

# The Door Handle

Transition Year 2018

# WELCOME

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This is a collection of short stories, speeches and other written pieces by the transition year students of John Scottus School 2017/2018.

A year in the making, this book is full of all our stories reflects our thoughts, emotions and memories throughout the year. Our interests, passions, and beliefs are stored inside for you to see. We hope you lose yourself in our work and get to know us a bit better as each page is turned.

~Jack & Faolán

# Acknowledgements

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# Speech about Global Warming

## *by Yunxiang Wang*

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Flooding? Sea levels rising? Many islands disappearing? The food chain gradually breaking? These are all results of Global Warming. In recent years the summer has been getting hotter and the winter has been getting colder. People are not used to this and some of them cannot stand for the change in temperature. My name is Yunxiang Wang and today I am here to talk to you about Global Warming.

Let me talk about some current situations:

Finland is a country with 1/3 of its territory in the Arctic Circle. Finland is one of the countries in the world that suffers the most from climate change. Temperatures in Nordic countries have risen a lot faster than in other countries in the world during the summer. A study from the University of Eastern Finland and the Finnish Meteorological Institute has found that “the average temperature has risen by more than 0.2 degrees per decade over the last 40 years.”

Nowadays, the freezing time of lakes are delayed in the winter and many trees are germinating in advance at spring time. Moreover, the snowfall is reduced along with the increase of rainfall during the winter. This has not only affected the environment, it has also caused great damage to buildings and infrastructures. Climate

change is such a serious issue that is worsening rapidly all around the world. It is an issue that the UN really needs to address.

The government of Finland decided to appeal the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and the production of rubbish that could harm the climate.

They encourage factories and citizens to use clean energy and to reduce the consumption of electricity. Finland also suggests the use of carpool and public transportation.

Finland is leading a great example for the rest of the world to follow when it comes to climate change, and we could all learn a thing or two from them.

Thank you everyone for listening.

# We're Just Healing Over

## *by Maria Colfer*

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Things suck. Trust me I know. As someone who has battled with anxiety for most of her life, things can get rough but I'm still marching on. I'm sure all of you have experienced a bit of this. Every day I'm faced with the anxieties of how people might see me, if my friend is going to give me such bad news that it might break my heart or just that I drop something and it's loud enough to make people turn around and look at the small mess I've caused, yet I move on somehow.

The human heart and mind are the most amazing things on the planet because they are so strong to fight the urges of breaking entirely and falling. For instance, your boyfriend or girlfriend of seven months turns around to you and tells you that you have to break up. Tears well up in your eyes as you fight the urge to just break down then and there but a few months pass and you're back on your feet after fighting that battle and your heart is all back together as if nothing had ever happened. Truly wonderful in my opinion. But watching someone fall is an entirely different story. If your enemy was having a rough time, the common human reaction is to laugh at them and say "Ha! That's what you get!" as to become your enemy, they must've wronged you at some point yes? Leave that aside now, what they need is a place of comfort, love and support. Be the person to give that.



It's human nature to push people away especially when you're going through a tough time. It's even harder to do the most mundane things like working, talking to people or even simply getting up in the morning. There might be that voice in your head telling you that you're not as pretty as your classmate or that you won't ever amount to anything. Fight it. With all the strength you have. I know at least some of you in this room have had thoughts like, 'maybe if I just stop showing up they'll forget about me' or 'maybe if I just end it all here the world would be better off'. I want you to know that those thoughts you have are not true. People will not forget about you, the world won't be better off without you. It needs you. You were put here for a reason, God knows what that reason is but you we're put here for it.

One of my favourite musicians, John Cooper from the band Skillet, once made a speech at one of their shows before playing their song called The Last Night and I'm going to read it out for you now

"This song I wrote is about a friend who wants to end her own life and she has been told that she is a loser by her parents ever since she was a kid. Been told she's never going to be good enough, never going to do anything right, wishes she'd never been born and she says 'you know what, I hate my life, I hate going home at night, hate what I see when look in the mirror and I don't have a single reason left waking up for in the morning'. She comes to me in this song and says, 'look, I just want to say goodbye' and in this song I have a

chance to tell my friend how special she is. I get a chance to tell her that no matter what her parents or what anyone else has said, that her life is not a mistake! I'm telling you this story because I meet people like her at every concert we play. I know that some of you here have given up on your life, some of you have thought about suicide, some of you think that you know what, my life at home is so bad I don't know how I'm going to make it passed this weekend. Well whatever your story is, I'm glad you're here today."

I want you to know something, everyone here wants you to know that no matter what you're going through right now, no matter what you've been through, things will be okay. You will move passed this. You will one day look back on all this and be glad you never gave up. We will heal over.

# Endangered Species

## *by Nina Howden*

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Good afternoon judges, students and teachers. Today I will be talking to you about endangered species. An endangered species is a species which has been classed as very likely to become extinct. More and more animals are being categorized as extinct due to human activity. Scientists believe that we are on the verge of the 'Sixth Mass Extinction'. This means that three quarters of all species become extinct. This is because of problems such as poaching, loss of habitat and pollution.

Poaching is a massive factor for the endangerment of animals. Animal poaching is an illegal process that still goes on in many countries. Animals such as the white rhino and the African and Asian elephants are being killed illegally for their horns and tusks. At the start of the 20th century there were millions of African elephants and around 100,000 Asian elephants. Today elephants are classed as an endangered species with approximately 450,000 to 700,000 African elephants and between 35,000 to 40,000 wild Asian elephants. As for the white rhino, there were only three left. However, very recently the last male white rhino died. This leaves only two females! The only hope for keeping this species alive is by artificially inseminating the two females. These beautiful and intelligent creatures are almost gone. How could we let something so horrible happen?

Pollution impacts animals greatly as tons of rubbish and chemicals are dumped into the ocean. In fact over 100 million marine animals are killed each year due to plastic debris in the ocean. There is around 100 million tons of plastic in the oceans around the world. Endangered animals such as the Hawksbill Sea Turtle and the Blue Whale and many more are affected by this. The Blue Whale, known as the largest animal on this earth is endangered. There are approximately 10,000 - 20,000 left. This magnificent creature is decreasing in numbers because of the harmful substances that we dump in the ocean. The selfish act of pollution is costing millions of animals lives that we should be protecting.

Habitat loss is another element that contributes to the endangerment of animals. Deforestation is a huge problem and the meat industry has a big impact on this. Masses of trees and forests are cut down to create space for fields for cattle, as the result of such a high demand for meat. This affects wildlife in many ways. We are tearing down their homes. This has an effect on animals such as the Orangutan, in particular the Sumatran Orangutan which is critically endangered. There are only approximately 7,500 left in the wild.

So what can we do to help? We must protect the wildlife habitat. We should look out for the environment that we live in. You can vote for political candidates who support the environment. Support organisations like WWF who raise awareness and money for endangered animals.

We as human beings share this planet with millions of different species. We are the ones with the power to change how we treat this earth. I believe that if we put more care and attention to how we treat animals we can save so many lives. This is something I am passionate about and feel that it is a topic that needs to be raised as I am speaking up for those who can't speak for themselves. Thank you for listening.

# Brexit

## *by Molly Cavanagh*

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On the 23rd of March 2017, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland announced their succession from the European Union. This came about from a referendum in June of 2016, with the popular vote of 51.9%. This ended up causing world-wide shock, as it would be the first country to ever leave the European Union. Why exactly did the United Kingdom leave, anyway? Good afternoon students, teachers, and adjudicators. My name is Molly Cavanagh and my speech is about Brexit, the European Union, and the significance of voting.

First, there needs to be an understanding of the European Union to understand Brexit. The European Union started after World War II as a way for the war-torn countries of Europe to regain resources and clean up the mess much quicker. It was known as the European Coal and Steel Community. It was originally between six countries and was established in 1952, and it also built peace between the nations. It was a huge success and even after they had recovered, their alliance was strong, trade and immigration between them was much easier than ever before and in 1967 they signed the Treaty of Rome and became known as the European Economic Community, or the EEC. In the 1970s, three more countries joined, of them was the United Kingdom. I believe the United Kingdom joining them was a wise decision, as it was a good

way to ease tensions with former enemies such as Germany and Italy, and in turn, help themselves with trade.

Over the years, 19 countries followed suit. With immigration increasing in the United Kingdom, some British citizens felt as if their jobs were being taken by these foreigners. Many other citizens however, thought that those who were anti-immigrant were rather small, though that clearly wasn't the case in the end. With the slightest win, it put headlines all over the world, even in countries not in Europe. While those who voted to leave rejoiced in their victory, much of the country was left in panic. After the voting, similar non-official polls were taken to reveal that the majority of the United Kingdom would have voted to stay. If more people had registered to participate in the vote, this could have greatly affected the outcome for the future of the United Kingdom.

Although I understand that most of the students here are too young to register to vote, I ask that those eligible to vote should always try to, as your participation can make a huge impact. Brexit has proved to be one of the most important events of this decade. Though leaving the European Union has its positives, it certainly has its negatives and it's the fact it caught so many people off guard that's important. This is why I believe in the importance of understanding the European Union, and why Brexit is a good example of the importance of voting. Thank you.

