

News, opinions, short stories, pets, photos and more!

# MEOPHAM MONTHLY

Meopham School's Student Magazine



Cover Art by Maia Kierans

**ISSUE 10: FEBRUARY 2023**

# WELCOME

Hello! Welcome to our February issue of Meopham Monthly. This issue puts a focus on love and appreciation, to spread some positive energy in these cold months. Read on to find book reviews, poetry, photography, stories and many inspirational articles.

If you would like to submit a short story, article, drawing, poem, photos or anything else for our future issues, please get in touch with the team at [MSS-magazine@swale.at](mailto:MSS-magazine@swale.at) or come along on a Thursday lunchtime to English 5.

**We hope you enjoy this issue!**

**Editor: Robyn Fitzpatrick (Yr 12)**

## NEWS JUST IN!

Building work has started on the new car park and school expansion. The new building will have specialist art and DT rooms, as well as a new hall and food hatch. The car park should be open in April this year and the new building is due to be finished in Spring 2024. You can find the full plans on the [school website](#).



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## With thanks to everyone who contributed this month:

Nshira Ansah (Yr7)	Silver Kesby (Yr7)
Miss Biscombe	Maia Kierans (Yr12)
Mel Astirbadi-Cox (Yr7)	Sienna Lee (Yr7)
Dylan Cooke (Yr11)	Finn McGee (Yr11)
Noah Courtney (Yr8)	Adam Nachyla (Yr7)
Mr Dyer	Maia New (Yr12)
Mrs Edwards	Harriett Pritchard (Yr7)
Theo Haydon (Yr8)	Ashe Reeves (Yr13)
Jack Hollis (Yr7)	Jenna Searle (Yr12)
Casey Homden (Yr7)	Ella Taylor (Yr7)
Charlotte Hooker (Yr12)	Miss Tiller
Miss Garnett	Mr Van Vuuren
Hollie Garratt (Yr11)	Mr Vilday
Harry Gower (Yr8)	Mrs Vince

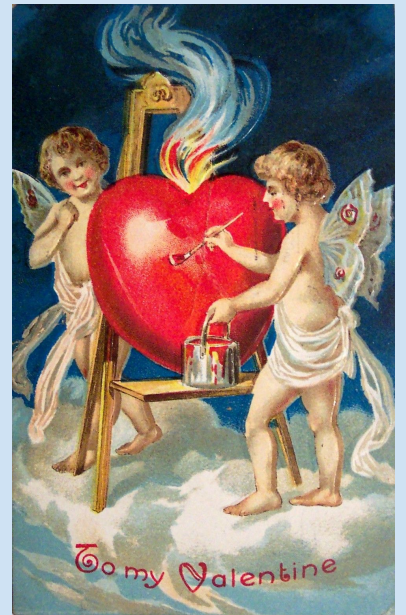
# VALENTINE'S DAY

By Charlie Gannaway (Yr7)

Valentine's Day... we've all heard of it. The day where people send gifts to show affection for each other, like giving each other chocolates. But it's not just about that.

Hey,  
I love you.  
Here's some  
chocolate.

Thanks,  
Love you too!  
Can't wait to  
see you!



## So where and when did it all start?

It all started at a **Roman festival** named '**Lupercalia**' in the year **496** and was held **mid-February**. The festival celebrated the upcoming **Spring** and included the Pairing of women and men. By the end of the **5th Century**, **Pope Gelasius** decided to change the name to '**St Valentine's Day**' after a Roman priest who supposedly performed secret weddings. Soon after in the **14th Century**, it came to be known as a day for **Romance and Love**.

## Fun Facts!

Did you know  
that 28 countries  
celebrate  
Valentine's Day?

Did you know  
that around 85%  
of Valentine's Day  
cards are bought  
by women?!



# A THOUGHT FOR FEBRUARY

By Ella Taylor & Nshira Ansah (Yr7)

There are a variety of cultures around the world and we should respect each and every one of them. It should not matter whether you are Asian, Caribbean, African or European, we are all human and deserve the same amount of respect.

Think of it like a piece of cake: let us say that you are getting a slice of cake and then your younger sibling runs up to you and *steals* the cake. The last slice, to be exact. You have to respect that because you should always put a younger person's needs before yours.

Take a moment to think about how you can be kind and respectful to others this month. It is really important that you be kind and be a good role model, because February is about love, kindness, family and friendship.

