

🔥 THE TORCH 🔥



Autumn 2024 Edition

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Editors' Note

Dear Readers,

We're back for the 2024 and 2025 academic year! After a short break, the Torch has returned. We have lots of exciting articles for you in this issue, so thank you to everyone who has contributed with their amazing articles.

We'll be back every term with a new edition, so look out for us in the future!

Finally, please sit back and enjoy reading the Autumn '24' Torch- we hope you enjoy it!

Thank you,
The Editors

About Us

Sophie

Hi, I'm Sophie! I take English Literature, History and Politics at A-level. I love literature and at home I normally have a book in my hand-my favourite is Wuthering Heights by Emily Brönte. I also play football at the weekends, and when I'm not doing that, rewatching the 2005 Pride and Prejudice.

Nancy

Hi, I'm Nancy! I study English Literature, Religious Studies, Politics and Geography at A-Level. I love writing and watching films, my favourite being The Shawshank Redemption. At the weekend, I enjoy playing video games but most recently, I have been learning to crochet.

Aimee

Hi, I'm Aimee! I study English Literature, Religious Studies, Economics and Maths at A-Level. I love music, I play the piano and really enjoy going to concerts; my favourite singers are Taylor Swift and Lana del Rey. In my spare time, I also enjoy reading, spending lots of time with my friends, and going on walks.

Twisha

Hi, I'm Twisha! I study English Literature, History, Economics and Maths at A-level. I love reading Jane Austen, my favourite book of hers being the classic 'Pride and Prejudice'. A couple things I enjoy include watching movies ('I, Tonya' is my favourite right now) along with ice skating while listening to Lana del Rey to set the mood.

Women in the Film Industry

By Aimee 12JPO

In 2022, a study found that 38.6% of lead actors in films in America that year were female. A decade earlier, 25.6%. Statistics show that only 5% of studio film makers and directors are women. Furthermore, women in the acting industry are paid \$1.1 million less than their male counterparts.

Why is it that women are underrepresented within the film industry? Why are they being paid less for the same work as men? And why is it that gender oppression is still limiting their successes?

I'm sure that all of you can name many successful directors, actors and producers that are women, so what is the problem?

In 1975, film theorist Laura Mulvey wrote an essay (Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema) about the "male gaze" and what happens when you only see film, popular culture, and art from the perspective of one gender. The male gaze is a feminist theory that states that portrayals of women in art are constructed in an objective and narrow manner, purely to satisfy the psychological desires of men and of our patriarchal society. The majority of media being from a male perspective matters. This is because the media we consume has a substantial impact on our lives. After Jaws was released, the phobia of sharks was suddenly listed in the top 10 major fears. After Lady Gaga was seen using a Polaroid camera in her music video for "Telephone," thousands more were sold. And female participation in archery went up by 105% after the Hunger Games were released. From these seemingly unimportant statistics, we can see that media influences not only our hobbies but also our emotions, purchases, career choices, mental health, and more.

If we were to consider that in your lifetime, you have to have only watched mainstream television, 95% of it was made by men, and 10 percent of all the leading characters were women. Actor and producer Geena Davis says that for young girls watching films, "if they can see it, they can be it." This lack of representation is detrimental for young women and girls, as the absence of female role models and strong female characters can limit

their aspirations and reinforce gender stereotypes. In doing my research, I googled film directors. 51 results came up. Not a single one of them was a woman. Then I looked at IMDB's top 100 list. 2 were women. If 50% of film school graduates are women, why is it that they're directing only 5% of studio movies? It's not because they are 95% less talented than men, but it's due to the systemic issues that prevent them from doing so. Sexism within Hollywood is a hundred year old issue and it is time that something is done about it.

The good news is that there are many people across Hollywood and the wider world of film that are pushing for change within the industry. The even better news is that movies by and about women make more money. The Washington Post released a study, and found that on average films that feature women actually make 23 cents more on every dollar than films that don't. Another study was conducted on over 1,700 movies; comparing the average return on investment where a woman fulfills the role of either director, screenwriter, producer or lead actor, as opposed to when a man does. In every single category, the return on investment was significantly higher if it was a woman. Namely, the return on investment is 35% higher when a woman is the screenwriter. Women buy over half of all movie tickets, and films about and by women make more money... so it makes no sense that 18% of Hollywood movies are labelled as so-called "women films".

Hollywood is a business, and we are all the customers. Next time you watch a film, start paying attention to the tiny details, and think about the female characters. How many are there? What are they wearing? Do they impact the plot? Or are they there just to support the male characters? Once you see this you won't be able to un-see it. Think about what you're putting your money towards when buying movie tickets, and do your research to support upcoming female artists. The first step towards change is by talking about the problem.

How did Catherine the Great earn her name?

By Sophie 12PKU

Catherine the Great (1729-1796) was a woman of contradictions- or, more accurately, a woman. Seen by both contemporaries and modern viewers as a scandalous warmonger, it can often be forgotten what actually won her the moniker 'Great'.

Born in what would become Germany as a low-level Prussian princess to a virtually penniless noble family, she was chosen to be married off to Peter III, heir to the throne of Russia and grandson of famed ruler Peter the Great. Currently in power was Elizabeth, daughter of Peter the Great. She led the way for Catherine by stabilising the monarchy and introducing European ideals to the Russian court.

Her marriage would be tumultuous. Peter was neurotic, rebellious and an alcoholic- not to say completely impotent. He could barely speak Russian and pursued a strong pro-Russian policy from the moment he took power in 1762, making him extremely unpopular. A cruel personality and keen on brutal practical jokes, he was overthrown by Catherine after only 6 months in power.

Catherine had ambition- she saw early on the possibility of eliminating Peter and governing Russia herself- a bold, and even mad, suggestion at the time. A keen follower of the Enlightenment, she communicated with famed philosopher Voltaire, making her admired by elements of aristocratic society. She had the support of the army, especially the regiments at St Petersburg where her lover Grigory Orlov, was stationed; the court; and public opinion in both capitals (Moscow and St. Petersburg).

In June 1762 she led the regiments she had rallied to her cause into St Petersburg and had herself proclaimed empress. 8 days later Peter III was assassinated. In September she was crowned in Moscow with a great ceremony and began a 34 year long reign as Empress of Russia under the title Catherine II.

