

# SCHOLARS

2022-2023 EDITION



CARPE DIEM

# WELCOME

Welcome to The John Frost School, where we seize every opportunity and potential is unlocked! We are proud to introduce our 'Scholars' initiative, aimed at unleashing the full potential of our exceptional students. We firmly believe that every individual possesses unique abilities and talents waiting to be explored, honed and refined. With this in mind, we have designed an innovative programme that transcends traditional education, offering an unparalleled platform for students to thrive and excel in their passions.

Our Scholars Programme offers our most able learners the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills further through a range of extra-curricular opportunities. These opportunities aim to provide our learners unique experiences that will benefit them in an ever changing, exigent society; preparing them to make positive contributions to Wales and the wider world.

It has been a pleasure working with our students this academic year and look forward to seeing them continue to strive for success as we go into the next year.

- Mr Z Frost  
MAT Coordinator



# CONTENTS

VESPA ACADEMY	1
PRE-SEREN AWARD @ TJFS	3
CARDIFF UNIVERSITY	5
OXFORD UNIVERSITY	6
P4C SENEDD EVENT	7
OXPLORE'S BIG QUESTIONS COMPETITION	9
MESSAGE FROM THE HEADTEACHER	31

# VESPA ACADEMY

Success at GCSE and A Level depends on habits, routines, attitudes and approaches to study. **VESPA** (which stands for **V**ision, **E**ffort, **S**ystems, **P**ractice and **A**ttitude) is a mind-set that help's improve success.

We believe that students who are successful:

- Know what they want to achieve (**VISION**)
- Complete many hours of independent study (**EFFORT**)
- Organise their learning resources and their time (**SYSTEMS**)
- Practice and develop their skills (**PRACTICE**)
- Respond constructively to challenge (**ATTITUDE**)

Our VESPA programme is designed to help support students develop their own ideas and empower them to take control over their future. The activities included in VESPA are designed to help students develop good habits and teach them how to organise their learning more effectively. At VESPA Academy our activities aim to develop all of these aspects of student attitude. By getting the attitude right, there is a good chance that a student will achieve the best they can.



I have really enjoyed attending the VESPA Academy. It has helped me with my grades in subjects and I think it has been really beneficial.

- Ava Draycott, Year 9

I'd love to have the opportunity to participate in the VESPA Academy again. I've really seen a change to my confidence going into tests after exploring new revision methods.

- Lois Lo Turco, Year 9



# PRE-SEREN AWARD



The Pre-Seren Award aims to give our learners an experience of university learning to help them make an informed decision about their future.

The programme not only widens their understanding of university, but develops a range of valuable, transferable skills which will help students no matter what they do after leaving school.

The experience students gain on the Pre-Seren Award will help them stand out in the future and put them one step ahead of many other people their age.

Students are assigned a PhD tutor who delivers three tutorials based on a supra-curricular topic in groups of 8. From this, students are asked to write a piece of academic work of one thousand words. This is then marked with in-depth feedback given to students and marked using University methods of marking.

## What did our students study?

**Year 8:** How do Ethnomusicologists believe music reflects and intersects with the history, folklore (traditional), and social aspects of a given culture?

**Year 9:** How have plants and pollinators evolved both to help one another for mutual benefit, and to deceive one another for singular gain?



## Year 8

# Pre-Seren Award Participants

Assia Hassan  
 Faith Tutt  
 Harry Elston  
 Imogen Symons  
 Jesse Lo Turco  
 Jonas Purnell  
 Keziah Morris  
 Malak Ghalib  
 Maya Dowling  
 Ollie Vinh  
 Taylor-Faith Martin-Rogers  
 Theodosia Tchatchoua  
 Thomas Evans  
 William Batchelder

## Year 9

# Pre-Seren Award Participants

Alexander Barton  
 Anabel Asare  
 Barnaby Guest  
 Caius Bird  
 Fatimah Fritche  
 Harley Cowper-Clark  
 Janavi Padilha  
 Maizie O'Neill

Mia Flemming  
 Nathaniel Harris  
 Salma Edres  
 Samuel Banks  
 Sara Nieborek  
 Sebastian Glinojeki  
 Summer-Mai Hobbs  
 Thomas Williams-Channing

# CARDIFF UNIVERSITY

In October 2022, we took 30 students in Year 10 to Cardiff University to see what student life was like in the heart of Cardiff. Students were able to find out what study was like at Wales' only Russell Group University.

Students took part in seminars, Q&A sessions with undergraduate students and had a tour of the facilities available at Cardiff university.



I enjoyed the trip at Cardiff University because I learnt lots about the history of Cardiff Uni and was able to see what courses they offered. It was interesting to hear how the students felt about studying at a city University.

- Sophie Small - Year 10

Our trip to Cardiff university was very inspirational. We had a tour of the campus and got an idea of what student life is like. We learnt about what courses they provide and the flexibility of the courses.

- Teyha O'Brien - Year 10

# OXFORD UNIVERSITY

At the moment, students from Wales are under-represented at Oxford. To help change this we are working in partnership with Oxford University on their initiative 'Oxford Cymru', an extensive community outreach programme offering bespoke support to more able and talented students in Wales.

This academic year, we took 30 Year 10 students to Oxford University to see what life is like studying at the UK's top university for teaching and research. Students were able to tour the site, speak with staff from a variety of faculties and engage in a Q&A session with undergraduate and postgraduate Oxford students.



“ it was a very fun experience, it was beneficial as it made me reconsider where I wanted to go for university and it made me think about my subject options. It was great to see what life is like out of Newport!

- Seren Brooks - Year 10

“ It was a new experience which showed me the benefits of going to university and further education. It was nice to see how life at school changes to life at university.

