

'Reading it Real':

**a collection of real life, relevant and provocative texts
to get you thinking, discussing and engaging with
examples of great non-fiction writing.**



Name: Tutor Group:

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OPINION

Yeezus and Jesus: Kanye's Sunday Service is no church

By Kate Bottley, Priest and presenter

Saturday 11 May 2019



Original Sunday Service would be something that married up my passion of Yeezus and Jesus (Picture: John Steward)

OK, let's start with a confession, I'm a bit of a Kanye fan.

I don't want to be and I've tried not to be. I don't align myself with his politics, he's arrogant, self-centred and probably the biggest egotist on the face of the planet, but I just can't help myself.

I even liked his Glastonbury set. I'm the only person I know that did.

So back in January of this year when Kim K announced the birth of the 'Sunday Service' I was intrigued. Could this be the start of something beautiful? Something that married up my passion of Yeezus and Jesus and how did I get myself into the sanctuary?

I was excited but then I had so many questions. And I'm not the only one. Apart from a few videos on social media and an appearance at Coachella, Kanye's new venture into the spiritual is secretive – attendees to the event must sign a non-disclosure agreement.

I'm not sure if what Kanye is doing could be called a church. But there are some similarities.

There's worship music that's for sure, although many of the songs are re-purposed from well-known pop songs. This isn't a new thing, I know a clerical colleague who rewrote 'Is this the road to Amarillo?' for Sunday use.

There was also another occasion where someone added words to the Match of the Day theme tune so that it begins, 'Why don't you put your trust in Jesus?'

The music at Kanye's Sunday Service is sung by a choir, wearing identical coloured clothing. To most that might sound a bit 'cult' but it's nothing you wouldn't see in a lot of parish churches most weeks.

Then there's the children, chiefly Kim and Kanye's daughter North, dancing at the front with her friends showing the grown-ups how it's done. This scene is played out again in lots of churches I know.

It's also what lots of churches I know would love, being as they are usually filled with an older demographic.



Apart from Coachella, Kanye's new Sunday Service is secretive (Photo: MEGA)

While the exact details of Sunday Service are sketchy, Kim has gone on record saying there's no sermon. We can't know if there's a theme or a Bible reading, but for me it must be more than a string of musical hits otherwise it's not really a service, it's a concert. However, I have been to churches like that, too. Churches where the band is polished and the music perfect, the lyrics sounding more like a love song than a hymn. My daughter calls these 'Jesus is my boyfriend' churches.

No sermon and no liturgy doesn't mean it isn't a church.

Kanye himself isn't the perfect priest; as well as the massive ego, his past actions have often courted controversy. In this, too, he isn't that different to clergy I've known and — although I hesitate to admit it — even myself at times.

While no cleric would want it to be all about them or to be as headline hitting as Yeezy, I think most of us would be lying if we denied that there is something of the showman about us all. Perfection and priestliness have never gone together.

The thing is, Sunday Service isn't a church.

For me, where Kanye's Sunday Service ceases to be a church is in its exclusiveness. The music might be spiritual, the message reflective of gospel values, they might even share communion in the form of the pre-service low fat low carb brunch, but the minute it limits who can be there, that's when it can't possibly be a church.

God knows the Church throughout the centuries, to its great shame, has got it spectacularly wrong.

The Windrush generation can attest to a lack of welcome they received when they first tried attend their local parish churches, as can the LGBTQT community. But to be a church it must at least try and welcome all comers.

When a church works best it isn't a palace for the perfect but a hospital for the sick and broken and its doors should always be metaphorically — if not literally — open.

Churches run homeless shelters, soup kitchens and food banks. Churches do coffee mornings for the recently bereaved and toddler groups.

Churches organise home visiting teams for the housebound and are one of the biggest providers of social care after the government.

I wish Kanye all the best with his spiritual journey and with this venture, I'll even pray for him, hoping that he might pray for me too. But until he and the rest of his congregation have organised Doris to be driven to bingo, buttered bread for the luncheon club or helped with the school nativity play, he isn't a priest and Sunday Service isn't a church.

Kate Bottley is a priest based in Nottinghamshire. She is passionate about bringing stories of faith and belief to the widest audience possible.

<https://metro.co.uk/2019/05/11/yeezus-and-jesus-kanyes-sunday-service-is-no-church-9453324/?ito=cbshare>



ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:

1. Share and research the definition of any unfamiliar vocabulary and / or cultural references.
2. Discuss the ways in which Kate Bottley's writing different to your expectations of an article written by a Priest.
3. Highlight your favourite sentence in the article: be prepared to discuss why you have chosen it!
4. 'Churches run homeless shelters, soup kitchens and food banks. Churches do coffee mornings for the recently bereaved and toddler groups'. This is an out of date view on the role of a church. Discuss.
5. If 'Kanye himself isn't the perfect priest', who is?!

I won't force him to 'learn to cope'.

Someone's Mum



I am Danielle and I am an ex-English teacher living on the border between Gloucestershire and Worcestershire. I have two children, a boy, aged seven, who is on the autistic spectrum, and a daughter, aged five...

There is an expectation, an implication, a pressure when you are the parent of an autistic child. Sometimes that pressure is very clear – when a therapist forces a child to make eye contact, for example. Sometimes it is unspoken but felt. It can come from relatives, professionals and the general public alike. It is the expectation that autistic children need to learn to cope.



You cannot mollycoddle them, they will say. One day, they will not have you to regulate everything for them, they will say. When they are an adult, they will have to cope with these things alone.

A few years ago I wrote a letter to Brittany Ferries, asking them if there was any way they could switch off their morning ferry alarm. Biggest is terrified of the alarm; it has marred so many trips to see his grandparents. Dealing with the alarm takes such a toll and he is so tired and so overwhelmed before we even get there. The trip becomes so much harder for him all round.

I dread every crossing.

When I wrote the post, I received several comments from people who said I was not sensible to ask them to stop the alarm, or even to get up early and get him up on deck before it sounds (this is our current solution. It is not perfect, as the anxiety about the alarm coming any second is still profound,

but it gets us through it). There were those who said I should not try to stop the alarm; I should not even try to prevent him from hearing it. In fact, I should make him stay and listen. We should stay in the cabin, deliberately, and deal with his screams and sobs for 45 minutes because he 'needs to learn to cope.'

I disagree with this wholeheartedly, for two reasons.

Firstly, it is inherently ableist. If autistic brains outnumbered neurotypical brains, things would be very different.

Biggest values preciseness, the expected and the known above all else. He needs control and correctness. If those who valued these things as much as he does were dominant, there would be far fewer incidences that cause him extreme distress. There would be no ferry alarms that cannot be switched off. People would not be vague about rules or say something will happen without being sure. Restaurants would not change their menus without warning.

It is because the world is set up for neurotypical people that Biggest must face so many unexpected things, so many things that seem painfully wrong to him. We would not tell people with physical disabilities to 'learn to cope' without their physical aids. We should not tell neurodiverse people that they need to cope with the neurotypical world unaided.

Secondly, it does not work. It is not some kind of immersion therapy that means he will one day be fine with expecting a reading certificate on one day and suddenly not receiving it when that day comes. If I made him listen to that ferry alarm for hours on end, he may eventually calm – but not because he has learned to cope with it in a healthy way. It would damage him irrevocably to be so cruel. He would be exhausted and broken. There is no way to know how the trauma of something like that may affect him in later life, even if he no longer screamed at alarms that he cannot switch off.

But it is not just big things, like the alarm, to which this applies. I spend a fair amount of time trying to keep Biggest regulated. I know him, as close as anyone can know someone else. He is a piece of my soul and I will make no apologies for doing *everything* I can to save him heartache.



We say what we mean. We make sure to be sure before we tell him anything. I phone restaurants ahead of time to ensure that they have what he wants to order. I double-check and I make sure things are correct and I place things just so.

Anxiety is a terrible thing. To feel like you are not safe, to feel like things may go terribly wrong at any moment, to be so afraid – it is exhausting. To feel less anxious, to be regulated and calm, Biggest needs to have confidence in those around him. He needs to know that they understand his need for predictability and that they respect it.

He needs a scaffold of routine and expectation to help him cope with the things that cannot be controlled.

But surely, if you control every little detail to make his life easier, he will never cope when the inevitable happens and some things cannot be controlled, like the ferry alarm? – they say.

No.

Controlling the small things is what makes him able to deal with the uncontrollable. Knowing that he can trust me to fix anything that is fixable gives him the confidence and strength to cope when things cannot be fixed. Yes, those times are difficult. But they would be harder to deal with if we did not alleviate his distress wherever we can – when given the opportunity.

In showing him how I help to control and regulate his world, I also give him the tools to regulate himself, when he is an adult.

If, when he is grown, he is ever able to take the overnight ferry alone to visit his grandparents, he will get himself up before the alarm and go to the deck. In doing everything I can to save him distress I am not 'making a rod' for my back.

I do not have to be cruel to be kind.

This is not to say that we never challenge him, never help him to try new things or face experiences that cannot be entirely known; we do. It does not mean that we do not help him to learn coping strategies for when he must face situations that are difficult for him; we do.

But the success of pushing Biggest to grow and learn, to be the best he can be – it is entirely dependent on how safe he feels, on that scaffold of routine and predictability. It is dependent on his trust and composure. In an environment where he feels safe, where he can trust those around him and the little things are regulated to help ease his anxiety – well, I *know* that he can achieve anything under those conditions.

He does not need to learn how to cope. He needs to learn how to regulate his world, and his emotions, so that coping is easier.

If you think I am an overprotective, mollycoddling parent, so be it. I can live with that.

[I won't force him to 'learn to cope'. - Someone's Mum](#)



ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:

1. Share and research the definition of any unfamiliar vocabulary and / or cultural references.
2. There are many parenting blogs on the internet. Is it fair on 'Biggest' – and other children – that parents record their experiences of parenting in this way?
3. Highlight the sentence in which you feel there is the most impactful emotion. What emotion is this? Be prepared to discuss why you have chosen it.
4. Should Brittany Ferries turn off the alarm? Depending on your view, what should they say in their response to Danielle's letter?
5. 'Danielle is wrong. She should force her son to cope.' Discuss.

We need to be careful about demanding migrants speak English

Rosie Driffill, 9 September 2016



It seems a sensible expectation, but policing people on their language abilities can come across as arbitrary and mask anti-immigration sentiments.

Visitors who do not speak English are often more deserving of our help than our scorn.

Photograph: Delcia Lopez/The Guardian

“If you come to this country, you have to learn English.” That old adage. Somehow, it seems to unite bigots and those of a relatively progressive mindset, frequently appropriated as an endnote to what can often be explosive discussions over immigration.

If the phrase were a country, it would be Switzerland. In my experience, when a debate over foreign nationals turns bellicose, the assertion that one has to learn English if they’re going to live in the UK seems to corral everybody into neutral territory, garnering affirmative noises from all camps.

As a standalone statement, I don’t dispute it: if you live in another country, be it the UK or otherwise, attempting to learn the language will make life far easier, from both a work and social perspective. Indeed, you as the language learner should have the final say over exactly what you need to learn in order to get by.

What I take issue with is this: people seldom debate the details that get overlooked when they insist that foreign nationals learn English. And perhaps more importantly still, because it’s a point that is difficult to dispute, as well as one that can bring closure to an argument, we often miss the opportunity to challenge those who may use it to mask viperous anti-immigration sentiments.

The details that the assertion misses pertain to two main ideas. First, it doesn’t quantify how much English one must learn in order to be acceptable in the eyes of those making the demands. For me, it sets the same admonitory precedent as the phrase “I’m not racist, but ...” The statement “I’m not anti-immigration, but they should learn English”, if left unchallenged, can become a dangerous criterion by which some people decide which foreign nationals they’ll tolerate, and which they won’t.

Therein also lies the possibility that those heard speaking their own language are assumed not to be able to speak English, or to have failed to learn it. Following the recent vote to leave the EU, I’ve had friends from France, Bahrain and Poland tell me they’ve been ordered to speak English by people who’ve

overheard them speaking their mother tongue. They can all speak English exceptionally well but are now worried about being heard speaking anything else in case they're met with abuse.

Even if they could not speak English, it is utterly deplorable to intimidate and scorn somebody on the basis of their language. But worse, it demonstrates how the goalposts are constantly shifting for the non-native speaker; not only do they have to meet an arbitrary standard of English set by the listener, woe betide them if they ever slip into their own language for a few moments.

Not only this, but the demand that people who live here learn English also fails to take account of people's financial situation, ability and motivation. Even learning the basics of a language takes dedication, focus, incentive, access to resources, time and some sort of financial commitment, be it funding a course or saying no to a shift in order to attend a class. A lot of people coming to the UK – either for work or to flee war or persecution – could only dream of enrolling on a five-day-a-week private English course, and have to make do with learning through interaction, on the job, free Esol classes and/or by using applications and books, all while juggling the demands of work and life.

