



# FIGHT THE SOCIETY

AYLESBURY HIGH SCHOOL

# Year 13 Biology Trip to Oxford University Museum of Natural History

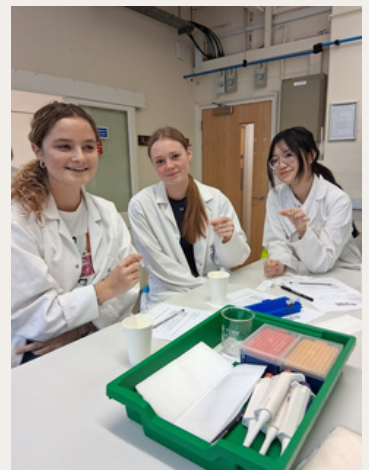
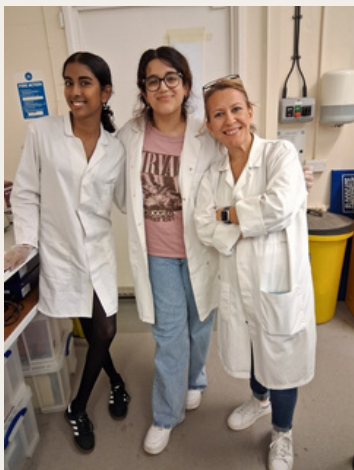
This term, Year 13 students studying A Level Biology visited the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, where they were given the exciting opportunity to spend an entire day working in a professional laboratory environment. The objective of this trip was to complete a practical on gel electrophoresis, a technique that students had previously only encountered in theory lessons.

The aim of this experiment was to determine whether students were tasters or non-tasters of coriander by analysing variations in their DNA. Using personal saliva samples, the students applied restriction enzymes to cut the DNA into fragments of varying lengths, which were then separated using gel electrophoresis. Students prepared agarose gel, carefully poured it into trays, and allowed it to solidify before loading their samples and observing the results.

This investigation demanded a high level of precision, accuracy and consistency, particularly during the use of micropipettes - a piece of equipment none of the students had used prior to this trip. Despite this, the group responded to the challenge remarkably! The scientist leading the session was pleasantly surprised by the high proportion of successful results achieved, praising the students' focus and technical ability. It was a rewarding experience that allowed students to apply classroom knowledge in a real research setting and gain confidence in essential laboratory skills.

Before departing, students were also given the time to explore the Oxford University Museum of Natural History itself. The museum houses an extensive collection of fossils excavated from across the globe, alongside precious minerals, preserved specimens, and skeletal displays. Highlights included exhibits illustrating extinct species and evolutionary history, which closely links to topics studied in the A Level Biology Specification. The visit provided valuable context and inspiration, reinforcing the relevance of biological study outside the classroom.

Overall, the trip was both educational and engaging, offering students a rare insight into university-level scientific research at a prestigious institution, whilst enriching their understanding of biology as a practical and ever-evolving field.



Zara M 13G



# Living History: Holodomor, an essay

In early December, it became apparent to me following advice from teachers surrounding potential university, degree and career options that it may be useful to boost my super-curricular activities in some way. Having started year 12 in September, I thought there would be no better time to enter myself into an essay competition, before I became too overloaded with schoolwork and university applications. It took me a quick search to find an essay competition that was open for entries, the deadline 25th January 2026. This essay competition was run by the Foundation for the History of Totalitarianism, requiring an essay to be written on "Holodomor".

I had never heard of this historical event, had zero background knowledge and was initially daunted by writing an essay on a topic completely unknown to me. Following some initial procrastination, I sat down and began to research the meaning of the word Holodomor itself- "Death by hunger". What followed was pages of information on what the Holodomor truly was- a man-made famine in Ukraine where an estimated over 5 million people died, in the early 1930s, engineered by Stalin's rule. What struck me was the vastness of this famine- why had a generation of Ukrainians been so deeply diminished, yet most people would never hear the word Holodomor?

This prompted me to write my essay as a reflective piece on how governments choose to frame past atrocities in favour of their own political interest. For example, the fact that the British government took until 2022 to recognise the Holodomor as a genocide stuck with me, as it conveniently coincided with the Russian invasion of Ukraine in the same year.