## STORY STARTER

By Harry Gower (Yr8)

He ran through the forest with sweat pouring down his face, which was contorted with fear. It was not far behind him chasing him, stalking him, tracing every move he made. A long dark-haired, fur-riddled beast. There was nowhere that he could hide. The beast had tracked him down and he was only a couple of hundred metres away from him; the beast was getting closer and closer. He bolted. He ran far into the forest into the eternal darkness...

**Can you carry on the story? Send your submissions to [mss-magazine@swale.at](mailto:mss-magazine@swale.at) for the chance to win a prize and to see your work in the next issue!**

# MR VILDAY'S VIEW

## Views from a latter-day Viking

### A VALENTINE'S TRAVELOGUE

Almost February 14th, although by the time of printing, Valentine's cards and gifts will have already been in the shops for at least 4 weeks. It's almost fair to say that Valentine's Day is often seen as the gift event between Christmas and Easter.

It's one of those odd celebrations that doesn't appear to have a real history. It's a bit like King Arthur: invented in a more romantic time based loosely on something that happened in the past. Historians can't agree on which Valentine is being celebrated as there were a few of them in Roman times.

Still, it's a celebration many people love to be involved in so in the spirit I thought I'd share some appropriate places around the world that might fit a Valentine's Day trip.



Where better to be, on this day,  
than Love County, Oklahoma.

Or maybe be inspired by the  
god of love and go to  
Cupids, Newfoundland.



For those who have the perfect  
relationship, venture to Heart's Content,  
also in Newfoundland. Canada is obviously  
the home of romance.

# ...continued



And as if to prove the point, while in Newfoundland, you could also visit Heart's Delight.

In the UK, perhaps a trip to Lover in Wiltshire. You can send a Valentine's card from here with a special postmark –  
Lover – on it.



For an explosive encounter there is always Loving, New Mexico. Romantic name but it was the site of a test for an atomic explosion.

For the goths and emos out there, maybe Romance, Arkansas would be the perfect destination.



Have a lovely day, however you celebrate it. I'll leave you with two Valentine's thoughts:

1. "Love is a fire, but whether it is going to warm your heart or burn down your house, you never can tell." Joan Crawford
2. Forget Valentine's Day, I'm just waiting for the discounted chocolate on February 15<sup>th</sup>!

# A TOURIST'S GUIDE TO HELL

By Finn McGee (Yr11)

As a concept, eternal torture in a pit of fire and anguish is not all that appealing. Some may be quick to describe such a situation as 'uncomfortable' and 'torturous'. Nevertheless you've managed this long in life and so you are almost perfectly equipped to deal with any such horrors that tartarus may throw at you.

The crux of this article is based on the writings of one Dante degli Alighieri who compiled his dreams of the afterlife into his poem '*The Divine Comedy*', with the chapters of the '*Inferno*' giving vivid descriptions of hell and all the accompanying punishments. It should be noted that this is in no way accurate and remains unrecognised by both the catholic and Lutheran church; please do not use biblical fanfiction from the 1300s to represent any religion.

This is for entertainment purposes only.

Hell is divided into 9 'rings' below the flat earth (yes, science has lied to you), each one smaller than the last and all categorised by a sin, with the uppermost 'ring' being the least severe and the bottom being the most. In order, they descend as: Limbo, Lust, Gluttony, Avarice, Wrath, Heresy, Violence, Fraud and Treachery, the worst of all.

Limbo is less extreme torture and more plain boredom, nothing really goes on here. This is occupied by good people who had the misfortune of being unbaptised or being subscribed to the wrong god (sorry to the 5.8 billion non-Christians). Lust itself is just a field with strong wind blowing people high into the air for all eternity. Gluttons are made to lie naked in freezing cold slime of some sort, forced to play dead as a three headed dog Cerberus devours those who fail to lie still. Those who were greedy in life are forced to push heavy weights against each other (personally I feel this was largely uncreative). The wrathful are consigned to continuously fight and beat each other whilst heretics are trapped within stone coffins and set ablaze in what could only be described as the second worst barbecue (all it needs now is room temperature coleslaw). Violence is a particularly dark one. Catholic doctrine said at this point in time that violence against anyone was punishable in hell including against yourself, and so murderers and killers were turned into trees along with those who sadly killed themselves. These trees feel everything, including their branches snapping, feeling similar to losing a limb. Second to last, Fraud holds a number of pits, each with its own unique torture and also holds Pope Celestine V (even a Pope's in hell; we've got no chance). Finally Treachery. This final ring contains a frozen lake with its members stuck within. Satan himself remains engulfed to the waist while using Judas as his personal chew toy.

