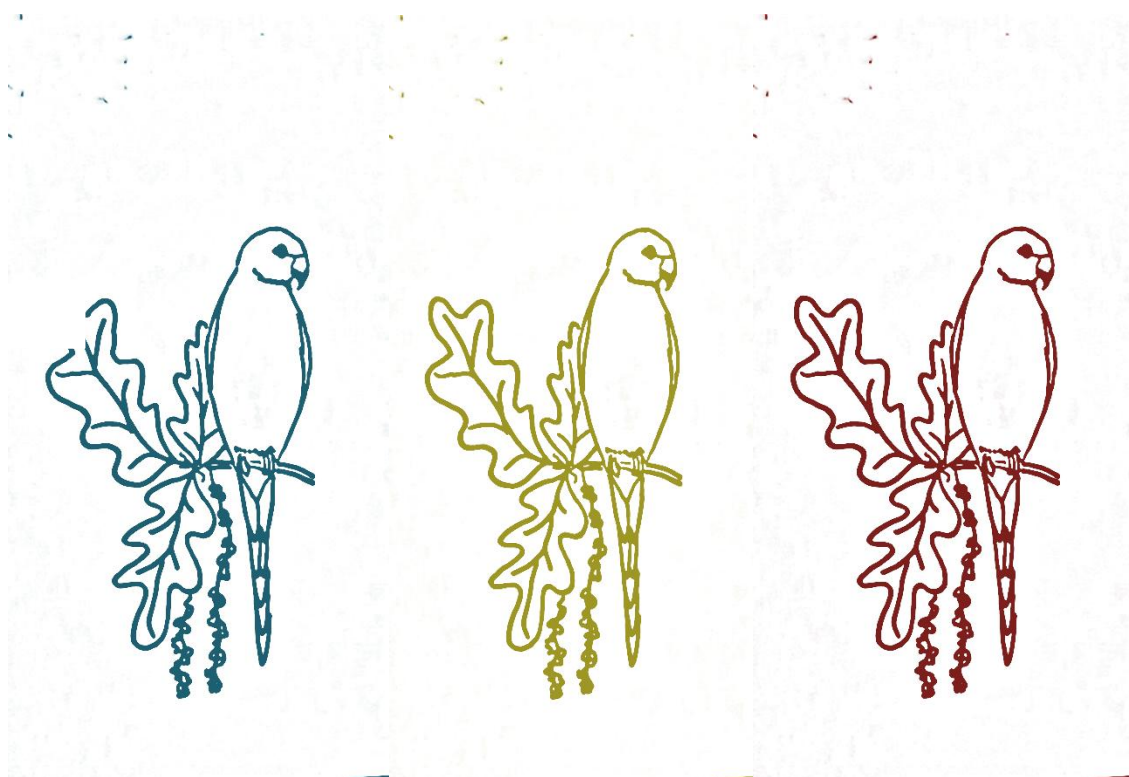


FROM THE ENGLISH CORRIDOR

The William Ellis English department magazine

Spring to Summer terms 2026

Featuring written work by students in Years 7–11



‘Rather Use Than Fame’

The magazine editor invites photographic or other illustrative contributions illustrating the school’s motto for inclusion in the next edition. Please send any contributions by email or hand directly to an English teacher.

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We would like to dedicate this edition of the English magazine to our Year 11 cohort, many of whom have been such engaged and engaging readers, actors and writers. We wish you all happiness and success.



Photo by R. Rahman, April 24th 2026



Year 7s
practising for the
final scene of
Hamlet with
paper foils.

(Image blurred
intentionally)

Year 7 work from across the year

Before 'Hamlet' in the spring (see above for some duelling) in the autumn term, Year 7s study **Ekphrastic Poetry**, poetry that addresses a piece of art or design. Students are invited to write their own ekphrastic poems, and here are some by our current Year 7s. We will publish Shakespeare-linked writing in the next edition.

'To the Imperial War Museum'

A beautiful building, with such horrors of war,
the museum, a memory of hatred.
All those poor people that died for their country.

All those sounds, bangs and splutters,
the war machines were on.
All those people running from the dogs of war.
All those screams of pain and anger, all those
lives lost. For nothing.

The echoes of the past, the reminder for the future.
To put down our guns, to make peace, as
a united family.

by Milo Ward



'Oh Wonder of Wonders'

Oh forest so close yet always so far,
Birthed from a mind with genius pure,
A mind already with wonders attributed,
Given life by the final idea,
The final wonder, of a grandmaster,
Who went by the name...
Antoni Gaudí.

Towers galore, worshipping a sacred family,
One only accessible by climbing a seashell,
A fortress of light and machinery,
A whisper of what once was,
Cloaked in figures,
Nature and human merged into one,
A portal into what should have been,
A relic made to survive the ages,
That is what I see from down here.

