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# Star piece



## Balloon

I was drifting ...  
I often ask how was I made?  
How did I get all of this air inside of me?  
Floating up to the moon,  
Getting tugged, to and fro  
Their hand grasped tightly around the beautiful ribbon.

I was there, a human hand grasped around,  
The string, wondering how was I made?  
The human tripped, I was free with air surrounding me,  
I was escaping, I could see everything, I could  
See the little girl crying while,  
I was drifting up and up ...

It was fun but then I became scared ...  
I saw everything, it was amazing!  
And ... I started to float down ...  
I could hardly breath, I was so out of breath.

What was I meant to do? Was I going to be ok?  
My string was all floppy, I came down to earth  
I saw, I fell, it changed ...  
The disturbing sea, the polluted rivers and the dying  
Trees.

Millie Walters-Bresner

# Don't miss that morning meal!



You've *definitely* had it grilled into you by now that's it's the most important meal of the day. I mean, all meals are important; eating is just one of those things in life that happens to be fairly essential. If you don't look after your body, it can lead to both long-term and short-term problems so making conscious decisions about your fuel of choice is a good habit to get into- so long as you remember to have the occasional treat!



The best way to fit breakfast in? Adjust your schedule. This may be easier said than done, though, as often we don't mind missing the scenic sunrise in exchange for a snooze. However, little time-savers such as packing your bag the night before can be used to create this necessary slot for breakfast; or, if you'd rather live life on the edge, consider figuring out the fastest breakfast that works for you! A breakfast bar can be a convenient grab-and-go (especially if you're about to miss the bus!). However, beware the amounts of added sugar companies tend to sneak into these- it's worth just checking the packet to make sure you know exactly what you're about to snack on.

For those of you who are perhaps a bit more organised, try opting for plain porridge to chase away the winter cold (which is also a plastic-free alternative to breakfast bars), chop up some fruit to satisfy a sweet tooth or even just combine the two! Scramble an egg, eat a bowl of granola, reach for a yogurt or a smoothie. Aim for something with some fibre to keep you fuller for longer- especially if you're in KS4 and lunch happens to be later in the day. If you're willing to push the idea of conventional breakfast foods aside, maybe throwing in a portion of veggies wouldn't go amiss. No, seriously- most cultures don't have strict ideas on what a 'breakfast food' denotes; in Mexico beef and beans isn't unusual and in India curries in the morning aren't shunned but embraced. Arguably the Americanised breakfast cereals that are considered pantry staples here would, in most countries, be regarded as desserts.



Hydration should also be a key part of your morning routine, so along with filling up your reusable drinks bottle for school (they're a must now, right?), make sure to drink a glass of water or a cup of herbal tea. Normal tea or coffee is also fine in moderation, but allow yourself no more than three cups a day to prevent yourself turning into a caffeine-craving zombie that crawls through last lesson. A plant-based milk would make an environmentally edition to your breakfast- that is, if you can bear to part from normal milk- as they often have lower carbon emissions.

So, when you go to leave your front door, remember to ask yourself: have I had a good breakfast? Overall, the most important thing is that you get the nutrients you need for an early boost to see you through to lunch as part of a healthy, balanced diet.

# Alice's trip to the Goedgedacht Trust South Africa



## Fundraising for the trip

The trip to the Goedgedacht Trust was organised by my school, Cowbridge Comprehensive. In order to take part, each pupil had to raise a minimum of £1000 towards the cost of the trip and a donation to the Trust, whilst at the same time highlighting its work. With your help, I exceeded this amount, and I would like to thank you for supporting my fundraising. Thank you for donating, attending my Christmas-themed musical concert, buying handmade crafts and cakes, or buying a ticket in a rugby ball raffle.