So, what gave her the nickname 'The Great'? Catherine championed the ideas of the Enlightenment (a philosophical movement sweeping Europe that proclaimed reason and modernity), bringing Russia's court to the forefront with some of the continent's most progressive. At one point she even dabbled in vaccination. She spearheaded judicial and administrative reforms and expanded her empire's borders. A keen lover of art, she curated a huge art collection which is considered the foundation of one of the world's greatest museums. Her other accomplishments included founding the country's first state-funded school for women, drafting her own legal code, and promoting a national system of education.

Catherine brought progressive ideals to a country devastated by war and the foolish actions of her predecessors. She became a champion for the people, bringing her country into the modern day. And perhaps what truly earned her the name 'The Great'- a woman, born virtually penniless, led a coup against an emperor and wielded power for three decades over a country she had no claim to rule whatsoever.



Catherine II, oil on canvas by Richard Brompton, 1782; in the collection of the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. 83 × 69 cm.

Paramore - Women in Rock Music

By Sreeja 12AGO

Paramore is an American rock band formed in Franklin, Tennessee in 2004. Although there have been many changes in their lineup over the 20 years, the band currently consists of founding members Hayley Williams (lead singer) and Zac Farro (drummer), and Taylor York (guitarist), who joined the band for their second album, Riot!.

With fans all over the world and many accolades, they are best known for their hit singles, 'Misery Business', 'Still Into You' and 'The Only Exception'. Latterly, the band opened for Taylor Swift's critically acclaimed Eras Tour. When Paramore broke into the emo music scene with their debut album 'All We Know Is Falling' in 2005, their music was particularly significant for young women, since the emo scene was previously chiefly run by male musicians.

Therefore, Paramore's presence in the emo music scene was revolutionary as they began to make it a place for women to feel acknowledged in a setting dominated by men, who - of course - do not understand the woes of a teenage girl like Hayley Williams does. However, being part of such a successful female-fronted band in a male-run scene, it comes as no surprise that Hayley Williams is not impervious to misogyny, having faced it since the start of her musical career when she was just 16 years old.

Looking back on the toxicity of the 2000s, she said, "I hope no young female experiences [what] I experienced", and that "People look back with these rose-tinted glasses" on the emo music scene, where she experienced misogyny and constant bullying. From being hurled abuse on stage to having unfair standards set for her by the public in comparison to her male bandmates, Hayley Williams endured a magnitude of ill treatment behind the scenes in the early days of her career, all while having a great impact on today's young people, with many young female musicians citing her as their inspiration to make music.

It is still true today that rock spaces need to be more accepting of women, which can be seen clearly by which bands are allowed to make history. This year, Paramore became the first female-fronted band to win Best Rock Album at the Grammys - a fact the band themselves claimed to be "Ridiculous, yet true" .

When accepting this notable award, Paramore urged people to "keep pushing these rock and alternative spaces to be more inclusive" in the hopes of seeing more female bands and artists thrive in rock music just like them, winning this award 20 years into their career.



Hayley Williams of Paramore performs at the Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival on Friday, June 8, 2018, in Manchester, TN. AMY HARRIS/INVISION/AP

Female Hysteria in Jane Eyre: Contemporary Perceptions of Mental Health

By Neha 12DNO

The concept of 'hysteria' is one that has long been entrenched with gendered connotations that have, throughout time, been used to discredit and undermine women. Through the rise of the madwoman trope, which first appeared in ancient aetiological myths and has since persisted in literature and fiction, terms such as: insanity, lunacy, hysteria, irrationality, and fury are consistently used to invalidate women, both implicitly and explicitly.

In considering the evolution of these portrayals, from the "mad woman in the attic" trope of the Victorian era to contemporary depictions of women's mental health struggles, one can begin to understand the ways in which literature both reflects and shapes societal attitudes towards women.

Charlotte Brontë's 1847 novel 'Jane Eyre', written within the context of the limiting and damaging patriarchal ideals of Victorian England, highlights contemporary assumptions about women's inherent emotional instability, and the associated propensity to delineate expressions of female emotion, sexual desire, or defiance under the term "hysteria".

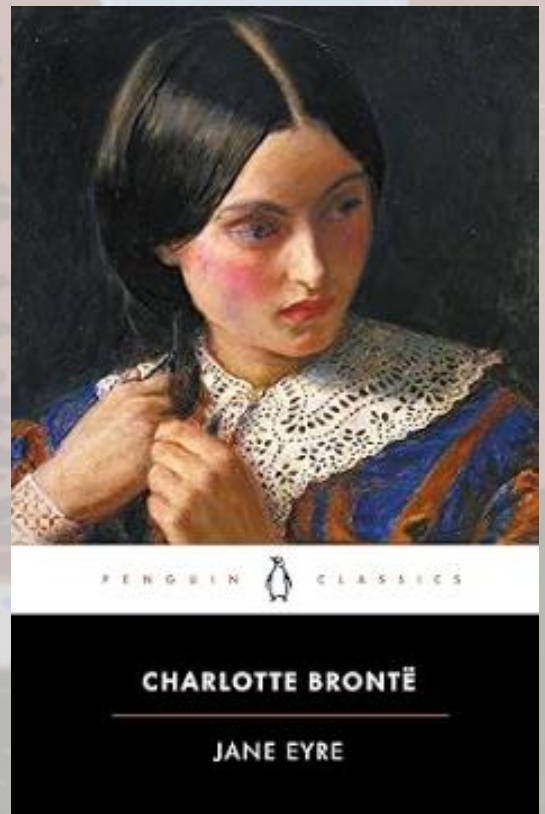
In Jane Eyre, Bertha's madness is linked to her "exotic" Creole heritage and her uncontained sexuality - her violent outbursts and confinement in the attic reflect not only the racialized and colonial anxieties of the time, but also contemporary fears of female autonomy. In this tale, the character of the mad woman is seen only in short, horrifying glimpses, not given autonomy or a voice of her own, representing the contemporary treatment of 'hysterical' women in 1847, locked away in asylums, out of sight, out of mind.

Jane, in contrast, is constructed as a paragon of self-control and moral fortitude, yet she, too, suffers psychological turmoil. Her struggles with isolation, trauma, and emotional repression are emblematic of the gendered expectations of

women to endure suffering in silence.

Elaine Showalter's *The Female Malady* (1985) examines how women's mental health was often pathologized when they deviated from the normative ideals of femininity—passivity, modesty, and emotional restraint.

