

The Invictus



See it. Name it. Stop it. Why we must all work together to stop the scourge of everyday sexism

Amber Robinson (Y10) argues that without acting now we threaten to perpetuate the sexist attitudes and behaviour that leave women feeling oppressed and unable to speak out about the issues affecting them

Despite amazing work that is being done to help bring an end to the huge issue of sexism, sexual harassment and violence against women, the fight is not over. There is still so much more to be done, not only in the eyes of legislation and policy, but also in the attitudes towards and about women. We still need to address silent, institutionalised misogyny that exists in our society, often going unquestioned and without consequence.

With major progress being made in the criminalisation of

many sexist related crimes, many believe that sexism is no longer a large issue in the UK. Yet, as has been highlighted in the news recently, through individuals such as Sabina Nessa and Sarah Everard, the problem is far from being solved. Legislation changes alone are not enough to breakdown centuries of systemic sexism, misogyny, and the dismissive attitude our society has to the struggles of women. Policy changes enforcing punishment to perpetrators only place a bandage over the visible wound sexism is causing. Instead, we need to break the foundations of sexism, so that the larger issues in turn come cascading down with them. The 'minor' harassment, cat calling, and derogatory comments on women passed off as a 'joke' or 'banter', as if it is sufficient validity for sexist attitudes, are often unacknowledged incidents that fuel more severe sexist attitudes and cases of assault against women.

It is the same attitudes and behaviour towards women seen in these cases of 'minor' incidents, that also underly and allow more severe instances of assault to occur. Therefore, if we continue to allow for mundane sexism, there is inevitability that more severe crimes will be committed. If, as a society, we continue to tell women that speaking out against mundane sexism is shameful; making a fuss; not having a sense of humour, they will feel as though



they shouldn't report small incidences, and that this same animosity will be felt when reporting bigger issues too. So, a seemingly harmless dismissal of low-level verbal harassment, perhaps a sexist joke that many don't see as an issue that is worth their attention, can spiral into much larger consequences. Women will feel that maybe there is no point in reporting claims, as they will not be taken seriously by the legal system. Or, they may fear being blamed, that it is a fault with their own personality, not with the perpetrator who committed the crime against her.

In 2019, only 21% of perpetrators of rape were charged, and it is because of such low conviction rates that so many victims do not report this crime to the police. Reporting the crime to the police. It is

'Policy changes only place a bandage over the visible wound sexism has caused'

clear that there are issues within the legal system, which is often working against women, instead of protecting them and ensuring their safety. In order to solve this problem, we must start to ensure that laws are being made to solve problems by people who have lived and experienced the very problem.

Perhaps one of the reasons why the legal system seems geared against women is because so few female MPs exist. In the UK only 34% of MPs are female (2019), and so the legal system is not designed by people who truly understand the difficulties of women. The lack of representation for women means these female issues often go unnoticed or ignored. However, this is not the cause of sexism. Sexist attitudes and behaviour are perpetuated by the passive attitude our society has towards it. The problem lies within those who think that simply not committing a crime, or looking away when they see it happen, will fix the problem. But sexism is everyone's problem. If we don't create change now, then when? And who is going to?

Yet, it is not just the legal system that is pitched against women, but society as a whole. If a woman does report harassment, not only may the claims not be taken seriously, as is often the case, but she is often then be subjected to more abuse simply



because she spoke out about what others were doing to her. We can no longer solely rely upon policy changes, instead we need a societal shift and a collective willingness to proactively shift the attitudes currently found in our society. There is proof in the UK right now that even when laws have been put in place to try and tackle sexism, women are still becoming victims of it every day. Despite workplace sexual harassment legislation being introduced, an overwhelming 52% of the female workforce reported experiencing discriminatory and misogynistic behaviour against them at their place of work.

Often women feel that they will be blamed if they report a sexist crime against them. They normalise degrading behaviour as a way of coping with or accepting what is wholly unacceptable. This creates an environment where victims are silenced and drowned out under perpetrators who are actively encouraged by the normalisation of harassment. The reason why labelling sexist behaviour as a joke is so harmful is because it silences victims, making them feel trapped and unable to speak out. They feel they would be accused of having no sense of humour or an inability to laugh at themselves for the sake of a 'harmless joke'. Women should be able to rely upon the people around them to validate their experiences. Women should be able to expect that the law will protect them and that they will be treated with basic respect and dignity, and that a perpetrator will be punished, but unfortunately this is not the case.

If we don't adjust our attitudes, if we don't begin to tackle the issue as a collective, we cannot expect change. If we continue to exist in a society where women are routinely sexualised and objectified, we are passively choosing to be part of the problem. And while perpetrators of sexual assault, harassment and violence may be the real criminals, for these

crimes to take place on the scale they are it is evident society is a party to this crime. We must realise that hatred and violence is learned through exposure, and so if harassment continues to be normalised, people will continue to accept it as normal.

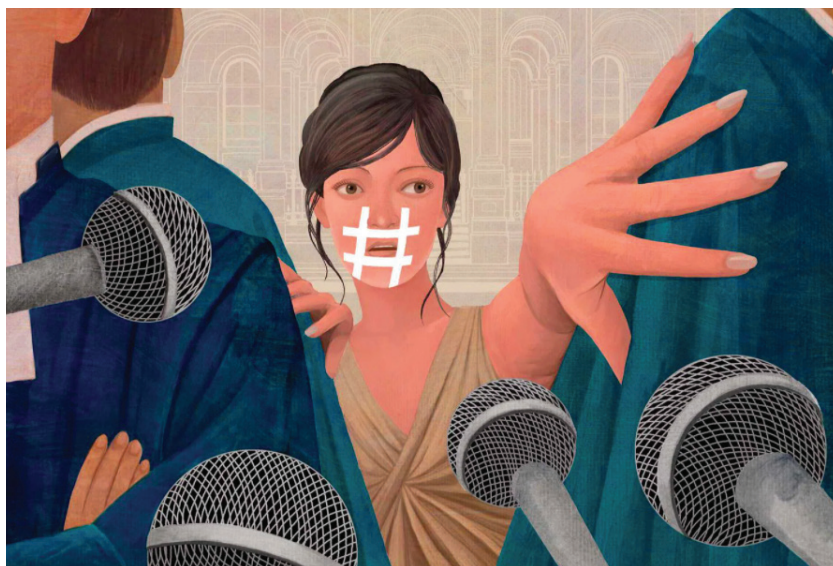
Often when victims don't speak out, they do it not because they don't want to, but because they have been told, by the same people that actively partake in sexist jokes, that it is shameful, that they are making a fuss over something that really isn't an issue anymore. Well, if this really isn't an issue, please tell me why millions of women have shared their stories and why millions more have stories yet to be told, why 97% of women in the UK will experience some form of harassment in their lifetime. You may think that because you have never committed such an act that you are not part of the problem and thus cannot be part of the solution, but this is false. Everyone can, and needs to be, part of this solution. Yes, we need to work together to force more action in legislation and in politics, but we also need to create an environment that uplifts women, empowers them and recognises their strength. That in turn provides a safe and supportive platform where women can share their experiences. Where women can demonstrate to those who are not

yet willing to listen and accept that this is a problem, that it really is. This needs to be made a priority, and is something we can all do something about.

In March 2019, the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers adopted a new Recommendation on Preventing and Combating Sexism. Not only does this text contain the first ever internationally agreed definition of sexism, but it also proposes a set of concrete measures to combat this widespread phenomenon. But we can all do our bit too. Simply by listening and sharing experiences and by acknowledging this is an ongoing issue that needs attention you are helping to combat sexism. By not passively allowing harassment to happen is a start. If there is no one willing to implement policies, if there isn't an environment where we can challenge sexist behaviour, then legislation and policy change will be futile. If we do not have an environment where everyone is committed to a solution motivated by a collective desire for equality, progress cannot be made. The policies on paper make no difference if there is not a society ready to lay them in practice. When we speak out as one group, millions of voices strong, politicians will no longer have an option to ignore the plight of women. They will be forced to listen.

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'97% of women in the UK will experience some form of harassment in their lifetime'



Raising awareness of Down's syndrome: exposing the myths and truths of the genetic disorder

Phoebe Mycroft (Y7) debunks society's misconceptions surrounding Down's syndrome

What is Down's syndrome?

Down's syndrome is a condition in which a person has an extra chromosome. Chromosomes are small "packages" of genes in the body. They determine how a baby's body forms and functions as it grows during pregnancy and after birth. Typically, a baby is born with 46 chromosomes but babies with Down's syndrome have an extra copy of one of these chromosomes. It may only be one more, but this tiny change has an enormous impact on the individual carrying it.

What are common reactions to people suffering with Down's syndrome?

Unfortunately, instances of discrimination against people who have Down's syndrome are still common. For instance, the scientist Richard Dawkins became embroiled in a Twitter row, when he claimed it would be any pregnant mother's duty to terminate a pregnancy, if the mother knew the foetus had Down's syndrome. Dawkins tweeted: "Abort it and try again. It would be immoral to bring it into the world if you have the choice."

