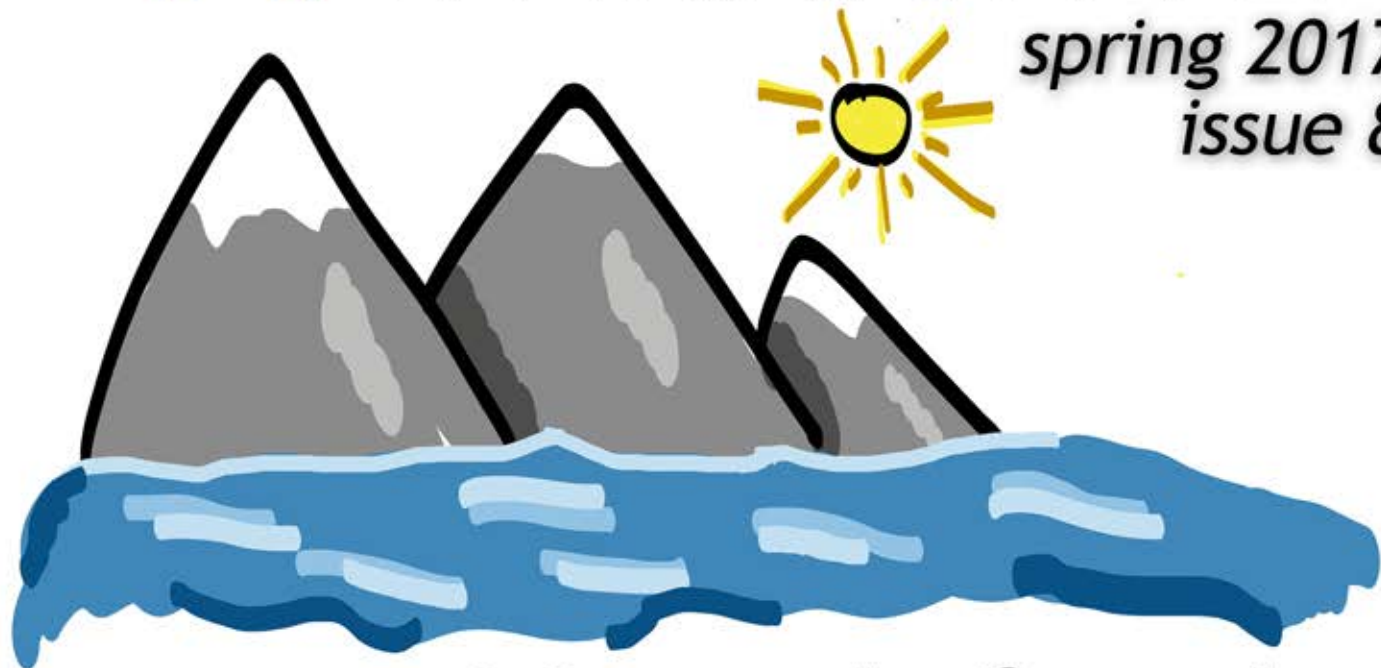


THE



ALTERNATIVE

spring 2017
issue 8



Hurrah for the Gap Yah!

Examples, tips and info for planning your year out!

2016's Best Summer Fests

Welcome Fest ● Being a Transgender Teen ● College Events

Creative Writing ● Why We Need Feminism

and more...

Welcome to The Alternative!

Welcome to The Alternative! A big thank you to everyone who has contributed to our spring edition of the college magazine which is run entirely by students for students. This edition includes some inspiring student gap year plans, reviews ranging from this year's Alton College production of Alan Ayckbourn's 'Bedroom Farce' to 'Kong Skull Island', creative writing and student art and much, much more! If you like what you see then visit our Facebook page or head to our online site for more, or if you want to contribute yourself then send submissions over to

thealternative.enquiries@gmail.com

Finally, as the college year is coming to an end we are now looking for the new Alternative team so keep your eyes peeled in PLD and around college for information on how to apply. Enjoy issue #9!

Hannah Seeckts, Editor

The Team

Hannah Seeckts - Editor

Rachael Arkell - Deputy Editor

Zoe Burgess - Graphics and Design Editor

Oscar Sutherland-Dee - Online Editor

Sub-Editors

Alexander Carswell - Politics

Alice Farrington - Music

George Baker - College

Klara Angeles - Charity and Social

Sienna Wells - Creative Writing

Columnists

Annie Coloe

Olivia Hardy

Andrew Hopgood

Katie Carlisle

Contributors

Logan Bailey

Millie Cashman

Elise Costain

Jacob Durn

Thomas Howe

Lili Isaac

Ellie Mills

Dan Peters

Olivia Thornton

The opinions expressed within the articles of The Alternative website/magazine belong to the individual authors and do not necessarily represent those of Alton College. This website/magazine is run by students, for students and has been created with the intention of providing a forum for them to voice their opinions on current affairs and other topics.



Contents

<i>Hurrah for the Gap Yah!</i>	3
<i>Forget the Fitness Fads</i>	5
<i>Carrie Fisher Made It OK for Me to Talk About My Mental Illness</i>	7
<i>On Autism</i>	9
<i>The Great Wiki-Myth</i>	11
<i>The West End: From Phantom to Hamilton</i>	12
<i>200 Years of England's Michelangelo: G. F. Watts</i>	13
<i>Bedroom Farce Review: An Alton College Theatre Production</i>	15
<i>Planet Earth 2 Review</i>	17
<i>Kong Skull Island Review</i>	18
<i>How to: Creative Writing EPQ</i>	19
<i>Creative Writing: But Not the Song it Sung</i>	20
<i>Student Art</i>	21
<i>Daisy on: 'The Secret Life of Pets'</i>	23
<i>Don't Get Me Started</i>	24



Hurrah for the Gap

Yah!

Examples, tips and info for planning your year out!

The prospect of taking a gap year can be daunting for any 18-year-old, especially if you've never gone travelling before. Whether you've long had your heart set on seeing the world before going to uni or into work, or if you're only just starting to consider it as a possibility, one of us has been in your position. That's why we've collected the plans of six current Alton students who are taking gap years after leaving college. We hope they inspire you to start thinking about your options, whatever they are - travel, paid work, volunteering, work experience or a combination of all of the above!