Jack Leach - Year 10

# P4C SENEDD EVENT

This event was created to give our students an opportunity to engage with local politics and develop their skills in political debate, in line with our whole school 'Philosophy for Children' initiative.

This exciting opportunity allowed students to participate in a variety of activities based on the following three areas:

## **Taking Action:**

Exploring the work of different campaigners and becoming empowered to contribute and challenge decision makers in Wales.

## **How is Wales Governed:**

Exploring how Wales is governed, along with how the Senedd makes laws and scrutinises Welsh Government.

## **Our Senedd:**

Collaborating with Members of the Senedd to take part in a debate, after seeing the Senedd in action.

“  
The Senedd was really great! I got to watch a live debate with local MPs and have a debate in a debating chamber. I learnt about the history of law making in Wales and the way the Senedd operates for the people of Wales.

- Blake Hill - Year 9  
”



**Year 9 students  
observing a live debate  
in the debating chamber  
at the Senedd.**



**Taken after meeting  
Jayne Bryant. (Welsh  
Labour Member for  
Newport West)**



**Students debating the  
ban of Vapes in the  
Youth Council of Wales  
debating room**



# EXPLORE'S BIG QUESTIONS ESSAY COMPETITION 2023

Home of Big Questions

# EXPLORE



THE JOHN FROST SCHOOL



UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

# EXPLORE'S BIG QUESTIONS

Every year, Jesus College (Part of Oxford University) invites Welsh state school MAT students to enter an essay competition. All of these essays have been prompted by one of Oxplore's Big Questions.

The first place applicant receives £300 in book tokens and the second place receives £200 in book tokens.

This year's questions students could choose from were:

- **Are we getting unhappier?**
- **Can we ever have nothing?**
- **Does gender matter?**
- **Is it OK to clone a human being?**
- **Is sleeping more important than studying?**
- **Would it be better if we all spoke the same language?**

Collaborating alongside Mr Frost and Ms Wheeler, the students actively participated in profound philosophical debates concerning the aforementioned inquiries. They autonomously crafted their essays, drawing inspiration from these insightful discussions.

It is with immense pride that we present these remarkable contributions in this year's edition of the Scholars Magazine.





Home of Big Questions

**EXPLORE**


# 'Is it OK to clone a human being?'

## by Alex Barton

When posed the question “should humans be cloned?” My immediate reaction was no. Cloning humans takes away any unique characteristics and our identity which we humans possess. By definition, cloning is the process in which a single cell or a whole biological creature can be duplicated and identically created. In theory, a whole new life can be made, but to what extent is the cloning process ethical?

The process of cloning is unethical. There is a very high likelihood of loss of life (90% chance of failure) and unless the person willing to clone themselves fully consents and is informed about the potential threatening consequences. We have an inadequate understanding of the drawbacks of cloning humans from the problems which have arisen when cloning animals and plants. First, genetic diversity is lost through cloning which may increase a child's vulnerability to a variety of problems: cancer, genetic dysfunction, and a shorter lifespan as seen with Dolly the sheep, the first animal cloned, which died at the age of six, half the average lifespan of a sheep. Although it seems successful, is it worth halving the lifespan? It can treat genetic disorders, but it may create new ones we can't even imagine.

A vast majority of species are in endangerment, some may argue that cloning can significantly counter the extinction of species. 99% of animals are at risk of complete extinction because of human activities. Cloning should be completed to help sustain and spread a species. For example, the giant panda (which had been driven out of lowland areas because of debilitating deforestation and farming) had trouble reproducing in captivity, so scientists decided to clone them as these pandas reproduce so infrequently. Now roughly 2060 giant pandas are living in the wild today. With the aid of cloning, researchers can reintroduce missing genes into a population of wild animals. From a utilitarian perspective, this would be effective because the number of lives saved greatly outweighs the possible risks. However, if we permit this, it's opening opportunities for clones to capitalize upon, and people use them for mutual benefit. So, where is the line?

We have limited resources. We can barely sustain our planet as it is, as stated on the Worldcounts website the number of earths needed to maintain our current habitual living is 1.8, so cloning humans will not benefit us anymore but will significantly cause the number of planets needed to survive to rise and the demand for resources to increase. Hence, cloning damages the earth more than if humans did not partake in the practice. It is undeniable that the key to sustained survival is maintaining our habitats and our world. Cloning has great risks but also contain a handful of positive actions as said before with it benefiting the repopulation of specie, yet the abundance of cons outweigh the pros as problems which occur might possibly be unable to deal with, creating a more menacing environment putting innocent lives in peril or even be taken as resources will become sparse. Furthermore, we are harvesting resources at a rapid rate and are dumping the waste at a rate exceeding the earth's capacity by 75%. Yet, adding more life on earth will not diminish the percentage but most likely cause the opposite. Thus, cloning humans is physically and sustainably impossible.

Fertilization difficulty, those who are physically unable to become pregnant including same sex couples or even couples experiencing fertility issues, may find a blessing in cloning as cloning will succour these couples to conceive a child who is genetically their own. A miracle in itself. They will get both characteristics of each parent. This is known as therapeutic cloning. Not only does cloning fertilized eggs benefit the couple or donor, but the cloned embryo can also be used purely for the goal of generating stem cells from the embryo with the same DNA as the donor cell is known as therapeutic cloning. These stem cells can be used in research projects targeted at improving our understanding of diseases and creating modern approaches to treating them effectively. How can we deny a miracle when we have the ability to create one?

Overall, cloning is completely unethical and against basic human rights. It creates numerous dilemmas and difficulties as previously explored. As seen in the past, the cloning of animals may have been a successful procedure yet, this is where I believe cloning should be concluded. It is one step too far for us, and one that is not necessary.



