



# JFS STUDENT JOURNAL

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK...

This edition sees our journalists very much out and about in London taking advantage of all our great city has to offer. I hope you'll be encouraged to try something from one of the articles. There are also important messages about social cohesion and the importance of community, all showing how eclectic our writers are. All of them give their time regularly to write for the school paper and you should be very proud of your school-fellows

*Ms Wolfson*





# In the Fires of War: The inspiring legacy of Hannah Szenes

Just a few weeks back, before entering Gaza, an Israeli commander read out a poem called 'In the fires of war' to his troops. Perhaps you've seen the video, because the scenes of hundreds of soldiers gathered around him in silence as he read the lines has gone viral online. The commander later explained that he needed his troops to fully understand the meaning of the poem before going into a potentially difficult battle - but why?

The poem was by a woman called Hannah Szenes, an Israeli heroine who was tortured and killed by the Nazis during the Holocaust whilst on a mission to save Jews. She was a poet, a diarist and a paratrooper and she left a mark never to be forgotten not only in Jewish history, but in history as a whole. Her life story is not only inspirational but also contains many lessons for us today.

Hannah Szenes was born on the 17th of July 1921 in Budapest and was raised by a single mother as her dad had died when she was young. Although she was Jewish while growing



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“There is one place in the world  
to which you do not escape,  
nor do you immigrate,  
you come home -  
the Land of Israel.”

*-Hannah Senesh (1921-1944)*

up in Hungary, she had never fully embraced Zionism. But when she realised that it was becoming dangerous for Jews to live in Hungary, that all changed. In 1939, at 18-years-old, she moved to Israel (which was then ruled by the British) and joined the Haganah, a Jewish military organisation that fought for Israel's independence.

In 1943 she enrolled in the Women's Air Force to serve Britain during World War II and then later that same year she was recruited to become a Special Operations Executive. In this role, she parachuted into Yugoslavia to save Hungarian Jews from the Holocaust despite the mission being called off as it was too dangerous. She had risked her life to save many Hungarian Jews, an extremely selfless feat. This shows what her priorities were; she put the safety of the Jewish people before her own safety. After landing on the ground, she made her way to the border of Hungary but was arrested before she could pass.

After the arrest she was imprisoned and then tortured. When she was asked for the code she used to communicate with her commanders over radio, she refused to speak. Even when they threatened to kill her own mother, she refused to say anything. The only thing that she had ever revealed was her name. As she wouldn't budge, the Nazis murdered her. She was just 23-years-old.

After her death, Hannah's diary was discovered. This diary has survived nearly 90 years and its contents have made a powerful mark on Israeli culture. It contained several poems which subsequently became extremely famous in Israel. The most famous poem is 'Walk to Caesarea':

***My G-d, my G-d,  
may it never end –  
the sand and the sea,  
the rustle of the water,  
the lightning of the sky,  
the prayer of man.***

It shows appreciation for the beauty of nature and the spiritual connection between people and G-d. This poem is simple, with just six lines, but extremely powerful.

The poem that really caught my eye and convinced me to research this woman was called, 'In the fires of war'.

***In the fires of war, in the burning, in the fire,  
Among stormy days of the blood,  
Here I am lighting my little torch,  
In order to search, to search for a human  
being.***

***The flames of the fire fade my torch,  
The fire glow blinds my eyes;  
How will I look, how will I see, how will I know  
to recognise?  
When will he stand before me?***

***Set a sign, O G-d, set a sign on his forehead,  
Because in the fire, the flare, in the blood,  
Surely, I will know the pure, the eternal spark  
Of what I was seeking; a human being.***

It was written during the Holocaust and it shows that even with all of the evil going on around her, Hannah still believed that there was good in the world, even if it was hard for her to see. She is looking for a human being - that is, someone who behaves kindly and ethically amongst all the evil. Her torch is a sign

of hope that she uses to look for this human, and for a better life.

