

# RWS 1000

## *Essay Anthology* **2024**



**SIXTH FORM**

*Preparing for Success*



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## RWS1000 Essay Titles

As part of the Self-Growth aspect of the RWS Community programme, students were asked to write a 1000 word essay on one of the titles below.

Art & Design	Is the value of a work of art determined by its price tag? Is the art world elitist and exclusive?
Biology	Do you own your own genetic information? Vaccination should be mandatory. Do you agree?
Business Studies	"Employees that work from home are more productive". To what extent do you agree with this statement?
Chemistry	Discuss the merits and pitfalls of the thermochemical processing of waste and biomass as the world gradually transitions to more sustainable solutions
Computer Science	Is Artificial Intelligence going to save the world...or kill it?
Design and Technology	"Technology will be man's downfall". Do you agree?
Economics	The EU...to be, or not to be?
English Literature	Is Shakespeare's writing universal and timeless?
English Literature and Language	'At any one time, language is a kaleidoscope of styles, genres and dialects'. Critically apply this David Crystal quote to a fiction or non-fiction text of your choice.
Languages	Is bilingualism a threat to unity? Would a common language promote harmony?
Film Studies	Is Netflix killing the film industry?
Geography	'The best way to combat climate change is for individuals to reduce their carbon footprint' Discuss, with reference to specific examples.
Government & Politics	Should First-Past-The-Post be abandoned as an electoral system? Are politics in the UK broken beyond all repair?
History	"Tradition is a thoroughly modern invention." How far do you agree? "We learn far more about the past by studying ordinary people rather than 'Great Men and Women'". How far do you agree? "British History in the 1900s is the story of failure after failure after failure." How far do you agree?
Mathematics	What is the most important mathematical discovery and why?
Media Studies	Does social media improve or impede communication?
Music	Does music distract or help?
Physical Education	"Should performance enhancing drugs (PEDs) be allowed in professional sport?"
Physics	Is nuclear energy the solution to overconsumption of fossil fuels? Should there be a manned mission to Mars?
Psychology	Nature vs nurture. Which plays the most significant role in determining a person's characteristics?
PRE	"If our actions are determined, then it is absurd that we should be held responsible for them." To what extent do you agree?
Sociology	'In society, everyone agrees.' Discuss. Is feminism irrelevant in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century?
Theatre Studies	Live theatre is a dying art form. Do you agree?

# Biology

*"Vaccination should be mandatory. Do you agree?"*

*First Place – Jessica Chigonda*

*Highly Commended – Toby Eatherton*

*"Do you own your own genetic information?"*

*First Place – Albert Boulding*



## *Jessica Chigonda*

The dilemma of mandatory vaccination has been a topic of debate since the first vaccination was developed by Dr Edward Jenner in 1796, where his ideas were heavily condemned by religious leaders who suggested that his method of inoculation went against God's will. However, since then we have seen the great development and medical advancement of vaccinations. Despite all the criticism that Jenner received and the highly religious nature of the west at the time, his vaccine was made mandatory in 1853. Nevertheless, there are still so many myths and scares surrounding vaccination today. I aim to explore a balanced argument regarding whether vaccination should be mandatory in our contemporary society.

One argument against the legislation of mandatory vaccines is that it is a direct violation of our human rights. In 1947, following the criminal behaviour of the Nazis during and leading up to WW2, a code of conduct was created called the "Nuremburg Code." This was put in place to ensure that the damaging and unethical experiments seen in WW2 were never to be repeated "during the course of the experiment the human subject should be at liberty to bring the experiment to an end if he has reached the physical or mental state where continuation of the experiment seems to him to be impossible." This is relative to the needs and well-being of the patient and not what the administrator of the vaccine or the government believes is appropriate. This shows that vaccination should not be made mandatory as it would be a violation of morals. Direct disregard of these laws would perpetuate a damning and hypocritical message – that the government does not value human rights and wants to promote a police state. The government would be extremely hypocritical if it were to ban these practices only to then take them up again 83 years later. Thus, vaccination should not be made mandatory due to its moral implications.

However, vaccinations, like the COVID-19 vaccination, are approved by national regulatory authority, following research. As a result, they are not classified as experimental and do not have to adhere to the Nuremburg Code, so making them mandatory would not violate it. Arguments that vaccinations are experimental are driven by emotion, not scientific and social evidence. Using the word "experimental" connotes a negative, Nazi image, skewing focus away from the fact that mandatory and ethical vaccination is possible. It could be argued that the true damage to human rights is the lack of collective action to avoid known, foreseeable harm to public health (WHO). If anything, it improves the lives of others and creates herd immunity for those who are at an elevated risk and cannot have a vaccine.

On the other hand, vaccination could be seen as coercive and discriminatory. Coercive policies use force or threats to compel individuals to do something they would not otherwise do (). Mandatory vaccination compels people to get vaccinated for fear of losing their jobs or being fined, hence being unethical. This creates restrictions and fines against people in society who refuse to be vaccinated, possibly affecting their quality of life. It is immoral for governments to intentionally cause harm and difficulty towards their citizens. This can also suggest that we do not live in a democracy. By holding favour towards certain people in society, the government is not promoting a democracy where everyone can feel valued and safe to speak up.

On the other hand, differential treatment cannot be said to be inherently discriminatory. Mandatory vaccination policies are usually given to people who are required to work in areas where their health has a direct effect on the health and lives of others. For example, healthcare workers were required to receive a jab during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is not a new concept that to work somewhere or enter certain buildings, you need to have the proper protection. You may be turned away, but this cannot be considered discriminatory. Employment conditions become discriminatory when they distinguish between people unrelated to the job, occupational health, and

safety. Since vaccination relates to occupational health, it is not within the area of discrimination.

Although, refusal for mandatory vaccination can be classed as discriminatory when the refusal is on the grounds of religion or disability, for example. As these are characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010, legal issues may occur. This shows yet another reason as to why vaccination should not be made mandatory.

Mandatory vaccination is crucial for public health and safety. Vaccines have been proven to be highly effective in preventing the spread of infectious diseases such as measles, polio and influenza. By ensuring that everyone is vaccinated, we create herd immunity, which protects those who cannot be vaccinated due to medical reasons. This collective immunity is essential to prevent outbreaks and epidemics. Moreover, mandatory vaccination policies help to reduce the burden on the NHS by decreasing the number of preventable illnesses.

In conclusion, it is very unlikely that vaccination would be made mandatory in our current society as it is one incredibly governed by the people and negative attitudes hinder this. Nevertheless, I think mandatory vaccination would enhance the overall health of our population and if attitudes were not a concern, then I believe it should absolutely be mandatory. Experiencing threats to global health first-hand should push us to do better. Vaccination mandates for children are the most effective because you can reach the most susceptible of our society first. As seen in the early 1800s with the smallpox vaccine, large scale use can eradicate diseases. Especially in larger, more developed countries, we should harness the technology and privilege we have to make our world safer. If we are able to do something that will only benefit us, we should. I hope for a future where attitudes will become more accommodating, and we can think for the welfare of others and not just ourselves.

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*Toby Eatherton*

I do not think that vaccination should be mandatory. That does not mean that I do not support vaccines or their achievements in biology, it simply means that not everyone should be forced to take vaccinations. I used to think otherwise. I used to believe that people who refused to have a vaccine were uneducated and ill informed. But as it turns out, the person who was uneducated was me, as there are many reasons why people won't or can't have a vaccine, even if they wanted to.

Firstly, I would like to explain what a vaccine is, and the 2 types. A vaccine is a solution containing an inactive or weakened pathogen that, when injected into the patient, stimulates an immune response without (most of the time) making the patient ill. The immune response is stimulated by the antigens on the pathogen that can be recognised on the pathogen itself or by infected cells presenting the antigen (APC's). These antigens are then recognised by T helper cells (a type of lymphocyte/ white blood cell) with a complementary binding site to the antigen. These cells then release chemicals that stimulate the cloning of many different types of cells through mitosis. The cells that vaccines are interested in creating are memory B cells, which "remember" the antigen for decades and stay in the blood. So, if the pathogen ever returns, the memory B cells will recognise its chemicals, and differentiate (turn into) a plasma cell. These are like factories that release millions of "soldiers" called antibodies. Antibodies bind to the pathogens antigen and neutralize the pathogen. This is why vaccines are so useful, as it pretty much means you get the faster and more intense response from the memory B cells over your normal response, and it usually causes no harm. However, As I mentioned, a vaccine can contain a weakened OR dead pathogen. They both do the same thing, however, weakened pathogens can still make you ill and potentially kill you. The thing is, this only happens if you have a weak immune system, which brings me on to my first point.

Older people, babies and people with AIDS all have one thing in common: a weak and slow immune system. AIDS literally stands for Autoimmune Deficiency Syndrome. This is what makes the HIV virus so dangerous. It invades cells, helper T cells specifically, which trigger the rest of the immune response. What HIV does is while inside these cells, it uses the T cells own organelles to reproduce, and once done it explodes the cell. So not only does HIV reproduce with these cells, but it also kills them, and in turn halts the entire immune response in the process. Without a healthy or working immune system, even a weak pathogen (some vaccines) can still make people ill and in some cases, kill them. So, making all vaccines mandatory for everyone would just be a terrible idea, as certain vaccine can pretty much be a lethal injection for the people mentioned earlier. A way to solve this would be to make vaccines mandatory only if they contain completely inactive/dead pathogens. However, this would still cause problems for some people because of ethics.

Many people simply are too afraid of needles or just don't want to take the vaccine. This alone means that vaccines just cannot be made mandatory. People would refuse and it would require some pretty ethically questionable measures (forcing it on people, putting them to sleep first) to have everyone take the vaccine. Taking away peoples free will just will not end well, and could cause uproar and potential riots. So, in other words, making vaccines mandatory could just cause more problems than it solves.

However, the safety and efficacy of vaccines have been extensively researched and validated through rigorous scientific scrutiny. Prior to approval, vaccines undergo years of testing in clinical trials to assess their safety, efficacy, and potential side effects. Regulatory agencies such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) meticulously evaluate the data to ensure that vaccines meet stringent standards before they are licensed for public use. Furthermore, post-approval surveillance systems continuously monitor vaccine safety, swiftly addressing any rare adverse events that may arise. The overwhelming

consensus among the scientific community is that the benefits of vaccination far outweigh the risks, making it a cornerstone of modern preventive medicine. Not taking vaccines also puts others at risk of the spread of a deadly disease, which could greatly increase infection/death rates. Making these mandatory could reduce this and help save much larger fractions of the population, which to many people matters more than certain peoples right of choice. Yet these issues are already significantly reduced by majority vaccination anyway. This is called herd immunity, where if most people get vaccinated, the ones that haven't will have a lower chance of getting ill as it is more difficult for the pathogen to survive and spread. And so even the issues caused by not vaccinating are mostly resolved anyway.

So overall, the question still stands in society if vaccines should be made mandatory or not, and there is no definitive answer and there may never be. But in my eyes, the way we go about vaccines should stay mostly the same, as although they are safe to most and do a lot of good, they can still harm vulnerable people. And even ignoring all of that, peoples free will and rights won't change anytime soon, so making things like vaccines "mandatory" just wouldn't work at the moment. So no, vaccines should not be made mandatory.



## *Albert Boulding*

Genetic information ownership has become a complicated and divisive topic in a society full of great biotechnological and genomic advancement, and as science continues to enhance further development into the mysteries of our genetic code, the question is raised; do individuals truly own their genetic information?

Evolving rapidly, genetic testing offers individuals an unprecedented opportunity to have an insight into their vulnerability to various genetic conditions, ancestry, and even potential responses to medication. The process analyses our DNA to identify variations associated with specific traits or diseases, providing valuable information about our health. This information, however, startles debates about what can or cannot be public; and what is in our natural and moral rights. According to Justin Clarence Thomas, an American lawyer associated with the Supreme Court, "A naturally occurring DNA segment is a product of nature and not patent eligible"<sup>1</sup>. This viewpoint emphasizes that DNA should not be asserted as a product of personal ownership, but as a product of nature, not subjected to personal claims.

Concerns over the ownership and use of genetic data has grown throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and informed consent has become a crucial aspect of genetic testing and development, ensuring that individuals are aware of the potential risks and benefits accompanying the process, with which they can have the necessary information to provide a clear and informed decision on the use of their genetic information. The argument however that genetic information is merely a product of nature and not human property, that it is in fact "common property"<sup>2</sup> completely disregards the subject of informed consent, removing the ethical and moral obligation to provide insight to a patient on what happens to the genetic information that they hold. The argument holds promise in a world where individuals are not truly individuals, where we have no say over what happens to our genetic information.

The rise in direct-to-consumer (DTC) genetic testing companies adds another complex argument to the genetic ownership debate. These companies, such as 23andMe, offer consumers the opportunity to explore their DNA without involving healthcare professionals. While this accessibility has massively popularized the industry, it also raises concerns about the commercialization and commodification of genetic information. Collecting vast amounts of genetic data from their customers and selling them to further third-party companies is outlined in their terms and services, which consumers may not thoroughly understand or read which prevents legitimate claims against the act.

DTC genetic testing can be used to provide a worthy cause, allowing consumer genetic information to be sold and distributed to organizations such as the Genetech company, where our genetics are used to research into early detection, treatment, and cures of Parkinson's disease. In this case, the absence of clearly informed consent in selling our genetic information reinforces the argument that it is not in our legal right to own genetic information, and the widespread use of publicly available genetics can contribute in its entirety to a better cause, ethically combatting the previous point of view.

Another ethical concern behind public use of our genetic information is the potential for discrimination depending on our genetics. Employers could exploit the ability to see genetic information to make decisions that adversely

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<sup>1</sup> Justin Clarence Thomas (Myriad 580) - <https://medium.com/nerd-for-tech/should-individuals-own-their-own-dna-f3986ad072be> : Last accessed 19/01/2024

<sup>2</sup> [J Community Genet](#), Property And Human Genetic Information - Property and human genetic information - PMC (nih.gov) : Last accessed 23/01/2024

affect individuals, such as not hiring candidates based on their susceptibility to cancer in the future which could prevent or hinder work. Our genetics should not play a role in determining our ability to work, with this being a prime example of misuse of genetic information. Upon granting companies the ability to access genetics, we lose the right to have full ownership and confidentiality with our own tailored and specific DNA, and traits that we cannot change could prevent opportunities that we would otherwise be granted to take control of.

On the contrary, public ownership of our genetic information could in fact aid the populace with boosting security through Law Enforcement, adding genetic information to databases that can identify individuals and their relatives rapidly. In dire situations, this could be the difference between locating a criminal and allowing them to roam free to further disrupt our society. Arguing that our ownership of genetic information should be personal and private, we lose out on the ability to progress into a world where society could be further protected by law enforcement using our genomes.

Collectively, the ethical arguments into whether we own our genetic information have sparked legal interest between many government jurisdictions globally. For instance, the Genetic Information Non-discrimination Act<sup>3</sup> (GIN) in the United States prohibits discrimination based on genetic information in health insurance and employment, protecting those who distribute their DNA to private companies, ultimately protecting their ownership. However, gaps in legislation and the rapid advancement of genetic technologies pose challenges in ensuring comprehensive protection, with loopholes being formed where private companies can sell our genetic information abroad with little to no risk. This results in vagueness between the individual and their genetic ownership, further reinforcing the argument that we wouldn't truly know if our genetic information is in fact ours, blindly sending our genetics into a world unknown to us.

Conclusively, our genetic information should remain privatized to our own body, however, considering arguments such as the natural right to distribute genetics, conditional offering of genetics to private companies to test, as well as aiding law enforcement, we should be aware that theoretically allowing public access to our genetic information could benefit society as a whole. Ultimately, we should have the right to decide what happens with our genetic information, with the ability to determine the journey of the distributed genetics remaining close to our human rights. With legal protection and further legislation against wrongful usage of DNA globally, we can combat the uncertainty that comes with genetic information ownership. Creating a constructive collaboration between nature and personal ownership, global health and medicinal development could advance at a faster rate, whilst retaining the personal touch to genetic information that makes an individual themselves.

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<sup>3</sup> <sup>1</sup> *U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission* - <https://www.eeoc.gov/genetic-information-discrimination> : Last accessed 19/01/2024

# *Business*

“Employees that work from home are more productive”.

To what extent do you agree with this statement

*First Place – Kiara Coke*

*Highly Commended – Aimee Crouch*

*Highly Commended – Ralph Coleman*



## *Kiara Coke*

Working from home describes a modern working arrangement where employees perform job responsibilities remotely, typically from their own homes instead of an office. There has been an increase in employees working from home in recent years, which has sparked the question if employees are more productive from an office or at home. Before 2020, the more traditional form of work was conducted in an office setting away from home. Since 2020, more workers are working from home due to the outbreak of COVID-19 where people were restricted in terms of travel and interacting with one another. This led to an increase in employees working from home as it lessened people's proximity, ensuring people's safety during the pandemic and soon became the norm in many countries, including the UK. Prior to the pandemic in 2019, 4.7% of UK employees worked from home (WISERD). By April 2020, 46.6% of employees did at least part of their job from home and 86% of those did so as a result of the pandemic (ONS). Even after the pandemic, people began to recognise the benefits to homeworking and the option arose to work from home, rather than going into the office.

Some would agree that employees that work from home are more productive. A recent study reported in Forbes found that "workers who worked from home 100% of the time were 20% happier on average, compared to those who didn't have the ability to work from home. A more flexible work style can lead to better mental health for employees, as evidence states. A better mental health can lead to a better work mentality as their needs are being attended to by employers as they have been entrusted to handle their business at home. By having a better work mentality, this increases the productivity levels as employees actually enjoy working and complete it to the best of their ability. This is supported by the 2023 Owl Labs study on hybrid work which found that 91% of workers reported being as productive, or more productive in their own working style. By offering a flexible working style, this makes employees feel less stressed as they aren't micromanaged and can take control of their work life. This makes them more motivated as they can work more comfortably in their own environment, which increases their productivity as they can tailor their work schedule to maximise their ability. Remote workers enjoy the flexible workstyle which is shown by Buffer who found that worldwide, 61% of workers have a 'very positive' view of remote working. This enjoyment of a flexible workstyle can also reduce absenteeism and help companies save money, reducing a business' costs and increasing their revenue.

Some would disagree that employees that work from home are more productive. This can be due to increased distractions, such as other members of the family interrupting or electronics. According to research from Microsoft, 42% of remote workers multitask during meetings, showing a decrease in concentration. A recent study from the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) found that remote workers who were randomly assigned to work from home full time were 18% less productive than in-office employees, either taking longer to complete tasks or getting less done. This evidence shows that remote workers are less efficient when at home due to increased distractions which leads to less productivity. This is due to remote workers not completing their work at the same rate as those working from home, affecting the business' sales. 85% of leaders say hybrid work has made it challenging to have confidence in employees' productivity. This lack of productivity leads to less output being made and less sales for the business, disadvantaging a business as less profit is being made.

Some would agree that employees that work from home are more productive as they can reduce costs, such as for travelling. 33% of employees love the savings that working from home brings. 53% of business leaders believe hybrid working helps employees better manage the costs associated with work (The Home Office Life). This can lead to happier employees as they don't have to wake up early and spend money on transport to and from work which can also benefit a business as they can spend more time working, instead of travelling and taking time out of their work day. By working for longer due to lack of travel, this increases employees' productivity as they spend

lots of time working and can potentially overwork due to losing track of time in the comfortability of their own home. However, this idea of working from home being better for employees and increasing productivity could be challenged as not all employees enjoy working from home. For example, working from home can lead to overworking as previously mentioned. Although this can be seen as a positive, some would say overworking is bad as it can lead to increased stress levels. This would mean that employees become unhappy and can affect the quality of their work, meaning less sales due to lack of quality and increased costs for the business due to increased output and lack of sales. Additionally, 81% of younger workers stated they would feel more isolated without time in the office. This shows how solely working from home can affect people's mental health's and disadvantage a business. By having unhappy employees, it can lead to less productivity as they aren't happy or motivated to be working. This means less sales are being made, leading to less profit which is a negative impact to a business.

In conclusion, I believe that employees that work from home can be more productive, however a majority are not. People working from home are more easily exposed to disturbances that they are unable to control, distracting them from work, whereas a work environment is more controlled. Employees have the potential to be productive from home, however that depends on their individual circumstances, resources available to them and their work ethic. This exposure to intrusions inside the home may lead to decreased productivity which leads to less output and therefore less sales, decreasing revenue and potential profit.

*Aimee Crouch*

Employees that work from home tend to have higher productivity levels than those that work in the office during hours. This can be for a few reasons such as eliminating commuting times, less social distractions and a healthier work-life balance. However, some employees can become too comfortable in their own home and not be able to keep up with the proper work environment when invited into the office.

I agree with the statement above to a certain extent. According to ONS as of June 2023, employees working remotely was at 10% and those working hybridlike was 29%. These statistics have risen since the pandemic and show that working from home is becoming increasingly popular amongst society. Recent psychological studies have shown the mental health benefits in adults working from home such as lower stress levels which, according to a study by PGI, 82% of remote workers agreed with. This is because working from home gives us a possibility to spend more time with our family and friends (and pets), which helps us to approach new tasks more regenerated and with increased motivation. This is extremely important for business owners to become aware of so that they ensure their employees feel comfortable when working for them, which will have positive effects on their business such as being known for treating their employees well, creating a good reputation for the business. This can also attract more workers to fill needed vacancies in the business, giving a win-win situation to both parties, and overall increasing levels of productivity in employees.

However, working from home has reportedly caused opposite effects on employees such as increased stress and signs of depression. The royal society of public health revealed that 67% of remote workers said that they felt “less connected with colleagues”, this is a negative impact because the workplace is genuinely meant to feel like you are part of a team so not to seem alone. Another effect a recent study has shown is the effect of house clutter on productivity and mental health. Many remote workers agreed on the fact that the environment around them reflects on their concentration, for example if their house is messy, so is their brain. The study also mentioned that this can lead to depression and more stress. Employees often encounter bigger interruptions, miss more lunch hours, and put in longer days than they ever did back at the office. On average, remote workers clocked a whopping 16.8 more days a year than their office colleagues, which could be why almost a third of remote workers requested a mental health day. This won't reflect well on the business because it will make it look as though they are overworking their employees and will also decrease the quality of work being produced due to lack of motivation from the remote workers.

Several studies over the past few months show productivity while working remotely from home is better than working in an office setting. On average, those who work from home spend 10 minutes less a day being unproductive, work one more day a week, and are 47% more productive. These statistics prove that remote working produces more motivated employees which leads to higher productivity and therefore higher quality of work. A study by Standford of 16,000 workers over 9 months found that working from home increased productivity by 13%. This increase in performance was due to more calls per minute attributed to a quieter more convenient working environment and working more minutes per shift because of fewer breaks and sick days. As these statistics continue to improve productivity for businesses there will be a lot less in-office work demanded which will lead to less commuting time for the employees and an overall pollution decrease from their cars and even public transportation. Furthermore, 77% of those who work remotely at least a few times per month show increased productivity, with 30% doing more work in less time and 24% doing more work in the same period according to a survey by ConnectSolutions. So surely more businesses will be more inclined to allowing their employees to work remotely more often instead of dragging them into the office.

Home-life distractions are more likely to prevent productive work when you don't enjoy the work. Microsoft released a new study, where it found that 85% of leaders say that the “shift to hybrid work has made it challenging to have confidence that employees are being productive.” More concretely, 49% of managers of hybrid workers “struggle to trust their employees to do their best work.” This lack of trust in worker productivity has led to what Microsoft researchers termed productivity paranoia: “where leaders fear that lost productivity is due to employees not working, even though hours worked, number of meetings, and other activity metrics have increased.” This shows that even employers or team managers don’t trust their employees to complete the work to the best of their ability, and even worse, can’t manage the expectations of work in the office because they are at home part or full time. That data aligns with a new report by Citrix based on a global survey of 900 business leaders and 1,800 knowledge workers - those who can do their job remotely. Half of all business leaders believe that when employees are working “out of sight,” they don’t work as hard. And 48% of the business leaders installed monitoring software on the computers of their employees to check on their work. No wonder only 49% of employees say that they trust their employer.

In conclusion to this, employees do tend to enjoy working from home more, but the productivity levels don’t seem to increase significantly. The fact that employers don’t trust their employees when they are supposed to resemble a team at work proves that offices increase productivity on their own.

*Ralph Coleman*

Studies show that meetings and work tasks in person are much more stressful instead of attending online. In 2021, 70 percent of those who worked from home during the pandemic report virtual meetings are less stressful, and 64 percent now prefer hybrid meetings. The main factor for this is the flexibility that employees have from home compared to being in a workspace under management. This statement varies on the employees' characteristics, focus when at home, home setting and the nature of the work meaning to agree and disagree will change for different people. I agree with this statement as when working at home you have much more freedom and able to be flexible with time and the amount of work you do at different times. Whereas in an office you are fixed to an amount of work in certain time frames which can lead to stress and further lead to lower levels of productivity.

Another factor that will make me agree with this statement is the fact of being at home and comfortable. This will improve your concentration levels which can help get more work done at a much higher quality instead of being sat in an office chair that may not be as comfortable than your home. On the other hand, working from home can bring many distractions. These can be things such as technology, boredom and other house hold objects you are around. When at home it is very easy to have a break on work from home and be able to relax to watch tv, play with pets/family and other online entertainment. Several studies over the past few months show productivity while working remotely from home is better than working in an office setting. On average, those who work from home spend 10 minutes less a day being unproductive, work one more day a week, and are 47% more productive. This shows levels of distraction that working from home can cause and it can lead to being less productive. A of 16,000 workers over 9 months found that working from home increase productivity by 13%.

