

Friary Pen

Poetry • Short Stories • Vivid Descriptions • Fresh Voices

Dec 2025

WINTER EDITION ¹

Editor's Note

This is the first edition of The Friary Pen 2025/6, and our primary focus for this issue is winter. We have chosen such a broad and interpretable theme for this issue to allow it to be relatable and a subject intertwined in everyone's lives. Furthermore, the compilation of a multitude of poetry and creative writing in this edition can potentially offer a fresh new perspective, one that is synonymous with the theme of winter and the appreciation of a season that isn't solely defined by frost and frigid temperatures. Winter can inspire feelings of festivity and excitement due to the long-awaited celebration of Christmas or dread and desolation as daylight hours are engulfed by a seemingly impenetrable darkness.

Furthermore, we believe it is important to acknowledge that suffering is intensified during the harsh winter months, and issues such as mental health, which stems from seasonal depression or much deeper emotions, are problems readily faced by many young people. Furthermore, relating to more global issues such as the heinous wars, conflicts, and genocides that still carry on throughout winter, as well as more locally occurring issues such as homelessness or poverty, we need to also show gratitude and thankfulness towards our safety and security during such a potentially harrowing period of the year that increases the struggles of not just ourselves but others.

Also, though the literary expression in this issue is hopefully you can find comfort in relating to any of the works included in this edition, and how many of your peers share the same perspectives on certain topics, and overall gain a deeper respect through the self-expression and intricacy of writing.

We hope you enjoy reading!



Hannah Grimshaw

Friary Pen Co-Editor

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ATERS ONCE CLEAR, NOW COVERED WITH ICE

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CICLES HANG FROM WINDOW LEDGES

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UMB ARE ALL NAKED FINGERS AND TOES

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REMBLING LEAVES OF THE EVERGREENS

E

MOTIONS VARY BETWEEN THE PEOPLE

R

EFLECTIONS OF ROBINS DANCED IN THE ICE

Christmas Eve



Cosy hot chocolates, woolly hats on heads
My breath is visible, my cheeks are red
Comforting cuddles tucked up in bed
Welcome to winter, the bitter wind said

Frozen lakes glisten in the sun
Making snowmen, all so much fun
Wrapped up by the fire all warm and snug
My cocoa steaming from my same old mug

Graceful snowflakes dance through the air
But sometimes the cold gets too fierce to bare
Frozen artwork appears on the glass
And the frost has attacked the once lush grass

And all to soon the crisp dark nights
Sneak up on us all to swallow the light
Back inside for one last sleep
As I look forward to the Christmas feast

By Penny Pinder- Smith

WINTER IS....

Winter is warmth cascading all around,
Fingers intertwining; arms wrapping round,
Winter is ubiquitous peace:
Winter is the slumber of the earth and the muffler of cityscapes,
Winter is the metropolis kept safe in a globe of ice,
Winter is the tangible ribbons of your breath serpentine in the wind,
Winter is cozy blankets and roaring fires,
Winter is childhood's nostalgia and untinctured glory,
Winter is death and the end to summer's story.
Winter is the burn of a hot beverage blistering your throat.
Winter is a stark white canvas waiting to be tainted.
Winter is deafening silence and silver tongues.
Winter is lurking with depression.
Winter is engulfing monotony.
Winter is frostbite on your fingers and toes,
Winter is secrets and burdens kept from: who knows!

Written by The Friary Pen Writers
Edited by Hannah Grimshaw

The Tree

Leaves plucked from me
Old wounds healing
Frost flooding in
Snow drifting from the sky
Branches torn from me
My Base failing me
Darkness encases me

Moon rising
Stars glistening
Snow Sparkling
White blanket wrapping around me
Alone yet not Warm but hot
Alone yet comforted.

MACBETH: A WINTER IN SCOTLAND

Y11 students were asked to reimagine the opening of Macbeth using winter imagery. Here are some extracts of their work...

Mournful cries filled the distant air. The air grew colder as the wailing grew louder, echoing against the howling cliffs. Their tattered, ragged clothing blew in the wind like a flag. Their pale skin did not belong to any living body. Something about them felt harmful and malicious, yet also magical and wondrous.