While many people do attain a high level of English by these means, some are never really afforded the opportunity to grasp the intricacies (particularly grammatical) that English contains. A friend of mine from Iraq came to the UK to seek asylum six years ago, and in spite of his efforts and hard work, people still assume he has never bothered to learn English properly as he still struggles with his speaking. Because he's had to rely on sporadic, volunteer-run classes, self-study and simply picking things up, he feels he can only get so far, yet any progress he has made is promptly negated whenever anyone deems his English to be below par.

This underlines the danger in having – at best – fluid criteria by which to judge how much English foreign nationals ought to learn, and – at worst – no criteria at all. My Iraqi friend can get by very well and could certainly get along in a work environment, but this didn't stop a woman in the post office telling him that he should improve his English if he is going to live in the UK.

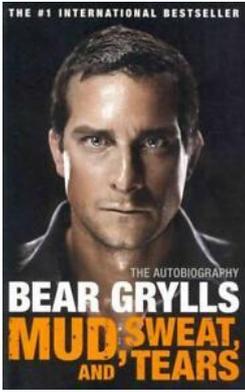
In the current climate, it is more important than ever that we meet foreign nationals with support and solidarity, rather than unquantifiable expectations and oversimplified demands. We can't judge people's efforts to engage in the process of picking up English, nor their dedication to learn, by what we hear in fleeting conversations. Nor can we shirk our duty to challenge any anti-immigration sentiment we suspect is being expressed, just because it's embedded in seemingly harmless terms.

[We need to be careful about demanding migrants speak English | Migration | The Guardian](#)

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:



1. Share and research the definition of any unfamiliar vocabulary and / or cultural references.
2. "If you come to this country, you have to learn English." Has this article influenced your point of view about this statement?
3. Highlight a sentence with which you either strongly agree or strongly disagree. Be prepared to discuss why you have chosen it.
4. Would this article have been more effective if the story about the writer's friend from Iraq had been given more focus at the beginning?
5. Your friend's mum making a comment about a new colleague at work who has arrived in Britain from Syria; she thinks that they should 'stay away until they can actually speak English properly.' What would / should / could you do? Discuss.



Excerpted from Mud, Sweat And Tears: The Autobiography, by Bear Grylls.

The air temperature is minus twenty degrees. I wiggle my fingers but they're still freezing cold. Old frostnip injuries never let you forget. I blame Everest for that.

"You set, buddy?" cameraman Simon asks me, smiling. His rig is all prepped and ready.

I smile back. I am unusually nervous. Something doesn't quite feel right. But I don't listen to the inner voice. It is time to go to work.

The crew tell me that the crisp northern Canadian Rockies look spectacular this morning. I don't really notice.

It is time to get into my secret space. A rare part of me that is focused, clear, brave, precise. It is the part of me I know the best but visit the least.

I only like to use it sparingly. Like now.

Beneath me is three hundred feet of steep snow and ice. Steep but manageable.

I have done this sort of fast descent many, many times. Never be complacent, the voice says. The voice is always right.

A last deep breath. A look to Simon. A silent acknowledgment back.

Yet we have cut a vital corner. I know it. But I do nothing.

I leap.

I am instantly taken by the speed. Normally I love it. This time I am worried.

I never feel worried in the moment. I know something is wrong.

I am soon travelling at over 40 mph. Feet first down the mountain. The ice races past only inches from my head. This is my world.

I gain even more speed. The edge of the peak gets closer. Time to arrest the fall.

I flip nimbly onto my front and drive the ice axe into the snow. A cloud of white spray and ice soars into the air. I can feel the rapid deceleration as I grind the axe deep into the mountain with all my power. It works like it always does. Like clockwork. Total confidence. One of those rare moments of lucidity. It is fleeting. Then it is gone. I am now static.

The world hangs still. Then—bang.

Simon, his heavy wooden sled, plus solid metal camera housing, piles straight into my left thigh. He is doing in excess of 45 mph.

There is an instant explosion of pain and noise and white.

It is like a freight train. And I am thrown down the mountain like a doll. Life stands still. I feel and see it all in slow motion.

Yet in that split second I have only one realization: a one-degree different course and the sled's impact would have been with my head. Without doubt, it would have been my last living thought.

Instead, I am in agony, writhing. I am crying. They are tears of relief. I am injured, but I am alive.

I see a helicopter but hear no sound. Then the hospital. I have been in a few since *Man vs. Wild* began. I hate them.

I can see them all through closed eyes. The dirty, bloodstained emergency room in Vietnam, after I severed half my finger in the jungle. No bedside graces there. Then the rockfall in the Yukon. Not to mention the way worse boulder fall in Costa Rica. The mineshaft collapse in Montana or that saltwater croc in Oz. Or the sixteen-foot tiger that I landed on in the Pacific versus the snakebite in Borneo.

Countless close shaves. They all blur. All bad.

Yet all good. I am alive.

There are too many to hold grudges. Life is all about the living. I am smiling.

The next day, I forget the crash. To me, it is past. Accidents happen, it was no one's fault. Lessons learned. Listen to the voice. I move on.

"Hey, Si, I'm cool. Just buy me a piña colada when we get out of here. Oh, and I'll be sending you the evac, doc, and physio bills."

He reaches for my hand. I love this man.

We've lived some life out there.

I look down to the floor: at my ripped mountain bib pants, bloodstained jacket, smashed Minicam, and broken goggles.

I quietly wonder: when did all this craziness become my world?

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:



1. Share and research the definition of any unfamiliar vocabulary and / or cultural references.
2. Find three examples of the writer deliberately building tension in this extract.
3. Highlight five sentences you think should be deleted to improve this extract. Be prepared to discuss why you have chosen them.
4. What is a 'secret space'; should we all have one? What would it look like?
5. Bear Grylls comes across as arrogant and egotistical in this extract. Discuss.

The experiences of lesbian, gay, bi and trans young people in Britain's schools in 2017

Josh Bradlow, Fay Bartram and April Guasp Stonewall

Dr Vasanti Jadva Centre for Family Research, University of Cambridge



Ten years ago, Stonewall launched the first School Report, a ground-breaking study into the experiences of 1,100 lesbian, gay and bi pupils in Britain's schools. Published four years after the repeal of Section 28, it revealed a startling picture: two in three lesbian, gay and bi pupils had been bullied at school because of their sexual orientation, and just one in four schools said this bullying was wrong.

In response, over the past decade Stonewall has worked with governments, schools and local authorities across Britain to help them combat this bullying and create inclusive schools. In 2015 Stonewall extended its remit to campaign for trans equality, and I am delighted that this report includes the specific experiences of trans pupils.

School Report 2017, a study of over 3,700 lesbian, gay, bi and trans (LGBT) pupils across Britain, demonstrates the continued impact of this work. Since the 2007 School Report, the number of lesbian, gay and bi pupils bullied because of their sexual orientation has fallen by almost a third. The number of schools who say this bullying is wrong has nearly trebled, and homophobic remarks are far less likely to be heard. Thanks to the dedication of teachers, schools and governments across Britain, more LGBT young people than ever are able to be themselves at school.

But while there is much to celebrate, this study shows how much there is left to do. Nearly half of LGBT young people are still bullied for being LGBT at school, and only one in five have learnt about safe sex in relation to same-sex relationships at school. LGBT young people continue to experience unacceptably high levels of poor mental health. Online, nearly all LGBT pupils are exposed to offensive content about LGBT people, and just one in three think that online companies will do something about it if reported.

For trans pupils in particular, the findings are alarming: nearly two in three trans pupils are bullied for being LGBT at school, one in ten have received death threats, and more than two in five have tried to take their own lives. While a growing number of schools are supporting their trans pupils, too many are not equipped to do so. It is vital that this is remedied as a matter of urgency.

At the same time, LGBT young people who are disabled, or who receive free school meals, are at heightened risk of being bullied and experiencing poor mental health. LGBT young people who are black, Asian and minority ethnic are particularly unlikely to have someone at home they can talk to about being LGBT, while bi and trans young people suffer from a persistent lack of role models at school. It is clear that much remains to be done until every young person in Britain can grow up free to reach their full potential.

But while the challenges that remain are significant, there is cause for optimism. Thanks to government and cross-party support, compulsory relationships and sex education (RSE) is set to become a reality in England's schools. This is a vital step towards ensuring that all young people are equipped to make informed decisions about their lives and relationships. It is crucial that updated RSE guidance explicitly includes LGBT young people, and is supported by high-quality resources and training for teachers.

As we look ahead, we must keep sight of our shared mission: to create a world where every young person can grow up happy, healthy and supported to reach their full potential. While much has changed over the past decade, it is clear we cannot be complacent in the fight for equality. So let's reflect on what's been achieved, establish what needs to be done, and work together to create a world where every young person can be themselves.

Ruth Hunt

Chief Executive



ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:

1. Share and research the definition of any unfamiliar vocabulary and / or cultural references.
2. Improve three sentences by changing vocabulary choices, tweaking sentence style and structure etc.
3. Highlight the statistic you find most shocking. Be prepared to discuss what you would have expected.
4. Does this report summary reflect your own experience of school? What more could be done to improve the experiences of LGPTQ students?
5. 'It is clear that much remains to be done until every young person in Britain can grow up free to reach their full potential.' In order to achieve this, what would be the top three issues on your list?

An exclusive essay from Bristol City Poet Vanessa Kisuule: “Edward Colston does not represent us”



This week Black Lives Matter activists toppled the slave trader's statue into the harbour. The city's resident poet ponders the space left behind

By [Vanessa Kisuule](#), 12th June 2020

I've a confession to make.

In 2017 I wrote an article for local Bristol paper *B 24/7* and in it I expressed ambivalence about the decision to change Colston Hall's name. I spoke about the need for our education system to tell the truth about colonialism and its continued ramifications. I feared the removal of the name was mostly an optical gesture and the history might be swept under the carpet.

Reading it back, I can't help but cringe. It's the same argument used by colonial apologists, though my stance strongly differs from theirs. I didn't want the name change to be an excuse for lazy

liberals to claim the hard work was done. Staunch nationalists, however, fear change because they don't wish the 'greatness' of Great Britain to be questioned.

Then Sunday the seventh of June 2020 happened: Edward Colston's statue, pulled down then pushed into the harbour with a cartoonishly satisfying splash. How can you not feel exhilarated watching this textbook-worthy moment unfurl in real time? It will go down with the incarnation of St Paul's Carnival, the Tesco riots and the Bristol Bus Boycott as Bad Ass Moments in Bristol History.

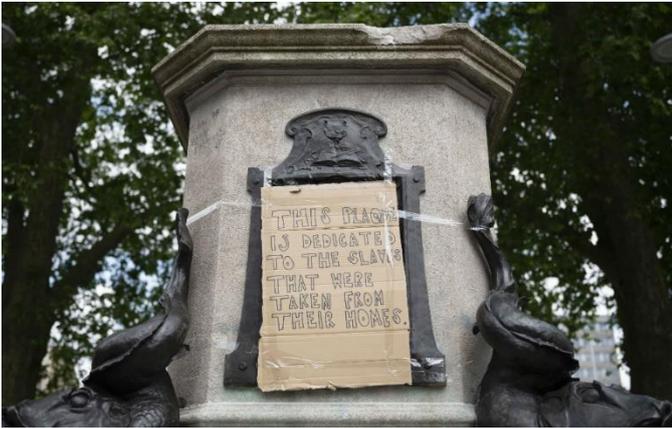
We can't falsely conclude that Bristol is a social utopia, though. A 2018 Runnymede Trust report showed that Bristol is the most segregated core city in the UK. But even as I scold myself for romanticising a place with its fair share of issues, I allow myself to feel excited. Amongst the harrowing news cycle of late, Colston's toppling was a moment of blissful catharsis.

The statue has been repeatedly petitioned against, defaced and denounced as a dark stain on the city's landscape. Still, it stood unchallenged. People got tired with mealy mouthed petitions and lobbying. Those who wish political change to be a soft-footed affair are either naive or all too cushioned by privilege to understand the means of change-makers.

In 1963, black Bristolians fought for their employment rights by refusing to use the buses and bringing the system to its knees. A knotty mass of persistent suffragettes bombed buildings and endured countless arrests so (some) women could vote. We stand on the shoulders of strategic agitators. My City Poet role is appointed by and paid for by the City Council so I am far from an anarchist. But Sunday's events show what people-powered change looks like unencumbered by the sludge of bureaucracy.

Still, this isn't a panacea for the ills committed against black people. Police brutality is just one thread in a web of despicable subjugation. We are disproportionately affected by COVID-19, less likely to be tested and receive treatment. BBC's *Sitting In Limbo* illustrates the heinous prejudice against Windrush citizens. We can't be complacent simply because Colston's statue is now swimming with the fishes.

But our cultural iconography speaks to who we are and who we hope to be. Over 10,000 people at the Black Lives Matter march spoke unequivocally: Edward Colston does not represent us moving forward. Though his historical and financial mark is indelible, the portrayal of him as 'wise' and 'virtuous' doesn't have to remain so.