By juxtaposing Bertha's overt madness with Jane's quieter, internal suffering, Brontë critiques the incompetent, patriarchal understanding of women's mental health. The novel ultimately reveals how women's emotional distress was frequently dismissed as hysteria or madness, a reflection of broader societal fears of female independence and nonconformity. Jane Eyre thus provides a lens through which to examine Victorian anxieties about female agency, sexuality, and mental health, themes that resonate with ongoing feminist critiques of psychiatry and gendered medical discourses.



<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Jane-Penguin-Classics-Charlotte-Bronte>

The Role of Women in Literature

By Annie 13FSE

Throughout the history of literature, women have often been portrayed as mothers, wives, and daughters, responsible only for managing the household. They had been assigned this role from birth, and it was nearly impossible to escape the life written for them. It wasn't easy to be recognised in a male-dominated space, and women were often excluded from intellectual, thoughtful discussions. However, as time has passed, female writers have focused on challenging societal norms. Literature has witnessed the evolution of women's voices emerging from their various experiences.

Women had been trapped and confined to the patriarchal role of the domestic sphere; it was only in the 1800s that they found ways around gender discrimination and began writing under pseudonyms. This can be seen through the Bronte sisters, who wrote under gender-neutral names to publish their works. Their contributions to literature were significant as they received recognition for their feminist narratives. Literature is a key art form that allows for creativity and the ability to express and communicate one's ideas.

This meant that women could share political ideas across the world, creating a space to challenge the oppression and prejudice faced by them for centuries.

Mary Wollstonecraft is seen as one of the first feminist writers to argue for the equality of men and women in 'A Vindication of the Rights of Women', written in 1792. There have been many other feminist writers throughout history who have paved the way for freedom of expression and the right for choice. In the late 1900s, Virginia Woolf explores this in 'A Room of One's Own', where she says women have not been given the freedom to write novels or pieces of fiction. The message of this book is that women need a place away from their role as mothers and wives- it is a room away from expectations. Literature has provided such a powerful outlet for women to champion the rights of those who follow them. It has supplied a platform to continue the fight against the patriarchy.



Mary Wollstonecraft, drawing based on painting by John Opie



Virginia Woolf Filippo Venturi, Photography Blog

Game Theory

By Laura 12AHN

Game Theory

1. What is Game Theory?

The Prisoner's Dilemma

Nash Equilibrium

2. Game Theory's relevance

3. The Arguments for and against its validity

4. Where to access further resources on Game Theory

What is Game Theory?

Though it is mainly seen as an economic field of study, Game Theory itself is a solely mathematical study. It is defined as the study of mathematical models of strategic interactions. AKA, the use of graphs to determine what conclusions can be made about a situation that involves some sort of strategy. The events must also be interdependent, as game theory requires the people involved in making the decisions (players) to consider the other's thought process. An example and the most well-known game is 'The Prisoner's Dilemma'

The Prisoner's Dilemma

The game begins as such:

2 prisoners are arrested for a crime, each placed into solitary confinement and are therefore unable to communicate. They have been arrested but the detective admits to his colleagues that there is not enough evidence to convict them of their crimes and the only way they will be charged for this crime is if a confession is drawn out. If Prisoner 1 confesses to the crime but Prisoner 2 keeps quiet, 1 will be let out on parole and 2 will go to jail for 10 years and vice versa. If Prisoner 1 and 2 both confessed, they will go to jail for 5 years each. If both stay silent, they will both go to jail for 1 year each on a separate lesser, charge of tax evasion. The prisoners are told their options and are now in a position where they must try to work out the decision that will minimise their own sentence.

The situation can be illustrated in the diagram..

		Prisoner 2	
		Confession	No Confession
Prisoner 1	Confession	5 Years, 5 Years	0 Years, 10 Years
	No Confession	10 Years, 0 Years	1 Year, 1 Year

Game theory is only concerned with the other prisoner, insofar as their decision (not their suffering) so regardless of what the other prisoner decides, both will get a higher reward when betraying each other.

To come to this conclusion, you analyse each player's best response to the other's decision. If Prisoner 1 defects (confesses), Prisoner 2 should also defect as they will either serve 5 years or 10 years. If Prisoner 1 cooperates (stays silent), Prisoner 2 should defect as they will be free. In both cases, Prisoner 2 should defect as it would make them better off, regardless of the other's strategy.

Defecting will always result in a better outcome for the players and is therefore known as the dominant strategy. As both players will not benefit from changing their strategies, given that other's stay the same, the Prisoner's Dilemma is an example of Nash Equilibrium.

Nash Equilibrium

This was theorised by John Nash, an American mathematician and academic, who in his 28-page PhD dissertation defined this idea. Even though it seems intuitive, it remains a vital concept within game theory and non-cooperative games (a game with no preliminary agreement holding the players accountable for their decisions, allowing betrayal of the other). Nash equilibrium is defined as a situation in which a rational player (a player not influenced by emotions, only motivated by their self-interest)

Game Theory

would remain with their chosen strategy even after considering the opponent's strategy. In the example of the Prisoner's Dilemma, this equilibrium was found when, regardless of the actions of the other player, the prisoners would be better off defecting (betraying).

Game Theory's Importance

At its core, game theory is applied mathematics so can be utilised by a wide variety of games involving human behaviour.

Initially, it was used in economics to link the behaviours of firms, markets and consumer; its first usage being a solution of the Cournot duopoly. The use of game theory now has expanded to politics, sociology and psychology. More notably, scholars of economics and philosophy have used game theory to explain 'good behaviour'; astonishingly, game-theory-style arguments regarding the philosophy of language and science can be seen in the work of Plato.

The usage of game theoretic arguments can be found throughout history, predating its formal introduction into academia. There are over 15 fields of study that use game theory and countless games to be analysed.

The field is constantly developing and is classed as a young-developing science. The subject thrives off the development of other fields, mainly psychology and new games can arise over the years. A famous example being a cooperative equilibrium in the Cold War.

Argument Against its Usage

The Achilles-heel of game theory is that it relies on the players being entirely rational, self-interested and unbounded decision makers which is almost never the case in real world situations. Humans are often unpredictable and include elements of honesty or duty in their decision making. Many decisions are also

not unbounded, having either legislation or unspoken agreement limiting the players actions. Using the example of the Prisoner's Dilemma, the answer of 'What is the best/most rational conclusion?' becomes more ambiguous when the idea of the two prisoners being a married couple who had promised to remain silent. Their situation would be heavily influenced by their feelings of empathy and loyalty to the other and the answer to what the best result is would be subject to these influences.

The prescribed strategies of game theory may not be the best decision for the specific situation due to external factors, meaning that the solutions would not provide the best outcome for the players.

