

# Off The Record

## **Everyday Is A Catwalk**

An interview with Mrs  
North

## **A New Addition!**

An interview with Mr  
O'Rourke

## **A Walk Through History**

An insight into the  
annual Oxford trip

## **A Celebration of Women**

Teachers share their  
female role models



Spring

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Magazine

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## EDITORIAL INTRO



### A MESSAGE FROM MS BANKS

The Easter edition of Off the Record is here! I have been incredibly impressed by the commitment and leadership shown by our Editors-in-Chief, Sophia Sutton and Isabella Payne, as they have worked with impressively high production values to bring together our second issue. Inside you will find a thoughtful celebration of International Women's Day alongside a vibrant collection of student voices from across the school. The magazine features a wide range of great writing, including in-depth feature articles, engaging interviews, and original creative pieces.

Over the course of this term, the editorial team has grown in confidence and every member has played an important role in shaping the publication you are about to read. Their collaboration, creativity, and enthusiasm are evident throughout this edition and I hope you enjoy reading it as much as they enjoyed creating it.

Happy Easter, everyone!

### *Message From The Editors*

SOPHIA & ISSY



We are so excited for the release of our second edition! Since our Autumn release, we have continued to develop and hone new skills, and have loved meeting and working with new people alongside our loyal editorial team for this Spring edition. Following its International Woman's Day theme, this copy has enabled us to collaborate across the school, and it has been a joy learning about the many female role models that inspire the many members of our school community. We want to thank everyone who made this magazine go from drafting the front cover to printing the final copy and we especially want to thank Ms Banks. The time and effort she has brought to this project is incredible.



# CONT

6-10 A Celebration of  
Women for IWD

11 - Spring  
Comic

12-14 Everyday is a  
Catwalk: Mrs North shares  
her fashion secrets

15 Book Review

16-17 A New Addition to  
TGS: Mr O'Rourke

18-19 The Psychology of Music



# EVENTS

20-21 Spring Pictures

26-28 The Annual Oxford Trip

22-23 Hybrid Cars:  
What's all the  
Fuss?

29 - Editors' Picks

24-25 Creative Writing Club  
Share Their Work

30-31 Doubt: A  
Poem by Rebecca  
Fry

# WOMEN

who inspire us

To celebrate International Women's Day, our teachers share the women who inspire them most. From family members to global leaders, these role models show the power of courage, determination, and change.



## Mrs Holt's Female Role Models

**Irena Sendlerowa** was a social worker and nurse during WWII. She used her position to smuggle Jewish children out of the Warsaw Ghetto during the Nazi occupation of Poland, saving almost 2500 children from certain death. Despite being arrested and tortured by the Gestapo, she did not reveal any details of her contacts or rescue operations. As a librarian and a very organised person, I was struck by the way Irena kept meticulous records of the children she rescued, in the hope that they could be reunited with their families after the war. She kept details of every child, written on small pieces of paper and buried in jars in a friend's garden. The experience of children in the Warsaw Ghetto is featured in *The Silver Sword*, a classic book by Ian Serraillier, available from our school library

**Professor Teresa Cremin** is my chief role model. She is a Professor of Education (Literacy) at the Open University and produces much of the UK's research around young people's reading, advising the government on strategies to develop reading for pleasure. I first met her at a reading conference at Bristol University in 2019 and have been lucky enough to participate in workshops she has headed, as well as attending her lectures over the past 7 years.



Rikta Akter Banu is a nurse from rural Bangladesh, where having an autistic or disabled child is seen as a curse. Rikta's daughter, who is autistic and has cerebral palsy, was denied an education because of this ... so Rikta built her own school! The school has now enrolled more than 300 students. I am a neurodiversity advocate and huge supporter of inclusion and equal opportunities – it's upsetting to hear about situations where barriers still exist. We have books in our school library which feature struggles that some neurodiverse students may experience at school : Elle McNicoll, Eve Ainsworth and Libby Scott are authors who write about this.



# WOMEN

who inspire us

## Mrs Gardener

**My sister** who has a physical disability but never complains and is always positive and kind. She inspires me because when life gets tough it's always important to remember that someone else's life will be tougher and you can face and overcome difficulties.



**Kate Winslet**, a famous Hollywood actress. I am inspired by the fact that throughout her career she refused to have photo's airbrushed and wants to be presented as she is, refusing to uphold unrealistic beauty ideals for women. I firmly believe we should be judged on our actions and abilities, not how we look.

## Mrs Browne

**My mum** was an inspiration to me as I grew up when she was one of the first female leaders in a managerial position in the NHS. She taught me to believe that anything is possible and supported me when I wanted to go to university. I was the first member of our large family to go to university.

**Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez**, a young American female politician and activist who has faced many challenges in her position but she refuses to allow that to stop her achieving her goals and supporting the people in New York's 14th congressional district.

**Jacinda Ardern** the former PM of New Zealand for leading her country through a number of challenges. Her leadership style was built upon kindness and compassion and she was very inspirational. She also had a baby whilst leading the country proving that women can have families and careers.



# Mrs Gorrin

**Coco Chanel** completely redefined what it meant for women to dress with freedom, confidence, and independence. Having worked in fashion in London, I saw first hand how deeply her influence still shapes the industry — from clean silhouettes to the idea that simplicity can be the ultimate form of elegance. She helped liberate women from restrictive corsets, introducing comfortable, practical designs that allowed women to move, work, and live more freely. I admire not just her aesthetic vision, but her resilience: she built an empire in a male-dominated world and transformed personal hardship into creative strength. Her ability to challenge conventions, trust her instincts, and create timeless style inspires me both professionally and personally.