And that's hell. With reviews ranging from 1 star to 5, it's got top of the line accommodation and dedicated staff members; it's certainly got its own charm. Now you can tell someone to go to hell with full knowledge of its intricacies!



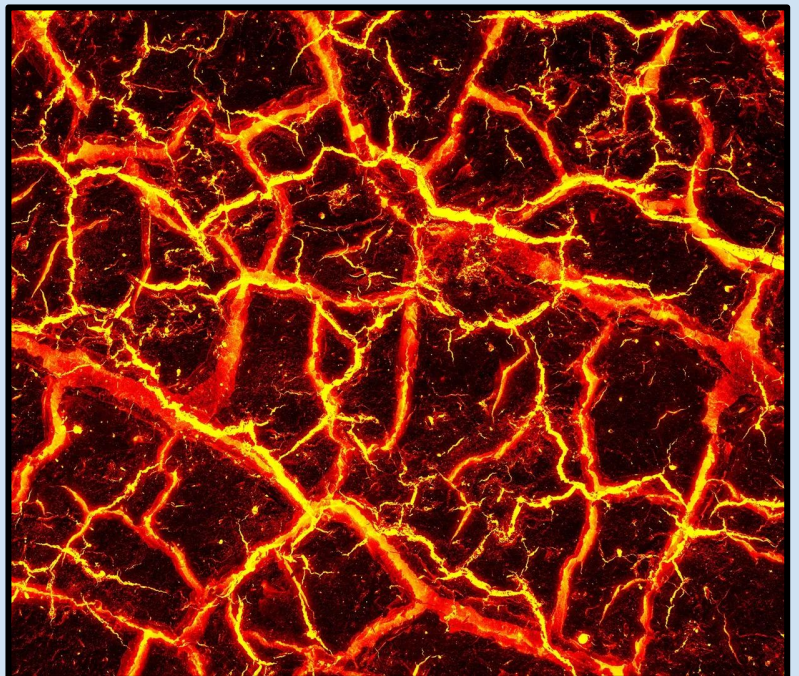
# THE MAGMACORE

Short story by Ashe Reeves (Yr13)

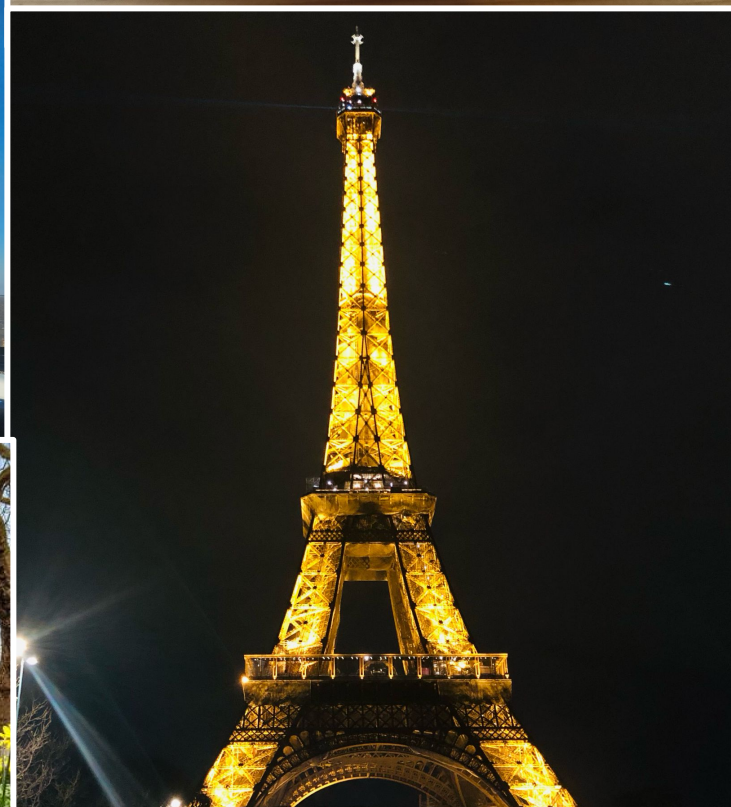
Wings of redemption fly high in the sky; its crimson wings spread wide with pride, loud roars escaping an outstretched maw. Crimson fades to a stygian furred body, absorbing any light and giving off an absence of life. Death swirls around its torso like ropes restricting its endless power. Shackling it to the earth, thick metal chains rattle, stretch and bend under the mighty beast's wrath. As powerful wings gust tornados to the surrounding areas, the shattering of earth echoes and the monster lands.