# My Future

*by Manuela Fernández Requena.*

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I would like to start my speech with a few questions: Do you have an idea of what you want to study? Does it cost too much for you to choose or do you not have any options? Well, I'm going to tell you how I feel about this...

This speech is not about what I want in my future because I don't know what I want. I can only tell you what my thoughts and concerns are about this.

This "problem" began when I was eight years old, at that time I wanted to be a teacher, I always taught my great-grandmother's sister. I loved it, but not anymore. I like teaching, it's true, but not in Spain. In my country the education is very different and students are very rude, and they have no respect for teachers. I have always thought that dedicating one's life to study, wanting to teach and then not being valued, is not worthwhile. That is why teaching is not an option for me anymore.

Another job I don't want to pursue in my future is medicine. Most of the people in my family studied medicine or something similar. My grandfather is a famous doctor in Spain, so he always tells me about how incredible this work is. My aunt is a chemist and she also tells me the same thing. My father studied odontology just like my other



uncles. Finally, my mother is a biologist and a nutritionist. I would love to make them happy and be a great doctor like my grandfather, but I know I will not be happy. I think it's too much responsibility and I would be very scared.

However, I know I want to study something that has to do with science, instead of humanities. But I also like history and literature very much. That's the problem, I like everything and I don't know where to start choosing. Actually, I like the history of the world, I enjoy studying it and learning about the mistakes we have made.

There is one thing I would love to do but I must say it would be quite difficult to choose this as a profession. It is a career that I always keep in mind but without paying much attention to as it is an impossible and childish thought. I want to act, I love acting, I enjoy it. My favourite subject is Drama. I can imagine that I am somebody else for a while. At school I practice it in English and it still fascinates me, but it is not possible.

Well, that's my problem. I don't really know what I want to do when I am older.

In Spain there is no Transition Year, in fact the most difficult year is 4th year, but doing this course here has helped to make my ideas a little clearer, not much clearer, but it's a start. I would like to have a year like transition year in Spain because I think it is very important.

But at this age, no matter how much help we can get, it is very difficult.

My great grandmother always says “tendríamos que ser primero viejos y luego niño para saber lo que debemos hacer”, which in English is: “we should be old before being a child to decide what to do” and it's true, but it is nice to learn from mistakes and be able to do things by yourself !!

After what I've said, I will ask you again, do you know what you want to do in the future? Because I have no idea.

Thank you.

# My experience at the airport in India

## *by Vianey Ramirez*

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My experience at the airport in India was very traumatic. It started when I was at check in , I gave the man at the desk my passport, however, he asked me for my Irish Visa ,which I did not have, following this, he started to check his computer. After fifteen minutes of looking for the information, the guards told me to take my things as I was being taken to the head of the airline. The man there started to search for my information. All the students and the teachers were waiting for me. After 15 minutes, the guard told me "I'm sorry but you can't leave the country without your visa". The teachers started to argue with them: "how is that possible?", "We have 17 other students waiting to go home". Finally, after some phone calls to the embassy in Ireland, they let me pass the check in. After 40 minutes of a scary experience, I was back with everyone and was able to fly back to Ireland. I will never forget this experience.

# Oil...

## *by Jack Bruton*

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"BP's annual report on proved global oil reserves says that as of the end of 2013, Earth has nearly 1.688 trillion barrels of crude oil, which will last 53.3 years at current rates of extraction. This figure is 1.1 percent higher than that of the previous year." So... We have 53 years. 53 years of life as we know it and then what? What happens next? Good afternoon, students, teachers and of course adjudicators, my name is Jack Bruton and today I am here to talk to you about, "Life after the oil runs out".

I have done my research and if we look over a 40 year period, from 1965 to 2005, we see that by the end of it, humanity was using two and a half times as much oil, twice as much coal and three times as much natural gas, than we were at the start of this period. So overall, around three times as much energy. All this extra energy and our population, as substantial as it may seem has only doubled. So, three times as much energy but only twice the amount of consumers. In a study done once again by BP, it found that 33% of our energy came from crude oil, this shows humans are the most reliant on crude oil as an energy source. The most frightening thing of all is that only 1.6% of our energy came from renewables.

On average, the ordinary American person will use two barrels of oil a month, this doesn't sound shocking but there is 158.987 litres of oil in a barrel... Now if that's how much one person uses, now imagine a multinational company with ten thousand plus employees. This seems like

one of those impossible stats again but it's not, think about it, one empty to full car refill is about 60 litres, in one go, and this stat is only the obvious oil we use what about all the plastics that we use, everyday items like, crayons, lipstick, candles, shoe polish, and even chewing gum. Eh yeah we even chew on oil.

Anyway my point is we rely on oil more than we rely anything. It's make the world go round so now onto what happens when this all stops, no more cars? No lipstick? No CHEWING GUM?

Well the truth is no one knows no one can see into the future, but we can prepare and some are already doing this.

"Attacks on electric cars by the oil industry are on a par with misinformation campaigns promoted by big tobacco companies and vested interests undermining climate science", according to Elon Musk. He also said and I quote "Trying to convince the population to have some monk-like existence is simply unrealistic".

So over the next few years we are going to have to find a happy medium. A medium that involves both crude oil and renewable energy. So that that 53.3 year period can be prolonged to the point that we will be able to move past oil.

China's production of solar panels has grown by 50% since 2016. Germany, Portugal, Denmark and Sweden have all gone days powered purely by renewable energy, no oil, no gas just renewables. Sweden is projected to be run purely by renewable energy all day everyday by 2040.

Yes, a world without oil would be different... But imagine a world with no oil spills that decemate sea life, no wars over oil, the oil industry has the most work related deaths, and no destroying the world's beautiful

landscape,

So... Don't run from the future, embrace it. Thank you .

# Poverty in India

## *by Kaiya Pfeiffer Reddy*

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Poverty is defined in the dictionary as “The state or condition of having little or no money, goods, or means of support”. This definition, although vague, covers poverty as a whole.

Good afternoon,

Adjudicators, teachers and fellow students. My name is Kaiya and in this speech, I will elaborate on the details of poverty by using an undeveloped country, India, as I have encountered the hardship that this country faces first hand. The focus of this speech is to educate you on the causes and effects of poverty in India.

What causes Poverty? There are many reasons why this would occur, the most prevalent of these being, lack of resources in the region and corruption. Unfortunately in India, the high population growth rate is a prominent economic issue and leads to a high level of illiteracy, poor health care and a lack of resources. The areas I will be highlighting today are poor healthcare, illiteracy and child Labour.

How does healthcare influence poverty in India? The high level of air pollution and lack of clean facilities and sanitation as well as nutrition, causes the spread of diseases around the country. Malaria, Typhoid, Hepatitis, Tuberculosis and Cholera are the most severe diseases in India. Malaria being the most deadly, killing more

citizens annually then the four other illnesses put together! Every year these 5 infections alone claim the lives of 18% of the country's population. In a lot of cases this adds to the poverty as the little resources in healthcare that they have are spent on treating the sick. In a worst case scenario, where the family's key worker dies, it leaves those left behind with very little resources to support themselves, thus leading to a poorer lifestyle.

As many of you know, but deny, education is the tool provided to us, to help us learn and grow as well as shape us for the future challenges that lie ahead of us. Sadly in India, the same opportunity is not provided. At least 35 million Indian children aged 6-14 years old do not attend school. This is because of a variety of reasons. The most prominent one being that they cannot afford to be sent to school or must work to supply their family with money! The average price of an Indian child's education annually is 200 rupees which is the equivalent of €2.50. One months Netflix subscription could put an Indian child through 4 years of school!

While I was lucky enough to teach English to the students in India, I met dozens of amazing and talented children. One of whom was called Punima. Punima was 12 years old and dreamed of being a nurse. She explained to me how her father had lost his job and was forced into considering taking her out of school as a result of this, because he could not afford to send her to school anymore. Following this, she went on to tell me about how she might have to work to supply some financial aid for her family. She is only 12 and might be forced into severely jeopardizing her bright future through



no fault of her own. This was eye opening to me because it made me realize that there are millions of children all over India being affected just like Punima. Not being able to afford education and Child Labour are huge barriers for Indian children that are leading to illiteracy, and although they may be decreasing every year, they are still very present and effect India's economic growth.

In the earlier paragraph, I briefly mentioned child Labour. This issue personally upsets me the most. It is a serious problem in Indian society in terms of economic welfare because it stops the children's opportunity to develop physically, socially, mentally and financially. According to UNICEF it is estimated that the highest number of children in hard Labour globally, is in India, with the number of children aged 4-15 in 2012 being around 13 million. That is 13 million little children working 12-16 hours a day in sweatshops or mines under threat of violence, intimidation and sexual exploitation for 20c a day! However, a nun in India told me that in most cases, the children are uneducated and are unable to do basic maths, and as a result of this are cruelly tricked by their bosses about how much money they made for a days work. For example if they are told to sew 30 shirts in a day and they achieve that quote, their boss will lie and say that they only did 25 shirts and the oblivious children wouldn't get paid for their work that day. Industrialists and businessmen involve children in this explicit employment at very low cost Labour because they know they can deceive these terrified children. Some may have to work night shifts or do over time because of the need of more work and to earn more money. As this occurs more often, their frail, lethargic and underfed bodies begin

to deteriorate and become prone to the many diseases that occur in their cramped unsanitary work areas.