Even though game theory cannot be a 'one size fits all' solution, it has been able to explain highly complex mathematical economic models, such as imperfect competition and entrepreneurial anticipation. The actions of oligopoly firms have also been predicted and explained by game theory, this being an influential point of movement in a market.

Beyond game theories practical, mathematical usage, it can also be an aid in political negotiations and improve strategic decision-making.

Further resources

There are countless resources available detailing the nature of game theory and games involved. Here is a brief list:

In the CCHS Library: "Game Theory: A Very Short Introduction" by Kenneth Binmore.

The Yale University YouTube channel has all of their Game Theory lectures (by Ben Polak) uploaded.

The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy is a brilliant resource and has a very informative article, titled "Game Theory" written by Don Ross.

Does Law Dictate What is Ethically Right or Wrong?

By Twisha 12JVI

The link between law and ethics has been the focus of extensive philosophical and legal investigation. Law and ethics both seek to control human behaviour, but they do so according to distinct ideologies and influences by many factors. For this reason, it is critical to examine the complex interactions between the two and determine how much one shapes the other.

Legal systems get legitimacy from democratic processes, cultural norms, and historical precedents. Law is a structured framework created by a society or governing authority to defend individual rights and maintain order. Nonetheless, the mere structure of law implies that its principal goal is to uphold social order rather than addressing the wider range of ethical problems, the focus is on law and order. Contrarily, ethics explores morality, and the values that shape human action; frameworks may be impacted by cultural, religious, philosophical, and individual viewpoints. Ethics, in contrast to law, is based on conscience and does not have the state's coercive power.

Although there is no denying that ethics and law have some overlap, this overlap is not always flawless. A society's consensus over what justice looks like is reflected in many legal principles, which are based on agreed ethical standards. In these situations, ethics would be dictating the law since it might represent the prevailing ethical norms. Legal positivism contends that morality and the law are unrelated, and that a law's legitimacy is independent of its morality

On the other hand, natural law asserts a link between morality and the law, arguing that moral principles should reflect in legislation. This philosophical debate further underscores the complex relationship between law and ethics.

Numerous examples of how the law falls short of addressing the entire range of ethical issues—such as laws that discriminate against people or authoritarian governments—highlight the differences between what the law requires and what is morally right. For instance, Guyana's Criminal Law (Offences) Act 1893 forbids same-sex relationships and imposes a maximum penalty of life in prison. The debate over whether morality and legality are synonymous continues. Although the law may provide a minimal level of behaviour that is acceptable, it does not always include or prescribe all ethical requirements. Legally allowed acts may nevertheless be morally repugnant, and moral principles may entail deviating from the letter of the law.

In conclusion, there are many facets and a complex interaction between ethics and the law. Morality is not entirely determined by the letter of the law. Although laws do not establish ethical principles, they frequently reflect prevalent ethical beliefs and serve as a foundation for society order.

Procrastination

By Francesca 12DMI

Procrastination is something most students face. I know I do, all the time. It is easy to let a simple task or project sit until the very last minute, especially when distractions like social media and texting are only a click away. But putting off work can lead to unnecessary stress, rushed quality, and lower grades. Breaking the cycle of procrastination is not easy, but with the right techniques, it is achievable.

The first step to beating procrastination is understanding why you do it. For me, it is usually the case that the assignment feels too overwhelming, and I can't find a place to start. However, there are lots of different reasons you might procrastinate a task. Once you find the root cause, you can create strategies that work for you.

One effective method is setting specific, manageable goals. Instead of tackling an entire project at once, break it down into smaller tasks. This has really helped me complete larger projects, usually I find it useful to put these tasks in a to-do list. Being able to visually see the number of tasks diminish as I complete them can really help to motivate me to finish the task once I have started it. For example, if I have a presentation to do, I might break it down into sub-topics and aim to complete one sub-topic a day. By setting small, realistic goals, you make the project less intimidating and give yourself a clear path to follow.

Another helpful tool is the Pomodoro Technique, where you work in focused intervals, typically 25 minutes, followed by a five-minute break. After four cycles, you take a longer break. If you only have a few days to revise for a topic test, this method helps to keep your brain engaged and not tire quickly. Also, by minimising distractions in your environment, the work done will be of a

higher quality and it will be easier to focus. If your phone is your biggest distraction, put it in another room or use apps like flora to block notifications while you study. Set up a clean, quiet workspace that signals it is time to focus, not scroll. Personally, I try to find somewhere outside of my bedroom to study, this makes me feel more awake and more like I am in a studying environment.

It can also be helpful to reward yourself for progress. Each time you complete a small goal, give yourself a quick break or treat as a reward. This positive reinforcement can make it easier to stay motivated. By the end of GCSE's this was one of the only methods that kept me engaged.

Hopefully by enforcing a few of these strategies, you can overcome procrastination and develop better time management skills that will help you succeed both in school and beyond.

The Impact of Make-up on Today's Youth

By Ananya 8G

In today's society, makeup is more than a means to cover up a blemish or an imperfection. It has become a powerful way to express oneself and to gain confidence, transforming some people. With social media becoming increasingly popular; beauty influencers, makeup trends, and beauty standards follow suit - changing the way youth see themselves. This article explores the many impacts makeup has on today's youth.

A positive impact of makeup is that it has the remarkable ability to boost confidence and enhance self-esteem. By hiding imperfections and highlighting the better features, it helps people feel more attractive and confident. Makeup can increase confidence in social and work settings by assisting people to feel more appealing and positive about themselves. A study in *Frontiers in Psychology* found that wearing makeup can improve how people see themselves, which lifts mood and confidence — a benefit known as the "lipstick effect".

The simple act of applying makeup can improve mood and well-being. Applying makeup can release oxytocin, a hormone that can make people feel good and relaxed, as the connection between the skin, microbiota, and the brain triggers it. Thus, makeup offers an opportunity for self-expression and confidence-building, aiding young people to take control of their appearance and feel empowered in their daily lives. According to psychologytoday.com, a healthy skin microbiome, often supported by regular skincare routines, can help manage stress responses in the body.

This balance positively affects mood and mental well-being, as a healthy skin microbiome can reduce inflammation and support a calmer, more positive mental state.

A negative impact of makeup is unrealistic expectations. Wearing makeup daily leads to expectations to have a certain appearance, which can lead to low self-esteem and poor mental health when makeup isn't worn. Makeup and beauty standards can increase the risk of eating disorders, anxiety, and depression. Wearing makeup every day can set unrealistic expectations for how people think they should look. Studies show that constantly seeing idealized beauty images on social media—like those on Instagram and TikTok—can add to the pressure to achieve these perfect looks, which may harm self-esteem and mental well-being (unsw.edu.au).