"I want to take some time out from education, explore the world a bit more and fully consider my future career options"

"I decided to take a gap year after realising I wasn't 100% sure on my university course choice. I want to travel and get work experience in my chosen field before jumping into uni and felt this was the best idea so I am clearer on what I want to go on to do. I'd love to do the cliché 'gap yahhh' locations in South-East Asia (Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand) and potentially do some island hopping around Indonesia. Whilst I have been saving, I hope to work solidly after exams so my funds are as big as possible meaning my time traveling is longer too. If I survive all that I would eventually like to study some kind of English at university and hopefully by then I will be clearer on what I'd like to pursue as a career." Alice Farrington

"I'm taking a gap year in order to give myself some freedom to explore options. I really want to do some travel. My main goal is to spend a week in Cuba (not trying to topple the regime I swear). I'm also going to spend a lot of time working and saving money for travel and for uni; I hear freshers week costs more than the debt. After my gap year I'm going straight off to uni to study Law and hopefully get a career in the same area." Oscar Sutherland-Dee

I am taking a gap year as I want to take some time out from education, explore the world a bit more and fully consider my future career options. Despite the cliché, I'm thinking about focusing on Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Malaysia, perhaps a bit of Indonesia and Thailand.

Might nip over to Australia for a bit too (time and money permitting) cook up a few kangaroos and wallabies on the barbie mate. And wear one of those hats with the dangly corks on them. And wrestle some crocodiles. Basically I'm just looking to explore the shop a bit and have a good adventure whilst I'm at it. Knowing me, I'll probably end up traipsing round Phnom Penh with only one flip flop (having lost the other to a particularly cranky croc), a Lonely Planet guidebook and a bad stomach bug, but hey, should be a laugh." Alexander Carswell





"I'm taking a gap year because I want to travel before going to uni, and more specifically spend an extended period of time in France to boost my fluency. I also didn't feel like my university applications were at submission standard and wanted more time to prepare them. I'll travel to Paris immediately after exams end and stay until mid-September, before returning to the UK to submit my university applications. Afterwards, I will spend some time with family in New Zealand and travel more around France and Europe, or further afield if I have the funds. I intend to use the website Workaway to find volunteering placements with free room and board. Although I won't be paid, this will greatly reduce my costs, and I also plan on getting a job while I'm back in the UK. I might also use the Pasporta Servo, an exchange network for Esperanto speakers, to find free accommodation. After my gap year I hope to go to university in America, but if unsuccessful I'll settle for a year abroad in France as part of a UK degree in French and Linguistics." Rachael Arkell

"A gap year seems to be the perfect opportunity to gain independence and confidence"

"I'm taking a gap year because I want to travel and volunteer before going to university. A gap year seems to be the perfect opportunity to gain independence and confidence, whilst having a good time. I plan to spend the first half of my gap year working and saving money for travelling. I am currently planning on going to New Zealand and Australia for a few months with a friend. I also want to go to Europe. After my gap year I am going straight to university to do English Literature with Creative Writing." Sienna Wells

"I had always planned to take a gap year between college and uni, as I felt it would be a great opportunity to build up my confidence and would remind me how it felt to live after over a decade of compulsory education. I also figured that having crazy gap year stories will be a great way to start up conversations with people at uni! I've booked a 4-month trip to Mexico through the company Outreach International. I'm going to spend the first 8 weeks living on the beach along the Pacific coast, where I will be assisting on a turtle conservation project. In the second half of my stay in Mexico I will be living with a Mexican host family whilst volunteering in a Rescue & Rehabilitation Aquarium. Outreach has sorted everything out for me, including Spanish lessons and information about local culture, what I should bring with me and vaccinations to have before I go. All of my gap year funding has come from every penny I've saved for the past year and a half, working a part-time job. Obviously 4 months doesn't cover the whole year and I'll be back in time for Christmas, by which time I will definitely be in need of a job in order to build my funds back up! I hope to work for a few months before going travelling again, either for another long period of time or on several shorter breaks. I completed my UCAS application this year and received my university offers, so I won't have to stress about uni whilst I'm away." Amelia Southern

Feeling inspired?
Want to find out more?
Here are some websites we've found useful while planning our gap years!

General information on gap year work, travel and volunteering:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/gap-year-for-foreign-travel-advice>
https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/Gap_Year_Advice
<https://www.theguardian.com/travel/gap-year-travel>
<https://www.gooverseas.com/>
<http://gapadvice.org/>
<https://www.vsointernational.org/>

Specifically mentioned:

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/>
<https://www.workaway.info/>
<https://pasportaservo.org/>
<https://www.outreachinternational.co.uk/>

Rachael Arkell

Forget the Fitness Fads

If you're anything like me, running may as well be the devil and you're probably susceptible to a tub of Ben and Jerry's on a Sunday... yes the whole tub... don't judge me.

However, healthy living is important and we should all make a conscious effort to do some exercise and attempt to eat healthily and in moderation for our personal health - NOT to look like a Victoria's Secret model, but for our hearts, mind and skin! I hope to shun some of the largely told lies of weight loss and install a bit of old fashioned body confidence in the glorious population of Alton College.

Being a young person in 2017, we are exposed to more media than ever before. The media is filled with unhealthy expectations of what we should look like. Frankly, being a teenager is hard. Our bodies are changing, we're making life changing decisions about our futures whilst revising for exams that we are told will make or break, figuring out who we are and who we want to surround ourselves with socially as well as trying to fit in with the norm. All the while, we're supposedly exercising for hours on end and eating nothing but pea soup to stay trim and toned. Absolute nightmare, right? It's no wonder 'Beat' estimates more than 725,000 people in the UK are affected by an eating disorder with around 1 in 250 women and 1 in 2,000 men experiencing anorexia nervosa at some point.

"Change your attitude to food, exercise and healthy living and the results will come naturally as a bonus"

Our bodies are unique and the bottom line is you will live the rest of your life with your body, height and general appearance - so you better start loving it.