Magma begins to pour from the crack in the surface, shifting the black shaggy fur to a glistening scarlet as the heat climbs its body, a mane of fire erupting from his neck. The mighty Teostra is birthed from a restrained beast turned apex predator, sparks waft from the pores on his underside to around the chain upon his leg.

With a snap of his powerful jaw an explosion shatters the chain and frees the elder dragon: a changer of terrain; a destroyer of ecosystems; a hunter of all. The fire manticore is free to hunt and gorge himself of all he can eat and avoid the ever-looming shadow.





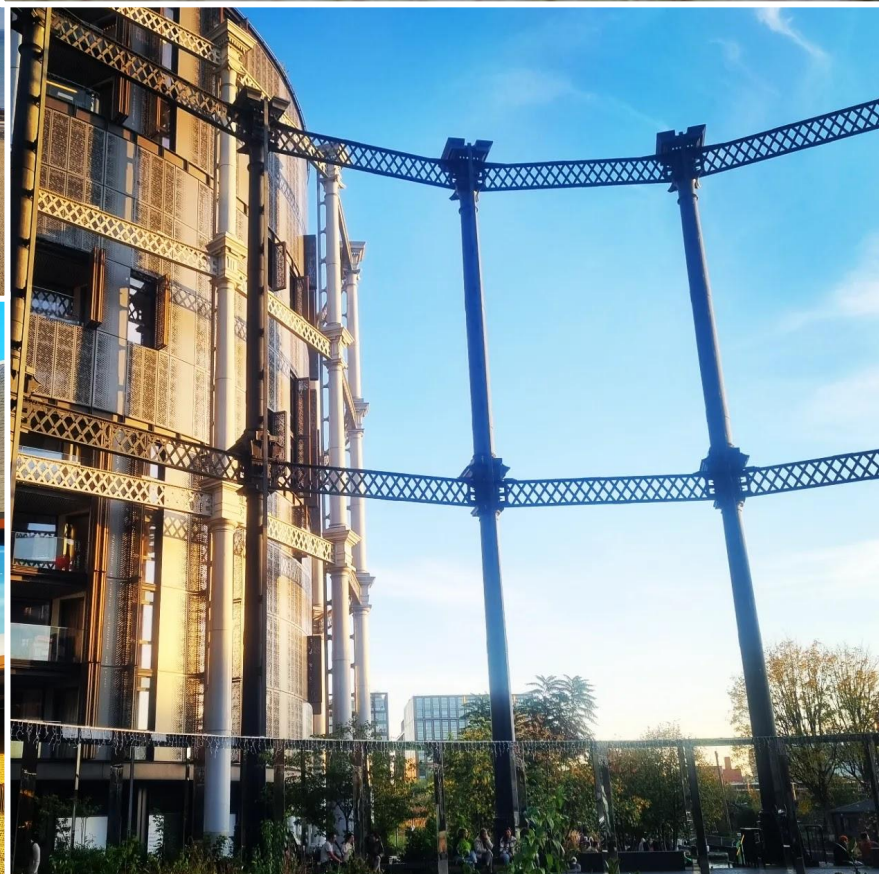
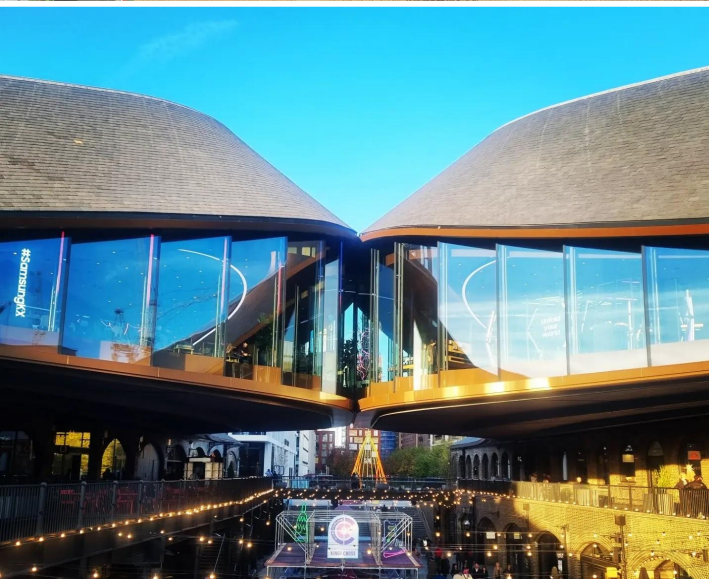