This increase in performance was due to more calls per minute attributed to a quieter more convenient working environment and working more minutes per shift because of fewer breaks and sick days. 77% of those who work remotely at least a few times per month show increased productivity, with 30% doing more work in less time and 24% doing more work in the same period of time. These statistics show working from home increases productivity and more work gets done. I believe this is due to not being set to a fixed time when working from home. When working in an office as many employees are set to a fixed time you may decide to not do as much work and leave it till last minute before you go home. On the other hand, when at home you will more likely want to get work done as soon as possible as you are able to be free once finished and do what you want due to not being let out/home at a fixed time. This could also increase productivity and employees will want to work from home for this reason.

A study conducted in 2012 shows those office workers who were assigned boring tasks performed better and faster in the regular office setting. Home-life distractions are more likely to prevent productive work when you don't enjoy the work. This study shows the opposite and shows us that while in an office space employee are more motivated to do work in a working environment. This links back to the distractions working from home can cause.

#### Advantages and reasons for more productivity when working from home

A study using employee monitoring software confirmed that the shift to remote work during COVID improved productivity by 5%. In a University of Chicago research paper, scientists found that nearly six in ten of their survey respondents reported higher productivity when working remotely, while only 14% proved less productive. On average, remote work productivity was over 7% higher than in-office productivity. Remote workers are working longer hours. Ergotron's study found that 40% of employees work longer hours at home than when in the office. And data from the National Bureau of Economic Research shows these extended workdays are, on average, about 48.5 minutes longer. For full-time employees, this time could add up to more than 193 additional working hours in a year. Remote workers have an improved work-life balance. Perhaps surprisingly, at the same time, 75% of



Egerton survey respondents said their work-life balance has improved since they've been working from home. In fact, data from Future Forum corroborates this notion. In April 2022, Future Forum found that remote employees have twice as much work-life balance as full-time office workers.

Remote workers experience less stress. A 2020 Nitro study also identified trends toward reduced workplace stress among remote workers. In that study, 29% of remote respondents said they were moderately stressed at work, down from 33% in 2019 when office work was the norm. The study also showed the number of employees who felt "extremely" stressed while working has declined. This figure fell from 17% in 2019 to 15% in 2020 as work shifted from in person to at home.

# Computer Science

*"Is Artificial Intelligence going to save the world...or kill it?"*

*First Place – Timothy Cosburn*

*Highly Commended – Rayan Ali*

*Highly Commended – Tom Morley*



## *Timothy Cosburn*

Artificial Intelligence is a “somewhat” lifeform, depending on the number of factors implemented into its system, take ChatGPT for example. It takes trillions of data across the internet and applies it onto their chat web, it works simply by (The user) inputting a message for the AI to combat, and the AI would respond (output) with mixed data from the internet, describing fully what they are asking for.

This seems very innocent and is. But this is the mere amount of technological change that AI is going to do, this is technically the beginning of AI. Chatbots, chatbots are the most basic terms of AI, it began with ELIZA, which was developed by Joseph Weizenbaum in 1966, this was the first chatbot.

### Chatbots

A chatbot is a fake program that simulates and processes human conversation (either written or spoken), allowing humans to interact with digital objects as if they were communicating with a real person. **(Source A)** These can be seen in all types of ways, informative chatbots, entertainment chatbots and even theatrical chatbots that are livestreamed online as a joke. AI chatbots seem very innocent, but it's also a hazard for many upcoming western countries that are now implementing it into their trends and systems. This is dangerous, why? Well, most countries in 2020 – 2024 are suffering from chronic depression and loneliness. This is due to the pandemic, social skills decreasing, and the amount of screentime individuals get (that's correlation not causation). This causes much panic, and much distress for an individual. Now if we combine the two, it can get sad. Quite depressing. As humans within the UK or any western country would rather resort to a chatbot, than a real human.

This can already be seen with twitch streamers or fake internet celebrities using viewers and customers as profit and engagement for their following and subscriptions. The future of chatbots looks far more advanced, with large language models that use machine learning which could create realism. These chatbots are generative, meaning they learn to interact based on real conversation data. **(Source B)**

That's the most basic AI, that could ruin the world, now it gets worse here. AI job take overs. This can be seen in the industrial revolution era, where humans got replaced by automated faster machines that worked greater and more efficiently. The recent trend of AI art taking over the art industry and possibly the creative media industry is slowly getting more and more realistic by the second. AI art is getting more and more fluid with their precision and it's starting to worry millions of people who are dreaming of a great job like an artist. AI could also take over huge industries like business, tech, or even labour. It's getting to the point where their detection and precision is almost human, you can't really tell the difference unless you're a professional in that task.

This can cause many individuals to drop creative arts and many industries to collapse into bankruptcy **(Source C)**. Which would initially ruin the world, making everything more fabricated, unrealistic and more depressing as it shows no human background on any creativity on the things we give each other, killing community and the creative industry. **(Source C)**

Then lastly comes the use of AI helping humans, this can be seen with medical care, faster production for helping individuals, police enforcement and potentially detective AI. This would be potentially useful as it could help humans to produce faster information and bring justice towards those who committed crime or injustice towards innocent people. **(Source D)**

Here AI is making critical decisions in healthcare. Doctors use virtual assistants and predictive software's that would help them diagnose and treat the diseases that the patients would have. Discovering diseases and fixing them is usually done naturally in a lab by humans, but in recent years humans have used AI to accelerate the

process to analyse. Beyond early detecting machines of diseases, medical robotics like connected devices and robotic platforms are additionally evolving with the help of AI to enhance the capability of the mechanics for the patients' health. **(Source F)**

These are huge moments in history as it would be able to not only make doctors/dentists jobs way easier than they are, but they'd improve and make the doctors/pharmacies waiting list and occurrence way more efficient and productive (as they usually take a long time to book an appointment) AI can benefit the doctors/pharmacy industry, as it is a very profitable and useful tool for many doctors that are suffering from long nights and are in need of sleep, they can boost their efficiency with the help of AI algorithms and improved speeds of detection by the AI. **(Source F)**

One other thing that AI is useful and productive in is the detection of threats (like natural disasters, shark attacks, potential terrorist organizations planning something and being able to spot it from an AI camera on a satellite) There are millions of things that AI can do and pull off, these things are very random, but they definitely could be a reality.

Since at least 10-20 years ago, no one believed we'd have self-driving cars. Self-driving cars use an AI system, this detects any incoming moving vehicle, still object, or potential dangers on the road. It can detect speeds of vehicles, it can suppress the speed of its own moving vehicle, and it's just super effective in what it can do.

There are benefits and negatives to the use of AI, but it's up to the user to put it to good use, or unethical use to benefit from and gain money. So, there's not really a real answer, it's very mixed.

**(Source A)** [What is a Chatbot | Oracle United Kingdom](#)

**(Source B)** [Should AI chatbots be used to address the nation's loneliness problem? | Nesta](#)

**(Source C)** [AI Is Causing Student Artists to Rethink Their Creative Career Plans | KQED](#)

**(Source D)** [Artificial intelligence is making critical health care decisions. The sheriff is MIA. - POLITICO](#)

**(Source F)** [Artificial intelligence is helping revolutionize healthcare as we know it \(jni.com\)](#)

*Rayan Ali*

Artificial Intelligence, also known as AI, is a machine with the ability to perform functions that associate with the human mind, such as logic, learning, problem solving and reasoning. There are so many different AIs used in the world around us. You may not even notice how many AI's you interact with; these may include voice assistants like Siri and Alexa and other kinds of chatbots found in FAQ's or in customer services.

During the period between 1930's to 1960's there was an increase in technological advancements, especially due to the Second World War. The enigma machine was created for the Germans to communicate with each other through the radio secret encrypted messages. They did this because radio messages were very easily intercepted and would allow the enemies to easily gather information and plan attacks on their vulnerabilities. To combat this, Alan Turing devised the electromechanical code-breaking machine in Bletchley Park. This was the first use of machinery to do an extensive amount of repetition in an efficient and fast way. The bombe was the first step in the development of AI. It assisted people with multiple calculations done rapidly and consecutively. This developed into the Colossus which was used to perform Boolean and counting operations. This was done through a paper tape of up to 20,000 x 5-bit characters in a continuous loop. Now it's all done with wires and electrical signals.

With the invention of computers, scientists and mathematicians worked on the concept of AI. This concept was initialised through Allen Newell's Logic Theorist. It was designed to mimic the problem skills of a human being; this was considered by many to be the first artificial program. As technology advanced, computers could store more information and became faster, cheaper, and more accessible. Machine learning algorithms were introduced and improved rapidly, and people got better at knowing which algorithms to apply to their problems. During the 1990's and 2000, many goals of artificial intelligence was achieved. In 1997, the reigning world champion and Grand Master Gary Kasparov was defeated by IBM's deep blue, a chess playing computer AI.

But will artificial intelligence kill the world or save it. Artificial intelligence has created great feats for humans. AI is not only used in big things such as ChatGPT but also small things such as chatbots or in face recognition. Without these we wouldn't have convenient help to make life easier and more efficient. With the use of AI, we can eliminate human error and minimise the risk in perilous tasks. This creates a greater chance of success due to the saving of both time and resources. We can use this to enable automation of a routine in areas such plugging in values, answering mathematical equations or data collection. AI can handle large amounts of data because of its fast-processing speeds enabling it to process and make conclusions from data in little amounts of time much faster to its human counterpart. This quick decision making makes AI more reliable in information gathering and data predictions which lessens the time on decision making and enhances productivity. Unlike humans, AI has full time availability. AI systems are available 24/7 and can be accessed at any given time.

However, even with all the positives being shown, many people still don't trust AI. One of the biggest issues is that people are scared AI will take peoples jobs. This is because of what was stated above with AI being able to do continuous tasks without stopping. This endangers workers that do monotonous tasks such as assembly line tasks. This can be in the form of an AI controlling a robot arm to move items from one location to another or picking up items that don't meet quality check. Another reason people think that AI will take over the world is, the more humane AI is becoming. Research was done where two AI interacted with each other with the goal of each of them trying to see if the other AI was human or a robot. Both the AI's conversed with each other and at the end when they had to choose, both of them chose human. With AI advancing, they are evolving from having limited knowledge and being limited to their programming to now being able to being able to make cognitive decisions and having thoughts of their own. However, they are still far from being able to think like humans, but they are being used to solve a wide variety of problems. As they continue to evolve, they will become more powerful and

capable, but they are limited to their programming and their ability to learn and store all the information they learnt and be able to use it again. AI are far from human brains. Without the nerves that humans have in their brains that can grow by creating new lines of information through continuous learning, AI will find it difficult to learn and compete with a human brain in terms of logical thinking.

In conclusion, I believe that AI will grant the world more good than bad. AI will not take peoples jobs but rather tasks. Tasks that can be done more efficient than humans which will save companies time and money due to the increase in production and less downtime. They also give other positives such as in simulations. This is used a lot in the forecasting future weather and disaster events which can highlight areas that can be used for safety and ways on planning evacuation. Without AI, we would find it harder to predict such events and plan to ensure the safety of people in those areas. Overall, AI plays a key role in day-to-day life and to limit or ban it would cause the world to progress slower and would remove aspects in our lives. AI is needed in this age to help us build a better sustainable future for future generations to flourish in.

*Tom Morley*

### What is AI?

AI (Artificial Intelligence) is making machines that think like humans and can autonomously learn – AIs can make decisions, judge and recognize patterns similarly to humans. AI is already present in everyday life for us, ranging from advertisement algorithms to advanced chatbots like GPT3 and GPT4 that can carry out a large variety of tasks – even surpassing humans in some areas in said tasks. AI has only recently begun to move into the geopolitical spotlight due to recent rapid advancements in machine learning and AIs such as ChatGPT creating interest in the public's eyes as well as attention from companies

### Politics and legislation in relation to AI

Legislation that restricts the advancement of AI and creates certain laws in relation to how AI can be used/ How it cannot be legally used are only being passed very recently, for example a few months ago when the Bletchley Declaration was passed. One of the problems of AI is that it is very hard to regulate due to the fact that it is always learning and changing, meaning that if one bit of legislation is made – AI will have developed on its self and caused another problem / highlighted something that needs restricting and hence when legislation related to AI is passed it has to be very broad in scope in terms of restrictions, this inadvertently limits AI from carrying out tasks and learning to the best of its ability.

### AI being cheaper than human workers and its ability to complete tasks faster and more effectively than humans.

AI has proven itself effective in a large variety of areas in present day, ranging from the arts to heavy industrial management – this effectiveness in such a wide variety of fields means that AI can cover the tasks and occupations that humans do and can carry out their role more effectively, quickly and for cheaper for businesses than human workers do, this is a good and a bad thing. The good thing about this is that we will have work done faster and with a higher degree of accuracy; since AI is constantly learning and adapting to solve the tasks it is presented with. The bad thing about AI replacing human workers is that many will lose their job security and potentially even be made redundant – causing unrest and potentially lowering the average wage due to the fact that AI does not need to be paid like human workers do.

### The threats that AI poses to employment

A way that AI could “kill” the world isn't really AI killing it, but it is doing damage. AI has already been able to replace many human roles with itself such as managerial roles and other occupations that encapsulate calculating things and managing tasks, from what we can see from AI today and the fact that AI is constantly learning and developing on itself will very likely lead to more people being made redundant by AI, leading to unemployment, which may lead to increased poverty rates and homelessness as an extreme, or as a lesser extreme many people having a hatred for AI and its effects due to the fact that they had to switch occupation because of it.

### Past examples of AI being misused or causing problems

An example of a concerning flaw in AIs currently could be with ChatGPT's DAN (Do Anything Now) exploit, where the AI was manipulated into bypassing its filters and answering controversial / offensive questions it took Alex

Polyakov only a few hours after GPT-4's release to find this exploit and the instructions on how to "jailbreak" GPT-4 spread around the internet and forums rapidly. This raises concern as if it took only 1 person to find an exploit only a few hours then how we can be sure that we can trust AIs to manage the economy / be responsible for industries if an AI's laws / restrictions can be so easily subverted. Another case is where an AI was trained to identify COVID-19 by analysing patient's symptoms, However the AI's machine learning had failed horribly and it ended up not being able to detect COVID-19 (What it was designed to detect) this led to many people suffering more than they could have if the AI worked as intended as well as others dying from COVID-19, this is a prime example of how AI's failure to learn and adapt properly can lead to tragedies and mistakes. If an AI fails to calculate the dosages of a medicine or chemical, many people could unknowingly be poisoning themselves because of this error.

[The potential that AI contains to change society and / or the world for better or worse.](#)

One of the main groups of people in society that heavily oppose AI and AI development are creatives and artists, this is due to the fact that AI can create art pieces that are barely indistinguishable from art pieces made by humans in a matter of seconds compared to artists that may have to take in the range of a few hours to a few months to create an art piece. Therefore, due to AI being able to generate works of art and designing things with inhuman speed and accuracy may cause people to lose their jobs / not receive as much money as they used to due to the fact that people can just generate something potentially more accurate / to their liking via the use of an AI for a significantly cheaper cost than a human artist almost instantly.



# *Design Technology*

"Technology will be man's downfall". Do you agree?"

*First Place – Mark McGowan*

*Highly Commended – Imogen Nevard*

*Highly Commended – Daniel Dowie*



*Mark McGowan*

To begin this discussion, this is a very open-ended question, without clear parameters regarding what the statement is actually referring to. What exactly is 'Man's Downfall', and what do we consider to be technology?

Throughout this essay I shall discuss these questions, endeavouring to provide an answer that will best inform you about this statement. As well as suggest what possible conclusions could be made from the statement.

The exact meaning of what this statement is ambiguous, so that is what I shall initially be discussing, even though this is not exactly clear. So, "Man's Downfall", What does this mean? One could entertain that this is implying the complete and final destruction of mankind, however, this is extremely difficult to achieve. The human race has persistently managed to overcome a wide range of various disasters, from natural disasters such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions all the way to humanitarian crisis such as global pandemics and epidemics. Throughout all these, humanity has endured. Consistently able to survive and continue to thrive as a global society. So, is it even reasonable to refer to the 'Downfall of Man' - as from previous evidence, surely this would be an extremely hard target to achieve? Next, 'Technology'. What even is technology? Most would think of this as Artificial Technology and incredible new advancements in computing sectors – which in a way is not wrong, but it is certainly not correct. The Cambridge English Dictionary defines technology as "The study and knowledge of the practical, especially industrial use of scientific discoveries". This would suggest that the common definition that is assumed and used by most people would mean 'Computer Technology', not technology. As technology is more of an umbrella term which not only includes computer technology, but also includes other forms of technological advancements such as industrial discoveries. Finally, in regards to the exact meaning of the statement – 'will'. 'will' is a command verb which suggests an essence of definite implication, meaning that there is no doubt in what the statement says. It is confident and in fact unshakeable in its belief that this will undeniably take place.

Now that I have made it clear what this statement is referring to, I will begin to debate whether this is indeed true. However, due to the ambiguous meaning, I will be adhering to the following assumptions: "Technology" is implying that it is Artificial Intelligence that will be Man's Downfall, the incorrect but more commonly known definition, not the more accurate and broad definition, which means all of the technological advancements – not just those that include Artificial Intelligence and computing. And by "Man's Downfall", I shall be assuming that this does not mean the utter annihilation of the human race, but a softer and more general term of it being a huge impacting factor which will subsequently lower the overall quality of life of the majority of humans.

So, the next stage of this process would be to discover and research the effects of this so-called technology, and what impacts it could potentially have on the human race. Then I will need to analyse these affects and see if they are worthy of being the prime cause of the ultimate and final Downfall of Man. Now, what impacts are there? Let us start with the basics. It is a common consensus that technology is "stealing people's jobs". There is undeniably a very concerned belief around this, which is completely morally justified. As undoubtedly it is reasonable to believe this, especially during the current climate where there is debateable humanitarian crisis – the cost-of-living crisis. During this time, it is essential for people to maintain a good earning job in order to support themselves and their families. Without these jobs, an incredibly high amount yet still unknown amount of people would suffer. Therefore, it is an upmost priority for these jobs to remain under the control and remain open to the vast majority of the unskilled and skilled members of the population.

Now that we have talked about what the very well-reasoned and truly precedented fear of people losing jobs actually is – is this really going to happen? Will peoples' jobs really be taken by Artificial Intelligence? Well, no not really. While in many industries there is a potential for jobs to be co-opted by Artificial Intelligence, very few jobs

will actually be fully taken over, especially without the management and oversight of humans. I realise what I just said may be quite complicated – so let me state it in layman’s terms, almost all jobs are safe, for example, could you imagine Artificial Intelligence trying to be a zookeeper? No of course you can’t. That’s because the job relies on a vast array of skills, including an extremely high emotional intelligence – that of which Artificial Intelligence simply cannot possess. Of course, someone could eventually program something to react in all situations with animals, but what happens when that one thing no one considered happens? Animals may be rational and predictable, but it is unambiguously decided that you cannot always guess what an animal is to do, there is always a situation that has never happened before. Now, apply this exact same logic to human interactions – Artificial Intelligence may be able to react brilliantly to some situations, but what happens when it encounters something outside of the code? Nothing. It will not be able to react. And that is why Artificial Intelligence will not be able to completely take over a human’s job, it will need regular and thorough supervision – not only in the code but also in everyday occurrences.

In conclusion, I don’t believe that “Technology will be the Downfall of Man”. Humanity has managed to endure and survive much worse, and this is not even a credible threat – as it cannot truly take over without humans monitoring and supervising the entire process. And there you have it, that is my take on the statement.

*Imogen Nevard*

### **Technology has undoubtedly changed the world but is that for the better or for the worse?**

From my own experiences as well as articles, I can see how much technology has impacted man's lack of social skills. Technology has hugely reduced face-to-face interactions and quality time spent together. The main cause of this I believe came from the Covid 19 lockdown as people became reliant on facetime and messaging apps to communicate. Along with this, it has made Anxiety levels increase and therefore man hasn't needed to leave the house and could still communicate without the social aspect. Overall, studies have shown that it can lead to underdeveloped social skills and lack of emotional connection.

Another major fault of technology is how it decreases man's concentration. I have noticed this myself by not being able to even sit through a 30 second Tik Tok video. As seen in a previous article: "Many people spend excessive amounts of time on their phones, computers, and other devices, leading to a range of negative health effects, such as eye strain, sleep deprivation, and increased stress levels". This makes us question what kind of future we as humans could have when we have become so dependent on and addicted to these small robots. Personally, technology has become so addictive to me that it has caused such distractions and interruptions that I don't complete all my coursework and homework. This will majorly impact my future so I'm sure it will affect yours too.

#### **Mental health:**

The authors of a 2016 systematic review Trusted Source discussed the link between social networks and mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety. Their research found mixed results. People who had more positive interactions and social support on these platforms appeared to have lower levels of depression and anxiety. However, the reverse was also true. People who perceived that they had more negative social interactions online and who were more prone to social comparison experienced higher levels of depression and anxiety. So, while there does appear to be a link between social media and mental health, a significant determining factor is the types of interactions people feel they are having on these platforms.

Your Ability to Make Eye Contact Suffers.

You're Shying Away from Face-to-Face Conversations.

You're Less Comfortable with Nondigital Conversations.

You're Shielding Yourself from Both Conflict and Conflict Resolution.

As technology advances, it becomes harder for humans to get jobs due to the development of machinery. Meaning people will struggle to provide for themselves and their families. However, there are also many pros of technology including how it can increase efficiency and productivity at a rapid pace. This is a major pro for technology on jobs because processes that were once manual and time-consuming can now be achieved in a quick and efficient manner with digital tools, applications, and systems.

#### **Environmental Impact**

Undoubtedly, there are many negatives on the environment due to technology. One big factor, being the production and disposal of technological devices, contributes to environmental pollution, depletion of natural resources, and greenhouse gas emissions. Over the years, the rapid obsolescence of digital devices leads to a massive accumulation of electronic waste which can release toxic substances into the environment if not properly recycled or disposed of. On top of this, the manufacturing and disposal of digital devices contribute to air, water, and soil pollution.

The use and operation of digital devices, data centres, and networks consume significant amounts of energy, often derived from non-renewable sources, contributing to greenhouse gas emissions and resource depletion. Digital devices require the extraction and processing of various raw materials, including rare earth elements, which have negative environmental impacts through mining, refining, and transportation processes.

However, there are still positives to the environment Technology can also have positive environmental impacts, such as enabling remote work and reducing commuting, facilitating environmental monitoring and modelling, and promoting renewable energy sources and recycling efforts. The overall environmental footprint of digital technology remains substantial, and concerted efforts are needed to reduce its negative impacts through sustainable practices, energy efficiency, responsible manufacturing, and proper e-waste management

### **Ethical concerns of Technology**

Now, technology isn't solely a bad thing for example, there has been an improvement in communication through digital platforms like video chats and social networks. This has been great for everyone all over the world such as people who live long distances or the struggles of covid 19. However, as technology advances, it has made us much more vulnerable to systematic failures. I know first handily how easy it is to be hacked just by clicking links or accepting cookies. This is a huge risk not only to the privacy of people but what would you do if a hacker gained control over worldwide critical systems like your water supplies or transportation networks? Therefore, that could ultimately be the attack that starts the chaos and dysfunction of the world.

Additionally, the advancement of technology has raised ethical concerns, particularly in fields like artificial intelligence and biotechnology. As we develop more AI systems, there are concerns about systems becoming uncontrollable or to be used for bad purposes. Similarly, advancements in biotechnology raise concerns about the potential for misuse or unintended consequences.

If we do not approach technological advancement with caution and consider the potential consequences, these marvels may very well be our undoing.

As responsible stewards of this planet, it is imperative that we recognize the risks and strive for a balance between technological innovation and the preservation of our humanity, society, and environment.

*Daniel Dowie*

I do agree with this statement, this is because the further mankind develops the more extreme and efficient technology will become. This could be for example mobile phones, the first mobile phone call was made in 1973, which was only around 60 years ago. To now we have apps and video games on our phones, and could also type and research anything up on your phone to help you out with any problems you are facing. This then in the future will lead to technology, such as robots and better devices, will lead to complete domination in the modern society. Being that technology will take over everything and control everything. This could be from jobs to making anything you want, and maybe even affect vehicles, being that they could be self-driving without any attention put onto the road at all. Although this is happening right now in Elon Musk's Tesla's, him and his team haven't quite mastered the arts of self-driving vehicles quite yet. In the future this advancement would then lead to potentially self-controlled delivery driving which is about half way there at the moment considering that you can order any food that you want from your phone and could be there within 30 minutes. With technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, it has become easier than ever to handle large volumes of data and make crucial business decisions based on the insights derived from the data. In addition to this, technological resources add accuracy to the decision-making process as they reduce the scope of errors from manual operations. This then means that there is able to be mass production and products made really quickly and efficiently and then be transported quicker, as of compared to manufacturing a product and delivering it 40 years ago would mean that the product was made mostly by hand, some machines were made, but mostly by hand in factories, to then only being delivered by a ship and then the mail. Today, technology empowers entrepreneurs to start new ventures and raise capital by offering a wide range of options. People with ideas can find ways to implement them and turn their ideas into the next big thing, create transformative business plans, and take their initial steps to start a business with more convenience. Technology also offers the advantage of easy scalability while improving both customer sales and employee processes. These developments will then lead to businesses becoming very successful and finding easier ways of finding high levels of revenue and profit, without the use of employees.