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, it remains more relevant than ever to recognise and understand how the history between these two countries shapes their conflict today. By learning about atrocities such as the Holodomor, it allows us to better understand the reactions of both Ukrainian and Russian people, and why Ukrainian sovereignty is a topic that remains so charged by cultural autonomy.

Entering this essay competition turned out to be more than a super-curricular exercise - it allowed me to critically engage with complex interpretations of this period of history, develop independent research skills and confront the nuanced perspectives from which history is often taught.

Here is an extract from the essay I submitted:

## **In the name of convenience: remembering the Holodomor too late.**

"I beg to move,  
That this House believes that the Holodomor was a genocide against the Ukrainian people."  
- Mrs. Pauline Latham, House of Commons,  
Thursday, 25th May 2023, 90 years after the Holodomor.

Genocide. A word so harrowing it risks becoming diminished by definition alone, its meaning often stretched or compressed by governments seeking to mould historical narratives in their favour. Under international law, genocide is defined as one of five acts committed to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, including killing members of a group, or changing living conditions to suppress life (OPIL, 2023).

These criteria, widely agreed upon as the pillars for genocide having been adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, act as a fitting epitaph for the Holodomor, the sad irony of a man-made famine that took hold of the "Breadbasket of Europe." The prior quote from the House of Commons displays that the engineered deaths of 3.5-7 million Ukrainian people (UoM 2018) did not gain recognition as an act of genocide in the United Kingdom until 2023, joining a list of 32 other countries that recognise this, despite the clear legal framework of genocide. In addition, the denial of the Holodomor as the intentional destruction of a national group lives on in both Russia and its allies, for example ex-Soviet state Belarus.

# Living History: Holodomor, an essay

In response, this essay will argue that such delays in recognition of the Holodomor as a genocide are not the result of historical ambiguity surrounding the intent of the Soviet Union to commit genocide; rather, they are a product of geopolitical self interest, exploiting how modern governments have ignored historical memory in order to maintain stable relations with Russia.

In order to understand the historical significance of the Holodomor and its delayed recognition, it is crucial to examine Ukrainian-Soviet relations within the background of “Ukrainisation” and subsequent Russification that Ukraine underwent as precursor to the Holodomor. In the dusk of the 1917 Russian Revolutions and World War One, a chaotic period of warfare emerged between the Bolshevik Red Army and the anti-Bolshevik White Army. This translated to Ukraine, where the Bolshevik Red Army established control in 1919, implementing “Ukrainisation,” which mandated usage of the Ukrainian language within schools and government, alongside promotion of Ukrainian culture (Babel, 2024). The process of Ukrainization was implemented and supported by the Bolsheviks in Moscow in order to maintain Ukrainian cooperation within the Soviet Union.

Encouraging cooperation from Ukraine was imperative for the Soviet Union due to Ukraine's significant agricultural contribution- their grain harvests were central to the economic gain that fueled Soviet industrialisation. Here, the first claim of ambiguity surrounding the intent of the Soviet Union to commit genocide is clear- the economic dependence of the Soviet Union upon Ukrainian grain production allows for the framing of the Holodomor as the unintended consequence of collectivisation. Such framing generates a curtain of historical ambiguity for modern governments, including the United Kingdom, to hide behind, in order to delay their recognition of the Holodomor as a genocide in favour of positive relations with Russia post Cold War.

However, as will be further examined, the starvation of millions of Ukrainian people can be more strongly argued to be an intentional result of Soviet fears surrounding increased Ukrainian autonomy, through the assessment of primary sources including Stalin's grain procurement quotas, words to colleagues and uprisings of Ukrainian people. These factors will prove the Holodomor as a genocide, thus exploiting the ignorance of historical memory by modern governments in favour of geopolitical self-interest.

**Charlotte W, 12D**



# Mary Shell-ey: a case study in parental attachment

A few weeks ago, the Year 12 psychology classes took on the responsibility of caring for a chicken egg for a week in order to investigate the attachment between a caregiver and their child. The biological argument for attachment is that humans have an innate drive to look after their young through natural selection as only those who had an attachment to their young would have had their offspring survive since children of humans need the support of their parents to live. In theory, this means that this innate drive will be activated when we take a crack at looking after an object equally as fragile as a newborn baby, an emptied chicken egg.

