

# HEAR ME OUT

**spring 2021**



# ***A Note From The Head Student Team***

This year hasn't quite started off as we had all imagined, and the past few months have been unexpected to say the least. We have each faced our own struggles and we should all be extremely proud of ourselves for what we have achieved. I am so excited to be Plymouth High's Head Student this year and the Team and myself are really looking forward to pushing student voices even further. Each of us on the Team have been busy this term and I am so pleased to be able to share this issue of Hear Me Out with you all. It has been a pleasure to put together and I am extremely grateful to everybody that has contributed. I hope that you all enjoy reading this magazine as much as I have. The last thing I'd like to say is that as life begins to go back to normal, please remember to be kind to yourself and others, have a great term and enjoy it.

**Jess**

Online school has given us a challenging start, but I'm feeling really positive about what we have achieved so far and what we hope to achieve in the future. Taking on the responsibility of developing wellbeing and charity work within the team, I'm pleased with what we have managed so far, developing some guidance to looking after yourself under the Trust's 'Stay' Campaign, and launching a 'Paint a pebble' initiative to help spread some smiles as we come out of lockdown. I'm so excited to begin working properly with the Charity Ambassador team in the next few weeks to come up with some great ways we can make a difference. This last year has been tough on all of us, and as we hopefully start to return to some normality, make sure that you continue taking time for yourself. Enjoy the magazine!

**Maisy**

Although things have been a bit different this year, I am so pleased to be part of the PHSG Head Student Team. Myself and the Student Council, which I will be leading this upcoming year, are looking forward to getting started on further developing the happy, comforting and safe environment within school, focusing on mental health and wellbeing as we begin to start returning to some sense of normality. I am delighted to say that the Student Council has already come up with many brilliant ideas, and I am looking forward to working with them, and students across the school in order for us all to take care of each other in these difficult times. Finally, I would like to wish everyone a successful return to school, and I hope you all enjoy reading this magazine as much as I have.

**Dominique**

Despite the abnormal start to the year, I am so proud of our achievements as a team so far. I am so glad to be a part of the Head Student Team and can't wait to see what this year brings. My role as head of diversity and inclusion is a new role in the school so we've had the opportunity to really decide which direction we want to take this role in. This year I want to put an emphasis on tolerance and education on challenging topics. My aim is to really foster a sense of independence in students, helping to promote the tools that enable us to create informed opinions as we go off into the wider world. I also hope to further encourage discussion surrounding these topics in our classrooms as a safe space and place where students can be their authentic selves. Lastly, I just want to encourage all of you to make sure you continue to take breaks and appreciate the world around you as we get settled back in. I hope you enjoy the magazine!

**Naomi**



Instagram Accounts: [hearmeoutphsg](#)  
[phsgheadstudents](#)

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# Media Restrictions- How Far Should They Go?

January 6th was one of the worst days in history. The atrocious actions of those involved in the riots at the Capitol, which resulted in the death of five people, including a brave police officer, are something which should leave anyone with a sorrowful sensation in their stomachs.

Recently, we have seen Trump removed from many social media platforms. Including his most powerful platform - Twitter, in order to prevent the further incitement of violence. Some may see this as a cleansing of sinister speech, whereas some may argue that it is an entire erasure of those who diverge from the ever-changing norm. It seems that whether Trump is off or on social media, his provocative presence resembles a microcosm for the divides of opinion and variety of voices in the media. This variety is what makes the media so incredible and we can see how easily one share ideas, debate with others, form new ideas - all via the media. However, when the media is stretched and the seam tears, a divide is inevitable, the material could break off completely and our differences could become damning. This tear should be patched up before it transforms into something much worse and irreparable or before the thread suddenly spirals out of control and unravels in the places where we least expect it.

It is very hard to not recognise

can express their opinion, Trump's inflammatory language on social media and its major influence. It is very hard to deny that his messages of "Stop the Steal" and "Rigged Election" did raise the temperature extraordinarily high in America by fanning the flames continuously on his social media platforms. We have to question how something as modern as the media has become powerful and influential to the point where it can be used as a dangerous device.

The media itself is not dangerous, but in the wrong hands it has the potential to become perilous. Its power revolves around the idea that the media forms the basis of our society, From the information we gather to the entertainment we so desperately seek - the media is everywhere. Now, this is not necessarily manipulative or malicious and we have to recognise that the ease of access to the press and information with such a

Illustrations: canva.com



thing! In fact, it is very useful in promoting businesses and sharing opinions, which, in a way, allows us to make more informed decisions. However, when you are in such a major position, such as CEO of a company, one would imagine that any word that left their mouths or keyboards should be held up to scrutiny, since they hold such a major responsibility to inform, to share, to maintain stability, to ensure safety.

Now, Trump's tweets have not been shy of stirring up many controversies in the media. However, in the same way that tech companies hold Trump to account for his provocative use of the media, we should be asking why tech companies are still allowing other controversial figures to spew hatred and roam the web freely? We also have to question if these actions set a dangerous precedent of removing anyone who simply disagrees with an opinion. How far do we take regulations until it destroys the freedom of the press? It raises concerns that if views which are not considered progressive are now being targeted by tech companies, after the catalyst that was Trump's ban? If we do continue to excessively restrict the media we risk tearing the divide in opinion further until it becomes irreparable and debates turn into shouting and shouting turns into regulations and regulations turn into censorship or violent confronta-

tion, as we saw at the invasion of the Capitol building.

Many conservatives and others on the right now fear that their voices may be snatched off them and this also creates more distrust between the media and the people, which will only do more damage and tear the divide further between our political spectrum. Yet, it is not just those on the right, but it seems that anyone could be targeted by growing regulations in the media. Surely, we should have more voices than less, to make sure that we can see as many views as possible, in order to make the best decisions for our lives? Surely, we should keep debate going on all platforms, for all to see? Surely, we should be able to shout without fear of censorship?

I am not writing this from a perspective of any part of the political spectrum, but when we see such drastic actions being taken, we have to question if there is a possibility of this extending, in some circumstances, to ordinary people like us. Following the terrible events in early January, we should be more cautious over what the media can force people into doing. However, this "care" should apply to all with the same standards and platforms should remove other controversial figures who incite violence too. Otherwise, it all appears to be politically motivated and insincere.

Written by INGRID ZAMFIR



# SOCIAL MEDIA - AN UNHEALTHY ADDICTION?

In this article I am going to analyse and form my own opinion about how social media (mainly Tik Tok) can have a damaging impact on your mental health based on my own personal experience, and research that I have conducted about other students' experiences. I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who filled out the google form I sent out, it offered some valuable insight that has helped me write this article.

