

Stand up and be Counted

Inspirational Wisdom from Young People

Edited by
David Lorimer

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Introduction by David Lorimer, Programme Director

I am delighted to introduce this book of inspiring wisdom from young people. If the real meaning of education is to draw out, then you will find some real gems drawn out by the extracts featured in this book, which is the third compilation of its kind. I am sure it will touch your heart.

The aim of the ***Learning for Life Values Poster Programme*** is character development in young people by helping them build a firm foundation for lifelong practical wisdom. The programme is an innovative exercise that provides an opportunity for young people to identify and examine their core values and character qualities. Students reflect on essential human qualities such as enthusiasm, courage, love, wisdom, generosity, trust and kindness through a mixture of text from Sir John Templeton's book *Wisdom from World Religions*, quotations, biographies, poems, parables and stories. They complete a specially designed poster template with support of Internet resources (www.learningforlife.org.uk/awards/) for background and inspiration. Since its inception in Scotland in 2005-2006, the programme has reached over 40,000 young people in over 200 schools in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, London and Birmingham. In 2008 we launched the first Learning for Life book – From Inspiration to Aspiration – in the Scottish Parliament in the presence of the First Minister, Alex Salmond, along with an exhibition of winning posters. In 2009 we held our award ceremonies in the parliaments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The Poster Award web site is structured round four main themes, with ten web pages under each theme:

- ***Personal Development - making the most of yourself***
- ***Principles for Successful Living - making the most of your life***
- ***Resilience - making the most of adversity***
- ***Relationships with Others - making the most of your friendships***

The students choose individual qualities they admire within each of the above themes and describe their inspirational figures, favourite quotations and stories on the poster template. The web site helps them choose these while encouraging them to relate their personal experiences with their choices. The quotations and figures are selected so that no single religion or viewpoint is privileged and to ensure that students have the widest possible range of inspirations to draw on. The finished posters are assessed and each school is invited to submit their best entries to the regional competitions, where their work is judged in their year category.

In 2007-2008, over 10,000 students throughout Scotland took part, along with 2,000 in Wales, 1,000 in Birmingham and a handful of other schools in England. The 2008 regional awards ceremonies took place during June with Norman Drummond, FRSE in Edinburgh, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, KT, in Aberdeen and Margot Clark, a Deputy Lord Provost in Glasgow. Judges' comments on the posters are reproduced below. HRH The Prince of Wales supported the project by donating 20 specimen oak trees to participating schools, which were planted in November 2007. It is fitting that the project emblem incorporates an oak tree inside an acorn to indicate the capacity of students to grow into their full potential. The oak has long been regarded as sacred, especially by the indigenous Celtic tradition, where it represented the tree of life.

This book has been compiled from the contributions of over 250 prize-winning students. The three main chapters feature their favourite stories, inspirational figures and personal reflections. Spread throughout the book are quotations chosen by students themselves, many of which come from their own research. There are inspirational figures from many different time periods and backgrounds. Some are iconic figures who feature every year but others include in last year's booklet include Mum (the favourite choice among girls), grandparents and even siblings. This year's inspirations include Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Oskar Schindler. From the classical world we have Octavia, Socrates, Alexander the Great and Cleopatra. Artists and musicians include Monet, Matisse, Vera Lynn, Nicola Benedetti, Evelyn Glennie and Leona Lewis. Among notable women are Elizabeth Blackwell, Anita Roddick, Jane Austen, Jane Goodall, Aung San Suu Kyi, Marie Curie, Mary Seacole, Emmeline Pankhurst and Jehan Sadat. Adventurers are represented by Sir Edmund Hillary, Sir Ranulph Fiennes and Lord Baden-Powell, politics by William Wilberforce and Abraham Lincoln and religion by St Francis of Assisi, The Dalai Lama and Rumi. Among scientists we have Sir Isaac Newton, Stephen Hawking, Sir Alexander Fleming and Sir David Attenborough while from sport there is Jack Nicklaus, Paula Radcliffe, Sir Steve Redgrave, Maria Sharapova, Ellen MacArthur, Colin Jackson and Andy Murray. Special mention must go to the budding Eton and Cambridge conductor, Alex Stubbs, who inspired people with his zest for life in the face of his debilitating cystic fibrosis. Chefs Jamie Oliver and Gordon Ramsay are highlighted, as are businessmen Steve Jobs and Sir Tom Farmer, the latter noted for his generous philanthropy. A Welsh student wrote about Simon Weston and the Falkland Islands, and the athletic charity fundraiser Jane Tomlinson is singled out for her immense courage. However, equally moving and significant are the heart-warming tributes to family members, ordinary people doing extraordinary things.

The personal reflections draw the poster together, enabling students to comment further on the qualities, stories, quotations and inspiring figures they have chosen. A number of themes run through these reflections, which make inspiring reading. Students have a greater appreciation of the personal qualities and values such as trust, courage, enthusiasm and perseverance required for their future happiness and success. Indeed, the very fact of having to choose between many important qualities helps them realise that they are all important and goes some way to explaining the transformative feedback we receive every year, of which this is a small sample:

“This project has taught me that ideals are inspirational and help you to live life better if you try to live up to them. I have learned what mine are, and I doubt I’ll ever forget them.”

