



SCHOOL

For students, by students

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The Fine Art of Fencing

Written by Tom Pocock, Year 9

Having been likened to a match of high-speed chess, the sport of fencing has always had close ties with sportsmanship, skill and history. As the years go by, fencing is a sport that is being brought up less and less, however, it is an easily accessible sport with many clubs for all skill levels around the country. Locally, the Wantage Fencing Club is run on Friday nights at King Alfred's West Site Sports Hall, open to all, ages 8 and up, run by British Fencing coach Olly Bickley.

Fencing dates back to the ancient Egyptian period, where there are records of people duelling with swords; however it did not become popularised until 16th century Italy where the first 'modern' fencing rules were established. Now, fencing is held in many competitions across the globe, and it is one of the first sports to be included in the modern Olympics. The rules of fencing change from sword to sword, as there are 3 main types of weapon for Olympic fencing, the first of which is the foil.

The foil's light frame makes the weapon generally lighter than the other types of sword, and with it being derived from the short-sword, it was commonly used by the 18th century gentlemen.

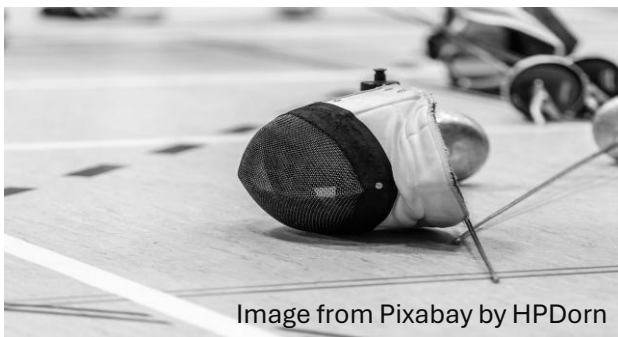


Image from Pixabay by HPDorn

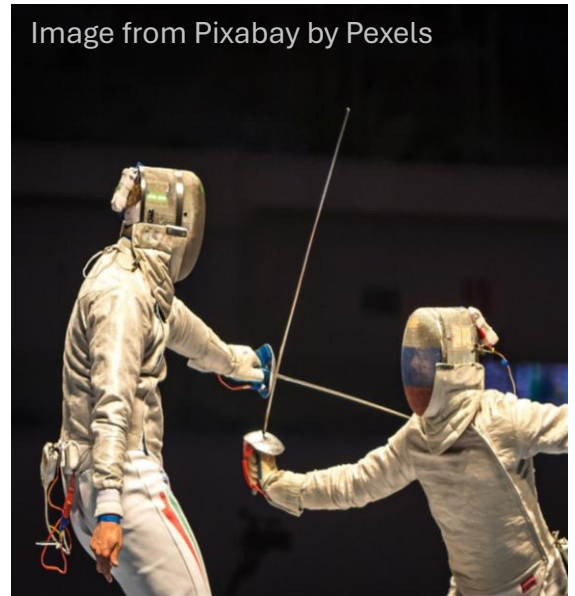


Image from Pixabay by Pexels

The second main type of sword is the *épée*: The *épée* is the only sword to allow hits anywhere on the body, whereas foil and sabre are limited to certain areas of the upper body. The French word *épée* derives from the Latin word *spatha* which means "broad blade of a sword".

The last type of sword, and my favorite, is the sabre: The sabre is the only sword in Olympic fencing where the cut technique is legal, unlike the other weapons, where the thrust is the main method of attacking the opponent. This makes the style far quicker and more intense. The standard length of an adults' size 5 blade is 88cm long, making it shorter than the foil and *épée*.

Overall, fencing is a sport that is often overlooked and with many clubs and teachers around, it is a very interesting and enjoyable sport.

The Curious History of Sudoku and Other Puzzles

Written by Alice Rendell, Year 8

Have you ever completed a logic puzzle? Have you ever got stuck, frustrated that you can't solve a particular problem? And have you ever wondered about the benefits of these puzzles on your brain? I love puzzles, having recently discovered the incredible *Murdle* logic puzzles by G.T. Karber.

