

an eternity or telling someone that you're in a relationship. With that inside, you feel empty and lost. Pressure. So, you ask me how I would combat and control pressure? Isolate the things you love doing, your passions and hobbies and keep pursuing them. Keep a positive frame of mind in order to keep your brain full of life and excitement, but at the same time make it free and give yourself the ability to contemplate and fantasise. For me, it's the small things that really make the difference and make me smile. The old man I see religiously walking the dog every day at 9am, with the same grimace, or a nice cup of warm tea left by your bedside for when I wake up. Keep active and don't lock yourself indoors all day, just do something! Athletes are able to enhance pressure and use it to

propel them to greatness. So propel yourself forward, don't stumble backwards. And remember a healthy lifestyle is a healthy brain and a healthy brain is less pressure.

So then, don't let pressure destroy you in these coming months or stop you from breaking down those walls. Smash them down, take a deep breath and do it with a smile. Don't let pressure shadow your dreams, seek them out and don't stop until you've achieved them. Pressure. Use it as your tool and let it drive you on.

THE PRESSURE

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By Anastasia Broder

Like pretty much everything else in today's world, the concept of pressure is highly controversial. On the one hand, we have those who advocate the necessity of pressure pointing to its effective motivational influence, which in the long run translates into success and hard work. On the other hand, those who oppose pressure consider it prerequisite in developing low personal morale and precipitating failure. Debate around whether people are living under too much pressure nowadays does not seem to settle the issue; press a little too hard and even the strongest will snap like a fragile twig: release a little too much and even the most motivated won't use his or her whole potential.

There have been times in my life where I considered pressure the ultimate evil. Pressure from teachers to get certain marks, pressure from the media to look a certain way, pressure from family to behave in a certain manner- this can get tedious, exhausting, and overwhelming. Suffocating under the currents of expectations and projections, one can't help it but feel inadequate. No matter how much effort is put, one never manages to be good enough. Pressure has that awful side effect of convincing an individual of his or her incapacity, planting weeds of self-doubt that infest the interior.

Nevertheless, I still consider pressure necessary. Vital even. I think pressure itself is fundamentally helpful in achieving goals and aiming higher than we consider ourselves capable of; it's our inability to deal correctly with it that's causing self-doubt and stress. We allow pressure to infiltrate our rational thinking by interpreting small defeats as testimony to our failure as a person. How we process defeat forms our relationship with pressure. As soon as we stop putting so much emphasis on avoiding mistakes, pressure becomes less of an enemy and more of a friend, whispering words of encouragement and challenging you to give your all.

So yes, if you allow pressure to destroy you it will. But pressure has some other amazing properties. It can discipline. Demand. Dare. Develop. It's about making the conscious choice to remain strong under pressure and utilize its benefits while avoiding its detrimental side effects. Of course that takes time, effort, and practice; breakdowns are unavoidable, but in time, developing immunity to dangers of pressure is possible. Pressure is the ultimate locomotive of life, and failure is inevitable, so the best you can do is embrace both.

Essay prompt for Issue 4: "Why do we fear Change?" Deadline 5th June

The Secret

Years have passed and
Time has come to fade
Most of my memories except
For one, that hasn't decayed.

It has stuck with me like a disease
Through the years of famine and drought.
A disease that makes me writhe
In blissful agony and shout.

For mercy and liberation to wash
Over me, like a brilliant wave
Of all the many things that
Bring the ignorance I crave.

Liberation from this memory that
Has me in ropes of insanity, bound,
And mercy from the destructive doubt
Circling my head, round and round.

The wretched silhouette of infidelity
Rearing its ugly face in every corner of my mind
And extinguishing the solace of love
That I never left behind.

A secret rooted now to the
Deepest, darkest crevices of my soul
One that cannot perish even after
The years of madness having taken their toll.

It refuses to leave or perhaps
I am reluctant to let it go
Because it is my last chance
Before the world, to put on a show

To show them that my love for you
Ultimately overpowered the hate
And that eventually forgiveness arrived
At the doors to your heart but perhaps too
late.

For you had passed on to the place beyond,
And I have, in this lonely world, remained,
But no longer do I grieve for I have grown
quite fond
Of the secret of love, with which, my soul you
have stained.

By Nandini Bulchandani

Publisher for Nobel Laureates — Bromsgrove Alumnus

Stephen Page

Stephen Page, CEO of Faber and Faber, reflects on Bromsgrove and his career in an industry that, against all the odds, is flourishing.

I interviewed Steven Page (Lupton, '83) before he spoke at a Bromsgrove Foundation event, in London.

A son of the then Prep School headmaster (after whom Page House is named), he fondly recalled his teachers, admiring and inspired by their passion for their subjects. In particular, he remembered his English and Politics teachers - the latter nicknamed 'Bolshy-Wolshy' - for their willingness to depart from the syllabus and their support and encouragement; not only did they help him succeed in school, but develop his own views and interests. His teachers inspired a sense of responsibility and self-starting, of taking opportunities with both hands. Page recollected an outing to see *King Lear* in theatre; before the last act, his English teacher left. When asked by the students, he explained that he 'can never watch the end' for his overwhelming engagement in the play; his enthusiasm for literature and the arts influenced Page.

Asked about his fondest memory of Bromsgrove, he smiled slightly; he hadn't been asked the question, or even considered it, in a while. Page remembered a prank he and a friend had played on the Chaplain in choir. They had stuck him to the pew with pins (I don't know how they did it), and naturally, he was apoplectic. Annoyingly, it was Page that was blamed. But the great thing about Bromsgrove, he said, was that rebellion, although officially discouraged, was almost welcomed; the school understood that it was normal, and they were just having fun.

