



King's High School

# Inspire Essay Competition

2019

# Contents

## Year 9 Prize-Winning Entries

**What is consciousness and can it be transferred?**

Jessica Strens (First Prize)

**All in good time: can procrastination have positive effects?**

Hannah Mason (Second Prize)

**Who checks the facts? The death of journalism**

Mini Willson (Third Prize)

## Year 8 Prize-Winning Entries

**To what extent was the failure of the Gallipoli Campaign Churchill's responsibility?**

Maddie Barnes (First Prize)

**What is the impact of social media on the teenage brain?**

Sophie Quinn (Second Prize)

**Can you teach an old dog new tricks? A study into the contributing factors of the intelligence of a dog**

Charlotte Isbell (Third Prize)

## Year 7 Prize-Winning Entries

**The brass band community and what its future holds**

Polly Rumble (First Prize)

**What are the advantages and disadvantages of being left-handed?**

Imogen Hill (Second Prize)

**A comparison of ten texts from different ancient civilisations**

Rosie Brooker (Third Prize)

## Highly Commended Entries

**How does Heathcliff's character expand throughout the novel Wuthering Heights ?**

Charlotte Allen (Year 9)

**Has racism declined in football in the last 50 years?**

Izzy Jones (Year 9)

**Is focussing on plastic straws a waste of time?**

Zoe Phillis (Year 9)

**Why does mental health have such a huge impact on teenage girls today?**

Ema Jasper (Year 8)

**To what extent are Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange from Wuthering Heights reflective of the personalities of their inhabitants?**

Emma Williams (Year 8)

**How have assistance dogs helped us since they were first introduced?**

Rosa Simkin (Year 7)

**Pollution in the sea – plastic, why don't we stop it?**

Juliana Stuber (Year 7)

**Are dreams random?**

Laura Watts (Year 7)

# Foreword

Our third annual Inspire Essay Competition has been as exciting and impressive as the two that preceded it. Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 were set a simple but difficult task: research and write an essay on any topic of your choosing. I am delighted to be sharing the Highly Commended and prize-winning essays from the outstanding work we received. To see such independence and creative thinking on display has been a real delight, and we commend those who took part in this prestigious part of our Inspire Programme.

Alongside the impressive topics explored in this booklet, we received excellent essays on areas as diverse as the siblings of Anne Boleyn, the ethics of the fashion industry, the ultra-swimmer Adam Walker, the case of JonBenèt Ramsey, the absence of women in Formula One, and much more besides. Debate continues nationally about whether learning in schools should be student-centred or teacher-led, but one thing is abundantly clear: give King's High girls the chance to look into a topic that fascinates them, and they come up with exceptional independent work.

As ever, judging the competition this year was difficult. To categorise the hard work and intelligence on display felt at least a little reductive, given that all of the essays we received contained the invaluable gifts of initiative and imagination. We were looking for clarity of expression and structure, and the ability to analyse and argue as well as to explain, and there wasn't a single essay that didn't show off these skills. All of our essayists should feel immensely proud of the work that they researched and produced, and we look forward to reading more in future competitions, or in the further opportunities for research we provide in the older year groups.

Please continue to look out for the various opportunities for academic enrichment that we offer at King's. Our Inspire Programme of trips, dinners, lectures, clubs and competitions is designed to make our community as intellectually broad and vibrant as it can be. Regular trips to Oxford, Cambridge and beyond, as well as talks from world experts in their field, are a staple of our supra-curricular provision. I encourage all students at King's to get involved with any opportunities that might spark exciting ideas or pose new, challenging questions.

**Dr P Seal**

Director of Studies

# Year 9

## Prize Winning Entries





FIRST PRIZE  
YEAR 9

# What is consciousness and can it be transferred?

Jessica Strens

One of the most difficult things to explain scientifically is consciousness, and no one truly knows what it is or how it came into being. One explanation is that it is to be present inside a mind, to have the ability to think and feel and picture colours and images, or to be aware of your thoughts and existence. As it is so difficult to explain what it is or how it works, it raises many questions, such as 'Can robots one day be conscious?' or 'Can a mind be transferred from one place to another?'

The Ship of Theseus theory asks the question, 'If you replace every part of a ship with an identical copy of that part, is it still the same ship?' This same question applies to living creatures. In medicine, a new option is being explored where scientists can try to clone various limbs for patients, which could be beneficial to many people in the future. If you replace someone's leg, it seems clear that they are still the same person.

This can work for physical parts of the body, such as arms or legs, but if you replace someone's brain with an identical clone, will they simply wake up in the new head, or will they be a different person entirely? This argument considers the principle that the mind, or consciousness, is stored in the brain, the living space where thoughts occur and images are pictured. So, let's say that over a few years, you replace each small part of a person's brain and body, until only the new version remains, and somehow the mind is kept intact. Then, if you take the pieces of the old body, and put them back together, could one mind theoretically control two bodies?

This sounds quite far-fetched, and the more likely explanation would be that the new body is a different person. They would still think the same way and have the same memories, and so to everyone around them they would appear the same, however the

original person would die, not just wake up in a new body. An example of this is Dolly the sheep, the most complex creature to have been replicated. When the clone was born, they were clearly two different sheep with no mental link. However, the argument as to 'Nature vs Nurture' relates to this, as the new Dolly did not contain the memories of the old one, and would have grown up in a different environment, so if you could somehow find where memories are stored in the brain, and copy them across, that could be a different matter entirely. So the real question is, if you replace someone piece by piece, how far can you go before they become a different person with a different mind or consciousness?

A popular belief is that robots could one day become self-aware, and have feelings and thoughts, and already science has progressed enough that robots can solve problems and learn how to perform tasks, but really a robot is not actually living, because although it can process information, it cannot actually have feelings or thoughts of its own. This further relates to the concept of self-awareness. A robot can display signs of emotion, and work out solutions to problems using complex programming, but it cannot actually be aware that it is doing so. Many people believe it will never truly be possible for robots to have a consciousness.

However, this raises the question 'Why are biological creatures like us so special?' Why can we have thoughts and feelings whereas artificial beings cannot? On a cellular base, all of our components are merely bits of machinery, put together to create something else. Duplicates of each of these small parts can easily be made using machinery, but then surely if they were fitted together like ours are, we could create life?

One theory is that while our bodies are three dimensional, it is possible that our minds are not; that they are in a different, non-physical dimension, and cannot be replicated by 3D matter. However, the theory of evolution tries to explain how humans have evolved from simple organisms, and that if we have this other force in us, surely our predecessors do as well. Therefore, creatures like snails and fish must have this force in them too, so it is not possible to truly replicate them as robots. Cloning, however, is different, as when you clone a creature you take an original cell and multiply this to make a whole new creature. The only difference between this and creating artificial life is the one cell you start with, and this could mean the difference between containing consciousness or not, meaning one basic cell could contain traces of a mind.

Sir Roger Penrose argued that while many computational processes happen in the brain, the reason humans are so very different from robots is that computers can process information, but not actually understand it, and that the human mind works outside the laws of physics, using something called quantum mechanics, whereby we don't just process information we have, but are also aware of doing so.

Another way of replicating life is virtually, through simulations on computers. If we could design a virtual cell identical to real ones, and create a whole human body in a simulation then run it where each cell copies what it does in real life, theoretically we would have created a virtual mind, that could think like we do, but not exist in 3D matter. This idea is often explored in science fiction, and if this worked, we could have ways of living inside a computer, or a virtual world.

This brings us onto the subject of robots again, and that if we could create a programme containing an actual virtual mind, this could be downloaded into a robot body, and a non-biological being that could think and feel would be created. However, this science is far beyond our ability to test at currently, and, even if it was, there would be no real way of testing that the robot could think or feel, not just appear to be doing so.

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SECOND PRIZE  
YEAR 9

# All in good time: can procrastination have positive effects?

Hannah Mason

Procrastination is a widely spread issue affecting the majority of the population of the world, even if they do not know it. It is defined as, “The action of delaying or postponing something”. This can be applied to anything, especially tasks that are not seen as fun, or that are known by the procrastinator to be stressful. In fact the word ‘procrastination’ comes from the Latin words: ‘pro’ (translating to ‘for’) and ‘cras’ (translating to ‘tomorrow’); therefore, meaning to leave things ‘for tomorrow’. Procrastination can be seen as one of the main barriers preventing an individual from achieving a goal they have set for themselves and from pursuing their dreams, as well as blocking them from carrying out short-term tasks, for example a household chore.

Often, due to procrastination, people regret what they have not done more than what they have done; these feelings of regret and guilt lead to more procrastination and more time, that could be invested in something meaningful, being wasted.

At one point or another in their lives, everyone will experience procrastination. According to Dr Steel, author of the “The Procrastination Equation”, one in four people would describe themselves as a chronic procrastinator. This is when stress and anxiety levels increase so high that they can become overwhelming, leading the individual to pursue distraction and therefore ‘put off’ doing a task.

This essay will further explore the concept of procrastination by looking at the difference between active and passive procrastination and analysing and evaluating the positive and negative effects and investigating to what extent these positive effects are significant. In doing so, I will also assess whether procrastination leads

to an increase or block in creativity and consider the differences in procrastination when deadlines are involved.

Procrastination is most often associated with negative aspects and characteristics, for example apathy, laziness and the inability to concentrate. These correlate with passive procrastination: the more traditional type of procrastination, where the procrastinator is ‘paralysed’ by their irresolution to act and are unable to complete tasks before the set deadline. As a result of passive procrastination, nothing productive emerges.

While procrastination is not always passive, most serious negative effects of procrastination come as a consequence of it. The most obvious and main effect is stress. Just as stress is one of the factors that causes procrastination, procrastination is a behaviour that leads to stress. Once an individual has left a task unfinished, they will begin to spiral in a circle



Figure 1 The Procrastination Hamster Loop



There are many more negative consequences of chronic procrastination. Delaying productivity can have disastrous effects on an individual's life, not only in school or university but also as an adult: they could lose their job or other opportunities, lose the trust of their boss, co-workers or friends in group work, or be unable to deal with sudden changes in their life. Furthermore, detrimental effects on a procrastinator's lifestyle and health are inevitable; an underdeveloped immune system and insomnia are common, due to anxiety and stress levels rising as a result of worrying about not getting anything done as time runs out. Furthermore, procrastination can lead to depression and eating disorders.

On the other hand, it has come to light that procrastination is not always negative and that it can have significant positive effects. Most of these are as a result of active procrastination. In contrast to passive, this is when another task is completed productively, whilst the main task is still being avoided. If a student has been given two projects, one hard and one easier, they might choose the easy one first. Although they are being productive, they are procrastinating completing the harder project.

Too much active procrastination can have similar consequences to passive procrastination for the same reasons, however it can also have positive effects.

The first of these effects is that it helps the procrastinator to learn to manage delays; the more somebody puts something off, the more they are holding it back and delaying it, and therefore they become experienced at dealing with delays. Procrastination provides an opportunity to reflect on what is most important. Whilst not carrying out a task, the subconscious is working hard and is given opportunity to consider decisions therefore supporting the procrastinator's ability to prioritise, leading to better conclusions. In addition, procrastination helps to grow the ability to work under pressure. Having put off the task, when the procrastinator finally completes it just before the deadline, they feel more pressure and stress to get it done, and they will learn how to deal with pressure which is an important life skill. Furthermore, active procrastination often results in other tasks being completed instead, which would have had to be done another time.

The final positive consequence of procrastination is that the individual will have an increase in creativity. Even though the procrastinator may not consciously be working on the task, their subconscious is always thinking of creative solution even though they do not know it. A famous example of a chronic procrastinator who achieved immense success due to increased creativity is Leonardo da Vinci. Scholars estimate that his most famous painting, the Mona Lisa, was painted on and off for a few years beginning in 1503 before being left unfinished, until da Vinci completed the painting just before his death in 1519. Critics believe that he spent more time procrastinating "wasting his time dabbling with optical experiments and other distractions that kept him from completing his paintings." However, these distractions whilst procrastinating were in fact vital to his originality and creativeness; it is thought that da Vinci would not have been as successful if he hadn't procrastinated, because it is this that greatly improved his paintings.

In order to provide my own evidence that procrastination can be productive, I decided to conduct an experiment. When procrastinating, most often the procrastinator is found to be using their time online; whether it be social media, streaming YouTube or TV programmes, or something else that the user can easily develop an addiction to and that reduces motivation to work, myself included. My experiment involved making a switch from social media and Netflix to something I find equally addictive, but with additional benefits involved. The website [freerice.com](https://www.freerice.com) fitted all of these categories.

[Freerice.com](https://www.freerice.com) asks multiple choice quiz questions about diverse topics such as art, languages, humanities, and science. For each question answered correctly, ten grains of rice are donated to starving families around the world through the United Nations World Food Program. [Freerice.com](https://www.freerice.com) adjusts to the user's skill level by increasing difficulty as more questions are answered correctly and decreasing the difficulty with wrong answers. The fact that by using [freerice.com](https://www.freerice.com) helps to feed those without food was enough to encourage me to make the switch, however I wanted to see if what the website states is true, and if there were benefits for my brain as well. To do this, before and after I began playing [freerice.com](https://www.freerice.com) in my procrastination time, I tested my reaction time, my reading speed, and my comprehension.

	MY SCORES		MY SISTER'S SCORES	
	Before using Freerice	After using Freerice	Before using Freerice	After using Freerice
Reaction time	230ms	222ms	243ms	243ms
Reading Speed	154wpm	193wpm	343wpm	350wpm
Comprehension Score	45%	64%	82%	91%

Figure 2 Table of Results for freerice.com Experiment

My sister, Lauren, also took part in the experiment in order to make the results comparable and reliable. For one day, we used freerice.com when we were procrastinating. I found freerice.com gripping and soon found myself as absorbed in it as I would have been in social media. I learnt more language vocabulary, improved my mental maths and learnt some chemical symbols. In total, I managed to answer 378 questions correctly and donated 3780 grains of rice. Lauren correctly answered 300 and donated 3000 grains.

Although I only managed to donate around one serving of rice after answering what seemed like endless questions, I am pleased that by procrastinating I was able to learn new skills and knowledge over a variety of topics – a positive outcome.

We measured our scores before and after the experiment. With the exception of Lauren's reaction time, which stayed the same, our scores after using freerice.com were better than before.

These results suggest that the outcome of procrastination is not always negative and there can be many benefits and positive impacts as well. These include personal mental progress in addition to improvements within society achieved by changing the method of procrastination to something worthwhile.

After looking in detail at the process of procrastination, thoroughly understanding the concept and analysing its outcomes, I can conclude that not all consequences of procrastination are negative, although sometimes for this to happen the individual needs to be aware of their procrastination and change the way they do it. I have discovered that procrastination can be productive. This contradicts information found by psychologists and provides a different view on the concept. To take a further step with my research and analysis, I would like to look in detail into the idea that procrastination can be linked to perfectionism and carry out further investigations to see why this occurs.