Iona, Putney High School, Year 7

“Learning for Life has shown me that my life is not hard and difficult - people out there have bigger problems than me but they are braver than me. Even if you have a problem, you can overcome it and be stronger than ever before. This Learning for Life project has touched my heart.”

Hannah, Queen Anne High School, Year 8

“Throughout this Learning for Life competition, I have realised that there is more to life than just living. You only live once so do as many things as you can throughout your life. I really enjoyed the project and it has taught me a lot - it wasn’t just a competition but a secret lesson teaching you about life.”

Ben, Selkirk High School, Year 8

“While doing this poster I’ve learned that you should live life to the full, because it is short and there is no use worrying about things. We should all live in peace and do our best to be good Samaritans and help those around us as we would like to be helped in times of suffering and hardship.”

Caitlin, Monifieth High School, Year 8

“Making this poster has helped me to gain a better understanding of myself and the world.”

Sofia, La Rosa High School, Cavalese, Italy, Year 8

“My own life has shown me that successful living and personal development depend on the kinds of themes and subjects that this poster has made me think about.”

Gareth, Gorgie Mills School, Year 11

“This project has changed my outlook on life and has made me think more about the world itself. I had never realised just how important the little things in life are. Not only have I realised a lot about myself through doing this project but also the real value of friendship. I hope to remember this project in the future to help me out with my problems and benefit me in the situations I may find myself in.”

Nicola, Kemnay Academy, Year 9

“After keeping the Learning for Life diary for a few weeks I have learned a lot about myself that I never knew before. I have realised that there are more important things in life than wealth or fame and that we should love life and embrace the challenges thrown at us. I used to be pessimistic and worry about everything, but now I believe that we should all be optimistic about the future.”

Lauren, Elgin High School, Year 9

“Creating this poster has been a real inspiration for me. It has helped me to understand others, the world surrounding me and the people in it, and what makes them who they are. This makes me realise how important those things we usually take for granted are: love, friendship and happiness. Not just to receive, but also to give and share.”

Aleena, Hodge Hill School, Birmingham, Year 9

“I have learned that every action we take will go on to touch countless other lives. And these lives will touch others. So I feel that the most important thing in life is always to do the best for others; it could change the world.”

Conner, Notre Dame High School, Year 11

Students come to realise the obstacles overcome by their inspirational figures in achieving their goals. They realise that in many cases their own circumstances are much more favourable, noting at the same time how much they have hitherto taken for granted. Students write about enhanced self-confidence and the importance of standing up for what they believe in. They express an enhanced love of life and the wish to contribute to a positive future in a variety of ways. They emphasise the importance of learning from their mistakes, of formulating and pursuing one's ideals, of looking on the bright side of life, and they set out how they intend to make a difference. As one of our judges, Professor Lord Dervaird put it: 'To read these posters was a humbling and uplifting experience. The insights and perceptions of these young people filled me with admiration and awe, and immense hope for the future.'

I am enormously grateful for all the continuing support we have received. To the teachers and students for their commitment and enthusiasm. To the John Templeton Foundation, the Garfield Weston Foundation and Enders Analysis for their continued financial backing, and to DC Thomson for all their help with printing and for donating the regional prizes and contributing to the overall expansion of the project. To Ronnie and Kath Davidson for their sterling creative and administrative work (to Ronnie especially for his improvements to the web site), to Catherine Robertson for her help with publicity and to Anne Smith for helping type up the manuscript. To our regional co-ordinators John Caton, Hector Mackenzie and David Black, to Rod Ashley and John Thomas in Wales and Ornella Corazza in London. Also to Charla Devereux at the Scientific and Medical Network office for keeping track of the accounts and administration. I am also very grateful to our judges for giving up their time and to Norman Drummond, Lord Mackay and Margot Clark for presenting the prizes with such inspirational speeches.

Acknowledgement

I am most grateful for the award of a grant from the Blaker Fund of the Scientific and Medical Network to assist in the completion of this book. George Blaker (1912-2001) was a founder of the Network who took a special interest in the unfolding of the potential of young people and would have read this book with relish. For further details of the Network, see www.scimednet.org

Judges' Comments

To read these posters was a humbling and uplifting experience. The insights and perceptions of these young people filled me with admiration and awe, and immense hope for the future.

Prof. Hon. Lord Dervaird QC

The young people were able to bring their character, aspirations and values to life through the posters, creatively describing their personal journeys and achievements.

Carol Downie, Chief Executive, Youth Scotland

The integrity and self-awareness evinced in the posters was simply outstanding. Pupils who are being encouraged to reflect in this way are laying a very sound foundation for their future life. I congratulate both the work of the pupils and that of the schools.

Rt. Revd. Dr. Brian Smith, Bishop of Edinburgh

It was highly inspiring to read the thoughtful comments of an impressive group of young people, focusing on core values and looking to the future with sensitivity and determination.