His counsel to aspiring publishers was emphatic: **'Learn about the industry, not just the product.'** He advised 'immersing yourself in the industry' by working in a bookshop and getting other book-related work experience. Post-graduate degrees in publishing enable you to get paid (living allowance) work experience - Faber accept a few students each year from different universities, including eight from UCL. Although 'good grades are important', 'a lot of people have them'; you need to do something or act in a way that defines you, that makes you unique and indispensable. People that are well rounded, smart, quick, personable and interesting - they're the ones that will get the job. **Remember to have the humility to listen and learn, adapting to your environment; don't just talk about yourself.**



Although he'd always loved books, he hadn't wanted to work in publishing until he was 22. He had studied History at university and played in a rock band for a year before realising that his music career wasn't going to work. He knew

he loved books, so he looked to a friend of his father, who was in publishing, for advice on getting into the industry. He suggested working in a book store, which Page did for a year before joining Longman publishers as a marketing executive.

Does Kindle (Amazon's e-reader) hurt publishing? Surprisingly, he is positive: 'it has transformed the industry', introducing a revolutionary technology for reading. However, the company has a great deal of power, and a near monopoly on the e-book industry, which gives them very strong bargaining power. But ultimately, what people sometimes forget is that, despite their influence and power, Amazon needs publishers. Perhaps Amazon would wish it otherwise, but despite a major dispute about pricing and Amazon's dominant position in some markets, the publishing world has remained strong.

Page captivated the audience during his ensuing speech; he proved an engaging, occasionally humorous, occasionally dramatic speaker, and brought the publishing industry to vivid life.

Page is committed to the industry, insisting that it's not dying, but needs to remain a relevant workforce like television, music and film - not a 'cosy place'. He quoted Woodie Allan, from his film *Annie Hall*: Publishing is "like a shark. If you stop swimming, you die".

With the theme of 'legacy', Page explained the challenge that Faber faces of living up to its history as an established, prestigious house, 'publishing the past today' (40% of its revenues derive from previously published work), whilst continuing to publish current authors. He described Faber as 'small and independent - yet renowned - with a huge support of authors and poets'; as some of the company's authors include Literature Nobel prize winners Orhan Pamuk and Harold Pinter, it seems they're more relevant than ever. (Page hosted a lunch for the two to meet each other).

When Page joined Faber in 2001, he advocated greater focus on the appearance of books, saying that 'digital books have urged publishers to create more beautiful books'. Similarly, he increased engagement with book stores (both big and small), urging them to improve their layout and look, because they 'encouraged an explosion in reading', and will continue doing so.

Amazon has disrupted the way we buy books, threatening high street stores. However, he cited that last year print book sales increased 6% while e-book sales have declined, decidedly proclaiming that 'people are now embracing books AND e-books, realising they can co-exist'. Although only half of the UK like books, those that do *really* like them; they're passionate about them, which is perhaps why the industry is less inclined to subscription services such as Spotify and Netflix which have hurt the music and film industries.

The publishing industry needs more diversity to reflect society; although there are programmes to encourage minorities to work in the industry, he insisted that more needs to be done. Additionally, the public library service is under threat from spending cuts; it *needs* to be saved because for some, it is the only way they can access books, especially in childhood.

The audience of 100 was clearly energised by Page's engaging description of his job and the industry. For people who may not have considered it as a potential career, keep in mind that it's a lively, creative industry full of people who love books, enjoy engaging with authors and relish its commercial side.

Alia Derriey

Alia Derriey

Whilst reading this book I went on the U4 French trip to Normandy and Brittany. It was a lovely trip (although I was glad to have my book with me); my favourite part was when we visited the quaint seaside town of Saint-Malo – where, as it happens, this book is set. It was such a great, almost magical experience: by the time we went to the town, I felt like I had already lived there, walking the streets with Marie-Laure (one of the two protagonists).