## Algorithm

Like most social media apps, Tik Tok has an algorithm, a mathematical set of rules, which curates your FYP (for you page) in order to meet the consumers' ideal content. This algorithm analyses your content to decide if it is 'viral worthy', subsequently choosing how far to promote those videos. However, one element of this algorithm on Tik Tok, which was only recently brought to light by Tik Tok creator @benthemite, has been labelled as dangerous for body image. This algorithm is known as the 'beauty algorithm', which simply explained is a computer generated system that rates creators' faces on a scale of 'attractiveness', and then promotes the creators deemed to be more beautiful than others.

Recently, the algorithms made by Bytedance (the company behind Tik Tok, formerly known as Musical.ly) have been exposed. We now know that the algorithm looks at 86 key points on your face to assess your beauty. The algorithm favours Eurocentric beauty standards that are often unattainable, choosing to promote creators that meet these ideals, such as: even matching skin tone, no eyebags, big eyes and small nose. If you don't have these features it doesn't mean that it's impossible for your content to become viral, however it is considered a lot harder.

One example of this is Bella Poarch's viral Tik Tok where she simply bobs her head to the song 'm to the b'. At the time of writing this article, she has 40.1 million likes on that video, arguably because she fits into the beauty algorithm, so her video was highly promoted. A contrasting example is the creator Jalaiah Harmon, who choreographed the famous 'renegade' dance. However, the dance didn't go viral until another creator, Charli D'Amelio, posted a video dancing to it (without credit to Jalaiah). Charli became viral and now has over 100 million followers.

## Warping

Tik Tok has a large problem with how creators show themselves in the content they post. Unlike apps such as Instagram, photoshopping is more rare due to the nature of the content posted being short videos rather than photos. However, there is a 'beauty filter' on Tik Tok that can be placed onto your videos in order to 'beautify' your face, features from smoothing your skin to enlarging your eyelashes. I believe that this is problematic because this filter can often be used subtly, to the point that it looks natural. This means that it can be hard to recognise that there's a filter so when you're scrolling through videos of creators that have the 'perfect face', it reinforces that image as the beauty standard, leading to a lack of self confidence.

People feel as though we know the creators as a person, but we don't really. We only see what they want us to see, which is often far from the truth. It's unbelievably easy to create a fake online persona and make your life out to be perfect, which makes impressionable fans believe their life needs to be like their idols- they must have a perfect life and if they don't, then they are unworthy.

The Trends (trigger warning- brief mention of body checking, body shaming, eating problems)

As a result of the algorithm (which



I've discussed earlier), most of the content you see on Tik Tok is specific to you. For example, if you follow lots of cooking creators, then most of your feed will be food related, however it is inevitable that popular trends will squeeze its way onto your FYP. A little while ago there was a trend where girls would get an oversized top and pull it backwards so their waistlines would be prominent . It was an unusual trend, not so problematic in itself, but the comments were filled with people saying how they're not going to eat after watching that video, or body shaming themselves. That helps to promote diet culture and thrive on an app made for young impressionable teens.

There have been so many 'attractive checking' trends on Tik Tok, such as the inverted face trend. People used the inverted face filter to flip their face in order to see if it was symmetrical, and for some reason Tik Tok has decided symmetrical faces are the beauty standard. As a result, teenagers would film themselves crying about not having a symmetrical face, with the comment section including unkind remarks. This is wrong. If Tik Tok is so toxic with its body positivity, to the extent that it's making young people cry, then something needs to change. The people affected by these trends deserve kindness and support, not shaming for feeling upset.

Another trend I came across while scrolling, was where you used a black and white filter on your face to look at your eyebrows, if your eyebrows were prominent then you were considered to have good eyebrows, but if not then you were considered unattractive. This type of toxic beauty trend is unacceptable, especially on a platform that attracts so many young people.

Of course, I'm not saying that we should all delete Tik Tok- there's some great content on there- however, we do need to be aware of the toxicity and danger lurking on that app, educating others so that ultimately we can reduce the amount of damage. Social media has the ability to give us body image issues

through comparing ourselves to others, but we need to realise that everyone is beautiful so that we can all start our journeys to body positivity.

Written by GRACE BROWNBRIDGE

Illustrated by ISOLDE THOMAS





# Social Interaction: A Primitive Necessity?

March 23 2020. The day the UK closed front doors, hushed town centre hubbub to silence and offered little to no human company for millions across the country for the first time. Nearly a year later, little has changed as connection has been forced to evolve past physical contact and instead muted voices and blurry images have become the new normal. We've called it unprecedented, surreal, but has any other age in humanity had to deal with this same peculiar situation?

Perhaps one period that we can look at to search for the answer is over 12,000 years ago, when the global population was estimated to amount to somewhere between the 1 million and 15 million mark for comparison, smaller than present-day Somalia at its upper bound. So how did the complex, large societies and communities we have today develop from these sparse beginnings when we weren't as intertwined with so many across the globe? In this period of small travelling settlements and close-knit groups of people, lockdown would have slowed the transfor-

mation that the advent of agriculture and the cooperation it brought with it, as larger and permanent settlements arose from shared skills. So undoubtedly, the absence of community, like that of what we are experiencing now, could have hindered the development of so much that we take for granted now.

But how can we find inspiration from thousand-year old communities when so many of us are in the absence of what was crucial, even at a small level, in constructing human development and knowledge? Well, for one thing, it's important to remember that humans survived in small migrating hunter-gatherer bands for millions of years, and it was only when attitudes towards producing, consuming and distributing food as a collective set the wheels turning for progression to permanent and larger settlements. Social interaction and dependence was always a benefit, despite surviving for many years without it, but in 2021, do we need human intimacy and contact to make these connections?

If there was any period in which to endure a global shutdown, one could argue that the technological age we live in now is the best. Lockdowns, technically speaking, are actually nothing new, from 'trentino' (the original Italian word for 'quarantine') at Venice ports during the Great plague of the 1300s, to the localised lockdown in China curbing the SARS epidemic less than 20 years ago. Undoubtedly, however, this is most definitely the first that has had such a universal grip on large parts of the world.

Yet, it didn't stop. It didn't stop millions pushing forward and working from home like never before with the aid of a laptop and an internet connection (however shaky!). It didn't stop children all over the world from trying their best to take advantage of education from their kitchen table. Films, tv, charity events, new music: all accomplished while communicating as clusters of pixels to one another. What is important to note, however, is that all of the technology that has seemingly offered itself to us in our hour of need isn't new technology. The video-chat app Zoom (a lockdown essential) was launched over 8 years ago, Skype is practically pre-historic at over 17 years old. We, as a global community, have been diverting

more and more of our everyday social interactions now since the turn of the millennium, the pandemic only accelerating this shift-and if we have been accustomed to completing an increased amount virtually, what does this mean for the future of physical interaction? Is it a necessity for the human experience or merely an addition?



