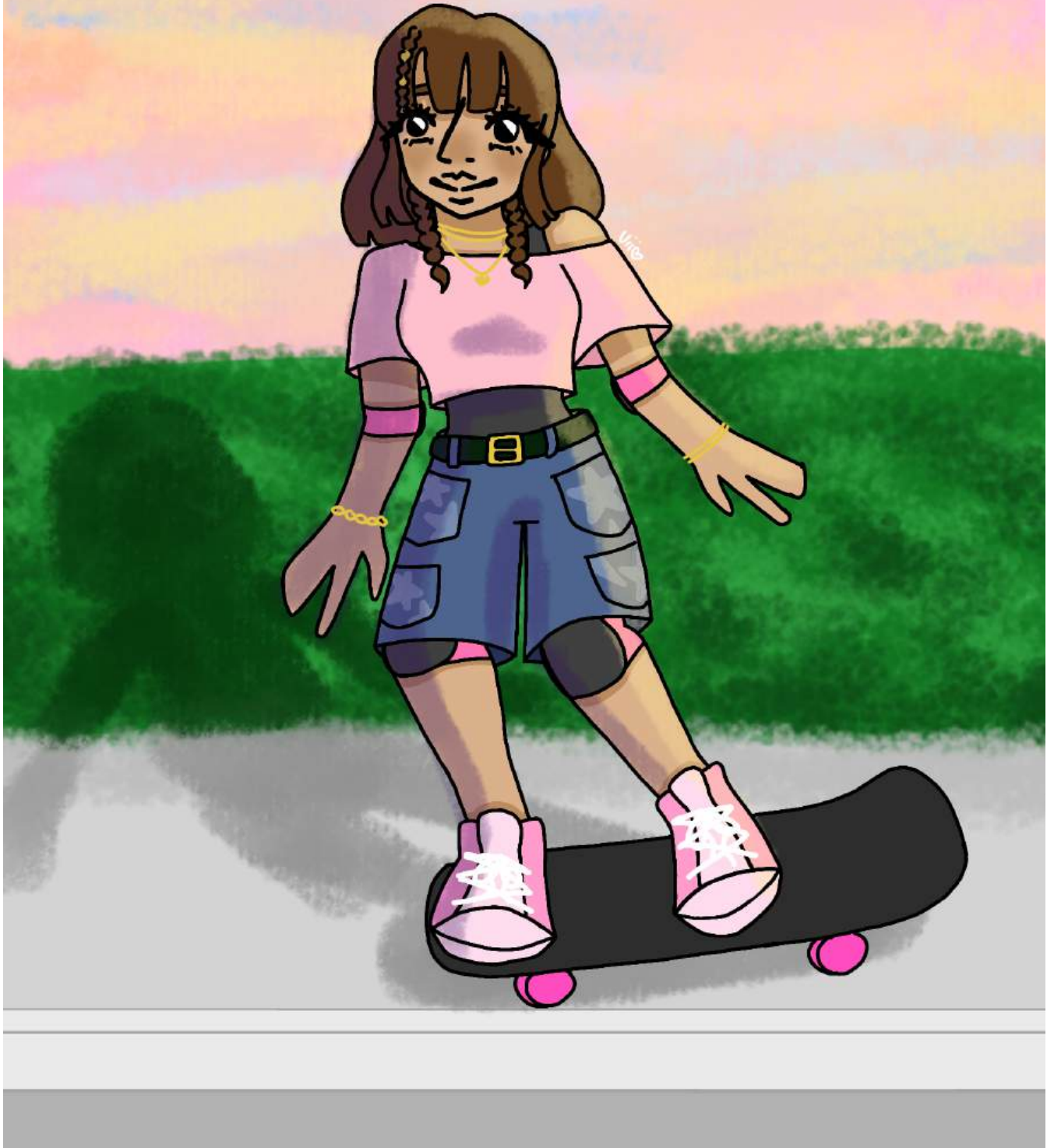


the Mark





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EDITOR'S NOTE

WRITTEN BY MRS STARR

Writing this Editor's Note is definitely bittersweet. On one hand, we are celebrating the end of another academic year, which brings countless opportunities to have fun and enjoy the summer sun. We are also celebrating another issue of The Mark. It has been brilliant working with the journalists who make this publication possible! However, at The Mark, we have said goodbye to our amazing 2024–2025 editors, Ruby R and Isla B. They have been instrumental in the success of this publication. Their enthusiasm and hard work have not gone unnoticed, and we will miss them dearly next year as they embark on their studies in Year 13.

Even though we are saying goodbye to some, we want to offer a warm welcome to all who have recently joined our team! They have written reviews, poems, and opinion pieces for you to enjoy. We are always looking for more journalists, artists, and photographers to join our team. If you are interested, please contact Mrs Starr via email at lstarr@rmet.org or go and see her in R4!

The RMGS spirit was evident throughout Term 6, with many events like Rainbow Friday, Charity Week, and The Big Walk. This year, all year groups had the opportunity to go on a trip: Year 7 learnt camping skills, Year 8 visited Planet Ice, Year 9 enjoyed Ninja Warrior, Year 10 went to Thorpe Park, and Year 12 went to Prison Island. We hope that everyone had a great experience on their year group trips.

I have really enjoyed putting this issue of The Mark together, as it showcases the creative writing talent we have at RMGS. At the end of this issue, Re-MARK-able Reads is full to the brim with poems and stories—do take the time to read and enjoy these works.

It was also great to see two reviews of Pig Heart Boy, a production that students across the school had the opportunity to see at The Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury. Each review is unique to the writer and their experience of the show, so do read both for a comprehensive critique of the performance.

Finally, I would like to mention some of the improvements we have for The Mark. We are looking to establish an entire section of the paper dedicated to photography! If you are a keen photographer, please get in touch with us. We are also hoping to cover more school events next year, so if you are running an event, please let us know—we would love to promote it in our publication.

Thank you for reading our small newspaper this year. We look forward to seeing you in the 2025–2026 academic year!

