



King's High School

INSPIRE ESSAY COMPETITION

2022



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Foreword

Reading the entries for the Inspire Competition is always one of the highlights of the year. During the six years since the competition was founded, the judging panel has been consistently wowed by the creativity and independence of thought on display. This year was no exception. I hope you enjoy reading the superb essays in this volume as much as we have.

The premise of the Inspire Essay Competition is simple: pupils are given six weeks to work independently on a topic of their choosing, leading to a piece of written research. We stipulate that we are looking for quality of research, depth of analysis, standard of essay composition, and the level of originality on display—but beyond this, it is up to our pupils to approach their essay in any way that they choose. It is remarkable and (fittingly enough) inspiring to see the topics that are chosen and the effort that pupils go to when conducting their research. If the individuals who wrote essays this year are in any way representative of Generation Z, the future is in safe hands.

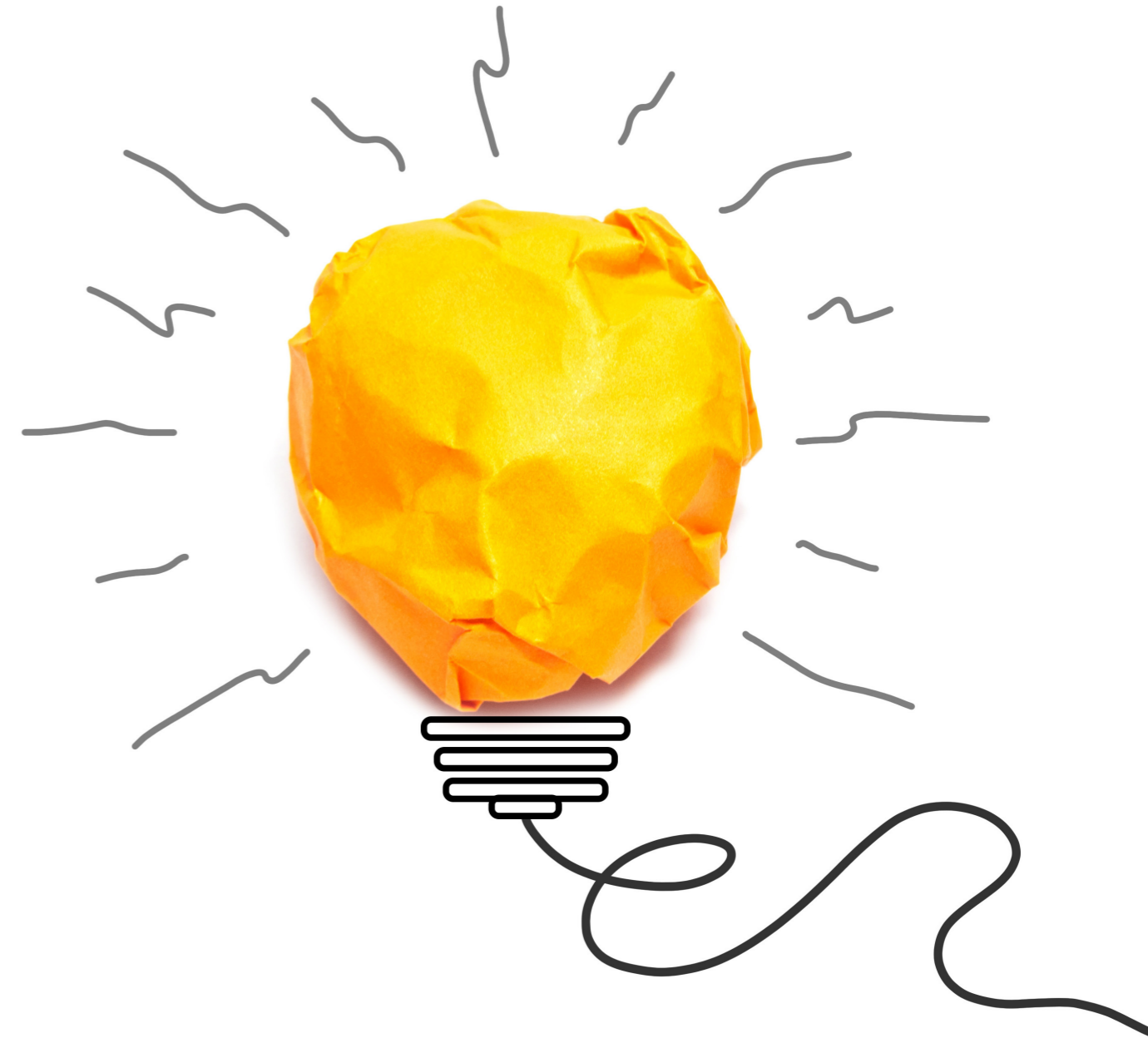
There are many outstanding essays submitted this year for which we didn't have space in this booklet, and the judging panel heartily congratulates all of our entrants. As well as helping to shape our school culture, with its strong focus on being curious about the world and forming your own passions and interests, our essayists help to shape the conversations and debates we have in school. We are now seeing more and more entries focus on the role (and drawbacks) of gaming, as well as nuanced discussions of how to respond to environmental crises. Voices calling for equality continue to sing through loudly; this year we had original and innovative essays on Ukraine and Sri Lanka that posed deeply thoughtful questions about racism. Mental health also continues to be a touchstone topic. Life in the 2020s doesn't sit still, and the adaptability and clear-sightedness of young people can be of enormous help as we navigate change.

I hope that everyone who reads this booklet, whether you are a visitor to the school or part of the King's High family already, catches the vision of our essayists. If any of the pieces provoke thought, debate, or perhaps even unleash a new passion in one of our readers, then we have fulfilled our aims.

Dr P Seal

Deputy Head (Academic)

Year 9 Prize Winning Entries





FIRST PRIZE
YEAR 9

Mind over Matter: Is it in the Mind, and Does that Matter?

Emily Strens

'Mind over Matter' is a term we hear everywhere. The mind is a powerful tool that can be used to achieve what appear to be miracles. But how much truth is there in these phenomena? From walking on hot coals to curing illness with the power of thought, this essay will explore the scientific merit behind these claims.

The fictional character Dr John Watson's injury in the television series 'Sherlock' was cured when Watson was rushing for a taxi and did not register that he had a limp. At this point, he realised he no longer needed the cane he always walked with. This is an example of a psychosomatic illness which is a psychological condition involving physical symptoms with no apparent medical explanation.¹ A history of anxiety and depression is supposedly the most common cause, as well as the genetic propensity to be more sensitive to pain and to somatic experiences.² An article from *The Guardian* in 2015 explores the truth about psychosomatic illnesses and reviews several case studies of people suffering these illnesses: a man named Matthew's problem began with a feeling of pins and needles in one foot which eventually spread around his body. Nothing he did made him any better. One day, he awoke and discovered he had no feeling nor movement in his legs. He was admitted to hospital, where he underwent a series of investigations which offered no explanation. However, with intensive physio and occupational therapy, Matthew was eventually able to walk again. The ability of the mind to affect the physical form can be seen here with the effect of psychosomatic illnesses on a person's life. The mind also has the power to treat real illnesses explored in an area of medicine called the 'placebo effect'.

In medicinal clinical trials, patients are prescribed placebos, which are not the real treatment pills, but are administered to patients without them knowing. Since the mind believes them to be real, they tend to have

positive effects. However, placebos can also have a negative effect. This has been named the 'nocebo effect,' and creates the opposite to the desired reaction. If the patient believes the treatment will harm their body, they may not recover and instead become worse. Both of these effects are purely psychological, yet can greatly affect a person's health.³ Placebos cannot lower your cholesterol or shrink a tumour. Instead, they only work on symptoms modulated by the brain, like the perception of pain. A study led by Kaptchuk explored this by testing how people react to migraine pain medication. This study was published in *Science Translational Medicine*. One group took the migraine pain drug, another took a placebo, and the final group took nothing. The research revealed that the placebo was 50% as effective as the real drug to reduce pain after a migraine. Although only half as effective, the mind can clearly improve a person's health.

Other examples of mind over matter in medicine include hypnotherapy, which uses hypnosis or the technique of influencing one's mind to help them recover from illnesses and psychological disorders. It causes the mind to induce a change in the behavioural aspects of the body, and thereby can cure illnesses. This treatment blurs the barrier between scientifically proven medicine and holistic approaches which rely more on old traditions than measured research.⁴ In a monastery in Northern India, Tibetan monks would sit quietly in a cold 40°F (4.4°C) room. Using a yoga technique, Tummo (also called gTum-mo), they entered a state of deep meditation. Other monks would wrap themselves in sheets soaked in cold water and attempt to dry 3 of them over a period of several hours from their body heat alone. For people untrained in the meditative technique, they would shiver uncontrollably, and eventually die. However, Tibetan monks have mastered the art, and repeat this practice daily. This

suggests that the mind has great power even if it requires practice, if we believe the account.

Religious medicinal rituals or techniques have a large impact on how our society has developed, and even if there is scientific evidence against them, does the mere existence of them allow them to work? One example of an ancient practice (believed by many to be highly effective) is acupuncture.⁵ Acupuncture is a treatment derived from ancient Chinese medicine. Traditional acupuncture is based on the belief that a life force known as Qi flows through the body in channels called meridians. Practitioners who use acupuncture in the traditional way believe that when Qi does not flow freely through the body, this can cause illness, and that acupuncture can restore the flow of Qi, and therefore restore health. Although there is no scientific evidence to support the existence of 'Qi', acupuncture is an effective method of pain relief against chronic pain, chronic tension-type headaches and migraines. Even if acupuncture does not restore the 'flow of Qi' it does stimulate sensory nerves under the skin and in the muscles which releases pain-relieving endorphins and other natural substances inside the body. This demonstrates that even if there is a scientific explanation for something, the idea of it, created by the mind, is what brings about its existence. With no evidence against the existence of the Qi, who can be sure that it does not exist?

In fact, since the beginning of recorded time the mind has been utilised to achieve seemingly impossible feats. There are many stories of people living normal lives who have been able to achieve impossibilities, as a result of their strong will. 'Our mind can move mountains', this may be metaphorical, however there are many supposedly metaphorical actions that are indeed possible if we do not underestimate the strength of our mind, such as walking over hot coals.

Also referred to as 'firewalking,' it is performed as a ritual in some cultures. Evidence suggests that this can be achieved by decreasing the contact time of the hot coals with the skin so that the skin does not burn. However, many believe that it is more the mind that enables them to detach their bodies from the pain. This is an example of extreme willpower allowing one to overcome their perceived physical limitations for a powerful feat.⁶ Aron Ralston used much more than just strong will. Whilst climbing down a narrow slot in Bluejohn Canyon, a boulder dislodged and trapped his forearm and hand. Nobody knew where he was; the chance of him being rescued was non-existent, as Ralston had not informed anyone of where he was going that day. Trapped for 127 hours, what choice did this American mountaineer have other than to use his penknife to amputate his forearm? He broke his radius and ulna then cut through the remaining skin and tendons, freeing himself and saving his own life.

This is a feasible miracle, in that the survival instinct allowed this man to withstand an extreme level of pain. However, some theorise that the mind is capable of far more than realising one's natural abilities. Many supposed examples of mind over matter that defy the laws of physics exist, such as telekinesis, which although unproven, is a popular idea and superpower that many young children wish to possess. Telekinesis refers to the ability to move something only by thinking and without the application of any physical force. It is a highly disputed example of mind over matter due to the lack of scientific evidence, however there are many claims of people having these powers.⁷ An example of this is Spoon bending, popularised in the 1970s by Uri Geller. He claimed to have paranormal powers and appeared on television performing purportedly psychokinetic feats such as bending spoons with his mind. This was shown to be fake by James Randi, a magician and sceptic who devoted much of his life



SECOND PRIZE
YEAR 9

What is the Best Way to Measure Intelligence?

Mim Brown

to debunking frauds. He published 'The Truth About Uri Geller', in which he challenges Geller's ability to perform paranormal feats and explains how spoon bending can be reproduced easily by any magician. This demonstrates that the mind can give us power, but not superpowers. Even though this is the case, the power we all have in our minds is far beyond that which we use on a day-to-day basis. Throughout history humans have attempted to create explanations for otherworldly events such as claiming solar eclipses represent the coupling of the sun and the moon and lead to the creation of more stars! In fact, the power of the imagination has shaped society into what it is today. Who knows what is possible?

While 'mind over matter' as a concept can go beyond the comprehension abilities of our conscious mind, it is indeed intriguing. While this phrase can be used in different contexts, it is largely used to refer to the power the mind can have over the body. "Miracles" do happen, and not all those we hear of are myths. You might have experienced your intuitive abilities leading you to a decision, or a gut feeling telling you that something is right or wrong. Our inner conscience has its own language; it is just that not all of us understand what it is. The mind an extremely powerful tool, underestimated by most of us. It has tremendous power waiting to be used.

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According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, intelligence "is the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills"! Intelligence in its various forms is an important aspect of human lifestyle as it determines career options, and what someone can do and accomplish in their life. In this essay, I will be evaluating different tests of intelligence and arguing which test is the most effective and why, as well as judging whether someone will have a higher chance of being more intelligent based on their environment and genetics.

One way of measuring intelligence is the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) Test. IQ Tests were founded in 1904 when a school in Paris asked psychologists Alfred Binet and Theodore Simon if they could create a test to determine a human's intelligence. The test involved a child performing a set of tasks. After completing these questions, the child's mental age (a person's mental ability expressed as the age at which an average person reaches the same ability) would be divided by the child's chronological age (the age of a person as measured from birth to a given date) and then multiplied by 100. Many countries adapted Binet's tests and used them in their own education systems. For example, in the US, Lewis Terman, a psychologist at Stanford University, developed the Stanford-Binet test, which was soon used in multiple places. However, there are many issues with IQ tests because at some point, the mental growth is complete, so when teenagers were taking the test, their scores would end up declining. Despite this, IQ tests are still used regularly today in places such as job applications, schools and diagnosing someone with a mental disability.

Another way of measuring intelligence is The Wechsler Scale, which was created by David Wechsler. Unlike the Stanford-Binet Tests, Wechsler tested both

children and adults in areas such as performance and verbal and nonverbal reasoning. It was used to try and diagnose people with serious psychological disorders (e.g., Schizophrenia and Bipolar Disorder), although research shows that this is not very reliable. However, it is still used a lot today, the main two being the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS) and the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WTSC).

Another way of measuring intelligence is through examinations, which are used in schools to determine a person's intelligence. However, examinations only show a person's memorization skills, effort, and work ethic. Ashlynn Roberts, a writer on The Talon, says "Grades have nothing to do with how smart a person is. Intelligence is not measured by a student's memorization skills and effort level."² I agree with this because using the definition from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, intelligence is acquiring and applying knowledge, not memorization skills, effort, and work ethic. Also, a person considered 'intelligent' could get an average grade if they do not put in the time and effort, another reason why it is not the best way to measure intelligence.