Alex Barton  
Year 9



Home of Big Questions

**EXPLORE**



# 'Is it OK to clone a human being?'

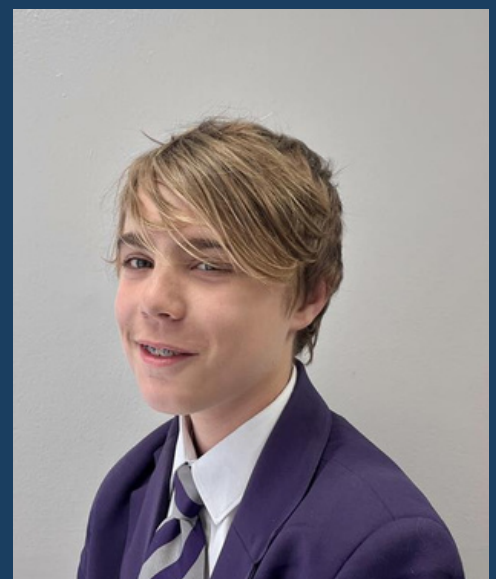
## by Alex Martell

'Is it ok to clone a human being?' is an ethical dilemma that we are going to need to solve eventually, as genetic engineering becomes a more prominent part of our world. However, it might not be as brilliant as it sounds. Do clones count as people? Do they have rights? Are they separate from the individual whose genetic material was used to create them? There are many medical benefits that could come from cloning, nevertheless there are even more downfalls.

The UN banned cloning of human beings in 2005 and this begs the questioning. The first artificially cloned animal was Dolly, a sheep, in 1996. She was euthanatised in 2003 because her health was rapidly decaying including progressive lung disease. What is the point if it will only end in death? Cloning causes extreme health issues: distorted limbs and dysfunctional immune systems and organs. Now picture this happening to a human, a person, it is not ethical. If we were to carry on treating clones like animals, then humanity are bound to just repeat the slavery of people. Is it ethical to force someone into an existence only for a life of pain and suffering, only to be cut short by their harsh treatment and own genetic illnesses? It would cause public outcry and would have to be stopped immediately. Others may argue just the limb or organ the patient needs could be cloned. This can be used for incredible medical practice; if someone had a heart failure then there was a storage of cloned hearts it would be as simple of a heart transplant. However, the game 'Surviving the Abyss' is focused on cloning. It is set in the 1970s and after the Second World War scientists made a substantial breakthrough in cloning, the first clones dying extremely quickly due to malformations and genetic disease. The experiments were terminated shortly after due to public outcry and protests about the ethics of these experiments and the gameplay loop begins. This shows that even though these events are fictional this is what people believe would happen when cloning technology progresses. What would prevent this reality?

A person is a human being regarded as an individual. Are clones considered individuals? Does that mean that genetic source for the clone is no longer considered an individual? What is an individual? If a clone is an exact copy with no deviations, then, in theory, they would still have thoughts, opinions and feelings. So, if your clone were to commit a crime, then would you also have to take the punishment? After all both the original and the clone have the same morality, opinions and ideals showing that both are capable of committing that crime. They both have the mindset for this, their morality has allowed them to do this. Others may argue that both the original and the clone have been exposed to different situations and thus have a different sense of morality, such as if someone were to be cloned at birth and one was raised with the rules that stealing was right and the other was raised with the rules that theft was wrong then just because they share the exact same body and genetics does not mean they share the same mind. Twins have extremely different personalities and moralities. However, if someone is cloned, do they have a soul? Are they true people? Do they still have morality? If they do have a soul, is it their own or is it shared with the genetic source? If they are connected, then do they share a conscience? There are so many questions that cannot be answered because the human brain simply cannot understand it. It is like trying to comprehend the fourth dimension. An analogy to the situation is the split-brain surgery used on many epilepsy patients in 1962. Although this treatment worked there were some side effects, such as sometimes one half of their body would act as though it had a mind of its own. When selecting clothing, patients would choose a shirt only for the other hand to shoot out and grab a different item of clothing, the two sides in conflict. This could be a risk to cloning.

There are valid reasons why the UN banned cloning in 2015 although we do not necessarily need to clone a whole human for benefits. However, the cloned organ or limb may experience further health issues in the future requiring more hassle than just doing what we do now in surgeries.



Alex Martell  
Year 9



Home of Big Questions

EXPLORE



# 'Are we getting unhappier?'

## by Ava Draycott

By definition, happiness is 'feeling or showing pleasure or contentment', but to me, happiness is a feeling that settles in our hearts, it thrives off love and kindness. Happiness connects us; it is the glue that holds us together. Happiness is constant, it is and will always be. Even the first human beings found happiness in the simplest parts of life, which has led me to the revelation that happiness has been overcomplicated by platforms like social media. There are unrealistic expectations that to be a happy, thriving person: one needs to wake up before dawn, work out every day and only eat salads and drink green juice. With these pressures being forced upon us daily, it is difficult not to question: are we getting unhappier?

A vast majority of the world as we know it is now completely reliant on technology. Every part of our daily lives is instantaneous because of the internet. Our social lives, our trends, our shopping, our news; it's all at our fingertips, all the time. At first glance, this would seem like a utopia, a perfect world. However, because of how fast paced our lives have become, everything else going on around us feels slow. We no longer have patience, and as a result of little things coming so quickly for us, monumental aspirations like relationships and long-term goals move too slowly. We are constant consumers, and though we know that the more dissatisfied we feel the more we consume, we just can't stop the constant loop of instant gratification.

Scrolling, liking, sharing, commenting; social media has become our escape from reality. Every time we don't want to face the world, our phones are right beside us. Scrolling through posts from influencers with 'perfect' lives gives us constant disappointment and compels us to simply be better. We compare our lives with the lives of people we have never met. It is inevitable that we would want to escape this, and through our phones we can. While this escapism may help us to forget about our problems for a short while, it is no solution to them. Anxiety, depression, addiction, memory loss, we wonder why there is a decline in our overall health when the answer is right in front of us. We are blinding ourselves from happiness.