It's a largely known fact that humans are social creatures. That forming connections and engaging in conversation with others strengthens the brain's neuroplasticity, thus encouraging healthy brain function and has even been linked with lower risks of dementia in later life. Surely, conversation and connection can be satisfactory enough over a fuzzy screen?

Well, no, there has been some evidence that at least in a work environment, that physical touch (eg. shaking hands) builds trust, honesty and activates the part of the brain associated with rewards. Moreover, the concept of 'mirror neurons', first discovered in the 1980s, introduces the benefits of face-to-face contact in that humans and other primates have been shown to stir the same neural response in one subject after watching others perform a certain action, encouraging empathy. These neurons in humans appear to function at higher levels than those in other primates, perhaps supporting their importance in evolving humans as being fundamentally wired to interact with others in close proximity. Would we be disadvantaged if we were to remove this sort of physical contact and its neurological and mood benefits in favour of a virtual alter-

native?

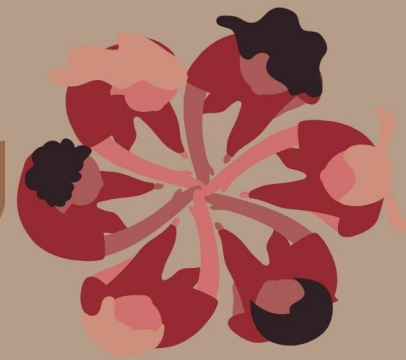
No one can be sure of the full effects of lockdown as we continue to remain firmly under the hold of the changes that COVID-19 has thrust upon us, yet we can try to find some comfort in our ability, in a time of darkness and isolation, to connect with and help each other, that countless generations before us have had their own periods of hardship in which the strength of humanity and community have managed to overcome. From ancient civilizations growing as societies together to the technological pillars that have held up families, businesses and the like - lockdown may come and go, but working together and interacting with each other is here to stay.

Written by SARAH DARWICH

Illustrated by ZARA TOEFY



# DIVERSITY & INCLUSIVITY



Hello, I'm Naomi and I'm the school's diversity and inclusivity ambassador for this year. This is a new role within the school, but one that we feel is vital in order to make sure everybody's voices and opinions are heard. The events of the summer really highlighted the injustices in society and we, as a school, want to speak up about it.

*The year 2020 was a historical one for many reasons: the COVID-19 pandemic hit hard and struck millions of households worldwide; the media was still reeling from the Australian bushfires that had captivated the population in January; perhaps one of the most prevalent images was that of the death of the 46-year-old African-American George Floyd. We are all aware of the circumstances in which George Floyd was killed, and his death was a significant moment in the realisation of the struggles of the 21st Century's battle for racial equality.*

*George Floyd died on the 25th May 2020, sparking worldwide conversations and demonstrations. Protests took place across 2,000 towns and cities across more than 60 countries. It is also estimated that between 15 and 26 million*

*people took part in the protests at some point in the United States, making it the largest protest in US history. Meanwhile, in Britain, protests took place in over 150 locations, including Plymouth. At one point, it is estimated that more than 10,000 people were attending the London protests every week.*

As a young black woman, last summer really hit hard. My life experiences seemed to be up for debate and seemed to be invalidated by the poisonous words of certain groups. However, amongst the chaos, there were signs of hope. Seeing all racial groups standing together in solidarity for a common cause was enough to reduce me to tears. The support and allyship was overwhelming, especially from our students. It was so powerful seeing all those people making a stand for what they believe in and demonstrating what we, as a school, are rooted in. Conversations were brought up in homes that exposed the ignorant views still held by some, bringing attention to the fact that we are a generation that is increasingly straying from outdated ideologies, creating our own informed opinions.

*Having those tough conversations with family and friends can be difficult, but it is extremely important to open up this healthy discussion so that, as a society, we can become more tolerant and accepting of everyone, regardless of race, age or gender. Society is constantly changing and adapting, and it is vital that we ensure our attitudes evolve alongside this.*

Ignorance is what made me want to make a change, no matter how big or small. Since acquiring my role, I have set up a working group whose aim is to make a difference in the school. The group consists of twenty-six year twelves. Mrs Hoyte generously gives up her time to support and guide us. The group has 5 subdivisions, all working on a different project. There is the PSHE reform group; the library display group; the hallway display group; the event/culture group and the research group. In the beginning, our main aim was educating students about the Black Lives Matter movement and the struggles faced by black people. Although this is still the forefront of this group, we also want to encourage tolerance for all people within our school community.

My main aim for this year is to contribute to an update to the PSHE curriculum by adding more relevant and informative topics relating to this issue. The PSHE reform group and I have been working closely with Mrs Lewin to make sure that this happens in an efficient and effective way so that the new curriculum can come into effect

at the start of the next academic year. Alongside this, the other groups also have their own aims, including the target to put up two display boards once we return to school. One of them is going to be located in the library and will have books intended to help educate people about the black struggle, and most importantly books by a diverse range of authors, to celebrate the creativity that comes out of the black community. The second display board will be situated in the hallway and will aim to educate students on slurs; systemic racism and promote tolerance in general. The culture group also aims to put together videos for assemblies and tutor times to educate about different specific topics. All the groups have made amazing progress and we are so eager to see our vision come together.

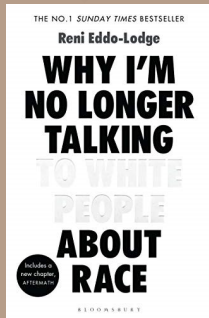
*It's sad that, despite living in the 21st Century, there is still not racial equality. Racism is still a major issue that needs to be tackled and though we're aware this will take time, we hope that these years will go down in history as progressive. All of the little things that we each do make a difference, whether that is engaging in a tough conversation, reading a book to educate ourselves, or watching a documentary. If you're interested in learning more about diversity and black history, we urge you to take a look at some of the recommendations below, and we hope that you'll enjoy them.*

*Written by NAOMI AGBOBLI*



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## BOOK Why I'm No Longer Talking To White People About Race by Reni Eddo-Lodge



I cannot recommend this book highly enough. As someone who is coming to this book from a white-British point of view, my eyes were opened. Not only does this book talk about Black history in Britain (which is something not talked enough about in our curriculum), but also about the whitewash of feminism and the links between class and race. It is a very honest book that talks about topics that should have been discussed long ago. It will open your eyes to white privilege and the different types of racism that are still very much a part of our society today.

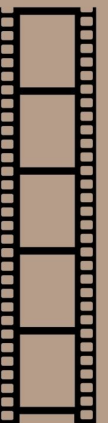
Definitely a must-read, one which will hopefully lead to a future where these sorts of books are no longer necessary.