The Mitford Sisters are fascinating role models to me because, despite some of their questionable political beliefs and controversial life choices, they lived with unapologetic individuality and intellectual boldness. Nancy Mitford and Jessica Mitford, in particular, carved out powerful literary and political identities, refusing to be confined by expectations placed on women of their class and era. What I find inspiring is not every decision they made, but their fierce independence, sharp wit, and willingness to think — and live — on their own terms. They remind me that role models do not have to be flawless; sometimes their value lies in their complexity, their courage to stand apart.



**Emmeline Pankhurst.** Being taught about her leadership in the women's suffrage movement in primary school left a lasting impression on me; I began to understand how hard women had to fight for rights we now often take for granted. She showed extraordinary courage, determination, and resilience in the face of arrest, criticism, and hardship. What inspires me most is her unwavering commitment to equality and her refusal to accept injustice, proving that real change often requires bold action and persistence.



# Mr Magee

**Keely Hodgkinson**, a middle-distance runner who has recently set a new world record for indoor 800m. She has won multiple world and Olympic medals and continues to push herself more and more in her event to see how fast she can go. As a keen runner myself, she inspires me with her dedication to her training and her desire to continually improve her performance. I'd love my two young daughters to get into running as well and I would hope they can look at Keely's running to show that you can achieve great things with determination and dedication!



**My mum** has always been a source of inspiration to me. It is not until recently that I've realised how many of her traits and characteristics I have inherited - her resilience and mindset in particular. She lost her husband (my dad) 15 years ago to cancer, and she has been able to cope with this huge loss and been incredibly resilient in the face of adversity. She is a constant source of both emotional and practical help for my two daughters also.

**Malala Yousafzai**, as a young teenager in Pakistan, Malala spoke out publicly for girls' right to education when it was extremely dangerous to do so. After surviving an assassination attempt at age 15, she continued advocating globally instead of staying silent. I think that her bravery shows that age should not be a limit to the change you want to see in the world. Also being a teacher, education can be transformational and Malala's courage to fight for her education is inspiring.

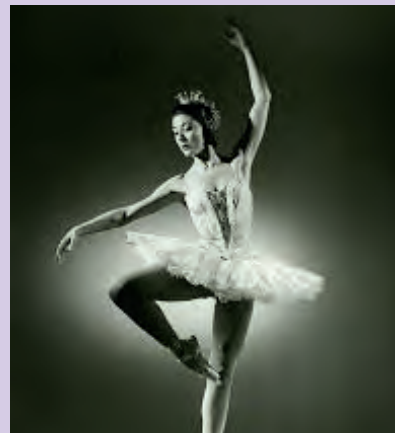




# Mrs Greaves

**My Gran** is my role model, who will be 101 years old in May. She was born in 1925 and lived through World War II. During the war, she worked as a nurse, helping bring new life into the world at a time of fear and uncertainty. That alone shows her strength, courage, and compassion. She also faced great poverty growing up, but she never let that define her. Instead, she worked hard and built a life through determination and resilience. As a farmer's wife, she worked tirelessly, supporting her family and contributing to the farm. Her life wasn't easy, but she never gave up. What inspires me most about my gran is her strength. She has lived through so much change, hardship, and history, yet she continues to show perseverance and dedication. She reminds me that hard work, kindness, and resilience truly matter.

**Dame Margot Fonteyn** has always inspired me because of her dedication and grace. She became one of the greatest ballerinas in history, not just because of her natural talent, but because of her relentless commitment to her craft. Even when others thought she might retire, she continued to perform at the highest level, showing incredible resilience and passion for dance.



Reading *The Diary of a Young Girl* by **Anne Frank** really inspired me. Despite living in fear and uncertainty, she stayed hopeful and continued to express herself honestly. Her courage and belief in the good in people remind me to stay positive and never take my freedom for granted.

# Spring Comic



Artwork  
and  
Narrative by  
Lucy  
Philipps



*“Everyday is a*  
**CATWALK”**

—an interview with Mrs North

***We had the pleasure of interviewing TGGs's very own Vivienne Westwood, Mrs North to find out how she manages to look so stylish and chic every single day of the year! Freya Jones finds out more about the woman behind those amazing dresses!***

**“We have seen many stunning outfits from you, but how do you store them?”**

All of my clothes are stored by theme, colour and season. I use Kallax bokes and also my wardrobe to store everything by colour and brand for example, all of my 1950s Colectif dresses are together, all of my hippy, flouncy dresses are together and all of my jumpsuits are together. My shoes are stored by brand, so that my favourite brand- Irregular choice, Ruby shoes- my second favourite, boots, ankle boots and flats are all separate.

**“Do your outfits come in sets or are they put together by you?”**

Some of my outfits, I buy as matching sets, however I occasionally spot something and think that it would go with a certain bit of clothing at home. I tend to have accessories in every colour, so it is easy to find something to match. I also don't tend to throw things away unless it is worn out because fashion always comes back around. Also, as I wear quite interesting colours, patterns and styles- they are never really in or out of fashion. I am also lucky because I tend to stay the same size so I can still wear dresses that I bought 20 years ago. Just because I don't throw clothes away, doesn't mean I don't buy anything new and I love a good bargain so if I see anything in a charity shop that is a good bargain, I will get it.

**“What is your favourite outfit?”**

I love vintage styles as they are timeless, quirky and elegant, I enjoy looking a bit different with bold colours and prints. I even used to be a goth when I was younger and then I hit my “Hippy Phase”.

**“How long have you taught for?”**

I have been teaching for 33 years- 24 years at Churston with 17 being the Head of History there and now 9 years- so far- as the head of History at TGGs.

**“Is it true that you were in the fashion industry and if so, for how long?”**

I haven't really worked in the fashion industry- though I would love to, but I have done modelling at various points. I did some modelling for Paramo modelling water-proof coats 15 years ago. More recently, I modelled for Dolly and Dotty and also Collectif Vintage, during lockdown. I am lucky as my husband is a professional photographer.