However, the intelligence of a person is not the same throughout their life. A person will get smarter as their brain develops, so when they are 'tested' for their intelligence, it cannot truly show what the true extent of their ability is. So then, should we even measure intelligence? Is it morally right to measure intelligence, if it stops a person from being able accomplish things in life? Nevertheless, this point can be overcome by complicated jobs that an 'intelligent' human would need to complete. For example, consider a brain surgeon. If someone had a brain tumour that needed to be operated on, you need someone who is qualified and intelligent enough to perform this task. As well as that, according to the textbook, 'An Introduction

to Psychology³ “the ability accurately to assess intelligence is one of the most important contributions of psychology to everyday public life”. Therefore, you will need some form of testing to know if a person has a qualification. But this raises back to the question of this essay, what is the best way to measure intelligence?

Throughout the recent years of research of psychologists, many modern-day intelligence tests have been created and theories have been made, including that there are multiple intelligences. A psychologist named Robert Sternberg proposed a triarchic theory of intelligence, that proposes that people may display analytical, creative, and practical intelligence. Sternberg reasoned that traditional intelligence tests only truly measure analytical intelligence, and that they do not measure creative intelligence (the ability to adapt to new situations and create new ideas) and practical intelligence (the ability to write good memos or to effectively delegate responsibility). Sternberg argued that someone may score highly in one area but average in another. Furthermore, as different parts of the brain control different forms on intelligence – convergent thinking is more analytical and divergent thinking is more creative – they will not be on the same scale, so therefore intelligence cannot be measured with just one test. Although I agree with Sternberg’s proposition of multiple intelligences, I disagree with Sternberg of there being only analytical intelligence, creative intelligence, and practical intelligence. As there are more types of intelligence, such as emotional intelligence (the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one’s emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically) and leadership intelligence (the practice of blending high performance experience and knowledge with personal and collective integrity within the context and culture of collaboration). An example of someone who has multiple types of intelligence is Sir Richard Branson,⁴ who struggled with dyslexia and dropped out of school at 16, showing that he lacked analytical intelligence. However, he started a small business and now oversees 500 companies and is worth around \$5 billion, showing leadership and practical intelligence. This shows how that there are multiple types of intelligences and that there should be multiple tests to truly test someone’s intelligence.

Intelligence changes from person to person, which is why intelligence needs to be tested, to work out who is better for jobs than others. Yet, how is intelligence decided? This brings us onto the nature vs. nurture debate. Surprisingly, while genetics does play a role in determining someone’s intelligence, it only accounts for 50% of difference of intelligence among individuals. The main thing that determines someone’s intelligence is their environment. These factors could be home environment and parenting; education and availability of resources; and nutrition. Even so, it is hard to tell the difference between genetics and environment effects. For example, if a child has a similar IQ to their parents, is it because of their genetics or for their environment at home? Still, it shows that intelligence is affected by both environment and genetics.

Now that I have researched different ways to measure intelligence, what affects intelligence and if we should even measure intelligence, I want to answer the question of this essay, “What is the best way to measure intelligence?”. In my opinion, the best way to measure intelligence is have multiple tests for the different types of intelligence: creative, analytical, practical, emotional and leadership. This then can work out someone’s strengths and weaknesses for when they are deciding what area/field they would like to enter and investigate. To make testing equal, universities and schools should also consider a person’s upbringing, school of education and home environment when deciding who offer a place to. For example, if someone has had a limited access to resources and education, but if they manage to get Bs and Cs in their A-Levels, then it shows that this person is intelligent and if put into the right school and have enough supplies, they will be able to thrive. Schools should not undermine someone’s potential, and instead help those who might not have had a good environment, good resources and money to get a good education. This is important because it allowed people who might struggle in life because they lack analytical intelligence, have a better chance of getting a good job if they have a lot of emotional intelligence as they could use that strength to be able to help make an impact of the world. It also allows all humans of all kinds of intelligence feel as though they are intelligent and can contribute to life in different ways.

To conclude, intelligence is more nuanced than it might appear at first sight. With their being multiple forms of intelligence and different ways intelligence can be measured, the traditional intelligence tests (e.g., the Stanford-Binet and Wechsler Tests) only measure one type of intelligence (analytical intelligence). Consequently, there must be multiple tests that measure different forms of intelligence to understand a person’s true ability. To have a test for multiple types of intelligence: analytical, creative, practical, emotional and leadership. But they also need to consider a person’s upbringing and form of education to help consider their true intelligence or ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills.

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THIRD PRIZE
YEAR 9

Am I Inspired?

Josephine Wood

Archimedes is known to have run naked through the streets of Syracuse shouting “Eureka” - which means “I have got it!” - in Greek. According to the story, Archimedes was supposed to have proven that a new crown made for Hieron, the king of Syracuse, was not made of pure gold, as the goldsmith had promised. Archimedes pondered for a long time but could not find a way to prove that the crown was not made of pure gold. Eventually he filled a bathtub and found that the water flowed over the rim when he got in, and he realised that the water displaced from his body was equal to his body weight. Knowing that gold was heavier than the other metals the crown maker could have used, Archimedes found a way to determine that the crown was not entirely gold. Eureka! He ran naked to show the king his discovery.

In many ways, this moment is considered the ultimate moment of inspiration. In biology, to inspire means ‘air or other substance inhaled’; the verb having its roots in the Latin *spiro* meaning *to breathe*. However, outside the sphere of science, inspiration is the absorption of one’s surroundings or ideas providing a moment of understanding and the application of it, leading people to make philosophical theories or scientific discoveries, such as Archimedes’. I had originally planned for my title to be ‘Inspire Essays: Worthy or Not?’ but much like Archimedes, I had a “eureka” moment where I decided against the cynicism of the title. Instead, in this essay I will discuss the possibility of being inspired.

Context is behind everything; the idea of originality or moments of pure inspiration is false due to the role of context. The *Merriam Webster Dictionary* defines context as the interrelated conditions in which something exists or occurs, for example environment, time and subject. A moment of inspiration is the meeting of core ideas or concepts with context. The belief that we can invent new ideas is therefore

misguided as ideas are *a priori*. *A priori* directly translates from Latin as “from the previous” or “from the one before” and is applied to brute facts or ideas, rather than *a posteriori*, which literally translates from Latin as “from the latter” or “from the one behind” and is applied to things that are based on experience or observation. One could visualise this as a graph, imagining a line of context. A good example of this is time (assuming time is linear). Around this line of context live multiple ideas or facts (like $1+1=2$), which fluctuate in and out of the line, the point at which they meet is the moment of inspiration. The absorption of one’s surroundings or ideas (the core idea) provide a moment of understanding and the application of it (the context). The change of context may make you think that your idea is original, but sadly you would be wrong: you did not create a new idea. You had a moment of inspiration, because the core of your thought, the knowledge, was pre-existing and therefore not original. Can I have an unprovoked moment of inspiration? No. Impossible. Can I still be inspired? Yes.

One reason inspiration does not exist is due to the lack of free will, which doesn’t exist due to epigenetic heritability, the genes effected by external forces being passed down through generations, for example aging, diet, environmental chemicals, childhood and emotional trauma. A study of this in the U.S. a few years ago, showed that genetics predetermine many of our choices. A trapped pair of mice were presented with the sweet smell of cherries but associated with that smell was a small electric shock. The scientists repeated this test with the same pair of mice over a longer period of time, and over that time the mice became anxious around the smell of cherries. They then allowed the mice to produce offspring and the offspring to live their lives without any testing, until they reached the great-grandchildren of the original

mice. These grandchildren were then also tested, but without the consequences of electric shock, and after three generations, it was established the mice were still fearful of the smell of cherries. This study proves epigenetics and their heritability because epigenetics alters gene expression in heritable manner without affecting the underlying genomic sequences. Furthermore, in more recent studies scientists have been able to use brain scanners to peer inside of a person’s brain, showing the networks of neurons, these networks are shaped and altered by our genes and our environment but are known to determine thoughts, dreams, and memories. This proves that thoughts that we have now were predetermined by the genetics of our ancestors as they are heritable, thus disproving free will as our ‘fates’ have been transmitted and passed down through generations (linking back to the mice).

If free will doesn’t exist, then neither do original nor new ideas, as we have been ‘programmed to already know them’, therefore, assuming no one can have an original or new idea, we can never be inspired as inspiration is the ‘absorption of one’s surroundings or ideas (ideas being original) providing a moment of understanding and the application of it’. However, this concept assumes that we require original ideas in order to be inspired, and its right, we do. This is because if we are truly inspired, we must apply our knowledge, this application refers to a change in context providing a difference and therefore becoming an original or new idea. Nevertheless, due to our lack of free will, original ideas are impossible and so we can never be inspired. So no, I am not inspired.

Inspiration does exist, however it works alongside realisation and so can easily be mixed up. According to the *Oxford Languages Dictionary*, realisation is the act of becoming fully aware of something, this is similar

and yet differs from the concept of inspiration. Both of these concepts require understanding and so are easily confusable. Archimedes took ages before he stepped into the bath, only then understanding the concept of displacement. He had an act of becoming fully aware of something as a fact and of being inspired; this was the combination of discovering a priori knowledge and the moment of stepping into the bath, proving the two concepts can live hand in hand and yet inspiration can still exist.

However, inspiration cannot happen without effort; you need to be interested and invested in a topic in order to be inspired. Interest – the focus of our attention – appears to be influenced by our interests. Because our individual interests differ considerably, what one person notices in a situation can differ from what others perceive. For example, when in an assembly about GCSE options and the benefits of different subjects, attention and listening between pupils may vary depending on what subject is being talked about. Furthermore, if you are preoccupied with a personal problem, you may find it hard to be as attentive as usual. So, in this sense you selectively decide what you are interested in and therefore what you ‘absorb’, causing you and your inspiration to be affected by what you deem interesting, but still enforcing the existence of inspiration itself. This is supported by the 150+ studies undertaken in 1992 showing that individual interests were correlated with success in both academic and laboratory performance due to a rise in endeavour. One social psychologist (Judith Harackiewicz) supported this idea so much that she believed and argued that interest in subjects may even be a better indicator of success than a student’s grades. In essence, your personal interests and the effort you put into what you enjoy, allow you to ‘dictate’, and ‘choose’ what you are inspired by. Am I inspired? Yes (but only by what I’m interested in).

Year 8

Prize Winning Entries

Having researched and discussed the origins of inspiration, I have come to the conclusion that inspiration is definitely possible due to context, the belief that inspiration is derived from understanding, and the application of a priori ideas to new situations. As well as the judgement that the possibility of inspiration is dependent on the topic and the person in question's interest, as inspiration cannot happen without effort, so yes, I am truly inspired.

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Side note – this essay was composed with the help of a lot of discussions with my family and many periods of thinking on my own (as well as research).





FIRST PRIZE
YEAR 8

Should We Be Worried About Surveillance?

Jenna Ansell

Surveillance is becoming increasingly commonplace in our day to day lives. Most people associate surveillance with security cameras or following a specific target, but surveillance can take many forms and often does not appear to be monitoring at all.

According to the *Oxford Dictionary* surveillance is, “the act of carefully watching a person suspected of a crime or a place where a crime may be committed”. This definition of surveillance can be misleading as it suggests that people are only watched when they have done something wrong, are about to or are somewhere potentially unsafe. However, this is not the case.

David Lyon gave a more realistic definition of surveillance as, “any collection and processing of personal data, whether identifiable or not, for the purposes of influencing or managing those whose data has been garnered”. This description better reflects the true extent of surveillance and how supposedly small things like accepting cookies on a website can result in personal data being stored and used to manipulate the way we perceive things and what we do in everyday life.

Surveillance can be overt or covert. Overt surveillance is when people know they are being watched and covert is when it is not obvious. Generally overt surveillance is more readily accepted and can make life simpler, deter crimes making for a safer society. Covert surveillance can help with national security and counter terrorism threats as it is not easily detected.

There are several common forms of surveillance including physical observation, electronic monitoring, and technical surveillance. Physical observation is not suitable for mass surveillance as people are needed to individually track the movement of a subject. Instead, physical surveillance is generally used to investigate crimes and follow individuals or groups.

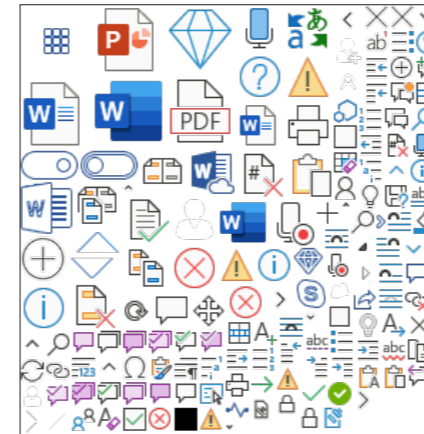
| Type of surveillance | Overt | Covert |
|----------------------|-------|--------|
| Physical | | ✓ |
| Electronic | ✓ | ✓ |
| Technical | ✓ | |

Electronic monitoring is the backdrop for multi-billion-dollar businesses such as Google and Facebook. The current technology sector is dominated by businesses whose platforms are based on online surveillance for data collection. Products ranging from smart devices that can listen into your conversations like Alexa, to basic websites with cookies that collect information contribute to a growing database of you and your habits for these technology companies. This data is often very helpful in your day-to-day life, providing recommended items, searches, and personalised ads that are more relevant to you. Surveillance data combined with modern artificial intelligence helps provide convenience for us when searching the web.

But increasingly there has been a push away from these cookies. As cookies appear in over 40% of websites, there were 2 million downloads of ad and cookie blockers in the past year alone, demonstrating the rising awareness of how much data these technology companies have on us. This could be due to the release of technology companies’ secrets, and how in their eyes our data is digital gold. Just like gold, our data is often sold on the market. However, this is not a market to sell material possessions, it is a market full of third-party organisations that, once they have bought our data, use it to manipulate the things we do.

Organisations like GCHQ (the UK’s intelligence, security, and cyber agency) constantly monitor our behaviour in the background. Around 300 GCHQ and

250 NSA (National Security Agency) staff process data including specific searches and 40,000 key triggers (keywords, email address etc.) to ensure public and national safety. This is an example of a more covert surveillance system.



An estimated 5.9 million CCTV cameras are currently in use across the UK, equivalent to one surveillance camera for every 11 people in the country, one of the highest rates in the world. It has been proven that these methods of surveillance can reduce crime rates and improve public safety. In a United Kingdom-based study, car parks with security cameras saw a 51% decrease in crimes. Crimes can be deterred and stopped before they happen.

Even if the offence has already taken place, the chances of the criminal being caught are much higher with surveillance than without. Details provided by security cameras can be used to identify the wrongdoer via facial recognition. This was shown in 2009 when 95% of Scotland Yard murder cases used CCTV as evidence.