'Role models' like Kim Kardashian promote unrealistic curves and 'booty goals', yet this is largely achieved through shapewear. Wait what?! OK magazine left that out! Unless you've got millions of pounds, and a pair of spanx, you will struggle to look like these so-called celebs. Not forgetting men here, boys are constantly under pressure to be taller, broader and have muscles upon muscles but for some taller frames, or indeed slight frames, this may be impossible to achieve no matter how much protein powder you get down your neck. Confidence is everything. I'm not saying exercise and healthy eating isn't important, health-wise, but enjoy a pizza now and again and have a drink at the weekends as being fixated on weight loss and body image will hold you back. The likelihood is you don't need to lose weight - it's just social media and 'instafit' pages making you feel like you have to.

Now for the magic myths that the media promote to target people who think they need to lose a few pounds...

Fad diets. Those absurd quick fixes to losing weight that we are exposed to everyday. Huge headlines on social media "Eat this and lose a stone in a week!" or celebrities endorsing statements like "Lose two stone just like me by cutting the carbs". These celebrities probably have a personal trainer and a nutritionist keeping them in shape, so don't be fooled by the seemingly effortless six packs they promote.



The Atkins, cabbage soup and baby food diet along with 'tea-toxing' and various other ludicrous pills and solutions are just some of the FADs many are guilty of trying or believing. The hard truth is to sustain weight loss and keep your body healthy you need to eat less than you burn or counter balance the two. It's not rocket science and there is no shortcut, you may see results quickly from starving yourself on shakes for a few days but all you have lost is water weight and as soon as you have that roast dinner piled high with Yorkshire puddings and gravy it's all going to go back on and you won't be toned or physically fitter either. The key is to eat healthy foods coupled with a little bit of movement.

Exercise is important to build muscle (which weighs more than fat so don't panic on the scales!) and boost your metabolism but your diet is crucial - plenty of goodness and moderate exercise will create steady results that can be sustained. This article isn't about weight loss because as young teenagers this should not be something we fixate on, it's about a healthy lifestyle. Change your attitude to food, exercise and healthy living and the results will come naturally as a bonus!

The best bit is, doing this lowers the risk of heart disease, high cholesterol and diabetes which may not be something you think about everyday but, when you have a high flying career and you're out in the big wide world achieving your dreams, you will want to live as long as possible!

Katie Carlisle

Disclaimer: this is not from a professional nutrition expert. Please do not follow if you have specific advice from doctor - vegetarians and vegans can substitute meat for another protein source or disregard completely. Consult a GP or doctor if you have any concerns about your own health and ability to undertake exercises mentioned.

WORKOUT IDEA

A 30 minute mixed workout that you can repeat 3-5 times a week, keep your abs tight throughout all exercises to work your abs and get a total body workout.

Skip as fast as you can for 2 minutes (no skipping rope? No problem. Run with high knees on the spot instead)

Mountain climbers x 50

Jump Squats x 20 (if this is too hard do stationary squats with a weight if you want to add intensity)

Moving press-ups x 10

V-sit ab hold for 1 minute

Burpees x 20

Jumping jacks x 50

Repeat 5 times, 1 minute breather before repeating the set, no break in between moves.

That way it is high intensity interval training fluctuating heart rate for maximum fat burn. There are also good routines you can access for free on Twitter, Instagram, or YouTube. 'Beachbody' offer a great range of workout DVD's too but they do come at a price.

STUDENT MEAL IDEAS

Aldi and Lidl do great quality food for student budgets.

Breakfast:

-Cereal with natural yoghurt fresh fruit and a drizzle of honey

-Homemade smoothies packed with fruit and veg

-Porridge with cinnamon and raisins or fresh fruit

Lunch:

-Tortilla wraps with ham, pepper, lettuce and coleslaw

-Healthy soup with wholemeal bread

-Hummus dip with pitta bread, carrot sticks and celery sticks

Dinner:

-Pasta with Mediterranean vegetables (tomato, pepper, onion) with chicken in a spicy chilli pasta sauce

-Stir fry - most shops stock stir fry readymade packet sauces to add to your meat and veg

-Spaghetti Bolognese - if you have a spiralizer instead of pasta try courgetti by spiralizing a courgette

Snacks:

-Rice cakes (the chocolate ones are yummy!)
-Almonds or cashew nuts



Carrie Fisher Made It OK for Me to Talk About My Mental Illness

On December 27, we were hit with the news that Carrie Fisher had sadly died. As soon as word spread, people around the world began sharing online how she had touched their lives and quite simply what an amazing person she was and will continue to be in our memories.

From around the age of 11, I've looked up to Carrie Fisher. She, among a few other inspirational men and women, has had an effect on my life. But this year, which I see as the one of the worst we've ever had, has taken several of these inspirational people away from me. And I seriously cannot process this.

"she became an advocate for the things I wanted — namely, to be recognized as me, not by my labels"

Carrie Fisher is the main reason I actually don't mind standing up and saying, "You know what? My brain doesn't work the same as other people's. It's ill, and you guys are gonna have to live with it."

Carrie Fisher was the first celebrity I ever followed who did as much as possible to advocate for those with mental health issues and to remove the massive stigma of mental illness. As an outwardly rational and emotionally detached person, I had so much difficulty coming to terms with the feelings and thoughts associated with the labels put over my head by people I did not know.


At just 13 years old, a woman at a CAMHS unit told me I have an anxiety disorder and recurring seasonal depression, and although she said it differently, her basic message was that I'm going to just "have to live with it." Back then, I had more conversations with counselors than friends, and I did not cope well at all. I didn't have many people to comfort or soften the blow.

So when I saw the leaflet of "notable people with mental disorders" pinned onto the noticeboard in the counseling rooms at school, I immediately told my then counselor I wanted to read it, and she lent it to me for the day. Inside two names popped up that I recognized: comedian and writer Caroline Aherne (who also died this year) and Carrie Fisher. (In those days, I only knew her as Princess Leia, and Angela from "Family Guy").

