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THE PERSPECTIVE



PERSONAL STATEMENTS BEING SCRAPPED BY FAVOR

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) has said that students will no longer be required to write a personal statement when applying for higher education.

The aim of this independent charity is to provide a central service between applicants and universities

It is safe to say we are all more or less familiar with the intricate and often enervating process of university applications. Draft upon drafts of personal statements, online forms and indecipherable acronyms are only some of the challenges faced by the modern student wishing to enter higher education. When did accessing university become so complex?

Access to university has changed dramatically over the years due to a variety of factors such as an increase in population and conflict. The most significant changes, however, were seen in the introduction of women into higher education and the availability of the internet. These developments finally lead to the tortuous process met with fear and excitement by students worldwide as they enter their adult life and leave the comfortable environment of their school.

The personal statement, a crucial component of the application process, will be eliminated by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) and replaced with a set of questions for prospective students. This modification is the first in a long line of reforms, according to UCAS.

The university and college admission service will no longer require students to write a personal statement when applying for university. These changes claim that the personal statements favour middle-class students who may have better access to "high-quality advice and guidance" according to UCAS. The 4,000-character essay be scrapped and replaced with a series of questions about the higher education course they are applying for.

UCAS announced in February that it was considering changes to university applications. At the time, Michelle Donelan, the university minister, said "I have always felt that personal statements in their current form favour the most advantaged students. So I'm pleased that UCAS have confirmed that the reform of the personal statement is in their plans so that admission processes work to the benefit of all students."

UCAS consulted with 1,200, 170 teachers, and more than 100 universities and colleges before making the reforms, as reported by The Times. According to UCAS, although 72 per cent of respondents surveyed felt positive about the personal statement, 79 per cent agreed that writing the statement is difficult to complete without support, and 83 per cent said they found the process of writing a personal statement stressful.

The structured questions aim to "bring focus and clarity for students, reducing the need for support". Students will be asked questions about their motivations for studying courses, what they have done to prepare, and any extenuating circumstances.

Kim Eccleston, head of strategy and reform at UCAS, said in a Higher Education Policy Institute blog post: "We believe this will create a more supportive framework, which in turn will help guide students through their responses by removing the guesswork, as well as capturing the information universities and colleges have told us they really need to know from applicants when it comes to offer-making." The changes to the admission process will be introduced no earlier than 2024 for students applying to begin university in 2025.

And in the future, UCAS has said that it would consider moving away from written text to multimedia submissions.

5 The Impact of Sugar
Information on the impact sugar has on the body

6 Freedom of Speech
Sasha reveals what it's like to grow up with deaf parents

7 Flash Fiction
Our short story writer presents the flash fiction 'The Dragon Lord's Land of Nightmare

8 The Olympics
Dive into the new Olympic sport: break dancing

This edition of The Perspective has been brought to you by various students from Strood Academy.

The aim of this newspaper is as a creative platform for students to not only voice their opinions on topics that matter the most to them but also to develop writing skills in order to articulate their thoughts and emotions.

This newspaper would not be made possible without the sixth form editorial team and the many students across key stage 3 and 4 who have volunteered their time and hard work to make this newspaper possible.

Thank you for taking the time to read the newspaper. Any feedback will be greatly received.

Yaren
Editor

Mrs Wilkinson-Crute and Mrs Worsfold

THE RESURGENCE OF READING

BY YAREN

Whilst humans have been reading for centuries, societies increasingly worry for the lack of reading and intellectually stimulating habits of the younger generations' chronically online presences may have just taken a turn. The resurgence of a reading culture amongst young people beyond compulsory, academic reading, has led to a significant difference in book sales and prints according to The New York Times. For better or worse?

Like most of the global population, in the midst of a melancholic lockdown, I found myself searching for a hobby to occupy myself with. Rekindling my appreciation for books by picking up my copy of Miller's 'The Song of Achilles', not knowing it would lead to an obsessive book collection many months later made it clear that many people turned to different activities to act as coping mechanisms and entertainment. The Reading Agency revealed that the nation was reading more with 1 in 3 adults reading more, rising to one in two 18-24-year-olds. Did the pandemic act as a catalyst for this popular reading culture? Or is the culture of reading itself changing with the development of social media and marketing? 'BookTok' is a side of the social media platform which has been instrumental in bringing back the reading culture. Creators focus on creating content based on book recommendations, and hauls and generally use their platforms to share their thoughts and opinions on their recent reads.