Now we're left with an empty space. Who could fill it? Some great suggestions are making the rounds. The first black ward sister hired in Bristol, Princess Campbell? Leader of the Bus Boycott Paul Stephenson? Co-founder of St Paul's Carnival, Roy Hackett? Others are calling for a rotation of commissioned art work to be displayed where Colston once loomed.

I've observed a marked difference in how we celebrate cultural figures in Britain. Take for example this mural on Campbell Street in St Pauls. It's an arresting artwork in a fitting part of the city. But murals are easily painted over and tend to remain for months or years whilst statues can hold sway for centuries.

The insidious notion is that black history is alternative and peripheral. Why do our figures not deserve the majestic permanence of a statue? But perhaps there's an honesty to commemorative art that can and does change with the times. The megalomania of statues is a relic from the iron rule of power-hungry aristocrats. Today, we claim to pride ourselves on democracy and diversity, the integral worth of every human regardless of their social status.

What good is it to immortalise someone in bronze, to imply they are beyond reproach or revision? We can be more imaginative in how we shape collective memory, erect less pompous statues and more art that compels the viewer to interact, question and reflect. Statues tower over us. They assume authority, indestructibility, a story with a full stop. But the story, as we know, goes on. It's high time civic art spoke to this maddening and beautiful ellipsis, the constant surge of time and change and progress.

[Bristol City Poet Vanessa Kisuule: "Edward Colston does not represent us" \(nme.com\)](https://www.nme.com/news/music/bristol-city-poet-vanessa-kisuule-edward-colston-does-not-represent-us-2021)

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:



1. Share and research the definition of any unfamiliar vocabulary and / or cultural references.
2. Which emoji would you add to summarise Kisuule's emotions in each paragraph of her article?
3. Highlight the phrase that most resonates or most irritates you. Be prepared to discuss your reasons.
4. The Black Lives Matter movement hasn't really changed anything for the average UK teenager. Discuss.
5. What should replace the statue of Colston, in your opinion?

Are video games really addictive?

Marc Lewis

Wed 20 Jun 2018

'Gaming disorder' is now a medical diagnosis. But evidence of real harm is scant, and gaming can have real benefits.



'There's a gaming culture growing quickly among teens and preteens that's completely beyond most parents' understanding or control.'
Fortnite. Photograph: Epic Games

I don't have serious arguments with my kids very often. My 12-year-old twin boys are well-mannered and cooperative. But last week they had me spitting mad. I had to ask again and again, and finally to cajole, bribe, and threaten to get them to turn off their Playstation and get in the car. Their screen time wasn't up yet, they shot back. I don't care, I hissed: we have to go shoe shopping. But we're in the middle of a game!

Of course video games can seem addictive. Almost every parent, or adult gamer, appreciates that. So the fact that the World Health Organization (WHO) just added a "gaming disorder" diagnosis to the International Classification of Diseases (ICD), fitting snugly next to substance use disorders, pathological gambling and the rest, isn't a big shock. But is addiction to video games a "real" addiction? Is an obsession with Fortnite as bad as an alcohol problem?

Experts have pointed to parallels between behavioural addictions, such as gambling, and substance addictions, like drugs and booze, for years, with brain research bolstering their findings. Both addictions are defined similarly: as a compelling activity you find difficult to stop despite the fact that it's wrecking your life. Both correspond with differences in brain structure and function that look remarkably similar. The people (whether children or adults) who are most prone to either kind of addiction are more likely than others to score high on impulsivity and low on measures of inhibition, decision-making and cognitive control. And they are more likely to have suffered psychological problems such as depression and anxiety, often resulting from childhood experiences such as parental neglect or abuse.

But video game-playing is rarely addictive. That makes it a very different animal from, say, gambling or binge eating. Experts estimate that problematic play is exhibited by 0.5% of the general population and less

than 1.0% of adult gamers. For these few, the “addiction” label may apply. But a similar fraction can get addicted to almost anything that’s attractive or fun, including shopping and sports. Is it meaningful to invent a “disorder” to fit that fringe? Might it even cause more harm than good?

Not only does “internet gaming disorder” have no adverse effects on health, socialising or physical activity, but there has been an outcry from researchers and scholars, warning of the dangers of pathologising a normal behavioural outlet. In China, teens are being hauled off to “boot camp” for spending more time online than is deemed appropriate. The danger for us may be creating a mental “illness” that didn’t previously exist.

That isn’t to say that we shouldn’t be concerned. Heroin was a technological advance over opium. And my favourite, scotch, is a big improvement over the brews of yesteryear. But video games reflect technological evolution at an unprecedented scale. Their appeal may increase exponentially, and what we see today may be the beginning of a new age of compulsive play. In fact, the attractiveness of video games says more about the brilliance of designers and their stunning technology than anything else. There is no regulating body in place to control the addictiveness of commercial products, unless they happen to be booze or drugs. So game players young and old are at the mercy of corporate giants motivated primarily by profit. And they are moving fast.

Yet gaming has unique benefits, as well as potential pitfalls. Firstly, video games are a lot of fun. Second, they can be good for you. Dozens of studies have shown correlations between video game use and improved spatial processing, multitasking, attentional control, and perseverance. And (sorry to have to add this, parents) the games many of us hate the most – first-person shooters – get top grades for cognitive enhancement. Games also improve emotional self-control and social skills. Today’s kids play games with teams of other kids, who may be friends from school or strangers from across the planet, people whose real names they’ll never know but whom they learn to care about and trust. And lastly, recent research reveals a Goldilocks effect. One to two hours of daily screen time (including WhatsApp, movies and video games) are optimal for teens’ “mental wellbeing,” that is to say, better than either no screen time or more than three or four hours daily.

A new direction in gaming research is to use the inherent appeal of the games – the thing that makes them so attractive – to help to improve child mental health. The Playnice Institute develops and tests games that are potent at counteracting childhood anxiety, the most serious psychological problem facing US families. Rather than try to drag anxious or depressed kids to the therapist’s office once a week – a strategy that has only limited chances of success– psychological researchers are teaming up with designers to structure game environments to help anxious kids to control their emotions and build self-confidence, both on the screen and in what we like to call real life.

So the attractiveness of gaming cuts both ways. I hope our kids will be OK because we control their screen time. Other children won’t have that kind of monitoring, or won’t get “addicted” until they’ve left home. I recently met a young man who desperately wanted my help, having squandered his entire undergraduate career in his efforts to lead Roman legionaries to victory over the barbarians. And there’s a gaming culture growing quickly among teens and preteens that’s completely beyond most parents’ understanding or control. Not only are kids getting transfixed by the games themselves, they are being ushered into YouTube communities that mess with their very identities, measuring merit in terms of wins, kills, levels, and skins (what their Fortnite avatars wear in battle). Those things make life so much more exciting than schlepping from home to school to sports and music lessons. We don’t yet know whether that is good or bad for our kids. What we do know is that it’s a competition we won’t easily win.

Defining a certain amount of gaming as an addiction isn't easy, and the new diagnostic label is unlikely to help. The WHO wants to enable doctors and insurers to decide who's addicted and who's not, based on the same stodgy metrics they have used for years: a minimum of 12 months of "persistent or recurrent" behaviour of "sufficient severity". These arbitrary delineations have never been reliable for deciding who's depressed or anxious enough to be treated one way or another. I doubt they'll do better with gaming.

Psychiatric labels for identifying psychological problems, boxes and baskets, can be useful in getting us to pay attention. Video games are powerful, and they can alter people's behaviour. But to identify addiction, we have to go deeper – to ask what it is that people are missing that makes them pursue something so compulsively. And that's a lot more complicated.

- Marc Lewis is a neuroscientist and author of *The Biology of Desire: Why Addiction is Not a Disease*



'Is an obsession with Minecraft as bad as an alcohol problem?' Photograph: Alamy

[Are video games really addictive? | Games | The Guardian](#)

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:



1. Share and research the definition of any unfamiliar vocabulary and / or cultural references.
2. Invent a more impactful and engaging headline for this article.
3. Highlight three examples where you agree with the arguments of the writer. Be prepared to discuss why you have chosen them.
4. In a top five list of 'things that are potentially harmful to a teenager's wellbeing', where would you place gaming - and what else would be on your list?
5. 'In China, teens are being hauled off to "boot camp" for spending more time online than is deemed appropriate.' Is this such a bad idea? Discuss!



SHONA. 23 YEAR OLD DISABILITY & THEATRE BLOGGER | HERTFORDSHIRE

02/10/2020

i'm tired of fighting for my rights as a disabled person

Inaccessible shops. Failed assistance on trains. Denied access to taxis. Strangers touching me in the street. The plastic straw ban. 59% of Covid deaths are disabled people. "You should complain about that". "You should report them". But why? I am exhausted from complaining, from ranting on Twitter, from fighting for scraps of accessibility. The responsibility is always on me, it's my problem to change. If I can't access the world then I'm the one who has to scream and shout to change that. If I'm too tired then the problem simply continues, no one else is going to protest in the street for me or start a campaign on their own time. Disabled people are running on empty though, and I can't keep up this pace forever.

When I first became disabled I would complain about every barrier I came across, constantly sending emails to businesses, bus companies, train companies and more. It was almost a part time job. The small wins every now and then kept me going, shops buying a ramp and train companies providing more training, but it never stopped the frequency of which I was experiencing these things. So, I started writing. Surely education was the way to go, if I shared my story then people would want to help, right? I'm preaching to the choir when I do this though, speaking to the same people who already know about these issues, even when writing for mainstream media. And on those occasions where I manage to break through that wall there's simply a period of outrage from the public, followed by more complacency as they return to their lives and I return to the same inequality and discrimination. So, it's no surprise that I'm feeling drained.

Just recently I had a conversation with a taxi driver about taxis refusing to pick me up as a wheelchair user, and he emphasised the importance of reporting these drivers. But, why is it on me to solve this problem? When things go wrong for disabled people we're told to complain, but people already know these issues are happening, I'm not telling a train company anything new when I tell them that they failed to provide my assistance. So, what

is it actually changing? Why is the responsibility on me to record and complain about every access problem and discrimination I face? There are some days where there are multiple incidences that I could complain about, but I do not want this to be my life. Sometimes I just want to move on from a bad situation, I don't want to relive it and consume myself in the negativity of it for weeks after. But, I'm told that if I want things to improve, that's what I must do. I must sacrifice my own wellbeing.



Access and discrimination is not just disabled people's problem to solve though, in fact I go as far to say that very little responsibility sits with us. It's mostly non-disabled people making our lives difficult, so why aren't they the ones encouraged to complain and challenge the system? When non-disabled people put the responsibility on us what they're saying is 'I don't care enough to change things myself because it doesn't affect my daily life'. Disabled people are tired though. We don't all want to be activists, and we shouldn't be forced to be them. Human rights issues are the responsibility of every human to solve, and whilst this is an issue across the board it really feels like disability has been heavily left behind. Disabled people have accounted for 59% of Covid deaths here in the UK, so where is the uproar? I've seen hardly anyone non-disabled on my social media address this issue, get angry about this statistic. That is an astounding number and it terrifies me how easily this country has been able to brush it off, I truly feel like mine and other disabled people's lives don't matter as much. We're just collateral damage. It makes me wonder, if our deaths don't make people listen, what will?

My instinct was to end this post with ideas and solutions of how you can help disabled people, but even the act of doing that is work I'm having to do as a disabled person to fight for my rights. I implore you to hunt out our voices and educate yourself, rather than relying on us to provide you with every tool and piece of information you need. Disabled people's emotional wellbeing matters and I will not stand to see it disrespected anymore.

[Shona Louise: I'm Tired Of Fighting For My Rights As A Disabled Person](#)



ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:

1. Share and research the definition of any unfamiliar vocabulary and / or cultural references.
2. Cross out any words or phrases that you don't think add value to the writer's argument and compare what you have left.
3. Highlight two examples of the writer using rhetorical questions. How would answer these? Be prepared to discuss your ideas.
4. 'My instinct was to end this post with ideas and solutions of how you can help disabled people'. What would you add to this list?
5. 'Disabled people have accounted for 59% of Covid deaths here in the UK, so where is the uproar? ... We're just collateral damage'. Is this true? Discuss!

Reaching for the Moon: autobiography extract by Katherine Johnson, 2019



Katherine Johnson and her coworkers at NASA; Johnson is in the second row, second from the left. (Image credit: Courtesy of Katherine Johnson)

The night before my first day of work at NACA, I touched up my navy-blue tweed pleated skirt and jacket and checked my stockings to make sure they didn't have any runs. I woke up the next morning without an alarm clock, excited and a little nervous. I sensed that my life was about to change.

"What secret project do you think the government will have me working on?" I wondered aloud to Jimmie, who lay awake in bed alongside me.

"I don't know, honey, but I know it will be important."

"I guess I'll have to wait to find out!"