First of all, there are many different types of puzzles, so everyone will be satisfied. If you love numbers and problem solving, why not try a *sudoku*, where you have a 9 by 9 grid and aim to write a number between 1 and 9, in order so that every number is in each horizontal line, vertical line and square. Or you could try *Wordle*, a word game where you try to find a 5 letter word with 6 guesses. Some of my favourite puzzles include Polygon, where you have to make words from letters and a central letter that has to be in every word and *Murdle* where you complete logic squares using clues to find out whodunnit! *Wordsearches* are also pretty fun and easy as well as the popular *Rubik's cube*.

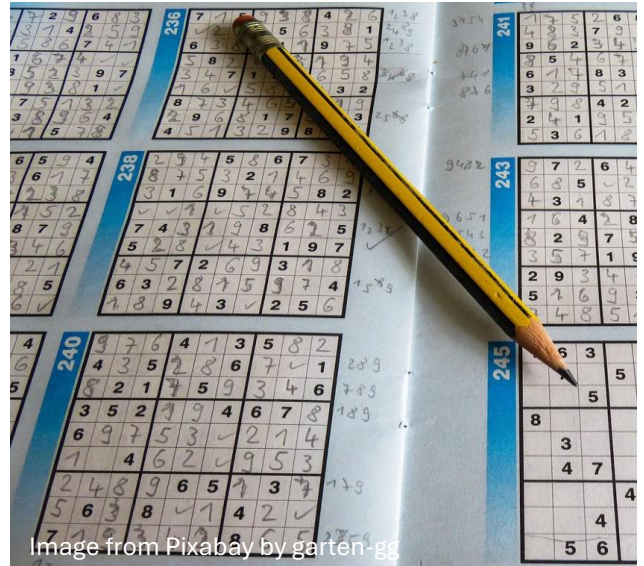


Image from Pixabay by garten-gg

Did you know that in 1942, the Telegraph newspaper had received letters that the cryptic crosswords were too easy? So, in response, the editors arranged a timed challenge, to complete the crossword in 12 minutes under test conditions. Many people came along to try, however only 5 finished in the set time. As the Second World War was happening, the War Office needed more codebreakers and a few weeks after the test, the fastest solvers were invited to work at Bletchley Park as code breakers.

Some of the earliest known puzzles were from the Sumerians in 3500BC who used clay tablets that featured complicated riddles and word games to test and challenge their scribes. Early forms of logic puzzles can be traced back to ancient civilisations like Greece and China. For example, the myth of The Labyrinth and the Minotaur was an early example of a maze.



Image from Pixabay by mzmatuszewski0

While the sudoku puzzle is relatively modern, its concept links back to magic squares from China around 2200 BC. Contrary to what people believe, the first sudoku appeared in a French newspaper in 1895. However, these early French puzzles were different from the sudokus we know today. The first modern sudoku was created by American retired architect and puzzle maker Howard Garns and was published in 1979 by Dell Magazines under the name of 'Number Place'. However, you might be wondering why sudoku is known by its Japanese name rather than the original 'Number Place'. This is because it became popular in Japan first (in 1984) when publisher Nikoli named it Suuji Wa Dokushin Ni Kagiru which means the numbers must remain single, and it was shortened to Sudoku, before the craze began in 2004 when The Times began publishing sudokus.

Sources:

- Dictionary.Cambridge.org
- Alaricstephen.com
- Puzzery.com
- Puzzlegenius.org
- Sudokuconquest.com
- Sudoku.com
- Theguardian.com
- Dictionary.com
- Rd.com
- www.sudokustation.com

Studies have shown that puzzles could be good for your brain, but scientists will have to do more research before we can know for certain. The brain is a complex organ and a lot is still unknown about how it functions and changes across a human life. First of all, puzzles stimulate different parts of the brain. For example, if you solve a riddle, that is likely to stimulate the language part of the brain. In contrast, a sudoku would stimulate the logic-processing areas. Puzzles also activate both the right and left hemispheres of the brain. They may encourage social interaction because many puzzles are designed to be completed in groups. Furthermore, they're satisfying to solve. If you've ever finished a puzzle, you will recognise the sense of exhilaration that comes from completion.