Bowlby, an eminent psychologist who supported the claim that attachment is an innate process, posited that babies use 'social releasers' to activate the adult's attachment system, such as the cooing and big eyes which humans connect with cuteness. Hence googly eyes and human names were necessary to anthropomorphise the eggs into something that will be able to forge the attachment bond between the primary caregiver. My choice may have further cemented this by creating a semantic connection between the egg and an author I enjoyed (as well as a tenuous egg-based pun), allowing the bond developed to be catalysed by the positive feelings already connected with Mary Shelley.

A behavioural psychologist, on looking at this eggsperiment, may argue that the responsibility of not dropping an egg on the floor is what causes the attachment to occur between the primary caregiver and egg through Skinner's operant conditioning.

Through negative reinforcement, the caregiver seeks to avoid the negative consequences of dropping the egg, failure at the school activity, by looking after the egg. This would condition the caregiver into feeling attached to the egg. Similarly, through positive reinforcement, the caregiver will feel relief at the end of the day through successfully looking after their egg, therefore, they continue to carry the egg around so that they keep on getting the positive emotion. As they associate this positive emotion with the egg, the caregiver will be conditioned into having a bond with the egg, which is an example of classical conditioning.

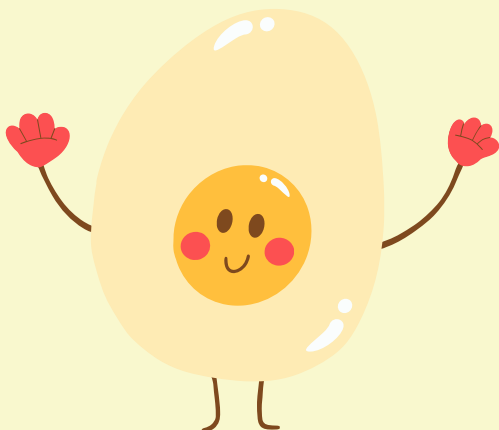
Mary Shelley, the author of Frankenstein and inventor of the sci-fry genre, would have interested Bowlby as her mother died 10 days after her birth, altering how she would form and depict relationships later in life, a field of research Bowlby was interested in. Bowlby argued that all infants have an internal working model which forms a mental representation of their relationship with their primary caregiver and serves as a template for all future relationships. Shelley did not have a secure connection to any primary caregiver since, after her father remarried, her stepmother was 'philistine, a devious and manipulative conservative' and her father 'left the running of the household to his second wife'. This suggests that Mary Shelley's internal working model would have depicted relationships as distant, a possible explanation for how she depicts Frankenstein's relationship to the Creature in her novel dedicated to her father.

# Mary Shell-ey: a case study in parental attachment

Unlike the egg I created, Frankenstein's creation with its 'watery eyes', 'dun-white sockets' and 'shrivelled complexion' lacked the social releasers, innate to humans, that Bowlby suggests are necessary to encourage the attachment to form between the primary caregiver and child. Instead of feeling positive emotion towards his creation, Frankenstein 'rushe[s] downstairs' and 'escape[s]' from it, leaving the Creature to face, just as Shelley, a form of "maternal" deprivation.

Bowlby emphasises that separation from the primary caregiver will have severe consequences for the child, such as affectionless psychopathy (individuals who cannot exhibit caring behaviors, concern, or affection for other people), which Bowlby links to lack of empathy and delinquency in adolescence, possibly what directs the Creature to 'vow[...] eternal hatred and vengeance to all mankind'.

If Shelley had been brought up by a living mother who allowed her to develop the attachment to a primary caregiver which Bowlby insisted is vital to the development of children, Shelley's Frankenstein may have been a different novel. With a different internal working model of what a relationship should look like, would Shelley have chosen at 18 to explore the tangled bond between Frankenstein and his Creation?



Instead of Frankenstein and the Creature as opposing forces, doomed to clash until one falls in some sort of Hegelian tragedy, would Frankenstein have formed the attachment necessary for the development of his Creature and changed a novel about the pitfalls of humans playing God into one celebrating the wonders of science? There is no way to know for certain but Bowlby's argument that the attachment to one's caregivers affects attachment to one's children is supported by studies from Bailey and Ainsworth among others, reflected in the damaged attachment between Mary Shelley and her primary caregivers and the one depicted in her own 'hideous progeny'. With a more secure attachment, perhaps my egg Mary Shelley would never have been able to write a story such as Frankenstein, even if she did have working arms and a brain.