## Path Onto Prosperity Programme (POP)

The POP programme supports children and their families from birth to adulthood through a number of initiatives such as the Early Childhood Development Unit, the After School Educational Project and the Youth Leadership Training scheme. In the evenings, we met with pupils from the Goedgedacht Rural Leadership Academy, which provides leadership training to prepare 18-25-year olds for work or tertiary education. It was so interesting to hear their insight into the Trust in terms of how it works and supports the surrounding communities, and how it is helping them. We also learnt about some of their culture through songs and dances around the campfire.



## Preschool

The Crèche and Pre-School on the farm caters for 145 children, with special attention given to children identified as struggling with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). This is prevalent because local farm workers are often paid with "bad alcohol" instead of money. We helped the children to read and speak English, and simply played, helping to develop their social and cognitive skills. The children loved the "Hokey Cokey", and "If you're Happy and you Know it". We danced a lot, and they were much better dancers than us! I was taken aback by how happy and confident the children were.

## Work on the Goedgedacht Farm

Duties on the farm vary, and this year we planted olive trees. By doing so, we have helped to boost the farm's source of income from making and selling olive products, such as olive oil. The money is then invested back into the farm and is used to further the Trust's different programmes. Whilst the Trust aims to tie environmental issues into their projects I also like to think that we have left a lasting legacy, as the trees will be there long after we have left – hopefully for at least 500 years.

We packaged various seeds collected from the farm and surrounding areas which were to be given out to the rural community and to members of the farm's eco branch. This was part of the Trust's "Care for the Planet" programme, which encourages more rural people to grow their own vegetables; this will help provide them with a reliable source of food, which in turn will help combat rural poverty and will provide more independence.



## Learning

Walking around Riebeek Kasteel gave me an appreciation of things that I often take for granted, such as shoes, clean clothes and a front door that locks. The trust also hosted an apartheid-themed evening for us at the farm, so that we could gain a deeper understanding of apartheid and the effects on different groups of people. In turn, we held a Welsh-themed evening; we taught the POP children and college students some traditional Welsh dances and a few Welsh phrases (eg “shwmae” and “dw i’n hoffi”) and sang songs such as “Calon Lan”.

## Thank you

I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who donated items for us to take with us. We managed to take an overwhelming amount, and once this was all sorted at the farm there were a good many tears. Just the day before, a member of the Trust had put up signs in local shops asking for donations of sanitary products for the rural communities. I was aware of how the children enjoy sport, and asked locally for donations of sports kits to take with me; parents and children were very generous and the Cowbridge under 10’s football team even donated their whole kit. I hope the children will think of their friends in Cowbridge when they wear the kits and play football.

## POP centres

We visited two out of the eight existing POP centres. Children attend these after school. We helped them with their homework, did arts and crafts together, undertook sports activities and played games. We even baked muffins and cookies and took these and toothbrushes around the community of Riebeek Kasteel, giving them to the locals. It was really thought-provoking to see the community in which these children live, and what they are doing to improve it, including, for example, the POP children go to the local park twice a week and litter pick. It was inspiring to see that they really wanted to make a difference. The children taught me many things; you can have hours of fun with a bouncy ball, how to say “nice to meet you” in Afrikaans (“Lekker om jou te ont moet”), and, hopefully, how to dance a little better!



# The Power of Greta

Greta Thunberg. A sixteen year old girl who's at the forefront of our media and has become a household name. So how did a sixteen year old Swedish school girl from Stockholm become the face of the School Strike for climate movement? Her passion, poise and intelligence has given her the global platform she



deserves as in September, she addressed the UN Climate Action Summit in New York. This is a girl who should be going to her lessons, hanging with her friends, doing sport- instead, she feels so let down by our global leaders that she has taken a stand and is leading a mass movement of millions. The UK government has declared a climate emergency with the goal of reducing carbon emissions by 80% by 2050 (BBC) and arguably, Greta Thunberg played a key role in forcing them to come to this decision. She is giving us a future; there is no 'Planet B'.