Prof. Eric Priest FRS, University of St. Andrews

Following on from my attendance at last year's award ceremony in Aberdeen, when I was extremely impressed by the posters on display, I was delighted to be involved in judging some of this year's entries. It was a most interesting and enjoyable experience, although I found it hard in some instances to choose between posters. The effort, thought, and sometimes quite brave "soul searching" put in by the pupils concerned was impressive, and in some cases very moving. I'm sure the exercise was memorable for the entrants, and to be involved in judging their efforts was memorable for me too. I hope all the pupils gained from the experience - although we had to choose winners, I think that all who entered were indeed winners in "learning for life".

Nanette Milne, OBE, MSP

Reading through and studying the details of the students' posters was an enriching and transformative experience. The narratives were variously moving, thoroughly informative and endlessly rewarding.

Rt. Revd. Dr. Robert A. Gillies, Bishop of Aberdeen and Orkney

Learning for Life allows young people to self evaluate through a unique process of discovery. The posters are an inspiration not only to the young people themselves but to all of us lucky enough to read them.

Prof. Chris van der Kuyl, Chief Executive, Brightsolid

I found it very difficult to select the winning posters as they were all of an extremely high standard. And I found it very hard to believe youngsters of that age were able to demonstrate such understanding of what is really important in life, and what will be fundamental to them in their future careers. I left the session inspired, and confident that the future will deliver many youngsters of great character and ability. Hopefully we at the Stewart Milne Group will be fortunate enough to be employing a great many of them. I have always been a great believer that, irrespective how gifted and able an individual is, their prospects of real success will be extremely limited without real character, whereas someone with real character and limited ability may well have far greater prospects.

Stewart Milne, CBE, Chairman, Stewart Milne Group

This is an excellent project with considerable potential as a vehicle for cross curricular work between perhaps PSE/RME/English and of considerable value for groups working in particular curricular areas e.g. ASDAN Xlerate – in developing their emotional literacy.

Jean MacMillan, Scottish Government

It was a great privilege to judge the first Learning for Life Poster competition in Wales. This unique programme challenges young people to explore a range of sources that help them to express their own values through designing their personal poster. The programme represents the best of active, purposeful learning. The results are inspirational.

*Dr. Cheryl Morgan, Chair,
International Education and Resource Network UK (IEARN-UK)*



“Life isn’t about waiting for the storm to pass; it’s about learning to dance in the rain”

*Anon, quoted by Amy Louise Wilmott,
Cynffig Comprehensive School*

Section 1: Stories

Favourite Stories

The ant story

Ennae Baley-McKnight, Albyn School, Year 8

Once upon a time there was an ant who was teased by a spider every day. One day he got fed up and wanted to see what it was like to be a spider, so he crawled into the spider. The ant was having a happy life until a mouse came and started to tease him until the ant had enough of it. So he crawled out of the spider into the mouse, but a rat teased him again and it kept on going. Wherever he went he was teased. He crawled from a rat to a rabbit, from a rabbit to a cat, from a cat or dog until he crawled into a farmer and found that the banker teased the farmer. The end had become so miserable after becoming one mean animal to the next, that it finally asked himself one day, 'Is there any animal that doesn't tease any other animal?' Suddenly he remembered that when he was an ant he didn't tease anyone so he crawled out of the farmer and stretched his legs. It was so good to be out in the fresh air but what was even better was that in the end he was himself again, and he crawled back home.

The bouncy ball

Melissa Jane Bremner, Albyn School, Year 8

Several years ago, I was outside playing with a bouncy ball with my younger sister. When I accidentally threw it over the wall in our garden, my sister made me go and get it. Little did I know that on the side of the wall was a dark, damp neglected field full of weeds. I went over the wall and began to search for the ball. However, the further I walked to look for the ball, the further away from the fence I got. After realising the ball was nowhere near me, I began to feel very scared. After a few moments of fear and defeat running through my body, however, I suddenly realised that the only person stopping me from escaping was myself. I decided that while I was here, I might as well find the ball and make the best of a bad situation. After walking around some more, I realised this was an adventure.

I like this story because it reminds me that if I turn a problem like this into a solution and am positive about it, things will always work out in my favour. Eventually, because I persevered, I found my sister's ball. I turned my problem of being lost into a solution of finding adventure. I must be confident and positive about my life. The only thing stopping you from trying your best is yourself.

The bear and the travellers

Emma Farquharson, Albyn School, Year 8

I like this story because it shows that friendship is very important. If you don't have any friends to support you, you will not be as confident as if they were supporting you. In this

story the person's friend does not stand by them or support them. I think the bear gives very good advice to the man lying on the road. A true friend would have helped you if you are not as nimble as them. They would not have left you, *knowing that you were in danger*.

The notebook

Abbie Buchan, Albyn School, Year 8

The Notebook is one of my favourite films, which is based on true love. An old lady has Alzheimer's so she can't remember anything. She lives in a home and every day her husband comes to read to her but she doesn't know who he is. He reads the story of their life together to try to make her remember. In the end she remembers. I think this film really does show true love because the man knew that his wife had Alzheimer's but never gave up on her. The story is special to me because my great-grandfather died of Alzheimer's. Maybe if someone had read his life story to him, he would have remembered.

