

The Mark





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THE MARKSMAN 2021

EDITOR'S NOTE

WRITTEN BY MATILDA G

Writing this editor's note, I am so proud to be publishing my second edition as editor of The Mark. Whilst editing the 20 pages of articles is an undoubtedly laborious task, it is always so enjoyable to read the work of our talented students.

With opinion pieces, poetry, stories, and cartoons, this issue is evidence of the creativity within our school community, and, from Dylan S' recap of politics in 2025, to Daniel K's review of 'Soul Food Stories' to Holly D's latest perspective of 'Ezra', I am confident that there is something for everyone.

I particularly enjoyed seeing the Louise Nevelson inspired artwork from the year 12 art students, recycling everyday materials to create visually striking monochromatic pieces, as well as Lizzy K's review of Sondheim's 'Merrily We Roll Along', examining not only the dramatic elements of the play, but how theatre can be personally impactful and emotive.

In this issue, we also have the second edition of our 'Department Spotlight' and 'Teacher Spotlight' columns. Ethan A was able to interview the drama department, exploring their dedication to creativity and favourite topics to teach, and Lizzy K interviewed Mrs Macken, detailing how she fell in love with drama, her favourite production, and her journey to becoming the head of expressive arts at Rainham Mark.

As always, I encourage any readers to submit any work to Mrs Starr (lstarr@rmet.org). Whether a story, poem, review, or piece of art, it is great to receive any work to showcase our talented student body.

Happy Reading!

**WRITERS
WANTED!
WEDNESDAY
LUNCH IN L6**

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



LOUISE NEVELSON INSPIRES YEAR 12 ARTISTS



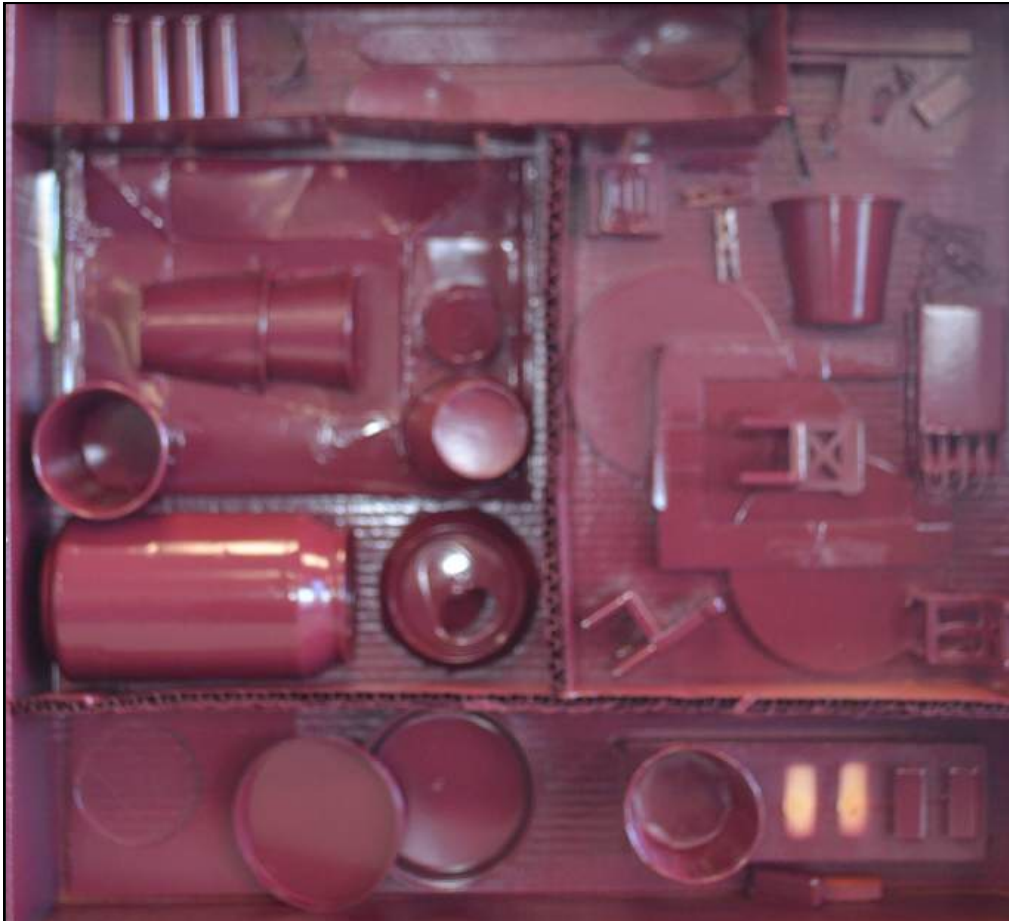
Year 12 students have been inspired by the work of Louise Nevelson, especially her sculpture Cascade VII. Nevelson was known for using discarded wood and found objects to create bold, structured artworks.

In response, students created their own boxed assemblages using recycled and everyday materials. Influenced by ideas from the 1960s, including Arte Povera and assemblage, they explored materials not usually seen in fine art. This project encouraged them to rethink what art can be, and who decides its value.

Students carefully arranged their materials to create interesting shapes, shadows and textures, thinking about balance and composition in the same way Nevelson did. Each piece is unique, showing individual creativity, while responding to a shared starting point.

