That said, some independent films have been given the go-ahead such as Sean Baker's 'Anora' or Bong Joon-Ho's 'Parasite', both of which won best picture at the Oscars. Without independent film we wouldn't have classics such as: Reservoir Dogs, The Shawshank Redemption or The Good, The Bad and The Ugly. Directors such as Martin Scorsese, Quentin Tarantino or Alfred Hitchcock who have transformed the world of filmmaking may never have been given their big break and their masterful works would never have existed.

According to the Guardian, streaming giants are erasing cinema's history. An article from 2019 states that at first Netflix kept its original films out of cinemas, pursuing a strategy that made the very concept of cinemagoing a stated enemy; this was softened considerably following blowback at the 2017 Cannes film festival, but the company's hardball negotiations with exhibitors have kept high-profile projects like 'The Irishman' out of major cinema chains.



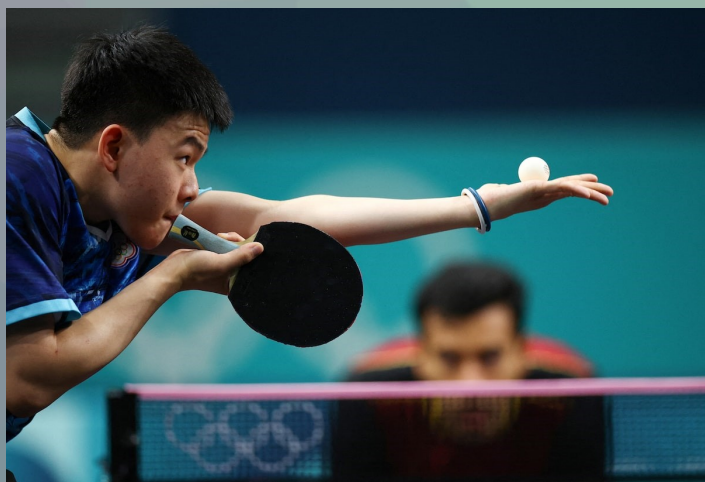
All is not lost as cinemas are fighting back against the threat of streaming companies. The Everyman cinema in Birmingham for example, has offered deals such as a lower subscription fees and complimentary confectionary to try and lure customers back into their seats. Many cinemas have also started to show classic movies such as 'Gone with the Wind' and 'Citizen Kane' alongside new releases to attract film fans who want to watch their favourite movies on the big screen.

Overall, I believe that the decline of cinemas across the UK and the world is a key issue that needs to be solved. Cinemas are places where people can experience life, where they can relax and take a break. If they shut, then movies that have a smaller audience will never be seen, this could cause the next Steven Spielberg or David Fincher to never release movies. The world would be deprived of their genius. Movies establish what it is to be human as they spread unique messages about society, they are the ultimate form of free speech. To save the cinema we must go more often. We must watch small independent films more often so that genius can be shared across the world and so that we can enjoy our lives more.

Nihal Sumal – Year 10



CHOOSING A TABLE TENNIS BAT



When you are picking a table tennis bat, the number of choices can be extremely overwhelming. This can be the case whether you are buying your first bat, or your tenth. However, after hundreds of hours of research, and many more hours of testing, I have put together some of my findings into this article. This is by no means a comprehensive guide, but it is a good introduction.

The first, and the most important thing that you need to consider is your skill level. If you have tested a pre-made beginner bat and a professional,

custom-made bat, the difference will be evident. With this difference considered, choosing the right extension of your arm is one of the most important sporting decisions that you could ever make.

If you are just starting off and are looking for your first bat, I would recommend buying a pre-made bat that costs around £5 with one of your best options being the Carlton Vapour Speed. This bat is readily available and provides good control. However, it lacks a lot of the speed and spin that is needed at a high level. The reason why I have chosen this bat is not because of the price, but because a higher-end bat will have too much speed to control for a beginner and will not allow you to get a good feel for the game. That said, there are a few better options, but they are very hard to find. For each of these bats, I will give it a rating out of ten and for this bat, I will give it a rating of 1.75/10.

If you have been playing for a few months, but did not buy a bat straight away, you may be better off selecting a bat that is around the £15-£20 price range. A good choice would be something like a Carlton R4, which is also very readily available. It has good control, but has a slightly spongier rubber which gives it slightly more speed and spin. As it also has a far better handle, I would rate this bat 2.5/10.

Once you have been playing for about six months to a year (depending on how regularly you play) it is time to consider whether you want to buy a high end pre-made bat, or a low-end custom-made bat. Within this category, I would not recommend spending more than £35-£40 because anything at a higher end would become faster and extremely hard to control. A good option would be the Carlton K9. However, a far better choice would be to buy a low-end custom bat. There are many websites that you can buy custom bats from, but, in my opinion, the best one is

www.customtabletennis.co.uk

TABLE TENNIS

Probably your best option is to either buy the Custom Table Tennis Allround Plus Gambler 7's Table Tennis Bat from their website, or the Custom Table Tennis Black Carbon Gambler 7's Table Tennis Bat if you have a slightly higher budget. These bats provide great control and decent spin, but lack a bit of speed even though they have a lot more than the previous bats. However, this is where, if you have a style of play that is not suited by these bats, or are looking for something else, it would be best to speak to a professional. The people at Custom Table Tennis are very helpful and will be more than happy to help you make the right decision. If you cannot speak to them, I am more than happy to help. You can do this by speaking to me in person, or by dropping me an email via the school email system. I would rate the K9 5/10, the Allround Plus 6/10 and the Black Carbon 6.25/10.