When I arrived at Langley later that morning, I discovered that since I had a bachelor's degree in mathematics, I would be hired as a mathematician. Women whose degrees were in other disciplines were hired to be what were called computers.

My heart beat with excitement as a woman led me over to the Aircraft Loads Building. Then she opened a door and ushered me in.

As I stepped into the room, I witnessed something that I'd never seen before: a couple of dozen Colored women sitting at desks, typing on Monroe or Friden desktop calculating machines.

What an amazing sight!

I stood there astounded. All of the women were neatly dressed in blouses and jackets and skirts. Back then a room filled with so many professional Colored women was a rare sight. And not one of them was a teacher or a nurse, the professions that were most common for Colored career women. Nor were any of them domestics, the job so many Colored women worked in back then.

These were the highly regarded computers I'd been hearing about. The click, click, click of their fingers running across the ten-by-ten gray manual keyboards of their calculators resonated throughout the room. Long before the electronic device we now know as a computer came into being, "computer" was the job title given to the women who performed mathematical calculations for Langley's engineers. I knew that the engineers were all men; the computers were all women. Most were White; a smaller number were Colored. I'd learn that all of us were known as computers with skirts.



At NACA, I didn't feel segregation in quite the same oppressive way that I did out in the world. Though there were Colored bathrooms and a Colored section of the cafeteria, I usually ate at my desk. Margery Hannah treated us well, and I spent lots of time working with or for White men and women, which was different from what was happening throughout much of the South. We had a mission and we worked on it. What was important was to do your job.

Of course, at the end of the day, segregation dictated that we went home to separate communities, our children attended separate schools, we worshipped in separate churches — we even shopped for clothes in different places and went to different grocery stores.

But the next day we'd arrive at Langley and come together to do our jobs all over again.

Now, when I first reported to the branch, the men would just hand me work and tell me they needed me to make calculations. Back then women were supposed to stay in their place. Lots of people — both men and women — believed that women were too emotional and that we should stay home and raise the children and leave all the thinking and working up to men. Of course, this belief system was less common among Colored families, since we weren't allowed to have the best jobs. Colored women were very poorly paid, and so were our husbands. Our families needed women's income in order to survive, so as a result most of us worked. Still, in the workforce, women were to stay in their place.

About two weeks into my new job, a man burst into the office, seemingly in a hurry.

"I need two Colored computers," he stated over the din of the typing.

There was a specific reason that he'd come to West Computing as opposed to East Computing, where the White computers worked. The hurdle for White women computers to be hired was lower than it was for Colored women. Indeed, many of them were the engineers' wives. White women could get hired without having a college degree. Colored women were not only required to have a college degree, ideally in math, but they also had to have a high GPA. In fact, NACA recruited Colored students who had earned honors in math.

Dorothy pointed at me and another woman and said, "Katherine, Erma."

We grabbed our purses and lunch bags, then followed the man over to the Maneuver Loads Branch of the Flight Research Division, where we were then assigned to an all-male research team. We were given desks near each other and were each given a calculating machine.

When I sat down, the engineers sitting next to me got up and walked away. I wasn't sure why. Was it because I was Colored? A woman? Something else? There was no way to know for sure, but I found it amusing. Eventually, we became good friends.

One of the engineers wanted to me to help him analyze some data from a flight test. I was to look through his long calculation sheets and compute an answer for him. That was my job, so I would do it to the best of my ability.

I pulled out my graph paper and my French curves, which would help me draw curves of different radii. But as I double-checked the engineer's math, I saw something unexpected. The calculation didn't look right. I soon discovered that he'd made an error involving a square root.

I thought for a moment about how to approach the situation. It would be unusual for a Colored person to question a White person. I knew that in some situations questioning White people could be quite

dangerous. We learned to pick our battles for the greater good and let other things go by the wayside. It was also unusual for a woman to question a man. Back then most women just did what they were told to do. They didn't ask questions or take the task any further.

But if you want to know the answer to something, you have to ask a question. Always remember that there's no such thing as a dumb question except if it goes unasked. Girls and women are capable of doing everything that boys and men are capable of doing. And sometimes we have more imagination than they do.

Knowing this, I took a deep breath before I spoke. "Is it possible you could have a mistake in your formula?"

Now, if the wind tunnels hadn't been running in the background, with their constant whoosh and roar, I might have heard a pin drop in the room.

I'd crossed a social line, and everyone froze. I could almost hear some of the engineers thinking, Who is she, a colored woman, to question a White male engineer?

The man came over to my desk and looked over my shoulder.

"I could have made a mistake," he said, "but we've been using that formula for years."

"I understand that, sir. I just think that it's inaccurate."

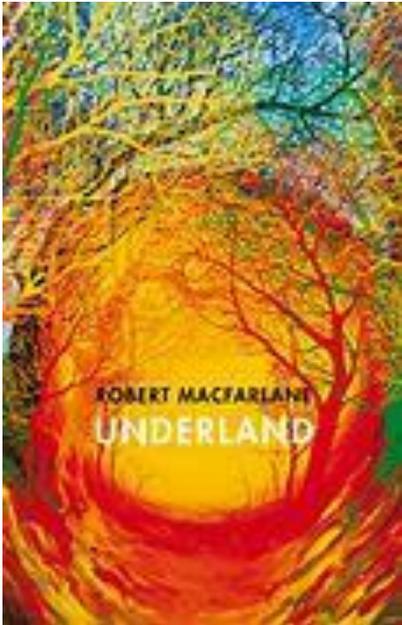
His face began to turn the color of a cherry cough drop.

I was right and he knew it.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:



1. Share and research the definition of any unfamiliar vocabulary and / or cultural references.
2. At the end of the extract, what might be an even better way to describe the expression on the male engineer's face?
3. Highlight two moments when you admire the attitude and reactions of the writer. Be prepared to discuss your choices.
4. 'Lots of people-both men and women-believed that women were too emotional and that we should stay home and raise the children and leave all the thinking and working up to men.' Does this belief still have relevance today? Discuss.
5. 'Always remember that there's no such thing as a dumb question except if it goes unasked.' How valuable is this advice?



An extract from *Underland: A Deep Time Journey* by Robert Macfarlane, 2019

It happens that afternoon when we are all together, standing near the tents and talking inconsequentially, enjoying the lethargy of the rest day. A shot-like snap begins it, whip-cracking across the fjord and the mountain walls.

‘A hunter?’ I say.

But it isn’t a hunter, it is the glacier, and the sound of the crack marks the fall of a bus- sized block of ice from high on the calving face. We do not see it fall but we see it swill back up and bob.

Without that outrider of the main event, we might have missed what followed – an event that, as Helen puts it later, ‘rarely occurs under witness’.

‘There!’ shouts Bill, but we are all already looking there, where the first block fell, for it seems that a white freight train is driving fast out of the calving face of the glacier, thundering laterally through space before toppling down towards the water, and then the white train is suddenly somehow pulling white wagons behind it from within the glacier, like an impossible magician’s trick, and then the white wagons are followed by a cathedral – a blue cathedral of ice, complete with towers and buttresses, all of them joined together into a single unnatural sideways- collapsing edifice – and then a whole *city* of white and blue follows the cathedral as we shout and step backwards involuntarily at the force of the event, even though it is occurring a mile away from us, and we call out to each other in the silence before the roar reaches us, even though we are only a few yards from each other, and then all of the hundreds of thousands of tons of that ice-city collapse into the water of the fjord, creating an impact wave forty or fifty feet high.

And then something terrible happens, which is that out of the water where the city has fallen there up-surges, rising – or so it seems from where we are standing – right to the summit of the calving face itself, a black shining pyramid, sharp at its prow, thrusting and glistening, made of a substance that *has to be* ice but looks like no ice we have seen before, something that resembles what I imagine meteorite metal to be, something that has come from so deep down in time that it has lost all colour, and we are dancing and swearing and shouting, appalled and thrilled to have seen this repulsive, exquisite thing rise up that should never have surfaced, this stardropped berg-surge that has taken three minutes and 100,000 years to conclude.

Twenty minutes later and the fjord is calm again. The tide swills gently in rock pools. Lap of water on gneiss, pop of melting ice, sun glittering on the margins of the water, sedgegrass flicking in the wind. The obscenity might never have occurred.

The berg has settled in the water as a sloping blue table, hundreds of square feet in area. Gulls land on this new territory in their dozens, shake out their wings, tuck one leg up into their breast feathers for warmth, hunker down.

I startle a single sanderling from a fold of bronze gneiss.

The next day at the tideline I find a small iceberg, rounded and dark blue, stranded in a rock pool. It is a relic of the dark star. I am just able to lift it. I carry it in both arms, cradling it, calling to the others.

It numbs my hands and chest. It feels far heavier than it should. I stumble uphill towards the camp and place it on top of a boulder by the tents.

The sun shines through it. Air bubbles inside it show as silver: wormholes, right- angle bends, incredible zigzags and sharp layers.

That night an Arctic fox comes to our camp, a playful blue shadow.

The little berg takes two days to melt. It leaves a stain on the dark rock that won't vanish.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:



1. Share and research the definition of any unfamiliar vocabulary and / or cultural references.
2. Can you think of a different metaphor (not the cathedral city) to create an image of the collapsing glacier?
3. Highlight three sentences that could be worthy of a 'incredibly well written sentence award'! Be prepared to discuss your choices and reasons.
4. 'We are dancing and swearing and shouting, appalled and thrilled.' Can you think of any other life events that might inspire this sort of reaction?!
5. Elsewhere in this book, the writer asks, 'what does human behaviour matter when Homo sapiens will have disappeared from Earth in the blink of a geological eye?' Discuss your reaction to this question.

OPINION

I helped put Brandon Bernard on federal death row. I now think he should live.

ANGELA MOORE | INDIANAPOLIS STAR

The news that Brandon Bernard was scheduled for execution on Dec. 10 hit me hard.

Brandon was convicted and sentenced to death in Waco 20 years ago; I was the federal prosecutor who defended that death verdict on appeal. I wrote briefs arguing that Brandon had a fair trial and his sentence was justified, even though he was only 18 at the time of the crime and did not shoot either victim.

I then argued to a panel of federal appellate judges to affirm his conviction and death sentence, which they did.

After that appeal, I moved on to the next case, because that was my job. I had been a state prosecutor in San Antonio before becoming a federal appellate prosecutor, and I had prosecuted death penalty cases before. Like a lot of people, I didn't think about the day when the government would take Brandon out of his prison cell and kill him.

A few years later, I left behind my work as a prosecutor and entered the world of private legal practice. I have since represented many young people caught up in the criminal justice system, often younger than Brandon at the time of his crime.

Many of these kids were in the wrong place or with the wrong people, like Brandon. Sometimes, like Brandon, they did not anticipate that a violent crime would occur until circumstances got away from them.

My experience with teenagers who have committed violent crimes, especially boys of color, has taught me much about the recklessness and fragility of adolescents, as well as their ability to mature and change.

Science tells us Brandon Bernard's brain was still developing.

For one thing, I know that in the 20 years since Brandon was sent to Death Row, science has made dramatic strides in understanding the youthful brain. In 2000, it was not widely appreciated that the brain remains physically immature well past age 18. Since then, science has established that the structures of the brain are not fully developed in young men until they are 25 or 26.

That's why Brandon, even though legally an adult at age 18, lacked an adult's capacity to control his impulses, consider alternative courses of action or anticipate the consequences of his behavior. This scientific truth played a decisive role in the Supreme Court's recent decisions holding that juveniles should be treated differently in the criminal justice system.

The same science shows that 18-year-olds are no different from 17-year-olds in both immaturities and potential for rehabilitation.

Brandon Bernard was seen less for his youth, more for his race

Another troubling fact revealed by recent research is that people tend to view Black boys – like Brandon – as more blameworthy than their white counterparts, even where other relevant circumstances are identical.

Indeed, one study showed that Black boys are misperceived as older relative to their peers of other races. Black teens like Brandon are systematically denied the “benefit” of their youth, which is outweighed by their race in the eyes of police, prosecutors, judges and jurors.

Through time and experience, I have come to appreciate that a teenager who takes part in committing a terrible crime may transform over the years into a thoughtful adult. From everything I have read, it appears that Brandon is just such a person – someone who, even in prison, has maintained rich relationships with his loved ones and worked to find meaning in his life by helping at-risk teenagers avoid a criminal path.

Remarkably, in two decades of incarceration Brandon has never been disciplined for a single violation of prison rules.

Jurors who supported a death sentence have changed their minds

Several of the jurors who voted for Brandon’s death sentence, having reflected further on his case and having learned more about his background and successful adjustment to prison, have disavowed their death verdict and publicly called for Brandon’s life to be spared.

They do not doubt his guilt, and are not asking for him to be released, but they do feel he should be allowed to live out the rest of his life in prison.

I have come to feel the same way. I always took pride in representing the United States as a federal prosecutor, and I think executing Brandon would be a terrible stain on the nation’s honor.