On the other hand, we could use technology solely for our help and needs, but could carry on with normal society and for all of us to become disciplined and not allow for it to take over. We could start the development of things which help us, but do not completely take over. It could also be used as war inventory, being robots and very sophisticated drones and aircraft. This would mean that wars would be extremely unfair and would be very worth not fighting as a result, then would lead to extreme death and world war and destruction. It could also mean that if people are able to make extreme technology, then this may mean data breaches, meaning that peoples security will be under intense danger and could lead to the loss of assets, being their money. The problem is that many people will fall under security breaches if technology does develop due to the reason of more intelligent products used for it. Technology will also distract many people in the recent living, because of the reason that they will be away from society and not realise dangers behind them, it will also lead to the laziness, being that people will struggle to socialise with other people, for example trying to get jobs, which will lead to no employment. In 2020, over 50% of American adults reported that internet access is essential for their livelihoods. Teenagers clock in an average of 7 hours per day on their phones according to some estimates. An estimated 90% of the world's population uses a smartphone daily, this is the current problem and it will only get worse as the generations proceed leading to constant time in technology and not living in the real world. Another technological trend that is changing rapidly is the amount of technology being used and implemented for children. The COVID-19 epidemic that began in 2020 had overwhelming effects on the lives of virtually every person on the planet – it expedited the necessity and use of technology in many respects, notably within education, this was the start of an overall spiral of decline towards children in this generation, in which this is basically all they are used to whilst growing up and

will find it really difficult. Our tools and technology played a big role improvement to our evolution, making a living, making us prosperous, and building ourselves to bare our survival. It's been mostly up to the last 50 years of absolute technological success, and never before has society developed this much, and this will one day just lead to a major decline in the world and how mankind evolve in the future.

I think that technology will be a man's downfall due to the reason that it will just get better and better and keep on developing and will lead to many problems in the world, such as a countries power, then every other country will want to become the best and it will all end in a technological war, being robots and many other highly destructive things. It will be good for a few more generations and will then take over everyone completely, and society wouldn't be a thing anymore and people will not corporate with each other, and will be too stuck to their phones or brand-new things, which will lead to bad health and more problems in the future and the next generations.

# *Economics*

"The EU...to be, or not to be?"

*First Place – Matthew Fryer*

*Highly Commended – Mia D'Angelo-Lawson*

*Highly Commended – Ben Image*





*Matthew Fryer*

### **The beginning of the end**

In a referendum held on 23 June 2016, most who voted chose to leave the European Union. On 29 March 2017, in writing to European Council President Donald Tusk, the Prime Minister formally prompted Article 50 and began the two-year countdown to the UK formally leaving the EU (commonly known as 'Brexit'). The UK had long been expected to exit the European Union at 11pm on 29 March 2019. However, following a House of Commons vote on 14 March 2019, the Government sought permission from the EU to extend Article 50 and agree a later Brexit date. On 20 March 2019, the Prime Minister wrote to European Council President Donald Tusk, asking to extend Article 50 until 30 June 2019.

Following a European Council meeting the next day, EU27 leaders concurred to grant an extension. On 2 April 2019, the Prime Minister announced she will seek a further extension to the Article 50 process and offered to meet the Leader of the Opposition to agree a deal that can win the support of MPs. At a meeting of the European Council on 10 April 2019, the UK and EU27 agreed to extend Article 50 until 31 October 2019. On 19 October 2019, the Prime Minister's new Brexit deal was lost on amendment in the Commons. In accordance with the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 2) Act 2019 – commonly known as the 'Benn Act' – the Prime Minister wrote to European Council president Donald Tusk, to request an extension to the Brexit process.

On 28 October 2019, EU Ambassadors agreed a further Brexit extension to 31 January 2020. On 12 December 2019, Boris Johnson won a majority in the UK General Election and reaffirmed his commitment to 'get Brexit done by 31 January 2020'. On 23 January 2020, the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020 received the royal family's formal consent to make the bill into an act of parliament. This is the legislation that will implement the withdrawal agreement negotiated by the UK and the EU. At 11pm on 31 January 2020, the UK left the EU and entered a transition period. At 11pm on 31 December (later that year), the transition period ended, and the United Kingdom left the EU single market and customs union. This paper provides a timeline of the major events leading up to the referendum and subsequent dates of note, including Brexit Day itself.

### **How has leaving the European Union impacted business and trade in the UK**

Britain's decision to leave the European Union has hampered the economy to the tune of 5% versus other comparable countries, the estimates showed. The Wall Street bank attributed the shortfall to three key factors: reduced trade; weaker business investment; and less immigration from the EU. Furthermore, the average Briton was nearly £2,000 worse off in 2023, while the average Londoner was nearly £3,400 worse off last year because of Brexit, the report reveals. \* It also calculates that there are nearly two million fewer jobs overall in the UK due to Brexit – with almost 300,000 fewer jobs in the capital alone. Despite the weaker business investment, Trade actually continued to grow between 2016 and the conclusion of the Brexit transition in 2020, indicating that Brexit uncertainty did not reduce UK-EU exchange. In addition, UK goods exports rose by 13.5 per cent to EU countries and 14.3 per cent to non-EU countries between 2019 and 2022, before and after Brexit.

### **Future trade and competition**

The two sides can disunite on the likes of employment and environmental standards, but there are safeguards — a "rebalancing mechanism" governed by arbitration — to ensure fair competition for both sides. The UK is beyond the revoke of EU law or the European Court of Justice (ECJ). But challenges are possible in each other's courts, and disciplinary measures may be taken if subsidies disfigure trade and for service industries — important to the UK — the deal indicated further uncertainty, as it contained only vague commitments. Financial services were not

covered at all and were to be dealt with by a separate process.

In terms of fishing rights post Brexit there was a trade deal that brought a five-and-a-half-year transition period on fisheries — one of the main stumbling blocks in the negotiations. During that time, EU access to UK waters will be cut by a quarter, and British quotas will be increased. Annual negotiations will then take place, but the EU can take reciprocal action if access is further reduced. And the UK, which sells most of its fish to the EU, is likely to continue to need the European market. Post-Brexit fault lines came to the fore in the autumn of 2021 with a disagreement between the UK and France, infuriated by the dozens of boats they had owned being denied access to waters off the coasts of England and the Channel Island of Jersey.

### **Social impacts of Brexit**

Equality rights in the UK have been intimately connected to the EU, not only for their propulsion but also for their continued content and strength. The withdrawal of the UK from the EU therefore raises serious legal issues for the protection of the right to equality for the people living in the UK. Unlike other jurisdictions, the right to equality in the UK is not protected by a constitutional bill of rights which would limit the extent to which equality could be removed by Parliamentary legislation. Prior to Brexit, EU law has performed a similar function to a constitutional guarantee. EU equality law is binding on the UK Parliament. In some cases, it can be enforced directly in UK courts, even without legislation. It can also be used to disapply legislation which fails to meet the standards of EU law. However, after Brexit, and the consequent removal of binding force EU law, there will be no obstacle to Parliament repealing or undermining the fundamental right to equality, currently largely contained in the Equality Act 2010 (EA). Even more concerning are proposed powers to be given to the executive by the EU (Withdrawal) Bill 2017-19 (Withdrawal Bill) to amend primary legislation without full Parliamentary scrutiny (so-called Henry VIII clauses). This could include the power to amend aspects of equality law without full Parliamentary safeguards. Additionally, the Withdrawal Bill specifically demands that the EU Charter on Fundamental Rights will no longer be part of domestic law after exit day. Although often overlooked in the discourse in England, these issues become even more pronounced in the context of the devolution of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. Strategies to protect equality post-Brexit essentially intersect with the foundations of the UK constitutional structure, democracy, the rule of law, the role of the judiciary and devolution. Overall, leaving the EU has left people far more vulnerable to inequality as the EU has well protected citizens of the UK from serious legal concerns by having strong protective policies for equality thus leaving people more assailable now that these policies do not apply the UK anymore.

### **Executive summary of Brexit**

It is clear that, Brexit was not implemented as well as it could have been perhaps due to unfortunate timing as other major problems occurred during this time (such as Covid 19) thus meaning that it was harder for the UK to reach an agreement with the UK which could explain some of the negative impacts accumulated by Brexit. However, despite this many experts believe that the UK would have been better off without Brexit as they believe that Brexit was not necessary in growing the UK's economy which was an aim of Brexit in the first place. Overall, I would say the success of Brexit depended on how well the UK could negotiate deals with the EU as this would have had the biggest say in the success of Brexit. Since negotiations were indeed performed poorly, I believe that the UK is much worse today than it was before as a result of leaving the European union.

## *Mia D'Angelo-Lawson*

European Union, otherwise known as the EU, is an international organisation encompassing twenty-seven European countries and governing common economic, social, and security policies. Originally the EU was confined to western Europe (was made up of six countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) until it undertook a strong expansion into central and eastern Europe in the early 21st century. The EU's members are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden. The United Kingdom, which had been a founding member of the EU, left the European Union in 2020. The European Union originated from the aftermath of World War II, aiming to foster economic cooperation and prevent future conflicts. The treaty of Paris in 1951 established the European Coal and Steel Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM). Over time, these entities evolved into the modern European Union, marked by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, which led to the formation of the EU as we know it today. The EU originally had six members: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. The question of whether to be or not to be is debatable but arguably the EU has had many positive influences on the world. The EU has delivered over half a century of peace, stability and prosperity, whilst also playing an important role in diplomacy as well as democracy, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. Although the EU has had many positive impacts on the globe, it is vital to also look at the opposing argument to completely decide 'to be or not to be'.

The European Union ensures a stronger economy as it is by far the UK's biggest trading partner. EU countries buy 44% of everything we sell abroad (export), from cars to insurance. Remaining inside the EU guarantees our full access to its Single Market. The EU's Single Market has over 500 million customers and an economy over five times bigger than the UK's, therefore making it easier and cheaper for UK companies to sell their products outside the UK, creating jobs as a result and therefore decreasing the unemployment rate. On the other hand, leaving the EU creates uncertainty and risk as there is no longer guaranteed trading partners which buy near enough half of the UK's exports. Being inside the EU also makes it more attractive for companies to invest in the UK, meaning more jobs and less unemployment. Over the last decade, foreign companies have invested £540 billion in the UK, equivalent to £148 million every day; this is all down to being a member of the EU.

Staying in the UK guarantees an improvement in the lives of everyone involved, for example, the cost of living would be majorly impacted by the UK leaving the European Union. If the UK voted to leave the EU, the subsequent economic shock would put pressure on the value of the pound, the value of the pound would become weaker, which would risk higher prices of some household goods and damage living standards. By no longer gaining full access to the EU's Single Market, it would make exporting to Europe harder and therefore increase costs. Leaving the EU would likewise make travelling abroad a lot harder. Millions of UK citizens travel to Europe each year and being in the EU has made this easier and cheaper for UK citizens. EU reforms in the 1990s have resulted in a drop in fares of over 40% for lower cost flights and from next year, mobile phone roaming charges have mostly been abolished across the EU, saving UK customers up to 38p per minute on calls. EU connections also gives UK citizens, travelling in other European countries, the right to access free or cheaper public healthcare. However, regardless of all of these benefits, some argue that little would change if the UK left the EU, but then again, there are no assurances UK customers would keep these benefits if they left (which evidently, they did decide to do in the 2016 EU referendum).

Leaving the EU created years of uncertainty and economic disruption which reduced investment and created the loss of many jobs. The UK has spent the last couple of years unpicking their relationship with the EU and

renegotiating new arrangements with the EU and over 50 other countries around the world. As a result, the UK has a more limited trade deal with the EU and so the UK now has less access to the Single Market than we did before we left; including for services, which made up almost 80% of the UK economy. The UK was not part of the EU's border-free zone, we controlled our own borders which gave us the right to check everyone, including EU nationals, arriving from continental Europe. The UK Government negotiated a deal that made our benefits system less of an attraction for EU citizens, since leaving the EU, new EU migrants will not have full access to certain benefits until they have worked in the UK for up to four years. The UK Government now have greater powers to take action where there is abuse of our immigration system and some argue that by leaving the EU it has given us more freedom to limit immigration. But in return for the economic benefits of access to the EU's Single Market, non-EU countries, such as Norway, have had to accept the right of all EU citizens to live and work in their country. EU involvement means UK police can use law enforcement intelligence from 27 EU countries, and have access to fingerprint and DNA information, additionally EU cooperation makes it easier to keep criminals and terrorists out of the UK. Since 2004, using the European Arrest Warrant, over 1,000 suspects have faced justice in UK courts and over 7,000 have been extradited.

We can conclude that although the European Union has had both positive and negative impacts on the UK, overall, the EU has positively benefitted the UK, the main benefit being the economic connections the EU has provided for us.

## *Ben Image*

The European union is a conglomerate of European nations who work in unison for the mutual benefit of each other. They strive to achieve low trade costs in a tariff free environment, without jeopardising the national integrity and domestic security of each member state. They do this via the implementation of continental legislations during conferences lead by the current president, Ursula von der Leyen

Leaving the European union would mean greater power when deciding on and implementing government policies. This would allow the United Kingdom to bend international law to its will, in a way that would sufficiently benefit the United Kingdom. Freedom of new law will inspire more of a free feeling as it is only nationals of this country who will withhold the power to change laws. This will then result in an uptake for law abiding citizens due to a feeling of national togetherness and community spirit (as Ravenswood holds this in such regard). This will, in turn mean that the national happiness will be at a higher rate than before. Happier people adhere to the rules and regulations of a nation state making this process cyclical to a degree. Conversely, it could have the effect of a sense of lawlessness due to a lack of regard to restrictions set by themselves, similar to how a person will cheat of a diet should no one else enforce it. This may have an external impact of higher rates of crime which would be very bad for local businesses and families who do not subscribe to a life of crime. This will reduce the overall quality of life that the people of the United Kingdom and its various attached, but not politically connected territories such as the isle of man and the Channel Islands will possess. Overall, this makes it ambiguous as to what effect that a change in political affiliation will have on the country, however in my opinion I believe that it is more likely to be the first effect and be positive.

One reason why one would remain is ease of travel between borders. Migration is and always has been a huge contributing factor to the prosperity of England and historically, England has been a free and accepting place to live; compared to the surrounding nation states. This has been reflected in the longstanding policy of accepting the free people into the mainland. Being the city of the most opportunity in the United Kingdom, London appealed to many as a place of future residence. This previously was especially true during the decolonisation of the British Empire, when authoritarian rule previously was mostly replaced by corrupt and incompetent leadership. This led to many people leaving their home countries in favour of a new life in the United Kingdom. In nineteen forty-eight the British Nationality Act gave people from colonies the right to live and work in Britain, because the government needed workers to help fill post War labour shortages and rebuild the economy. They looked to as far as their ex-colonies in the Caribbean, who were also struggling economically and many of their inhabitants needed to find work. This in turn facilitated the immigration of thousands, most famously on board the HMT Empire Windrush. This created a multiculturalism which allowed for many talented individuals and groups to restore the productivity of the local economy back to that of pre-war times and beyond that. This approach to acceptance previously was not a common occurrence among the nations of the time but it previously was not even near to the first time England undertook such a shift in demographics. One legislation passed hundreds of years prior to World War two, is the "restoration and final passage of such act" in which, after a dozen attempts of creating a bill with such a final intended and hopeful outcome in mind, the naturalisation of foreign protestants would become affordable for the masses. This allowed the French Protestants who had fled to Britain since the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 to be assimilated into the community. After three years of commission, the act previously was repealed and replaced with several new bills in its place. This established a reputation of a more open border seen today as a given in the western world, and is a legacy upheld to this day. There is a clear and emphatic gulf between the two, and this has allowed England to maintain such a high total number of local inhabitants, despite waning fertility rates.

Seeing as the United Kingdom has left the European union, it will be hard to re-join as the various barriers to entry restrict the ability for the country to get back into the European union. There will be many countries which will resent the previous actions of Britain and will refrain from accepting the request. This will most likely make a return impossible, however as a thought experiment, in which the event of such an occurrence was a true possibility, there is little to sway my opinion either side. I have weighed up both sides of the political spectrum and have finally deduced that i do not see any issues either way. At the end of the day, as Isaac newton once said, every action has an equal and opposite reaction, and this is no different. With every positive comes a negative eternality.

# *English Literature*

"Is Shakespeare's writing universal and timeless?"

*First Place – Megan Biederman*



## *Megan Biederman*

Globally, Shakespeare's work is presented in schools throughout a compulsory curriculum, dialogue, and literature. From his repetition of themes, his involvement in Greek tragedy and the mimicking of society that allows the audience or reader to project a connection within the piece of art and provide a reflection of their own life in a scene or act. This essay will analyse his contribution to the British language and determine whether it had an effect for an extended period or just temporary. However, with society progressing further and modernised literature becoming more prominent universally, could Shakespeare be the end of his everlasting career, or did he never make it past his period?

Shakespeare's work is presented in schools today throughout a compulsory curriculum as it reflects problems that occur in society, for example: sex, race, age, and religion. This makes it interesting and relatable which insights for attraction for the entertainment industry and for schools to teach and debate with the class in deeper analysis. A survey conducted in 2013 showed that 93% of American schools chose *Romeo and Juliet* as their choice of study due to recent child labour laws being enforced, causing more children to be in school and therefore the education system thought a romance novel would keep students engaged. Shakespeare acts as a steppingstone for children to then deepen their knowledge on these topics and discover a reasonable, decisive opinion which is backed up by evidence and analysis. Within the 19th century, Shakespeare played a vital role in children's education, acting as a template for reading aloud, this further progressed into a curriculum basis during the 20th century. This is due to English turning into a more characterised subject, and with Shakespeare's work deemed "ripe for analysis on concepts such as: character development, clever wordplay and imagery, and themes that remain relevant, like love, honour and war" (Why is Shakespeare still taught in American schools? — Today You Should Know), his work acts as a canvas for greater understanding and acceptance of society.

However, within recent years, some journalists have argued Shakespeare's work is out of date and not entirely relevant to the British curriculum anymore due to the lack of diversity and modern-day problems the youth of today are now faced with. Journalist Amanda MacGregor explains in the article that we should "allow room for more diverse and modern inclusive voices" (To Teach or Not To Teach: Is Shakespeare Still Relevant to Today's Students? | School Library Journal (slj.com)) With many educators now expressing the phrase: "To teach or not to teach" - following the out-of-date themes that have been picked up in Shakespeare's work: Misogyny, homophobia, racism, classism and antisemitism, portraying Shakespeare's work as only major in his time. MacGregor argues that educators should enforce their own values and focus on what they want their students to be taught, looking at other authors values, message, wordplay and instead of abandoning Shakespeare, provide more diversity to the education board and enhance a modernised curriculum.

Arguably, it could be said that Shakespeare should be kept timeless and universal as his work is pivotal in teaching the younger generation right or wrong: Sarah Mulhern Gross, a ninth and twelfth grade English teacher, teaches *Romeo and Juliet*, but "through the lens of adolescent brain development with a side of toxic masculinity analysis," However without teaching this play, how could boys learn that it is okay to show emotion. For instance, in *Hamlet*, it is okay to grieve, but how can we grieve healthy, in *Macbeth*, the danger of obsession and the desire of power, all can be altered to a modern-day reader and interpreted in many shapes and forms, providing Shakespeare a perfect example of timeless literature.

In some cases, Shakespeare is passed on, for example Liz Matthews, a ninth-grade teacher at Hartford Public high school, which is 95% black and Latinx passed on Shakespeare as a compulsory piece and instead taught: "I replaced *Romeo and Juliet* with *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros last year and *Long Way Down* by Jason



Reynolds this year,” She explained that it provided more representation for her classes and a better understanding of their own identity development. After researching the book, the main sentence that appears when types are: “finding identity and a sense of belonging” - in some cases Shakespeare's themes are not able to convey full engagement and visual representation is needed.

Finally, Shakespeare’s work can be deemed as timeless and universal as his wordplay has added to the British vocabulary immensely. For example, Shakespeare created many words still used today, alligator, downstairs. This was done by merging words together, changing nouns into verbs and adding prefixes and suffixes. This can support that Shakespeare is timeless as many of these words are still in the British vocabulary today. Furthermore, Shakespeare’s work can be used as a prime example of creativity and success, proving that he is timeless in an eloquent manner.

In conclusion, throughout exploring educational opinions and children's reaction to Shakespeare's work, from an educational standpoint, Shakespeare is timeless but should not be compulsory to learn. Instead, curriculum should have a broader line of diversity, modern day problems, and a more relative connection to children. For example, age, environmental factors and over all a better understanding from a child's point of view. Some may argue that Shakespeare's language use is out of date and therefore irrelevant for children to use and learn about in an essay format, where else others may say that the different format is a good learning curve and portrays a deeper understanding of the text. From Amanda MacGregor’s point of view, Shakespeare should not be deemed as timeless as his work has many societal problems; homophobia, misogyny etc. Although these problems may be hard to address, they are steppingstones for children to determine their moral values and learn the diversity of people and their sexuality, as well as other individual prospects. It can be a highly ambiguous topic, but with my research I am to conclude that Shakespeare is timeless, from his intellectual sonnets to his wise word play and overall reflective messages that mirror onto society, Shakespeare proved himself a mastermind behind words and helped build the English language.

# *Film Studies*

*"Is Netflix killing the film industry?"*

*First Place – Dan Addington*

*Highly Commended – Liam Gebbie*



*Dan Addington*

While it could be argued that Netflix and many other streaming platforms have been killing the film industry by deterring people from: going to the cinema, buying physical copies of films, and even watching TV networks, it could also be argued that Netflix has played a key role in making films more accessible for more people, therefore popularising the industry, bringing film into the modern era and to more people across the world.

Netflix is the world's largest streaming service with almost a quarter of a million people owning accounts. They started in 1997 as a film renting company like blockbuster, but started the streaming service in 2007, after they moved away from the DVD renting format. Netflix grew in popularity rapidly over time since its inception in 2007, but the growth was exponential in 2020, with billions in lockdown all over the world due to the threat of Covid. This caused many cinema companies to close, as no one was allowed to go to see the latest releases. As well as cinemas being affected, films were also not receiving any money from cinema goers, which led to many films that came out in 2020 bombing tremendously at the box office. Some of these films include: Tenet, Dolittle, Birds of Prey and Wonder Woman 1984. With nowhere else to go, many consumers turned to streaming platforms to watch films, where the subscription price was much cheaper than buying the film individually. In addition to the cheap pricing and lockdown, the films and tv offered by Netflix alone were enticing, even to the average film watcher. These include: Tiger King, Stranger Things, Marriage Story and Bird Box. This boom in popularity of streaming services allowed these services to buy more rights to more franchises, leading to more films available on more accessible platforms like Netflix for more people to see. This has arguably enhanced the film industry because it has made film more accessible for more people, allowing film and its industry to reach wider audiences with Netflix being available in 190 countries. This may also lead to an increase in films made around the world, therefore growing the film industry by utilising streaming services like Netflix as the new way to spread film, as a medium, globally.

However, 2020 wasn't the only year that showed a box office bomb in the film industry, 2017 was hailed as the worst year for filmmakers before the pandemic, and yet 2021 showed that not all hope was lost for cinemas. The box office had grossed 2.6% more than in 2017 globally. This in turn, shows that streaming services like Netflix had not had a lasting impact on cinema as a whole, as cinemas were still a used medium to see film, even more so after the global pandemic. But how did people adapt to the lifting of lockdown, and being able to go to the cinema again? Did people get too comfortable using Netflix, and instead neglect the film industry?

Well, the lockdown had a heavy impact on the accessibility of films, with most people not going to see the latest film in cinemas and just waiting for it to come out on Netflix or Disney+ for example. Consequentially, after the lockdown lifted, many cinemas were left with no money, therefore making the cinemas have to increase their prices, in order to make up for the deficit. The accessibility of Netflix has carried over as a curse for cinema companies, rather than a blessing, from lockdown with a decline in box office sales, as people would prefer to wait and save their money until it releases on their streaming platform. The number of cinema goers has decreased by 16% since 2017, and studies show that the number will continue to decrease in the coming years. If this continues, then cinemas will cease to exist as a main way to see films, and the streaming services like Netflix will take over as a primary way to view films. On one hand, Netflix provided a service that was not available for most people during lockdown, consuming film as a medium of entertainment. On the other hand, the drop in frequency of cinema goers has damaged the Hollywood tradition of going to the cinema which has existed since 1895, but does this damage the film industry as a whole? Maybe it damages the people involved in a film's inception like the writers or directors.

Netflix produces their own films and tv shows, in which the average pay for a writer (for Netflix) is a salary of approximately \$79,000 in the USA, which is 37% above the average pay nationally. If it were true, that Netflix is “killing the film industry” then it can’t be through enticing new writers with an \$80,000 pay check. In fact, most people involved in a Netflix film, like actors, producers and directors are paid not that dissimilar from other workers of the same job. So, if there isn’t a problem with the team behind a films production, then how is Netflix damaging the film industry? Maybe film itself isn’t dying, but rather old cinema is, with people going to cinemas less frequently and streaming services having seen a boom in popularity over the past 4-5 years. Personally, I believe that the film industry has heavily changed in the last few decades, and with that comes change that conservative cinema enthusiasts don’t like, as it goes against the tradition of going to the cinema to see the latest release.

Overall, it may seem that the classic Hollywood film industry is dying but I believe that the film industry is not dying, and it is not because of Netflix, but the industry is instead going through change that it is slowly adapting to, and will- in the long term- eventually benefit the film industry because it will be: more accessible for more people, an inspiration for new filmmakers, and it will shape the film industry for the better.

## *Liam Gebbie*

Netflix is changing the way that people watch TV, but some worry that it is killing the film and cinema industry. Netflix has added a record-breaking number of paid users to its online streaming service, now topping 139 million worldwide. That's 3 times the number of accounts just 5 years ago. Netflix's top market globally is the USA, with over 40% of paid users living there.