We hope you enjoy exploring the Year 12 examples and seeing how they have transformed simple, discarded materials into imaginative and thoughtful works of art.

Please view the Year 12 work on the
next page



FIX THE SYSTEM, NOT THE WOMEN

A powerful and unflinching exploration of misogyny across the world, this article examines violence against women, systemic injustice, and the urgent need for meaningful societal change. Written by Lilly S in Year 10, it challenges readers to confront uncomfortable truths and demand a fairer future for women and girls everywhere.

There is a young girl in Afghanistan who, right now, is being refused her human right to an education because of the Taliban's rule. In many states in the United States of America, women's reproductive rights are being taken away, meaning that women are going to have virtually no control over their own bodies. When a woman is murdered, the first person the police investigate is her partner because, in many cases, a woman's own partner is also her killer. Three women, a mother and her two daughters, were killed by a man with a crossbow just this summer because one of the women had tried to end the relationship with the same abusive male. Earlier this year, three young girls were murdered by a teenager whilst attending a Taylor Swift themed dance class in Southport. These are only a few examples of how the world is affected by misogynistic views in the modern day, and whether these are 'low level sexist' views about women, or a deep rooted hatred for females steeped in a rising community of incels, violence, and harm against women is an ever increasing issue affecting our society.

A common misconception about misogyny is that it does not exist anymore, that females have equal rights to males, and that it is no longer an issue that we need to fix.

If people are unaware of the problem, then it will never be solved, as the only way to fix an issue is to confront it, discuss it, and collectively try to change it.

One in three women on the planet will be raped or beaten in their lifetime. It is no wonder, then, that girls are taught at a young age to take certain precautions to ensure their safety: when you are walking somewhere, put your keys in between your fingers in case somebody tries to hurt you

and you need to defend yourself. Send somebody you trust your location if you are out late at night so they can track you if something happens to you. Never walk home alone at night. Walk around in groups so you have strength in numbers. Do not wear anything that could be tempting to a man, or they will say you were asking for it. The fact that mothers feel the need to give their daughters this advice to help them survive in this prejudiced world proves how bad the problem has become. Sarah Everard was walking home, but she never made it because a 'bad apple' police officer, Wayne Couzens, abused his power to rape and murder her. Only he was not a bad apple, he was one of many officers, like his colleague David Carrick, who have a history of violent and controlling behaviour, placed within an institution that is supposed to protect women and girls, only for it later to be found that he was abusing his position for his own gain. Several male police officers continue to be identified in cases of misconduct throughout the country. How many more will be uncovered? How many more red flags will be ignored?

You will say that it is not all men, not all men are rapists, or not all men are murderers, and yes, you would be right in saying that. Of course it is not all men, but how many more men must be identified before something changes? How many more women and girls will die or be raped? You see, even though not all men are the problem, enough are that every woman and girl has their own story, or they know someone who has had their own experience. It can be as simple as walking home from school past a group of boys making inappropriate comments or gestures, but that is how it all starts.



Image of Sarah Everard, victim of Wayne Couzens

Significantly, influencers like Andrew Tate are now making it acceptable for young boys, who often view Tate as a role model, to have these derogatory views about females, further promoting toxic masculinity and the epidemic of violence against women and girls. This is a prevalent issue, to the point that extremist misogyny is now recognised as a form of terrorism, and the grooming of vulnerable young men into this ideology as a form of radicalisation. It is positive that in the UK some steps seem to be being made to address these issues.

Sadly, however, this is not the case in other places. The Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan in 2021 and soon after they started changing many laws to suit the misogynistic views of men who seek to have ultimate control over women. Over the three years the Taliban have been in power, Afghan women have practically lost all their rights: girls are no longer allowed to have an education over the age of eight, no women are allowed to attend or teach at universities, women can no longer work at any organisation that is not government run, women are not allowed to leave the house

without being completely covered from head to toe (including a special cover over their eyes so that they can see through it but nobody can see into it), women cannot visit anyone, including their families, without their husband's permission, and they cannot speak to anybody outside their household without their husband knowing and allowing it. It is estimated that all these new laws will lead to a five per cent increase in gross domestic violence. I would imagine that this figure is grossly underestimated or minimised, both due to underreporting and since domestic violence is likely to be higher in these cultures anyway. Since the Taliban have taken over, the rates of child marriage have also increased, with some children getting married by the age of 12 and having multiple children before the age of 15. I find it abhorrent that if I had simply had the misfortune of being born in a different country, I might be married with children by now, and the saddest thing is that I might not know any different. The issue with these laws is that girls are being born into this society where it is normal for them to have no rights and, if they are not able to be properly educated, then they will have no power to fight against these prejudiced laws and they



Image of young women protesting against the criminalisation of abortion in the USA.

will continue for generations. I ask myself, what is the Western world doing to support these women and girls? Surely, if these laws continue to be passed, the answer has to be not enough.

In the US, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of an abortion ban which has effectively ended the constitutional right to an abortion for millions of American women. Individual states are now able to ban abortion, and these laws effectively mean that, in the states where a full ban is in place, there are little to no exceptions where an abortion would be legal. Although the act of banning abortion is technically not a misogynistic act, the effect it has is. The consequence is, basically, women not being able to choose what they want to do with their own bodies and a man in Congress having control over millions of women's bodies. The pro-life movement claims to care about the rights of the unborn, 9

but I often wonder, are abortion restrictions really about the fact that a foetus deserves to be treated as a human being, or is it about believing that women do not?