To conclude I would like to say that the aim of this speech was not to compare the way we live to the way the citizens in India do, but it was to make everyone in this room aware of some of the ongoing issues that occur globally every day. It was for you to understand how the spread of diseases, lack of education and child Labour are only a few of the many factors of poverty that India are trying to resolve. Nelson Mandela once said “poverty is not an accident. Like slavery and apartheid, it is man- made and can be removed by the actions of human beings.” The example you can think about for this quote, is poor little Punima who wants to grow up and save people, which, in turn, would help to economically develop the country, but has a very little chance of achieving this and could easily end up stuck in the vicious cycle of poverty that I have spoken about today.

Thank you for listening.

# Why people lie?

## *by Aleksandra Dozorova*

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Good morning teachers, judges and students, my name is Aleksandra and today I'm going to talk about lies. For my speech, I wanted to start off with the question: "Do you lie often?" Well, you probably do.

A lie is a complicated concept. People call lying a vice. But we have to lie sometimes; to not disappoint someone, to get rid of problems. Sometimes we get in even bigger trouble by lying. Sometimes it is necessary for people to lie, otherwise lying would disappear from the Earth. And why do people say: "a lie for good"? I will try to answer these questions in my speech today.

For me, lying is definitely a bad thing. After all, if a person lies to me, then they want to deceive me. Maybe they want to use me for their own purpose. Or maybe they just want to laugh at the "fool". Or they lie, without thinking, so that they are left behind. In any case, their lies initially do not imply good motives for me. At least, this person is indifferent to me.

So, what are the main reasons for lying? I analyzed situations when people lie most. Here they are.

They try to avoid disappointment in the eyes of others and yourself. Embellishing the reality, we create an improved versions of ourselves. When we brag or exaggerate our successes, we want

people around us to believe this too. Seeing our new image reflecting in the eyes of people around us, we assure ourselves even more.

Also people try to attract attention. From early childhood we understand that ordinary stories are rarely in the spotlight, but fantasies - about the mum-fairy, the ghost in the apartment or their own unprecedented abilities - easily come to the center of attention. I consider that person who lies to attract attention represents nothing from themselves because they have nothing happening in their life so they lie.

There are also "lies for good". This is when a person doesn't tell the truth so he wouldn't disappoint or upset someone. For example, a patient is told that his illness is not fatal. Or they do not say that something unpleasant has happened, but they calm down: "everything is fine". But such a lie still remains a lie. A person will still suspect that something is wrong, suffer and worry about it. And then, after all, they will know the whole truth. And who knows if it was better to tell them everything in the beginning!

The only option of "lies for good", which I personally admit - is to keep silent where you really can not speak. For example, to not cause panic. Or so you do not cause a deep heart wound. Sometimes they hide something to be better than you are. No wonder they say: "Silence is golden." But do not lie, do not compose, do not invent or "twist".

I don't like people who can lie as easy as they can breathe. And I knew such people, people I was friends with at that time. But not

for long. You can communicate with them, but you can't be friends, you can't start and common business. Otherwise you'll get in trouble.

Sometimes you don't understand why they create something new: do they have a rich imagination? Or somehow self-affirm? Then you just try to "filter" everything they say. But they don't care! Having lost some friends, they immediately find others, often the same liars as they are. And then these people do not understand why they get into trouble, why no one wants to communicate with them.

According to my observations, public figures often lie - those whose words are really important for those who listen to them. For example, members of the government. Their lies usually contain elements of truth, but they "twist" it, manipulating the public opinion. For example, when they debate they promise to make everyone's' life better. But once they achieve their post - they don't move a muscle to make their promises come true. Also, sometimes they keep silent about important information: for example they say: "25 new schools were opened". And they never said that all these schools weren't built, but simply repaired. The viewer also creates a false impression. This "silence" is not a "lie for good", but simply a lie.

If a person is often lied to, and he doesn't lie, he should think about it. Maybe he behaves in such a way that he is "presented" with any rubbish? I can say the same about the nations and about the government.

I lied before sometimes, I try not to anymore. There are just people who do not want to hear the truth. They would stay forever in their wrong opinion. There are others - they immediately threaten punishment for the truth.

Do you know why I don't want to lie? Because if i said something that's not true - I wouldn't be myself anymore. I wouldn't be able to express myself. And I'm not interested in creating somebody that's not myself.

# The positives and Negatives of Social Media

## *by Catherine McCaffrey*

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Good afternoon, today I'm going to talk to you about the positive and negative sides of social media. Social media is a major element of our daily lives. It affects us in many different ways and you are soon going to hear if the pros weigh out the cons for the 2.8 billion users of social media.

A benefit of social media is that people can use this as a medium in which they can share their thoughts and opinions to a far wider audience. Online is not only a perfect place to show the public, this is an encouraging outcome as people can express themselves and further develop their confidence.

The second advantage of using social media is that there is easy access to information related to health, the news and educational purposes. Social media is increasingly being used as an information source, including information related to risks and crises. Social media has also seen a great deal of usage by those seeking health information. As a report suggests "people use online social tools to gather information, share stories, and discuss concerns." People can observe the news on apps such as Snapchat, Facebook and Instagram. With a simple touch, you can have access to worldwide crucial announcements. Through social media, fellow students can also communicate with each other about assignments and gain further information about it. In addition, students can develop their data by observing statistics shown through apps.

Another advantage of social media is easy and instant communication with your loved ones.

Social media is forming an increasingly central part of how we all communicate. Before social media, we were extremely limited to interact with others and we were limited largely to the people that we knew in-person. The internet and social media has drastically changed the way people all over the world interact and communicate. Due to social media networks, we are now able to interact with thousands of people all over the world. This is an immense result as unlike the olden days where you would have to wait for a handwritten letter in the post, with the touch of a button you can start a conversation with the ones that you miss.

Cyber-bullying is a major disadvantage to social media. Due to anonymous texting, it is very easy for people to say hurtful things without knowing who said it. Cyber-bullying has dramatically increased due to the high use of social media. Nearly 43% of teenagers have been bullied online and 70% of students report seeing frequent bullying online. Cyber-bullying is easier to undertake and much harder to stop than face-to-face bullying. As a result of social media, it is extremely easy to say something online you wouldn't say to someone if they were standing right in front of you.

The second negative side of social media is damaging mental health. Social media allows a way for people to lower their self-esteem and well-being. Social media has been linked to higher levels of loneliness, envy, anxiety, depression, narcissism and decreased



social skills. A Behavioural Scientist conducted in-depth interviews with social media users and found out that 60% of people using social media reported that it has impacted their self-esteem in a negative way, 50% reported social media having negative effects on their relationships and that 80% reported that it is easier to be deceived by others through their sharing on social media. A study found that the more time people spent on social media, the more socially isolated they perceived themselves to be. Part of the reason it makes people feel socially isolated is the comparison factor. We fall into the trap of comparing ourselves to others as we scroll through our feeds, and make judgements about how we measure up.

The third and final negative outcome of using social media is sedentary lifestyle habits such as addiction and sleep disruption. A review study from Nottingham Trent University research showed that the symptoms from using social media excessively include neglect of personal life, mental preoccupation, mood changes, tolerance and concealing the addictive behaviour.

Addiction leads to poor physical health as a result of sitting down all day, mindlessly scrolling through our social media feeds when we have a few spare minutes or even a few hours. Given the number of diseases to which sitting is linked, it is one of the worst things we can do for our health. Sitting in a stationary position every day can increase your risk of high blood pressure and abnormal cholesterol levels. It may even cause premature death due to cardiovascular disease and certain types of cancer.

According to a 2015 report by Common Sense Media, teenagers spend up to 9 hours a day consuming media on screens. While the National Sleep Foundation recommends that teenagers get 9 and 1/2 hours of sleep each night, the average American teenager sleeps around 7 hours each day. A lack of proper sleep has been connected with reduced cognitive functions and lower academic performance. Teens may be tired as instead of sleeping soundly they are on their smartphones, which has been connected with increased difficulty in falling asleep.

To conclude, i have explained to you many advantages and disadvantages of using social media. In my opinion the cons weigh out the pros, however, why do i still use it? I find social media a great way to communicate with others and scrolling through my instagram feed will always entertain me. Although i know all the negative outcomes thoroughly, i cannot break the addiction. Studies have found that taking a break from social media helps boost psychological well-being. If you're feeling brave, try taking a little break and see how it goes. And if you're going to keep using social media, then at least try to use it in moderation. I know I will.

Thank you.

# Bees

## *by Tove Murphy*

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Good afternoon, judges, teachers and fellow students, today I'm going to speak to you about how it is impossible for humans to survive without bees. You may think that bees are annoying, they fly in front of your face, land on your food and there is a possibility of stinging you, which for people with allergies can be deadly. Which, I understand, is very irritating but bees also impact our lives in a very positive way. I'm going to be informing you about these impacts and telling you what is causing so many bees to die everyday.

Did you know that one third of our global food is pollinated by bees? Many of the crops that we eat and/or use in our everyday lives are pollinated by bees. Some examples of these crops are: apples, coffee, cucumbers, grapes and walnuts. Without bees to pollinate these crops, they would cease to exist. You may also not have known that bees pollinate alfalfa hay. You're probably thinking " I don't even know what that is so why would I care" however this is what is used to feed dairy cows and I'm certain that many of you consume dairy in your everyday lives and would like to continue having the ability to do so. As Albert Einstein said "If the bee disappears from the Earth, man would only have four years left to live."

