written by students for students

TEENSCOPE

Solihull Sixth Form College
SUMMIT LEARNING TRUST
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The Cooper Prize Finalists

Social Media & Self Image

Creative Media

Cooper Prize

The Cooper Prize: young journalists write about issues of importance to them.

Imagine if you had 1000 words to let the world know about what is important to you. What would you have to say?

The Cooper Prize, named in honour of inspirational Solihull SFC teacher Chris Cooper, encourages students from across the college to write about issues that are important to them. Along with a prize of £50, the winner gets their name engraved on the Cooper Shield which is displayed in the study area of the English Department. Year 12 students applying for competitive university courses will of course be able to write about their achievement in their personal statements.

Student journalists are asked to enter, "engaging writing" which shows an understanding of the conventions of journalism whilst also demonstrating "confident and conscious stylistic choices". Overall, judges are looking for an accurate and coherent "professional looking" article from the candidates for the prize.

The competition, in its second year, has already seen absorbing, high-quality writing from a large number of students making selecting the winner a challenging task for the panel of judges. Last year's winner, Thia Douglas, wrote a provocative piece questioning media stereotypes of black women which edged out competition from many other pieces of excellent work some of which are displayed next to the shield itself.

This year's entries for the prize maintained or possibly even raised journalistic standards with Elsa Lowther's thought-provoking work on the ethics of displaying human remains in museums showing just what Solihull SFC students are capable of in terms of mature investigative journalism.

In this term's edition of Teenscope, we proudly publish the work of some of this year's candidates including Elsa's winning piece and we hope you will enjoy their work.

Cooper Prize

1st

Death on Display

What should archaeologists do with human remains?

By Elsa Lowther

With the reopening of the Hunterian Museum earlier this month, the question of 'How do we investigate the past whilst honouring the dead' is again at the forefront of debate in the archaeological world.

It is no surprise that archaeologists are regularly confronted with the issue of the exhumation and display of human remains. Some would argue that it is crucial that human remains are examined to learn about our past as humans. Others feel uncomfortable with the concept of humans being stored in laboratories awaiting inspection.

Even in legal terms, it is unclear how best to approach this issue. In 2008 a Governmental decree stated that all human remains should be reburied after two years. However, the legality around human remains and their display is still unclear, as many archaeologists and museums pointed out the impracticality of this decree, for instance for Roman or neolithic remains. In these cases, the possible scientific advantages of not reburying remains hugely outweigh the moral implications, due to their historic nature. Special allowances are now having to be afforded to museums to allow them to continue to display the remains they already owned, creating a legal headache for little tangible change.

Many people are uncomfortable with the exhumation, and in particular the display, of human remains, however. An issue that is often cited is the lack of respect for the religious and cultural practices that were put in place when the body was first buried, which are not then followed when

the body is reburied. As many current religions have laws around the burial of the dead, it is reasonable to assume many ancient religions did also. As the archaeologist Dan Davis puts it, "In Athens and other ancient cities, it was a crime to mess with human remains". Is it right, then, that we should displace those buried with love and care, only to rebury them in a different graveyard, in a different cultural context, hundreds of years later?

For many this issue is compounded by the previous lack of respect for remains by historic archaeologists. In the Hunterian Museum, the skeleton of Charles Byrne will no longer be displayed as he wanted to be buried at sea, a wish negated by Hunter, the collector of this museum collection. At the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, the popular Shuar Tsantsas (a collection of shrunken human and animal heads) has been removed as part of an ethical review within the museum. Many other collections also carry a sordid past, marred by colonial expansion. It is arguable, therefore, that these collections should not be displayed in England, but rather returned to their country of origin to be given the proper respect they deserve.

Whilst the colonial past of many of the displayed remains in museums around the UK is a clear ethical issue that must be addressed, it is arguably a separate consideration to that of the archaeologists who are attempting to studying newly exhumed remains.