How does it feel, oh work of art?
To know your creator will never see you,
(At least in all your glory).
You are the last breath,
You are the legacy,
You are the one all will remember.
You are the memory frozen in time.
How does it feel?
Oh Sagrada Familia.

by Marcel Revilla Zanichelli



'The Watching of Big Ben'

You knew and watched everything, Big Ben,
From momentary hours to a long year,
All forgotten about in time.
You have stood there for over a century,
Yet you still stand.

As the short hours pass,
You remain watching,
Like an overseeing eye,
From day to night. Only your clock changes,
But you remain patrolling
After long days of watching.
Yet you still stand.

Through wind, hot weathers and rain,
You continue standing,
Unmoving and unchanging.
May I ask how you do it?
As warmth spreads through you,
You never fade away.
You willingly hang on to the Earth.
You might fall ,
And wonder,
Why still hang on?
Yet you still stand.

by Leo Deallie

Year 7 ekphrastic poetry, continued

An ekphrastic poem inspired by U.A. Fanthorpe's
'Not My Best Side':

'A Dialogue Between the Dragon and the Knight
Whilst Being Painted'

*You're so lucky that it is not my side today,
Otherwise I would burn you into a crisp.*

That's it! Ahhhh! Wait!

Stop fighting – he's painting! We can't move an inch,
Otherwise we and this painting
Will never exist in the future.

*Fine! But when he stops painting
You and your dumb horse will be dead.*

Is that so? Well, we will have to see about that then.

'The Death of Icarus' According to George...

When Icarus died
It was a bruised evening,

There were vibrant shades
sliding
From pink to purple,

The sun was
tinged with red

The figure of
Icarus,
falling near the rocks.

Bright blue tears streaked
down Daedalus's
face.

Their wings
were creations of
Genius.

by GM

'I wrote my poem to
evoke a sense of frozen
beauty and tranquility. I
want it to show what life
would have been like for



Left, by Mickey Looney (but painting by Paolo Uccello)

'Not the Protagonist'

Ah yes, the Glory!
It's not as good as
Being the main character
But a sidekick is good enough
Especially if you're the most
Powerful character depicted.
I wouldn't have been
But the artist left out half the
dragon.
Or maybe half of him got red-carded!
It did make it an easy win.
But I am not complaining
Because I like
Not being burnt to a crisp!

Now, I'm still not complaining
But George isn't exactly a
Lightweight, especially with all
His armour on. Why couldn't
He have brought
A tank and be done with it?
Then I would have been
Protected as well.
However, a tank might have been against the rules
And the dragon might have
Complained to the ref!
I'm fine with being a whole sidekick
If I'm honest, even if I'm
Not the protagonist.

by Wilfrid Scrivener (inspired by 'Not My Best Side')

'The Angel of the Meridian' Responds

People look up to me all the time,
Always in awe and never in respect,
You are different for today I saw,
The look of empathy on your face,
Why are you not like the others,
Awe-struck and inspired?

For once someone understands my suffering,
Notices my job is not plain sailing,
Why can't everyone understand the damage this
 has done to my pride?
Instead of looking at me like I am the luckiest person alive?

It was already bad enough to begin with.
Why, people, did you have to add the poles?
They quench the little feeling for freedom I had left,
Made me look even weaker,
Prolonged my suffering to no end.
It hurt enough without them.
Why did you have to add them?

As you probably think I have my job,
I have to explain.
It wasn't my choice to be slung up on a wall,
A feature made only for decor.
My wish was to fly free.
But at least now I see something.
So, in a way, I like my job.
Just not enough to stop me complaining.

*Written by by Marcel Revilla Zanichelli
in response to 'The Angel of the Meridian' by Rilke*



One of the ekphrastic poems we read that students were particularly creative with was 'Ozymandias' by P.B. Shelley. We worked on voicing different elements of the poem. Here is Ismail Rahman writing in the voice of Time, followed by George Mobbs who – and this is a first – is being the statue's left leg in his monologue.

'The Voices of Ozymandias I'

I am Time. I watched Ozymandias rise to power and
believe he would last forever.
He built statues and cities to prove how strong he was.

But I kept on moving.
Slowly his empire fell apart.
His people left, his buildings broke,

And even his statue cracked and fell into the sand.
The words on it scream, but no one listens anymore.

Travellers come and go. They see the
ruins and realise nothing lasts forever.

I am Time and I always continue.



'The Voices of Ozymandias II' – the left leg speaks

I am the mighty left leg and I shall conquer
the desert sands standing solo after
eliminating the right leg. Of course, before
my reign of destruction, I had to get rid of
that big, arrogant balloon of a head that
held me in the shadows.