Gelert

Heather Banham, Amman Valley School, Year 9

I chose the story of Gelert as my favourite story because it's saying that you should trust people and not jump to conclusions. The story is a tragic Welsh tale about a dog, Gelert, who belonged to Prince Llewelyn of Wales. The Prince went out hunting one day and left his baby son with Gelert. Gelert heard a noise and a wolf was staring him right in the eyes. They started fighting and they knocked over the cradle with the baby in it, but the baby was safe. Gelert killed the wolf in the fight. He was injured and was bleeding badly. He had saved the baby's life. When the prince returned home, he saw Gelert full of blood, then he saw the cradle turned over, but no crying. Without thinking it through, he drew his sword and stabbed Gelert, killing him. Then he heard the baby's cry and saw the wolf's body. This story is upsetting as Gelert had protected the baby and got killed for it. The Prince should not have jumped to conclusions. He knew his dog was faithful; otherwise he would not have left his son with him.

The gold wrapping paper

Annalise Belton, Amman Valley School, Year 9

The story is about a father punishing his daughter for using the last of the gold wrapping paper. The girl gives her father a gold box, but the box was empty. Her father became angry, then the little girl looked up at her father and cried. She said 'I blew a kiss into the box.' The father was crushed. He begged for forgiveness. Later the little girl had an accident which took her life. The father kept the box by his bed side for many years.

The story tells you that you should think before you speak as the father got the wrong end of the stick and then he felt trauma, upset and angry. At the end after he jumped to conclusions he was sorry. He could have done more for the little girl. The story is telling

you that you should always take things step by step and listen carefully to those who are telling you something important, and not to get the wrong end of things, but to hear what they are saying first. At the end of the day, you hurt the ones you love and you don't realise it until they are gone. Everything you have done wrong you feel guilty on yourself.

The ass and his purchaser

Robert Llewelyn, Amman Valley School, Year 9

My favourite story is 'The Ass and His Purchaser' as it tells you about how a man who chose a donkey to run tests on. He took the donkey home, put it in the stable and watched it go over to the laziest and greediest donkey. After he saw that, he took it back and told the owner 'I do not need to run any more tests. I could tell what the donkey was like by the companion it chose.' I like this because it portrays the fact that if you look at the people that someone is with all the time, then you can sometimes tell what that person is going to be like. The only thing is that it's not always true, as I hang around with many different people and I'm not like any of them. Possibly, the man made a very silly mistake and took back a very hard-working donkey.

*“Advice is what we ask for when we already know
the answer but wish we didn’t.”*

Erica Jong, quoted by Amy Louise Wilmott,
Cynffig Comprehensive School

Animal Farm – George Orwell

Maxime Saxena, Ardingly College Prep School, Year 8

Three of my favourite books are: 'Lord of the Flies' by William Golding, 'Pride and Prejudice' by Jane Austen and 'Animal Farm' by George Orwell. Since I could only pick one for this poster I chose 'Animal Farm' because of its strong moral stand and its relevance to today's society. The story: Animals take over a farm to create a better life for themselves, but the animals slowly start to resemble humans as they get greedy for power and wealth.

This political satire resembles our society where one leader is overthrown by another. But power slowly leads the triumphant party into becoming just as greedy for power as the first leader. Greed and power lead many people astray in life and it is a virtue to be able to yield power and still remain humble, wise and fair. Power can be a powerful tool to improve people's life or the downfall of an individual or a society. We must use our common sense when dealing with power and wealth, and remain humble and grateful at all times.

Enthusiasm

quoted by Daniel Kennedy, Baldragon Academy, Year 10

'Enthusiasm is that mysterious something that turns an average person into an outstanding individual. It lifts us from fatigue to energy. It pulls us from mediocrity to excellence. It turns on a bright light in our life until our face glows and our eyes sparkle. It's a spiritual magnet that draws happy people to us. It's a joyful fountain that bubbles and causes people to come to our side and share their joy. Out of this fountain there leaps self-confidence that shouts to the world, 'I can! It's possible! Let's go!' Enthusiasm is the long sought after fountain of youth. Drink from the fountain of enthusiasm, and you will experience a miracle. Discouragement will fade away like the morning's fog in the noonday sun. Suddenly, you will start laughing, whistling, singing, and you know you are a child of God. Enthusiasm - when someone offers it to you, take it, especially if you don't want it.'

The meaning of life

John Milne, Baldragon Academy, Year 8

An eight-year-old boy approached an old man in front of the wishing well, looked up into his eyes and asked: 'I understand you're a very wise man. I'd like to know the secret of life.' The old man looked down at the youngster and replied: 'I've thought a lot in my lifetime, and the secret can be summed up in four words. The first is think. Think about the values you wish to live your life by. The second is believe. Believe in yourself based on the thinking you've done about the values you're going to live your life by. The third is dream. Dream about the things that can be, based on your belief in yourself and the values you're going to live by. The last is dare. Dare to make your dreams become reality, based on your belief in yourself and your values.' And with that, Walter E. Disney said to the little boy, 'Think, Believe, Dream, and Dare.'