The examples I have shared are only a fraction of the problem, and the reality is that there are many more. As a society, we urgently need meaningful systemic change, including stronger leadership, reform of the police and criminal justice system, and better education for young people about consent, respect, and equality. Although the system is stretched and imperfect, enough is enough. It is time to fix the system, not the women, and, for those who say it is not all men, to stand alongside us in creating genuine and lasting equality.

WRITTEN BY LILLY S, YEAR 10

'PICK YOURSELF A ROAD/GET TO KNOW THE COUNTRYSIDE' - A REVIEW OF THE 2024 BROADWAY PRODUCTION OF MERRILY WE ROLL ALONG



Stephen Sondheim is undoubtedly one of the greatest writers of musicals of his time, perhaps even of all time, with hits such as *Into the Woods*, *West Side Story* and *Company* all evidence of his talent. The recent production of his more obscure musical *Merrily We Roll Along* at the Hudson Theatre, starring Jonathan Groff, Lindsay Mendez and Daniel Radcliffe, was a great success, opening to rave reviews. As seeing it on Broadway would have been impossible for me, it was with great excitement that I discovered the filmed performance would be broadcast at the Light in Sittingbourne, and I certainly did not regret taking the opportunity to see it.

Merrily We Roll Along follows the story of three friends – Frank, Charley and Mary – across 20 years as they attempt to make it in their respective arts. However, there is a twist: the story plays in reverse. This approach makes it both a tragedy and a comedy – the story played chronologically would end in isolation and misery, but the musical ends with the three friends meeting for the first time, reuniting backwards. This particular quirk also means that reprises of songs are heard before the originals. A striking example is "Not a Day Goes By," sung by Beth, Frank's wife (played by Katie Rose Clarke).

When we first hear it, it is a bitter final goodbye sung in a divorce court as the couple separates. Later, it is heard again as the tune they sing at their wedding in a tiny nightclub.

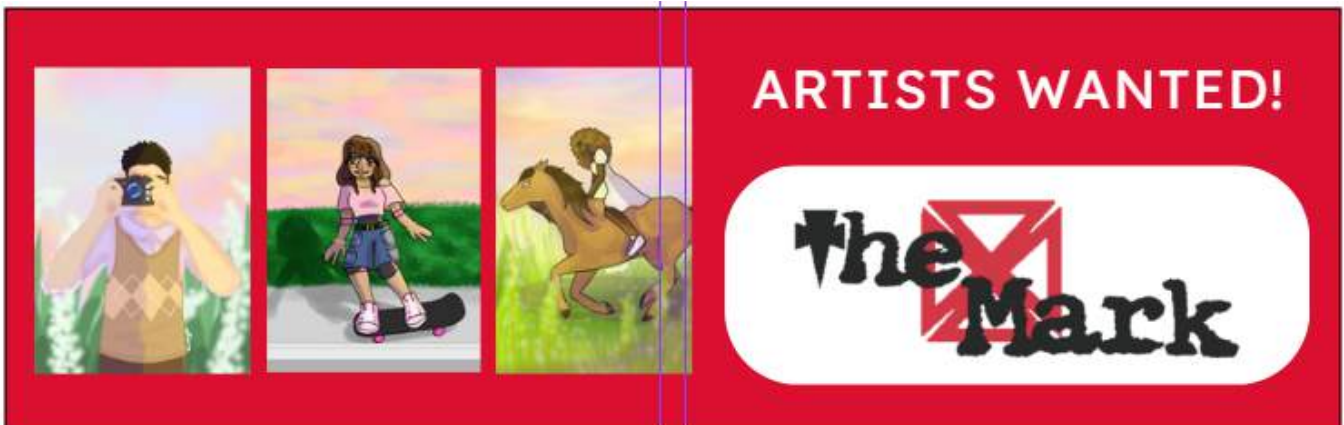
Groff (Frank), Mendez (Mary) and Radcliffe (Charley) are all extremely strong performers, each approaching Sondheim's piece with skill and vigour. Radcliffe leaves a particular impression with his performance of "Franklin Shepard, Inc." early on. It is one of those trademark Sondheim patter songs, like Company's "Getting Married," which requires fast diction while remaining well-characterised - and Radcliffe juggles all these aspects with ease. Mendez shines particularly in the reprise of "Not a Day Goes By"; the expression in her voice as she yearns for Frank is heartbreakingly beautiful. Groff does not have a particular "look at me" moment, because you are captivated by him throughout. If I had to choose one moment, it would be "Our Time," right at the end. There is something about his portrayal of Frank before the pressure to change for success gets to him, especially when juxtaposed with the Frank the audience sees first.

Our leads are surrounded by an equally strong ensemble. The production truly has no weak links - every character fits seamlessly into the world of the show, and the ensemble acts almost like a Greek chorus, guiding the audience backwards through the decades and switching quickly and flawlessly from party guests to reporters to bohemians as the scene demands. The featured characters

are a small group, but all leave their mark. Krystal Joy Brown is resplendent as Gussie, a diva with her sights firmly set on Frank. Reg Rogers plays her husband Joe, a hapless producer who ends up penniless after Gussie leaves him. Katie Rose Clarke portrays Beth, once a hopeful young actress who becomes jaded and bitter when Frank leaves her for Gussie. The characters are easy to become fond of (perhaps apart from Gussie, who is designed more as a love-to-hate character), and it is just as hard to see them in this backwards tragedy as it is to follow the main trio. Though we see her in only one scene at the end, Jamila Sabares-Klemm is a joy as Charley's wife, Evelyn. I would have loved to see her written more into the story, although she is often mentioned as being happily married and content with Charley, in contrast to Frank's messy love life. Soutra Gilmour's set and costume design is gorgeous and deserves recognition for the way it perfectly captures each decade and allows seamless transitions between them.