We rightly must reserve the death penalty for the “worst of the worst,” if as a nation we continue to impose execution as a punishment. Having learned so much since 2000 about the maturation of the human brain, and having seen Brandon grow into a humble, remorseful adult fully capable of living peacefully in prison, how can we say he is among that tiny group of offenders who must be put to death?

I urgently hope that a court or the president will step in to stop Brandon’s execution.



Angela Moore served as an assistant U.S attorney for the Western District of Texas from 1998 to 2002, and as an assistant district attorney in Bexar County, Texas, from 1990 to 1998. She also has worked as a public defender and as a staff attorney for the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals. Today, she is an attorney in private practice in San Antonio.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:



1. Share and research the definition of any unfamiliar vocabulary and / or cultural references.
2. Can you rewrite the first sentence without losing what it adds to the writer’s overall meaning?
3. Highlight a sentence in the article that makes you feel most inclined to feel sympathy for Brandon Bernard. Be prepared to discuss this.
4. ‘Science has established that the structures of the brain are not fully developed in young men until they are 25 or 26’ – how relevant is this, do you think, when considering criminal cases in teenagers / young people?
5. According to the writer, ‘We rightly must reserve the death penalty for the “worst of the worst”’ - discuss your reactions to this statement.



An exclusive extract from Michelle Obama's memoir: 'How would you feel if Daddy ran for president?'

The former first lady recalls campaigning in 2008, and how her daughters got used to a new normal

Image: The Obama family, the day Barack Obama announced his candidacy for president in February 2007. Photograph: Anne Ryan.

So much of the last decade had been about trying to strike a balance between my family and my work, figuring out how to be loving and present for Malia and Sasha while also trying to be decent at my job. But the axis had shifted: I was now trying to balance parenting with something altogether different and more confusing – politics, America, Barack's quest to do something important.

The magnitude of what was happening in Barack's life, the demands of the campaign, the spotlight on our family, all seemed to be growing quickly. After the Iowa caucuses [in January 2008], I'd decided to take a leave of absence from my position at the hospital, knowing that it would be impossible, really, to stay on and be effective. The campaign was slowly consuming everything. I'd been too busy after Iowa to even go over and box up the things in my office or say any sort of proper goodbye. I was a full-time mother and wife now, albeit a wife with a cause and a mother who wanted to guard her kids against getting swallowed by that cause. It had been painful to step away from my work, but there was no choice: my family needed me, and that mattered more.

And so here I was at a campaign picnic in Montana [on 4 July that year], leading a group of mostly strangers in singing "Happy Birthday" to Malia, who sat smiling on the grass with a hamburger on her plate. Voters saw our daughters as sweet, I knew, and our family's closeness as endearing. But I did think often of how all this appeared to our daughters, what their view was looking outward. I tried to tamp down any guilt.

We had a real birthday party planned for the following weekend, one involving a heap of Malia's friends sleeping over at our house in Chicago and no politics whatsoever. And that evening, we'd hold a more private gathering back at our hotel. Still, as the afternoon went on and our girls ran around the picnic grounds while Barack and I shook hands and hugged potential voters, I found myself wondering if the two of them would remember this outing as fun.

I watched Sasha and Malia these days with a new fierceness in my heart. Like me, they now had strangers calling their names, people wanting to touch them and take their pictures. Over the winter, the government had deemed me and the girls exposed enough to assign us Secret Service protection, which

meant that when Sasha and Malia went to school or their summer day camp, usually driven by my mother, it was with the Secret Service tailing them in a second car.

At the picnic, each one of us had our own agent flanking us, canvassing the gathering for any sign of threat, subtly intervening if a well-wisher got overenthusiased and grabby. Thankfully, the girls seemed to see the agents less as guards and more as grown-up friends, new additions to the growing knot of friendly people with whom we traveled, distinguishable only by their earpieces and quiet vigilance. Sasha generally referred to them as “the secret people”.



Michelle Obama and President Barack Obama attend the national Christmas tree lighting ceremony
Photograph: Pool/Getty Images

The girls made campaigning more relaxing, if only because they weren’t much invested in the outcome. For both me and Barack, they were a relief to be around – a reminder that in the end our family meant more than any tallying of supporters or bump in the polls. Neither daughter cared much about the hubbub surrounding their dad. They weren’t focused on building a better democracy or getting to the White House. All they really wanted (really, really wanted) was a puppy. They loved playing tag or card games with campaign staff during the quieter moments and made a point of finding an ice-cream shop in every new place they went. Everything else was just noise.

To this day, Malia and I still crack up about the fact that she’d been eight years old when Barack, clearly feeling some sense of responsibility, posed the question one night while he was tucking her into bed. “How would you feel if Daddy ran for president?” he’d asked. “Do you think that’s a good idea?”

“Sure, Daddy!” she’d replied, pecking him on the cheek. His decision to run would alter nearly everything about her life after that, but how was she to know? She’d just rolled over then and drifted off to sleep.

That day in Butte, we visited the local mining museum, had a water-pistol battle and kicked a soccer ball around in the grass. Barack gave his stump speech and shook the usual number of hands, but he also got to anchor himself back inside the unit of us. Sasha and Malia climbed all over him, giggling and regaling him with their thoughts. I saw the lightness in his smile, admiring him for his ability to block out the peripheral distractions and just be a dad when he had the chance. He chatted with Maya and Konrad [Obama’s half-sister and brother-in-law] and kept an arm hooked around my shoulder as we walked from place to place.

We were never alone. We had staff around us, agents guarding us, members of the press waiting for interviews, onlookers snapping pictures from a distance. But this was now our normal. Over the course of the campaign, our days had become so programmed that we'd watched our privacy and autonomy slowly slip away, both Barack and I handing nearly every aspect of our lives over to a bunch of twentysomethings who were highly intelligent and capable but still couldn't know how painful it could feel to give up control over my own life. If I needed something at the store, I had to ask someone to get it for me. If I wanted to speak to Barack, I usually had to send a request through one of his young staffers. Events and activities I didn't know about would sometimes show up on my calendar.

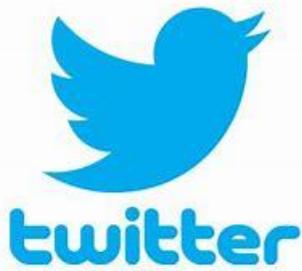
But slowly, as a matter of survival, we were learning to live our lives more publicly, accepting the reality for what it was.

[An exclusive extract from Michelle Obama's memoir: 'How would you feel if Daddy ran for president?' | Culture | The Guardian](#)

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:



1. Share and research the definition of any unfamiliar vocabulary and / or cultural references.
2. Can you rewrite the final sentence but add some figurative language (e.g. a simile or metaphor etc.) to further enhance its tone and meaning?
3. Highlight a sentence in the article that makes you feel most uncomfortable about the 'new normal' the Obama family are accepting. Be prepared to discuss this.
4. What do you think you would find hardest about having a parent in such a public position? Is there anything you would actually prefer?
5. 'It is selfish to take on a high profile, powerful position (like the USA presidency) if you have a young family.' Discuss.



November 2019

Dear Misters Ant' and Dec'

I am writing once again about the abuse of animals on 'I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here'. I make no apologies for being tenacious.

I'd like to call upon your consciences to reconsider the validity of your 'bush-tucker trials', to cease these and to end all involvement of animals in your forthcoming series.

You see since the programme first aired in 2002 the world and its attitudes have moved on. Many of us have always found these abuses repugnant but now a far greater number of people have woken up to the fact that we are facing a Climate and Environment Emergency and that we are precipitating a mass extinction event. Here are a couple of statistics for you to think about ...

Since around the time you were both born we have lost between 40 and 50% of all the world's wildlife.

Since you were born we've lost 90 million birds from the UK countryside.

We are currently losing species of animals, plants and fungi at a rate of 1000 to 10,000 times faster than what is measured as natural.

All this means we have a global biodiversity crisis.

But what's that got to do with IACGMOOH mistreating animals? Well, it's simple really ... because it's about the urgent need to culture a respect for life. All life. You would not ask your contestants to eat a live baby monkey, but in ecological terms a monkey is no more valuable, no more important than a grub or a spider or cricket. And when you continue to demonise rodents and reptiles by re-enforcing stereotypes which prostrate them as repulsive or dangerous you risk undoing all the work my colleagues and I do to try and promote an essential understanding of the way all these species play a role in stabilising a beautiful, harmonious and sustainable planet.

Further, to say that exploiting animals for entertainment is a thing of the past in civilised societies in the 21st century should be a given. Circuses have gone, dancing bears have gone, cock and dog fighting are the sad preserve of psychopathic criminals ... we have no performing dolphins in the UK and no Chimpanzees dressed up for tea time. The cruel exploitation of wildlife for gratuitous entertainment on your programme is now no more than an ugly anachronism. It's embarrassing the great reputation of the UK as a 'nation of animal lovers'.

I am certain that you and the imaginative producers at ITV could find very entertaining ways of replacing these segments of your show, so can I please, on behalf of a large and growing number of people, ask you to immediately stop abusing animals on 'I'm a Celebrity'.

Declan, you have a daughter. Please think about how she will perceive your actions as she grows into a world increasingly devoid of wildlife ... we are now all aware that we have a duty to safeguard our world for future generations.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Packham

[Chris Packham: Eating bugs same as 'eating baby monkey' on I'm A Celeb | Metro News](#)

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:



1. Share and research the definition of any unfamiliar vocabulary and / or cultural references.
2. How many persuasive techniques can you find and identify in the letter?
3. Highlight a paragraph you think could be improved. Be prepared to discuss why you have chosen it and what advice you would give to Chris Packham about how it could be more effectively written.
4. 'I am certain that you and the imaginative producers at ITV could find very entertaining ways of replacing these segments of your show' – how many ideas can you suggest?
5. Chris Packham has repeatedly written similar letters about the programme but he has still not succeeded in ending the use of live animals in the trials. Isn't it time he gave up? Discuss.

Extracts from Emmeline Pankhurst's Speech: Freedom or death – Hartford, Connecticut on November 13, 1913



I am here as a soldier who has temporarily left the field of battle in order to explain – it seems strange it should have to be explained – what civil war is like when civil war is waged by women. I am not only here as a soldier temporarily absent from the field at battle; I am here – and that, I think, is the strangest part of my coming – I am here as a person who, according to the law courts of my country, it has been decided, is of no value to the community at all; and I am adjudged because of my life to be a dangerous person, under sentence of penal servitude in a convict prison.

It is not at all difficult if revolutionaries come to you from Russia, if they come to you from China, or from any other part of the world, if they are men. But since I am a woman it is necessary to explain why women have adopted revolutionary methods in order to win the rights of citizenship. We women, in trying to make our case clear, always have to make as part of our argument, and urge upon men in our audience the fact – a very simple fact – that women are human beings.

Suppose the men of Hartford had a grievance, and they laid that grievance before their legislature, and the legislature obstinately refused to listen to them, or to remove their grievance, what would be the proper and the constitutional and the practical way of getting their grievance removed? Well, it is perfectly obvious at the next general election the men of Hartford would turn out that legislature and elect a new one.

But let the men of Hartford imagine that they were not in the position of being voters at all, that they were governed without their consent being obtained, that the legislature turned an absolutely deaf ear to their demands, what would the men of Hartford do then? They couldn't vote the legislature out. They would have to choose; they would have to make a choice of two evils: they would either have to submit indefinitely to an unjust state of affairs, or they would have to rise up and adopt some of the antiquated means by which men in the past got their grievances remedied.

Your forefathers decided that they must have representation for taxation, many, many years ago. When they felt they couldn't wait any longer, when they laid all the arguments before an obstinate British government that they could think of, and when their arguments were absolutely disregarded, when every other means had failed, they began by the tea party at Boston, and they went on until they had won the independence of the United States of America.

It is about eight years since the word militant was first used to describe what we were doing. It was not militant at all, except that it provoked militancy on the part of those who were opposed to it. When women asked questions in political meetings and failed to get answers, they were not doing anything militant. In Great Britain it is a custom, a time-honoured one, to ask questions of candidates for parliament and ask questions of members of the government. No man was ever put out of a public meeting for asking a question. The first people who were put out of a political meeting for asking questions, were women; they were brutally ill-used; they found themselves in jail before 24 hours had expired.

We were called militant, and we were quite willing to accept the name. We were determined to press this question of the enfranchisement of women to the point where we were no longer to be ignored by the politicians.

You have two babies very hungry and wanting to be fed. One baby is a patient baby, and waits indefinitely until its mother is ready to feed it. The other baby is an impatient baby and cries lustily, screams and kicks and makes everybody unpleasant until it is fed. Well, we know perfectly well which baby is attended to first. That is the whole history of politics. You have to make more noise than anybody else, you have to make yourself more obtrusive than anybody else, you have to fill all the papers more than anybody else, in fact you have to be there all the time and see that they do not snow you under.