Even though they can ensure public safety, there are downsides to both overt and covert surveillance. Both can lead to people worrying about their appearance,

decreased trust in government, and self-censorship. In addition, covert surveillance can lead to paranoia and the deterioration of mental health.

Individuals may become more distrusting of their government if they believe they are being monitored. According to one study, when they learn they are being observed, individuals who identify with a particular leader have diminished faith in that leader. Another study discovered that when individuals learn it is they who are being monitored instead of an unknown suspect, their willingness to tolerate monitoring falls. The idea of somebody constantly watching you and being able to track what you are doing can influence relationships, even with friends and family. Social networks, emails and texts play a huge role in keeping healthy relationships and when someone can monitor what you send people tend to feel inclined to decrease their use of these social platforms.

Surveillance can therefore lead to self-censorship. When people have the knowledge that their government has the ability to monitor them, they tend to alter their behaviour to conform to the possible watcher’s expectations.

A key individual who studied the psychology and behaviour of prisoners when being observed was Jeremy Bentham. Bentham developed a prison control system called the Panopticon which was designed to increase perceived surveillance. It consisted of a circular building with cells built into the circular walls with an observational tower in the centre. Every prison cell could be seen from the observational tower and every cell could see the tower, but the prisoners could not see inside the tower to see if a guard was watching. Bentham believed that because the prisoners were always unsure if they were being watched, they would always keep their behaviour in check. Studies

such as that by Michael Foucault into the relationship between people and the systems of social control, and the relationship between knowledge and power have shown that video surveillance can deter other types of crime, like vandalism or hit-and-runs.

Another study conducted by PEN America (Poets, Essayists, Novelists – a non-profit group that aims to defend the freedom to write) showed that 1 in 6 writers had avoided writing articles on a subject that may make them subject to surveillance. This effect was amplified in people who are less politically engaged – fewer said they were likely to participate in any sort of activism because of the result of continuing alleged surveillance. It shows that people will self-censor to reduce the chances of becoming monitored.

If surveillance is acted upon by the surveyor, it becomes censorship. China adopted a form of censorship that was nicknamed ‘the Great Firewall of China’ in 1998. The Great Firewall of China limits what Chinese citizens can see online and the things they see are approved by the government. Many social media services including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are blocked and alternative social media platforms are heavily monitored. The system uses fear as a means of self-censorship and to not dissent, as this could result in a reduced social credit score affecting everything from your career, schooling, healthcare and what benefits you receive. If everyone is fed the same information, it leads to a lack of diversity which leads to conformity. When conformity moderates the behaviour of the general population, it can lead to a very compliant society as in the case of China.

When surveillance is embedded in society, can we avoid it? It is difficult to avoid surveillance totally as there are so many different aspects of it. However, there are a few things you can do to reduce the amount of surveillance on you, for example being careful with your email address, turning off Google Maps and anything that can track you and avoiding paying by card as this shows exactly when and where you have been. Reality TV shows like C4’s *Hunted* highlight how hard it is to avoid surveillance for any significant period of time.

So, should you be worried about surveillance? It can make day-to-day life simpler, more convenient, and safer due to the use of cookies and CCTV, but there

are definitely valid concerns over the effects it can have on an individual’s behaviour – increased stress and paranoia, social pressure and conformity, and decreased trust in government. The answer really depends on your view on what is an acceptable trade-off between your privacy and being able to have technological convenience. In my opinion, at the moment surveillance is doing more good than harm in the UK, but in the future we need to be careful as we may not be able to control the amount of data being extracted and used from our personal lives to manipulate what we do and how we perceive the world.

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SECOND PRIZE
YEAR 8

Should Performance-Enhancing Drugs be Legalized in Sport?

Laura Scott-Brown

‘Doping’ by professional athletes has been acknowledged as a problem since at least the 1960s. There are several types of performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs), including anabolic steroids, stimulants, human growth hormones and diuretics. These can be used to build muscle mass, help recovery, impact the central nervous system, and increase testosterone levels. In 2011, an anonymous survey asked 1200 athletes if they had used some form of PED. 44% admitted to doping. WADA (world anti-doping agency) works to combat doping. But are they doing enough and are they taking the right path? In this essay, I am going to explore one of the biggest doping scandals in sports history and try to answer the question ‘Should performance-enhancing drugs be legalised in sport?’

The Russian Doping Scandal was a state-sponsored doping program where Russia was found to have supplied steroids and other drugs to their athletes and then faked drug tests to advantage their athletes in major events such as the Olympics. In 2010, a RUSADA employee (Russian Anti-Doping Agency) Vitaly Stepanov sent information to WADA claiming that RUSADA was enabling systematic doping in athletes. In 2012, Darya Pishchalnikova (a Russian discus athlete) sent an email to WADA containing details about the state-run doping program in Russia. Instead of investigating it, WADA forwarded her email to Russian sports officials which led to her being failed in two drug tests and banned by the Russian Athletics Committee. In February 2014, Russia hosted the Sochi Winter Olympics winning a surprising 33 medals topping all countries. Many of these medals were later stripped from them due to the scandal. In 2014, a German investigative reporter, released a film *The Doping Secret: How Russia Makes its Winners*. The documentary was made with the help of Russian athletes who provided evidence raising global attention. In response, WADA commissioned an investigation. The report found widespread doping and

large-scale cover-ups by the Russian authorities. The report recommended to the IOC (International Olympic Committee) they should not allow any Russian athletes to compete at the 2016 summer Olympics however the IOC disregarded this and announced that a decision would be made by each sport federation. In 2016, two former directors of RUSADA both died unexpectedly. After being fired by Russian authorities, a prominent laboratory director Gregory Rodchenkov fled in fear to the US where he collaborated with filmmaker Bryan Fogel to create the film *Icarus*. According to *The New York Times*, Rodchenkov said that doping experts worked with Russia’s intelligence service on a state-sponsored doping programme where urine samples were switched through a ‘mouse hole’ in the laboratory’s wall and tamper-resistant bottles were opened in a nearby building and replaced with clean urine. Russia submitted 389 participants to the Rio Olympics. 278 were cleared and allowed to compete. In 2019, WADA, due to widespread violations of anti-doping regulations, banned the Russian Federation from all major sporting events – including the Olympic games – for four years which was reduced to two. No more than 10 Russian track and field athletes were allowed to compete at the 2020 summer Olympics in Tokyo, and they had to compete as neutrals under the name ROC (Russian Olympic Committee). The scandal has intensified the debate over corruption and doping in sports.

My first argument for why PEDs should be legalised in sport is that the current testing system is flawed. Research shows that if an athlete was tested 12 times in a year, the probability of detecting continuous doping is only 33%. Athletes do not continuously take PEDs and use sly methods to avoid detection. So why do they not improve the tests? Money. If tests were made 100% accurate then athletes would have to be tested up to 50 times a year with a cost of 25,000 US dollars per athlete. This is assuming the tests are

the lowest-cost tests currently available. There is nowhere near enough money in anti-doping to make this change. Is the doping ban enough to stop athletes cheating seeing as the likelihood of being caught is estimated to be somewhere between 0.1% and 10%? Instead of spending money testing athletes should the money instead be directed into legalising and regulating them?

However, is it ethical to legalise PEDs when we know the danger they pose to health? Stimulants and PEDs have been linked to strokes, seizures, anxiety, mood changes and in extreme cases can cause sudden death due to blood clots and heart failure. The side-effects of these drugs can be both short-term and long term.

However, some may argue that prohibiting PEDs can cause more harm to athletes, as it forces athletes to take drugs in secret. This means that these drugs are not tested or regulated. If we permitted safe PEDs, then there would be a greater pressure to develop safer drugs. Furthermore, is sport not about the thrill of taking risks. People die through sport. People are paralysed through sport. Should PEDs just be another risk that can come with being an elite athlete?

My second argument for PEDs being legalised is that sport is constantly evolving. Former athletes did not have access to the incredible facilities, or the supplements athletes have access to now. But we allow these current advantages because of the idea of progress. Some argue that we have reached our potential in sport, so PEDs are just a new advancement to keep progressing. Sport provides entertainment after all and by legalising and regulating PEDs there are benefits for athletes and fans alike.

Whenever anyone mentions the word doping or PEDs 'unfair' comes to mind. Some people argue that PEDs

are unfair and undermine talent and hard work. Why work for something when you can just get it through drugs? Is it fair on talented athletes to have to take PEDs to keep up? People would also lose interest in sport if it were just a competition of who had the best drugs. It also has a bad influence on young athletes as they would believe that to be an elite athlete you would have to take PED's dissuading many from choosing this path.

But what if PEDs were actually a way of making sport fairer? People do well at sport because of a genetic lottery. Without it there would be no sport as we would all be the same, but can even this natural lottery be classed as fair? An example of this is the Finnish skier Eero Maentyranta. In 1964, he won three gold medals. Subsequently it was found he had a genetic mutation that meant that he naturally had 40–50% more red blood cells than average. Was it fair that he had significant advantage given to him by chance? By allowing everyone to take PEDs are we levelling the playing field?

My final argument for the legalisation of PEDs is where do we draw the line between acceptable behaviour and cheating and who should make the laws? What is the difference between therapy (treating an illness) and enhancement? For example, a footballer uses an inhaler to control his asthma and a runner uses PEDs which increases his muscle mass. Lots of people would say in this case that the sprinter is cheating whereas the footballer is not. However, asthma treatments affect performance and even contain banned substances. People argue that the footballer needs the inhaler for medical reasons whereas the sprinter could run without the PEDs. The runner may argue that being asthmatic is a natural disadvantage just like being slow at running. And what even is performance-enhancing? Athletes are allowed to compete penalty-free with

twelve or less micrograms per millilitres of caffeine in their urine. Is caffeine not performance-enhancing?

Another argument against legalising PEDs is the fact that, if they were legalised, sport would become a competition of money and technology. PEDs can be expensive especially if they are used on a large scale. This makes it harder for poorer countries to keep up, creating further economic discrimination in sport.

However, some argue that legalizing PEDs could reduce economic discrimination in sport. Is sport now not determined by economic factors such as facilities, coaching and equipment? The cost of a hypoxic air-machine and tent (used for simulated high-altitude training) is around 7000 US dollars. High altitude training itself may be even more expensive. Endurance athletes use this as a way of giving themselves a physical advantage. Whereas 6 Acetazolamide tablets (tablets used to help altitude sickness, which are currently banned by WADA) can cost as little as 15 US dollars. Money is already such a major part in sporting success so would legalising PEDs even help control the economic discrimination?

In conclusion, I believe that PEDs should not be legalised if they pose any danger to health which currently they obviously do. But would they have to if money were invested into developing safer drugs rather than into testing? Could drugs with similar effects be produced that are safe to use? In addition, could there be a point where there are separate competitions for those taking them and those not allowing people to choose how they use their body. Although, then you are just back to the same temptation of cheating and corruption and is this what sport is all about?

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THIRD PRIZE
YEAR 8

Free Speech: Too Much of a Good Thing?

Alice Wynn-Evans

On 6th January 2021, Donald Trump made a speech to his fans and supporters outside the White House. He suggested the election had been rigged, and that was why he had not won.¹ More than 2,000 Trump supporters stormed the Capitol, entering the senate room and destroying precious artefacts. In the end, five people died, and the world was shocked by the severity of what was seen as an attack on the American Constitution. Donald Trump became the first U.S. president to be impeached for a second time: he was accused of inciting a riot which caused five deaths. However, he was not involved in the storming itself, so he did not technically break the law. But, if his speech incited a riot in which people were killed, was it still his fault?² This is the very dilemma of free speech: if it is regarded as a “good thing”, can you have too much of it or should there be limits?

So, what is free speech? According to Britannica School, the definition of free speech³ is “to express information, ideas and opinions free of government restrictions based on content.” This means that effectively, anyone can say whatever they like without committing a crime. In fact, in the United States, under the First Amendment of the American Constitution⁴, Congress is prevented from passing any laws against freedom of speech, meaning it is unconstitutional to not allow someone to speak without freedom. However, does this mean someone has the right to cause panic, such as to shout “bomb” in an airport or “fire” in a crowded theatre, which is an example often cited?

As a result, governments have introduced laws around free speech. For example,⁵ threatening and abusive speculation, known as hate speech, is illegal, as is spreading lies with intent to harm, known as defamation. To protect national security, there is some information that cannot be shared by law. In today’s

western liberal societies, it has long been the case that people can freely express their feelings without the worry of being arrested. However, in some countries, such as North Korea, some people are unable to express their opinions freely due to laws that prevent it.

Let us take defamation as an example of where free speech is restricted. This year, in 2022, Johnny Depp sued his ex-wife Amber Heard for \$50 million US dollars.⁶ In 2018, Ms Heard had written an article, which was published, claiming that she was a victim of domestic abuse. Mr Depp disagreed and took her to court because this article had considerably damaged his reputation. However, it was not Heard suing Depp for abuse, it was Depp suing Heard for saying she was abused, possibly not even by him as the article did not specify.^{7&8}

After six weeks of testimony, Mr Depp triumphed over Ms Heard, and was awarded \$15 million US dollars by the court. However, he was also found to have defamed Ms. Heard through his attorney, during the court testimony, meaning Amber Heard was awarded \$2 million US dollars.⁹ Laws relating to defamation exist because while Amber Heard had the right to say what she likes without going to jail, there are restrictions on how far you can go before others have the right to intervene to protect their reputation.

Free speech has also been in the spotlight with the proposed takeover of Twitter by Elon Musk for \$44 billion US dollars.¹⁰ He is an avid user of Twitter, amassing more than 83 million followers, but he has been critical of how it is run, accusing it of failing to protect free speech. This has raised concerns that the way the app is currently run might change, and several members of the team running it have already left the business.

Ahead of his bid, Mr Musk said: “Given that Twitter serves as the de facto public town square, failing to adhere to free speech principles fundamentally undermines democracy.”¹¹ Mr Musk has also stated that he does not believe in permanent bans, and hence there is a worry that Donald Trump may be unblocked, which could potentially lead to more violence. But the very act of blocking someone is considered by some to be a violation of free speech, which is what Elon Musk is claiming he intends to restore.

Let us go to the important matter of online safety, back here in the UK. The world’s first online safety laws, known as the online harms bill¹², were introduced into the UK Parliament. This means that Parliament must approve what types of “legal but harmful” content platforms must tackle in order to protect their users. Part three, chapter two; “additional duties for category 1”¹³ of the bill states that a platform has:

- (5) A duty-
 - (a) must, when deciding on safety measures and policies, to carry out an assessment of the impact of such measures or policies would have on-
 - i. user’s right to freedom of expression within the law and-
 - ii. the privacy of users, and-
 - (b) to carry out an assessment of the impact of adopted safety measures and policies on the matters mentioned in articles (l), (ii) and (a).

This means that all online platforms must allow freedom of expression, but to a certain extent, allowing freedom of expression within the boundaries of the law, and protecting privacy and users’ rights to online safety.