Memoirs of a Geisha

Carine Marchand, Berwickshire High School, Year 9

One of my favourite stories is 'Memoirs of a Geisha'. It is about a girl who has nothing to look forward to in her life in China. She is cruelly taken and split up with her family and sent to a 'tea room' in a Chinese city. The girl is bullied by everyone and expects to work as a servant forever; until a woman says that she will train her to become a Geisha. She goes through many ups and downs in her early years; but never stops trying to succeed. She stays determined and focused on having a happy life. In the end the girl can only be partially happy and loved because of the rules and conditions of her life. This is a great story showing determination and success in all its glory. Life can only be what you make it.

The oxen and the axel tree

Nicole Etherington, Ysgol Bryngwyn, Year 9

A heavy wagon was being pulled by some oxen across a country path. The trees groaned and creaked loudly so the oxen turned to talk to the trees and asked 'Hullo there! Why do you make so much noise? We bear all the labour, and we, not you, ought to cry out.' The moral of the story is: Those who suffer the most cry out the least. I think that means that the people who go through the most turmoil in life don't complain as much as those who only suffer one tragedy.

A piece of cake – Cupcake Brown

Shannon Simone Fitzgerald, Ysgol Bryngwyn, Year 9

This book is a true story of a girl from the day she was born and what events took place in her life some good and some not so good such as being put in foster care after her mother died, being beaten and raped by her foster parents, moving from house to house never being able to settle, forced into prostitution, introduced to gang culture, drugs, alcohol, lost her baby because her foster mum made people kick and punch her stomach, having more than 7 abortions and she'd also been shot. This woman has been through so much in her life most things that seem bad to us are just a part of her everyday life and what she had to do to survive on the streets.

Just a boy – Richard McCann

Shannon Simone Fitzgerald, Ysgol Bryngwyn, Year 9

This is the true story of a small boy, just five years old, who woke up one October morning to discover his mother was gone. And it is the story of how the murder of one woman can ruin a family and trigger decades of deprivation and abuse. After their mother became the first victim of the Yorkshire Ripper, Richard McCann and his sister's lives fell apart. They were beaten and abused through their childhood until they began to expect nothing more than pain from life. Until one day, the young man that Richard had become decided that his life didn't have to be this way. This story makes me think of how lucky I am to be here, for my family to be here and how these small things that I take for granted really are the most meaningful things (people) in my life.

The bundle of sticks

Sadie Lewis, Ysgol Bryngwyn, Year 9

An old man, on the verge of death, asked his servants to fetch him sticks in a faggot. He told his eldest son to break it. He strained his hardest but it just wouldn't break. So he asked his other sons and they also failed. The father told them to untie the faggots and take a stick each. He then told them to break. All of the sticks broke. The moral of the story is that closeness/union means strength. I think that this story is telling me that if you are

close with someone, or a few people, keep it that way because it means you are stronger in yourself.

Walt Disney

Jordan Thomas, Ysgol Bryn Taur, Year 9

The story of Walt Disney inspired me the most. I was shocked to learn that at the beginning of his career, he was struggling. The story shows that it is through his determination and his passion for drawing and animation, his drive to be successful, despite all of the let-downs, that he still manages to achieve his goal at the end. It's comical that through living with mice in a garage he finds his meal ticket and fulfils his ambition to become a famous cartoon artist. One thing his story does prove is that he had so many opportunities to fold and forget his dreams, but he decides not to, and it speaks volumes that it was at his lowest point, financially and emotionally that he finally got the break he needed.

Pride and Prejudice – Jane Austen

Catrin Davies, Cynffig Comprehensive, Year 9

Stories are meant to inspire you, make you think, make you imagine, make you believe. A good story makes you forget your troubles and free your mind. Stories are said to be a window to a new world, stories can help us grow learn and achieve. Your favourite story is always a part of you, it reflects your personality - that's why different people have different favourite stories. My favourite story is *Pride and Prejudice* written by Jane Austen. It is the most famous of Jane Austen's novels and one of the first 'romantic comedies' and the first of its genre to be published at the time.

The story is filled with love and romance but is based on the assumptions that love conquers all, and that first impressions don't last. The basis of the story revolves around Mr & Mrs Bennett's five daughters who are all unmarried. This is an amazing book because it highlights that love can conquer all, even if it has to overcome all obstacles. When you consider that Jane Austen herself did not find her own Mr Darcy, it shows me that you do not need to draw on your own experiences to write a great novel. The imagination of its writer highlights that true personal depth and being able to dive into one's own imagination shows me that being a great writer can be achieved by writing what you wish could happen and not what has happened.

Jane Austen inspires me because she was one of the first woman writers and experienced much discrimination in her life but she refused to let it get to her and managed to write many great novels. As you read this novel the words come to life on the page. When I read this book I feel safe and secure, every time I want to get away I read this book and I get lost in a world of imagination. This book isn't just a book to me it's a friend.

Lord of the Rings – JRR Tolkien

Dale Thomas, Cynffig Comprehensive, Year 8

My favourite story is *Lord of the Rings* by JRR Tolkien. It is my favourite story for a few reasons. Firstly, it is a fabulous fantasy story which has a land called Middle Earth, with many different races and creatures, good and bad. I enjoy reading about the adventures of the characters. Also, I like the idea that in this land, where there are so many powerful creatures, two small hobbits manage to beat a powerful dark lord and all his monsters and are the heroes. Despite the fact that they are very small and have no magic powers they beat all of those who do. They never give up; even when their journey looks like it is going to end in failure.