I used a simple trick – I would smirk if I had
a mouth – and dared him to walk. Priceless:
a stone giant trying to walk whilst his legs
stay put! As soon as the head hit the floor I
knew I had won. Not only was the right leg
as thick as a tree, but the great king had
toppled from his throne.

Now, for the right leg. I have had a plan
brewing: I no longer care if the kingdom of
left legs fails. All I want is to take out this
right leg. If I could just tip and fall onto it, it
would smash and I would break into the
sand that fills my kingdom. I say it again,
"DEATH TO THE RIGHT LEG!"

Year 8 work from across the year

Before some more poems, this time in response to modern poems loosely on the theme of growing up and change, here are some beautifully shaped short story openings by our 8s. These are time-slip stories written after reading 'The Story of Rip Van Winkle' by Washington Irving, amongst many others.

Adam Torok's Story

I woke to a strange humming sound, low and constant. The ground beneath me was smooth and cold, nothing like the pavement I remembered. When I looked up, glass buildings stretched into the sky, glowing with light. In the distance, I could just make out Big Ben, but it flickered strangely. My stomach dropped – something wasn't right.

I moved through the streets, my footsteps echoing in the silence, vehicles gliding past without wheels. Big bright blue screens hovered in the air, flashing images of people but too quickly to properly make out their faces. People walked around like an army, no difference in their step, just all of them in a straight line walking emotionlessly. They didn't look at me or acknowledge my presence. They just walked straight ahead as if I wasn't there. London felt familiar but completely different.

A huge screen lit up above me, showing the date. I froze as I read it again and again. Years, no decades, no centuries, had passed. My hands shook as the truth hit me; everything I knew was gone: my house, my family, my local shops, everything. The city suddenly felt colder, emptier.

I stood alone, staring at the glowing skyline. This was still London, but it didn't feel like home anymore. I started to break down, my eyes filled with hot, salty tears. How could this be? Why was it me that had to stay in a future that moved on without me?

After the Picnic - Ossian Beatson's Story

Finn's eyes flickered open, slowly adjusting to the lights around him. He sat up in the long flowing grass of what he thought to be Hampstead Heath. He expected to hear the usual sounds: dogs barking, joggers chatting, the wind in the trees. Instead, the grass glowed a faint blue beneath him, and the skies were filled with shimmering silver pathways where silent aircraft drifted through the air like ghosts. There was no cool summer breeze; the air was still. The scent of fresh, ripe strawberries was long gone. Instead, a scent of rust replaced it. Finn sat up straight, confused, as the ground hummed beneath him. 'Was this a dream?', he thought.

Finn stood up and started walking. It all seemed too real. Old oak trees were wrapped in floating rings of light, like slow moving halos. A small fox with metallic strands of fur trotted past him, pausing to scan him. It had glowing, artificial eyes. Finn advanced towards it, making it dart away.

Curiously, Finn followed it. A faint pathway formed under his feet, which led him to a small clearing. People had gathered round a map of London, its buildings rising and falling like a living model.

A woman noticed Finn and waved him over. Her coat shimmered with moving holograms that constantly changed colour, and a small drone hovered by her, almost like a pet. 'You're not registered on London's database,' she said, tapping a little glowing watch. 'Are you from around here?' She asked. Finn didn't know how to answer, so the mystery woman guided him to the floating map. Places he remembered lit up – Camden, Kings Cross, Kentish Town – but each one looked different now, taller, slicker, more advanced. The woman smiled. 'If you're lost, the city will guide you. It learns from you.' Before Finn could respond, a drone projected an arrow in front of him, showing him the way to somewhere he didn't know he wanted to go.

Finn followed the arrow with mixed feelings of fear and excitement. He walked past viewpoints. He could see towers floating above the ground connected with glowing bridges and being held up by traction beams. The city buzzed with life – people on hoverboards, drones delivering packages, lights flowing like waves.

Eventually he reached his destination. Home. Fear trembled through his body. Finn shakily stepped up to the door and pressed a button, which he hoped was the doorbell. His mind whirled. 'Where is the world I knew?' He thought to himself. 'What happened?' Then the door shifted open...

Ihsan Miah's Story (complete with prologue to the big sleep!)

It was a hot, serene and sunny day so I decided to take a trip to Golders Green Park. It was beautiful. The sun reflecting off the grass was glittering like a star in the night sky. I strolled through the park, looking at all the animals going about their days. I could hear the happy laughs of people, the squawking of exotic birds and the joyful screams of monkeys buzzing with energy. But then something caught my attention. It was an exquisite smell, so good I could feel the streaks of the scent being blown away by the gusts of wind. It led me to the cafe. The menu spoke to me. It convinced me to buy something. I bought the pizza and it was cooked to perfection. The cheese was soft and melted with a cheese pull you couldn't even comprehend. But my feast was not finished yet. The ice cream was next. I took one lick and my tongue found his match made in heaven. The brain freeze and sugar rush caused my body to shut down. Suddenly I was absolutely knackered and the sun started to set.