Thunberg spent her childhood in the audience with a mother who is an opera singer and an acting father, little did she know that she herself would soon command worldwide audiences of her own. At the age of eleven, Greta became depressed and was later diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome, OCD and Selective Mutism; however, she does not consider these to be a weakness or her Aspergers to be an illness- she instead calls them her "superpowers". Thunberg then became a vegan and gave up flying in an attempt to reduce her carbon footprint all at the age of 12, now, she is a renowned leader of the Extinction Rebellion cause. She first went on strike from school in August 2018 inspired by the Gun Law strike 'March for our Lives' in America. It was during Sweden's hottest summer to date and she demanded that her government reduced their carbon emissions to comply with the Paris Agreement. The famous image of Greta with her sign painted with 'Skolstrejk för klimatet' (School strike for the climate) was soon plastered over social media. The pure simplicity of a school girl's plea for change resonated with millions. And so, the strike for climate movement was born.



She hasn't rested since. In August 2019, she sailed the Atlantic Ocean from Plymouth to New York in what she called a carbon-neutral transatlantic crossing done as a demonstration of her beliefs in cutting carbon emissions. The voyage lasted fourteen days and was to the UN Climate Action Summit in New York where her emotional speech touched millions. She's been criticized heavily, especially by the older generations with Jeremy Clarkson labelling her a 'spoilt brat', but what she is saying is facts, logic, and science. Indisputable. To openly mock a sixteen year old girl over social media clearly shows WHY it is a sixteen year old girl who is having to lead the protest against climate change.



Sharing her videos and occasionally retweeting her on twitter is, unfortunately, not enough to save our planet. Think before you shop: is there a way I could be more sustainable with my purchase? Whether it is using a reusable shopping bag, buying loose fruit and veg or even growing your own produce, we can all do our bit. We can all be a little bit Greta.





# Technology vs Mental Health: Which do we value more?



1 in 10 children and young people are affected by mental health problems. Worryingly, this figure has more than doubled since the 1990s when the age of technology and social media was really yet to begin. May there be a connection between mental health and technology use? Countless research (such as by Duke University) seems to suggest so.

Anxiety and depression are the most common mental illnesses in the UK. Depression is characterised by feelings of severe hopelessness and misery, whilst anxiety is marked by excessive uneasiness and apprehension, perhaps accompanied by compulsive behaviour or panic attacks. Online harassment and cyber-bullying have often been found to be major sources of anxiety and/ or depression, but while these may be the more well-known contributors to mental health issues, there are other very common conditions caused by technology that many people are often less aware of; phone headaches, hearing loss and 3D hangovers can affect peoples' lives without them even knowing it is the result of technology use. The average teen spends 9 hours a day on their phone meaning these issues can grow until they start to affect school performance and overall well being: grades, energy levels and self esteem can drop, which can snowball towards mental health decline. So, are the urges to check social media constantly and have movie marathons really worth the risk?

The issue is that technology is so useful: perhaps it is too convenient, making us too dependent on it. It is a necessity for many businesses and education systems worldwide, and technology also fuels consumerism, with many companies dependent on TV and social media advertising to promote themselves and their products. But be honest with yourself- how do you conduct the majority of your work or research? How do you keep in contact with friends? How often do you turn on the TV in the evenings?

Although electronic devices seem essential to everyday life in the 21st century, they arguably have even more downfalls. For example, the young ages at which children are exposed to electronic devices means they are sometimes subjected to violence in video games, bad language and other non-age-appropriate material which may harm their mental health and development, even years later. This is evident in the famous Bobo Doll Experiment conducted by sociologist Bandura, which proved that children often imitate what they see on their screens. We should, therefore, think more carefully about what we expose ourselves- and our younger relatives- to in the future.

There is no denying that the internet is an essential part of modern day life. Without it there would be millions or even billions unemployed across the world, yet we need to put limitations in place for all age groups to ensure the prevention of further increase in mental health problems in the future.

*Alisha Major*

***If you feel like you have been affected by anything in this article, you may wish to search online for and/ or contact: Childline ([www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)), Young Minds ([www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)) or Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/child-and-adolescent-mental-health-services-camhs/>).***



