



The Marlborough Oracle

January, 2016

Written for the students, by the students

So, the Christmas holidays are over and we're back – I know, at times it's hard to look happy about this. I know as well as anyone that January is probably the hardest month there is: it's freezing, it's dark, and the likelihood is that you have exams. Somehow before the holidays, the miserable winter weather didn't seem quite so bad, I mean you had two weeks off to look forward to and the term was winding down, but now, with six weeks of academia ahead, the outlook can seem pretty bleak.

For me at least, motivating myself to even open my eyes in the morning is a strenuous task; I prefer the just-ten-more-minutes approach which never fails to make me late. What can I say? The idea of getting out of my warm cocoon (that I've spent all night perfecting) is, frankly, ridiculous. Even if I do manage this, I am then faced with the hopeless task of replicating the warmth that I've just vacated with clothes. (I am almost ashamed to admit that have been known to put clothes against the radiator before putting them on in a feeble attempt to warm up.) Back in my uniform days I would envelope my body with countless tops under my school shirt in the hope of retaining some kind of heat. Now, I tend to put on ALL the clothes I can find, (which usually includes about three hoodies) and march out the door with an expression of angry exhaustion as a final weapon against the harsh weather. If all else fails, my cold-hearted bitterness will repel the biting wind.

However, it seems I am doomed to freeze. No matter the lengths I go to I always seem to be fighting a losing battle with the ghastly temperature. Maybe I haven't yet mastered the right strategy, or I just have awful circulation, or (and in my opinion most likely) humans were not designed to live in these conditions. But whatever the reason one thing is clear; the cold and I are not the best of friends and I for one, am very much looking forward to spring.

Tiggy Harris

Remembering Alan Rickman

A tribute by Nicole Cox



Alan Rickman: 1946-2016

Alan Rickman was a man of extreme and admirable talent, a man with an amazing voice and a man with an abundance of dedication and commitment to his art. His career (as we know it today) didn't quite take off until much later on in his life, when many would have given up or assumed that what they aspired for was just too far out of reach... Rickman seemed to have no such thought. Rather, he persevered and worked hard. He was touching in his performance in Love Actually, managed to scare us as Snape in the Harry Potter series and ensured that we giggled during his witty and satirical presentation of the Sheriff of Nottingham. Thus, although he may be gone his characters and Snape's teachings will live on forever.



Dress To Oppress

Written for the students, by the students

It cannot be denied that there is a huge focus on appearance within our society; television presenters, politicians, and celebrities all don so-called smart/professional clothing or risk being ridiculed by the vampires of the media. These "articles" can be found on almost every webpage and in almost every newspaper, making them impossible to ignore. What with these and the countless adverts for clothes, make-up, and accessories that are plastered across our lives it has hard not to find people trying to dress to impress.

Humans are impressionable creatures and so how to make a good first impression is something we're taught from a very early age. The translation of 'a good first impression' is, dress smart and keep quiet about anything even remotely controversial. This concept is ridiculously irrational to me. If the person you're meeting is to become somebody that will become important in your life then eventually they will learn the reality of your clothing preference. So, why the elaborate fabrication?

In a world full of judgements we seems to have become obsessed with the notion that appearance is the be-all and end-all. Well, and here's a radical idea, why don't we just accept people for who they are and how they choose to dress? Should someone choose to dress in "smart" or "attractive" wear (and I use quotation marks to demonstrate how these are both subjective ideas) then fine, but should a person favour comfort in oversized hoodies or prefer to wear a short skirt rather than a knee-length one, that should be fine too. Society should be ready to accept people's dress as a choice - an expression of individuality, rather than an obligation to impress.

This brings me to something that I know continues to divide the readership; it is because of this division that it need be discussed: school dress codes.

Most schools either have a standard uniform or a dress code for their students, outlining the dos and don'ts of school attire. Students are told the purpose of this is reflect the school's smart and successful ethos, whilst preparing students for later life. Now (and maybe I am alone in this) I cannot fathom how a dress code has anything other than a negative outcome; most simply it teaches conformity. If you grow up believing that to be accepted you must do what everyone else does, you are in danger of losing your ability to think independently. We are taught that everyone is uniquely different, but how can you start to stand out from the crowd and be different when conforming to 'the code'?