This musical is one I would be unafraid to add to a list of shows that have changed me. It is deeply impactful, deeply funny, deeply beautiful, but also deeply tragic. To end on a lighter note, there was a very merry wedding during the run of the show: Mendez married her now-husband J. Alex Brinson in a ceremony officiated by Groff, with Radcliffe as ringbearer. It is a testament to the wonderful chemistry the three friends share both on and off stage.

WRITTEN BY LIZZY K, YEAR 12



ARTISTS WANTED!

The Mark

DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT

DRAMA

In this Department Spotlight, Ethan A interviews the Drama teachers to explore what makes their subject unique, engaging and valuable to students. The article highlights their commitment to creativity, confidence and belonging, as well as the projects and topics they are most proud to teach.



Recently, I had the opportunity to speak with the Drama department about their subject for The Mark and to ask them some questions about their lessons. They responded with the following answers:

What do you think makes your department stand out from others in the school?

Ms Macken stated that Drama is a fun, caring place where everyone can belong and where everyone feels seen and heard. She also said that students can learn valuable life skills through Drama.

Ms Barry mentioned that Drama allows students to feel safe and be creative.

How do you try to make your lessons engaging and enjoyable for students?

Mrs Macken makes her lessons engaging by making jokes and building positive relationships with the students she teaches, whilst Ms Barry makes her lessons enjoyable by highlighting when students come up with great ideas.

What skills or values do you hope students take away from studying your subject?

Ms Macken hopes her students learn about belonging and diversity through her lessons, and Ms Barry aims to develop students' sense of identity and their confidence in making decisions.

Can you share a recent project, trip or achievement that the department is particularly proud of?

The Drama teachers are proud of four things: a beatboxing workshop, working with Lyric Arts to encourage students, the theatre craft trip, and the careers fair.

What advice would you give to students who want to excel in your subject?

Ms Macken advises students to take risks and not worry about getting things wrong, while Ms Barry suggests not stressing about looking silly.

If your department were a person, what kind of personality would they have?

The Drama department agreed that their personality would be bubbly, exuberant, sometimes scatty, and friendly.

And finally, which topic do you most enjoy teaching?

Woyzeck – Ms Macken

The Curious Incident – Ms Barry

In conclusion, I enjoyed an exuberant lunchtime with the Drama teachers, and I believe they are a wonderful department. Check back next time to see which department is in the spotlight!

TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

MRS MACKEN

In this Teacher Spotlight, Lizzy K profiles Mrs Macken, Head of Expressive Arts at RMGS, exploring her journey into teaching, her proudest achievements, and the productions she has most enjoyed. The article highlights Mrs Macken's passion for drama, her dedication to building community through the arts, and her lifelong love of theatre.

Mrs Macken has been at RMGS for about eleven years and is our Head of Expressive Arts. She has also been a huge part of organising many shows here, whether musicals like last year's bombastic production of Grease or plays such as the upcoming National Theatre Connections production Macbeth Macbeth Macbeth Macbeth Macbeth. This term's Teacher Spotlight shines a light on the journey that brought her to Rainham Mark, what she is most proud of as a teacher, and the shows she has most enjoyed.

At school, Mrs Macken says her love for drama was instilled by two very inspirational female drama teachers who not only knew their subject well but were also funny and caring. Drama made her feel at home while she was growing up, and outside school she attended HYT in Parkwood, where she made many friends. She went on to train at Rose Bruford College, a drama school in London.

When she started drama school, she intended to pursue acting professionally, but by the end of her course her intentions had changed. Acting would not have allowed her to have the other things she wanted in life, and she had always wanted to be a teacher. She became a cover supervisor in a comprehensive school in the south-east of London, and when the school offered her teacher training alongside a salary for a year, she could not turn the offer down. She says she loved working there and would have stayed if she could have.

Unfortunately, the comprehensive school closed six years after she started working there. Fortunately, it was at that time that Rainham Mark was looking for someone.

Mrs Macken says she was drawn to the school because of its good reputation and because she had attended a grammar school herself. She started as an English teacher with drama responsibilities and has since gone on to become the overall lead for all expressive arts at RMGS.

One thing she is very proud of is the re-establishment of not only the drama department at RMGS, but also the community it creates. A milestone in this re-establishment was the first school musical she led, Little Shop of Horrors. The school musical continues to be a community-oriented production, bringing together students from across departments to put on a show and allowing friendships to form across year groups in ways that school does not typically allow. She also feels proud whenever she is able to support a young person who is struggling and ensure they feel happy and accepted.

Mrs Macken's favourite production she has seen with a school was one she saw as a student herself: the National Theatre's adaptation of Philip Pullman's The Northern Lights. She cites it as one of the moments that sparked her love of theatre. She also enjoyed the trip a couple of years ago to see Hadestown in the West End, as it was a show she had previously seen and loved, and she was pleased to share that experience with others.

