

Candidate A evidence

How Music Broadens The Mind

For a long time, research has found that music has a positive effect on the brain, as listening to music has been found to help people who are stressed, while studies have found that background music can make studying seem like less of a chore and can make doing homework pass a lot quicker. There are several benefits to listening to music while doing homework, such as improved memory and aided concentration, while classical music has been scientifically proven to have helped students achieve higher grades. Evidence also proves that listening to music boosts creativity within a person and helps them to work faster if given a task to complete, therefore proving music's capability to broaden the mind.

Research has found that music has several benefits when it comes to learning as it has been found that music can aid concentration, boost creativity, reduce stress and anxiety and can even improve memory. Music has even been proven to help make a person become kinder as one study discovered that children as young as fourteen months were more helpful after listening to music. Music's capability to improve learning is supported by findings on the so-called 'Mozart Effect', where a group of students were found to have achieved higher grades and have improved concentration after listening to twenty minutes of a piece of music composed by Mozart. Evidence to support the Mozart effect is backed up by scientists' recommendations that classical music is the best background music to have on while studying, as it has no distracting or aggressive lyrics, overly fast tempos and is often peaceful and relaxing and has been found to increase a person's focus, creative mood and productivity and to aid students with retaining information they have learned, while other studies have found that certain pieces of classical music, including well known pieces such as Beethoven's 'Für Elise' and Vivaldi's 'Spring' from the Four Seasons were the best pieces of classical music to help students with studying. Other types of music found to be best for studying are film soundtracks (due to the lack of distracting lyrics or overly fast tempos and generally consisting of classical music), ambient spa music and New Age or EDM music with either few lyrics or no lyrics at all. Nature sounds, such as birdsong and waterfall sounds, were also found to have helped students study better than those who listened to pop music while studying. Other studies have found that listening to music while studying was actually better than studying in silence, as complete silence can often be more distracting than music while trying to study. However, it is recommended that whatever music students choose to listen to while studying, they play it at a low volume or do not choose music that is overly fast or upbeat so as to not distract them from their studying.

Music has also been found to improve students' memory, as studies show that students who learn musical instruments were found to have better motor control, more superior memories, reading ability, auditory skills and overall achieved

better grades and ultimately went on to have better careers than those who did not learn an instrument. Students who did not play an instrument were still shown to have improved memory, attention and mental math ability due to listening to music before performing a homework task. Music has also been discovered to have a positive effect on elderly people suffering from dementia or Alzheimer's, reinforced by findings from social worker Dan Cohen for the 2014 documentary-film 'Alive Inside', in which he conducted an experiment that had nursing home residents who suffered from dementia listen to music they had previously enjoyed earlier in their life to see if the music had an effect on their behaviour and moods. During the experiment, the elderly patients were reported to have sung and even danced to the music, proving to scientists that music has the ability to metaphorically open doors in the minds of elderly people suffering from Alzheimer's or dementia. In other studies, undertaken in the USA and Japan, elderly people in good health were found to have achieved better results in tests to do with memory and logistics after partaking in exercise classes with accompanying music, reinforcing music's capability to improve a person's learning.

However, a 2010 study by Dr Nick Perham found that music can interfere with students' revision in subjects that involve reading, writing or a lot of memorisation, as they can be distracted by lyrics or notes in the music they are listening to, especially if the song changes tempo rapidly or has distracting or aggressive lyrics. A recent study undertaken by Cardiff Metropolitan University, in which students were assigned in to four groups which involved revising in complete silence, listening to music they liked and did not like and listening to instrumental music. After those participating were tested on what they were studying, the results found that students who studied in silence achieved 60% more in their exam results, while students who listened to music while studying performed worse than those who studied in silence, regardless if they liked the music they were studying to or not. Other studies have found that listening to music while studying is not recommended for people who have difficulty multi-tasking as they will focus more on the song they are listening to instead of their study material.

In conclusion, many scientific studies have discovered the many positive aspects music can have on a person, ranging from helping them achieve higher grades in education due to music (and in particular classical music)'s ability to improve concentration, memory and mental math ability, to helping to boost creativity in a person. Studies that show that students who learn instruments are more likely to have better memories and reading skills, thus are more likely to get better grades, reinforce scientists' beliefs that music can be used to aid students' learning, as well as just being for their own enjoyment.

Word count- 1,035

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Candidate B evidence

Moorman

David Harker lived on Marsden Moor, a place he had lived for most of his life. In the daytime, the moors provided a great place to walk his dog, however, at night-time, it was a different story. Even though he was nearly fifty, David still didn't like how dark and desolate the moors were and often considered moving in to the village just so that he could be around other people

One particular foul night, where rain lashed sideways across the moors and branches were being blown about like paper, David was in his house watching a documentary about Stephen Hawking talking about the possibility of the existence of aliens. There's no such thing as aliens, David thought to himself, but as he picked up the TV remote, he felt a strange feeling overcome him. It was as if someone had turned off his hearing. The feeling only lasted for a few seconds though and David was alerted to where he was by the sound of his dog scratching on the door, wanting to be let out. David sighed loudly, before he found his dog's lead and reluctantly set out in to the pouring rain.