This is both an age-old and worldwide issue but school dress codes are the perfect example. The standard expectation of schools is "office-wear" which suggests that it is also the expectation of most workplaces. Well, this is not always the case. Many jobs, particularly practical ones, only require you to wear sensible attire for the work you are doing. Even in actual offices, "office-wear" is not the norm. Both of my parents, and indeed most of the adults I know, are not expected to dress a certain way for work unless it is a matter of health and safety. In fact I have never, in all my seventeen years, seen my father in a suit, or even a tie. The underlying truth is that a lot of work places do not have a dress code at all – it seems as though there's an unspoken understanding of respectability, modesty, and attire suitable for the industry; but why is this an issue? More importantly, why are children being forced into clothes they cannot identify with, or indeed are comfortable in?

It's not simply a matter of individuality and comfort; it appears that there are more immediate gender issues to be addressed in relation to a dress code. The truth is that it is mostly girls who are questioned for their appearance, particularly the clothes they wear.

"Your shoulders should be covered." - "Take off the make-up." – "Your skirt is too short." – "Your clothes are too tight and distracting the boys."

Distracting the boys.

Sending a girl home to change because her clothing might not be deemed modest enough does not solve the problem, it exacerbates it; she is forced to miss out on her learning so that the boys don't miss out on theirs. What do other people have to do with the clothes I choose to wear? Does *my* choice of attire mean I am no more than "a distraction"? Maybe instead of teaching girls how not to "distract the boys," we should teach the boys not to objectify girls. Feminism has come a long way, but that in no way means the war is won.

Of course, there is the understanding that dress code insists that the rules are the same for the boys and girls, but when was the last time a boy was told to wear longer PE shorts, or to wear looser trousers?

The primary function of clothing is to provide comfort and if I am forced into "office wear" I can tell you I will be far, far away from comfortable. I'm an oversized hoodie kinda girl; blazers and pencil skirts are just not for me. I do not see an issue with my choice in the clothes I wear to school. I am comfortable and as far as I am concerned, I am in school to be educated, not to take fashion advice. Therefore, why shouldn't I be comfortable? In fact, I'm much more likely to reach my full potential if I am relaxed.

Schools are not to blame for all this is part of a much wider issue within society. I am not naïve enough to believe perspectives will change overnight. However, perhaps if schools focused less on the importance of a standard appearance then perhaps society can move towards a brighter and more accepting future where we are allowed to wear clothes that are comfortable both physically and mentally, and where we can be... individual.

The crux of the matter is, you should never dress for someone else; be your own person and if that means wearing your pyjamas to school/work then so be it. Clothes are an expression of individuality and appearance should never be controlled. I truly believe that the world would be a better place if its people were a patchwork of hoodies and hot pants, jeans and jackets, tank-tops and ties, socks and sandals, and a pair of shoes that don't quite match.

Tiggy Harris

Valentine's Day Surprise

Written for the students, by the students



With February soon approaching it means that Valentine's Day is on its way. I feel as though it is my duty to make your movie night far more memorable.

Everyone has their own ideal date whether it be: going out for a fancy dinner; spending a day in London; roaming from shop to shop, museum to museum... or simply snuggling up. However, one can never really go wrong with a night of take out and movies along with a bowl or two of Ben & Jerry's ice-cream.

There are a number of movies I can recommend you watch to make Valentine's night more enjoyable. These range from films that'll bring tears of laughter and even a few tears of sadness. *The Notebook* is a great example of this, with Ryan Gosling and Rachel McAdams their emotional performance and the stunning cinematography all entwine to make a film that requires a rather big box of tissues and blanket to snuggle beneath.

A great classic that deserves far more praise than its given is *10 Things I Hate About You*, a real light-hearted teen flick that still manages to bring in Shakespeare, a strong moral message and many laughs. With a strong comedic element and witty teen cast, I feel great that care went into the making of this and the end result was something that far exceeded its waning budget.

Another great film to watch, and also one to commemorate Alan Rickman has got to be *Love Actually*. Funny, witty and terribly British – it's a classic of the modern era!