You can see why the Israeli commander chose this poem to read to his soldiers before a difficult war and after what had happened on October 7th. He was asking them to remember to behave morally and with consideration to the people of Gaza, no matter how difficult it might be in the heat of battle. He was asking them to pass on their torch of hope.

Overall, the main idea of the poem is to act like a human no matter what is happening around you. This is not only something that should be listened to in war, but in everyday life. No matter what happens, staying human and acting in a humane way should be our main aim.

Hannah Szenes's entire life reflected this idea of morality. Even in the darkest days of the Second World War, when the Nazis were not acting like true humans, she stood up for what she believed in, saving the lives of the Jews of Europe, until the very last moment. No matter what was happening around her, she strived to stay human.

By Eitan Bermant Y7





# Queen Margrethe II Abdicates



On the 31st of December 2023, Queen Margrethe II, the Queen of Denmark and a third cousin of Queen Elizabeth II, announced live on TV that on the 14th of January this year, on the 52nd anniversary of her reign, she intends to abdicate (give up the throne) and be succeeded by her son Frederik. Her plans were not known by the general public until this announcement, and that will end her 52-year long reign: the longest reign in Europe after that of Queen Elizabeth II.

But why would the queen, who had shown no signs of wanting to abdicate suddenly make that life-changing decision? In her New Year's Eve address, she cited old age, ailments, and her recent back surgery



as reasons for her to decide to give up her position. However, this still came as a shock to most of the world, as she even said herself many times that she would remain queen for life. Her abdication will be the first voluntary Danish abdication in 900 years.

Despite the fact that she is abdicating, Margrethe will still have the title of Queen and will still be referred to as 'Her Majesty'. On the day of her abdication, she will sign a declaration of her abdication, then her son Frederik will officially become king, after the Prime Minister of Denmark, Mette Frederiksen, officially proclaims it. Finally, that evening, the royal colours will be transferred between two castles. Frederik's wife, Mary, will also become Queen Consort, the first ever Australian-born one.

Commentators over a variety of sources cannot agree if our King Charles III would be likely to do the same as his distant cousin in favour of his son. The last British monarch to abdicate was King Edward VIII in 1936. The most recent European monarchs

to abdicate were Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands, and Juan Carlos I of Spain in 2014. The last monarch in the wider world to abdicate was Emperor Akihito of Japan in 2019, so it isn't too unusual for other monarchs to give up the throne.

By Judith Mailer Y9

*the longest  
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# Unlocking the Mystery: Exploring the Origins of the Unlucky Number 13 and Friday the 13th

Superstitions have woven themselves into the tapestry of human culture over the years, with one of the most globally recognised and acknowledged beliefs stemming around the ominous number 13, and its curious connection to Fridays. In this article, I aim to delve into the history of this superstition of unluckiness, both surrounding the day, and the number itself.

To fully appreciate the unease linked with the number 13, we must look to the past for an explanation. Across many global diverse cultures, the number 13 has long been deemed as an unfortunate omen. One instance can be traced back to the stories found in Norse mythology, where a banquet in the divine halls of the mystical Valhalla saw 12 gods invited. However, the celebrations become short-lived, as the mischievous God of mischief Loki crashed his way into the party uninvited, becoming the 13th member at the table. His arrival caused chaos to unfold, disrupting the harmony of the gods, and resulting in chaos, leading to the tragic demise of the beloved god Balder, who was shot in the heart with a milestone-tipped arrow. This plan was schemed by the uninvited 13th member of the party, Loki. Moreover, in Christian traditions, the discomfort surrounding the number 13 is further engrained through the infamous 'Last Supper', where Judas, the notorious betrayer of Jesus, occupied the 13th seat at the table. This association with betrayal has left an enduring negative mark on the number, going so far as to earn a scientific name for the fear of the number 13: Triskaidekaphobia.