Netflix is now nominated for most awards at the Golden Globes and the Oscars, something that years ago would have never happened. It is also very impressive considering the company was only started in 1997. When Netflix was founded in 1997, the global ticket sales for cinemas was over \$14.5 billion however, fast forward almost 30 years, they made around \$8.9 billion in 2023. However, the average ticket price has also doubled since then.

Netflix has invested heavily into producing original content. Netflix originals (which is where Netflix owns the exclusive rights to stream them indefinitely) now make up 55% of the US's Netflix library. As of July 2023, there are 6,621 movies, series, and specials (this number does not include the 60+ games). Of those, almost 3700 are Netflix Original titles. That library has been built in the short space of 10 years, as Netflix celebrated just recently.

However, there are studies that prove this wrong. For example, The National Association of Theatre Owners in the States found that people who watch a lot of streamed programmes also go to the cinema frequently, while those who don't subscribe rarely visit the movie theatre either. Those who saw nine or more movies at the cinema averaged 11 hours of weekly streaming compared to the seven hours of streaming reported on average by those who saw one to two movies at the cinema. Nearly half of the people who said they didn't visit a movie theatre in the last 12 months also didn't stream any online content. There have also been things that have threatened the film industry before. For example, it was thought that bringing televisions into homes in the 1950s, could kill off Hollywood too, however as we can now see, it didn't.

Respondents between the ages of 13 to 17 went to a mean of 7.3 movies and consumed 9.2 hours of streaming content, the highest of any age group. There was a large difference in consumers between the ages of 18 to 37, however. The average for respondents in this group was six theatre visits in the past year, the lowest among any age group. At the same time, they watched 8.6 hours of streaming content a week, the third most of any demographic.

In the past few years, the cinema industry has been faced with challenges due to the rise of Netflix and other popular streaming services such as Prime Video. However, as with many industries, multiple companies can all share market share and compete with each other, this is not an industry where only one can operate. We can definitely see that Netflix has had an effect on the industry, but it has also created new opportunities for film writers, makers and producers. It has allowed them to create films and shows that may not have been possible a decade ago, such as "black mirror" and "Russian doll" which push the boundaries of film writing with complex themes and narratives. As well as this, Netflix has a very large catalogue, offering thousands of unique films and shows, including niche content that appeal to specific audiences, which won't have necessarily redirected the cinema industry's customers.

However, there are still challenges being faced by the film and cinema industry. The rise of streaming companies such as Netflix has led to cinema company's (such as Cineworld and Vue) revenue declining as more people choose to pay a monthly fee for content rather than going to the cinema. This is due to factors including the fact that most subscription services are low cost and often cost just a little more than a single cinema ticket.

Many people now expect instant access to content without having to wait for releases or having to physically go to

the cinema. There is competition within the streaming market for attention and screentime, as all the different companies are constantly fighting for the consumer's attention. In order to survive, the film and cinema industry will need to evolve, this may be by offering a wider range of content for all different types of audiences around the world as well as investing heavily into physical and digital marketing to remind people that cinemas do exist.

New formats in the content are also essential for the film and cinema industry to survive. Many streaming services including Netflix and Prime Video are releasing content with complex storytelling, however this may be difficult for the film industry to replicate as they generally create content with more simple and straightforward timelines. As with any other business, the film industry will need to innovate and take risks if they want to continue to thrive in this ever more digital market. However, there is one thing that the cinemas can provide that cannot be provided by streaming companies on your TV. For example, since the introduction of 4D into a cinema in Baltimore in 1984, 4D as well as other immersive experiences in cinemas have been evolving, and the cinema industry could use this to their advantage to gain the upper hand on these streaming companies. They can also invest in technologies such as virtual reality and augmented reality. They could also copy some of what the streaming companies do, by creating a subscription service of their own.

In conclusion, I think that the rise of Netflix as well as other streaming companies such as Prime Video has created competition within the market, I don't think it is an industry where only one of these can survive. If the film industry continues to innovate by using their advantage of actually having the customer there in real life, they can continue to thrive in the market.

# Geography

"The best way to combat climate change is for individuals to reduce their carbon footprint"

Discuss, with reference to specific examples."

*First Place – Amelia Righelato Sutton*

*Highly Commended – Millie Howes*

*Highly Commended – Millie Woodford*



## *Amelia Righelato Sutton*

Climate change is one of the most pressing issues concerning human civilisation as a whole and without immediate intervention climate change will cause man kind to become extinct. Government intervention has already taken place but has been concluded at the COP-24 meeting that government policies are not enough to mitigate global warming. Individuals reducing their personal carbon footprint is undeniable the best course of action and there are several numerous ways in which a person can reduce their carbon footprint including adapting their clothing, eating habits, and cutting the amount of food waste produced.

One of the easiest ways to decrease the amount of carbon footprint an individual produces is by changing where their clothing is purchased. Some clothing companies are more sustainable than others and create lower emissions during the production process. Sustainable suppliers are not as hard to discover as one might think, googling the certification of a company is an effortless way to check the green values of a company – a company with an ISO 14001 certification is approved in the terms of sustainability<sup>1</sup>. By choosing a company that is Carbon Neutral certified you are choosing a supplier that is more environmentally friendly and produces less emissions. Another way in which an individual can become more eco-friendly when shopping is by remembering the three Rs. The three Rs refer to Reduce, Reuse and Recycle, three objectives that individuals need to incorporate into their shopping trends to maximise their low emissions<sup>2</sup>. Reducing refers to buying less products, by purchasing less products individuals are causing companies to lower their company demand and less emissions will be produced during the production process. Reuse is simple, the easiest way in which Reuse can be implemented into society is by buying second hand clothing to maximise the use from clothing items rather than buying new clothing and increasing demand. Second hand clothing can be found in charity shops or rather online in apps such as Vinted that makes second hand shopping more accessible and provides the same experience as online shopping for new clothing<sup>3</sup>. Lastly, recycle is one of the fastest ways for an individual to reduce their carbon footprint. Recycling can be as easy as recycling your paper and plastics, or in terms of clothing it can refer to donating clothing to second hand clothing stores and charity shops or taking a more creative clothing and redesigning old and unwanted clothing. Overall, the three Rs are the foundational principles that everyone should be implementing to their day-to-day life and shopping habits. Overall, changing shopping habits and incorporating the three Rs into clothing trends will reduce an individual's carbon footprint, this individual change will have a widespread environmental impact, the French Environmental Agency announced that only by choosing sustainably suppliers and certain organic and recycles fabric the impacts of climate change can be reduced by approximately 99%<sup>5</sup>. This shows how numerous smaller changes to reduce carbon footprint can have a widespread impact in reducing the impacts of global warming, these small individual changes are arguably the most impactful changes that could be made globally to reduce the impact of global warming.

Another way in which an individual can reduce their carbon footprint is by changing their food habits; this can be as simple as cutting down on food waste. Every year approximately 1.3 billion tons of food is wasted, this is accumulated to around a third of the world's food<sup>6</sup>. When food waste rots in landfill, methane is produced and released into the atmosphere which contributes to global warming<sup>7</sup>, by reducing food waste we are decreasing the amount of methane that is released and therefore reducing the impacts of global warming. Commonly, food wastage is disposed of into the compost, and this has shown signs of significantly reducing the impacts<sup>8</sup>. However, to reduce climate change on a larger scale, a larger scale that is needed before the impacts become irreversible, greater measures to cut food wastage will need to be taken. The further measures that could be taken to reduce the individual's food wastage and the impacts that this causes on the environment is to save leftovers rather than disposing of unwanted food, this will allow more food to be used rather than being deposited into landfill<sup>9</sup>. Making



meal plans and shopping lists have also been demonstrated to be successful in minimising food wastage as it allows only needed food to be bought rather than unnecessary food that ends up being unused and discarded, this is a habit that could be easily adapted into society's everyday habits and can reduce the negative impacts of climate change<sup>10</sup>. Frequently, foods that are perceived as 'ugly' are left behind when shopping as they are not seen as appealing to shoppers, an estimated 20% of our food is left because of its appearance, these imperfect foods are disposed of and added to food landfill<sup>11</sup>. To limit this disposal, happening individuals need to be encouraged to buy foods that are not stereotypical looking. Changing diet has also seen to be effective in minimise the impacts of climate change, a shift away from animal products and towards plant-based protein. Those who follow a plant-based diet are seen to produce 75% less carbon footprint in terms of their food – this is because plant-based diets cause a significantly less harm to water, land and biodiversity<sup>12</sup>. This is a bigger change that is not as easy for those to adapt to in society and is not as achievable on a global level, nevertheless, changing individual's diets to become more plant based on an international scale would reduce the symptoms of global warming. Overall, individuals decreasing their carbon footprint through changing smaller habits on a global scale will aid the reduction of climate change more than government policies – this is not to say that governmental policies are not needed to reduce the impacts however the two strategies are dependent on one another to reduce the emission levels before they become irreversible.

One of the most known governmental policy that has been put in place is the 'Net Zero Strategy', declaring that decarbonation is needed in all areas to reduce emissions<sup>13</sup>. To achieve this aim by 2050, investment into renewable energy is needed urgently. Solar panel, hydropower and wind turbines are zero emission energy sources that have been recognised to be the future of renewable energy as they harness their energy from natural elements such as the weather and the sun. Renewable energy has grown in popularity in recent years, now being the source of 50% of Britain's energy, this has also been reflected through the decrease in emissions from energy in recent years<sup>14</sup>. Ultra-Low Emission Zones are another governmental policy that has been implemented in the UK to aim to reduce air pollution, this has led to a 4% drop in emissions which presents a successful case in which policies have reduced carbon emissions – yet 4% is not enough to meet the 2050 international goals<sup>15</sup>. This demonstrates how governmental policies have encouraged changes that have has a positive effect on climate change, however, latest COP meetings have concluded that governmental strategies are not enough to enough to meet the 2050 target. Therefore, individual changes to reduce carbon footprint and governmental changes need to work hand in hand to reduce the side effects of climate change before it is too late.

Overall, governmental policies are not enough to achieve the levels or carbon emission reductions that is needed and is dependent on the support from individual changes. By individua's reducing their carbon footprint, carbon emissions will decrease at the rate needed to meet the international target. Individual changes are more affordable and accessible then governmental policies as they can be as small as changing food and shopping habits, this is the best course of action to combat climate change.

*Millie Howes*

Climate change refers to a long-term shift in global temperatures and weather patterns, these changes lead to many environmental disasters which further impact many places and people. These environmental disasters include the increase of cyclones, earthquakes, and even widespread flooding. Not only does climate change affect the environment we live in, but it also effects many people, places, and animals around the world. So, is your personal reduction of carbon emissions the best way to combat climate change and furthermore the effects?

Firstly, how can you decrease your carbon footprint? To reduce your impact on climate change these simple changes we all can make will help in the long run. To start with, lowering your consumption; this includes buying only what is necessary when food shopping to avoid waste, buying second hand clothes or clothes that are responsibly made and taking up cycling or taking shared public transport instead of using a personal vehicle. All of these are simple changes and swaps which help limit your output of carbon. However, if your prepared to make larger changes to your lifestyle in order to cut your carbon footprint levels more drastically, considering other options may be a possibility. One of the major changes you can make is to become vegan or vegetarian, following the new research conducted by oxford university, those who follow a plant-based diet release 75% less of greenhouse emission than meat eaters, additionally those who follow a plant-based diet tend to produce less harm to land, water and biodiversity (New York Times - 'Save the Planet, Put Down the Hamburger').

Another major lifestyle change that you can make to reduce your personal carbon footprint is switching from a fuel consuming car to an electric car, although a very expensive change to make, this change could be detrimental to the amount of carbon you personally output, all recent studies agree that by switching to an electric car you can reduce your carbon footprint by 50-70% (The New York Times). Additionally, by changing to an electric car this could be a personal benefit, with rising fuel prices, many say that you can counteract the initial cost of the car over a period of time, due to the removal of paying fuel prices, however this change is more largely seen the more you drive the car.

For some limiting the number of holidays you have per year is a difficult change and hard sacrifice to make, however limiting your holidays is not the only option, making sustainable changes to your travel options whilst on holiday, for example switching from flying by plane to traveling by train, these switches not only benefit the world and its carbon output but also changes your own personal travelling experiences, allowing you to see the world in a different light. Whilst on holiday choosing more hotel options which have more eco-friendly and sustainable ethics possibly helps support locals in the surrounding area, not only does this help support the locals, they are more likely to be sustainable alternatives, for example eating at a local restaurant instead of a chain restaurant or inside of an all-inclusive, the produce is more likely to be sourced locally, cutting the air miles of the produce, increasing freshness of the food and supporting local farmers. Lastly, a great way to have a holiday without releasing a large amount of carbon dioxide and therefore reducing your personal carbon footprint is having a staycation instead of going abroad, this allows for money to stay within the country, increasing levels of development which would then be able to be reinvested in schemes to reduce carbon emissions.

However, even if the majority of people or even everybody makes these changes to limit their personal carbon output, is this the best method to combat the effects of climate change? Multinational supply companies have an immense impact on the amount of carbon emissions released, being responsible for the production of a fifth of global carbon emissions (UCL - 'Multinationals' supply chains account for a fifth of global emissions'). China is a notable example of this with their carbon dioxide product the largest with 11,336 million metric tons emitted in

2021, this consumption is made up of many factors including; transportation, burning of coal, importing oil and the country's large use of cars. This data heavily suggests that if multinational corporations and TNCs were to make changes to their sourcing of materials, production systems, transportation methods and many other factors they would be able to create extensive change to the amount of carbon emissions released and therefore majorly change the current and the approaching effects of climate change. Professor Dabo Guan (UCL Bartlett School of Construction & Project Management) said 'If the world's leading companies exercised leadership on climate change – for instance, by requiring energy efficiency in their supply chains – they could have a transformative effect on global efforts to reduce emissions.'

MNCs and TNCs produce copious amounts of carbon dioxide especially whilst offshoring in another country typically where the carbon emission production limit is higher and less harshly regulated, this leads to those living in areas being used for offshoring purposes being majorly affected without any compensation. Not only do TNCs and MNCs produce carbon emissions when offshoring but also when transporting the products from the manufacturing country to the recipient country, these products are be transported using methods such as cargo ships and planes, leaving scarring consequences on climate change.

If TNCs and MNCs were to take first step in creating a more sustainable and climate friendly environment this would possibly establish a turning point to globally become more climate and carbon dioxide conscious through making more sustainable options more widely accessible.

In conclusion, personal reduction of carbon emission will contribute to the fore-coming effects of climate change. However, to be able to see drastic change in the effects of climate change TNCs and MNCs need to change their way of creating and transporting products, therefore changing the sizeable amount of carbon currently being produced.

## *Millie Woodford*

Climate change refers to the long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns, which can also be further explained by the greenhouse effect. This is the process where greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide and methane, surround the earth's atmosphere and trap the heat generated by the sun. This therefore leads to a global temperature rise as the volume of heat from the sun that enters the earth each year is rising at a rapid rate.

The history of climate change originates back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century with ice ages and other complications surrounding changes in the paleoclimate. This led to the suspicion of the greenhouse effect. Scientists argued that human activities resulting in more emissions of these greenhouse gases were what was leading to climate change. This is due to there being a higher volume of them in the atmosphere than there should have been. In the 1820s, Joseph Fourier produced the theory that energy reaching the planet as sunlight must be balanced by energy returning to space due to the fact that heated surfaces emit radiation. Resulting from this, Eunice Newton Foote further explored Fourier's theory through her experiments. These consisted of glass cylinders which were used in order to demonstrate that the heating effect of the sun was greater in moist air than it was in dry air. Therefore, by the late 1950s carbon dioxide readings were able to be obtained and they offered the first set of data evidence to support the global warming theory.

This therefore leads onto the statement surrounding carbon footprints and whether or not reducing them will decrease the impacts of climate change. Carbon footprints are a measure of the volume of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere resulting from the activities of a particular individual, organisation or community. The volume of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere can be increased through carbon emissions which are released through energy production, and this includes burning coal, oil or natural gas. One-way humans contribute to this in their everyday life is through driving vehicles and it is estimated that a general passenger emits around 4.6 metric tons per year into the atmosphere. Therefore, reducing the car usage can mitigate the effects of climate change as it slows the rate of temperature rises and sea level rises. This can be achieved through eco-friendly activities such as walking, cycling or taking public transport. This is vitally important as the Earth's temperature has warmed 1.5 degrees Celsius since 1880 which can create seasonal temperature extremes such as extremely hot summers and extremely cold winters. It can also cause ice caps to melt which leads to a loss of habitats and a rise in sea levels. Global sea levels have therefore increased by approximately 8-9 inches since 1880. This means water supplies, power plants, sewage treatment plants and landfills will remain at risk until this issue is resolved and this will therefore leave a negative multiplier effect on the environment and climate change.

However, an alternative way to combat climate change is afforestation. This is the process in which new trees are planted to increase forest cover. Trees are a natural carbon capture and are classified as 'carbon sinks' as they have an ability to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. This is beneficial for the environment as it reduces the volume of carbon that enters the atmosphere, averting the climate crisis. It is also stated by the United Nations climate negotiators that planting trees is equivalent to reducing emissions from fossil fuels. A similar way this can be achieved is through the reduction of deforestation. When trees are cut down, their stored carbon is released back into the atmosphere and there is also a limited number of trees for carbon stores meaning that there will remain a high volume in the surroundings. Deforestation further contributes to 12-20% of global greenhouse gas emissions and it is averaged that from 2015-2017, the deforestation of tropical forests led to around 4.8 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide per year being released into the atmosphere. Some countries are now off track for acquiring the decrease in deforestation that they need in order to reduce and prevent climate change. It is now increasing due to the demand of human activities such as cattle farming, creating land for factories or extracting materials such as wood.

To summarise, in my opinion the most effective way to combat climate change is to use renewable energy sources. Renewable energy is energy that has been derived from natural sources and they are then replenished at a higher rate than they are consumed. Some examples of renewable energy sources would be sunlight and wind as they are constantly replenished. Whereas a non-renewable energy source would be fossil fuels as they take hundreds of millions of years to form. Switching to renewable energy will not only contribute towards reducing climate change but also have positive effects on the global economy and on development. They require no costs as they are a natural source, and they are infinite meaning they will not run out so the resources required to extract them such as machinery will only be a one-time expense. They can also be extracted locally so trade of these resources from other countries is not necessary. Therefore, it will not be affected by price spikes, disruptions in the supply chain or government issues such as a geopolitical crisis. A REN21 Executive Director, Rana Adib stated that “an energy system based on distributed and centralised generation is more flexible and resilient to those central shocks which are becoming more frequent with climate change”. This means that renewable energy sources are more beneficial in helping reduce climate change. They will also further contribute towards the gross domestic product of a country through the expansion of renewable energy manufacturing and deployment. Furthermore, the money that was previously used on other energy sources can now be invested in other schemes to help prevent the impacts created by climate change.

# Government & Politics

"Should First-Past-The-Post be abandoned as an electoral system?"

Or

"Are politics in the UK broken beyond all repair?"

*First Place – Robin Khan Lawrence*

*Highly Commended – Poppy Berks*

*Highly Commended – Ewan Turner*



*Robin Khan Lawrence: 'Should First-Past-The-Post be abandoned as an electoral system?'*

First past the post is a widely recognised electoral system used by over one third of the countries around the world including: UK, US, Canada, India and many Caribbean and African states. First past the post most commonly used to elect heads of state or members of parliament. Voters can cast their single vote by putting a cross next to their chosen candidate on the ballot paper. These ballot papers are then counted and the candidate with the most votes wins and represents that constituency in parliament. However, candidates only require a plurality of votes to win, this means that there is no need to obtain the majority of the votes, over 50%, the winning candidate merely needs to have more votes than the other participating candidates.

The first past the post system tends to result in a two-party system, this is a drawback for smaller parties as they may struggle to obtain votes and therefore seats in parliament, resulting in them never being able to win the majority and become the dominant party in parliament. As discussed previously, votes are counted within each constituency, therefore an MP, a candidate, needs the largest number of votes inside their constituency. Even if millions of people vote for the same party, if they are thinly spread out across the country, they may only get the largest number of votes in a couple constituencies. However, this does aid to prevent extremist parties from getting into power. Far right and far left political groups may struggle to gain or win seats in parliament, and therefore gain access to greater publicity which may spread their extremist views. Moreover, single party governments are generally able to have more control over the legislative and policy making processes, this means that they are more able to implement policies that were promised on their manifesto and act predictably in time of a crisis. If no single party has a clear majority following a general election and does not meet the required number of seats to form a majority government, then it leads to a hung parliament and a coalition government is formed. An example of a coalition parliament is Lib Lab, a coalition between the liberal democrats and the labour party following the election in 1977. A coalition government is the opposite of a single party government as it involves the coming together of two or more different parties, generally, it is uncommon for a coalition to form under first past the post and tends to form under other electoral systems such as proportional voting. Whilst a coalition appeases multiple groups of people, a coalition government generally take significantly longer to agree on and determine policies, having a strong single party in government would prevent this.

Moreover, first past the post is generally more efficient than other forms of voting systems. It's simple to understand which aids new voters who may find the electoral system confusing. Voters are only required to select the candidate they wish to vote for. This is particularly important for younger voters who are new to politics and have little to no previous knowledge. Moreover, the counting of the votes is also a simple process and can be done quickly, as soon as polls close, this is beneficial from the voters as they will be anticipating the eventual turnout. As this voting system has been around since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, voters are mostly familiar with system. In addition, first past the post voting system is also relatively low cost, meaning the government will not have to spend thousands and thousands of pounds on making sure it runs smoothly.

On the other hand, one of the main criticisms of first past the post is that it can lead to disproportionate outcomes. The number of seats won by a party does not actually reflect the number of votes received. Some representatives can get elected with relatively low levels of public support, whilst parties who achieve almost the same result end up with far fewer seats in parliament. An example of this is the 2019 general election where the conservative party won 317 seats in parliament, with 42.4% of the votes, whilst the labour party, who won 40% of the vote, only won 262 seats. Seats are based on who is elected in each constituency, it can be argued that the government have the power to manipulate the constituency lines and places a specific group of people in a constituency which could alter the outcome of that constituency's vote. Moreover, votes are weighted unequally, as constituency sizes vary

votes have different values attributed to them. A vote in a smaller constituency is likely to have a larger impact on the outcome rather than a single vote in a larger constituency. In addition, first past the post can also encourage tactical voting, whereby instead of voting for the candidate they like, they vote for the candidate with the highest chance of preventing the candidate they dislike from winning in their constituency.

In conclusion, I believe that first past the post should be abandoned as an electoral system. Candidates are elected within constituencies, however these constituencies can be changed and manipulated in order to favour a specific party. Moreover, the votes casted are not proportional which means that even if a party has a high number of votes, they may not have a high number of seats in parliament and not gain a majority. Instead of first past the post, I believe that proportional voting should be introduced into the UK. This gives more power to the voters and will lead to an outcome that is representative with who the nation actually wants to be led by and will put an end to millions of votes that are considered to be wasted. In addition, proportional voting will also lead to more representation locally which can help build a bigger community and people may feel a better connection to whoever is representing their constituency locally.



## *Poppy Berks: 'Should First-Past-The-Post be abandoned as an electoral system?'*

First-past-the-post is our current UK electoral system. FPTP originates from the British electoral system and has been widely adopted around the world, likely due to the simplicity of it. However, overtime other systems have come along and people have begun to wonder if these might be a better way to run elections. Alongside FPTP, there are many others, such as Proportional Representation. However, there are both positives and negatives to the system. Hence the current ongoing debate about whether we should abandon the system.

One reason why it should be abandoned is due to its ability to lead to disproportionate representation. This is because there have been elections where it has given the party with the less votes, the majority of seats. If the system was changed for PR for example, the issue of giving the less popular party the majority of seats, will be diminished. Therefore, it will ensure that the distribution of seats is carried out more accurately and reflects the overall popular vote. Not only are the seats not distributed fairly, it can lead to a lot of wasted votes. Votes casted for losing candidates or extra votes for winning candidates that do not contribute to the final outcome are classed as "wasted votes". This has raised concerns about the possible harm to democracy, a system such as First Past the Post has. Many people also believe their votes will be wasted voting for smaller parties so they pick one of the larger parties due to a winner-takes-all approach, even if they do not agree with their manifesto, decreasing the legitimacy of democracy as the outcome is not truly to people's opinion. It can also be seen as limiting diversity due to the nature of how the system works. Minority parties, as stated in the name, support a minority of people in Britain. Therefore, the parties struggle to win seats and definitely don't stand a chance against one of the leading parties. This can cause a lack of representation in UK politics, which is unfair for the public who believe in that parties' ideas and want to see them implemented in parliament.

One system which has been widely suggested is Proportional Representation. Many people believe it creates fairer representation as it reflects voter preferences more. PR aims to ensure that there is a more equal distribution of votes across different political parties, resulting in more proportional and diverse opinions within the government. As well as fewer wasted votes because even parties with a minority of votes can secure a proportionate number of seats. Thus, enhancing voter satisfaction in the electoral process. Encouraging diversity is also a very positive aspect of PR. PR tends to be more inclusive and allows smaller parties and diverse voices to have a say in the legislative body. This also avoids marginalization, something FPTP is guilty of. With FPTP, it creates a two-party system, excluding all the other parties from having a strong chance at winning an election. This means Proportional Representation does not exclude a vast range of political perspectives. PR goes further and encourages a multiparty democracy. It also gives the public more accountability in their vote. Proportional Representation most importantly, strengthens democratic legitimacy. It ensures that parliament reflect the diverse views and preferences of the population; when voters are able to see what their vote translates to towards parliamentary representation, it increases the public's trust and confidence in the democratic system. PR systems often result in coalition governments, where parties must negotiate and compromise to form governing coalitions. This can promote consensus-building and cooperation among political parties, leading to more stable and effective governance. However, it is also important that PR is not without its faults. For example, its possibility for political fragmentation and the need for electoral reforms.