Review by LARA BRINSDEN

## Hidden Figures FILM

This movie is simply outstanding, it captures the daily life struggles of African American women in the workplace and in general, focusing on how society degrades and minimises black voices. It empowers black women and teaches everyone how powerful and important women, and especially black women, are. Moreover, it highlights how vital black women, and women in general, are in STEM and shows young women that they can too rise above society's stereotypes and dominate the field of their choice.

Review by VENUS EGONU



## DOCUMENTARY Will Britain Ever Have A Black Prime Minister? Presented by David Harewood– 2016 BBC Documentary on YouTube



This documentary is so eye-opening; it discusses the facts and figures of systemic racism and the hurdles that hinder young black students. The documentary follows black children from birth until post 16, evaluating every stage and talks about the obstacles faced at every stage. Even as a black student myself, I found some of the statistics shocking and thought-provoking. I would recommend everyone to watch it at some point to really see things from an alternative perspective that you may not have previously considered. This conversation is one that definitely needs to be had and it's great that the BBC opened it up and approached it from a factual perspective. Review by Naomi Agbobli

# How Renewable Energy Will Shape The Future Of Geopolitics

The shift away from fossil fuels is not only necessary in order to minimize the enhanced greenhouse effect but also to make the 21st century more politically stable. The switch to renewable energy means that fuel would be more accessible as it can be harnessed from abundant sources such as the sun and wind, allowing each country to achieve energy security in their own right. It also stops the current major players in the fuel industry from capitalising exploiting other countries, thereby reducing international tensions. Moreover, the price of energy will shift to become based upon technological advancements in things such as efficiency rather than being controlled by a monopoly- no longer by just the handful of “players” who happen to control the current oil market.

Achieving this sort of future will not be easy.

Firstly, countries whose revenue relies upon the export of oil will suffer, especially as the majority of these petrostates are more politically volatile. Due to the fact that fossil fuels account for 85% of today's energy, many superpowers have vied for influence in these countries, which are often corrupt. As the lack of demand for these fuels increases, western countries will likely pull away from the petrostates giving them the opportunity to reform, or possibly leaving their people more vulnerable.



Secondly, although more countries will have the ability to become energy secure as the use of renewables increases, some countries will still continue to have an advantage over others. China, although the world's largest oil importer, already produces 70% of the world's solar modules in addition to manufacturing 60% of the world's lithium-ion batteries. Whilst this has had a positive effect on the rest of the world – (the cost of solar panels and batteries has dropped by 85% in the past decade) China's seat at the table becomes ever more dominant, the question is what China will do with that power.

The next 50 years will see many countries greatly changed as a result of geopolitics, as the green new era emerges lets hope democracy and peace will prevail with it.

Written by LARA BRINSDEN

# Introduction From The Earth Alliance

AMY

My name is Amy and I am co-leading the Earth Alliance at PHSg with Lara. I am very passionate about protecting our environment as I feel that it is an issue that affects the whole world. In the future, I would like to be a marine biologist, and try to protect and preserve areas of the oceans for marine life to flourish. My hope within the Earth Alliance is to get schools involved to make the smaller changes to their lives to better the environment and to start a composting scheme to reduce food waste and make schools greener places.



Instagram

check out @earthalliance.phsg on Instagram for more information.

LARA

Hi, my name is Lara, and as Amy said, we have founded Earth Alliance at Plymouth High. As both Amy and I have begun to find out, many of the students have the same goals that we do, to make our school and city a more environmentally friendly place, to protect nature and all who live in it. We hope to achieve this by collaborating with other schools to begin green initiatives to allow us to do simple things that make big differences. With action comes change, with this mindset we are hoping to create real, lasting change.



## BEEES NEED YOUR HELP!



Many people think there are two types of bees: honeybee and bumblebees. However, there are around 270 species of bees resident in the UK alone, and they're incredibly important to agriculture and to our environment. 84% of EU crops and 80% of our wildflowers rely on insect pollination, and most plants can't reproduce without being pollinated. This means that if there's a drop in bee populations then farmers may struggle to grow crops and it could, if left unchecked, lead to an increase in food insecurity across the world. Bees also pollinate wildflowers – without bees our countryside and urban areas would lose colourful flowers, and other wildlife that depends upon wild plants would suffer.



The question I'm sure you're all asking now is; are bee populations declining? The answer is yes. A study from 2019 called 'Bees Under Siege' (by Buglife and WWF)

analysed data from 228 species of bees in the East of England, 17 of those have already gone extinct and a quarter are under threat. This is due to many things, such as the loss of wildflower habitats, the use of pesticides on crops, and climate change.

What can you do to help? Many things! But here are three easy ones;

- support charities
- Plant flowers native to your local area in your garden that are easy for bees to pollinate
- checking whether pesticides are used on products you buy

So get involved! The pollinators of the UK need help, and everyone can help, so spread the word!

Written by HOLLY WHITEHOUSE



# Clothing That Doesn't Cost The Earth

As I'm sure we are all aware by now, we are at a critical turning point in the climate emergency. According to María Espinosa Garcés, UN General Assembly President, "11 years are all that remain to avert catastrophe." This was nearly two years ago and despite global carbon dioxide emissions falling by 6.4%, (2.3 billion tonnes) in 2020, this is not enough, as these figures clearly relied on industries such as aviation being shut down, and are expected to spike again once the pandemic is brought under control.

With this in mind over the last few months, and clearly a lot of time on my hands, I have been trying my best to be more environmentally conscious. This has meant swapping out single use plastic for reusable options; turning plastic food containers into plant pots, and even trying my hand at making some homemade christmas gifts with my limited crafting skills. It's the thought that counts though, right? Of course, a reusable straw in an oat milk latte isn't going to change the world; ultimately if we are to curb the ecological crisis before it is too late, the change is going to have to come from billion dollar corporate giants, as well as anxious Gen Z activists.

However, we have to start somewhere, and any small action towards becoming more sustainable is a step in the right direction, whether that be cooking more vegan meals, conserving water and electricity or, as I will be discussing in this article, being more savvy about how and where we shop for clothes.

In our evermore digital and consumerist world, fast fashion is able to entice consumers with flashy marketing campaigns of on trend clothing at affordable prices. Though while online fast fashion companies such as



SHEIN, Boohoo and Wish are able to hide behind the pop up mega offers and glamorous backdrops of sports cars and swimming pools, there is a lack of transparency around their sourcing of materials, environmental impact as well as worker exploitation and child labour. Waste is at the heart of fast fashion – with an estimated 100 billion items of clothing made each year. Coupled with the ethos of bringing in new styles every season and discarding items once out of fashion (much of which ends up in landfill in the global south), companies are producing more harmful greenhouse gases such as methane and carbon dioxide than ever before.

The global fashion industry (the second most polluting industry worldwide) is worth over 300 billion dollars and with the manufacturing process of one cotton t-shirt using 2700 litres of water, as well as carbon emissions from shipping and unnecessary use of single-use plastic, it is clear that the impact of fast fashion runs deep. Companies need to be held accountable for their impact and be transparent about their practices.