However, since then, I've read extracts from her books, her tweets, and watched the numerous speeches and hilarious interviews available online. Slowly more and more, she became an advocate for the things I wanted — namely, to be recognized as me, not by my labels.

I was always astounded that such successful, creative, and funny people could still feel "broken" and live on without things falling apart because I genuinely used to think having any sort of label meant I couldn't live a normal life. Carrie Fisher totally transformed this view. Not only did she cope with mental illness for most of her life, and the judgment of others surrounding it, she had a successful career, and on top of this she used it as a tool to help others in the same boat.





She did not have to, and she was not obligated to, but she chose to out of decency and humility, and there is no doubt in my mind that it must have added to some of the stress in her life because as we all know living with mental health issues is not easy, and additionally, once a celebrity publicizes their issues, the world often cross-examines them. I see that every day on my social media feed, and I can't imagine the strength it must take to bear all to a world of close-mindedness.

“such successful, creative, and funny people could still feel “broken” and live on without things falling apart”

Carrie Fisher continued throughout her life to help us be us by joyously living in the face of mental illness. Sometimes, she did this just by giving us a laugh. Other times she did so by giving us a personal heartfelt speech or written passage.

Just this year, Harvard College gave Carrie Fisher its Annual Outstanding Lifetime Achievement Award in Cultural Humanism, noting that “her forthright activism and outspokenness about addiction, mental illness, and agnosticism have advanced public discourse on these issues with creativity and empathy.” And I’m so glad they did so; she deserved that recognition, and I’m going to do everything I can to make sure that even posthumously, everyone knows what a brilliant human being this woman was and what she has done for the mental health community.

She once said, “I don’t want my life to imitate art, I want my life to be art” — and art it was.

I, along with the other 450 million people with mental illnesses around the globe, will be forever grateful for what you’ve bequeathed this planet. You helped give us an identity other than a label. And your actions will go on to inspire others to continue to do the same.

Rest in peace,
Carrie Fisher.

Jacob Durn



On Autism

Before we embark you should know I am in no way an authority on this subject. Firstly, because autism is a vast spectrum which encompasses many different behaviours and personalities, it is difficult to define. Secondly, and most importantly, upon writing this sentence I had only been officially diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome two months ago.

"It's a bit of a mystery to me and my parents that we didn't see this sooner, as the man who diagnosed me said I was a textbook example of a girl with Asperger's"

I'm told this situation is quite common: girls with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) are diagnosed later in life (or often not at all) than boys with ASD. As I understand it, there are several reasons for this. Due to the inherently patriarchal nature of society, autism research was, for many years, centred on male candidates. Therefore the behaviours and 'symptoms' first identified are often only present as observed in boys on the spectrum. Additionally, a common factor of ASD in girls is 'social camouflaging': acting as neurotypical peers do as a form of mimicry solely in order to survive social situations, thus it is harder to identify. Mimicry can involve behaviour, physicality, or speech patterns, which explains my knack for imitating accents with limited conscious effort; undoubtedly weird, but handy for a drama student.

I came across this truth about myself shortly after being diagnosed with anxiety and depression. My mother emailed a couple articles and told me to read them when I was in a positive frame of mind. I was expecting some Huffington Post-esque drivel about the benefits of Pilates or veganism for mental illness; what I didn't expect was a list of ASD behaviours in young girls. Each bullet point was another knot in my stomach; almost everything listed was something I recognised in my younger, and in some cases current, self. I had often joked in the past about how I 'cultivated' a personality in order to make friends at school - I wasn't prepared for how right I was.

It was as though a light-bulb had been lit (a misunderstanding of metaphors and idioms was one of the few symptoms that didn't apply to me) and all the odd anecdotes from my past had clarity, even the time I cried because my mum rearranged my bedroom without telling me, or why I had no friends for the first three years of secondary school. (You're allowed to laugh at that by the way, I do.) I was suddenly able to understand why I behave the way I do, why I need constant reminders to brush my teeth, why I click pens next to my ear, why I get angry when people mispronounce 'Van Gogh'; and hopefully accept it.





It's a bit of a mystery to me and my parents that we didn't see this sooner, as the man who diagnosed me said I was a textbook example of a girl with Asperger's. It's a bit like stumbling and falling over your entire childhood, wondering why all the other kids don't seem to be struggling the way you are, then looking down in your late teens and realising you've only got one leg. Suddenly your strange obsession with syllables and adamant refusal to eat casserole, because you don't like the word casserole, makes a bit more sense than it did before. And whilst we're on the subject, I don't understand American food names. Sloppy Joes? Why would I want to eat something with 'sloppy' in the name?

On reflection, an earlier diagnosis would have been beneficial. Maybe I wouldn't have spent most of secondary school tearing my hair out (and I do mean that literally.) It would have certainly saved me being yelled at by my parents for being rude, getting upset for no reason, or refusing to get in the pool at my swimming lesson because my regular teacher was off. Not that I blame them, of course. There isn't anyone to blame here, not even myself. It's a pointless endeavour anyway, and I would know. I spent the better part of 18 years hating myself, and let me tell you, it's exhausting. I wish I had a wittier end to this piece but, to be honest, I've had enough of pretence for one lifetime.

"I was suddenly able to understand why I behave the way I do"

Lili Isaac



The Great Wiki-Myth

The age old classroom adage of 'anyone can change Wikipedia, you know' or some other banal variant, has long been used to deride and detract from what is actually probably the largest accumulated wealth of general knowledge the world has ever seen.

It is the very fact that anyone can edit the site that is precisely what makes it such a valuable resource. Anybody who has attempted to vandalise a Wikipedia page will be well aware of the speed and diligence with which their carefully crafted humorous edit is wiped from the face of Wikipedia. Repeat perpetrators of these acts of intellectual vandalism will fast find themselves blocked, and as such the good ship Wiki sails on with its unrivalled cargo of information.

Perhaps these Wiki-naysayers are also unaware of the gratuitously enforced requirement to reference any information that one contributes; scroll to the bottom of any page and there may be tens if not hundreds of references laying the foundation for whatever is asserted in the above text.