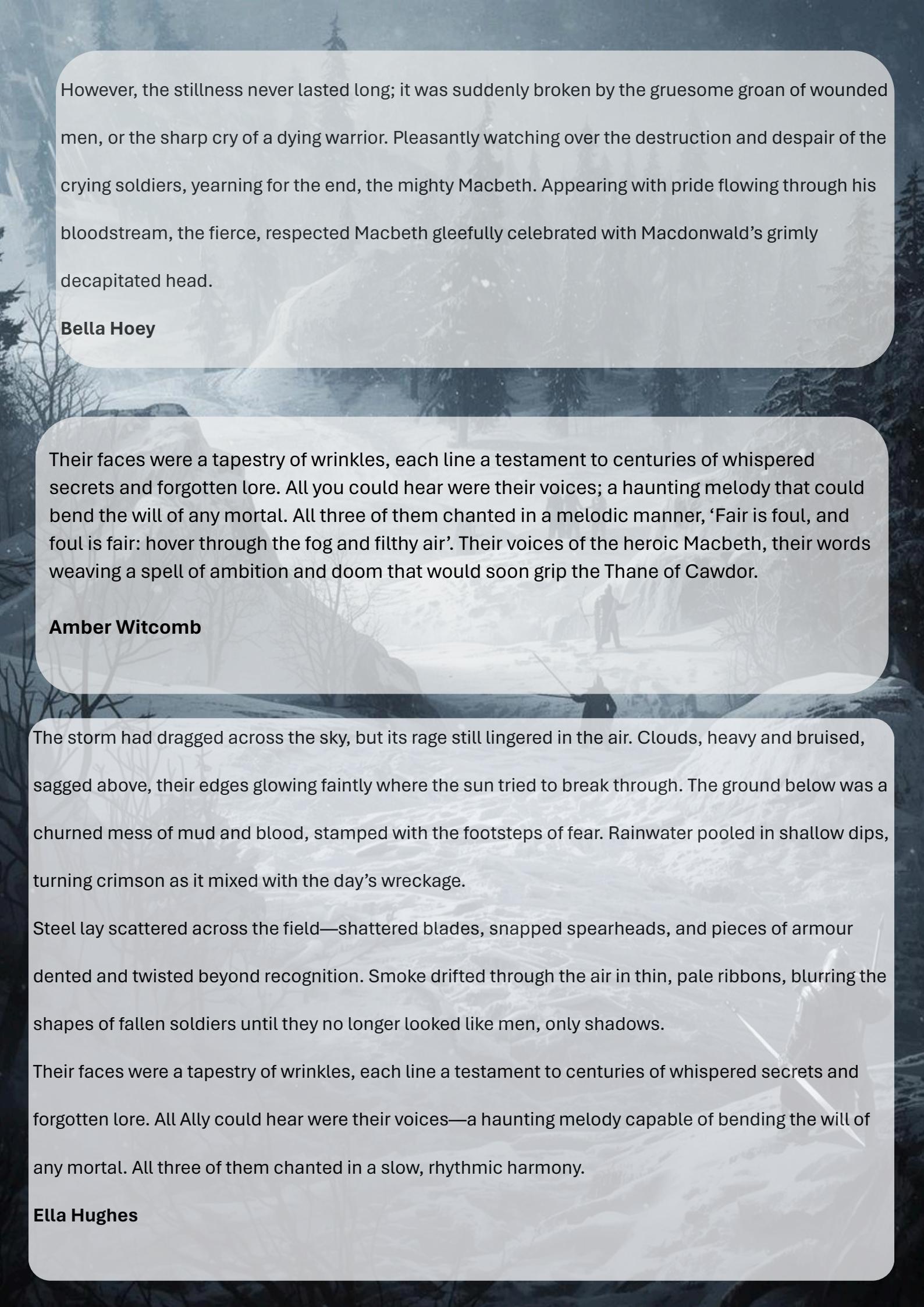
Felix Lindley

Across the desolate, barren, and treacherous heath of the Scottish moorland, an angry tempest swept across the sky, sending crashing thunder and flickering embers through the trembling night. The victims of the storm shuddered at each flash and trembled at every roar. They were not only waiting for the end of this natural catastrophe but also dreading the triumph of a gruesome, slaughtering, grim war.