There are hundreds of more movies that I know you'd enjoy immensely; to check them out and find the ones that are right for you, I'd recommend checking out imdb.com.



Nicole Cox

Valentine's Day Is Not For Everyone

Written for the students, by the students

The end of January is drawing ever closer, meaning our post-Christmas depression slowly fading (yippee!) to make way for another time for celebrations... Saint Valentine's Day. I love Valentine's Day! Whether single or dating everybody can take advantage of it: rom-coms and chick-flicks (that we all pretend to hate but secretly love), chocolate, and the only day of the year where it is acceptable to eat a whole tub of ice cream (or two) and feel absolutely no guilt, because hey - who needs just one Valentine's friend when you can have Ben AND Jerry?

Whilst I love Valentines, I hate it in equal measure - I know, I'm the biggest contradiction known to man, but it really is the most ridiculous 'holiday'. I mean, really, like there is just one day of the year where you can confess your infatuation and attraction towards someone? Surely that defeats the point of the day itself. Whereas I, on the other hand, take full advantage of its excuse to watch soppy movies and eat yummy food in pink foil wrap! I do not send cringe workth cards and an overly large creepy teddy bear!

It is estimated over 1 billion Valentine's cards will be sent this year, for what? A few fleeting seconds of happiness. When the world is in a global crisis, when we run out of trees one day, won't it be great to use the completely valid excuse, "Oh! We used them to send Valentine's cards!" Oh yes, extremely worth completely ruining the carbon cycle, because 'whoopie!' at least we all got disgusting pink cards with pop out teddies screaming "I love you" in your face! No. Not good. If you do feel the need to send a card send an e-card instead. Do the world a favour and save some paper.

Basically, the worst part of Valentine's is the moaners and haters. If you don't like it and think it's pointless, then treat it like any other day of the year. EVERY SINGLE YEAR I read Facebook statuses knocking the day. I hear people moaning about how pointless it all is and that there's no need to feed consumerist companies with any more money, but hey, everything you buy from a company is feeding capitalism in some way!

Like Halloween, Easter and Christmas there are good points and bad points... but let's just embrace it for what it is - a light hearted day of love, not hate.

At the end of the day, Valentine's Day should be positive, single or taken, married or divorced, because it's an opportunity to make other people happy. Appreciate those that you love, and do good to others (it's not like you can do this every other day of the year...) because there's no nicer feeling than making other people happy, honestly. Take it with a pinch of salt (or sugar); it only happens once a year.

Happy St Valentine's Day to you all!



Millie Nicholson

Book Reviews

Written for the students, by the students

Just finished your book? Stuck for what to read next? Check out these awesome reviews for some inspiration!

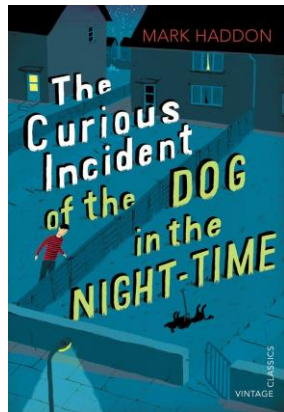
The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time | Mark Haddon

Written from the point of view of the main character, Christopher Boone is a teenager with Aspergers syndrome. One day he discovers his neighbour's dog, Wellington has been killed so he plays detective and uses his high level of intelligence to work out who killed Wellington, while uncovering secrets along the way.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time offers insight to what life might be like if you are autistic, it is honest and inspiring and most certainly a page-turner. Due to Christopher having Aspergers syndrome, emotion is not described or used, but this actually made the book more moving and it allowed me to empathise with Christopher.

I knew that due to the narrative style the story would lack emotion, which I thought would be the book's downfall but it made it more accurate and offered a different perspective to that which I had read before. The most enjoyable part of the book however, was not the mathematics problems, or the insert of Christopher's schedule, but the ending. I won't spoil it, but often with books I find that I enjoy most of the book, then I'm disappointed, but with this I was truly shocked and impressed.

An excellent piece of literature, Mark Haddon, gripping, moving, honest and impressive.



Echo Boy | Matt Haig

Set in the not-too-distant future, humans have developed 'Echos' to help them out with their lives, such as security guards or for domestic purposes. They resemble humans but are emotionless machines.