The superstition gains added momentum when the 13th day of the month aligns with a Friday, giving birth to the infamous 'Friday the 13'. The roots of this fear can be traced to a fusion of religious and

## *Superstitions have woven themselves into the tapestry of human culture*

cultural beliefs and influences. Some Christians consider Friday an unlucky day due to its association with the crucifixion of Christ. When coupled with the already dreaded number 13, this conjunction creates a potent invitation for superstition to brew.

In the historical tapestry of the superstitions, the Knights Templar (Christian warriors known for their influence in medieval society) also play a role in shaping the fear associated with the number 13. Legend has it that on Friday, October 13, 1307, King Phillip IV of France ordered the arrest and persecution of the Knights Templar, accusing them of heresy. This historical event has since contributed further to the superstition surrounding both Friday and the number 13.

In contrast, the number 13 is far from unlucky in Judaism. It marks a pivotal moment in a boy's life—the Bar Mitzvah at age 13, symbolising adulthood and moral responsibility.

The Thirteen Principles of Faith, articulated by the great rabbinical figure Maimonides, further elevate the significance of 13. Covering essential beliefs such as G-d's existence and the origin of the Torah, these principles shape Jewish thought and have had a profound impact on Torah study to this day. Overall, 13 embodies positive transitions and core faith tenets within Judaism, dispelling any notion of it being an unlucky number.

People around the world share superstitions about the number 13 and Friday the 13th. Buildings skip the 13th floor, airlines avoid a 13th row, and some avoid important events on the 13th day, especially if it's a Friday. These beliefs, rooted in history, culture, and psychology, are deeply ingrained in our collective consciousness. Whether from ancient myths, religious stories, or cultural traditions, the fear of 13, influenced by the Knights Templar, continues to capture our imagination. Superstitions may not make sense, but their impact on human behaviour turns the mystery of the unlucky number 13 into an enduring enigma.

By Louis Morrison, Year 12





# Food Bank Aid Makes a Difference



Food Bank Aid in Finchley, is a restaurant turned food supply bank, that houses large amounts of food and toiletries. It receives many donations and deliveries so there are always goods available to distribute to the large number of food banks relying on them. My youth group and I visited and helped them during the holidays.

This specific food bank distributes to 30 food banks across London, helping over 15,000 people to access food and meals throughout the busy week. Although many families and schools fundraise and donate large amounts of food, the majority of food distributed by this centre is purchased with money, mainly raised through fundraisers throughout the year. Roughly £40,000 is spent a week to support all the food banks. However, the donations peak during the holidays as more people rush in to help.

The base layer and reason why this centre is able to support all these families and food banks is due to the generous help of volunteers.

Many pitch in, any way they can to help from sorting the food on site, to collecting and delivering the food packages. David Lerner, is one of these volunteers, he says, "Sometimes I stack and sort food, most frequently I collect donations from schools." This is the way he contributes to this charitable cause and he said he, "Values the opportunity to help collect the food that others have given, because I know how much it will be appreciated by those who are getting the food."

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Together with my group, I visited this food charity centre. We sorted the food, ready to send to food banks across areas in North London for example Barnet, Harrow, Camden, and Brent. We learnt over the course of a few hours the methodical and quick way to sort a large delivery efficiently. At the beginning it was slightly overwhelming, as we were worried about not understanding the system. However, the system was incredibly easy to pick up on and no one noticed how the time flew by. It was much easier than anyone would have thought it would be and left everyone with a great feeling of positivity.

With a few hours to spare during the holidays, we were able to help and give time to people who are in need. This was not a hard task to do and I urge anyone with any time or unneeded food to give to food banks or financial aid, so that they can increase their support with your help.

By Hannah Pillemer Y11



# Barnet Multi-Faith Forum Sustainability Project

On the 17th of December 2023, while walking in Mill Hill, I spotted a unique sight, a Christmas tree next to a Chanukiah with some stalls surrounding it. This event was held by the Barnet Multi-Faith Forum in connection with the Mill Hill Library and the Mill Hill Food Bank.

For the past year this Multi-Faith Forum had been focusing on sustainability, and the Christmas tree was a real evergreen that would be planted in soil again at the end of the season to be used again next year in order to reduce waste.