I have not yet mentioned one of the most controversial TV presenters and bastion of free speech. “Love him or hate him, you won’t want to miss him” proclaimed almost every bus I saw in April 2022. This was an advertisement for Piers Morgan’s new TV show, Piers Morgan Uncensored, where he allows people to “speak their minds”. In 2021, Morgan stormed out of Good Morning Britain live on-air after his comments on Meghan Markle’s interview with Oprah Winfrey. A year later, he joined Rupert Murdoch’s channel TalkTV, to host his new show. But why is he so popular?

Mr Morgan claims to speak whatever he thinks, which makes people feel free to express themselves. But the day he made comments on the interview between Meghan Markle, Prince Harry and Oprah Winfrey, Ofcom received 41,000 complaints, making it the second most complained about show on TV ever. That evening, it was announced that Piers Morgan would be stepping down from his role at ITV. A year later he came back with a new TV programme, Piers Morgan Uncensored. He has said he believes in freedom of speech, and the right to have an opinion, but in my opinion, if he is going to dish out what he says to people, he needs to be able to take criticism from others, because people also have a right to express their opinions about him!¹⁴

In conclusion, I think that free speech is crucial to today’s society. However, I do believe it can be too much of a good thing, because it can lead to hurt, anger and confusion, and sometimes even violence. The online community allows people to say what they think, often anonymously, and it can travel enormous distances, posing a threat to society. This is very different from the pre-internet dilemma often quoted about shouting “fire” in a crowded theatre. I do believe that some measures limiting free speech are important

to stop things spiralling out of control, and when people speak freely, they must be prepared to be challenged. But measures to control free speech are having to adapt fast to the way we communicate today.

Footnotes

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Year 7 Prize Winning Entries



FIRST PRIZE
YEAR 7

Has Equality Been Realised in the Film and Television Industry?

Eve Cunningham

For my essay, I have decided to look into whether equality has really been realised in the film industry. I will look into whether people of different races, genders and sexualities are given equal rights when it comes to performing. I have decided to look at this topic as I'm really interested in film production and how films are made. I also love the story of how Mirabel, from the film Encanto, was the first Disney princess to wear glasses because a 12-year-old girl wrote to Disney to ask to see more people that look like her in films.

This intrigued me and I wanted find out more about whether all people are being treated fairly when making films.

Are People of Different Races Being Treated Fairly?

Around the world, people are protesting for equal rights for black people. Some of the major protests came after the death of George Floyd in 2020 when people around the world stood up to try to change the way we think. In the productions of films, it is often claimed that black people are significantly underrepresented, and few black people are given creative off-screen roles. A survey taken in 2015-19 showed that the likelihood of black people getting roles in film production was dependent on there being another black person in the 'upper line' of production (these are the director, producer and writer). If there is a black director then there is an 8% chance that there will be a black producer. This is the same for a black writer, where there is an 8% chance that there will be a black producer and a 6% chance that there will be a black director.

Another issue here is the way that black people are represented. In 2009, Disney launched the film The Princess and the Frog. This was Disney's first film with a black princess. However, about half-an-hour into the

film, Disney turned her into a frog. This is a pattern that seems to be a problem in a lot of films where Disney takes a black character and turns them into an animal. The pattern continues with Pixar who turned their first black lead (Joe Gardner from the film Soul in 2020) into a cat. After 10 minutes of the film, the company kills the lead and then proceeds to let a white person voice his body when he and his friend find themselves in different bodies.

This evidence shows that work needs to be done to get black people better representation in the film industry.

Are People of Different Genders Being Treated Fairly?

Equality for women has changed for the better ever since the Suffragette movement that gave women the vote in the 1920s. However, despite all of the positive changes in history for women, they are still being under-represented in the film industry. At the Cannes Film Festival, only two women have ever won the Palme d'Or prize for Best Film in the history of the festival. The first women to receive this honour (Jane Campion) said "it was insane" that she was the first women to ever win the award. Similarly, since 1929, the Best Director award at the Oscars has only ever been won by three women.

Another place where men outnumber women in films where one gender outnumbers the other in terms of representation. Only 6% of films have women outnumbering men and 5% have an equal amount. In the remaining 89% men outnumber women. There are no films that have ever had a 100% all-female team on and off screen compared to the 15 films that have an all-male team on and off screen. Also, 74% of leading cast and crew roles go to men with women only getting 26%. Men get 82% of the non-acting roles

and 63% of the acting roles, leaving women with the remaining 18% and 37% respectively. This shows that its easier for women to rise to the top with a role in front of the camera than behind it.

Between 2003-2015, a survey was taken across 3452 films that showed that only 14% had a female director and 7% had a female cinematographer. However, things are changing across the industry with more films having an all-female lead cast, for example recent films like Oceans 8, Mean Girls and The Women, which has no men at all on-screen. Disney, who have a track record of making the women in their films dependant on men (Snow White and Sleeping Beauty are two examples) are also changing their view by producing films like Mulan and Brave which star rebellious and independent girls as the lead character. The most recent film that really highlights this change is Pixar's film Turning Red, which has an all-female led creative team behind the scenes for the first time in Pixar's history. This shows that whilst some work still needs to be done it does feel like opportunities for women are on the rise.

Are People of Different Sexualities Being Treated Fairly?

Everywhere we go these days, we see a Pride flag waving proudly from a flagpole. Millions of people across the world are now members or supporters of the LGBTQ+ movement. However, whilst things may be changing for the better, there is still discrimination against LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) actors and in off-screen roles in the film industry. 50% of LGBT actors have heard other on and off-screen colleagues make anti-gay comments on the sets of films. 9% of LGBT actors have been turned away because of their sexual orientation and this applies to 4% of bisexual performers. Also, LGBT actors earn less than straight actors in the same business. Bisexual men earn less over a year than straight men whilst lesbian and gay actors earn less daily than straight actors.

This data is from a SAG-AFTRA survey compiled in the USA: 53% of the respondents felt that directors and producers were biased against LGBT performers when hiring. Along with this, 34% of straight actors agreed that they felt the same bias against LGBT actors. Lesbian and gay actors (45%) felt that directors thought that LG actors are less marketable in the

industry. 27% of bisexual actors agree with this claim. Disrespectful behaviour towards LGBT performers was witnessed by 1/3 of other actors or off-screen roles. 1/5 of lesbian, gay and bisexual performers experienced casting directors making situations uncomfortable for them because of their sexual orientation. At the start of their career, LGBT actors are less likely to get an agent which can significantly affect their career. Over the course of their career, 71% of straight actors have never played a lesbian or gay role whereas 58% of lesbian and gay actors and 33% of bisexual actors have. This data may seem shocking but the important thing to remember is that some of these facts are how people felt and could just be a mistake or a misunderstanding. Also, due to this survey, no one thought things were getting worse for these performers and most of the LGBT respondents (71%) would encourage others to come out, as doing so had no long-term effect on their career. This change is also being shown on-screen with a new series on Netflix called Heartstopper. This is about the life of a gay boy and how he falls in love with somebody who plucks up the courage to tell people that he is bisexual.

In conclusion, from all the research I have done, I believe that there is more and more equality being shown in the film industry but there is still a lot that could be done to improve equality and fairness for everyone working in this industry.

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SECOND PRIZE
YEAR 7

Is Nature Cruel?

Sophie Goonewardane Brown



This essay will explore one of nature's key characteristics, the essential part of nature known as 'survival of the fittest'. Is it cruel that not all people or other animals do not live a completely healthy life? Is nature's way of prey and predator morally wrong? Or is that for the natural world's own good?

On one side, if an animal picks up a disease it means they are most likely to be killed by a predator, therefore not being able to reproduce and spread that to their children, so it leaves fewer animals suffering, meaning the breed is left with only the healthiest and strongest individuals. This means if it was a disease where for example the eyes are affected, those who can see the predator and react will live to reproduce healthy offspring whereas the affected ones will not. So, cruelty could help. On the other hand, this could be considered cruel to the animal with the disease in the short term. Also, if the prey has a defect from birth, in the wild there is no one to help them even though it is not their fault: it is certain death through no fault in their own control.

Some might argue that sometimes it is essential to have prey and predator because if the prey always outwitted the attacker, the predator would starve making the predator of that animal starve and so

on until the whole food chain collapses. While it is possible for some animals like humans to become fully vegan it will never be possible for certain breeds like African Wild Dogs.

It might cause some concern that we as humans have no need to raise certain livestock just to be killed for meat. Most cows naturally live to about 10-15 years old but in Hinduism where cows are thought of as sacred or holy are known to live past twenty years. This shows that when animals are cared for as equals, they will have longer lives. In Hinduism, there is also a teaching called 'Ahimsa' meaning 'No harm'; clearly killing an animal goes against this. Humans killing animals for meat could be thought of as ethically wrong since we as an animal can live perfectly well on a vegetarian and some can even thrive on a vegan diet.

Others could argue that it is important to have a meat form of protein in our diet to help those with allergies to foods like nuts – a good plant source of protein. So that means nature might be harsh, but it is also necessary for many people. Nature is mainly perceived as cruel through applying human principles that nature can't follow such as the human idea that killing is wrong.

In the wild, animals are usually killed painfully and slowly which is almost a form of torture, showing that nature is ethically harsh. When a Wild Dog kills a buffalo, it does not kill it quickly and then eat it – many animals are eaten alive which makes the death even more painful.

It was claimed by Richard Dawkins, Evolutionary Biologist, that 'Nature is not cruel, only pitilessly indifferent. This is one of the hardest things for a human to learn. We cannot admit that things might be not be good or evil, neither cruel nor kind but simply callous - indifferent to all suffering, lacking all purpose.'

This means that we cannot define nature as cruel because it has no sympathy or emotions – what we perceive as a cruel act is simply based on survival instinct that all animals have.

Nature could be seen as cruel when nature is judged as a human. We even personify 'her' and refer to 'Mother Nature'. If nature is a supreme being or beings, that does potentially make the natural world a lot harsher because it implies it is controlled. Even if the natural world is not controlled it could still be seen as harsh because the instinct has no sympathy for the animal it is about to kill. Nature could also be seen as selfish because it has only the survival needs of the predator in mind.

This could be opposed with the fact that many animals have camouflage and defensive techniques, so nature gives each individual a fair chance at survival. It is not a human controlling nature so it should not be judged ethically as one, nature follows its own rules no matter what the consequences. Many humans want to blame nature for this perhaps because they have experienced pain or premature loss of friends or family dying making them hate natural occurrences such as death.

In a way, the whole way of life could be labelled as cruel as we humans have wars where we callously kill others for land or even ideology. Different animals in their ecosystems compete and fight for females and food. The fact that animals such as zebras fight for the prize of a female seems ethically wrong. For the same reason, Bowerbirds are more humane in their ways to attract a female and build extravagant nests to impress 'their girl', this to a human would seem slightly cruel because the Bowerbird that doesn't quite impress won't win a mate to breed with or have offspring of its own.

From a different perspective, nature was made so that the strongest of the species goes on and has more strong offspring making, over time, through selection, a stronger species. For mammals, females are built to carry the offspring and males were built to fertilise their ova and to protect and ensure the survival of their offspring. So, this means that there is no cruelty in the way nature is as it is driven by a need for survival.

In conclusion, I think that nature cannot be described as either cruel or kind or intermediate because nature does not act upon human ethics, it has made its own set of rules on right and wrong. If nature was judged on human values, I would still say it isn't cruel because nature doesn't allow weakness to be shown in the face of an enemy predator. So, it does what it does for the species' greater good to ensure a strong majority.



THIRD PRIZE
YEAR 7

Should Zoos be Banned?

Mya Bajway



There are over 10,000 Zoos in the world. Zoos are a place where families can go for a nice day out to see exotic animals from around the world. Zoos can help educate children and society on climate change and protect endangered species. However, some of these animals have been taken from their home and brought to zoos for human entertainment. These animals don't feel comfortable and may feel stressed or worried as the zoo won't be like home. So, should zoos be banned, or not?

The Pros of Zoos

Going to a zoo is a very nice trip for families and friends as there is a wide range of animals to see. Approximately, 700 million people visit zoos and aquariums every year worldwide. Zoos can help educate young children on environmental problems and gives the children knowledge on animals. Adults can also learn lots of interesting facts about animals when they visit a zoo which they may not otherwise have known.

Lots of exotic animals are kept in zoos which allow people to see amazing animals from foreign countries easily. Also, lots of these animals are rescued from their homes, which may have been destroyed by climate change, deforestation, pollution or poaching etc. Breeding programs are made in zoos in order to

keep critically endangered animals still alive. When there are enough animals, they then can be released in the wild and can live freely.

Historically, animals were kept in small cages, being unable to move or hunt. However, slowly this has changed as animals are able to move around freely in a limited space. This helps their wellbeing and can change their mental wellbeing.

Zoos also allow people to have jobs. According to the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), in America, Zoos employ almost 40,000 people. This allows people to have access to money and to earn a living. Zoos are also very helpful for researchers, as they can look at the behaviours of animals and what they are like. This then helps for the future of the animals.

Breeding programs are made across the world which help to secure species in their numbers. Animals such as Canadian condors, Arabian Oryx's and Bongos have all been saved due to the help of conservation efforts and charities.

The Cons of Zoos

Zoos have noticed that the lifespan of animals living in the zoo is shorter than living in the wild. For example, African Elephants live for 56-70 years in the wild, but in comparison, the elephants live 17 years in captivity. This is because there are less elephants around them, and elephants like to roam around. It is the same for other species too. Lots like to explore different parts of their habitat when in the wild, but of course, zoos only have limited space for the animals to stay in.

The animals staying in zoos also become more dependent on facilities, to provide food, shelter, water, medical needs etc. This means that when they get released in the wild (if they are well) then they will

struggle to live without the support of humans. Whilst living in the wild, a disease might affect a species as their bodies aren't used to dealing with illnesses. When releasing animals, it is very hard to make sure that animals aren't overly dependent on humans from having been in captivity. A study, which reviewed 45 case studies on 17 carnivore species let out into the wild, found that only 30% of captive animals released survived. More than 50% of the deaths were caused by us humans, mostly from incidents such as car accidents. Is it right to let animals back out to the wild?

Many opponents argue that zoos provide education to the public and try to spread the information on environmental issues. However, as technology is increasing and becoming more in use, people can access information about climate change, deforestation, habitat loss, sea levels rising etc online rather than only from zoos. Also, many people may already know the information that zoos provide, so there is nothing that they may learn.

In a zoo, the artificial setting isn't 100% accurate to the actual environment in the wild. Animals may feel depressed, worried, anxious just as humans would feel if staying in a new place not like home.

Although lots of breeding programs help animals, many can fail or not go to plan. One single breeding program can't save a species; global co-operation is required, which isn't easy to get. Although there have been many successful outcomes in these programs, not all have turned out as expected. For example, the Great Indian Bustards (which are a bit like ostriches) are on the verge of extinction. This is due to habitat loss, hunting and dangerous things surrounding them. Great Indian Bustards reproduce quite differently to others, so it is much more complicated to create a breeding program.