I went to lay by a tree for a quick power-nap under the enchanted sky.

Or so, I thought. I woke up, body fatigued and mind drowsy to the point it needed rewiring, as if it were a robot. But that wasn't all. It was cold. Very, very cold. My vision was blank, pure white, to the point I thought I had lost my sight! But no, suddenly a minuscule white orb fell from the sky onto my nose. Then I realised it was snowing. Heavily snowing, which is rare to happen in London. The tree had also grown into a great colossal tree towering over me, making me look like an ant. I stood up wanting to adventure into this new, different world. But then I realised that not only the tree had

grown, but I had grown as well. Throughout my tremendously long slumber. I had also grown a goatee. There was now a lake in the middle of the park, but due to the ice-cold weather it was frozen.

I left the park, stumbling as I went. My brain forgot how to walk. I was looking for an Uber, but now they were just robot cars driving around. I tried to find my way home but my phone wouldn't turn on. Asking for help was no help, because everyone was just bustling through the busy roads.

But miraculously, I saw familiar faces My nieces, who had just been babies years ago, had grown fully. I called out to them, praying they would notice me and that by fate, they had found me. They were driving now. The cars were not so different compared to years ago. My nieces drove me home and I was reunited with my beloved family back in the same old house filled with memories. I found that I'd been sleeping for 20 years. I now treasure my time and spend it wisely.

I now have to make my place in this new world. *The end.*

'All I heard'

The cars were beeping
Motorcycles,
The sound of the air quietened
By the music in the car.

As I got out the car
A bell rings from a nearby bike
As I enter the station
I hear "Please mind the gap
Between the train and the platform."

Another train came whizzing through
And then I entered
The buzzing and beeping of phones
That's all I heard, all I heard.

by Muhammad Khan

The birds chirp
Squirrels squeak
leaves rustle
all for the break of dawn
the start of a new day
a fresh start
a changed way
crimson roses bow down
trees centuries old meet their elder
the sun spills light across the plains
the rooster shrieks
movement in the city startles the birds nearby
and they flee towards the sky
some people groan
others rejoice
most find it a miracle
to see the light of day
one
more
time
before you know it.

by Rayn Chowdhury

'Change is not a setback'

Change like the seasons.
Like the cold like a loss.

A feeling so distant from
You.

No assistance just the bleak
And numbing cold.

You think the warm is near but
The storm is nearer.

Your heart is numb but
You must start.

The road maybe foggy but your
Eyes are clear.

So continue – don't look back

Change is not a setback.

by Percy Power

'English in Snow'

We were in English,
everyone tired, pens moving
Chairs creaking, everyone trying to focus
Suddenly someone said, "It's snowing!!"
and the whole class snapped their heads around like an owl
and looked outside of the window.
Snow started falling fast, like the sky had opened.

The flakes landed on the ground as if they
wanted to live but couldn't
The whole class was distracted
like their concentration just disappeared,
like it evaporated
The teacher stopped, just stared.

The room felt different
everyone was excited
They knew it wouldn't set but still
Discussed plans that would never happen
It's like the work vanished as everyone watched,
In awe, like it was something
Magical, different, it was like
We had never seen snow!

by Asuadoba Domah

'The Mystic Sky'

The mystic sky gleaming so bright.
The colours red, orange to yellow like lava flowing throughout the sky,
The harmonising stars illuminating the world,
I suddenly say 'Wow', the clouds swimming in melted cheese.
The cycle of life resetting like a seed, ready to grow again,
The sky speaking silently and slowly to us, saying goodbye,
The gleaming sound of a new cycle.
The sun descending, ready to go back up again with the night sky,
The lava-like colours slowly and slowly and slowly fade away,
The dazzling light announcing its return,
Slowly, slowly, slowly.
This is not over yet.

by Elijah Ali

Year 9 work from across the year

One of the shorter units we do in Year 9 is called 'Journeys'. One of the tasks students do is write a story inspired by some 'found' objects pulled out of an abandoned bag. Here is Abe Hildrow's quick-thinking, inventive piece based on the objects he ended up with. Look out for his memory simile towards the end.

'Thanks'

She sat hunched on her seat, holding the card so 'lovingly' given to her a couple of days before. As she gazed at it, she wept a silent, solemn tear onto her soon-to-be torn light-blue jeans. She was only kept warm by the discoloured, waterproof yellow jacket, and the black and white reusable paper bag, which, unusually, lit a small flame in her heart, but would only last a moment before being engulfed in her sorrow once again.

She turned the card over and over again in her hand, re-reading the 'thanks' on the front, and all the details of it on the back to drain out all the rest of hope she had left in it. She had never dared to open it up and read what was inside, since there was nothing to read anyways. Convincing herself of hope that almost didn't exist was all that was left for the poor girl. Just her and a plain 'thanks' card against the world.