Often labelled as the “snowflake generation”, there is a popular opinion that the younger generation is too sensitive. In fact, a student survey asked the question ‘Is Gen Z too sensitive?’, the results showing that 62% answered yes. This is described as being ‘hypersensitive’: how we respond to events that cause trauma. This hypersensitivity among young people is not aided by the fact that we are also the main consumers of the internet, and it is not rare knowledge that there is a detrimental relationship between social media and mental health. This could explain why in the space of a year the proportion of young people ages 17-19 with a probable mental health disorder jumped from one in six to one in four. These statistics prove that it is undoubtable we are becoming a ‘hypersensitive generation’, but does that mean we are unhappier?

Generation Z may be more sensitive, and therefore perceived to be unhappier, but this also makes us more aware, observant and accepting individuals. Being socially conscious means we have more of a desire to make a change. A will to make the world happier not just for ourselves, but for everyone. This is not a weakness, but an honorable trait that many, historically, have lacked. People can freely express themselves in more ways than ever before thanks to the internet and can find support easily from likeminded groups. Maslow's hierarchy of needs conceptualizes this. We must have self-esteem in order to reach the highest level: self-actualization, which involves respect for and of others, as well as confidence and achievement. We need support to reach true happiness. This is no longer the barrier that it previously was, as effortless communication all over the world is now something we take for granted.

Ultimately, we are not getting unhappier. We have more potential for happiness than ever before. As a 14-year-old girl growing up in this world, I don’t know everything. However, I am almost certain that when it comes to happiness, we have to focus on our own perspective. We need to prioritize ourselves. As Vivian Greene said, “life isn’t about waiting for the storm to pass. It’s about learning how to dance in the rain.”



Ava Draycott  
Year 9



Home of Big Questions

**EXPLORE**


# 'Are we getting unhappier?'

## by Barnaby Guest

Happiness. Is it a chemical reaction in the brain, something felt deep in the soul? One clear thing is that many are not feeling that happiness. Many people, including myself, struggle greatly with the crushing weight of modern-day life. However, is that the case, is the world truly unhappier or is it that society is just becoming more aware of issues: waking up to the problems plaguing the world?

In the current day, the 'Age of Technology', people are becoming dependent on phones. Especially in the younger generation, social media is a huge way of escaping from reality with around 2/3 of children having an account, yet it is polluting minds with false expectations of what we should achieve, have, or be. When people are scrolling through social media it gives an extreme boost in dopamine, which in the moment is great but overtime turns almost into an addiction, with people finding it impossible to take a step away from social media. In fact, people are so addicted to social media that the average 16-24 year old spends almost 6 hours a day on it. That is almost a quarter of their day being wasted. This means other things in life, the simpler things, become less enjoyable as people are familiar with that immediate boost in mood. For instance, someone could be watching a sunset with their family and might not have the patience for it, yet in months or years' time that person might regret not cherishing it properly. This addiction means that people are not becoming less happy but rather the pleasures of life that they should be appreciating and happy about are being replaced by the social media dependency there is in society. However, many people argue that social media is not poisoning society but rather aiding them in an imaginative and creative aspect. Instagram is widely used to share things that people may want to replicate or implement in their lives. For example, social media can provide different food recipes, or pieces of art that can spark creativity in the mind of the viewers. Despite being used to share these positive and imaginative creations online it also has a dark side. Many posts on social media are about people's bodies or their incredible possessions like supercars which on the surface seems innocent yet can have an extremely negative impact on some people. Everything people aspire to be or have, whether a Ferrari or a body that looks a certain way, that is affecting their mental health, the most common way this occurs is people's body image. Many people become obsessed with how they look, because of this never being happy with how they look, this is the more negative side of social media,

An often-asked question is whether money truly buys happiness. During the Victorian Era the world was far different. The rich lived a privileged life often with masses of money from land owned or investments made. However, the underclass was often paid little, earning roughly 20 shillings a week. This meant it was excruciatingly difficult to feed and provide for their families, which were often large. Unfortunately, due to the hard times depression was at an all-time high with most people living with extreme stress and anxiety. However, in this current day pay is far more generous with the average wage around £630 per week, with around 80-90% of the world living safer, more privileged lives in comparison to our past darker times. Fortunately, levels of depression worldwide in adults are now around only 5% according to the World Health Organisation. Based on this it implies that money may be able to contribute to living a happier life. Despite this, others may argue that many people still suffer similarly to Victorian Times with many people sleeping rough on the streets. However, unlike in Victorian Times people that live in these harsh conditions are entitled to support through the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 which means they should have access to suitable accommodation.

As time passes, humans have evolved and thus the question of whether we are getting unhappier is not uncomplicated. As we have evolved so have our fears, our stresses. Back to the Middle Ages with the Black Death plaguing the world, later the Great Depression and back to today with our many modern-day stresses especially the toll Covid-19 took on people, so no we are not getting unhappier but rather our burdens have changed as we have.



Barnaby Guest  
Year 9



Home of Big Questions

**EXPLORE**


# 'Can we ever have nothing?'

## by Keziah Morris

What is nothing? Nothing is a paradox. Nothing is something completely subjective; nothing is a phenomenon that is distinctive to every individual. Nothing is abstract and speculative. Scientifically, nothing is the absence of particles, atoms, matter and it is simply a void of desolate space. Is something so barren achievable? No. Nothing is unobtainable for people. You are living. How can you have nothing if you are living?