Scarlett Broderick

The storm had finally rolled past, leaving behind a sky of gold, a battlefield drowned in smoke. Bodies lay scattered across the torn earth, their armour glinting faintly beneath the grey light. Macbeth drank in a breath, thick with the stench of dead bodies, blood and wet soil as he surveyed the wreckage beside his loyal friend Banquo. Through the distant shouts of victory, there was a smelly, final end. But an eerie shriek and stillness hung tight in the air, as if the world itself held its breath. When the silence broke, it shattered into one massive piece. Then we hear Macbeth murmur, "So foul and fair a day I have not seen." The words drifted upwards like a ghost, hanging over all of his carnage.

Esme Morris



However, the stillness never lasted long; it was suddenly broken by the gruesome groan of wounded men, or the sharp cry of a dying warrior. Pleasantly watching over the destruction and despair of the crying soldiers, yearning for the end, the mighty Macbeth. Appearing with pride flowing through his bloodstream, the fierce, respected Macbeth gleefully celebrated with Macdonwald's grimly decapitated head.

Bella Hoey

Their faces were a tapestry of wrinkles, each line a testament to centuries of whispered secrets and forgotten lore. All you could hear were their voices; a haunting melody that could bend the will of any mortal. All three of them chanted in a melodic manner, 'Fair is foul, and foul is fair: hover through the fog and filthy air'. Their voices of the heroic Macbeth, their words weaving a spell of ambition and doom that would soon grip the Thane of Cawdor.

Amber Witcomb

The storm had dragged across the sky, but its rage still lingered in the air. Clouds, heavy and bruised, sagged above, their edges glowing faintly where the sun tried to break through. The ground below was a churned mess of mud and blood, stamped with the footsteps of fear. Rainwater pooled in shallow dips, turning crimson as it mixed with the day's wreckage.

Steel lay scattered across the field—shattered blades, snapped spearheads, and pieces of armour dented and twisted beyond recognition. Smoke drifted through the air in thin, pale ribbons, blurring the shapes of fallen soldiers until they no longer looked like men, only shadows.

Their faces were a tapestry of wrinkles, each line a testament to centuries of whispered secrets and forgotten lore. All Ally could hear were their voices—a haunting melody capable of bending the will of any mortal. All three of them chanted in a slow, rhythmic harmony.

Ella Hughes

Use the QR code
(at the back) to
submit your
answers!

Santa's Christmas Eve Adventure

1. Preparing the Reindeer (Ratio)

Santa feeds Rudolph and Dasher food pellets in the ratio $3 : 4$. If Santa prepares 280 pellets, how many does each reindeer get?



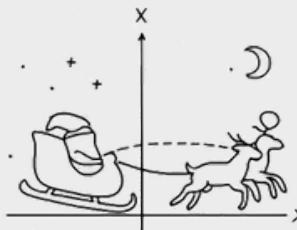
2. Loading the Sleigh (Percentages)

Santa's sleigh can safely carry 240 kg of presents. He fills it to 85% capacity. How much weight of presents does he load?



3. Mapping the Journey (Coordinates)

Santa begins at the North Pole, located at $(0, 10)$ on a coordinate map. His first stop is a town at $(-6, 4)$. What is the horizontal and vertical change in position?



4. The Long Flight (Distance)

Using the same two points as above, calculate the distance Santa travels to reach the town. (Use Pythagoras' Theorem.)



5. Wrapping Up (Area)

At the first house, Santa needs to wrap a last-minute present shaped like a square with side 12 cm. What is the area of the wrapping paper needed (just the top face)?



6. Chimney Countdown (Sequences)

Santa visits chimneys in a pattern: He climbs 5, then 8, then 11, then 14, ...

- a) What type of sequence is this?
- b) What is the 15th term?

7. Snowy Sleigh Ride (Speed, Time)

A snowstorm slows Santa down. He travels 180 km at a steady speed of 60 km/h. How long does this part of the journey take?

8. Candy Cane Distribution (Fractions)

An elf accidentally knocks over a box containing 48 candy canes. Santa quickly sorts them:

$\frac{3}{8}$ are broken

The rest are fine.

How many candy canes are not broken?

9. Reindeer Warm-Up (Angles)

The reindeer land in a circular clearing. Santa marks an angle of 110° for the sleigh's turning space. What fraction of a full turn is 110° ? (Give your answer in simplest form.)

10. Final Delivery (Surface Area)

Santa's final gift is a cuboid box measuring $18 \text{ cm} \times 10 \text{ cm} \times 5 \text{ cm}$. Calculate the total surface area of the box to work out how much wrapping paper he needs.



A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Y10 students were challenged to interpret the opening of *A Christmas Carol* from a different perspective, here's what they came up with.....