She looked up, in an attempt to catch a break, at the commencing raindrops tapping on the windows, at the knocked-over coffee cup and newspaper left isolated on the table beside her, and listened to the people bustling on and off the train. The air was becoming thinner and fresher as it moved along the train from the opening and closing doors. It felt cool and rejuvenating, seeming to clear Angela's thoughts for a moment, kindly wiping away her teary eyes. She loved that feeling, but hated it, always retreating to the fact it couldn't love her back.

The train began to move steadily. Trees and buildings outside the window getting blurrier as the train's speed ramped up. Memories started to race in and out of her mind the further the train went, flickering like when you run your thumb across all the pages of a book. "It wasn't worth it Angela, you idiot." "So you're leaving? Just like that?" "You selfish little moron." "Shame on you."

"Rise and shine, Angie! We made it: Paris!" Angela shot straight upright and noticed her eyes slightly misty and swollen from her dream. She wiped them away before her mum noticed. "Angie, you alright?" she asked. "Yeah. All good. I mean... Je suis très bien!" she answered with a shaky, nervous voice, remaining bemused by her surreal night's sleep.

She stretched her legs, put on her rucksack and was about to leave the train, before hastily grabbing the 'thanks' card she had left on her seat.

And next...

We have chosen Clare Keegan's *Small Things Like These* for a wider reading text right at the end of Year 9. This book is set in the 1980s and the first homework includes an option to interview a parent, guardian, or other family member, about life in the 1980s. Here are three we particularly enjoyed, with thanks to Judah Sung, Donnie McGlashan and Rudi Carney-Thompson and their mothers for sharing these memories so eloquently.

Donnie's Report

Donnie: Where did you live in the 80s, mum?

- In the 80s, I was a child of primary school age living in Poland, living under the communist regime imposed by Russia.

Donnie: What was the food like?

- My parents made sure we had dinner every day and we had lunch in school. There were no free school meals so we had to pay for them. This is because communism, which ended in 1989 here does not accept the concept of worklessness. The state provided employment for both my parents, and having a job was obligatory. However, the remuneration consisted of money and food rationing vouchers. I remember my mum taking me to a state-run grocery shop and presenting the cashier her rationing card, and the cashier said the only item they had which they would sell was 1/4 of a bar of butter. My mum pushed a bank note to the cashier, and looked at her meaningfully, and the cashier took the money and produced two extra frankfurters so that evening, I and my brother had for dinner buttered bread with a frankfurter each. I don't know what my parents ate for dinner that day. So it is important to note that the state-run grocery shop back in the 1980s had near completely empty shelves, with only a few items to justify opening the shop, and bread was old and it was sold once a week.

Donnie: What did the school day look like?

- I enjoyed school. My favourite subjects were biology and geography. School was six days a week. We had to memorise poems which improved our memory, children's literature was very good in the 80s. I enjoyed learning children's poems by heart; it was obligatory, but I liked it. I liked biology because there were lots of plants so we could learn botanics and there was a full-size human skeleton for anatomy classes. I liked geography because we worked with the World Atlas, and I

enjoyed learning about the continents, rivers, oceans and mountains. Plus, in the 80s it would not be possible to travel to those places because of closed borders and the fact we didn't have a passport.

What did you do in your own time?

- In my own time, I played with my brother, watched a TV programme for children every evening, did my homework and went to bed at 8:00 every day. There wasn't much to do, only one TV channel, lots of homework and revision.

When the Solidarity movement, which was a trade union movement for freedom and against inflation, protested in the streets, I remember on the news the government called them 'Far right thugs' and 'extremists', but they weren't thugs. They were normal people like my parents!

Rudi's Report

Rudi: What was life like in the 1980s?

- Life in the 80s was great. We didn't have the Internet or mobile phones. We only had landlines and everybody spoke face to face. People were more social than people are now.

What was TV like?

- We had only four channels on the TV. Watching TV was considered family time and there were no streaming services. You had to record your favourite shows on a VCR (video cassette recorder). We used to run home from school to watch TV. Kids' shows. used to be on everyday (from 4:00p.m. to 6:00p.m.). TVs were massive boxes with small screens and we had to take turns on what channel we wanted to watch.

What was school like?

- There weren't any smart boards, there were only blackboards. The games now haven't really changed much. Many of the subjects schools have now weren't around in the 80s, so children now have more opportunities. People now would be shocked at the punishments we had then by modern standards of today. The school food was really delicious, but you just ate the food you were given. There were leftovers too.

What was music like?

There was a diverse range of types of music. We used to watch a show on TV every Thursday called Top of the Pops, which was the top 100 songs of the week. The music was very catchy and mostly used synthesisers. You could only listen to music on vinyl record players, TV, radios and on a mix tape and a Walkman.