[1] Charlotte Pabst-Kastner, Associate Lecturer, Open University (UK)

<https://victorianweb.org/previctorian/mshelley.bio.html>

[2] Charlotte Pabst-Kastner, Associate Lecturer, Open University (UK)

<https://victorianweb.org/previctorian/mshelley.bio.html>

[3] All further quotes are from M.Shelley (1818)

Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus London



**Katy D 12G**

As part of GCSE English Literature, year 11s have been looking at an anthology of poems centred around the theme of 'Belonging', many of which explore personal experiences of identity. The following poem was inspired by this collection.

## Too

"I didn't even know you were mixed," is what they'll say,  
But I can't say that they deserve any kind of blame;  
For my skin is so pale and my speech is too proper  
And in terms of religion? It's like I didn't even bother.

I can drape a scarf around my head  
Or use my fingers to scoop curry with bread  
But I'm an unfaithful sinner - I'm no devout  
And the spice sometimes feels a foreign taste in my mouth.

'Assalamualaikum,' I could greet an auntie,  
Swamped in modest fabric down to the feet,  
But their words feel fake when they're from my tongue  
And my attempt at modesty feels like sinister deceit.

Alas, my eyes are of almond and nose a hill's slope  
Thick hair and irises of brown - not blue;  
And though if I cut my skin and the blood looks like a white girl's,  
I'm actually Pakistani, too.

Layla R 11A



# The philosophy (and the impossibility) of perfection



Vast expanses of fluffy, white clouds, caressed by the evening sun. Wafts of food fit for the gods, who surely can be no happier than you. Surrounded by all you hold dear, you float in pure ecstasy, eternal, no future and no past, only the present bliss.

Such is society's prevailing vision of a Utopia. Defined as 'an imagined place or state of things in which everything is perfect', it is how the large majority of our society may view heaven or such an equivalent, a place of everlasting peace, tranquility, and happiness. However, the notion of a heaven, where all souls deemed worthy ascend off this mortal coil at the time of some god's choosing, is pure conjecture, an impossibility. How can all souls deemed worthy experience pure happiness at the same time, when bliss is an individual experience? When humans, regardless of whether they are self-aware enough to acknowledge it, are intrinsically self-serving, will use whatever means to maximise their own enjoyment and possibility to thrive? One person's happiness is another person's sadness.

After reading George Orwell's 'Can Socialists Be Happy?', which discusses the inaccessible nature of Utopia due to man's inability to decide what exactly said Utopia looks like, I have come to the following conclusions.

One: a Utopia is possible, however not in our society, nor in a communal sense.

Two: the reason that the common goal of working towards personal fulfilment does not unite groups of all biases is due to the individuality of happiness, even within factions of belief.

And lastly, three: as Orwell argues, I agree - without suffering we cannot know happiness.

The possibility of a Utopia depends on how we choose to think of a Utopia. As happiness, bliss and enjoyment are personal, according to our individualistic biases and status as self-serving creatures, a communal place of ever-lasting happiness for all is unattainable. In order to give pure satisfaction to any such groups, a level of suffering must be present. If suffering is present, unavoidably, a member of society will not be truly happy. Of course, this poses another question of can happiness and suffering co-exist - they are not complete opposites as happiness and sadness (though the idea of those co-existing must also be debated), rather juxtaposed through their connotations, but let us assume (by operating upon the global ideology that eradicating suffering will bring peace and happiness) that one cannot exist alongside the other

Let me pose a familiar one to you: unwrapping a present on your birthday. This is a core and relatable memory; the tinkle of a mother's laugh, the dozing grandparents, and the oohs and aahs of little friends and siblings. Now, look once again at this picture; note the discontent of those wanting the gift but not in possession of it. Think back to opening your birthday presents; did not you feel some sense of individual elation, some metaphysical podium, at the glory of owning something so coveted that no other has? But wait - little Sue proclaims she also has the limited edition Barbie - how fun, you can play together! All of a sudden, the podium jerks back down, the elation dissipates, the novelty has worn off. The attention is shared now, you don't hold all eyes captive. Even if you were shy, even if the loss of censure gave you joy, you still hold within some small jewel of jealousy that she got it first, that you have nothing to boast about amongst your little friends.