The man and the dog set off across the dark, sinister moors. They had just reached the top of the road that overlooked the reservoir when there was a blinding flash that caused the dog to turn on the spot and run at high speed back towards the house. David would have run too, but he was too afraid to move. Fearing the worst, he glanced upwards and saw something- but what was it? It couldn't be a plane- but what else was it? David suddenly realised that what he was looking at was a UFO, but before he could get a closer look, the thing had disappeared. David ran like Usain Bolt back to his house, where he found his dog hiding in its kennel. Instead of going inside, David and his dog jumped in to his Vauxhall Astra and zoomed off down the hill in to the village.

David arrived at his local pub, The Huntsman, and headed inside. He made his way to the bar, where the barman Joe, a mid-forties man with glasses, reached for a glass and asked- 'the usual, Dave'. David said nothing. His mind was still racing after the shock of the UFO sighting. 'Large brandy, please' David managed to say, once he had found his voice. Joe poured a glass of brandy and handed it to David.

'You look like you've seen a ghost' Joe said, once David had finished his brandy. David wasn't sure if he should tell him what he had seen; he had known Joe for a long time, but that probably wouldn't stop him from laughing at him, or worse, think he was drunk at the time.

'I don't know what I saw, but I think it were a UFO' David said. There was silence and then everyone in the pub (apart from Joe and David) started laughing. 'I'm

telling you, I saw summat. It were like nowt I've ever seen' David said. The pub goers were still laughing though. 'UFO? There's no such thing as UFOs' an old woman cackled loudly, while her friend asked David if he was drunk at the time. David had had enough. He turned to the bar, ignoring the laughing from the local madman, Graham, who he later thought would probably have said a similar thing.

'Joe, please tell me you believe me' David said desperately, but he knew how ridiculous asking someone to believe a UFO sighting must sound. 'Of course you weren't drunk at t'time, because you drove down 'ere' Joe said. David was glad that somebody didn't think he was drunk at the time, but as he left the pub and drove home, the locals' words echoed in his thoughts. Maybe he was just seeing things? 'I'll make them believe me even if it takes me forever to do so' David said to himself as he arrived back at his house.

A few days later, David was driving home from his shopping trip in the nearby town of Huddersfield when his car began to lose power and he was forced to pull in at the side of the road. As he got out the car and looked under the bonnet to see what the problem was, he felt the feeling of his hearing being turned off- the same feeling he had felt when the UFO first appeared- come over him. Again fearing the worst, he glanced up at the sky and there it was- the UFO. David slammed the bonnet shut and jumped back in the car- which miraculously started- and raced off towards the village, praying that the UFO would stay in the sky long enough so that the locals would see it and finally believe him.

David arrived at The Huntsman and ran inside. All the conversation instantly stopped when he appeared. 'Well, well, it's Mr UFO!' the old women cackled again. David ignored her. 'I'm telling you, it's out there' he said desperately. A few of the more sceptical locals decided to follow him outside to see the so-called UFO. However, by the time they got outside, the UFO was all but a red dot in the sky and the locals returned inside. 'I'm telling you, that were the same UFO I saw the other day!' David said. 'That weren't a UFO, it were a helicopter or summat!' barked a man wearing a black cap. The other regulars who had been outside nodded in agreement. David didn't bother trying to argue and instead got back in his car and drove away. He was starting to wonder if anyone would believe him. 'Maybe I'm just hallucinating' David thought to himself.

The next night, David had a plan. He, along with Joe, Greg, the village butcher (who also claimed to have seen the UFO) and his dog set up camp on the moors with high definition cameras and waited until the UFO made its appearance. However, hours passed without them seeing anything and they were about to give up when the dog started barking frantically. The three men looked up at the sky and saw the cigar-shaped craft descending down onto the moors. There was a loud hiss as the door slid open and a purple, slimy, six-fingered hand appeared round

the side of the wall. The three men and the dog ran before this thing could get to them, but once they reached the safety of the village, they swore that they would never talk about the UFO again

Word count - 1,107

Candidate C evidence

(Creative)

In the Jaws of the Grand Dragon

Mrs Mackenzie's living room was the lair of a black dragon. The piano; an uncontrollable beast that humiliated all who dared to cross its path. Yet week after week, I would journey into its cave, sit before its gaping mouth, place my fingers on its daunting black and white teeth and wait for the torture to begin - my piano lesson.

For any other kid, Friday afternoons signified the weekend, a chance to sit back and relax after a tiresome week. Freedom from school. The night where you can unwind and forget about maths equations, English essays and French grammar. Every other kid got to go home, relax and enjoy their stress-free night. But not me. From the time I was 9 until I was 15, I absolutely detested Friday after school. Of course back then, it was not called Friday for me but rather "Piano Day".