While looking for sustainable fashion brands online, I came across one brand who claimed to be eco friendly, stocking a range of suitably cliched slogan t-shirts such as ‘skip a straw save a turtle’ and ‘bee kind to the planet.’ As I dug deeper into the website, I wasn’t 100% convinced that their sustainability claims were legitimate, however I eventually found one hoodie that was apparently made ethically from recycled plastic bottles. It stated that it was shipped in biodegradable packaging with a percentage of profits going to animal rescue charities. How much of the hoodie was made from recycled plastic, how sustainable the packaging was (for example if it degraded into harmful microplastics), and which charity the money was allegedly going to was unknown, but I reasoned that at least the company was probably doing its bit for the environment. When I went to checkout, I was shocked (though sadly not surprised) that their largest size, which they called XXL, was the same as roughly a UK size 10-12! For a company boasting positivity and self love, this display of blatant exclusivity, as well as the lack of clear evidence to support their sustainability claims was the last (reusable) straw, and I moved on.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that being able to avoid fast fashion is a privilege. Buying from ethical or eco friendly brands is often a lot more expensive, if they are to pay employees in the production chain a fair wage for their work as well as the extra cost of sourcing materials. Even buying clothes on resale sites such as depop, although a great resource to avoid clothing going to waste, takes increased time and effort to find exactly what you are looking for in your size and budget. For many people, fast fashion brands are a necessity and it is up to the fashion industry as a whole to innovate production chains to be less harmful to the planet.

Thankfully, the future looks bright with big name high street stores such as Craghoppers, Levi’s and Primark making pledges in-

cluding removing all plastic packaging from their products. This means being able to trace where their cotton is produced and collections which use recycled materials and less water than conventional production methods. These companies still have a very long way to go, but it is certainly moving in the right direction. There are also smaller brands such as Lucy and Yak, which use organic and recycled materials and are completely plastic free, committed to paying all of their employees both in the UK, and in India, where the garments are made, a fair livable wage. They also sell items that are not perfect, but still completely functional for a discounted price to ensure nothing goes to waste.

These companies are setting a precedent for the fashion industry to do better and create affordable clothing that doesn’t cost the earth. As we are reminded on a near daily basis, it is up to the innovators and leaders of our generation to steer our future away from certain doom of a climate disaster (no pressure there then). It is all too easy for this daunting task to feel impossible and that any individual efforts we make couldn’t possibly make a difference. However, as consumers we hold the power to show this billion dollar industry that exploiting workers and destroying the planet for cheap clothes is unacceptable and we will not stand for it!

Fast fashion isn’t going anywhere in a hurry, but small actions which lead to a change in the way we shop and eventually, the culture of the industry as a whole, will make a difference. Taking the first step in challenging fast fashion is simple because it doesn’t have to mean shopping exclusively at expensive eco friendly designer outlets. In the words of Vivienne Westwood, the essence of sustainable fashion is “Buy less. Choose well. Make it last.”

Written by FRANKIE BALDRY

Illustrated by ARIANNE ARAGON



# The Five Letter Word

Death. A five letter word written so easily but scarcely talked about in our British culture. A death avoiding culture, that negatively impacts on our mental health and wellbeing when we must later deal with death, loss and grief. One role of a doctor is to reveal death, to communicate death and to create a connection to death that is both challenging, painful and emotional. But isn't this everyone's role? Does the role of religions, cultures and countries who are more open to death offer a solution to the fear culture we have created in the United Kingdom? Since we are all destined towards this fate- this path- we would expect such a unifying factor to connect us, to consolidate us but instead this simple five letter word creates a silence, an awkwardness and a swift change of subject onto next week's shopping list. Can we analyse and learn from cultures that create an openness around death, and if they do this so easily- why can't we?

In the Hindu culture and religion, as well as the Buddhist culture, death is seen as a stepping stone towards a pond of eternal life. We, as water droplets, will become small drops in a vast ocean- the metaphor of an ocean could seem daunting and open and endless or it could be seen as a unison and a connection back to the root of existence that offers some sense of tranquility to a feared subject. In fact this sense and reasoning of something we know so little about is something that draws people towards religion- a study by Ohio state university found that there are 16 psychological factors that draw people towards religion with one being fear of death, and another a sense of community. With both of these ideas providing comfort in the midst of an ageing population crisis that creates new problems

of quality of life and palliative treatment every year: it seems poignant to find some solution to the water source of dealing with death people aren't willing to dip their toes into. This art of dealing with death can be seen clearly in Buddhism through the maransati practise of death meditation ; losing an attachment to the material world and finding a realisation of our futile existence to create these ties with death. Analysing these cultural differences could provide us with the knowledge of why we have created such an uncomfortable culture about death in the UK.

Death is a common topic of the media. A fear word that could be propelled into non-communication by this potentially controlling form of propaganda. But identifying how we deal with other cultures and religions has the ability to examine the bias we may have towards keeping death as a well-known secret.

Dealing and coming to terms with death throughout culture could be seen from a consequentialist viewpoint as resulting in a more tranquil ending to life and potentially acceptable to use actions like euthanasia in extreme circumstances. But with the conflict of categorical imperatives like killing beyond a religious perception of natural law it is a very complex issue. Euthanasia remains a controversial topic, balancing quality of life against medical ethics. Key cases throughout the media and UK's history analyse the public reaction to this issue; the first being the Dr Cox and Lilian Boyes case- who injected Lilian Boyes with potassium chloride to end her life. The slowing down of her heart could be seen to provide her an escape to that eternal sea, it allowed her to become removed from the immense amount of pain, and allowed her

to hold hands with her children as she died. Though many would argue from a moral view-point, killing or assisting with killing is a categorically wrong action despite any potential better consequences, and that the options of palliative care that are provided in this country should outweigh any leniency towards this accelerated death. This action of removing Lillian Boyes from pain was illegal and weighs into ... Elderly people might sense they are a burden and feel pressured to opt for euthanasia- feeling they are a pressure on their family, their friends, this country and the NHS.

"Isn't there some way to turn dying into some kind of celebration," Broyard wondered. "A birthday to end all birthdays?" -wrote Anatole Broyard in the 1980s. A small speck of change crushed under the heel of discomfort and polite British culture. This secret culture is somewhat explainable by the privacy many worlds prefer to feel when experiencing death- not surrounded by the flood-light lights and stench of bacterial disinfect clogging to the back of their throats- in fact a Comres survey found that only 6% of people would want to die in a hospital with the rest much more inclined to die in an environment which they find more comfortable and private. Lillian Boyes died in hospital but holding the hands of her children- amidst the COVID 19 pandemic and the isolation of patients in hospitals, without loved one, friends or family brings death back to this cyclical fear in the forefront of many's subconscious- dying alone. Another heart-wrenching ethical dilemma: the removal of an emotional solace for a dying patient, dying in the circumstance of a global pandemic sweeping the world. A party is a group, a celebration with others but dying on your own in the absence of others, in the absence of comfort and the absence of privacy would

never be a party. Questioning whether COVID 19 is the rubber sole in the crushing of this five letter word.