Photos by: Sienna Lee, Silver Kesby, Harriett Pritchard & Adam Nachyla





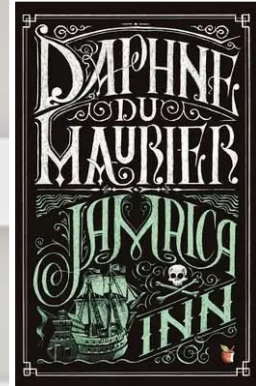
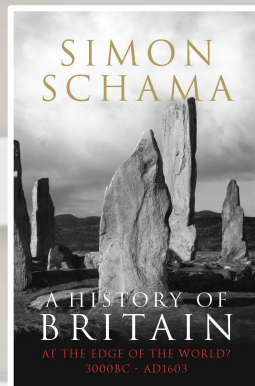
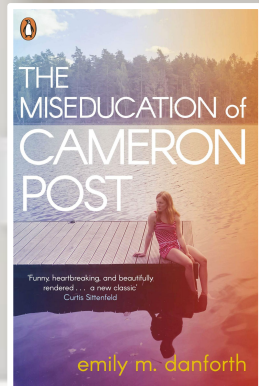
# THE GALLERY



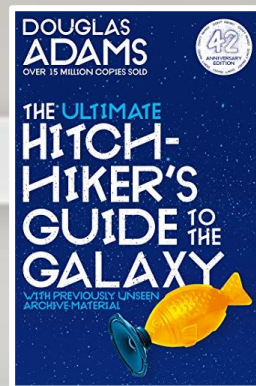
Photos by: Mr Vilday & Mrs Williamson



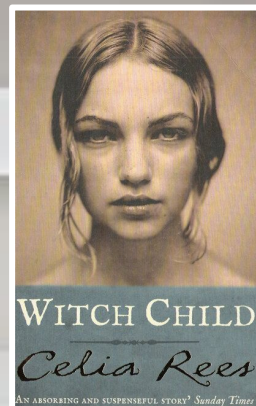
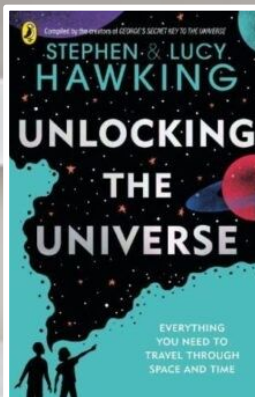
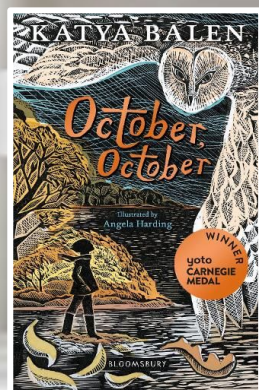
# BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS



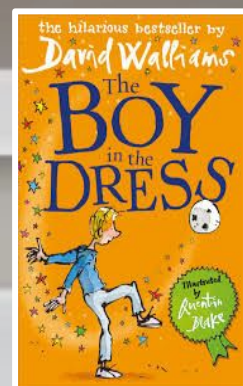
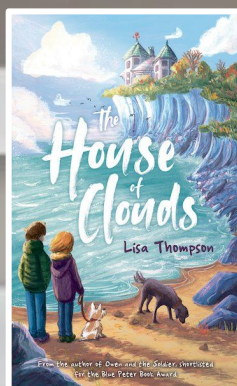
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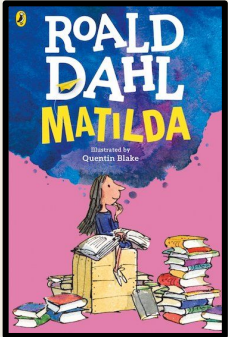
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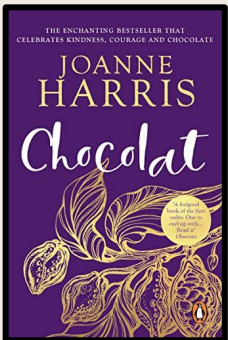
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# TEACHERS' FAVOURITE BOOKS

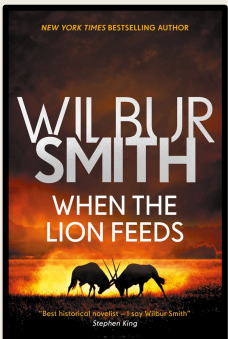
By Amelia Rogers & Lola Gardner (Yr7)



**Mrs Edwards'** favourite book is *Matilda* by Roald Dahl, as it reminds her of her childhood. Her favourite part of the book is when Matilda discovers her powers. Miss Edwards' favourite character is, unsurprisingly, Matilda and her least favourite is Mrs Trunchbull.



