

# The Mark



- 3 EDITOR'S NOTE
- 4 CELEBRATING BELONGING AT RMGS: A  
LOOK BACK AT CULTURE DAY
- 8 WHY YOU SHOULD GET A RESCUE PET
- 9 MEET THE LEADERS: RMGS' NEW HEAD  
STUDENTS!
- 11 YEAR 9 ADVENTURERS CONQUER THE  
WILD: RMGS BRONZE D.OF.E EXPEDITION  
WEEKEND
- 14 THE WILD LIFE OF GEORGE IV: A  
GEORGIAN KING LIKE NO OTHER
- 15 WORDS THAT INSPIRE: RAINHAM  
POETRY FESTIVAL 2025 UNITES VOICES  
AND VERSE
- 18 THE BOOKMARK  
A COLUMN WRITTEN BY ISLA B
- 20 FREEDOM OVER HOMEWORK: A  
DISCUSSION ABOUT HOW HOMEWORK  
AFFECTS STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH.
- 22 WHEN FAME GOES TOO FAR: WHY  
POWER SHOULDN'T PLACE YOU ABOVE THE  
LAW
- 23 THE HISTORY OF AI- A CONCEPT  
THAT'S NOT AS MODERN AS IT SEEMS
- 25 I'M NOT PERFECT
- 27 DO CELEBRITIES REALLY FEEL THE  
PAIN OF PUBLIC CRITICISM?
- 29 ARTIST'S CORNER
- 30 REMARKABLE READS  
BEAUTY STANDARDS

# EDITOR'S NOTE

WRITTEN BY RUBY R AND ISLA B

As we reflect on the past term, it's impossible not to feel a sense of pride in the achievements of our RMGS students. This edition of The Mark celebrates some truly remarkable milestones, from the incredible success of the Diversity Team's Culture Day to the hard-earned accomplishments of our Year 9 students who completed their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh expedition. These events, alongside countless other moments of personal growth, are a testament to the vibrant spirit of our school community. It has truly been an inspiring term, and we're excited to share all of it with you in this issue.

However, there's also a bittersweet feeling as we bid farewell to our Year 11 and Year 13 students, who have now moved on to focus on their GCSEs and A-levels. The school feels emptier without them, and their absence serves as a reminder of the big changes ahead. We wish them all the very best of luck in their upcoming exams, and we are confident that their hard work and dedication will pay off. Their contributions to school life will certainly be missed, but we know they're ready to take on the next chapter of their academic journeys.

This term has also seen our Year 10 students embark on their work experience placements, a significant step in their growth and preparation for the future. From navigating the challenges of a professional environment to learning new skills and gaining valuable insights into different careers, they've truly demonstrated resilience and commitment. It's been wonderful to witness their personal development and we're proud of how they've embraced this opportunity.

Amidst all of this, it's important to take a moment to acknowledge the incredible efforts of our teachers during this exam season. They've gone above and beyond in offering extra support to our Year 11 and Year 13 students, whether through additional revision sessions, one-on-one tutoring, or simply offering words of encouragement and guidance. Their dedication to ensuring every student feels prepared and supported is something we can all be thankful for, and it's truly inspiring to see how committed they are to helping our students succeed.

As always, we encourage anyone with a story to tell or a perspective to share to get involved. If you'd like to join the team, please reach out to Mrs. Starr ([Istarr@rmet.org](mailto:Istarr@rmet.org)) to find out how you can contribute to future editions.

Happy reading!

# CELEBRATING BELONGING AT RMGS: A LOOK BACK AT CULTURE DAY

RMGS Culture Day on Wednesday 30th April was a vibrant celebration of identity and diversity across the school. Students wore clothes representing their culture, enjoyed a curated playlist in the canteen, and sampled a special menu featuring dishes like Jerk Chicken, hot dogs, and churros. The day also included a showing of Turning Red and a series of engaging lectures, offering opportunities for learning and reflection.



Article continues on the next page!

On Wednesday 30th April, Rainham Mark Grammar School came alive with colour, music, and celebration as students and staff took part in Culture Day – a powerful celebration of identity, heritage, and, most importantly, belonging. Organised by the RMGS Student Diversity Team, the day was a vibrant showcase of the many cultures and backgrounds that make up the school's community. From the moment students arrived, it was clear that Culture Day was something special. Pupils were invited to wear clothing that represented their cultural identity or personal background, creating a sea of traditional outfits, national colours, and meaningful personal styles across the school. It was a visual reminder of the school's diversity and the shared values that bind everyone together.

Throughout the day, the celebration continued in a variety of creative and inclusive ways. In the canteen, a student-curated playlist filled the air with music from around the world, transforming lunchtime into a joyful, shared experience. The menu was just as exciting – featuring Jerk Chicken, classic hot dogs, and sweet churros – a delicious nod to global cuisine and the many cultures within the school.

There were also opportunities for students to engage more deeply through a series of lectures exploring cultural identity, representation, and inclusion. These sessions sparked important conversations and gave students a space to reflect on their own experiences and those of others.

A highlight of the afternoon was a special showing of the animated film *Turning Red*, which explores themes of family, heritage, and growing up between cultures. The film resonated with many and served as a fitting way to end a day focused on understanding and embracing differences.

The Mark sat down with the Diversity Team to discuss the organisation of the day and their favourite moments from the celebration. Before we delve into the interview, journalists at The Mark would like to thank Mrs Horstrup, Alex G

(year 12), Max W (Year 8), Edie M (Year 8), Josh T (Year 8), Bea H (Year 7) and Abbie-Gail O (Year 7) for allowing us to join you during your meeting.

What inspired you to organise Culture Day this year, and how did you choose the activities and events?

Alex- We started this event 3 or 4 years ago and have carried it on ever since. This year we really wanted to include events that all pupils could enjoy so that is how we decided on the screening of Disney's *Turning Red*. However, we were also really keen to invite people into school to deliver lectures. This year we had the Medway African and Caribbean Association (MACA) come in to talk to our pupils.

What message did you hope students and staff would take away from the day?

Josh- I think acceptance is at the heart of this event. We want everyone to feel a sense of belonging and inclusion in the RMGS community. It is important that our differences are cause for celebration, not division.

What was the most rewarding part of organising and seeing Culture Day come to life?

Josh- It was great to see people participating! So many students came into school in their cultural wear and there were some amazing dresses.

Bea- Coming to school on Culture Day was brilliant. I remember standing in a corner and feeling so proud that people have come into school wearing the clothes that represent their culture and identity.

Alex- I think, for me, the most rewarding part was when Mrs Horstrup, Mrs Hart and I recruited people around the school to attend the lecture at lunchtime. Initially, it was very quiet in the lecture. However, after publicising it to students it quickly filled up.



Were there any challenges that you faced while planning the event, and how did you overcome them?

Josh- Well, some of the songs that we wanted for the canteen were not on Spotify!

Alex- Other than that, I think a real challenge was thinking of events that students at our school would like to participate in. We gave some serious thought to the film that we wanted to show at lunchtime. We decided on Turning Red because it appeals to all ages and does a great job at representing Chinese/ Chinese-Canadian culture.

What feedback have you received from students and/or staff since the event?

Alex- Miss Atlee and Dr Sutton praised the event and helped us out with aspects of the organisation.

Josh- I was so impressed with 8S's efforts in getting involved in the event.

Abby-Gail- 7L were also brilliant!

Is there a moment from the event that stood out to you or felt particularly meaningful?

Bea- Whilst at primary school sometimes I felt like there were not as many people who shared the same cultural heritage

and identity as me. There also were not many instances where I felt that our cultural differences were celebrated. However, since being at RMGS I have not felt like that; I have felt included. Culture Day is a day that represents this feeling of belonging.

Josh- I liked that no one was made fun of for what they were wearing. There was a real feeling of acceptance and respect. I could hear small conversations around school where pupils were complimenting each other.

Edie- I think that this year, attitudes towards Culture Day have really changed. People were responding with curiosity and not ignorance. That was lovely to see.