Every Piano Day, I reluctantly stepped off the bus and into the car, tears welling up in my eyes. Hungry for Friday night pizza, my stomach rumbled as Mum drove me to Mrs Mackenzie's house. Every second that passed in the car took me closer to the doom I knew awaited me. As Mum pulled up to the grey-brick house, I appreciated my last seconds of freedom. I took a deep breath and dragged myself towards the front of the house. As I reached the front door, my shaking hand lifted slowly and pushed the cold door bell. The melancholy sound of the bell rang through the cavernous hall and I waited to be escorted in. As I stood in the cold, thoughts flew through my head. Had I done enough practice the past week? Would I come out crying, again? Maybe I would get lucky and she would be out. But every time without fail and to my utter dismay, I heard the dreaded creak of her footsteps and saw the dark shadow looming up towards me.

Mrs Mackenzie always wore an old fashioned blue dress that draped to just below her knees, and a knitted brown cardigan. Her hair was short and matched the colour of the grey-bricks of her house. Her glasses sat on top of her pointy nose as she looked down upon me in a disapproving manner. Her small, wizened body perfectly matched her stern, traditional personality.

Painfully slowly, she opened the door, her arm outstretched in a wordless sign of greeting. She bared her yellow teeth in what I assumed to be a smile as I stepped into the gloom of her hallway. I was ushered into the spent air of her sitting room. The same ancient lamp gave just enough light onto the old upright piano that stood glaring at me from the opposite wall. If I was lucky, the piano was still torturing the previous victim. I hung my blazer on one of the chairs and sat down, waiting for my turn. In front of me sat piles of colouring books, half completed crosswords and a box of dried out felt-tip pens. I had little interest in finishing one of the crosswords, and it wouldn't have mattered even if I had as the pupil before me stood up, stifled a deep sigh of relief under the glare of Mrs Mackenzie and cast me a knowing smile. With very little conversation, she vacated the piano stool, snatched her coat and left the room as quickly as possible. I barely had time to get out my music pieces before the sound of the front door slamming echoed through the halls and soon returned Mrs Mackenzie. Now it was just me, her, and the menacing piano. Each lesson began with a throat-clearing sound that I roughly translated into "take your seat".

Perched on the piano stool, my voice trembled as I unsuccessfully tried to waste time, asking about her plans for the weekend. Her blunt replies led quickly on to the end of

our conversation and she began asking for the dreaded scales and arpeggios that I had supposedly practised. My eyes were fixated on the notes, not daring to look anywhere else. Half guessing, I placed my fingers on the cold keys and attempted numerous 'memorised' scales. From time to time I would either get a "good" or a disapproving shake of her head. I checked the clock that hung above the piano, but the hands were making painfully slow progress.

On occasion, Mrs Mackenzie would dab the end of her nose with a scrunched up tissue which would then disappear up the sleeve of her cardigan. Now it was time to move onto the endlessly rehearsed Grade 4 piece, "A Prelude in C". I had practised the piece so many times that I was getting sick of hearing it and yet it was never enough for her. Her pencil struck repetitively against the wood of the piano to keep me in check with the time signature. Her beady eyes glared over her thin glasses as she watched my uncoordinated hands reach for the keys. Her jaw was clenching and unclenching as she stopped me for the umpteenth time, picking up on every small mistake, making me repeat the same agonizing passage until I got it just right.

I began to panic as the unfamiliar part of the piece loomed up on me. As I threw my fingers wildly at the keys, she raised her head, looked to the ceiling and sighed. In her icy voice, she abruptly told me I was "just guessing" and muttered something under her breath which was impossible to distinguish. Growing impatient, she nudged me off the chair to show me how it was done. Embarrassed, my heart sank and I willingly stood up. Her curled old fingers glided effortlessly over the keys, putting all my work to shame. Jealous of her natural talent, I watched in awe. This was how the melody was supposed to sound, yet I couldn't perfect it. She grinned proudly and reluctantly moved back to her own crooked chair. I sat down ashamed, not willing to place my hands anywhere near the piano.

As I splayed my fingers and once again returned them to the cold ivory I prayed that I wouldn't mess up this time. She pointed to the middle of the bar and ordered me to begin from there. Immediately, I began to play and managed to successfully get through the rest of the piece with surprisingly little amount of further interruption. When I eventually reached the end, she nodded generously. To my delight the melancholy bell rang through my ears, indicating the next poor pupil to endure their thirty minutes of suffering. Just before exiting the room to answer the door, she announced I was ready to sit my Grade 4 exam and my name was going forward. Wanting to scream "NO!"; I politely nodded and followed her through the dark corridors to her front door. As she welcomed the next young girl in, I thanked her for my awful lesson and bared my teeth in a forced grin. As she slammed the door behind me the smile dropped off my face and I found myself back in the freezing cold.

As I got into the warm car, Mum gave me a welcoming smile. We drove away in silence until she dared to ask how it went; "Fine... she's putting me forward for my grade 4". Mum smirked and asked if I was ready to sit the piano exam. In all truth, I was never ready to sit my grade 4; at that moment all I was ready for was some pizza. Despite this, lurking already in the back of my mind were thoughts of next week's piano lesson in the lair of the black dragon.