People, places, topics and issues on which there is no 'respectable' easily accessible scholarly content can pretty much without exception be found on the site. Even if content does exist, and perhaps particularly if there is a great deal of it, Wikipedia once again comes in to its own. There is a concise and informative summary at the top of every single entry on the site which in my own experience has proved invaluable and often unrivalled in its accuracy and accessibility, a combination that is admittedly often rare within an ever increasing world wide web.

"largest accumulated wealth of general knowledge the world has ever seen"

I have never knowingly been misinformed by Wikipedia and on countless occasions it has filled intellectual vacuums that no other easily discovered corner of the internet could allay. It is one of the brightest stars in the interconnected constellation of the internet and long may it be championed both in and out of the classroom.

George Baker



The West End: From Phantom to Hamilton

The theatre experience is always an unforgettable one. Whether you're going to see a long-running musical or a contemporary play, it's easy to sit back and watch the cast exceed our already high expectations. The West End is currently filled with smash-hit shows such as *Wicked*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Les Misérables* and *Matilda* – any one of these is a perfect starter show for an exciting day out in London.

Personally, *Phantom* is my all-time favourite production. The show tells the story of the mysterious 'Opera Ghost' and his young protégée, chorus girl Christine, through an inspirational score written by Andrew Lloyd Webber. The current production at Her Majesty's Theatre in London showcases the incredible talents of the cast, matched by the impressive costumes and set. I've been lucky enough to have seen the show three times as well as going on a backstage tour of the theatre. The ballet dancers who gave me the tour let me in on plenty of secrets and facts about the show - did you know that the *Phantom's* makeup alone takes 2 hours to apply and half an hour to remove? As Webber's longest-running musical, which has been performed in the West End for over 30 years, this is a classic love story that always strikes a chord with its audience.

Moving forward to a more current phenomenon, it's clear to see that Lin-Manuel Miranda's musical *Hamilton* is going to be a hit when it makes the transition from Broadway to the West End in November this year.

With tickets selling out until June 2018 almost instantly, the hype surrounding this American musical is huge. *Hamilton's* plot follows the life of American Founding Father Alexander Hamilton, and is entirely sung (and rapped!) throughout.

The Broadway show won 11 Tony Awards last year. The production, mostly comprised of people of colour, was described by James Corden as "so diverse that Donald Trump has threatened to build a wall around this theatre".

If you wish to broaden your horizons when it comes to stage shows, other up-and-coming West End shows include *Half a Sixpence*, *Dreamgirls*, *Harry Potter* and the *Cursed Child*, *An American in Paris* and *School of Rock*.

"so diverse that Donald Trump has threatened to build a wall around this theatre"

Theatre is becoming even more accessible and appreciated via TV shows such as Gary Barlow's 'Let It Shine', a search for cast members to star in Barlow's new musical *The Band*. Although the show has sparked controversy in the theatre community, this unconventional method of casting has shown that musicals are now available to a much wider audience, as well as giving unknown performers a chance to step into the spotlight. The programme's hunt for young hopefuls was successful; Barlow has now found a group of five talented 'triple threats' (performers who can sing, dance and act) to bring the boy band in his show to life.

With the popularity of theatre rising higher than ever, it's a great time to witness a masterpiece on stage – and the perfect way to finish off a theatre trip to London is with a visit to the renowned Theatre Café!

Ellie Mills



200 Years of England's Michelangelo

En route to Guildford, tucked neatly off the A3, there exists a hidden gem in the world of the Arts. An alluring but largely unheard of treasure, The Watts Gallery is secreted down a leafy country-lane in Compton, Surrey. It is filled with the works of G. F. Watts. A man who was once the most acclaimed and revered artist in Britain. Lauded by his contemporaries as 'England's Michelangelo', today, G.F. Watts is hardly a household name. Nonetheless, 2017 marks the bicentenary of the birth of the Victorian visionary. In celebratory style, The Watts Gallery has opened three new and exciting exhibitions to commemorate this milestone. I strongly urge everybody and anybody with an interest in the Arts to venture to the gallery and marvel for themselves at the splendor that is Watts. In the artist's 200th anniversary year, what better time is there than now?

The gallery itself looks and feels like a portal to another time. On entering, you are greeted by a glittering array of portraits, mostly of Victorian socialites. One of his more notable sitters was Ellen Terry, the teenage actress whom he supposedly married in a desperate attempt to save her from the depravities of life on the stage. Despite the significant age difference - he was 46 and she just 16, they wed in 1864. It was likely that Watts intended to secure her as a sitter and she features in much of his best works. The marriage, however, was short-lived and lasted only a year. Watts destroyed many of his paintings of her. However, his painting of Terry as Ophelia was one of the few that survived. Terry's association to the theatre and youthfulness, makes Watts' portrayal of the Shakespearean character particularly convincing. He captures the symbolic nature of the figure, in the sense that she represents the struggle of a young, beautiful and tragic heroine. Overall the painting reaffirms the notion that Watts was very much a man of his time, choosing to paint a figure that embodies the Romantic ideals and trends of 19th century art.



"The gallery itself looks and feels like a portal to another time."

However, Watts was not just a portrait painter. Large allegorical canvases are blazoned across the richly decorated gallery. Their profound and symbolic air penetrates the room. Amongst the wealth of work exhibited, there is Hope, the former POTUS, Barack Obama's, favourite painting. Hope was part of Watts' 'House of Life' project which intended to depict the spiritual history of mankind. The artist's ability to portray abstract concepts is markedly why he deserves recognition. Watts' aim was clearly evidenced by the quote 'I paint ideas, not things.' There is a depth to Watts' works which is why I think they are successful. In Hope a blindfolded figure can be seen folded over a lyre. There remains only one string on the instrument and she is placed in a desolate scene. Watts paints a single star in the sky to celebrate the fact that even in times of despair there remains a note of optimism through hope.