At one stall children could decorate wooden Christmas tree decorations, with free drinks and snacks being provided to them. The stall next to it provided leaflets, books and cards about the Barnet Multi-Faith Forum and what it does.



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The Chair of the environment and climate change committee, Amir Ohadi, told me that he loves being part of the Multi-Faith Forum as they

work together, making the world a better place despite their religions and beliefs. All of the people part of the forum are volunteers who represent different diverse faith organisations across Barnett. They aim to, "Promote social cohesion and oppose prejudice, injustice and bigotry" and also to just understand each other's beliefs.

The organisation has been around for eight years and within the Multi-Faith Forum is a Youth Forum, a safe space where youth of different faiths can talk about their aspirations, concerns and how to tackle obstacles together.

If you want to know more about the Barnet Multi-Faith Forum or their Youth Forum you can visit their website: [www.barnetmultifaithforum.org](http://www.barnetmultifaithforum.org)

By Roline Pillemer Y8





# New life, new experiences, new you

Imagine having your whole life changed drastically after a freak accident on a 'mates' holiday'. This is exactly what happened to 17-year-old Henry Fraser as portrayed in the new hit musical 'The Little Big Things' directed by Luke Sheppard. This musical takes the audience through Henry's life pre, and post, accident when Henry was destined to become a star rugby player with his dream team, the Saracens.

The musical begins with the three sons of the Fraser family persuading their parents to go on a trip to Portugal and after much reluctance from their parents, the boys are allowed to go. They're excited for their quality time having fun, partying and celebrating the recent win by Henry in his rugby match. After an amazing night celebrating, Henry jumps into what he thinks is the sea, but is in fact a shallow sand bank, resulting in a life threatening, paralysing injury. From this moment onwards, Henry's life changes for what him and his family think is the worst, but in fact ends in an exciting and interesting way. This is portrayed through the actors who bring a fascinating, true story to life

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inspiring for the audience to believe that if you have the passion that can drive you through life, no matter what circumstances you are faced with, you will find success.

What was special about the cast was that most of them had some form of disability themselves, for example, Katie, Henry's close friend has an

amputated arm and Agnes, his physio therapist used a wheelchair throughout the production. This was important to the real Henry Fraser because it further addresses the storyline that even though you might face a challenge that shifts your life 'plan', you can still be successful in your field. Katie is a passionate artist and Agnes found her husband through her job as a physio. Alongside this, much of the dancing throughout the musical uses sign language. This creates a heart-warming idea because, the real physio was deaf and used an interpreter on a daily basis, this therefore reflects one of the people who helped Henry put his life back on track.

Overall, the musical 'The Little Big Things' is one to watch, it's a heartfelt production that encapsulates the way positivity can shape someone's future even in the hardest of times. With a 5 -star review from Andrew Lloyd Webber after stating, "I've just had the most exciting night in a theatre for a year." Make sure you watch the show before its runs end in March. Also... bring tissues!!

By Mia Marks Y12









# Bubble Planet

## The Experience



Bubble planet is the newest, most popular experience in London. Advertised everywhere on social networks it is the 'must do' thing that everyone is speaking about!!! So much so, that tickets are sold out weeks in advance.

This exhibition is a captivating experience. It allows you to surround yourself with bubbles using all five senses, through VR technology; themed rooms, mesmerising landscapes and even a hot air balloon!

This immersive exhibition is lined with balloons straight from the entrance. Before you enter the double doors, there is an outdoor transparent bubble with bean bags just to give you a little taste of the fabulous adventure that awaits you. Your journey will start taking you through a series of multi-coloured arches leading to all the different thematic rooms. All of the rooms are colourful and surreal and offers fantastical landscapes designed to appeal to your senses. The variety

of the environments to immerse in range from a giant ball pit to a bubble themed arcade games room, through a selfie bubble themed room, and LED floor aquarium surrounded with mirrors, or an echoing light up bubble and even a mirrored corridor filled with colour changing bulbs dangling from the ceiling.