A lot of people tend to use the argument that there are other ways of pollinating our crops such as artificial pollination, for example

'Plan Bee'. This is a personal robotic bee being designed to mimic how bees pollinate flowers and crops. This may sound amazing and inventive to some, it may even seem like a way to fix this problem, however to me it sounds like spending billions to do something that bees already do for free.

For people to be able to fix this problem we need to know what is causing it. It is presumed that pesticides containing neonicotinoids are a big reason for the quick rise in bee deaths recently. Neonicotinoids are similar to nicotine which as you may have already guessed, is not good for bees to have in their systems.

These pesticides have contributed to a large increase in CCD (Colony Collapse Disorder). Colony Collapse Disorder is the process by which bees spontaneously abandon their hives and queens. It has been found that when bees are exposed to pesticides containing neonicotinoids they go insane and forget how to find their way home. These effects have been thought similar to a form of alzheimer's.

While pesticides are definitely a main reason for the deaths of bees, there are other factors to consider such as the Varroa mite, which is a form of parasite. Overall however, humans are a big factor in the deaths of bees as we have been destroying the habitats in which they pollinate.

Bees also have a lot to gain from pollinating as well as humans as it gives them all of the protein they receive in their diet and gives them energy. This is why artificial pollination is not an option as it will most likely result in the eventual extinction of bees.

There are ways to prevent this from happening. Simply planting flowers in your garden is a step in the right direction towards saving bees. However don't contaminate them with pesticides as this will just make matters worse.

Humans have done the most to damage our planet that we share with hundreds of different species so we should be the ones who are trying to restore it, not destroy it even more.

I really hope you'll take all that I have said into consideration and will try to think about what you can do help fix the problem that we have caused. In the end if we save the bees, we save ourselves.

# Food waste

## *by Allie O'Neill*

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Hello, my name is Allie O'Neill and today I'll be talking to you about food waste, and how it's affecting our planet. Hopefully, by the end of this speech, you will want to make small changes in your lifestyle to try limit waste.

Did you know, that roughly one third of the food produced in the world, for human consumption, every year, which is approximately 1.3 billion tons, gets lost or wasted? When there is such a need among poorer people and people from developing countries for food, this fact just isn't okay. We need to put in place a way of more evenly distributing food in order to prevent food waste.

Every year, consumers in developed countries waste 222 million tonnes. While in Sub-Saharan Africa their entire net food production is 230 million tonnes of food. This means that we are throwing away almost as much food as Sub-Saharan Africa is producing. How does this make you feel?

A huge impact of waste is also that lots of food comes with packaging this is having a huge affect on our oceans and sea life. The waste and trash we are dumping in the ocean is having a catastrophic impact on sealife. Ocean Conservancy workers collected almost half a million straws which were eaten by sea turtles. Straws are also known to clog up turtles' noses. Online, there is a petition called 'The Last Plastic Straw' which is to try to help limit the use of straws so less of them will end up in our ocean. I encourage you all to go home later, go onto the plastic population coalition website and sign the pledge to try to stop using straws.

Disposing of waste also has a huge impact on our environment. Some waste will eventually rot and breakdown but in doing so it may smell and also release methane gas which contributes to the Greenhouse Effect which is destroying our atmosphere.

Luckily there are people who are trying to combat this problem. The National Waste Prevention Programme has been working with communities and local authorities throughout Ireland since 2009 to raise awareness on a range of initiatives to prevent food waste and to promote home composting.

There are many things you can do at home to do your part to limit food waste and plastic waste. When you are at a restaurant try to just order what you will eat. Likewise if you are cooking for yourself try to figure out a portion size that will limit the amount of food you will not eat. In terms of not wasting plastics; try to avoid buying bottled water and when you are going shopping, try reusing your plastic bags you have or you could always get a reusable shopping bag

I hope that today my speech has convinced you to try and make some changes to combat food waste. We all need to make small changes together to lead to a big result for our environment.

Thank you.

# My TY India Experience

## *by Jade O'Toole*

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Good afternoon teachers, fellow students and judges. Today I will be talking about my TY India Experience. India for me was one of the most difficult and amazing trips I'll ever experience. It was literally life-changing.

As soon as we arrived, the heat and smells hit us instantly. When we stepped foot outside the airport in Kolkata the thick, humid, polluted air with a strong essence of spice filled our lungs, our eyes watered at the sights of young children making us chai coffee with pots too big for their little arms. It seemed like people and colours were everywhere, it was veryc overwhelming.

We made our way to LEE Memorial to get our bearings and catch up on some much needed rest. Take a minute and think back to when you were around the age of ten, what were you doing?

We were greeted by a little girl about ten years holding her little brother. It was clear she had nothing but family. She welcomed us wholeheartedly. The children were so excited at our arrival.

We then headed to Siliguri by an overnight train which once again was packed. Everyone was staring at us. the pungent smell of the toilets in between the cabins made it hard to breathe. Want some advice? don't wait there, trust me it won't end well. Once we got to



our correct cabin we took down our beds and attempted to rest. It was disrupted sleep for that night.

We reached Siliguri train station the next morning. We went to Baharampur for breakfast where they gave us a really warm welcome. They blessed us and gave us the most gorgeous vibrant red rose I've ever seen. We got back on the bus and headed to Panighata. When we got there they held a school assembly for us straight away.

It was so exciting seeing the whole school and knowing we would be teaching these students.

We began to have conversations with them. It amazed me how happy the children were without nay trappings of our western world. It was so refreshing and eye-opening. We taught six year olds on the first day of teaching. They were just so happy and excited to have us there. It was such a privilege to teach the children who were so eager to learn. We also painted nice murals on their walls to use as resources and brighten up their dull classrooms, which was really nice to leave a physical mark.

I hope when they look at our paintings they will remember us and hopefully we made even a little difference in their lives.

Dogs in packs and skinny goats wandering on dusty roads, locals in trucks , mad taxi drivers driving erratically up and down mountainous roads and beeping, lots and lots of beeping! Became the usual for us.

I experienced so much and got to bond and learn so much about my fellow classmates. It was the trip of a lifetime. So appreciate everything and everyone you have and be grateful for everything life throws at you, thank you for listening.

# Water

## *by Daman Oberoi*

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Good afternoon, adjudicators, teachers and fellow students, today I am going to talk to you about water.

Water, as we all know, helps bring and sustain life on our planet earth. It is such an important element for the living species that nothing is possible without it. After all, human bodies consist of 70 percent water. It is possible to sustain ourselves without food for a month, but without water we cannot survive for even a few days. Thus, water is extremely essential to sustain life on earth.

Water is required for every activity that we do such as cooking, washing, growing crops and essentially for drinking. Without water life on earth wouldn't be able to survive. Imagine that we suffered from drought where there is no rainfall and water body; crops animals and humans will all suffer. Nobody wants to live in such a place, So then why don't we use water wisely?.

Please understand that water contains such important chemical properties and compounds that are required to provide nourishment to the living cells of living creatures. Thus, water is an active life sustaining agent. Other than this, it is also a vital source of energy. Water is used to generate electricity and it is also converted

into steam, which in turn is used for vehicles attached to water power.

Unfortunately we waste a lot of this water, statistics show that showers are one of the biggest consumers of water in Irish households. The average 7 minute shower uses up to 49 litres of hot water while power showers can use up to 175 litres in the same period. The majority (65%) of those surveyed have a power shower at home, which means in a year many of us are individually washing away over 63,800 litres of water - that's 112,456 pints – on showering alone. Reducing your shower time by just one minute could save up to 9,000 litres of water per year.

Brushing your teeth with the tap running is one of the most common ways of wasting water in the home with approximately six litres of water used per minute. By turning off the tap when brushing your teeth, it is estimated that up to 7,000 litres of water can be saved per year. We also waste a lot of water by doing the laundry and many more daily tasks, like doing the laundry and flushing the toilet.

Thus, importance of water cannot be overlooked. It becomes our responsibility to use this resource sensibly without a lot of wastage . Spread awareness as much as you can in your community and try to stop the exploitation of scarce natural resources. Let's try to never waste water or leave the tap running when not required. Every single drop of water counts, so save it for future generation. Take extra care while using water for such uses as washing your car

or cleaning your porch because instead of using a direct flow of water get a bucket of water and take only the required quantity. This is all I have to say and Thank you for listening to me!

# Our lifestyle on Earth

## *by James Dempsy*

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Let's talk about our lifestyle on our planet. We are killing our planet and everything on it, we are ruining the chance to live on this planet for future generations and we are running out of time to change this. I'm James and today I am telling you all the different way that we are destroying the planet and how people are trying to stop it.

So we are pumping a lot of gases into the earth's atmosphere each day and this is not only slowing eroding away at the earth's atmosphere but it doesn't look that nice seeing all the black gases Some of these gases also mix into the clouds and fall as acid rain. This kills all natures' beauties like the Great Barrier Reef

If we don't act quickly the earth's ozone layer will float off and this would leave us to over exposure to the sun, this would give us skin cancer and unfortunately the plain truth is that we would all die

The government are making small steps in stopping this horrible situation such as they've added three cycle lanes and only two driving lanes, they are also giving people grants to buy electric cars and they are also letting people charge their cars for free

Some people are trying to change and live happily on this small planet for hopefully generations to come, so don't ruin this for everyone who wants to live happy and healthy. This needs to change before it's too late.