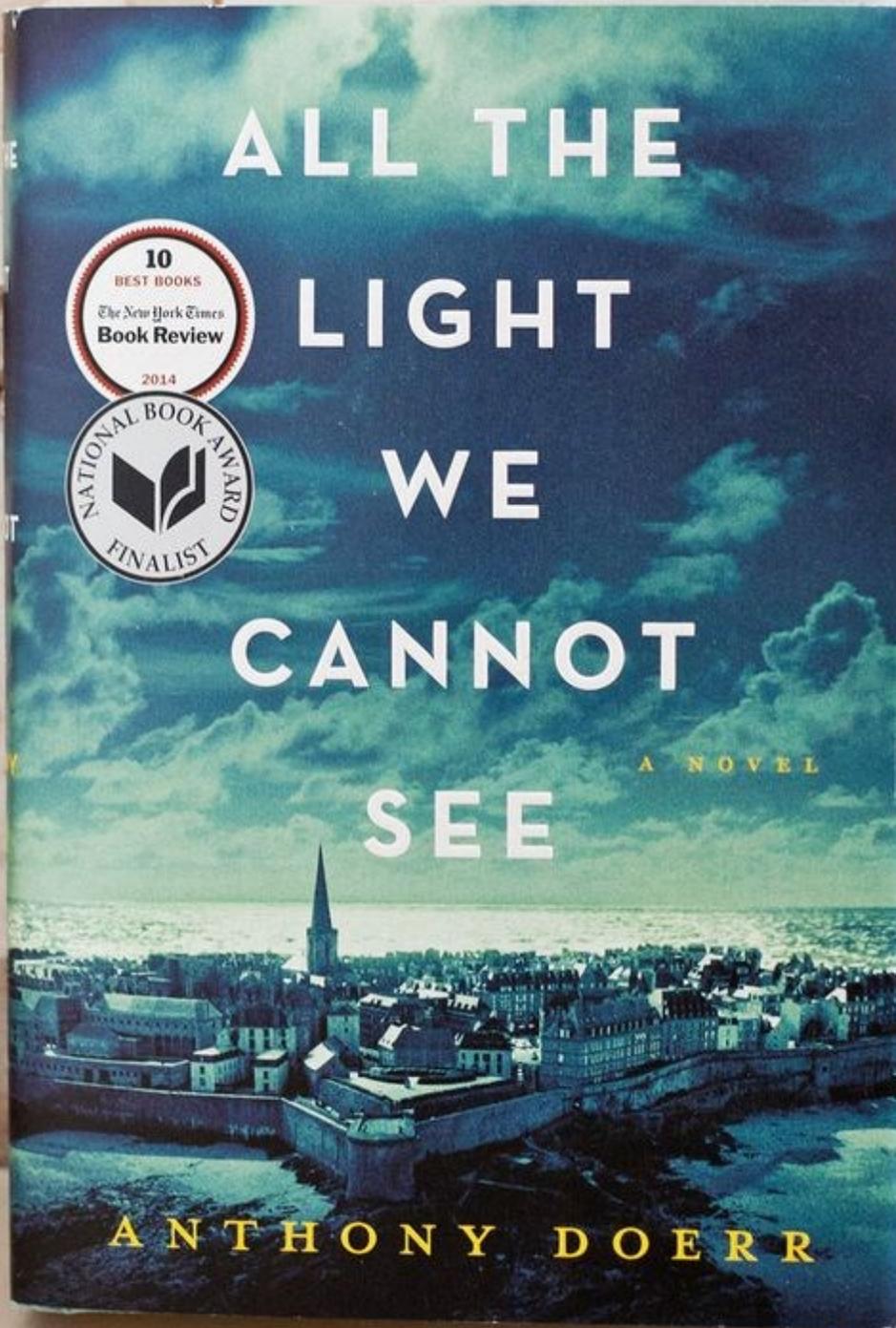
So, what's it about? you wonder. That is, if you haven't already heard about it – it won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2015. The novel wasn't expected to be such a hit; the writer himself has said he thought only a small audience would enjoy it because of its sometimes lengthy descriptions of radio technology and trigonometric calculations.

But nonetheless, people loved it. Perhaps this is due to its innocent, endearing protagonists: Marie-Laure, a blind girl who lives in Paris with her father, a museum locksmith. The other is Werner,

a German orphan who lives in a coal mining village. Although set in the Second World War, this story isn't really about concentration camps or inhumane Nazi prisons (although these are featured); it mainly focuses on the average French experience in occupied France, and the malevolent influence and power of the Hitler Youth. By giving a voice to both sides, Doerr doesn't present a narrow, overly biased view of the war, but merely lets you

come to your own conclusion about the war – and the ordinary people stuck in the middle.

Despite their contrasting upbringings and environments, Marie-Laure and Werner are surprisingly alike: they're both 'innocent', although Werner sees (excuse the pun) more of the war than his counterpart. They're also passionate about their interests. From a young age, Werner has been infatuated with inventing and science, especially radios; Marie-Laure has had a great love for molluscs ever since she went to live in Saint-Malo with her great-uncle, hearing about them in stories and feeling them on the beach for the first time.



All the Light is simply enjoyable to read; never once did I feel like I had to work at it to keep interested, or push myself to read further. It's got a compelling, credible storyline with sweet, lovable characters who contrast with a few vile ones; it's beautifully written (I say that a lot but it's true), with a vivid description – more like immersion – of the bombing in Saint-Malo. Not only is it a physical experience, but an emotional one, especially for Marie-Laure, blind and alone, and Werner, who is trapped in the basement of a building. Not once does Doerr give way to monotonous, predictable thriller/action description. The structure, although at times disorienting, helps move the plot along and keep 'grip': weirdly similar to the last book I read, its chapters alternate between different time settings, gradually

coming closer and closer, closing the gap until 'one setting' at the conclusion. This switching juxtaposes life at different points in the war and how the

characters have changed. Additional narrators add layers/perspectives to the plot and the reader's overall outlook on the war, increasing the tension caused by dramatic irony (because the reader can 'see all', they can understand and appreciate the links among the characters and the ways their lives will intertwine).

Something struck me when Werner and the other boys (at the boarding school) chase the weakest boy in the group. I was reminded of Orwell's 1984, specifically the Two Minutes' Hate, when Winston is surrounded by people inexplicably, furiously shouting at a picture on a screen, and he can't help but join in. Werner is the same – he doesn't really want to hurt the boy, but because everyone else is chasing him, he feels he must, and

longs to fit in and be part of something far bigger than himself. On a larger scale, this is what happened with a lot of people, both in Nazi Germany and occupied France; they simply didn't want to (or couldn't) fight back. Don't get me wrong, I'm not excusing their passivity, ignorance or indolence, but it's important to try to understand what life was like under such an oppressive, omnipotent regime. Sometimes it's easy to forget that people had ordinary lives and just wanted to get on with them. I guess it's just something to think about, and it's great that this book brings it up in a non-oppressive or explicitly judgmental way. Conversely, Marie-Laure is never 'tainted' by influence of war, staying true to her beliefs; this is why she's such a lovable character, because she's every-

thing that people (or at least I) aspire to be like: honest, caring, passionate and intelligent. But perhaps this is only because being blind has meant she's never had much of a 'social life'; in a way she's unrealistic, or at least not 'normal'.