The Diamond of Drury Lane

Anna Underhill, Cynffig Comprehensive, Year 7

My favourite story is 'The Diamond of Drury Lane' because it is about a girl who stays loyal to her friend even though her own life was threatened. Even when she is thrown into prison and the only way to escape is to give up her friend, she stays true to her friendship, and does not give him up.

The Catcher in the Rye – J D Salinger

Bethan Williams, Cynffig Comprehensive, Year 11

My favourite book is 'The Catcher in the Rye' by J D Salinger. It follows the experiences of 16 year-old protagonist Holden Caulfield. Having been expelled from boarding school due to his academic attitude, Holden spends 48 hours in New York as he is unwilling to return home and face his parents. Told in the 1st person, the book offers a frank and insightful view into teenage rebellion and the feelings of depression and isolation that many young people face.

I chose this book as I found myself identifying with the emotions that Holden experiences on his journey. I also found myself agreeing with a lot of his wry and uncensored views on life, the world and society. I think the book offers a lot of important messages to teenagers, but most importantly, I think it provides a sense of inclusion and solidarity to its readers, everybody feels unhappy and disillusioned at times, but it is important to keep living and to keep taking solace in the little things, such as memories, family, hopes for the future.

The lost donkey

Chloe Chan, Elgin High School, Year 8

I like the story about the lost donkey as it shows that you won't realise how important something is to you until you lose it. When something is lost, you try your best to find it and you know what it means to you. When you have found something lost, you feel the

relief and joy than you will learn to look after it and make sure you don't lose it again.

“Knowledge speaks, but wisdom listens”

Jimi Hendrix, quoted by Mollie Marcel, Bishop Gore School

True love

Zoe Grant, Elgin High School, Year 9

A guy and a girl were speeding at over 100 miles an hour on a deserted road on a motor bike.

Girl: 'Slow down, were going too fast, I'm scared.'

Boy: 'Don't worry, I know what I'm doing.'

Girl: 'No please stop, I'm really scared.'

Boy: 'Give me a hand. Can you help me out, take my helmet off and put it on, it's bugging me.'

In the paper the next day, it was reported that a motorcyclist had crashed into a building due to brake failure. Two people were found, but only one survived. It turned out that halfway down the road the guy realises that his brakes have failed, but didn't want the girl to know so instead he made her say she loved him, felt her hand one last time, then had her wear his helmet so that she would live even though that meant he would die. I like the story because it proves that true love makes you sacrifice your own life to someone else.

Jane Eyre

Lauren Taylor, Elgin High School, Year 9

I love reading but if I had to pick just one it would be *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte, where one orphaned Jane grows up at a harsh charity school called Lowoods. Finally she leaves and becomes a governess at Thornfield Hall, but the plain woman falls in love with her employer Mr Rochester. Jane finds out a terrible secret that he had kept locked away and she is forced to make a life changing decision. I love this book because it's an amazing story about a woman's search for equality and freedom in the world, and it has some exciting twists that make your heart thump and your stomach flip.

Girls in Tears – Jacqueline Wilson

Lori-Jo Curran, Forfar Academy, Year 9

My favourite story is Jacqueline Wilson's 'Girls in Tears'. I like this book because it is about the troubles and problems that teenage girls have to face throughout the years such as

bullying, eating disorders and falling out with family and friends etc. In this book, the main character deals with everything that I've had to deal with apart from a few things. It is comforting to know that there are plenty of other people that face that kind of thing. But in the end, everything turns out alright, not quite fairytale, but close enough.

Anatomy of the Illness – Norman Cousins

Kelsey Burnside, George Heriot's School, Year 9

Norman Cousins was diagnosed terminally ill, and the chances of his survival were 1 in 500. He could see that the worry, anger, and depression in his life contributed to and perhaps helped cause the disease. He wondered that if illness can be caused by negativity can wellness be created by positivity? Laughing was one of the most positive actions he knew. He did things like rent funny films. His pain was so great he could not sleep. Laughing for 10 minutes solid, he found, relieved the pain for several hours so he could sleep. Norman fully recovered and lived another 20 happy and productive years. Pretty amazing when all he did was laugh.

The donkey who rose to the top

Kate Keohane, George Heriot's School, Year 10

Once upon a time a country miller discovered that his old donkey had fallen down an abandoned well. The miller decided that it would be easier to buy a new donkey than to rescue the one down the well and realised that it had been unsafe for some time, and it was a miracle that some poor unthinking child hadn't already met the same fate as the poor donkey. This gave the miller an idea.

He asked his friends to help him fill in the well and, in doing so, bury the donkey. It was, after all, the most practical thing to do. Each person got hold of a shovel and began shifting earth into the well. The donkey understood what was happening and whimpered dreadfully. Then, to everyone's surprise, he abruptly stopped his crying. It was as though the donkey had resigned himself to his terrible fate.

Some time later, the miller looked down the well. He was amazed at the sight that met him. When each shovelful of earth hit the donkey's back, the beast did something incredible. He threw it off and then stepped onto it.