This outrageous comment illustrates that acceptance and equality for those with Down's syndrome is still very much at stake. It conveys a complete lack of understanding of the variety and richness of the lives of many people with Down's syndrome, their families and those around them and is completely obscene. Many people with Down's syndrome, along with their family and friends, will testify that they are not suffering and are able to live very fulfilling lives. A qualitative study, asking people with Down's syndrome how they

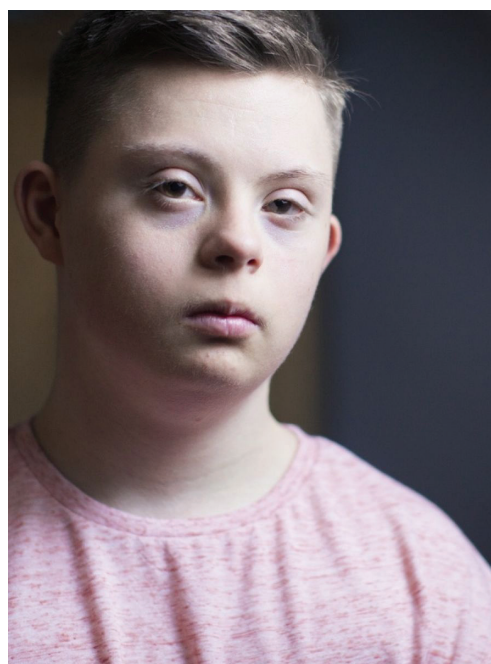
experience life, found that 99 per cent of people with Down's syndrome describe themselves as very happy with their lives. Dawkins later made a statement apologising for his 'tactlessly vulnerable' phrasing.

What is it like to have Down's syndrome?

People with Down syndrome usually have an IQ in the mildly-to-moderately low range and are slower to speak than other children. For this reason, one of the difficult things about having Down's syndrome is the person cannot communicate as easily as we can. Yet, life prospects for those with Down's syndrome have remarkably improved over the past two decades. For example, the lifespan of a person with Down syndrome in the 1980s was 28 years old, and today it is nearly 60.

What is Makaton and who is Isabella Signs?

Makaton is a unique language programme that uses symbols, signs, and speech to enable people to communicate. It supports the development of essential communication skills such as attention and listening, comprehension, memory, recall and organisation of language and expression. There are also many websites that simplify Makaton and make it easier for people to teach it to young children. Isabella Signs is a brilliant example. Isabella Evans was 11 when she started to make quite an impression online with her sign language skills. The social media star, who goes by the name Isabella Signs, now has over 200,000 followers and tutors people sign language. She has a little brother with down syndrome and stated on her website that "this is for my brother and for all those voices



'Acceptance and equality for those with Down's syndrome is still very much at stake'

'My sister has Down's syndrome and when she was growing up struggled to communicate at all'

who have been muted by a condition which stops them speaking."

My experience: My younger sister Niamh has Down's syndrome, and when she was growing up, she struggled to communicate at all. She has got better now but she still cannot speak very well and she is 9 years old. If you have a sibling with Down's syndrome, I have one tip for you. Do not get angry with them. Patience is key. Remember that if they struggle to communicate, they will have to find other ways to let you if they need something. It is hard to have a sibling like that but it is made up for when you realise you have something that no ordinary person does. Trust me they are the most extraordinary person in your life that you will ever have!

With the right support, people who have Down's syndrome can achieve typical life goals. Most people who have Down's syndrome are now attending mainstream schools, passing exams and living full, semi-independent adult lives.

The ugly truth about blackfishing: why Jesy Nelson has been accused of cultural appropriation

Esther Tetenji (Y10) criticises former Little Mix singer, Jesy Nelson's, debut pop video, 'Boyz', arguing her cultural appropriation of black features is discriminatory and harmful

The term 'blackfishing' was coined by Canadian journalist Wanna Thompson in 2018, used to describe someone accused of pretending to be black by using makeup, hair products and in some cases, surgery to drastically alter their physical appearance. It denotes a form of cultural appropriation, especially when there is an opportunity for financial gain. It all adds up from the way you speak, your appearance, your mannerisms, all of which are designed to emulate black culture. The term has now become increasingly more mainstream because of a shift away from Eurocentric ideals, with racial ambiguity. It involves cherry-picking 'desirable' features of a black woman or man such as – an uncomfortably dark tan, thick curly locs and unnaturally large lips.

More recently, blackfishing has made the headlines from criticism of former Little Mix singer Jesy Nelson's imitation of black culture in her debut single 'Boyz', featuring rapper Nicki Minaj. In the music video, Nelson, a Caucasian Essex woman, appears unnaturally tanned. She sports plumped up lips, grills on her teeth and dons a

wig and braids later in the video. Throughout, she is surrounded by a coterie of black women and men who turn up to terrorise a suburban neighbourhood.

Blackfishing could be confused as an act of cultural appreciation or cultural appropriation. First, we need to distinguish the differences between them. Cultural appreciation is when someone seeks to understand and learn more about a culture to widen their perspectives to connect with others and the culture. On the other hand, appropriation is simply adopting or 'cherry-picking' aspects of a culture or race simply for publicity or personal interest. Blackfishing is an act of cultural appropriation because it is an insidious form of practice, where white women appropriate black features to appropriate blackness itself. Black womanhood has been essentialised into the black female body and its parts. Thus, donning on these features, white women are taking blackness onto themselves with the goal of profiting financial gains.

Nelson hit back at critics, stating 'my intention was never to offend people of colour with the video or song. I was not wearing fake tan but had been

in Antigua for three weeks.' She went on to add, 'I'm just really lucky that as a white girl, when I'm in the sun I tan so dark.'

This response shocked many, as it depicted to some that having these perceived black features made her 'lucky' and presents this as a privilege without having to endure the daily realities of black experiences.

We must also consider other celebrities who feel supercilious towards these offences. Many often view the Kardashians as a catalyst to the rise in blackfishing, although they regularly deny it. Their lucrative empire paves a pathway based on a particular 'Instagram look'. Kylie Jenner has explicitly leveraged her lips to build a cosmetics kingdom after repeatedly admitting that she consistently uses lip fillers. Obviously, the Kardashians are not the only celebrities accused of the practice – pop stars such as Ariana Grande, Rita Ora and Love Island's Molly Mae Hague have also come under fire for allegedly darkening their skin and adopting black hairstyles.

As a community attempting to be sincere with each other, we need to acknowledge why and how blackfishing is harmful. People do not think to consider that exploiting these black features without experiencing the discrimination that comes with the lived experience of being black is problematic and manipulative. Exactly like blackface, blackfishing treats black features as a costume that can be removed at will, which is not the case for black people. It involves co-opting an aesthetic which many black people themselves are repeatedly shunned for.

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Connor's Chronicles #4: How Genghis Khan rose out of slavery to create the largest empire ever known

Connor Baldwin (Y10) takes a look at the polarising conquests of Genghis Khan and suggests his depiction as a tyrannical warmonger may need re-examination



The Mongols have been often described as violent conquerors and peaceful rulers, and the same is true of Genghis Khan. The conquests he began may have claimed as many as 60 million lives, in part due to numerous massacres and famines caused by the empire he spawned, as well as the Black Death that the nomadic Mongols are accused of bringing to Europe. However, many also saw him as a liberator, and credited him with strengthening democracy across Asia; he sanctioned the adoption of an official Mongol script, encouraged religious tolerance across his empire, and unified the various discordant tribes of Northeast Asia. However, what was perhaps of most importance was that he brought the Silk Road under one rule, allowing for revived trade and communication between Asia and Europe, which was a crucial not only to the Middle Ages but to world history.

Genghis Khan was born Temujin in modern day Mongolia around 1162, the son of a prominent chieftain in the Khamag Mongol confederation (several tribes, united under a

common leader). At the age of 9, he was sent to live with the family of his future wife, Börte, but his father was poisoned while returning from the journey, and died shortly after. Temujin attempted to take his father's place as chief, but his family was instead abandoned by his tribe. They were forced to spend several years living in poverty, until in 1177 Genghis was captured and enslaved during a raid by his father's former allies. However, he eventually escaped, and began to garner a reputation as a formidable leader. It was at this time he began to gather supporters and allies, gradually growing his influence over the nomadic Mongol tribes.

However, Genghis was once again exiled from power in 1186, when he was decisively defeated by his Jamukha, his great rival, in battle. He did not return to power until 11 years later, when he led a successful attack against the Tatars (a rival nomadic steppe tribe) and was restored to power. Shortly after, he began the unification of the scattered Mongol tribes. Genghis was different from many of the Mongol leaders in that he awarded positions based on

merit, rather than family ties or alliances. Genghis also did not enslave those he conquered, instead integrating them into his own tribes, which inspired their great loyalty.

'He encouraged religious tolerance and unified the discordant tribes of Northeast Asia'

'He was a great leader, understanding the weaknesses of his enemies to successfully exploit them'

Over the next few years, Genghis launched several campaigns to unite the Mongol tribes. Genghis' armies adapted ideas from the rest of Asia, such as using siege warfare which had been used successfully in China. This demonstrates why Genghis was a great leader; he was able to understand the weaknesses of his enemies and adapt his tactics to successfully exploit them. These conquests include the defeat of Jamukha, the man who had been responsible for Genghis' greatest defeat. It is said that Genghis offered his rival mercy as a sign of respect, which suggests a multifaceted nature not often shown in common depictions of him. In 1206, Genghis had managed to subdue all of his major rivals; it was a monumental feat and allowed Genghis to create a single military and political force that was, at the time, one of the greatest armies the world had ever seen. It was here he was acclaimed 'Genghis Khan,'

roughly translated to ruler of all.

Over the next 20 years, Genghis Khan would create the foundation for one of history's greatest empires, conquering much of Asia and expanding into Europe. In 1205, Genghis Khan marked the beginning of his conquests in modern China (at the time divided into smaller, warring states). He first conquered the lands of the Xia dynasty (which made up much of northern China) and later the lands of Jin dynasty. The major battle of this conflict was the Battle of Yehuling, during which as few as 100,000 Mongols were able to defeat an overwhelmingly superior force, killing as many as 300,000 enemy soldiers over the course of a few weeks, another clear sign of the strength of the Mongol armies. This was in large part to the Mongol cavalry; largely unarmoured archers who rode on horses, allowing them to outride and encircle their enemies. Shortly after the victory at Yehuling, in 1215, the Mongols entered the Chinese capital, Beijing, signalling the success of the Mongol conquests and the dominance of its army over Asia.