Although we present palliative care as the obvious solution to terminal, end of life illnesses could seeing palliative care in other countries change the way we view our own healthcare system. The out-ageing population continues to increase pressure on our healthcare services- not only A and E but primary care and community care. Not only does the juxtaposition of the increasing age of the elderly but the increasing modernisation of artificial intelligence we are beginning to adapt in healthcare create two ironic developments but also has some possibility of creating a culture where death is much easier not only on the healthcare service but patients too- reducing that burden of pressure seen previously. For example the use of robots booming in Japan and China to provide comfort in end of life care and reduce the pressure of healthcare staff through their ability to disinfect rooms, patients and easily perform tasks that could add to an already pressured job- as long as their is compliance to the robot regulations in medicine of 1942. This oxymoron of the old and the young provides answers to some hard questions we face when confronting end of life care- in this country do we associate the old with the old and not with the new, and do other countries with hierarchical cultures with a greater emphasis for respect of the elderly do it better than us? Although we can question the disadvantages of artificial intelligence- does it show technological being used to far, can it still create a comfort without a human, where does the problem of accountability arise- all these questions probe if this is an effective or expensive solution in end of life care. But still the question remains, do other countries do it better than us?

Not isolated to a single country but places both abroad and in the UK offer a more open discussion of death. The US system of death over dinner and frequent death cafes across the world offer an informal setting to the somewhat challenging topic. Across multiple sources, the UK is seen as one of the best countries in the world for palliative care, whether that be the funding provided or the leniency towards these better services compared to the potential funding of euthanasia or assisted suicide in a more religious culture. The UK provides us with support and care for our elderly and may still adapt to deal with the increasing pressures of an ageing society and potential technological advancements.

Death. Still a difficult topic but it seems to slowly emerge as a thought for many of us to discuss, whether that be over dinner or over a coffee. There is still some despite over the legalisation of assisted suicide in this country whether that be through the Lord Falconer's bill or over the controversy of the Dr Cox case or the emotional social media case of Charlie Gard. As we

still battle with these ethical judgments and the balance of both consequentialist and deontological theories we may never reach a judgement on the right decision for the greater good but what palliative care in this country and across the world highlights is that although we may associate palliative care with the old, it is rooted in both advancement and technology that brings it back to the new. Creating comfortable circumstances for death, reinforcing the myths of dying presented not only on social media but across all media functions and providing some comfort towards end of life care.

Death. We may see the UK as providing a culture that is fearful of death but our high prominence throughout the world for palliative care, our creation of palliative care doctors in the 1980s questions whether it is our culture or whether some of us are not yet comfortable with these topics. But for now we seem to be making progress.

Written by ABI FINNIE

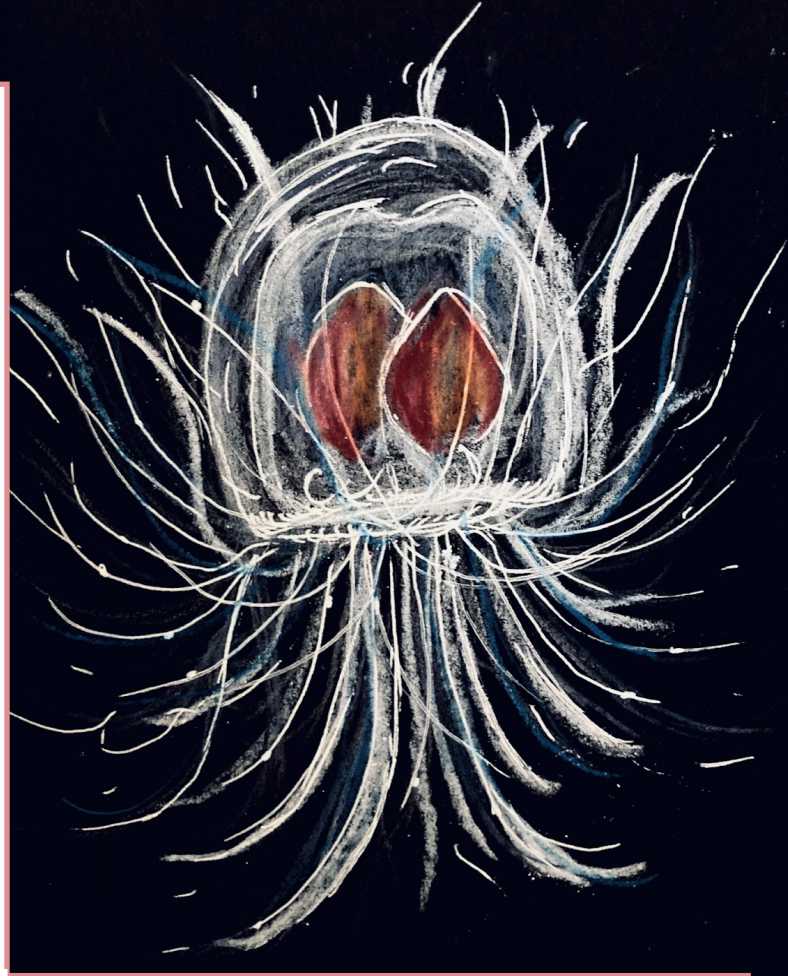
# Animals In Science

Animals have walked the Earth long before humans arrived, and yet in the short expanse of our existence, we have managed to wipe out hundreds of species. The number is now reaching up to 150 per day. Yet declaring a species extinct in the first place is a very difficult thing to do; we don't have the time or resources to scour the globe for every tiny organism. It takes decades to see if an animal will turn up again. And even then, some are missed out.

But with the species we have identified, many of the more recognisable ones are lost. For example, the Indian Cheetah disappeared in 2019, along with the last Wild Sumatran Rhino. This raises the questions: do we really need animals and how do they help us?

Scientific research shows some of the key ways in which animals contribute to our society. Of the 252 essential chemicals selected by the World Health Organisation, 11% originated from plants and 9% came from animals. Along with this, many are being used in research to discover new methods to treat diseases like cancer. This isn't just by testing new drugs on them - it is targeted at specific animals who have rare qualities and resistance in combating disease.

One of these creatures is the axolotl. This unique species is able to regrow arms, legs, restart its heart, and even regenerate the spinal cord if severed. One study showed that a head of one axolotl could be attached to another. Not only this, but they can live for



around 15 years. If we compare this to other animals of their size, there is a vast difference in life expectancy, for example, the rat only lives for 2 years, and the hamster, although only a few inches smaller, also lives for the same amount of time. So why does the axolotl live for so long?