Mrs Horstrup- I was so proud of our students' respect for each other. Culture Day symbolises our efforts to change ignorance into curiosity.

How do you see Culture Day evolving in the future? Are there any new ideas in the works?

Josh- Next year we would like to utilise the Main Hall stage. We have been talking about the opportunity to have student performances during lunch time next year as a way of celebrating cultural music and dance.



Mrs Horstrup- We have also considered doing something similar to the RMGS Girls' Rights Hub when they organised the Open Mic event in the Recital Hall!

Why is it important to celebrate diversity?

Bea- Well, diversity is integral to our lives. In the world we see people from all walks of life. We must create a community that is inclusive to all. If we fail to do so, how can we expect anyone to include us?

Josh- If we want our society to progress, we must be part of that change. The main thing that we want to do is to show people that everyone should be treated with kindness, understanding and respect. There is no positive outcome of neglecting our differences.

Alex- In the future, I want to work in human rights law and with more diversity in the profession there is evidence to suggest that more cases will be rightfully won. This is because increased diversity in the legal profession will create more understanding and tolerance. This can only be a positive thing.

How can students get involved with the Diversity Team?

Mrs Horstrup- We meet every Friday

lunchtime in C4! We would love for you to come along and join us! If you are unsure, please email me at [Ehorstrup@rmet.org](mailto:Ehorstrup@rmet.org) and I can give you some details!

None of this would have been possible without the incredible work of Mrs Horstrup and the RMGS Student Diversity Team, who planned and delivered every aspect of the event. Their dedication, creativity, and leadership were clear throughout the day, and their efforts played a crucial role in making every student feel seen, heard, and celebrated.

Culture Day was more than just a fun event – it was a living expression of the RMGS mantra of belonging. It reminded everyone that at RMGS, differences are not just accepted – they are valued, respected, and celebrated.

If you would like to get involved with the Diversity Team, please join them during Friday Lunch in C4!

WRITTEN BY ANONYMOUS  
YEAR 9

# WHY YOU SHOULD GET A RESCUE PET

Annabelle C in Year 7 shares the inspiring story of rescuing her dog Toffee, a German Shepherd saved from the streets of Romania. Her heartfelt account highlights the importance of adopting rescue pets and giving them the love and care they deserve.



On Friday, 14th March, we rescued a beautiful German Shepherd. Her story is incredible, and it really made me think about how important it is to rescue animals. It's a brilliant decision—for both them and us.

## Toffee's Story

Toffee and her sibling were found on the streets of Romania and taken to the local council pound, a horrible dog centre where hundreds of dogs are packed into kennels and sleep on hay and straw. They stay there for a week or two, and if they're not claimed, they are put to sleep. The Pawprints to Freedom dog centre visits these places and saves the dogs by buying them. This is incredibly important—they deserve to live proper lives with loving families.

Just imagine how terrifying it must be to be taken in a van and packed into a crowded kennel. Toffee is incredibly brave and has brought us so much happiness since joining our home.

The next stage of her life was even worse. Sadly, her sibling didn't make it, so Toffee wasn't just anxious and afraid—she was lonely too. Soon after, a volunteer from the dog centre arrived to choose some dogs. It must be heart-breaking to have to pick between them. Rescuing dogs like Toffee means the centre can make space to take in more.

After a lot of persuading, my dad finally agreed, and we said we'd take her. She and 71 other dogs were driven over to England in a lorry.

Toffee is lovely, and we are so glad we got her. She quickly became friends with Atticus, our other dog. She has done brilliantly, and we are so proud of her. It means so much to adopt a rescue pet, and it gives the animal the care and love it truly deserves.

When I'm an adult, I'm going to have my own animal sanctuary, and I'll take in any abandoned animal. I think it's incredibly meaningful, and we need more sanctuaries like that in the world.

WRITTEN BY ANNABELLE C  
YEAR 7

# MEET THE LEADERS: RMGS' NEW HEAD STUDENTS!

Written by Rajni C and Erin N, this article captures an engaging interview with the newly appointed head students at RMGS. The piece explores their goals, inspirations, and what they hope to achieve during their time in leadership.



We got the chance to sit down and interview the new head students (Arthur P and Lois R) at RMGS to find out what it's really like being in one of the most important student roles in the school. They were super friendly and had some great advice to share with us!

When we asked what inspired them to run for head student, they told us that school has given them lots of great opportunities and they wanted to give something back. Arthur P said, "I became a prefect and thought 'why not, I'll go for head student.' Look where that got me!" Both Arthur and Lois talked about their love for RMGS and wanting to give back to the school.

When asking Lois and Arthur what they want to accomplish as Head Students, both commented on how they want to be strong role models and do their best to represent the school. They also said they hope to make small but noticeable changes that can improve school life for everyone.

We were really curious about how they actually became head students. They explained that first they had to write a 500-word essay about themselves, then get shortlisted, and finally go through an interview. Lois spoke about the key skills that are needed to be a Head Student, "To be a head student you must have good

social skills and be confident, not arrogant,” Arthur and Lois also said the interview to be Head Students was a bit nerve-wracking but a great experience, and it helped them think more about how they could contribute to the school. They were asked questions about their leadership skills, how they handle challenges, and what ideas they had for improving school life. One of them said they practiced answering questions with friends and family beforehand to feel more prepared. They even had to talk about times they’ve shown responsibility, teamwork, and how they would help younger students feel more included. Overall, they agreed it was a tough process, but totally worth it in the end!

Lois and Arthur talked about being prefects and how it helped them get ready for this new and important role. Prefects do lots of important things around school, like helping with the student bulletin, being in the student parliament, and even talking to important staff members. They also help with events such as Rock ‘n’ Roll!

Being a prefect taught them how to manage their time, speak up in front of others, and work as part of a team. They said it gave them the confidence to take on more responsibility and learn how the school works behind the scenes. It also helped them build strong relationships with teachers and students, which is really important when representing the school as a head student.

Arthur and Lois explained that prefects are often the link between students and teachers, and they play a big role in making sure student voices are heard. Prefects also help organise charity events, support Year 7s when they join the school, and sometimes even give tours to visitors. One of the head students said that being a prefect showed them how much difference even small actions can make, like helping someone who’s lost or answering questions about school life. All these experiences gave them the skills and confidence to aim higher—and apply for the role of head student.

Arthur and Lois told us they feel really honoured to be chosen as head students and are excited to lead the school during the next academic year. They said it’s a big responsibility, but they’re ready to take it on and do their best to support both students and staff. As KS3 students, we felt that both of them were really friendly and easy to talk to. They listened to our questions carefully and gave thoughtful answers, which made us feel comfortable around them. We think they’ll be brilliant role models and great leaders for the school because they’re kind, confident, and clearly care a lot about making RMGS the best it can be.

We really enjoyed talking to the head students and learning more about what they do. Maybe one day, one of us will be a head student too!

WRITTEN BY RAJNI C (YEAR 7) & ERIN N (YEAR 8)



## JOIN OUR TEAM!

WE ARE LOOKING FOR WRITERS OF FICTION AND NON-FICTION.

WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO WELCOME ARTISTS TO SUBMIT THEIR WORK.

## WEDNESDAY LUNCH L6

# YEAR 9 ADVENTURERS CONQUER THE WILD: RMGS BRONZE DofE EXPEDITION WEEKEND

Braving the elements and navigating the unknown, RMGS Year 9 students proved their resilience and teamwork on an unforgettable Duke of Edinburgh adventure.



From Friday 16th to Sunday 18th May, Year 9 students embarked on a journey they'll never forget – their Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award expedition. As a member of staff lucky enough to witness the full weekend unfold, I can honestly say it was an extraordinary experience full of determination, team spirit, and countless unforgettable moments.