The other greatest power in Asia during the 13th century was the Khwarazmian Empire, which ruled over what is now the Middle East. Genghis Khan initially sent several envoys to the empire, hoping to create an alliance that would allow the Mongols to properly utilise the Silk Road for trade and commercial use. However, these envoys were executed on the orders of Shah of the Khwarazmian Empire. In response, Genghis Khan launched one of his greatest invasions, sending 100,000 men to conquer those who had dishonoured him. The armies of the Shah were fractured, which allowed the Mongols to gradually defeat several smaller armies in turn. However, unlike his previous conquests, Genghis Khan harshly treated those he conquered, massacring many and enslaving the rest. Those spared were deported to Mongolia. This mass deportation led to famines

and societal collapse across the empire, and it is thought that the Mongols led to the deaths of millions of people across the Khwarazmian Empire. This juxtaposes the earlier, more peaceful way in which Genghis Khan integrated his enemies into his empire and suggests why the Mongol ruler was often depicted as a blood-thirsty warmonger.

In 1220, after his conquests in the Khwarazmian Empire, Genghis Khan sent 20,000 men to Russia (which was at the time divided into several smaller kingdoms), a campaign which culminated in the Battle of Kalka River, during which as many as 90,000 Russians were defeated. This was a crucial campaign for the Mongols, exposing them to the arable lands of Europe they could make a part of their empire. It was the Mongols invasion of Eastern Europe that caused a political, economic and cultural devastation that would not end until 15 years after the death of Genghis Khan.

While the armies of Genghis Khan were undefeated by the armies of Europe and Asia, it would ultimately be internal division and civil conflict that would lead to the downfall of the Mongol empire. However, Genghis Khan would never live to see his empire's downfall, dying in August 1227, during campaigns in Western Xia. It is unknown how he died, but soon

after his death he was returned to Mongolia. By the traditions of his culture his buried location is still unknown to this day. By 1260, the Mongol Empire was once again divided, having returned to the nomadic tribalism that Genghis Khan had laboured to raise his people from. While the Mongol Empire would continue their campaigns across Asia and Europe, they would never be as unified or as powerful as they had been under Genghis Khan.

The Mongol Empire is perhaps the most overlooked empire in history. Its achievements pushed to the side to make way for the British and Roman empires' successes. Yet, it had arguably more of an impact on history and much of that is in part due to the actions of Genghis Khan. Genghis was raised a slave but rose to create one of the richest empires in history; he treated the Mongols he conquered with respect, but also slaughtered foreign armies in their hundreds and thousands. He introduced a law code that punished murder and unnecessary violence, but in turn ordered the annihilation of entire cultures and towns. It is these complexities that make Genghis Khan such a polarising figure. However, Genghis Khan's impact on history cannot be denied; over the course of his life, he created the largest land empire ever, a feat that has not been matched since.

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'Khan introduced laws that punished murder, but in turn ordered the annihilation of entire cultures and towns'



Has Britain lost its faith in the church? The crisis Christianity faces in Britain today

Research shows the number of Brits identifying as Christian is declining, Saniyah Mahmood (Y9) examines why the UK is becoming increasingly secular and whether this really matters



While research from this year's census won't be released until Spring 2022, leading academics claim it will prove the UK is living in a 'post-Christian era.' Less than half of Britons are expected to identify as Christian; a downward trajectory that many have interpreted as showing increasing disillusionment from the church. But why is Britain losing its faith in Christianity and does it even matter?

How did Britain become a Christian country?

In 597AD, a team of 40 missionaries sent by Pope Gregory, led by a monk called Augustine, arrived in Britain. Their aim was to spread Christianity all around the world, starting with Britain. However, unknown to them, 10,000 Britons had already been baptised and on their arrival the Anglo-Saxon king, King Ethelbert, was made an official Christian, showing how easily Christianity was accepted by the early Britons. After being gifted some land from the king, Augustine built Canterbury Cathedral, the first church that Christians could worship and pray in.

How has Christianity shaped British society?

The influence of Christianity on British society can be seen in many ways. Firstly, the Church of England is recognised by law as the official church of the nation. The Act of Supremacy also makes the King or Queen of England the Head of the Church and 'Defender of the Faith'.

Furthermore, some people say that many of the laws of the UK have their roots in Christianity. For example, there are laws that reflect the Ten Commandments, which forbid stealing and murder. In addition, the sheer number of churches around Britain indicates how it was built around the Christian faith. There are roughly 16,000 churches across the UK, a vast number more than the number of mosques (1,600) or synagogues (450).

Even our national bank-holidays celebrate distinctly Christian festivals, such as Easter and Christmas, and our Sunday opening hours still reflect the Christian idea of Sunday as the Sabbath. However, with research showing an increasingly secular society, should these Christian

values still retain the importance they use to have?

What evidence suggests Britain is no longer a Christian country?

The most convincing proof comes from the censuses, conducted every 10 years. In 2001 the number of people who identified as Christian was 72%, which then fell to 59% in 2011. In contrast, in 2001 the number of people who identified as having no religion was 15%, which then increased by 10% in 2011, suggesting Britain is becoming more secular. Abby Day, professor of race, faith and culture at Goldsmiths, University of London, claims this shift is down to changing attitudes towards faith, with many younger generations regarding the church as irrelevant to them.

Furthermore, just 1% of the population currently attend church on a Sunday, which shows the place of Christianity is diminishing in society as the UK becomes a more diverse country. This may also be why only 30% of children attend a faith school, with the vast majority attending more culturally diverse and inclusive schools.

What is happening now?

Christian churches are desperately trying to modernise themselves to entice people back into their religion. For instance, they have organised religious rock concerts and opened café shops. Whether this will work is yet to be seen, but if the data is set to continue on the same downward trajectory, then it is likely Christianity's prominence will continue to fade. But I think, this will reflect how we are living in an increasingly culturally diverse country and could draw attention to other faiths and religions.

'Academics claim the 2021 census will prove the UK is living in a 'post-Christian era'

'In 2011 the number of people who identified as Christian fell from 72% to 59%, with secularism increasing by 10%'

From giant eel to prehistoric creature: Unlocking the mystery behind the Loch Ness monster

Hannah Bendrey (Y7) investigates the mysterious hypothesis of a prehistoric monster living in the Scottish Highlands' famous body of water, Loch Ness



The Loch Ness monster is said to live deep within the bowels of one of Scotland's largest lochs. Loch Ness, located south of Inverness in the Scottish Highlands, contains more water than all English and Welsh lakes combined. Loch Ness is over 10,000 years old, formed during the last Ice Age when the top part of Scotland collided with England. Some guess this was when 'Nessie' swam in, before the loch was sealed. The loch's deepest points are over 800ft deep which is twice the average depth of the North Sea. In fact, the volume is sufficient for every single person on earth to fit inside it 10 times over. Perhaps that's why Nessie has been able to remain hidden for so long!

While the earliest report of a monster in the vicinity of Loch Ness appears in the Life of St. Columba by Adomnán, written in the sixth century AD, the sighting that brought Nessie to worldwide attention was made in 1933 by Londoner George Spicer and his wife. Spicer was driving along the side of the loch when he reported seeing 'a most extraordinary animal having a large body about 1.2m high and 8m long crossing the road.'

Since then, interest in the Loch Ness Monster has only increased with many people flocking to Loch Ness, patiently waiting to catch a glimpse of Nessie. In 1934 the Daily Mail published the first photo of the creature's head and neck, a photograph of what appeared to be a plesiosaur-like beast with a long neck emerging out of the murky waters. It became known as the "surgeon's photograph", named after Robert Kenneth Wilson, a London gynaecologist who reportedly took the photo. 60 years later it was confirmed as a hoax hatched in revenge after a newspaper ridiculed journalist Marmaduke Wetherell for finding "Nessie footprints" on the shore.

Later in the same year, Edward Mountain, a wealthy insurance broker, financed a search to find the monster. The Edward Mountain Expedition saw twenty men with binoculars and cameras station themselves around the loch from 9am to 6pm for five weeks. Their mission was to capture clear photos of the creature. One man, James Fraser, did capture an object about seven feet long on film. However, the images were deciphered by zoologists and professors of natural history at the time, and

they concluded it was likely a grey seal instead of Nessie.

Since the Edward Mountain Expedition was inconclusive, the next step was to advance to using sonar. To date, the largest sonar investigation of Loch Ness has been Operation Deepscan where 24 boats lined up along the loch to simultaneously emit acoustic waves. Although Operation Deepscan did make fleeting contact with a large, unidentified object of unusual size and strength, no conclusive findings were made.

The most popular explanation for Nessie is that it is a type of marine reptile, such as the plesiosaurs, which became extinct around 65 million years ago. The image of Nessie certainly resembles that of a plesiosaur, but the prehistoric reptile only grew to around 1.5m in length, whereas Nessie is claimed to be up to 8m long. Furthermore, plesiosaurs were cold blooded creatures, and the waters of Loch Ness would be too cold for them to survive.

The Loch Ness Monster continues to hide from us, but will it one day be found? I personally believe that the Loch Ness Monster could exist but the science could change my opinion.

'Loch Ness contains more water than all English and Welsh lakes combined'

'The most popular explanation for Nessie is that it is a type of marine reptile such as the plesiosaur'

The dark secrets behind our white tigers - the species that never should have existed

Isabel Smith (Y7) explains how the white tiger is a species sustained from successive generations of inbreeding, a process that often leads to deformities for the big cats

There are no white tigers in the wild. This is because white tigers are a rare breed of tiger that occur when two Bengal tigers that carry a recessive gene controlling coat colour are bred together. It's been said the entire captive white tiger population originated from one single white tiger and has been inbred ever since. To retain this recessive gene, zoos and breeders must continually inbreed father to daughter, father to granddaughter and so on. The breeding of white tigers is cruel and exploitative and must stop.