Word Count- 1,299

Candidate D evidence

(Discursive)

Why Zoos Should be Endangered

For most families, days out to the zoo are an amazing experience, where they can get up close to animals large and small from far-flung places that they may have only seen in picture books or on TV. However, the reality is not always pretty or cute due to large groups of noisy people gawking at the animals and even harassing them as the animals pace up and down their cages in boredom or frustration or sitting in a corner, lonely and depressed. They may chuck food at them or knock on the glass of their enclosure, increasingly disturbing and distressing these animals. Even those animals that look like they're having fun - the monkeys and penguins - would be much more exciting to see swinging in the jungle, rather than in a cage, or hunting on the ice caps instead of being thrown fish at feeding time. Although it is a commonly held belief that animals do not belong in zoos, we need to look at things from another point of view. If we look at how animals are being endangered, whether by hunting or by reduction of their natural habitat, we can see how zoos can be beneficial to them, serving as a place of safety.

There are many arguments as to why zoos should be banned. Insufficient space is one of the best reasons to support this. No matter how large zoos try to make their enclosures, it will never be able to simulate the space that is required for some of the animals. This lack of space is particularly an issue for animals that travel large distances. According to numerous studies, elephants, which typically travel 30 miles a day, are held captive in places that are on average a thousand times smaller. As a result of this confinement, many of the animals suffer from stress, boredom and depression. This is particularly clear in the case of the penguins at Scarborough Sea Life Centre many of whom are on anti-depressants due to anxiety and stress. This is due to the fact that they're being kept in captivity in a zoo, thousands of miles from where they belong. In the last decade, zoos across the nation have turned increasingly to antidepressants, tranquilizers, and even antipsychotic drugs to ease behavioural problems within enclosures. On top of this, animals are no longer able to survive in their natural habitat due to the fact that animals born into zoos do not learn how to hunt or master necessary skills that are essential to survive in the wild. In addition, removing individuals from the wild further endangers the wild population because the remaining individuals will be less genetically diverse and will have more difficulty finding mates.

Zoos are also morally wrong. We simply do not have the right to capture, confine and breed other animals. Baby animals bring in visitors and money, but this incentive to breed new baby animals leads to overcrowded cages. Surplus animals are sold not only to other zoos, but also to circuses, canned hunting facilities, and even for slaughter. In addition, some zoos just kill their surplus animals outright. The vast majority of captive breeding programs do not release animals back into the wild. The offspring are forever part of the chain of zoos, circuses, petting zoos, and exotic pet

trade that buy, sell and barter animals among themselves and exploit the animals. The zoos they live in can also have atrocious living conditions and animals have sometimes escaped their enclosures, endangering themselves as well as people. This was made abundantly clear at the Virginia zoo where 10 prairie dogs died when their tunnel collapsed, a rhinoceros drowned in the moat of her exhibit, and a zebra narrowly escaped death after jumping into the lion exhibit, while another lost her life when she bolted from a holding pen, struck a fence, and broke her neck. These examples show that often zoos are unable to replicate the normal living conditions that wildlife survive in and they occasionally don't provide safe or secure shelter for these animals.

On the other hand, there are many arguments for keeping zoos the way they are. Zoos have improved significantly in the last 25 or so years. Gone are the old steel-bar enclosures and cold cement cages. Most zoos these days use natural-looking barriers like moats or ditches to separate animals from people, and have mini-habitats that resemble the animals' natural environment. Zoos save endangered species by bringing the animals into a safe environment, where they are protected from poachers, habitat loss, starvation and predators. In 2016, there were 39 animal species listed by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) as extinct in the wild and these species would have vanished totally were it not for captive populations around the world, many of which reside in zoos. Furthermore, many zoos also have breeding programs for endangered species. In the wild, these individuals might have trouble finding mates and breeding. Successful breeding programs brought the Pere David's deer back from extinction. Though this Asian deer ceased to exist in the wild, Chinese and European zoo programs enabled four of the deer to be released back into the wild in 1985, where they're now self-sustaining. A good zoo provides an enriched habitat in which the animals are never bored, are well cared for, and have plenty of space. This means that by bringing people and animals together, zoos educate the public and foster an appreciation of the animals. This exposure and education motivates people to protect the animals.

Finally, zoos are vital for research. Being able to observe and study animals is crucial if we want to contribute to help them and repair the ecosystems. They also help reduce human-animal conflicts and better understand the needs and psychology of animals. Zoos serve as laboratories to learn more about how to fight animal diseases and develop effective animal anaesthetics and other treatments to help more animals in the future.

In conclusion, it is clear to see that there are both positives and negatives for retaining zoos. A zoo is a place where animals live in captivity and are put on display for people to view. From an animal rights standpoint, we do not have the right to breed, capture and confine other animals. On the other hand, the conditions the zoos provide for the animals to live in have greatly improved over time and they can help to rehabilitate wild life populations. However, I believe zoos should only contain wild animals on the endangered list as their amounts are rapidly diminishing. This is because it would be safer for the animals and they would not become extinct as they would be provided

with food, shelter and medicine and their breeding would be monitored and controlled. Alongside these arguments in favor of zoos from an animal perspective, humans too can benefit enormously from spending time within the confines of the zoological gardens. A day out at the zoo can provide the perfect opportunity for parents to teach children about respectful behavior towards others, while at the same time giving them acres of space to run wild and free as memories are captured for a lifetime.