Overall, I loved this book. I can't really find much to criticise, but I will say that it's a pretty long book (although not slow-paced), and as I mentioned before, it contains some lengthy scientific descriptions – although at least for me, they were quite interesting. If you usually like historical fiction, then you'll love this – although even if you don't, you'll probably still enjoy it.



For the Love of Wi-Fi

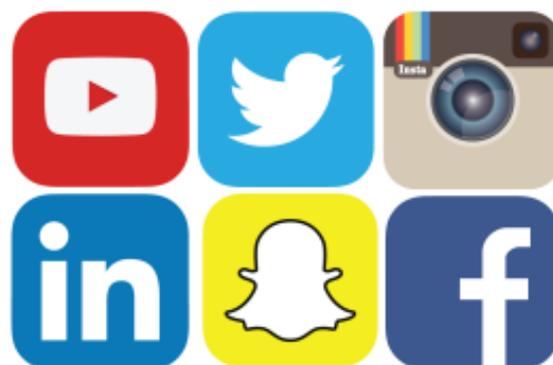
Libby Edwards

It's 8pm and you still haven't started a 1000 word essay that's due in for period 2 the next morning. You've spent the last 3 hours on your laptop; checking Facebook, scrolling through Pinterest or watching Best Vines on YouTube. You've convinced yourself that you're 'just not in an essay-writing mood' and have started season 3 of 'Orange is the new Black' on Netflix. An irreversible crime, way past the point of no return. You're not alone. Young people between the ages of 16 and 24 are spending more than 27 hours on the internet a week. More than a seventh of your life is spent online, and how do you justify it? It's the 21st Century, we're generation Z, it's normal. How do they expect us to do school work when so much free entertainment is just a google away? It's a temptation we have engulfing us 24/7 and internet-denying has almost become something to be rewarded. We become proud of an hour of productivity and so reward ourselves with an episode of 'Breaking Bad'. We have transformed into a generation of procrastination and it would seem that some form of taxing training is needed to pull ourselves out of this world of zeroes and ones. Self-perseverance and willpower is majorly tested when the pressures of success can so easily be relieved by Netflix.

But perhaps what is most concerning is the extent in which the internet intrudes our lives. We have a curtain enveloping us, like a permanent contact lens tinting our view of the world, showing everything from the perspective of social media. Vines, tweets and status updates are changing our views. But could they be for the better? The concept of social media being to share memories and ideas would seem ideal. A means of mass sharing and communicating, where's the flaw in that? We can watch anything from a TedTalk to a live stream political debate. There are free lessons on basically anything from a vlogger on YouTube and immediate feedback on a product, restaurant or even person is always available. By reading articles, pdfs, reviews, blogs etc. you are developing opin-

ions and expanding your view of the world. Through using the internet you're learning. So where does internet-use become unproductive?

Perhaps it's knowing how to use it. Being able to separate the honest from dishonest and having a radar for those who use the internet with an agenda. Knowing where relaxing turns to lazy. Unquestionably, your responsibilities in the real world are paramount. Despite the internet expanding our global understanding and forever fuelling globalisation, it's two dimensional. It serves a small purpose in our lives: to enhance our knowledge. We can take and leave what we want from it because at the end of the day the experiences, relationships and memories we have can't be lived through the internet. The people behind the screens come from the same physical world we do and whilst you were watching that video on a weird tradition they have in Spain, a Spanish person who runs the local town hall in Pamplona just came sat next to you on the train. Despite the name 'social media', there is an undeniable possibility of unsocial behaviour which comes with it. There is a point where the Internet in fact becomes restricting. Knowing where the internet stops being gratifying and starts being a restriction is the key to its use. So the decision is yours, do you continue watching that episode or do you prioritize your responsibilities and select the internet that's of value to you and leave the rest behind?



Top Teacher Tips

Exams are getting closer and stress only builds up. School life is generally stressful but when deadlines are reached and we have to sit in a quiet room in front of paper that will predict our future, our panic levels hit the ceiling. That is why I interviewed a couple of our Bromsgrovian teachers to share their experience and give us some TOP TIPS!

Did you ever get stressed before exams back at school and if so, how did you deal with it?

Ms Wadley: I didn't get very stressed during exams because I balanced my time. I went home and revised for a couple of hours but then I took some timeout for myself and to see my friends.

Mr Whiting: I never got stressed during exams because I would revise during the day and then not work during the night. I would balance my time so that I would not make myself stressed by feeling that I should be working. Instead I would think, "I know I've worked during the day so I can now enjoy my time off."

Dr Thompson: Very much, yeah. It manifested itself by me panicking. My hands would shake a lot, I would become very petrified and I never really overcame it. All I would do is arrive really really early to my exams because I was just so panicked about missing it. I didn't really do anything though to calm my nerves. It was a huge problem to an extent that it made me very miserable.

Mrs Faulkner-Petrova: I used to shout at my mum a lot, lock myself in my room and do more and more revision because I thought that would help. It helped with the stress because I used to get stressed thinking I didn't know enough, so if I locked myself away and shouted everyone away, then I would think, "Oh yeah now I know everything, now I'm not stressed."

As an experienced teacher, would you recommend the same to your students or do you have any different advice?