Does 'nothing' have a form? A structure? Is 'nothing' negative or positive? Peace or a burden? Is 'nothing' a blissful peace, with no worries, no attachments. Is 'nothing' an unachievable paradise, from the never-ending conflict, death and illness, or is 'nothing' a burden, a weight causing loneliness, emptiness and conflict between one's mind? Yet, each of these have their similarities. Peace, leaving no worries, a burden, no emotion, no anxiety. Can something similar, be 'nothing'? Furthermore, can anything be 'nothing', if nothing is everywhere, in everything, yet not anything at all? If nothing embodies everything, we have everything. Therefore, nothing is subjective and personal.

Is nothing the snowy glow at the end of life? Or is nothing the obsidian obscurity in space? Since nothingness is the absence of everything, which is it? Is it the beginning or end? White, symbolic of purity and innocence? Black symbolizes many topics: death, grief, rebellion, mystery, heaviness and depression. How can the absence of all become overflowing with emotion? Some argue that the emotions that black symbolizes are the emotions usually described as 'empty feelings.' Can 'empty feelings' be truly barren, as they are still feelings? Emotions, a calculated response to situations presented. Emotions, centre of choice. If each situation has an adapted response, can you undoubtedly feel 'nothing' while alive? You will always 'have' feelings. The human body will never halt signals sent through nerves. This process only happens when deceased.

Are the dead able to experience 'nothing'? Deceased, a state of irreversible termination of the human body. Without a functioning brain, you cannot perceive 'nothing'. The dead, the only ones able to have no signals travelling through their body. Is that the state of nothing? Yet, at the same time, nothing is an existing entity, a paradox to itself. So, can the dead have 'nothing' if nothing is something? As the dead have a title, they are acknowledged beings, just not living. To achieve nothing, do you need to be unacknowledged? To be completely ignored, forgotten? To be forgotten would cease existence as we know it, so it cannot be acknowledged as nothing.

It is frequently argued that you cannot 'own nothing.' Can you own nothing, or is that just a mindset? Antiques and heirlooms all hold material value; an object having a significance in one's life. Many celebrities live a life consumed by money and fans. These celebrities have so much, yet so little. Do the riches they own have material value to them? Or is it just another penny, another object that can be easily replaced? Bernard Arnault, the richest billionaire on the planet, of May 1st, 2023, possibly has no concept of material value, as he is surrounded by abundance. The working class, however, has 'nothing' in the concept of money. Due to this, working class citizens are more celebratory of their salaries, giving their view of money a higher material value.

Copious amounts of the public wish to have fame, to be wealthy. Yet when this goal is reached, celebrities are depressed, yearning for more. This desperate hunger for affluence destroys the concept of material worth; to them, they truly do have 'nothing' from their ungrateful mentality. Kurt Cobain, an American musician and lead singer of influential band Nirvana committed suicide on the 8th of April 1994. Although Cobain's life was abounding with fame and fans globally, Kurt was never genuinely content. Kurt was living the dream of thousands of people, yet he was not pleased with his life. Kurt was a perfect example of Yotam Ottolenghi's famous quote: "One man's trash is another man's treasure."

The wealthy in our society are bathed in riches with tunnel vision, formed by greed, making us blind to what we do have. We cannot have 'nothing', but we are warped by avarice to believe we can. 'Nothing' does not have a form, but individuals create a definition of a personal 'nothing'. Whether it be black or white, a peace or a burden.



Keziah Morris  
Year 8



Home of Big Questions

**EXPLORE**


# 'Are we getting unhappier?'

by **Lois Lo Turco**

Are we becoming unhappier? Yes, we are. But can we define a feeling? The definition of happiness is 'the state of being happy.' Not even the definition can explain it, because happiness is subjective. Happiness changes overtime; it grows as we grow, flourishes as we flourish, and subdues without warning. Historically, the problem of happiness has been explored: "To know nothing is the happiest life," claiming that ignorance is bliss. Our generation are more aware of what is going on around them than any other before it: the world is at our fingertips. But is this beneficial?

The Technological Age is detrimental to our mental health because social media is accessible from a concerningly low age. 62% of children have a social media account: exposed to worlds no one can govern, control, or monitor. We explore everything. TikTok is a popular app consisting of short, entertaining videos, usually lasting from between 15 – 60 seconds; prolonged exposure causing attention spans to decrease. Children and teenagers do not see the point in meeting friends or involving themselves socially because they have the option to lazily lay in bed and watch endless hours' worth of videos that no doubt cause social skills to decline. As social skills decline, happiness does too. The children are where all of this begins. One day, children like me become parental figures. It is our responsibility to take control and reduce the normalised exposure of our children to the internet. If we do not, we are setting our children up for failure; a life that they do not deserve.

Extending the relationship between social media and declining happiness, we are incredibly influenced by the media. As a young girl, I never cared about the way they looked, acted, sounded, what we were interested in or any other media-fueled expectations. We have become unhappier as a generation due to the obsession over ourselves. Are these global concerns the barriers between us and happiness? Even before social media, Buddha believed that "happy is he who has overcome his ego." These influences are not new, but much stronger with the accessibility of social media. The mental struggle that it would involve to bury the standards that have existed for thousands of years would be astronomical. Would it result in us becoming unhappier in the process? And, although they may have differed throughout the years, they remain present. Constantly. Therefore, is the damage that we have created too severe to repair?