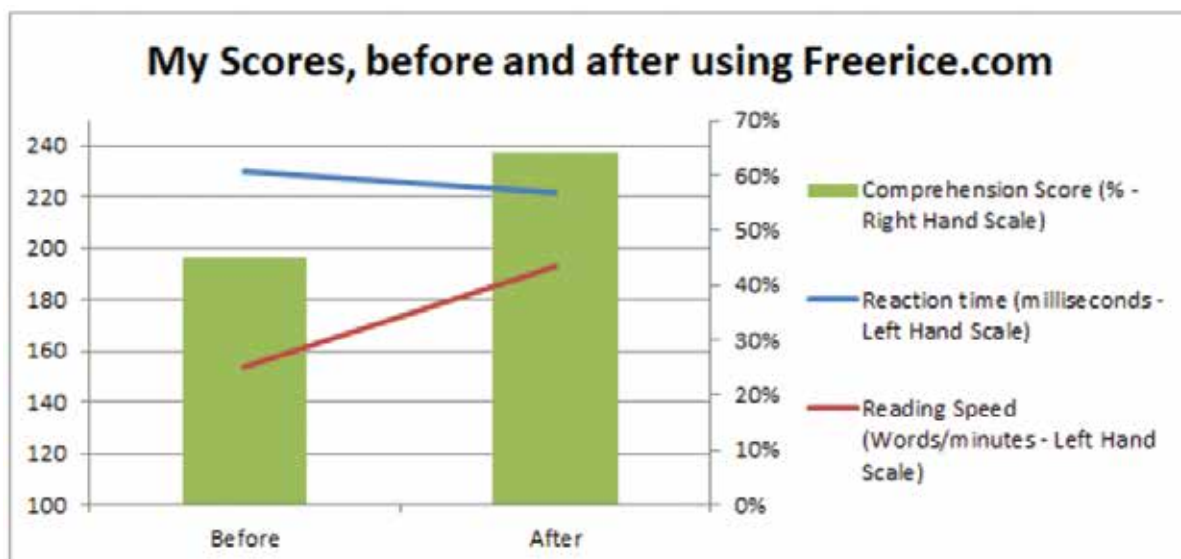


Figure 3 Chart to show my scores, before and after using freerice.com

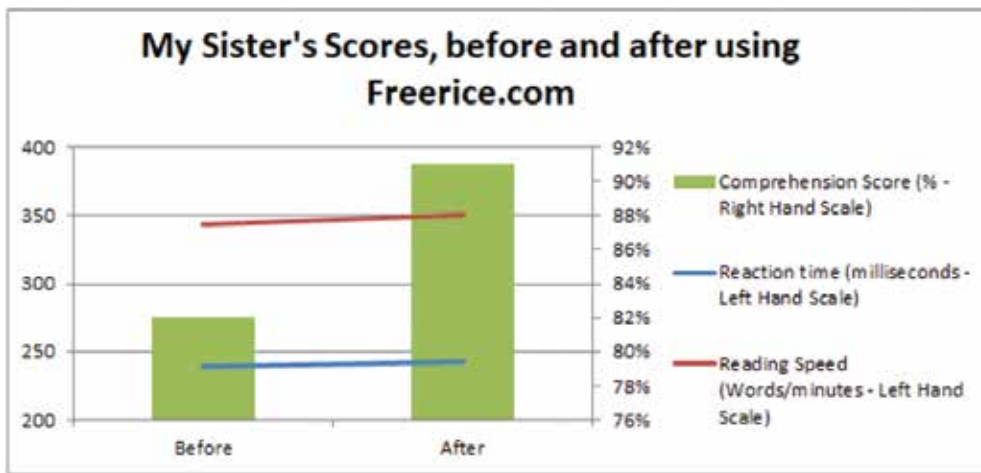


Figure 4 Chart to show my sister's scores, before and after using freerice.com

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THIRD PRIZE  
YEAR 9

# Who Checks the Facts? The Death of Journalism

Mini Willson

Why is truth so hard to find? Who took it away? At my prep school my headmaster told me all about truth. He said it meant everything. That truth is what makes us civilised and gives us our inner beauty, our strength and our power. Truth, he said, is simply the difference between right and wrong. So where has it gone? As a 14-year-old I feel I shouldn't have to ask this question, but I'm scared that truth, like the glaciers, is disappearing. I remember my dad in the morning with his bowl of Frosties and a big flappy copy of The Independent on his daily search for truth. It was always there, easy to see in the lines of black type. He doesn't read it anymore because it is gone.

Newspapers are closing at record levels. The Press Gazette says that since 2005 379 local papers in the UK have folded, circulations are down 10% (28% in Wales) and each year another 45 papers close. And all those journalists, who fought for truth, who checked, and checked and double checked their facts, have gone. Full Story Media reports that since 2007 the number of full-time journalists in the U.K has fallen by 25%. They chased away the lies, the gossip, the planted stories, suspect surveys and political fairy tales and told the true facts. Their jobs depended on facts. Who does that now?

Not the internet-obsessed new world of influencers and social media platforms, that's for sure. And not the new amateur 'Citizens Journalists' either. News is no longer facts and truth is no longer news. In the swirling tempest of memes, sponsorships, photo shop, Google, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram nothing is what it seems anymore. But the worse thing is the speed of this change. In less than 10 years our society has gone from having a reliable base of solid factual information to a world-wide-web of PR and paid-for opinions. We even have a description for this new crisis: Fake News. Two scary words

created by the President of the United States who was elected to stand for integrity and truth. When the leader of the free world starts hiding truth – that's when we should worry.

If a journalist criticises Trump they are publicly humiliated, bullied and even have their press papers taken away. He behaves like an bratty spoilt child. If a newspaper questions any of his claims he reacts irrationally on social media and is supported by his 61.7 million followers. The rest of the world watches America, and Trump has played a big part in questioning the honesty and accuracy of 21st century journalism. And he is winning his personal fight against truth. Last year North Carolina's School of Media reported that in the U.S 1,800 newspapers have closed since 2004, creating 'news deserts with the poorest, least educated and most isolated without local news from credible sources that they can rely on'. When historians try to explain what went wrong with American society in the 21st century they must start by looking at the 'Trump Effect' and this critical decline in local journalism.

But it is not just the West that has lost so many fact-checkers. Global Press Freedom says that the Annual Prison Census lists 251 journalists locked up in jail around the world: 68, in Turkey, 47 in China, 25 in Egypt and 16 in Saudi Arabia. In Russia, since President Putin came to power, 21 journalists have been killed. The truth is slowly being murdered. On October the 2nd 2018 Jamal Khashoggi, a columnist for the Washington Post and critic of Saudi Arabia, walked into an Istanbul consulate and was murdered. A U.N investigation said that it was 'an extrajudicial killing for which the state of Saudi Arabia is responsible'. For a few months there was anger round the world, but nearly a year later not much has happened. The Saudi Arabian government still

says they were not directly involved, the U.K and U.S still treat Saudi Arabia as a friend, we still sell them guns and rockets, still buy their oil and friends at my school still go on holiday to Dubai with their families. A famous journalist was murdered by a government for telling the truth about human rights and the world now just shrugs its shoulders and sunbathes. October the 2nd 2018 was a bad day for journalism and the search for truth.

And this infection has even filtered down into the everyday TV programmes my friends and I watch. In Love Island this year, contestant Sherif Lanre was asked to leave the show under mysterious circumstances. Hours after being asked to leave several stories were trending on social media supported by fake screen shots and unchecked versions of the facts in newspapers. The Daily Mirror reported that 'ITV producers have demanded secrecy after the incident and have tried to stop Sherif's family from speaking out.' Most honest people would say that 'demanding secrecy' is a fancier version of lying and trying to hide the truth. If popular television programmes, foreign governments, and the President of the United States are all on a mission to try and hide the truth, then what is to become of this world? What hope is there for journalism and truth, and what hope is there for my generation? We worry about this. We think about it a lot.

And when we do, the future does not look good. Without hard-working journalists on local papers in Flagstaff, Bradford, Calcutta, Moscow, Ankara, Bordeaux and Alexandria, all sorts of bad things (and bad people) will get away with things. Politicians, big business, governments, criminals and fraudsters will have an easy time because there will be nobody to tell the other side of the story – to check the facts, to find the truth and to write the headlines. From

Watergate and the My Lai massacre to Thalidomide and the MP's expenses scandal, investigative journalism has changed history and made the world a more honest place. The slow death of journalism is one of society's biggest issues right now. And if we don't do something about it soon we are in danger of creating a world where truth has no value, no importance and, most important, no power.

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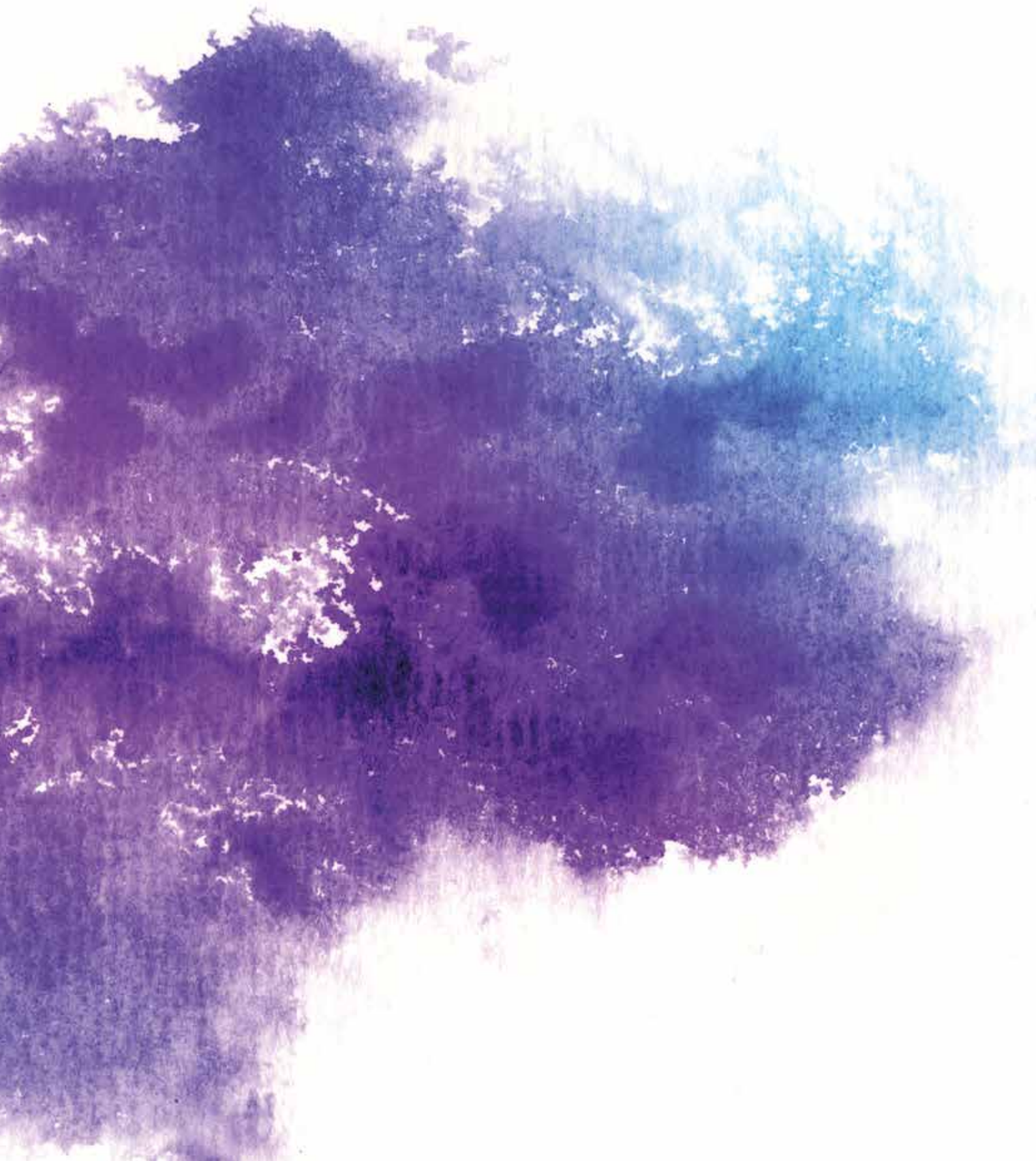
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# Year 8

## Prize Winning Entries





FIRST PRIZE  
YEAR 8

# To what extent was the failure of the Gallipoli Campaign Churchill's Responsibility?

Maddie Barnes

On the 19th February 1915, the Battle of Gallipoli, one of the most famous battles in World War I, began. The overall plan was to control the sea passage from Europe to Russia. Hundreds of thousands of British troops, Australian troops, New Zealand troops, Canadian troops and more came together to battle against the Ottoman Empire in Turkey. Over 21,000 British troops died and between 55,000 to 85,000 Ottomans were put to death. It failed miserably.

Till the day he died, Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill regretted the Battle of Gallipoli. He, along with millions of others, blamed himself. However, some people believe that it wasn't entirely his fault.

Winston Churchill is best known for two things: being Prime Minister whilst World War II was going on and making the error of the Battle of Dardanelles. When D-Day in World War II came around, Churchill was initially against it. After the Battle of Gallipoli, he was very anxious about making another similar mistake. But fortunately for Britain, he eventually and reluctantly agreed to D-Day commencing, and consequently this ended up with a very successful result.

The Gallipoli Campaign was a major battle over a small amount of land. However, the main target of the battle was not to gain that land necessarily but rather to overthrow the Ottoman Empire. The land that was being fought over was the Ottoman Capital, which, if captured, would seriously weaken the empire, and would hopefully mean that the Ottoman Empire would surrender.

The plan was a rather simple one. A huge fleet of allied ships would sail up the very slim Dardanelles patch of sea and conquer. However, this did not go well. A large percentage of the ships were sunk or damaged due to the cannons and mines that the Ottoman Empire used against them, which ended up making them retreat back to the safer seas.

After the complete failure of the first attempt, the allies of the Triple Entente Empire had made plans for a major land invasion, instead of by sea. This was an absolute catastrophe. On the 25th April 1915, the second round of this seemingly never-ending battle began. On the first day of the allies landing onto the shores, thousands had died, and the front lines were never pushed more than a few hundred metres from the beach, even after 8 months of attacks, counter-attacks, fresh landings, and a lot of fighting. So many troops were sentenced to death, and Churchill held himself responsible for this.

The title of this essay, however, isn't asking about what Gallipoli was, but instead, why was Churchill held responsible for this disastrous event.

Winston Churchill was a soldier in the Royal Navy during the Great War. He was becoming increasingly infuriated by the mass casualties and the stalemate that was happening, and so he felt an urgent need to take action. In his frustrated state, he asked the Prime Minister at the time, "Are there not other alternatives than sending our armies to chew barbed wire in Flanders?". This sentiment is what started the whole battle of Gallipoli because it was the quote that got the Prime Minister and many around him thinking long and hard about the alternatives to the gruesome and brutal battles that surrounded their day-to-day lives and suffocated their every move.