Ms Wadley: Don't do these big long chunks of revision where it lasts all day. Balance the hours by giving yourself some time out. Go outside as well and get fresh air, otherwise you end up sitting indoors for hours on end.

Mr Whiting: Yes, just have a break at least once an hour. 50 minutes work then 10 minutes break and so on. In the breaks make yourself come away from your work like making a cuppa. Classical music also helped to concentrate by not listening to it but using it more as a distraction that allowed you to concentrate.

Ms Faulkner-Petrova: I would recommend throughout an exam course to make decent notes and to review and revise as you go through the course, so that at the end you don't have it all messed up. I did very little work for 2 years and then at the end I had to basically learn everything, all in one big ball and that's what was stressful about it.

Dr Thompson: I've never known how to deal with stress so I don't really know other than to talk to people but I'll tell you this story:

When I was at GCSE we had the head of exams, he was a very evil person he would say, "if you forget your calculator that's it and I'm not going to help you". I understand why he was like that but I felt like please, come on, this is a very stressful time can you not be on my side?

So as head of IB I always model myself on the antithesis of him by saying "come in, relax". I don't know what to tell you because that's personal. What I do, as head of IB is I try and make IB exams as relaxing as possible and try and appear on the side of the students as much as possible. I had an exam once in University, it was a nuclear physics exam, and I was at the front of the hall and the lecturer who taught the course was in there as well, checking it was okay and invigilating. The lecturer, then seeing that I was panicking and nervous, winked at me and did a silly impression, which relaxed me.



Dr Thompson

How do you cope with stress in a situation that you cannot get out of?

Mr Whiting: Most problems are fixable; almost all problems have a solution to them. Recently a problem came up where I thought I couldn't get out of, which is what makes me stressed. However, even that ultimately did have a solution. Before I gave my speech at my wedding I was very nervous but now after teaching I'm used to it. Before I would find that very scary to speak in front of lots of people but now I have learnt.

Ms Wadley: Count to 10, if you're stuck then give yourself this small 10 second time out. Before my driving test I would get stressed because I would be worried about failing but in fact it's the stress that was going to cause me to fail, if I didn't get stressed I wouldn't fail. That motto then worked!

Ms Faulkner-Petrova: I will clench and unclench my hands and focus on that. Anything physical would help like fidgeting with a paper clip or a piece of blue-tak in my hand or picking my nail.



Ms Faulkner Petrova

Nowadays, what do you do to take your mind off things, or lets say, what is relaxing for you?

Mr Whiting: Do something where I can turn my brain off for a bit. Something that I can absorb myself in like go for a swim, going and doing a building project or working on my car. Something I can think about but then not have to think about everything else that's going on. Do something different, which you still have to apply your brain to, but distracts you from other things that your brain normally thinks about.

Ms Wadley: I go for a walk. I had never done it before but the last 12 months or so I just go for walks. When I get home and the weather is nice I don't even go inside, I park my car at home and just go for a walk. Even though I won't be going anywhere I just go for a wander around because that makes me stop and it gives me the break I need between work. Also read a book that has got nothing to do with work; no EAL or grammar. Go home, sit down, walk and read a book with a massive cup of coffee.

Ms Faulkner-Petrova: Running is what mainly gets my mind off everything; once I've run 2K my mind starts to clear. Other thing is yoga but if I do yoga at home it's hard to switch off but it helps if there is no one around or in a different place. Also reading because even though it takes a while, once I'm into the book that's it. Lastly, listening to music is helpful but only when I'm listening with headphones and I'm capable to block the rest out. That I find very relaxing as well.

Dr Thompson: Decent advice, remember what matters. If I'm panicking about something silly like what percentage the IB scores are going to go up and down by and then I see my daughter bang her leg and start crying, it pales into insignificance. So my advice is to remember what is genuinely important. However, still revise please.

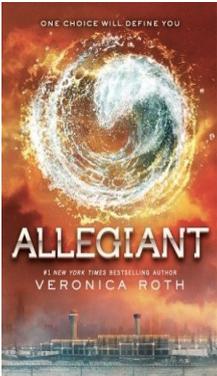


Ms Wadley

Top Four Books for Relaxation

It's exam season, there's no getting away from it. But, as our trusted teachers advised in Anna's article, a little downtime is always good for dealing with stress. And what better way to escape than delving into a really good, all-consuming book. Here are my top-four:

1. Allegiant – By Veronica Roth

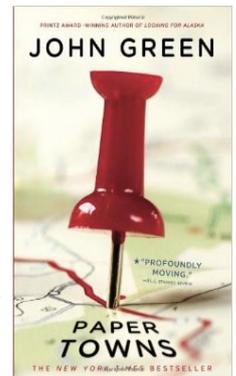


Allegiant, a fast paced dystopian novel, is the last in the *Divergent* trilogy. If you haven't read the whole series, I strongly suggest you do, as it is otherwise hard to follow the plot and characters - the story continues smoothly from *Insurgent* (the second in the trio). The plot is fast-moving and gripping; I could hardly put the book down.

The main characters Four and Tris have to go outside the wall of their experiment city of Chicago, after discovering that divergents (people that are 'different', with strong abilities in more than one area and that are considered dangerous by the government) are needed beyond the borders of the city. Everyone was made aware of this information in the video released to the public at the end of the Erudite headquarters raid. Now they must leave the only place and family that they have ever known in order to find a peaceful solution to their city which is now embroiled. Once they are outside of the wall they must quickly decide who they can trust as a heartless battle breaks out, threatening the entire population. In order to survive, Tris is forced to make an almost impossible decision involving the ultimate courage and sacrifice.