Makeup could also be addictive to some, making it difficult for them to see themselves without any. It also promotes the idea that going about as your natural self isn't good enough, making people feel like they're ugly. The beauty industry has exploded in recent years, with global sales expected to reach \$758 billion by 2025. "In a world where we're bombarded with images of airbrushed perfection, it's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that if we just find the right product, we'll finally feel good enough."(neurolaunch.com)

To counter this, though, I believe that makeup is overall beneficial, even though having quite a few downsides to it. My reasoning for this is that it brings out confidence in people. Instead of worrying about a blemish here or there, they're focusing on their life, how to be the best version of themselves, to learn and be ambitious about their future.

Wabi-Sabi Philosophy

By Amy 12AGO

Wabi-Sabi is a traditional Japanese philosophy encompassing three major principles: acceptance of imperfection, appreciation of transience, and connection to nature. The basic idea of this philosophy is to find beauty in flaws, which can be seen in the Japanese practice of kintsugi (repairing broken pottery with a gold, silver or platinum mixture to highlight the cracks). Wabi-sabi encourages those who follow the philosophy to take time to enjoy and appreciate the simple aspects of life, especially in the chaos of today's world.

The acceptance of imperfection is the first of the three main principles and can be summarised by the idea of 'Uketamo', a Japanese word translating to 'I humbly accept with an open heart'. The adversity of life will continue, and denying this will only give you more grief, it is much easier to move on when you accept the misfortune and allow yourself to grow past it. 'Imperfection' refers to anything that is not perfect, leading to a negative view on life, and a sense of never being good enough. In order to oppose this wabi-sabi suggests that we should aim for excellence rather than perfection.

A second principle of wabi-sabi is the appreciation of transience (the state of lasting for a short time). This refers to the fact of impermanence: life is short. This means that we need to take time to slow down and live in the moment. We should not rush what is already over too quick, allowing us to become more self-aware and reflective, and encourages the idea of living in the moment. This principle teaches that life should be simplified by 'decluttering', so as to not waste time on the complexities, and appreciate things as they come and go.

Connection to nature, another principle of wabi-sabi, comments on embracing the natural cycle of growth and decay. The idea of beauty in all stages of life and death is prevalent within literature and art. Beauty can be found anywhere, for example in Autumn, when the leaves are dying, but the warm and golden hues leave just as beautiful a landscape as the vibrant colours of flowers as they grow in the Spring. The appreciation of this allows us to reach a more observant and reflective mindset.

Overall, the practice of this philosophy, is thought to help us achieve a more fulfilling life of simplicity and calm, through the appreciation of transience, connection to nature, and acceptance of imperfection. There is beauty within everything if you look for it.

Hurricane Milton

By Diya 7G

As dawn broke over the Gulf Coast (USA) on the 5th of October for 7 days, the full power of Hurricane Milton was unleashed. The Category 4 storm, with wind speeds of up to 180mph battered coastal towns with heavy rains, devastating winds and widespread flooding. The hurricane's winds uprooted trees, destroyed power lines and tore roofs from homes and businesses. Power outages stretched hundreds of miles, leaving entire communities in darkness. It has been described as some of the worst damage seen in years.

Millions of people across multiple states were affected with a total of 35 fatalities, 6 missing and thousands injured. Areas such as Mexico, Florida, Georgia, the Bahamas and Cuba were impacted with estimated costs of repair reaching an outstanding height of \$85 billion.

The hurricane triggered a range of severe weather impacts including over 40 tornadoes, tsunamis reaching tremendous heights, landslides and sinkholes, striking both coastal and inland areas.

The rainfall caused the greatest devastation, Milton having dumped over 20 inches of rain in less than 24 hours. Not only did this trigger flash floods but entire neighbourhoods were swamped, forcing many residents to evacuate. As lakes and creeks overflowed, cars, large objects and houses were washed away.

Streets turned into rivers and houses filled with water within hours. Local officials called in the National Guard to assist in rescue missions, using both helicopters and boats to transport residents to safety.

Amid the chaos, countless citizens worked tirelessly to evacuate people, aiding the elderly, the disabled and children. Rescue teams came together guiding one another to shelters before floodwaters rose too high. Danny Harrington, a twelve-year-old whose home was heavily damaged commented, " I knew we needed to move fast."

Local authorities have been working tirelessly to assess the destruction and make a start on recovery efforts. While the journey to recovery will be long and difficult, residents remain hopeful, trusting that with hard work everything will be restored to its former self. Community organisations and volunteers have provided food, water and medical care to those in need and donations from across the country have pooled in to support recovery efforts. For now, the Gulf Coast is completely focused on rebuilding. As one leader mentioned, " We'll come back, stronger than ever. We've done it before, and we can very well do it again."



Hurricane Milton causes billions in property damage. Credit: Getty Images

The Northern Lights

By Isabel 9H

The Northern Lights or the Aurora Borealis is a rare event, which is in many peoples' bucket list and is often regarded as the 'Holy grail of sky watching' but do you know why there are these pretty lights in the sky? Did you know that even though it looks like a spectacular and beautiful show, it's actually quite violent event?

Auroras, generally seen near the Arctic or Antarctic, happens when solar wind carrying energised particles from the sun interacts (aurora australis) with the Earth's magnetic field. The magnetic field moves these to the poles which is why we see this amazing phenomenon. The best Auroras happen when the sun emits big clouds called 'coronal mass ejections'. Northern lights have a different colour depending on the gas and the altitude. The two most common gases on Earth are Oxygen and Nitrogen. Oxygen normally glows green; however, if it's very energised and it is at a high altitude it sometimes glows scarlet. Nitrogen atoms emit purple, blue and pink but this is rarer to see because nitrogen is harder to energise than oxygen. They only happen if there is a really big solar cloud.



Credit: Westend61 via Getty Images

The Northern lights are usually seen in places close to the North pole like Greenland, Canada, Alaska and Russia. However, the bigger the coronal mass ejection is the more area the northern lights will cover. The best time to see them is during the equinoxes when there are more magnetic storms.

So, if it is rare, then why is it becoming quite a common sighting nowadays in the last few years? This is because the sun has reached a 'maximum' which leads to the sun sending more charging particles to Earth creating the Aurora.