The term “woke” is a common stereotypical derogative used to describe Generation Z, but there is truth to it. To be “woke” is to be conscious of oppression and injustice in society. Luckily, we are growing into more ‘woke’ communities. We are finally waking up. Hundreds of years ago, no one questioned the government, power and their intentions because they had no reason to. Now we know that leaders are not selfless, they are not omniscient, and they do not always have our best interests at heart. People have less trust in them and are therefore more worried about what our futures may hold. Mental health issues are more common: 1 in 4 17–19-year-olds had a probable mental disorder in 2022, an increase from 1 in 6 in 2021. That is eight pupils in every classroom. Anxiety levels are greater because our perception of the world is worse, yet more realistic. Is being woke beneficial? We know about all the dreadful matters occurring globally, but hardly any of us can make a difference. Where does this leave us? Contemplating all these issues and feeling a sense of helplessness due to the lack of ability to do anything. We are trapped in this knowledge and trying to escape it is draining our happiness. Is it better to be woke than to be happy?

There is no reversal. We have caused damage, we have made decisions, and society is this way now. Even if we could, would we want to? Would we want to go back to when we were oblivious: to be happy than prioritise doing good? Or have our reasons for being unhappy changed? These days we compare our lives to others through social media, but that would have been different in 1923. We are always going to be at war with things that induce some sadness in our lives, including ourselves. Although this is true, I do believe that we are unhappier now than ever before; though where the blame should be placed is debatable.



Lois Lo Turco  
Year 9



Home of Big Questions

**EXPLORE**


# 'Can we ever have nothing?'

## by Lucy Jenkins

Nothing. A paradox in itself. A contradictory term used to describe the absence of matter, the epitome of our universe. We cannot fully comprehend the scale to which nothing exists. Nor can we fathom to what depth it reaches, but we can identify it as something, therefore disproving the term nothing, as a paradoxically inconceivable word. Being parody and an oxymoron, this word is an antithesis of itself. It's very meaning is unviable, the logistics do not cohere, nor do they conform to its supposed true meaning.

The definition of nothing is subjective, due to both opinions and the fact that the word has multiple definitions, making it troublesome to determine its contextual meaning. To feel nothing is to have no emotion, to be impassive, an allegorical sense, or nothing. In the physical sense, it is when states of matter and physical substances are truant; this often refers to a vacuum, which is a space that is devoid of matter of any kind. It is an abstract phenomenon, which subsequently refers to the fact that by identifying nothing, it cannot be nothing, ergo it is something.

Black holes are physical manifestations of nothing, they are the only place that true black is found, in the depths of a star that has collapsed in on itself. There have been many debates on the colour of nothing, it is decidedly so that it is black, due to the fact that if there was nothing there would be no light so you would observe nothing, but just because we cannot see nothingness does not mean that something is not there. Something is technically always there, as we can always determine something, obvious or not, visible, or imperceptible.

Another question this topic poses is if you can identify nothing, can you ever possess it? While there are many standpoints in this argument, but we always own something, we can always classify at least one thing, whether it is easily detectable or barely perceivable. We always have life, we are always sentient, and nothing beside death would change that, we would be nothing but in an utterly unique way.

We cannot own nothing, it is unobtainable. You could have the impression that you own nothing, though that could not be further from the truth. Nevertheless, you can be unaware of what you have whether it be love, responsibility, burden or content, it is selective to your mindset and how you feel. If you are motionless, you are choosing to do so, what you are doing cannot be interpreted as nothing, as you are choosing to it.

Many people who partake in psychotherapy and psychoanalysis often complain that they have nothing to say. To think or feel nothing is just that, a feeling. When you perceive something as nothing, that does not necessarily mean that nothing is present, but rather figurative. Feeling you have nothing to say can be recognised as a defence mechanism used to defer from saying something that you don't wish to share or say but is not truthful nor accurate.

Some may argue that you can have nothing, it's just recognised at zero, a term which is both positive and negative, having similar characteristics of what nothing is described as. Many mathematic functions, such as algebra, decimals, and the confines between positive and negative numbers rely on zero and without it would cease to exist. Also, all modern electronics depend on zero, and no engineering or automation could exist as zero has been in use for over 5,000 years, and computers, require binary code to operate. Furthermore, when it comes to money, you can genuinely have nothing, it is one of the few cases in which nothing is truly attainable, when it is synonymous with zero. Beyond maths, nothing is an inconceivable concept, true nothingness is not real. While some may think that space due to its complete lack of particles it is true nothingness. Nonetheless, this is nothing but a hoax, it's a word used to define what we as a society are too idle to explore, to analyse, to delve further into what exactly nothing is.

We can never have physical nothingness, while in maths and money it is possible to have nothing, in that case it is a metaphoric term, and in no way links to physical nothingness. Physical nothingness is an unreservedly opposed concept which cannot be associated to circumstantial nothingness as their definitions are entirely opposite and hold no links to one another.



Lucy Jenkins  
Year 9



Home of Big Questions

**EXPLORE**


# 'Are we getting unhappier?'

## by Maya Dowling

“To know nothing is the happiest life”- Desiderius Erasmus.

Although we are getting more education about our surroundings, we are still getting unhappier. We are more aware of the world around us; we gain knowledge as we grow. But we are gaining higher standards as we grow. The standards in the world are growing, as a whole. People are ageing every day, new things are invented, more is discovered, and higher expectations grow. Are we too woke?

Social media is gaining popularity as time goes on. It is the cause of many insecurities, unreasonable standards, and unhappiness. Most people feel the need to ‘fit in’ and are unable to see themselves accurately. Many people suffer from mental health problems and social media never helps, 61% of men and 50% of women are diagnosed with depression due to social media. A global depression. Even though social media is good for marketing and communication, it is a key factor for bullying and unrealistic expectations about body images. When people use social media, it makes them feel the need to be someone they are not, it is draining but addictive. Social media causes disrupted sleep, lower life satisfaction and lower self-esteem. We need to live in the moment. So many people are so focused on posting memories on social media they don’t even get to experience actual memories. What’s the point of recording memories if you can’t even experience them in real life? It takes up so much of our life and there is nothing to gain from it. Humanity should enjoy things and not feel the need to post them. We need to appreciate what we already have.