If she could see only one play or musical for the rest of her life, Mrs Macken's choice would be Oliver!. It is a very nostalgic musical for her, and one she remembers watching in black and white on VHS. Although she has not yet seen it live, she would love to.

THE MARK OF THOUGHT

Introducing “The Mark of Thought”, a new column in The Mark showcasing essays by Isla B, inspired by her A-Level Philosophy studies. Each edition will explore intriguing ideas, challenge assumptions, and invite readers to think deeply about the big questions that shape our world.

IS CHOOSING NOT TO HELP (WHEN YOU COULD) A MORAL CRIME?

In this article, Isla B explores whether choosing not to help someone in need can be as morally wrong as actively causing harm, drawing on the ideas of philosophers such as Peter Singer and Immanuel Kant. She examines arguments on both sides before suggesting that moral responsibility may depend on context, proximity and personal capacity.

One of the most pressing questions in ethics is whether failing to act can be as blameworthy as actively causing harm. If someone could help another person in need but chooses not to, is that omission itself a moral crime? Philosophers from different traditions have offered different answers, revealing the complexities of responsibility, intention and duty.

The Case for Moral Blame in Omission

For utilitarian philosopher Peter Singer, omissions can be just as morally significant as actions. In his famous ‘drowning child’ analogy, Singer argues that if you can save a child drowning in a shallow pond at minimal cost to yourself, you are morally obligated to do so. Choosing not to help, even by omission, would be morally wrong. This reasoning extends to global poverty: if we can save lives through charitable giving, failing to do so is akin to letting people die when we could have intervened. Some agree



undermines idea of compassion and justice.

Similarly, Immanuel Kant argued that we have duties of beneficence. While our primary duty is not to treat others merely as means, we also owe them help when possible. To consistently ignore others’ needs would be to deny their worth as rational beings.

The Case Against Moral Crime in Omission

Contrastingly, Robert Nozick emphasises the moral difference between harming

with Singer’s reasoning, as they see the distinction between killing and letting die as morally insignificant if the outcome – death – is preventable by our action. They claim that morality requires positive duties, not merely refraining from harm. Allowing suffering when one can prevent it the very

and failing to help. For him, individuals have strong negative rights – not to be harmed or coerced – but far weaker positive obligations to aid others. According to this view, failing to help may be morally regrettable but not a crime. Compelling individuals to act on every possible duty would violate personal liberty and autonomy. Some argue there is an important moral difference between doing harm and allowing harm. Imposing broad duties to help risks turning individuals into instruments of others’ welfare. Moral blame for omission could become limitless, since we cannot help everyone in need.

This view is also supported by John Stuart Mill’s emphasis on liberty. Mill argued that individuals should be free to pursue their own good unless they directly harm others. Failure to assist may be unkind but does not necessarily constitute a violation of moral or legal duty.

Middle Ground: Context and Proximity
 Some philosophers seek a middle ground. David Hume recognised that while sympathy drives us to help others, our obligations are stronger towards those close to us (family, friends and community) than towards distant strangers. Modern debates in applied ethics often consider proximity and capacity. While ignoring a drowning child before your eyes seems gravely immoral, failing to donate to every worthy cause worldwide may not carry the same weight. Is choosing not to help, when you could, a moral crime? Utilitarians and Kantian thinkers argue yes: omission can be as culpable as action if preventable suffering results. Libertarian and liberal perspectives argue no: omissions may be regrettable but do not carry the same moral weight as direct harm. The truth may lie somewhere in between, where obligations are shaped by context, proximity and feasibility. Ultimately, the debate forces us to confront how far our moral responsibilities extend in an interconnected world.

WRITTEN BY ISLA B, YEAR 13



DRAWN BY GEORGE B, YEAR 7

Written by: Dylan S, Year 10

TAVAK

February 2026

2025 – A YEAR IN REVIEW

Politics in 2025 has been defined by constant headlines featuring Trump, as well as war and civil unrest

Right from the outset, 2025 was off to a historic start. After a dramatic victory in the most expensive election in history, on the 20th of January, U.S. President Donald Trump was inaugurated as the 47th president of the USA, as one of the only presidents to have had two non – consecutive terms. Appealing to more working class and wealthy, as well as more ethnic minorities outside of his traditional majority – white voter base, Trump cleaned up winning the Electoral College with 312 electoral votes to Harris' 226. Trump won all of the seven swing states, including the first win of Nevada by a Republican since 2004.

Trump campaigned on a anti – immigration platform, and also said with confidence that he would be deploying tariffs, protecting US industry whilst damaging foreign industry. April 2nd (probably because April 1st would have looked like a joke) marked Trump's Liberation day where Trump unleashed the majority of his tariffs. Many countries were severely affected, reshaping global trade, however UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer weathered the storm well after a charming meeting with Trump, receiving only a 10% tariff.

On the 13th of June 2025, Israeli authorities ordered a wave of strikes on Iran, to destroy their nuclear regime and topple their authoritarian government. Iran hit back (as shown above) with a wave of strikes on sensitive Israeli targets, and cities such as Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Since then, for 'self – defence', Iran's nuclear program has been full steam ahead.