White tigers are bred for one purpose: money. Their striking appearance and rarity makes them a popular tourist attraction that zoos often exploit. And while in 2011, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) took a huge step in banning member zoos from breeding white tigers, lions, and cheetahs it doesn't stop these zoos, roadside attractions, and traveling exhibits from displaying them. They're also not prohibited from obtaining them from other sources.

However, this inbreeding causes severe genetic problems for the animals. Only one in every 30 white tiger cubs is born healthy, leading to the rest being 'disposed' of by zoos or breeders.



For instance, if white tigers are not seen as white enough, they are abandoned or dumped off at roadside zoos, often advertised as "sanctuaries" but are zoos in which the animals are kept in horrific conditions and can barely move.

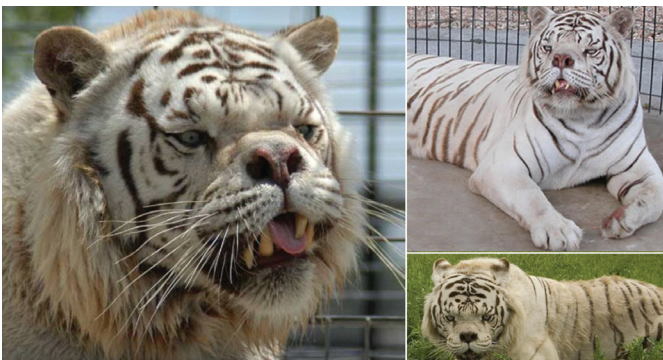
For years, breeders and exhibitors have been using the excuse that white tigers are an endangered species, so they need to keep breeding them. This is completely false. Contrary to what many people believe, there is no population of white tigers in the wild. In fact, no known white tiger has ever survived to adulthood in the wild because their colour greatly hinders their ability to hide, stalk, and hunt prey. Without the normal orange-and-black colouring, they are

unable to camouflage themselves and end up starving to death. According to wildlife experts, only 1 in 10,000 wild tigers will be born white. Although the creation and display of white tigers causes suffering and death to countless innocent cubs, it will continue until the public refuses to support zoos and facilities that breed them. Our greed and desire to see something beautiful is what fuels this sad truth. What is the point of breeding a tiger that will just have an unhappy life? There is no conservation value to breeding an animal, who will never live a happy or healthy life in the wild. The only reason they are bred is for money.

It's up to all of us to stop supporting the cruelty involved in displaying this non-existent species. The white tigers being dumped after they're no longer earning their keep in the exhibition world didn't ask to be in this situation. We can help this by not supporting zoos that continue to breed white tigers and by educating others about the problems these animals face. By supporting sanctuaries that care for discarded big cats we can help bring an end to the practice of white tiger breeding.

'Only one in every 30 white tiger cubs is born healthy, with zoos and breeders disposing of the rest'

'There is no conservation value to breeding an animal who will never live a happy or healthy life in the wild'



Murder of our mangroves: the death of our wetland ecosystems threatens to hurt us all

Georgina Halstead (Y7) explores the vital role wetland ecosystems play for plants, animals and humans, arguing their destruction threatens to fuel the growing climate change crisis

Situated at the border of land and sea, mangrove forests are unique in many ways. They are forests made up of shrubs or trees that thrive in salt water and are one of the most productive and biologically diverse ecosystems on the planet. Indeed, 40% of the world's plants and animals depend on wetlands. Yet despite the important role mangroves play, also in our own ecosystem, they are being cut down and drained at a rapid pace. Our mangroves are being murdered.

Over the past four decades 35% of global mangrove forests have been destroyed. This degradation has a knock-on effect on some of the world's most endangered species which rely on the ecosystem for habitat, such as the Bengal tiger. Mangroves also provide food and protection for young marine life before they are ready to move further out to sea. As well as supporting and protecting marine life, mangroves provide nesting and migratory sites for hundreds of species of birds which flourish among their branches.

Furthermore, mangroves play a vital role in the sustainability and security of coastal communities. For example, they are one of the most cost-effective methods of coastal disaster risk management as their roots can absorb water, reducing the impact of flooding. Their dense vegetation also acts as a barrier to the mainland, protecting nearby communities from adverse weather. Research has also found that mangroves can absorb up to four times more carbon dioxide by area than mainland forests. For these reasons, our wetland habitats must be protected.

Peatlands are another type of wetland, this ecosystem made up of bogs, mires and marshes. Because of a lack of oxygen, these wetlands can build up vast quantities of organic matter that doesn't decompose properly, known as peat. Historically, peat was used a fuel to help power growing towns and cities in the Industrial Revolution. Later, in the 20th century, remaining peatlands were harvested on an industrial scale for compost to satisfy Britain's burgeoning passion for gardening. This may not seem an issue, but peat is made up of huge amounts of carbon. In fact, scientists have estimated that peatlands could contain as much as 644 gigatons of carbon – one-fifth of all the carbon stored in soil on Earth. The destruction of peatlands releases all that carbon into the atmosphere, in turn contributing towards the global climate crisis. Staying away from using compost and using suitable alternatives like coconut fibre is an effective way of preventing further release of carbon.

Over recent years, more people have started to realise what terrible things are happening to

'Mangroves are one of the most productive and biologically diverse ecosystems on the planet'

'Destruction of peatlands releases huge amounts of carbon into the atmosphere'

our wetlands and have stopped using environmentally harmful materials. Despite this, since 1970 83% of freshwater species have declined due to the cutting down of wetlands. One of the culprits for this is careless littering, specifically people who throw their rubbish into water. We need to become more aware of our destructive habits and control them so that they don't affect nature. We need to play our part; however small it may be. It would be very incredibly difficult to build a wetland, so we need to try to keep it.

You can help the environment by sponsoring charities like the WWF, RSPB or Wildlife Trust all of which support our wildlife. But there's something else you can do: use your voice to encourage change. At COP26 more than 100 countries signed a commitment to reduce their methane emissions by at least 30 per cent from 2020 levels by 2030 and Greta Thunberg has also encouraged young people to stand up for climate change. We can't change the clocks and go back in time to restore our precious wetlands so we must act now to save our planet.



Mercia Literary Corner



How the Crab Got His Shell

Once upon a time there lived a woman whose name was Aftermath. She had one daughter, whose name was Akuvi. The woman's husband had died when she was still very young. As Akuvi grew up, she began to rebel against her mother's authority. If Aftermath asked her to fetch a bucket of water, she would refuse and simply tell her mother to get it herself. Aftermath asked the girl to pound some yam, and the girl would snarl and sulk. The mother used to curse Akuvi, but to no avail.

"You think I'm hard on you", she would say. "Just you wait. If you keep behaving like this, you'll meet your fate one day!" This continued for some time until one day Aftermath had had enough.

"That's it! I've had enough of your insolence", she yelled at her daughter. "I'm leaving."

And with that, Aftermath packed her clothes and left. Akuvi had no idea where her mother was going. She had nobody to ask, nobody to turn to in the small village she lived in.

As there was nowhere else to go, she headed towards the forest. She had been walking for some time, until she came across a small farm where an old woman sat outside knitting a coral blue scarf. The old woman approached Akuvi and thrust a piece of paper into her hand. Opening it up, she read the words 'Western Beach'. Perhaps this was where her mother had ventured to.

As Akuvi sprinted down to the coastal path towards the thick yellow sand she caught the sight of a wonderful, vibrant red creature. The creature cried "Akuvi, help me!"

Akuvi immediately realised this was her mother. She wept all day and all night, her tears melting into the sand beneath her. For two weeks she sat and mourned, until slowly her body started to fade away and melted into a million pieces onto the back of the red creature's back. Over time, the pieces of Akuvi's body became the shell on the back of Aftermath's body. And so together both Akuvi and Aftermath become the crab we know today.

- Selenge Bat-Ulzii (Y8)

The Day the Sun Stayed Down

The day the sun stayed down
People left each other alone
"It's not our fault!" they all cried out
When it was nobody's fault but their own

The day the sun stayed down
Children got the day off school
"We'll see you all tomorrow," they said
But they wouldn't be back so soon

The day the sun stayed down
They all went down to the pub
"Stay for a pint!" they begged
As if they hadn't done enough



The day the sun stayed down
The youths understood what went on
"We tried to warn them," they mourned
"But they didn't listen. Now our future is gone"

- Wednesday Addis (Y10)

This is for you

This is for those who refuse it,
For those who enforce it,
For those who it hurts them to hear.
It passes through our minds like a plague,
Pains us to face the reality that it's true.

They're diagnosed with twenty-twenty vision,
Blind to our suffering. But we've lost autonomy,
Of our cultures and our clothes.
And my mind has been poisoned to tell me
My hijab is wrong.

Towel-head, oppressed, letterbox –
Is it a bomb?

We are white, we are black, we are brown,
We are every colour of the rainbow.

This is for those who challenge it,
For those who cry blood and
Whose brains ache in the name of it.
In the name of God we are blessed,
In the name of Allah we are queens.
But to them we are not.

I should be out there living true happiness, but no
Cos I'm stood here reciting this poem,
And I can't even find the words to explain
How I'm feeling.

This is for those who face it head on,
Diving into the world headfirst,
Hopelessly focused on the incessant fighting.
For those in French schools,
Fighting the system.