Some may say people always suffered, and we are just diagnosing now. Mental health isn’t new, during the Middle Ages people viewed mental illness as a punishment from God. In the 1600s mental health patients were treated with religious, psychological, astrological, and traditional healing remedies. Nowadays, we may feel more comfortable discussing our issues because in the past people would be seen as crazy just for being different. In the 19th century people would be sent to an asylum and locked up for being seen as mentally ill. Although, currently suffering from mental health issues seems to be popular. In early 2021 to 2022 many people self-diagnosed or hoaxed mental illnesses. Self-diagnosis is a substantial problem; it can cause misinterpretation and confusion and it is becoming a growing trend on social media. Some people would even choose to fake mental illnesses due to loneliness or jealousy. A lot of people were trying to get happier by making themselves unhappier. Trying to feel as if we are someone we aren’t even if it makes us unhappy. Are we making ourselves unwell for a hope to fit in?

Aging may be a reason people tend to become unhappier. Expectations are lowered, more responsibilities and freedom ensue but most of all, you get more realistic ideas of the world around you. You no longer have dreams of unicorns flying across the sky or being a millionaire because it is not likely to happen. Adults have more realistic expectations and usually no longer expect such amazing possibilities to happen. Sometimes, adults can be happier though because they have more freedom. They can do what they want when they want, they can live their life however they want. That can still be stressful. Adults tend to be more miserable than children because they have lived longer, have less to look forward to and many more responsibilities. Some feel like there is no point in life beyond childhood.

Covid-19 impacted everyone's lives. Businesses failing, stores shutting down, lives at stake and extreme poverty. Also, 63% of students' mental health is worse because of the pandemic. Students are two years behind because of what they missed out on in lockdown. Lockdown was the reason people struggled in the times of Covid-19. Loneliness. Not being able to talk to anyone, to see friends or visit family. The only way to contact someone was online which was miserable as it is. Many people suffered in lockdown because they were lonely. Some will be affected by Covid-19 for the rest of their life, suffering from depression or anxiety. Lockdown caused many mental health issues for almost everyone.

We are getting unhappier, but this is nothing new. There are many problems in the world and there always have been. As social media grows, insecurities form – but should we stop progress?



Maya Dowling  
Year 8



Home of Big Questions

**EXPLORE**


# 'Is it OK to clone a human being?'

## by Miah Ringrose

Cloning: theorized when introduced by Jbs Haldane, an identical group of cells that are produced asexually but are completely identical. An example of cloning is shown in South Korea by the company called Soom Biotech, a company that clones pets that are close to their death bed. They support wellbeing but they're financially expensive.

Considering utilitarianism, does doing the most amount of good for the most amount of people justify the deed? Cloning poses a plethora of ethical questions: can you be credited for their actions? Are they extensions of yourself? Do they have human rights? Clones shouldn't theoretically exist as they aren't extensions of yourself, but they aren't their own people either; they are between life or illusion. They should be treated as humans, but it is also difficult not to mistreat them. As they are copies, they have your mind and your physical forms, but they aren't you. It is natural to believe they are lesser than yourself. It makes it even more difficult to treat them in a respectable manner and not use them to your own advantage. Clones are people as they can grow and adapt as real people. The longer they exist the more different and human they become so they should be treated as such. If clones were to exist, they should have freedom; they would have to be 'human' in their own right.

Cloning could become non-hypothetical at a moment's notice. The thought of self-identity and them having their own identity is difficult as they would have false memories. When the clone has developed a sense of self, they would be confused why everyone in their life isn't treating them the same. Would the clone know they're a clone? Should clones be self-aware it could lead to confusion and spiralling as insecurities grow about what's happening to themselves. That spiralling could cause negative decisions and mental illness. Cloning wouldn't lead to any benefits, only a lot more suffering. Clones wouldn't have an identity until they've had their own experiences. You would be held accountable for their actions if they're the same as you. This idea also means that clones develop and grow. Would new laws be put into place about how after a certain period clones would be considered independent and their own person? Or would they have some form of identification that would name them as a clone?

Cloned limbs or organs could be donated for science; but this poses ethical dilemmas. Clones and subjects would have to consent. However, we don't know the logistics of cloning and whether we can clone the previous states of someone or just body parts. What if clones don't consent? Would that be considered? When thinking about cloning, you will just cycle back in loops because there are so many possibilities. You can't experiment on clones because they are human but one of the main reasons for clones is experiments. Experimenting on clones could help find cures for ails and such. It is complicated as the subject may have consented but then the clone could change its mind – voiding that consent. That's why many believe cloning compromises ethics and morality.

It is utterly horrific to think of humans as anything less than humans, but when thinking about cloning is strenuous on the mind. Humans believe that they are above all other creatures, including other people. It's entirely common to put oneself above others. Thinking about humans' selfishness reflects insecurities. Most people wouldn't be able to assimilate seeing the worst of their qualities. A vain person wouldn't cope seeing what everyone else sees in them as they hate the thought of being seen as beneath someone else. Clones and people couldn't live peacefully together as they are so similar and so different at the same time. Clones seeing the person they were cloned after would be like looking in a mirror or it would be a paradox as the amount of confusion it would cause. Your brain most likely wouldn't be able to even confront the thoughts of having someone who was essentially you

Cloning is unethical. Incomprehensible. Clones may have self-awareness and all the potential that humans have but it would be cruel to create them. Humans would undoubtedly treat them differently as people usually have a fear of ambiguity; the unknown. Truly, if clones were to exist, they would be taken advantage of, abused for personal gain and the belief that they should be used as experiments.