Churchill's next idea was the one that changed everything. He abandoned his plan to invade Germany from the Baltic Sea and moved on to his next idea – the Battle of Gallipoli. He proposed that they should send a fleet of ships up the incredibly narrow Dardanelles river and seize the surrounding land so that they had complete control of the waterways, meaning that they could knock one of Germany's allies out of the equation.

I personally disagree with the notion that Gallipoli was completely Churchill's fault. I think that, of

course, a very large portion of it was completely his doing (after all, it was his idea), but it would never have been passed if the Cabinet hadn't agreed and backed up the plan. Churchill can't be completely blamed for all of those lives ending as they did. Looking from the other point of view, not only did he come up with the idea and present it himself, but he then went and disobeyed crucial orders which cost a lot more lives than it should have. Churchill wanted a strong army of 50,000 men and sea-power, but the British War Office refused to send that many men. Due to Churchill strongly believing that Gallipoli would be an incredible success, he went forward with his original plan and sent all 50,000 troops to be lead to, effectively their slaughter.

The next error he made was being unreasonably pressurising. He chose to pressurise everyone into following his orders, and when the weather was looking unsafe and ships were being sunk, he put a British Naval Commander under so much pressure to continue that he eventually had a nervous breakdown. After 3 ships were sunk and 3 other ships were severely damaged by undetected mines, John de Robeck ordered a withdrawal due to half of his fleet being out of commission. However, Churchill disagreed with this and so a debate began. Whilst this debate was occurring, the fleet was hesitating, which gave the opposition a large advantage. This is when the second round of the Battle of Çanakkale began: the invasion via land.

Whilst all the hesitation and confusion was going on, the Turks had time to call in reinforcements and backup, and thus, the element of surprise (which was their main advantage) was lost. The azure colour of the Aegean Sea turned burgundy as the Ottoman Empire rebutted the flows of ANZAC, British and French troops that were charging towards them.

The intention of the Battle of Gallipoli was to annihilate the current stalemate that was taking place on the Western Front, but instead of doing this, it morphed into the exact same situation. Blood was spewed everywhere and the beaches were covered in rotting bodies. Then, instead of one stalemate, there was two.

Churchill was removed from his position as part of the Admiralty. This lead Churchill to the decision to fight. He picked up a gun and fought long and hard in the war, facing several possibly fatal situations. In 1917, he

put his army uniform away and returned to politics.

To summarise, the whole idea of Gallipoli was put into action by Churchill, but this could not have happened if the Cabinet didn't consent to Churchill's plans. Of course, Winston Churchill is very largely to blame and the whole situation was at his behest, but the idea and the intention were actually well thought out, and if there hadn't been so many bumps – or mountains – on the road then it could have been successful. Winston was a young, relatively inexperienced member of the Admiralty who was just trying to do his part, and even long after Gallipoli, he said "The Dardanelles might have saved millions of lives. Don't imagine I am running away from the Dardanelles. I glory in it". The lives lost always taunted him silently, but he never regretted bringing the idea forward. The battle could have saved millions of lives and may have been responsible for breaking the stalemate that was happening over on the Western Front.

Winston Churchill once said, "You have enemies? Good. That means you've stood up for something, sometime in your life." This quote reflects his encounter with Gallipoli very well: he made many enemies in a short amount of time, but that is because no matter what you do, how you do it or where you do it, you will always gain enemies along the line – as long as you are standing up for something that others may not. He stood up for Gallipoli because he genuinely thought it was right, even though it didn't go to plan.

Essentially, the process of Gallipoli had to pass through all the players of the team before it hit the Goalkeeper, so if the ball went in the goal, then the whole responsibility wasn't upon the Goalkeeper's shoulders, because the whole team had a part to play in it.

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SECOND PRIZE  
YEAR 8

# What is the impact of social media on the teenage brain?

Sophie Quinn

The teenage brain is developing and continues to do so until a person is in their twenties. The pre-frontal cortex is the last part of the brain to fully develop and it controls rational thought and decision making. Adolescence is the time of most rapid and dramatic brain development and this includes a teen's motivation to develop, and sustain, social relations. This therefore will make the appeal of social media greater as it will satisfy the teen's natural desire to increase their social circle and connect with others. Teenagers use the amygdala to process thoughts and feelings. This is the emotional part of the brain which we rely on to enable us to behave instinctively. For example, it controls the flight or fight response. This contributes to mood swings and can result in risky behaviour and lack of emotional control as it is not the part of the brain which relies on rational balanced thought. The amygdala plays a huge role in the mental health of teenagers and it has been proved that teenagers with depression also showed increased activity in the amygdala, whereas adults use the frontal cortex to think and process. This aids with reasoning and planning.

Social media is a digital platform or system or app which enables people to connect and share all sorts of content, from photos to memes to comments. Social media appeals to teenagers as it enables them to talk to friends and groups of friends; stay up to date with the latest news; meet new friends and feel that they are keeping up to date with what is going on. As social connection is particularly important to teenagers as a result of their brain development, social media holds a particular appeal to them. Evidence from Common Sense media suggests that teenagers are spending, on average, 9 hours a day on social media. This

means that it is the most consuming activity that they do. It is more influential than school, sleep, hobbies or time with family. Some teenagers are checking their social media accounts 100 times a day and 51% of teens are visiting social networking sites every day. 67% of teenagers have their own mobile phone.

Do we need to worry? At UCLA 32 teenagers aged 13 – 18 were shown photographs, including photos they had uploaded, including the number of 'likes' each had received. However, unbeknownst to the teenagers, the number of 'likes' had actually been made up by researchers. When they saw their own pictures with numerous likes the brain's reward system became very active, as did the social brain. If a picture had a large number of likes, they were more inclined to like it themselves. Although they were strangers, they still seemed to experience peer pressure so we can assume that the pressure is far greater when the teenager's friends are the other participants. This can, of course, be positive as it can work to influence people in a good way as well as a negative. What is interesting is that peer pressure via social media has a strong influence. The teenage brain does mean that the influence of risk takers via social media is considerable and is even greater when under the influence of drugs or alcohol when any cautiousness is dulled.

Teenagers' developing brains find it difficult to self-regulate their screen time meaning that the risks can increase, and the developing brain is particularly vulnerable to lots of time on-line. They are more vulnerable to peer pressure and cyber bullying, having a negative impact on their mental health. There is a link between social media and



depression and social media can intensify the symptoms of depression. People who use more than seven social media platforms have three times the risk of depression than people who use one or two. Depression affects the brain which means neurotransmitters function incorrectly. The amygdala controls the thought processes of a teenager and it is increasingly active during depression. One in eight teens develop depression every year compared to one in 33 children and 6.7% of the US population aged over eighteen. During depression, cortisol is released and long-term exposure to raised cortisol levels can lead to memory problems. The pre-frontal cortex shrinks when there is too much cortisol and the amygdala become enlarged and more active. This can result in sleep disturbances. The larger a teenager's social circle, the more anxious they are to keep up to date with everything and they are emotionally involved with social media, feeling pressured to upload perfect pictures and comments. If teenagers do something wrong on social media, it is very public and can be used against them through cyber bullying. They also feel anxiety when they next see someone they have connected with through a social media platform.

Social media can have a positive effect on the teenage brain. In a study by Medical News Today researchers discovered those who are more likely to use a social media site are people who often feel more insecure and anxious. However, those who had positive feedback on social media had improved self-esteem and stronger activity in the reward area of the brain. In addition, the dopamine effect is triggered by use of social media, thereby associating it with good feelings. Also, IQs are rising partly as a result of social media. According to the education testing service the advancements in how people are able to learn using interactive games and media learning breaks communication barriers. This enables people to learn and take in more information. Social media is changing the brain, in particular the plasticity is affected enabling the brain to change. Whenever you experience or learn something new the connections between neurons change and strengthen so now teenagers are becoming worse at reading

subtle expressions on moving facial expressions, but they are faster at comprehending what is going on in a bigger group of friends. Use of social media can encourage creativity and innovative thinking. It teaches teenagers to become critical thinkers because the internet is full of false information, so teens have to develop critical thinking skills in order to decide what to believe. This is an important skill for later life.

However, the use of social media has many negative impacts on the teenage brain. For example, there have been numerous studies, where healthy, adjusted teenagers have had prolonged exposure to social media and quickly became depressed and anxious. Constant multi-tasking can reduce the brain's anterior cingulate cortex which is the part that helps us process emotions and make decisions. This has links to ADHD and addictive behaviours. The dopamine hit that young people receive from social media makes them dependent on it and causes feelings of depression when they are deprived of it. Psychologists report seeing some teenagers who are constantly distracted and lack empathy. One fifth of teenagers said they 'almost always wake up and log onto social media in the middle of the night,' having a detrimental effect on their brain and their physical health. ASAP Science studied how non-stop social media can change the brain. Social media sites are used by one third of the world. 5 – 10% of people are unable to manage their social media usage due to psychological addiction. Brain scans conducted on social media addicts show similar impairment to those who are addicted to drugs or alcohol. There is a reduction of the white matter controlling emotional processing and decision making due to the fact it provides instant reward. Because of social media, more people are multi-tasking and the brain is less able to filter out irrelevant information as a result. This stops us from being able to commit things to memory. There is a new disorder called phantom vibration syndrome where the brain perceives something like an itch as a phone vibrating. This prompts the person to check their phone causing the brain to be confused and the person to be distracted.



In conclusion, the teenage brain is more inclined to crave usage of social media as it is the time when connection with peers is particularly appealing. Therefore, teenagers are more likely to use social media and they are therefore affected by it more than adults. Whilst it can bring communication and happiness, long term effects are worse, and teenagers can develop risky and addictive behaviour. This could make them more likely to be addicted to drugs or alcohol as adults and engage in risky

behaviours, leading them to take unsafe risks that are not carefully thought out, resulting in harm. As teenagers do not have a fully developed pre-frontal cortex, the amygdala begins to dominate creating a more emotional response to everything and making a teenager more fearful. Social media increases the chance of having depression and it increases peer pressure. This leads to deterioration in both mental and physical health.

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THIRD PRIZE  
YEAR 8

# Can you teach an old dog new tricks? A study into the contributing factors of the intelligence of a dog

Charlotte Isbell

The statement 'You can't teach an old dog new tricks' is widely known and provokes very split views. Some agree and believe you can only train a dog whilst it's a puppy, whereas some argue that you can teach an old dog, but just more slowly. I will be delving deeper into this argument and researching the contributing factors of a dog's intelligence and if this affects their ability to learn. I was inspired to complete this essay because I have two dogs, one young and one old. I have taught them both the basics but want to teach them more. Before I commit my time, I want to know if I will really be able to do it.

The phrase is not just used in dogs, but is a metaphor used regularly in life. For example, you might say, 'Good luck trying to get her to listen. You can't teach an old dog new tricks!'. In this example, it means that she won't listen because she never does out of habit. If someone has done something all their life, how could they break the habit and start now?

Petplan spoke to clinic animal behaviourist Inga MacKellar about this debate. She said that as well as it being difficult to teach an old dog new tricks, it will become increasingly hard for them to remember their basic training. This is because over the years, the brain function of a dog slows down a little and the owner may have become more relaxed on training than when the dog was a puppy. However, Dogtime says that it will be easier to train an old dog rather than a puppy because they have better focus than a younger dog. VCA also agrees with this, additionally saying that because older dogs are less active, they will be more inclined to listen and learn. There were some differences between these websites' views; Inga MacKellar states that you need to 'bear in mind that an older dog may take longer to learn and find it a little harder to readjust to any new routines', whereas Dogtime states that older dogs

adapt more quickly. I believe that both old and young dogs adapt to new habits. If you give them enough attention and don't train them constantly, then you may find progress.

The interesting thing is that if you look at specially trained dogs, e.g. guide dogs, they never use old dogs, but always puppies. Surely if you could train old dogs as well as young ones, you would? Guide Dogs for the Blind wrote an article on how they train their dogs. They stated that 'Our dogs are trained with positive reinforcement methods that use high value rewards of both food and praise. An abundance of rewards, including physical and verbal affection, builds motivation and confidence, and creates a happy working guide dog'. My previous research suggests that all these teaching methods are standard for younger and older dogs, but they still train puppies. This leads me to suggest that either it must be a lot easier to train a younger dog, or that you can't teach an old dog new tricks.

Earlier I mentioned that VCA said that because older dogs are less mobile than puppies, it might be easier to train them, because they cannot bound off when they are bored. However, Alpha-Dog considered limited activity to be an issue during training. I believe that it depends on the trick you are trying to teach; if there is lots of movement involved then you might be doing the dog a disservice. This may mean that you can teach an old dog new tricks, but it may not be sensible to do so. Some tricks may be too hard physically to teach them. This leads me onto the point that although you may be mentally able to teach an old dog new tricks, they may not be physically able to do them.

This aspect is often forgotten when debating this topic. We often forget about the wellbeing of the dog.

They may have a mental issue like dementia or a physical one like arthritis. You are supposed to keep an old dog close to you if they have dementia and make them feel safe and calm. If you are constantly teaching them new and complicated tricks, this will lead to increasingly high stress levels. Also, pain in the joints can be enhanced if you hound the dog with too much training too often.

Because some breeds are more intelligent than others, I wondered if this would affect whether all older dogs could mentally pick up new tricks. Some of the most intelligent breeds are Border Collies, Poodles and German Shepherds. But are these naturally more intelligent, or is it down to training?

Petplan believes it's a little bit of both. For example, if you take a Border Collie and a mixed-breed dog, if the Border Collie wasn't cared for or trained, he may not necessarily be more intelligent than the mixed-breed dog. Some breeds have been historically brought up to be of higher intelligence than others because they would need it in the jobs they carried out; Border Collies were (and some still are) used to herd livestock. This required tactics and skill, all developed from extensive training. English Bulldogs are far down this list, because they were bred to be strong. But if you gave them the right drive (food, for example), they would probably be able to learn the same trick a Border Collie would be able to.

Petplan concluded that some breeds are smarter than others, but training helps. This may mean that at an old age, some breeds of dog won't be able to pick up a trick as easily, or at all, as another breed. This means that the statement 'You can't teach an old dog new tricks' really depends on the breed of dog. You would also have to consider whether you are referring to being able to mentally pick up a trick or physically;

this means you should also consider any physical or mental disabilities.

I also wondered if gender plays any issue in this. If one gender is more intelligent, this would make it easier for them to pick up tricks at an older age. Live Science researched an experiment which would determine the dog's ability to understand the impossible. They measured this by how long each dog looked at the ball. The male dogs hadn't noticed the change of ball size, whereas the female dogs looked at the ball for about 30 seconds, trying to figure out what was causing the shrinking and expanding of the ball. They found this with a variety of different breeds and crossbreeds. They gave some explanations for this: firstly, that past evolutionary pressures may have slightly altered the sex's brains, and secondly, that the different hormones that are not used in the brain may have different side effects. This, therefore, is another aspect to consider in this debate.

In conclusion, I believe the statement 'You can't teach an old dog new tricks' is too generic to give an exact yes or no answer to. You must consider the gender, breed, mental and physical abilities of the dog and how well the dog is being looked after and trained. The answer to the question may be yes, but this is not always a given in all cases; it is not correct to generalise all older dogs into one category and forget about their individual issues and needs.