However, many people believe it is a good system to have due to the simplicity of it. FPTP is straight-forward for both the voters and the administrators. Unlike other systems, such as Additional Member's system. This is a positive as it decreases the likeliness of the public feeling confused and out of touch with what is going on, which

could also cause a dip in the number of people participating, as people are less likely to vote if they don't understand the process. Importantly, the system is most likely to create a stable government with a clear mandate. This is because it often leads to the formation of the majority winning government. Furthermore, stopping the chances of having a fragmented parliament; meaning there isn't a chance of having multiple parties inputting, creating a more stable government. Potentially one of the most important reasons FPTP is viewed as a positive system for general elections, is its ability to avoid extremist groups reaching power. This is because these parties may struggle to win individual constituencies

In conclusion, First Past the Post should be highlighted for both its advantages and disadvantages. FPTP is simple and direct, although it creates disproportionate outcomes, wasted votes and a two-party system. Thus, a suggestion of an alternative electoral system has become popular amongst the public, such as Proportional Representation. This system, as stated can offer fairer representation, reduce wasted votes and enhance accountability. Ultimately, I believe that FPTP should be abandoned in replacement for Proportional Representation. While abandoning FPTP may cause some challenges and working out at first, I feel it will boost the overall involvement of the public with UK politics. Any decision to abandon FPTP should be informed by a thorough assessment of the trade-offs involved and a commitment to strengthening democratic governance and representation.

*Ewan Turner: "Are politics in the UK broken beyond all repair?"*

Politics, in general, are messy, complicated and often used more to further an individual's - or specific groups - goals, world views, or plain wants; rather than the betterment of society. They have always been broken not just here but everywhere.

Since Tony Blair all of our prime ministers have been homophobic or transphobic or both. Rishi Sunak publicly saying that trans women have no place in women's sports, and saying that it just makes sense to misgender trans people. Liz Truss actively voted against trans people from experiencing the same rights as cisgender people, and stated "only women have a cervix" (saying trans men are women – which is both false and transphobic) and spoke against self-gender identification. Margaret Thatcher, while serving before Tony Blair, was so reviled by the LGBTQ+ community, that her grave is used to mock her and her harmful beliefs (section 28<sup>(3)</sup> was a series of laws across the UK that severely limited public access to information about LGBTQ topics, but focusing on homosexuality, that were put into law thanks to Margaret Thatcher. They forced LGBTQ groups to, dissolve, self-censor, or limit their activities and prevented the teaching of it in schools – much like what is currently happening in the United States.), by calling it "the first public gender-neutral bathroom in the UK" and putting stickers on it reading "a trans person peed here". She was quoted saying that children were "cheated of a sound start in life" due to being "taught they have an inalienable right to be gay". Recently, there has been a petition calling for the reimplementing of section 28 that received over 280,000 signatures, almost triple the number needed for it to be discussed in Parliament UK politics, especially concerning transgender people, haven't improved much, or really at all since the gender recognition act was passed. Section 35<sup>(4)</sup> was used to stop the passing of a bill in Scotland that would make social and legal transition easier for trans people and was described as "a full-frontal attack on our democratically elected Scottish parliament."

Section 35 allows the secretary of state to prevent the passing of a bill in Scotland under if it meets one of two criteria: If a Bill contains provisions—

- (a) which the Secretary of State has reasonable grounds to believe would be incompatible with any international obligations or the interests of defence or national security, or
- (b) which make modifications of the law as it applies to reserved matters and which the Secretary of State has reasonable grounds to believe would have an adverse effect on the operation of the law as it applies to reserved matters,

The gender reform bill had no impact on either country's international obligations, defence, or national security, so option b) had to be the reasoning for the use of section 35, however making social and legal transition easier has no effect on anyone but the trans community, a fact that many transphobic people (including people calling themselves gender critical) deny. The secretary of state, Alister Jack made a statement about his section 35 order saying that the trans community was "not part of my thinking at all", he wasn't thinking about the trans community, when deciding to stop a bill from being passed that would affect **only** the trans community, for the better. Kemi Badenoch, the Minister of **Equalities**, abstained from the vote to extend **equal** marriage rights to gay couples in Northern Ireland, voted against allowing people to use their preferred name and pronouns in the workplace, voted against the installation of gender-neutral public bathrooms, has mocked gay relationships, called trans women men, is attempting to ban social transition in schools, and most recently has introduced a blacklist of countries allowing people to transition "too easily". The Minister of Equalities has actively been working to try and stop LGBTQ+ people from obtaining equal rights to cis-het people. She doesn't believe some people deserve rights.

Kemi Badenoch, like many other “gender critical” people (basically just transphobes who get offended by the word transphobe), uses many of the same recycled excuses such as “they’re trying to turn all of the gay people trans to make them straight”, often the reasoning behind this is “straight people receive less hate than gay people” which ignores the massive amount of hate, and threats and violence that is directed at trans people for simply existing (The murder of Briana Ghey for example) UK politics seems to be more obsessed with making life hell for any gender diverse individuals within the country rather than making life better for everyone or anyone within it.

<sup>(1)</sup> The US is only a democratic country because they can vote for their leader(s) despite it being much more of a fascist hellscape under the thumb of right-wing conservative groups who only really care about themselves, monetary profit and the eradication of anyone different from themselves

<sup>(2)</sup> [Council for National Policy - Wikipedia](#)

<sup>(3)</sup> [Section 28 - Wikipedia](#)

<sup>(4)</sup> [Scotland Act 1998 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

[Gender reforms: the risks to LGBTQ+ equality in 2023 | ULaw](#)

[Kemi Badenoch confirms UK trans self-ID 'blacklist' of countries \(thepinknews.com\)](#)

[UK Equalities Minister Goes on Anti-LGBTQ Rant in Leaked Audio \(vice.com\)](#)

[Kemi Badenoch: Boris Johnson’s new equalities minister abstained from key LGBTQ+ votes | The Independent | The Independent](#)

[‘Appalling’ speech by equalities minister was final straw, says LGBTQ+ adviser who quit government | The Independent](#)

# History

"We learn far more about the past by studying ordinary people rather than 'Great Men and Women'".

How far do you agree?"

Or

"British History in the 1900s is the story of failure after failure after failure." How far do you agree?"

*First Place – Farhan Islam*

*Highly Commended – Harry Bodley*



*Farhan Islam:* "We learn far more about the past by studying ordinary people rather than 'Great Men and Women'. How far do you agree?"

History is written through the eyes of the ones who have won the battles, not those who have failed, is similar to many quotes that historians have said, and therefore we may never know of the different individual stories and legends that may have existed of those who failed which could be lost in history, and for me the answer the question beforehand, I believe history is written by the actions of ordinary people in response to intransigent despots and when faced with tyranny, and there are thousands of examples of this etched throughout history.

In the grand scheme of things, the Great Men and Women of history have inspired rebellions, coup d'états, wars against these so called despots which had led to shifts in power, such as Alexander the Great who had conquered Darius III which led to Macedonia, a minor kingdom dominated by the great city-states of Athens, Sparta, and Thebes, become a major power thwarting the states mentioned beforehand after Alexander conquered the Achaemenian Empire, and it could be argued that without a brilliant strategic mastermind in Alexander, Macedonia would have never reached their zenith, and therefore testifies to the fact that Victorious Great Men and Women have had a substantially large role in writing history. However, again it can be argued that without the ordinary people in the Macedonian Army stepping up and pushing beyond their boundaries to achieve such victories which Macedonia achieved, Alexander wouldn't have been known, this ancient Macedonian Empire wouldn't have existed and many different historic cities such as Alexandria wouldn't have been formed and there would have been a large part of history unwritten.

On the other hand, there have been revolutionary changes in history due to the actions and needs of ordinary people, which culminates in the Russian and French Revolution which are arguably the greatest examples of changes brought by due to the needs and wants of ordinary people and have set a historical precedent for other oppressed and victimised ordinary people around the globe especially after World War 2 in the post-colonisation era and even in the 1800s during radical changes brought on in Britain inspired by the French Revolution, where the third estate of France's dehumanizing order of French society was being oppressed and exploited by the two upper estates and due to the failures in abolishing the feudal system for the peasants which led to them rising against their lords after the Estates-General came to a stalemate and the National Constituent Assembly was formed. This was one of the most important focal points in human history as this was the first major revolution in Europe where the ordinary people overcame the nobles and the clergy and broke the monarchical government which had oppressed and exploited them for centuries. This set a historic precedent for ordinary people in Europe and around the world to rebel in order to get their rights such as the franchise as well as representation in government, and this proved to work as in England rebellions and disorders due to radicals inspired by the French Revolution led Britain to pass the Great Reform Acts of 1832 and then in 1867 and again in 1884, all due to the people's desire and needs to gain the franchise and rights which improved their quality of life and so that they could have a say in government policies so that they will not be exploited by the aristocrats. However, a counter Argument can be produced that there were certain figureheads which helped give the French Revolution a straight direction to follow such as Marquis de Lafayette, who was a liberal aristocrat and supported the government of Louis XVI and supported a constitutional monarchy who then supported the manoeuvres through which the bourgeois leaders of the Third Estate gained control of the Estates-General and the conversion of it into a National Assembly. Furthermore he, with the help of Thomas Jefferson drafted The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of

the Citizen which is one of the most important documents in recorded history and has influenced the lives of the later ordinary people around the world, especially in the 1800s in Britain, and they have had to face the consequences and the benefits of this document.

To conclude, I honestly think that history is more a study of change of norms and beliefs brought upon by the actions of individuals such as tyrannical despots, warlords, or military heroes and how the ordinary people react to this new unprecedented change, and this point is proved by the examples I gave above as in these examples, there have been certain massive stimulus, be that tyranny or a vital victory in a war or fighting oppression, the people have reacted to it and have strived to return this stimuli back to normal or engineer a new system in which there will not be this certain stimulus which have affected them extremely negatively to the point rebellions, revolutions and uprisings are orchestrated by the Great Men and Women, and therefore I partially agree to the statement made because without Great Men and Women, there would be no valorous victories won which changed the course of history and there would have been no radical changes brought upon due to those victories, and arguably mankind would actually have been regressed if there wasn't many vital victories won, but without the ordinary people being the backbone of these revolutions and rebellions, there wouldn't be any progress made and history would only have been favoured towards despots and tyranny and without these ordinary people telling their heroic tales of battles, the great victories won would not have been passed down generations keeping them alive making them into legends and arguably they are more important than Great Men and Women because it is due to the support of the people that Great Men and Women were able to be so influential and powerful and therefore we do learn more about history through ordinary people than Great men and Women

*Harry Bodley: "British History in the 1900s is the story of failure after failure after failure." How far do you agree?"*

The 1900s a century of 2 world wars, communism, innovation and activism. But is the British account of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a success or is it a story of repeated failures.

Let's start with the most significant events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the world wars. Although the Germans were eventually defeated in world war 1 the British campaign included many notable failures including the 1915 Gallipoli campaign. The plan consisted of allied troops landing on the Gallipoli peninsula in the ottoman empire with the aim of taking the ottoman capital of Constantinople, knocking the ottomans out of the war, providing a supply route for Russia before going through the Balkans to fight provide a second front for the war. A combination of poor planning, tactics and leadership led to a humiliating defeat for the British and the deaths of 115 000 British and Dominion troops. Although the Germans were eventually defeated by the allies in November 1918 only decades later another war would arrive in Europe. One of the main reasons attributed to the rise of the Nazis was the 1919 treaty of Versailles, with its harsh and perhaps unfair conditions for Germany. Britain was not solely behind this treaty but contributed to it alongside the victorious allies, so this argument shows more of a joint failure as oppose to British failure. However, another debated reason for World War 2 was the British policy of appeasement, with the aim of avoiding war Neville chamberlain believed in making certain sacrifices to Hitler. This is most evidently seen with Hitler re arming and making multiple breaches of the treaty of Versailles. Although this likely did give Hitler the confidence to expand at the time, eventually provoking war, this policy did make sense. With public opinion strongly opposed to more war and the dire economic state of Britain fighting a war in Europe whilst simultaneously defending the Empire would have been impossible. With the benefit of hindsight, we can see that this was a mistake and Hitler could've perhaps been shut down sooner, however this still remains a highly debated topic. Furthermore, the French were also partly responsible for appeasement, although Britain did take the lead, they did not oppose it. Furthermore, there is also an argument to say that had the United States of America joined the war sooner then perhaps the Nazi spread would have been overcome sooner. This all relies on the benefit of hindsight and I would argue that at the time there was no right answer. Some would argue the cases for successes during World War 2 such as the evacuation of Dunkirk. Whilst this did instil belief and patriotism within the country it came off the back of British humiliation. Had Britain been successful there would be no need to evacuate 338 000 British troops in the first place.

Finally, even after the second World War there was a collective allied failure which consequently sparked the 'cold war' decades of ideological tensions between the communist east and capitalist west. The collective failure to prevent communist spread led to proxy wars in Korea and Vietnam, conflict in Yugoslavia and almost a devastating 3<sup>rd</sup> world war after the Cuban missile crisis. Internationally there were still some British failures during this period, in particular the Suez crisis of 1956 whereby Britain conceded the Suez Canal and undermined the United States. However, with this argument and that about the first two world wars is that it is not necessarily a British failure and more of a collective international failure.

The 20th century marked an important stage in British history as it was the century where we conceded much of the empire. Certain places such as Malaya in 1957 had a relatively smooth transition in to becoming independent states whereas other places such as Cyprus have become victim to ethnic tensions and disputes about the states ruling. One of the most well-known failures came after World War 2, after one million Indians fought for Britain during the war pressure to grant Indian independence increased. In a bid to prevent ethnic conflict between Hindus and Muslims in 1947 Britain partitioned India creating Muslim homelands in east and west Pakistan. The impact of this caused large scale migration resulting in the deaths of an estimated one million people. Other British



failures in India include the Amritsar massacre of 1919 where several hundred unarmed Indians were killed after British troops opened fire. Failures such as Amritsar highlighted the injustice in many colonies eventually leading to the process of de colonialization which was more successful in certain regions than in others such as India's partition. However ultimately, I would argue that this process was largely carried out unsuccessfully as with the benefit of hindsight we can see there were many avoidable deaths.

On a domestic level the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought a lot of reform for Britain. With all women over 21 years old getting the same voting rights as men in 1928, the national health service being formed in 1948, and secondary school education becoming free for all in 1944, later in the century in 1967 homosexuality was de criminalised and by 1968 it became unlawful for race discrimination to take place in public, employment or on the housing market. We can therefore see Britain developed into a more progressive society with the rights and living standards of everyday people improving. When considering that Britain was among the first nation to implement these kinds of progressive measures, I think it's hard to argue that British History in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a complete failure. Whilst society was not perfect by the end of the century there had still been significant progress.

Therefore, in conclusion I don't think that British history was a complete failure in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Britain had some significant international failures such as appeasement but also managed to transform into a more progressive fair society.

# Media Studies

"Does social media improve or impede communication?"

*First Place – Beatrice Howliston*

*Highly Commended – Thomas Hall*

*Highly Commended – Mia Brasier*

*Highly Commended – Elena Bridgwater*



## *Beatrice Howliston*

Technology is always changing; social media is constantly advancing. Social media is a rising form of communication; Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, and twitter are few of many social media platforms, where children, teens and adults alike can communicate with one another through sending pictures, chats etc. Traditional ways of communication like telephone calls or sending letters are becoming less popular.

On the one hand, many people believe that social media improves communication. Some reasons to believe this are because it is quick and easy, it is cheap and requires minimal effort and it is available everywhere- at any time. Social media platforms are vastly available; the app is downloaded on any device, a tablet, phone, or a laptop/computer, and you are ready to chat. This improves communication as the message can be sent and received almost at once without the hassle of addressing and posting like when sending a letter, which also takes days- even weeks to arrive, or the time it takes to dial someone's number into a phone, that is not guaranteed to answer. Whilst it is so easy, connections are formed quicker and greater relationships can be made. However, some may argue that this impedes communication as the accessibility and simplicity of social media can be dangerous. Though many social media apps require users to be of a certain age, there are many loopholes to enable young children to access them, for example they can lie about their age and their birthday. As most children join these social media apps, their main form of communication becomes online, and they can talk to anyone. Many of the online profiles do not require identification, meaning one could pose as another. Also, it is common for children these days to friend people on social media that they do not know in real life. This exposes children to strangers, making them unaware of the dangers of interacting with people they are not familiar with. As well as this, when communicating is increasingly online, from such an early age, it creates a dependable culture on technology. Arguably, this conditions people to communicate via a screen, so much that face-to-face communication becomes a social anxiety that many shy away from.

Social media also improves communication as it has no limits; people from Australia can chat to people in England with just a click, 70-year-olds (if capable) can chat with their grandchildren, 50 years younger. It is a platform where different people with common interests can connect and become friends. This encourages inclusivity and perhaps enables those with few real-life friends, or those who lack ability to communicate in real life, to have friends online who they can express themselves to and make them less lonely. Despite this, social media could otherwise create invaluable connections as many conversations are repetitive and lack emotion, as tone cannot be read through a screen and people regularly have the same conversations- 'hi,' 'how are you,' 'what are you doing.' A study has shown that 74 percent of Millennials talk to others online more than in person, this instils a culture whereby people feel that communication is only possible with social media, not just in person. Without the presence of social media in a relationship or friendship, many people feel disconnected- that a relationship without social media communication is invaluable compared to one where they communicate every day on snapchat for instance. Though, to some extent, this is useful in enhancing and building friendships, which real life communication takes time to build, it makes these friendships ingenuine- reinforcing the idea that it is repetitive- as many people have the same conversation with different people. That said, there are many advanced updates in social media that can build otherwise meaningful friendships. For example, on most of the social media platforms there is the possibility to snap a picture. This means that you can share in the moment where you are, what you are seeing or who you are with. You can also send voice notes, which could argue against the belief that these conversations online lack emotion.

In my opinion, as much as the people around me and I are very much addicted to social media and spend most of our free time talking on them, I think that social media in fact impedes communication. Communication through social media has become a habit, rather than a choice. This makes the quality of these conversations weaker. Furthermore, I believe that the problem of social media, and society's clear addiction to it, goes much deeper than communication. It has become an identity issue, and a basic skill issue. Most of today's generation are constantly checking their phones, even while being with people, communication online has become the norm- which people rarely spend time off.

Also, people are becoming increasingly concerned with people, and their own online identities; they base opinions and who they surround themselves with, on their online profile rather than who they are as a person. This restricts the friendships that could be made, creates a bullying environment, if someone does not meet another person's profile requirements. The culture of social media is shortening words, having opinions on things that have nothing to do with others, and trends that are considered cool if followed, weird if different. The culture of using slang, for example 'LOL' or 'wyd', has become a part of many students' everyday lives- which compromises their literacy skills.

In conclusion, I believe that social media impedes communication as it has alienated those with phones from real life society. People often check their phones and what other people are doing- even whilst they are busy. Many are constantly checking their phones, throughout school, whilst in bed and even when they themselves are out. This concern about being in touch with other people and how they spend their time has become a part of people's days. Many teens have a screen time of over 5 hours, most of it is spent scrolling and swiping on social media. Today's generation is out of touch with reality, social media is the biggest reason why.

## *Thomas Hall*

Netflix is a subscription based streaming site that allows for people to watch many different types of film, this varies from; series, films, documentaries and trailers. Whereas the film industry thrives due to people buying copies of it as a DVD and cinemas buying the rights to show the film to the public. However, although the cinemas are slowly being killed, Netflix acts in a manner that promotes film and keeps it alive and thriving. The film industry will ultimately benefit due to the actions of Netflix, this is because like cinemas they still have to buy the rights to show the film to the public, meaning that they do not lose out on a profit. On top of that, due to the massive pre sold audience that use Netflix often, the films will be presented and be accessible to people from all around the world, thus only further promoting the films and the directors. From this we are able to initially say that from face value, Netflix is only helping to benefit the film industry.

On the contrary, Netflix and other streaming sites (whether they are free or paid for) are killing the film industry. One could argue that due to the huge amounts of advertising and commonplaceness that the film industry is too prevalent in society, due to this, people will find films to be more and more over represented, ultimately killing the idea of film being a special form of art that is meant to be enjoyed. In addition to this, series are becoming increasingly more seen, because of this people have begun 'binge watching' series of films or episodes. Many people 'binge watch' because of the love for the series, whereas, many individuals do it out of habit and want for more consumption of the media. Overall, the overrepresentation of film is making films less special to society, ultimately killing the film industry.

However, it could also be viewed from a stance that presented Netflix as helping films be more accessible to those that may not be able to go to the cinema or would prefer not to. Although cinema is slowly becoming less popular, film has become more accessible to the masses and thus increased the overall awareness of the film industry. On top of this, Netflix provides categories in which help entice people to keep watching, this includes categories such as 'because you watched...' and 'recently added'. These categories keep their viewers watching films and series after finishing one, this means that Netflix is actually helping the film industry retain its audience and continue to grow at a rapid rate. In addition to this, because of the large amount of brand awareness that Netflix has, directors that have their films on Netflix are given a large source of promotion due to the audience that Netflix has been able to acquire.

On the other hand, Netflix can once again be argued to be killing the film industry, this is because of the streaming attribute that Netflix uses. This means that people are able to stay at home and watch films through there subscription as long as the films are on Netflix. Thus, making DVDs obsolete and killing the film industry piece by piece. DVD discs are now starting to be seen as useless and so are being produced and sold less often, this means that this side of the film industry is being given a poorer reputation. With DVDs being produced at a lower rate, this means that the film industry gains lower amounts of revenue and so this will kill the industry over the long term.

To argue against the idea that Netflix is killing the film industry, Netflix opens film up to a broader target audience, people that may not have been able to afford to watch any film are now given the option to pay a monthly subscription that is affordable to most to watch any films that are offered on the App or website. This means that the business is ultimately aiding the growth of the film industry rather than killing it. On top of this, Netflix have therefore also revolutionised the ways in which society as a whole indulge in watching films and series, making the film industry more well-known and more popular than ever before, overall helping the film industry rather than killing it. The broader target audience helps the directors gain recognition and for Netflix to grow their brand in the

meantime, in consequence Netflix gains a larger amount of brand awareness and profits, meaning that they are therefore helping the film industry grow to its fullest extent.

In conclusion, both cases have been argued and are equally valid. However, overall, the verdict comes to the answer as being, no, Netflix mostly provides benefits to the film industry with few smaller negatives that it brings. Netflix has provided the film industry with many new opportunities and has aided the growth and expansion of the industry as a whole, with this we can comfortably say that Netflix has been a great help to the film industry rather than being a burden or detrimental. One example of the opportunities that Netflix had provided is for the directors, they were given the chance to get paid and have their names exposed to a large number of viewers through the pre-sold audience that Netflix has to offer.

*Mia Brasier*

Social media has become a big part of our daily lives, it has changed the way we communicate and share information with others. Social media sites like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Tik Tok connect people all over the world, which brings people closer together even when they are not physically with each other. However, social media can negatively affect the way we live our life and impact our communication skills. In this essay I will show the positives and negative ways social media can have on communication and if it does improve or impede communication.

**Positives of social media communication:**

- **Increases global connectivity**

Social media allows the world to become more interconnected as it breaks down the geographical barriers and allows immediate communication all around the world. People do not need to physically interact with friends, family and colleagues instead can call, text, email. No matter where they are in the world.

- **Information sharing**

Recently more news channels have converted to the social media app TikTok to share information as they know it will reach a wider audience than just on the TV, social media allows information to be shared at a click of a button and can share news, updates and educational content, which provides awareness and knowledge sharing across the globe.

- **Helps long distance relationships**

Social media can help people to maintain and keep strong relationships with relatives or partners who may not live near each other however can keep a strong bond even when they cannot physically see each other, platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter enable people to stay connected with friends and family where they can share experiences, photos and updates.

- **Social movements**

Social media has played a vital role in political movements, activists and groups use these social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to raise awareness, organise events and educate people around common causes which can increase the impact of change across the world.

**Negatives of social media Communication:**

- **Superficial connections**

Although we all believe that social media creates connectivity, social media can create superficial relationships what I mean by this is people can get drawn in by how many likes, comments or shares they get on their post which can lead to the need of social validation creating an unrealistic life style and not genuine connections with people.

- **Information overload or misinformation**

The amount that is shared on social media can lead to an information overload this can question the authenticity of the source making it hard to believe what is true and not true, the spread of misinformation and fake news is a rising concern as false information and content can influence public opinions and perceptions, on others which can be detrimental to someone's mental health.

- **Privacy concerns**

Social media platforms often make users share their personal information which has led to concerns about privacy

and data security. Things like data breaches and unauthorised access demonstrate the vulnerabilities related with the digital age and potentially invading people's private lives.

- **Cyberbullying and online harassment**

Social media can be a very dangerous place and the rise of cyberbullying and harassment has increased, people have faced threats, insults or discrimination. Which has impacted so many people's mental health and has even caused people to take their own lives due to people's hurtful comments, threats or discrimination.

Verbal communication is on a decline due to the power of social media, other negative impacts of social media include the increase of abbreviations for example "Idk" I do not know, "Wdym" What do you mean, "Lol" laugh out loud and many more. Which has also seen students use these abbreviations in exams and formal environments which has led to the younger generation having poorer grammar skills.

Social media can have a negative impact on people's mental health as many people share their lives on platforms like Facebook, Instagram and TikTok some people can start to compare themselves to others and devalue their own life, some people can pretend their life is better than what it is which can make others feel negative about their life.