Students arrived at Bexon Lane Campsite around 5:30pm on Friday evening, straight after a full day at school. Despite their long day, the excitement was infectious. The field buzzed with energy as groups eagerly set up their tents and claimed their patch of grass for the night. Cricket games broke out, laughter echoed across the field, and more than a few

impromptu races kept everyone warm as the sun dipped behind the trees.

That evening, our DofE assessors gathered the groups at 8 and 9pm for a briefing on the weekend ahead. There was a real sense of anticipation in the air. The students listened closely, knowing that Saturday would begin bright and early with a 16km hike to Wormshill. But despite the upcoming challenge, sleep did not come easily – the buzz of adventure kept many awake. Thankfully, Mrs Lee, Mrs Wayte, Mrs Hart, Ms Tappous, Mr Smith, Mr Pearson and I were on patrol to ensure tents were quiet and torches switched off!

Saturday morning arrived and, despite some sleepy eyes, spirits were high.



Breakfasts were cooked (some more successfully than others – a shout-out to the group who managed perfect pancakes!) and tents were packed away with impressive efficiency. At 8am sharp, boots were laced, maps were unfolded, and our adventurers were off.

The hike to Wormshill was no easy feat. The sun was shining, the terrain was varied, and the route – though scenic – presented its fair share of navigational puzzles. Our students rose to the challenge beautifully. They tackled fields of curious cows (many of whom seemed determined to become part of the expedition), and even turned some of these encounters into creativity. One standout moment was reading a wonderfully funny and heartfelt poem written by Katie P (9R), inspired by the day's walk – a true testament to the spirit of the expedition.



When the students arrived at Wormshill campsite on Saturday evening, the welcome from staff was jubilant. There were cheers and lots of tired but happy faces. Dinner was cooked on Trangias (with mixed success – we won't name names, but let's just say burnt pasta was a popular feature!) and the evening was filled with joy. The attached park quickly became the centre of activity, with students and staff alike making full use of the swings and climbing frames. It was pure, unfiltered fun.

Sunday morning was noticeably quieter – the effects of Saturday's exertions clearly felt. But again, our students showed remarkable resilience. They scrubbed their Trangias (with much grumbling about burnt-on food), packed up their tents, and



were ready for another 10-16km hike. It was impressive to see how much they had grown in just 24 hours. Navigational mistakes were fewer, teamwork was smoother, and the confidence in each group was obvious.

There were more funny moments, more cow encounters, and even more stories added to the expedition memory bank. As students marched back into Bexon Lane on Sunday evening, there were cheers from teachers and parents alike. The sense of pride we all felt was overwhelming. These students had pushed themselves, learned new skills, supported one another, and completed something truly meaningful.

They were tired, yes – but they were also

glowing with pride.

Before embarking on their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) expedition, Year 9 students undertook several months of preparation and commitment across four key sections: Volunteering, Physical, Skills, and Expedition. For the Volunteering section, students dedicated their time to helping in their communities, supporting causes such as local charities, school clubs, and environmental projects. The Physical

section required students to regularly engage in a chosen sport or physical activity, showing personal improvement over a sustained period. Meanwhile, the Skills section saw participants develop abilities ranging from playing musical instruments and cooking, to photography and learning a new language. These three sections had to be completed and signed off by supervisors before students could participate in the final component – the Expedition.

Leading up to the weekend itself, students also attended after-school training sessions, learning essential skills such as map reading, using a compass, setting up a tent, cooking on a Trangia, and planning safe, efficient hiking routes. Only after demonstrating responsibility, resilience, and readiness were they approved to take part in the qualifying expedition.

Following the expedition, students were asked whether



they would recommend the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award to Year 8 pupils – and the response was overwhelmingly positive, albeit with some honest reflections. Many highlighted the importance of resilience, noting that the experience pushed them out of their comfort zones. For those who felt they lacked resilience at the start, several students pointed out that DofE is actually the perfect way to build it. Others emphasised the level

of dedication required, stressing that success in the award comes only with commitment – attending every training session, completing the volunteering, physical, and skills sections, and being prepared to work hard. A number of students credited the after-school training sessions led by Mrs Lee and Mrs Wayte as crucial to their achievement, saying these sessions gave them the tools and

confidence needed to succeed. While many admitted there were moments of challenge and even exhaustion, every student agreed: it was absolutely worth it, and a truly rewarding experience they'd remember for years to come.

Each and every student should be incredibly proud of what they achieved. As staff, we couldn't be more impressed with their resilience, humour, teamwork, and spirit.

Well done Year 9!



# THE WILD LIFE OF GEORGE IV: A GEORGIAN KING LIKE NO OTHER

Annabelle C in Year 7 explores the fascinating and chaotic life of George IV, her favourite monarch from the Georgian era. Her lively account highlights his eccentric personality, love of fashion and food, and dramatic royal scandals.



The Georgian era was, to say the least, chaotic—and it is my favourite part of history of all time. There is just so much information about it, and it never gets boring. The Georgian kings were, well, strange...

## George IV

George IV is my favourite monarch of all time. He was born to George III and Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. He had a very eccentric father and soon became fed up. His role was to act as Prince Regent, meaning he made decisions on behalf of the king.

George IV designed Buckingham Palace—would you believe it! He was very interested in art and fashion, but struggled with obesity. He also loved food. One of his ministers once suggested he wear a corset—and he was, in fact, already wearing one!

He enjoyed spending time with famous noblewomen, mostly duchesses and

actresses, but he hated his wife. George III promised to pay off his son's rising debts if he married Queen Caroline, so that's exactly what the lazy Regent King did. The problem was, he already had a wife—Maria Fitzherbert. To make things even worse, he had to get a divorce, which was strictly against Catholic law. But that didn't matter much to him, because he was Prince Regent and could do what he wanted.

When his father died at the age of 81, George was very glad to finally become king. He banned Queen Caroline from his coronation, and she died just three weeks later. George himself died ten years later, due to obesity and blood loss.

So, George IV had a very interesting life indeed. There are always more facts about him to discover, and I love finding out new things.

WRITTEN BY ANNABELLE C  
YEAR 7

# WORDS THAT INSPIRE: RAINHAM POETRY FESTIVAL 2025 UNITES VOICES AND VERSE

The Rainham Poetry Festival 2025 brought together voices in a powerful celebration of verse and identity – with exclusive interviews by Bea H, who spoke to RMGS's Mrs Horstrup and Miss Davies about the lasting impact of the event.

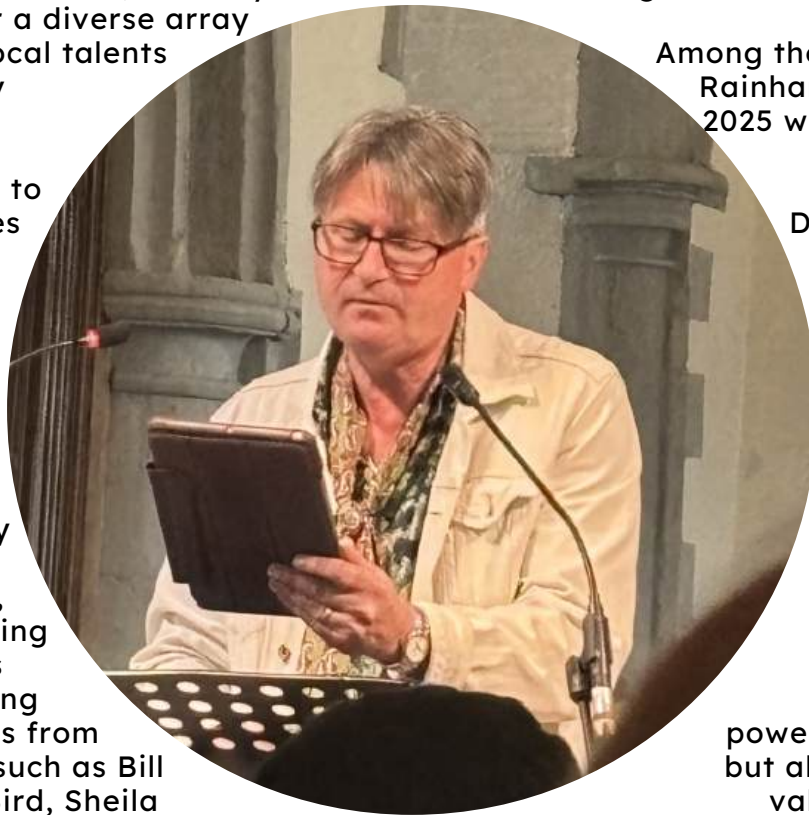
From April 11th to 12th, 2025, the historic St Margaret's Church in Rainham, Kent, became a vibrant hub for poets and poetry enthusiasts during the Rainham Poetry Festival. This free, two-day event brought together a diverse array of voices, from local talents to internationally acclaimed poets, embodying the festival's mission to unite communities through the transformative power of poetry.