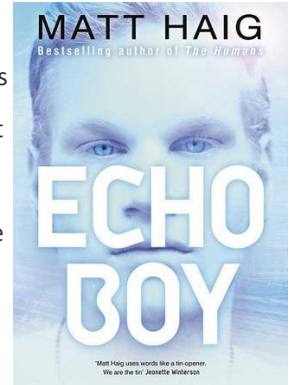
Audrey has one such Echo as a tutor, helping her education and she is soon to go to Oxford University. However, tragic events unfold that change Audrey's life completely.

Daniel is a prototype Echo, but is unlike the others, which he cannot explain. He can question himself and begin to develop emotions...

As a lover of philosophy and ethics, I was intrigued by this book because of the ethical issues surrounding 'Echos', and the philosophical issues of what makes us 'human', of freedom and technology. Although the book focuses on the plot, rather than exploring the ethical issues, it was still thought-provoking and make me question the philosophical issue of personhood. Haig writes in a fluent style, exploring the minds of Audrey and Daniel and demonstrating their personalities convincingly. There were cleverly thought-out moments and elements of the future that are believable. It showed humanity's capability of both kindness and great cruelty, such as how humans laugh at other's pain.

Do not be put off by its size, 399 pages in hardback, because it is a quick read. I read most of it in one sitting because it was surprisingly gripping. Unlike most books I acquire that just end up on the charity shop pile once read, I'm keeping this one because it was a thoroughly interesting and enjoyable read. Online, the reviews are mostly positive and I would recommend it for 13+.

There are a few mature themes in it, but they are brushed over, so it is suitable for a younger teen.



Why I Love Science...

Written for the students, by the students

The Year 7's are really enjoying their science lessons this year, but what is it about the subject that they love so much?

'What I love most about Science is that every day there's something different. Nothing's ever the same - a new day, a new science experience. It's amazing how there's always an explanation for everything and the majority of the time it's science!

My favourite experiment is the 'Egg in a Bottle' because it's just outstanding how it magically falls inside the bottle with nothing but a flame. The atmosphere outside the bottle is pushing the egg in with force. It's brilliant to see how powerful air pressure can actually be! I can't wait to see what Science has in store for the future.

Big thanks to Mr Jenkinson and Ms Nugent for being fantastic Science Teachers this term.'

Fariha Hussain

'What I love most about science is the experiments. My favourite experiment was when we used microscopes and there were different cells on the glass cards with dye in the background. I could see the different cells roaming on the glass. There were liver cells, heart cells and blood cells, each as interesting as the last. My favourite part was when we figured out and learnt what each group of cells were and how they worked together to function the organisms.'

Lilly Flanagan



'I love Science the most because of all the experiments we do and they are a lot of fun. Although I am only in Year 7 we have already done quite a lot of experiments.

One of them that I can remember is the can experiment. You put a bit of water in the bottom of a can, then put it over the Bunsen Burner to heat up for a little bit. Then you fill up a bowl of water and take the can off the heat, put it in the bowl, then the air from in the can compresses and implodes.

I also like Science because the experiments are exiting; it's nice sometimes to do one instead of writing a lot of things down (you can't do that as much in other lessons as you can in Science.)'

Alice Rose

'My favourite experiment is the one where you put a can on top of a Bunsen burner and then you dip it in luke-warm water. The can made a bang. I found this really interesting as I had never seen this happen before. I am really enjoying Science at Marlborough; it's really fun and you get to use much more advanced equipment.'

Melissa Riches

'I really like Science, mainly because of my teacher Mr Jenkinson and the amazing experiments we get to do. My favourite experiment is the most recent when we got to see how far Haribos can stretch, depending on whether they are heated or left at room temperature. My favourite bit is when Sir let us eat them and it was good.'

Zachary Foulkes

The Definite Article

Written for the students, by the students

With a focus of films and literature this month we couldn't help but find ourselves knocking on the doors of Mr Corbett and Mr Downey (lovingly known as The Lord) to find out what they thought about everything ranging from crisps, characters and challenges?

Which literary character do you most resemble and why?

Mr C: Deckard from 'Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?' I really want to be a bitter loaner but I always get sucked in to helping people.