Missed out on the latest Aurora? Don't worry! Scientists expects more auroras in UK, so make sure to be awake from 10pm-midnight with your phone camera to take some incredible pictures!

Endangered Animals

By Sasmika 7S

2000: near extinction



2009: three types extinct



2020- now: increasing



In Woburn Safari Park, an Eastern Mountain Bongo, also known to be a type of antelope was born for the first time in a decade.

Facts:

- Both sexes have horns.
- They are the 3rd largest type of antelope in the world.
- They prefer to go in groups as they are less shy there.

Bongos are known to be a critically endangered species as throughout in 2000, they were said to almost be extinct from a disease. They were being hunted for their meat and horns. This year, they are being protected by conservations in the world.

Is sustainability all about recycling?

By Isabel 12JCH

Clean the oceans! Turn off the lights! Save the polar bears and turtles! Those are only a few of the multitude of slogans you hear on the news nowadays. Sustainability is portrayed in the media as only sustaining our planet Earth, its resources, and its organisms through recycling or reducing the use of resources. But what about the wider picture? Is it sustainable to have crime rates skyrocketing? There would not be a human race to sustain if everyone is in peril danger.

Social media nowadays has many positive influences on society, affecting people's habits and behaviours, as well as daily inputs into the environment. But due to the limited information people receive about sustainability in a wider sense, social media and its input into sustainability is also reduced.

So, what do I mean when I say, 'Sustainability in its wider sense'? Studies from the United Nations have shown that there are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that society must achieve to sustain our planet. Each of the SDGs are something scientists call a 'wicked problem', or a problem that cannot be solved using conventional methods. For example, the first SDG in the list is 'No Poverty' (SDG 1). Poverty is a problem that the world is unfortunately facing, especially with the increasing cost of living, as well as the decrease in funds from the government to develop some parts of their countries. This means that poverty is not an easy problem to fix with just conventional methods.

Another important sustainable goal that must be mentioned is Quality Education (SDG 4). The United Nations says that Quality Education goal is to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote

lifelong learning opportunities for all' (sdg.un.org). Here in CCHS, the school has successfully achieved excellent quality education, ensuring students have an equal opportunity to learn and thrive.

CCHS achieves goals 4.4 (increasing the number of people with the relevant skills for financial success), 4.6 (universal literacy and numeracy) and 4.7 (education for sustainable development and global citizenship). These are all especially important due to the elimination of discrimination within a school environment. Students of CCHS are extremely lucky to be in a school where diversity is celebrated, and students are empowered to learn.

Excellent quality education can sometimes lead to more than just opportunities in higher education; sometimes it could lead to new inventions or discoveries. For example, two secondary school girls in the United States have found a solution to reducing plastic waste while they had been studying polymers. They found that cockroaches can break the bonds between plastic and return it to a biodegradable state, solving a crisis that many scientists have failed to find a solution to. Another group of people also decided to use plastic bags to create mosquito nets to prevent malaria in malaria-infested countries, which has saved countless lives. This has further spread to large organisations such as the power of Love foundation and so on. In addition, 4 years ago an Australian girl, Angelina Arora (age 17), invented a type of biodegradable plastic using prawn shells. All these are examples of people who used their education and creativity to further help the sustainability of our Earth.

Is sustainability all about recycling?

Sustainability, as we can see, has 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and each one concentrates on its individual disciplines or wicked problems. Sometimes, like the examples above, more than one discipline is needed to improve a solution for one of these wicked problems. Therefore, we can now answer our original question 'Is sustainability all about recycling?'. The answer is no, sustainability is much more than recycling. It is about solving wicked problems that we as citizens of the Earth face, and it is about unifying to solve those problems together. If everyone contributes 1% to the world, the world will become better at a rapid rate. This is the 1% theory.

What can you do for our world today?



Editors Picks: Our Top Ten!

By The Torch Editors

(Disclaimer- not all of these are appropriate for younger years so we have marked where there are more mature themes. Please check before reading/watching what the age rating is!)

Top Ten Books

- 1 Wuthering Heights
- 2 The Secret History *
- 3 The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo *
- 4 Pride and Prejudice
- 5 Frankenstein
- 6 The Hunger Games
- 7 Crime and Punishment *
- 8 To Kill a Mockingbird *
- 9 Tess of the D'Urbervilles *
- 10 The Brothers Karamazov*

Top Ten Films

- 1 10 Things I Hate About You
- 2 I, Tonya *
- 3 The Social Network *
- 4 Priscilla *
- 5 Little Women (2019)
- 6 Pride and Prejudice (2005)
- 7 Shawshank Redemption
- 8 The Grand Budapest Hotel*
- 9 Marie Antoinette *
- 10 Fantastic Mr. Fox

Top Ten Artists

- 1 Taylor Swift
- 2 Lana del Rey
- 3 Tame Impala
- 4 Noah Kahan
- 5 Beth Mckenzie
- 6 Gracie Abrams
- 7 Arctic Monkeys
- 8 Blur
- 9 The Cure
- 10 Gorillaz

Top Ten Video Games

(all of these have violent or graphic elements so be careful)

- 1 Red Dead Redemption
- 2 Detroit Become Human
- 3 The Last of Us
- 4 Life is Strange
- 5 Assassin's Creed
- 6 Mortal Kombat
- 7 Silent Hill
- 8 Elden Ring
- 9 Skyrim
- 10 Legend of Zelda

Noughts and Crosses Book Review

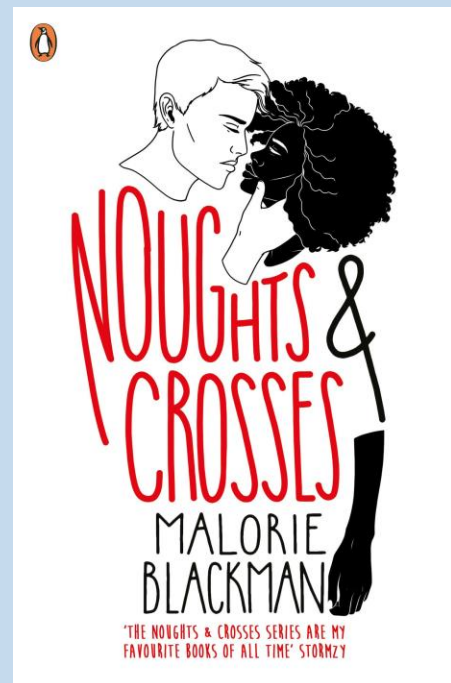
By Kalista 12AGO

In honour of October's Black History Month, I endeavour to focus on Malorie Blackman's *Noughts & Crosses*. The novel explores the love between two young people in a divided society. Blackman manufactures a world where the Crosses (Black people) hold social, political, and economic power over the Noughts (White people). She drastically shifts the script on racial prejudice, forcing her readers to confront uncomfortable truths about the social structures of our own world.