By the time that you need to change this bat, you would have developed a certain style of play. At this point, your game will be at a high level. This could be anywhere from around six months to two years since you bought this bat. This is really dependent on how much you play, how quickly you improve and the level you play at. By this point you should have joined, or should be looking to join a club. This is because you need experience playing against better players and coaching on the correct techniques. Then, your coach can advise you on what type of bat to buy. However, as this is not generally their area of expertise, they may not know of the latest rubbers with the best technology. That is why, once they have suggested what type of bat to buy, you should speak to a specialist. Once again, I recommend Custom Table Tennis. They have the best varieties to choose from and some of the best staff to advise you. A few rubbers that I would recommend staying away from are: Tenergy, Dignics and in most cases DHS Hurricane rubbers. This is along with older rubbers such as Mark 5 and Schriber. This is because they are extremely overpriced for what they are and really outdated. Now you can get far better rubbers for that price, or lower. Personally, I use the Custom Table Tennis Premium Hinoki Carbon Blade, with the Jekyll and Hyde V47.5 rubbers on both sides, however, I am soon looking at changing to the C57.5 and C55 versions of these rubbers. At this stage, you should not spend less than £100 on a bat and should be willing to spend upwards of £300 depending on your choices and playing style. If you need any help, once again, I



am more than happy to help. I would rate my current bat 8.5/10 and with the new rubbers 9.25/10.

So, whether you are new to table tennis, or an advanced player, choosing the right bat is one of the most important sporting decisions that you can make. Even though the choices may be overwhelming, it is well worth it when you realise that you have made the right decision. Please do not hesitate to contact me.

Armaan Currim – Year 10

FOOTBALL: THE BEAUTIFUL GAME

Football, also known as soccer in some countries, is the world's most popular sport, played by millions across the globe. It is a game that transcends borders, cultures, and generations, uniting people in a shared love for the sport. Football is not only a source of entertainment but also provides numerous health benefits, has a rich and fascinating history, and has been shaped by some of the greatest and most innovative players of all time.



The Health Benefits of Football

Playing football offers a wide range of physical and mental health benefits. As a high-intensity sport, it improves cardiovascular health by increasing heart rate and promoting better circulation. The constant movement involved—sprinting, jogging, and quick direction changes enhances endurance, strength, and agility. Additionally, football helps develop coordination and balance due to the precise footwork required to control the ball.

Beyond physical fitness, football also has psychological benefits. It encourages teamwork, discipline, and strategic thinking, all of which are valuable life skills. The social aspect of football reduces stress and improves mental well-being, as players form bonds with teammates and experience the joy of competition and achievement. Studies suggest that playing football can help reduce anxiety and depression, making it an excellent activity for mental health.

The History of Football

The origins of football can be traced back thousands of years, with early forms of the game played in ancient China, Greece and Rome. However, the modern version of football as we know it today was developed in England during the 19th century. In 1863, the Football Association (FA) was established, and the first official rules of the game were written, distinguishing it from rugby. From there, football rapidly spread across Europe and the rest of the world, leading to the formation of major leagues and international competitions.

The first-ever FIFA World Cup was held in 1930 in Uruguay, marking a new era for international football. Over the decades, the sport has continued to grow, with club competitions such as the UEFA Champions League and domestic leagues like the English Premier League, La Liga, and Serie A becoming global phenomena. Today, football remains the most watched and played sport worldwide.

The Greatest Players of All Time

Throughout football's history, several players have left an indelible mark on the game, earning the status of legends. Among them is Pelé, the Brazilian forward widely regarded as one of the greatest players ever. He won three FIFA World Cups (1958, 1962, 1970) and scored over 1,000 career goals, becoming a global icon.

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Another legendary figure is Diego Maradona, the Argentine maestro best known for his breathtaking dribbles and the infamous 'Hand of God' goal in the 1986 World Cup. His ability to single-handedly change the course of a match made him one of football's most mesmerising talents.

In modern football, Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo have dominated the game for over a decade. Messi, with his extraordinary dribbling, vision, and playmaking ability, has won multiple Ballon d'Or awards and led Argentina to World Cup glory in 2022. Ronaldo, known for his athleticism, powerful shots, and goal-scoring prowess, has won major titles across England, Spain, and Italy, cementing his status as one of football's greatest athletes.

Unique Players Who Invented Techniques

Some footballers have not only mastered the game but also introduced new techniques that have influenced generations of players. One such player is Johan Cruyff, the Dutch genius who popularised the 'Cruyff Turn', a deceptive dribbling move that allows players to quickly change direction while shielding the ball. His vision and philosophy also shaped modern football, particularly through his influence at Barcelona.



Another innovator was Ricardo Quaresma, a Portuguese winger known for his signature 'Trivela' shot, where he uses the outside of his foot to curl the ball with incredible precision. This technique has been adopted by many players seeking to add unpredictability to their game. Brazilian legend Ronaldinho brought creativity and flair to football with his dazzling skills, including the 'Elastico' (or flip-flap), a rapid movement where the ball is pushed one way and quickly flicked in the opposite direction. His joyful style of play inspired countless young footballers.

My [definitely not] biased dream team:

Buffon
R. Carlos
Maldini
Terry
Cafu
Matthäus
Zidane
Pele
Hazard
CR7 Ronaldo
Messi

Honourable mentions: Maradona, Ronaldinho, R9, Neuer, Ramos.

Yakob Isak – Year 10





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