INSIDE THE CLASSROOM: REFLECTIONS ON MY WORK EXPERIENCE PLACEMENT IN THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

This reflective article, written by Danielle J, shares her experience of working in the RMGS English department during her Year 10 work experience. Through assisting teachers and engaging with students, she gained valuable insights into the teaching profession and developed new skills and confidence.

I am Danielle, and I am a Year 10 student here at RMGS. Recently, our year group was given the opportunity to take part in work experience. I chose to do mine in the English department. This gave me the chance to see lessons—and the planning that goes into them—from a different perspective.

During the week, I acted as a teaching assistant, shadowing various teachers with younger year groups. I helped with assessing reading, “Books and Biscuits” lessons, and more! I was also fortunate enough to observe an A-Level English lesson and see the class dynamics as well as the topics they study. I found it particularly interesting, as it was very different from typical GCSE classes—the books and poems are much more complex.

During my time with the English department, I learned how to manage my time efficiently, as there is always something to do—whether that’s organising books, completing small tasks like putting up displays, or helping plan lessons. At first, it was quite stressful trying to get everything done, but I soon got used to it. I also discovered that teachers often have to change their plans mid-lesson when students don’t understand certain concepts or need extra help with unexpected topics. It really shows how skilled our teachers are at “reading the room”!

I’ve realised that being a teacher isn’t easy. I now understand that assessments are stressful not just for students, but for teachers too—especially in a subject like English, where there’s rarely a clear right or wrong answer. Marking is actually really difficult! Knowing this, I’ll never be upset if I have to wait a week or so for my assessment grade. I also learned that being a teacher can be fun! Watching teachers rush around because there’s a candidate in for an interview, or simply chatting in the staffroom, are some of the funny and enjoyable moments I witnessed this week that made each day more enjoyable.

This experience has also helped me gain confidence, as it’s quite scary to walk into a room with 30 students watching you—it can be very daunting! However, I eventually became more comfortable in that environment, and I was able to go around to different students during lessons and have meaningful conversations with them.

This week, I have learned many new skills, and I’m incredibly grateful to have been given the opportunity to spend this time with the RMGS English department.

WRITTEN BY DANIELLE J
YEAR 11

RAINBOW FRIDAY BRINGS COLOUR, MUSIC, AND PRIDE TO RMGS!

This article, written by Mrs Starr and Bea H, celebrates Rainbow Friday at Rainham Mark Grammar School – a joyful event full of colour, music, and inclusivity to mark Pride Month. Organised by Mrs Horstrup and the Student Diversity Team, the day featured an open mic picnic, rainbow-themed outfits and food, and gave students a chance to express themselves and support one another.

On Friday 27th June, Rainham Mark Grammar School was bursting with colour, music, and celebration for this year's Rainbow Friday! Organised by the amazing Mrs Horstrup and the Student Diversity Team, the day was all about celebrating Pride Month and showing support for everyone in our school community.



Poster by Edie M

One of the biggest highlights of the day was the Rainbow Friday Picnic, which took place outside in the 'Outback' area of the school. It wasn't just a normal lunchtime—students gathered with their food to enjoy a fantastic open mic event filled with

music, poetry, and some incredible performances by their peers. The open mic was a joint effort from the Student Diversity Team, Dr Sutton, and the RMGS Girls Human Rights Hub, and it created an environment where students felt empowered to share their voices. One student shared that they felt the day “celebrates individuality and being you,” and that made the whole event feel extra special.

The school looked more vibrant than ever, as students were encouraged to ditch their uniforms and wear their most colourful clothes—and they definitely did not disappoint! Rainbow-themed outfits filled the corridors, and even the canteen joined in the fun with specially made “Rainbow” food for lunch. It was a brilliant visual reminder of what the day was all about: showing pride in who we are, and supporting one another. One student commented, “Rainbow Friday is a necessary and unforgiving representation of who people are as individuals,” which perfectly sums up the heart of the event.

When asked if the day made them feel included, another student said, “Yeah, because we can share our experiences and express ourselves,” while someone else added, “Yes—and everyone should feel included.” That's what made Rainbow Friday so powerful—it was fun, but also meaningful.

Of course, there's always room to make things even better. Some students suggested that “a bit more thought could've been put into the relevance of the performances,” though they agreed the acts were “all brilliant.” Many also praised the positive atmosphere, saying, “The environment and people were great!”



Overall, Rainbow Friday was a joyful celebration of Pride Month that brought our school together in the most colourful way possible. It reminded us all that at RMGS, everyone is welcome, everyone is valued, and everyone deserves to shine.



WRITTEN BY MRS STARR AND BEA H
YEAR 8

CHARITY WEEK! FUNDRAISING AND FRIENDLY COMPETITION

Charity Week at RMGS is always one of the most exciting and uplifting events in the school calendar – and this year was no exception! Across five action-packed days, forms from each house went head-to-head in a friendly battle to raise as much money as possible for their chosen charities. The school was buzzing with energy, creativity, and a wonderful sense of the RMGS spirit.

From soaking teachers in Sponge a Teacher to the sweet temptations of bake sales, there was something for everyone to enjoy.

Students and staff alike came together for a fantastic lineup of events, including

hilarious panto performances, the lively RMGS Carnival, and the ever-popular Guess the Teacher from their Baby Picture. The Staff Relay had everyone cheering from the sidelines, while countless other activities added to the festive atmosphere.

Together, our school community raised an incredible total of over £1,000 – a true testament to the dedication, teamwork, and generosity of everyone involved. A huge well done to all the houses, forms, and individuals who helped make Charity Week such a resounding success. What an amazing effort!

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: THE UNSUNG HEROES OF SCHOOL PRODUCTIONS

This article, written by Thomas W, shines a spotlight on the vital yet often overlooked role of technicians and backstage crew in school productions. Through personal experience and insight, Thomas highlights how these behind-the-scenes contributors are just as essential to a show's success as the performers on stage.



For the past three years, I've been involved with the technical side of Rainham Mark productions and concerts, and I have loved every single part of it.

When most people go to see a production—such as those who came to see Rainham Mark's astonishing musical *Grease*, featuring a '50s rock 'n' roll soundtrack—they are thrilled by the acting, music, and choreography. But one thing that some (though not all) may overlook is what happens behind the scenes on show night: the sound, the lights, and the stage management.