The full term for zoo is 'zoological park' which implies that we go to a 'park' full of animals to see. Not all of these animals have been saved from the wild - many have been taken away from their homes for human pleasure. A number of zoos also include a theme park extension that helps to make lots of money for the business and to attract customers. Also, some zoos make business by saying how they are 'helping the world' and 'Saving endangered species' when they are really just operating like a business for financial gain.

Some zoos have been seen to mistreat their animals and can abuse them. This is quite sad as the animals have been placed there through no fault of their own. Out of all of the 10,000 zoos worldwide, it is very hard to make sure every zoo follows fair rules.

Conclusion

My view is that governing bodies in countries need to do much more to help animals close to extinction for example by setting tighter rules and regulations on how zoos are run. This would make sure that all the animals are safe and treated well. Donations should also be made to the sanctuaries in order to help animals at risk. There could be a number of days set where you could visit the animals, which would give the animals some peace.

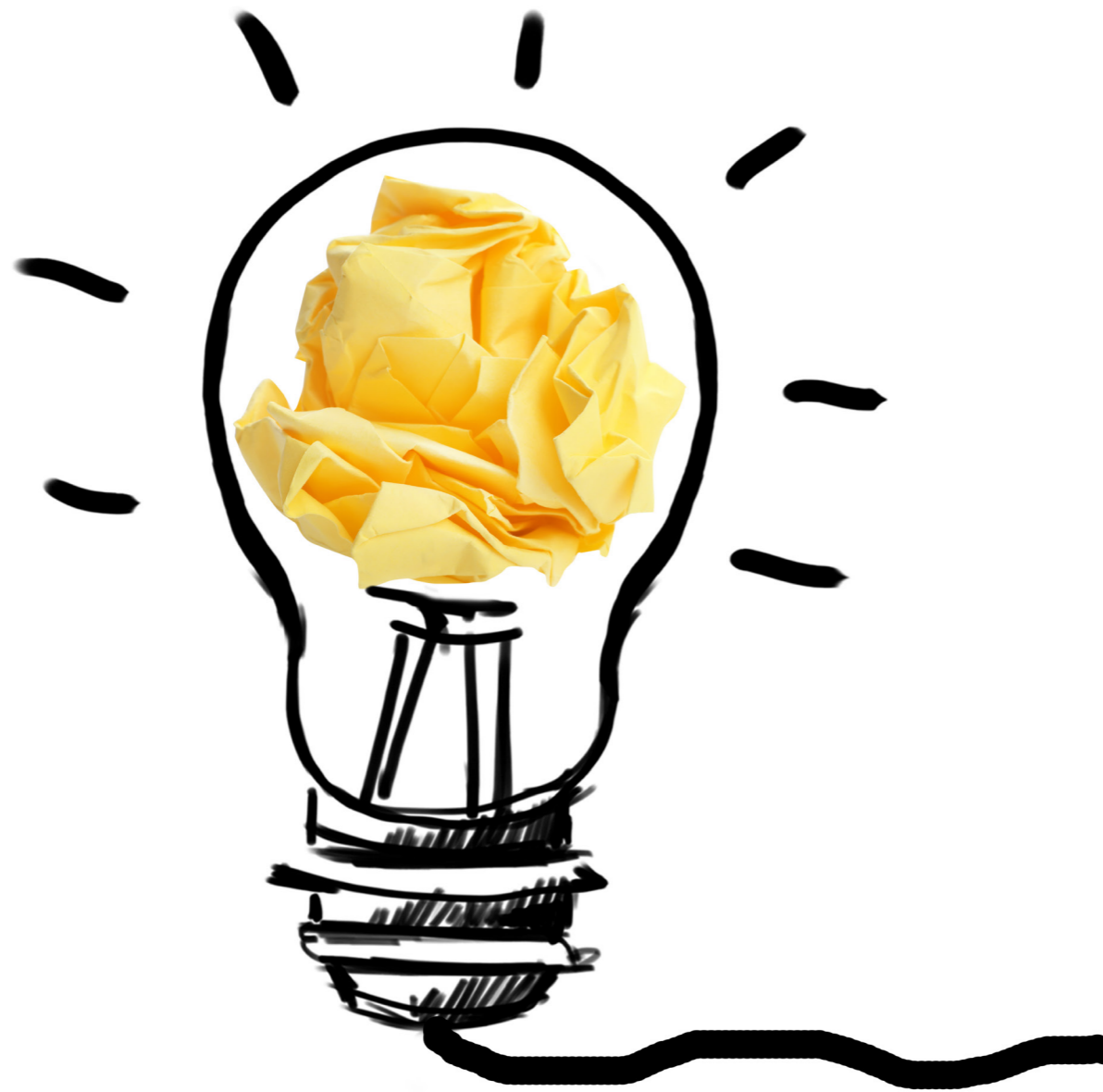
Not all zoos were created with the intention of harming animals, however as the pressure on zoos to make a profit has grown and we have improved our understanding of the impact that captivity has on animals, the time has come to reconsider how zoos can continue in the modern age. Any action taken should also be staggered over a number of years to avoid the risk of animals being killed if zoo owners decide that this is cheaper than relocating them to their natural habitats.

In conclusion, I think that zoos should soon come to an end, but maybe the number of animal sanctuaries should be increased in order to help animals close to extinction survive.

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Highly Commended Entries



Greek Mythology: Misogyny or Feminism?

Charlotte Betts, Year 9

Silenced goddesses, oppressed mortals, empowered monsters, malicious beauties.

When people think of Greek mythology, they picture heroes fighting monsters on missions and quests, the various antics of gods and goddesses; but whilst they are wonderful, entertaining stories, what messages are hidden under the fables? Greek heroes are often men, fighting the monsters of the world literally and metaphorically, who (coincidentally) seem too often be women. The world of mythology reflects the society that created it. In this essay, I will explore some prominent examples that depict how female characters are portrayed in the myths that came from Ancient Greece – an incredibly influential society. In this way I will look to outline the feminism and misogyny that form these stories. Firstly, I will look to Pandora and the portrayal of the first woman, and how she sets a precedent for women as a *kalon kakon* ('evil hidden in beauty'). I will follow this with Athena and her role as a powerful goddess before moving on to Medusa, a monstrous Gorgon. Penultimately, I will briefly explore the Sphinx, a treacherous and mythical female creature, and the idea of intelligent women. Finally, I will look to Penelope and how women were generally regarded and treated.

Pandora is renowned for her role in the downfall of man. She was created by the gods as a punishment after the titan Prometheus stole fire to give to humanity. Zeus ordered that the first woman should be made and sent her as a gift to Prometheus with a box. After this, Pandora intentionally opens her box and releases all evil and suffering in the world. However, this interpretation of events misrepresents her character, portraying her as a malicious woman, who ruins life for all men. Despite the errors Prometheus makes this evil and suffering is never seen as caused by a man's mistake, instead it is a woman's' fault... In a patriarchal

society, Prometheus suffers little blame for his errors from people (his punishment from the gods is briefly mentioned), and likewise, the gods are commonly referred to very little in retellings of the story. Zeus remains the oppressive patriarchal leader of the divine society looking down on the misery that humans now face, misery that he orchestrated. This story resonates clearly with that of Eve from the bible, a woman causes the downfall of man, supposedly women are both malicious and gullible. The follies/vices of other wrong doers are brushed over in these tales despite their clear flaws and no matter how much they have the potential to change the impression of our main women. [15]

In contrast, Athena is the goddess of war and wisdom. She was worshipped in the hope that she may bring people victory and help them to make the right decisions. How ironic it is that men caused, fought, and won wars, and yet one of the main beings overseeing and ultimately in charge of this was a woman! Ares was also a key figure in war but is not deemed as more influential.^{[7][8]} So, if a woman can be worshipped for something dominated by men for centuries, surely, she cannot conform to or represent the stereotypes of a woman that are shown in so many tales, attitudes which oppressed and held women back for centuries. In this way, the Greeks seem progressive and more equal than initially assumed. Furthermore, women cannot be gullible and lacking in intelligence if Athena could be the goddess of wisdom. This clearly demonstrates that women still deserve intelligence and have just as much ability as men to think for themselves. Yet despite all these seemingly wonderful attributes, Athena must defer to Zeus, despite her wisdom, she is inferior in status and power in a hierarchy of male dominance, so while she represents a strong, independent woman, there are still misogynistic limitations, even for a goddess.^[2]

A key part of the divine world was Zeus, the 'god of gods' and the idea of hierarchy and oppression in traditional Ancient Greek society is clearly reflected in the world of gods and goddesses. Zeus acts as the generic male oppressor, he is in charge despite mistakes and numerous vices, many gods have little impact on decisions and are made to acquiesce to the power of Zeus, especially women. He demonstrates hypocrisy and lack of virtue yet remains with supreme power. This misogynistic structure of a group at the core of all Greek mythology acts as a clear sign of the underlying divide of genders.^{[5][7]}

However, at times Zeus did contribute to the creation of some powerful monsters who were often women. One example of this is Medusa, a Gorgon with hair made of snakes who could turn anyone to stone simply by looking at them. As the only mortal gorgon, she was slain by the 'hero' Perseus who used a mirrored shield from Athena, sandals with gold wings from Hermes, a sword from Hephaestus and Hades' helm of invisibility to defeat her. After this, Perseus returns as a victorious hero with the head of Medusa.^{[6][7]} Since the main focus is often on Perseus, we fail to realise the great power that Medusa has, she has a fearsome reputation for a reason, she can overcome many great, powerful heroes and live to tell the tale. In fact, Perseus was not able to defeat Medusa on his own, despite his status as a stereotypically 'strong and powerful' man, he relied on divine intervention. So, females were not always inferior, Medusa stands as a powerful creature even if she is portrayed as using it for evil, malicious actions, nevertheless, she was a woman with power.^[3]

Another interesting creature is the Sphinx (a half woman/half lion), who terrorised people with a riddle. If they could not answer the riddle correctly, the sphinx would kill and eat them. The sphinx is a prominent representation of women with knowledge and Greek

attitudes towards them. Once her riddle is solved by a 'hero', the Sphinx throws herself to her own death. The implications of this action are voiced well by Jess Zimmerman who said 'the story of the Sphinx is the story of a woman with questions men can't answer,' she writes. "Men didn't take that any better in the fifth century [B.C.] than they do now."^[3]

Finally, one story involving Penelope (the wife of Odysseus) and her son Telemachus demonstrates the ingrained attitudes towards women in Greek society. Penelope wanted to complain about some singing and was silenced by her own son who sent her to her chambers. Telemachus told her that the stories in songs and public speaking were the domain of men, they were no place for a woman. Whilst Telemachus may have wanted to hear the song, his dismissal of his own mother is a clear demonstration of the misogyny in Ancient Greek society. It shows how ingrained prejudice was and how it was cemented in people's beliefs therefore effecting their decisions. Even though Penelope ruled Ithaca in her husband's absence, she was still seen as lesser and inferior, not even allowed the right to express her opinion. Words became the world of men; credit was never fully given to the woman for her own ideas especially if they were important and intelligent. Women would be undermined by ideas of weakness and diminished/rejected, simply because of gender.^[4]

In conclusion, I believe that Greek mythology ultimately portrays women as inferior to men but did not leave them completely in the role of property to be married off or powerless, easily tricked 'lesser people'. Instead, they still managed to be somewhat independent and could be powerful in their own ways, finding their own ways to stand up against the oppressors of the world. They were never shown as having full liberty or control of destiny – as they were always held back by

stereotypes of a patriarchal hierarchy however, they flapped their wings even if they could never fly.

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Tax Inequality

Lixu Chen, Year 9

Introduction

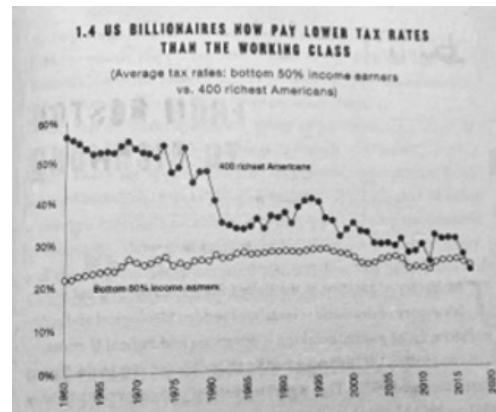


Figure 1 – a graph to show taxation from 1960-2020 (The Triumph of Injustice, 2020)

Taxes – a mandatory contribution issued to individuals or corporations by a government entity for the purpose of financing government activities, public works, services, and programs (Investopedia, 2021). With 32.2 million taxpayers in the UK alone (HM revenues and customs, 2021), it is no surprise that taxes are a step towards wealth equality. However, the predominant source of tax derives from the top 1%, who account for paying 30% of all income tax, a higher share than at any time in the past twenty years. In figures, 3 in every 10 pounds that the government receives is paid by just over 300 thousand individuals in the UK. On the contrary in 2016, one in ten millionaires paid just 11% in tax – the same as someone earning £15,000 (LSE, 2021).

It may come as no surprise that America is still on a journey to even wealth distribution. For the first time in recorded history, the richest 400 Americans paid less tax in 2018 than the bottom 50% of earners, see figure 1 (The Triumph of Injustice, 2020).

This essay will argue against tax avoidance while

providing a background to the methods used to reduce tax and the consequences of doing so, on a micro and macro scale.

Tax Evasion vs Tax Avoidance

The fine line between avoidance and evasion is if the process abides by the word of law.

Tax evasion is always illegal. It is when people or businesses deliberately do not declare or account for what they owe. An example would be if someone hides taxable activity from HMRC completely (HM Revenue and customs, 2021).

On a small scale, let us say a waiter gets tipped on a credit card. They will be legally required to report their tip to the restaurant, resulting in the waiter receiving their tip on their paycheck. This in turn results in the tip going on the restaurant's balance sheet, so tax is deducted from the tip in the form of capital gains.

On the contrary, let us say the waiter gets tipped in cash. If they do not report their tip to the restaurant, it is deemed tax evasion under “deliberate concealment” (HMRC, 2021).

If the practice is revealed, the individual will be prosecuted and charged resulting in legal trouble. This implies a criminal record for the persons involved, in addition to reputational damage.

Tax Avoidance Case Study

In 2011, Starbucks sold £400m worth of goods in the UK but paid no corporation tax (BBC, 2012).

Why?

Because they transferred some of the money to a *sister company*¹ in the Netherlands in the form of *royalty payments*, bought its coffee beans from

Switzerland², and paid *high-interest rates* to borrow money from other parts of the business. Shockingly, in December 2013 it was announced that Starbucks paid just £8.6m from 1999-2013 (UK Essays, 2013). In addition, Starbucks UK reported losses on its balance sheets, despite telling investors Starbucks was “profitable” (BBC, 2012).