# Year 7 Prize Winning Entries



FIRST PRIZE  
YEAR 7

# The brass band community and what its future holds

Polly Rumble

Note: the essay printed below is a shortened version of the original. To read the full essay, including the appendix with the survey conducted by the author, please contact Dr Seal.

Brass bands are an established part of British culture, but the instantly recognisable sound that is such an important part of fetes and parks could be heard less in the future if solutions cannot be found to the challenges facing the 'banding' community. In this essay, I will explore where brass bands came from, identify the challenges they face today and look at what bands are doing and could do to ensure they thrive deep into the 21st century. In writing this essay, I will draw on a range of sources including a survey of brass players I carried out which was completed by 87 people.

Although they date back to the early 1800s, Brass bands largely developed in the late 19th century. Many were funded by collieries, factories and the temperance movement to keep men out of trouble after a day of work 'banding' was a popular activity and by the 1890s there were more than 5,000 bands. These a source of pride for local communities and boys grew up aspiring to play in their local band.

Grimethorpe band was formed in 1917 by the colliery as a leisure activity for miners and is now a Championship band ranked fourteenth in the world. In 1992, the colliery closed and the band lost its funder. However, due to its strong sense of community Grimethorpe managed to carry on, raising funds from performances and tours. In 1995, the band featured in the film 'Brassed Off', based on the band's own experience and a new generation became aware of the incredible community and sound of brass bands.

Another Championship band, Jaguar Land Rover, formed in 1944 as an Air-Training-Corps band and has had many name changes. Today it takes its name from its funder and is lucky to be one of just a few bands to have a sponsor. Daventry Brass is a lower level community band formed by the merging of two railway workers' bands with the Daventry Working Men's band. The band has had success in contests but like many it relies on paid performances to fund itself. It struggles to get a full band at every performance or rehearsal and relies on borrowing 'deputies' from other bands.

Despite their strong heritage, for many, continuing the community of their band has been a struggle. From the peak of popularity in the 1890s the numbers of bands fell at the beginning of the 20th Century. The decline has slowed since the 1960s, but there are now only about 1,200 active bands left and many of these, like Daventry Brass struggle to attract and keep enough players or secure the funding they need.

Some people believe brass bands are at risk of dying out; so, what are the challenges that brass bands face, and what can bands do to change?

The main issues facing bands that came up in my survey were internal politics and competition within and between bands; the amount of time taken up by rehearsing, performing and competing; the stress and pressure of contesting; lack of public support and limited performance opportunities. Other issues mentioned were lack of money, traditional repertoire and the need to attract youngsters and new blood into bands. Comments included:

"Refusal to move away from age old traditions that are either discouraging people or not allowing for new developments."



“The following of brass bands is becoming smaller and it is becoming more and more difficult to get an audience to attend a concert which is what generates revenue and keeps the band going.”

“In financially challenging times it can be difficult to keep a top band running smoothly.”

“A lack of funding, it’s so difficult to get anything from the present funding from the Arts Council etc.”

“Difficult to obtain modern music and arrangements.”

“Less encouraging of females and younger musicians, very set in their ways.”

Nearly half of the people who completed my survey joined their first band over 25 years ago, suggesting bands are dominated by older players. For a lot of younger players banding is not seen as ‘cool’ and they are not interested. The future of brass bands relies on new players, but not many young people want to pick up a cornet or tuba instead of a guitar or iPad and it is becoming increasingly difficult to persuade the next generation to join in.

There used to be a supply of children desperate to learn a brass instrument, with long waiting lists for training bands but recently a student from the Conservatoire stated, “From what I have seen, there appears to be very few children joining bands who don’t already have links to the band.” More than half of people who completed my survey joined their first band aged younger than 12. Now, fewer children learn brass instruments at school and most children who are learning brass, have family with banding in their blood. Overall bands are losing players as more drop out than join.

Even if bands attract players it is hard to retain them. Responses to my survey suggest issues that lead to loss of players are politics within the band, tradition, time-consuming, contesting, funding and members leaving to go to university or to better funded bands. The situation was summarised on a brass band forum by one user who said, “I would say that people are packing in playing at a faster rate than people are learning to play and there are too many bands for the amount of players that are about.”

However, it is possible to change this. Not all bands need to contest. For many, spending months

working on a single piece for one competition piece is boring. Bands also need to be more open to change, promote themselves better and encourage all brass players to join them. One responder to my survey said they did not play with a brass band because their instrument was not typically included in a brass band. This doesn’t have to be the case. Bands could allow players of other brass instruments to join.

The Unibrass competition for example, allows trumpets and cornets to play together. Traditionally there may be 28 instrumentalists, but people will enjoy listening to a brass band with seven tubas and only 5 cornets as much as they enjoy a traditional band.

Another problem is that many people see brass bands as old-fashioned and dated. “People think of brass bands and think of coal mines, cloth caps, and marching down the street” but this typical stereotype shows that brass bands were, not necessarily what they are today. Some bands may still play marches at concerts wearing heavily braided blazers, but this isn’t all they do. Beneath the highest ranked bands, hundreds of groups get together in towns and villages across the country every week. There are many examples of bands doing exciting, interesting and innovative things. In my opinion bands are not dying, they are just changing. There is a lot of positive activity and innovation.

Today there is a growing youth brass band movement with training bands developing young musicians to take over seats in adult bands. These are more attractive to many younger players who may be put off by the idea of playing with people 30 years older than them with a lot of rehearsals and performances. Some people argue that “Youth bands are better than ever these days, with more members, and a better standard of musicianship.” This year the National Youth Brass Band Champion of Great Britain were held at Warwick School with 30 youth bands competing over four sections.

Following on from the many training bands the NCBGB (National Children’s Brass Band of Great Britain) and NYBBGB (National Youth Brass Band of Great Britain) “exist to give gifted young brass instrumentalists the opportunity to perform advanced music and receive the highest quality teaching, care and help to provide the brass band movement and the music profession with the next generation of brass players”. These thriving national youth bands

have many alumni who have gone on to have highly successful careers in music, and not just in brass bands.

Bands are also experimenting with repertoire. Jaguar Land Rover band recently produced a CD called Fusion which brought together big band, jazz and traditional brass band music and musicians.

This project, funded by the Arts Council created an incredible new sound and shows that brass bands don't have to stick to tradition. Similarly,

Tredegar band played a big band show with a Michael Buble-style singer to a full audience. Zoe Hancock, one of the players, said "We had all the music rearranged and it was a great concert with big lights and a huge audience. They love that kind of thing, so perhaps that's a different route for brass bands to try and modernise a bit".<sup>10</sup> These are good examples of bands adapting to what people like and enjoy in order to attract a new audience and keep people interested.

Uni Brass has been described by Brass Bands England as the most innovative thing to happen in 100 years. It is the world's only inter-university brass band contest. It was founded in 2010 and the first contest took place in 2011 with 12 bands. As well as running the competition, the organising competition supports the creation of new university bands and in 2018 the competition attracted 21 bands, which shows there is an interest in banding among younger generations. Unibrass is very important in giving players the opportunity to continue brass banding when they leave school, a time when many stop playing. It does this by creating opportunities to continue playing and to compete but also to move away from traditional images of band competitions.

In my full essay, I outlined the five things I think brass bands need to do to thrive: get more young people interested, change the image, keep people interested, expose people to bands and work as a movement. Here is a sample of what I wrote for the last of these:

In order to gain more recognition and credibility bands need to work more as a banding movement. In recent years Brass Bands England has started to play a more active role. Below are some of their aims:

- Help bands to be outward focused, engage with communities and other bands, and share resources and expertise.

- Raise understanding with the wider public, funders, organisers, stakeholders and partners of the value of brass bands.
- Help bands access funding.
- Encourage innovation and engagement with other art forms.
- Lead on campaigns which help brass groups attract and reach wider audiences, gain a broader support base and pave the way for creative collaboration.

Despite the challenges facing brass bands I believe they do have a bright future if Brass Bands England can deliver this and if bands are prepared to change more quickly and embrace the innovative things I have mentioned. Rachel Veitch-straw from Brass Bands England says "Musicians of all ages are part of this [brass band] community and it is a tradition that will continue. There may only be a small number of them, but there are enough to sustain them and provide them with a future".

From my survey (please contact Dr Seal to see the full Appendix) it is clear that banders get a lot out of being part of a brass band, the biggest positives being:

1. Friends, belonging and social life
2. Being part of something bigger
3. Playing with others
4. Musical development and challenge
5. Performing
6. Pride / achievement / satisfaction
7. Excitement, buzz, enjoyment

Bands need to build on these positives, to value their heritage but also be prepared to move away from old traditions to become more relevant to the present. With the right approach people of all ages can fall in love with banding.

Having fallen in love with brass when I heard the band at my local fete I have become a member of the banding community. However, I had challenges to overcome. I was the only person interested in brass at my primary school and tried very hard to get school lessons but was told there were not enough people to offer them. Instead, I had to find my own way to learn. I was taught the basics by an inspirational teacher who had been a military musician. He encouraged me to join the local music service training bands where I was supported by other musicians who were active in the brass band community. They encouraged me to join a full brass band. Despite being a competing adult

band, they were welcoming and flexible about my rehearsal attendance. They have really helped me develop and I have progressed to become a front row player and regular soloist. They gave me the confidence to perform not just in their concerts and competitions but also in concerts at school. My trumpet playing at primary school introduced more children to the idea of a brass instrument and when I left for senior school 10 pupils signed up for brass lessons out of 170 in the school. Lessons are now provided. It may have been difficult to begin with, but I have been given plenty of opportunities by the banding community and in a small way may have encouraged a few children to become future brass band players.

“Brass bands are wonderful, let’s all get out there and show people just how great we are.”

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SECOND PRIZE  
YEAR 7

# What are the advantages and disadvantages of being left-handed?

Lucy Jennings

Approximately 10% of the world's population are left-handed which puts us in the minority. My own class has 22 pupils and only 3, including myself, are "lefties." I am therefore curious to investigate what it means to be left-handed in a predominantly right-handed world.

Firstly, I think it is important to analyse the history of left-handedness as it helps to explain how people's opinions have developed through time and understand where any stigmas have arisen from.

In Medieval times if you were left-handed you were considered to be a witch and with the devil being portrayed as a leftie as well this was not a very positive view! The Egyptians, Romans and Greeks also had negative thoughts about left-handers. They believed the right hand of the Gods was for healing, whereas the left hand was for curses and inflicting injury. It is no wonder that people feared us. In Ancient Egyptian mosaics the good armies are shown as being right-handed and the enemies as left-handed. What a generalisation! I have also discovered that this is why we shake hands with our right hand, as this dates back to the Roman times. I find this point particularly interesting as, when I was younger, I always used to try and shake hands with my left and was told by numerous adults that this was wrong and to swap hands (my Mum and Dad included!).

The 18th and 19th century was especially hard on left-handers. We were discriminated against quite brutally. Corporal punishment was inflicted if the left was used for writing and, whilst watching a recent BBC documentary (Back in Time for School) I learnt that if you use your left hand in Victorian times it was pinned to the back of a chair. Luckily, when we had our Victorian day at school, I was allowed to write without having to swap hands.

Even in recent history, in the 1970s, some countries such as Spain and Italy made it compulsory to write with your right hand. In Albania it was illegal to use your left hand to write with and was a punishable crime. Even today, in the 21st century, some parents try to encourage their child away from being left-handed. I question why this is the case. Maybe it is to try and make our lives easier in such a right-handed world.

Having stated how left-handers were treated in the past, I now want to explain some of the difficulties I still face in 2019. At primary school, there were only 2 sets of left-handed scissors in my class and 3 left-handers. This meant that I had to adapt to using right handed scissors with my left-hand - not an easy skill to learn age 7. The prize for perfect handwriting was a fountain pen. This is an impossible tool for a leftie as the ink would smudge all over my books and myself. This meant, even though I was deemed to have neat handwriting, I was never rewarded like everyone who was right-handed. Although this may seem a minor problem, it could result in tears for a young left-hander. At King's High there still continues to be a few frustrations. For example, teachers sitting me near a wall where I constantly bash my elbow or sitting me in the middle of a row where I end up nudging the person on my left. This is frustrating for both of us! In P.E. lessons some sports cannot be played left-handed for example hockey. I totally understand this is for safety issues but for me it feels unnatural. In dance lessons, my brain tells me to go left first so I really have to concentrate hard or I end up going a different direction to everyone else which can be extremely embarrassing. Out of school, I find great frustration with everyday objects that my right-handed counterparts have probably never considered an issue. Spiral notebooks are a challenge as I get a sore hand bashing into the rings. My hand often has

ink or pencil marks on the side where it has dragged over my work. When I interviewed my left-handed grandad (the only other leftie in the family apart from my brother and I) he said that because of this he developed a hook or curved round handwriting style which is not good for your shoulder, back or wrist. Strangely, I also find doors can be a nuisance as I end up pulling them into myself.

All of the above makes being a leftie sound awful but there is another side to the coin that I wanted to investigate. What is positive about being left-handed?

According to [Educationandcareersnews.com](http://Educationandcareersnews.com), lefties score higher when it comes to creativity, imagination, daydreaming and intuition. They are also better at rhythm and visualisation. I think this is generalising but at least it is a positive view. They also state that left-handed stroke patients recover faster. I think this is possibly because we have to strengthen both sides of our brain to live in a predominantly right-handed world. We often have to use our non-dominant hand. According to numerous websites, a large number of Nobel Prize winners are left-handed. Is this because left-handers have to think outside the box? In terms of sport, although there are the disadvantages that I have stated we can have advantages too. My brother, who is 9, plays squash very well and the majority of his training sessions are with right-handed people. This gives him the edge in competitions as he has a very strong backhand!

So, who are my lefty-handed allies? 4/5 designers of the Apple computer are lefties. Barack Obama, Marie Curie, Aristotle, Prince Charles and Prince William, Lady Gaga and even Ned Flanders from The Simpsons are proud to write with their left hand. It is nice to know that I am not alone!

In conclusion, I do not think, even though research might suggest this, that being a left-hander makes me any better, more intelligent or creative than a right-hander. However, I do think that it has made me more adaptable as on a daily basis I am often faced with new challenges. The world is still very right-handed and this is understandable as you do make up about 90% of the world's population. I know sometimes I may look clumsy, or badly co-ordinated but a lot of things I have to do are in reverse or with my non-dominant hand. At least, through researching this topic, I now know that there have been lots of left-handed success stories and I hope I have opened your eyes to some of the simple issues I face. In the words of Albert Einstein, "In the middle of difficulties, is opportunities." I am proud to be a leftie!

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THIRD PRIZE  
YEAR 7

# A comparison of ten texts from different ancient civilisations

Rosie Brooker

Every civilisation tells stories. Early civilisations are similar; some of these ancient stories were recorded giving us today the opportunity to study ancient texts from 3,000 BCE – 999CE. These texts were written all over the world where there were humans. But are they all written on the same topic? In the essay, I will be comparing major ancient texts to see what the people from thousands of years ago wrote about, and if they share anything in common.