The Lord: I feel that I perhaps resemble Willy Wonka. I am a bit mad, a bit of a joker, I like a bit of nonsense now and then, and I am a big kid at heart.

If you had to be a hero or villain which would it be and why?

Mr C: I feel like it would always be easier to be the villain and I like to make things hard for myself so I'll try and be the hero.

The Lord: If I could be a hero it would have to be Batman. He has always been my favourite. He does not have a bright silly costume, but a cool dark one. At the end of the day he has no super powers, he is just an ordinary man who is keeping the streets safe.

What is your most prized possession?

Mr C: I have an original first draft of the pilot of Twin Peaks signed by the cast.

The Lord: Obviously my most prized possession is not my hair! I guess that I would say it is my sense of humour. If I had to pick a physical object, it would be my TV.

What subject did you find most challenging when you were at school?

Mr C: Design and technology. I'm just too clumsy and inaccurate with practical subjects.

The Lord: At school I struggled with French. Trying to get all the different tenses and the idea of the masculine or feminine words really baffled me.

Triumphing can be tricky, but what personal triumph are you most proud of?

Mr C: I'm pretty proud to be a teacher. To think seven of my students in the last two years have gone on to study film at university makes me feel like I've done something important.

The Lord: I had a huge fear of heights and so I did a 12,000 feet skydive for charity.

Chocolate or crisps? Why?

Mr C: Crisps, although it is a tough choice. I think you'd always get fed up with sweet stuff eventually.

The Lord: Crisps every time. Us Irish love our spuds.

What is your guilty secret?

Mr C: Mr Theophanous.

The Lord: My guilty secret is that I love watching SpongeBob Squarepants more than my 6 year old son does.

Other than your own, whose lesson would you most like to be in and why?

Mr C: I always enjoy Mr Griggs' lessons. I have a lot of respect for his creative process.

The Lord: Hayley Redfern, she is fabulous (and she asked the question).

What's your one regret?

Mr C: I lost touch with a friend who is unfortunately no longer with us. It taught me not to take anything for granted.

The Lord: My main regret is that I did not travel more when I was younger. I would recommend it to everyone. Travel, see the world, experience other cultures, try new foods, try new things, enjoy all that the world has to offer you. Go on an adventure.

If you won £1,000,000 what would be your first purchase?

Mr C: An animal park for my children.

The Lord: If I had the money, a holiday is the first thing that I would book. Then maybe hair plugs NOT!

If you think you have got what it takes to become part of the team then... get involved!

We are looking for enthusiastic writers to help us with our features, alternatively you could specialise in an area and bring it to life. Just see Ms Redfern and she'll talk you through it!



WE WANT YOU WE WANT YOU WE WANT YOU WE WANT YOU

The House On Holly Hill

Written for the students, by the students

Jacob Frye always hated the deserted house of Holly Hill with its gloomy hallway and its tasteless style. The house had a long line of history and Jacob was the sole executor of the estate. For years there had been rumblings of paranormal activity among the superstitious inhabitants of the little village. Rumblings that seemed to be seeped in half-truths and exaggerations. Conversations were often had in whispered and ushered tones, telling tall tales of strange events that had no apparent explanation.

Darkness and fear seemed to lurk around every corner - watching Jacob's every move. It was no surprise that the same sensation greeted him when he stepped foot in the dilapidated house. It felt as though it were alive. If he listened close enough Jacob was sure he could even hear it breathing, panting, wanting.

Night descended upon the house. Suddenly, Jacob felt the atmosphere change and the temperature drop; he heard a muffled sound coming from downstairs. Fear gripped him. The fear was so tangible that he felt an inexplicable urge to lock his door, waiting till morning and the safety of daylight to investigate this heinous disturbance. Shadows danced around the room as Jacob lay awake. His inner fear developed further, as he heard the sound of creaking floorboards outside his room. Who was there? Against his will his thoughts shifted back to the whispers he had heard of Lady Mary.

Lady Mary had owned of the estate. A woman whose rich and noble history was now long forgotten and her name associated with her demise. She died in the most unpleasant and disturbing way; she had nobody to mourn her and nobody to offer a prayer. No one in the area knew of any surviving family and if an heir could not be found the estate and its entirety would be left to the state. Therefore the task fell to Jacob to find somebody to stake a claim to the property.