Campaigner Richard Murphy from Tax Research UK said: “Starbucks is playing the game here. This is tax avoidance; they are doing nothing illegal. That does not mean to say it is right,” on BBC Radio 5.

This source may feel this way due to him being on the team that investigated Starbucks; therefore, may have a bias toward their business practices (BBC, 2013). Furthermore, this supports my argument since global businesses do not pay their tax; further increasing the tax burden on ordinary workers.



Figure 2 – a pie chart to show the average tax paid by people with over a million in income and gains

When data was collected from personal tax returns of millionaires, it is shown that in 2015-16 the average rate of tax paid by people who received £1,000,000 in taxable income and gains was just 35%: the same as someone earning £100,000. But one in four of these

paid 45 %, whilst another quarter paid less than 30 % overall. One in ten paid just 11 percent—the same as someone earning £15,000 (LSE, 2021). Figure 2 demonstrates the wide spectrum millionaires fall under in terms of taxes.

Philanthropy

Philanthropy translates from Greek into “Love of humanity” (Oxford Languages, 2020). It could be argued that the rich paying less tax could be compensated by their charitable giving, much wider known as philanthropy. An example of this is The Giving Pledge, publicized in 2010 by 40 of America's elite, notably Bill and Melinda Gates, joined by Warren Buffet. (The Giving Pledge, 2010). The sole aim is for its members to commit most of their wealth to any charitable cause that benefits society and inspires them personally.

As Melinda Gates states, “The ultimate goal of any philanthropist should be to render the need for philanthropy obsolete.” (The Giving Pledge, 2020). Her quotation highlights the importance of improving mankind until no further improvements are necessary. Effects of philanthropy include better healthcare, building education systems, and promoting equality. This leads to an improved quality of life and standard of living for all.

Argument Against Philanthropy

Global losses from multinational corporations, such as Apple, owned by philanthropic billionaires are about \$500 billion. Furthermore, cash in tax havens³ is worth at least 10% of the world economy.

Additionally, money spent on philanthropy is often highly unrepresentative of the wider population, therefore, is more likely to be out of touch with their needs. The fact that 85% of charitable foundation board members are white, and just 7% are African

American proves philanthropy is a predominantly white industry, subsequently, will stand for the interests of white billionaires. (The Guardian,2018).

This further supports my argument since philanthropy mostly stands for the interests of white billionaires, whereas taxes would stand for the interest of an entire nation. I believe government taxation will be more beneficial to the needs of many, rather than the generosity of a few.

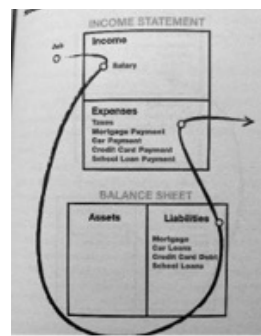


Figure 3 – shows an employee’s income statement. (Rich dad poor dad, 2020)

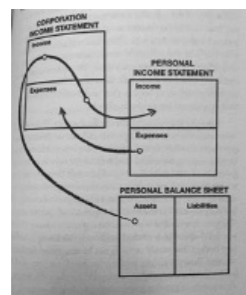


Figure 4 – shows a business owner’s income statement

On the contrary, one advantage a corporation could receive, that an employee could not qualify for, is paying costs before tax. Figure 4 shows a business owner’s income comes from their business, and their expenses are company expenses since the business can spend before tax. Therefore, by owning your own corporation, personal expenses can become corporate expenses. For example, a laptop could be a business expense, a restaurant meal a partial expense, all done legally with pre-tax money. Data shows the government uses *tax incentives* to encourage businesses to form, creating employment, which in turn generates economic stability for the country. (Rich dad poor dad, 2020)

Robert Kiyosaki’s book is restricted due to Kiyosaki’s environment growing up with his “rich dad” influenced his mindset toward tax avoidance. Nowadays he is surrounded by like-minded millionaires, which further strengthens his opinion on this matter.

Consequently, his opinion is restrained due to flaws in the diagrams; I believe there should be expenses in Figure 4’s personal income statement that are not transferable to the corporation income statement, such as income tax if applicable⁴. Likewise, there is no representation in Figure 3 for employees who purchase assets.

The Power of Corporations

Why does the highest-earning employee pay up to 45% in tax, yet the highest-earning business pays a mere 1%?

Figure 3 shows the employee must pay everyone else (government, other businesses) before they pay themselves. However, the downside is it leads to a growing imbalance between the employee and the business.

Conclusion

To summarize, higher-income earners pay lower rates as their income is not subject to the personal income tax, unlike employees. The reason they are exempt is because of their diversified income portfolio, many of which are not earned income.⁵ I believe this is unfair since the tax burden is now levied predominantly on upper-middle-class workers, who spend up to five months working for the government to pay off their taxes. This links back to the idea of tax inequality; due to the billionaires paying so little, the bottom 50% outweighs them; implying the working class has more and more deductions from their paycheck, whereas the rich have less and less tax, but growing net worth, as seen in Figure 1. In view of this, I believe this results in an expanding wealth divide, resulting in long-term inequality, not just in taxes, but in many other aspects of life.

Glossary

- High-interest rates- a large amount charged for borrowing money
- Royalty payments- a fee from one party to another, for use of an asset.
- Tax incentives-
- Tax havens- a country where both tax rates and transparency are low, making it attractive for foreign investment to deposit income (Investopedia, 2022)
- Sister company – a company with close affiliations with another company, owned by the same parent. For example, Amazon’s Alexa and Prime Video are sister companies; both owned by the parent Amazon.

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How Has *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* Set Back Holocaust Education?

Ottelia Tetley, Year 9

11 million copies sold. Published in 57 languages. A second book in production. All for a book described to have 'set back Holocaust education by decades'. In this essay I will be looking at how the book *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* by John Boyne has many inaccuracies concerning the Holocaust and despite these, has been used to educate many young people on the topic, therefore causing the education in this subject to have been set back by many years.

On the 5th of January 2006, a book titled *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* was first published by David Fickling Books and was soon to be an international bestseller. Two years later in 2008, it was adapted into a best-selling film. The book is set around the main character Bruno – a nine-year-old boy, living in Berlin, Germany, growing up during World War II. His father is a high-ranking Nazi and gets a new job as Commandant of the concentration camp, Auschwitz, resulting in Bruno and his family having to move to a house closer to the camp. Bruno becomes curious and after seeing the concentration camp outside his window, decides to explore. When he reaches the fence, he meets a boy called Shmuel who is a prisoner in the concentration camp on the other side of the fence. They become friends and Bruno goes to see Shmuel almost every day, sneaking him food and talking. One day before Bruno is set to go back to Berlin with his sister and mother, Shmuel's father goes missing and Bruno devises a plan for him to come and help Shmuel find him. Shmuel gets Bruno a set of the prisoners uniforms that Bruno describes as 'striped pyjamas' and crawls under the fence to help look. Inside the camp, Shmuel and Bruno get swept up in a group of prisoners being taken to a gas chamber. When in the dark room, Bruno takes Shmuel's hand and tells him he is his best friend. Bruno or Shmuel are never heard from again.

Although his father is a senior officer working in Germany's Nazi party, Bruno knows little of his work, and this is where the first issue with the novel arises. As the son of a high-ranking Nazi Bruno would have been – by law – a member of the Hitler Youth which was an organisation focussed on educating and training male youth in Nazi Principles. By 1936 all 'Aryan' children in Germany over the age of six were required to join a youth group therefore proving that if this book was more accurate, Bruno would have known who Hitler was and would have been flooded with antisemitic (hostile or prejudiced against Jewish people) propaganda and teachings - all infiltrating the curriculum. This proves that Bruno, like all German children at the time, would have had a hatred of Jews bred into him at school (making the events in this book entirely impossible) but by portraying him as ignorant to the situation around him would make readers believe that very few people knew about the Holocaust, absolving them of any blame, however in reality, the general public in Germany as well as occupied Europe would have been well aware of the persecution of the Jews and many would have even known about the killings. There were only a minority of German civilians resisting Nazi ideology who were quickly stamped out whilst the rest of the population just stood by and watched - proving them far from innocent.

Another issue often brought up with the book is Shmuel. In the book, it is very hard for the reader to empathise with Shmuel as he is only ever portrayed as a victim whereas with Bruno – we learn lots about his personality that we never learn about his new friend. This means that it is harder for the reader to empathise with Shmuel and his situation as the author is portraying Jewish victims as passive and un-resisting when, in reality, there was much Jewish resistance in and out of the camps – they did not go to their deaths without fighting for their lives.

On top of this, it is highly unlikely that Shmuel would have survived at a concentration camp such as Auschwitz for so long as he would be too young and weak to work. It would be very likely that he would have been sent straight to a gas chamber on arrival, just like the majority of children who arrived there, as the Nazis didn't consider them useful in the forced labour the other prisoners were made to do. On the slim chance that Shmuel wasn't killed on arrival, he would not have had the opportunity to sit on the outskirts of the camp all day and would have been forced to work, with little to no time to do things such as talk to curious German Officers' children. By implying that the inmates at Auschwitz concentration camp were unguarded as well as unaware of the constant danger they faced, every second at the camp, the reality has been diminished – this tragedy has been minimised to an absurd degree and has therefore disrespected the millions of people who had lost their lives in these brutal and incomprehensible ways.

One of the greatest concerns about this book, and the ideas it plants inside children's and adult's heads alike, is the problem surrounding Bruno's death. Many reporters as well as websites have said that it is appalling that Shmuel's living conditions, his family's destruction and his father's murder are apparently not enough for the author John Boyne so serve as the climax for this controversial book. Instead, we are left with the twisted moral that the accidental death of one non-Jewish child is somehow due reward for the death of around six million Jews over the duration of the Holocaust. As the story remains with Bruno, the real tragedy of the Holocaust is somehow overlooked and the idea that no one should have been in that gas chamber in the first place is often forgotten. No one in that gas chamber engages the reader's sympathy in the way that Bruno does. Instead of feeling sympathy for Shmuel, a young boy representing 1.5 million

other children all stripped of their humanity, we feel sympathy for a Nazi concentration camp commandant and his family mourning the loss of one child whilst having no remorse for being involved with the death of 1.5 million others.

Following the publication of Boyne's book in 2006, there have been troubling responses to the book that form the basis for questioning whether it has set back the education of the Holocaust. It has been found that *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* is usually student's first introduction to the topic of the Holocaust and a worrying study shows that it is the most widely read book about the Holocaust among students aged 12-18. Over 35% of teachers in the UK use it as a resource to look at in history classes and the most disturbing point is that over 70% of readers thought this book was a true story. This is troubling because it doesn't portray the monstrosity of what the Holocaust actually was and instead makes it more comprehensible for the readers instead of facing reality of what was the first known genocide – the deliberate killing of a large number of people from a particular ethnic group with the aim of destroying that group.

Boyne has tried to reply to all of the complains and outcries about his book and has said that it is 'just a fable' and arguing that it is just a novel however it is a story about true events and so therefore should be historically accurate, even if it is just a fable, it doesn't change the incorrect ideas it sparks in the readers heads. Giving them a sick, twisted version of the truth is not enough and if this is allowed to continue, education on key historical events such as the Holocaust will be obscured by people's ideas on what it really was and may eventually cause people to think the wrong things are facts, leading to historical inaccuracies and eventually, a veil over the true education of a topic needed to be known by all.

Cryonics: Our Ticket to Preserve Humanity or an Ethical Disaster?

Jessica Zhou, Year 9

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The concept of freezing people in order to bring them back in the distant future has previously only appeared in various, futuristic sci-fi movies. One notable example is Steve Rogers in the Marvel movies who was cryonically preserved for nearly 70 years and then brought back to life. Even though this used to be a mere speculation of science-fiction, are we, as a society, nearing what could be our ticket to immortality?

In June 2021, a team of scientists discovered a multi-celled organism called a 'bdelloid rotifer' in the Russian Arctic. It was frozen for 24,000 years in Siberia, but once thawed they found that it was able to reproduce asexually. Stas Malavin, of Russia's Institute of Physicochemical and Biological Problems in Soil Science "The takeaway is that a multicellular organism can be frozen and stored as such for thousands of years and then return back to life - a dream of many fiction writers." This discovery re-ignited the search to find a shortcut in the path to immortality and brought lots of publicity to the world of cryonics.

The process of cryopreservation is not a simple one. It requires rapid movements from the moment the patient is declared legally dead. Within the first 60 seconds of the person's death, they are placed immediately into an ice bath whilst being fed oxygen through a ventilation mask to ensure that the body's organs (predominantly the brain), remain sustained. Following on from this, the body is 'vitrified', which simply turns it into a glass-like state, preventing it from being damaged by the freezing process via the gradual lowering of the temperature. The cooling process begins by being placed inside an insulating bag which liquid nitrogen is fed into slowly (over a couple of days). Eventually, the body reaches -200 degrees Celsius and then is placed into a cryostat (a device used to maintain the sub-zero temperatures).

Here, the body stays for the rest of its journey, until it is revived in the future.

It is important to note the reasons why people want to be cryonically preserved. One reason people choose to undergo this process is because they have an incurable health problem (e.g., various strains of brain cancer). They want to have a second chance at the life that they were never given the opportunity to experience, due to the current medical capabilities of our world, and turn to cryonics to do this. One example is Sahatorn Naovaratpong who signed his 2-year-old daughter up to be cryonically preserved once she was diagnosed with an incurable brain cancer. The emotional torment individuals must go through to make these decisions tear families apart, and from an outsider's perspective, it may even seem pointless to make this decision based on what-ifs and maybes. You are essentially putting your relative's, or your own life on the line, just hoping that in the future, technology will have developed so far that they will be able to be brought back.

This seemingly promising process has faced plenty of backlash based on how ethical it is. One of the main questions that people ask is 'how can we possibly bring these individuals back into an indefinitely more progressed society without causing disruption, mental and physical strain to themselves and the people around them?'. The question of integration is a very difficult one to tackle. In the future, when technology has progressed so incredibly far that we are able to cure certain diseases that would be unthinkable in this current age, who is to say that we will not have flying cars or be living side by side with aliens? Resuscitated individuals will wake up in an unknown environment, completely alone.

So, how do we help people from the past to rebuild their lives? Max More (philosopher and previously president and CEO of Alcor Life Extension Foundation) said: "I am imagining that you might first be brought back to consciousness in virtual reality." Virtual reality may have also progressed so far that there would be close to no difference between a real social experience and one that you would participate in behind a screen. The technology that would be able to bring these people back would not be anything like the technology that we have in our world today, and we can only hope that scientists will have solved the ageing problem, so individuals are surrounded by their known family when they are resuscitated.