This could be due to the fact that they reach maturity at an early age. The average human brain stops developing at around 25, which is roughly at  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the average lifespan. However, axolotls reach maturity after just one year, and as they live until around 15, they stop developing at about  $\frac{1}{15}$ th of their age. If this were also true to humans, our average life expectancy would theoretically be 375.



This species, or rather an earlier version, has been around since the dinosaurs, surviving the meteorite and many catastrophic events. The earlier variant, *Metoposaurus Algarvensis*, has evolved over millions of years, and over this time, gained abilities like a resistance to cancer. The axolotl is over 1000 times more resistant than other mammals, which is because of how perfectly they are able to replicate cells. Cancer is caused when cells divide uncontrollably, and spread throughout the body. Because of the axolotl's ability to regenerate cells and whole limbs so perfectly, it means that the chances of a cell mutating and losing control of cell division is very low.

But the downside is that like many animals, the axolotl is critically endangered. Originating in Mexico, its habitat has been polluted, taken over by cities and the urban environment. They are very popular pets, but in the wild, there are fewer than 1000 individuals left. That's less than the number of tigers, and cheetahs, and many more familiar animals that we hear of every day. But we certainly don't hear of the axolotl very often.

Another animal is the *turritopsis dohrnii*, a type of jellyfish that can literally live forever. They achieve this by reverting to an earlier stage of their life cycle - in other words, making their bodies younger whenever they like, so when injured, they can access the faster healing ability of a younger jellyfish. In order to do this, their tentacles retract, bodies shrink, and they sink to the ocean floor in order to start the cycle again. This is only possible when they reach adulthood, and they can be killed by other

means like getting eaten by a shark. But, in theory, they could live forever, and similarly to the axolotl, they are resistant to cancer because they can shut off the production of particular cells or DNA. This ability could also link to maturity - axolotls reach it at an early stage, while the immortal jellyfish can easily convert back to the immature stage of its life cycle whenever it falls ill.

But how does this help science? It reveals that immortality is possible, and there have been theoretical theories relating to 'immortal' animals, like the planarian worms or the jellyfish. It shows us that it is possible for organisms to restart their hearts, or restart the cycle of their lives, and that it is possible to beat cancer. This could be the closest we will ever get to turning back time, or true immortality, by learning from the organisms around us. Some of the ways we experiment with animals may not be morally right, but it could certainly uncover many mysteries, like forever looking young or extending our lives beyond the reasonable amount of time. There are many ways animals can help us, if we only look in the right places and allow time for the natural world to recover. Perhaps we should focus on fixing the planet instead of our looks.

Either way, animals are vital to our survival. Maybe we will get to extend lives, or find new ways to make them easier - but for now, we need to focus on the natural world, and fix it before learning from it.

Written and Illustrated by AGATHA GARSTANG



# SILENT THOUGHTS AND ACCEPTING GRIEF

I was going to try and write you all a positive article about self acceptance as I did for the previous issue, but I think it's important to address the fact that things aren't always positive. This being said, you can find light in the darkness.

A good example of this is the yin and yang and its associated symbol. It demonstrates how there is bad in the good and good in the bad, which provides balance in the chaos. We need this balance; the bad makes us appreciate the good instead of taking it for granted.

Another example that's more pop culture based is the movie 'The Book of Life,' which is centred around Latin American culture and the day of the dead. It astutely describes a 'Land of the Remembered', where all the souls who are spoken about and thought about reside, and the 'Land of the Forgotten', where all the souls who had been forgotten go to pass on further. This philosophy has helped me a lot as it made me realise that it's important to keep talking about those who have died and remember them warmly.


I'm not a professional by

any means when it comes to grief or processing anything like that; I just want to offer comfort to those who need it and say that you're not alone.

One thing I've discovered is that we all process grief at different speeds and we all have different reactions. Anger and disbelief are the most common reactions as we take our emotions out on other people and other things — just because someone else is calm about the situation doesn't mean you also have to be. Scream, shout, cry. Don't force yourself into a box where you expect yourself to do the same things as everyone else who is grieving. We all have our own ways of processing it and it's important that we act on them. I write a lot of poetry and songs and channel the energy into a positive outcome so I have a healthy outlet for my emotions.

Moreover, it's important not to suffer alone or in silence. I've found it's freeing to speak about the situation with a friend, whether that was setting everything out neatly or sending a stream-of-consciousness text message about how I was feeling without

Illustrations: canva.com



context. I understand that one of the most frustrating things someone can hear is, “If you need to talk, I’m here,” because it is not always that easy to talk about. When people tell me that, I’m always questioning whether they mean it or they say it because they know I wouldn’t reach out. I



know it’s hard to speak about our situations and grief because it always seems so personal and sacred and we don’t want to break that vow of silence. Keeping it all in and pushing your emotions down is like shaking a bottle of Coca-Cola; one day, it will pop. We need to express ourselves and our emotions when we experience grief so we don’t end up popping.

Don’t be afraid to go through the five stages of grief in a different order (denial, anger,

bargaining, depression, acceptance), and don’t be afraid to be stuck in one stage. In this case, the end goal is what truly matters, not how we get there. Processing grief isn’t a sprint, it’s a walk through a forest of memories; we’re allowed to take our time and enjoy the view. Don’t be afraid to visit places you’ve been before; allow yourself to be in any stage you want as often as you need. It is a long road to acceptance and there is no shortcut.

In the meantime, take as many pictures as you can with everyone you love — live life to the full so you can look back fondly on those memories. Have conversations about philosophy and how you think the world will look in ten years, go roller skating, learn how to crochet. The memories are what matter; goodbye is not forever, it’s just until you meet again.

Written by LAUREN HERD



# How To De-Stress During Lockdown

Okay, let's all agree on something- these, but also physical wellbeing. lockdown has been rough. I'm sure Now, this is not to say you need to many of us have found it difficult do vigorous physical activity all to just get out of our beds some week long, but taking walks- even mornings, even just to brush our if it is just to the shops and back-hair or get dressed- as many winter stimulates a hormone called tryptophan into your bloodstream, mornings may have gone if circumstances were normal. However, it which is turned into serotonin in is evident, or for me at least, that it your brain. Aerobic exercise (more has been much more difficult to commonly known as cardio) has not only prepare myself for the been shown to be the most effective, but actually do the work I tive at stimulating this hormone, need to prepare for when I am at so grab a household member or home all day. I'm sure I could list a your headphones and try to get million natural causes for lack of out a few times a week. If exercise motivation- like being tired, is not for you, it has also been stressed or anxious- but when shown that your body reacts to looked at scientifically, all the evidence is right there. Did you know tonin. It is advised that you need to that lack of sun exposure leads to go outside for at least 15 minutes, lower serotonin levels- the hormone which stimulates happiness in the mind and body? So, what can we do to try and enforce serotonin to still be released, without putting ourselves at risk?