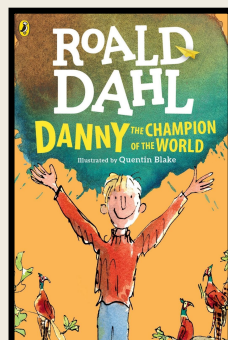
**Miss Tiller's** favourite book is *Chocolat* by Joanne Harris, because she can picture herself in the story. Her favourite character is Anouk Rocher – she is the eldest daughter of Vianne, but we do not know anything of her father. Her least favourite character is the priest Francis Reynaud.



**Mr Van's** favourite book is *When The Lion Feeds* by Wilbur Smith. This particular book is very special to him, as it is set in his home country, South Africa. It is based around animals which make him enjoy it even more. His favourite character is Sean and his favourite scene is when Sean escapes the lion.



**Mr Dyer** loves the *Cirque du Freak* series by Darren Shan. He enjoys reading about this hidden world of shadows at war within itself. This action-packed series is sure to fire the imagination and sate any reader's thirst for action and a bit of gore.



**Mrs Vince's** favourite book is *Danny The Champion of the World* because even though Danny finds out his dad is doing something not quite legal, he loves him regardless. They are not just friends, they are comrades and partners in crime together. She thinks he relationship between them is beautiful.



# BOOK REVIEWS

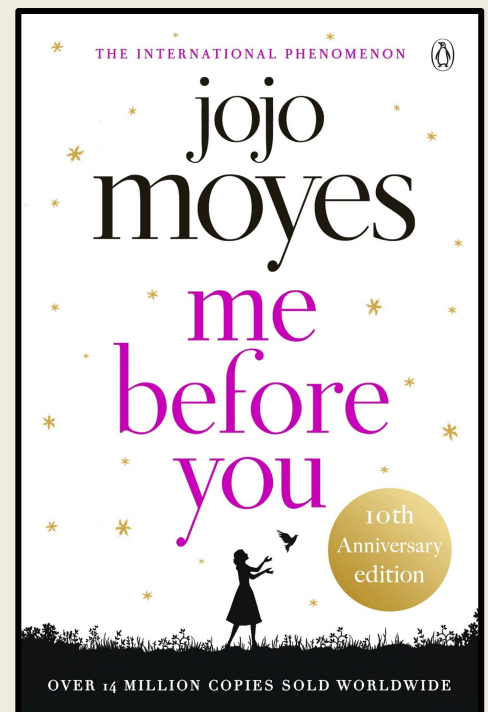
## *Me Before You* by Jojo Moyes Review by Charlotte Hooker (Yr12)

*Me Before You* is one of those timeless, bittersweet stories that grips your heart and refuses to let go. The novel follows eccentric Louisa Clark who has unfortunately lost her job and is in the process of looking for a new one. That's how she meets Will Traynor, a man who has lost the desire to live and struggles to see the joy in life after a motorcycle accident left him paralysed. Louisa is brought in as his new carer, neither of them aware of how their meeting will change their lives forever.

Jojo Moyes has such a beautiful writing style that makes you forget you are reading, as the story just flows so fluidly. Her humanly flawed and realistic characters really help with this effect, as she describes them in a way that really allows you to put yourself in their shoes and relate to their feelings and what they are experiencing. In my opinion, this is a remarkable achievement as the story covers a subject that very few people can understand on a personal level, and Moyes does a fantastic job at shedding light on the struggles that come with being a quadriplegic and really makes the reader consider what it would truly be like. She instils the reader with empathy and admiration for Will, that carries on into their everyday life. The novel offers insight to the lives of people living with disabilities, and also those around them.

The emotional connection between Louisa and Will is so raw and beautiful, it is unlike anything I have ever read in a story before. Honestly, the character development in this novel is something that enticed me as I felt it was incredibly relatable, it was almost as though you could feel your view of the world and your own life changing with the characters.

*Me Before You* will leave your heart aching and your mind debating questions you had never even thought to consider before. Therefore, I understand it may not be everyone's cup of tea. However, for those who are looking for a mind altering novel that gives you a new perspective on life, I cannot recommend this novel enough. The whole way through I was engaged, laughing, crying and enjoying not knowing what emotion was about to be instilled in me next. This novel has inspired me to help those less fortunate.