I stand with you, amongst many others,
Because we can all relate
With the food of our mothers.
We beam when she smiles,
We weep when she sheds a tear,
We'll protect her like a shield
If anything comes near her.



Call me a snowflake for wanting my culture back
But my eyes are more British than those things in museums.

My eyes have seen more than you can imagine.
My eyes hold heartache, death, bomb explosions.
But I am not me. My eyes are not mine.
I am Rahaf. I am Nabil. I am Sadaf.

This is for those who are forced to suffer in silence,
Not those that chose to be silent on suffering.
This is for you.

- Maqbula Sarvari (Y10)

A Thorn Bush

Someone once said to me,
If you never change you never grow -
But I ignored that thought
And carried on, like nothing had changed,
A repeat, every single day

As time passed on, within the cold
I had no desire to change.
(At least, that's what I had been told)
Lost in my mind
A thought began to grow - slowly -
Bit by bit, by bit.

It grew until I felt imprisoned in myself,
For I no longer seemed to fit.
A whole world was waiting out there -
Changing, everyday.

It proves there is nothing to be afraid of,
If you work day by day.
Because a sun-lit day afraid to turn to dark
Will miss the splendor of the white moon.
And a flower that refuses to grow
Will never get to bloom.

I thought I was a thorn bush,
Only good for snagging clothes.
But if you do not change,
You'll never find out a
thorn is also a rose.

- Fraser Hughes (Y10)

Poetry inspired
by William Blake



Regret

Green flesh, yellow eyes
A devil, a traitor, a fiend from hell,
One that deserves nothing but death
William! Elizabeth! Justine! Henry!
Gone.
You vile insect!
The corpses I stole, the time I wasted,
The crimes you have committed
And you still want to be accepted?
Never.
Instead of being embarrassed,
You call yourself my master.
Instead of being embarrassed,
You ask me to make you a wife -
When the sky falls and the ground turns red
I would tear her limb from limb,
I would destroy her.
You may be my master but I am your creator.
I create. I destroy.



- Abdunaser Abdulmannan (Y8)

Chimney Sweeper

One day, I saw a light
Like a fire from the Forest of the Night.
Revolution hit the city,
No masters felt any pity.
Dark, dull - the scene was appalling
Children so young, sold while they were snoring.



Long ago people had passion and desire,
Now we torment, working above a fire
Covered in soot, injuries to hand and foot.
Once, we lived in a heaven but now it's a hell,
Tom, Jack and Harry working under your spell.

- Messi Mahmood (Y8)

Have a go at these maths problems and hand in your attempts to your maths teacher for house points.

Q1: Four different positive integers have a product of 110. What is the sum of the four integers?

Q2: Six friends are having dinner together in their local restaurant. The first eats there every day, the second eats there every other day, the third eats there every third day, the fourth eats there every fourth day, the fifth every fifth day and the sixth eats there every sixth day. They agree to have a party the next time they all eat together there. In how many days' time is the party?

Q3: Two 2-digit multiples of 7 have a product of 7007. What is their sum?

Q4: A bottle contains 750ml of mineral water. Rachel drinks 50% more than Ross, and these two friends finish the bottle between them. How much does Rachel drink?

Q5: Six friends Pat, Qasim, Roman, Sam, Tara and Uma, stand in a line for a photograph. There are three people standing between Pat and Qasim, two between Qasim and Roman and one between Roman and Sam. Sam is not at either end of the line. How many people are standing between Tara and Uma?

Maths
House Point
Challenge #4

Answers to Summer 2021 Edition (Challenge #3)

Q1: 17:00 Q2: 09:38
Q3: 56 minutes Q4: 20:15
Q5: 19 pairs



Noughts + Crosses: a reverse reality that illustrates systemic racism and class oppression

Laaibah Mehmood (Y8) applies a Marxist and postcolonial reading to Malorie Blackman's novel 'Noughts and Crosses' to explore the text's class and racial struggles



Literary theory refers to the ideas and methods we can use to analyse and interpret a text. A particular literary theory I have been exploring is applying a Marxist reading to popular fiction novels. Based on the theories of Karl Marx, Marxist critical theory looks at how different social classes are represented in a text, reading the interaction between the classes as an expression of contemporary class struggle.

If we take Malorie Blackman's popular dystopian novel, 'Noughts and Crosses' and apply a Marxist reading to it, we can clearly see signs of a class struggle. We can see Meggie McGregor, the hard-working mother of Callum, and former nurse to Sephy, as representative of the working class. She is exploited by Sephy's mother, Mrs Hadley, and required to be subservient to her because of Mrs Hadley's status as a capitalist. The reader can see Meggie's submissive nature through her formality towards Mrs Hadley, she often refers to her using the honorific term "Mrs Hadley" which implies her role inferiority in relation to the capitalists.

On the other hand, Mrs Hadley juxtaposes Meggie's formality by addressing her by her first name, "The things I tell you, Meggie" – this conveys the ultimate disparity between the working class and the capitalists. The capitalists are able to exploit those beneath them purely due to their status as wealthy individuals.

Furthermore, the relationship between Meggie and Mrs Hadley demonstrates the barriers the working classes are constantly faced with as a result of the forces of capitalism. Meggie and Mrs Hadley have a thoroughly inequitable relationship, despite the fact Mrs Hadley refers to them as good friends, "It's lucky we're such good friends!" This false show of friendship is a way the capitalists aim to perpetuate their power over the lower class, masking it under the pretence of love and affection.

Additionally, 'Noughts and Crosses' can also be seen through a postcolonial perspective. This literary theory looks at how race and ethnicity is represented in a text, aiming to disempower how the colonisers "perceive," "understand," and "know" the

world. It looks at the conflict of power between the colonisers and the colonised. In Noughts + Crosses, Blackman plays with the idea of racial inequality by setting her novel in an alternate reality where black Crosses rule and white Noughts are severely oppressed. Meggie, a white nought, is instantly silenced as soon as the arrival of Kamal Hadley, a superior black cross, is mentioned. This elucidates Meggie's potential feelings of being controlled by the Hadley's due to their superiority in the highly discriminatory society in which they live. It also shows her vulnerability when surrounded by her superiors and the colonial powers in her society.

'The interaction between classes is an expression of contemporary class struggle'

'In the novel, it is the white, lower-class citizens who suffer the tyranny of the black colonial capitalists'

However, even though the marginalisation of noughts is a normalised part of the characters' social hierarchy, Meggie's son Callum (a nought) continues to hold a steadfast friendship with Mrs Hadley's daughter, Sephy (a cross). Perhaps their friendship persists because children are typically presented as a symbol of innocence. As a result, Callum and Sephy are ignorant to the racial distinctions between them as well as the constitutional power held by crosses, which insinuates that Sephy would have the higher power and control in this relationship. This corresponds to the colonization of the 'noughts' as they are oppressed and exploited by a higher power who compels them into silence. In the world of Noughts + Crosses it is the white, lower-class citizens who suffer the tyranny of the black, colonial capitalists. Meggie McGregor illustrates this clearly, 'making sure to keep her mouth well and truly shut' when in the presence of the Hadleys.

The monstrosity of colonialism is the real fiend in Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein'

Zainab Ismail (Y9) uses post-colonial criticism to read Shelley's famous novel as a symbol of the racial oppression incited through Britain's colonialism in the 19th century

Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein', or, 'The Modern Prometheus' (1818) is, among many things, a proto-postcolonial text. Shelley, after all, was an anti-colonialist defender of freedom. It is no accident that her classic work is told through an explorer, Robert Walton, attempting to traverse the northern seas and, through finding a path across the North Pole, open routes for new possibilities of conquest and domination.

Post-colonial criticism looks at the relationship between colonisers and the colonised, arguing that the latter are often suppressed and marginalised, presented as monstrous and barbaric. If we read Shelley's novel through this lens, we can see this power dynamic played out between Victor Frankenstein (the coloniser) and his monster (the colonised).

Firstly, the epigraph at the beginning of Frankenstein – 'did I request thee, Maker, from my clay to mould me man? Did I solicit thee from Darkness to promote me?' – is an extract from

the epic poem 'Paradise Lost' by John Milton. Contextually Paradise Lost incorporates political tensions due to being written after the English civil war, a time of upheaval and change. The interrogative sentence structure questions the creation of man and the morality behind it. Furthermore, the narrator inquires the decision of being created "from darkness". The noun "darkness" perhaps portrays the ignorance of man before his fall from the heavens. Moreover, the noun "maker" refers to a hierarchical structure, which establishes a superior status for the creator. Thus, from the beginning of the narrative a sense of social order is instilled through there being a "maker" representing the master in a colonial context.

Indeed, both Victor and the Creature use the language of slavery to describe their relationship, a reminder that slavery across the British Empire was a huge concern of the Shelleys as well as Mary's parents. The monster is denied the right to an identity by being

'Both Victor and the Creature use the language of slavery to describe their relationship'

'From the outset, a sense of social order is instilled through there being a 'maker', or a master in the colonial context'

called a "devil" a "demon" and an "abhorred monster" throughout the novel. He is also called Frankenstein's monster, which refers to him by his creator's name. This cements the idea of a master and slave relationship as the title objectifies the monster and ties him to Victor. The monster is marginalised and "irrevocably excluded" even by his creator or master who "detests and spurns him". This is only because of his appearance, which is "too horrible for human eyes". This is one of the novel's numerous reminders that a fixation on appearance and difference has historically focused on specific categories of visible (or believed to be visible) differences, such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, and disability. However, the monster does voice his resistance against his master by being "more powerful" and "superior", both in physical stature and moral reasoning. This demonstrates the master versus slave dynamic in which the slave can gain his freedom and liberty. The Creature, in a reversal of the terms of bondage, shows how the discourse of slavery in the novel is more than metaphorical: 'You are my creator, but I am your master; – obey!'