The power of social media influence is remarkable, and when it comes to reading and book recommendations it can have both positives and negatives. Recommendations of books from online book communities can indeed be helpful and introduce us to a range of books that we may not have heard of, ensuring diversity and representation in the book community. TikTok has also helped revive the book industry, many books that were suggested on the platform have become bestsellers, and publishers increasingly rely on creators to promote their books. A touching example includes the recognition of the user 'Stone Maidens' - the thriller author Lloyd Devereux Richards post gained quick recognition after Llyod's daughter shared a video detailing how her father 'spent 14 years writing a book' in

hopes of increasing his sales due to 11 years of a lack of recognition. The post quickly gained over 10.3 million likes, which led to the decade-old thriller moving to number one on Amazon.



Whilst online book recommendations have been a boom for the reading community, there are negatives to be aware of. For one, not all recommendations are genuine and may be presented in a way that is completely misleading. It's easy to get swept up by the exposure a book gets, and it can create ethical issues when a book is recommended with deceitful expectations. One author that has gained remarkable recognition of young readers is Colleen Hoover, her best selling novel 'It Ends With Us' creating controversy especially in the ways in which social media impacts it's reputation. Hoover's novel is composed on themes such as domestic violence and abusive relationships, as her audience is predominantly young adults, the recognition of the novel, with its appealing pink cover has led to the novel being discussed and recommended as a 'romance.' Why is this problematic? It's often difficult to separate an author from their work, however as the author had compounded the novel based on her mothers own experience this becomes more complicated. How can one truly separate the author from their work if the work in question could never have been brought to fruition were it not for the author's own experiences? One of the primary reasons that the book can be seen as problematic is because it romanticised abuse. Hoover's novels are written in an easily accessible manner, making them perfect for young adults and teens, however to write about such sensitive topics in this way can lead to a desensitisation of these topics, often leading the reader to think that the problematic behaviour of the characters are acceptable.

The resurgence of a reading culture amongst young people is clear, and the overall attitude towards reading beyond school is shown.

For further insight into the 'Rebirth of Reading Culture,' I'd highly recommend this Ted Talk by Shahi Guzargah - an educationist, who learnt how the habit of reading books transforms people and makes them skilful.

https://www.ted.com/talks/rebirth_of_reading_culture_in_phone_obsessed_society



How can I support my friend who is struggling with mental health?

First, let them know that you're someone they can trust, and if they do not feel like talking to you, try to prompt them to speak to someone they trust

Second, be present. Let them know that you are totally there to listen and help in whatever way you can. Even if it's just listening to them.

Don't change the subject if they start talking about their mental health or illness, this could make them feel like their worries are unimportant or feel silly for bringing them up.

Maybe every time you text your friend to hang out, they say no. Be patient. Keep inviting them. Keep being their friend, even when it's hard.

Make sure they are getting the help they need. Ask questions like, "Have you ever talked to anyone about the way you're feeling?" If you feel like you can encourage your friend to get some help or to tell a trusted adult, go for it. But if you can't do that without being pushy, or pushed away, have an adult try to get your friend help instead.

Many people who are going through mental health challenges or a crisis are not ready to admit it or ask for help—so instead of getting frustrated, loop an adult in to help and just keep being a good friend.

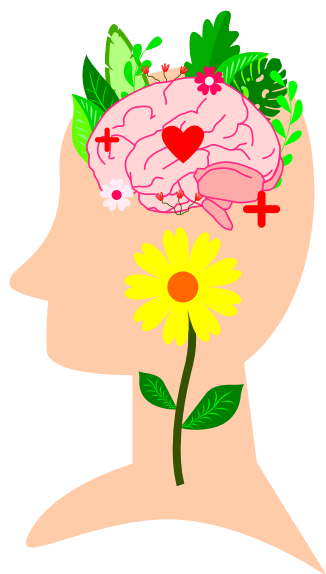


I want to be able to read lots of books but cannot afford them. How can I further my reading without much money?