Interestingly, hope is a virtue that remained integral to the gallery's uncertain past. After his death in 1904, G.F Watts' popularity suffered a sharp decline. Presumably, his posthumous success dwindled in the wake of the Second World War, when his art became viewed by critics as outmoded and an unwelcome reminder of an old age. As a result, the gallery was left to crumble away. That is until 2006, when it received a multi-million-pound restoration scheme from the Heritage Lottery Fund and aptly named Hope appeal which secured its future and grand reopening in 2011. Now, it has been fully reinstated to its former glory.

The curators of the gallery have painstakingly transferred the large works from the walls of private homes into the gallery space. Watts' influence by the great Italian masters is eminent in this particular collection of his work and is partly what earned him the title of England's Michelangelo. With his prolific and versatile output of work, it is easy to see why he was the most revered artist in England at the time of his death.

Olivia Thornton

"The artist's ability to portray abstract concepts is markedly why he deserves recognition."

Currently, there are three exhibitions to commemorate Watts 200. A Life in Art: GF Watts 1817-1904 (which runs from 28 February to 5 November 2017), GF Watts: England's Michelangelo (20 June - 26 November 2017) and Monumental Murals (28 February to 5 November 2017). The latter of which showcases Watts' skillful handling of fresco and mural painting. The subject matter of the murals themselves are grand depictions of epic Greek narratives. Achilles and Briseis for example, is a triumphant homage to the opening scene of Homer's Iliad. The impressive scale and technicality of the works can now for the first time ever be appreciated up close by the public.



Bedroom Farce Review: An Alton College Theatre Production

Bedroom Farce, an Alan Ayckbourn play, chronicles the events of four intergenerational married couples and the social hijinks and dramas that connect them and play out between them. Set in three bedrooms, the story follows an evening in the lives of these four couples and how the characters of Susanna and Trevor become a nuisance for them all.

I had the absolute privilege of seeing Bedroom Farce, performed by the Alton College Theatre when it was staged in December, and what a treat it was. To be completely honest, I went into it with relatively 'meh' expectations and, quite frankly, it blew me and my assumptions out of the water. The writing was very strong, as was the direction, with an interesting diversity of character types expertly cast together. Seriously, creds to the casting director on this play, but that's no discredit to the technical crew as the sets and props, whilst minimalistic, were effective, and gave the actors a lot to work with, as were the lighting cues and sound effects.

It was very clearly rehearsed; the enthusiasm and chemistry oozed out of the performance most contagiously and kind of made me miss the theatre and reminded me of the brief couple of years when I did the same thing. The chemistry was very strong on all the couples' parts - knowing some of them personally, it did feel slightly cast to type but then again, if you have that ability at your disposal, I ask why wouldn't you do that? Nothing was overshadowed as it all fit perfectly into place, like that amazing Tetris line before it gets deleted.

It had a very light tone, yet its cartoonish nature ironically propelled it forward where in other places it could have been a major downfall. Line delivery was very strong and the knowledge of comic timing was clearly well rehearsed amongst the students as they knew exactly how to play each line to the smallest inflection in order to make it the best it could be.

***"furiously entertaining
with a good pace and
clear passion"***





I felt at times the general idea could be re-adapted and expanded upon, but the general structuring makes it perfect for a college piece: furiously entertaining with a good pace and clear passion for the material all round. The actors really got into their characters, throwing themselves into their roles, both charismatically and energetically and I think every audience member could relate to somebody in the cast. I gravitated to the character of Trevor myself - the try-hard good intentioned but obnoxious one that causes most of the plots dilemmas!

In conclusion, I needed a toilet break halfway through but there was no way I was going to miss what happened next! I found myself grinning from ear to ear throughout and I am more than intrigued to hear about what comes next from this very dedicated group. #lolmemes

Logan Bailey

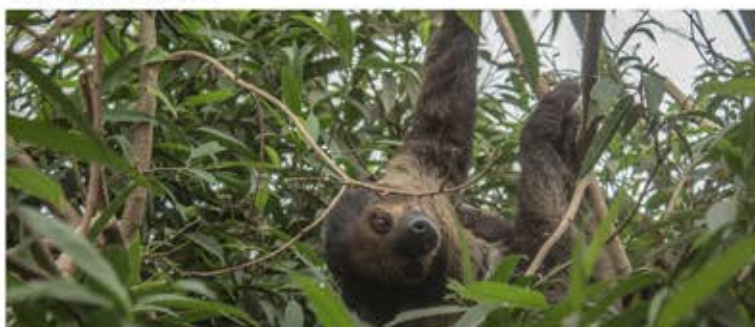


The Greatest Natural History Series Returns:

PLANET EARTH 2

2016 was a special year for Sir David Attenborough, who turned 90 on 8th May and received a few presents in the form of a dragonfly, an extinct "mini marsupial lion" and a research vessel being named after him. He has been involved in natural history broadcasting for over 60 years and inspired millions of people around the world (including myself) to become interested in the natural world. It is only fitting that he, of all people, had a 90th birthday celebration almost as big as the Queen. To top off such an amazing year was the broadcast of Planet Earth 2, the sequel to the smash hit from 2006. This new series was special in being the first natural history series to be filmed entirely in 4K, and boy did it show.

The 6 episodes each featured a different habitat in which animals had adapted to thrive in, in much the same style as the original series, yet differing slightly in the exact setting for each episode. The list of episodes in order were: islands, mountains, jungles, deserts, grasslands and cities, each with their own unique cast of characters. What made this series special, much like in previous Attenborough programs, was the abundance of footage and behaviors that had been filmed for the first time, such surprises including, but not limited to: a Wels catfish hunting pigeons killer-whale-style, a sloth that can swim across waterways in order to reach a mate, a desperate pride of lionesses attempting to take down an adult giraffe, and who could forget 2016's most intense moment of television as a newborn marine iguana sped across towards the sea to escape hordes of racer snakes?



Just when you think that there was nothing new to be seen in the natural world, Attenborough once again succeeds in blowing our minds.

It is testament to David Attenborough's fame and emotional appeal that the series achieved such critical acclaim. The figures say it all: an average of more than 12 million viewers per episode, the second most watched TV series of 2016 (after The Great British Bake Off), and the highest rated TV series on IMDb (9.8/10). As a matter of fact, more young people aged 16-34 watched Planet Earth 2 than The X Factor. Not only was there the spectacle of 4K and the amazing footage to praise, there was also the music, which was composed by Hans Zimmer, famous for doing the musical scores for such films as Gladiator, Pirates of the Caribbean and Madagascar.