Word Count- 1,204

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Candidate E evidence

Having a Bad Day

A'm oan ma wae tae Glesga Central. The light drizzle o' rain blends in wae ma tears as a rush fir my train. A had just finished ma meeting wae ma boss who telt me they had tae let me go. A shock tae say the least. A get through the gates at Central Station anely tae hear the final whistle blow fir the 3 o'clock train tae Ayr. A slump doon oan the bench n stare at the large black n orange screen wae aw the trains showing oan it. Wae half an oor tae spare till the next train tae Ayr a begin tae debate in ma heed whit's goane tae happen tae ma life now that am unemployed. How am A goanie pay the rent? How can A feed masel? Five minutes passed n A stop sobbing iver ma now "destroyed" life tae take a luk at the masses ae folk surrounding me n a poandered tae maself could any ae these folk's lives possibly be worse than mine at this moment.

As a scopes oot the folk aroond me, my eyes came tae a halt at the sight ae what appears tae be a stereotypical 'goth'. The pale, lanky figure wis awkwardly leaning against a pole whilst been laughed at by a group ae basic teenagers opposite him. A feel bad fir the boy and hinks tae maself under aw that dark clothing wae skulls plastered aw iver it, n the jet black eye makeup, he is probably a lovely young boy who is just trying tae express himself. His life's probably oan repeat: waking up n goane tae school, being made fun ae fir being a Goth, after school taking in more Goth jokes, goane hame n is probably kept awake aw night by his tears. But a smile wis brought tae ma face when a seen a smaw group ae folk just like the boy get aff a train n run taewards him screaming his name which seemed tae be Josh.

As a watch Josh n his friends go doon tae the underground, ma eyes are drawn tae a wee auld woman coming up the other side ae the stairs. The warm smile she kept giving tae those that passed her made me smile the way Josh did. It must be hard watching the world change fae everyoane being sociable n folk taking the time tae visit n write tae others, tae watch everyone being brainwished by social media n being obsessed wae their appearance n that. Ma guess wis she wis a 70 year auld widower who spoils her gran kids

n never firgets tae tell them what life wis like when she wis a wee lassie. A wis right aboot the grankid part as two little boys ran iver tae greet their gran, but A wis wroang aboot the widower part as a wee auld man followed the boys tae greet his wife Margaret wae a kiss.

Margaret n her family disappeared in tae a little café at the statiön whilst a wee lassie sat next tae me oan the same bench. She seemed fine just scrolling through social media oan her phoane. A got a quick glance ae what wis oan her phone scréen n what a seen upset me; the poor lassie wis scrolling through messages cawing her aw sorts ae names. A wis hinking ae saying something tae say tae the lassie like "don't listen tae them" or "these thing won't matter when you get aulder" but as soon as a built up the courage tae do so, the lassie switched tae messages wae someone cawed Jessica, n aw the messages were just laughing at what the other folk were saying tae her. A wis relieved as she wouldn't have tae explain tae the lassie why she wis lukiing at her phone but a also wis happy fir her as she wisn't fazed by the thing being said aboot her.

It wis noo haulf past 3 n the train had still no arrived. A sigh as a kind ae firgot aboot what happened earlier. a goes back intae the mind set that ma life is ruined n will never be the same. That though wis stuck in ma heed until a little lassie came rushing round the corner. She had no hair. A didn't want tae assume but the two little tubes coming oot ae both nostrils gave away that she had some sort ae illness. A found it hard tae believe that even though this wee lassie has a life threatening illness she is still running aboot wae a grin oan her face, her maw wis behind her she obviously hurting as-well but was able tae keep a smile oan her face fir her wee one. The little toy car the lassie wis throwing across the station floor happened tae land right at ma feet. The warm look the wee tot gave me when she collected her car made me realize ma life is no destroyed.

The half 3 train finally arrived; but a didn't care if a missed it or no. A wis just happy tae be alive n healthy. The wee lassie opened ma eyes n made me realize a have the ability tae clean maself up n get ma job back so A'm gone tae do it. Wance in a while, it pays mair than wages tae tak' a keek aroond 'n' pat yersel' in someone else's bits.

Candidate F evidence

I Don't Mean To Be Dramatic But...

Some may argue that in order to participate in anything drama related that you have to be 'talented' or there is no point. This is so wrong. Drama is not all about performing, in fact, it's only a small portion of it. What people get wrong time and time again is thinking that drama involves putting on a costume, getting into makeup, learning a bunch of lines and performing in front of large crowds. What people don't realize is that there are multiple other factors that contribute to drama as a whole. I often get told repeatedly... "I can't do drama, I can't act" or "you are good at acting, it comes easily to you" and I often stress to people that performing is not all there is to it; there are many other routes within the subject of drama that can equally contribute to shaping the mind of a young impressionable student.