When you have warfare things happen; people suffer; the noncombatants suffer as well as the combatants. And so it happens in civil war. When your forefathers threw the tea into Boston Harbour, a good many women had to go without their tea. It has always seemed to me an extraordinary thing that you did not follow it up by throwing the whiskey overboard; you sacrificed the women; and there is a good deal of warfare for which men take a great deal of glorification which has involved more practical sacrifice on women than it has on any man. It always has been so. The grievances of those who have got power, the influence of those who have got power commands a great deal of attention; but the wrongs and the grievances of those people who have no power at all are apt to be absolutely ignored. That is the history of humanity right from the beginning.

Well, in our civil war people have suffered, but you cannot make omelettes without breaking eggs; you cannot have civil war without damage to something. The great thing is to see that no more damage is done than is absolutely necessary, that you do just as much as will arouse enough feeling to bring about peace, to bring about an honourable peace for the combatants; and that is what we have been doing.

We entirely prevented stockbrokers in London from telegraphing to stockbrokers in Glasgow and vice versa: for one whole day telegraphic communication was entirely stopped. I am not going to tell you how it was done. I am not going to tell you how the women got to the mains and cut the wires; but it was done. It was done, and it was proved to the authorities that weak women, suffrage women, as we are supposed to be, had enough ingenuity to create a situation of that kind. Now, I ask you, if women can do that, is there any limit to what we can do except the limit we put upon ourselves?

If you are dealing with an industrial revolution, if you get the men and women of one class rising up against the men and women of another class, you can locate the difficulty; if there is a great industrial strike, you know exactly where the violence is and how the warfare is going to be waged; but in our war against the

government you can't locate it. We wear no mark; we belong to every class; we permeate every class of the community from the highest to the lowest; and so you see in the woman's civil war the dear men of my country are discovering it is absolutely impossible to deal with it: you cannot locate it, and you cannot stop it.

"Put them in prison," they said, "that will stop it." But it didn't stop it at all: instead of the women giving it up, more women did it, and more and more and more women did it until there were 300 women at a time, who had not broken a single law, only "made a nuisance of themselves" as the politicians say.

You won your freedom in America when you had the revolution, by bloodshed, by sacrificing human life. You won the civil war by the sacrifice of human life when you decided to emancipate the negro. You have left it to women in your land, the men of all civilised countries have left it to women, to work out their own salvation. That is the way in which we women of England are doing. Human life for us is sacred, but we say if any life is to be sacrificed it shall be ours; we won't do it ourselves, but we will put the enemy in the position where they will have to choose between giving us freedom or giving us death.

So here am I. I come in the intervals of prison appearance. I come after having been four times imprisoned under the "Cat and Mouse Act", probably going back to be rearrested as soon as I set my foot on British soil. I come to ask you to help to win this fight. If we win it, this hardest of all fights, then, to be sure, in the future it is going to be made easier for women all over the world to win their fight when their time comes."

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:



1. Share and research the definition of any unfamiliar vocabulary and / or cultural references.
2. Imagine you were in the audience when this speech was delivered. Annotate how an audience might have reacted at different points e.g. cheering, clapping, silent concentration, whispering, booing in disagreement etc.
3. The writer uses a range of metaphors in this speech. Highlight the metaphor you find most effective and be prepared to explain why you have chosen it.
4. The campaign to win the vote for British women was won. What would you describe as the 'hardest of all fights' in today's society?
5. 'Is there any limit to what we can do except the limit we put upon ourselves?' Discuss this quotation from the speech; is this helpful when thinking about your own life?

'A crash could have left us rolling through space': an extract from Tim Peake's autobiography



The British astronaut describes a close call on arriving at the International Space Station

Tim Peake, Sat 3 Oct 2020

The Soyuz capsule docks with the International Space Station. Photograph: NASA/Getty Images

Yuri Malenchenko is one of the most accomplished Russian cosmonauts in history. By December 2015 he is already the veteran of five separate missions and has logged just over 641 days in orbit, which means he has spent more time off the planet than almost anybody.

He is also the calmest man I have ever met. A quietly spoken, undemonstrative 53-year-old, Yuri is one of those naturally composed people who can reassure you with the smallest gesture. All in all, I could not have hoped for a steadier commander to be strapped in beside on my first voyage into space.

Which is why I know it's a bad sign when I glance across at Yuri and notice that there's a tremor in his hands.

And it had all been going so well. For six hours our tiny Soyuz capsule, blasted into orbit by rocket from Kazakhstan, had travelled through space at 25 times the speed of sound towards our destination, around 400km from Earth. With just 400 metres to go until contact, the spacecraft, in automated mode, began its standard fly-around of the International Space Station (ISS) before locking on to the docking port for the final approach.

Creeping softly forward, we are now less than 20 metres away, close enough for me to see the space station's cluttered docking area. The camera view of our port begins to loom large on the monitor in front of Yuri. And, unbeknown to me, our orbit has just begun to carry us over the United Kingdom, a nice piece of synchronicity with which to kick off this whole adventure: me arriving at my temporary home for the next six months in full view of my permanent one.

I'm going to feel a bit sheepish if I return to Earth 12 hours after leaving.

And then, at 17 metres from contact, the master alarm goes off and red lights flash on the console. The Soyuz is aborting. Why? There has never been an automated docking that aborted this close to the space station. Even for Yuri, this is new territory.

It's a thruster sensor failure, apparently. But no worries. There's a procedure. In space flight, there's always a procedure. In this case, the procedure is that Yuri will switch to manual control and fly us in by hand. Simple.

Well, in theory. The Soyuz gently backs out to 90 metres from the space station and then Yuri gets ready to bring us forward again. Our orbit is taking us from day to night, and the lighting conditions are less than ideal. In the pitch darkness of space, the searchlight on our little craft suddenly seems to have the feeble range of a bedroom torch. Yuri hunches forward and peers into the periscope in front of him.

That's when I notice the trembling hands and think, well, if Yuri is anxious, maybe this isn't such a great situation.

At this point, I should outline some of the consequences of a crash. The ISS cost \$100bn to build, took 10 years of multinational collaboration, and is arguably the most advanced structure humanity has ever made. The worst-case scenario would be a rupture to the space station, or a rupture to the Soyuz, or both, leading to a rapid depressurisation – survivable, possibly, but a major catastrophe.

Alternatively, glancing against a solid object could send the craft into a tumble that might prove impossible to arrest. The space station is not able to grapple a Soyuz capsule with the robotic arm; unlike with cargo vehicles, it has no means to reach out mechanically and grab you. You would be left rolling through space for ever.

Coming in practically blind, the Soyuz yaws about 30 degrees off target, drifting towards the back of the space station. This is where Yuri's experience really tells. A more junior cosmonaut might have ploughed on in the hope of correcting the manoeuvre, with possibly disastrous consequences. Not Yuri. Despite the pressure and the voices from mission control in his ears, he has the composure to gently back the Soyuz away out into space. Then he settles himself and prepares to try again.

Maybe it's just my habitual mindset as a helicopter pilot, which is to be constantly checking your systems and contingency plans, but uppermost among my concerns at this point is our fuel level. There needs to be enough fuel to get us home safely – and at this stage, yes, there's plenty. Yet all this unplanned flying on manual control is eating into our precisely budgeted supply. If we stay out here, it's not impossible that we will have to give up on docking altogether and head back to Earth.

This after the buildup, the hype and fanfare, the ceremonial farewells, the emotional partings from Rebecca, my wife, our two boys, and my parents, the big departure in clouds of smoke with the nation looking on. Suffice to say, I'm going to feel a bit sheepish if I return 12 hours later.

As Yuri once more lowers his face to the periscope and begins to line up the Soyuz for its third attempt at docking, I'm keen that he should get it right.

Yuri hunches forward to peer into the periscope. Once again, Tim Kopra and I are largely powerless to help him, unable to see what he's seeing. The capsule begins to move in and almost straight away I can sense the difference in Yuri's demeanour. The tension leaves him, he is steady-handed. He has very clearly got this under control as he brings the capsule in for a textbook-manual docking.

As we put the Soyuz into hibernation mode, we heard the voice of Scott Kelly, our commander who was already aboard the ISS, over the radio. "Welcome to space," he said. "What would you like for dinner?"

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:



1. Share and research the definition of any unfamiliar vocabulary and / or cultural references.
2. If you could ask the writer why he concluded with the words of Scott Kelly, what do you think he would say?
3. Highlight the sentence you think creates the most tension. Be prepared to explain your choice.
4. The Daily Mirror has described the autobiography as 'Full of courage, camaraderie and daring escapades, this reads like a Boys' Own adventure.' Write a similar promotional blurb based on this extract.
5. 'The ISS cost \$100bn to build, took 10 years of multinational collaboration' – is this really a good use of time, talent and money? Discuss.



Romesh Ranganathan: 'I'll stop talking about race when I stop experiencing racism'

Romesh Ranganathan: 'I don't believe in make-or-break moments in your life.' Photograph: Pål Hansen for the Guardian

Is it OK to tell Irish jokes in a fake Sri Lankan accent? The comedian on talent shows, trolls and his right to offend

Romesh Ranganathan

Sat 29 Sep 2018



My first ever gig was at a Pontins holiday camp when I was nine. It had a talent competition and I decided to enter as a standup, with a book of jokes from which I took all of my material. A lot of the jokes seemed to have no problem playing with the stereotype of Irish people being stupid. They were incredibly racist, but the bigger crime here, comedy-wise, was that my set was entirely built on stolen material.

There was a joke about a man buying a Rolls-Royce who is a bit short of cash. He goes out into the street to see if someone can lend him 10p to make up the price. He bumps into an Irish man – we know he's Irish, because his name is Paddy. Paddy says, "Here's 20p. Buy me one as well."

The point of that joke is that Paddy is incredibly stupid, because he's assumed that Rolls-Royces cost 10p. I'd never even met an Irish person, but I had the clear impression that they were all thick – and the Pontins crowd seemed to agree: the joke went down a storm.

That was one of the many hugely racist jokes I told as part of my set that night at Pontins, Camber Sands, which I also delivered completely in a Sri Lankan accent – a very early recognition of the fact that my ethnic minority roots could be exploited for comedic value.

Years later, when I was working as a trolley wally in a supermarket, I tackled the boredom by talking to the customers in as many different accents as I could manage. I started with one that I didn't think would alert any suspicion – generic Asian – then moved on to Irish, Welsh, Australian and American. I am pretty sure I even smashed out a Chinese voice. I discovered it takes a very ballsy person to say, "I'm sorry, but I don't think that's how you really speak", particularly to an Asian-looking, English-speaking guy with a lazy eye.

Anyway, I won the Pontins competition. There were only two other contestants, and one was a girl playing a kazoo. She was shit, but at least she was performing her own material. I can't remember what the other guy did. I didn't care, because this fat Asian kid reading out loud in a fake accent blew them both out of the water.

I don't believe in make-or-break moments in your life. If you screw something up, it can knock you down, but that only means you'll be better when you get back to where you were before. I also think luck has a huge part to play. You can be good at comedy, which means you'll be given spots, but beyond that it is luck that pushes you to the next level. There are loads of brilliant comedians who haven't had the breaks, and plenty of average comedians who have. I don't think I'm the best comedian they could have got for anything I've done. And if I ever forget that, I can just look at Twitter, where I'll quickly find someone saying, "Can somebody explain to me why somebody as unfunny as @RomeshRanga keeps managing to get on TV?"

The one thing that all ethnic minority comedians seem to have to contend with is people telling them they talk about race too much. This happens if they mention it at all. There are certain people who, when they see a female or an ethnic minority comic, are basically waiting for them to mention something that they can accuse them of talking about all the time. For women, it's periods and relationships; for ethnic minority comics, it's race. I've talked about this with the comic Rob Beckett, who said he joked about his teeth and being working class a lot, yet he'd never been accused of talking about either too much. If a woman wants to go on about periods or I want to talk exclusively about race, that should not be an issue. We should be letting market forces decide. If audiences stop laughing, that's your clue – but if not, then it's nobody's right to pick you up on it. They can always go elsewhere.

One night, we were filming *Mock The Week*, on which I've appeared a few times, when Hugh Dennis made an Isis joke. I said it would have gone better if I'd laughed, too, so that people felt reassured. It became a running joke throughout the recording that every time somebody told a gag that had any connection with race, I would laugh loudly and everyone would feel better. The night that show went out I got absolutely slaughtered on Twitter: "@RomeshRanga talking about race again. Quelle surprise"; "@RomeshRanga waited a whole two minutes before talking about his race". I found it unfair. People seem to want a moratorium on anybody discussing anything that doesn't directly affect them, which means I'm being dictated to by people who have no direct experience of the subject I'm discussing.

If you can make all of my life experiences the same as a white guy's, and you can stop me experiencing racism, which I do all the time, then I'll stop talking about race. And if you have ever tweeted me or spoken to me suggesting I talk about it too much, that's a pretty racially intolerant position to adopt.