I'm not writing this to make you stare at the tech desk for the rest of your life, but I do think it's worth understanding the work that goes into making productions the best they can be. Just as the actors spend countless hours rehearsing, so do the musicians and technicians—programming lighting cues, reprogramming them into a suitable

order, and ensuring everything is clearly labelled.

Ever since I started taking part in an amateur drama group at eight years old, I've always paused during shows to wonder: Who moved the set on stage? Who chose the sound effects and ensured the microphones worked? Who was changing the lights and making sure the audience could see the actors? Who was making sure everything ran smoothly and everyone was in sync?

Well, I'm happy to say I now know the answers. These roles are taken on by Assistant Stage Managers (Stagehands), Sound Technicians (often known as SX1, SX2, etc.), Lighting Technicians (LX1, LX2, etc.), and the Deputy Stage Manager. Of course, there are many more departments involved, but this article would be five pages long if I listed every single one.

When I was in Year 6, after passing my 11+, I considered coming to RMGS—and I’m really glad I did. Since joining, I’ve had countless opportunities to be involved, whether backstage or working the sound or lighting desks. I’ve had the privilege of collaborating with amazing people, from Year 7 students to Sixth Formers, as well as professionals who come into the school to help.

Sadly, I’ve often been asked by relatives if I’m “in the production.” When I explain that I’m going to be a technician, they sometimes seem confused or even surprised that I’m not “on stage” or “actually in it.” As a techie, that’s always a little disheartening. In reality, it’s not just the actors who bring a show to life. It’s the ensemble. It’s the band. It’s the front of house team. And it’s the technicians.

After all, how would you see the actors if there were no lighting technicians? How would you hear them in a large auditorium without sound technicians? And how would you even find your seat or feel welcomed without front of house staff?

So, the next time you attend a performance, I ask you to consider this: “Who else has worked hard to put this show on—even if I can’t see them?”

WRITTEN BY THOMAS W
YEAR 10 STAGE MANAGEMENT TEAM
MEMBER (LIGHTING DEPT)





ARTISTS WANTED!

WEDNESDAY LUNCH IN L6

CONTACT MRS STARR WITH ANY ENQUIRIES AT LSTARR@RMET.ORG









THE BOOKMARK

This term, Bryony R takes over The Bookmark from our deputy editor, Isla B. She'll be sharing her latest book reviews along with thoughts on the ups and downs of reading. Look out for honest opinions, hidden gems, and must-read recommendations in each issue.

WHY SHOULD YOU READ?

Reading offers numerous benefits for both mental and physical health, including reduced stress, better sleep, improved memory, and stronger emotional intelligence. Despite its many advantages, daily reading remains low in the UK, highlighting the need to make it a more regular habit.



In the UK, only 19% of people read daily, yet this number should be far higher. The average child should be reading every day, yet for many, this is not the case. Reading has many positive aspects—often in unexpected ways.

Reading helps in various ways, improving both your mental and physical health. It reduces stress levels, improves sleep, fights depression, and lowers blood pressure.

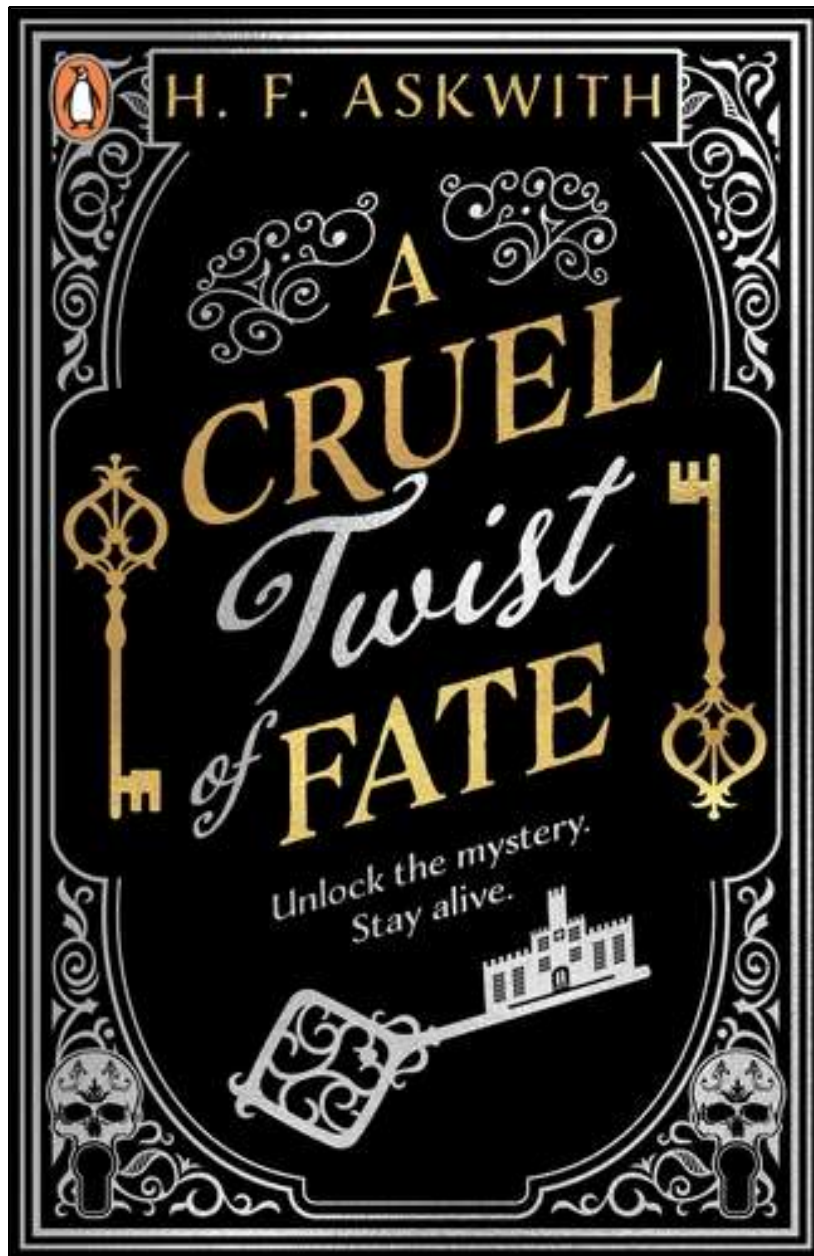
It can also encourage socialization and improve your grades. Reading strengthens your brain, enhancing memory, concentration, and vocabulary. It builds empathy and emotional intelligence, making it easier to connect with others. As well as all this, reading can reduce your risk of cognitive decline (the inability to learn, focus, and remember with age). This may increase your lifespan and lead to a happier, healthier life.