There are around three billion users on social media, this means 40% of the world uses social media for communication, so is not a shock that social media effects communication. 11% of adults reported they prefer to stay at home on Facebook rather than go out on the weekend, communication is affected as they do not experience personal expression, our expectations of others and the way companies communicate with customers, I think social media will make working environments more informal as the younger generation get into work due to them growing up around abbreviations and more informal communication over social media

A benefit of social media is younger people are interested in the news again, as the news used to be on TV as it has converted on to Tik Tok and other social media platforms. 23% of young users get news from social media and 61% get political news from Facebook, this improves young people's communication in keeping up with the real world.

In conclusion the impact of social media on communication has positive and negative elements, social media is a great place to communicate especially with family and friends, it allows you to live freely knowing wherever you are in the world you can still keep in contact with family and friends. However, since the coronavirus which meant a lot of people working from home and not having face to face interactions for a long time it has meant people have developed social anxiety this can lead to less people going out which can impact their mental health.

Overall, I believe social media does not improve communication because although it does keep everyone connected, I think social media makes social interactions in person more difficult for people as with social media they have time to think of responses whereas in real life they are on the spot. Therefore, I believe social media impedes communication as it decreases face to face interactions which I believe in the long term will affect people's mental health.



## *Elena Bridgwater*

One of social media's greatest benefits is the connection to people and news all over the world. Societies have evolved greatly due to the media, and many of our communities are solely strengthened by social media. But there are two views on social media, good and bad.

Social media, or in other words, "The enormous Tin-Can Telephone" has allowed companies, friends, family, news and strangers to be able to communicate even from other sides of the world. To communicate doesn't mean picking up a pen and piece of paper and waiting months for a letter back, or waiting by the one telephone in the house for an oncoming call because now it is all so much different. A message can be sent in within a few seconds. This clearly shows social media improves communication by helping a message get across quick and easy. You could imagine writing a long letter, posting it, months go by then you receive a letter back and completely forget what the topic was about. Social media has helped spread awareness or important information to be beneficial to people all over the world.

There are many questions about social media that swirl around my brain. For example, how would life have been without social media during Covid? I can't even imagine how chaotic it would have all been. All the news that kept people all over the world aware of what was going on would have been alienated. Thousands more people would've died by the deadly virus because they would have had no awareness of the current situation and how to be cured. Education would have crashed, and work would have been impossible. Which would lead to the fall of businesses and the world would become silent. Families and friends wouldn't know if someone they loved had died, they wouldn't even be able talk to keep company. Statistics show that social media usage growth, since the Covid outbreak, is unprecedented across the industry, and they are experiencing new records in usage almost every day. Social media was the key to globalization and with the use of technology it helped save the world with communication.

Another reason why humans would go crazy without social media is political news. Having the use of social media allows people to keep up and understand the current state of political views. Humans are strange creatures; we are too nosey and quarrelsome to stay quiet and just observe. That's when different Parties and voting come in. Social media allows each Party leader to communicate what will happen if their party is voted.

The word impede means delay or prevent someone or something by obstructing them. And sometimes social media can be exactly that, it can block the true meaning of things. In some strange way, humans are being brainwashed to believe exactly what media creators want people to see. Which is a scary thought but is partially the reason why certain companies are up and running. Advertising is the persuasion to buy a product/service. Without feeding the audience some type of delusional message, it would be very hard to sell. That's why sometimes we buy a product without any knowledge of it and receive it being disappointed because it was gold-dipped in lies to be bought. News is believed to be exaggerated lies and brainwashes the audience to think we are doing worse as a society than we actually are. Marxism view believes we are living in a false consciousness and everything we are being told by the bourgeoisie is a lie to motivate us to work hard. Therefore, communication via social media is untrustworthy and may be causing bigger problems.

Does social media impede communication in discreet ways? People who don't own any technology equipment are the answers to this question. We may ask ourselves; do they have the same level of communication as people who are surrounded by technology? Do they have any knowledge of what's happening around the world?

Well, another way social media impedes communication is the fact we are blinded. Every day we hide behind screens and believe everything we read or see, which has a high possibility of being made up by a 10-year-old boy bored in his room. The only thing that is certain is the anyone can be anyone. When you are texting a close friend or even a family member, how are you completely sure it's not a hacker, or even AI?

This is linked to the fact that true face-to-face communication is decreasing due to the advantage of social media. Now people think there is no point putting in the effort in meeting up with someone but instead staying at home and texting or calling them. I believe having in-person interaction is what communication is all about. Being there in person gives you the chance to take in each other's raw emotions when talking to them about anything. This improves mental health because social interaction is strongly needed to grow bonds and to learn about true communication.

In my opinion there is no one answer to this question because it's a mixture of both. It improves technological communication all over the world but when it comes down to face-to-face interactions that strengthen trust and honesty, social media impedes it. It impedes communication in a metaphorical way, if we are talking literally, of course it improves it. Many years ago, British people didn't even know Africa existed but now we have the ability to call anyone in Africa. Humans built an extraordinary invention, but now there is no way back. Technology will carry on growing until robots take over (we used to joke about that, but now...)

My friends and I were wondering what would happen if the world went through a cyber malfunction and every technological equipment shut off. Would the world go silent? Would a tsunami of chaos overthrow us all? Would the world become bright again? There is an infinite queue of questions that may never be answered. Or maybe we could just ask AI and he could scare the crap out of us.

# *Modern Foreign Languages*

*"Is bilingualism a threat to unity? Would a common language  
promote harmony?"*

*First Place – Woody Richardson*



## *Woody Richardson*

Many of the ancient scholars of the past have aimed to answer this question, but the grossly unobtainable nature of the question makes it one more fit for philosophers such as Plato, Bertrand Russell and Gottlob Frege than one that could actually affect or improve the present. But with advanced AI able to weave languages in a way akin to spider making webs, the prospect has become more feasible. The rose-tinted concept of one glorious universal language has origins in cultures scattered across and beyond the shores, however it's most common and well-known iteration is in the Tower of Babel, a structure referenced in the book of Genesis and said to be the antithesis of hubris fuelled unity. It's said the world united under common tongue was a prosperous one, but an arrogant one; this conveyed in the tower of babel. Derived from the Hebrew, babel is meant to mean jumble or confusion and is what results from God knocking the tower down (a result of humans being conceited enough to build a tower reaching the lofty heavens); cultural discord, miscommunication and confusion run writhe and humanity is set back generations. While this is obviously a work of fiction, it has aspects that are quite the opposite. The notion that humans under a common god and a common language are mighty is proven in the (debated) real equivalent of the titular tower being over 300 feet tall (or the rough height of the statue of liberty). But languages are much more than a means of communication and the etymological journey of many dialects are far more significant than the information they're used to communicate.

Because while some languages are tapestries of progress and cultural metamorphosis, others are beautifully localized having left the lips of the same family's generations after generation. However, this isolation often leads to languages dying out; this tragedy is quantified and analysed by K. David Harrison in his book "When Languages Die: The Extinction of The World's Languages and The Erosion of Human Knowledge,". Harrison posits that languages are as integral to civilizations as the air they breathe and the food they eat and highlights the incredible depth that some languages can encompass, that the death of a language is like "dropping a bomb on the original culture". This metaphor applied to the concept of a beautiful universal language would be borderline genocidal. This wanton etymological pogrom also discounts the fact some words aren't designed to be translated, as they are intimately woven into the fabric of one specific philosophy, for example KOYAANISQATSI, a Hopi Indian word that exclusively targets a Hopi Indian problem – the spiritual discord that follows a disharmony between body, mind and spirit. What about sign language – a solution to an ever-present global problem – that would slowly be phased out, or the worldwide whistling languages, adapted for a necessity of long-range communication and also gloriously separated from the norm. The simple fact is that these nuances are too human to die and align too closely with our nature of adapt and overcome.

But with technology blossoming and the facts become the facts? What is human nature and what must we sacrifice to align with it? In a nihilistic (but probably realistic) view, all languages and culture will all die eventually. But in the now, does bilingualism affect this? A good example of this debacle is in Scandinavia, and more specifically Sweden and Finland, who are actively seeing this debate played out in their streets and schools. Both countries are liberal and holistic in their multilingual policies, with Sweden having the Language Act of 2009 while Finland has the 1999 Finish constitution.

Framed around Richards Ruiz's three orientations of languages planning, the Norse school language ideology is based on the pillars of understanding the "a complex of dispositions toward language and its role, and toward languages and their role in society". Principally this answers the question (in the Scandinavian context at least), with bilingualism and more education about languages being the perfect way to understand a culture and its place in society. This idea is only supported by the numbers, with Scandinavian schools being consistently ranked among the best in the world. However, the wider societal impacts of such as culturally diverse policy are presently seen in

the controversy surrounding Sweden's far right governance, and in particular a violent spike in Islamophobia. With the jingoistic wind running through the Sveriges Riksdag being viewed as one of progress and the Scandinavian nations perceived purity over the lesser mongrel nations; and a concern over the previous government generous accepting and integrating of immigrants.

So, the past and the present both have case studies of debatable success, but what of the future? Well, it's similarly convoluted and murky, shrouded in a gossamer of hypotheticals. But a growing number of economists and etymologists point to globalization as the potential solution. Historically trade and cultural merging has led to the origins of most modern-day languages (and a past attempt at an artificial global language known as Esperanto), English in particular has been, in the words of lexicographer Kory Stamper "been borrowing words from other languages since its infancy." leading to an estimate of 80% of the language being comprised of loan words gathered through cultural mingling. If globalization continues then a global language could be one formed out of necessity to articulate humans voracious demand for convenience and trade

In conclusion, however, the answer to both questions is an underwhelming maybe. As while the demand for progress we have achieved would seem to consist of a boundless appetite for growth whatever the cost, we must ultimately question it. The story of languages is one that transcends mere communication and labels and spearheads the very heart of the human condition. Our pride, in the footsteps of Oedipus and Othello will be the ultimate hindrance. We perceive the journey as more important than the destination and that is fault that's so beautifully human.

# Music

*"Does music distract or help?"*

*First Place – Tom Poynton*

*Highly Commended – Isaac McGonnell*



*Tom Poynton*

Personally, I believe that music is the most beautiful human creation ever. It can be funny, relaxing, intense, exciting, and best of all, there is something for everyone. Music has become a major part of my life and finding songs which entrance my brain and clear away my thoughts has flattered my consciousness.

Although my whole life I have always been told “Don't listen to music whilst studying as you will get distracted” I did not obey and continued with my unhealthy habits. This made me think, does music actually distract you from your work? After looking into this topic, I came across some studies which said that; Music may help reduce stress, improve some aspects of memory, and improve cognitive function, which may all help with concentration and focus when studying, which I thought was funny as nothing I had revised the night before stuck with me till the next morning for the test. Other studies have shown that different genres of music create different brain wave reactions towards them, for example, aggressive sounding beats with violent lyrics cause the amygdala to stimulate the hypothalamus causing you to become angry and excited, therefore distracting you from the mundane task of essay writing. On the other hand, classical music has the opposite effect with it spiking dopamine making you happier and gives a calming effect preventing the release of stress hormones which ultimately fogs thinking and disables you from being focused. This type of effect has been proven to increase ability to reach the ‘flow state’ of writing.

This is when a writer can tap into a different mindset and just write without thinking about it. Everyone has experienced it, and it is a great feeling being able to portray your thoughts onto a piece of paper and when authoring a long essay this is essential if you want to finish in time. With it being proven that (for most people) music helps people to reach this state when doing work, I do not believe that this is negative or ‘distracting’ at all.

On the other hand, during exams music will certainly not be allowed, so studying with this accessory may confuse the brain when it is time to perform in a tense and professional environment like an exam hall. Have you ever heard the phrase ‘Practice it how you would play it’? This phrase is used in sports where people train their physical bodies to do something repeatedly, just how they would do it if it were the biggest tournament in the world. So why should revision for exams be any different?

Apart from schoolwork, music has also been banned in sports such as running since it ‘distracts’ the runner from their surroundings, but it is believed that around 90% of casual runners listen to music whilst working out

As a student who struggles to focus on schoolwork, music is a great way to channel my thoughts and stay focused on a task.

### ***How is music used for learning?***

Music is actually used for learning as it helps people to remember as the songs are catchy and the lyrics usually rhyme. This technique is often used with the younger generation who need to remember certain things such as the order of the months, certain history facts such as Henry the 8th's wives and of course the alphabet song. By age two, most toddlers can recite this song and by age three fully understand the whole alphabet and some phonetic sounds.

### ***How does music help with memory and maturity?***

Interestingly, children listening to or playing music activate various neural networks involved in processing sound,

movement, emotion, and memory. This engagement can help to strengthen neural connections and improve brain function. Music is also proven to boost children's vocabulary and help them to relate emotions with words as it is linked to the tone it is sung in.

### ***How does music influence us emotionally?***

The limbic system, which is involved in processing emotion lights up when we hear music which we enjoy. The chills that you feel when listening to a particularly moving piece of music is a result of dopamine a neurotransmitter that triggers sensations of pleasure and wellbeing. As humans we also like to listen to music which relate to our current emotions, for example, when sad we won't listen to happy music and vice versa. Our brain splits music up into the temporal lobe which is the language centre of our brain where each side, reacts to different parts with the left hemisphere translating the lyrics and the right hemisphere interprets the music. The recognition and understanding of pitch and tone are mainly handled by the auditory cortex. The auditory cortex is the most highly organized processing unit in the brain. This cortex area is where animals process hearing but for humans, language and music.

After researching and writing this essay, i have come to the conclusion that music is the most complex yet beautiful things humans have created, it has benefitted us in so many ways and has been proven to help us mentally, physically and most importantly of course; in our studies. The way our brain breaks down and processes these lyrics and beats has shocked me on how intricate our brains are. I doubt that i will ever stop my habits of listening to music non-stop but now I have realized that it's not a problem and that music DOES help us.



## *Isaac McGonnell*

Having music whilst doing some work or revising is a controversial topic, that I'm sure has been discussed at least once in a household. When doing revision many choose whether or not to have music on in the background or not at all, some say it helps revising whilst others say it distracts and does not help in learning. Background music may have a negative effect on studying in some cases. A 2021 article highlights research that suggests music can worsen performance in reading comprehension tasks compared with performance in silent conditions. Music may be distracting to some people, especially when it is loud or contains lyrics. The research outlined in the above article has also suggested that listening to pop music while carrying out a reading task reduced performance in introverts but not extroverts. So, personality may play a role, as well as the type of music. There is also positive impact on stress and anxiety by playing music as Lasting stress may negatively affect cognitive function and concentration, which may have a negative effect on performance. A 2021 small-scale study looked at the effects of music on psychological and physiological stress in 50 people in a hospital. After listening to music for 30 minutes, people reported significantly lower anxiety and pain. This evidently shows that music even makes the world a better place as people who are struggling with anxiety and stress consequentially gain even more harmful symptoms during exams and even may lose motivation, not doing any revision. Therefore, by having music on whilst revising can calm them down and help them revise for important tests.

However, it can also have negative impacts on things such as memory. Working memory is the cognitive system for holding and retaining a certain amount of information temporarily. According to a 2017 article, background music may put an extra load on working memory, making learning more difficult. Everything involved in learning, including the learning material, task, and context, requires processing with working memory. Working memory capacity is the number of different concepts that working memory can deal with at once. The brain has limited working memory capacity, and music may reduce the capacity available for learning. People may have to divide their attention between the background music and what they are trying to learn. People may require extra cognitive effort to listen to music and learn, which may negatively impact studying. This is a clear contradiction to what was said earlier. This must mean that it just depends on what type of person you are, as earlier an article said that it may reduce an introvert's performance not an extrovert. This could have the same effect as music on memory as some people are more easily to concentrate and multi task compared to people who cannot. An example of who this could affect is people with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hypertrophy Disorder) and people with sensitive hearing. But a 2017 Research shows that different types of music can affect concentration: Soft, fast music may have beneficial effects on learning. Loud music, either fast or slow, may have adverse effects on learning. Slow, soft music may also negatively affect learning. Instrumental music may distract people less than music with lyrics. Familiarity with the music may also affect how people learn. Therefore, it also depends on the pace and type of music you listen to.

Music doesn't only just affect studying but also sleep. Some people are unable to sleep without music and some people can't sleep with music on. Therefore, it is a very controversial topic as to whether music has positive impacts or negative impacts on sleep. Music can reduce sympathetic nervous system activity, decrease anxiety, blood pressure, heart and respiratory rate and may have positive effects on sleep via muscle relaxation and distraction from thoughts. By it having such positive impacts it such as muscle relaxation it means that people with anxiety and stress are able to get a good night sleep which is detrimental for mental and physical health. When you play the music too loud, it can worsen your hearing and make it even harder to fall asleep. Poor choice of music can increase your heart rate, impact your mood, and increase alertness and anxiety. In children, sleeping with wired headphones or earplugs can lead to strangulation, though rather rare. However, another study has completely agreed with what was said earlier and says that it also has positive impacts. In one study, adults who listened to 45 minutes of music before going to sleep reported having better sleep quality beginning on the very first night Even more encouraging is that this benefit appears to have a cumulative effect with study participants reporting better sleep the more often, they incorporated music into their nightly routine. Using music can also

decrease the time it takes to fall asleep. In a study of women with symptoms of insomnia, participants played a self-selected album when getting into bed for 10 consecutive nights. Before adding music to their evening routine, it took participants from 27 to 69 minutes to fall asleep, after adding music it only took 6 to 13 minutes. In addition to facilitating quickly falling asleep and improving sleep quality, playing music before bed can improve sleep efficiency, which means more time that you are in bed is actually spent sleeping. Improved sleep efficiency equals more consistent rest and less waking up during the night.

In conclusion, I think that listening to music whilst revising has positive impacts depending on the person as some people struggle and get distracted easily and therefore having music in the background would majorly distract them. This is the same as my opinion for having it on when sleeping I think it would be useful to those who struggle to get to sleep.

# *Physical Education*

"Should performance enhancing drugs (PEDs) be allowed in professional sport?"

*First Place – Sidney Callaghan*

*Highly Commended – Zak Garratty*

*Highly Commended – Adam Nicholson*



## *Sidney Callaghan*

The use of Performance Enhancing Drugs (PED's) in professional sport is a topic that has been heavily debated throughout the years. PED's can give advantages such as increased muscle mass, increased muscular and cardiovascular endurance, more efficient recovery, calming of nerves and drastic weight loss. Perhaps the most famous incident of PED abuse is the case of Lance Armstrong, a seven-time Tour de France winner, who was found using erythropoietin (EPO) and blood transfusions dating back to 1996 back in 2013. He admitted to using EPO, human growth hormone, diuretics – a PED that helps the kidneys remove excess water leading to decreased weight, and blood doping. This helped him to all seven of his record-breaking seven consecutive Tour de France wins. EPO is a drug that promotes production of red blood cells, causing increased oxygen delivery to the muscles, meaning that athletes can perform at a higher intensity for longer, and was banned by the International Olympic Committee Medical Commission in 1990. Cycling is the most infamous sport for PED use, with countless cases throughout the years leading to a belief that cyclists must take PEDs in order to be able to compete at the professional level. PED's are known to cause multiple harmful side effects on the body, such as hypertension, increased risk of heart attacks and strokes, nausea, shrinking of the testicles in males, aggressive behaviour, acne, addiction and blood clotting.

One commonly used argument for the use of PEDs in professional sport is that as spectators want to see the best performances possible, allowing use of substances that will enhance such performance will make the sport more enjoyable to watch, increasing spectatorship and therefore income into the sport. As athletes begin to reach the limit of what is believed to be possible with the natural, unenhanced body, any further improvement will end up reliant on the use of performance enhancers. On the topic of money, there is also an argument that legalising use of drugs would save the money currently spent on testing – especially given that current drug testing is wildly inaccurate, shown in the case of Andre Onana, a Cameroonian goalkeeper currently playing for Manchester United who was banned from professional football for 12 months in 2021 after mistakenly taking his wife's pregnancy medication and failing a doping test. Using PED's in a sport where there is a large disparity between the facilities and revenue available to the top clubs and the lower clubs could also help to bridge this gap, and could therefore make the sport more competitive and enjoyable to watch, again increasing income for the sport. The sustained viewership of cycling – a sport infamous for its relentless use of PED's – can be used as a case study to prove that use of drugs does not reduce interest in a sport. There is also an argument that if athletes are aware of the health risks associated with taking such substances it is their personal decision.

On the other hand, there are just as many arguments stacked against the idea of using PED's in elite-level sport. Permitting the use of PED's in sport would create an imbalance and be unjust to individuals who do not want to take such substances as they will become incredibly unlikely to reach the professional level. This also takes away the value of hard work and persistent graft to achieve the standards required at the professional level, making achievements by enhanced performers less impressive and decreasing the reputation, credibility and respect towards such sports and accolades. The loss of a traditional, and arguably the most important, value of sport would be one that would most definitely cause a mass lack of interest in sport and decrease participation from grassroots level to professional level. Furthermore, by having children look up to role models that have taken these substances, a culture that promotes use of these drugs will be established, leading to an increase in younger children taking these dangerous substances and causing potentially irreversible damage to their bodies. The possibility of drug advertising and sponsorship only adds to this potential problem, as PED's will become normalised and promoted to a wider audience, which may lead to uninformed people taking these drugs unaware of the side effects and damaging their bodies, increasing strain on the healthcare system as well. The long-term

health risks of many PED's are also unknown, meaning athletes cannot truly make an informed decision on whether they want to take these substances as they cannot gain a full idea of the risks and potential consequences of such actions.

One idea to appease both arguments is a separate competition in which enhanced athletes can face each other, leaving natural performers to compete within their original set-ups. This would create a separate standard of sport that does not put pressure on unwilling athletes to take these performance enhancers, leaving only athletes aware of the risks and happy to take them in their own federation. However, it could be argued that as this separate system will probably be a higher standard of sport, it will leapfrog the traditional competitions in viewership and leave them under-represented and not bring in enough revenue. Despite this, the traditional values of the original organisation with unenhanced athletes will most likely appeal to a large audience due to the equal nature and reliance on hard work to reach the top, rather than the 'easy way out' of taking a PED. This will also level the playing field in a sport like cycling, renowned for drug abuse, as it gives natural cyclists the opportunity to prove themselves in a completely fair environment.

Overall, I believe that the idea of a separate league / competition system for enhanced performers to compete in would be the best way to settle this argument, on the condition that all athletes deciding to take part are fully educated on the potential dangers of taking PED's. This is because personally I believe it would be interesting to see how much the human body can truly achieve, without neglecting unenhanced performers and giving them the opportunity to still perform on the professional level regardless of potential hesitation or unwillingness to take potentially dangerous performance enhancers.

*Zak Garratty*

The use of performance enhancing drugs have been a subject of controversy over the many years of sporting events, whether it be cycling, athletics or football. The use of these drugs has always been illegal as it takes away a lot of the challenging work other sports players put in and is an extremely unethical way to win a global competition. However, are there cases where PEDs may be used in sports and why?

The most common PED used in sports nowadays are anabolic steroids. These drugs are used to build strength and muscle and could be used in Olympic events such as cycling or powerlifting. Not only are they an unfair way to build strength and to skip training, but these steroids also have a history of health effects, some of which being: Early heart attacks, strokes, liver tumours and kidney failures. So not only have these drugs been banned to make all sports events an even playing field the ban is also in place to protect the livelihood and wellbeing of the athletes and their families.

Some famous cases on the use of PEDs and why their ban is justified trace back to the 1960s. In 1967 British cyclist, Tom Simpson, died while competing in the Tour de France. Due to it being on a hot day, his death was initially put down to dehydration but on further inspection during the autopsy and looking at his cycling jersey, amphetamines were found. These drugs allowed Tom to push himself into an overdrive state where he could not even tell he was overworking and dehydrating. His death led to the ban on PEDs throughout the professional cycling world.

Performance enhancing drugs take away the true ability of athletes and make for unreliable expectations surrounding skill. They should stay banned from professional sports as it will take away the true aspect of what it is to be an athlete. These people train their bodies for hours upon hours to reach their peak performance and if PEDs were made to be legal. Not to mention the danger they put the athlete's lives in.

However, there is also an argument to why PEDs should be allowed in the professional sports scene. These drugs can drastically improve the recovery from serious injuries and as most athletes will get injured at some point in their careers this could be a good development. Research is showing that short-term anabolic androgenic steroid use during surgery may help people recover after ACL which is a common but profoundly severe injury in sports such as football and basketball. With an injury such as an ACL tear the athlete may suffer long-term damage. However, legalising the use of certain PEDs which are currently illegal can help stop long-term damage while also significantly reducing recovery time.

Another predominant argument for the legalisation of PEDs is that there are already so many athletes already using them that it has gotten to the point where it is fairer to just legalise them for everyone. Countries in athletics, for example Russia, are already doping, while their clean athletes are being punished for not taking the drugs. This means that they are being punished for having a moral code and trying to keep it fair for the rest of the playing field. Certain researchers have suggested the solution of giving athletes the option of using PEDs, making it their choice despite knowing the negative health impacts they can have. Natural playing in sports only encourages further injuries and short careers, whereas certain PEDs can combat this and even the playing field.

If the drugs were legalised, they could be easily regulated by the sports associations around the world. Drugs that are safe could be potentially introduced while drugs that are known to be unsafe could be monitored and forever banned. It is unfair that athletes must miss a safe advantage that the cheaters of sport use so shamelessly. As long as regular health checks are introduced and a maximum dosage of PEDs is put in place, there should be no reason not to allow the introduction of these drugs into the sporting world.

However, legalising these drugs may accidentally promote the use of other drugs and other unhealthy activities. A

study found that people who use PEDs are more likely to participate in other behaviours such as substance abuse and unsafe driving. Athletes are meant to be seen as the role models for children around the world and if they are seen using these drugs and being allowed to do so it may influence the youth to participate in certain unhealthy activities. It may also create an image of body dissatisfaction and children realise they may not be able to live up to the level of their favourite athletes without the use of these PEDs.