From a personal point of view, the Drama provision in my school is an absolute farce: one part-time teacher, one drama classroom and no drama until the 4th year of secondary school. The poor junior years, I don't know how I coped being deprived like that. All I know is, I could have done with a drama game or two to help break the ice between me and my new classmates. Getting kids involved in drama at a younger age should be mandatory. In many ways, it is more important than core P.E. I mean, what's *that* meant to teach you? Classes divided by gender, running around an AstroTurf kicking a ball and doing nothing but teaching kids to be fuelled with rage, having kids feeling left out when picking teams and the overall effort of having to put up with the glorious Scottish weather. I mean, what troglodyte thought of this curriculum? Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying physical education is pointless, but it certainly shouldn't take priority over the skills that can be developed in drama. Drama doesn't just teach you how to 'act', it does a lot more. So many people I know have come out of their shell simply by participating. Everyone is treated as an individual, everyone can shine in their own way and the subject can be tailored to someone's strengths. I realize that acting isn't for everyone, so why not do set

design? Or lighting? Sound, costume, makeup and the list goes on. From a personal perspective, I know that when it comes to putting on a performance, everyone works side by side together to make sure that the performance runs. I guess what I'm trying to say is that teamwork is key for success, and what better way to teach kids about teamwork. On top of all this, everyone feels a sense of importance which in turn leaves you feeling rewarded. And let's not forget one of the most important skills that someone can develop through their involvement in drama - confidence. Confidence has an immense impact on how we live our everyday lives; the development of such opens doors to a multitude of opportunities, and confidence widens people's abilities, allowing them to partake in slightly daunting activities. For example, public speaking, seminars, presentations or even just a job interview, these are challenges adults face every day so why aren't the government encouraging some aspect of mandatory involvement to improve the skills and abilities of their young people.

I suppose the biggest thing that irks me most is not the fact that people choose not to participate; if something isn't for you, that's fine. You try something, you realise it's not for you and then you move on. There is no issue with this. What bothers me is that kids aren't being given the chance. Take my school again for example: no drama until senior phase, we never do a school play or musical for it is 'too much work' and our drama facilities are next to nothing. All I can think about is that there are kids no one knows about, whose talents are being bypassed in the more conventional subjects and we aren't giving them the chance. It's simply unfair. This isn't just an issue in schools. In my local community, you always hear about the 'Wednesday night football' or the 'after school rugby' yet nothing geared towards kids with a much more creative approach. There are quite simply no extracurricular opportunities for them. I can think of one drama 'club' floating around near me. One. Even at that, it's run-down and slowly dying out. What are we doing? From a

cultural standpoint it's a sin, because we are abandoning of a massive aspect of literature. Exploration through drama enables audiences and actors alike to gain a different perspective; drama works often explore progressive themes and allow for them to be discussed in a normal environment. Let's not deny young people this experience.

Despite all this being said, we can't put all the blame on schools or the lack of opportunity in the community. We face a much bigger problem far worse than an unfair system. The joy of a stubborn teenage mind-set. It's true, a lot of kids (especially boys) hold back when given a rare opportunity to take part. I suppose it stems from the ludicrous idea that boys tend to feel 'less masculine' and would much rather see themselves being slammed to the grass and trampled on by studded boots, as opposed to 'dressing up' and 'parading' around a stage chanting "Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?" Come on boys, get a grip. Man up and give it a chance! There is nothing wrong with adopting a character portraying whatever it is you're trying to tell; just like there is nothing wrong with being rugby-tackled to the ground (a little barbaric and slightly more embarrassing in my humble opinion but who am I to judge). I suppose what I'm trying to say is that perhaps if more kids were exposed to the performing arts there wouldn't be so many false stereotypes that come along with it. In actual fact, I have always found that telling people you are an actor goes down a treat with the ladies; I suppose there is something quite sexy about the whole concept. But again, that's just my opinion. Or maybe my secret hope.

My message is simple. If you feel that you can't really find anything that interests you, or you feel you are always living in a bubble; if you need a confidence boost or even want to just make a few friends, be a part of something bigger and go for it! I can't speak for all schools, but as a general statement, please reconsider the beneficial impact that drama can have on young minds. Schools who value teamwork, confidence and self-expression

would be foolish to not introduce drama as part of core education. Drama can teach you a lot, it may even teach you that you have an underlying talent. It did for me. The opportunities I have had over the past few years of my life would not have been available to me had I not started my small little drama group at the age of 8. So I will finish on this note, to all my fellow thespians out there: now is the time to act.

1,240 Words

Candidate G evidence

Ophelia

My hand trembles almost imperceptibly as I reach for the padlocked tin box that contains my most precious possessions. These photos not only document my past, but possess my present. Each small white square a vital step on the road to here. The faintest glide of my hand over the image unlocks the memories of each event in my mind and I am transported back, back to the sights, smells sounds and emotions of the time. Reverently I lift my favourite, the first time I saw her. London. 1965. St James' Street packed like a tin of sardines, colourless sardines devoid of life, freedom, creativity. In my left hand I clutch a briefcase, as uncomfortable in my grasp as I was in this facade of a businessman, a hollow picture of power and money. My persona was one I had craved for, striven for, but it gave me no satisfaction. I was empty.