As he lay with the blanket tugged up to his eyes he wondered if the great evil that had seized this house and its owner would ever truly leave this house. Surely memories can linger in a house. Dismissing these thoughts Jacob turned over and fell into an uneasy sleep.

At last the rays of the morning sun began to shine through the house. Jacob felt as though the grip of fear that had strangled him throughout the night had been un-wrapped by the saviour of the sunlight. Embracing the morning Jacob was in the kitchen making coffee. He had decided that he must (if he wanted to put his fears to bed) investigate the noise that disturbed him last night. Making his way through the house he came across an altogether unfamiliar room. A room that posed an enigma, the window was wide ajar and written across the floor was a sinister instruction: L.E.A.V.E T.H.I.S H.O.U.S.E .

Sprinting upstairs Jacob entered into his room. Blind with panic he found his suitcase and frantically began throwing the clothes and shoes his suitcase was lying on top of his bed, frantically he began opening it. Throwing his clothes and shoes on the floor he reached for a small tin box at the bottom of his bag. He opened it hoping to find his talisman there to offer him comfort. Finding it, clutching it and holding it dear his fearful state melted like chocolate in sunlight; although, he still couldn't block out the dark shadows that plagued him. He sat on the floor with head slouched in shame. Tears welled into his eyes. His vision blurred from crying. That's when he saw her.... A woman dressed in black with a veil covering her face. In silences she stood in the corner of the room.

The vision faded. Jacob got to his feet and stumbled in fear, out of the room. He ran down the stairs into the living room. There before him lay the woman, small, frail and broken. Beside her, on the table with a note, it simply read - 'Jacob Frye'.

Rudy Farrell

‘You are better than no man,

Written for the students, by the students

Once upon a time, in a school not so different from yours, there was a girl. This little girl was called Franky. Now, Franky wasn't particularly wiser or braver or prettier than any other person at her school, and as for being 'good as gold' and 'kind-hearted', well to most people, she came across as a rather sullen character, who wore the wrong clothes and spent too much time with books. Franky wasn't special. But she had a dream. That dream was to go to a magical kingdom, about an hour and a quarter away from her village, if you went via the A1 on a Tuesday morning, called Cambridge. Cambridge was an old kingdom, with cobbled streets that ran around and over the winding river at the kingdom's centre. It was a kingdom dedicated to learning, and many young and old people lived their lives there. The buildings were modest but they looked wise somehow, almost as if their sandy coloured stone and gothic arches could reveal to you the whispers of all the clever things that had ever been thought there. When she reached this faraway kingdom, Franky wanted to learn those things.

There were, however, conditions and requirements that had to be fulfilled, in order for anybody to gain access to the magical kingdom. There were potions to brew, spells to cast and all manner of paper work that needed checking over and stamping. Twice. Inevitably, this took months and months, and never once did Franky hear from the magicians of Cambridge themselves, no: they sent all their messages through the UCAS portal. Zap zap. To this world from that distant kingdom. Finally, after months and months, Franky received news from Cambridge. She had never had an 'Interview' before, but from what everybody said, she assumed that she had been challenged to a duel or some kind of battle with the fire-breathing dragons of Modern and Medieval Languages Faculty. Thus it was with some temerity that Franky set off towards Cambridge, and the duelling dragons.

It soon became clear that, though Franky had set out alone, she would not be along in her quest. She stopped by a little clear stream to get water, and a met a brown bear, who was also drinking from the stream, in huge gulps. He was very friendly, and she explained to him about the dragons. He was very sympathetic, and so she also told him, quite shamefully, that she was feeling quite lost.

At this the bear scoffed, 'Nonsense!'

He reassured her that she was on the right track.

A couple of miles further down the path, and she bumped two squabbling hobgoblins, who were arguing about whether Russian had six or seven cases.

'Six', 'Seven', 'Six', 'Seven,' they went crossly.

'I think it has six,' whispered Franky, looking anxiously at the goblins blocking her path.

'What?' barked the shortest of the hobgoblins.