The festival commenced on Friday evening with an open mic session hosted by actor and poet Nathaniel Oguns, setting a welcoming tone for the days ahead. The evening featured readings from esteemed poets such as Bill Lewis, Caroline Bird, Sheila Aldous, Charlotte Ansell, and Adrian Masters, each offering unique perspectives that resonated with the audience.

Saturday's highlight was a reading by Poet Laureate Simon Armitage, who shared selections from his recent collections, *Blossomise* and *Never Good with Horses*. Armitage's presence underscored the festival's commitment to featuring prominent literary figures and fostering a deep appreciation for contemporary poetry.

The festival also celebrated young poets through a competition among sixth form

students from Medway schools. Winners were honoured in a ceremony attended by local dignitaries, reflecting the festival's dedication to nurturing the next generation of literary voices.



Among those attending the Rainham Poetry Festival 2025 were Mrs Horstrup, Deputy Head of RMGS, and Miss Davies, Teacher of English, who have both long championed the importance of the arts in education.

Speaking warmly about the atmosphere at St Margaret's Church, they reflected on how the festival not only showcased powerful poetic talent, but also reinforced the values of creativity, inclusion, and shared expression that are central to the RMGS ethos.

Bea H sat down with Mrs Horstrup and Miss Davies after the event to learn more about their thoughts on the festival and the role of poetry in the school community.

What did you enjoy about the festival?

MRS H- It was a real celebration of spoken word poetry, a form that we don't always speak about. I really enjoyed the performances from each poet and how the poetry linked in with music and lyrics. I also think that it is really important to



Rainham Poetry Festival 2025's headlining poet was Poet Laureate, Simon Armitage

see poetry as something that isn't static but can be performative. Too often people see poetry as something that is scary or difficult to understand but the Rainham Poetry Festival aims to make poetry more inclusive every year. The whole festival is entirely free to attend and is funded by a secret philanthropist; therefore it really is for everyone! I also love the venue for this event, St. Margaret's church is beautiful and has brilliant acoustics!

MISS D- There is always a variety of poets and performances. The past two years, Rainham has welcomed Carol Ann Duffy and Simon Armitage (both Poet Laureates). This year there was also a brilliant performance by Katy Carr who recited William Blake poems whilst playing folk music on her ukulele!

It was a real highlight of my experience this year. It seemed that the 2025 festival was focused on poetry's ability to be musical and bring it to life.

How would you like to see the festival expand in the coming years?

MRS H- I think that the festival would be much more fun if more people came! Poetry really is for everyone and should be enjoyed by a larger audience. We are so lucky to have this annual event on our doorstep. Not only that but it is free to attend! It would be brilliant to see more RMGS students getting involved in the wider community and enjoying poetry. There are tons of local events that you can attend, the Medway council website is a great website to find out what's on.



Nathaniel Oguns is an actor, starring in a British comedy series produced by BBC and A24, called 'Dreaming Whilst Black'. He's also a presenter and a poet.

**MISS D-** I would like to see the festival include more youth poetry. Each year there is a sixth form competition where students write poetry in response to a theme. It is always awe-inspiring to see students from local schools perform and share their work at this event. I guess I just wish that there was more opportunity for students in KS3 and 4 to showcase their talents. Being an English teacher, I know all about the brilliant writers that we have in our school community and it would be brilliant to give them a stage to share their poetry. Also, the youth poetry is always presented at the end of the festival when many guests have already left! Bringing it forward in the programme of events would be a great way to show off some young talent in Medway. However, I would give the event 5 stars! It is unique to Rainham and a real

pleasure to attend - and all for free!

Next year's Rainham Poetry Festival will take place in spring/summer and the English Department are eager to advertise the event to all pupils when the time comes. In the meantime, you could be reading, or even writing, poetry for yourself. Remember, poetry is for everyone!

WRITTEN BY MRS STARR AND BEA H  
YEAR 7

## THE BOOKMARK

“The Bookmark” is a captivating column written by Isla B, the deputy editor of The Mark, dedicated to all things literary. Featured in each issue throughout the 2024-2025 academic year, this column offers a sneak peek into upcoming book releases, along with thoughtful reviews and recommendations from Isla herself.

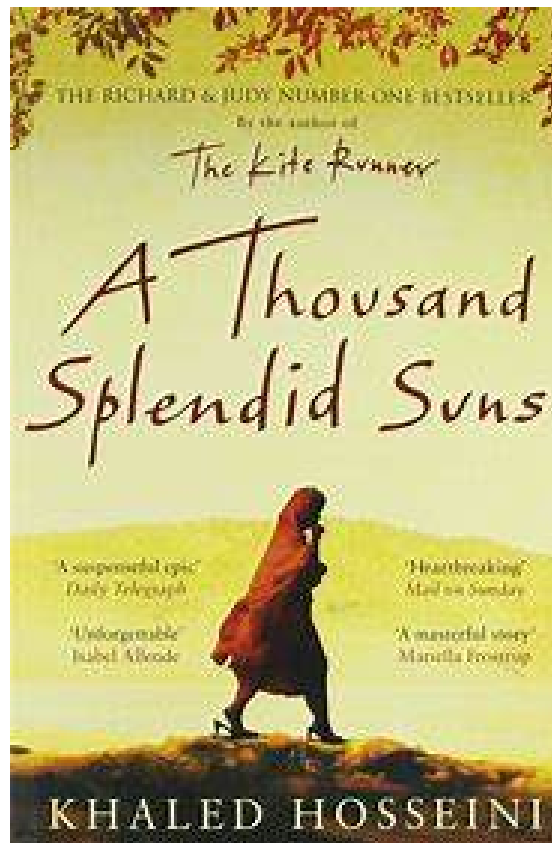
### A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS- A REVIEW

Khaled Hosseini’s thought-provoking book tells the story of Mariam and Laila, two Afghan women from different generations whose lives become intertwined by war, loss, and fate. Mariam is forced into marriage with the much older Rasheed, while Laila, a young and educated girl, is later brought into her life. The novel explores their evolving relationship as they navigate the brutal and oppressive environment of Afghanistan under the Taliban regime. Despite enduring immense hardships, their bond deepens, and they find strength and resilience in their shared struggle for survival and freedom.

This is a powerful and moving novel that offers a heartbreaking glimpse into the lives of women in Afghanistan. Hosseini masterfully portrays the themes of love, sacrifice, and the resilience of the human spirit in the face of unimaginable adversity. While the story is emotionally challenging due to its depiction of violence and oppression, it is ultimately a story of hope and the enduring power of female solidarity.