The people of the village continued to shovel dirt on top of the donkey, he continued to shake it off his back and take a step up. Eventually, an enormous amount of earth had been moved and the well was almost filled in. Then the donkey, much to the astonishment of the assembled crowd, stepped up over the edge of the well and happily trotted away!

Throughout our lives we are all going to get dirt shovelled onto us. Bad things happen to everyone. The key to getting over this is to throw it off and use it to take a step up. Each of our troubles is like a stepping stone. We can find our way out of the deepest wells of misery by not stopping, not wallowing in self-pit; but by never giving up!

The Happy Prince

Felicia Law, George Heriot's School, Year 9

This story is about the magnificent statue of the Happy Prince, who saw the misery in the city and at the Swallow to give his sapphire eyes, ruby and thin leaves of gold from his body to the poor. The Swallow, now his best friend, wouldn't leave him for the winter and died in the cold. The statue, now looking very drab, was melted down by the city people who had once admired him so much. Only the heart did not melt, and was thrown on a rubbish heap.

I like this story because at the end, in God's eyes, the dead bird and the statue's heart were the two most precious things in the city. The Prince had made mistakes during his life, only caring about luxury, but as a statue he learned from these and help the poor. The city people had only liked the statue because of gold and jewels, but it was his kind heart that made him so dear to God. The story shows the importance of generosity and good intentions. If you carry out a good action, there will always be at least one person who will appreciate your good deed, even though it may not feel like this at the time.

The old man's bequest

Tom McKeever, George Heriot's School, Year 9

My inspirational story is about an old man passing his wisdom on to his children. He tells them that if they take four things into their mind and heart, they will be eternally happy. The first is love. He says you have to fill your heart with love. Second is understanding. If you understand you will have no fear. Thirdly, he tells them you must fill your heart with gratitude and appreciate everything that is given to you. Finally he says, take pride in everything you do. I love this story because it explains the four ways to happiness.

Jay the beagle

Eileen Mairi Morrow, George Heriot's School, Year 9

Jay the beagle was raised on a farm in Indiana by Jim Kreis. Jim had to move, so he gave Jay to his parents, who then moved away to North Carolina, taking the dog. A few months later, Jay was let loose to chase rabbits and disappeared. In actual fact, Jay had become homesick and travel 650 miles back to Indiana. When she turned up she was agonisingly thin with her paws bleeding, but as soon as Jim saw her, he recognised the dog as Jay. He told reporters, 'I was absolutely amazed she would travel that far to come home. I guess the farm is the only place she knows.' I really like this story as it shows how much even dogs will do to get back to the place they love.

“Woe to the man whose heart has not learned while young to hope, to love and to put its trust in life.”

*Joseph Conrad, quoted by Nicole Etherington,
Bryngwyn Comprehensive School*

Animals have parents too!

Eloise Lynn, George Heriot's School, Year 9

A couple pulled into a petrol station to get something to eat. They noticed a homeless man, whose clothes were tattered and worn. He didn't have enough money to buy himself anything to eat. Next, a female dog came near - it wasn't a nice looking dog and looked like it was part wolf. It was obvious that the dog was feeding pups, even though she was stick thin. She obviously had not been fed in a very long time, and the homeless man went into the shop and bought the poor dog a tin of dog food. This happened on mother's day, and shows that even animals are parents too. I like the story because the homeless man was so generous that he bought the dog food with the only money he had. Many people forget that some animals are abandoned and neglected, and this is just one case of an animal in distress. My inspirational figure, Eleanor Kidd, originally started an animal refuge centre in her garage, which eventually grew into a barn with light and heat. When she was 86, she was still living at the shelter, looking after all her rescued animals.

The Vicar of Nibbleswicke – Roald Dahl

Helena Scott, George Heriot's School, Year 9

‘Reverend Lee is suffering from a rare and embarrassing condition: Back-to-Front Dyslexia, a type of dyslexia that causes the sufferer always to say the most important word in a sentence backwards. For example, instead of saying knits, he says stink; god would be dog; sip would be pis, etc. It affects only his speech, and he doesn't realise he's doing it, but the people of Nibbleswicke are shocked and confused by his outrageous comments. A cure is found (walking backwards everywhere for the rest of his life), and the mild-mannered vicar can resume normal service.’

The reason I chose this book is mainly because I am also dyslexic and when I was younger I used to think that dyslexia was just a bit like having some awful disease where people just look at you and think ‘Yer, you can see it in her eyes she's dyslexic, she's stupid!’ And when I didn't know how to spell something easy, I'd get embarrassed and just think of something different to write, something that wasn't so challenging. So when I first read this book it helped make me realise that dyslexia is common for people and that loads of people have it. Reading this book has made me more confident and not judge myself so much.

Touching the Void

Michael Sturrock, George Heriot's School, Year 9

My favourite story is 'Touching the Void'. It is about Joe Simpson who is with his friend. Joe Simpson in the Peruvian Alps on a mountain expedition when he falls into a crevasse and breaks his leg. Although he is in great pain, he keeps going with determination. Day after day through freezing conditions to get back to base camp, not just for himself but for friends and family too. This is a good story because it shows us, no matter what it is, we should keep going with it until the end even when it is easiest to give up and stop.