Some have criticized the series for using unrealistic sound effects and for presenting a "utopian world", but the undeniable truth is that the series has revealed much about life on our planet that nobody had ever seen before, and showed us what a wonderful world we live in. It has been therapy for many of us who found that 2016 was a horrible year all-round. Throughout the series, there has been a deeper quest: to raise awareness of the fact that this apparent paradise is under serious threat, and that it is our responsibility to conserve it for future generations, to allow the human population to coexist with nature, rather than destroy it, as Attenborough himself rightly stated at the end of the final episode. David Attenborough was on television regularly throughout 2016 and his commitment to the future in projects such as Planet Earth 2 shows that he has no plans to slow down just yet. That is the ultimate mark of a national treasure. 5/5

Andrew Hopgood



'Kong- Skull Island' Review

"Kong's God on the Island, but the Devils live below us"

Even if you haven't seen any of the King Kong based releases, you will almost certainly be able to envisage the iconic solute of the supersized gorilla clinging to a tower, with a damsel in its grasp. More than 80 years after it originally came stomping onto the big screen, the King is back once again.

You don't need to come to this with any prior knowledge of previous films with the manic beast. It's not a sequel, more of a new take.

"It's stuffed with truly terrifying, edge-of-your seat moments"

Fast into the action, the plot dates back to 1944, when an American and a Japanese pilot crash lands on an island in the South Pacific during World War 2, and soon find that this war is the least of their worries.

28 years later, in 1973, former British Special Air Service Captain, James Conrad, is hired by the government to guide an expedition to map out the island, known as "Skull Island". Along with the Sky Devils, a helicopter squadron, the team go to investigate.

Arriving on Skull Island, they begin dropping explosives to determine if the ground is hollow, despite Conrad's objections. The individuals are attacked by the infamous gorilla - their only hope is to stay alive long enough so that their resupply team can come to their rescue. But that's easier said than done when you're in 'the land of the monsters'...

It goes without saying, like most recent blockbusters, the CGI throughout is extraordinary. Comparing this to last year's critically panned Superman Vs Batman, the story does a far better job at reaching the dizzy heights of its visuals.

The slightly larger monkey (standing at around 100ft tall, apparently) is as you would expect him to be for the most part, exposing his giant nashers in fits of enormous roars. However, we do get once again to see his softer side. The viewer switches between feeling scared and fearful of Kong to gaining an element of pity for him which is nicely played out. The island sees an onslaught of similarly gigantic pests all calling it home. It's stuffed with truly terrifying, edge-of-your seat moments.

There are a large assembly of characters, who feel staggered and, it has to be said, fairly two dimensional at times. Top names of Tom Hiddlestone and Brie Larson feel lost and fairly useless. For me, it's Samuel L Jackson who holds up proceedings with an undeterred energy, when the beasts aren't on screen.

On the whole, Kong is a rip-roaring, exciting tale focusing on establishing and expanding its own mythology, where perhaps it ignores character and story development. However, they must be doing something right as there are already plans for the equally monstrous Godzilla to collide with the manic monkey, in Godzilla vs. Kong, due for release in 2020. 3.5/5

Dan Peters



EPQ Creative Writing Tips

Doing an 'Extended Project Qualification' artefact that involves creative writing does have challenges, but it injects a more fun and relaxed side to an overall academic process. I decided to do a creative writing EPQ because it provided an opportunity to do some writing within a busy academic year.



6 TIPS FOR DOING A CREATIVE WRITING ARTEFACT:

- 1) Knowing what your genre is and who your audience are before writing is essential and will make your artefact a lot easier to produce. For example, the type of lexis and imagery is dependable on what you're aiming for in terms of audience and genre.
- 2) Try to set yourself word limits and stick to them. This way the task will not become laborious as there are other elements of the EPQ that need to be considered. For example, writing a report explaining your research. However, if you do go over (or under) your word count it doesn't matter as it is your project!
- 3) Depending on how you work, you could set yourself miniature goals for when you want to have certain sections completed. Although, if your writing style is more tailored to creating a whole piece in one sitting then consider setting goals of when to go back to your work and further refine it. By planning ahead, stress levels may be reduced.
- 4) Don't be too harsh on yourself if things don't go to plan. For example, a period of writing block can seem defeating, but instead see it as a chance to think of new ideas and consider different perspectives. This may actually enhance what you already have.
- 5) Proof reading is a useful skill to learn. Being able to pick up on small things such as typos or phrasing saves you time, and helps in other subject areas. It took me a while to be able to spot little things but eventually it became a lot easier as my project progressed.
- 6) Enjoy it! You should be proud of what you produce - you never know, in the future you may decide to publish.

Good Luck!

Sienna Wells



An underwater scene with a large shark swimming towards the viewer in the foreground. In the background, a school of smaller fish swims in the blue water. The lighting is dim, creating a mysterious atmosphere.

But Not the Song It Sung

As I am swimming the same path as yesterday, I observe the fish as they act out their synchronised swimming. However, the joyful dynamic suddenly changes as an oncoming predator looms, and all the fish hide. The seagulls conduct their own performance, hoping to get a good prize of fish. During all of this, the ocean orchestrates the movements of all life within its waves. The Californian beach comes into my line of sight with its yellow sands and I watch my prey scurry around enjoying the blazing sunlight.

Not for much longer.

I step up onto the beach and start to sing my bittersweet sounding melody as I waltz towards a group of men playing volley ball. Mesmerised by my tune, they begin to move towards me. I beckon the men as I glide back into the water. The glistening shallow sea quickly descends into dark depths where my people are waiting in hunger.

As my home grows nearer the further I swim down, the lives of the men sink too. Their now soulless bodies drift down towards where, lying in wait, are sea creatures that crave the flesh of a human being.

Hearing the bodies connect with the ocean's floor, I grin.