Hosseini’s writing style in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is both lyrical and

accessible, marked by vivid imagery and emotional depth. His prose is elegant yet unpretentious, allowing the rawness of the characters’ experiences to resonate powerfully with the reader. Through simple but evocative language, he paints a hauntingly beautiful portrait of Afghanistan’s landscapes and culture,

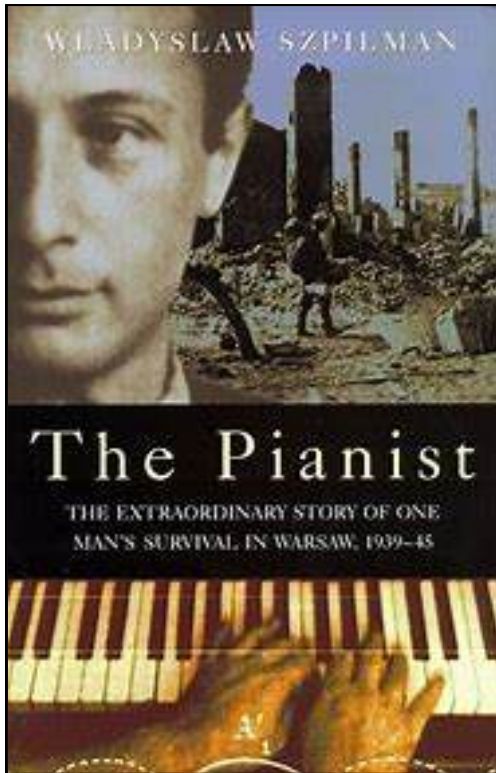


while also capturing the intimate, everyday moments that define Mariam and Laila’s lives. His use of shifting perspectives gives the reader a deeper understanding of each character’s inner world, and his ability to convey complex emotions with clarity and nuance makes the story both heartbreaking and deeply human.

I loved this book because the characters are well-developed, and their experiences are both deeply personal and reflective of the broader historical and political context of Afghanistan.

WRITTEN BY ISLA B  
YEAR 12

# OVERRATED OR UNDERRATED?



## Underrated- The Pianist: The Extraordinary Story of One Man's Survival.

The Pianist is a memoir by Władysław Szpilman, a Polish-Jewish pianist who survived the Holocaust in Warsaw. The book recounts his experiences from the initial Nazi occupation, through his time in the Warsaw Ghetto, to his eventual escape and survival in hiding. Szpilman details the horrors he witnessed, the constant fear of discovery, and the moments of unexpected kindness that helped him endure. The book highlights his struggle to maintain his connection to music amidst the dehumanising conditions of war.

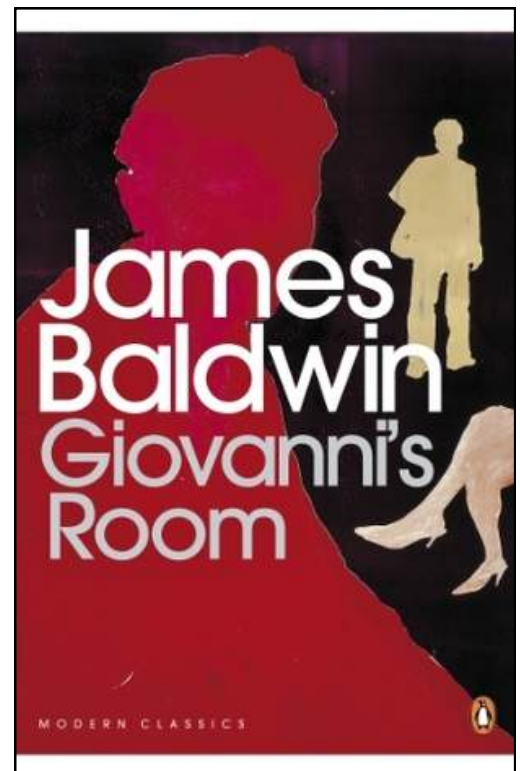
Szpilman's direct and unsentimental writing makes the events he describes even more impactful. The memoir offers a unique perspective on the Holocaust, focusing on the experiences of an individual rather than broad historical narratives. The film adaptation, directed by Roman Polanski, brought this story to a wider audience, but the book offers a more detailed and nuanced portrayal of Szpilman's experience.

It allows for a more intimate look into his internal world—you get his thoughts, feelings, and reflections on the events unfolding around him. This internal monologue provides a deeper understanding of his psychological and emotional state during the war. If you enjoyed the movie, I would highly recommend reading the book.

## Overrated- Giovanni's Room

This book by James Baldwin tells the story of David, an American man in Paris, grappling with his identity and sexuality. While awaiting the execution of Giovanni, a young Italian man with whom he had a passionate affair, David reflects on his relationship with Giovanni and his fiancée, Hella. The novel explores themes of self-repression, fear, and the destructive consequences of denying one's true nature. Set against the backdrop of 1950s Paris, it delves into the complexities of love, desire, and the search for acceptance in a world that often condemns those who deviate from societal norms.

I found this novel to be a powerful exploration of self-denial and the consequences of living in fear of societal expectations. Though I believe it's somewhat overrated, its impact on LGBTQ+ literature is undeniable, particularly for its honest portrayal of same-sex desire and defiance of convention. That said, the novel has flaws. David's self-pitying and passive nature made him hard to connect with. Since the story is told solely from his perspective, Giovanni and Hella's experiences feel limited and filtered, leaving readers unsure of their true realities.



WRITTEN BY ISLA B  
YEAR 12

# FREEDOM OVER HOMEWORK: A DISCUSSION ABOUT HOW HOMEWORK AFFECTS STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH.

Amber B in Year 9 shares a powerful opinion piece on the negative impact of homework on students' wellbeing, free time, and future goals. She argues that excessive homework causes unnecessary stress and takes away from learning essential life skills and preparing for GCSEs.

Homework is something every student faces after a long, tiring seven hours of learning at school. Some people argue that it's educational and helps us retain what we've learned in previous lessons—but does it really help? And does it really only take an hour to complete? In my opinion, it isn't worth it. Why do we spend extra time going over what we already revisited during the starter activity in the next lesson?

Everyone has different opinions on homework, but I believe it takes over our lives in a big way. It prevents us from learning essential life skills—like how to take care of children, cook, clean, and most importantly, how to grow up. It also takes away our time to enjoy freedom and explore our passions. For example, a student aspiring to be a professional football player might have to miss training or matches because of homework. That could damage their chances of success, simply because they're afraid of the consequences from teachers.

Teachers often tell us that all that matters is trying our best, yet there is pressure to get 100% on every assignment—and if we don't, we risk detention. Is that really fair? We're still young and learning, and expecting perfection from everyone doesn't reflect that. If a student is struggling with certain questions and doesn't have access to help, they might feel inadequate for not knowing everything by heart. Not all of us understand things instantly. This kind of pressure can cause stress and make students feel like they're falling behind, even when they're not.

Some might say homework isn't a big deal—it's just a sheet or two. But it can impact the things that truly matter, like spending time with family. We never know how long our loved ones will be around, and homework often takes away those precious moments. Even more importantly, it affects sleep. Excessive homework can keep students up late, leading to sleep deprivation, which is damaging to both physical and mental health. Exhaustion can even contribute to serious health problems. Instead of fostering a love for learning, homework can make students dread school, which is not how education should feel. Many students also lack free time when they get home. While some may say homework only takes half an hour, that's not always true. I know several students who find homework more difficult than others or don't have the right resources at home to complete it. Instead of allowing those students to skip a single task, some teachers expect families to buy additional materials—even if they don't have the time or money to do so.

We should be focusing more on our GCSEs rather than being burdened with constant homework. Why are we even receiving homework from subjects we don't plan to take in the future? Teachers often stress how important it is to think ahead and prepare for our exams—but how can we focus on revision if we're overwhelmed with irrelevant tasks? Our GCSEs determine our future jobs, yet we're expected to prioritise homework over meaningful preparation. Lessons should

provide the knowledge we need. Homework doesn't necessarily make us smarter—it often just adds stress and pressure.

Students should have more say in how they spend their time outside of school. Our lives beyond the school gates should belong to us. Yet homework continues to interfere with our goals, our freedom, and our mental wellbeing. It's time to ask whether it's really helping—or if it's just holding us back.

WRITTEN BY AMBER B  
YEAR 9

University of  
**Kent**

# Bioscience Work Experience Week

Monday 4<sup>th</sup> to Friday 8<sup>th</sup> August

This week offers budding scientists the opportunity to experience what it is like to study bioscience at university. As part of this week, you will: carry out your own mini research project in our undergraduate teaching laboratories, compete in an agar art competition, listen in on research talks, and produce your own research poster.