In this arena of debate, the morally 'correct' action is unclear, as there are also clear benefits to the study of human remains, especially in the field of archaeology. The study of skeletons, for instance, provides a far greater understanding of human evolution. Skeletons such as 'Lucy' (an early example of a human ancestor who would have walked upright on two legs), provide huge amounts of scientific knowledge. As the skeleton is nearly 3.18 million years old (according to the Natural History Museum), it would be difficult to argue that the huge wealth of understanding gained is greatly marred by any potential ethical issues surrounding the exhumation of this skeleton.

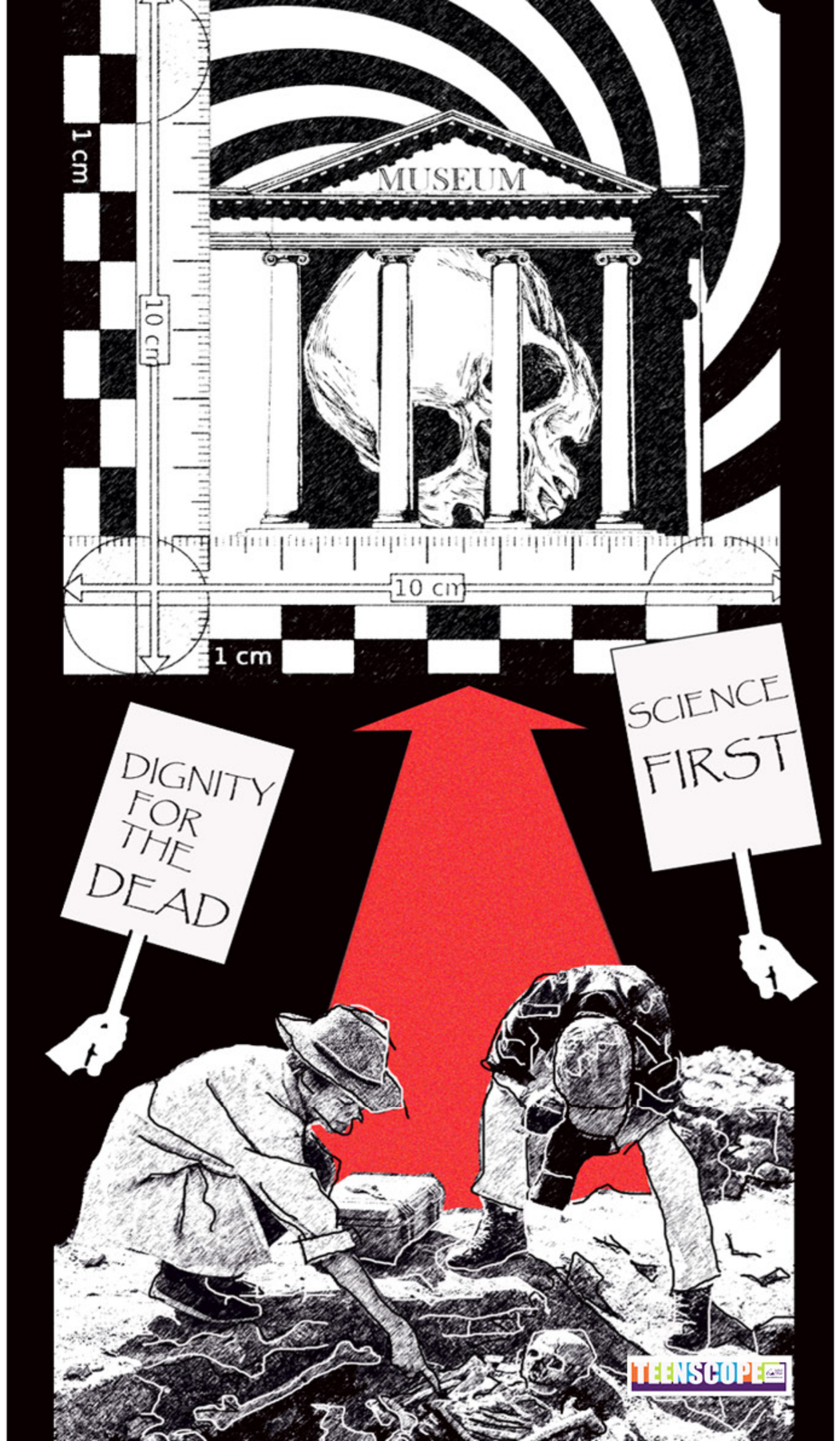
Excavations such as a double burial discovered in Moderna have challenged previous conceptions. Dubbed "the Lovers" by Italian media, as the skeletons were holding hands when buried, the burial was previously assumed to be a male-female double burial. However, new forms of DNA testing revealed that the two skeletons are both male. Some have since referred to the find as brothers, however this is likely evidence of an early male homosexual couple being buried together. Other possible examples of historic LGBTQIA+ identities have also been uncovered through the exhumation of human remains. An excavation at a burial site in Finland found a skeleton with XXY chromosomes (Klinefelter syndrome), who would have had the same physical characteristics as an XY chromosome male but who was found buried wearing a typically female dress and alongside swords. The discovery of this has now helped to change how traditional Nordic gender boundaries are viewed. This may suggest that the gender norms typically assigned to traditional views of the past, were in fact not adhered to as strictly as previously thought.