In conclusion, I do not believe the use of PEDs in sport should be something that is ever allowed as not only does it damage the spirit and integrity of these different sports, but it is also way too dangerous for the athletes themselves. All they do is remove the amazing effort and work our athletes put in and disrespect everyone who has dedicated their lives to a sport. It is only fair to go off natural talent and ability as it is the way we as humans were created and that is not something that needs to be tampered with. There needs to be a severe lockdown on the use of these drugs and stricter punishments introduced for any athletes found in possession or using them. Countries like Russia need to be banned from competitions going forward unless they can prove they have changed and are not forcing their athletes to dope.

*Adam Nicholson*

Performance Enhancing Drug use in elite level sport is a topic that has sparked debate in the industry for decades. Anabolic steroids, blood doping and other illicit drugs have a major effect on sport around the world, and in many sports such as cycling is arguably the largest threat to the integrity and professionalism of the sport. This can be attributed to the 'win at all costs' mindset associated with professional athletes. This mindset continues to grow more and more, especially due to the ridiculous prize pools in large tournaments. As a result, athletes have such a desire to perform well that traditional sporting values and gamesmanship are disregarded. Perhaps this means it is time for performance enhancing drugs to be legalised in elite sport to create a fairer and more level competition level for all athletes in sport.

One of the primary reasons for performance enhancing drugs being strictly banned in sport is due to the unfair physiological advantages that these drugs give to users. To combat this, elite sport organisations frequently carry out blood tests on athletes to identify traces of illicit substances. Those found guilty are often struck with lengthy bans from participating, financial punishments, and even removal of titles they have won. This can be seen with famous cyclist Lance Armstrong, who was found guilty of blood doping stretching over 13 years. Blood doping involves the removal of blood which is later re-injected into the body, to unnaturally increase the number of red blood cells in the bloodstream. This has a large benefit to physical performance, as oxygen can be transported to muscles more efficiently, reducing the rate of fatigue in muscle cells. For cyclists, this provides a substantial boost to performance that can place them significantly above competitors. As a result, Armstrong was stripped of his 7 Tour de France titles, and faced a lifetime ban from competing in the sport. Blood doping is so common in cycling that all 7 of the athletes handed the Tour de France titles taken from Armstrong had all been part of doping scandals in the past. However, more and more athletes in all varieties of sports are found guilty of performance enhancing drugs use, and even more perpetrators go undetected, therefore one way to combat this could be levelling the playing field and allowing performance enhancing drugs to be used legally in sport. However, this creates an argument about the choices available to performers. The permission to use performance enhancers essentially forces all athletes in the sport to also use these drugs, regardless of their own views or fears of health implications, in order to remain competitive amongst drugged athletes.

Further to this, the legalisation of performance enhancing drugs would provide benefits to sporting governing bodies from a business and financial perspective. Allowing performance enhancing drugs use would greatly enhance the level of performance for the sport as a whole; for example, cyclists would race quicker, power athletes exert more force, and sprinters test the limits of the human anatomy. In turn, the viewership and fans spending money to watch these athletes would greatly increase, bringing more money into the sport, which would allow expansion of the sport as a whole. Another financial benefit is the expenses associated with managing performance enhancing drugs control in sport. This includes the tests to ensure performance enhancing drugs aren't used currently, and regulations that establish a grey-area regarding performance enhancing drugs use – an example being creatine use, an exercise supplement that greatly increases the ability to build muscle mass through training. There are no regulations against the use of this in professional sport, even with the physiological benefits it provides to users. However, similar benefits, such as growth hormones, which provide benefits to injured athletes to re-build lost muscle tissue are prohibited, establishing a mid-ground of what is or not allowed in sport. To prevent this grey-area of what is and isn't legal, the legalisation of all Performance enhancing drugs would mean all athletes would be on a level playing field.

The major issue with the suggestion of legalising Performance enhancing drugs is the great risk to athletes' health that occurs through a lot of performance enhancing drugs use. These risks are often severe and sometimes life



threatening. Anabolic steroid use has dangers including severe mood swings, risk of heart disease and testicular atrophy, amongst many other physiological impacts. Blood doping involves the serious potential of blood infection due to the extraction and injection of blood from the user. Of course, these dangers to the athletes are not to be ignored, and therefore make the legalisation of performance enhancing drugs incredibly difficult to gain traction for. The counter-argument to this is the concept of all athletes' use of performance enhancing drugs being regulated and administrated centrally by sporting governing bodies. This could ensure that performance enhancing drugs would be used with as much safety as possible, resultingly lowering the chance of health damages to the athletes.

Critics to the idea would raise the point that allowing performance enhancers would be sport as a whole almost accepting defeat in the attempt to control drug use.

All things considered, it would be a revolutionary and difficult regulation change to get passed in sport. A greater amount of scientific and sporting research into the effects would be advisable, to ensure all potential drug use would be a benefit to the sport and outweigh the potential negatives – primarily health-wise that may affect the athletes; the health and well-being of performers must still remain the primary interest in the minds of governing bodies. One thing is for sure; performance enhancing drugs would level the playing field in an industry that has an underlying issue of bending current drug regulations, and this is just one of the several pros to argue over the proposed rule change.

# Physics

"Should there be a manned mission to Mars?"

*First Place – Milena Fleming*

*Highly Commended – Florian Fetahu*



## *Milena Fleming*

The prospect of sending humans to Mars has captivated the imagination of scientists, space enthusiasts, and the public alike. As technology advances and space exploration capabilities grow, the idea of a manned mission to Mars becomes increasingly plausible. However, this ambitious endeavour raises profound questions and concerns. This essay explores the arguments for and against a manned mission to Mars, weighing the potential benefits against the challenges and risks involved. In the 1960s, humans set out to discover what the red planet can teach us. Now, NASA is hoping to land the first humans on Mars by the 2030s. [1]

Firstly, there is immense potential for ground-breaking scientific discovery. If humans are sent, it allows for real-time decision-making and adaptability. Moreover, successful missions to Mars can enable scientists to explore and investigate unforeseen phenomena. Also, human presence can unlock more mysteries of the Red Planet's geological and biological history than the presence of robots.

Secondly, the challenges posed by a manned mission to Mars could drive significant technological advancements. If the missions to Mars are successful, the necessary technologies for life support, resource utilisation, and long-duration space travel developed could benefit us far beyond Mars exploration. In terms of benefits for life on Earth, useful information from Mars explorations can be used to contribute to advancements in fields such as medicine, engineering, and sustainable living.

Thirdly, a manned mission to Mars has the potential to inspire a new generation of scientists, engineers, and explorers. The audacity of an undertaking captures the human spirit of exploration and curiosity. Additionally, joint efforts among countries to achieve this monumental goal could foster international cooperation, transcending geopolitical boundaries for the benefit of all humanity.

Fourthly, Stephen Hawking claimed that humanity does not have as many years left on Earth before it becomes uninhabitable as people would like to think. "[W]e must ... continue to go into space for the future of humanity," Hawking said in a lecture at the University of Cambridge this week. "I don't think we will survive another 1,000 years without escaping beyond our fragile planet." Due to events such as climate change, overtaxed food production, and overpopulation, humanity needs to find other planets to jettison itself to or it will not survive longer than roughly 1000 years. [2]

This reasoning that manned missions to Mars are useful can be supported further by the fact that, in the past, many automated missions to Mars have proven to be fallible, and the results returned to Earth were far from optimal. Therefore, a manned mission, while more expensive, and risky, provides extra security, and versatility that is necessary for this mission

Finally, establishing a human presence on Mars could serve as a stepping stone for future colonization efforts. While this prospect remains distant, having a backup for the human species on another planet could provide a form of planetary insurance. In the face of existential threats on Earth such as those that Hawking spoke about, a self-sustaining colony on Mars could ensure the survival of the human species.

However, the arguments against manned missions to Mars are just as convincing.

Firstly, in February 2018, Musk sent his personal Tesla roadster into outer space. This stunt was viewed as impressive by many; nevertheless, countless people believe that the trick was ridiculous as, unlike other spacecraft which had been sent to Mars, the car and the mannequin sitting behind the wheel – had not been sterilised. Some scientists described it as the “largest load of earthly bacteria to ever enter space.” So, if humans do eventually land on Mars, they would not arrive alone. They would carry with them trillions of their earthly microbes and these

microbes that humans would bring with them would eventually find their way onto the surface of Mars. And in doing so, confuse the search for Martian life. This is because we would not be able to distinguish indigenous life from the microbes that we had brought with us.

Secondly, the cost involved is astronomical. A considerable amount of money is required in order to develop the necessary technology, building spacecraft capable of sustaining human life for extended periods, and executing the mission alone demands substantial financial resources. Critics argue that these funds could be better allocated to addressing urgent issues on Earth, such as poverty, healthcare, and climate change.

Thirdly, long-duration space travel poses numerous health risks for astronauts. For example, exposure to cosmic radiation, microgravity effects on the human body, and psychological challenges during extended isolation just to name a few. Therefore, ensuring the physical and mental well-being of astronauts on a journey to/from Mars and during their stay on the planet presents significant hurdles that must be overcome.

Fourthly, the ethical issues of sending humans to Mars cannot be ignored. Critics say that the potential exploitation of Martian resources and the potential disturbance of any existing Martian ecosystem raise ethical concerns. They also argue that it is better to preserve life on Mars rather than destroy it just for the sake of knowing it is there. This ties in with the argument that human exploration of Mars could contaminate it.

Lastly, some argue that the scientific goals of exploring Mars can be achieved more efficiently and safely through robotic missions. Robotic explorers, such as rovers and orbiters, have provided valuable data about Mars without the inherent risks associated with human space travel. Investing in advanced robotic technologies could continue to yield significant scientific insights at a fraction of the cost and without risking human lives.

The question of whether there should be a manned mission to Mars is complex and multifaceted, involving scientific, technological, ethical, and financial considerations. While the potential benefits of such a mission are enticing—ranging from scientific discovery to technological innovation and inspiring future generations—the challenges and risks should not be underestimated. The decision to pursue a manned mission to Mars should be a careful balance between the potential rewards and the responsible use of resources. As technology advances and international collaboration grows, addressing the challenges associated with space travel becomes more feasible. It is essential for the global community to engage in open and transparent discussions, weighing the aspirations of exploring new frontiers against the practical realities and ethical implications of a manned mission to Mars. Only through careful consideration and thoughtful planning can humanity responsibly embark on the journey to the Red Planet.

Overall, I believe that we should have manned missions to Mars because the benefits far outweigh the challenges. Furthermore, the missions can inspire generations of new scientists to make new discoveries and breakthroughs. As Stephen Hawking once said, “Remember to look up at the stars and not down at your feet.”

[1] [Manned Mission to Mars By 2030s Is Really Possible, Experts Say | Space](#)

[2] [Stephen Hawking: Humans won't survive another 1,000 years on Earth - CBS News](#)

## *Florian Fetahu*

Astronomy. The study of space is a continuous mystery, providing biological, quantum and fundamental research; yielding insights to benefit society. When tackling the question regarding a manned mission to mars, the prominent issue lies within the ethics of the mission: can we find skilled astronomers willing to spend years on mars, sacrifice their very existence on earth for the benefits to humanity. According to NASA, a one-way trip to mars will last around 9 months. If I asked the average person to sacrifice almost 2 years of their life, away from their families, I think I could know the answer.

Rather than dwelling on the ethics of the mission, I think focusing on the substantial significance to society has a greater impact and influence on whether the mission would launch or not. Let's take a look at 2 aspects to why a mission of mars would could benefit society: solving the population crisis on earth, providing scientific discoveries for earth.

Is mars habitable: currently, no. Mars is severely cold in comparison to earth, too cold to provide a habitable environment for any life at all. The atmosphere is also very thin in comparison to earth, containing threatening low levels of fundamental greenhouse gases for life on mars to possibly occur. Now, solutions to this problem? Well, there's no current solutions otherwise there would already be people on mars by now, but there have been theories, explaining radical methods to provide a safe environment for humans on Mars. Launch nuclear missiles on the arctic poles on each side of Mars, this provides many threats to the planet, as the missiles could release a ton of nuclear radiation making it inhabitable for any life. However, the theory behind this is that the missiles could release greenhouse gases as a result of the chemical reaction taking place, producing gases such as CO<sub>2</sub>, O<sub>2</sub>, water vapour and several more fundamental to survive on Mars. So why do I dwell on the possibility of life on Mars? Because, if by now no one has found a solution to making it habitable, what's the point of wasting years of your life on a manned mission when the possibility of it solving the future problem of over population is significant to none.

So, creating a habitable environment is a slim possibility, but the scientific discoveries it may produce could benefit our future generation to developing more advanced technology and improve the standards of society. 2 of my favourite films of all time: *Interstellar* and *The Martian*, explore the vastness and complexity of astrophysics, in particular, *The Martian* is about a man and the first manned mission to Mars. As the film develops, they soon find that life on mars, even hours of time on mars is inhabitable for human life (the film shows a sand storm severely injure a crew member, leaving the others with no choice to leave him due to the lack of vision past all the sand on the arid surface of Mars). Such a short snippet from a film, emphasises to the viewers the sheer danger of a manned mission to mars. As I recall from the beginning of this essay, should the ethics of the crew be considered if it's seen to benefit society as a whole? I'm a strict film critic, so the fact that I enjoyed these films suggest that there is deeper meaning to them. Rather than simply exploring the complexity of space, they create a false sense of hope for the viewer, almost captivating the viewer in the sense that they are on the mission together.

A manned Mission to mars isn't worth the risk, it won't provide as significant discoveries as other space missions. There are vaster, unsolved mysteries in our universe like dark energy. I think investigating perhaps more daunting existences like black holes and investing more money into these missions may provide a greater significance to the department of astrophysics. *Interstellar* is the greatest film of all time, written by Christopher Nolan, and explores ideas of entering black holes and loop holes, what happens when you reach the event horizon. Whilst some of the film is complete fiction, ideas like the 4<sup>th</sup> dimension are far more interesting and expand past regular quantum physics discoveries, and expand to ideas like time travelling and how time is affected in black holes.

Say you land on Mars, what would the ideal mission consist of? When you create life on a planet, you are said to

have colonised it. There are possible discoveries currently taking place on earth, researching how we could create fertile soil on Mars. Just like Mars doesn't have the correct number of fundamental gases in the atmosphere, the ground will be infertile to grow crops. If we discovered how to grow crops on Mars how ridiculous would that sound to the average person, to have colonised a new planet!

We've already sent rovers on Mars in the past, this mission itself cost billions of dollars to fund. Imagine the cost of sending humans on Mars. With a rover, you don't have to worry about the return trip to earth. Take into consideration the sheer amount of fuel you would need to carry on board to provide enough power for a return trip. Due to the substantial mass of the spacecraft, you would have to reach very high launch velocities to launch into the orbit of Mars and back to earth. Think about the safety and the risks in these missions. Is it worth risking the safety of a human for scientific discoveries?

We have never experienced what the atmosphere on Mars would feel like to a human in a spacesuit. However due to previous missions (rovers) and visual discoveries we can replicate this atmosphere and design the suits to be safe enough to survive in the harshness of Mars's atmosphere and ensure human safety.

So, should there be a manned mission? Yes. The potential of discoveries outweighs the ethics.

# Psychology

"Nature vs nurture. Which plays the most significant role in determining a person's characteristics?"

*First Place – Elyssia Seddon-Johnson*

*Highly Commended – Mae Cochrane*

*Highly Commended – Sianna Marshall*



## *Elyssia Seddon-Johnson*

In the mid-1800s, the phrase 'nature vs nurture' was first used<sup>4</sup> by a Victorian man named Francis Galton, in a discussion about hereditary and environmental influence on social advancement. Since then, it has been arguably the biggest debate in the world of psychology. Considering that, you would think that the answer had been coined by now. Yet after nearly 200 years, psychologists with different approaches continue to argue over which one it truly is. In this essay I will discuss the evidence and arguments for each side, to determine which has more control over our personality and behavioural characteristics.

Psychologists following the biological approach will argue that nature plays the biggest role – that our genetics, passed down from our parents, are what determine our physical characteristics. And of course, they are correct in saying that: a person who has blue eyes has blue eyes because one or both of their parents carry the gene, and they happened to inherit the phenotype. While not all characteristics can be explained by genetics, many have been proven to be innate. For example, Gibson and Walk (1960) proved this in their visual cliff experiment<sup>5</sup>. Aiming to investigate whether depth perception was innate or learned, they created a visual illusion of a cliff, to see whether babies aged from 6 to 14 months would cross the cliff. The purpose of using such young children was that they could not have learned depth perception yet, so if they crawled across, it would demonstrate that depth perception was innate. The cliff was entirely safe to cross, with a panel of transparent glass over the top, but the babies did not know this. The babies' mothers would stand on the other side of the cliff, encouraging them to cross. However, Gibson and Walk found that, even when their mothers encouraged them to do so, 92% of the 36 babies refused to cross the cliff, even when they patted the glass to show them it was safe. From this data, we can conclude that depth perception, which is how we perceive the world around us, is innate – we are born with it. This evidence supports the nature side of the debate, as how we perceive the world around us plays a huge role in how we behave in response to our environment.

Even though the visual cliff experiment produced valid data to contradict the nurture argument, that doesn't mean nature is what's predominantly responsible for our characteristics. In fact, you could argue that any innate behavioural traits can be altered by a person's environment, if the environmental conditions are significant enough. Classical conditioning experiments such as Pavlov's dogs provide evidence to support this.

Pavlov's theory of learning states that<sup>6</sup> behaviours can be learned through the association between different stimuli, and his repeated classical conditioning experiments proved this. In the 1980s, Pavlov began to research the way dogs would salivate as a response to being fed. He inserted a small test tube into the dogs' cheeks to measure the saliva produced when they were fed. Pavlov hypothesised that the dogs would salivate when food was placed in front of them, but he also noticed that they would salivate at the sound of the person's footsteps who was bringing them food. He then showed that the dogs would salivate at the sound of a bell, after it had been sounded repeatedly at the time, they were given food. He eventually realised that the dogs responded in the same way towards anything they associated with food, and Pavlov realised the significance of this discovery. This type of learning later became known as 'Pavlovian conditioning'.

Pavlov's research has been extremely significant in modern psychology. It has influenced behaviourism, as well as highly used therapy techniques, which use conditioning to treat symptoms of disorders such as addiction and post-traumatic stress disorder. This shows that his research is applicable to real-life situations, and that the

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<sup>4</sup> [Guest Editorial - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Visual Cliff Experiment \(Gibson & Walk, 1960\) \(simplypsychology.org\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Pavlov's Dogs Experiment & Pavlovian Conditioning Response \(simplypsychology.org\)](#)



nurture argument can explain human behaviour in a way that allows us to predict and even control behaviours

The above research focuses on one or the other: nature or nurture. A good example of the role of nurture alongside nature is the *Three Identical Strangers*<sup>7</sup> documentary. At the age of only six months, as a psychological experiment, identical triplets Edward, David and Robert were separated. One was adopted into a lower-class household, one into a middle-class household, and one into an upper-class household. The experiment was extremely unethical, as the triplets and their families were not told that they had siblings and found out themselves when Robert and Edward coincidentally met at high school. However, it gives a lot of insight into how their different upbringings affected them, as when they first met, they were overjoyed. But after a while, they experienced difficulties in their relationships, and prior to a diagnosis of manic-depressive disorder, Edward committed suicide. Notably, Edward had a difficult upbringing compared to his siblings. Additionally, the influences of nature were also apparent among the three- as babies, all three would cry excessively, probably due to their separation. And as they got older, before even knowing each other, they would smoke in exactly the same way. The results of the experiment were never published due to the unethical nature of the procedure, however conclusions supporting both arguments can be drawn from observing their behaviour. Watching the full documentary is critical to understanding exactly how their varied upbringings affected the triplets. However, it is clear that the way they were raised had a massive impact on their characteristics as adults.

In conclusion, it is difficult to say that it is either nature or nurture which has more control over our characteristics. The influences of nurture are more malleable, as almost all behavioural traits can be learned, and some innate behaviours can even be unlearned. But this does not mean nurture has more power over us. The influences of nature are often unchangeable. For example, a person cannot overcome a chromosomal abnormality with the help of their environment. Ideally, to come to a firm conclusion of either nature or nurture, much more time and research would need to be dedicated to this area of study. The reason this debate has continued for so long is because there is extensive, reliable evidence supporting both arguments.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.netflix.com/gb/title/80240088>

## *Mae Cochrane*

Many people argue about which factor determines a person's characteristic more, nature or nurture. Nature is a factor that refers to our genetics. It includes the genes we are born with and other hereditary factors, such as height, eye colour etc, that can impact how our personality is formed and influence the way that we develop from childhood. Whereas, nurture is the idea that the environmental factors help impact and develop who we are. This includes our childhood experiences, the way we were raised, our social relationships, and the surrounding culture/environment. Many people question why people act or behave a certain way for example, if a man abuses his wife and kids, is he behaving like this because he was born with violent tendencies, or is violence something he learned by observing others in his life when growing up? They question whether it was because of their genetics (nature) or environment (nurture).

Instead of defending extreme nativist or nurturist views, most psychologists are interested in investigating how nature and nurture interact different ways. Recently psychologists are beginning to question whether human behaviour is formed by heredity factors (nature) or the environment (nurture). It is now believed that nature and the nurture do not act alone and both nature and nurture are essential for almost all behaviour. This means that, instead of defending extreme nativist or environmentalist views, most psychologists and researchers are now more interested in investigating the ways nature and nurture work together to develop personalities and characteristics. They came up with the interactionist approach to show how they work together. The interactionist approach is the idea that both nature and nurture work together to shape human behaviour. The interactionist approach is shown best through the genetic disorder PKU (phenylketonuria). This is a disorder caused by the inheritance of two recessive genes, one from each parent. People with PKU are unable to break down the amino acid phenylalanine meaning it builds up in the blood and brain causing mental retardation. However, if the child is diagnosed in early stages of childhood, they are placed on a low protein diet for the first 12 years, which helps to prevent this potentially lifelong disorder. Therefore, the disorder PKU (nature) is not expressed, because of an altered environment (low protein diet – nurture) supporting the idea that nature and nurture work together to shape human behaviour. (Tutor2u 2021 - Issues & Debates: Evaluating the Nature-Nurture Debate - Interactionist Approach)

Nature refers to our genetics. It includes the genes we are born with and other hereditary factors that impact how our personality is formed and influence the way that we develop from childhood through to adulthood. There are some characteristics that we believe we inherit from our parents like a short temper or perfectionist tendencies. These then are characteristics we then have with us through childhood and through adulthood. Some people believe that all of our characteristics and behaviours are a result of evolution. They argue that genetic traits are passed down from parents to their children and influence the individual differences that make each person unique. Biological theories in psychology suggest that personality is largely inherited. Researchers like Chomsky (1957) argue that humans are born with an inherited capacity for language, this is known as universal grammar, suggesting that genetics play a significant role in language development. Scientists estimate that 20% to 60% percent of make-up is determined by genetics and that many of common gene variations combine to influence individual characteristics of personality. Nature theorists believe genetics plays a significant role in language development and that children are born with an instinctive ability that allows them to both learn and produce language. This all shows that characteristics are developed through genetics and inherited things.

Nurture refers to our environmental factors that impact who we are. This includes our early childhood experiences, the way we were raised, our social relationships, and the surrounding culture. Psychological researchers like Skinner, who created operant conditioning, believed in the behaviourist approach. Skinner

believed that characteristics and behaviour can be shaped by positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement and punishment. His theory of operant conditioning is still used widely today. Another psychologist called Albert Bandura's created the Social Learning Theory which states that people learn by observing, imitating, and modelling behaviour. In 1961, Bandura's conducted a Bobo doll experiment; his findings support the nurture side of the argument as he found that our environment influences our behaviour - the children who watched aggressive behaviour imitated the aggressive behaviour. These experiments suggest that nurture plays the main role when a person is developing characteristics. In 1980, there was a case study called "Isabel the chicken girl" Maria Isabel Quaresma Dos Santos, a 9-year-old girl who had spent her whole childhood in a chicken coop, deprived of any human interaction and affection. Due to the lack of human interaction, she started to display behaviours of chickens. Due to a lack of attachment with a human primary figure, she became attached to the chickens around her and started to mirror their actions; this shows that a person's surroundings influence their behaviour as they grow up.

Personally, I believe that nurture plays the most significant role when determining a person's characteristics. I imagine that a person's environment, friends, family, parenting styles, people around them and behaviour they witness influences the development of a person's characteristics. I believe these are the factors that mainly determine a person's characteristics because there is lots of evidence that supports the role of nurture in developing a person's characteristics. Also, it's known that whilst growing up young people spend more time with friends, teachers and classmates over their biological family. This shows us that their characteristics and behaviour changes and is determined by the people they grow up around and are influenced by more than their genetic makeup. People also pick up role models as they age, copying their behaviour and get influenced by what they do and how they act; suggesting that behaviour is learnt rather than inherited.

## *Sianna Marshall*

There are many arguments that favour each side of this debate about nature and nurture, with people arguing which one has a bigger impact on characteristics of a person. There are strong points arguing each side of the argument, highlighting how it can never just be one of the two components that play a role in determining a person's characteristics, it is believed to be a combination of both, with people disagreeing on which one is more significant. Many researchers reportedly consider it as nature *with* nurture rather than nature *versus* nurture.