# BOOK REVIEWS

## *The Boy in the Dress* by David Walliams

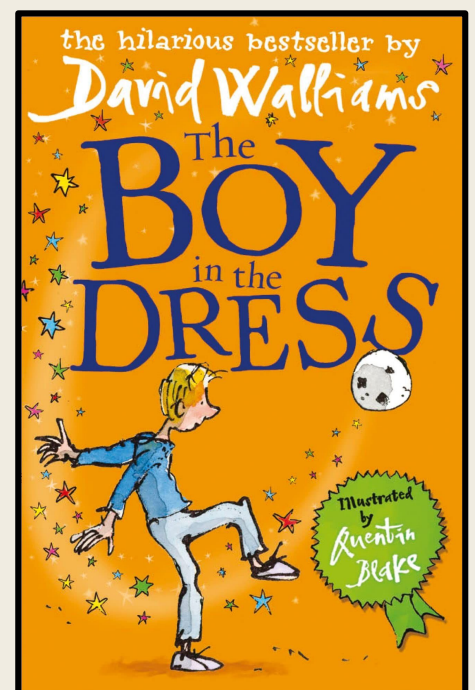
Review by Casey Homden (Yr7)

*The Boy in the Dress* is a book that tells you that you can wear whatever you want and to not let others change that. The main character, Dennis, hangs out with the most beautiful and popular girl in his school, Lisa. He is with her one day, then after that he starts to wear dresses when they are together and they kept reading *Vogue* fashion magazines.

Later in the story, Dennis goes to school in a dress, but nobody knows that he was pretending to be a girl. When he kicks the ball back to his best friend, his wig falls off and he gets laughed at, and then his head teacher expels him from his school. When he goes to the final football match later on, he is not allowed to participate as he had been expelled. Then the most beautiful girl in his school takes him into the changing rooms of the stadium and the best part of the book happens!

In another part of the story, Dennis and Lisa see their headteacher out in public in a dress wig and sunglasses and heels, so they are able to get Dennis back to school. In the end, everyone lives happily and everyone wears whatever they wanted, and the boy in the dress lives with his dad and older brother, the happiest they have ever been!

This is an uplifting story that will have you smiling and cheering on the characters until the very end.



# STUDENT LEADERSHIP

By the Student Leaders & Miss Biscombe



On Friday 27th January, Student Leaders with an interest in conservation and the environment took part in the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch. This vital survey helps the charity understand changes to the UK bird population. Our leaders surveyed areas of the school grounds and recorded all the birds that landed. We saw robins, long-tailed tits, house sparrows, crows, magpies and lots of gulls.

**NEXT STEPS:** Student Leaders felt that more could be done to improve bird habitats on the school grounds and will start working with the school council on initiatives to make the site even more wildlife friendly.



## FOOD BANK COLLECTION

Thank you to everyone that made a donation to the **Give One Gift** initiative. Through the generosity of Meopham staff, students and families, we collected:

- ★ 144 nappies
- ★ 59 bottles of shower gel
- ★ 36 shampoos and conditioners
- ★ 35 bars of soap and hand wash
- ★ 16 cans of deodorant
- ★ 14 tubes of toothpaste
- ★ and over 100 extra gifts of food and toiletries.

**Finn, Jack and Theo** represented us beautifully when taking the donations to the Food Bank and the staff at the Riverside Centre wanted to send their sincere thanks to you all.



# SOCIAL UNREST:

## Why is everyone striking?

It's an interesting time in our country's history. With nurses, ambulance crews, train drivers, teachers and now firefighters signed up to strike this year, you have to start to wonder what is going on to cause such unrest.

Striking began in the Victorian era. During the Industrial Revolution, warehouses and factories had popped up all over the country, dragging workers from their rural idylls into the hustle and bustle of the cities. People wanted new opportunities and decent working conditions, but they were met with overcrowding, long hours, poor wages, meagre food and smog. Londoners called the clouds of noxious fog that filled the air "pea soup" for its greenish colour, caused by the air pollution and poisonous gas, sulphur dioxide. It wasn't pleasant and let's just say they didn't get what they came for.

So, they used the little power they had and they stopped working. Workers began to band together and a wave of strikes began in 1842. This was the first time a large number of workers organised themselves into a politically-motivated group to try and fight for industrial change: better conditions and better pay.