This is the downfall of a communal Utopia, of the layman's heaven - the unavoidable, intrinsic human thirst for individuality and momentary glory. Such ideas are woven into the very fabric of our capitalist society, from Rome's taxation upon the plebeians, to 'Hollister's limited edition evening dress - buy now' - we always thirst for the new, the novel, the only.

# The philosophy (and the impossibility) of perfection

For this reason, our society is doomed to be forever fractured. This is quite a simple conclusion, drawn by many around the world. Some groups are simply too entrenched in their ideals to reconcile, and the pleasures of the opposing faction can bring nothing but envy and anger to their members. Whilst some may argue all ideologies can change, and this is a fair point, I now ask if an ideology can be eradicated. Whilst we may try to suppress widely condemned positions, such as Nazism, this serves only to ignite the flame within some followers, and promotes it to others.

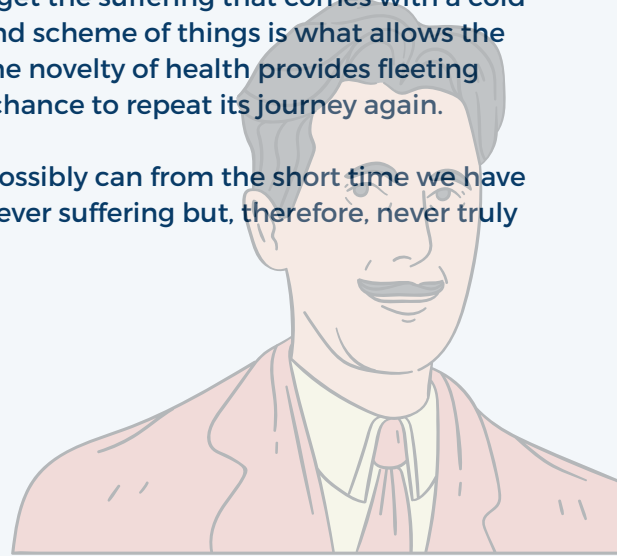
One aspect that can be seen as uniting the vast majority is the goal of personal fulfillment. Whether this be through creating the perfect nuclear family or living in a 4 story mansion, each and every person on this planet lives in order to reach their own view of what their life should be. So, you may ask, if such a concept exists that should unite all humanity, how have we been fractured since conception? The answer lies, once again, in our intrinsic individuality. Each human experience is unique; even two people born exactly the exact same, in the same conditions, who look identical and seem outwardly to be the same person, will forever have differences. Temperament, desires, viewpoints, fingerprints, all are unique and therefore create divides between us. These divides do not have to be seen as negative - the happiest married couple in the world, who never argue, will look different, have different ideas and voices, and different experiences, yet still coexist in as close to bliss as they can feasibly achieve. However, the most prominent and consequential of divides do fragment us so deeply that no amount of glossy propaganda and messages of community can piece them together.

Applying our agreed-upon understanding that personal fulfillment is a common goal to the aforementioned groups, one can clearly see how much individuality weaves itself into our beings and tears apart unity, as much as creating it. Whilst fire can run along oil spills in the ocean, it is drowned immediately at the lick of sea spray. When a Klan member accepts the status of any person of colour, a member of the LGBTQ+ community, or a strong woman as an equal human, they no longer prescribe to the hateful doctrines of their own ideology. Light and dark, locked in their eternal battle, dance between each other at dawn and dusk, yet ultimately remain divided. Such is the way of our society, forever fragmented and impossible to exist in harmonious bliss.

The final conclusion that arose for me from reading Orwell's essay was a conclusion that suffering is essential for experiencing happiness. Without a bad experience to compare it to, how can you know you are in a happy place? If you live your entire life in what another may describe as pure bliss if they spent 5 minutes in your place, you simply view that life as normal, as just existing, rather than a perpetual state of elation. Perhaps one could be perpetually content, forever at ease with the world, but with that comes a complacency borne from a lack of excitement, of vigour, which itself comes only from the disparity between a negative and positive state. Think back to when you last had a cold, the irrepressible want to get back to normal, pure consternation at your own ability to forget the suffering that comes with a cold and the ease of healthy life. This momentary suffering in the grand scheme of things is what allows the return to normality to be sweetened with a hint of happiness - the novelty of health provides fleeting elation, before subsiding, waiting for the next infection and the chance to repeat its journey again.