A CRUEL TWIST OF FATE BY H. F. ASKWITH - A REVIEW

In her review, Bryony R explores *A Cruel Twist of Fate* by H.F. Askwith, a gripping mystery that follows Helena Timber as she uncovers dark secrets and becomes entangled in a series of murders. While Bryony found the story immersive and atmospheric, she notes that the mystery becomes a little too easy to solve.

A Cruel Twist of Fate is an intriguing mystery/thriller written by H.F. Askwith, published in January 2024. You may have heard of Askwith's first book, *A Dark Inheritance*—if not, it's well worth the read and has set high expectations for this latest novel.

The story revolves around 17-year-old Helena Timber, who leaves her mother behind to take up a position as a governess at the remote and imposing Archfall Manor. Yet during her short stay there, Helena soon realizes she may have signed herself up for far more than she initially expected. Within just a few days, she uncovers dark and disturbing truths about her own identity and finds herself caught in the middle of three gruesome murders that shake the household to its core.



Every decision Helena makes from this point on carries enormous weight—potentially meaning the difference between life and death.

“*A Cruel Twist of Fate*” is a compelling and atmospheric story that keeps readers guessing throughout much of the novel. I found myself completely immersed in the richly detailed world that Askwith has created, often unable to put the book down. The tension builds steadily as Helena pieces together clues and faces

unexpected dangers. However, despite the engaging plot and vivid descriptions, the identity of the murderer becomes relatively easy to predict before the final reveal, which slightly lessened the suspense for me. Nevertheless, it's an enjoyable read for fans of mystery and thriller genres, with a strong heroine at its heart.

WRITTEN BY BRYONY R
YEAR 10

PIG HEART BOY: A REVIEW

Written by Daniel K, this engaging review explores the RMGS trip to Canterbury's Marlowe Theatre to see Pig Heart Boy, praising its powerful storyline, inventive staging, and outstanding performances. Daniel highlights key emotional moments and creative production choices, ultimately awarding the show a glowing 5/5 rating as "a show with plenty of heart."



It was Thursday 5 June when I joined the RMGS trip to Canterbury's Marlowe Theatre to watch a performance of Pig Heart Boy. And it was astounding from start to finish. For those who have not been to see it, this article will review some notable parts of the production. Oh, and just a warning : spoilers lie ahead. Turn back now if you don't want the story given away.

Where to start but with the remarkable storyline? The play centres around schoolboy Cameron who, due to leukaemia, must undergo a pig's heart transplantation. However, his relationships subsequently begin to fall apart, at the same time as him gaining a national status of fame! Over the course of the play, Cameron will change and

begin to see life in a different way, going for a troublesome, careless kid to a more responsible person. Other characters include Cameron's mother and father, the former of which is reluctant about the transplant; Dr Bryce the transgenics expert; and Rashid, another of Cameron's friends.

Some notable parts of the story include:

When Cameron's mother announces her pregnancy, which prompts Cameron to record videos for 'Alex' in case he dies before their birth;

- Cameron secretly telling Marlon about the transplant, which leads to the story being leaked to the media and a falling-out between the two;



- Cameron's discovery that he needs another transplant, which he rejects due to attention sickness (remember, national status of fame);
- Followed by his grandmother's passing which shows him how important life is and changes his mind about the operation, wanting to be there when Alex is born.

Another key aspect was the staging. What stood out to me was the pipelighting attached to a metal frame. This sometimes simulated a beating heart and changed colour to fit with the incredible scenery, and the metal frame could act as a bed, or a place to sit, or somewhere to wind down, just to name a few! Also, the retro TVs added to the vivid scenery by displaying many things on their screens like fields, books, mathematic equations, even some very gory imagery at one point. They, along with the lively lighting and creative soundscape, are just one of the things that stood out in the production.

And how can I do this review without mentioning the fantastic cast? I couldn't tell you any of their names, but I do know

that they were energetic, played multiple roles (as it was a small cast), and were absolutely great! The actor who played Cameron notably was able to talk about the experience his character was going through really well, adding to the amazing imagery. The scene with Cameron's grandmother's death was interesting too, showing her 'soul leaving her body' and 'passing onto the heavens' through how the actor left the stage. I found the slow motion introductions quite fun, as well as the other dance scenes. And the mime into the daredevil dive scenes was great.

Overall, Pig Heart Boy is an amazing, heartwarming show, in staging, story and cast, and very fun to watch. If it comes on again, I would recommend this to anyone who likes theatre and entertainment.

Final rating - (5/5)



"A show with plenty of heart"

WRITTEN BY DANIEL K
YEAR 8

STUNNING TECH BRINGS PIG HEART BOY TO LIFE ON STAGE

Written by Thomas W, this review explores a school trip to the Marlowe Theatre to see *Pig Heart Boy*, adapted by Winsome Pinnock from Malorie Blackman's novel. Thomas praises the powerful performances, innovative set and lighting design, and highlights how the production effectively conveyed the story's key themes.

On Thursday 5th June, students in Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 visited the Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury to watch a stage adaptation of *Pig Heart Boy* by Malorie Blackman, adapted by Winsome Pinnock. In my opinion, the adaptation was phenomenal and perfectly encapsulated the plot of the novel through the characters' personas, lighting design, sound, and set.