The story focuses on Sephy, a Cross, and Callum, a Nought, childhood friends whose connection develops into a forbidden romance; their relationship exists in the secret; society was hostile towards racial mixing with a long history of systemic oppression. Blackman's characters are aware of their struggles - with identity and belonging both heartbreaking and heartening. Sephy and Callum are symbolic of many real-world individuals who have faced barriers due to the colour of their skin and their social status.

Noughts & Crosses is powerful not only for its emotional weight but also for the way it explores discrimination, privilege, and injustice. By creating a world where the roles dynamics are reversed, Blackman encourages readers to consider their own world in a new light. The narrative subtly acknowledges both the oppressive ways of society; the personal tolls on individuals navigating love, loyalty, and survival within it.

However, what I adore most about Blackman's *Noughts & Crosses* is her refusal to shy away from difficult truths. She reminds us that stories of oppression are not merely historical events; they in our contemporary society. Her writing invites readers to question every aspect of novel; even the title is so intelligently thoughtful; it is derived from a game although 'once you have grasped its aim and tactics, it invariably ends in a draw – a no-win situation.



<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Naughts-Crosses-Malorie-Blackman/dp/1416900160>

Warner's Review: Gladiator II (2024)

By Mr Warner (age rating 15)

Discussed, started and then put back into development hell for decades, the sequel no one really expected finally arrives, Ridley Scott back behind the camera and Paul Mescal in front of it. So is it any good? Largely yes. In parts it's better than the original, in others worse but it provides the requisite thrills and drama that pays tribute to the legacy of Maximus while also offering up enough that is new to justify its existence. It's 16 years after Maximus killed Emperor Commodus and died himself in the Colosseum. Alas, Rome has not become the Republic the gladiator hoped, mad twins Geta and Caracalla (Joseph Quinn and Fred Hechinger) on the throne and sending General Marcus Acacius (Pedro Pascal) off to conquer whatever Rome doesn't already own, the General staging an invasion of a North African city in Numidia. Defending his adopted home is Hanno (Mescal) and his wife Arichat (who you just know won't last long). The attack is a wondrous piece of spectacle, with convincing CGI of Roman galleons ramming the coastal walls mixed with practical stunt work as trebuchets fling fire bombs from both sides and soldiers clash on the battlements. Scott has also got over his fascination with slower frame speeds, meaning we've spared what marred the forest war that opened the original. With wife dead and Hanno stuck on a ship bound for Rome, he finds himself part of Macrinus's gladiator stable. Macrinus (Denzel Washington) has big plans and he sees Hanno as a way of achieving them.



There's a rather big narrative wrinkle, however. Hanno is actually Lucius, son of Lucilla (Connie Nielsen) and Maximus. What are the chances, eh? I'm not sure why Hanno couldn't just be an unrelated new gladiator but it means we get Lucilla back and, to make things even more soap opera, she's now married to, you'll never guess, General Acacius. Yes, the plot starts to creak a little by this stage, though I found David Scarpa and Peter Craig's dialogue a step up from the rather ponderous lines of the first film. However, Gladiator 2 has a less clear throughline than its predecessor, alliances shifting more and with different factions with different agendas. In some ways this works, the new film as interested in the politicking as the slicing and thumping, but it also means we spend a lot of time with people like Tim McInnerny and other old blokes in togas scheming (in a nice touch, we even get veteran Derek Jacobi back for a few scenes). One big plus of this though is more Denzel. Oh, it's such a joy to have him in the film and he seems to be having a ball. Seductive, manipulative and vengeful, Washington balances perfectly that line between acting large and overacting and, thank goodness, Scott doesn't try to get him to use standard British accented Roman. I'd argue that Gladiator 2 is worth existing just for his performance alone, his ambitious ascent often more interesting than Lucius's 'coming to terms with his legacy' arc. This does mean though, that good as they are, Quinn and Hechinger make much less of an impact, more Beavis and Butthead than Phoenix times two, though one has a monkey.

However, most of us aren't sitting there for debates in the Senate and Scott does deliver when the action kicks in. A quarter century on and action filmmaking has changed a lot yet Scott keeps up with ease, his sequences pacier, more varied and incorporating computer generated elements largely without a hitch.

Gladiator II (2024) review

There's a giant rhino so convincing that I forget it was pixellated and, in the film's finest set-piece, a flooded arena as the gladiators are put aboard a boat, sharks circling as they take on a rival vessel. That said, the CG baboons are bad with poor Mescal having to pretend to grapple with thin air. The more traditional fights are better too, Mescal adept at the physical stuff while a fight between him and the General is bone-shakingly good. As for Mescal, well he could be the only actor who looks less Spanish than Russell Crowe, but he has definite presence and a brooding quality though I found him less effortless as a lead than Crowe was. I'm not wholly convinced he's blockbuster lead material and he felt to me like a theatre actor trying just a little too hard. His best scenes are with Washington though the climatic one on one makes the recent Tyson vs Paul fight look perfectly reasonable. Oh, and Matt Lucas is in it. No, really. Overall, Gladiator 2 is way, way better than we have any right to expect, as muscular and beautiful to look at as the first one - the recreation of ancient Rome more textured this time - and with some of the same problems too. Mescal may not be Crowe but Pascal and Washington more than make up for it while Nielsen gets some good moments. It's a proper epic from a director who has nothing to prove and seems to be having fun. Go see.



<https://theblogofdelights.blogspot.com/?view=classic>

Warner Rating: ★★★★★

Warner Reviews: Wicked (2024)

review

by Mr Warner

I'll be honest, I didn't really want to see Wicked. I don't like musicals. I'm not a Wizard of Oz fan. I went to the stage show years ago with students and found it largely tedious and it's not even the complete story, the producers doing a Harry Potter/Twilight/Hunger Games and stretching the musical to two movies at twice its length. The start did little to assuage me either, with lots of CG flying monkeys and waterfalls and a limp opening number as Glinda (Ariana Grande-Butera) floats down in a bubble to celebrate with the people of Oz the death of the Wicked Witch of the West. I girded myself for the long haul, sharpening my later putdowns for this review and then Cynthia Erivo came on, grabbed me by the cardigan and slowly but surely stole my heart over the next two plus hours. She is astonishingly, astoundingly good, breathing life, emotion, heart and heartbreak into the film, elevating her co-stars so that Wicked becomes a genuinely affecting experience, transcending its roots and its many familiar influences to become a mesmerising and magical night at the cinema. It's like a sugar rush that lasts for hours.