Miah Ringrose  
year 8



Home of Big Questions

**EXPLORE**


# 'Can we ever have nothing?'

## by William Batchelder

After death, what do we think of? We often think of nothingness. But what exactly is nothingness? Some people think of pure white; some people think of pitch black. They often refer to this as nothing. But why is that? One Greek philosopher, Hermandez, once said “Nothing cannot exist because to speak of something is to speak of something that exists.”

So, nothing cannot exist... simple as that, right? Well, it depends on definition. For example, if I were to hand in a blank document for this essay with absolutely nothing on it, it would not have been nothing because I would have handed in a document. But to you, I would have handed in ‘nothing.’ What this example shows is that ‘nothing’ can be defined by expectation, experiences, and goals. An example of expectation vs nothing is Elon Musk. Our expectation of Elon Musk is that he has everything, but one thing he does not have is freedom. Compared to us Elon Musk has no freedom, he has guards following him everywhere. Compared to Elon Musk we have plenty of freedom.

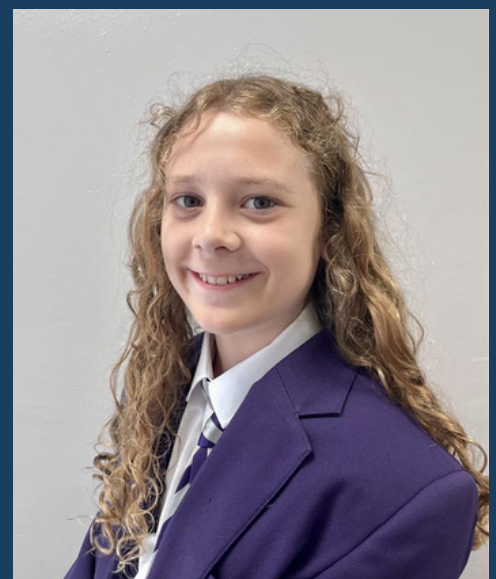
Yet another example is this: imagine you have plenty of toys that you like, but your friend has recently got a new, shiny toy that you really want. You would then feel that you would have nothing. But you still have plenty of toys, so you do not have ‘nothing.’ Linked in with this is emotion. You feel like you have nothing. But can ‘nothing’ be an emotion? For example, have you ever been asked how you feel, and have you answered “meh.” Because you feel ‘nothing.’ You do not feel happy, sad, or anything. Just nothing. However, feeling ‘nothing’ is to feel something. This may be the case, but feeling empty or ‘nothingness’ is familiar, and if ‘nothing’ is the absence of something, then are you missing something? This feeling of ‘nothingness’ can be combated by happiness. Happiness can fill the absence of ‘nothing.’

How does something become nothing, and is it possible to achieve ‘nothingness’? There is one answer to that question, you cannot. It is not possible to achieve ‘nothingness.’ This is because you will always have something, even life is something. However, after death we do not know what happens. After death, you may not see anything, you may not be aware that you are dead, you have no scenes or life. Then you have achieved ‘nothing.’

“To know nothing is the happiest life” once said Desiderius Erasmus. This argument suggests that you can know ‘nothing’ and can live the happiest life ever. But you can never know ‘nothing.’ Even babies know something. They know how to breathe, eat, and drink. Also, to know happiness you must know to be happy, you must know happiness. But how can ‘nothingness’ evoke such an emotion? To know of ‘nothingness’ is to live the best life. It is because you can be content, you would know ‘nothing’ so you would be content. You would not want to know anything because you would not know what curiosity is. You would be content. Therefore, this must mean that the pursuit of knowledge is hindering our happiness. We all think that the pursuit of knowledge will help us, make us happier. We all want to know things; we think that the only way of life is to learn. But it is leading us to live an unhappy life. Remember the saying ‘never meet your hero's,’ it is because when you meet them you feel like you hate them because they have shown their true colours. The knowledge that they are not what they seem on TV makes you unhappier.

Considering ‘nothing’ at a value would be zero. Let’s say you have no money in your bank account. You could still be in debt. You still owe money even though you have ‘nothing.’ Alternatively, If someone asks you what is below zero, you will say negative one, or negative two, or negative three and so on. If zero or ‘nothing’ cannot exist, how can negative numbers? But what if you have apples? How can you be in debt apples if you do not have any? You cannot owe it if you have zero or ‘nothing.’

‘Nothing’ can and cannot exist. It depends on the subject; whether it be leading the happiest life, or being in debt, or wanting the new shiny toy. Everyone can feel like you have ‘nothing,’ but realistically you can never have ‘nothing’ because even life is something.



William Batchelder  
Year 8

# HEADTEACHER'S MESSAGE

Dear Parent/Carer

I am incredibly proud to share with you the outstanding achievements of our Scholars students throughout this academic year. The dedication and hard work they have displayed has truly been exceptional. I also want to express my delight in the remarkable progress made by our Scholars students, both in their academic pursuits and their involvement in enriching extra-curricular activities.

This year, our Scholar students embarked on transformative educational visits, including going to esteemed institutions such as Oxford University and Cardiff University. These visits not only broadened their horizons but also inspired them to strive for excellence in their studies.

I am particularly thrilled to mention the remarkable accomplishments of our Year 8 and 9 students in the 'Oxplore Big Questions' competition. I am proud to see our young Scholar students engage in such thought-provoking endeavours and represent our school with distinction.

Our Scholar students have proven that they possess the qualities of true academic ambassadors. Their commitment to academic excellence, coupled with their active participation in extra-curricular activities makes them excellent role models for their peers. As headteacher, I extend my congratulations to all our Scholar students on their remarkable achievements this year.

As a school we will continue to foster an environment that nurtures curiosity, embraces intellectual challenges and celebrates the achievements of our exceptional Scholar students.

Yours sincerely

Mr M Tucker  
Headteacher