It is safe to say that these discoveries are crucial at a time when anti-LGBTQIA+ bigotry is rife. These finds help archaeologists to reassess the way relationships, masculinity and femininity were viewed in the world of history, and help prevent heteronormative and cisnormative ideologies clouding the assessment of the possible lives of the people found in future discoveries.

The benefits of human exhumation in both the worlds of science and anthropology are clear, however the treatment of human remains is still of the utmost importance in this debate. There is no doubt that remains should be treated with respect and dignity, and archaeologists working with human remains treat them with such qualities. There are now strict guidelines in the UK about the best ways to display exhumed remains, to respect the skeleton whilst allowing museums to educate

and inform those who visit about their past and the culture and traditions of people groups that have since been lost to time.

It is now common practice that any remains which are not of special scientific or historical interest are reburied at the end of an excavation. Whilst this debate remains at the heart of modern archaeology, a tentative equilibrium appears to have been successfully found.



Cooper Prize

The right way to grieve

By Lily Beddows

Though once something I used to excitedly anticipate, in recent years Bonfire Night has become a day which I dread. Now, when I hear the harsh screams of the fireworks, and I see the vibrant patterns painted in the sky, I feel guilty and sorrowful. When I see people celebrating and cheering, in response I feel resentful and jealous. Instead of commemorating, I grieve – and that's ok.

On November 5th 2021, Bonfire Night, my mother passed away whilst I was at school. Death is sometimes something terribly jarring, which can make the grieving process so much more difficult and painful – I did not expect to lose my mother at such an early age, which is why I still find myself angry about what happened, and sometimes still in denial that she is not here anymore. Why my mother? Why did it have to happen whilst I wasn't there? Why do I now have to remember her for longer than I knew her? When I grieve, I feel angry and guilty – as I know is the case for many others. Others will feel differently: depressed, overwhelmed, regretful. Some may not 'feel' at all – grief can leave us feeling benumbed and deprived. There is no 'right way' to grieve. Grief never stops, it may feel smaller or larger throughout life, but it is always there – we must learn to live with it and acknowledge its existence.

Guilt is a common emotion felt during grief and is particularly strong within young people who have lost a loved one. This correlates with the anger we may experience, and they both stem from feeling out of control. We question, what we could have done differently, what we should have done, what we should not have done – but in reality, the passing of a friend or family member is not our fault. Just because you feel guilty does not mean that you are. I am often overwhelmed with guilt, as I did not say goodbye to my mum the morning I left for school, but how could I have known what would happen that afternoon? Regardless of what I did that day, nothing would have changed the outcome; whilst there is no 'cure' for grief, beginning to accept the reality, learning to stop blaming yourself, and starting to forgive helps with managing these feelings of guilt. We are all human: we all make mistakes, and we cannot foresee the future – do not just accept your feelings of guilt as a reality, you tried the best you could've done.