**“Who is your fashion role model?”**

My Fashion role model is Dame Vivienne Westwood, who is an inspiration as she wore bold, bright and daring clothes. She was ridiculed for her work but is now ranked 4th most inspirational person in the world. She is a great role model for female fashion from designs, female business and fashion activists.

I admire students who take risks with their fashion- those who want to look a bit “different” from everyone else. Fashion is a real way to express yourself and my advice is to experiment. You don't need to spend lots of money, just play with what you've got, mixing and matching. Look for pieces that are timeless and don't date. Have fun with clothes and remember:

*“Every day is a catwalk”*

# Iconic LOOKS

*"Fashion is very important. It is life-enhancing and, like everything that gives pleasure, it is worth doing well".*



THE

# INHERITANCE GAMES

Jennifer Barnes

**THE INHERITANCE GAMES: A THRILLING READ! LET THE GAMES BEGIN...**

Like I promised last time, this book is available in the library as a non-Y9+ book! (The Inheritance Games, Jennifer Lynn Barnes). This book review is written by Raine Ball, 9B

I found this book when I was at Waterstones and saw this breathtaking hardcover book – black with gold and green symbols, lines and the title – The Inheritance Games- kind of embroidered on (do you know what I mean? This was the special deluxe edition – it didn't even come with a dust jacket! Anyway, I was spellbound by this cover – genuinely, before I even read it, I sat down staring at the cover for a solid 3 minutes – my description does not do this cover justice. Then, I looked at the blurb (engraved in a deep green colour): “She came from nothing. They have everything. Let the games begin.” This was the only information I had on this book – no dust jacket, remember – and I was immediately intrigued. So, I wasted no time, diving straight in. By the end of the day, I was almost halfway through, absolutely captivated by the story, the characters, the mystery – which is worth noting as unsolvable, it isn't a like a murder mystery where the killer can often be found by the reader before the end. It relates too much to the Hawthorne house and past events for the reader to piece together the clues before the protagonist, Avery. Don't let that put you off though, as the mystery is still amazingly captivating and twist-heavy – I was invested. The story follows Avery, who dreams of a better future with her half sister Libby, discovering an eccentric billionaire – Tobias Hawthorne – has left her almost all of his entire fortune. No-one, least of all Avery, knows why. She must live in the mansion she has inherited for a year or lose everything. Soon she meets the Hawthorne family, hell-bent on discovering why she inherited ‘their’ money. Eventually, she is trapped in a deadly game that everyone in this family is playing. But just how far will they go to keep their fortune?

Romance is a theme in the book, nothing detailed though – a kiss or two, that's it. Now, I love a bit of romance, especially tied in with a mystery, so this book was perfect.

I would personally rate this book a definite 5 stars – it deserves it!

Last thing: they say, ‘never judge a book by it's cover’. But sometimes, you need to! I probably wouldn't have picked up The Inheritance Games if it wasn't for that cover – so don't take every saying literally!

Oh and also, not all the books are out as deluxe editions yet, but if you're like me and find having one absolutely gorgeous version and the rest in paperback, you can read them in the library, and put them on your Christmas list. BY: RAINE BALL

# A New TGGGS Addition:

Mr O'Rourke

## **What have you enjoyed the most/ what surprised you the most after you started working here at TGGGS?**

It has been a real pleasure to start working at TGGGS. While it hasn't been a huge surprise, I have really enjoyed how friendly and helpful everyone has been. From students to colleagues to parents, everyone has been more than happy to help me out, answering my questions and showing me where to go when I have been lost! I have also really appreciated the culture in the school, where I can work hard during the day but have also been able to get home most evenings to spend time with my little boy.

## **Have you got any new initiatives or changes you intend to make for the school?**

One of the things I wanted to do when starting at the school was to get to know everything about the school before making any big changes. My main priority when arriving was to build relationships with everyone, especially the students and my colleagues, and to learn about everything that the school does so well. Like everywhere though, there will be areas in which I think that we can improve, and I am keen to help us to do that. In the areas that I manage, I have some ideas to help support Attendance and I hope to make everybody's lives as easy as possible by writing the best timetable that I can. However, my most pressing priority is to develop the way that we report progress to students and parents, especially in Years 7-9. I know that our students, with the support of their parents, always want to improve, and I want our reports to be able to guide them on how they can do that. I also want us teachers to be able to use these reports to identify how we can intervene to help students improve.

## **If you could teach another subject what would it be and why?**

Since starting in January, half of my teaching has been in Science. Even though Maths is my specialist subject, I have really enjoyed my Science lessons. Physics has lots of links to Maths but I have also really enjoyed doing some Chemistry experiments. Earlier in my career, I used to teach PE as I absolutely love sport. It is a regret of mine that I no longer have time to do any sports coaching in school. That is something that I hope to change in the future.



**Have you always wanted to be a teacher?**

Maths was always my favourite subject in school and the one at which I was best. As a result, I did a Business degree, specialising in Finance. I used this qualification and my Maths ability to get a job in an American investment bank but unfortunately, I did not enjoy the job. I even went travelling for a year then came back and tried another bank but still didn't like it. I learned that making money wasn't as important to me as being happy in what I did. For part time jobs while at University I had coached sports teams and did Maths tuition. Having loved both, I thought I would pursue my full-time teaching career. Even though I didn't enjoy banking, I am glad that I had the experience as I learned a lot and appreciate how lucky I am to now do something I enjoy, even on the tougher days!



**We are sure you're aware of Mr Baker's infamous end of term raffles. Are you planning any of your own end of term surprises?**

I have quickly learned at TGGs that students really enjoy this sort of thing! I hope to continue all of Mr Baker's great work and am beginning to plan the Easter raffle. In time, I would love to be able to put my own spin on it!