# India

## *by Aisling Wright*

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India was a phenomenal and eye-opening trip. We met at Dublin airport at 9am on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January. Most of us were both excited and scared because some of us have never been to Asia and some have never been away from our families for that long. We arrived at our gate for our first flight to Dubai and we settled down on the plane as we knew this trip had finally begun after months and months of waiting. When we arrived in Dubai the first thing occurred to me was the heat. We all gathered and we did our first group count, success we still managed to keep 18 students in the group! We then made our way to connecting flights and we made a toilet stop on the way...little did the girls know that we had to face a new type of toilet, it looked as if a kitchen sink and a shower were installed in the ground.

We then barely made it to our next flight from Dubai to Kolkata as Starbucks was a priority for both us and the teachers. On the flight we mainly talked, drank a lot of juice, scanned off

Siobhan's snacks and watched a LOT of movies. We then arrived in Kolkata and we were relieved because we thought the travelling was over. As we left the airport we noticed how dense and polluted the air was and we were brought to the Lee Memorial Hostel. Me, Jade, Jack, James Woods, Chris and Cian were piled into a small van car thing and we were on our way to the hostel..we got to see a lot

of the city but it was heart breaking to see how much poverty controlled this city. We made a stop for bottled water and chai. We stayed in lee memorial for the day but then we were driven to the train station and we took a 10 hour train to panighata. This was the weirdest and most triggering moment of my life. From Jacks head being knocked on for the time, Zach being woken up by a strange Indian man and me being woken up by an Indian man with a dead chicken in a bucket with lots of boiled eggs.

You could say it was an experience. After 10 hours we were greeted by the sister and she accompanied us to the school. We were greeted by the school in assembly and we participated in a dance with the students. That day marked the start of the trip for me and we spent three weeks teaching all those students what we prepared in school for many months.

During those three weeks we visited many places including Darjeeling and Siliguri. We also visited a tea factory and a local community hall which was built by John Scottus school. We also visited a safari in West Bengal which was approx two hours away from where we were staying. There were may more trips including Darjeeling, Kolkata, and local villages. I believe india was an amazing thing to do in fourth year as we all bonded so much and I would go back in a heartbeat.



# Do I Believe Her?

## *By Gigi Watt*

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Did you know that for every thousand rapes, 10% are reported, 3% face trial and 1% are jailed. In 2% of these reported rapes, the rapist was falsely accused.

As I'm sure most of you have heard, on the 28th of March, Ulster rugby players Paddy Jackson and Stuart Olding were found not guilty of raping a woman from Belfast in June of 2016. There's been a lot of controversy over whether the verdict was just.

Judges, teachers and fellow students, today I will be talking about my thoughts on this case, my thoughts on the verdict, and my thoughts on consent. I think that rape and consent are two things that we as people need to talk more openly about because it is an important, prevalent issue in our society and a major source of many mental health issues.

In case you're not aware, this case followed a twenty-one-year-old woman, only nineteen years at the time, who had just finished her exams and decided to go out to a nightclub in Belfast to celebrate. According to her testimony, she was invited to an after-party at rugby star, Paddy Jackson's house. Although she says she didn't "have a clear recollection" of the night, she said that she remembers going up to his bedroom, where they consensually kissed. He tried to take things further, but she wasn't interested and returned back downstairs. She then decided she wanted to leave the party, so she went upstairs to retrieve her bag. She claimed Mr. Jackson followed her upstairs, and she was subsequently raped.

The next morning this woman then sent Rory Harrison a message, which turned out to be the most important text in the entire trial. She said, “what happened last night was not consensual.”

A lot of people took to social media during this trial to say that they believed the verdict was unjust, and I think that is completely fair because I think that everyone is entitled to their own opinion. To be honest, I can't say I necessarily think this is an unfair trial. Now, I am not saying that I don't believe this girl, and I am definitely not saying I think she made the allegations up. There was DNA, mobile phone data and even witness statements, but none clearly pointed towards either guilt or innocence. I just don't think there was enough evidence to find the accused guilty. Though, lack of evidence does not mean they are innocent!

The jury was presented with evidence of the woman's injuries following a medical examination she undertook the evening after she was allegedly raped. Unfortunately, both the doctor for the defense and for the prosecution agreed the injuries did not prove penetration, or in particular lack of consent.

The woman testified that “Jackson knew she didn't want it to happen but “he kept going”. In Jackson's defense, maybe he didn't. He said he “did not force himself on her. {he} presume{d} she wanted it to happen. Maybe she didn't blatantly say no, or say that she wanted him to stop. I am in no way condoning his actions or saying what he did was at all okay, but maybe it's not his fault. Maybe he wasn't educated properly about what consent was because, to be honest, I don't think a lot of people really are. It's very important that we as teenagers, and we as people, know what consent is and it's pretty simple in reality.

Consent is not just a legal term. It's about respect. Consent means you give permission for something to happen, and you have agency over

yourself and what you do. Nothing can change that. Not what you're wearing, not how much you've had to drink, not where you are or who you're with.

While I was doing research for this speech, I came across a few different definitions for the word consent, but the one that New York University wrote I thought was the most accurate NYU created their sexual misconduct, relationship violence, and stalking policy in January of 2016. They define consent as "knowing, voluntary, and mutual decision among both participants. Affirmative consent can be given by words or actions, as long as those words or actions create clear permission.

Silence or lack of resistance does not automatically demonstrate consent. And I think in this situation this may have been one of the reasons why these men were found not guilty. Because the men didn't think what they were doing was wrong, or they didn't know that she didn't want to be part of it. And I think that one of the reasons they were found innocent was because there was no evidence to show that she said no or she asked them to stop. To convict a rapist, a juror must first determine that the victim did not consent and second that the attackers knew she didn't not consent. And the sad fact is that most victims of rape do not fight back, so many alleged rapes involve little physical evidence.

And you may think that if it was you in that situation, you'd tell them to stop, but we can't even begin to imagine how hard it must be. Especially if you think it could be dangerous or harmful to do so. A Swedish study shows just how 'normal' it is for victims of sexual assault to experience a temporary paralysis that keeps them from fighting back, screaming, or even telling their attacker to stop. The researchers spoke to almost three hundred women who went to an emergency clinic in Stockholm after being raped. Seventy percent of the women said that they experienced involuntary paralysis, during the attack. Nearly 50 percent reported

extreme paralysis, such that they were effectively catatonic. As the young woman in this case testified. “You think you are going to kick and scream and fight but it does not work that way. You literally just freeze”

Some people believe that this girl was making up the allegations because she “got really drunk”, “did something that she ended up regretting the next morning”, and then decided she wanted to use the made up story to gain “fame” and or “attention”. I can’t even begin to understand why someone would have that opinion. She remained completely anonymous throughout the trial. Why would she go through all that and have to relive that night if “it was all a lie”?

Regardless of whether you think these men are innocent or guilty when you research the details of the case, any humane person would be appalled by how the girl was dealt with in court, and how she was degraded by WhatsApp messages these men sent to each other. The prosecution read texts these men sent to each other in a group chat where Jackson and Olding were boasting and being verbally abusive. According to the defence, the texts were ‘banter’ and ‘immature boasting’ and had no evidential value towards the case. If anything, these texts were evidence of a complete lack of respect for women. The way they spoke about her was vile, and they should not be considered as role models to anyone. EVER.

This case has captured the attention of the whole country. Although we may all have our own opinions and different beliefs, I think we can all agree that we need to talk more about rape, we need to talk more about consent and we need to talk more about respect. Openly and honestly.

# The Secrets of Sleep and Dreams

## *by Molly Hirst*

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Sleep and dreams are necessary human functions. They give our brains and our bodies an opportunity to settle and recharge themselves. As George Lucas said- "Dreams are immensely important. You can't do it unless you imagine it" In theory, we should be spending an average of 8 hours each night sleeping within this time we use dreams to help us through problems and experiences similar to how we would in everyday life. REM sleep is the most important aspect of sleep. It is the period where our brains can really recharge and replenish the neurotransmitters that make us actually able to go about and be functioning during the day.

During REM sleep our memories are reactivated. They're put into a perspective that we cannot generally see while we are awake. We go into a state where stress neurochemicals are beneficially suppressed, essentially, the dead sleep state. The state where nothing can wake you up.

But what's the big idea? What's the big deal? Okay, so we dream, what's so important about it. Why do you always feel more refreshed after you've dreamt? Well, basically, when we dream during REM, and yes, we dream outside of REM too, we just may not need those dreams as much, we produce a blood pressure drug which, unexpectedly, reduces the occurrence of nightmares. This results in a suppression of norepinephrine, in normal words, a stress brain chemical.