On the 24th of July in Thailand, following several diplomatic and political incidents, with Cambodia, conflict broke out between the two countries. Thailand and Cambodia agreed to an unconditional ceasefire on 28 July, but the ceasefire would be broken on 8 December after Thailand launched air strikes along its border with Cambodia.

On the 15th of August, and sticking to war, Trump has been trying to reach a peace deal for Ukraine, at the Alaska summit. This was with Russian President Vladimir Putin, but with the noticeable absence of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. As you probably know, the war hasn't ended.



Retaliatory Iranian terror reigning down on Tel Aviv

The upside is that at that point, Trump was often seen as leaning towards Putin, so if the war was ended at that point, it would've been likely that it would be on Russian terms, thus marking a victory for the Kremlin. Thus, whether you feel this is a positive outcome depends on whether you believe resisting Russian aggression is worth shedding countless lives over.

On the 10th of September, we woke to the news that the conservative activist and influencer Charlie Kirk had been assassinated at Utah Valley University whilst answering questions about gun violence in his prove me wrong campaign. Kirk had previously echoed many conservative positions, including gun control, but as well as that, he criticised abortion, DEI programs, and LGBTQ rights. Over time, he aligned with the Christian right and advocated for Christian nationalism.

Whether or not you agreed with his strong views, he was a man who shared his beliefs, and challenged other views, whilst also being a young man raising a happy family. I believe that shooting him was shameful, despite disagreeing with almost everything the man stood for.

Before the assassination of Kirk, the Green party had elected a new leader. Zack Polanski headed the new charge within the Green party under his style of eco – populism. He very quickly ate into the Lib Dems, Labour and even the Reform party, plateauing, only slightly below Labour. We will have to see whether he can grow the party further or whether this was just the "honeymoon effect."

SOUL FOOD SOLO STORIES - A REVIEW

In this review, Daniel K reflects on his experience of watching Soul Food Solo Stories at the GlassBox Theatre, praising the powerful storytelling, expressive performances and creative use of props. He highlights how each performer explored themes of identity, culture, loss and belonging, ultimately recommending the production to anyone interested in theatre and heritage.



Promotional Image for Lyrici Arts

In October, I participated in a trip to see Soul Food Solo Stories at the GlassBox Theatre at MidKent College, Chatham, and I had a great experience. I decided that I should review it, so here it is! This article will guide you through what makes this Lyrici Arts production such a great experience.

This production featured four individuals of African or Caribbean heritage sharing their personal experiences. First, Monique Day told the story of a childhood road trip.

She used great tone and expression when speaking in the voices of her family members, and she also mimicked driving a car convincingly. She was honest about her family and personal experiences, including sneaking a look around during a prayer, arguments in the car, and even her brother revealing that her father spoke English while on holiday. In the end, the whole family was brought together by their shared love of good food. Monique and the others each used one of two small stages with

interchangeable curtains for each performance and had their own personal props box. Monique's box included a hat, which added to her portrayal of certain characters.

After Monique, Chika Jones shared a story of Igbo identity, truth and dignity. His box contained traditional African dress, which he wore over urban clothing, including a type of skirt, a necklace and a walking stick. To me, Chika's story seemed to centre on his son, who had moved to London and started collecting receipts from shops. He explained that his son wanted proof of the items he had bought, such as 'flour', 'sugar' and 'something to drink with it'. This list was repeated throughout to exaggerate the point. Chika's tone and the varying speeds at which he spoke further enhanced his performance and made his section intriguing. It became even more engaging when he invited the audience to 'dance' along to a traditional African song.

After a very quick break, we were introduced to Lizzy Partridge, who shared a story that her mother had told her about 'the brown princesses of Council House No. 11'. This focused on the titular sisters, who take on the seemingly impossible task of restoring light to the world. Along the way, they encounter multiple African mythical figures, such as the Sky God and the well-known man-spider Anansi, while overcoming obstacles and making new friends on a journey of learning and self-discovery. Lizzy's props box contained items that helped convey the story to the audience, such as a pop-up moon and a sheet that she waved up and down to simulate a raging river. She also portrayed multiple characters through her voice and tone to great effect. One of the elements that

that stood out most was the call and response: she would say 'go, go!' to prompt the audience to reply, 'bring it back!' This really helped the performance feel inclusive.

The final performance was from Aduke Aladekomo, who had lost her father at a young age. She explained that she had lost herself, but that she was also trying to 'become' and find herself again. After the death of her grandmother, Aduke rediscovered the recipes she had left behind. She felt empowered by the art of cooking and rediscovered her voice through it. Her story sheds light on universal human experiences – loss, love and the influences that shape us – regardless of background. Aduke used her voice to convey a range of tones, from playful to serious, in telling this story of self-expression. Another memorable moment was when she sang a song and invited the audience to clap along and feel part of the production.

Overall, these solo stories have given me a fresh understanding of the world and of personal experiences, while delivering emotion and storytelling in an engaging way. Soul Food Solo Stories was an experience that truly connected with the audience, and I wholeheartedly recommend this production to theatre lovers and to anyone who wishes to enjoy culture and heritage.

WRITTEN BY DANIEL K, YEAR 8

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.

LITTLE SOLDIER

This poem traces the loss of innocence as a child is hardened into a “little soldier,” moving from tenderness and fairy tales to guilt, discipline and emotional desolation. Through the repeated refrain, it mourns how youth and gentleness are stolen by trauma and forced endurance.