Running late, Bob Cratchit was barely scrapping by. His scarf was as thin as one thread, with rips scattered across it, and the colour of his coat had clearly begun to fade, as what once used to be a navy blue just like the night sky had now become a dull grey that had lived out its fulfilling job. Bob's heart racing, he was determined to make his way to the counting-house not a minute later as his legs shook, marching in the sleek, snowy roads, which made Bob feel a smirk come through and a hum which flew and chirped out of him. His eyes scattered the streets and took in the array of bright and colourful lights, along with the songs of young carollers who roared, dashing past him, which forced a slight laugh to escape Bob's merry mood. Breathing became more difficult for Bob as he felt a sweat drip down his frosted face, which froze into an icicle before Bob could swipe it away, as his feet took him to the person Bob feared most – Ebenezer Scrooge.

Adrija Pikelyte

Christmas Day. The witching hour. We saw a dim, dying glow of a fire in what appeared to be a counting-house under the ominous banner “Scrooge and Marley.” I just made out the silhouette of a man over the embers of his fire. I approached the final door of the night joyously, ready to see another joy-filled face. I saw a figure walking towards the door, a skeleton-like shadow projected on the window. Suddenly, a crooked, stiff, old man, whose eyes had no warmth, burst through the door. Brandishing a cold, steel ruler, he stared into my soul like a devil judging me.

Luke Perkins

I had just begun the next verse when a shadow, tall and stiff like a hose, glided across the snow at my feet. Ebenezer Scrooge emerged from the doorway like a gust of cold air. Though the night itself was bitter, it retracted from him. I remembered the line I had heard whispered by the townspeople earlier that week: "No warmth could warm him, nor wintery weather chill him." And standing there facing him, I knew it to be true. The frost might nip at me, but it dared not touch him, as though even the weather found his temperament too inhospitable.

His eyes, sharp and calculating, swept over us with open disapproval. Our singing faltered. The notes trembled, wavering like candle flames before a draught. My companions shifted uneasily; one boy beside me lowered his candle as though he was trying to avoid being seen at all. Scrooge's mere presence drained the street of its small, flickering joy.

Ffion Taylor

Marley was dead to begin with. Yet somehow... somehow he was also here with me.

I am nothing but a door knocker — brass and silent, usually ignored. My metal remains cold all day, all night. Even when the man himself grabs me with those stiff, bony fingers of his, nothing changes. He never stops to admire me; he brushes straight past me like an unforgiving wind. Each evening I watch him return, as predictable as the clock's tick: head down, lips pressed thin, heart locked tighter than any bolt on this door. He sees only what he must. Never me. Though tonight the air tastes different — sharp, as if it could slice me open. The fog hangs lower, like it's eavesdropping. Snow seems to creep rather than fall, curling in ghostly swirls along the street. Even I, a lump of metal, can feel a strange shiver through me, as if the house itself were holding its breath. Scrooge strides toward me, muttering calculations under his breath, a thin mist that vanishes too quickly — like the hope around him, which declines following each heartless action.

And then I change.

My brass stiffens, reshapes. Eyes bulge where none existed, lips emerge from the metal, and chains snake across my face as though they had been forged from misery itself. Marley, or what remains of him.

Fern Sherry

VOLCANIC WINTER

A golden hot stream rushing from me

Earth shaking around me

Layers building on me

Cooling weight added to me

Darkness encasing the world

Everything becoming cooler

Everything becoming a white wasteland

The world feeling emptier

River crystalising

Waters freezing

Snow drifting

The cold envelopes the earth

Bethan Fish Y8

The volcano blew with a giant roar,
ash came down more and more.

The trees fell dead
where once was green was spread

The lava crept across the land,
like fire pouring from nature's hand.

Olivia Wright Y8

Volcanic Winter

The Year Without Summer



When the mountain exploded, it didn't sound like thunder. It sounded as if the sky itself were ripping apart. The villagers had always called the mountain the Sleeping Giant, but that morning it woke up angry.

Ash poured into the sky, thick and grey, turning daylight into something like dusk. Birds vanished, and the air smelled of burnt rock. For weeks, the sun was only a pale circle behind the smoke.

Lexi had never known cold in summer before. Normally she would be swimming in the lake, chasing frogs, but the water had frozen over — a thin sheet of ice glimmering in June. The crops died, and the potatoes turned black in the ground.