Cameron, a thirteen-year-old boy (played by Immanuel Yeboah), struggles with the difficulties of having a human heart that does not work properly. He conveyed his emotions successfully through the use of monologues and social interactions within a classroom and at the swimming pool with his best friend, Marilyn (played by Christina Ngoyi). I believe this was effective, as it helped the audience feel empathetic towards him, rather than relying on a narrator.



As the play continues, the audience discovers that the rest of the world now knows Cameron will be undergoing a heart transplant using a pig's heart. I believe that the second act significantly enhanced the performance, as it explored more of the play's key themes, such as media intrusion, animal rights, and family dynamics. As a result of Pinnock's adaptation, the audience gained deeper insight into Cameron's life and thoughts, which I found particularly successful.



The play was performed on an End-On/Proscenium Arch stage (where the audience sits on one side of the stage where the action takes place). At some points during the performance, actors such as Dr Bryce (played by Tré Medley) directly addressed audience members in the front rows. Although this performance is not a pantomime, this was a successful way of breaking the fourth wall and involving the audience.

Before the play began, and throughout the first act, interval, second act, and after the performance, the stage picture was perfectly set. Designed by Paul Wills, the set featured a large iron frame (used by the actors during scenes), with a central speaker and LED light tubes wrapping around the structure, symbolising Cameron's heart. This was the first time I had seen anything like this—it brilliantly combined set design, lighting and sound into one cohesive element. While there were two static speakers hanging from the fly grid and two subwoofers at the sides, the actors also used glass blocks containing speakers as stage blocks. Furthermore, all set changes were carried out by the actors themselves, resulting in smooth and slick transitions without the need for stagehands.



Designed by Andrew Exeter, the lighting was used effectively to set the mood and reflect Cameron’s emotions. This was complemented by the LED light tubes from the heart and haze emitted at head height from the wings. Haze lighting added depth and a misty atmosphere to scenes; however, I personally believe it was overused at times.

However, if I were to direct it, I would consider having the actors perform on a thrust stage. Additionally, my friends and I felt that the ending was slightly rushed. That said, I think this was a truly impressive performance, and I would recommend it to anyone who hasn’t seen it to either read the book or watch the play live.

Overall, I believe Pinnock’s adaptation successfully transformed Blackman’s novel Pig Heart Boy for the stage.

WRITTEN BY THOMAS W
YEAR 10



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

‘KIDFLUENCING’: ARE WE LETTING SOCIAL MEDIA LIKES DEFINE OUR CHILDHOOD?

In this article, Emma C explores the growing trend of child influencers and the harmful impact social media fame can have on their privacy, mental health, and well-being. She calls for parents, governments, and society to prioritise real childhood experiences over online popularity.



Imagine waking up every day of your childhood and thinking not about school, learning, or your playdates with your closest friends, but thinking about online content. Thinking about what you need to film and edit today, what brands to collaborate with, or how many likes yesterday's video got. For many children, this is not a fictional situation—it is a reality.

We live in a society of kidfluencing, where children, starting from the age of five, are social media stars. They wake up and immediately start filming their day, posting their every move and sharing their lives with millions of viewers across

the globe. The question we need to raise is: Are we letting social media likes define our childhood?

A fulfilling childhood should be a period of joy, exploration, and learning, where children feel loved, secure, and supported in their development by their parents—not by strangers online. But when it comes to social media, every move is filtered and ranked based on its likability and the number of views it will gain. There is no room for mistakes. Within moments, a messy playroom filled with bright toys turns into a plain filming studio, with a single vanity stocked with hundreds of

pounds' worth of makeup—neatly organised, waiting to be used by a child whose skin should not have makeup on for another ten years. Playing becomes posting.

Some kids may enjoy the fame and the interaction with thousands of other “children,” and some families have earned life-changing amounts of money from it. But at what cost?

First is the loss of privacy. Millions of strangers can know what they eat, what they wear, or where they live at the click of a button—immediately putting these children at risk. This information, which should be private, is sold to secure the next sponsorship deal.

Second comes the pressure. Children begin associating their self-worth with the number of likes their page has. Their confidence hinges on algorithms—not on real relationships with classmates.



'Devil in the Family: The Fall of Ruby Franke' tells the story of how 'kidfluencing' can lead to neglect.

Third is the exploitation. Many countries around the world don't have labour laws that protect children in the digital universe. There's no guarantee that the money made from these accounts benefits the child.

We must also consider the psychological impact. Studies have already shown how social media can damage mental health in teens. Imagine what it does to a seven-year-old who doesn't hit their engagement goals. Cases from last year make it impossible to ignore.

A woman who rose to fame giving controversial parenting advice was sentenced to at least four years in prison for child abuse. This is the case of Ruby Franke. She was behind the 8 Passengers YouTube channel, which launched in 2015 during a boom in popularity for family vlogging channels. From the channel's birth until 2024, it appeared innocent—until the truth was revealed.

On a late August morning in Utah, a 12-year-old boy, covered in open wounds, knocked at a neighbour's door asking for food and water. He had escaped Ruby's home just moments before by climbing out of a window and running away with duct tape still on his ankles. The boy was suffering from malnourishment and deep lacerations from being tied up with rope. This was Ruby Franke's son.

In total, four children were taken into care, and Ruby Franke, the mother of six, was arrested. She later pleaded guilty to starving and abusing her children, leading to a 15-year jail sentence.

So what can we do?

Parents need to stop and think about the dangers of social media, putting their children before content. Governments need to step in with proper regulations. And as a society, we must stop applauding popularity over well-being. We need to bring back a true childhood and teach children that success is not about follower counts but about happiness, learning, and real experiences.

Likes will never be love. Views do not equal value. A childhood should never be traded for an online alter ego.

Stop letting social media likes define children's childhoods.

WRITTEN BY EMMA C
YEAR 11

THE GREAT PET DEBATE: CATS OR DOGS?

This article, written by Holly D, explores the lovable qualities of both cats and dogs, highlighting what makes each a great pet depending on your lifestyle and personality. Holly emphasises that choosing between a cat or dog ultimately depends on individual preferences, affection levels, and the type of companionship you desire.