**Finally, the most important question, what is your favourite film?!**

My favourite film is Dumb and Dumber, a comedy film from the 1990s. As an adult, there are a lot of serious responsibilities. I have a job where I have to be responsible, as well as my most serious responsibility of being a Dad. With all of this, it is important to have a laugh, and this silly film never fails to give me a laugh!

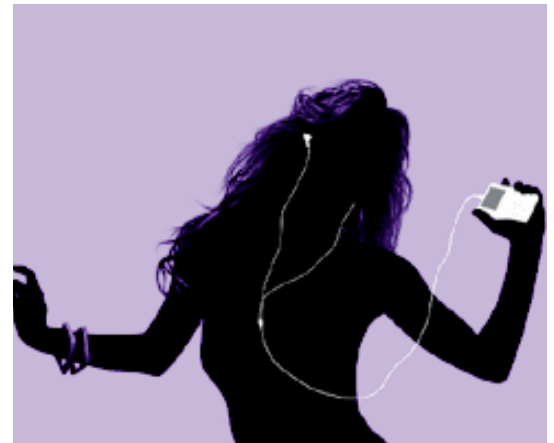
By Raine Ball



# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MUSIC

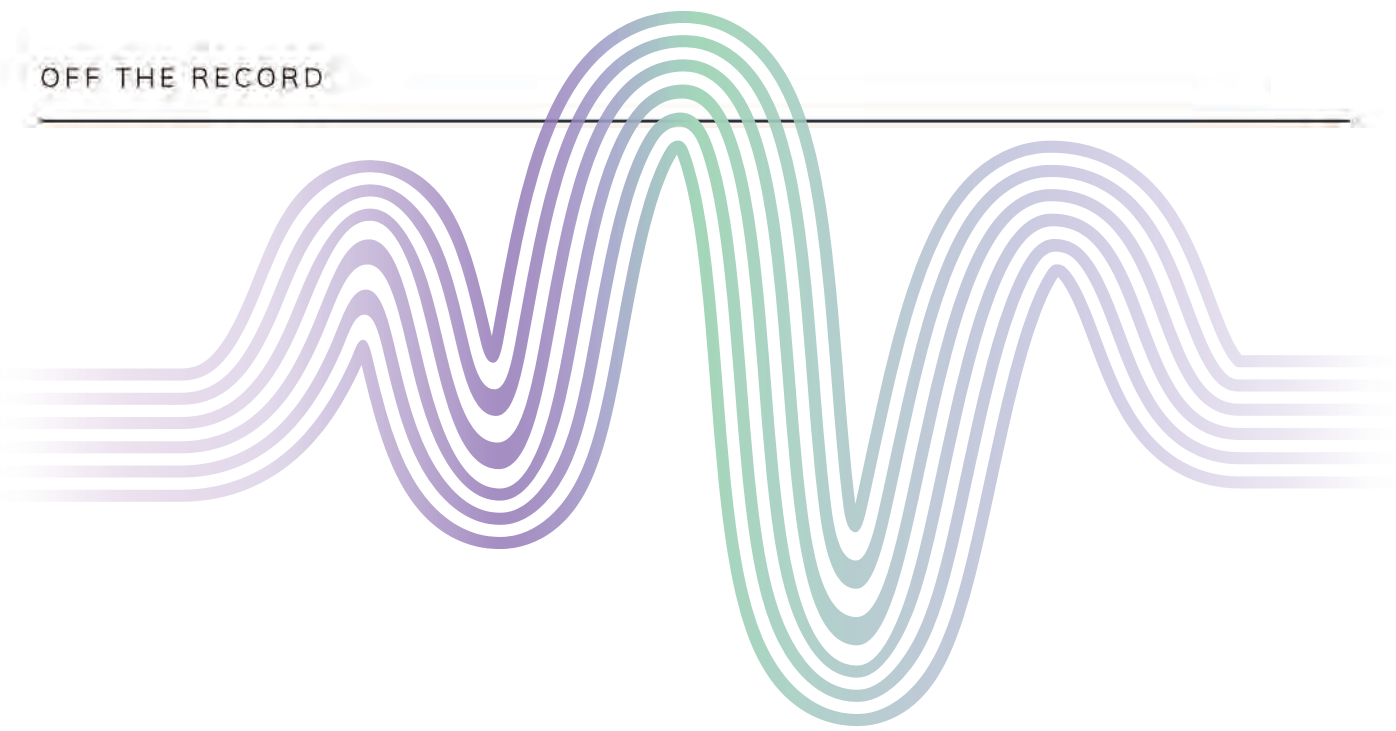
With approximately **7,159 languages** being spoken across the globe, and variations of the meaning behind body language between cultures - music is universal. However, it holds a unique impression on us all. We have created sound as a means of communication for over 40,000 years, with the bone flute being the oldest recorded instrument, however, we continue to learn more about the remarkable effects music has on our physical and psychological well-being every day.

Brain scanning techniques such as EEGs (electroencephalograms), show the areas of the brain that are active when listening to music. Music appears to stimulate the right hemisphere of the brain, which is best at artistic, creative and spontaneous tasks. The limbic system is also involved; the limbic system plays a key role in how we display our behaviour and emotions, which is why music can bring about specific feelings. When listening to your favourite song there is often an emotional peak, otherwise known as your favourite part of the song, when this is reached a large burst of dopamine is released, dopamine is a neurotransmitter which when released can lead to rewarding feelings, these make us want to repeat actions, hence we sometimes listen to our favourite song on repeat.