This event is completely free to attend, and lunch will be provided throughout the week.

This opportunity is available to students who live in Kent and are studying biology at sixth form or college. Considering there are limited places available, applicants who meet the university's widening participation criteria will be prioritised.

Applications are currently open and will close midnight on Sunday the 18<sup>th</sup> of May. To apply, please scan the QR code below:



# WHEN FAME GOES TOO FAR: WHY POWER SHOULDN'T PLACE YOU ABOVE THE LAW

Danny A in Year 9 explores how fame and power can lead celebrities to believe they are above the law, highlighting the serious consequences of unchecked behaviour. Through the cases of Dr Disrespect and P. Diddy, he argues that all individuals—regardless of status—should be held equally accountable for their actions.

In today's celebrity-obsessed world, fame and wealth often lead certain individuals to believe they can act without consequence. Amber B in Year 9 explores how fame has influenced the actions of some public figures and raises the question of whether the rich and famous are treated too leniently when it comes to serious allegations.

One example is Herschel Beahm IV, better known as Dr Disrespect, a former Twitch streamer. By the age of 38, he had what many would consider a dream life: a well-paid job doing what he loved, a supportive wife, and a young daughter. However, he made headlines for having an affair, which was just the beginning of his downward spiral. Allegations later emerged that he had engaged in inappropriate conversations with a minor—conversations that reportedly continued even after she revealed her age. As a result, Dr Disrespect lost his Twitch and YouTube platforms, was dropped by sponsors, and became widely criticised. His fame, it seemed, had clouded his judgement.

Another case is Sean John Combs, better known as P. Diddy. Like Dr Disrespect, he had a successful career, wealth, and a family. Yet multiple allegations began to surface—first anonymously—accusing him of sexual assault, rape, and even issuing death threats. Eventually, over 100 accusations came to light. Police investigations revealed far more disturbing activities, including links to sex trafficking and unsettling reports of so-called "Diddy Parties." The fallout was swift and severe: public opinion turned .

dramatically against him, his reputation was destroyed, and he was arrested on 6th September. He spent his 55th birthday behind bars on 4th November

These examples highlight a worrying trend: celebrities who achieve extreme fame often begin to see themselves as untouchable. Society can sometimes idolise celebrities to the point that their wrongdoings are overlooked or forgiven too easily. This imbalance in accountability allows harmful behaviour to continue unchecked. If an ordinary person were to commit these acts, consequences would follow far sooner. Yet for celebrities, it often takes multiple allegations and overwhelming evidence before justice is served.

It's important to remember that no one, regardless of wealth or fame, should be placed above the law. Talented or not, celebrities are people like everyone else and should be held to the same standards. We must shift the culture of blind admiration and recognise that power should not excuse abuse. Real change happens when accountability is applied equally.

WRITTEN BY DANNY A  
YEAR 9

# THE HISTORY OF AI- A CONCEPT THAT'S NOT AS MODERN AS IT SEEMS

This article, written by our editor Ruby R, explores the surprising ancient origins and rapid evolution of artificial intelligence, from mythological tales to modern innovations like Sophia the robot. It also highlights both the transformative potential and the emerging risks of AI technology in today's society.

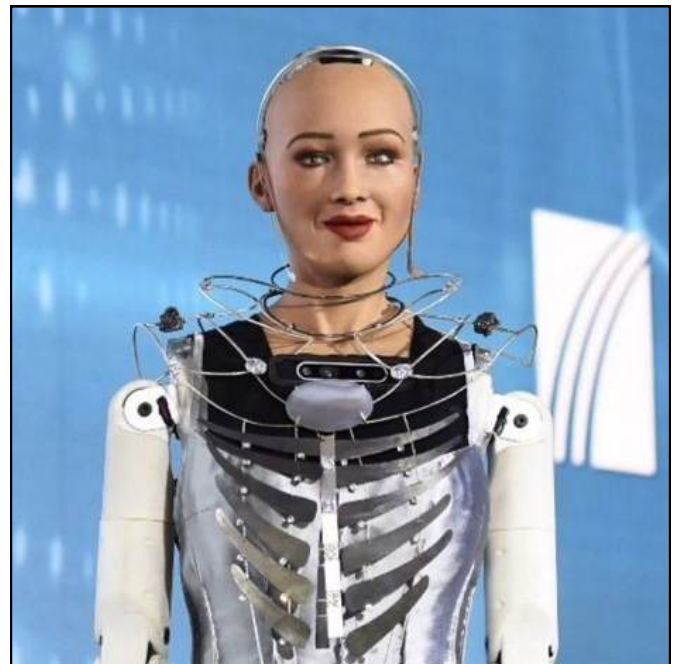
When we think of AI, our minds often wander to new, life-changing inventions such as Apple's Siri or Amazon's Alexa, which were both introduced in the early 2010s—less than 20 years ago. However, the idea of artificial intelligence surprisingly traces back much further than this.

Greek mythology first presented tales of futuristic robots and artificial beings such as Pandora, as well as early notions of biotechnology, exploring how technology could alter the nature of biology.

In the 13th century, Spanish philosopher Ramon Llull developed a system of mechanical logic based on symbols and diagrams. Later, in the 17th century, philosopher and mathematician Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz built on Llull's ideas and imagined a universal language of symbols to solve problems, thus laying the foundations for the future creation of intelligent machines.

In 1833, mathematicians and close friends Charles Babbage and Ada Lovelace collaborated, leading to the invention of the Analytical Machine—a forerunner to modern computers. In addition, novelist Samuel Butler proposed the idea that machines could become conscious and replace mankind. He was one of the first to warn us of the dangers of technological advancement—perhaps we should have listened to him sooner...

Advancements in AI really began to take off in the 1950s, as more and more people became interested in, and fascinated by, the concept. Claude Shannon, known as the "Father of Information Theory," published

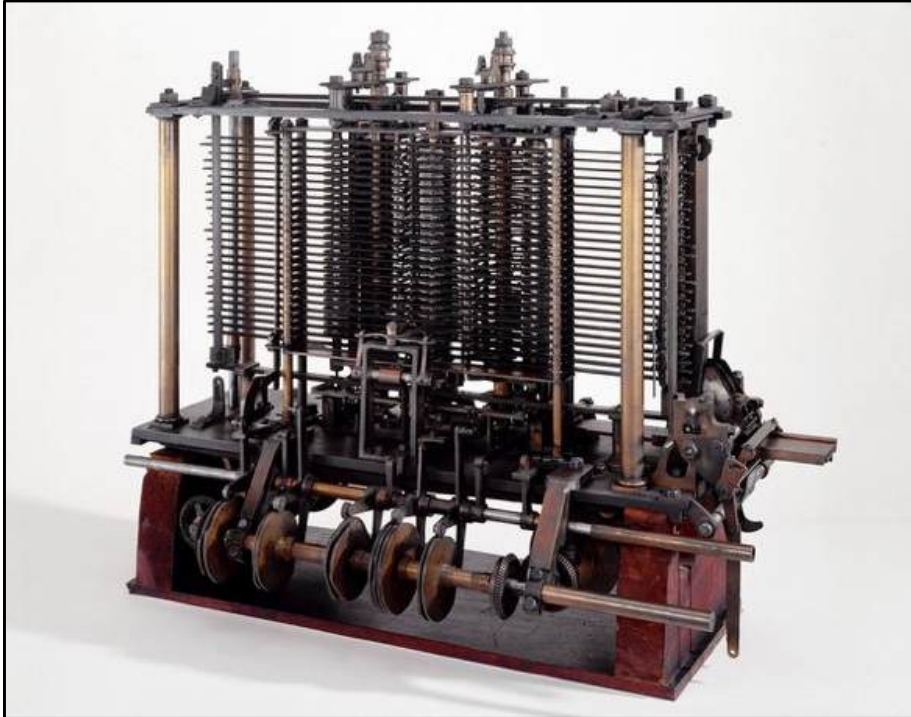


Sophia The Robot

Programming a Computer for Playing Chess, offering thousands of curious minds a way to explore the wonders of emerging technology. Just a few years after this publication, Arthur Samuel developed the first computer program for playing chess, paving the way for further research in strategic gaming.