If you don't know the plot it tells the story of how young Glinda and Elphaba (Erivo) met at Hogwarts, no sorry, Shiz, the magic school in Oz. Among the teachers are Michelle Yeoh's Madame Morrible and Peter Dinklage voicing a goat. The first hour will be familiar to any Wednesday fans (the show, not the day) as the two mismatched girls are forced to share a room, Glinda the shallow and blonde popular girl, Elphaba, with her green skin, the perennial outsider forced to attend the school to look after her disabled younger sister Nessa (Marissa Bode). However, when Glinda humiliates Elphaba at a dance, the popular one feels awful and a bond develops, the pair becoming friends which causes more than a little complication when both have

feelings for bad boy student Prince Fiyero (Jonathan Bailey).

Yeoh's witch believes Elphaba has the potential to work for the wizard and when the green one is invited to the Emerald City to see the Wizard she takes Glinda along, hoping to ask the Wizard to do something about the persecution of animals, the poor creatures being put into cages. However, when the pair meet the Wizard and discover his agenda, the two friends are forced to make choices which will define them forever.



From the above, you can see that there's not much that's particularly original about Wicked. It takes elements of Harry Potter and other chosen one fables like Star Wars with a healthy dose of classic high school comedies like Mean Girls. However, director Jon M Chu and his crew grab the material and manage to inject almost three hours with non-stop energy and invention. There is a fair amount of CGI but also more practical sets than I'd expected and overall the production design is gorgeous. Shiz University shines with its courtyards, balconies and streams while the classrooms have a lived in quality. The depiction of the Emerald City is also eye-popping, reminding me a little of Wonka and, strangely, Poor Things. The film is more for the kiddies, with no real horror and only mild peril, but Chu does manage to offer moments that unnerve and raise the pulse. The mechanical prop for the Wizard's front of house face is especially formidable while a monkey growing wings painfully is disconcerting also.

Warner Reviews: Wicked (2024) review

By Mr Warner

The tone is much more David Yates than Chris Columbus.

Though I'm no musical fan (I say that but I love Grease, Rocky Horror and West Side Story so maybe I am a little), the song and dance numbers pop, especially for Bailey's introduction when he runs amok through the school library, the backing artists spinning around on revolving bookcases, and there's a nice callback to the original actors of the musical who get their own number in Emerald City. Both Grande and Erivo can sing and Grande is also an excellent dancer, quick and nimble on her feet. As a thespian she lacks Erivo's talent but she learned a lot about comic timing on Victorious and when the going gets more serious Eviro elevates her enough, a great actor knowing how to make others look better. Maybe their change from enemies to friends is a little quick but their rapport is fun and leads to some lovely moments and routines. Bailey has less to do but makes this musical theatre lark look like child's play and knows when to go all brooding to make the girls (and a fair

amount of the boys) in the audience swoon. Everyone who has seen the musical knows the big song is Defying Gravity and, this being part one of two, the production team leave it for the ending, Elphaba deciding to go against the Wizard (Jeff Goldblum as usual playing Jeff Goldblum) who is secretly her father. That the Wizard is not a great leader but a huckster uniting his people against a common enemy so they don't look too closely at him is one becomes more relevant year on year but it's not the political parallels that hold you but Erivo's acceptance of her destiny as the one who will be called Wicked, busting out of the Palace on her broomstick and whizzing around the city like Harry Potter on Red Bull as she belts out that song. It's a testament to her that it's not the CG or the wind machines we notice but her voice, blasting out the song as if it's coming straight from her soul. I've liked Erivo in what I've seen her in before but this is a fully-fledged star-making turn, one she'll always be remembered for and which deserves all the awards. Wicked is the real deal, a proper barnstorming night at the movies.



Warner Rating: ★★★★★

Warner Reviews: The Wild Robot (2024) review

by Mr Warner

The best compliment I can give Dreamworks' latest cartoon is that feels like a missing Pixar from the Nemo, Up and Wall-E era. It's gorgeous to look at from start to finish, has some clever casting choices for the voice artists and eschews the company's usual propensity for rapid fire gags and pop-cultural references for a genuinely heartfelt story that, though lightly handled, has something to say about the simple acts of kindness that matter in an increasingly divided world. Sometime in the near future, robot servants made by Universal Dynamics have become common but a shipment crashes in a storm near to an uninhabited island, only one still functioning. ROZZUM Unit 7134, later known as just Roz (Lupita Nyong'o) scours the island offering assistance to bemused animals who run from her. However, when she falls into a goose nest, killing the mother and all but one of the eggs, the remaining one hatches and imprints on her, lonely fox Fink (Pedro Pascal) becoming part of their bizarre found family. The task-oriented robot sets itself the mission of teaching Brightbill (Kit Connor) to swim and then to be able to fly when the geese migrate for the winter. However, Universal Dynamics wants their robot back...

You can see elements of other toons in Chris Sander's picture. Obviously there's a helping of The Iron Giant and with Brightbill being the runt of the goose world, there's shades of Finding Nemo also. However, what cartoon is totally original? Sanders takes some familiar ingredients and cooks them up into something new. The film is unashamedly gorgeous, with scenes of wonder such as Roz surrounded by hundreds of butterflies or racing with Brightbill on her shoulder as the geese take off for their migration. The script matches the visuals too, with a genuine, emotional tale of motherhood and the sacrifices required. Roz is also an immigrant in many ways, washed up on the shore, initially shunned by everyone before winning them over with her compassion. She teaches the island of divided animals that more can be achieved by working together than by struggling alone. The supporting voice cast all do great work - a shout out to Matt Berry as a grumpy beaver and Mark Hamill as a bear - and there's enough fun for the little 'uns and jeopardy for their older sibling as a phalanx of robots descend on the island and the animals take them on. It's a lovely picture.



<https://theblogofdelights.blogspot.com/?view=classic>

Warner Rating: ★★★★★

Do you want to write for the Torch?

If you want to get involved and contribute to the next edition, we'll accept submissions for articles at any time! The next edition is coming out in the Spring so there is plenty of time for you to write something. Feel free to email one of us at our emails below!

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