Then I saw her, among the hurried rush of people who threatened to overwhelm me. One girl sat on the wall as if the world moved around her and she remained a constant, becalmed. A yellow striped shirt hung, slightly off centre, from her slight frame, far too big but somehow perfect. She held a leather-bound book, on the spine 'Hamlet' etched in faded gold leaf. Serenity in a sea of chaos. I reached into the briefcase to awake my camera from its long slumber. With the click of the shutter she was captured. I remember it well, the first sight, the first photo; the first step on the journey.

As the bowler-hatted business life of 1960s London fades I pick up another photo. India. 1970. She strolled lightly through the bustling markets of Arpora, Goa, the heavy, heady smells of spices and bolt upon bolt of silk in a million hues making the sensory experience almost spiritual. The black leather strap hung heavy on my shoulders as I was frozen by choice and opportunity, what to photograph when everything was the perfect image. Then a side street of the market that the sun seemed to miss, a corner on the page that the child had forgotten to colour in. She ventured further into the oasis of quiet and cried out as she spotted it, a dog, curled and cold as alabaster. Thousands of stalls selling food and joy, yet starved and joyless he lay. She stood still as if moving would injure the dog more and a piece of her melted to a tear tracking a trail through the dust on her cheek. I framed the scene in the

viewfinder and heard the click of the shutter. The hushed drone, the camera captured a moment of tragic perfection. Doubt truth to be a liar, but never doubt that I love.

I keep the room cold, the only warmth radiating from the light streaming through a crack in the door. I mourn the adventures we once had. My hand strokes the small pile of books gathered in the corner of the room, the first leather bound, the title "Hamlet" now almost invisible. I pull my hand away quickly and I see the next photograph, a dusty scene of warmth. Malawi. 1973. In the midst of a dusky evening she meandered as the warm air attempted to suffocate, dust gathering at the back of our throats. Yet she smiled effortlessly, an uncontrollable physical reaction to the sun. She jumped to the side as the bus passed and then spilled out its contents, an outpouring of laughter and sharing news, farewells as they headed home to their families to break bread. As she reached her shack he was sitting on the stoop. He cradled a small round ball covered in a layer of mud, looking at it as if he held a rare piece of treasure. He wore torn shorts and a baggy top, his arms like thin sticks on the verge of snapping. His stomach small, like a deflated balloon and his ribs straining as if attempting to escape the thin layer of skin stretched across them. He looked up at us with delight, eyeing the camera around my neck: an unspoken desire for this moment to be captured forever. She sat beside him, her slender fingers encircling his tiny hand, his infectious happiness reflected in her eyes. I brought the camera towards my eye and muttered a redundant "smile"; as if she would do anything else. The photograph pulses with youthful delight and warmth touching even this unhappy soul for a brief moment. I try to imagine her, frozen in this image, hidden from the grasps of time, her happiness still emanating on warm summer nights, not yet imprisoned by reality.

I tear myself away from the photo, gather my limbs and gravitate towards the air conditioning. The dial is already low yet I turn it lower, shivering but a necessity. Frost has gathered outdoors, slowly creeping in through the cracks in the windows. The three jumpers nearly insulate me but not quite. My breath is visible like a puff of smoke. London. 1976. As I peered around, I couldn't stop myself; I had to capture her beauty once again, even though she grew increasingly frail in each image, a cigarette held in her left hand, her fingertips stained slightly yellow and a cloud engulfing her blurring features. I rested against the barrier in the station, exhausted by her departure as she was about to board the train, 8:15, four minutes left. Her

pale skin, translucent like china so delicate, not warm, yet beautiful all the same. I knew the risk of the camera as I held it in my right hand. I reminded myself “there is nothing good or bad but thinking makes it so”, as I lifted my right hand and pressed the shutter. I couldn’t let her go.

The final photograph. She lies, the pale blue dress falling around her, holding her, embellished and luminous, but drowned by darkness. The plants thrive around her, bright green illuminating the scene, nature filling the edges of the photo almost overflowing the frame; the winding limbs of the reeds arch over her protectively. Her brunette locks spread in the water creating a crown of chestnut spindles. The water is too shallow to engulf and instead cushions her fall. Her hand falls to the side as I position the flowers and the reds, blues and violets fall from her grasp onto her dress. Sweets to the sweet. Her skin is cold to the touch and yet she has not quite lost the blush of her cheeks. Her mouth lies slightly open as if taking her last breath or trying to utter her last message, some words of comfort or of condemnation? Her life is gone, but she will live on, captured forever in this image, safe from the ravages of the world. “This is the very ecstasy of love,” I think as I stand over her, my Ophelia.

Candidate H evidence

Cyberchondria

Bit of a sore head: probably migraine, cluster headache, brain tumour, CJD... Pain in your arm: could be tennis elbow, arthritis, bone cancer... Having a bit of a down day: anxiety, seasonal affected disorder, depression... Worried that you are not feeling 100%, then hop online and research every symptom (real or imagined), scroll through every possible, however improbable, diagnosis until you spiral down the rabbit hole of common, rare and frantically ludicrous diseases that you might be suffering from. Unwind yourself from the stress ball that you are curled up in and confront the real diagnosis - you are a cyberchondriac.