2. Paper towns – By John Green

Paper towns is the third Young Adult book written by Green. Young, shy Quentin and Margo were best friends when they were young but they've grown apart as they've gotten older – it's senior year and they hardly know each other. However, Quentin is in for the night of his life when Margo (one of the most popular girls in school) asks him to help her in her mischievous plan to seek revenge on several friends who have betrayed her in the past. The next morning, after a night full of fun and adventure about town, Margo is nowhere to be found. With the help of a small group of friends and some clues left behind, Quentin goes on a mission to find the girl who stole his heart. I really like this book, as although it is not as fast paced as some of the other books on this list, it is a great teenage love story. If you don't enjoy this type of book then this might not be the one for you.



3. Mockingjay - By Suzanne Collins



Again, *Mockingjay* is the last book in a big series – this time, the famous *Hunger Games* trilogy. The chances are, you've already seen the movie, but nonetheless I'd recommend the book because it really is that well written. It's an epic dystopian science-fiction war book. As with *Allegiant*, I recommend you read the whole trilogy in order to get the whole story.

Now realizing that the stakes are no longer only for survival, Katniss teams up with her closest, most trusted friends (Peeta, Gale and Finnick). They leave district 13 to liberate the citizens of war-torn Panem and kill President Snow who is obsessed with destroying Katniss. Knowing what she is trying to do, he sets up deadly traps, trying to kill her in any way possible. What lies ahead for Katniss and her friends includes dangerous enemies and moral choices that will ultimately determine the future of the millions of Panem citizens. This book is another fast paced page-turner – a pleasure to read.

4. Paper Aeroplanes - By Dawn O'Porter

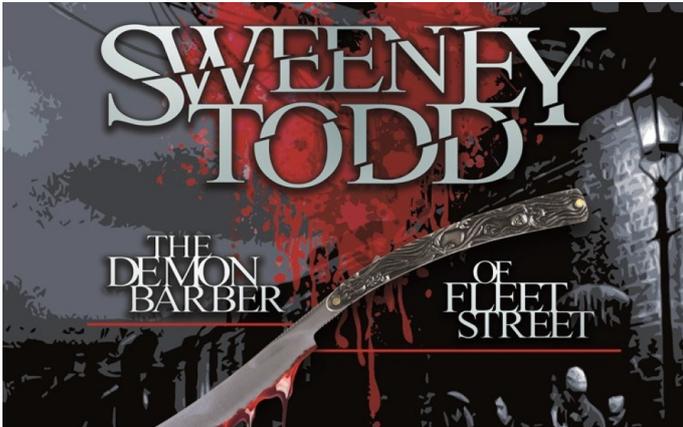
This book is different from the others, set in 1950's Guernsey. Protagonists Renee and Flo aren't meant to be friends because of their opposing personalities: Flo is studious, thoughtful and introverted whereas Renee is ambitious, not afraid to speak her mind. But against all the odds, Renee and Flo have been brought together, united in their shared loneliness and dysfunctional families. But there are many obstacles that they must overcome. At 15, life stretches out in front of them; anything can happen and betrayal feels like the end of the world. *Paper Aeroplanes* is gritty, poignant, funny and powerful; it's a snapshot of small town adolescence, growing up and the power of female friendships.

By Daisy Scott



Attend The Tale of Sweeney Todd

My Sweeney Experience by Nanci Burbidge



September 2015: the eagerly awaited email calling for auditions from the aspiring actors of the school is received with much excitement mixed with some apprehension. Scrolling straight past the *welcome backs, whens, wheres* and *whos*, the proudly stated title '*Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*' hit me. I had no background knowledge of this Sondheim production, only that it was a 'musical', if I'd have known at the time that many consider it an opera, I may have run a mile. My initial thought, "Ooh a musical, about time", my second thought, "Singing, properly, in front of people. Oh god!" Unbeknownst to me at the time this would be something that I wouldn't stop doing for six months and, in fact, am still doing long since the production has ended, much to the despair of my fellow study members and family.

So up the wooden stairs of the drama studio I went to my audition, song lyrics in hand and never feeling so destined for failure in my life. I don't have much faith in my own singing ability.

I watched my fellow cast member Rachel Xuereb, soon to be named Tobias, belt out a classic *Disney* song and then master a scale with ease in the most angelic voice, wondering how on earth I was going to follow it up. As I stood before Mr McKelvey and Mrs James I knew my choice of "You've Got the Love" by Florence & the Machine (yeah, really) was about the worst decision I could've made. Lesson one, always research what you're auditioning for! I'd just discovered Sweeney's parlour was based in Victorian London and wondered if a song from the classic musical 'Oliver' performed in a cockney accent might have been a better choice. I figured I'd probably left it a bit late to perfect a rendition of "I'd Do Anything". The next five

minutes would go surprisingly quickly and I would end up being quite proud of my first audition for a musical.

Once the cast list was complete rehearsals got underway, and so began the late nights, lack of sleep, non existent free time and hammering in of lyrics and lines.

However, the best part, as always and the bit I love the most when being part of the rehearsal process is the coming together of the whole cast. This is because we begin as friends, but end as one big family. I think the best summary of this was given to me by none other than leading lady Nyree Williams, a.k.a Mrs Lovett, "This year the play has been longer in the making, and whilst it has been hard at times, I never failed to come out of rehearsal with a smile on my face. The Sweeney cast have gelled better than in any other performance I've been in, and I'm sure I speak on behalf of everyone when I say that the bonds we have formed as a company won't be broken. Even if we don't all keep in contact, the memory of what we have achieved will remain."