A second obstacle is the factor of wealth. Alcor, a leading institute in the world of cryonics, offers two different options for their cryopreservation. The first being whole body preservation which costs at least 200,000 US dollars and the second being neuropreservation (just the brain) which requires about 80,000 dollars. These hefty sums of money rule out the chance for many people who have the wish of being cryopreserved due to not being able to afford it. Does this mean that the rich could experience immortality, whilst the lower classes must miss out on the basis of their wealth? Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states 'Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person'. This essentially means that no one is allowed to end your life, or arbitrarily deprive you of it. Surely, if you would like the opportunity to keep living on, but cannot afford it, cryonics organisations cannot reject you merely on the basis that you cannot afford their services. Does this not go against you having the right to life if they are allowing you to die based on your economic situation?

Another factor to consider is whether cryonics is actually an extremely selfish process. Some would say that it is wrong to prolong life especially if the reason for the process is not because of a health problem. If someone had already lived to a respectable age, then it would be selfish to just keep them alive simply for their own benefit. The UN has already expected that by mid-2050 our population will be at 9.8 billion, and we will reach 11.2 billion by 2100. If our population is already increasing this rapidly, the addition of immortality will surely contribute greatly and make the total potentially closer to 12 billion. Is it really fair for us to prolong our own lives, just to damage those of future generations? There is also fear that if we continue to develop these technologies, more people will want to use them, causing over-population and ultimately ending in the demise of our planet.

But how close are we to bringing people back? In early 2016, scientists led by MIT graduate Robert McIntyre conducted an experiment to see if they were able to freeze a rabbit's brain cryonically and bring it back. They used a combination of chemical fixation and cryogenic storage called 'aldehyde-stabilised cryopreservation'. They drained all the blood from the animal's head and replaced it with 'glutaraldehyde' which is a chemical substance used to preserve biological material within the brain's vascular system. This is a very quick process which stops decaying and stabilises tissues, therefore preventing the brain from shrinking and suffering extreme damage. Then, it was vitrified and stored at -135 degrees Celsius. Later, the brain was thawed, and the previously injected cryopreservation chemicals were removed. Kenneth Hayworth, president of the BPF (brain preservation foundation) said that the aim of the experiment was "to demonstrate that the structure of the delicate synaptic circuitry of the brain could be preserved over indefinite

time spans." They successfully managed to cryonically freeze and recover it in almost perfect condition. This was a massive step forwards for cryonics as it proved to society that long-term preservation of a brain was possible.

Let us compare this to the human brain. The two share the same basic divisions (forebrain, midbrain, and hindbrain) and several major structures (e.g., cerebellum, hypothalamus, and the pituitary gland). Clearly, there are differences between the two, as we have different roles to play and rely on different things to thrive. For example, we use the parietal lobe a lot more than a rabbit does as it controls all our senses and pain. As rabbits are prey, their parietal lobes are extremely underdeveloped compared to ours. Although the human and the rabbit brains are very similar, the above method cannot be applied to humans. Even though this is disappointing, other methods will be able to be used to bring them back. One potential solution is highly advanced nanotechnology which is currently non-existent. Artificial molecular machines which could one day fix any sort of damage the cryonics process would do to our cells and tissues have been suggested, but some scientists believe that the cryonics process may damage some cells and tissues beyond repair. Although this is plausible, we have no idea what the future of technology has in store for us, so the theory of 'beyond repair' may, in 50 years, not even exist.

In my opinion, I think that for some, cryonics is a symbol of hope. A hope for a better world in the future, where incurable diseases do not exist. But I believe that this is all based on probability, the probability of something that may not even happen. How will we ever be able to guarantee that the 'person' that we bring back to life will keep their memories, their personality, everything that they had built up in their

past life and transfer into their new one? Are we really bringing people back? Or are we just creating a new person, in an old body? Is it truly fair on this new person to bring them into an unknown place? Is it fair to the rest of society? Although cryonics is looking promising, at this current point in time, there is no guarantee that anyone will ever be able to be brought back in any lifetime, no matter how far into the future it is, or how developed technology has become. Cryonics bring about a multitude of ethical challenges and cannot easily be integrated into a functioning health practice of our growing society. But who knows what the future holds? As Robert C.W. Ettinger (sometimes referred to as the father of cryonics) said in his book 'The Prospect of Immortality': "It is clear that you and I, right now, have a chance to avoid permanent death."

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Does Rewilding Work?

Rhiannon Grist, Year 8



Rewilding is a conservation effort to restore or to protect an area, including reintroducing an apex predator into the wild. Such efforts need little human interaction as when introducing a keystone species, they can manage well without help. It is listed as one of the most needed methods for restoring habitats.¹ The EU directive EC/92/43/EEC states that countries should “study the desirability of reintroducing species in Annex IV that are native to their territory where this might contribute to their conservation.”²

One of the many animals people are reintroducing is the lynx. People are thinking about rewilding it into the UK. Their main prey is roe deer and there is enough to feed around 400 individuals. These shy predators are rarely sighted and normally don't attack humans. This species could also help keep deer numbers down so woodland doesn't get harmed by them.³ The lynx's main food (roe deer and red deer) is in abundance here in the UK and a lot is put into culling deer each year to just reduce the numbers and leave the dead bodies around to rot or become venison for human consumption. Britain has signed up to the Berne Convention (1979) and the EC Habitats Directive (1992) which encourages rewilding of native wildlife. It may also be easier to introduce this species into the Scottish Highlands, where the human population is lower. There is also a big cat-loving population so people will be more supportive of this. Especially with



how there are no fairy tales about them like wolves eating Grandma.²

Another species plans are being made for is the European bison. This heavy animal can run at 54 km/h and is coming back to Britain. There are plans to rewild bison into Kent, England this year. It is not native to Britain, but its extinct relative used to be around.⁴ This ongoing project is called Wilder Blean and there are four bison due to arrive in Thornden Woods and West Blean. The European Bison are needed to create lush green woodlands as woodland management is one of the top 8 causes for loss of biodiversity.⁵ This site is licensed to hold up to 10 bison as part of the Dangerous Wild Animal Act (1976). Bisons live in herds and are matriarchal like elephants and will begin with just four individuals. Hopefully this herd will help rewilding happen in other places.⁶

Beavers are Europe's largest rodent and in Scotland they have been declared a native species. There has been a consultation launched by the government to try and have more reestablishment of beavers.⁷ In the Ardennes region of Belgium beavers have helped decrease flooding by dam-building which slows winter rainfall from entering the rivers.⁸ This amazing species became extinct in the 16th century due to hunting for fur and for meat. There are currently two populations of beavers in Scotland and in 2016 their government

declared that the beavers needed to stay in Scotland as a protected species. Beavers are a keystone species because it helps the environment it lives in in a positive way.⁹ Flooding is happening more frequently due to climate change, so beaver habitats could be an important way to reduce this.

The next animal has been rewilded in at least two continents: wolves. The expansion of population size recently for this species in the US is helping there to be safer roads. These wolves can keep control of deer populations, like the lynx can, reducing the numbers of deer that stray onto roads causing human injuries and fatalities and improve the environment because too many deer can stop plants to grow.¹⁰ The main reason the deer aren't involved in car crashes any more as much is because wolves are using the man-made roads as corridors or pathways which discourages the deer to go near the roads. This helps as these wolves are helping save around \$11 million annually.¹¹

Although having wild wolves has lots of benefits, in mainland Europe farmers are worried wolves will kill and eat their livestock. In Portugal it has been banned to kill, harm or hunt wolves which are always a constant threat for farmers. Wolves are protected, so the farmers can't kill or harm the wolves. Instead, they have decided to have guard dogs so the farmers can know earlier that there are wolves nearby. The dogs would be big breeds such as the Estrela Mountain dog (above) and the Castro Laboreiro dog. These dogs also have protective instinct and can bond with the animals under their care. The dogs don't harm the wolves in any way they just scare them off by barking when under attack. Currently 300 dogs have been placed with livestock which is helping reduce killings and the wolves in the area will probably learn to avoid them.¹²

Red wolves are critically endangered on the IUCN red list and were declared extinct in 1980. Due to conservation efforts, there are currently 35 individuals or less remaining in the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge in North Carolina and surrounding areas.¹³ Although there is a positive attitude towards red wolves in the wild it has not stopped poaching of the species. As the protected areas aren't large enough to hold a growing population red wolves will start to drift into farmland.¹⁴ It would be good if farmers around the world can share ideas on how to live with these important wild animals, and this will protect the animals and the livestock.

Oostvaardersplassen is a nature reserve in the Netherlands and in 1968 they wanted to reintroduce wild ponies and wild cattle into the reserve after being extinct. The extinct cattle were called Aurochs but as they're extinct Heck cattle have been put in their place as they are the closest living species to the ancient Aurochs. As for the ponies, they introduced feral Konik ponies instead as they are also the closest thing they could find to the extinct ponies. The problem with this is that the idea of carnivores seemed to not exist so there are now not enough carnivores. The ponies and cattle end up starving to death because weaker animals are not removed by predators. Although dead carcasses have brought in raptors there is still an absence of big carnivores such as wolves. Currently they are trying to get some big carnivores so there is a higher survival for the stronger ones and the weaker ones won't eat their food and just become prey.² Allowing animals to starve to death is not liked by the public, and so Oostvaardersplassen needs to change how they manage the reserve.

Extinct in the wild on the IUCN red list, the scimitar horned oryx are being reintroduced to Chad. The Environmental Agency, the Sahara Conservation

Is Social Media Doing More Harm Than Good?

Florence Juxon, Year 8

Fund, the Zoological Society of London, and the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute's Conservation Ecology Centre are all part of the Chad Oryx Reintroduction Project. The Oryx will be returning to Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim Game Reserve which can be a stronghold for this rare species and is one of the largest protected areas on the planet. The first release was in 2016 of 23 individuals born in captivity. All the individuals released are monitored with satellite tracking collars. These ensure we can see where the oryx are and check they are surviving.¹⁵

I conclude that rewilding can work but only when there is a correct balance of all species for a functioning ecosystem. In the Netherlands disaster, they had no carnivores and a lot of herbivores therefore there were too many herbivores causing them to eat all the vegetation, destroying the ecosystem. Also, no rewilding will work well if you don't have support from the public as some of the public such as farmers might not want more animals around and they might see them as a nuisance. If enough people support the idea, then you might be able to help farmers to introduce new ways to protect their livelihoods, by sharing ideas with others that have learnt to live with carnivores, such as wolves.

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The number of people using social media has increased by 3.1 time over the past ten years. According to the Datareportal January 2022 Global Overview, 58.4% (4.62 billion) of the world's population use social media. Whilst social media helps with building relationships, spreading news, and promoting business, there are negative consequences. Social media was only invented in 1997 and therefore little research has been conducted but we can use this, alongside our own experiences to look further into the negative effects that social media has on people. The purpose of this essay is to highlight this.

One of the things that social media can negatively impact is one's self esteem. According to a survey which was conducted in 2018 by the Pew Research Team, 26% of teens said they believed social media was decreasing their self-esteem, with only 4% saying it impacted their self-esteem 'a lot'. People carefully select what they want to share online and are most likely to post their achievements, holidays, events they have attended and photos of themselves. The average teenager spends three hours a day on social media, so it would eventually have an impact. Closely linked to self-esteem is the issue of body image. Whilst 71% of images posted online have been edited, 90% have been photoshopped. This means that as a person spending 3 hours of their day scrolling through social media, only 18 minutes would be spent looking at real people, yet the photos looked at during this time may still be edited, even if not photoshopped. Eventually, a person would become almost brainwashed by these images and made to believe that they are not reaching the beauty standard which can result in doing unhealthy things to their body in order to reach these standards. However, despite this being the case, 69% of people said they feel confident, rather than insecure, and 64% feel authentic, rather than fake when using social media.

Another issue relating to social media is poor mental health. In 2014, researchers from Austria concluded that people who spent 20 minutes on Facebook had lower moods compared to those who just browsed the internet. In 2016, a study involving 1700 people found that those using social media platforms were three times more likely to develop anxiety and depression; yet it is unknown whether social media is a direct cause. Scientists believe that the reason for this could be as a result of cyber-bullying, having a distorted view of others' lives, and feeling as though time spent on social media is a waste which leads to feelings of stress, guilt, and self-hatred. Although people on social media are more likely to get these disorders, it can also be a great way to find help. Only 30% of teens are currently receiving the necessary treatment for depression. Social media is proving to be a great way to both realise and accept mental disorders before receiving the necessary help. However, the disadvantages for this include self-diagnosis and normalising poor mental health. Studies have found that 2 in 5 people misdiagnose themselves with disorders due to searching and scrolling through social media. This could lead to more people believing they need help and so those who genuinely do need it, are unable to receive it. If one has recently been feeling down or angry, leading to an increase in the amount of time spent on social media, they are likely to come across more videos about mental health. So if a person has been feeling sad for the past few days and they keep seeing videos stating that a symptom of depression is 'a constant low mood', the immediate response is to think they may have depression. If this person then continues to come across videos explaining how 'it's okay to feel this way', they are more likely to believe that it's both okay and normal to be 'depressed'. That person is then more likely to post about it. This glamorized version of depression is therefore relatable to more people and so the cycle continues.

A big issue relating to social media use is quality of sleep. The relationship between sleep and social media is often referred to as being similar to the chicken and egg dilemma. Research has shown that 1 in 5 people check their phone as a distraction to what is keeping them awake when struggling to sleep at night-time. However, after spending a suitable amount of time on social media, it becomes difficult to disengage and so one continues to scroll. The more a person scrolls, the more attached they become to new posts and messages which means that when they do eventually put their phone down to sleep, they are alert with the constant waiting for their phone to ping. Therefore, they struggle to fall asleep. It quickly becomes a vicious cycle which is difficult to break. Social media can also physically affect sleep. The artificial blue light, which is emitted from phones and laptop screens, can affect the production of the hormone melatonin which facilitates sleep so, the more time spent on social media, the less melatonin produced, and the higher the chance of disturbed sleep and potential insomnia. So, did the chicken lay the egg, or did the egg hatch the chicken? Similarly, does night-time social media use cause insomnia, or do people with insomnia use social media at night-time to cope?

It cannot be conclusively stated that social media is doing more harm than good, but we can use the information above, our personal experiences and further research to reach a prediction. The little research which has been conducted suggests that social media has a negative effect on self-esteem, body image, mental health, self-diagnosing, normalising poor mental health and both the amount and quality of sleep which a person gets. As previously stated, these can increase the risk of depression and

anxiety but also the risk of loneliness, self-harm, and even suicidal thoughts. The long-term effects caused by lack of sleep include being at risk of diabetes and heart disease, weight gain, mood changes, memory issues and a weakened immune system. However, these are all very serious issues which would only be the result of an abnormal amount of time spent on social media. So, if the average time spent on social media is 3 hours by teens, and 2 hours 5 minutes by adults, the likelihood is, we won't experience these issues.