“Hypochondria is the only illness I don’t have,” We all know someone who is a hypochondriac, convinced every sniffle will lead to their untimely demise, but now they are armed with research, facts, data, global information that assures them that the slightest cough is no longer the common cold, but in fact Von Hippel-Lindau Disease, Paraneoplastic Pemphigus, or Alice in Wonderland syndrome - all real diseases, but so incredibly rare you would have a much higher chance of winning the lottery than contracting them. However, much as we may mock those whose reliance on cybernetic diagnosis affects their behaviour, many health professionals are worried about the negative effects on both the individuals involved and the UK health care system in general.

Researchers from Imperial College London say that one in five appointments are now taken up by people with irrational fears fuelled by researching the internet and this is wasting £420 million of the NHS’s scarce resources every year. The 2006 Pew Internet and American Life Project reported that 80% of American internet users have searched for health-related information online. This translates to about 113 million American adults. Most of these people started their search on a web search engine, such as Google or Yahoo and only 15% of them checked that their sources were reliable or backed up by evidence.

However, before this becomes another Luddite condemnation of the internet, it must be acknowledged that having access to information from reliable sources is beneficial. Surely it is better to be well-informed than rely on rumour, heresy and old wives’ tales? With the average doctor patient consultation time being eight minutes, it is understandable that many

people may feel that they can gain a more accurate and informative diagnosis by spending a length of time on the web. There is also the impression that the internet contains the wisdom of a large number of health professionals and specialists whereas your doctor is a general practitioner and may not have the expertise that you need. The website NHS Inform, for example has an A to Z list of symptoms and self-help guide which can reassure the patient that they have a cold, that can be treated with over the counter remedies, reducing the need for a call to the NHS helpline or making a doctor's appointment. We are all well aware of the crisis affecting the NHS and anything that can decrease unnecessary appointments must be beneficial to the system as a whole. Not only is this true of physical ailments, but there are also diagnostic tools to help patients with mental health issues. The NHS has a self-assessment tool for people who feel they may be depressed and the mental health charity MIND also has information about symptoms and treatment.

But, like everything connected to the internet, online diagnostic tools must be used cautiously and cannot replace an interview with a health professional. Our bodies are complex organisms that do not always work perfectly, we suffer from aches and pains, we get tired and out of sorts: this doesn't always mean that we have to put a name to our ache, pain or lethargy, we might just have to get more sleep, eat healthier, get fitter. Our lives too are complex, often stressful and emotional, we get anxious, we get sad, we get frustrated, we get overwhelmed. This doesn't mean that we have to medicalise perfectly legitimate feelings. We might just have to take a break, ask for support, get some fresh air or maybe even alter the way we live our lives. No one is seeking to belittle people with mental health issues, but perhaps we are all starting to believe that we are all supposed to feel 100% happy and well 100% of the time and if we don't then we have a diagnosable problem.

The issue with using the internet to categorise our symptoms is that it will give equal weighting to both common and extremely rare illnesses. Two scientists who research for Microsoft, Eric Horvitz and Ryen White, carried out an analysis of online diagnostic sites, finding that a web search for "headache" caused information about brain tumours to come up 25% of the time, even though only 0.002% of the population will develop a brain tumour. They had the same concerns with other searches, for example a web search for 'twitching' brought up a 'significantly high' proportion of documents about Motor Neurone Disease

when it only affects 0.007 % of the population. We believe that the more information there is about a disease, the more likely it is to affect us and we are basically too lazy, or too panicked to delve deeper and question the validity of the website or look for more mundane and less life threatening alternative causes of our symptoms. It is way more likely that our headache is due to stress, too much alcohol, caffeine withdrawal, dehydration, bad posture or eye strain. It is far more probable that our twitching is caused by stress, dehydration or too much caffeine. Put down that third Americano.

There is another, possibly more serious problem with online diagnosis being that errors can be made. The patient has a number of symptoms, they use an online diagnostic tool, they are reassured that there is nothing wrong and thus don't visit their doctor and a serious, potentially life threatening illness is missed. Doctors are only human and make human errors, but, hopefully they are educated and experienced enough to be able to diagnose most illnesses at a consultation. And doctors have something it is unlikely that the internet will ever have: instinct, that gut feeling that persuades them to carry out further tests.

For good or ill, in today's society the replacement of the humble human with a highly technological machine is on the rise, but in the medical field we should only accept the technological advances that *support* the human health professionals. Doctors cannot be replaced by computers, however many thousands or millions of hits a web search for symptoms produces. There is a simple solution to cyberchondria - stop people self-diagnosing on the internet altogether. However, this blunt edged and knee jerk reaction is probably not advisable, even if it were possible. The internet gives ordinary people access to in-depth and well researched health advice. The more sophisticated answer to the concerns expressed is to guide people to the best, most trustworthy sites to access their information, sites which adhere to a code of conduct. We need to master the use of the internet in health care rather than become enslaved by it.

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