In addition, puzzles can help reduce stress and lift your mood, if you enjoy solving them. Puzzles may help sharpen your learning, decision-making, thinking and reasoning skills. For example, if you do a jigsaw puzzle without the picture for reference you are using visualisation and working memory skills. Puzzles could also help you to be more disciplined and increase your resilience which is a good life skill to have. Another benefit is that solving puzzles may reduce the risk of dementia in the future, however more information has to be discovered and more experiments conducted for scientists to be sure.

One final puzzle to leave you with...

Each line contains two capital cities. Can you unscramble them?

LION JOB ENDING

TOOK MY ORE

CRIMSON ELBOW

RAPID DISARM (Answers on the back page.)

Toxic Energy

Written by William Haycock,
Year 8

Have you ever wondered what goes into an energy drink? The truth is shocking. Some drinks commonly available in supermarkets contain potentially toxic ingredients that can alter your life. Read on to find out more.

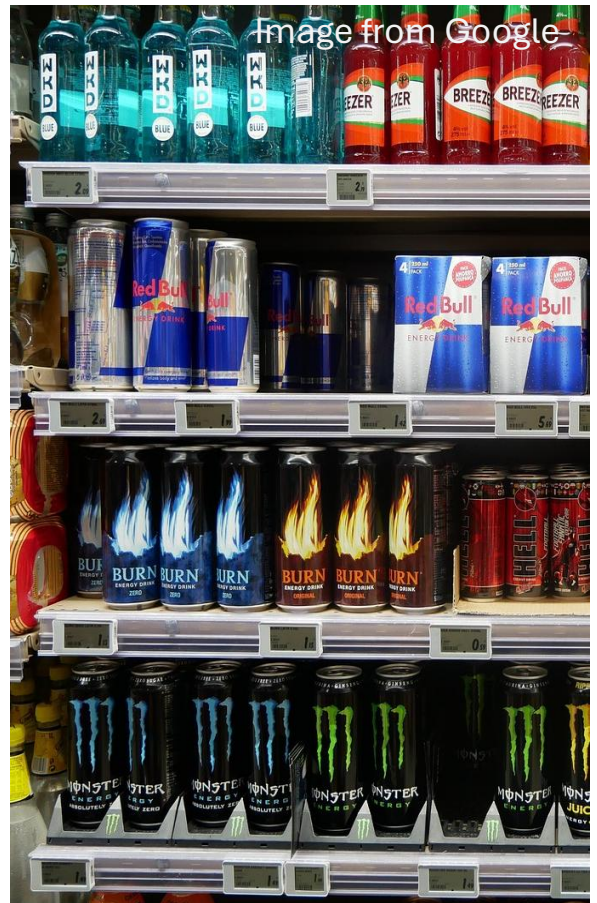
What defines an energy drink?

An energy drink is usually defined as any drink that contains high levels of one or more 'stimulant' ingredients which increase heart rate as well as sugar and vitamins. They are usually advertised as something that can boost athletic performance and stamina, so are typically marketed for use during long periods of exercise. However, they are also often used as just a regular daily drink by adults and many children. These drinks are widely sold with a rapidly increasing popularity. They are often brightly colored and in appealing packaging that attracts children even though many have warnings that say they are unsuitable for them.

What's in an energy drink?

The truth is it varies wildly based on the brand, but most of them contain high levels of sugar, caffeine and flavorings. The side effects of consuming these can include:

- Headaches
- Anxiety
- Insomnia
- An increased risk of heart attacks
- + many more



Any of these could be life changing so it's no wonder these risks are usually hidden in the small print, if at all, on most cans. Current UK labelling rules require any drink, other than tea or coffee, that contains over 150 milligrams (mg) of caffeine per litre to have a warning label saying: Not recommended for children