Some comedy clubs are really hot on making sure hecklers get dealt with. *Komedia* in Brighton is particularly good at it, but on one occasion it did backfire. I was doing a set about the difficulties of taking your children on holiday when one of the crowd shouted, "Just sack off the little ragamuffins!"



I was surprised to hear such an old-fashioned word, so I said, "Sorry, mate, did you just use the word 'ragamuffin'?" The Brighton in the crowd came out then, as somebody else said: "You cannot say that to him. That's racist!"

I have no idea how it's racist. This person just heard "ragamuffin", made an association with Jamaican patois and took that to mean the guy was being racist, which I think in itself might be quite racist. Suddenly the bouncers came up and grabbed the guy to throw him out.

I started protesting, but they put their hands up to say, "We've got this, don't worry." Next thing I knew, he was being frogmarched out.

I finished my set, then ran outside to find him and get him back into the club, but he had gone. I felt terrible. If by any chance he's reading this now, I'd like him to know that I'm sorry.

But, really, you shouldn't be so racist, mate.

Adapted from Straight Outta Crawley: Memoirs Of A Distinctly Average Human Being,
by Romesh Ranganathan

[Romesh Ranganathan: 'I'll stop talking about race when I stop experiencing racism' | Comedy | The Guardian](#)

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:



1. Share and research the definition of any unfamiliar vocabulary and / or cultural references.
2. What three words could you use to describe the tone of this article?
3. Highlight the sentence you found funniest when reading this. Be prepared to explain your choice.
4. 'The night that show went out I got absolutely slaughtered on Twitter: "@RomeshRanga talking about race again. Quelle surprise"; "@RomeshRanga waited a whole two minutes before talking about his race". I found it unfair.' Do you agree that these comments are unfair?
5. 'Comedy is an effective way to fight racism.' Discuss.

'You did not act in time': Greta Thunberg's speech to MPs

Tue 23 Apr 2019 ['You did not act in time': Greta Thunberg's full speech to MPs | Environment | The Guardian](#)



▲ Greta Thunberg tells MPs: 'Our future was sold' - video

My name is Greta Thunberg. I am 16 years old. I come from Sweden. And I speak on behalf of future generations.

I know many of you don't want to listen to us – you say we are just children. But we're only repeating the message of the united climate science.

Many of you appear concerned that we are wasting valuable lesson time, but I assure you we will go back to school the moment you start listening to science and give us a future. Is that really too much to ask?

In the year 2030 I will be 26 years old. My little sister Beata will be 23. Just like many of your own children or grandchildren. That is a great age, we have been told. When you have all of your life ahead of you. But I am not so sure it will be that great for us.

I was fortunate to be born in a time and place where everyone told us to dream big; I could become whatever I wanted to. I could live wherever I wanted to. People like me had everything we needed and more. Things our grandparents could not even dream of. We had everything we could ever wish for and yet now we may have nothing.

Now we probably don't even have a future any more.

Because that future was sold so that a small number of people could make unimaginable amounts of money. It was stolen from us every time you said that the sky was the limit, and that you only live once.

You lied to us. You gave us false hope. You told us that the future was something to look forward to. And the saddest thing is that most children are not even aware of the fate that awaits us. We will not understand it until it's too late. And yet we are the lucky ones. Those who will be affected the hardest are already suffering the consequences. But their voices are not heard.

Is my microphone on? Can you hear me?

Many people say that we don't have any solutions to the climate crisis. And they are right. Because how could we? How do you "solve" the greatest crisis that humanity has ever faced? How do you "solve" a war? How do you "solve" going to the moon for the first time? How do you "solve" inventing new inventions?

The climate crisis is both the easiest and the hardest issue we have ever faced. The easiest because we know what we must do. We must stop the emissions of greenhouse gases. The hardest because our

current economics are still totally dependent on burning fossil fuels, and thereby destroying ecosystems in order to create everlasting economic growth.

“So, exactly how do we solve that?” you ask us – the schoolchildren striking for the climate.

And we say: “No one knows for sure. But we have to stop burning fossil fuels and restore nature and many other things that we may not have quite figured out yet.”

Then you say: “That’s not an answer!”

So we say: “We have to start treating the crisis like a crisis – and act even if we don’t have all the solutions.”

“That’s still not an answer,” you say.

Then we start talking about circular economy and rewilding nature and the need for a just transition. Then you don’t understand what we are talking about.

We say that all those solutions needed are not known to anyone and therefore we must unite behind the science and find them together along the way. But you do not listen to that. Because those answers are for solving a crisis that most of you don’t even fully understand. Or don’t want to understand.

You don’t listen to the science because you are only interested in solutions that will enable you to carry on like before. Like now. And those answers don’t exist any more. Because you did not act in time.

Avoiding climate breakdown will require cathedral thinking. We must lay the foundation while we may not know exactly how to build the ceiling.

Sometimes we just simply have to find a way. The moment we decide to fulfil something, we can do anything. And I’m sure that the moment we start behaving as if we were in an emergency, we can avoid climate and ecological catastrophe. Humans are very adaptable: we can still fix this. But the opportunity to do so will not last for long. We must start today. We have no more excuses.

We children are not sacrificing our education and our childhood for you to tell us what you consider is politically possible in the society that you have created. We have not taken to the streets for you to take selfies with us, and tell us that you really admire what we do.

We children are doing this to wake the adults up. We children are doing this for you to put your differences aside and start acting as you would in a crisis. We children are doing this because we want our hopes and dreams back.

I hope my microphone was on. I hope you could all hear me.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:



1. Share and research the definition of any unfamiliar vocabulary and / or cultural references.
2. Count the references to listening in this speech: why are so many?
3. Highlight the five most important sentences in this speech. Be prepared to explain your reasoning.
4. Your local MP asks you if you agree with everything Greta said in her speech; how do you respond?
5. ‘Children striking from lessons in the name of the climate crisis is a waste of time and should be treated as truancy by headteachers.’ Discuss.

Maradona the footballer had no flaws; Maradona the man was a victim

Jorge Valdano

Thu 26 Nov 2020 17.53

There is something perverse about a life that fulfils all your dreams and Diego suffered the generosity of fate like no other. The terrible journey from human to myth divided him in two.



Diego Maradona is congratulated by Jorge Valdano after he scored the second goal in Argentina's 2-0 win over Belgium in the 1986 World Cup semi-final. Photograph: Bob Thomas/Bob Thomas Sports Photography/Getty

Those who screw up their faces sneering as they contemplate the latest incarnation of Maradona, the one who had difficulties walking, struggled to talk, embraced [the Venezuela president Nicolás] Maduro and did whatever he felt like, would be better off abandoning this farewell which embraces the genius and absolves the man. They will not find a single reproach here because the footballer had no flaws and the man was a victim. Of whom? Of me or of you, for example, who at some moment must have eulogised him pitilessly.

There is something perverse about a life that fulfils all your dreams and Diego suffered the generosity of fate like no other. The terrible, terminal journey from human to myth divided him in two: on the one side Diego; on the other Maradona. Fernando Signorini, his fitness coach, a sensitive, intelligent man who may well have known him better than anyone else, used to say: "I would follow Diego to the end of the earth; I wouldn't follow Maradona to the corner."

Diego was another product of the poor, humble neighbourhood in which he was born. Fame came young and with it a glorification that set in motion a series of consequences, the worst of which was the inevitable temptation to scale the heights of his legend every day. In an addictive personality, that was a fatal need.

If football is universal, so is Diego, because Maradona and football are synonymous. But at the same time, he was unequivocally Argentinian, which helps to explain the emotional power he has always had in our country, handing him impunity. Because he was a genius he stopped having limits imposed upon him from adolescence and because of where he was from, he grew up proud of his class. Such was his symbolic, sentimental power that with Maradona the poor defeated the rich and the unconditional support that came from below was

proportional to the mistrust from above. The rich hate to lose. But in the end even his greatest enemies were forced to bow to him. They had no other choice.

He wasn't much more than 15 when he began to apply for the post of God of football. He did so, moreover, in a country that embraced him, emotionally, like a messiah because in Argentina this is a game that only reaches the mind via the heart. The fascination for his art, brought from the street to the stadium, transcended fan allegiances. It did not matter what shirt he wore; he was Argentinian and that was sufficient to unleash pride in the people.



The Argentina squad before the 1986 World Cup final, with Jorge Valdano on the right of the bottom row and Maradona standing behind.
Photograph: Bongarts/Getty Images

As it was his work, not his life, that made him great, let's start there. There is an early image of Diego, a poor boy in a humble setting, controlling a ball with the concentration of a bureaucrat and the happiness of a child, mastering the toy of his life. First with his left foot, then with his head, he does not let it drop. The scene is like an amiable discussion, a gentle argument with a ball that still occasionally rebels against him, still resists but will soon join him. In the image, it is about to escape but Diego does not let it; instead he controls it, subjects it to his will, wins it over. He does not control it, he tames it. He is not much more than 10 years old, and there is a glimpse of the virtuoso already, but the ball and Diego are still getting to know each other.

The ball and its master: an idyll that grew with time, to the point that watching them together was a spectacle of its own. When he trained, to give but one example, he would send it high into the sky with a touch that only he could understand still less apply and while the ball travelled on its journey, he would do exercises below, as if he couldn't remember that he had left it hanging up there.

When at last the ball fell to his level, he would look up, acting as if he was surprised to see it there, send it sailing back into the sky and forget about it for a while longer, until it returned to him again. He knew exactly where and when they would be reunited; his precision, his command, ensured that. His infinite repertoire left you with a complex.

We were in Berlin waiting for a game one time when Carlos Bilardo, the Argentina manager, insisted on the need to perfect our technique. As he was never a man to stop short of obsession, he kept repeating that an Argentinian player should live life with the ball permanently at his feet “morning, afternoon, evening and night”. He repeated it day after day, until one day Maradona came out of his room juggling the ball, took a lift juggling the ball, arrived in the dining room juggling the ball, sat down and, without letting it drop, began to nibble at the bread on the table. Bilardo came in, saw him and a smile stretched across his face, proud to be proven right. “See?” he said, “that’s why he’s Maradona.” Every time I told that story it made me smile; today, it comes to me wrapped in sadness.

The virtuosity he reached with the ball, so admired by us all, was taken to the game itself, his understanding such that he made a habit of perfection. He had the peripheral vision of an owl; the elegant nobility of a magician performing an illusion that tricks everyone; the power of a 4x4 to pull away, escaping; flawless passing to combine with teammates; lethal shooting, and a Napoleonic personality with which to go into the greatest battles.

Nowhere was he as happy as on the pitch, where he had a date with his true love: the ball. And yet, out there he also had the ability to dominate the stage, as if he did not feel part of the team, but unique, alone. More like a rock star sending the crowd wild than a footballer. That self-assurance he had with the ball, that abusive superiority over it, dominance, became part of his mentality, forging him until that dark day when the personality became bigger than the person. He was different, he felt different, he behaved differently.

Somewhere in that reflection, two ideas formed that, misunderstood, may offend and which must be clarified. First, when I suggested that he was more singer, more star, than footballer. It is an image that aims to exalt the soloist, there in the spotlight, never to diminish the footballer. He lived and died with a footballer’s soul. Second, his status as a soloist, an individual: he stood out from the team, shining with an incomparable light of his own, but not only did he feel part of the team, he was also generous with his teammates, committed to them. The happiness he felt on the pitch became solidarity, making him brave, talented to the point of exhibitionism and as competitive as a starving man. That is why I am convinced that just being able to tread that 100 x 70-metre carpet of grass, and do so gloriously, made life worthwhile for him.

Given that this account must talk too of Diego’s life of excess, we have to go to Naples, where in eight years lived with the intensity and incident of a century, his football took Napoli to heights they had never known before and brought glory that was new even for him, but where his life went off the rails. Pleasure and pain, light and dark, the tallest peaks and deepest wells. Health, which was football. And sickness, which infected his life. No one that I know of underwent such a long, torturous journey.

At both ends, in both incarnations, on the pitch and in life, resided a superman. On the pitch because, surrounded by normal players, he was stronger even than the referees, the power of the north, Arrigo Sacchi’s Milan, and Naples’ own history of poverty, in sport and society. It was him against the world. And he won.

At the 1986 World Cup, where he played as if in a state of grace, his genius reached its highest peak the day he defeated England. Here we find the words Homer applies to Ulysses, the same descriptions applied to the hero of the Odyssey: sagacious, cunning, astute, shrewd, artful, crafty, deceitful, tricky. Diego’s football was built on beauty, creativity, pride and bravery and, that afternoon against England, upon a deep feeling for Argentina too, as well as on his talent and awareness. Diego scored a goal that was stratospheric and another in which he cheated. And that is the best example of a phrase that gets used so often and in moments less appropriate than this: he was above good and evil.