Judah's Report: Interview with My Gen X Mother

My mum was a child and a teen of the 70s and 80s – in her own estimation, the most resourceful, independent, and coolest generation of the 20th century. I've asked my mum many times about her childhood and it seems to me that she had more freedom and exposure to popular culture despite having no global communications technology. My first questions to my mum are about the music she remembers listening to.

"I listened to Radio Luxembourg on Sunday evenings to the Alexis Korner show. I listened to jazz and rock and I learned about Miles Davis, Charlie Parker and also bands like The Doors, Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin. I also listened to Radio 1. I used to record my favourite songs onto a cassette tape that was integral to the radio. I kept the tape in the radio with the pause button on so I could quickly take it off to record songs. We didn't have headphones or portable machines. The Sony Walkman didn't come out until the 90s. MTV came out in the 80s and music videos were really popular. I remember The Buggles and Michael Jackson, Dire Straits, The Human League. But the big musical event of the 80s was Live Aid in 1985.

It was unprecedented. Bob Geldof organised everyone – David Bowie, Queen, George Michael, Elton John, Duran Duran, and hundreds of other bands, to play for free at Wembley, and coordinated all over the world to raise money for famine relief in Ethiopia. It created a feeling of global connection in a whole new way. The world seemed closer. I watched it from a kibbutz in southern Israel.

I remember Margaret Thatcher, the first female Prime Minister. She wanted to disband the trade unions. Arthur Scargill, the head of the miners' union, clashed with her. He was always on the 6:00 News calling for strike action. The miners' strike went on for over a year. Some miners tried to keep working because they needed income. People were starving. But other miners insisted on striking, and picketed outside the mines. As busloads of miners trying to work came up to the collieries, picketing miners attacked the buses and the miners violently. Huge numbers of police in riot gear were brought in to try to control the situation. Communities and families were ripped apart because of their opinions over the strike. There are still divisions today.

The 80s was the decade when clubbing started to take off. Rave culture was starting. A rave could be arranged and people found out about it through networking by word of mouth. Raves could happen in a field or a disused warehouse with less than 24 hours' notice. Ecstasy was getting popular. It seemed to make people feel happy, connected and dance like a maniac all night and into the morning.

I'm glad there was no mobile technology in the 80s because I like remembering all the fun I had with no pressure of criticism or judgement online. There is nothing to spoil the way I remember it."

Over to Year 10

If the 10s' work isn't so fully represented here it is purely because they have their books at home because they have been preparing for exams (we like to think). It isn't because they haven't written as much as other years. What we do want to share, though, is one piece of descriptive writing done in response to a potentially dull exam board task, and one reflection about one of the great literary experiences of the year for the 10s, reading Dickens's *Great Expectations*. To the descriptive writing first...

In response to a prompt to write about an old person (with the extra challenge of writing from the perspective of a tree in an old person's garden)

Rivers and streams. Water in general. It aids life and is life. We all need water to live and yet it wears us down, washes away layers, shows us what's underneath. It starts with a trickle. It turns into a stream. It wears down the ground until it is a river. I see it all happen in his face. So beaten and bashed, yet beautiful. The grooves that run and split get deeper by the day, accenting the movements, and showing the past. I remember many years ago when my skin was as smooth as his was. There was not a wrinkle. How things have changed. Now we both reflect each other. Our deep grooves may look ugly to some. However, to those who truly see they are memories.

Rivers and streams. They are constantly moving yet some things stay the same. Their source, their heart will never change. I remember when we were young, as the sun spilled out over the horizon and its rays struck softly on our faces, he would come to us, to feed us, nurture us. We would stare at his beauty and he would stare at ours. As time went on, he kept coming. Sometimes later, sometimes at the same time. We could all rely on him. Although we both drooped over and became unstable, we could always find support in each other. We shared our fruits so we both stayed standing.

Rivers and streams. They can wash us away if we're not careful. Those who are not in control don't stay for long. As time crawls on like a slug on a leaf, our energy falls away like leaves from a tree. I remember when he gave me a stick to keep me up., just like the one he used day after day. He told me, 'Look at us now! Look how we can't stand tall as we used to.' We creaked with laughter at our past. Although one wouldn't think it, we were standing tall. We stood tall for each other.

Rivers and Streams. I know one day I will drop my last fruit and shed my last leaf. I will fall to the ground where I will stay. He will do the same. He will take his last breath, his last hair will fall and he will turn out the lights for the last time. We will all fall, a tree like me or a man like him, as all rivers come to an end and, after all, flow out to the deep blue sea.

by Alfred Mobbs

On Reading Dickens's *Great Expectations*

[I am a 15-year-old boy in London and I have just finished reading *Great Expectations*.](#) This is the longest time I've spent reading a book. This book was a roller coaster of emotions and I can't say I enjoyed every moment of this novel, but it is definitely a book I want to revisit after I finish the exams on this book, to read it casually and enjoy the world of Pip and the many journeys he embarks on.