Music also has an effect on hormones, and therefore how we feel: it has been found that when singing with others, especially when improvising, higher levels of oxytocin are produced, promoting trust, bonding and stress reduction. This may explain why group karaoke can be popular, it may even deepen your friendships! Additionally, the levels of cortisol and stress in the body are reduced, which signifies that music does have a calming effect.





Music has been used in medicine as a tool for rehabilitation. It can help to unlock once restricted memories in those suffering from dementia and Alzheimer's disease. According to research published in *Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience* (2023), over 93% of neuroscience studies show at least one beneficial effect of music on patients with neurodegenerative diseases, with improvements in memory and cognition being the most frequent outcomes. This can be incredibly rewarding for both patients and their families who may have lost all hope of their loved one retrieving such memories.

There have been studies which show the possible positive implications of music for children suffering with autism, for example, increased social interactions, verbal communication, initiating behaviour, and social-emotional reciprocity. Music therapy may also help to enhance non-verbal communication skills within the therapy context. Finally, music is used in rehabilitation of patients who suffered strokes or from Parkinson's disease to help with cognitive redevelopment and also to increase their mood and mental wellbeing.

Some musical education has been shown to have a positive impact on social and cognitive development of children, for example, improved memory and better listening skills, where these effects are long lasting. It is recommended for children to learn to play an instrument due to the coordination and academic skills it can bring about, it is never too late to learn.

As you can see the effects of music are extensive, and can be incredibly positive, however as mentioned at the beginning of the article, music has a unique impression on each of every one of us. Different songs can bring us back to specific memories like nothing else can and create surreal and wonderful experiences. It's important during exam seasons or just general stress to have a tool that you can use to relieve your stress, and I certainly recommend finding your perfect playlist to help you do so!



# Spring Pictures

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I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the milky way,  
They stretched in never-ending line  
Along the margin of a bay:  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