Personally, one of my favourite things about drama is the camaraderie we build during rehearsals. Everyone appears comfortable being completely themselves because we throw ourselves 100% into all that we do without worrying about being judged by others. From the first rehearsal in the studio to the last moment we spend together backstage, everyone is fully supportive of one another and always willing to step in with words of wisdom or a much needed hug. My fellow cast members managed to sum this up well. Rachel, who gave a fantastic portrayal of the character Tobias expressed the views of many of the cast, "I made so many new friends and the whole cast were like family. The production made me remember how good it feels to be on stage and the experience created memories I will keep forever."

After six months of rehearsals we finally got to perform the show in front of an audience over three nights and one matinee at the Artrix theatre.

If any one reading this has ever thought about joining the drama group, I would say go for it. It will be one of the most rewarding things you do during your time at Bromsgrove, and you will create memories with some of the most talented people to last a lifetime.

The Murder Trail – Part 2

Unintended Help

By Jagveer Uppal

Artwork By

Anya Butler and June Lec

“Cheers.” He raised his glass. She raised hers.

“Cheers John.” She sipped.

“Hey, drink up.” He angled her glass parallel to her mouth.

“John!” she exclaimed, gulping and smiling. “What’s the occasion?”

“Oh,” John refilled their glasses. “Do we need one?”

“No. But most people have one when drinking this much.” she replied guiltily.

“Yes. Very true. But, you’re not people.” he chuckled to himself

“You’ve married me; you’re stuck with me ‘till your old. You don’t need to use lines like that anymore.” she said while tilting her head, peering expectantly at her husband from the corner of her eye. They both looked at each other and smiled.

“I am old, Kat.” he gave a guffaw. Katherine smacked him on his knee and leaned forward.

“And...” She was stopped. A knock broke their gaze, resonating round the room. Like a gun shot, it came again sharp and firm. Then again. Then again.

“For God’s sake!” She stormed across the room as though she’d heard an insult made behind her back that she had to confront. John hadn’t reacted, and remained in a drunken slum on the sofa. Katherine’s frustration dissolved as soon as she saw the creature stood in her door way.

“Hello there.” Its voice matched its face: vile and offensive. She froze with disgust. After overcoming the brief stupor she’d entered she managed to splutter the words:

“You are... what exactly?”

The creature, not at all aggrieved, continued. “I’m a friend of John’s.” His words slithered around a pair of gargantuan teeth peeping proudly out from under his top lip. “I’m... someone he should remember.” He twitched his knife-like nose. “I definitely remember him.”

“I...” Ignoring Katherine, the diminutive homunculus-like creature invited himself in. His dress, like his nose, was undeniably sharp. He waltzed around the house in a brown suit and a pair of old-fashioned leather gloves which he regularly fastened and pulled down further onto his hand, as though preparing for a job he had to do. He peeped around the corner and found the man he had been looking for.

“Hello Jonny boy.” The voice revived John, as if he’d been awoken from a deep sleep with a smack.

“What the hell!”

“John?” Katherine came a moment after. “Who is this?”

“I told you, you...” he huffed “I’m a friend.”

“Yeah,” John didn’t sound sure. “A work friend. This is about work.”

“Oh...” the man (if you’re liberal enough to refer to him as one) smiled “Yes, work.”

“Shall we talk outside?”



*

“What the hell are you doin’!” John now had the man firmly pinned to the outside wall of his house. His hands were latched around the collar of the man’s blazer; he hoped (in the privacy of his own skull) they would soon be latched round his neck.

“I needed to tell you...” John squeezed a little tighter.

“The end of that sentence had better be a damn good one. Last time I dropped you from a fifty story buildin’; now I can make sure you stay dead.”

“That’s it though!” He pointed at John “You didn’t. You had the perfect opportunity to. You had gun at my head. But, you didn’t.”

“I dropped your arse from a building!” hollered John straight into the man’s face.

“Yes, but anyone else wouldn’t have.” he spoke quickly, frantically. “I know how Moody works; she hires guys she can use. People who’ve got more mug shots than baby photos. She appeals to the selfish nature of people, but you’re not just people. You’re not like them.”

“How do you know that?” John hoisted him further up the wall.

“Because I’m breathing!” spat the now blubbering man. John let him drop onto the floor “You gave me a chance to get outta’ Moony’s reach. No one looks for a dead guy and now I wanna’ give you a chance.” A dry swallow entered the man’s throat as he coughed, “What’s the bitch got on you?”

“What are you talkin’ about?” John shook his head as convincingly as he could.

“You wouldn’t be working for her if she hadn’t. You’ve got a wife, a house, and a conscience, so why would you want to get into all this?”

“I’m not telling you anything. Besides, what’s a little man like you gonna’ do,” He poked him “Huh? You gonna’ take down Moody? What are you gonna’ do? What?”

“I’m going to burn her.”

“What?” John shook his head in disbelief, laughing.

“I’m gonna’ burn everything. Everything she’s built over the years. Her whole operation.” John looked away, still laughing. “Starting with the asylum.”

“Asylum? I keep hearin’ about this.”

“It’s where Moody gets her ‘stock’, as she calls it.”

“Stock.” John’s eyes narrowed.

“I’m gonna do this with or without you. You helped me, I’m tryna’ help you.”

“I ‘aint ever helped someone by dropin’ ‘em out of a window before,” he muttered.

“I’m gonna burn her. I’m gonna burn everything. She’s ruled this city for too long.”