You have probably been asked this question a lot: “Are you a dog person or a cat person?” I have found that it normally ends in a very loud argument about why either side is better. If you were civil, this would simply be a quiet debate that usually ends with both people agreeing to disagree. However, in the case of my friends, it’s an ear-splitting shouting match that makes you wish you never asked in the first place.

Well, here’s a debate for both sides of the argument. I won’t include my own personal opinion, though, because this is oddly a touchy subject. First of all, the cats...



My favourite part of this will definitely be being able to put all the cute pictures in. So that’s the first point: cats are adorable. They’ve got so much fluff (sorry, Sphynx cats) and such cute button noses that you could boop all day. Not only that, but the beautiful patterns on their coats are so unique to each cat, even if they’re from the same family.

Who says cats aren’t affectionate? Just because they aren’t as open with their way of affection doesn’t mean they don’t care. My aunt’s cat likes to sit down with her whenever possible, although he is also the same cat who brought a snake into her house. My aunt wasn’t happy. Most cats prefer calm and quiet, although that doesn’t mean they don’t like playtime. I love when their eyes get dilated and so big; it’s one of the cutest wonders of the world. Cats are better for people who are okay with less affection and can’t afford to give their pets attention all the time (and for those who’d rather stay inside with a cup of hot chocolate than get dragged through the snow by a dog that’s way too excited). And then you feel extra special when they show you their tummy – it’s their way of saying they trust you. Just don’t try to rub their stomach; it’s a mistake I’ve made several times, but in my defence, they shouldn’t look that cute. Another cute cat habit is when they bite you out of the blue – it means they’re just trying to get your attention. Also, cats mostly meow to get humans’ attention, not other cats.

In conclusion, cats are better for people who like quieter lives and are prepared to get a lot of cat videos stored on their phones from the number of times their cats have fallen off the fence.

Dogs next! I've mentioned how cats are cute, but so are dogs. It's the eyes that I love most about dogs, and their tails too. Those eyes are always so easy to read; I can tell exactly what my dog is thinking by looking in her eyes – whether she's happy, sad, or hungry, I can always tell. And the tails that always wag so fast it actually hurts sometimes when they jump on you. The best part about having a dog is the affection. Coming home after a long, hard day and being met with the unconditional love and loyalty that a dog can give you always brightens me up – and definitely the cuddles when they fall asleep on your lap.



Dogs are also super helpful; for example, police dogs and service dogs. Both are extremely helpful in serious situations and can help save lives.

Everyone always hears about how loyal dogs are. In my experience, that's true – if you're holding a sweet! But dogs are truly loyal animals. You might have heard of Gobi, who joined Dion Leonard in his ultramarathon across the Gobi Desert – a sweet story of love and dedication. While this might be a little overwhelming for some, their devoted love for you never wavers.



Dogs are quite intelligent animals and can be trained to do entertaining tricks – even though my dog never seems to understand! – which is a mental exercise for both the dog and the human. It sometimes proves a challenge to teach them what you'd like them to do, but it's also a lot of fun and a way to de-stress after a long day. This also extends to walks; taking your dog on a walk is an excuse to get out of the house more and get some fresh air, which is quite good for your mental health too!

In conclusion, it often depends on what kind of person you are – whether you want more affection or if you get overwhelmed by too much; whether you'd prefer quiet or a tug-of-war game with your dog. And while some people have very strong opinions on which one is better, others may even prefer other animals like hamsters or rabbits. Truly, a question like this depends on who you are and what you'd like to have at home – whether it's a really excitable dog or a gentle cat, a little guinea pig or a button-nose rabbit. It's your choice what animal you're willing to take care of and willing to love!

WRITTEN BY HOLLY D
YEAR 10

IS SOCIAL MEDIA A PROBLEM FOR TEENAGERS? DOES IT AFFECT THEIR SCHOOL AND DAILY LIFE?

This article, written by Gabriela J, explores the complex effects of social media on teenagers, highlighting both its benefits—such as creativity and connection—and its risks, including mental health challenges and decreased academic performance. It emphasizes the importance of mindful usage and digital literacy to help young people navigate social media responsibly.

In recent years, researchers have increasingly drawn attention to the relationship between social media use and mental health issues, including depression and elevated suicide risk among young people. As digital platforms continue to permeate daily life, particularly among teenagers and young adults, their effects—both positive and negative—on well-being and academic performance have become a topic of growing concern.

Social media has become a central aspect of modern adolescence. According to the Pew Research Centre, 95% of UK teenagers own or have access to a smartphone, and 45% report being online "almost constantly." While these platforms can offer spaces for social interaction and self-expression, their widespread use also raises questions about their long-term impact on mental health and school performance.

A significant concern is the effect of social media on teenagers' mental health. Research published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* indicates that teens who spend more than three hours per day on social media are more likely to exhibit internalizing behaviours such as anxiety and depression. Constant exposure to curated images and online personas can foster unrealistic comparisons, leading to diminished self-esteem and emotional distress.

In addition to mental health concerns, social media use has been linked to reduced academic performance. A study featured in *Computers in Human Behaviour* found that teenagers who are heavy users of social media are more prone to

procrastination and experience lower academic achievement. The constant stream of notifications and online interactions can serve as a persistent distraction, resulting in missed deadlines and a decline in motivation.

Despite these challenges, social media is not without its benefits. A report by Common Sense Media revealed that 81% of teenagers believe social media positively influences their lives. Platforms often provide opportunities for self-expression, creativity, and connection, which can be especially meaningful during the formative adolescent years. Social media can also serve educational purposes, offering access to learning resources, peer collaboration, and communication with teachers.

In school settings, the role of social media is nuanced. While it can facilitate information sharing and enhance collaboration among students—59% of whom reportedly use it to discuss school-related topics, according to the National School Boards Association—it can also hinder focus and productivity when overused or mismanaged.

Ultimately, the influence of social media on teenagers is complex and multifaceted. It offers valuable opportunities for connection and learning, yet also poses risks to mental health and academic success. Encouraging mindful usage, fostering digital literacy, and promoting healthy online habits are essential steps in helping young people navigate the digital world responsibly.