In 'Frankenstein' Shelley is thus giving a voice to the colonised: those people who are traditionally silenced and defined as alien, inferior, or monstrous solely because of physical features or material conditions such as poverty. Through her depictions of Victor and the monster she demonstrates the oppression of the colonised but also the power inherent within them to rebel against authority and readjust the power imbalance in society.



How Marx's Communist Manifesto has evolved over 150 years to create the communist states we see today

Kamil Wani (Y8) explores how communism has developed over the past century, looking at how its ideologies have been interpreted in societies then and now

Communism comes from the Latin word “communis” meaning common universal. It is a philosophical, social, political, and economic ideology that has its roots in Karl Marx's famous political theory, ‘The Communist Manifesto’, published in 1848. The goal of communism is the establishment of a communist society; a socioeconomic order structured upon the ideas of common ownership and the absence of social classes.

Marxism

Marxism is the earliest of the communist philosophies and focuses on the struggle between the ruling class (the bourgeoisie) and the working class (the proletariat). The bourgeoisie own the means of production, such as factories, whereas the proletariat are exploited for their labour. Marx claimed that power relations between the bourgeoisie and workers were inherently exploitable and would create inevitable class conflict. He believed that to create a classless society (the desired outcome) the proletariat must rebel and destroy the ruling class's private property. In a Marxist society

there is no class conflict as the means of production is shared amongst the people.

Leninism

Leninism, named after the politician Vladimir Lenin, was a form of Marxism designed for the specific needs of tsarist Russia. In view of Russia's backwardness, Leninism was as a strategy of building socialism under adverse or ‘unripe’ conditions. It rose to attention during the Russian Revolution of 1917, after the forced abolition of the Tsar just months earlier. Through this revolution, Lenin's party, the Bolsheviks, were able to seize power and establish the Soviet Union.

Stalinism

Stalinism is by far the most infamous and controversial type of communism, implemented in 1927 by Joseph Stalin. Stalinism evolved from Marxism-Leninism and was marked by rigid authoritarianism, widespread use of terror and often emphasis on Russian nationalism. Stalinism was marked by mass religious persecution and ethnic cleansing through forced deprivations.

Maoism

The most recent and

‘Marx claimed that power relations between the bourgeoisie and workers were inherently exploitable’

‘State control of the Cuban economy has nearly bankrupted their government, which owns almost all means of production’

significant form of communism today is Maoism, developed by the infamous Chinese revolutionary, Chairman Mao. Mao declared that Russian-style communism should be adapted to local, national conditions. Diverging from Stalin, he believed that peasants, not factory workers, should lead the communist revolution. He urged revolutionaries to take their struggle out of the cities and to fight guerrilla wars deep in the countryside. He preached the doctrine of voluntarism: that by strength of will, the Chinese people could transform their country. Revolutionary zeal, not weaponry, was the decisive factor.

Communism today

For decades after World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union, two global superpowers representing capitalism and communism, engaged in the Cold War as both sought economic and military superiority. The Soviet Union spread communism throughout most of Eastern Europe, including the creation of the socialist state of East Germany. When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, so did many other communist governments as the world began to embrace free markets.

Today, only five communist states remain: Cuba, China, Laos, North Korea and Vietnam. In some communist countries, economic and social outcomes have been relatively positive. For instance, the economic performance of China has been outstanding in recent decades, while in Cuba state control of the economy has nearly bankrupted the Cuban government, which owns almost all means of production.



The Belarus-Poland border crisis is an orchestrated attack on the EU by Lukashenko

Evan Shkul (Y8) argues that Belarus has been strategically moving migrants to its borders to place strain on the EU countries that harshly sanctioned the country last year

The standoff at the border between Belarus and Poland, where thousands of migrants have been stuck in a cold forest, is different from the other migrant crises we've witnessed in recent years. Many believe this is an orchestrated attack by Lukashenko, the autocratic leader of Belarus, to cause trouble for the European Union in retaliation for a series of sanctions against his government.

In recent months the Belarusian government has been flying immigrants into Belarus from Iraq, Africa, Afghanistan, Syria, and Russia to help them reach the freer, wealthier countries of Western and Northern Europe. Both Poland and Lithuania, which have borders with Belarus, are part of the European Union and one of the most straightforward routes for accessing Germany and the UK, where lots of the migrants seek to travel to.

Although Lukashenko and his government have denied deliberately using migrants to unsettle the EU, the country's liberal granting of visas to people with one-way airline tickets to Minsk, the Belarusian capital, reeked of dubious intent. For example, flightradar24.com, which monitors global air traffic, reported 27 flights from Beirut (Lebanon) to Minsk between August and November 2021, compared to only five in the whole of 2020.

The Polish government has since stopped all migrants from entering Poland, further escalating tensions. This has led to tens of thousands of migrants being stuck on the Polish-Lithuanian border with 15,000 Polish border security personnel



enlisted to use force to prevent any access into their country. Water cannons and tear gas have already been used as deterrents. There are also fears for the migrants' safety in this year's sub-zero winter and at least ten migrants have died so far on the Polish-Lithuanian border.

Some reports have suggested that Putin, the Russian President, is the puppet master of this border crisis, and Lukashenko a mere part of his plan. Liana Semchuk from the University of Oxford told Conversation News, "the crisis has also brought Russia's role and interests into a sharp focus, with leaders in Poland directly accusing Putin of orchestrating it. It is unclear to what extent the Kremlin is directly involved in promoting the current crisis, but the situation nevertheless plays into Russia's hands. It will inevitably push Lukashenko further under Moscow's influence – something the Kremlin ultimately seeks."

General Sir Nick Carter told BBC One's Andrew Marr Show that he "distinctly hoped" there would not be a war with Russia, but NATO would have to be ready. He suggested the border

crisis between Belarus and Poland was being used by Russia as a "classic example of a bit of distraction" from its activities near Ukraine. According to the BBC, the head of NATO has urged Russia to be transparent about its military plans after an increase in the numbers of troops on its border with Ukraine. Some analysts suggest the border crisis is a classic example of hybrid warfare, with migrants as pawns of war to destabilise Europe.

Hybrid warfare is a theory of military strategy, first proposed by American military expert Frank Hoffman, which blends conventional warfare and cyberwarfare with other influencing methods, such as fake news, diplomacy, and foreign electoral intervention. Numerous reports suggest the current Polish-Lithuanian border crisis is the start of a European hybrid war initiated by Russia against Ukraine.

So, how will the story unfold? There are many possibilities, from bad to worse, but I hope the EU leaders, Lukashenko, Putin, and NATO representatives can sort this crisis out before it gets any worse.

'Lukashenko is retaliating for a series of sanctions the EU imposed against his government'

'There are fears for the migrants' safety in this year's sub-zero winter and at least ten have already died'

China is continuing to harvest organs from political prisoners and ethnic minorities

Jeremiah Donovan (Y8) condemns the actions of the Chinese state which permits the trafficking of thousands of ethnic minorities in order to harvest their organs



Forced organ harvesting is the illegal practice of surgically removing a victim's organs against their will. They are then sold on the black-market for transplantation. Each year, it is claimed that up to 100,000 of China's ethnic minorities and political prisoners are victims of this organ-trafficking system.

In June 2021, a group of U.N. independent experts expressed their concerns at allegations of organ harvesting carried out on minority groups including Falun Gong practitioners, Uyghurs, Tibetans, Muslims and Christians, in detention in China. However, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) insists it relies on voluntary donations for organ transplants, despite publishing figures in 2009 stating that two-thirds of organ donations came from executed prisoners. Suspiciously, a few days later they claimed this was misinformation.

However, credible information claims that these ethnic or religious minorities are often forcibly subjected to blood tests and organ examinations

such as ultrasound and x-rays, without their informed consent. The results of the examinations are reportedly registered in a database of living organ sources that facilitates organ allocation.

The United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) said that they were "extremely alarmed" by reports of organ harvesting targeting ethnic minorities, particularly those who follow the Falun Gong movement. Persecution of the group began in 1999 after it attracted tens of millions of followers and came to be seen as a threat to the communist party for its radical social and religious views. These minorities are allegedly subjected to sexual and physical abuse and forced to have their organs stripped from them.

The detainment camps in China have facilitated easily access to thousands of ethnic minorities who are forced to donate their organs. Reports suggest around 1.5 million people are imprisoned in detainment camps around China, with 1 million of these believed to be Uyghurs and other minorities from Xinjiang. China claims the

'Up to
100,000
of China's
ethnic
minorities
are victims of
organ
trafficking'

'In the
world's most
densely
populated
country,
the wait for
a kidney
donation can
be as short as
two weeks'

camps are 're-education centres' that provide vocational training and are necessary to fight extremism, but this is a cover-up. Within these internment camps, the minorities are forced to study Marxism, renounce their religion, work in factories and face abuse daily. 'Hospitals' that carry out organ harvesting (and inhuman mass sterilisation) are suspiciously close to the detention centres, raising further probability the imprisoned minorities are being used for this inhumane practice.

Forced organ harvesting continues because of the high demand for organs. For example, in the USA nearly 92,000 people are currently on the list for a kidney transplant, which could be a wait of up to 10 years. But this is not the case in China. In the world's most densely populated country, the wait for a kidney donation can be as short as two weeks, with some even receiving a transplant on the same day as the request made. Tales of foreigners travelling to China for illegal transplants from living donors are rife, with patients paying up to 200,000

yuan (£18,000) for a kidney. In 2009, a study in the journal *Clinical Transplantation* said that only 4% of transplant experts surveyed believed procurement processes in China were ethically sound. It also cited World Health Organisation figures suggesting that around 10% of transplants occurred via “transplant tourism” in 2005, with China among the leading destinations for patients. Indeed, China’s latest figures show that around 20,000 patients received organ transplants in 2018 from around just over 6,000 donors. However, an independent tribunal that researched forced organ harvesting believes that these figures are falsified. They believe China is operating around 60,000 to 90,000 transplants a year.