In his life there resides a superman too because if Jesus Christ rose again on the third day, which isn’t easy, Maradona rose again at least three times, which isn’t easy either. His physical strength was comparable to his footballing genius. All of his many excesses were an attack on his sport, his craft, and yet they still did not ruin his extraordinary talent, nor prevent it from being expressed, even though he sometimes played in alarming

condition. In admiration and pity, many different emotions coexist. Today even the ball, the most inclusive, shared of toys, feels alone, inconsolably weeping for the loss of its owner, its master. All of those who love football, real football, cry with it. And those of us who knew him will cry even more for that Diego who, in recent times, had almost disappeared beneath the weight of his legend and his life of excess. Goodbye, great captain.

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[Maradona the footballer had no flaws – Maradona the man was a victim | Jorge Valdano | Football | The Guardian](#)

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:



1. Share and research the definition of any unfamiliar vocabulary and / or cultural references.
2. How does the writer's opening paragraph set the tone for the rest of the article.
3. 'He was different, he felt different, he behaved differently.' Highlight three examples of how the writer presents Maradona as out of the ordinary. Be prepared to explain your choices.
4. In 1986, Maradona infamously described the use of his hand to score a goal against England as 'a little with his head, and a little with the hand of God': is it fair that the writer acknowledges this incident by describing Maradona as 'above good and evil'?
5. Our celebrity culture creates too many victims who 'disappear beneath the weight of their legend.' Discuss.

Chadwick Boseman – 1976-2020: a real-life superhero who gave hope to many

The man behind 'Black Panther' changed the world – and he did it with talent, dignity and a good heart

By Amon Warmann, 29th August 2020

[Chadwick Boseman obituary: a real-life superhero who gave hope to many \(nme.com\)](https://www.nme.com/news/music/chadwick-boseman-obituary-a-real-life-superhero-who-gave-hope-to-many)



Chadwick Boseman has died aged 43 of cancer. Credit: Getty

Chadwick Boseman's death by colon cancer at the age of 43 feels unfathomable. Although he appeared in relatively few movies, he had already become one of the most important actors of his generation. It seems certain that the best was yet to come. His passing is not just an immeasurable loss to cinema but to Black culture, which he entertained and enriched immeasurably through his art and voice.

It had almost become a running joke that every time there was an important Black male figure getting the big screen treatment, Boseman was the man you called. The safe choice? Perhaps. But it was also an astute one. The dignity, grace and good-heartedness that Boseman so naturally radiated was perfect for the likes of baseball legend Jackie Robinson, music pioneer James Brown and civil rights titan Thurgood Marshall. His performances were the highlight of these films.

No role that Boseman played was more iconic than T'Challa, aka Black Panther. From the moment the camera first panned up to him in 2016's *Captain America: Civil War*, it was clear he was the perfect choice to portray the Warrior King of Wakanda, a fictional African nation untouched by colonialism. There's a regal quality he exudes that is incredibly rare but crucial for such a character – and it's evident every moment he's on screen. Some critics saw his understated approach in 2018's *Black Panther* and wrote that he was overshadowed by Michael B. Jordan (Killmonger) and Letitia Wright (Shuri). But cool, calm and composed was exactly what was needed for T'Challa, a King who always does what is right, not what is easy.

It is not an overstatement to say that Boseman's T'Challa changed the world. The build-up to *Black Panther* was a



Chadwick Boseman as T'Challa in 'Black Panther'. Credit: [Alamy](#)

cultural moment for the ages. Celebrities hired out cinemas so that the less privileged got a chance to see it. Fans spent hours watching and re-watching the trailers – and then fashioning elaborate, detailed cosplay inspired by the movie. Videos of Black kids celebrating when they found out they were going to watch *Black Panther* early went viral. T'Challa was not the first Black superhero to get the big screen treatment – that honour goes to Wesley Snipes' *Blade* – but he was the first that had Black kids all over the globe claiming him as their own. There has never been anyone or anything which has inspired a comparative amount of Black joy in my lifetime.

I experienced this joy first-hand when I attended the *Black Panther* UK premiere in February 2018. For a man who's grudgingly made peace with the fact that I'll be one of maybe three people of colour (if I'm lucky) at every press screening, seeing Black people of every shade representing several parts of the diaspora, all proudly wearing their traditional garments was a revelation. There has never been a screening like it before or since. By the time *Avengers: Endgame* rolled around a year later, Marvel had gotten the message. It is of no small significance that T'Challa, Okoye, and Shuri are the first to emerge from the portals in that final battle, poised and ready to take the baton from departing MCU stalwarts Captain America and Iron Man in the franchise's next phase. Speaking of which, the mere fact that Marvel's upcoming slate features an all-Asian movie like *Shang-Chi* is just one example of the game-changing impact *Black Panther* will continue to have for years to come.

That Boseman was battling colon cancer for the past four years only enhances his reputation. While filming tough, draining action sequences in addition to the press junkets and red carpets, Boseman led the *Black Panther* cast with the same dignity and grace he put into all his roles, both outwardly and inwardly. The best example of this was at the 2019 SAG Awards, where he gave a passionate, memorable speech about being "young, gifted, and Black".

Perhaps Boseman's kingly demeanour is most evident in Spike Lee's *Da 5 Bloods*, released earlier this year. He played the wonderfully named Stormin' Norman, a fallen squad leader of four Vietnam veterans who search for his remains years later. As Lee told *The Atlantic*, "The character is a superhero. Who do we cast? We cast Jackie Robinson, James Brown, Thurgood Marshall, T'Challa... Chad is a superhero!" Slowly but surely, by portraying so many iconic Black figures, Boseman became iconic in his own right. In doing so, he's left a legacy that won't soon be forgotten. Rest in power, my King.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:



1. Share and research the definition of any unfamiliar vocabulary and / or cultural references.
2. The final sentence of this obituary is nominated for a writers' talent award. What reasons would be given to support this nomination?
3. Highlight the three sentences you think are most important in summing up the achievements of Chadwick Boseman.
4. 'It is not an overstatement to say that Boseman's T'Challa changed the world.' Is this an exaggeration? Discuss.
5. In order to be more representative and diverse, what advice would you give Marvel about inventing a new superhero for the big screen?

Me? I thought, OBE me? Up yours, I thought'

An invitation to the palace to accept a New Year honour... you must be joking. Benjamin Zephaniah won't be going. Here he explains why.



Angry: Benjamin Zephaniah, Thu 27 Nov 2003

I woke up on the morning of November 13 wondering how the government could be overthrown and what could replace it, and then I noticed a letter from the prime minister's office. It said: "The prime minister has asked me to inform you, in strict confidence, that he has in mind, on the occasion of the forthcoming list of New Year's honours to submit your name to the Queen with a recommendation that Her Majesty may be graciously pleased to approve that you be appointed an officer of the Order of the British Empire."

Me? I thought, OBE me? Up yours, I thought. I get angry when I hear that word "empire"; it reminds me of slavery, it reminds of thousands of years of brutality, it reminds me of how my foremothers were raped and my forefathers brutalised. It is because of this concept of empire that my British education led me to believe that the history of black people started with slavery and that we were born slaves, and should therefore be grateful that we were given freedom by our caring white masters. It is because of this idea of empire that black people like myself don't even know our true names or our true historical culture. I am not one of those who are obsessed with their roots, and I'm certainly not suffering from a crisis of identity; my obsession is about the future and the political rights of all people. Benjamin Zephaniah OBE - no way Mr Blair, no way Mrs Queen. I am profoundly anti-empire.

There's something very strange about receiving a letter from Tony Blair's office asking me if I want to accept this award. In the past couple of months I've been on Blair's doorstep a few times. I have begged him to come out and meet me; I have been longing for a conversation with him, but he won't come out, and now here he is asking me to meet him at the palace! I was there with a million people on February 15, and the last time I was there was just a couple of weeks ago. My cousin, Michael Powell, was arrested and taken to Thornhill Road police station in Birmingham where he died. Now, I know how he died. The whole of Birmingham knows how he died, but in order to get this article published and to be politically (or journalistically) correct, I have to say that he died in suspicious circumstances. The police will not give us any answers. We have not seen or heard anything of all the reports and investigations we were told were going to take place. Now, all that my family can do is join with all the other families who have lost members while in custody because no one in power is listening to us. Come on Mr Blair, I'll meet you anytime. Let's talk about your Home Office, let's talk about being tough on crime.

This OBE thing is supposed to be for my services to literature, but there are a whole lot of writers who are better than me, and they're not involved in the things that I'm involved in. All they do is write; I spend most

of my time doing other things. If they want to give me one of these empire things, why can't they give me one for my work in animal rights? Why can't they give me one for my struggle against racism? What about giving me one for all the letters I write to innocent people in prisons who have been framed? I may just consider accepting some kind of award for my services on behalf of the millions of people who have stood up against the war in Iraq. It's such hard work - much harder than writing poems.

And hey, if Her Majesty may be graciously pleased to lay all that empire stuff on me, why can't she write to me herself. Let's cut out the middleman - she knows me. The last time we met, it was at a concert I was hosting. She came backstage to meet me. That didn't bother me; lots of people visit my dressing room after performances. Me and the South African performers I was working with that night thought it rather funny that we had a royal groupie. She's a bit stiff but she's a nice old lady. Let me make it clear: I have nothing against her or the royal family. It is the institution of the monarchy that I loathe so very much, the monarchy that still refuses to apologise for sanctioning slavery.

There is a part of me that hopes that after writing this article I shall never be considered as a Poet Laureate or an OBE sucker again. Let this put an end to it. This may lose me some of my writing friends; some people may never want to work with me again, but the truth is I think OBEs compromise writers and poets, and laureates suddenly go soft - in the past I've even written a poem, *Bought and Sold*, saying that.

There are many black writers who love OBEs, it makes them feel like they have made it. When it suits them, they embrace the struggle against the ruling class and the oppression they visit upon us, but then they join the oppressors' club. They are so easily seduced into the great house of Babylon known as the palace. For them, a wonderful time is meeting the Queen and bowing before her presence.

I was shocked to see how many of my fellow writers jumped at the opportunity to go to Buckingham Palace when the Queen had her "meet the writers day" on July 9 2002, and I laughed at the pathetic excuses writers gave for going. "I did it for my mum"; "I did it for my kids"; "I did it for the school"; "I did it for the people", etc. I have even heard black writers who have collected OBEs saying that it is "symbolic of how far we have come". Oh yes, I say, we've struggled so hard just to get a minute with the Queen and we are so very grateful - not.

I've never heard of a holder of the OBE openly criticising the monarchy. They are officially friends, and that's what this cool Britannia project is about. It gives OBEs to cool rock stars, successful businesswomen and blacks who would be militant in order to give the impression that it is inclusive. Then these rock stars, successful women, and ex-militants write to me with the OBE after their name as if I should be impressed. I'm not. Quite the opposite - you've been had.

Writers and artists who see themselves as working outside the establishment are constantly being accused of selling out as soon as they have any kind of success. I've been called a sell-out for selling too many books, for writing books for children, for performing at the Royal Albert Hall, for going on *Desert Island Discs*, and for appearing on the *Parkinson* show. But I want to reach as many people as possible without compromising the content of my work.

What continues to be my biggest deal with the establishment must be my work with the British Council, of which, ironically, the Queen is patron. I have no problem with this. It has never told me what to say, or what not to say. I have always been free to criticise the government and even the council itself. This is what being a poet is about. Most importantly, through my work with the council I am able to show the world what Britain is really about in terms of our arts, and I am able to partake in the type of political and cultural intercourse which is not possible in the mainstream political arena. I have no problem representing the reality of our multiculturalism, which may sometimes mean speaking about the way my cousin Michael

died in a police station. But then, I am also at ease letting people know that our music scene is more than what they hear in the charts, and that British poetry is more than Wordsworth, or even Motion. I have no problem with all of this because this is about us and what we do. It is about what happens on the streets of our country and not in the palace or at No 10.

Me, OBE? Whoever is behind this offer can never have read any of my work. Why don't they just give me some of those great African works of art that were taken in the name of the empire and let me return them to their rightful place? You can't fool me, Mr Blair. You want to privatise us all; you want to send us to war. You stay silent when we need you to speak for us, preferring to be the voice of the US. You have lied to us, and you continue to lie to us, and you have poured the working-class dream of a fair, compassionate, caring society down the dirty drain of empire. Stick it, Mr Blair - and Mrs Queen, stop going on about the empire. Let's do something else.

['Me? I thought, OBE me? Up yours, I thought' | Books | The Guardian](#)

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:



1. Share and research the definition of any unfamiliar vocabulary and / or cultural references.
2. The writer manages to sound furious but is also humorous. How does he achieve this?
3. Do you admire or ridicule Zephaniah's attitude towards the OBE? Highlight three sentences that most powerfully support this view.
4. If you had to nominate someone you know for an OBE, who would you choose and why?
5. OBEs are awarded to 'cool rock stars, successful businesswomen and blacks who would be militant in order to give the impression that it is inclusive' – discuss.



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