On one hand of the argument, people argue that nature plays the most significant role for a wide range of reasons – they are nativists. They believe that the characteristics we have as a whole are a product of evolution and that individual differences are due to each person's unique genetic code. Two recent studies have illustrated the importance of genes in a child's development and characteristics. These studies have been conducted by UCLA and British Columbia Children's Hospital, discovering a genetic marker in a child's DNA that serves as a chemical clock to indicate the child's biological age. Adding to this, one argument is that characteristics isn't just a result of one gene, but rather a variety of genes put together. Researchers have conducted studies to further provide evidence for this argument. The evidence found was in twin studies, family studies and adoptive studies. These studies provided an argument that parents play less of a role in shaping our characteristics than biological factors do, like genetics. Height is another example of nature being stronger in forming characteristics as a child will inherit the height genes from their parents, and it is believed by some that environment can not affect the height as it is inheritance.

Examples of extreme nature positions in psychology include Chomsky (1965), who proposed language is gained through the use of an innate language acquisition device. Another example of nature is Freud's theory of aggression as being an innate drive – this is called Thanatos.

These facts have led to broad speculation as to whether psychological characteristics such as behavioural tendencies, personality attributes, and mental abilities are also 'wired in' before we are even born.

However, contrast to popular belief, height can in fact be affected by nurture as it can be reliant on your environment. This is highlighted where it has been found that if children – not fully developed – grow up in a malnourished environment where proper nourishment is not received, they may never develop the height they could have had if they grew up in a healthier environment. Moreover, a newer field of study called Epigenetics, aims to explain how environment can impact the way genes are expressed. This supports the idea that it is not always nature versus nurture, but it is the combination of both that builds the strongest argument for characteristics. Nurture is also shown to be a strong part in developing characteristics as the social learning theory states that children learn by observing others' behaviour so parenting styles and learned experiences can determine the characteristics of a person and whether they have a good or bad reaction such as aggression or being polite in a situation that comes about. Moreover, behavioural genetics is a subtopic studied to illustrate how nature and nurture combine to affect a child's development and characteristics. It states that while genetics have a more significant impact on a person's characteristics than their family environment does, most of someone's behaviour traits cannot be traced back to specific genes of family characteristics, but instead each behavioural trait has been associated with multiple genetic variants, each contributing a very small amount to the expression of a specific trait.

On the other hand, many argue nurture plays a more significant role as they are empiricists, with behavioural psychology considering how their interaction with the environment can condition certain behaviours. This area of research only considers observable behaviour though, believing that moods, cognition, and emotions are too

subjective to be measurable. Types of conditioning are ways in which nurture can influence the development of characteristics. Firstly, there is classical conditioning, which is the type that pairs a neutral stimulus with a naturally occurring stimulus until each evokes the same response in a person. Secondly, there is operant conditioning, which uses reinforcements and punishments to bring about the desired behaviour and characteristics.

For the empiricists, characteristics and behaviour emerges through infancy and childhood, through the results of learning. It is how we are brought up that governs the psychologically significant aspects of child development and the concept of maturation applies only to the biological aspect. For example, Bandura's social learning theory states that aggression is learned from the environment through observation and imitation. This is seen in his Bobo doll experiment. Also, Skinner believed that language is learned from other people via behaviour-shaping techniques. Freud stated that events in childhood have a vast influence on our adult lives, shaping our personality.

The Blank Slate Theory – otherwise known as the Tabula Rasa – also supported the nurture side of this debate, stating that every person was born with a blank slate and therefore, the characteristics they develop are learned through their environment and not developed by genes. It suggests that before people receive external impressions from their environment their mind has not developed their characteristics, meaning that nurture is the more significant contributor to the development of characteristics as it depends on those around the growing up and developing.

In conclusion, I think that nurture has a more significant role in determining a person's characteristics. This is because I believe you learn more from your environment you grow up in rather than inheriting the genes from your parents. Genes play more of a role in your physical and mental components such as appearance (eye colour, hair colour, skin colour etc) and mental health abnormalities, such as OCD or schizophrenia. Characteristics in my opinion is more how you act or behave, such as ambition or compassion, which I believe you develop based on your surroundings and how people treat you and act around you.

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# Sociology

"Is feminism irrelevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?"

Or

"'In society, everyone agrees.' Discuss"

*First Place – Alex Seppings*

*Highly Commended – Heloise Ribbans*

*Highly Commended – Charlie Moss*



## *Alex Seppings: Is feminism irrelevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?*

Determination. Frustration. Liberation. What exactly does it mean to be a Feminist? If you do not know, then yes, Feminism is still very much relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, because clearly there is a lot to learn. Feminism is far more than 'just a movement', it is an identity, a way of life, and for women and girls everywhere, it is freedom.

'Is Feminism still a thing?' a headline that I stumbled across when researching this piece. What does 'a thing' suggest to you? A passing phase? A minor inconvenience? A bump in the road perhaps? I bet that whoever wrote that article did not know that women have been fighting for rights since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. I bet that whoever wrote that article did not know of the women (like Emmeline Pankhurst) who risks their lives for liberation, so that I can be sitting here today, in my school, writing for you. I hope that whoever wrote this article can understand the power of this cause, the history of this movement, and the meaning behind all the hard work completed by each and every resilient woman.

Contrary to many beliefs, feminism is not about 'hating all men'. Feminists are portrayed by the media as violent, volatile even and especially disruptive to the social constructs of society. They are seen to be purely 'making noise' for a subject that 'no longer exists in today's society'. But who decides when a problem no longer exists in society? Apparently, those who have never had to face the issue in the first place.

The beauty of this reformative act is both genders coming together to celebrate equality and respect amongst one another, take a man like Terry Crews for example, he is an advocate for feminism and stands shoulder to shoulder with women everywhere, raising awareness. A man of high status, and rightly so. A man who understands the difficulties faced by women, a man who does not say, 'it's not all men' who undervalue the women in our society.

Of course, like everything, Feminism does have its drawbacks. With this movement being so heavily broadcasted, I'm sure this ignites a sense of frustration in many, to hear the 'same thing over and over again'. From the media to day-to-day life in reality, feminism is all round us. For as long as it takes, women will fight for equality, women will fight to preserve all of our successes thus far. Because the word 'feminism' alone demonstrates to women and girls everywhere, not only how far we have come, but how far we still have to go.

I do however believe that the constructs and goals of feminism has changed drastically since this movement originated, for example, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we are faced with people such as 'radical feminists', who appear to strive for female superiority rather than complete equality. This minority of people alter the views on what Feminism is, causing people to be concerned about 'the point' of Feminism itself. It's important to reiterate that this group is most definitely not what Feminism stands for.

The exact goal of the Feminist act is 'To create equity in the social and cultural constructs in society that perceive the female gender to be inferior'. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, women have far more opportunities, we are seeing female CEO's, Doctors, Teachers and so much more. Women have rights to Education, and some may even say girls are favoured in school. But we are still faced with issues such as the Gender Pay Gap, where typically women are paid less than male employees, even if they are fulfilling similar job roles. Some male high-powered bosses still choose to overlook women for other high powered position job openings not because they are 'unfit for the job', but because of their gender. Despite the conflicting opinions on this subject, I believe that we do live in a very patriarchal and male dominated society with a 'lads' culture' mentality. Feminism strives to adjust this stereotype purely so we can have the same opportunities as men in our ever-changing society.

The feminist movement is about creating a society where all genders are free to express themselves and pursue their dreams without limitations or discrimination, and this goal has still not yet been achieved. Women are still

seen as the 'homemakers', they are expected to be kind and 'not rock the boat'. The sociologist Oakley suggested that the way that genders are separated is based off of three main factors, verbal appellations, manipulation and the activities of play that are introduced to children in the beginning of their lives, for example, a young girl given a play kitchen or an easy bake oven (which teaches domestication). So, a 'woman's role' is taught to young girls before they can even officially become a woman. This needs to change. Part of Feminism is giving young girls and women the freedom to be whoever and whatever they want to be, with no instruction or guidance about what a woman 'should be.'

We still need feminism today, because we, as a society, are far from ensuring that women around the globe have not only equal rights, but equal protection in our rapidly changing world. Feminism is still very much relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, every protest, every failure, and every success has led women to where we are now. And for that, I can truly say that I am proud to be a woman.



## *Heloise Ribbans: Is feminism irrelevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?*

Short answer, no it's not. Women have been fighting for equal rights for hundreds of years. One of the first recorded feminist acts was in 1848, when 300 men and women rallied to the cause of equality for women. This rally caused a wave of women and men fighting, protesting and rallying for women's equal rights and it has been coined the name, 'The First Wave' and it lasted from 1848 to 1928. Within this wave, women fought for property rights and the right to vote. Now this was in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century, so of course women would've been fighting for their rights, however nearly 200 years later since the First Wave started and women are still fighting to be taken seriously in workplaces. In addition, some women around the world still don't have the same rights as men do.

You see it all the time in the news, women being undermined and belittled. There was this news story I had read and it was about women who work in the NHS are being sexually assaulted/harassed in the operating room. A room meant to be for saving lives and women can't even feel safe or even comfortable. It's disgusting and never reported because women are the ones who will be blamed. There will be things said like 'What were you wearing?' 'Did you lead him on?' or, the worst of all 'You didn't say no.' No matter what a woman does, she will be penalised for something traumatic happening to her. The woman will be judged and made to be shamed as it was her fault. This happens on a daily to women and even young girls everywhere, so yeah there needs to be feminism in society still to this day. Until things like this don't happen anymore, there will always be a need for feminism.

Throughout the decades, there has been confusion between feminism and misandry. Feminists don't want to be better than men or hate on them, we just want to have the same rights and opportunity to be something in the world. So how is it fair that women are ridiculed for saying they're a feminist. Most women want to have their equal rights and live equally with men. However, no woman will be able to even exist comfortably whilst there are women all around the world who don't have the same freedom as the luckier ones. A quote better explains it: 'I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different to my own.' (Audre Lorde).

There will be a need for feminism until a woman can walk down the street in the night and not feel the need to, hold her keys between her fingers, *just in case*. Or keep her head high, walk fast, don't look at anyone for too long, keep someone on speed dial, take well-lit roads. There will be a need for feminism until a skirt isn't to blame for a man who doesn't keep his hands to himself.

Feminism, however, isn't just fighting for women. Feminism is trying to break down the toxic masculinity that society has grained into itself. It can break down the misogyny and stereotypes; men must be at work and 'bring home the bacon' and women must be in the home: cleaning, cooking and taking care of the many, many kids they just *had to have*. It's the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there will be women who go to work and their husbands/boyfriends stay home and look after the kids. However, people seem to be stuck in the 1950s mindset of stereotypical families. It's not good and there has to be some change somewhere.

There shouldn't be a need for feminism. There should be equality, love, acceptance, unfortunately life isn't the ending of a fairy-tale. Instead, there are women being raped and killed for wearing or saying the wrong thing. There shouldn't be domestic abuse cases that go unreported or dismissed because no one believes the victim. On average, a girl/woman is killed by domestic abuse/violence every 11 minutes. Male violence against women is the leading cause of premature death for women globally. There is nowhere a woman can feel fully comfortable. Not in her home, school, the street and even an operating room.

I am being a little repetitive with my words, but how else is it meant to make sense to anyone? Women have to try and find their voices as no one else is going to speak out for us. Until every woman that has been assaulted, raped,

catcalled, abused, used and silenced can find their voice and escape their own guilt and shame that society has placed on them; every other woman will proudly say their name and shout their story for people to know and understand that what happened is not okay.

(2020 alone)

Victoria Woodhall, 31. She was an NHS nurse and got taken from her three children. Killed by estranged husband with a machete.

Silke Hartshorne-Jones, 42. She was a lawyer and got taken from her two young children. Shot by her husband.

Rosemary Hill, 87. She was a retired teacher and musician. Hit with cricket bat by her neighbour.

Yvonne Lawson McCann, 46. Got taken from her four children. Strangled to death by her husband.

Nicole Smallman, 27. She was a freelance photographer. Stabbed to death by a stranger.

Nicoleta and Anita Zdun, 18 & 40. Stabbed to death by Nicoleta's father, Anita's husband.

Ruth Williams, 67. She was a retired supermarket worker. Strangled to death by her husband.

Maryam Ismail, 57. She worked as a cleaner. Battered to death by her husband.

Louise Smith, 16. She was training to be a veterinary nurse. Set on fire by her aunt's partner.

These are just a handful of women who died at the hands of men, mostly by family. They deserve to have their story told; other women will not get that chance. There so many more women like those listed above, most likely, we will never hear what happened to them. However, if more women have their story told and those who committed the act get brought to justice, the all more likely that a girl/woman steps forward and get the justice they deserve.

So, I have to say that feminism is relevant and needed in society, there shouldn't be a debate. Its helping women and men alike that are victims of toxic/disgusting people. I will stand by this opinion forever.

## *Charlie Moss: 'In society, everyone agrees.' Discuss*

The easy answer to this question would be no, as within society conflict is a very common theme some examples of these include, War, Revolutions, Protests and many more. Within this essay I will explore all the instances where there is disagreement within society and the consequences that follow it. Also, I will look at the instances where there is agreement and then outweigh them to come to a clear conclusion.

Firstly, let's talk about agreeing, for example, the average people of the UK will abide by the laws put in place by the government however this doesn't mean we agree with them. There are many situations within society where this concept occurs.

We can apply this to most societies around the world as their everyday life happens with peace most days. Another example of countries agreeing would be with unions or trade unions, most of these trade unions would be formed around the continents they are located in such as the EU (Europe) or the NAU (North America). This is an example as the countries that trade with each other must come to a mutual agreement with what they trade, the quality and quantity that has been agreed. The trade unions such as the EU will enforce these rules to make sure their countries are protected to make sure the right amount of product is shipped or received and the same with the amount of money, to make sure the economic development of the country is secured.

In most developed societies, the people will have freedom of speech. Meaning they will be able to have a voice and be heard about a certain topic and it will be taken into consideration by whoever the opinion is towards. However, sometimes this is not the case as the person or group who are speaking out may feel like they are not being heard which can result in protests which can include striking off of work for a more desirable pay or gathering a large group outside the aim persons residence as then they cannot be ignored. An example of this can be the BLM movement as in America the black community and the wider community felt that black ethnic minorities men or women were being treated unequally when it came to facing the police. This is evident when a Black American George Floyd, was arrested on suspicion of using a counterfeit 20-dollar bill then was killed by white police officer Derek Chauvin, who used his knee to stop George from breathing and eventually killed him.

Throughout history there have been many forms of disagreement whether that be a small or large disagreement either way they can all end with war etc. This is extremely evident as we see since the beginning of time conflict has been a thing and war has followed because of it. There are some prime examples of this, them being WW1 and WW2. These are clear pieces of evidence as they all began due to a disagreement turning into conflict and finally into war. For WW2, the Nazis wanted to eradicate all Jewish people and take over Europe. Obviously, Jews and the rest of Europe didn't want this to happen causing WW2. Another example of an instance of disagreement would be with extremist religious groups, this is when a group of people believe that their holy figure or teachings is telling them to do some extreme things for their religion. An example of this would be the 9/11 attacks in New York on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon in Virginia, just across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C. The 9/11 attacks happened because a group of extremists called the al Qaeda led by Bin Laden believed that to make Islam the most powerful religion, they had to show the power that they hold.

Onto some fewer extreme examples, we can talk about politics, more specifically UK politics and the recent Sunak v Stahmer debate where members of the public would ask them questions surrounding what they would do if they became prime minister. These are supposed to be civilised debates however they can turn very unprofessional very quickly just like in the houses of parliament, this can make the members of public who are the ones who vote for how they want their country to be and due to the way, they act in parliament, some people can be put off of voting from this as it can make them feel that it doesn't matter who is in charge, it will still be run in a childish way.

In our everyday lives, we have disagreements with people big or small, it could be with your mum and how she thinks you will be late for school if you don't leave now or it could be with your boss who is about to fire you as you don't do enough work. The point is agreement and disagreement are everywhere and it happens all the time. More often than not people will be agreeing with each other but a disagreement stands out more as it is more visible and vocal. For example, if you look around on a year 11 playground most people will be speaking to their friends or maybe they will be playing football but you will at least spot one pair or group of students who will visibly be disagreeing, this could just be a small misinterpretation or could end with a fight.

In conclusion, yes in society people agree but not everyone agrees, in fact almost all the time there is disagreement instead of agreement. In almost every aspect of our lives, disagreement is present whether that be with things big or small. For this question I believe that disagreement is more prevalent and can affect more than agreement.

# *Theatre Studies*

*"Live theatre is a dying art form. Do you agree?"*

*First Place – Sophie Kemp*

*Highly Commended – Grace Lambrou*



## *Sophie Kemp*

Live theatre has been around for many centuries going all the way back to the golden age when theatre was a dominant form of entertainment with widespread popularity and cultural influences with playwrights such like famous William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe and ben Jonson. Leading to constructions of still famous landmarks today of theatres like the globe and the rose in London exemplified in the gold age period. Carrying on through time, the late 17<sup>th</sup> century the re-opening of theatres after the English Civil War and the Puritan Commonwealth, 17<sup>th</sup> century saw a resurgence in theatre. This period was marked by the introduction of actresses on stage and the popularity of comedies of manners by playwrights. Through to 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Theatre continued to thrive, with the rise of sentimental comedy and the work of playwrights and Theatres like Drury Lane and Covent Garden in London became major cultural hubs. The 19th century saw an expansion in theatre going as it became more accessible to the middle classes. Late 20th Century to Present: Theatre has remained popular in the UK, with a diverse range of productions from classical revivals to cutting-edge new works. The establishment of the National Theatre and the continued prominence of the West End has kept theatre at the heart of British cultural life. Throughout these periods, live theatre has been a significant part of the UK's cultural and social landscape, adapting and evolving with the times to try to maintain its popularity. However, the rise of cinema and television in the mid-20th century drew audiences away from live theatre, leading to a decline in its mainstream popularity.

Live theatre is struggling due to the competition with other forms of entertainment such like digital media like streaming services, online content and affordable entertainment alternatives which is more accessible and coinvent as its offering on-demand entertainment that fits into people's schedules. Live theatre requires attending performances at set times and places. Digital media also provides a vast array of content, including movies, TV shows, web series, and user-generated content. This variety caters to a wide range of tastes and interests. Also New content is constantly being added to digital platforms, ensuring a steady stream of fresh material. Another competitor to live theatre is live events such like concerts, sports; Many live events incorporate interactive elements, such as fan participation in sports or the immersive experience of a music festival, which can enhance the overall appeal. festivals and sports, create a sense of community and shared experience among attendees. The atmosphere can be electric, with large crowds adding to the excitement. They also have strong appeal among younger demographics who might prioritize these experiences over traditional theatre.

During the Covid-19 pandemic live theatre would have been impacted massively as they had to be shutdown temporary due to social distancing. Theatres faced significant financial challenges due to the loss of ticket sales and other income sources like concessions and merchandise. The pandemic may have long-term effects on audience behaviour, with some people becoming more accustomed to consuming entertainment digitally and being hesitant to return to crowded venues. there could be a surge in demand for live performances once restrictions are lifted, as people seek out communal experiences. Some theatre companies adapted by offering virtual performances, which reached wider audiences but did not fully replicate the live experience. Finally, when theatres reopened, they often had to operate at reduced capacity to ensure social distancing, which impacted ticket sales.

My point of view that maybe live theatre is a dying art form as the digital entertainment platforms such as streaming services, video games, and social media has significantly altered how people consume media. These platforms offer on-demand entertainment, which can be more convenient than attending live performances. Live theatre can be expensive especially for a family day out or date night, The costs of tickets, production, and maintaining venues can be high costing especially compared to more accessible and affordable digital options. Live theatre also faces the problem of fast changing in tastes such as Morden audiences, particularly younger

generations, often prefer the immediacy and variety of digital media. The traditional format of live theatre may seem less appealing compared to the fast-paced, interactive nature of digital content. Finally, my last point on why I think live theatre is a dying art form is because of the Economic downturns and financial crises can lead to reduced funding for the arts. Theatre companies, especially smaller ones, may struggle to survive without sufficient financial support from both public and private sectors.

My point of view that live theatre is not a dying art form as it offers a unique, immersive experience that digital media cannot replicate the connection between performers and audience, the immediacy of live performance, and the communal aspect of theatregoing are powerful draws for many people. The theatre community has shown resilience and adaptability. Innovations such as virtual performances, interactive theatre, and hybrid models that combine live and digital elements have emerged, demonstrating the industry's ability to evolve with changing times. Theatre plays a significant role in education, offering opportunities for students to engage with literature, history, and the performing arts in a dynamic way. School and community theatre programs help foster a love for live performance in younger generations.

In conclusion while live theatre may not dominate the entertainment landscape as it once did, it remains a vital and dynamic part of contemporary culture. Its popularity endures, particularly in major theatre hubs and through a dedicated base of enthusiasts. The industry continues to evolve in response to changing audience preferences and technological advancements. While live theatre faces significant challenges in the digital age, it is not necessarily a dying art form. Its ability to adapt and the unique experiences it offers ensure that it continues to have a place in modern society. The future of live theatre may involve a blending of traditional and innovative approaches to meet the evolving preferences of audiences.

## *Grace Lambrou*

Live theatre is an art form with roots going back to ancient civilizations this has been a cornerstone of human culture and expression for millennia. From the grand amphitheatres of Ancient Greece to the sophisticated stages of Broadway, theatre has evolved, reflecting societal changes and technological advancements. However, in the 21st century, questions arise about the relevance and sustainability of live theatre. With the advent of digital entertainment, streaming services, and immersive technologies, so people start to question if live theatre is a dying art form,

Personally, I believe that live theatre isn't a dying art form as there are so many people who enjoy it whether it's watching it or being in the performance or watching it as an audience member, the creativity in theatre is so real and it something that no other entertainment has. However, I do understand why people do think that live theatre is a dying art form as recently it hasn't been as popular as it used to especially with the younger generation. Personally, I think that Theatre is not a dying art form as it continues to thrive and evolve. While it's true that other forms of entertainment, such as film, television, and digital media, have gained prominence, theatre maintains a significant and enduring presence in the world of performing arts.

One reason that I believe that live theatre isn't a dying form of art is because by doing live theatre you can really see the passion and the emotions in someone's face when you see them performing, even if it's a production that isn't an original idea the actors can still show and produce their emotions.

Performances are a chance of escapism for its audience, a chance to be immersed in what can be described as an ethereal experience, a chance for all sense to be ignited. An estimated 25% to 30% of audiences have not returned since the shutdown enforced by the coronavirus pandemic between march 2020 and late 2021. The adults who reported seeing a musical theatre production fell about 17% to 10%, the number for non-musical plays dropped from about 9% to 5%. Attendance for ballet, opera and classical music performances saw similarly dramatic decreases. For the longest time, theatre has been spoken of as a dying artform. Whether that's true or not, it's clear that theatre continues to be a significant part of our culture and contributes to the development of creatives from all fields.

The COVID-19 pandemic dealt a severe blow to live theatre. Lockdowns and social distancing measures forced theatres to close their doors, leading to significant financial losses and even permanent closures for some venues. While many theatres adapted by offering online performances, these virtual experiences could not fully replicate the unique atmosphere of live shows, and audience engagement suffered as a result.

The economic realities of producing live theatre are daunting. High production costs, including sets, costumes, and actor salaries, often result in expensive ticket prices. This financial barrier can deter many potential patrons, particularly in economically challenging times. Additionally, the ongoing maintenance of theatre venues and the need for constant innovation to keep productions fresh and appealing add to the financial strain on theatre companies.

The rise of digital media presents a formidable challenge to live theatre. Streaming platforms such as Netflix, Disney+, and Amazon Prime offer a vast array of entertainment options that are easily accessible and relatively inexpensive compared to the cost of theatre tickets. These platforms provide convenience and a wide variety of genres, making them attractive alternatives to the traditional theatre experience. The immersive nature of video games and virtual reality further diverts potential audiences, particularly younger generations, away from live performances.



Despite these challenges, live theatre retains a unique emotional resonance that digital media struggles to replicate. The immediacy and intimacy of a live performance create a powerful connection between actors and audience members. This shared experience fosters a sense of community and emotional involvement that is difficult to achieve through a screen. The unpredictability of live performances, where anything can happen, adds an element of excitement and authenticity that pre-recorded content cannot match.

Theatre plays a crucial role in preserving and promoting cultural heritage. Classic plays, such as those by Shakespeare, Chekhov, and Ibsen, are continually reinterpreted, offering fresh insights into timeless themes. Theatre also serves as an educational tool, helping audiences explore complex social issues and human experiences. Schools and universities incorporate theatre into their curricula to enhance students' understanding of literature, history, and the performing arts, highlighting its ongoing relevance.

Theatre continues to thrive thanks to the dedication of its enthusiasts and support from cultural institutions. Non-profit organizations, government grants, and private donations provide essential funding to keep theatre alive. Moreover, theatre festivals and awards, such as the Tony Awards and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, celebrate and promote excellence in theatre, drawing attention to new and innovative works.

To ensure its future, the theatre community must continue to embrace change and seek new ways to engage audiences. Investing in accessibility, both economically and geographically, will be crucial. Outreach programs and initiatives that make theatre more affordable and inclusive can help build a broader and more diverse audience base. Additionally, fostering a culture of innovation within the industry will ensure that theatre remains a dynamic and evolving art form.

In conclusion, while live theatre faces undeniable challenges in the modern age, it is far from a dying art form. Its unique ability to forge emotional connections, its cultural and educational significance, and its capacity for adaptation and innovation all contribute to its enduring appeal. By continuing to evolve and embrace new opportunities, live theatre can remain a vital and cherished part of our cultural landscape. The essence of theatre and its community, and its ability to reflect and challenge society ensures that it will continue to thrive, even in an increasingly digital world.