As well as guilt, anger is another common emotion that many of us feel when we grieve and is another prominent feeling within young people coping with loss. In the first few weeks of losing my mother, I felt angry at everything. Angry at myself. Angry at everyone else. Angry at life itself. I felt, and still feel, that what happened was unfair, and that I needed to place the blame on somebody even though nobody was at fault. An abundance of anger also morphed into feelings of envy – I felt jealous of my friends and peers whose mothers were still alive, and started feeling outcast as I did not know anyone my age who had also lost a parent. Through the first few weeks of grief, I also became spiteful and bitter; many of my school friends expressed how sorry they were for me, but soon they were laughing as if nothing had happened. Though they did not even know my mum, I still felt angered – how could they be laughing when I felt such despair? These feelings of guilt, anger, jealousy, and isolation made me feel shameful – I believed something was wrong with me, that I was not grieving the right way. Gradually, a sense of embarrassment and discomfort formed around my grief, I was scared to talk about my mum in fear that I would let this jumble of humiliating emotions escape, or I would get too overwhelmed or emotional.

In our minds, we have developed unrealistic expectations of grief we believe everyone goes through and experiences in the same exact way, such as the popular theory of the '5 stages of grief' by Kubler-Ross. There is also this collective assumption that eventually we will 'get over' the death of a loved one, that the hole left after a loss will be filled again, exactly the way it was before. Sadly, this is untrue. Imagine your grief as a vast dark sphere in a jar: over time, the jar expands and makes the sphere's presence gradually less noticeable. Grief is represented by the sphere, and you are the jar: your grief never gets smaller, through processes such as counselling, talking with family and friends, accepting your feelings, and trying to say goodbye- you can adapt to your grief and grow around it, even though the ache of its existence never goes away. Feeling angry, guilty, uncomfortable, isolated, numb, depressed – all of these emotions are normal. One of the most helpful things you can do whilst grieving is expressing your emotions in whatever way is comfortable, such as writing down how you feel in a journal, or talking to someone you are comfortable with – confronting and accepting how you feel lets you overcome the first hurdle.

To reiterate, there is no right way to grieve. Grief attacks us in waves, leaves us with a tangle of feelings we do not know how to deal with. It is nothing to be ashamed about. It is nothing that you are expected to understand. It is nothing that you must handle alone. When Bonfire night rolls around, I still feel tremendously bitter, guilty, depressed, and angry, and I do not think there will be a point where I will feel any differently. However, I now know how to embrace those feelings as completely normal – I am not embarrassed anymore. The way I grieve is what makes me, me.

Creative Media: exploring behind the scenes

By Lily Beddows

Inventive, imaginative, inspired – those on the BTEC Creative Media course are clearly skilled in demonstrating their talents. From being drenched in fake blood to coming to college dressed as a cowboy, Creative Media is not a subject for the mundane.

BTEC Creative Media is a 2 A level equivalent course, that students take alongside an A level. The course is made up of four units, consisting of both internal and external assessments.

Starting the process

Prior to the making of their audio-visual content, students were taught various editing techniques – which they then experimented with. "We connect them to different genres like horror, comedy, and western," Hannah Moloney told me. Creative Media students also tested these techniques and later utilized them when making their own horror movie trailers.

creative media

Creating ideas and planning

"Our ideas were dependent on our films at the start of the year," answered Hannah, named a 'star student' by teachers. Earlier in the year, the group produced short horror films, that some then used as inspiration for their later projects; Hannah's short horror film contained several mystery elements with a 'big twist' at the end, which then influenced her trailer's content. "It also helps that there is creative freedom to edit with the skills that you've learnt," another student Eleanor Faulkner adamantly reported, "you can show off whilst learning along the way."

Going forward into Year 13

BTEC Creative Media is made up of a set of an assortment of different units and projects; when asking what the group would be working on next year, I was surprised by how much there was still left to do. "We have five units every year that explore different aspects of media," Hannah began describing in detail whilst sitting on the floor next to me, "There are more units. We'll look at storyboarding and scriptwriting, in unit 7 we look at media enterprise and have to create a big film by the end of it. Unit 3 is a 25-hour external assessment." The entire course consists of a range of units which students must select 10 from, where 2 are externally assessed, 4 are mandatory and the other 4 are optional – meaning learners can adapt some aspects of the course to what suits them best.