It is better to live, accepting some suffering, and to gain all you possibly can from the short time we have upon this earth, than to hide in a bubble of perpetual comfort, never suffering but, therefore, never truly fulfilled either.

**Alys W, 11M**



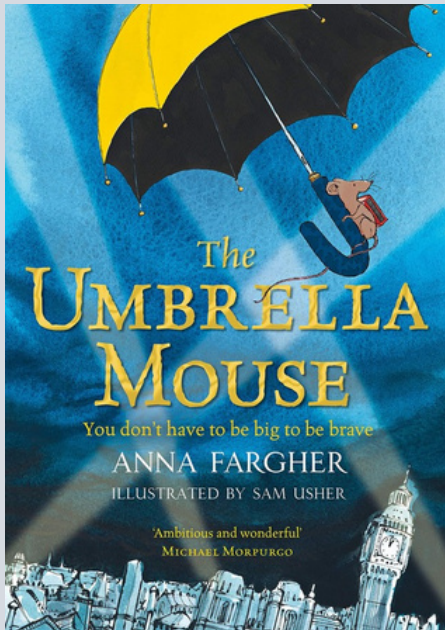
# Book recommendations

## The Umbrella Mouse by Anna Fargher

### You don't have to be big to be brave

"A spellbinding tale of bravery and hope"-Gill Lewis. Author of Sky Hawk.

Age rating: 9-12 years



Pip Stanway is a small mouse who lives in a big unhappy world. It's 1944 and World War 2 has broken out. London is under attack. The umbrella shop that Pip has called home for as long as she can remember is struck by a bomb. With her parents dead, Pip has to do all she can to help with the war effort so she joins Noah's Ark, a gang of animals fighting with the Resistance at the feet of unsuspecting French soldiers. She takes her matchbox backpack and sets off on an adventure to find a new home: the place where umbrellas were established in Italy. How much does she have to risk to save her new friends?

### What do I like about this book?

I love how heart warming it is and how much Pip loves her new friends. Pip shows true loyalty and faithfulness. It explores a well-known part of history from a totally original angle. I think it's a lovely book that I'd definitely recommend.

## Fight Back by A.M. Dassu

### When we come together, our voices are stronger.

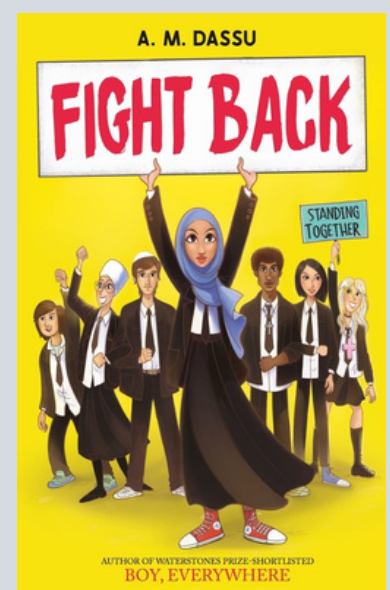
"It's very very good, and Aaliyah and her behaviour is very realistic and I really loved her best mate too." - Sanaa, 14 year old Muslim teen.

Age rating: 11-14 years

Aaliyah is ready for her first ever dream-come-true k-pop concert, but it becomes a nightmare when a terrorist targets the stadium. After the explosion, Aaliyah is bullied because she is a muslim. She forces herself to do what she thinks is right and decides to make her voice heard and wear a hijab to show she is proud to be a muslim and that she isn't scared. Her school then bans all religious symbols. She is targeted and made to feel small but Aaliyah is not alone- other young people from different religions and backgrounds also feel discriminated against. Can she and her friends do what is right?- speak up and fight back!

### What do I like about this book?

I like how it was dramatic. It surprised me how bad some people can be to people who are different from them. It also amazed me that someone could be made to feel so bad about themselves when they didn't even do anything wrong. It really made me think about the experiences of other people that I had never noticed before.



# *Celebrating Holi*

You may have heard of Holi but what really is it and why do people celebrate it? Holi, also known as 'the festival of colour' or 'festival of love', is an ancient Hindu festival that is celebrated globally. It commences on the last full moon of the lunar month of Phalgun, which usually lies in March.