Most of the texts from ancient times come from Europe, Asia or Africa; continents that were civilized at some time between 3,000 BCE – 999CE. The other areas of the world – such as the Americas and Oceania – were not yet civilised enough to write texts, or at least, that is the impression given to historians through the artefacts collected to date.

To be able to compare the ancient texts, we need to understand them; when, where, why and how they were written, and who wrote them.

Starting in Africa, the 'Ancient Egypt Book of the Dead' was based off early tomb paintings from c. 2670 - 2613 BCE. It has been thought that the book's original name is 'Spells for Going Forth by Day,' which is a more accurate name because it is a collection of spells and magical rituals. 'The Book of the Dead' has been misinterpreted as the 'Bible of the Egyptian religion' but this is untrue, as the Egyptologist Geraldine Pinch says, 'The Book of the Dead was not the central holy-book of Egyptian religion. It was [...] a series of manuals composed to assist the spirits of the elite dead to achieve and maintain a full afterlife.'<sup>ii</sup>.

The 'Blue Qur'an' is an old Islamic text probably written near Tunisia in Northern Africa in the style of texts from the neighboring Byzantine Empire, with deep indigo pages and golden lettering. The words are hard to decipher because they have been changed to fit into regular lines, and it is thought to have been written between the second half 9th-mid-

10th century CE in Arabic language and Kufic script. It was one of the most luxurious version of the typical 7th century Qur'an that precedes it.

The 'Dead Sea Scrolls' were written from 250BCE-68CE on vellum, papyrus, leather and copper in Israel. It was the oldest collection of Jewish texts which has illuminated mysteries of Jewish and Christian interpretations of the Bible for modern people. They were found in caves in pots containing 981 scrolls and other artefacts. Most of the scrolls were fragmented and written in Hebrew but some were written in Aramaic and Greek.

The 'Diamond Sutra' is a Buddhist text from China, although Buddhism originated in India and the word 'sutra' comes from Sanskrit, which is an ancient Indian language. The 'Diamond Sutra' was supposedly named by Buddha himself, who explained the title by saying, 'cut like a diamond blade through worldly illusion to illuminate what is real and everlasting'. The text was made in 868 CE and was printed on paper and silk using carved wooden blocks. They were found at the 492 caves carved out of cliff named 'Caves of a Thousand Buddhas.'

Remaining in China, the 'Art of War' by general and military leader Sun Tzu, was written about c.500BCE on bamboo sticks 6,000 words long in 13 chapters. It is a comprehensive guide to everything needed in a war, and covers everything to do with training, leading, organising, preparedness and discipline. It has remained one of the greatest military handbooks of all time, the first of the Seven Military Classics of Emperor Shenzong, and also popular with other military leaders such as Mao Tse-tung and Napoleon.

The 'I Ching' or 'Book of Changes' is a divination guide all about how to make decisions, understand life, predict future happenings and answer fundamental questions about humanity and existence, threaded with religious influences from

Taoist, Confucian and Buddhist beliefs. The original 'I Ching' is unknown, but it has been re-made many times throughout Chinese history, with copies claiming to be replicas of the original, and it is through more modern and more ancient copies of this philosophical text that experts today have found the meaning of the 'I Ching' which is very centred around the ideas of yin (negative/dark) and yang (positive/ light).

Next, moving into India, is the 'Mahabharata', written in 400BCE on paper by the Indian sage Vyāsa. The legends state that Vyāsa grew up in the forests dictating to his scribe the god Ganesha all the knowledge he had learnt from nearby hermits, compiling them into the 'Mahabharata'. This text is the longest epic poem to ever be created with a phenomenal sum of 100,000 couplets. It is based around two sets of cousins; it reaches an almighty crescendo when the exiled cousins come back to claim what is theirs.

Moving to Europe, the 'Exeter Book' is the largest body of Anglo-Saxon poetry from England. It was written on vellum towards the end of the 10th century, though its traditional roots may go back into more ancient oral times, as it did with the similar, more famous poem Beowulf. It covers a variety of topics: nature, religion, animals, exile, loneliness, wisdom, fealty, destiny, the influence of the Church and riddles, for which the 'Exeter Book' is famous.

The 'Book of Kells,' is one of the finest examples of illuminated manuscripts from Celtic medieval Britain, written by Irish monks c.800CE using a wide range of materials, such as lime, pumice, soot, lead and copper sulphide. An outstanding version of early Christian art, the 'Book of Kells' is heavily stylised with fabulous letterings, images, angels, animal motifs, hidden images, intricate design and all of it is rich in religious teachings of Christ and the four Gospels. Thought to

have been the work of multiple scribes, this text is similar to the 'Lindisfarne Gospels', but considerably more elaborate.

And, finally, the 'Vienna Dioscorides' was written in the Byzantine Empire c.70CE. This text contains information on 383 herbs and 200 plants and their medical properties, listing organic medicines and what they cured, and how to prepare them. Editor and translator of the text, Tess-Anne Osbaldeston has noted that 'for almost two millennia Dioscorides was regarded the ultimate authority on plants and medicine.' Used until the 1930s, this text has an outstanding impact on the understanding of Greco-Roman medical works and biological remedies which have been used for thousands of years.

Looking at these works, I think some similarities can be found. The 'Blue Qur'an', 'Diamond Sutra', 'Book of Kells' and 'Dead Sea Scrolls' all were religious, which shows the influence of religion on the early world. But religion, as a set of beliefs, tries to explain spiritual questions about the world, such as how we were made and what happens when we die. But then, taking the 'Book of the Dead', 'Exeter Book', and 'Mahabharata', all with hints of religion, do they try to explain the world too? Well, in a way, yes. The 'Book of the Dead' tries to explain the Afterlife – a key aspect to a human's world – and the 'Exeter Book' explains lessons and morals and poems to entertain readers and give them things to ponder. The 'Mahabharata' also explains things to ancient people through an epic story, things about how people live, revenge, hatred, love and trickery. That leaves two books from China, 'Art of War' and 'I Ching'. The first of these books explains warfare, how it happens, and how to prepare for it, and the latter explains more philosophical things, like chance and decision-making. But they too explain things about the world. The last ancient text

– ‘Vienna Discorides’ – is slightly different in one way, because it is not fiction, religion or philosophy. It is a kind of primitive science, and it explains how to tend to wounds and sicknesses, and how medicines help to heal humans, which is explanatory in a way different from others, but nonetheless informative.

It seems that, with the lack of modern science, the ancient world relied on four things to explain the world to them: religion, fictious stories or poems, philosophy and early science. This, I believe, is why all of the ancient books fit into these categories, even ones I have not focused on, like the ‘Iliad’, ‘Tao Te Ching’ and the ‘Torah’, because that is what the ancients read and believed in. Later on came other books on histories, sciences, geography, astronomy and so forth, but, with the ancients, we are dealing with the infancy of the human world, and that is why they tried to explain everything in a few ways, giving all ancient texts a strong connection.

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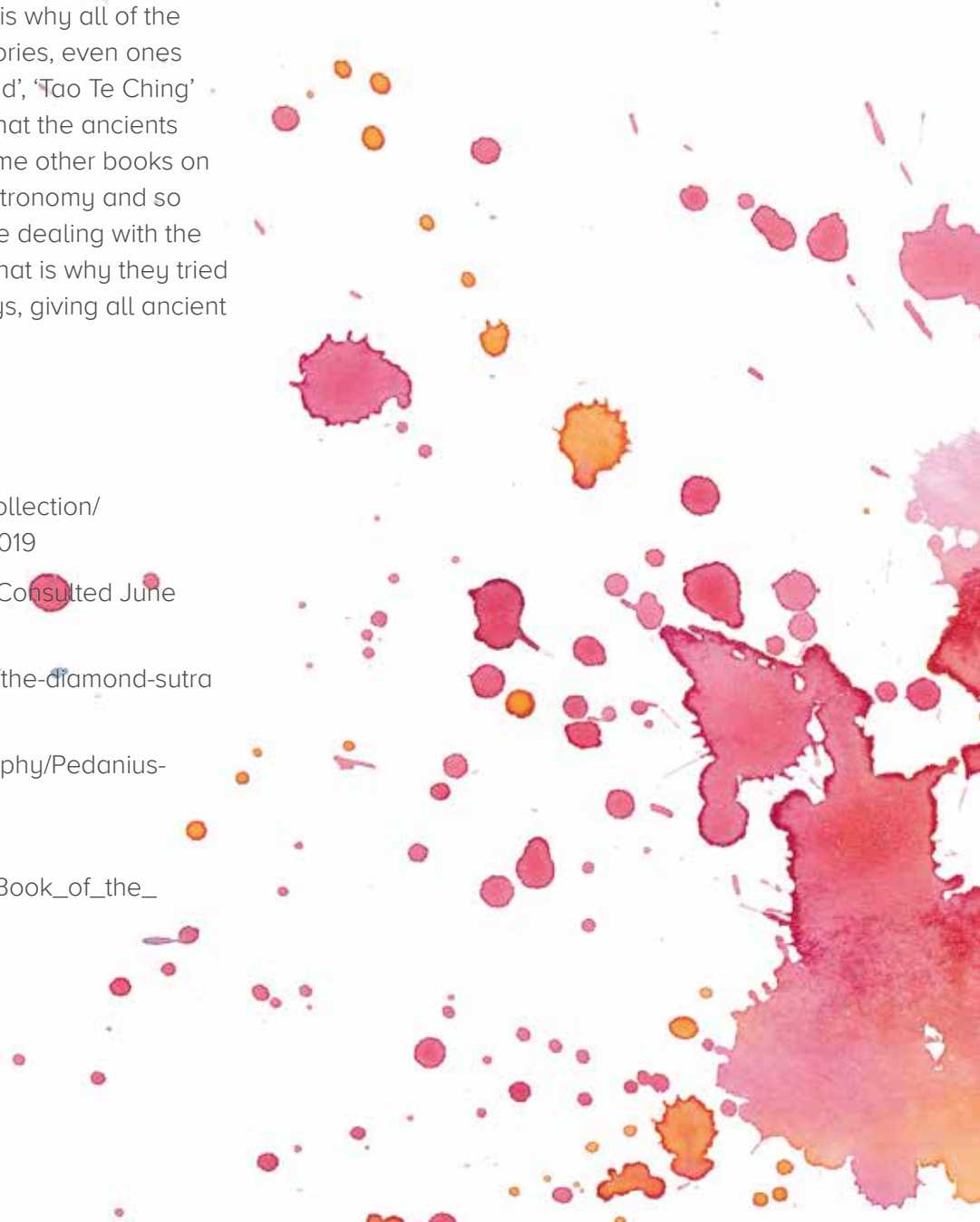
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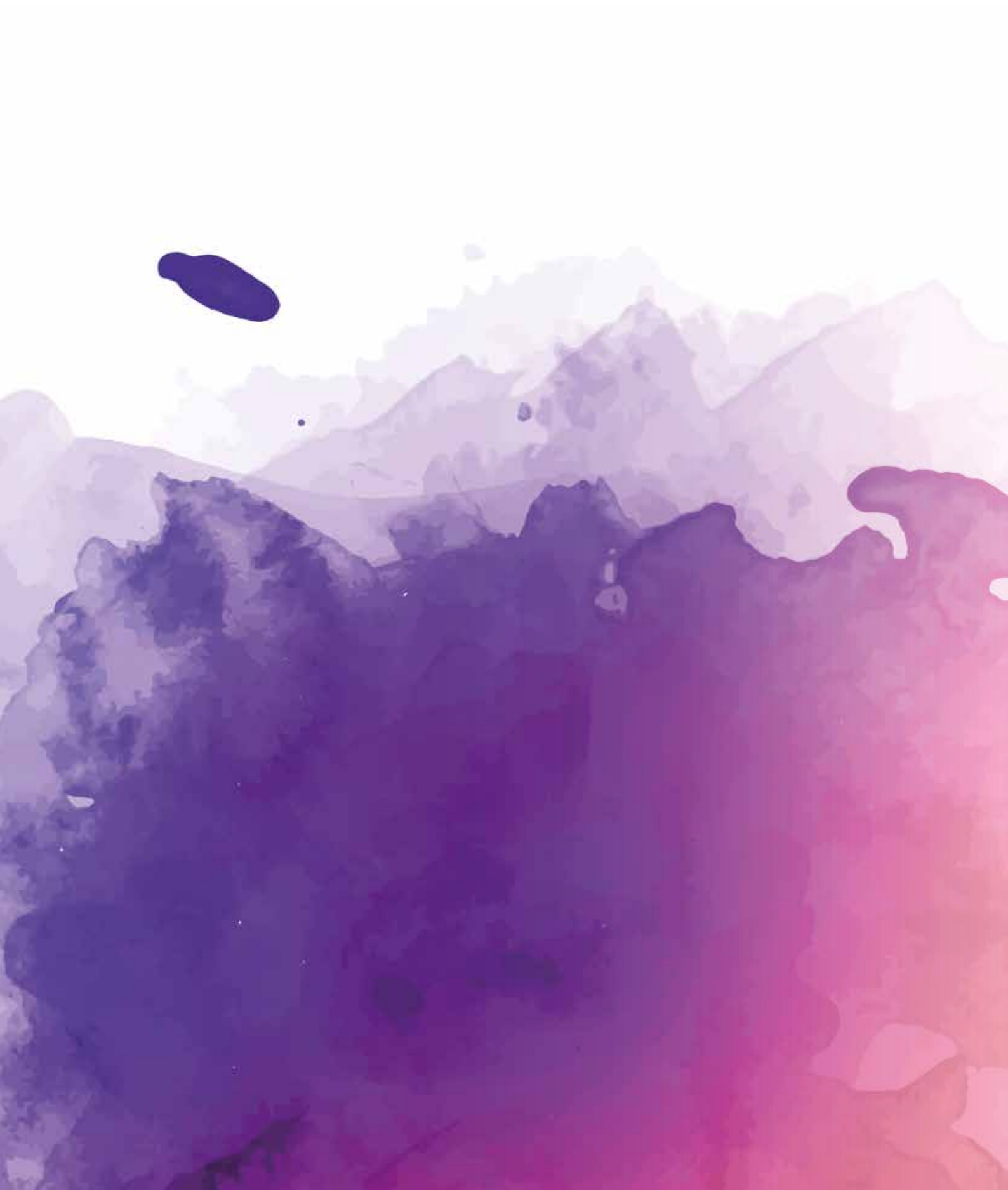
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# Highly Commended Entries



# How does Heathcliff's Character Expand Throughout the Novel Wuthering Heights

Charlotte Allen

Wuthering Heights is a novel written by English author Emily Brontë and sold 806,294 copies between 2001 and 2018 alone; it was published in 1847, and although not immediately successful, proved popular over time. However, before the end of the following year, Brontë died from tuberculosis, a prominent disease at the time, at the age of 30. Brontë wrote under the pseudonym of 'Ellis Bell' and wrote Wuthering Heights between October 1845 and June 1846. Wuthering Heights follows the dramatic and passionate love story between Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff, a man abandoned young by his family in Liverpool but adopted by Catherine's father. The novel is set in Yorkshire, inspired from where Brontë herself grew up, and contains gothic themes. In this essay, I will analyse the development of Heathcliff's character from a pitied but impish boy to a troubled and vicious man.