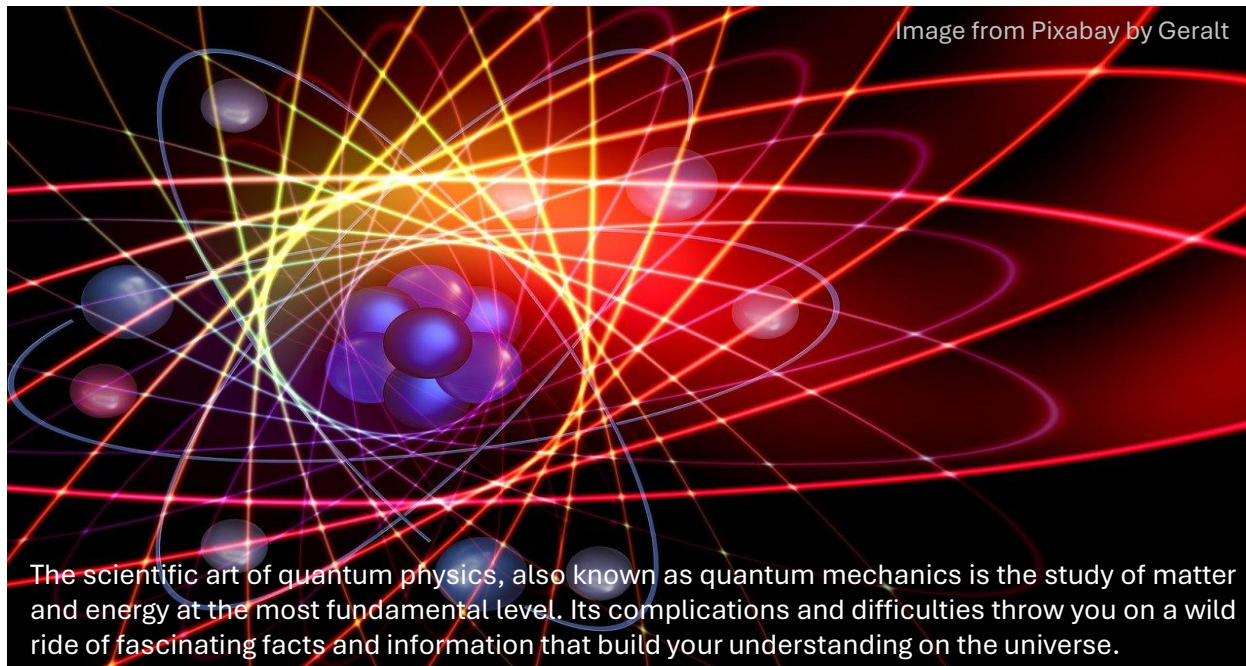
For example, 'Monster Energy' has 160mg of caffeine in a can - four times as much as a shot of Espresso. Furthermore, the drink has the equivalent of 13 teaspoons of sugar and scientific studies have highlighted the potential dangers of these for children and a ban has been discussed.

So, the truth is there is no silver lining. The vast majority are bad for you and whilst some aren't too harmful, they are probably all better to avoid!

Is quantum physics too difficult for young minds?

Written by Mia Du Preez, Year 8

Image from Pixabay by Geralt



The scientific art of quantum physics, also known as quantum mechanics is the study of matter and energy at the most fundamental level. Its complications and difficulties throw you on a wild ride of fascinating facts and information that build your understanding on the universe.

Now, of course, not all children and teens can fully understand quantum physics, and not even professional physicists can understand it fully. But what's wrong with challenging those young minds that seek a challenge? Many children find school learning curriculums too easy, tending not to listen and drift away from the lesson.

These children are in a constant yearn for a challenge in their learning. This simple yet hard field provides a sufficient challenge for those gifted minded, sparking curiosity within the field of quantum mechanics builds a new picture of the universe, a deeper understanding, allowing for a life of knowledge and prosperity. Since this field is rather difficult, people that understand it are often sought after for jobs that include science and mathematics. Of course, there is also difficult mathematics involved with this.

However, many people have simplified it down for those rather unfamiliar with the world of maths. It has been shown that the majority of children over the age of 10 have the capability to understand it when simplified.

The amazing quote by the Science Writer Bruce H Lipton truly changes our view of the entire world as we know it: "What quantum physics teaches us is that everything we thought was physical is not physical." There is knowledge out there that can turn our understanding of the world on its head.

Yes, it isn't for everyone, but it is really important to always challenge young minds, teaching them to question, It leads them to a prosperous future, and they may go on to make a discovery that changes our view of the world altogether.

General knowledge quiz!