Yet, the highlight of my experience was the robot led bubble show which I believe is both enchanting and futuristic. As you enter the room, you are handed free pink and blue mini bubble wands so you can actively participate in the show during which two robotic hands perform increasingly daring soap bubbles. The mechanically guided arms use a wide range of equipment from a simple bubble wand to huge nets creating hundreds of giant face-sized balloons gracefully floating through the air, and making a huge splash of soap as they hit the floor. On the other side of the room, you get an opportunity to experiment making a huge bubble yourself by standing in the middle of a circular bubble mixture and pulling a rope to elevate a wand which will create a huge bubble around you. This room is truly magical and as far as I'm concerned unlike anything else.

The hot air balloon flight simulator is another one of my favourites. It was extremely lifelike, and the illusory motion makes you think that you are actually flying through lands and space. You enter this room on a bridge leading to a giant elevated circle. In the middle lies a circular sofa so you can sit directly underneath a net filled with thousands of balloons. This whole setup allows you to capture the illusion of a hot air balloon expedition. The projections on the walls surrounding





you enhance this illusion further as you feel like you are moving and everything is spinning around you. And that is really awesome.

Still the most fun and relaxing room is undeniably the VR room. The experience will take you to a ten-minute virtual reality voyage while you are comfortably sat on a dangling sofa pod with your VR headset on. The journey starts at a wishing well into which you are absorbed and then reach a cave with shimmering pink water and huge pearls floating. The transitions from one land to another may startle you or even frighten the least valiant of you.

And last, but by no means the least, the most interactive room of all, is certainly the bubble ocean. There you get to blow up huge pink balloons, the size of yoga balls, then enter a glass room filled with these. In the centre of the room a light up flower slowly opens up and then carefully closes back down and so forth. As you walk through this room, the balloons almost effortlessly make way for you and rise into the air slowly and majestically, floating back down, creating a sense of deep relaxation, almost like you are in a make-believe land. It felt just fabulous! To quote my six-year-old sister, "This is the best thing I have ever done in my life."

It took my family three hours to complete the tour but there is no time limit to your stay so you could easily spend your afternoon exploring.

If you are interested in visiting this experience, I suggest you check out the website and plan in advance. I highly recommend this place for a fun filled day designed for both kids and adults to unleash your inner child.

By Anaëlle Choukroun Y8

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# The Balloon Museum:

## Emotion Air Experience

After opening on the 27th of December this experience has already proven itself to be a unique and enjoyable experience for both the young and old. Its unique art style, combined with its interactive nature makes it a must-see before it closes.

The balloon exhibition is focused on emotions. From the beginning to the end, every art installation has a distinct emotion or emotions connected to it. The exhibition also, with the help of the artists, tries to make you feel that emotion when looking or interacting with the art pieces. This idea sets this exhibition out from many others in

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London as it makes your experience as you walk through it, far more personal. As a fellow visitor remarked,

"It is a family experience like no other that allows you to engage with art in a unique way that I have never seen before."

The exhibition has several significant interactive art pieces. These include a giant inflatable playground, automatic bubble machine, and a giant hall-sized ball pit. For me, these were the most exciting and innovative parts of it. The playground was fun to run around in, and due to it having many different sections, there was always something new to explore. From room-sized balls, to inflatables attached to strings, it created a chaotic but exciting experience like no other. It was the same with the ball pit. It had a long queue to get into which added to the suspense. It was the size of a swimming pool and once you gently lifted yourself down you felt like you were standing on a different planet. The weight of the thousands of plastic balls made it feel like there was a very strong gravity with this resulting in many funny moments when I had fallen down and was struggling to get up.

The only issues I had with the exhibition was the queueing and the crowdedness although the organisers tried to combat this with a staggered entry. Personally, I wish I could have had more time to experience the installations further, especially the ball pit. One thing which I found unique was when you were queuing outside to get into the exhibition, they allowed you to borrow umbrellas if it was raining!