'Russian,' she said, 'It has six cases: nominative, accusative, dative, genitive, instrumental and prepositional.'

'Aha!' said the taller goblin.

'You're on your way to the dragons, aren't you?' the small goblin said almost cunningly. Franky replied, with some surprise, that she was indeed.

'I knew it,' he continued, with a twinkle in his eye, 'You know, I used to be one of them.'

Franky couldn't at all decide whether or not she believed the little goblin, but nonetheless, she thanked them and carried on her way. She thought she must be nearly there, when she stumbled out into a clearing, and nearly fell over a young man pacing distractedly backwards and forwards, muttering incantations and verb conjugations to himself.

'Woah, hullo there!' exclaimed the young man, though now Franky looked at him, he looked more like a boy.

'Hullo,' said Franky anxiously.

'I don't suppose you're on your way to meet the dragons, are you?' the boy ran his hands through his hair, his brows were furrowed.

'Why, yes, I am!' said Franky, surprised for the second time on her journey to have been sniffed out. 'Are you going to fight the dragons as well?'

and no man is better than you.'

Written for the students, by the students

'Yes, yes I am. But forgive me, I'm awfully nervous.' Franky could tell by the boy's accent that he didn't come from the same village or even the same province as her. His voice was nasal, and it had a peculiar kind of drawl to it, as if his tongue were in no hurry to push the words out of his mouth. 'You see,' he continued, 'my father, he studied at Cambridge, and my father's father before him, and so, if I don't beat the dragons, you see, I rather lose all chance at living up to my family name.'

Franky could see why that would make the boy sad, and, for the first time, she was very glad that no one she knew had been to see the dragons, or studied at Cambridge, before. Unfortunately, Franky and the nervous boy could not enter the kingdom together, but they promised to send word of their ventures to each other, as soon as they possibly could. The boy went one way, and Franky went the other.

Finally, she arrived in the kingdom of Cambridge. Upon entering the gates, she fairly ran straight through the streets to the 'Trinity' building, the one specified in the letter she had received. But when she reached the court yard of 'Trinity', she was dismayed. Not only were there no dragons to be seen, but the whole court yard was full of young people, a similar age to herself, and dressed from head to foot in gleaming armour. Franky looked down at the black dress her mother had given her. She felt suddenly very small. She wondered if she ought not just turn back now, and avoid the humiliation and inevitable roasting.

It was too late, however, and before she knew it, a guard wearing a visor had ushered her into the 'Trinity' building and up a winding flight of stairs. Even in her anxiousness, Franky couldn't help but wonder what kind of dragons they could be, that lived up stairs. There was only one door at the top of the stairs, and so Franky stretched out a hand and shyly knocked on it.

'Come in,' said a deep voice, and a smell of singing wafted out from under the door.

Franky stepped into the room, and nearly fell over again in her surprise.

'Come in, you must be Franky, come and take a seat.'

There were no dragons! There was just three people sitting in armchairs by a fire: a tall, grey man with a long nose; a little grey man, with spectacles; and a very pretty lady, with curly hair. The fourth chair was vacant. She sat in it. The tall grey man, with a big nose, tossed her a ball of red wool.

'Here, unravel this,' his accent was foreign, and there was an odd, challenging note in his voice, which told Franky that she had better not falter.

How long Franky sat there, unwinding the wool, she didn't know. But by the end of it, she knew that the wool was not just red, it was also crimson and scarlet and vermillion, in certain lights, and blood and claret and cerise, in others. Once she had unwound the wool, the next challenge was to put the ball back together again, and occasionally, when she shook the wool out to wrap it up, a question would drop out of it: is the nature of poetry contemplative, or reflective? If our writing of history is not impartial, then what is the role of history? How would you differentiate the writing styles of Tolstoy and Dickens? And on and on, until Franky thought her poor head might break.

When, all of a sudden, the lady firmly told her, 'That's all we have time for.'

Franky looked down at her reconstructed ball of wool – it wasn't done! There were still kinks to work out, and the left hand side seemed to bulge more than the right. She thought her heart would burst, because all her dream was wound up in that wool, and try as she might, her ball of wool was not perfect.