I loved Charles Dickens's critique of the Victorian justice system and how it was more focused on making a spectacle for the public's entertainment rather than maintaining public order and making sure they're fairly and justly prosecuting people, and how relevant it is to today, where we've moved on from public executions to 'True crime' and trials which are publicised to garner the most attention and clicks.

Pip's journeys definitely felt annoying at times, and as a 'gentleman' the way he treated Joe and Biddy made me cringe at times, and I felt like Miss Havisham's demise was both over dramatic and unsatisfying, and the strange marriage between Biddy and Joe (though it was normal and common in the Victorian era, I still felt slightly disgusted).

However, I don't think Pip not marrying Estella or Biddy, or Pip not becoming the gentleman he wanted to become is something to critique about the book. The book lives up to its name: Pip has so many of these Great Expectations about his life and we the reader have many expectations for him, but it doesn't necessarily mean he will get them. In fact, I believe if he ended up with Estella, became the gentleman he so desperately wanted to become, it would contradict the story's core message, that affection and loyalty are greater than wealth, power and social hierarchy.

by Tarek Gaci.

Year 11 writing

The story that follows and really ends the magazine actually emerged in exam conditions, but also below is a poem written whilst studying poetry to help students be attentive to the studied poems' imagery and lines. First is Slava's 'A Walk in the Park' (and you can tell it was written in early spring) made after reading 'Flirtation' by Rita Dove, and playing with run-on lines, stanza breaks and fragmented images to create a delicate effect. Then there is a very different sort of poem: students were asked to create a new speech for the Chorus in *Romeo and Juliet*, one to fall between Acts 2&3. This is Seba Drinot-Boesten's, with elements of an Elizabethan sonnet deftly used:

'A Walk in the Park'

When you breathe in the air
do you feel at ease?

moss, engulfing the soul
outstretching its hands

to the sky. Greenish hues,
floating in the air

Little spots of delight
embracing the

atmosphere, like a
mother holding her child.

a rush of blue
composing a soothing melody,

my heart resonating
with the sequence of notes.

It's a delight. by SM

For the Chorus

Romeo and Juliet's love set in stone
By the Friar's hand cautiously married.
The peace or fury will be their own
The consequences regardless, on will be carried.
A warning to tread slow,
A warning to take care:
For a love that may grow
Could rise like ash in air.
Death doth follow in their love's wake,
Grieving peace follows after.
For one brawl of rage may make
One so fluid become one so martyred.
For as their passion turns to magic,
So too does their young love turn to tragic.

by SD-B

Earlier, you will have read a Year 10 student's writing about reading *Great Expectations*. This piece of story-writing by Luke Gil shows, very differently, how the reading of that novel has had an impact. The prompt was just the title 'Survival' and students had to write a story opening. Here is Luke's:

'Survival' by Luke Gil

I had certainly never seen such a sorry sight in all my life as the small bundle of shivers that lay before me on one harsh, grey morning in the bleak English countryside. The small thing was both exhausted and filled with a feverish liveliness, with his wide eyes continuously darting from me to the old farmhouse that lay on my right, and back to me in an almost never-ending cycle, that I reckoned, would cause his eyes to fall clean out of his head if he kept it up for much longer.

With the same worry now drilled into my mind and my shock starting to dissipate, I murmured, "Well, I suppose you must come with me." and so it was decided.

I placed my long woollen coat onto his shoulders, and he followed me with such a grim expression that I derived its only possible origin could have been many days of sustained hardship and grief. At some points of our journey, he lagged behind me, though he struggled fiercely to stay at my heels, and I always stopped and waited for him to catch up. Our footsteps became rhythmic and on numerous occasions I attempted, but to no avail, to ask a question regarding who the young boy was or where he came from. I was only ever met with the same haunted expression that lay as a burden across his face.

By the time we reached the impoverished inn I was based at, the boy's face had become as pale and ghostly as the thick mists that were descending from the evening sky. Upon seeing his ghastly state, I rushed into the inn and ushered him as close to the fire as I could, and promptly left him there to locate the village doctor as I knew that there was a grave chance the poor boy would not survive the night.

Soon, I found myself returning with the old doctor. I was glad he was moving with the same sense of urgency as I.

The man I had found to treat the boy worked with the utmost calm and composure, conducting himself with an air of respect I admired greatly. There was a wisdom in his eyes I had never seen before and it helped calm my mind that was jumping and dancing, just as the fire that helped illuminate the room.

I do not know how long I watched the man work and cannot tell you at what point I fell asleep, but I can tell you that I was awoken with a soft hand on my shoulder.