Overall, the experience was fun, interesting and I would recommend it to all ages. It is more fun with other people rather than yourself so I recommend going with family or friends!

By Elijah Pillemer Y10





# Grease and Frozen: Musical Reviews

Theatrical productions have been evolving more than ever and my family are huge fans of the theatre and especially musical theatre. In the summer, my parents, my brother, and I went to see Grease, the Musical in the West End. Also, in December my sister came along too to see Disney's Frozen, the Musical and here are my reviews.

Grease is about the dynamic love story of Danny Zuko, a confident and charismatic teenager with lots of friends, and Sandy Olson a sweet, naïve girl who is too innocent to fit in. The cast starred Dan Partridge as Danny, Olivia Moore as Sandy, Jocasta Almgill as Rizzo and Solomon Davy as Kenickie. Two guest stars were Peter Andre as Vince Fontaine and Jason Donovan as the Teen Angel. Set in America in the '50s, the drama was all based in Rydell High's gym hall and the local restaurant. Overall, the choreography was very well done and complicated and so were the costumes. If there was something they could have done better, it would have been that some of the actors



could have had stronger singing voices - 4 stars.

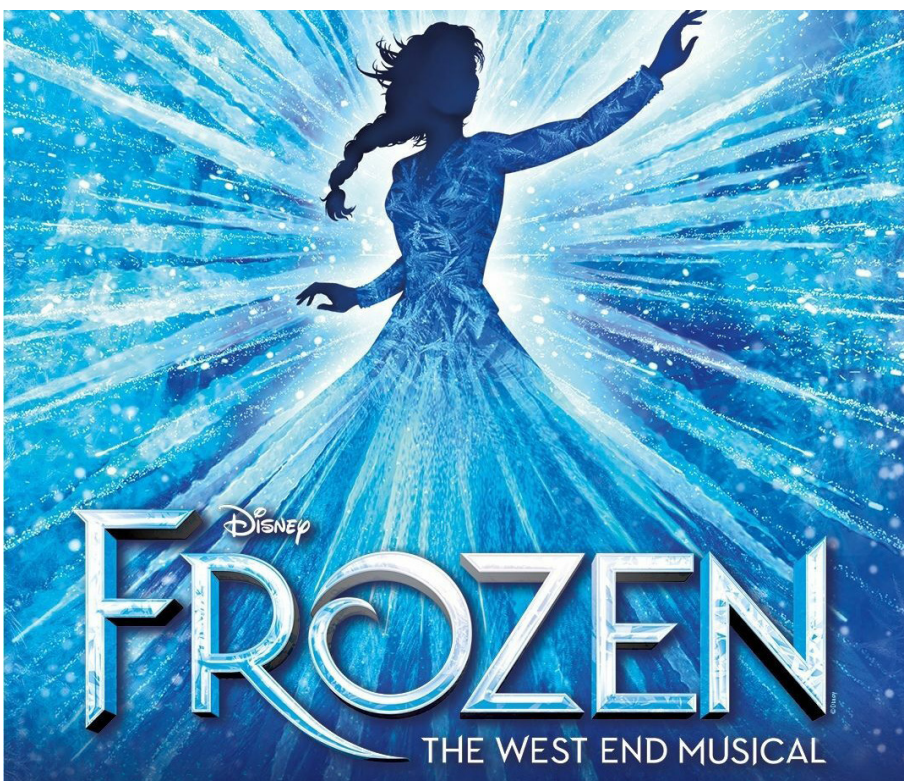
Secondly, Frozen is a classic story based on 'the Snow Queen' by Hans Christian Andersen. It follows Queen Elsa, who

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was born with magical ice powers and Princess Anna, two sisters with several differences. The cast starred Jenna Lee James as Elsa, Laura Dawkes as Anna, James Kasongo as Kristoff and Craig Gallivan as Olaf. There was a vast ensemble, all of whom were brilliant dancers. The costumes were amazing but what really stood out were the sets and puppets for Sven and Olaf. The highlight of the show was during the song of 'Let It Go', Elsa's dress seemed to disappear, revealing a blue ice dress underneath - 5 stars.