So REM reduces the levels of the stress chemical. Dreams, however, help us to sort through the days events, which is probably just as important as the chemical aspect of REM. Dreams are essential in regards to our development and evolution as metaphysical beings. A professor at Harvard University called Deirdre Barrett believes that we solve problems

through our dreams. There is a part of our brain which resurrects confusing or troubling events from our day and puts them into a dream scenario which we can eventually understand. Barrett did an experiment with a handful of her college students in which she had them pick out a homework problem to try and solve within their dream. The problems weren't hard, the student simply hadn't been able to solve it while they were awake and actively thinking about it. The students were made to focus on the problem each night before they went to sleep. By the end of the week half of the students had dreamed about the problem in general. But the more impressive result was that a quarter of the students had had a dream that contained the solution and the answer to their chosen problem.

So, we can see that in cases where the problem is relatively simple, we are able to solve them in our sleep. Whether we can solve our bigger, life problems fully has yet to be proved, but we definitely know that our brains can help us to understand our lives that little bit better.

In conclusion, dreams may not be the answer to all of our problems, but in the end, they do us a great deal of good. After all, in the grand scheme of things, it really is just a little bit of extra thinking time.

# We are what we think

## *by Sarah Kelly*

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“Think good, and good follows”

You may have heard this before, but what does it really mean? What is the connection between our thoughts and what happens in our lives? It is often said that what you focus on becomes your reality.

We have over six-thousand thoughts passing through our brains every single day. Most of them are the same as the thoughts that we had yesterday. Your mind is very powerful. Yet, if you're like most people, you probably spend very little time reflecting on the way you think. After all, who thinks about thinking? But, the way you think about yourself turns into your reality. If you draw inaccurate conclusions about who you are and what you're capable of doing, you'll limit your potential. You see, with our thoughts we make our world, Buddha once said; “All that we are is the result of what we have thought. The mind is everything. What we think we become.”

Your thoughts are a catalyst for self-perpetuating cycles. What you think directly influences how you feel and how you behave. So, if you think you're a failure, you'll feel like a failure. Then, you'll act like a failure, which reinforces your belief that you must be a failure. However, by keeping an open mind and by moving your attention from the things that are making you unhappy to those that can bring you peace of mind and happiness, you will bring more success into your life. It is vital to change your thoughts and your limiting beliefs and be open to new experiences, perseverance, hard work, and positive thinking.

The good news is, you can change how you think. You can alter your perception and change your life. Here are some of the ways in which you can do that. Look for evidence to the contrary. Take note of any times when your beliefs weren't reinforced. Acknowledging exceptions to the rule will remind you that your belief isn't always true.

Meditate. Your mind can bend and change direction at your will, but it will steer itself unless you take control of it. Not only does meditation provide you with this control, it helps you focus on solutions, positivity, and the accomplishment of your present and future goals.

Act in a certain way to become who you want. While we all know how emotions can lead to actions – like the way we smile when we're happy – what if it worked the other way around? What if smiling could make us happy? We are how we act: Running away makes us afraid, while standing firm makes us bold; having fun or being energetic will stave off aging; and just acting differently can really make a lasting change to your personality.

In 1957 the Stanford social psychologist Leon Festinger published his theory of cognitive dissonance, the distressing mental state that arises when people find that their beliefs are inconstant with their actions. Festinger observed in the subjects of his experimentation a deep-seated need to eliminate cognitive dissonance by changing either their actions or their beliefs. Therefore, changing your behavior can also result in you thinking differently.

With practice, you can train your brain to think differently, and allow you to act differently. When you give up those self-limiting beliefs, you'll be better equipped to reach your fullest potential.

Believe it and you will achieve it. Just say: "I can, and I will!"



# Mother earth : INDIA

## *by Willow Bardin*

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Today I will be talking about India and the issues that India has with pollution. I love nature and all the difficulties that come with it. When I travelled to India I saw and got to experience the beauty and character it has to offer. I wrote this essay because beauty is not the only thing India has to offer. The pollution levels are dangerously high and this needs to change.

We need this planet, we only have this one and we need it to survive. We are not keeping it or protecting it as we should. We have been blessed with this beauty and yet we take advantage of it and rid it of all its natural elements. Kolkata is one of the cities most affected by pollution. Kolkata has been given a pollution level of 160, this classifies it as an unhealthy city. It is the 4<sup>th</sup> unhealthiest city in the world. This can be linked to the amount of factories, cars and the rise in human activities such as building. Kolkata has a level of 140 micrograms per cubic meter The World Health Organisation says that a level of 20 micrograms per cubic meter is healthy and sustainable. This high level of pollution is extremely unhealthy and is a cause for the high mortality rate that can be noticed in Kolkata.

Our planet is vital for our existence, we build on it and with it, we eat from it and take pleasure in its beauty and variation. We are slowly draining it of all these amazing resources; we do this by releasing carbon dioxide and other harmful gases into the atmosphere. In India they rely on their land. They grow all of their food and they raise their cattle off the Earth. They export most of the food they grow to western countries such as Ireland. These exports are how Indian families can afford food and afford for their

children to go to school. As the demand for Indian resources increases the demand on the increase at the same rate. This is pushing the Earth and the environment to unsustainable levels.

My experience in India was limited however I truly feel as though I got to embrace myself in the culture. I also got to see the poorer people live and how much they value the earth for their own food but also for the money that their produce makes. India is a truly lovely country and not to be undermined by the pollution but it is a serious issue. As for someone from Ireland, a lovely country with very little pollution, the pollution was even more apparent to me, it seemed that some native people did not recognise or notice that the air they were breathing was heavy and nasty to have in your lungs. The air was almost suffocating, you felt weighed down by humidity. Every breath felt sluggish and hard, I used double the energy just taking one breath of smoke full 'oxygen'.

As a rich first world country we have the obligation to aid India as much as we can in their endeavours to make their country more green and sustainable for the future of this planet but also for the future of India. Every country needs help in making these changes to their own future, we can provide that help to some degree. The Indian government has not been encouraging changes necessary to a sustainable Indian in the future. If the UN and the EU can help and send people over to highlight the issues this has on the environment and the more significant issue of health and the rising health issues that are causing more deaths than ever before and the amount of cars and motorbikes can be attributed to this increase as well just by the fact that people are getting hit more frequently. If we can introduce strict rules and regulations that must be followed maybe we can get the government officials to truly implement these acts, and maybe this will set them on the right track to bettering the environmental issues faced by India, because these issues will only become worse as time goes

by and we are coming close to a point of no return and gearstick measures need to be taken to insure that we preserve what's left of the one of a kind earth we have.

To conclude what we have talked about the reasons for pollution and what has contributed to the damage, what we can do to help and why places such as India need this earth preserved in all its Glory for them to be able to live off it as they do at the moment.

I would like everyone to think about this issue and how it affects You, because even if you don't think it, it really does and who knows some day years from now India's problems at the moment could be our problems. If we can change our habits just minorly it can impact on a global scale and can save the lives of so many people and animals all over the world.

# Water

## *by James Woods*

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Hello teachers and fellow students. Today I will be telling you everything you need to know about water.

What is water? Water is a transparent, tasteless, odourless and nearly colourless chemical substance. Its chemical formula is  $H_2O$ . This means that each of its molecules are made up of one oxygen and two hydrogen atoms that are connected by covalent bonds. Water is not restricted to just one shape. It takes shape of whatever it is placed in. Water can also occur in the different states: liquid, solid and and gas.

Water on Earth. Water covers 71% of the Earth. 96% of the water on earth is found in the oceans and seas, 1.7% in ground water, 1.7% in glaciers and 0.001% in clouds. Did you know that only 2.5% of all water on earth is freshwater? And out of that, 98.8% of that is water in the form of ice. Another crazy fact is that less than 0.3% of all freshwater is in rivers and lakes.

Fresh clean drinking water provides no calories or organic material but is essential for life on earth to survive. The amount of safe drinking water has increased dramatically over the past 50 years but unfortunately around 1 billion people do not have access to safe drinking water. It is said that by 2025 over 50% of the population

will be facing water shortages. This is because of (e.g. the rising population) we can stop/slow this down by doing the following (e.g. shorter showers).

Does water exist outside Earth? Yes, water exists outside earth. Water has been discovered on Mars, on Saturn's moon Enceladus and on Jupiter's moon Europa. This water could prove vital in coming generations, so we need to get working on trying to extract it.

Where does water come from? For a long time the creation of water remained one of the mysteries of the universe. Not very long ago scientists found out that most of the universe's water is created as a byproduct of star formation. When a star is being formed it creates a strong outward wind of gas and dust. When this impacts surrounding gas it releases shock waves. The shock waves then compresses and heats the gas. Water is produced in this hot dense gas.

Has water affected civilisation? Yes water has greatly affected human civilisation. Almost every civilisation has based its whereabouts around a flowing stream of water. This happens because people can use it for transport and to gather food from, as well as the act that is vital to our diet. Some examples of civilisations that settled near flowing water are the ancient Egyptians that settled and depended on the river Nile. Rome was also created on the river Tiber, even Dublin was founded on the river Liffey.

Water is used in almost everything you can imagine but I will list some things you probably didn't know water was used for. Water is used as a scientific standard for the gram. The definition of a gram is the absolute weight of a volume of pure equal to the cube of the hundredth part of a metre. Water is also used in many chemicals. It acts as a solvent or a reactant. This shows it is a vital resource in all aspect of life and should be cherished.

Thank you all for listening and I hope you learned as much as I did.