Since then many other groups have decided to stop working in order to make a point. Miners' strikes were almost commonplace from the end of the nineteenth century all the way up until the 1970s. During 'The Winter of Discontent' in 1979, after a huge cost of living crisis fuelled by rising inflation, 29 million working days were lost when public sector workers (nurses, teachers, drivers and even grave-diggers) downed tools. This led to a change of government from Labour to Conservative.

Fast forward to 2023 and we are facing more disruption to services through the strike action from a variety of different professions. We have all heard of the 'cost of living crisis' - it's a term that gets thrown around in everyday conversation and regularly on the news - but the fact is that many people are really suffering financially at the moment. Food prices went up 13.3% in the Autumn and we all need to eat. Electricity prices went up by 65% in 2022 and we all could do with lights, fridges, ovens, washing machines... Gas prices went up by 129%, so if you'd like to heat your house this way...

And the problem is that wages are not increasing at the same rate as costs. Many professions are asking for a 10% salary increase to match the overall cost increase and to help them meet their everyday needs. It's a difficult time and difficult decisions need to be made.



Miners' wives from the Betteshanger Colliery in Deal, Kent. 18 January 1972.  
(Photo by Central Press/Getty Images)



# WELLBEING CORNER

By Maia New (Yr12) and Miss Garnett

## Anxiety: Techniques to overcome anxious feelings

Anxiety can be described as a feeling of unease, often during social situations. However, this feeling can happen whenever your body feels stressed. The feeling varies from mild to severe and everyone will have felt feelings of anxiety at some point in their life. Although, anxiety can be treated with medication, there are a few alternatives which can reduce it:

### 1. Using your senses..

To do this, name five things you can see, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell and one thing you can taste. In stressful situations, your brain tends to overthink which can cause: worry and fear. By distracting yourself from the situation, it gives you time to calm down.



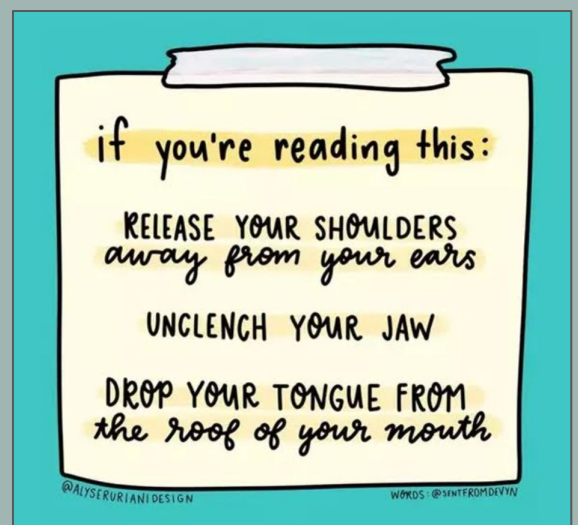
### 2. Square breathing

This is where you breathe in for four seconds, hold for four seconds, breathe out for four seconds, hold for four seconds and repeat.

### 3. Talking

Discussing your feelings can be awkward/uncomfortable at first. However, expressing your feelings to someone else can feel refreshing.

**PS: It's important to get diagnosed by a medical professional first, so they can advise the right treatment for you.**



# THE MEOPHAM (PET) FAMILY



**Winston - Noah C**



**Ruby & Luna - Jenna S**



**Honey - Sienna L**



**Lenny - Hollie G**



**Honey & Benji - Casey H**



**AJ - Mel A-C**

If you would like to share a pet photo for a future issue, email it to [MSS-magazine@swale.at](mailto:MSS-magazine@swale.at), along with a note of your pet's name.



# *February*

*By Sienna Lee (Yr7)*

Winter walks and lovely talks  
Starlit nights and bright white lights  
We promise each other we will be there for one another  
We promise we won't fight

# *Valentine*

*By Carol Ann Duffy*

Not a red rose or a satin heart.

I give you an onion.  
It is a moon wrapped in brown paper.  
It promises light  
like the careful undressing of love.

Here.  
It will blind you with tears  
like a lover.  
It will make your reflection  
a wobbling photo of grief.

I am trying to be truthful.

Not a cute card or a kissogram.

I give you an onion.  
Its fierce kiss will stay on your lips,  
possessive and faithful  
as we are,  
for as long as we are.

Take it.  
Its platinum loops shrink to a wedding ring,  
if you like.  
Lethal.  
Its scent will cling to your fingers,  
cling to your knife.