In China scheduling a heart transplant means scheduling someone else’s death, as the ‘donor’ will be killed to provide the organs required on the date required. This practice benefits the CCP because whilst killing those who are possible threats to Chinese state, they simultaneously can give transplants to citizens who need it, thus sustaining their enormous population. This is the harsh reality of how the Chinese state is run. What is concerning is that the vast majority of Chinese citizens are fed so much propaganda, to the point where they worship the state and their dictator, Xi Jinping, that they

don’t question the way their society is run. For instance, the source of organs which magically appear whenever they need them.

In response to the allegations of organ harvesting and human trafficking, the Chinese Government cited a litany of existing laws on the issues. None of which rebuke the allegations. Despite this, the state has always bluntly denied any evidence of the practice happening. For example, in 2015, Huang Jiefu, a Chinese governmental official, faced questions about the number of China’s yearly transplant operations. Jiefu claimed there were 10,000 total donors in 2015, despite evidence over 100,000 operations had occurred. He refused to answer questions challenging his claims. The Chinese government claims that witness testimonies and first-hand reports of the practice have come from “actors” who “repeatedly engage in slander and rumour-mongering on the issue of human rights in China.

In China, the market for organ trafficking is astronomically high, it is an industry worth billions. However, information surrounding this trade has only been recently discovered, meaning we don’t know how long the practice has been ongoing. Reports suggest forced organ harvesting in China could trace back as early as 2006, but with such difficulty accessing this information and publishing it,



‘Some have called for a boycott of the Winter Olympics in China next year to draw attention to this inhumane practice’

it is difficult to know exactly when the practice started. China manipulates the narrative so it can hide what it is doing and allow the organ harvesting industry to continue.

Forced organ harvesting is a system of terror and a complete violation of human rights. Some reports even say that the extraction of organs is sometimes done whilst the subject is still alive and that the surgeons use injections to put the person into a state of full body paralysis. It is worrying that the people of China are blind to this human rights atrocity. It shows how a totalitarian regime can silence its population to information from the outside world.

Organ transplantation to save life is a scientific and social triumph – but killing the donor is criminal. Government and international bodies must do their duty and condemn this brutal practice and help the minorities being targeted. It is the legal obligation of UN Member States and the duty of this council to address this criminal conduct. We need to use our voice to educate others that this inhumane operation is happening. Some have even called for a boycott of the Winter Olympics in China next year, saying it could draw attention to this practice and the treatment of minorities.



Three months under the Taliban: How has life changed for those living under extremist rule in Afghanistan

Samuel Knight (Y7) explains the history behind the Taliban, explaining who they are, why they came to power and how life in Afghanistan has changed under their rule

Between 2001 and 2021 Afghanistan was at war with the United States. During this time, the US were able to quell the extremist group's power in the country and establish an interim government. However, the Taliban were not eliminated entirely. In February 2020 the US government and Taliban reached a deal that required US troops to withdraw from the country by April 2021, with the final American troops leaving the country on 31st August this year.

All the meanwhile a greater power vacuum was emerging in Afghanistan. With each withdrawal of foreign troops there was less resistance to protect the interim government against the re-emerging Taliban forces. Across the summer the Taliban displayed their growing force with a broad offensive that managed to capture 69 Afghan provinces. They finally were able to capture the capital, Kabul, on 15 August 2021. The same day, the president of Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani, fled the country and the Taliban took control.

Many Afghans, fearful of what life under Taliban rule would

mean for them, desperately attempted to flee their country in the days following the inception of the new extremist government. More than 123,000 civilians were evacuated by US forces and its coalition partners after the Taliban took control of the capital and the United Nations has warned that up to half a million Afghans could flee the country by the end of the year. It has called on neighbouring countries to keep their borders open amidst this humanitarian crisis.

Perhaps the reason why so many Afghans fled is because the Taliban is renowned for its strict interpretation of Islamic law. In fact, they have refused to rule out reintroducing punishments such as cutting off people's hands for stealing. Furthermore, the Taliban could roll back "significant progress" for the country's public health system – and experts have warned that without proper funding, it could collapse. Members of the Health in Humanitarian Crises Centre at London School of Hygiene and Tropical medicine said that Taliban rule could lead to a rise in mortality rates, workforce shortages and the decimation of

women's health services.

The Taliban takeover has also caused alarm among women's rights groups for their repressive attitudes towards women. Under their leadership in the 1990s, women were only allowed to leave home with a male chaperone. High-heeled shoes were banned in case they "excited" men and women had to speak quietly in public so strangers did not hear their voices.

While women's rights will almost certainly be severely restricted, the Taliban have promised to respect them more so than in their previous regimes. They have said that women will be allowed an education up to university level and will not have to cover their face, although will have to wear a headscarf. However, 100 days into Taliban rule this more moderate approach is yet to be seen, with young girls instructed to stay home from school until proper systems were in place to ensure their safety.

As Afghanistan continues to slip into a devastating economic and humanitarian crisis, there is one global actor that can help the country pull through: the United Nations. While its member states continue to debate whether to recognise the Taliban's government, the UN can still play a significant role in supporting the Afghan people. With winter coming and the disruption in governance brought on by the Taliban takeover, Afghanistan's 600,000 internally displaced people risk famine and their basic human necessities going unmet. The UN, along with its key member states, need to act now to help the innocent people of Afghanistan.

'Perhaps the reason why so many Afghans fled is because the Taliban is renowned for its strict interpretation of Islamic law'

'Under Taliban leadership women were only allowed to leave home with a male chaperone'



With over half of British companies now owned by overseas investors, who really owns Britain?

Tristan Edwards (Y9) examines whether the foreign take over of British businesses should be feared or welcomed

Just for a moment, imagine being a tourist in search of the full British experience. Where would you start? Well, you would start in London, by boarding a red double-decker bus to do some sight-seeing. You might possibly visit a quintessentially British store, such as Boots the chemist, Selfridges or Harrods, before having a proper English tea at Fortnum & Mason or the Dorchester. Later, you might drive a Rolls Royce around country lanes and would almost certainly go home via a British airport or shipping port, thinking you'd seen a slice of the real Britain. But, in one sense at least, you'd be totally wrong.

Due to a combination of factors, such as rising powers in the East and businessmen seeking to sell their companies off to new investors, many homegrown British businesses have now been sold to offshore investors. But is foreign ownership of British companies something to be welcomed or feared?

Let's start off with British Gas, the heating company so proud of its roots it has the country's name in its branding. Wrong. British gas is actually owned by Centrica, a subsidiary of the French government owned company EDF. Other energy companies, like Shell are also based externally. But does this matter? Well, to begin with, being foreign owned means these companies can cut higher paid, British jobs, and use lower paid workforces in developing countries. Only recently, Centrica cut 5,000 jobs from its global workforce.

Some foreign firms have also adopted the practice of making a fast buck by buying a company, stripping its assets and then

selling for a quick profit. A classic case was that of the once-great department store, Debenhams, bought in 2003 by two U.S.-based private equity firms. Within three years, they'd stripped the firm of investment, loaded it with debt and sold it on at a big profit. The company went on to suffer more financial difficulties, entering administration in both 2019 and 2020. After 243 years in business, the remaining Debenhams stores closed for the final time during May 2021. This led to thousands of workers losing their jobs.

Beyond the high street, Britain is also losing its docks, ports and harbours to foreign investors. In fact, all of Britain's ports have been sold to overseas companies. The last remaining port was sold for £754 million to a little-known European investment firm. This company has control of London's Tilbury docks, several Scottish ports and 400 acres of Edinburgh waterfront. In the words of one government official, this was the equivalent of "selling off the nation's family silver." Furthermore, Britain's busiest port, Felixstowe, is owned by one of Asia's richest men and incorporated in the Cayman Islands.

A little closer to home, Sheffield City Council management has contracted Kier, a maintenance and housing repairs company, to maintain the infrastructure of council homes around the city. But despite branding itself as 'a British construction, services and property group' Kier is no more British than Madonna. The company is currently owned by Beazer, a US based company that designs houses for California residents.

Elsewhere, even the greatest



'All of Britain's ports have been sold to overseas companies'

'Even the NHS, is slowly being infiltrated by private American health providers'

British innovation, the NHS, is slowly being infiltrated by private American health providers. Despite this, the UK government seems to welcome the possibility of further growth in the NHS despite Brexit restrictions UN trade and travel. This is something that most commentators see as highly undesirable given the generally poor performance of the US health care system, with its unjustifiably high administrative and other costs. Fee for service is not a route the UK should pursue and is alien to the whole concept of the NHS.

As matters stand, trying to protect UK companies is like attempting to guard chickens in a coop to which foxes have been invited. And while foreign investment does bring economic prosperity, it is at the cost. Tens of thousands of jobs have been lost from overseas businesses taking over companies, which in turn means the homegrown British companies we hold a part of our culture are disappearing, probably for good. Still, the outlook isn't all bleak: bankers and foreign shareholders are doing just fine.

Is your mind wheeling with worry? Get your health back on a roll with skating

If the wheels have come off your search for calm, Elsa Harrison (Y7) argues the retro sport of roller-skating can help rebalance your mood and provide serious health benefits

If you've been drawn into the addictive world of TikTok, you'll know roller skating has gone viral over the past few months, mostly thanks to co-ordinated pro-skater users sharing videos of themselves effortlessly gliding in sun-drenched locations. While the stars of TikTok make zooming around on the pavement look pretty easy, roller skating is actually a really challenging sport that requires core strength, flexibility and balance – not to mention the mental determination to skate at speed across tarmac.