“Here here to that,” John’s laugh now sincere. He was joined by the undersized humanoid, his chuckle more painful than humorous.

The Warp and Weft of Art - An Interview with Hollie Barton

When you set foot for the first time in Bromsgrove's Art department, you need a couple of seconds to register the "reality transfiguration" that's taking place - similar to how your eyes take some time to adjust when going from a dark into a lit room. Suddenly, the dark suites the school is filled with are replaced by messy aprons, the whispers from the library abruptly alter into the uproarious noise of wood manufacturing and the buildings' solemn atmosphere dissipates into the abstract beauty of the art works, seemingly at random along the corridors.

The first time I met Hollie Barton, the first thought I had was that I could hardly imagine her in the sombre architecture of the school - which led me to questioning my observational abilities, as I have never noticed her walking around the school... and I clearly should have. While searching for her in the Art department, dazed by the limitless creativity poured into the sculptures and drawings surrounding me, I realised that I've just walked into her natural habitat. My mind could suddenly place the Hollie Barton I'd met just a couple of days before, into this place, where thoughts and imagination are converted into tangible things. Distinctive blonde hair, tied in a bun, large eyes sparkling with life, an outfit which clearly showed her as the artist of the night - that

was my picture of her, since the evening we met at her art exposition, "Warp and Theft", at the Museum of Carpets in Kidderminster. In the small room of the museum, surrounded by strands of materials brought to life by her passion for transforming simple textiles into stories, she allowed a glimpse of the ideas, memories and experiences which shaped the different weaving works she had made, each one depicting parts of an untold biography. Even with small paragraphs of texts hanging next to her artworks, explaining the ideas from which her creations originated, the experience of having the artist uncover the veils of abstraction left me questioning how I would have personally perceived her work. "It's a mix really - my work is quite abstract; I like that people make their own assumptions about what the work is. However I wanted people to know what my ideas are, so that is why added my statement on what the work was about," she said, when asked the key idea she would want people to leave the exposition with.

In the old factory building, which is nowadays a museum dedicated to the disappearing art

of weaving, the colours, unorthodox materials and the abstract nature of her creations seem to serve as a statement celebrating the uniqueness of interweaving the old and the new, the past and the present. Having this exposition, was her chance to "explore her work. When you are an art teacher, you are teaching most of the time. But then, why shouldn't you also be an artist, your true identity?" At the same time, though, organising it in Kidderminster seemed to be a metaphor for going back to her roots, "The place was quite evocative, powerful in terms of memories...it resonates with my upbringing as my father trained in Kidderminster". The whole exposition is filled with hints about her childhood and memories with her family, who have a long history in physical work: "My great grandmother was a seamstress and she was working in a factory, then my mom has been a hairdresser. My passion for crafts is hereditary, but I am not only trying to assimilate the skills of my family and make them mine, I am also trying to make sense of where I come from. For example, I tried doing a couple of things that my grand-

mother used to do and it was so hard, but it really made me appreciate her skills more. I tried crochet but I didn't like that you had to count - it was too systematic - when I'm being creative I'll do my work quite instantaneously. My family is definitely an inspiration, a big part of my life - but it doesn't mean that I want to be exactly like them."

Old memories embedded between the warps and wefts, experiences, such as the well known school inspection, captured in small details of her work, all of her creations seemed to bring out in a subtle way her perception on different chapters of her life, while also trying to break the conventions involved in weaving; "In Warp and Theft I have combined techniques such as stitch and



printmaking to show how the traditional can inspire contemporary art practice. When I am creating my work I am always challenging ideals. I am a bit of a rebel. Some of the work is based on when I work at Bromsgrove with young people, which I think is quite an unusual way- is not a visual form of inspiration. It might be through a conversation or by actually working with the student."

Hidden locks of hair, pairs of earrings, small pieces of materials - intrigued by the unexpected ways in which she brought her personal touch into her work, I asked from where did she get her inspiration for creating artwork which deeply resonated with her person: "In April last year I went to the Savage Beauty museum exhibition of Alexander McQueen in Vienna. He did one of his first collections using his locks of hair, which made it almost like a piece of him- I suppose that is why I also used hair, as a piece of me, and obviously with my mom working with hair as well I felt it

appropriate. I admire his way of pushing boundaries - it makes you ask yourself: is it art?, is it culture?, is it fashion?, as you can't say it is only textiles- and I find the way in which he perceives creativity as massively inspiring."

As soon as you start talking with Miss Barton about her work, about art, about the process of transforming ideas into reality, her eyes start radiating with excitement and her whole expression is dominated by a genuine smile - you can easily tell that she found in art, of whichever form, a passion for a lifetime. "I think I have always been making art for as long as I can remember - even just the idea of play which comes together with art. I would say that my fondest memory is from when I was little and my mother would find me in the garden in clean, white clothes, playing with mud. The memory reminds me that I always liked the idea of working with my hands, in a way in which play and creativity come together -

it's a way of expressing thought and opinion just through visuals."

The Art department has become, in my eyes, a place of manifestation of human imagination - I instantaneously felt drawn towards the seemingly limitless ways in which art was perceived there. Before ending my interview with Miss Barton, I had to ask her on her view on the culture of creativity: "I think everyone has creativity and it's only a matter of what you are exposed to or how you use it. I'll have students come into my classroom in September and say to me, "I am not creative if I can't do this" but with time, a small change, experience, or idea might bring out the creativity they were looking for. I do feel that here at Bromsgrove one thing that is great is that we want you to try new things, to be creative, to take risks because actually, there is no standard for being creative."

AnaMaria Cuza