In 1955, the term "artificial intelligence" was officially coined by computer scientist John McCarthy, giving a clearer and more formal name to this rapidly emerging field. In the same year, the first official AI computer program was created by Allen Newell, Herbert Simon, and Cliff Shaw—an exciting and major milestone in the history of AI.

In the 1970s and '80s, advances in AI were limited due to computational constraints and a lack of funding.



### Analytical Machine

This period is commonly referred to as the “AI winter.” However, this didn’t stop Japan’s Waseda University from building the first anthropomorphic robot, WABOT-1.

This brings us to more recent inventions—perhaps the most captivating. In 2004, NASA’s robotic explorers navigated Mars without human intervention.

In 2016, Hanson Robotics created a hyper-realistic humanoid robot known as Sophia, who later became the world’s first “robot citizen.”

AI has seen a growing presence across a wide range of key sectors in recent years, including customer service, education, and healthcare. This growth has increased public awareness of the undeniable benefits of AI. Yet, we must not forget Samuel Butler’s early concerns. A recent investigation by Apollo

Research, an AI safety firm, revealed that the most advanced AI models may, in specific circumstances, plot and act with deceit against their creators and users.

So, while AI is undoubtedly influential, it also poses potential dangers to society—dangers we must remain vigilant about.

WRITTEN BY RUBY R  
YEAR 12

**INTERESTED IN WORLD AFFAIRS?**  
**SHARE YOUR INTERESTS WITH RMGS!**



**WEDNESDAY LUNCH  
IN L6**

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ENQUIRIES AT [LSTARR@RMET.ORG](mailto:LSTARR@RMET.ORG)**

# I'M NOT PERFECT

Aimee L in Year 9 explores the damaging effects of unrealistic beauty standards and how they can lead to bullying, low self-esteem, and serious mental health struggles. Using real-life examples, including the experience of Jesy Nelson from Little Mix, she highlights the urgent need for greater acceptance and body positivity in society.

In today's society, young people—especially women—are facing increasing pressure to meet impossible beauty standards. Social media, advertising, and public figures constantly present images of perfection, making it difficult for individuals to feel confident in their own skin. Whether it's being told you're too tall, too short, too blonde, too brunette, or that your features aren't quite right, it feels as though we're all expected to look like flawless supermodels. Big lips—but not too big. Perfect skin—but it has to be natural. The contradiction is exhausting, and the pressure is endless.

These standards often lead people to turn to body modifications, heavy makeup, fillers, or even cosmetic surgery, just to feel accepted. Society has, in many ways, been conditioned to believe that beauty only looks one way—when in reality, it doesn't. Beauty is diverse. But the message we often receive says otherwise.

You might assume this issue isn't that serious or doesn't affect many people, but the truth is far more concerning. A national survey conducted across England and Wales found that over 55% of young people have experienced bullying based on their appearance. This is not just a passing concern—it's a widespread and deeply damaging problem affecting school environments, social spaces, and even households.



A high-profile example of this is Jesy Nelson, former member of the popular girl group Little Mix. After the band won The X Factor, Jesy became the target of constant online and in-person abuse. She was cruelly labelled the "ugly, fat one," and endured years of bullying that severely impacted her mental and physical health. In her BBC Three documentary, Jesy revealed that she had once attempted suicide, saying she felt like she was "living a dream" but "hating it at the same time." Her story is just one of many. In Britain, more than half of youth suicides are linked to bullying—most of it rooted in appearance-based criticism.

Unrealistic beauty standards are not harmless. They hurt. They silence individuality and destroy confidence. It's time we start accepting ourselves—and others—for who we are, not what we look like. By challenging harmful ideals and embracing real, diverse beauty, we can help create a more supportive and healthier society.

No one should ever feel like they're not enough because they don't fit a narrow definition of beauty. And if you ever find yourself thinking, "I'm not perfect," remember: you already are—just as you are.

# Medical Society

*For KS5 students aspiring to join  
medical based careers*

Talks from medical professionals  
Help with medical school application  
Interview preparation  
Understanding research articles  
Ethical debates  
UKAT preparation



Every Tuesday at  
13:40 in Q1

First meeting for year 12  
students on January 7<sup>th</sup>

# DO CELEBRITIES REALLY FEEL THE PAIN OF PUBLIC CRITICISM?

This article, written by Molly S in Year 9, explores how public criticism and online hate can deeply affect celebrities' mental health and personal lives. Using examples like Jane Moore, it highlights the pressure celebrities face to constantly meet public expectations while dealing with negativity behind the scenes.

Many celebrities struggle with the pressure of constantly being in the public eye. With every word they say and every action they take, they must consider not just one person's reaction—but potentially millions. While mistakes can and do happen, the backlash they receive online is often harsh, even if their behaviour is out of character. These comments can have a serious impact on a celebrity's mental health.

One example of this is the backlash faced by Loose Women host Jane Moore. During a reality TV episode of *I'm A Celebrity*, Moore shared her opinion about gender roles in camp, which sparked an intense reaction online. She had been assigned washing-up duties and questioned whether this decision was made because she was a woman. Although she expressed her concern calmly, some viewers on social media branded her as dramatic and labelled her comments as sexist and ageist. Despite some of her fellow campmates supporting her, many online users told her to "get a grip" and dismissed her viewpoint. The negativity that followed made Jane feel she could no longer speak freely, a sentiment shared by many celebrities who face public scrutiny.

So how do celebrities deal with constant judgment from the public? Here are a few common ways:

- Many celebrities try to ignore the hateful comments, understanding that negativity is part of fame.
- Some choose to respond calmly, depending on their mood or the situation.
- When comments become repetitive or aggressive, celebrities often block those users on social media.



Pop culture means that celebrities put themselves in the limelight. Yet we need to remember that they are people too.

- Most celebrities receive thousands of messages daily, so they don't read every comment. Over time, they grow used to dealing with public opinion.
- In many cases, celebrities' social media accounts are managed by teams who respond on their behalf.
- When asked in interviews how they handle criticism, many simply say they choose to focus on the positive and their supportive fans.

In conclusion, while celebrities may seem to live glamorous lives, they often face intense emotional pressure behind the scenes. Constant negativity can push them to a breaking point, with some even stepping away from their careers due to overwhelming hate. It's important to remember that celebrities are people too—and they deserve respect just like anyone else.

WRITTEN BY MOLLY S  
YEAR 9

# Space School

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> August

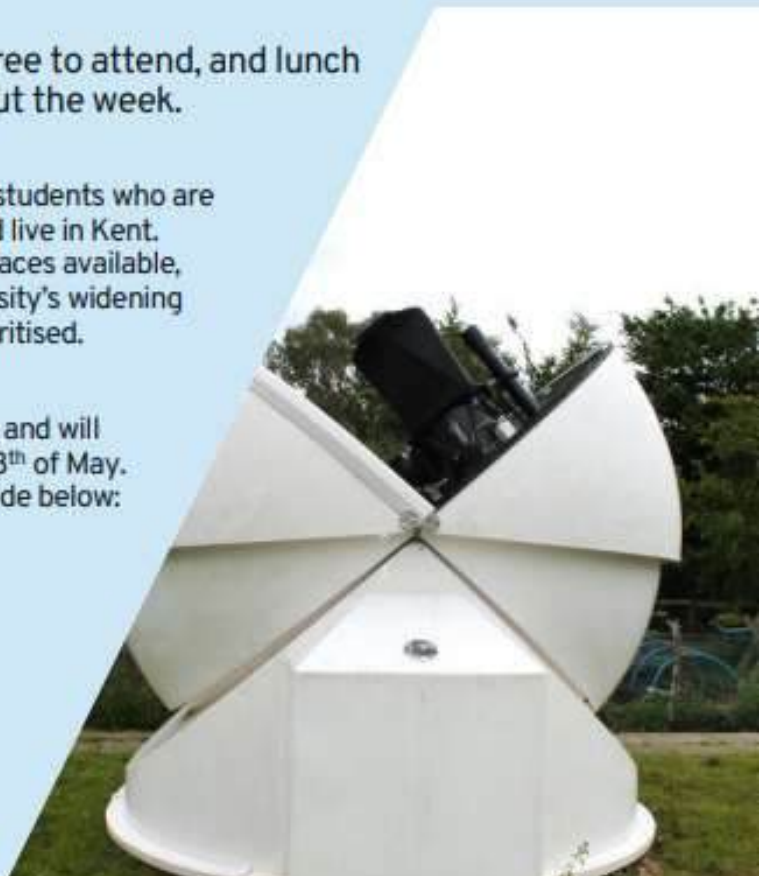
Ever wanted to design, build and launch your own rocket? Then this event is for you!