Made by: Kyra Crawford

(answers at the end of the magazine)

1. Who holds the record for the most sports personality of the year wins?
Hint: Male
2. How long is a French President's Term?
3. What is the smallest continent on Earth?
4. What is the longest anyone has held their breath underwater? Is it 12.4 mins, 5.6 mins, 35 mins or 24.5 mins?
5. What is the highest grossing movie of 2023? Bonus Point: How much money was made?
6. What year did the Spanish civil war end?
7. Who is the highest paid fashion designer of all time? Hint: Born in Piacenza
8. True or false? Snails have teeth
9. What is the name for the vanishing spell in Harry Potter? Is it Incendio, Imperio, Accio, Evanesco or Avis?
10. What country was Pope Francis' predecessor from?

How Ancient Egyptian writing has shaped our literacy today

Written by Georgina Herbert, Year 8

The earliest Egyptian writing was developed from simple Pictographs by prehistoric people. However, pictographs couldn't express emotions, past, present or future. Then, hieroglyphs emerged, and they were used before 3100 BC. The Ancient Egyptians invented a cursive form of hieroglyphs called 'hieratic', which was a simplistic form of hieroglyphs, was used until 800 BC. Hieratic was written on papyrus, leather, wood or stone, whilst hieroglyphs were carved into stone. Another cursive form called 'demotic' was introduced in 700 BC.

Demotic used new grammatical features and vocabulary; however, it was difficult to translate. So, you could say that literacy and writing today has had some influence from the Ancient Egyptian dynasty.

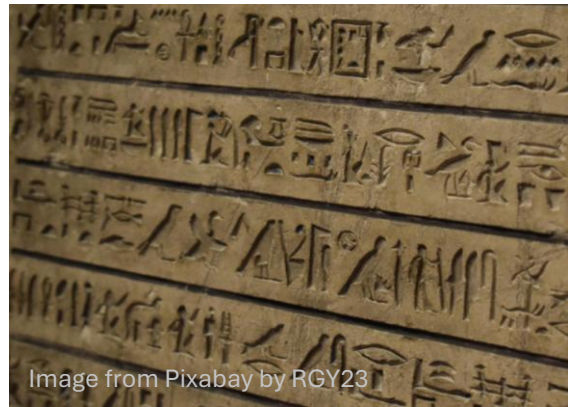
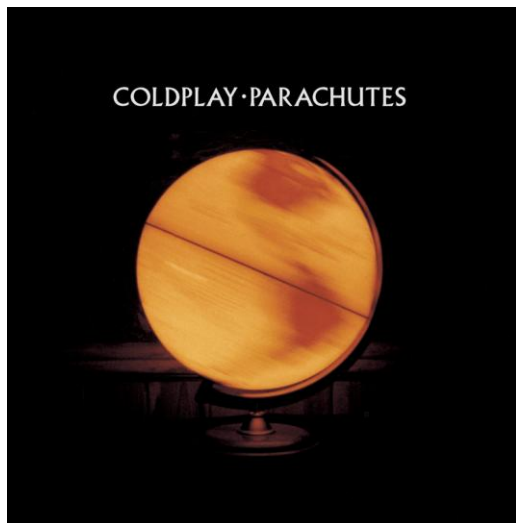


Image from Pixabay by RGY23



Parachutes

Anonymous

Parachutes, the British rock album by Coldplay is, in my opinion, one of the greatest albums of all time.

Some of the songs are:

- Don't Panic
- Shiver
- Yellow

Because of the album's slow and relaxed theme, I have found it is great to listen to whilst going to sleep; this has also contributed to its great commercial success. I love the acoustic guitar found in most of the songs. They are well thought out and not choppy like some of the other songs and this proves the amount of effort put into the album.

The praise of the album has led to it winning the Grammy award for Best Alternative Music Album in 2002 as well as winning the British album of the year at the Brit Awards in 2001. It was eventually certified double platinum.

The immense effort and time spent into one album is contributing to my conclusion that this is one of it not the best album of all time. I also decided that I would pay for the vinyl version of this to listen to on my record player. As this album has bought me such enjoyment, I am also encouraging you to also listen to this album!