From the start of the novel, when Heathcliff is first introduced as a young boy, adopted by Mr Earnshaw, Master of Wuthering Heights, he is depicted to be despised by the family and immediately seen as different. The primary reaction of Mr Earnshaw's family and servants (his wife Mrs Earnshaw, his children Hindley and Catherine Earnshaw and servants Nelly and Joseph) is that Heathcliff is inferior and should not be allowed in the house. In Chapter 4, Mrs Earnshaw describes Heathcliff as a 'gipsy brat' which suggests she thinks that Heathcliff is not respectable and therefore should not be a part of their household as he may bring down their social status; she continues including the phrase 'do with it' in her dialogue. The use of the pronoun 'it' demonstrates that Mrs Earnshaw does not view Heathcliff as worthy of being a person. This theme of inequality is continued in the quotation 'spitting at the stupid little thing'; Heathcliff is illustrated as a 'thing' which further gives the implication that the family think of Heathcliff as inhumane. However,

Mr Earnshaw punishes anyone who is uncivil to Heathcliff and always gives him the best treatment out of the family which means that most of the family continue to disrespect Heathcliff through envy. The overall perception of Heathcliff at this point in the novel is that he is being unfairly treated by all but Mr Earnshaw and is subject to injustices as well as being humanly degraded verbally, particularly by Mrs Earnshaw.

As Heathcliff begins to integrate himself into the Earnshaw Household, the rest of the family suggest their disapproval of him by purposely telling the master of his sins, and also physically abusing him. In Chapter 5, Joseph, a servant who despises Heathcliff, tries to set Mr Earnshaw against him by 'telling on him'. This is illustrated in the quotation 'a long string of tales against Heathcliff'; an additional motive for Joseph to do this is because of jealousy. Heathcliff receives exemplary treatment from the master ever since the start of his presently short time in the household, whereas Joseph, who has worked at Wuthering Heights his entire life does not receive gratitude for his efforts and therefore thinks Heathcliff's treatment as unfair. However, after Mr Earnshaw dies, his heir Hindley Earnshaw (Catherine's brother and Heathcliff's stepbrother) does not give Heathcliff the same treatment at all. As he very possibly experienced similar envy of Heathcliff's superior place in Wuthering Heights like Joseph, he treats Heathcliff very badly, sometimes even ordering physical abuse to be bestowed on him as illustrated in the quotation 'order Heathcliff a flogging'; this generates the sense that Heathcliff is treated similar to a slave, rather than a young gentleman of the house which is his true place as depicted by Mr Earnshaw. Overall, at this point in the novel, Heathcliff is illustrated as a victim through the sudden change in master and therefore treatment.



As we progress through the novel, Heathcliff is suggested to inconsiderately grow detached from his relations at Wuthering Heights and is beginning his journey of cruelty and selfishness which greatly expands throughout the book. An example of this is in the quotation 'you have grieved Catherine' in Chapter 7. Heathcliff is constantly implied to care about Catherine the most out of the rest of the characters and therefore by hurting her it suggests he is beginning not to comprehend the extent of pain he inflicts on others – he has to be told by others the effect he has. This quotation also depicts that Heathcliff is becoming more isolated from the people who care about him. Another instance of Heathcliff's selfishness is in Chapter 8 in the quotation 'don't turn me out for those pitiful, silly friends of yours!'; this quotation gives the implication that Heathcliff does not respect Catherine's choices as he does not defer her choice of friendship to Edgar and Isabella, the children of a neighbouring house over the moors. However, he is also trying to maintain his life-long friendship with Catherine and his place as her closest companion. Additionally, the quotation demonstrates that Heathcliff is jealous of Catherine having others friends when he doesn't; a broader implication of this quotation is that Heathcliff is starting to only think from his perspective, making him more self-centred. Lastly, the quotation from Chapter 9, 'he's gone' is at the point in the story where Heathcliff unexpectedly leaves in the middle of the night without saying goodbye to anyone at Wuthering Heights. This event generates the sense that Heathcliff has no decency to give gratitude to anyone after all the years he has spent with them before disappearing; his actions cause much grief for Catherine and establishes his character as increasingly callous. Heathcliff's character has reached a new low as he is no longer trusting of anyone at Wuthering Heights and is acting out of envy towards Catherine, causing much upset.

Proceeding on, Heathcliff becomes manipulative of those surrounding him and his actions are so demonic, he is regarded as devilish. After his return, an example of his deviousness is illustrated in the quotation 'I love him more than you ever loved Edgar; and he might love me if you would let him!' in Chapter 10. Catherine and Isabella, Edgar's

sister and Catherine's new sister-in-law (Catherine married Edgar soon after Heathcliff's departure), are conversing about Heathcliff. Heathcliff has manipulated Isabella into loving him, knowing he doesn't feel remotely the same about her, for his amusement: his scheming leads to her believing him over anyone else which causes her desperation for him. The word 'might' suggests that she is questioning her chances with Heathcliff, however the rest of the quotation confirms that she is ignoring her gut instincts about him. An additional instance of Heathcliff's manipulation is in Chapter 11's quotation 'the devil teaches you to swear at Daddy?...who then? Heathcliff'. Heathcliff is using a young, innocent child, Hareton - Hindley Earnshaw's son, to carry out his bidding: he is getting Hareton to swear at Hindley, his own Father, purely for his entertainment. This is especially evil as Heathcliff does not care about the consequence of a troubled relationship between Father and Son by setting them against each other; this quotation is proof of Heathcliff's evil intentions. Finally, the quotation 'that is the most diabolical deed you ever did' in Chapter 15 continues the theme of Heathcliff being 'of the devil'. Heathcliff embraces Catherine at Thrushcross Grange, her and Edgar's home, and leads her on to think that he loves her when she is not mentally sane. Although sincere, Heathcliff 'ruined' her as claimed by Nelly, a servant who narrates most of the story, as Catherine dies that very night, confused and not knowing those closest to her. From Nelly's point of view, he preyed on her vulnerability of poor mental health as well as physical illness because he made her cheat on her husband when she was not aware of her actions. This is regarded as his most evil deed across the novel. Overall, these quotations represent a few of the many of the worst sins Heathcliff commits throughout the course of his life and depicts his progression to the manipulative and unforgiving individual he is at this point of the novel.

Advancing over the half way point, Heathcliff remains cunning but the focus is particularly on how he treats his son, Linton, who was born to him and Isabella at a similar time Catherine II was born to Catherine and Edgar (Please note that at this point in the novel, Catherine and Isabella have both died); Heathcliff maintains his negative intentions, however

is saying his barbaric thoughts out loud but in quite a pleasant and unconcerned way. An example of this is in the Chapter 21 quotation 'confound the vapid thing'; Heathcliff calls his own son, Linton, 'vapid' which is an insult, this gives the implication that Heathcliff does not love him and is behaving very viciously towards him. On the other hand, he is letting Catherine II see her cousin Linton at the point this quotation is said which is rather generous coming from Heathcliff; it demonstrates that he is more considerate of others' wishes than he was on the night that Catherine died. Another instance of his disrespect towards his son is in the quotation 'I don't hate my son, I suppose' in Chapter 22. This generates the sense that Heathcliff is insensitive as he is unprepared to hide his inner thoughts and feelings from anyone, no matter how treacherous they are. At this part of the novel, he has decided not to fight his inner darkness, he has decided to embrace it; this goes against what he was taught as a child at Wuthering Heights.

A final example of this theme is in Chapter 27's quotation of 'I know how to chastise children'. Heathcliff uses physical violence towards his niece for the first time and regularly to Linton to install order. Although this was a common punishment in those times, especially for the lower classes, Catherine II only received punishment because she was obeying her Father's, Edgar's, orders; Heathcliff then forces Catherine II and Linton into a child marriage against their will: he enforces this through the threat of physical violence. Heathcliff is portrayed as barbaric, reaching a new evil as a crime such as this today would be punished severely by the law. Additionally, Heathcliff does not mind hitting children which depicts him to be not experiencing any piteous emotions, this further develops the idea of Heathcliff being continuously callous. Overall, at this part of the novel Heathcliff is very violent towards his family, especially his son and niece which further suggests his mental imbalance.

Reaching the end of the novel, Heathcliff is clearly driven mad by his past decisions and the outcome of past events. An example of this is in Chapter 29's quotation 'Were you not ashamed to disturb the dead?'; in this quotation, Heathcliff digs up Catherine's grave at night and seemingly does

not regret his actions which are considered by Nelly, who asks Heathcliff the quotation, sinful, wicked and diabolical. He claims that Catherine has been haunting him ever since she died and that digging up her grave let him sleep soundly for the first time in 18 years. Heathcliff is now deteriorating, being slowly driven mad by Catherine and is now unleashing the gradual build-up of it all by acting rashly. An additional example of Heathcliff's obsession of past events is in the quotation 'my old enemies have not beaten me' in Chapter 32. Heathcliff is possessed by the past (this is implied by the use of the word 'old'): it consumes him and drives him crazy. Now, he is not focused at all on the present and therefore is likely not to be making conscious decisions. Heathcliff is presently delirious and behaves obsessively. Finally, the Chapter 34 quotation 'I cannot eat or rest' depicts that Heathcliff is not concerned that he will surely die without eating or resting as he is not doing anything about it. Therefore, he is welcoming death as he says this statement in a pleased manner, the context implies this. Heathcliff dies soon after saying this, leaving his character by the end of the novel as delirious and obsessive; characteristics that are implied through the past few quotations.

In conclusion, Heathcliff's character goes through a number of different stages in his lifetime. He starts off as the victim of the novel but ends as the perpetrator; in between there is a fascinating journey, depicting his jealousy of Catherine, the way he treats his son and niece and so much more illustrated in my essay. I think a cause, for Heathcliff's vicious actions might be the despoilment he experienced in his childhood and the violence Hindley subjected him to. However, he might fictionally prove that you can be born evil and therefore this could be the cause for his personality.

# Has racism declined in football in the last 50 years?

Izzy Jones

## Overview

Racism - prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior - has been common in sports in the last 50 years, especially in football. During this essay, I will be discussing whether racism has actually improved in football and then compare the present with 50 years ago. I will talk about modern day racism and the problems Eastern Europe face, as well as English football.

## Evolution of black players and clubs

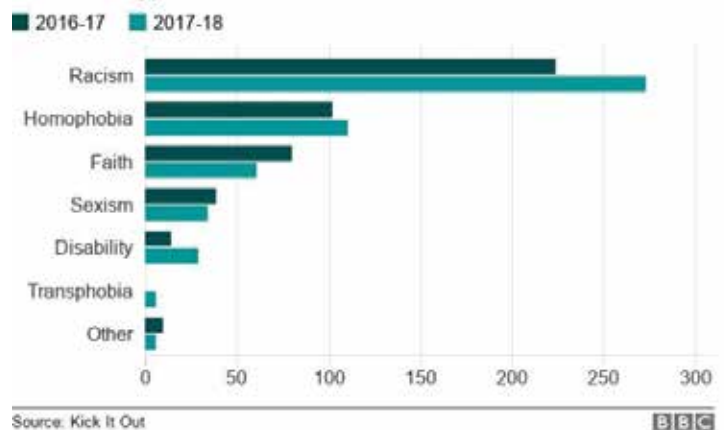
In November 1978, defender Viv Anderson made his debut for England against Czechoslovakia at 22 years old and became the first black player to play for England at senior level. This was a huge turning point in England's history, with countries such as France, Wales and Scotland already having international black players, which portrays the prominent racism that England still faced.

Some people might say that in the last 50 years, the football world has tackled racism in an attempt to have justice amongst all races. For example, in the 1970 World Cup squad, all players were white, however this seasons Nations League squad was 43% black/mixed ethnicity. This huge improvement means players of a different ethnicity are now being treated as equal and are permitted the same opportunities as white players.

In the 1970's, racism in football wasn't treated as a problem as many people turned a blind-eye to it. As more and more clubs were introducing black players, fans made it clear they were not happy; yet the abuse was not seen as a problem. Today, all clubs have a zero-tolerance policy for racism and have set regulations to try and eradicate it.

## Education of racism rights – past vs. present

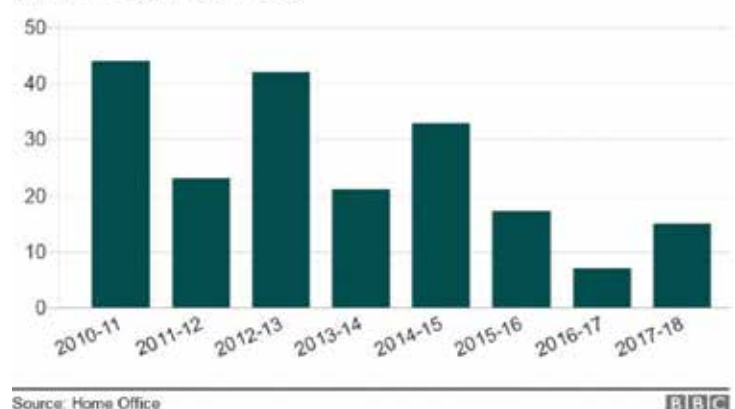
### How have types of discrimination in football risen?



On the other hand, numerous events with racial abuse have occurred this season, displaying the prejudice beliefs some people still have to this day. In schools today, children are taught about justice and they are educated about equal treatment, whereas in the past this was not the case; leading to older generations still having racist views as they were not educated in equality. The graph to the left clearly displays the increase in racial discrimination in the last few years, which is contradicting the intent to stop it.

## Football-related arrests for racist and indecent chanting

### Arrests in England and Wales



Many people of an older generation give a negative impact on equality due to their lack of understanding, which has led to physical and verbal abuse multiple times in the last year. An example of this is Raheem Sterling, who has been victim of multiple racial attacks. He is an influencer to try and put a stop to racism, and one of his beliefs is that it would be good to have a more severe punishment to act as a deterrent.

At the same time, the graph above shows the mixed results over the last 8 years, but overall the improvements and the decreasing number of arrests for racist and indecent chanting.

#### **Problems across Europe and punishment**

Another problem is the common racism in Eastern Europe, displayed in the match against Montenegro earlier this year. Racism is still very prevalent in Eastern Europe, unlike in England, resulting in verbal abuse aimed at England players. This proves that racism is still a problem, even though it is being handled in England and West Europe.

Some people might argue with this and say that although it is still present in other countries, it has

come a long way and is now less frequent. The problem has a more severe punishment and is now being dealt with which is improving the stigma of racism in football. This was evident in Montenegro, as the issue was dealt with quicker and should act as a deterrent.

However, the problem is not being dealt with harshly enough as it is still a common issue. Whilst being asked about his views on the punishment for racism, Sterling said, "the racism problem in football is so bad, runs so deep and is nowhere near being sorted," which proves people within football are calling for change. It also displays how the current punishment is not effective as other countries still have a regular problem.