Join us as we plan an exciting mission to Mars, taking you through a condensed mission life cycle. You will get to programme rovers to navigate an obstacle course, research and propose a cubesat mission, and more!

This event is completely free to attend, and lunch will be provided throughout the week.

This opportunity is available to students who are between 14 and 17 years old and live in Kent. Considering there are limited places available, applicants who meet the university's widening participation criteria will be prioritised.

Applications are currently open and will close midnight on Sunday the 18<sup>th</sup> of May. To apply, please scan the QR code below:

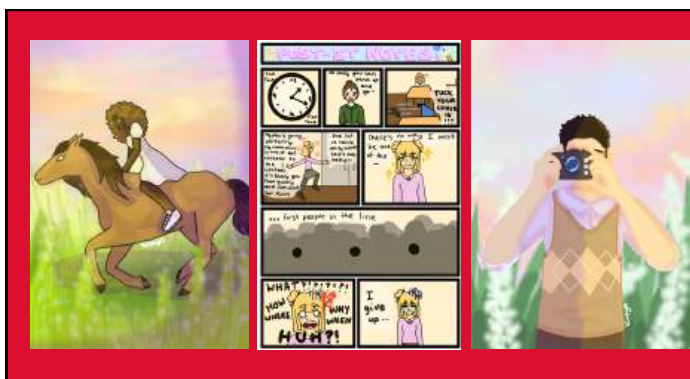
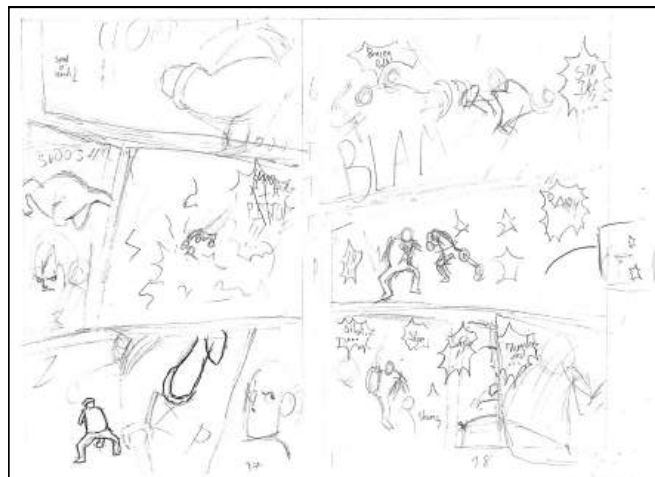
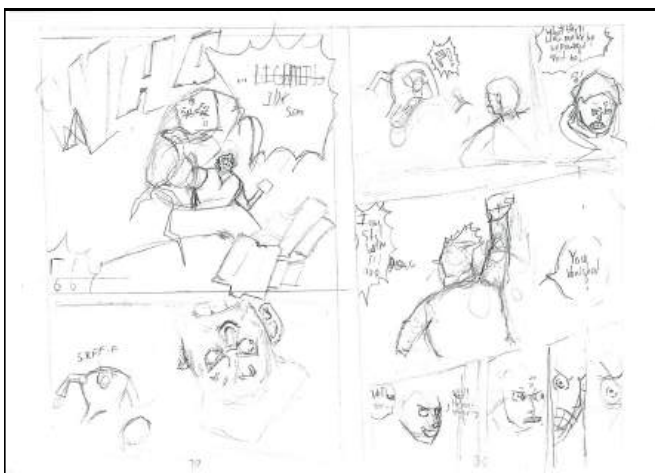


# ARTIST'S CORNER

"Artist's Corner" is a dedicated section in The Mark where students can showcase their artistic talents, including drawings, paintings, and digital art. Each issue highlights selected pieces, giving young artists a platform to share their creativity with the school community.

## COMIC-BOOK STORYBOARDS BY QAZIM I

This issue's Artist's Corner features Qazim I (Year 7), who impresses with his dynamic comic-book storyboards, a preview of his upcoming work set to be published in The Mark. Qazim's talent shines through in every panel, showcasing his creativity, attention to detail, and storytelling flair.



**ARTISTS WANTED!  
WEDNESDAY LUNCH  
IN L6**

CONTACT MRS STARR WITH ANY ENQUIRIES AT [LSTARR@RMET.ORG](mailto:LSTARR@RMET.ORG)

## REMARKABLE READS

Welcome to Remarkable Reads, the section that celebrates the boundless imagination and talent of our student writers! This space is dedicated to showcasing the creative works of RMGS pupils, from captivating short stories to evocative poetry.

Sophie R's poem 'Beauty Standards' explores the conflicting and harmful expectations placed on women, highlighting how society both idolises and devalues them based on appearance and behaviour.

### Beauty Standards

We always look for four leaf clovers,  
Picking and discarding the threes.  
We always try to fit in  
Yet we need to stand out.

We always pick the "prettiest" flowers  
Yet the "ugly" ones live on.  
We crush the petals like the veins of our hearts.

"Girls live to serve a purpose"  
Do they forget that we're human too?  
They pick us out. Crush our petals  
And then leave us to rot.

"You have to fit in"  
"You have to stand out"  
"But you can't be different", "can't be normal"  
"It's too bland!"  
"You have to cook and clean. Bare children. Care for yourself."  
"You have to look 'hot' but don't attract the wrong kind of attention"  
—because men can't control themselves.

1 in 30 women are sexually assaulted.  
They'll tear you down. Hurt you. Boys will be boys.

Don't be too normal, too different, too loud, too quiet, too independent, too dependent.

WRITTEN BY SOPHIE R  
YEAR 8



**WRITERS WANTED!**  
**WEDNESDAY LUNCH**  
**IN L6**

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ENQUIRIES AT [LSTARR@RMET.ORG](mailto:LSTARR@RMET.ORG)

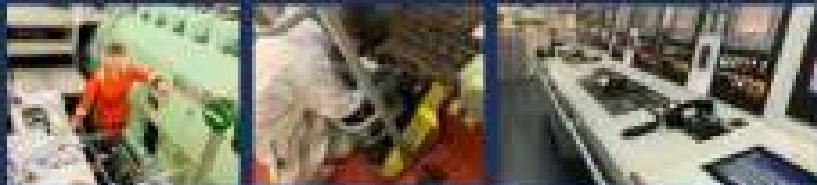


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**SATURDAY 10th MAY**  
**9:30AM - 15:00PM**

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We offer a 3-year training programme leading to a university-level degree qualification, training allowance, and paid tuition fees!

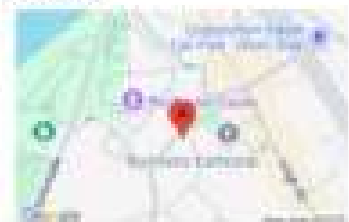
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FROM ALL YEAR GROUPS

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