Music Recommendations

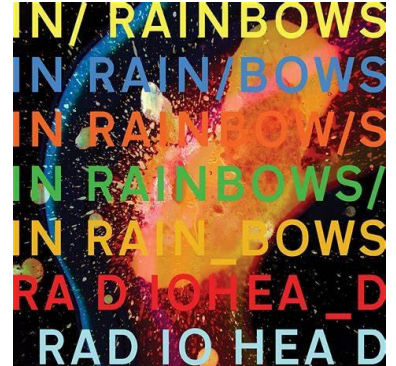
Need something to listen to? Here are some albums you might enjoy!



Djo - DECIDE



Temples - Exotico



Radiohead – In Rainbows



Red Hot Chili Peppers - Californication



R.E.M - Automatic For The People



Hozier - Hozier



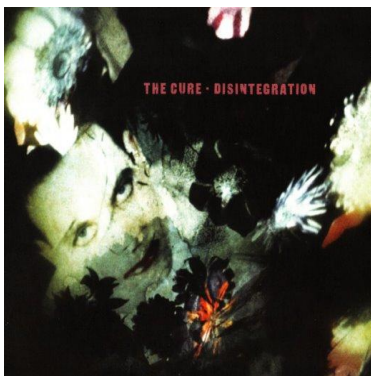
I Don't Know How But They Found Me – Gloom Division



Gorillaz – Demon Days



Queen – Greatest Hits



The Cure -
Disintegration



Tyler, the Creator -
Flower Boy



I Monster - A Dense
Swarm of Ancient Stars



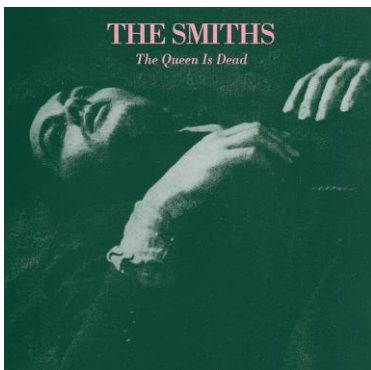
Blur - Parklife



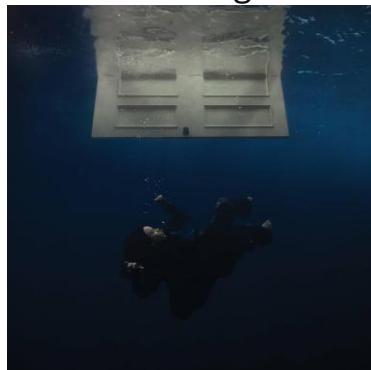
Fall Out Boy - Infinity
on High



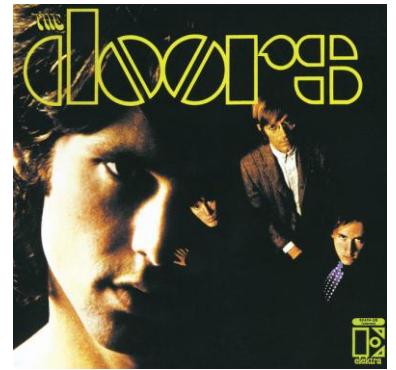
Kate Bush - Never for
Ever



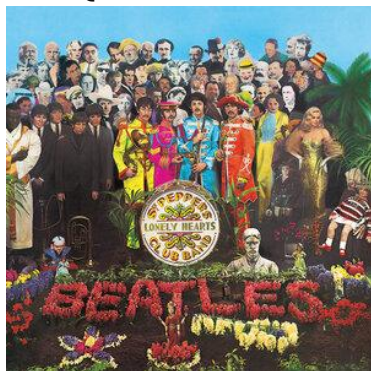
The Smiths - The
Queen is Dead



Billie Eilish - Hit Me
Hard and Soft



The Doors - The Doors



The Beatles - Sgt.
Pepper's Lonely
Hearts Club Band



Fleetwood Mac -
Rumours



Arctic Monkeys -
Whatever People Say I
Am, That's What I'm
Not

Are YOU interested in the Army?