Daffodil- William Wordsworth



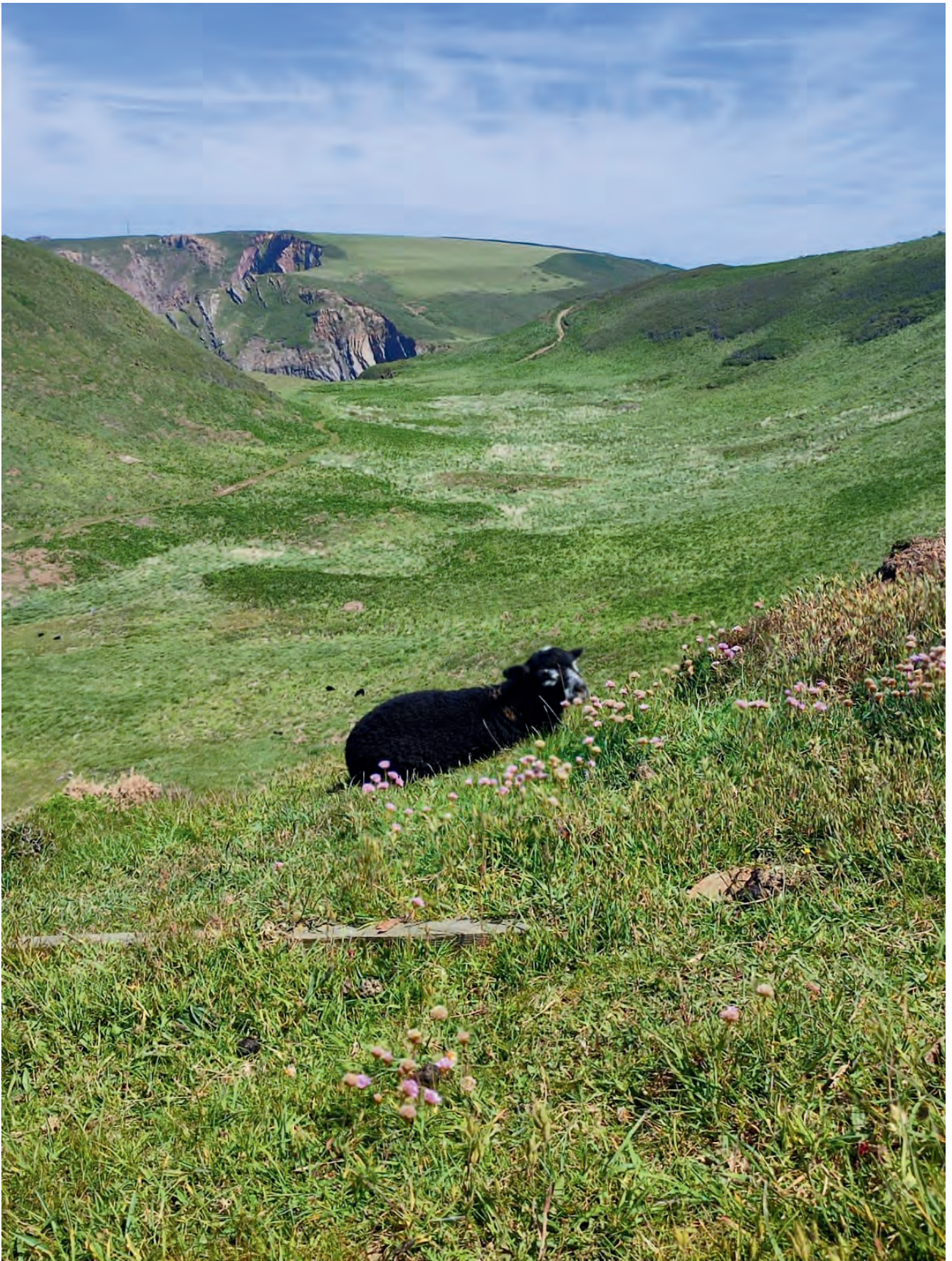


Photo by Anna Maddocks, Yr 10

# HYBRID CARS

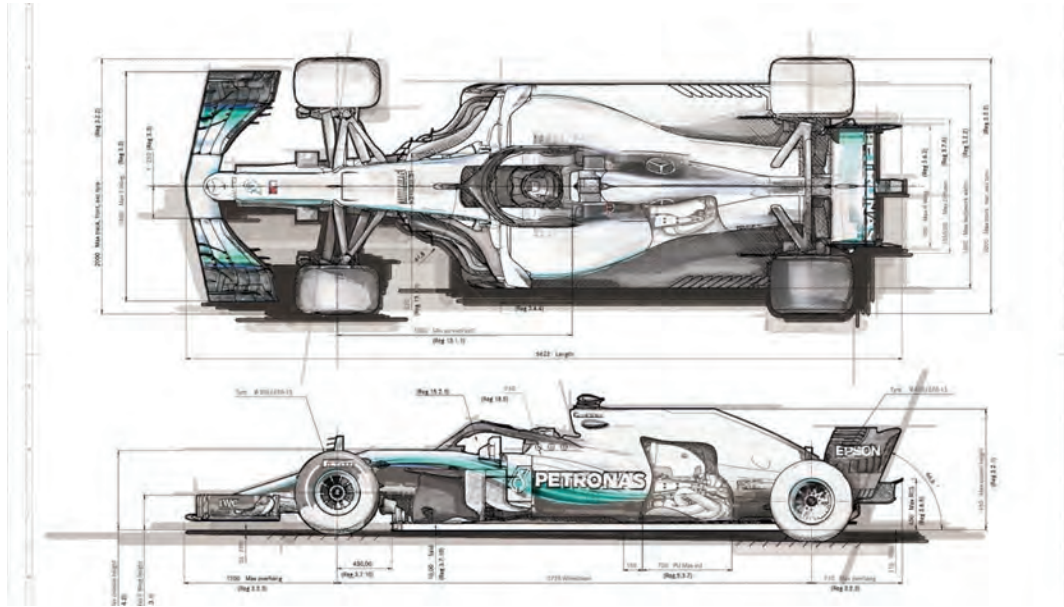
**“One tank of fuel could power an average detached home for three to four weeks.”**

Over the last few years, Formula One (F1) has had an abrupt surge of popularity, especially in the UK. It is now considered a top three sport in the UK and has reached over 827 million people globally, a 12% year-on-year increase and a 63% rise since 2018. But the growing popularity comes with consequences, and 2025 was proof of that with around 168,720 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent released. However, the sport is working fast to change that.

Formula One has undergone the most radical regulation change in the sport's entire history ahead of the 2026 season. The new generation of cars has been designed to look and race differently to the former cars. But what really are the new regulations, and how is F1 actually meant to be looking to become more sustainable?

One of the most noticeable ways the new cars differ from their predecessors is how they look. The cars are designed under a “nimble car” concept, making them smaller, lighter and more visually distinct from last year's cars. Furthermore, the minimum weight has decreased by 30kg, and along with other changes to the car, the max width has decreased by 100mm. Along with this, the front wing is 100mm narrower and has fewer elements. The rear wing loses its lower “beam wing” and features simplified endplates.





That said, how is this actually making a difference for the sport's sustainability? Most of it comes down to the changes in the engines and in the fuel. While the engine is still a 1.6 litre V6 Turbo Hybrid (for those who have any idea what that is), the balance of power has shifted dramatically. Now, the engines have a near 50/50 split between electric and fuel, and cars can recover energy to recharge the car with twice as much energy per lap. Meanwhile, the fuel is now made from cutting-edge sources like carbon capture, municipal waste, and non-food biomass.

So, to sum it all up, Formula One's 2026 engines will utilize 100% advanced sustainable fuels, aiming ultimately for a 65% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to fossil fuels. And if that doesn't mean much to you and you don't notice how much F1 has really done to try and become more sustainable, as mentioned before, last year approximately 168,720 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent was released through the sport. Approximately 45% came from transport, 27.7% from business travel, 19.3% from factories/facilities, and 7.3% from event operations. In 2026, the sport is targeting a total carbon footprint of 145,000 to 150,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (a year-on-year decrease of up to 23,720 tonnes).

So, while it can't all be perfect straight away, F1 is racing to make the sport more sustainable, proving that the same engineering genius used to win races is being geared toward winning the most important race of all: the one for our planet.

By Lucie Harris



# KS3 CREATIVE WRITING CLUB

## SHARE THEIR WORK

Lights flickered. Clouds shook. Waves splashed and twirled. Vigorous flashes of lightning thrashed upon the shrivelled land, cracks forming and fickle fizzling beyond it. Crumbling rocks of fury and agony tumbled down, getting stared daggers by the luminous sun across the foreign land like it was in possession of everything in sight. Crows squawked in torment, screaming with no mouth to feeble humans, no words to use before they succumb to ash.

Tempestuous water churned and pounded the warped, diminished school (trembling), waves splashing with vigour, reveling in the deterioration submerging into empty wails of outcries to a knowing silence of acceptance, using this as a weapon for sadism. Aromas drowned of chlorine and horror swarmed the melancholy jail, screams heard drowning out in the distance, the sea laughing with malice. From my memory, the waves were as blue as a neglected sapphire with a shine of the deepest grief one can have to offer, blending to a rich turquoise with a tint of seafoam broadening a tint of seafoam.