#### **Media impact**

Some people might say that the media affects the actions of people as it is influential and reaches many people across the world. Both positive and negative things can be taken from the media's view on racism, which causes controversy and debate about how improvements are supposed to be made in the football community.

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Positive examples of media include campaigns such as Show Racism the Red Card (the UK's leading anti-racism charity), who are being advertised across the country in order to stop racist abuse. Additionally, by publicising abuse in a negative light, the public read this and associate it with negativity, therefore less people are likely to take part in it due to the consequences.

On the other hand, examples of negative media use have also been found, pointed out by Raheem Sterling last year. The point he made was that the media aren't treating young players equally as they are discretely making negative comments about black players unnecessarily. By doing this, it creates a bad perception of them: this can then impact on the public's views and actions towards them. In his comments, he spoke about how the action was nearly identical from both players, however the wording the media has used illustrates them in different ways. Sterling then went on to argue, "This young black kid is looked at in a bad light, which helps fuel racism and aggressive behaviour" which clearly displays the hidden discrimination in England and how the wording of a newspaper can impact so many.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, after exploring both sides of the argument, I think that the issue of racism has declined, however the abuse and unnecessary targeting proves that racism is still a huge problem; something that is slowly improving. I think sources such as the media play a huge role in influencing people, as the wide scale broadcast of this news results in it being reached across the country. This means that many people follow the negative trend that the media publish, and therefore this doesn't help resolve the issue. I believe with more campaigns, influencers and education, the racism label can soon leave football - leading to a more pleasant and equal environment.



# Is focussing on plastic straws a waste of time?

Zoe Phillis

It's Monday evening, you walk into McDonalds to get your regular order, a big mac with a chocolate milkshake. You walk over to collect your sides, ketchup and mayonnaise, before then picking up a paper straw. No, not plastic. A paper straw. Why would you use a paper straw after that inspiring David Attenborough show? After seeing the footage of the risk they've put on turtles' lives. Surely that would be wrong?

Although you may have saved a turtle, what you failed to consider was the other huge impacts that the one meal you've just consumed had on the environment. That beef burger you had came from a large-scale farm of cattle, each cow emitting methane into the atmosphere and building up greenhouse gases within the air. You might think that this is only a small issue, but the UN food organization estimates that 14.5% of emissions of greenhouse gases (man-made) are a result of farming livestock, and 9.42% of this is estimated to be from cattle. Additionally, you may also be aware of the high demand for "free-range products" or "grass fed beef". And although these may leave more fertile soil and a lower use of fertilizers, they are certainly not having a good impact on the environment due to the fact grass fed cattle tend to produce more methane. By 2050 it is estimated that this large industry of animal production will double, and this means double the amount of greenhouse gas emissions.

This is clearly a large-scale problem, so what can we do to reduce it? Well, the simplest solution is for the demand for meat and other produce from livestock to lower globally. However, for this to take place it is essential for there to be a popular and affordable alternative.

The excessive packaging your order came in is likely to end up in landfill, where your rubbish will slowly decompose before then discharging methane into the atmosphere.

And this is not just your McDonalds order. For example, with your online shopping where that one tiny item comes in bags and bags of unnecessary plastic. Or perhaps that plastic bag you picked from Sainsburys because you forgot your reusable one, well that one bag will sit in landfill from between 200-500 years. A study in 2010 came to show that the US alone had emitted the equivalent of 143 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>. Luckily, some landfill sites have incited a system known as "capture and use". This system controls the levels of methane being emitted by firstly capturing the gases released by the rubbish. Next, this gas can be burned for energy which ensures the effect on the climate is less intense than simply leaving the rubbish to seep out gases into the atmosphere. Although this is a significant step towards improvement, it alone is not enough. We need bigger changes such as using reusable or recyclable packages so that we can eliminate non-recyclable packaging and eventually landfills, for a cleaner planet.

This brings us onto the important matter of carbon footprints. How did you get to your McDonalds? Was it by car? By train? Did you consider the plane that flew key components of your meal over? A carbon footprint is described as: "the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere as a result of the activities of a particular individual, organisation or community". Most actions you do have a carbon footprint associated with them and therefore every small choice you make each day can have dramatic effects on the size of your carbon footprint. An example of this is something as simple as going grocery shopping. Firstly, you must drive to the shop; this emits CO<sub>2</sub> via the burning of fossil fuels. Then each individual food item you put in your basket has a footprint of its own, such as a typical item in a British household, orange juice where one carton can emit 1.7kg of carbon dioxide. This large figure stems from several factors: the growing of the oranges, the packaging, consumer use and finally

how it is disposed. As a comparison, the average British household spends approximately £60 on their weekly shop. Orange juice is only one example; if you add £55 worth more of food items and then work out the carbon footprint of each of these items you would soon see how one trip to the supermarket can leave such a huge footprint.

An interesting example to look at is Glastonbury this year. The festival was praised by David Attenborough, a key activist in the prevention of global warming, for going plastic free, everyone having to use reusable water bottles and refusing to sell single-use plastics. This was a big step towards change, inspiring many different generations to do better. However, what was not highlighted by the press was the amount of litter and tents left behind after the festival. Although there have been improvements from previous years, by leaving this litter behind it is almost undoing the good of going plastic free.

Essentially, the majority of people don't want global warming to continue, but if you were to have a choice between having food on the table and having something like an electric car, the choice is simple. It's not necessarily that people don't want to prevent global warming, it's that financially it often works out cheaper to choose the option that is not the best for the environment.

For us to save our planet in time, changes need to be made on a bigger scale. Yes, replacing a plastic straw with paper or metal ones is having a positive effect, but this alone is not enough! We need to look at the bigger picture and find cost effective solutions so that bigger companies can take action, as it is these large industries that are having the biggest effects on the earth.

In conclusion, suddenly when you consider all of these things, that paper straw that made you think you were having a huge impact on the planet doesn't seem quite as important. In 100 years when all the

coral reefs are bleached, when those beautiful islands are far beneath the sea and climate change starts to eliminate more and more species, the generations ahead of us are going to wish that we did more to stop this. Yes, using paper straws is a start but it is not enough to save our planet.

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# Why does mental health have such a huge impact on teenage girls today?

Emma Jasper

## **Mental health... overlooked?**

The Oxford dictionary states that Mental health is 'A person's condition with regard to their psychological and emotional well-being'. It impacts everything you do in life; decisions, outlook, interaction and so much more. Because of how impactful your mental health is on yourself and everyone else, it is very important to have a strong and healthy mental health as without it, you risk so much. I believe that one of the reasons that so many people suffer from undiagnosed mental health issues is because it is much less recognisable than any physical injury like breaking a leg or cutting yourself. It often happens over time and you feel as though it is your normal self rather than something that needs to be fixed much like a broken leg. You feel as though your state is how it should be rather than thinking 'Why do I feel this way?' and questioning it.

Statistics show that only 1 in 3 young people and children receive the NHS treatment that they need for their mental health issues. I believe that the NHS should be more aware of these issues and ensure that everyone who needs it receives the help and guidance that they need. This is because of how subtle the changes can be for someone with mental health issues which means that to prevent the condition from worsening, the patient should receive help from professionals.

For these reasons, I think that mental health is often overlooked as something that is not nearly as important as physical well-being because the impact of it can be very slight. This should not be the case as mental well-being can hugely change lives and is largely undiagnosed. This needs to change.

## **Comparison**

Teenagers suffer greatly from how easy it is to compare yourself to others around you. Teenagers can feel upset and most of the time, this is because the person or image someone is comparing themselves to is fake, unrealistic and 'perfect'. It is often impossible to become like the image but because the person sees

the image as real, they feel they are not enough and do not fit in with everyone else.

In past generations, there has been much less access to other people's lives and so this kind of competitive comparison was impossible. Imagine, when your grandparents were children, they wouldn't have had phones or much television and certainly not social media sites like Instagram and Snapchat. This meant the only people you could compare yourself to were local. In social media, the real lives of people aren't reflected clearly and so when you compare, you feel unworthy. However, before this platform was created, people knew others on a close enough level that they knew their real lives and not some distorted fantasy. Comparisons were more realistic and so these problems were nowhere near as bad as today.

Comparison can lead to a significant loss in confidence which of course damages young people's self-esteem/confidence and subsequently their mental health. By constantly feeling negative towards themselves, the person may begin to block people out who care about them. We need to change the way we perceive others' lives and how this affects our own to make a difference. Self-confidence needs to be built in order to be able to accept others and not compare ourselves to them for a strong mental health.

## **Peer pressure**

Peer pressure is the feeling of needing to do something purely because others around you are and expect you to do the same. This can range from a wide range of things, from playing 'Tag' instead of 'Stuck in the mud', to smoking and taking drugs. This has a significant impact on teenage girls today as they feel peer pressure to look and act a certain way. This can heavily impact their self-esteem and self-confidence. Peer pressure has such a big influence because the 'victim' is often part of a minority group and is scared of being alone and bullied. They feel that if they don't do as others expect, they are wrong and would be left out and disliked by the group.

However, peer pressure can also be a positive thing. If what you are being pressured to do is a positive thing, for example trying a new sport, it could be good for you to be put into new environments that you might actually enjoy as well as being out of your comfort zone. Also, peer pressure can teach that you can't always do whatever feels comfortable, this is not the case in life, especially in the workplace where you need to be flexibly minded to work with others and come to an agreement.

Statistics show that 70% of teens started smoking because their friends were and they wanted to fit in and be 'cool'. Obviously, this is not 'cool' later on when it heavily impacts your health and brain development at such a young age. To fix this, we should help teens to build strong self-confidence so that when put in these situations, they are able to hold their ground and not be influenced by other people and judge themselves on what they think is best.

### **Review of evidence of self-harm**

'Rates of self-harm were higher in children who were attracted to the same gender or to both genders (46%), and in children from lower-income households.'

I believe this is because of how people who like people of the same gender are discriminated against and told they are not acceptable. This makes the person feel that they are not wanted in society which can affect their mental health. Today, these stereotypes and generalisations are everywhere on the media and although awareness is being raised against it, people are suffering this discrimination.

'52.7% of young women with a diagnosable mental health disorder has self-harmed or attempted suicide at some point.'

By the term 'diagnosable' it's suggested that if the patient had had medical help this kind of damaging behaviour could be prevented. This seems ridiculous because this dangerous activity costs lives that could be saved if young people were educated in how to act when they recognise their mental health issues. If we act, we can stop these things from happening and raise awareness of the problem.

### **What can we do?**

I believe that to make a change, we must alter the way we view mental health. We all need more knowledge to deal with these issues and understand how to act

when we come across them. If we do this, we could reduce the huge number of people suffering these problems alone.

This could be done in so many ways including the way in which we use social media. Because it has such a huge impact, we could use it for the better to reach out to people who are struggling to deal with mental health and are using social media as a distraction. By doing this, we can show them that they are not alone and there are plenty of people willing to help them.

Also we can talk openly about mental health so that people with these problems do not feel embarrassed or nervous about how they might be judged by asking for help when they really need it. It is at times like these when someone is willing to ask for help that we have to be welcoming and help in every way we can.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I believe that mental health has such a huge impact on teenage girls because of the expectations around what a girl should be like and how this illogical idea is distributed everywhere from tv and social media to the backs of cereal boxes and signs in the street. These are the reasons why mental health is such an important factor in young girls' lives.

Whilst this effect is growing, the knowledge and awareness around mental health is extremely limited and overlooked so that people don't know where to go for help. Mental health is hushed away in a corner as something embarrassing, wrong and unimportant which is part of the reason why it has become such a problem. The huge number of undiagnosed young girls is ridiculous and needs to be changed so that they can have the help they need.

I think that mental health is more important than physical wellbeing because it not only impacts yourself but people around you and physicality. I think that if you have poor physical health, it is possible to have a positive mental health because the way you perceive your illness changes your physical state but if you have a negative mental health, it is difficult to attain physical health because this affects the way you act which affects your body.

I believe that mental health must be more discovered and understood to help our generation through what our modern lives have brought.

# To what extent are Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange from Wuthering Heights reflective of the personalities of their inhabitants?

Emma Williams

In Emily Bronte's classic novel *Wuthering Heights*, the main events of the story take place at two central houses: Wuthering Heights and neighbouring house Thrushcross Grange. These residences are home to two opposing families, the Earnshaws and the Lintons. Despite being geographically four miles apart, both properties contrast to such an extent in not only appearance but also the atmosphere of their interiors. In this essay I will be comparing the two houses' physical features and histories to try and discover their prominent differences, including several occurrences that seem to be linked to the gothic genre.

Initially, the location of the two buildings are vastly different and separated. Wuthering Heights is gloomy and isolated, situated on the moors. Despite being just the short distance of four miles away, Thrushcross Grange is bigger, more welcoming and brighter. Thrushcross Grange is more elegantly decorated; described as 'a splendid place carpeted with crimson, and crimson-covered chairs and tables, and a pure white ceiling bordered by gold, a shower of glass-drops hanging in silver chains from the centre, and shimmering with little soft tapers.' This implies that one family has more money and is wealthier than the other. In addition to this, Wuthering Heights has been described as hostile: 'Happily, the architect had foresight to build it strong: the narrow windows are deeply set in the wall, and the corners defended with large jutting stones'.

In addition to this, during much of the novel, children inhabit Thrushcross Grange whereas Wuthering Heights is mostly uninhabited by children, the only

exception being the beginning of the book, for during the very beginning there is the young Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff until Catherine relocates to Thrushcross Grange and Heathcliff remains at the house, becoming a large factor in its depressive mood. This contributes to the aura of the houses, as Thrushcross Grange does not have a part in the main storyline, which does not involve a child's residence, in contrast to Wuthering Heights' children's miserable upbringings and considerable deaths within its walls.

Furthermore, the residents of these houses are very different in social status. The Lintons of Thrushcross Grange are a wealthy, middle-class family with children who are significantly more protected than the children of the working-class Earnshaws, whose children could be described as almost feral due to their constant exploration and exposure of the wild moors that envelop their house. This heavily impacts later decisions of Heathcliff's throughout his life, as he is very much focused on revenge and maintains his wild and animalistic streak throughout the events of the novel. This contrasts with his neighbour, Edgar Linton who is incapable of standing up for himself due to the overprotectiveness of his parents and the privileged upbringing he received. During the events of the novel, these two characters are conflicted, especially over Catherine following her marriage to Linton.

As a child, Edgar is very spoiled: 'Edgar stood on the hearth weeping silently, and in the middle of the table sat a little dog, shaking its paw and yelping; which, from their mutual accusations, we understood they had nearly pulled in two between



them.’ This is also true as adults after Heathcliff’s arrival three years after leaving: ‘I was amazed, more than ever, to behold the transformation of Heathcliff. He had grown a tall, athletic, well-formed man; beside whom my master seemed quite slender and youth-like...His countenance was much older in expression and decision of feature than Mr. Linton’s; it looked intelligent, and retained no marks of former degradation. A half-civilised ferocity lurked yet in the depressed brows and eyes full of black fire, but it was subdued; and his manner was even dignified: quite divested of roughness, though too stern for grace!’ The upbringings of these two men have heavily impacted them at this stage of life.