This lively festival celebrates new life, the triumph of good over evil and welcoming spring. It is one of India's most vibrant festivals, joining people together, regardless of background, caste or culture. Holi is a festival which is celebrated in many different ways by different people, from holding religious ceremonies and going to temples, to taking part in festivities and having fun. During this joyous time, celebrants typically tend to host a bonfire on the night before Holi, known as Holika dahan, to destroy evil and symbolise the old Hindu legend of Prahlad and Holika, where the Demon King's, (Hiranyakshipu) sister, Holika, attempted to burn Prahlad due to his deep devotion to Lord Vishnu but failed, as Prahlad's faith in the Lord allowed him to survive, marking the triumph of good over evil. On the following day, on Holi itself, celebrations are hosted where people throw Gulal (coloured powder and water) on each other, representing victory, the beginning of spring and the overall good in life.



Celebrations also include many lively and energetic songs, dances and the exchange of stories and homemade sweets, carrying out the free-spirited happiness of this festival. Not only does Holi represent these beautiful aspects, but it is also a time of togetherness, and joy, giving people an opportunity to come together, forgive and make amends. But Holi isn't complete without the delicious variety of food. Many types of foods are cooked on this auspicious day, varying from sweet to savoury, such as Gujiya (sweet fried dumpling), Gulab Jamoonn, Puri and Samosas, which brings out the rich diverse culture through its flavours, tying the spirit of Holi together.

**Yuktha S 10W**



# “What would happen if you put a 17 year old girl in a particle accelerator?”

Last term, along with 22 fellow Physics A-Level students, I had the opportunity to travel to Geneva and visit The European Organization for Nuclear Research, otherwise known as CERN.

CERN is inarguably at the forefront of new particle physics. The development of the Large Hadron Collider was pivotal in the discovery of the Higgs Boson in 2012, a unique particle which was essential in completing the Standard Model. In addition to this, CERN is home to particle detectors ATLAS and CMS which have been used to study dark matter and allowed physicists to gain new insight into the defining characteristics of the Higgs Boson with degrees of precision that have never been seen before.

You may be wondering “What is a Higgs Boson?” or even, “What is particle physics?”. Before travelling to Geneva, I had many questions about how to link my in-class learning to the seemingly daunting Physics there. However, one of the most significant parts of this visit was the opportunity to ask experts my questions about Physics and receive answers which were filled with comprehensive and nuanced knowledge. Across our trip, together with my friends, I've compiled a few of our questions (and their answers):

- Why is all the machinery covered in foil? Foil acts as an insulator to combat the extremely cold temperatures inside the particle accelerator ( $-270^{\circ}\text{C}$ !) as well as preventing the heat from the surroundings from warming up the intricate components.

- Have any accidents ever happened while you've worked here? No, across all CERN facilities there are extreme measures in place to ensure the safest working conditions for all staff.
- Will my Toblerone become radioactive from being in this room? Also no, in order to prevent the escape of radioactive particles, machinery is surrounded by massive walls of concrete, this is able to absorb even the most penetrating types of radiation such as gamma.

And perhaps my favourite question of the trip; “What would happen if you put a 17 year old girl in a particle accelerator?”. Very surprisingly, the effects of a particle accelerator on the body can be quite minimal. Contrasting the mass of a single particle to the human body, from the outside the sensation of a particle would feel like a bee flying into your face. However, due to the compact nature of a particle, a large amount of energy would be transferred quite rapidly, not harming the body, but delivering a slight shock to the system.

Going on the trip to CERN was an invaluable experience - the opportunity to take part in interactive workshops as well as a guided tour of the Data Centre and Antimatter Factory provided me with a captivating educational experience. In addition to the irreplaceable insight gained, we also shared memories of Christmas markets, Swiss culture and beautiful scenery such as Mont Blanc and Lake Geneva, bookmarking this trip as a lifelong memory.

# THE HIGH SOCIETY TEAM

## **Writers**

Zara M 13G

Charlotte W 12D

Katy D 12G

Layla R 11A

Alys W 11M

Harriet C 7C

Yuktha S 10W

Olamide A 13K

## **Student Publications Lead**

Miss Nash