While books can be accessed freely through your local library or perhaps audiobooks on Youtube, there are a few online platforms which can offer books that are not available as print copies. One of these includes Wattpad which can be accessed via the App Store and/or browser. Rated for 13 years and up, Wattpad is a great space to discover a range of books as well as gives the opportunity for young people to express their own creative writing skills. Wattpad offers an inclusive community for people to engage with others who share similar interests allowing readers to comment and communicate with authors. The platform has even helped some authors publish their books and go on to being No.1 best sellers. For example, the After series by Anna Todd was originally published on Wattpad and was so well loved by readers that it

became a New York Times bestseller and even produced as a series of movies.

However, it is important to ensure you are staying safe whilst using Wattpad as some content may be too mature and/or triggering to readers. In order to do this, you should always check whether the story is rated 'mature' or 'for everyone'. 'Mature' rated books are a genre for new adults and so have content only suitable for 17+. There are various settings which can stop mature books from showing up on your account. Stories also have 'tags' that act as trigger warnings as to what kind of content you will be reading within the book. Certain tags and types of content can be blocked from showing up on your account too. If these stories are found to be rated incorrectly or fail to tag the triggering content, you can report the story and block the author.



Agony Aunt

By Lois, Scarlett and Eirwen



What is the best way to deal with exam stress?

After the exam period:

Take time to enjoy your free time and relax

Reward yourself, and take a step back to be proud of the hard work you've put into your exams.

Try not to compare your answers to others. If possible, avoid talking to other people about the questions, comparing answers or looking up answers online as this may cause doubt and further concern.

What is the best way to deal with exam stress?

During the exam period:

Talk to others - Connect with other people, especially those going through the same thing so you can relate and not feel alienated.

Try to find a balance - Take regular breaks and be realistic about what you can do in a day.

Keep things in perspective - remember that exams won't last forever.

Ensure you are eating, sleeping and drinking well enough to keep up your energy and stay healthy.

Remember to stay active - exercise triggers your body to release endorphins which help you feel better and more relaxed.

What do I do if someone makes me feel pressured to do something in my relationship?

If you are not comfortable, it is best to remind the person of your boundaries and outline them. It is best to surround yourself with those who are patient and respect your boundaries, and if the person continues to make you feel pressured, it is better to distance yourself from them, as someone who values you as a person would not want to make you uncomfortable.

A Poem About Anxiety BY A.M.L

trigger warning

"Oh, I've got school today"
that horrible gut-destroying feeling settles in.

I still got up

Be proud of me

I get into class THEY walk past

My hearts racing

My anxieties rising

I'm pulling hair out

Pinching myself

I still carried the day on

Be proud of me

I go get food "hahaha fatty"

Great! Now I'm in the bathroom

Im stressing

There are tears in my eyes

"Mum please come get me" I text mum

"Hun I can't"

God kill me I'm thinking to myself

Talking to my mate

They walk past again

They scare me

Now it's maths kill me now

She says I'm being difficult

So I speak back

But then I'm in the wrong

My hearts racing

Body shaking

Feel trapped

So I head to the bathroom again
I hear someone so I cover my mouth

"Are you ok my dear?" she says

"No" I respond

"Open the door"

So I do

Oh no, oh no, oh no, I'm thinking

Its a teacher

"What's up"

"Just a bad day"

Time to go home

I wake up tomorrow

"Oh, I've got school today"

Be proud of me

It's like a never-ending circle (a mentally draining one)

I've written this poem because I know I'm not the only one who struggles and that after being severely bullied you might have/get anxiety and I want to spread the effects of bullying especially if it's about your body. Sadly I've had to deal with it and it's not fun. So please be careful with what you say, it does damage people.

WHO IS J.K ROWLING REALLY?

BY KACEY

Get ready to dive in and read all about the real J.K. Rowling and facts about her life. Which will help you understand her lifestyle and shocking facts. Continue reading to find out things you might not already know about J.K. Rowling.

J.K. Rowling is a popular British author who wrote the beloved Harry Potter series that many people love to read. J.K. Rowlings real name is Joanne Kathleen Rowling. She has 3 children and is married to her second husband and they live in Scotland.



Shocking fact:

Did you know that J.K. Rowling was richer than Queen Elizabeth the 2nd?

Did you know Harry Potter was rejected 12 times before J.K.Rowling could publish it?

Did you know J.K Rowling's first book was published on the 26th of June 1997? This was Harry Potter and the philosophers stone.