Anonymous



Why you should join Army Cadets

Values of being an army cadet

Courage

Discipline

Respect

Integrity

Loyalty

Selfless commitment



-You can pass off your subjects while completing your D of E

-It's much CHEAPER to complete your D of E through cadets

(£30.50 for bronze, same for silver and £37.50 for gold)

First Aid Knowledge

Danger

Response

Shout for help

Airways

Breathing

Circulation/CPR

(there are many different interpretations of C)

Learn how to use radios, read maps, move tactically and use air rifles.

Social Aspects

-You get to meet new people across the company and your detachment.

(Wantage, Didcot, Faringdon, Henley, Wallingford)

-Good support between the cadets and adult instructors

COMMON MISCONCEPTION

You can experience army cadets without having to join the army.

Our experience in the Addams Family

Written by Harry Wilson, Fabian Stoermer, Gwyn Rees, Lucas Levett, year 9

Gwyn Rees – Lucas Beineke (the guy in love with Wednesday)

Hi! I'm Gwyn and I was one of the main characters. Being a principal character was honestly one of the most amazing experiences ever and I would 10000% recommend to anyone interested in singing, acting or dancing! Auditions happened right back at the start of September and you got given a song for your character and a scene from the show to act out. Auditions were slightly terrifying but SO WORTH IT when I got my part!! I was so happy it was such a good feeling. Rehearsals were every Wednesday after school until 4:45, Thursday lunchtimes and then closer to show week all day Sunday rehearsals. The rehearsals were really fun and it was so cool to watch the show come together!

Backstage was honestly one of the most fun times I've had. Everyone is singing with each other, talking and having fun, and it all feels so nice and like family! The people I met are honestly so amazing and most of them I wouldn't have met otherwise so I'm so glad I took part. Performing was really scary, but as the shows went on I got into the flow and it was all ok! I would recommend to absolutely anyone and there's so many ways you can get involved. See you next year!

Harry Wilson – Knight (one of the 'main' ancestors)

Hi, I'm Harry and I played an Addams family ancestor. My character died by being knocked off his draw bridge and drowning.

We started rehearsing for the show at the beginning of September, Wednesday after school, some on Thursday lunchtime and closer to the show on Sunday as well as a final rehearsal on Monday of show week. We had six shows, Tuesday to primary schools, Wednesday to year seven and eight, then Thursday and Friday evening shows, Saturday matinée and Saturday evening and each was a very unique experience.

Fabian Stoermer – Mechanic (ensemble)

Hi, I'm Fabian and I also played an Addams family ancestor. Playing an Addams ancestor was a blast. Wednesdays after school were our rehearsal days, and yes, at times it was a little bit of a drag – but totally worth it! Things got extra busy with Sunday rehearsals leading up to the show, but the performance itself? Amazing. You learn so much, meet fantastic people, and honestly, it's just a ton of fun. Hectic? Definitely. But would I do it again? In a heartbeat! Highly recommend.

Lucas Levett – I did something (light tech)!

Hi, I'm Lucas and I helped with lighting and backstage. So, you want to know what it's like to be in the play. Well, I can't tell you that but what I can tell you is that being backstage crew or light tech is a blast. I got to experience what it's like to go backstage and help, and it is awesome! You can sing along, chat with the cast and crew, set up stage and, in my experience, catch a grenade.



Now I know what you're thinking: your title says light tech. So, I helped set up lights the Monday before show week then I came in on the last Sunday rehearsal before show week, where I helped with some odd jobs like painting wood, designing parts and other bits and bobs, then sat and watch rehearsals for the rest of it. After this I then helped with 3 shows (I even watched one from the audience). On one I watched how the lights were done; the next behind stage (that was fun helping collect branches and stuff); and the last recording the mid shot from a camera at the back. Very tedious because you have to focus as to who the close up is on and where the action/drama is going to be next.

General Knowledge Quiz

Unscrambled puzzle

Answers!

Question 1: Andy Murray
Question 2: Five years
Question 3: Australia
Question 4: 24.5 minutes
Question 5: Barbie (Bonus point: \$1.45bn)
Question 6: 1939
Question 7: Giorgio Armani
Question 8: True
Question 9: Evanescence
Question 10: Germany

Beijing, London
Rome, Tokyo
Berlin, Moscow
Madrid, Paris

Well done if you got them all right!