"I have done all I can," said the doctor softly. "What happens now is up to him."

I took his hand and shook it feverishly, thanking him over and over until he quietly made his way out of the room.

I decided to try and sleep some more as the boy, too, lay in a heap of blankets and slumbered away next to the fire.

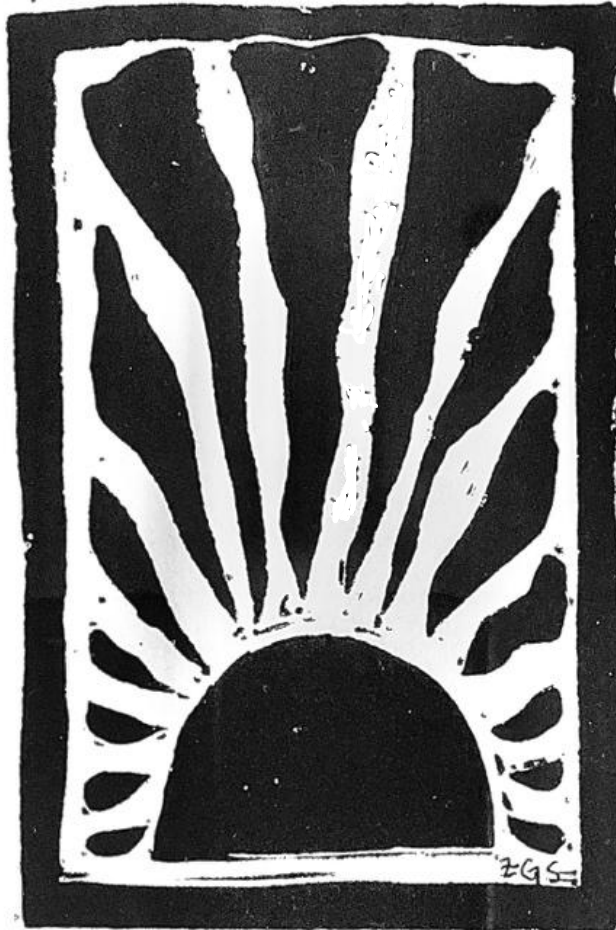
When I awoke for the second time, I looked over to the boy and found he was gone and the door lay ajar, and the light of the hallway shone onto the bed where he had slept for so long. It seemed the boy had left my life just as sharply as he had entered it, and as I closed the door and was left with the fire's dying embers, a darkness surrounded me, as if to say it was all over with him and his part in my life story had come to an end.

And for a last entry Joseph Hagan, now in Year 11, painted the picture below when he was in Year 7 and reading Auden's 'Musée des Beaux Arts' and writing poems about Daedalus and Icarus and generally doing some of the sorts of things the 7s whose work begins this magazine were doing, and later the things the 8s, the 9s and the 10s have done. [And we are using Joseph's Year 11 speech for the exams as a text for the 8s to read in our new speeches unit, showing something of how generative students' work in English can be.]

Joseph's picture has been propped up in room 24 for over four years, kept for its finely drawn sun and to remind us that inside the Year 11s are the Year 7s they once were.



*In memory of
Raymi Willka Saldaña Rojas*



This lino-cut was made by English teacher Zoë Guzy-Sprague for the end of Key Stage 3 English prize that remembers the reading and writing and life of Raymi Saldaña Rojas.



And a late entry from two Year 9s working together to write a story which happens to go really well with Joseph's picture on the previous page and some of the Ekphrastic Poetry.

This is by Neron Hadzic and Moheez Habbib in Year 9, and it might remind you of the poem 'Walking Away' so it has the provisional title 'Release':

And so it began.

The final dance between a father and his son.

As one moved, the other followed, their motions woven seamlessly through the azure sky. They drifted amidst the clouds in a dance far older than either of them, older perhaps than memory itself. As the father had once learnt from his father, so too did the son strive to mirror his own. Every turn was echoed, every movement understood too well. And with each passing moment, the impending goodbye crept closer.

The son no longer needed guidance.

No longer needed encouragement.

No longer needed a role model to follow.

Still, the father glided overhead, watching in silence as his son took those final steps away from childhood. Though he had long believed himself prepared, his heart betrayed him; each beat carried the ghost of a memory — every shared flight, every silent lesson, every fleeting moment that had led them here.

Yet he knew.

He knew that just as his own father had once loosened his grasp upon the sky and allowed him to vanish beyond it, he knew that he too must now endure the quiet ache of letting go.

And so he did.

He watched, suddenly anchorless, as his son disappeared into the endless blue, swallowed gently by the horizon.

But, for a fleeting moment, the son looked back.

And at last, he understood.

The strength of flight had never been in learning how to soar —

but in finding the strength to release what you love into the unknown.