J.K ROWLINGS PAST

J.K. Rowlings birthday is the 31st of July 1965. This means she is 57 years old. She went to St Michael's Primary school and Moray house school of education.

WRITING AT A YOUNG AGE

J.K. Rowling first began writing when she was 6 years old! She wrote a book about a rabbit called Rabbit. At only the age of 11 J.K. Rowling wrote her first novel about seven cursed diamonds and the people who owned them.



COMING UP WITH CHARACTERS

J.K. Rowlings childhood friends had the surname Potter so that gave her the idea for the main character's name. She also based the character Hermione Granger on herself so she had one of Harry's friends' names too. Ron Weasley's name came from J.K. Rowling's love of the Mustelidae family which includes badgers, otters and of course weasels.



Eating sugar can really affect the body, especially these days because everything has so much sugar and calories which have a massive impact on people's lives. If we eat too much sugar it can cause serious illnesses and disease. Read on to find out more about the impact sugar has on the body.



NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF SUGAR:

As much as sugar is nice it can be very addictive which causes people to eat it more which can make us get very ill and become very unhealthy.

Eating too much sugar can lead to gaining too many calories which can lead to gaining weight. Being overweight increases your risk of health problems such as heart disease, some cancer types and 2 types of diabetes.

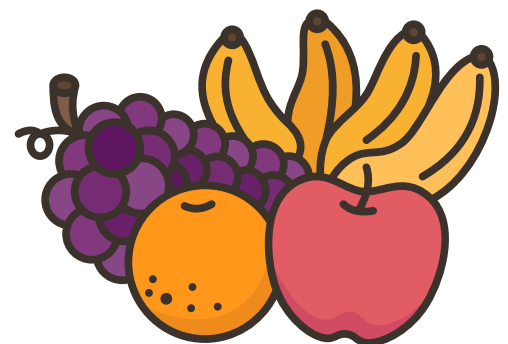
POSITIVE EFFECTS OF SUGAR:

Some sugar isn't so bad though because natural sugars are found in fruits, for example, apples. They offer nutrients and fast stable energy.

It can give us energy and some naturally sweet sugar can improve our thinking power, as well as make us happy. It also helps to store energy!

HOW IS SUGAR MADE?

Sugar can be made by extracting sugar juice from beet or sugar cane plants, and many different types of sugars can be produced.



Teens should only eat 25 grams or 6 teaspoons of sugar a day! But too many people eat more of that and instead of eating a lot of unhealthy sugar we should eat more natural sugars.

Freedom of Speech

By Sascha



Hi, I'm Sascha and I live with deaf parents. This means my life is very different to some. My parents are fully deaf and can only lipread but I'm hearing. I have a couple of siblings which can be very annoying sometimes but I love them and my parents very much.

When I was 4 or 5, I went to nursery and didn't know how to speak as I only knew sign language. Nursery gave me the freedom to speak since there was no reason to at home. I was the firstborn and found it very weird because, for 3 or 4 years of my life, I didn't speak so it took me a while to adjust. I always wondered why my parents couldn't hear me and thought they were weird. It wasn't until year 3 that a teacher told me why they are deaf. I was quite shocked and from then on devoted my childhood to helping my parents the best I could so they could have the freedom of speech that I do.

I'm in my teenage years now and have experienced different types of banter but some jokes have been directed towards my parents. I've felt sad and shocked about it. Sometimes when I walk around my town I get dirty looks and in school, for example, people have made weird noises because my parents don't know how to speak properly. People don't understand they wouldn't like it if their parents were deaf and were made fun of. Normally my parents don't get a say in things and get left out. I have freedom of speech so they should too.

THE DRAGON LORD'S LAND

NIGHTMARE

By Thomas & Cody



Four dragon lords were fighting with the other dark dragon lords, yet it was all down to the upper house of stronger creatures. They all descended from the sky where no one knew where they came from. All four are powerful. Kyle because he appeared with his big robot demon dolphin, Cody is good-powerful because his most potent powers are speed and strength, Keeley has powers of lighting and sky and Sophie can teleport and mimic.