Crack! My lungs were engulfed with floods of water. My hands trembled. My heart hammered. My teeth chattered. Dread gnawing inside. Blood running cold. Hands stretched out into nothingness. The metallic taste of blood filled my mouth. A burning sensation in my chest rose higher the more I drowned. Every time I tried to escape this place of torment, I got dragged lower, my arms and legs weakening and my breaths becoming slower and raspier. Was there any way of escape, freedom? Senses of displaced aggression washed all over me - hauling the students down with me, if I go, I will make sure to the best of my abilities that I will not be the only one inundating in this sea of grief, lashing out on my students as a way of projection, Retaliatory anger and externalizing coping. Convulsing, with hysteria disintegrating I submerged, breathing one last singular breath, letting my chest stiffen as I sank in a deep abyss, my body numbing and pacing thoughts drowning with me. A quote lay in my mind from my deceased husband, " You are the prettiest shade of blue but once I go up in the sky free from this sickly bed don't go for someone whose favourite colour is red, you're a rose don't twist and break yourself into a tulip for someone, because even if a tulip is pretty you forget how rare and beautiful a rose is.

"Grief is like the ocean, webbing and flowing, it might swallow you whole but eventually you will wash up to a new piece of land."

Who and what am I again? Can I ever be the same?

# KS3 CREATIVE WRITING CLUB

## SHARE THEIR WORK

Bang! The doors slammed shut behind me, there was no escape. Something cold grasped at my foot and dragged me to the ground. Everything went black.

I walked through the grease-stained corridors and tried to clamp my nose as subtly as possible. I could still smell it. Death. The whole school stank of it no matter how much they had fruitlessly tried to cover it up. They had always tried to hide the school's age through things like colour walls, buntings and repainted rooms. All efforts were in vain. The school looked older than ever. The same could be said about the teachers though. Some of them had been teaching at this school for decades. The oldest was Mr Court, my English teacher. He had been working here for fifty years, and you could tell it had aged him. He had long dark bags hanging on his eyes, his hair was thin, moist and grey and his eyes were a dulled green, a colour which seemed to fade more each year. And of course, I had Mr court first period. His lessons weren't exactly the most exciting to say the least. I walked into his grey walled classroom, which was covered in posters of verbs, nouns, similes and more all in slight variations of a monotone looking black. There was something strange though there were flowers on his desk, all in bright shades, Mr Court never had flowers. I turned around on the board there was Miss Eclair written on it in a large thin font that flicked up at the ends.

"Hello dear", someone said in a sickly-sweet voice. My head whipped round and behind me there was a woman in a blue blouse, bright yellow glasses and a pink skirt. She had a head of flowing blonde hair and bright green eyes. "Who are you", she replied in the same caramelly voice.

"Lavender", I muttered under my breath. I hated my name it was as if I was some flower or shade of purple, sadly for me though my parents loved the name. "What a wonderful name Lavender" she said, and by now her voice was giving me a tooth ache.

"Who are you?" I asked putting on my sweetest smile to match her tone. Her smile twitched and her eyes grew quite wide for about ten seconds and then she relaxed again.

"I'm Mrs Eclair", she replied immediately after she returned her former pink lip-sticked smile, a slight mechanical edge creeping into her sugary tone.

Nina Heyward

# Oxford Trip

## *A walk through history*

By: Anna Maddocks, Anwen Titford - Yr 10

For many, the word 'Oxford' immediately brings to mind images of historical buildings, Harry Potter scenes and Einstein-like students who surely all know the English dictionary off by heart. However, once you visit this city and experience its magic first hand, you will understand where the fantasised reputation comes from and also realise that certain aspects of it are untrue.

In February, thirty year 10s and 11s spent the day in Oxford with Mr Endersby leading the trip. After an early start and a 4-hour coach ride, we finally arrived at Exeter College, which has historical links to the city of Exeter: it was founded by two brothers from Devon in 1314.

Oxford is a collegiate university: instead of being confined to a campus with all the buildings on site, it's made up of 39 separate colleges scattered around the city. Each one has its own history, culture and control over itself, a bit like our house culture at school but on a much bigger scale. Exeter College is one of the university's oldest. It is in the heart of Oxford beside the Bodleian library, which has a copy of every single book published in the British Isles since 1610- that's over 13 million copies! No wonder the students are into reading...



Firstly, we listened to an introductory lecture from the outreach lead, which outlined some of the university's numerous traditions (e.g. the annual summer rowing competition); debunked some of the myths about the requirements and benefits provided for students; and introduced us to critical thinking – something that they look for in interviews.

Some examples of the critical thinking: spot the flaws in the following statements:

- “Robots complete jobs faster than humans, so we should replace all humans with robots.”
- “Scientists can't prove that ghosts don't exist, therefore they must be real.”



We were then taken on a guided tour under intricately carved stone archways, around the courtyard's pristine lawn, into one of the libraries, where bookshelves crammed with books stretched up to the ceiling, the walled gardens, the magnificent chapel, and past the stately hall that we recognised as the Hogwarts infirmary. College crests had been chalked on the outer walls, which act as a trophy for the winners of the inter-college rowing races, which are taken incredibly seriously at Oxford. A buffet-style lunch in the cavernous banquet hall, which was lined with imposing oil paintings (only three of women though!) and stained-glass windows featuring the college crests, outdid anything at school (sorry!) and gave the impression of being in Hogwarts castle.

After that, we had Q&As with students, including two TGGs alumnae. It was great to speak to students from Exeter and it definitely gave us an idea of what life is like studying at Oxford. Some of the questions they answered were: **'What made you apply to Oxford?'** - the fact that Oxford offers several mixed degrees, e.g. English and History; Oxford's incredible tutors, some of whom are leading professors in their field; and the university's reputation. **'How do they manage to balance studying and social life?'** Everyone is in the same position so there are always people who will go to the library with you and then be free to go out in the evening. Also, the relatively empty timetables give everyone a flexible schedule and incorporate plenty of time for studying. **'What was the transition like from school to university?'** - again, everyone is in the same boat, and the tutors and professors are used to and expect first years to struggle to adjust at first. As a result, they are reasonably relaxed for the first term/year with deadlines etc.