Both were awesome productions; I consider myself incredibly lucky to live close enough to the centre of London so I can go to the theatre often.

By Zach Bokobza Y7





# Trying Something New: Going to a Rugby Game



Both my mother and my father started their careers as Journalists around the age of 15, my mother as a Music and Entertainment writer, my father as a Tech writer. So, when I developed the same interest in Journalism, my parents were thrilled to give me all of the advice that I needed. Advice such as finding a niche topic to write about, and to make connections with various individuals, you never know who you might run into somewhere.

My home borough of Ealing is a place I continue to learn about each and every day. In 2022, my father set up the website EALING.NEWS, a local online news site devoted to stories happening within the borough. This gave me the opportunity to start going to events with him and write many pieces on youth matters in Ealing. On one cold December afternoon, my dad told me he was going out to report on local carollers in Ealing Broadway and asked if I wanted to come with. I said, why not! When I got there however, I realised that they were

actually players from the local rugby club, the 'Ealing Trailfinders', which explained why the singing wasn't all that amazing.

Whilst there, I was introduced to various people who work with the club as Journalists. They asked me if I wanted to write a piece on them. While I knew little about rugby, I wasn't going to turn down the opportunity of a piece, and this would be perfect to write about for the Young Reporters Scheme that I'm currently doing. I forgot about this interaction, until I received an email offering me two season tickets for the club. Panic started to set in as I reminded myself how out of my depth I was. I had approximately two weeks to go to a game, write an article, upload it and do the club justice, all while revising for my mocks.

Trying to make use of the tickets I was just given, I decided to go to the first rugby game I could, which was a men's match against the Cornish Pirates. I found a friend who enjoyed sports

and had been to rugby before and asked her to go with me, acting as my dictionary to consult whenever I did not understand something. Before this however, I thought it would be useful to look more into how both teams had been doing so far in the season. This is where I found the perfect angle for my story. The men's team were at the top of the Championship table, perfect for me to write about, as long as they kept this up at their final game of the year, which I was going to be at.

So, there I was, sat at the game, praying for a win to make my article possible, and everything was going my way. We had made it to the end of the first half, and the Trailfinders were up 12-0. I was slowly starting to understand how the game worked and I was actually really enjoying myself – until, out of nowhere, a Cornish Pirates player was knocked unconscious and began to have a seizure on the field. Medics and teammates began rushing towards the scene, as we in the crowd anxiously waited to hear what would





happen. Pirates fans around me looked worried, and commentators on BBC Sport stopped talking. Then came the dreaded announcement, the game had to be abandoned, as the player would have to be taken to hospital. He was discharged later that night, much to the relief of many Pirates fans. Yet, I now thought I had no article. I couldn't even rely on the women's match played that day, as they had lost their game. I returned to the drawing board, and wondered again what to write about.

I left the article for the next few days, deciding it would be best to forget about it. That's where I found out that the women's team had one final game of the year to play. Unable to attend, I waited patiently to see the final score. 24-22, to the Trailfinders Women. Finally! There lay the foundations for my article. Trailfinders Women had ended the year with success, and I could start to write. I had around 100 words, and was struggling to write more. That's when I decided to look back at the Championship table, only to find that the men's team had remained at the top, despite the abandoned game. In that moment, everything fell into place. I would write my article on how both teams ended the year successfully, and what awaits them in the future. Using what knowledge I had, I pooled it all together to write an article for the Young Reporters Scheme, and upload it ahead of the deadline.

Although, I started this whole experience knowing absolutely nothing, I was able to produce a clear and concise piece for an official publication. And in the process, I broadened my writing horizons, scored myself some free tickets and actually enjoyed the game. New and unknown does not always have to be complicated.

By Emily Bunder Y13

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