At night, the stars were hidden behind a blanket of ash. People began to think the world was ending, but Lexi smiled sadly and said, “The Earth is only taking a short break.”

Each morning, she scraped frost from the windows and fed the last scraps of grain to the chickens. She eventually found some beauty in the strange world outside — the way snow glittered on black ash, and how the trees looked like silver sculptures.

One day, after months of grey, a thin ray of sunlight broke through the clouds. The Sleeping Giant went quiet again, and Lexi realised that even after fire and ash, life always finds a way back.

ONCE UPON A STORMY HOUR

A poem inspired by lights, acids and alkalines.....

Once upon a stormy hour,
I pondered on the birds who cower,
Right up high in their nest,
And Darwin who categorized them his very best.
My mind wanders to the subject of light,
The candles in my cabin burn so bright,
Thermal energy I once doubted,
But as I feel it on my skin, the roots have sprouted.
What about the acids that burn,
And the alkalis who churn.
I've never thought about it before.
Now I want to explore.
The storm grows wilder still,
But all I think is liquids that chill,
As they turn from wet to dense,
How would they surprise the ancient's sense.
The winds are howling.
And my cat is scowling.
I've grown so tired,
My brain'sadenosine neurotransmitters are well wired.
I can't ponder much more,
And someone's knocking on the door...

A DAY IN SOVIET RUSSIA

In the blizzard, in the cold, in the storm and in despair, he found his legs caught in the unbreakable grasp of freezing snow, its claws clutching his ankles. Not to mention that the exhaustion in him grew and grew until he had only the little strength to raise his head towards the looming clouds of death. There was no longer any question whatsoever about charging forwards.

Where the air was veiled by frost, where the wild winds pierced through the air with a frightful howl – like long knives with blades leaving burning trails on his skin, The land was vast; there was nothing to see, save for the white, hostile ground that stretched evermore into the grey and gloomy sky. Yet, in his mind, he still saw triumph, riches beyond belief and power superior to gods, which laid, waiting, beyond a distant horizon that was but imagined now. Agony brought tears to his eyes as they reflected the dark yet strangely gleaming sky.

He tried – desperately too – to resurrect his young and ancient ambitions; how he painted the future in such a glorious light of eternity, how he had perfectly planned imperial power for his beloved Fatherland; Could he not remember too vividly the divinity he was to give his country, his people? He could, of course! Dreams used to soar like birds, their feathers coming down delicately in light, beautiful twirls, floating past his fingers in all its promises of wonders, and he always snatched them back.

But now, upon catching the snowflakes, they all but thawed. Snow disappeared within instances on his coarse, bloodied palms: A man fuelled by ambitions, must too be consumed by its flames.

WINTER CELEBRATIONS AROUND THE WORLD (AT THE FRIARY)



Peru



At Christmas time in Peru, we celebrate on the evening of the 24th, having our Christmas dinner at 9pm. We usually eat turkey, ham, salad, and a slice of panettone with hot chocolate. At midnight we go to mass, and afterwards we return home to open presents. For New Year's, we follow several traditions: we wear something yellow for good luck, eat twelve grapes to represent each month of the coming year, open the front door and sweep away bad luck, and then grab an empty suitcase and run around the block at midnight to encourage travel in the year ahead. In February, during summer, we also celebrate carnival, when people fill balloons with water and throw them playfully at others in the street. **Rafael McCurdy Grana Y7**

Poland

In Poland it is typical for people to have a meatless supper made up of 12 dishes which symbolises the 12 apostles, some of these meals are beetroot soup with mushroom dumplings, wild mushroom soup and poppyseed roll. Before eating, families break pieces of a special wafer (opłatek) and exchange blessings and wishes with each other wishing each other things like good health or for kids to learn well and be smart. Another thing that is done before the meal is, when setting up the table for the dinner, hay is placed under the tablecloth, this is to represent Jesus' stable manger. Around the table an empty seat and plate are left in case of an unexpected guest or for deceased relatives, this is to show our hospitality and remembrance for the ones we lost. Not always, but my family occasionally go to mass during midnight, this is to attend something called a Pasterka or Shepards mass, this is a special service for the Shepards who first visited Jesus. When it comes to traditions that happen during new years, these can include many things examples being, keeping a carp scale in your wallet for financial luck, paying off all your debts and settling arguments to start the year fresh and keeping a well stocked fridge to ensure abundance for the year these are some of the traditions that me and my family as poles do to ensure prosperity and wealth for next year ahead. But there are other traditions that ensure a good year for us, those being cleaning the before new years day as this ensures a clean year and getting up early on New Year's Day in order to productive all year. **Ernest Sawicki Y13**

Romania

On 6th December, we celebrate Saint Nicholas day, where children leave their clean boots out overnight to be filled with gifts. Nice children receive sweets, chocolate, fruit and small toys while naughty children receive wooden sticks.