It was with a heavy tread that Franky walked the path through the woods home. She avoided her previous route, she didn't want to have to explain to anyone that she had tried her hardest but still wasn't sure that she had done enough. All she could do now was wait for news to come to her from the not-really-dragons and hope that no one would be too disappointed if she was deemed unworthy to re-enter the walls of that magical kingdom.

A month later, when Franky had fairly given up hope, the letter came. The letter read something along the lines of:

'Many congratulations, but your quest is not over yet! To complete your application, you must collect mandrake roots, a mermaid's tear, the heart of the north wind, an A and an A-Star, and submit these items by 31st August.'

Now Franky didn't even know what those things were, not least where to find them. But instead of despairing, she grinned silently to herself, sent a letter to the nervous boy with the reedy voice, and thought to herself, 'I really need to crack on now, if I'm going to make it back to see those funny looking dragons.'

Frank West

World Challenge

Written for the students, by the students



World Challenge is an organisation that provides young people with the opportunity to travel to all corners of the globe on an expedition of a lifetime.

The Challengers sign up to the programme a couple of years ahead of departure to give them time to fundraise for their trip themselves. This not only teaches a sense of responsibility but makes the trip that much more special if you've put blood, sweat, and tears into getting there!

On the expedition itself the days divided up and crammed-packed with more experiences than you can possibly imagine. It comes down to four main phases; the Project phase, the Trekking phase, the Rainforest or Cloudforest phase, and the Rest & Relaxation phase.

Our school has offered these expeditions for many years now and so many Marlborough students have gone on these life-changing expeditions to all over the world. As a Challenger myself, I can tell you that there is nothing else like it - my expedition was probably the best month of my life and it taught me so much. I hope my experiences will convince more of you to get involved.

Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands (Summer, 2015)

After two years of build-up and fundraising almost £5,000, the day of departure was unbelievably surreal. As a team of 14 Challengers and 3 adults, including the incredible Mr Ballantine and Ms Mynott, we set off on our four week journey!

Part of the experience is that it's totally *your* expedition which not only means you get to choose your itinerary before heading off, but also that *you* are the organisers. All of your accommodation, travel arrangements, food preparation, and general organisation have to be done by you. Let's make this quite clear; World Challenge is NOT a school trip. It's tough, but the skills, experiences, and memories are utterly priceless.

Rainforest Phase: Staying in the heart of the South American rainforest, we got the chance to experience some unique cultures and traditions. We saw breathtaking animals utterly unique to this environment; we learnt to blow darts, throw spears, and pan for gold; we even got to swim in the Amazon River! The locals were so friendly and welcoming; we even played a game of football with them on the bank of the river on our last night.



Project Phase: Our project was a local school who were building a new classroom to help eliminate the problem of overcrowding. We slept on the floors of classrooms overnight, cooked our meals in their school kitchen, and helped build the structure during the day. In only five days we painted the interior and exterior, and cemented a flood barrier around the entire perimeter, (without a mechanical cement-mixer!) This was not only a physically tough stage, but a mental one as the team has to live together in harmony as well as work together.

Trek Phase: The trek was the most physically demanding part of the expedition but the views were breath-taking! After two days of short acclimatisation treks, we set off on our main five-day trek. Much of it was gruelling, uphill walking but the sense of satisfaction and the memories you take away make it all worth it! We also tackled the volcano Ruminahui which stands at 4,721m above sea-level and involves some pretty scary rock-scrambling to reach the very summit.

Rest & Relaxation Phase: For us, this was five days in the Galapagos Islands. As a protected national park, the islands are home to thousands of amazing species that are found nowhere else on Earth. To help maintain the Islands, visiting is restricted so we were incredibly lucky to be able to go and the experiences we had here will stay with me for the rest of my life! Snorkelling with seals, turtles, and octopuses is something many people only dream of!

World Challenge really is an unparalleled opportunity and no matter any reservations you may have I urge you to take a deep breath and just go for it! When you return home you bring not only a whole range of new skills, but with your eyes opened to the wonders of travel and memories that will last a lifetime!

To the Challengers of 2017 who are off to Costa Rica and Nicaragua, I wish you all the best. Right now it may seem very far away but stick with it and keep fundraising; I promise you really will have the time of your life!

Tiggy Harris