Suddenly, I feel a sharp pain through my chest. I look down in horror as a spear is cutting through me.

My blood mixes with the water and the sea salt stings my wound. My temperature drops and my vision blurs. I try to move but my body doesn't respond. I will for myself to stay conscious, but then I slip away into the abyss.

Then there is nothing.

Awakening, I force my eyes to adjust to a blinding light. Sitting up, I hear muffled talking. Ignoring it, I take a deep breath but then dread fills my body.

Then there is nothing.

Awakening, I force my eyes to adjust to a blinding light. Sitting up, I hear muffled talking. Ignoring it, I take a deep breath but then dread fills my body.

I'm on land.

In panic, I struggle against restraints on my arms and legs which are holding me down to a bed. A woman in white appears in front of me; she is talking but I don't listen. Out of anger and fear, I lunge forward against the restraints and hiss. She draws back in shock and retreats to the other side of the room. Breaking free from the restraints, I sense movement to my left and I spin around, flashing my fangs.

I am too late.

The men plunge a needle into my neck. The serum takes immediate effect on my body and I succumb to darkness once more.

Awakening again, I notice that I'm not in the same comforting room as before. Instead, I'm lying on a cold metal slab. I slowly look up and observe the creatures prodding at my wound with sharp tools I have never seen.

One of the monsters glances up and sees I'm awake. In fear, she yells at her companions to restrain me. Working quickly, I lash out and grab people's throats; cutting off their air. After I am finished I go down onto the cold marble floor, but fall over straight away. My wobbly legs don't co-operate with me. I try to stand for a second time, my legs straighten out and I head towards the exit.

Managing to escape that hell, I run towards the beautiful, shimmering water, where I hear my people crying out. Wasting no time, I dive into the sea. A wave of relief floods my entire body. I claw at the water to quicken my pace, as I head straight for the depths of the ocean.

I am on my way home.

Millie Cashman



Student Art



Elise Costain



Zoe Burgess - Digital





Kieran Cox - Digital



Kieran Cox - Digital



Alice Farrington - Colour Film



Daisy on: 'The Secret Life of Pets'

Daisy Howe, the cat, managed to watch *The Secret Life of Pets*, whilst in cinemas last summer, and was keen to give the low down through some fresh eyes. Thomas went over to interview her to recount her review of the film.

"It was all very strange. I sat down to watch this film with all the other pets, munching away at what humans call 'popcorn'. The film started but it was disappointing from the beginning as I saw that the story was about a dog and not a cat. Eurgh! I hate dogs.

"Max was far too basic and predictable for a dog's name"

Then the story was about another dog as well. I contemplated walking out but my friend, Buttons told me that the film was just getting interesting. So, we sat and watched the film. I did enjoy it but, as an animal, I felt that the film was making fun of our secret lives away from humans.

Max (voiced by Louis C.K), I thought, was far too basic and predictable for a dog's name. It should have been 'Destroyer of All Cats' or 'Evil Canine'. Gidget (voiced by Jenny Slate) was a fantastic character; she was one of the bravest characters in the film. Snowball (voiced by Kevin Hart) was completely crazy! I mean, keeping a pet snake in the sewers and threatening Max and Duke was just too much for me and Buttons.

At the time of writing, the film has grossed \$724.9 million. Most animated films these days are grossing a huge amount of money, such as *Zootropolis* (\$1.023 billion), *Finding Dory* (\$930.8 million) and *Kung Fu Panda 3* (\$519.9 million). A question that I was asked was 'Do you think that *The Secret Life of Pets* deserves that amount of money?' Well, with the interest of animated films these days, it should deserve a decent award in the box office.



"it just about explained the lives of us pets when our humans aren't watching"

After seeing that the film had also received good reviews, everyone could agree that went with me to see it, that it was a film worth watching. It held a strong storyline, likeable characters, good setting (as a cat, I've never seen Manhattan before), a brilliant voice cast and it just about explained the lives of us pets when our humans aren't watching.

I highly recommend this film, and I recommend that adults also watch this film. It seems that family films are really for the whole family and they've all improved massively! Studios that create family animations do try to include comedy that children, adults, cats and maybe dogs can all appreciate. Thanks to the cast, the film was able to humanise the animals whilst still sticking to the reality of a pet's life - a "slice of life" as I like to call it." 4/5

Daisy Howe (via Thomas Howe)



Don't Get Me Started...

VOL. 2

Alton College students explain what bugs them the most

"On music artists who started out as buskers but forget their roots and think it's acceptable to charge £85 for a mere standing ticket. Yes, Ed Sheeran, I'm talking about you. You may be smashing all the chart records ever created and have reached apparent god-like status but frankly, You Need M(on)e(y), I Don't Need You."

"On slow walkers."

"On how expensive caffeine-laden products are at college."

"On the absolute anarchy that is finding a car parking space at Alton College."

"On student discount...nowhere bloody accepts it!"

"On the brilliance of Phillip Scofield's Snapchats."

"On the directed study section of insight... never gonna fill that out... never."

"On the potholes in this country! The roads look like they've either been subjected to an intensive artillery bombardment or a wandering troop of dwarves with shares in Travis-Perkins have just passed through. Either way, when I drive over them I headbutt the roof so much that there's a serious risk I'll do some damage to the family brain cell."

"On Austen's automatic doors. We've all been there, strolling happily into the Austen building with not a care in the world (and obviously no responsibilities weighing us down) when you're faced with the obstacle of the infamous 'automatic' doors.

The doors squeak open at about 1mph and the people behind you are piling up as you try to squeeze through the crack created by the 'effective' automatic doors. Come on AC get yo act together! We are actually trying to get in to college, at least make it easy for us to get inside the building eh?!?"

"On how no good TV shows are on now Peaky Blinders is still in production. The Walking Dead is bad now, it will not do. IT WILL NOT DO."



**Contribute
to Issue #**

10

HAS THIS INSPIRED YOU?

*If you would like to have your work or opinions
published then please send your submissions
to:*

thealternative.enquiries@gmail.com

Or find us online at:

***www.facebook.com/thealternative/
altonalternative.wordpress.com***