I’m getting older.
Sunkissed skin
burns from touch.
Elegant flowers
tear at blooming shins.
The hand that palms your cheek
turns cold and bitter.

Oh, little soldier,
one boot after the other
left, right, left.

Dancing nimble fingers
turn calloused,
a reminder of guilt.

Oh, little soldier,
hither to your haunted home,
floorboards that used to cry out
now silent under practised tread.

Colourful lines of life,
blisters against grey skin.

Oh, little soldier,
tear-stained faces
wrung out for thirst.

WRITTEN BY A YEAR 11 STUDENT

THE MARK OF MURDER

Written by Holly D in Year 10, this thrilling murder mystery will keep readers guessing all year long in the 2025–2026 editions of The Mark. Each issue reveals a brand-new perspective on the same shocking crime and with every twist, you'll get closer to uncovering the real killer.

EZRA



I hadn't found Emily's phone, not where she said it was. But Emily was getting help, so even if I couldn't do anything, at least she was. I sank onto Emily's bed and buried my face in my hands. Alan was so cold...

His eyes were blank, compared to their usual light. Everything about him was so still. Alan was gone. I knew that. But I also knew that Triston needed to hope.

So I pushed myself to my feet and stepped out of the room, only to be barrelled into by Triston.

"My room," he said, then sprinted for his door. It all happened so quickly that I barely processed it. Then Audrey, who had apparently been following him, took my arm and dragged me after my friend. 20

When we crept in, Triston was half under his bed, reaching for something underneath.

"What are you looking for?" Audrey asked, sitting down a little way from him. Was she scared? I'll admit, Triston was freaking me out too.

He didn't respond, just kept searching and yelling in frustration when he couldn't find it.

"What?" Audrey turned to me with questioning eyes.

"One second." I reached towards my friend and gently put my hand on his back. "Triston," I started.

“It’s not here, my phone. It’s not here,” he wheezed as he slid out from under the bed. His eyes were wide and red, filled with fear.

“I know.” I held his shoulders. “I looked for your phone too.”

“Not my other phone, not my burner one,” Triston protested. “It’s got to be here.”

“Burner phone?” Audrey asked, as my blood seemed to freeze. Triston looked up, suddenly snapping out of his daze.

“I... uhm... I...”

“Why do you need a burner phone?” Audrey asked quietly.

“Probably to have a cheap spare in case anything goes wrong?” Leah brushed into the room and cautiously pulled Triston to his feet.

“Yeah... maybe,” she whispered. But Triston was looking at his feet, his eyes filled with shame, and suddenly all the implications of him having a burner phone were swimming in my head.

Then he laughed. “You’re thinking about this too much, guys.”

But I knew we weren’t, not when he kept glancing at the suitcase. The room was filled with silence. He was always an awful liar. He looked at each of us in turn, focusing on me. Then he burst into tears, huge drops of water streaking down his face.

“I’m sorry. I never meant to get involved with them. But then Alan did, and then I couldn’t let him get hurt, and then I can’t

get out,” he sobbed. Leah wrapped him in a hug, and he buried his face in her shoulder. Leah looked up at me, and we communicated silently.

Triston needed us, now that his brother was gone, now that he was stuck in a gang.

Of course, we had both known about it already, but that didn’t make it easier to hear. The familiar surge of anger at Alan came again, but this time there was no Alan there with us.

“Back to the fire.” Leah and I gently guided our friend back downstairs, with Audrey in tow.

The living room still had an air of safety and warmth. It was better to stay here. Leah’s art supplies were a trip hazard, especially her oil paints and her stunning artwork. The bottle of paint thinner was uncapped, and I reached down to screw the lid back on.

Did she notice?
Did she know?
No. I was safe.
We were safe.

Now that Alan was gone, we were all safe.

RMGS ARCHIVES

Welcome to RMGS Archives – your window into the rich history of Rainham Mark Grammar School. Each issue, we'll journey through old photos, stories, and memories to celebrate the people and moments that shaped RMGS.

THE MARKSMAN 2021

Before 'The Mark', RMGS had a student publication called 'The Marksman' that showcased student writing and artwork. In this issue of the 'RMGS Archives' we are showcasing a piece of writing written by a Year 12 student in 2020 about their experience of Covid Lockdown.

Isn't it strange to think that we are living through a time that will, in the future, be remembered in history? And what a time it has been too. We have had highs, lows and everything in between, at least in my personal experience of lockdown and all that has happened during it. First, I want to talk about the highs, particularly at the beginning of it all.

Think back to that week when we were all talking about how long we thought we would be away from school, and the assembly we had where we had our first glimpse of social distancing, with all the chairs looking as though they did not want anything to do with each other. At first, social distancing seemed a strange and funny concept when we saw the chairs arranged like that. Then we said goodbye to our teachers, goodbye to our friends, and cleared our inboxes to prepare for the unusual times ahead. The greatest part about all this was, I think, the support. We all had the support of each other and the support of our teachers too. Not only this, but there were the Thursday night claps for our NHS, and people coming together to support Captain Tom on his walk. Then on VE Day, I really felt as though the whole population was supporting each other. The sense of community spirit, strength and togetherness was something I

treasured. It was as though the country knew that the lockdown was going to be tough and that we would need to stand together to get through it. For me, that was the greatest high. It was heart-warming to feel that support and togetherness.