Then there's the big one who is the most powerful: Thomas. His powers are solar and eclipse (plus his powers are so cool that he is able to make them come out of his mouth, tail and spine. But he can only do it with his max power and it causes a lot of pain in the mouth. His body is covered in a midnight purple and his eyes are like fishes with magical colours. As for the stomach, it was like a twilight moon falling from space (that's why people call him the midnight dragon lord) to see at night and show them the way to safety.

When the dragon lords combine they evolve to make a dragon god/goddess. Their name is twilight magic. All their personalities and traits combine as well creating a new power called life and destruction. This life power brings life back to the dead while destruction can kill whatever gets in the way.

After all, there are a lot of dark dragons. They want power for their king and queen so they can make a world in their image. They want to make a place where they can lead alone and easily create an army of different creatures and evolutions. This will allow them to make it hard for any enemies because of the amount of power that comes from them and the different beings.

However, before all this, the dragon lords were living a great life with the other creatures. Kyle was the best at making peace with the other animals and creatures. He was like a friend to all families. Yet there was one creature who disliked the dragon lords, Ria. Due to their immense power, they decided to take control of forest Jura and the other forest with other creatures. This started a war with the dragon lords and so the humans called upon the dark dragon lords. This would become known as the Great War of the Light and Dark. The main 5 dragon lords were going to fly in a triangle to show kids how to fly, as well as swim and catch fish and gather food for the big feast they were going to have. But the dark dragon lords wanted to ruin it for the light dragon lords. Because Bradon's powers are ice and earth, he is one of the light lords and has the wings of a god. Hunter's crossbows are only gifted to those who are worthy and loyal to his people. He wears clothes that are richer than the richest man to rule the earth. He takes care of his kingdom, Aquarius - home to the greats. But then there is the most powerful evil whose name causes great fear when spoken. Her name is Mid-Asia and can turn anyone into gold.



THE OLYMPIC GAMES

SHOULD BREAK DANCING BE AN OLYMPIC SPORT?

At the 2024 Olympic games in Paris, there will be a new tradition to the games called breakdancing. This was confirmed by the international Olympic committee on Monday the 7th of December 2022. Breakdancing will be called breaking when taken to the floor in Paris. The dance-off will occur in the same area as the 3v3 basketball games.

The newest Olympic sport added to the Olympics is ski mountaineering in the winter Olympics (2026). The 2024 Olympic games will start on Friday 26th July 2024 and end on the 11th of August 2024.

The Paris 2024 Paralympic games will be the biggest event ever organised in France. The spectacle during those weeks will go down in history and Paris will be the centre of the world. It's official. Breakdancing is coming to the Olympics. Officially named "breaking" by the International Olympic Committee, the sport will be part of the 2024 Summer Games in Paris.

Compared to other Olympic sports, one of the unique elements of breaking is that much of what you see is freestyled," Choi said, during our interview last week. " But breaking definitely requires more creativity and adaptability, adding an element of difficulty that a sport like gymnastics does not have.

Breakdancing is seen as a sport that blends urban dance with remarkable athleticism, making it worthy to be an Olympics.



Technology

KARTRIDER: DRIFT BLOWS UP REACHING 380 MILLION PLAYERS IN 2 WEEKS

By Brandon



Kartrider: Drift is a game that had its fully free release on the 12th of January 2023. In just a fortnight, it had skyrocketed to over 380 million players. With the game being announced 3 years ago, and only having its first open play tests in December of 2022. The game's full release took a lot of time; hence the reason for its simple yet intense character design, and its extremely detailed maps and karts to choose from. It makes sense why this is so popular already, having been anticipated for over 3 years.

The game is accessible on all platforms and is cross-platform, already gaining thousands of views over Twitch and YouTube. Even with Steam describing it as "the fun free-to-play, cross-platform kart racing game where arcade thrills and fast drift-fuelled competition meet customised karts and character personalisation."

The 380 million people player base was confirmed on Valve's Steam Website and App themselves, followed by them stating that it has no barriers, no paywalls and no pay-to-win - preventing leader boards being stacked up because of people buying things - with fully customisable cars and even being able to put your own designs on them. No wonder this game grew so popular so quickly! Even some of Twitch's biggest streamers are getting into the game such as MoistCr1tikal with him uploading a video of himself playing the game which has already got over a million views.

The game has had a lot of time put into it and has gained popularity at a tremendous rate. I wouldn't be surprised if the game reached 400 million players by March 1st.