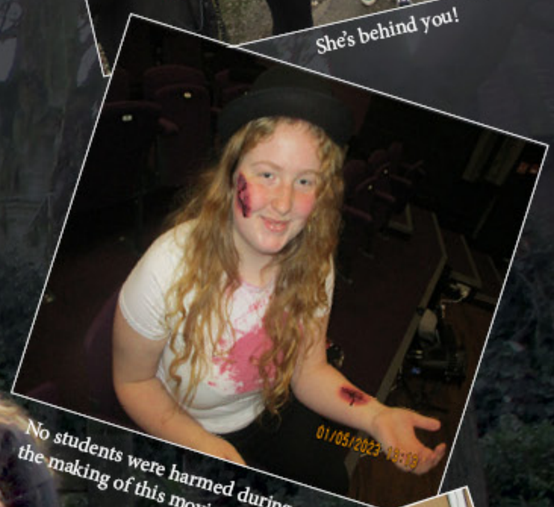
BTEC Creative Media as a whole

Another resolute student in the room, Emily Nash, told me all about how she finds the subject. "I love it, but it's very coursework heavy," Emily insisted, "there's so much work, and we have to balance it with another A level too. We need to know how to manage our time - it's not an easy subject." Hannah added on to this: "We started with a class of 15, but now there's only 8 of us," - this astonished me. "But the small group means that we work closely," Hannah resumed, smiling now, "We're a really close group. We did Secret Santa at Christmas, and we can always help each other." Undoubtedly, the students in this class are a persevering and tight-knit group of people. "The teachers are also helpful, they're supportive and they talk us through anything we don't understand." Emily concluded, "It's a nice environment to be in."

BTEC Creative Media allows you to be innovative, artistic, and original – it's a subject which is clearly loved by its students through its distinctive course components and harmonious class atmosphere. However, it is not a subject to be underestimated. As proven by Hannah, Emily, and Eleanor – it is not for the mundane.

ON LOCATION

She's behind you!



No students were harmed during the making of this movie...honest

You got a little something on your shirt there

TEENSCOPE

self image

Will You Ever Be Good Enough?

By Ruby Jones

Social media plays a vital part in the deterioration of young people's self-confidence. It is polluting our brains with unrealistic- sometimes impossible- standards of beauty. Social media has distorted what it means to be human, to have a healthy body, instead we crave an unobtainable beauty. Yet still, it is a persistent plague on our society that we find ourselves constantly overexposed to

I asked students here at the sixth form one question: "Has social media ever had a negative impact on your body image and self-confidence?" 100% of those students answered yes. Although social media, at times, makes us feel worthless and insecure, it is something that we spend most of our time engrossed in and are relentlessly surrounded by. Whether it is Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat or Tiktok; I can guarantee that if you look around right now, you will see someone scrolling and double tapping on one of these toxic platforms determinedly. It is impacting young people's self-confidence and mental health when absorbing content of this idealistic criteria. Constantly being injected into our minds by a hypodermic needle. The co-comparison deteriorating us all, well most of us, slowly.

However, I know that this may all come across as ironic and hypocritical as I, myself, waste hours of my life scrolling endlessly through social media daily. Addictive and entertaining, it is often a positive thing that brings us enjoyment and connects us to people around the world. However, it seems that those people- often strangers or celebrities- that we see on our phone screens incessantly are the people that we intensely compare ourselves to and are the people who alter our expectations of ourselves.

There are simple ways to combat the harmful effects that stem from our overuse of these damaging apps. One way is to simply take a break. Put down your devices and focus on yourself. Although, some may not want to cut it out completely, so follow influencers who promote body positivity, or content that does not focus on appearances at all. Influencers who share realistic content online that we can relate to and do not feel judged by.

Have a lovely summer from TEENSCOPE

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