We also put up a decorated Christmas Tree, it is usually decorated a few days before, but our family decorates the tree quite early into December.

Christmas is celebrated on Christmas Eve (24th), this is when we open gifts and have a Christmas meal. The Christmas meal consists of sarmale (cabbage rolls stuffed with meat), ciorbă (sour soup, often with meatballs called perișoare) and cozonac (sweet bread, often filled with nuts or poppy seeds) for dessert. Carolling also takes place usually in the evening.

There are also traditional Christmas sweets called bomboane de pom (directly translates to 'tree sweets'), these are small sweets that consist of a jelly or marzipan filling covered in chocolate.

After dinner, we spend time together as a family by watching Christmas movies or by visiting relatives.

New Years in Romania isn't very different to how it is celebrated in the UK, at least in my family, we spend time with friends and family either at someone's house or a booked place and we listen to music, eat traditional food and count down to New Years.

IRIS MUNTEAN Y12

Hong Kong



Christmas for Hong Kong people is just a holiday for people having rest. I believe that most people in this holiday will go to other countries like Japan, because they have a better vibe of Christmas. Also most schools will host Christmas party for students enjoy on that day. For my family, we don't do too much celebrations, not those fancy decorating in house and a Christmas meal.

That day we just go to shopping malls and Victoria Harbour which is a really famous attraction in Hong Kong, to see their decorations because they do decorate some, and have a walk with family and friends. For me I personally think Christmas is a great time to gather and stay with your love ones.

16

ANTONY LAI Y12

The Man In The Lake

By Katie Leonard Y8

“

A whisper from a frozen tree set Olive's heart into a tremble. The fallen branches cackled to themselves as the girls trod further. Their footsteps lay lifeless in the snow, almost beckoning them to come back. As they got closer to the frozen lake, the snow started to fall once more. The small snowflakes danced all the way to the floor. Olive looked up.

"Guys, look!"

An elegant singular snowflake had landed on the tip of her nose as if to say hi! The gaggle of girls huddled together, and for a moment the lake seemed to glow. They all looked up, and Grace asked, "Is that just me, or did that just glow?" Rebecca paused before replying, "I don't know, I think I saw it too!"

In the darkness a voice whispered, "Olive, what should we do?" Cautiously checking behind her, Olive shouted back, "Who said that?"

The lake glowed again as if trying to answer her question.

"Come in," the voice hissed.

"What should we do?" Rebecca asked nervously. Lily chimed in (the usually quiet one of the group), "It's dangerous," shuddering as the words left her mouth. Olive paused to gather her thoughts before replying, "Should we...?" She stood gazing at the lake before finally finishing her sentence, "What's the worst that could happen?!"

Rebecca, now pacing back and forth frantically, replied, "No, no one is going in there, it's dangerous."

Olive, now getting agitated by her friend's dismissive attitude, replied, "Don't be a baby!"

Rebecca remarked back quickly, "I'm a baby?!"

”

Parisian Streets

By Audrey Wu Y11



To walk upon the cobblestones, knowing there were people who walked on the same paths with stories untold, it was a romance to me, personally, and sadly to very few others. To walk on the streets that were constructed upon a history so rich, dead and buried tales seemed to stir in me.

To walk upon the cobblestones, thinking about Albert Camus, carrying a copy of 'L'étranger' with me, I became the protagonist with his deceased mother.

To walk upon the cobblestones, thinking about Oscar Wilde, carrying a copy 'Salomé' with me, I confronted the mystery of death and the mystery of love.

To walk upon the cobblestones, thinking about Claude Monet, carrying a bag with badges of water lilies on, I marvelled at the magic of colours and colours alone.

To walk upon the cobblestones, thinking about Claude Debussy, carrying a copy of 'Reverie' with me, I understood the flow of dreams in the streams of harmony.