# Overpopulation

## *by Zach O'Sullivan*

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Human population growth is becoming a huge issue in our world today. The population is increasing rapidly. The reason that it is becoming a concern is because it has affected the economic, environmental, and social aspects of our world. In the film *Frontline: Heat*, we can see how there might not be a future for our planet unless we are able to reduce the emissions and make our world a safe place. Not only for the present but also for future generations so that they are able to live long and healthy lives.

An increase in human population can influence our economy. Some of the factors that are affected are unemployment, poverty and the restriction of economic expansion. When the population increases, the cost of health, education, and other areas of urban growth are affected. Unemployment results because there is a smaller share contributing to the economy while larger share uses it to support itself. The revenues are not enough to provide for the population growth. This affects families to save less because they are spending all of their income on basic needs and cannot afford to educate their children, which produces poverty in the next generation. This results in low qualification and low chance of employment for children when they reach the working age. Due to this, industries and services cannot develop. With the increase of population, the volume of employment and unemployment increases. The number of unemployed depends on the size of the active population called

the Labour Force. If the growth rate of the population is higher than the job opportunities available to the labour force, unemployment will occur. When there is an increase in population, society is solely focused on providing the basic needs. This results in the lack of obtaining education and because of this they cannot help the economy expand. Also, there are more consumers with the increase of population than producers, causing the restriction of economic expansion.

Not only is our economy impacting the population, but so is the environment. "Population is the number one threat to our environment". (Population Growth Impacts on the Environment website). Our population is rising beyond the earth's ability to maintain a reasonable quality of life. This enlarged population has also increased the land uses, resource uses and pollution problems. A raise in land use has resulted in habitat losses for other species to live. Without this land habitat, the species that are living there presently might die off. Due to the decrease in the animal population, this affects its consumption by humans. Another problem is also the increase of resources used. This results in changes in land covers which can affect ecosystems, biodiversity, agriculture and productivity.



# Why Marijuana should be legalised

## *by Cian Doherty*

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Good morning adjudicators, students and teachers. I'm here today to present to you my speech on why I think marijuana should be legalized. Introduction Behind alcohol and tobacco, marijuana is considered as the third most popular recreational substance not only in the United States, but also in some parts of the world. The thing that differentiates marijuana from the other two, is its legality. In the past decades, marijuana was frowned upon by society because of the myths that surrounds its use. However, several debates have shown the light to the issue because of the rising awareness about marijuana's questionable reputation. More and more people are now accepting the idea of legalizing marijuana because of the factors that constitutes a valid argument of its legality. This speech will mention the most significant attributes that will justify why marijuana should be legalized.

Cannabis contains molecules that resembles those produced in our very own brains these are called cannabinoids .Cannabis contains around 113 different types of these cannabinoids but the main two cannabinoids you normally hear about are Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and Cannabidiol (CBD) which both have no addictive effects.

THC is the cannabinoid in cannabis that gives you the "high" effect what it does, is it removes the refractory period of neurons that are already active and cause your thoughts, imagination and perception

to immensely magnify it, it also effects the levels of dopamine and norepinephrine in your brain, often leading to a sense of euphoria, relaxation, pain modulation and general enhancement of an experience which can sometimes cause anxiety furthermore. There are cannabinoid receptors in areas controlling short term memory, learning, coordination, movement control and higher cognitive functions. CBD is the cannabinoid in cannabis that gives you the relaxed feeling in your body and it is also responsible for many of cannabis's medical benefits. CBD can be extracted from the cannabis or hemp plant and be turned into an oil known as CBD oil or hash oil which can be absorbed through skin or administered orally. Cannabis is split up into three different groups or strains Indica, Sativa and Hybrid. The indica strain gives more of a relaxing effect and helps treat some cases of ANXIETY and INSOMNIA, the reason is because it draws the sugar out of your blood and that's why you feel tired and you just want to sit there. The next strain is sativa which is a more energetic strain its mainly used to treat behavioural and mental issues such as ADHD and DEPRESSION, like indica it stimulates hunger. Which makes it very useful if you have been diagnosed with CANCER, ANOREXIA and HIV/AIDS. The third and final strain is hybrid which is a mix between an indica seed and a sativa seed so at first you get the energetic feel but later you will be tired and drowsy.

Here are 7 diseases that supplements like CBD oil are helping to treat right now.

### 1. Epilepsy and Seizures

It's recently been making headlines as more and more parents of young epilepsy patients have been advocating for medical marijuana as an available treatment. But just in case you haven't, you should know that cannabidiol (CBD), a compound of marijuana that does not contain psychoactive properties (meaning that it doesn't get you high), is being used to treat people with epilepsy or people who suffer from seizures. In 2015, researchers at NYU found a 50 percent decrease in the frequency of seizures for people using CBD.

## 2. Asthma

This one may seem pretty contradictory, as smoking is usually not healthy for your lungs. However, recent studies have shown that marijuana is not only much less harmful to your lungs than cigarettes and tobacco, but it also has a dilating effect on human airways. Thus, it's actually helping people with asthma to breathe easily.

## 3. HIV/AIDS

Even though no cure has been discovered yet, HIV/AIDS patients can still find some relief for their symptoms with medical marijuana. In a study of HIV-positive individuals, those who smoked marijuana were found to eat better, sleep better, gain weight, experience a better mood and have less neuropathic pain than those who don't.

## 4. Alzheimer's

Marijuana is being used to ease the symptoms of Alzheimer's patients, which include aggression, anxiety, depression, insomnia and hallucinations. More importantly, however, marijuana has been proven to slow the production of beta-amyloid proteins, which scientists think are the main contributors to the progression of Alzheimer's. This means that the plant could potentially be able to prevent or at least delay the onset of the disease.

#### 5. Inflammatory Bowel Disease

Researchers have found that people with IBD who used marijuana noticed an improved quality of life. In a small study of 13 people, those who smoked weed said they gained weight, saw a rise in their BMI and felt less pain than those who didn't.

#### 6. Multiple Sclerosis

According to early-stage studies, patients who used marijuana experienced a major decline in their muscle spasms, tremors, pain and muscle stiffness. Also noted, participants who were given marijuana or cannabis extracts were found to have experienced better sleep quality during the trial than those who weren't.

#### 7. Menstrual Cramps

While menstrual cramps are not technically a disease, they are still a huge issue for women who experience debilitating pain while on their period. For some women, smoking marijuana can help ease the discomfort of period cramps.

Some other diagnostic's that can be treated with an indica strain of marijuana are Anxiety and Insomnia the last point that I would like to make is that, marijuana is one of the safest substances in this universe it is nearly impossible to overdose on marijuana it is estimated that you would have to smoke 1,500 pounds of marijuana in just 15 minutes to die. Or eat 49 pounds of marijuana in edibles just to put that the scale with tobacco alcohol and other drugs. Approximately 400,000 people die from tobacco, 100,000 from drinking, 15,000 from meth, 15,000 from pain killers, 400 from heroin, 200 from cocaine, 76 from ecstasy and 0 from marijuana so in my opinion there needs to be a change in the government when it comes to marijuana. Thank you all for listening and I hope you all enjoyed this speech.

# Cristiano Ronaldo

## *by Ilia Ilyenko*

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Hi, my name is Ilia and my speech is about Cristiano Ronaldo. Cristiano Ronaldo was born in 1985. He has won twenty-five trophies so far in his career, including five league titles, five champions league titles, a UEFA European Champions league and a few Copa Del Rey titles.

He played for CP Sporting including his time playing with Manchester United. He scored many hat-tricks in the champions league. He won tons of Premier League titles and one UEFA Champions League title.

# 300 seconds

## *by Faolán Doecke-Lauders*

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The Human Race now lives on a planet called Buriis, for centuries the humans have cooperated with an alien race known as the Katsuvarii. As of 46 hours ago, an unknown enemy that call themselves the “Imperial Covenant” were first discovered. Within 10 minutes of the discovery, the Imperial Covenant opened fire upon the United Alliance’s Orbital Station.

The casualties were in the hundreds of thousands...

The Imperial Covenants advanced weaponry was far stronger than anything the United Alliance had...

Scanners had detected the same Imperial Covenant cruiser approaching Buriis...

**[Time: 07:15]**

Drake: “I am Drake Der Mascascarus, With a PHD in Warfare Tactics, Military History and Military Psychology, I had examined this new threat and It is evident that if the Imperial Covenant reach Buriis the entirety of humanity will be crushed within weeks, I have taken it upon myself to create a team of unique individuals that I believe can be used to counterattack the Imperial Covenant forces.”

“These Individuals come from many backgrounds and some are not kind at heart, but I believe that with the threat of humanities extinction that these individuals will become something that all humans will be able to follow, something that can show us that we can always fight... that we can always win... that we have hope... “

[Drake closes his logbook and opens various files on his computer screen.]

Computer: “Opening Files of UA Imperial Covenant Counterattack Squad”

Drake: “Suleyk Usinona, The son of a great military general, Ediin Jul AKA Scorch, A pyrokinetic scientist, Lingrah Edun AKA Snipe, a sharpshooting gunzerker, Krona and Crovii Chilung AKA The Twins, twin melee combat champions, and Spartacus Kearn AKA Sparker, a military trained all type vehicle driver/pilot. I must say, this is one odd group”

[Drake closed the screen and looked eye level with the 10 or so people sitting on the other side of the long table.]