The two residences also influence character development, as one day in the novel Catherine is injured near to Thrushcross Grange and is taken in; still as turbulent as Heathcliff, and in a matter of two weeks becomes more placid and easy-going, although she still remains hot-headed and often rude. Negative traits aside, Catherine becomes more ladylike after her short stay with the Lintons, and then after returning to Wuthering Heights invites the Lintons to be frequent guests, although they often express their displeasure at the house’s residents. Prior to this, Catherine was a close ally to Heathcliff, but later considers herself to be superior to him: ‘instead of a wild, hatless little savage jumping into the house, and rushing to squeeze us all breathless, there ‘lighted from a handsome black pony a very dignified person, with

brown ringlets falling from the cover of a feathered beaver, and a long cloth habit, which she was obliged to hold up with both hands that she might sail in.’

The Linton children live in this fashion also; out of the four children, at this point, it is only Heathcliff who is treated less significantly than the other three. This continues throughout the next generation when Heathcliff seeks revenge on Edgar and Catherine’s daughter due to Edgar’s previous treatment of him.

In summary, the residences Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange are reflective of the families living inside them due to their many traits and how the houses are decorated reflecting their social statuses. Another large impact is the significant events of the story taking place at these houses, such as the dismal period when Heathcliff owns Wuthering Heights, while plotting to inherit Thrushcross Grange and also getting revenge on his enemies through their children’s happiness and the period of Catherine becoming more ladylike and ‘growing up’ in a sense taking place at Thrushcross Grange. These events are vastly different, representing the residences even when all of their original residents have died, and their legacies have been passed on to the next generation.

# How have assistance dogs helped us since they were first introduced?

Rosa Simkin

This essay will consider how assistance dogs have helped us since they were first introduced and how their uses have changed over time. An assistance dog is a specially trained dog to help people who are handicapped or suffering in different ways. This can range from being blind to just feeling a bit stressed. Different types of assistance dog include guide dogs for the blind, hearing dogs, stress-busting dogs and disability dogs. In my essay I am going to concentrate on three of those types: guide dogs for the blind, stress-busting dogs and dogs for good (dogs for the disabled). These dogs can do all sorts of things, including guiding people, making them feel calm, watching out for dangers and listening out for doorbells.

I have chosen this topic because these dogs play an important role in supporting people in our community. If we understand the contribution they can make, then we can learn more about how to use them in the future. I have a dog myself, so I am very interested in how these dogs can help people in their everyday life.

In this essay I will explain how assistance dogs have helped us since they were introduced, I will describe the different types of assistance dogs and show how their roles have changed over time. As I will show, through their history these dogs have been trained to help people in an increasing range of ways. Perhaps this means there will be even more ways they will be used in the future.

## **Why were assistance dogs introduced and who introduced them?**

Guide Dogs were introduced for many reasons. Firstly, Britain was not very safe for people who were blind. Blind people could not even call their home a safe place to be because they might trip on stuff left on the floor, might not be able to get ready in the mornings and even struggle to get out of bed on their own. Leaving the house was even harder. Blind people might trip on curbs, were at

risk of getting hit by cars or might not know where they were or be able to get to where they wanted to go. Two British Pioneers knew something needed to change quickly and they helped to make that happen. Muriel Crook and Rosamund Bond who were two British female pioneers created Guide Dogs on the thirtieth of August 1930. Later that year, Guide Dogs' first four dogs were trained in a lock up garage in Wallasey, Merseyside. Since then, Guide Dogs has continued to grow and have now helped an amazing 29,000 British people get back some independence. Nowadays the breeds used include Labradors, German Shepherds and Golden Retrievers. One of the favourite dogs is the Labrador/Golden Retriever cross.

Dogs for Good were set up to help disabled or handicapped people in 1988 by Frances Hay. Being disabled since a teenager, Frances knew she needed to do something that would make life easier for people like her. When it started, the charity was called Dogs for the Disabled. In 2015, twenty-five years after Frances sadly passed away, the charity was renamed as Dogs for Good. These dogs are often Labrador-Retriever crosses. They help their owners do all sorts of jobs, like picking up things they have dropped, fetching the post, opening and shutting doors, helping them take off clothes. One lady called Ann said: "Before, I was just a lady in a wheelchair. Now, I'm Ann with the lovely, clever, amazing dog and my disability fades into the background." Looking after a dog like this makes their owner feel good too because it shows they can care for something too.

Stress-Busting Dogs (sometimes called therapy dogs) are a much more recent development, although the exact introduction date or creator is unclear. These dogs are used in hospitals and old people's homes to cheer people up and make them relax. They are also known to help people with mental health issues or those who are stressed. This is because cuddling and playing with animals reduces a stress hormone

call oxytocin. Whenever I am fed up and I am at home, I find that spending time with my dog Sydney makes me feel happier. Recently, these dogs have also been used to help students all over the world calm down, including near here at the University of Warwick. A study has shown that Stress-Busting Dogs helps students learn and make them less likely to drop out of university before the end of their course.

### **How have assistance dogs changed since they were first introduced?**

This brings me back to the question for this essay: How have assistance dogs changed since they were first introduced? Assistance dogs have changed in so many ways since they were first introduced. Firstly, the types of disabilities or difficulties these dogs can help with has changed. When assistance dogs were first introduced their use was to guide blind or partially sighted people. Now there are so many different ways that assistance dogs are used. There are hearing dogs, disabled help dogs and even dogs to relieve stress. Rosamund Bond and Muriel Crook probably had no idea when they introduced Guide Dogs to Britain they would make people realize that dogs could help people who are handicapped in other ways. If they could see what has happened, they would be really happy that the four Guide Dogs they introduced have led the way for thousands of different types of assistance dogs.

Secondly, the number of tasks that assistance dogs can carry out has increased. Before Guide Dogs would mainly lead people around and stop them from tripping but now, they can do much, much more. These dogs are trained to give items to their owners, shut cupboards, and even to open doors for them. Guide Dogs developed a new way of thinking about how to look after disabled people. Who knows, maybe one day guide dogs will be able to ride a bike!

Finally, the types of people who use these dogs has changed. Guide dogs used to mainly be used by older people. But now, rather than making a difference only to older aged people's lives, guide dogs are helping to make kids' lives better too! Dogs for Good used to only be for people in a wheelchair but now people with artificial legs or who have a hip replacement can have them too, if they are struggling. Stress-Busting Dogs were first used in hospitals and in old people's homes but now are also used in schools and universities.

### **What can we do to help assistance dog charities?**

We can do so much to help these charities develop and grow, so they do even more in the future. If you want to make a difference, there are so many things you can do. One option is to sponsor a puppy. If you do this with Guide Dogs, you pay only one pound a week. You will get regular photos and updates about your puppy and at the end of the year you will receive a calendar. You could make a one-off donation or a monthly donation to any assistance dogs' charity. You could volunteer to help out at your local charity shop for your chosen charity. You could walk a puppy each week. The list goes on. If you want to donate money to a charity, why not donate it to an assistance dog's charity so that they can use it for this incredible cause.

### **Conclusion**

This essay shows that assistance dogs have developed so much through time in so many ways! Their uses have changed, the people who use them and even how they are used. Everything develops over time, but the uses of assistance dogs has changed at a rapid speed. Who knows, in 10,000 years there could be assistance dogs for everything?! Even cooking. Ideas to help the disabled are developing so quickly that anything could happen. This shows that anyone with an amazing idea who is determined can make a difference to the world as Rosamund and Muriel did. If you think you can do something do it. If you don't go for it, your idea could be forgotten even if it could make an outstanding difference to our world, our community. I hope my essay has improved your understanding of how assistance dogs have changed and what we can do to help them in the future. Thank you for reading.

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# Pollution in the sea – plastic, why don't we stop it?

Juliana Stuber

Every day approximately 8 million pieces of plastic pollution find their way into our oceans. There may now be around 5.25 trillion macro and microplastic pieces floating in the open ocean, weighing up to 269,000 tonnes. We are told nearly every day that we must stop plastic pollution, so why is it that everything we have tried hasn't solved the problem? In my essay I will be explaining and exploring the dangers and the complications of the plastic pollution and why we haven't stopped it yet.

To eliminate a problem, it is important to look at the cause. The one of the main reasons why plastic is in our oceans is because plastic is used almost everywhere, plastic is one of the cheapest products to get, easy to make and equally durable. Making plastic a convenient material to use when creating and making products. Secondly, population growth, currently (2019) there are 7.7 billion people in the world, and by 2050 there are predicted to be 9.8 billion people in the world. If you just think about even half of those people using at least one piece of plastic every day and then throwing it away, that is a lot of plastic. Another cause is people not caring: 7 out of every 10 items that have been littered are either food packaging or wrappers, most of these will be plastic. There are so many more reasons why plastic has ended up in our oceans, but I have just highlighted the major ones.

Many solutions have been created like recycling our waste and rubbish. But only nine percent of plastic is recycled and only twelve percent has been incinerated. This is a huge problem and even though recycling solves many problems like glass bottles and metal, it hasn't done enough to change the amount of plastic that is going into our oceans.

Another solution is cleaning and clearing the ocean our self, for example '4ocean' has removed 4.7 million pounds of trash from the water since 2017. But once we have cleaned the ocean and removed all the plastic where will it all go?

There are many reasons why everything we are trying is not working and there is a big chance that many things that we try in the future will not work either. But there are good reasons why we should not give up the struggle. Firstly, the consequences of not saving the ocean from plastic is way worse than the struggle of clearing the ocean, it is turning out to be fatal to wildlife. Isn't that enough to want to stop? Another reason is that future generations will suffer because of our mistakes as we pollute the earth and use it as a live garbage bin the future of our earth being jeopardized.

Everything relates back to the problem that plastic takes 450 years to biodegrade. There is no way to destroy all plastic or get rid of it without it still being present in some sort of form meaning that maybe we must either get rid of plastic all together or produce under a quarter of what we currently produce.

The one major question is why don't we stop? We have all means to and we have enough technology to create something that can help. So, what is it that prevents us from standing up and saying something like 'let's stop producing plastic bags' or to stop buying plastic products or not pick up a plastic straw? To be impartial I do not believe that there is a straight forward answer or even a slightly complex answer. The real question is not 'how do we stop plastic pollution?' or 'why won't we stop' it's what will we do? What will we do with all the plastic that is currently

crowding our oceans? Although I covered this topic briefly, I think this is an over looked problem.

The 'plastic problem' has gotten so out of control that plastic is in the food chain and entering our systems daily. We can't stop the problem overnight, so we need to break it down and slow down the rate of which the problem is increasing. The only way we can slow it down is through human behavior, our habits. We should reduce the amount of plastic that we use in our daily life. We use plastic every day and buy plastic without realizing what we are doing and preventing ourselves before we do it. We don't even question it because our food is just there in plastic bags or plastic packaging and the other alternatives aren't very convenient. Plastic has entwined its way into our lives and now we cannot stop it.

By 2050, plastic in the oceans will outweigh fish, I strongly believe that we can do way better, we should all just take time to appreciate the world and see

it as one. I also believe that every week we should allocate about two or three hours to just picking up plastic or switching of lights or even making sure that everything has been recycled properly. In conclusion, millions of sea creatures have died due to plastic and if we don't start slowing down the rate that the problem is increasing then we will have to face treacherous and potentially even fatal consequences of our actions. There are so many other ways we could do things that would save the planet, 500 billion plastic bags are used every year worldwide. Every action that you do towards saving the planet counts, at the moment it is the only place we can live so we must cherish it and protect it from the new technology and materials that we have created. We must realize that it is our problem and we must solve it before it's too late for the earth.



# Are Dreams Random?

Laura Watts

Dreams are one of the most curious events in modern life, as there is so much we don't know about them. One question that is quite common is whether dreams related to things we are thinking about, or whether they just appear in our minds. The obvious answer is no. They don't just appear randomly, that would make no sense, but it is less obvious how to prove this. This essay is all about the proof that people have come up with, and why this proves that dreams are not random.

As Kristyn Lewis has written, when you start to sleep, “your heart rate slows, your temperature drops, and your brain is busy processing the day's events. During this, dreams are made up of flashes of thoughts and images from your waking life. You rarely remember these dreams unless you wake up during them.” This is proof that dreams are related to your day before, but it does not show whether dreams include long term memories. This could mean that dreams may be telling you something, like an unconscious instinct, maybe highlighting something you need to change or improve.

As J. E. Rapaport has written, “people tend to dream about negative events a lot more than they do about positive events.” This may be because most languages have more negative words than positive words, but there could be many other possibilities. I think the reason behind these petrifying nightmares, is that many humans need to change their lives, and make them better. It is natural to think more on the bad things than the good, so maybe our nightmares are trying to point out our flaws, and what we need to do to improve. “Things happening in real life can also influence dreams. For example, a person sleeping in a hot room might dream about being in a sauna or

being trapped in a sweltering desert. If your alarm clock goes off, you might simply assume the noise is your dream rather than waking to the sound.”

According to Kristyn Lewis dreams are the things that “help us process new, emotionally important information and add it to our conceptual memory system”. This means that dreams help us to think over our day and remember important things. This would prove that dreams are associated to our day-time lives, and they are vital to our memory. They could also help keep our stress levels down, as they process and “organize” our thoughts.

Mary Grace Taylor writes: “Certain foods can impact how easily (or not) you drift off to dreamland”. This is more evidence that things in your waking world affect your sleep and cause different dreams. This also links to the question: can you stop bad dreams by changing your diet?

The answer is yes. Mary Grace Taylor also answers the question “Plenty of people report having weirdly vivid dreams after dining on something spicy or heavy. Some experts suspect that this could be because fiery foods raise your body temperature, which can cause you to have worse sleep. Other experts chalk the effect up to meal size. The more you eat, the harder your body has to work to digest all of that food—a process that can make it harder to achieve restful sleep”. So, if you are a person who is having scary or unnerving dreams, think about changing your diet.

As Mary Grace Taylor has written “Popping a melatonin supplement might help you fall asleep

more easily. But it can also cause you to have super vivid dreams or nightmares. In fact, one small study, published in *Sleep and Hypnosis*, found that college students (especially women) who took 6 mg melatonin before bed were more likely to rate their dreams as bizarre compared to those who took a placebo pill... Catching up on your favorite shows might seem like a great way to unwind before turning in. But once you fall asleep (which might take a while, thanks to the blue light emitted by your laptop or tablet), your dreams could be pretty strange. Studies on children find that watching media before bed significantly ups the risk of nightmares. Some experts say that could be because little kids have trouble telling the difference between what's real and what's fake, so the stuff on TV is more likely to scare them. But adults might not be immune to what they see on the screen at night, either. In a British survey of 2,000 adults, over 60% reported being more likely to have bad dreams after watching a scary or gruesome show". Here is yet more proof that dreams are not random, and you can change them yourself.

So, to conclude, if you are having restless nights, or terrifying nightmares, there is something you can do about it. Solve your problems, change your diet, and stop worrying about yesterdays you can't change. If you do have a bad dream though, make sure to think about it, and try to discover what it is trying to tell you.







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