KANYE WEST: FAME, FALLOUT, AND THE FIGHT FOR MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

This article explores the rise and fall of Kanye West, examining how his mental health struggles and experiences of exploitation may have contributed to his controversial behaviour and public downfall. Written by Troy M, it calls for greater awareness and support for mental health and workers' rights in the face of fame and pressure.

Kanye West is a name that almost everyone recognizes. As one of the most successful and wealthy artists of our generation, his impact on music and fashion is undeniable. At his peak, his net worth reached an astonishing \$3 billion. He is widely regarded as a musical genius, with an impressive 22 Grammy wins—second only to Jay-Z among rappers—and a legacy that includes critically acclaimed albums such as

'The College Dropout', 'Late Registration, Graduation', and 'My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy'.

However, Kanye's legacy has become increasingly complicated. In recent years, he has made headlines not just for his artistic contributions, but for a series of controversial and offensive remarks on X (formerly Twitter), many of which have been condemned as antisemitic and racist. These posts sparked widespread backlash, causing many former fans to distance themselves from him. His business ventures, including his clothing brand Yeezy, have also suffered major setbacks, with multiple partnerships terminated.

This raises an important question: Why did Kanye say these things? Was there any justification for his behaviour?



There are a few key factors that may offer context, though not necessarily excuses. First and foremost, Kanye has been open about his struggles with bipolar disorder. Mental health episodes can lead to impulsive and harmful behaviour, especially when left untreated or poorly managed. Reports have also emerged that Kanye

was being charged \$50,000 a month for nitrous oxide canisters by a dentist who allegedly exploited him—another situation that may have contributed to his instability.

Secondly, Kanye has often expressed a desire to speak freely, regardless of public or corporate backlash. His feud with Adidas is a well-documented example, where he accused the company of design theft and oppressive treatment. In turn, Adidas claimed that Kanye created a toxic work environment and even shared explicit material with employees—



Kanye West at his Yeezy fashion show

allegations that have further damaged his public image.

It's likely that a combination of declining mental health, personal grievances, and feelings of being exploited contributed to his public breakdown. Regardless of the reasons, the consequences have been severe. Kanye's estimated net worth has plummeted from \$3 billion to around \$400 million. Some suggest this downfall may also be rooted in unresolved grief from his mother's passing or the ongoing difficulty of being separated from his children.

In a recent post on X, Kanye wrote: "I simply got a FaceTime from my kids and I wanna save the world again..."—a statement that many interpreted as a turning point. It was, in essence, an apology and a reflection of his renewed clarity.

This brings us to a broader issue: the importance of addressing mental health and worker exploitation. If more support systems were in place for those struggling—especially in high-pressure environments like the entertainment industry—perhaps we could prevent such public meltdowns. In the UK alone, more than 1 in 7 adults suffer from mental health issues, yet it remains underfunded and stigmatized. The same applies to worker exploitation, which often goes unnoticed or unreported.

Kanye's story is not just about fame, fortune, and failure. It's a call to pay attention to the deeper issues that affect millions. So, after hearing the full picture—was he justified? That's up to the public to decide. But perhaps the more important question is: what can we learn from this, and how can we do better for those who are silently struggling?

WRITTEN BY TROY M
YEAR 11

RE-MARK-ABLE 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.

This eerie piece, written by Amber R in Year 7, captures the tense moment when a young girl faces mysterious knocking and unexplained noises outside her door, building suspense until the lights suddenly go out. The story explores fear, curiosity, and the struggle between choosing safety or confronting the unknown.

“Tap-tap-tap” on the door.

I should have ignored it—I know. But did I? Of course not. The tapping became louder. Much louder.

“Tap-tap-tap” again.

I slowly, cautiously got up from my bed, pulling the covers—now feeling like sandbags—off of me. The “tap-tap-tap” turned into a loud, heavy “bang-bang-bang.” I thought about throwing my shoe at the door, but what would have been the point of that? I slipped my now shivering body into my slippers and walked over to the door. I reached my hand out to the handle gingerly—but then, silence.

This silence didn’t last long before that thing was tapping again. I had the chance to ignore it, go back to bed, maybe even sleep. But why would 14-year-old me do the sensible thing?

I turned the lock on the door, the air suffocating me with tension. The door made a loud screech as I opened it.

I looked outside my room—nothing.
The bathroom—nothing.
My parents’ room—nothing.

“Tap-tap-tap.”

I looked behind me. I creaked my door closed and turned around, my hair catching on my shoulders, like I was in a movie—one of those really fancy ones. There was a small scratch on the wall. And then a small crack.

Was I imagining this? Was I just scared that Mum and Dad had left me?

I must have been imagining it... but it felt so real.

Then, the lights went out. The tapping stopped. Pure silence.

I could hear my heart beating in my chest, my breath catching in my throat...

WRITTEN BY AMBER R
YEAR 8

'In My Dreams' is a poem written by Bryony R which paints a vivid picture of memories, emotions, and dreams, blending real-life moments with imagined landscapes. Through gentle imagery and rhythmic reflections, Bryony explores childhood, family, and wonder, capturing the beauty of both reality and fantasy.



IN MY DREAMS

In my dreams
I see you and me
Legends untold
Future unseen
First day at school
A birds sweet call
Birthday partys
And sad family passings

In my dreams
Winter is here
Struggling to sleep
Christmas is near
Snowball fights
And sleepless nights
Gift unwrapping
And midnight snacking

In my dreams
A beautiful land
Clear blue seas
And beaches of sand
Fields of green
Crystals that gleam
The rise of the sun
And loads of fun.

WRITTEN BY BRYONY R
YEAR 10

In Love is War, Sky-Rocket A reflects on how love changes over time—from innocent and peaceful in youth to complicated and painful with age. The poem shows that love can be fragile, even toxic, and compares it to a battle that sometimes becomes a war. The poet ends by urging us to choose carefully which loves are worth fighting for.

Love is War

From a young age, we are taught love,
What it means and how it is shown.
At this age, it's as peaceful as a dove.
Love is not yet war and we are not yet alone.