A choice of four different taster sessions was offered, all of which were reported to be really interesting and engaging. The aerospace option, which encouraged us to think critically about the materials used to build aircraft, was ideal for anyone with STEM interests and gave a good insight into what this course consists of at Oxford.



In the Law lecture, we had a discussion-based talk with a student. She asked us questions such as ‘What is democracy?’ and ‘What do we have laws for?’ It was thought-provoking and interesting to debate the very basis of human civilisation and we may have left with more questions than we answered.

In the afternoon, we split up into three groups: those interested in history visited the Ashmolean Museum; any taking triple science participated in an Earth sciences talk; and everyone else visited Hertford College.

For the Earth Sciences talk, we walked through the city to the Department of Earth Sciences (a very modern and well-equipped building). During the talk, we learnt about different types of volcanoes and did an interactive experiment, where containers of fizzy tablets exploded up off the pavement to demonstrate how the pressure inside volcanoes affects the power of the explosion.

After a packed day of sightseeing, learning and trying to blend in with the academic scholars, we headed home.

## *FOUR MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT OXFORD*

### **“You must have all Grade 9s at GCSE.”**

Whilst most Oxford students have around 5 – 8 Grade 9s, all aspects of applications and the interview are considered by tutors to get an idea of your academic potential.

### **“Oxford is expensive”.**

In reality, Oxford can be cheaper than many universities! Short terms mean that you are not supporting yourself for very long and reasonably priced accommodation is run by your collage for at least 3 years. You only pay for the time you are using it (so not during holidays) and due to the size of Oxford, everything is nearby so there are not loads of expensive transport fees – most students use bikes. Food is heavily subsidised so it is a lot cheaper than buying meals elsewhere. On top of this, there’s generous support for lower-income families.

### **“Everyone comes from private schools.”**

This is a relevant debate at the moment and although traditionally this was true, it is an outdated perception. The university is actively making a move towards being more accessible to state schools – in 2021, 68.6% of the students accepted were from state schools.

### **“Interviews are scary”**

The interview is supposed to be a test of what you can do rather than what you cannot. The interviewer wants to see how you think, to judge how well the teaching styles and academic work will suit you. The interview involves a two-way discussion – working through tricky problems. They want to bring out the best in you! One thing that we were told on the trip was that it is good to learn how to think aloud as this helps the interviewer understand your thought process.



Age Range : 12A  
To stream : Apple TV /Sky



Age range : 12A  
To stream: Netflix



Age range : All  
To stream : Spotify/Podcasts



# EDITORS' SPRING PICKS

# Doubt

Written By Rebecca Fry, Year 13

Inspired by Anon by Carol Ann Duffy

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She made time to write.

But...

She's second-guessing this poem's name,  
Because she wonders how it sounds out loud.

Is the 'out' in 'doubt' too bold, too stout?  
Is the syllable too cold, too strong?

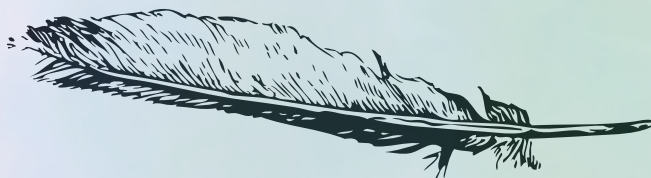
Is it wrong to pick a word that doesn't read like it writes?  
Indeed, why doubt when there's certainty  
In prerogative rites  
Of the road most travelled, the road most approved.

The pen rolls from her grip,  
Into a den - a drawer,  
Of ten pastimes, maybe more,  
Shoves it shut, mutters,  
*What's it all for?*

Dons a skirt, a shirt, weaves her hair into a braid,  
Feels to prim, what to wear? Waits for the writer's callous to fade.  
*Why toy with words when there's a voice ready-made?*

Focuses on lip gloss and gum floss,  
Not getting her point across,  
And when she can't speak up with her voice,  
Finds herself  
At a loss.

Fits in with the girls, the harmony of their chatter,  
Tries tennis, tries baking, but something's the matter,  
Because the poems she studies have these voices so loud.  
Between the crowd of iambic,  
The rhymes of men stand so proud.



The pace and rhythm at which they speak,  
Makes her heart grow heavy, writing soured and bleak,  
Could've been dirges from the beak of their quill,  
That crowed on-

*Morals!*

*Laurels!*

*Quarrels!*

-and the women they're "owed."  
Is the English Cannon secure and composed,  
If male prose forms its lyric,  
And women's verse is seldom disclosed?

So she takes the spine of women's work,  
Hefty in her uncalloused hand,  
Reads Brontë, Angelou, Charlotte Perkins G,  
Dickenson, Atwood, Carol Ann D,  
Then Sappho, Rosetti, Sylvia P.  
Swayed to ask if written word truly is key - For  
*Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?*  
*Why, the patriarchs, you see!*

Did they say it, those women,  
That came before she,  
Did they say, "I'm a suffragette,  
But I know my place?"  
Did 'Deeds, not words,' incite  
Letters gone without trace?  
No!  
No doubt on her tongue now,  
Only haste to join the pace!

For this way comes that itch,  
That buzz to stich words down.  
To hem in the lines and pitch  
The syllables, to make a case  
For the right sound.  
She snatches a moment to write,  
Catches her fingers on the fine-nibbed pen.  
Comes back to the page of doubt,  
And intends to begin again.

...Only to find that,  
With an audacious, heavy hand,  
He's overwritten her words,  
And to her greatest despair,  
Left not one scrape of paper spare.

# SAFE



# IN



# EVERY

# WORK PLACE!

## A Torbay Initiative