To walk upon cobblestones, looking into shop windows, and to think, the passions this land nurtured, which now vibrate in our world, in us, with an undying essence – how much more yet to discover!

The Deer Fox

To my shock, it worked! I saw a small, white, fuzzy creature slowly enter through a window. It crawled in, then somehow had the intelligence to open my fridge, and steal some of the delicious food I was saving for myself. How rude! First, it sneaks into my house and tampers with the electricity, then decides to steal my food! Before I could interfere, it left the same way it entered. The small, unknown creature was gone.

I couldn't describe it as a fox, as surprisingly, it had horns too. But not large horns. Small, deer-like horns and a white, fuzzy creature.

Interesting. The mystery I wanted to solve is what I wanted to call it. A foxlike creature, with deer-like horns? How about a deerfox!

On Christmas night, after celebrating with family and friends, I decided to give it a gift. I set up a bowl of pet food. That same night, it came in from the cold winter breeze outside, through the window, into the coziness and warmth of my cabin. Curious, it circled around the food, inspecting it, before finally coming up and eating the food. I had befriended a deerfox, or at least it seemed like it.

Mahbir Uddin Y7
Inspired by Netflix series Hilda



Why do we love Christmas Films?

There are many festive events and activities that people will do to get them into the Christmas spirit, but nothing compares to sitting around a cozy fire, hot chocolate in hand, and watching your favorite Christmas movies. Many people would consider this to be a tradition within their family; Christmas would not be complete without this seasonal ritual. The reason why I think people find watching Christmas films to be very important, myself included, is because watching these films together is a relaxing experience which allows you to explore the wonders of this holiday from the comfort of your own home.

Christmas films often explore themes such as family, magic, and hope to appeal to younger audiences who are captivated by the wonder and magic of Christmas. For younger children in particular, these genres of Christmas films can form an impression of Christmas; it is a unique and special time of the year, full of excitement and joy, and is the only occasion when celebrated figures such as Santa are present.

Family Christmas films can also improve the attitude and behaviour of children as they include themes of forgiveness, generosity, and kindness. There is also a constant threat of being punished for bad behaviour by being removed from the good list and put on the naughty list. For these reasons alone, parents will be optimistic about watching Christmas films together.

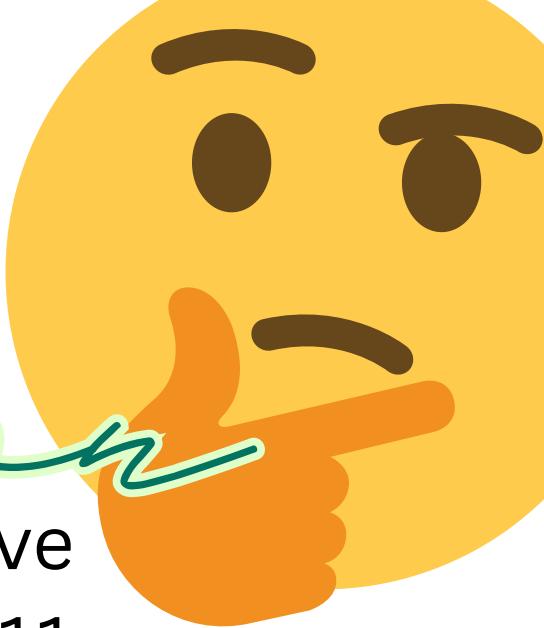
Watching these films together as a family feels more personal as some family Christmas films focus on dramatising events or problems that could happen to anyone in the audience. This makes the films seem more relatable, and aspects of the film such as humour would be more amusing.

The emotional impact of Christmas films is immense because, as I have mentioned prior, some films focus on dramatising real-life situations, allowing the audience to connect with the story and the characters on a deeper level. I think this is another reason why Christmas films are so loved, as they are relatable to the audience but also provide them with emotional themes and scenes like other films.

Christmas films such as *Miracle on 34th Street* and *A Christmas Carol* may remind an older generation of all the joyful Christmases they had when they were children and evoke a sense of nostalgia and comfort within them. This is also why Christmas films remain timeless, watching them create unforgettable memories, so they are watched for many Christmases to come to remind us of cheerfulness.

In conclusion, Christmas films continue to matter because they make us feel a sense of comfort, wonder, and are a key part of our Christmas.

BIG Question



What would Year 12 have liked to have known in Y11 that they know now?

Don't panic,
you'll do great.

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on so that you can do exam questions
later

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