Roller-skating first originated in the late 18th century, invented by the Belgian entrepreneur John Joseph Merlin as a type of wacky shoe people could glide across ballrooms in. However, the invention never took off, limited by the fact the skates could only move in a straight line. Later, a man named James Plimpton attached what are known as trucks to the bottom of the skates, allowing greater freedom of movement. However, skating was not popularised until the 1950s and 60s, where roller skating carhops became popular at drive-through restaurants. Carhops were waiters or waitresses who brought fast food to people in their cars. Now, 70 years after the roller-skating boom, Gen-Z is buying skates in their droves amid a viral TikTok craze. But skating is not just about the aesthetic, and it's certainly more than just a social media trend. Skating offers plenty of great health benefits for your body and mind.

Roller-skating is equivalent to jogging in terms of health benefits and burning calories. It's easy to think roller skating only



challenges the legs, but those who practice regularly know it's a full-body burn. The hamstrings, quadriceps, and core muscles like the pelvic floor and glutes are strengthened and toned as you propel yourself forward. Plus, you're trying to stay balanced too. Elite roller-skaters have to have an incredible amount of core strength to keep the body perfectly aligned when nailing complicated moves like waltz jumps and twists.

Furthermore, not only does roller skating benefit your body, it's also good for your brain. Exercise releases endorphins, which can improve mood and even help with symptoms of anxiety and depression. Unlike gym sports, roller skating gets you out into fresh air, which can have further benefits for your mental health too.

Roller-skating can also help improve posture and coordination. Much like any dance skill, roller skating requires coordination to move the whole body in unison. As you're on several wheels, the brain is concentrating on spinning different plates, which can challenge your mental agility and balance. Posture plays a vital

role in maintaining your balance, so regular skating can help you straighten up and correct any bad habits you've picked up while hunching over a laptop.

If you are wondering where you can skate, there are lots of solutions. Many confident skaters tend to skate at their local park or in specialised skate parks. And if you don't like to skate in front of people don't worry, as you can use any concrete area to skate on, such as pavements and car-parks. I personally love to roller-skate at a skate park but prefer to skate without people watching, so I would recommend going early in the morning so you can skate without worry.

Although roller-skating hasn't made its way to the Olympics yet, most ice skaters started out on wheels. In fact, more than half of the 2014 Olympic speed skating team started out on roller-skates. As a sport that requires serious athletic skill, I think roller-skating should be part of the Olympics. This retro sport has come a long way since its inception in the Belgian ballrooms of the 18th century and now needs to find a place among the other competitive sports played at an elite level.

'Roller-skating is equivalent to jogging in terms of health benefits and burning calories'

'Exercise releases endorphins, which can improve mood and help with anxiety and depression'

How skateboarding became one of the fashion industry's most beloved subcultures

Max Lowing (Y7) explores the origins of skateboarding as a subculture and how it has had a powerful influence on modern day clothing such as beanies and sneakers

Skateboarding isn't just about a piece of wood with 4 wheels; it is an entire subculture. Despite being considered as an outsider sport, it has unassumingly influenced mainstream culture and industries more than most would have expected. It is a culture rich with history in rock, art, rebellion, and hip-hop and has left a lasting print in fashion, music, and film.

Origins of Skateboarding

Skateboarding developed in the US during the late 1940s as an alternative sport and pastime for surfers in California when the waves were less ideal for surfing. This early version of skating was known as side surfing as they use the boards on pavements. However, skateboarding didn't rise to popularity until the late 1970s and was practiced by a small group of individuals outside conventional societal norms, circles, and trends. During this time, punk rock music was also developing and the two cultures merged to become known as skate punk.

Style Developing

Initially, most skateboarders wore clothes based on convenience and what worked for the sport and pastime. It was usually just a combination of t-shirts, socks, and shorts – hardly a fashion statement. However, over time, as skateboarding became more popular, the dress code became more distinct with big brands such as Supreme, DC and Thrasher deciding to hone in on the trend to grow their businesses. The new fashion wave known as skatewear, influenced by the skateboarding culture, brought in a contemporary style that

included jeans, hooded jumpers, street-inspired clothing and large graphics that have found a home in fashion.

Supreme, in particular, was unapologetic of the culture skaters embodied. It was a shop for skaters, by skaters. Other brands like Vans and Airsoft began to sell sneakers like black half cabs and shredded shoes. Skater styled designs were symbolic of the skater culture and lifestyle but have become fashion favourites with celebrities like Justine Bieber and Rihanna also rocking skatewear.

1990s Era

Skatewear rose to the heights of mainstream fashion in the 90s. In this era, skater clothing was dominated by more neo-urban styles, such as plaid shirts, loose ripped jeans, waist chains, and shredded shoes. Blue denim jeans were traded in for darker shades or replaced entirely by jogging bottoms, which offered greater comfort and freedom of movement.

Musical Influence

Skateboarding and hip-hop were destined to intersect. Both were born of the streets, masters in rhythm and maestros

'Over time, as skating became more popular the dress code became more distinct and unique'

'Skateboarding developed in the US during the late 1940s as an alternative pastime for surfers in California'

of flow. With hip-hop artists, such as Logic, Tyler, the Creator and Kanye West sporting the skatewear trend, this style of clothing has been popularised with fans worldwide. One of the most influential looks is Tyler, The Creator's iconic hoodie over cap look, which is exceedingly popular among skaters.

Modern Trends

Caps were iconic at the onset of skater fashion, but they have been replaced by the more fitting skullcap beanie, which gives a cleaner, more fashion-forward look, also taking over from the looser fitting beanie version. Skater footwear has also changed. In addition to Vans, sneakers have become a skater go to with influence from both sportswear and streetwear. The skatewear shop Supreme has also transformed its style from a fringe youth culture hub to a global streetwear brand.

Skateboarding culture has developed into a way of life, with its set of norms, rules, and dressing style. And although once quite distinct, its unique clothing and style trends have begun to re-enter mainstream culture and influence global fashion trends.



Why England will tackle the opposition to win big in the Six Nations 2022

Niam Patel (Y8) weighs up which of the six European teams is likely to win the Six Nations next year

It seems to be said every year that the next Six Nations is going to be close, but this time it feels different, with five of the six teams very capable of beating each other on any given day. But who is most likely to win big when the games kick off on February 5th?

England

In my opinion, the strongest contender to win is England. This is because of the newfound trust and backing of younger players by coach, Eddie Jones. Marcus Smith is the latest addition to the squad and brings excitement to the game because of his creativity. Marcus has played 118 games for his club team Harlequins and has scored 1040 points for them. He finally played his first game for England this summer, then was swiftly called up for the British and Irish Lions a few hours later, followed by good balanced performances in the Autumn Nations. Additionally, the depth in England's new squad has improved because Eddie Jones has introduced new methods.

I asked my brother who he backs to win big next year, and he told me "I think England are going to win the Six Nations, because of the faith displayed in younger players like Marcus Smith and Freddie Steward by Eddie Jones. England also looked strong playing as a team against South Africa and Australia. They proved themselves winners against them."

France

Going into next year's tournament, France will be the team to beat. Their style of play (attacking and passing a lot more than other teams) is not only great to watch but also wins them games. They have had a great calendar year which ended in

them convincingly defeating the sublime All Blacks by 40-25 at the end of November.

France also arguably have the most in form scrum-half in international rugby: Antoine Dupont. He has played exceptionally well in past year, playing a crucial role in the annihilation of New Zealand. His games are more varied than most in his position, playing more defensively as well as running hard lines and scoring tries. Finally, France's captain, Grégory Alldritt, has been central to the improvement in the French side, winning 97% of the tackles he has made and narrowly missing out on a Six Nations victory for his side. The French are serious challengers to the win the title if their form continues.

Wales

The Welsh side are the current Six Nation Champions, but their recent form has been mixed. In the Autumn Internationals, they won two matches and lost two. Their standout player is the lightning-fast winger named Louis Rees Zammit. He has scored six tries in 11 games for the Welsh. Wales also have the great hooker, Ken Owens. He has played 82 games for Wales and rarely throws a bad line-out. However, with so many other teams on top form, I think Wales are unlikely to win big next year.

Scotland

Over the last couple of years, the Scots performances have been roller-coaster. However, their current team looks strong. Their captain, Stuart Hogg, recently broke the record for the number of tries scored for Scotland and rarely fails to impress. Scotland also have the tackling king, Hamish Watson, who hasn't missed a



France have had a great calendar year, ending with them convincingly defeating the sublime All Blacks'

Marcus Smith is the latest addition to the England squad and brings excitement and creativity to the team'

tackle for Scotland in nearly two years. That's 242 tackles in row! Furthermore, this year The British and Irish Lions named the most Scots in their starting line-up for 24 years. Despite this, I still think they're unlikely to be serious contenders for next year.

Ireland

Ireland have had a great season this year, winning all four matches in the Autumn Internationals, including beating the mighty All Blacks. Andy Farrell's side have established a style of play that allows them to win; they can go toe-to-toe with the best in the world and come out on top, with their huge defensive discipline. Arguably their stand-out player is Tadhg Furlong who is one of the best props in the world. He was also picked and played for the Lions Tour in 2021. However, for next year, I don't think Ireland have enough attacking quality to win the Six Nations. Expect some close games though!

Italy

The Italian side have never thrived, most of the time finishing last and winning no more than the wooden spoon. They struggle to get many points on the board against most teams. However, their team has changed since the 2019 Rugby World Cup, with younger players entering the squad. My prediction? Same as the last 15 years.