Governmental personnel: “And Drake, how can we be sure this squadron will be able to fight against the enemy forces? Even our best military equipment wasn’t able to dent the enemy units.”

Drake: “Because these six people are far stronger than anything your laboratories can produce, and put together under the right conditions, will exponentially increase their fighting power”



Governmental personnel: “Maybe their bodies are capable of fighting but what of their minds, most of these candidates aren’t even old enough to join the military, what if they can’t handle the stress of war?”

Drake: “They can, because all of them have something against the Covenant, something that gives them determination to eliminate the enemy”

Governmental personnel: “And even so, if the covenant is defeated, what’s stopping these kids from attacking us? You said yourself they *were far stronger* than anything we have, what if they abuse their abilities and attempt treason?”

Drake: “We will deal with that once the time comes...”

Governmental personnel: “Look, Drake, We as the Government of Buriis cannot allow this squadron to be created, the risks are far too high.”

Drake: “ugh... Let me tell ye all a little something, I only came here because Roy told me to inform ye of the New UAICC Squad that was officially formed seven minutes before this meeting took place.”

Governmental personnel: “What? We never signed any agreements to this?”

Drake: “Correct, ye didn’t.”

[Drake slides the signed document to the other side of the table, stands up and turns around to face the door.]

Governmental personnel: "This is the Kings Signature... How?!"

Drake:"As you know, the King's signature overrules any other signature in our society, including any government signed documents. So if you will allow me to leave, I have about eight hours to throw a group of teens into a battlefield and save humanity from extinction."

[Drake walks through the door and leaves every person at the table in surprise and frustration.]

Governmental personnel: "I hate that little brat, just because he's friends of the royal family he thinks he owns the place."

**[Time: 07:17]**

[Drake enters a training room, Suleyk is lifting rocks and streams of water while meditating, Scorch is meditating beside him, small streams of fire hovered around the pair. Snipe, while wearing a blindfold, is shooting multiple moving targets with pistols. The twins are simultaneously punching and kicking practice dummies, meanwhile Sparker is fixing the underside of his car. Drake looks at the group of them.]

[Whispering to self] Drake: "They've been here for five hours, and I don't think a single word has been said."

[Drake signs]

Drake: "Alright everyone, listen up! The enemy will be expected to enter our atmosphere in about 3 hours..."

Scorch: “But won’t the Military Fleet Defence stop the cruiser?”

Drake: “The government thinks that, yes, my prediction is that they won’t last 5 minutes against that Covenant ship”

Scorch: “... but... the entire fleet consists of over three thousand ships, scanners have only picked up one covenant ship, no matter how superior their weapons may be, we outnumber them three thousand to one... right?”

**[Time: 07:18]**

[Location: 160,000km from the Buriis Outer Atmosphere, The Alliance fleet has gathered to form a wall like structure in preparation for the enemy attack.]

Soldier 1: “Sir, Enemy spotted, within five thousand kilometres, shall we prepare to fire?”

Captain: “Tell every ship to prepare its weapons and aim directly for the enemy, Fire when I give the signal!”

[All of a sudden the sound systems within the ship made a loud screeching sound]

Captain: “What was that?”

Unknown Voice: “Hello, I am Aldak, General of the Imperial Covenant. Your fleet appears to be in my way, you have to the count of 10 to move or I will destroy your fleet.”

Soldier 2: "Sir, it would appear the enemy have hacked into our ships systems!"

Aldak: ...nine ...eight ...seven

Captain: "Tell all of our fleet to fire at will!"

Aldak: ...six ...five ... four

Soldier 1: "Sir, our communications are locked down, we can't do anything"

Aldak: ...three ...two ... one

Soldier 3: "Sir the firing system is not responding. What do we do?"

Aldak: ...zero.

[Beside the covenant cruiser two cruisers deactivated their camouflage and were revealed for all to see, they were at least six times the size of the main cruiser, and 3 times the size of any of the Alliance's cruisers. Once they were fully revealed the head of the cruiser split in two and slowly started coming apart, within the front of the cruisers, were enormous hollow cylindrical shapes. The captain looked at them with fear, "giant... cannons..." Within a flash second a stream of blinding light shot out of the cannons, the captain could only watch as the stream of light slowly engulfed the left and right side of the fleet, the cannons started turning inward, ship by ship the fleet was being shredded to pieces as if it was nothing but paper. The lights and computers inside the captain's

ship started flickering and stopped working. They were unable to move the ship. trapped. Left for dead...]

**[Time: 07:19]**

Drake: "I've just received word from the Airspace Fleet ground control, just as I predicted, the entire fleet has been destroyed."

[There was silence after those words, each person expressed fear, shock and pure horror, and no words were needed.]

Drake: "This means it will be only an hour until they get here, ye may want to suit up."

[Suleyk remained sitting, his mind was recalling the space station, when the covenant first attacked, him and family were aboard the ships bridge. He could hear the screams through his memory.]

Suleyk: "If they think they can just go around killing people there wrong, No one, no matter what faction nor race can control the death of others... If they think that we'll allow them to just come here and let them kill us. Their wrong, dead wrong"

[Each person gathered there equipment and readied for battle, they formed a circle around the holographic table in the training room.]

Drake: "This is the information we have so far, their entire army appears to be mechanic, our scanners didn't find any life forms aboard the ship. The armour and weaponry is stronger than anything we have, hopefully using your unique abilities you can find

a way of taking them out easily. The main cruiser fired off three large pods about 15 seconds ago, each one is headed to a different city within the same region, each one is roughly an hour travel distance by flight. You will split into two teams, Team A will attack the pod in Ubiko, meanwhile Team B will attack the pod in Fjorm. Once those pods are dealt with, Team A and B will make their way to the third pod in Lopez. There are six of you so it will be three and three. The teams are as follows. Team A, Suleyk, Snipe, Sparker. Team B, Scorch and the Twins. These teams should have equal abilities. Honestly, we don't know much about the covenant, but I do know one thing. The Military can't stop them, the only ones who have any hope in defeating them, are ye. Good luck out there, you're going to need every scrap of it.

**[Time: 07:20]**

# In the wrong place at the wrong time

*by Christian Madden*

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Frank locked his door and started to walk through the cold dark streets. He didn't know where he was going or why, but he just had to get out of the house, He had to confront his problems. He looked out into the nocturnal alleyways of the Bronx and found the looming uncertainty of what would unfold soothing. So he set off.

He started walking to his local park, where he has gone since he was young. "Maybe I'll grab a coffee along the way", he thought, and went down winding laneways and alleys to the nearest coffee house. The longer he stayed awake the longer he could last without having to go home. Maybe he'd even check into a motel for the night. Frank grinded slowly to a halt. He put his hands up as if to silence others, but slowly lowered them realising that there was no one else around. "Help..." a faint, but definite cry from the way he had just come. He turned around and went back up the labyrinth of alleyways, whilst picking up speed as he went. "Help..." again, but clearer and louder than the first time. At this point Frank had broken into a sprint. He was filled with a sudden determination that he hadn't felt in a long time.

There it was. A frail, withered body, sprawled across the ground with a large gash along her aged face and bleeding heavily from her side. "Oh my God.." Frank muttered under his breath, before going to his knees to tend to the woman. "Ma'am? Ma'am can you hear me?" She slowly opened her eyes, revealing milky white spheres

staring vacantly at Frank's face. "Oh thank goodness" she whispered weakly. " You have to help me, a man ran past and tried to snatch my purse. When I tried to resist, he cut my face, and stabbed me." "Ok ma'am what is your name?" Frank tried to keep his voice calm as he pretended to know what he was doing. "Ma- Maggie." "Ok Maggie I'm going to try to help you, alright?" Frank swiftly took off his jacket and pressed it against Maggie's wound. He reached for his phone... but it wasn't there. He must have left it at home. "Ok Maggie, Maggie do you hear me?" "Y-Yes..." she faintly replied. "I'm going to need you to be strong for me Maggie, what did the man who did this look like?" No reply. "Maggie? Maggie, can you hear me?" Still no reply. Frank panicked and thought of what to do next. He started to sprint home to try and get his phone, but someone had already begun walking down the alley. He bumped into Frank, knocking him to the floor. "Oh sorry..." the man started, but then spotted the body sprawled behind Frank. "I'm calling the police!" The man shouted. Still in a daze, Frank did not register what the man said, so he got to his feet and began to sprint again.

About halfway from his house, Frank realised what had just happened, and stopped. That man thought Frank was guilty of killing the old woman, and he just sprinted away making himself look even more suspicious. Why hadn't he explained, or asked the man for his phone to call an ambulance. He knew that if he explained that it simply didn't cross his mind to the authorities it wouldn't go well. Frank weighed up his options. He has no leads as to who the real culprit is, and as of this moment, all of the evidence



points towards him. He looked back in the direction of the alley and turned back towards his house, and started to run again.

Frank searched through his pockets and fumbled with his keys before opening his front door. He grabbed his backpack, a notepad and pen, and some water from the fridge. He grabbed his phone, took the sim card and cracked it half. Frank realised the more he did to protect himself, the guiltier he looked, but he was too far in now to turn back. He peered through his shutters. The night was calm, and was not concerned with what Frank was doing or why. He left the house and set out again, this time from the opposite way he came. The future was scary and intimidating to Frank, but nevertheless, he had no time to reflect on it, only to attack it head on...