I'm sure you've heard it before, but exercising is very important not only for mental health during uncertain times such as



as this is the time it takes for the production to take place- which you could easily do on a lunch break, or if it is really nice weather, you could even take lunch outdoors for the whole hour. However, in our forecast weather- I don't see picnics in the near future...

Along with exercising the body, it is important to exercise your mind by doing things you enjoy at home, and finding a balance between screen time and other activities. Finding time away from a screen is crucial, as it allows your body to be at ease and there are many activities which do not over stimulate your brain with blue light. It has been proven that phones, televisions and most electronic devices have a 'blue light', which is a short wavelength, meaning it can easily penetrate your eyes. This blocks the production of melatonin which controls your level of drowsiness, therefore confusing your sleeping pattern. Not only does blue light alter your sleeping patterns, but also your working habits (which you definitely want to keep in control at the moment). There are many different activities you could pursue instead of using your phone, including: reading, yoga or organising a board game night with your family. You could also learn to take up a new hobby! I learnt how to knit (at a very basic level) with my Nan, and sometimes I find myself just sitting and knitting for fun- it's a great distraction! However, if you want to have a peaceful Netflix night a few times a week- absolutely go for it! Your body has needs, and sometimes laying in your bed with a good movie is exactly what you need!

Remember that it is normal to feel less productive during uncertain times like these- and that you are not alone if you are feeling overwhelmed at this moment in time. Whilst school work is extremely important- especially for those doing exams this year, it is also crucial that you look after yourself, and listen to what your body needs. Try to make the most of your free time by using it to regulate your stress levels and emotional well-being, and hopefully we will all be in a better position next month! Most importantly: stay safe!

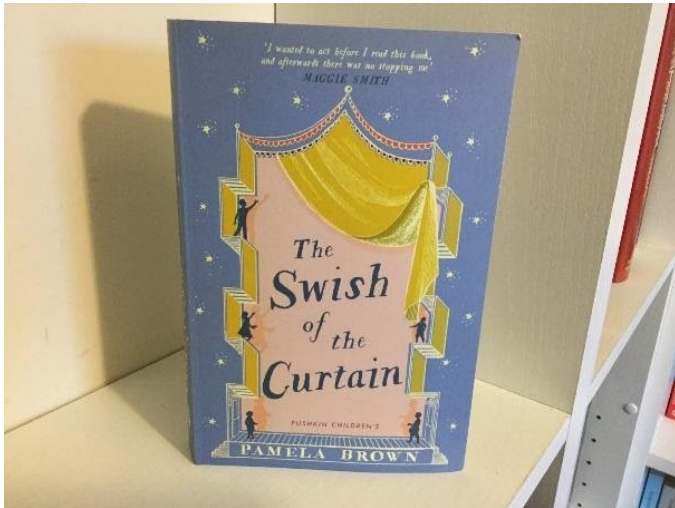
Written by MEGAN DIBBEN

Illustrated by MEGAN WRIGHT



# Book Review Corner

## The Swish Of The Curtain by Pamela Brown



Pamela Brown is the sort of inspirational woman who would have fitted in at PHSG. Brown started writing her first book, **The Swish of the Curtain** (the subject of this review), when she was just 13 years old. A year later, the Second World War began, and Pamela was forced to leave Colchester County High School, and was evacuated to Wales. Pamela continued with her writing and completed the book when she was 16. The book was published a year later, and she used her earnings from the book to train at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art so that she could follow her true dream of becoming an actress.

Pamela Brown's most fa-

mous novel, **The Swish of the Curtain**, is unsurprisingly about a group of children all who yearn for a life on the stage. Seven children from three families, all living in Fenchester (Pamela Brown's fictional version of Colchester), quickly become firm friends. Although there are seven main characters, they all come to life so vividly on the page, that it is easy to get swept up in each of their adventures.

Similar to a lot of great stories, the young people get drawn in almost by accident. A thrown brick (don't ask!) leads to a broken window, leads to the discovery that the church building is actually vacant, which leads to the golden opportunity of starting their own theatre company. So from then on, our seven friends, Maddy (my favourite), Sandra, Vicky, Lyn, Bulldog (real name Percy), Nigel and Jeremy quickly set about writing a play, building scenery, making costumes, composing songs, refurbishing the run-down building, rehearsing, painting posters...busy, talented young people, just like the girls at PHSG.



There is a lot of humour in this book, *Begone – you cannot frighten me!* and its sequels, such as in this sequence:

*“Can you answer that question, Madeline?” asked Miss Green suddenly. Maddy jerked herself away from her dreams. “No, Miss Green.”*

*“Can you if you think carefully?”*

*“No,” said Maddy.*

*“Did you hear the question?”*

*“No,” said Maddy.*

*“Have you any interest whatsoever in what I’ve been saying?”*

*“No,” said Maddy truthfully.”*

Of course, every good story needs a good villain and *The Swish of the Curtain* has such a villain in the character Mrs Potter-Smith. Mrs Potter-Smith is the local gossip and leader of the ladies’ institute who opposes them at every turn. It is always especially delightful when the children get one over on Mrs Potter-Smith, or one of her cohort of crones. I love this scene in **Blue Door Venture** (*Swish of the Curtain* 3):

*Maddy crept gradually nearer and popped up in between Mrs Thropple and Nigel mid conversation, wearing a short, white Goldilocks dress and ringlets, and pointing an accusing finger at Miss Thropple, Maddy quoted from the script of the pantomime:*

*What evil sprite is this I see?*

Dame Maggie Smith, who was in *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, *Gnomeo & Juliet*, and the Harry Potter films (Professor McGonagall) said that this was her favourite book as a child and was the one which made her convinced she had to be an actress.

The pages simply fly by and if you like the *Railway Children* or Emma Carroll, I think you’ll enjoy this too. I’ll leave you with an inspirational quote from Pamela Brown herself:

*“I’ve learned that if you don’t believe in yourself, no one else will. And that sometimes there is no failure, just opportunity.”* Here, here!

Written by LUCY BEASLEY



“If everything  
was perfect,  
you would  
never learn and  
you would  
never grow.”

- Beyonce



“

**We may  
encounter many  
defeats but we  
must not be  
defeated.**

**- Maya Angelou**

”

Be kind whenever  
possible. It is  
always possible.

- Dalai Lama

It is not in the  
stars to hold our  
destiny but in  
ourselves.

William Shakespeare

“

The greatest glory in  
living lies not in never  
falling, but in rising  
every time we fall.

- Nelson Mandela



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