Personally, I find that social media has had a negative impact on me which led to my interest on this topic. Whenever I use social media, particularly TikTok, I find it challenging to disengage; as a result, I waste a considerable amount of time. Looking back at my relationship with social media, I have often left it feeling equally as confident as when I opened the app, yet much less positive. Everyone has a different experience with social media, but personally I find it damaging to my wellbeing. The obvious solution would be to delete the platforms which have this effect on me. However, if I did this, I would miss out on trends and ideas/events that happen online. This would make me feel left out of the conversations my friends have about them. In my judgement, it depends on the amount of time spent on social media, the type of posts being looked at and the type of person they are, which affects how they interpret and react to certain posts. It's advantageous to be aware of both the mental and physical issues associated with social media when using it, to ensure their prevention.

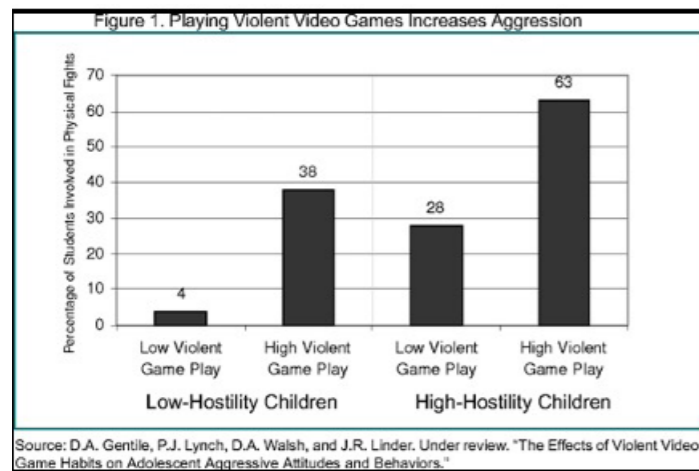
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Are Violent Video Games Influential on Youthful Behaviour and Would Society be Better Without Them?

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Video games are electronically played sources of entertainment consisting of programmed coding, broadcasted on monitors or other displays such as TV's etc. They are a global popularity, especially by the evolving new generation. Computerized games produced by successful companies including Xbox, PlayStation, and Nintendo behold multiple aspects of both reality and fantasy. Commonly purchased and played games such as Fortnite and GTA involve a diverse range of realistic factors yet are revolved around the configuration of physical violence (guns, knives, bombs). More than 90% of today's teenage society play video games, and more than 90% of games E10+ or above contain violence and brutality.



As you can see in the above graph, children who do not regularly partake in playing 'High Violent' video games are depicted as possessing lower hostility characteristics as they are involved with significantly less volume of physical fights in comparison to the masses of children who do engage in aggressive video games., having participated in multiple fights of terrorizing physicality. This has increased significantly as the capacity of society's technological world has adapted and developed, introducing more and more intricate game designs that sell frequently across the globe.

I strongly agree that violent video games can have a negative influential element towards the behaviours of young individuals and their maturing attributes from today's flourishing civilisation and the future to come. This is because I believe it is immensely impacting masses of communities across the world from huge cities to countries of diverse populations. Large corporations like Epic games (Founders of Fortnite) retain a staggering revenue each year. From the commencing year of 2018 the organisation acquired 5.4 billion from not only the production rates of the game itself, but the additional memberships and monthly fees and the games currency, known as V Bucks. In 2019 it continued to make a staggering amount, this time 3.7 billion, followed by 5.1 billion in the year of the pandemic in 2020 to which many resorted to intense gaming. From the yearly profits gathered across the course of 3 years. It is easily depictable that Epic games is a widely successful gaming company from the many video games they advertise and sell, with Fortnite being their most favoured game by consumers. Fortnite game is defined by the team as 'a survival game where 100 players fight against each other in player versus player combat to be the last one standing.' This description boldly highlights the key aspect of barbarity and physical attacks with the use of a range of weapons. Since the game is played by over half of the Gen-Z teenagers of children below the age of 13 it is highly consumed in a more realistic way because a child's brain works differently from an adult's when making decisions, maintaining informative dialogue, and solving problems. A child's actions are regulated via a more emotional and impulsive reaction of amygdala (A cluster of cells located near the base of the brain, helping to define and function feelings) rather than a more contemplated, calculated vision.

Now is the time to start thinking about the growing children of society and their vulnerability and exposure. Recent studies show that millions of students skip precious education time due to gaming and fear. Fear is the feeling of unsafety and beholding a sense of danger, alongside being afraid of occurring or potential occurrences of events. This could be seen to coincide with the elements of video game violence and its influential factors on behaviour and how one "Battle Royale" on a Sunday evening, may embark on vital issues such as bullying; cyber, verbal, sexual, physical, relation and prejudicial. The police recorded 5.8 million casualties and crimes in the ending year of September 2021 in the UK and Wales and over 25% of those criminal offences were committed by juveniles.

Some may say that by initiating the action to minimise the mass production and optimistic promotion of highly violent games could cause economic diminution. The world is fuelled by lucrative producers and consumers which determines the status of the economy. Therefore, it is argued that if one of the major profitable genres of business is diminished in its manufacturing, there is a possibility of intense economic decline. The U.S Gaming Industry generated 90.3 billion in annual economic input in 2019 supporting nearly 429,000 jobs.

Not only this, but they may believe by eliminating violence completely throughout the gaming industry and the age ranges it appeals to could end up portraying a world with no violence and worries to adolescents. They could argue that popularized games that are regularly streamed on laptops to televisions can not only have a negative influence but a positive one also. They currently claim for example that the games that have been listed previously, like Call of Duty can educate many of its consumers. Call of Duty is a 'First-person shooter game' and opposing

arguments proclaim it stimulates infantry and combined arms warfare of World War II. Giving younger clients that are interested in playing the game a way to have the ability to form a sense of the intense and erratic atmosphere in 1939 – 1945. Similarly, to reinforce this attest another common video game such as Grand Theft Auto (GTA) is argued to supply those who play with the skills of recognising unexpectancy. Wherever you may go, the unexpected is possible. GTA aims to prepare those for times in life where the reassurance of feeling safe isn't reliable. Propelling the idea to accurately devise and be smart in all areas of life.

Both disputes against the impact of high video game violence on youthful behaviour consist of irrelevant concerns. 'Stimulates infantry and combined arms of warfare in World War II' is an unrealistic, disrespectful accusation. No virtual game or experience can provide an educational source nor idealistic atmosphere in regard to the immense terror of the War where many sacrificed their lives. By selling an inaccurate statement it gives the new generation a false perspective of the War, so in conflict it doesn't improve intelligence but however it could harm it. GTA contains sensitive actions and intimidating weapons which can produce distressing trepidation. Grand Theft Auto is argued to 'Supply those who play with the skills of recognising unexpectancy.' yet it is a role-playing adventure comprising of guns and knives in a backing offence of "protection". The game involves rural locations and sexual factors like prostitutes alongside vicious physical fights. Therefore, this cannot learn the consumers anything but in fact affect their frequency of violent behaviour.

Secondly, I disagree with the appeal 'There is a possibility of intense economic decline.' Suggesting that society's economic status is in jeopardy. This is a responsible recognition but globally the world is

Is the Future Female?

Bethany Hobbs, Year 6

financially secure. We must not forget that the UK in itself generates approximately 800 billion yearly and suggesting it's depends solely on the gaming world is incorrect. Walmart, which is one of the United States most profitable businesses contributes to the economy hugely, helping keep employee productivity at an optimum level. Walmart is a colossal retailer operating grocery stores, clothing markets and popular sales for both small and big communities amongst the world's largest corporations. Its revenue is at an astounding 572.8 billion USD, meaning companies like Nintendo in the United States produce a mere 15.3 billion USD in revenue in comparison. Nintendo's revenue is around 3% of Walmart's which massively contributes to the USA's economy and yet the USA has the world's biggest gaming industry.

I believe that by removing violence from video games made for young people can only be seen as a positive thing due to their influential aspects on a young person's brain function and behaviour. In my opinion, computerized entertainment triggers emotional and behavioural disorders. Impulsive decisions are made in response to losing a 'Gunfight' in Call of Duty or perceiving the actions of fighting within the game are appropriate in daily life. This can venture and result to serious consequential outcomes from injuries to increased crime rates. The drastic expansion in casualties that are performed by youthful individuals has been witnessed especially in the UK and Wales. So by making the decision to minimise this and enforcing the idea, we would be working towards a new chapter of wellbeing and safety for many.

I believe the pros far outweigh the cons since the opposing arguments do not contain enough evidence and proof to support their perspective. The supporting factual information I have displayed to strengthen my opinion justifies why video games consisting of an

intensity of barbarity have a severe impact on children and the way they act, and society would be a better place without them.

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Two hundred years ago women had no rights at all. They were owned by men and stayed at home to do all of the housework and look after their children. Women like the Brontë sisters escaped from this by writing, but still they had to publish their work with men's names. Mary Anning, a fossil collector and palaeontologist, found some of the most extraordinary skeletons of her time. She was not allowed to publish her work because she was female, even though men used her findings in their own work and edited out her name. Fighting for freedom, these women were turning away a life of housework, and bringing in a life of never-ending opportunities.

Nellie Bly was the most impressive, investigative female journalist of the 19th century. She was a feminist, adventurer and the first female war correspondent. She travelled around the world in seventy-two days and pushed her way to the top of the male newspaper industry. At this time, women were only allowed to report on topics like fashion and society news. She embraced stunt journalism and even took the extreme measure of faking madness, admitting herself into a female asylum undercover. She was a force of nature and has paved the way for women in the newsroom.

By the end of the nineteenth century women had graduated from London University and women like Miss Buss and Miss Beale were opening impressive girls' only schools. During the First World War many women filled the traditional roles that men had previously done - like farming and factory work - so it was no surprise when the Suffragette movement came along in the 1920s. Emmeline Pankhurst was a courageous Suffragette who devoted her life campaigning for votes for women. After years of protesting for what was right, even if it meant being sent to prison, the law was changed and women over

30 were allowed to vote. Shortly after her death in 1928 all women over the age of 21 were allowed to vote. Other suffragettes include Flora Drummond, a Scottish activist and Kate Sheppard who made New Zealand the first country where women were allowed to vote. These strong, brave women pushed the cause of women's rights further forward into the twentieth century.

Encouraged by these early successes, in the 1950s Jane Goodall dreamed of studying wildlife in Africa but people thought that was far too dangerous a job for a woman. Jane disagreed and eventually accepted a job of finding out about chimpanzees and how they evolved to humans. In the USA Annie Easley was also an incredible role model. She was one of the first human computers in the USA and worked on one of the first computer programs to enable navigation in space. Her work with electric batteries led to the foundation of today's hybrid cars.

By the 1960s, women were growing stronger than ever before. Thanks to the invention of household appliances like vacuum cleaners and washing machines, meant women were no longer stuck at home, and instead were out there exploring the world and finding new careers. Feminism was taking off in the UK by Germaine Greer and in the USA by Betty Friedan, and they both produced bestselling books on the subject. Both women asserted that women were capable of doing anything that men could do. Their cause was helped by the introduction of the equal pay act and sex discrimination being banned in the workplace.

All of these inspirational women are incredible, and these are just a few out of a world of determined females, who have thrived to help succeed in gender equality. All we have to do now is follow on from their

footsteps and make the world a place where change can be made. Could we finally be at a turning point for equality for women? All of these strong, independent role models of the past have led the way for change and there is also optimism for the future of women. Sheryl Sandberg (Chief Operating Officer, Facebook) believes that “In the future, there will be no female leaders. There will just be leaders.”

Women now stand on debating stages in the USA and argue that they should be elected to run a government office. Two thirds of the Spanish government are women. Women have led almost a third of the world’s countries proving they can take on anything including men’s roles. Women can be anything they want to be: army generals; astronauts; politicians; pilots. Even countries that have resisted change have buckled, as Saudi Arabia finally allowed women to drive. Fearless activist Loujain defied Saudi Arabia’s driving ban and faced the consequences. In 2014, she was locked up just for live tweeting herself driving into Saudi Arabia from the United Arab Emirates. She went on to stand for election in November 2015 which was the first time women were allowed to vote and stand for election. But despite finally being recognised as a candidate, her name was never added to the ballot. Today she continues her fight to help women be happy and have their own rights.

But there are still gaps around the world where women need to be accepted as equals and even in the places where change is being made, women are still struggling with equality. In 2015, 193 member countries of the United Nation came together to commit to goal 5 of the seventeen Sustainable Development goals which focus on gender equality and empowering women by 2030. Seven years later, large gender gaps remain around the world, which have been increased by the COVID-19 pandemic. Post pandemic, how do

we ensure that women don’t fall any further behind men?

For women to be successful in the roles traditionally given to men, girls need to have the right to have a proper education, so that they can have a happy and healthy future. 130 million girls across the world don’t have a proper education. A particular role model is Malala Yousafzai, who fought against the Taliban for girls schooling and she is still an activist for female education today.

Since she was 11, Malala Yousafzai has been passionate about giving all girls the opportunity of a proper education, as her schooling was interrupted by the Taliban. By the end of 2008, the Taliban had destroyed over 400 schools. In October 2012, Malala Yousafzai was shot on the way back from school by the Taliban because of her campaigning for the rights of girls’ education. She was flown to Birmingham, in the UK immediately and once she had recovered, she then went on to study at Oxford University. She has built a school in Africa and opened a school for Syrian refugees and called on world leaders to invest in ‘books not bullets’. She is an international peace symbol and the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize for her non-stop fight for girls’ rights.

Power has been denied to women for so long that it is fantastic to see that a new generation of women like Malala Yousafzai are challenging this in the Middle East. In the USA, Susan and Anne Wojcicki (sisters who are the CEOs of YouTube and 23and me) and all of the women who have inspired the #MeToo movement are challenging a system that still disregards women’s rights. Women who want to change the world have to be strong and resilient, but they also have to disregard any thoughts about how they should behave. We need to encourage a state of mind where women aren’t

labelled by their behaviour. As Coco Chanel once said: “A girl should be two things: who and what she wants.”

Social media has increased the pressure on women and girls to look and behave a certain way. TikTok trends such as Hot Girl Summer and Feral Girl Summer are meant to be empowering. However, they are not realistic and are policing female behaviour. At the same time male behaviour isn’t policed and men can be whatever they want to be.

There is so much promise and positive change for women and girls that we need to be making it hard for females to feel inferior. The future of gender equality is not only dependent on inspirational women but also on making sure that women and girls know their power and place as equals. In the words of Michelle Obama, “There is no limit to what we, as women (and girls), can accomplish.”

It will take many generations to come for all women to finally be seen as equal to men. Even though women gained the right to vote over one hundred years ago, many are still being seen as inferior to men and have to struggle to maintain their rights as well as pushing them forward. Around the world women still struggle with poverty, illiteracy, and ill health. As Malala Yousafzai said, “I raise up my voice - not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard. We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back.”

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