But as we grow a few more years,
We learn that love can end and hearts can break.
At this age, we are gifted with love's first tears.
Love is but a battle-- not war-- don't make that mistake.

Time does not wait and continues to pass.
Love shows us happiness; shields us from hate.
At this age, we find love is as fragile as glass.
Love isn't war, in fact it's great!

Soon, we feel love's sting.
Supposed to stay but conflicted and may leave.
At this age, we question if love has meaning.
Love, again, is a battle-- not war-- all you do is flee.

As you come to your senses, gather your things and leave.
You learn the final lesson, Love is sometimes toxic
and the cause? Us. Humans are naïve.
So yes, Love is a war and this line does not rhyme...

But learn to pick what love you'll fight for
as some just aren't worth your time.

WRITTEN BY SKY-ROCKET A
YEAR 10



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This poem by Annabelle C pays tribute to the often-forgotten animals—cats, horses, dogs, and even pigeons—who bravely served alongside soldiers in times of war. It reminds us to appreciate the freedom we enjoy today, made possible not only by human sacrifice but by the loyalty and courage of these animal heroes.

The Forgotten Heroes on Four Legs and Wings

Look at the soldiers, scattered around,
Surrounded by animals too.
All of the cats, the horses and dogs,
Also fought for me and for you.

They've been forgotten, yet they fought for our rights.
And the pigeons, over they flew,
To let the brave soldiers communicate,
For the freedom of people like you.

So next time you open the door to go out,
Look at the sky full of blue,
And remember you wouldn't be looking at that,
If the animals weren't there for you.

WRITTEN BY ANNABELLE C
YEAR 8

This suspenseful piece by Isabel M paints a haunting scene of an abandoned hallway, where a ringing phone and a creaking door hint at an unsettling mystery in room 385. The story leaves readers with lingering questions about what drove the other residents away.

Ring, ring...

The harsh sound of the phone echoed down the now empty hallway which was once filled with lively conversations and laughter. The phone buzzed against the table and final time before silencing; leaving nothing but darkness to take over. Just then, a door creaked open. The room was labelled "385".

A mystery. A question. A wonder.

What could've possibly happened there to make the other residents move out?

WRITTEN BY ISABELLE M
YEAR 8

BONNIE

This evocative piece by Holly D. captures a tense moment during a school trip that takes an unexpected turn, exploring themes of fear and uncertainty. It also touches on the deep emotional impact of waiting and loss.

The bus rounded the corner, the tyres screaming in protest as everyone inside was thrown to their left. Bonnie grumbled as she pushed herself off Maddie.

“This road is crazy. Sorry, Mads,” she said, glancing out the murky, dirt-stained windows to watch the road race past in a grey blur. The forest stretched on beyond what anyone could see, the trees waving manically as we sped past, the road offering the only sanctuary from its greedy grip.

“How long left, Miss?” someone called out.

“Half an hour, or so,” our teacher replied, bored.

Everyone collectively groaned. We’d been on the track for at least two hours, and everyone was getting restless.



Bonnie sighed and closed her eyes, the previous excitement from the school trip having worn off ages ago. Her ringtone echoed through the bus, making her take out her phone.

“Hello?”

“Hey, Bonnie! How’s it going? Are you there yet?”

“No, not yet. I think the bus driver took a wrong turn and now we’re in the middle of a forest,” she grumbled.

“Oh, obviously it all goes wrong. Don’t worry about it, Bo,” Max said soothingly. “Remember, you have snacks.”

Bonnie grinned as she brought out the packet of Oreos and happily bit into one. Maddie reached over and snagged another before Bonnie could protest.

“Thanks for packing my bag!”

“Of course, I know you’ve been stressed with all these tests.”

“You’re the best!” Bonnie laughed, then yelped as Maddie drove her elbow into her side.

“I thought I was the best,” she pouted jokingly.

“Phones away!” the teacher yelled from the front of the bus.

“Sorry, Max, guess I have to go.”

“Yeah, well, love you. See you soon.”

“Love you too.”

Bonnie put her phone in her bag, feeling that stupid grin still plastered to her face after talking to her boyfriend.

“Nice chat with Max?” Maddie teased, then started laughing.

“Shut up,” Bonnie felt her face heat up. She handed another Oreo to her best friend as a peace treaty, then munched on another herself.

Soft murmurs turned to silence inside the bus, making Bonnie’s hair stand on end. An unexplainable feeling of dread made its way to her throat, and suddenly the bus seemed a lot smaller than before. She grabbed Maddie’s hand and the handle of

her seat, the scratchy material uncomfortable against her legs. Maddie glanced at her in concern.

“What are you—”

“DEER!” someone screamed.

The bus violently swerved to the right, the breath knocked from Bonnie’s lungs as she was slammed against the window. The driver yanked the wheel left, then right, but couldn’t regain control of the bus. Screams erupted as loud as sirens, but Bonnie didn’t hear them, panic drowning out the voices.

The last thing she saw was the doe-eyed look of innocence as the deer watched the doomed bus spin wildly into the clawed grasp of the forest.

Max had reread her last message a thousand times, as if expecting another to spring up every time he did. A lone tear rolled down his cheek as he remembered her beautiful smile and hazel eyes that shone like stars whenever she laughed.

A knock on the door broke through his haze as he sat bolt upright and his mother came in. She was a plump woman with brown wavy hair pulled into a tight bun. Her face was pulled into a grim frown.

“H-have they?”

“They’ve called off the search,” she averted her gaze. “I’m so sorry, darling.”

“NO!” he yelled. “They can’t!”

“Well, it’s been three weeks, darling. They can’t keep it up forever.”

Get out,” Max whispered through his downpour of tears.

His mother left.

The pain that engulfed him was like nothing he’d ever felt before, every heartbeat a stab of unbearable agony



against his chest. Every breath felt like he was inhaling poison.

Bonnie.

He started shaking.

Bonnie.

He almost couldn’t breathe.

Bonnie.

Her smile, her joyful laugh, her familiar scent of home-baked goods. All of it gone forever.

Bonnie...

WRITTEN BY HOLLY D
YEAR 10



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