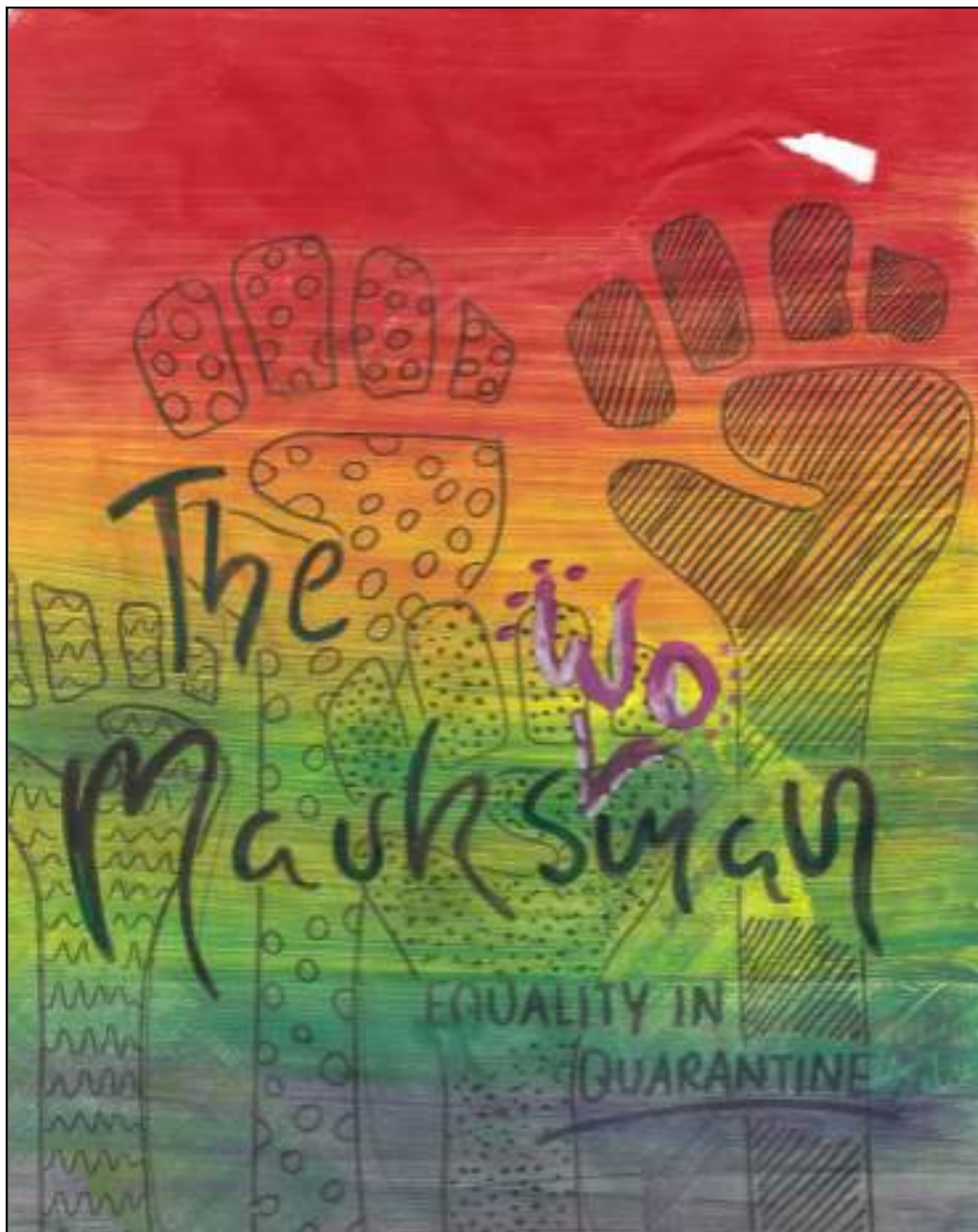
Then the weeks turned into months, and we all started to adjust to our new, and hopefully temporary, way of life. However, this year would become known for more than just the virus. After the tragic death of George Floyd, division suddenly became apparent. The media became flooded with stories of differences and separation, and the wrongs of the world came to light. It was surprising how quickly the sense of community changed. I fully support equality, and I always try to challenge discrimination in my own life and wherever I witness it. I detest violence in any shape or form. I have trained in karate for over half my life and am currently a second level black belt, and this has taught me to avoid violence at all costs. That is why it has been so heartbreaking for me to watch the news or go on social media recently. Seeing acts of violence and hatred on both sides is deeply upsetting. I have seen innocent people hurt by the police and innocent police officers hurt by members of the public. I wholeheartedly support protests

for change, but it is my opinion that violence is not the way to achieve it. My use of the word innocent may be controversial, but everyone is entitled to their own opinion, and I respect that.

We must respect each other's opinions and be tolerant. I feel that understanding and avoiding generalisation are two of the most important things to bear in mind at times like these. Everyone needs to try to understand issues from each other's perspective and not jump to conclusions

about matters on such an incredible scale as racism. I do not believe that all police officers in the UK are racist, and it must be remembered that they are human too. Likewise, not all white people are racist. However, all black people deserve our respect and compassion.

More than anything in the world, I wish that we could all love each other for who we are rather than what we are, and that everyone could recognise that we are all human.





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