To Kill a Mocking Bird - Lee Harper

Isla Scott-Pearce, George Heriot's School, Year 2

'To Kill a Mocking Bird' by Harper Lee is a 20th century American classic novel about race and class in the Deep South of the 1930s. This novel definitely changed some parts of my outlook on life. It taught me to consider what I see around me and made me question if everything around me was always right. I learned not to always follow what others are thinking but to try and understand why people believe in what they do. I believe that this has made me a more balanced human being.

The football game

Scott Clark, Girvan Academy, Year 11

My favourite story is about a boy who loved playing football. However, after his parents had an argument with the coach, the boy stopped getting a game despite being one of the best players. One game came for the boy but only in the last 10 minutes was he on pitch through injury. The team were losing 4-3 and the boys started and after five minutes they were winning with the boy scoring one goal and setting up another. Despite this, the boy still never got a game, thus driving him to quit the game he loved. The story shows how you should never let your personal feelings get in the way of what you know is right.

The special butterfly

Kerri Lindsay, Girvan Academy, Year 9

On the day of my cousin Alyson's funeral my uncle and I were standing out in the back garden and we saw a butterfly, the same kind that my cousin had a picture of on the wall, so my uncle told me to stand still so I didn't go away. As my uncle stuck out his hand, the butterfly came and sat on it. At that moment I began to feel happy as I thought it was strange that the same butterflies she loved should appear on the day of her funeral. This story reminds me of my cousin and how happy she used to be whenever I saw her.

The milkmaid and the pail

Pamela Sandford, Glasgow Academy, Year 9

This story by Aesop is about a milkmaid carrying a pail of milk on her head to the market. As she walked, she's calculating what she was going to do with the money. She thought she might buy a new dress and everyone would be jealous, but she would just throw her head back like this... as she did so, the milk spilled everywhere and she had lost the chance to buy a new dress. The story tells you not to count your chickens before they have hatched, but rather to think through your actions and realise that daydreaming can cause accidents! It also encourages me to think about what might happen if you don't get your first choice.

The Whitewash House

Catriona Murray, Glasgow Academy, Year 9

There was once little boy who lived in the cosy little village in the cosy little cottage. Every Saturday his parents would take him into the city by train, and every time he passed by a beautiful whitewashed house and he wished he lived there. A couple of years later, in winter, he decided he would run away to that house and ask them to take him in. So he packed a bag and walk several miles through the thick snow until he reached the top of the last hill and looked down upon the Whitewash House. But when he saw the house, he was shocked. It looked ugly and dull compared with the pure white snow all around. It was a revolting shade of grey, so the boy began to cry. He felt the sun against his back then when he reached his old house again it was stunning, when the sun shining behind it so glowed. I like as it conveys the moral that the grass is not always greener on the other side.

How to fill a jar

Lily Mortimer, Glasgow Academy, Year 9

A clever man and a foolish man were once given the task of getting as much as possible into a bottle. They had to fill it with golf balls, sand, pebbles and gravel. Each of the objects had to be used as much as possible to fill the bottle. The clever man dropped in the golf balls first. The fool exclaimed: 'Why did you put them in? Now we can't get any more in.' The wise man replied that the pebbles were smaller and will fit in the gaps. Then he put all the pebbles into the bottle. Again the fool questioned his friend, and still he found room for the gravel and sand. The foolish man asked, 'how did you do that?' The wise man replied, 'you can always find more, you just have to look.' This story teaches us that we can always get more from a situation than is first obvious.

The wolf in sheep's clothing

Sophie Reilly, Glasgow Academy, Year 10

A hungry wolf was hunting when he found a sheep's fleece lying on the ground. He realized that if he wore the fleece, to the sheep he would seem to be a fellow sheep. This would

mean they would not recognise him and flee, allowing him to get close to the sheep and increase his chances of catching one. So the wolf put on the fleece, and was just about to pounce on a lamb when another wolf, also looking for its dinner, mistook the first wolf for a sheep and killed it and ate it in place of mutton.

The moral of this story is 'Frauds and liars are always discovered', but it is important to me because it also says 'don't try to be something you're not'. This reinforces what I think is a very important quality: to be content with what you have, and make the most of it (i.e. the fox killing in the traditional way), rather than always wanting more and better methods and materials, as they will usually be your downfall.

The Good Samaritan

Suhaib Ahmed Siddiqui, Glasgow Academy, Year 9

One of my favourite and most inspiring stories is the Good Samaritan. When a man is left to die after bumping into a gang of thieves, no-one stops to help him. Not even a priest. When a man who could be an enemy due to religion passes by, he helps him. When I was young, I believed myself different to the rest of my classmates. When we were told this parable in assembly it became a sign for me telling me I am not different unless I make myself so this showed me that no matter how different someone is or seems we are all connected in this world and should treat others with respect and care as we are all humans.

Mule's Ears

Krean Joseph Emmott, Glyn Derw High School, Year 9

My favourite story is the Mule's Ears. It is about a king with mule's ears who has never had his hair cut but eventually does. He tells the barber never tell anyone. The barber soon feels ill and goes to the doctor who says tell someone or something so he tells reeds. A while after there is a party and one of the people's instruments was broke so he cuts the reeds and makes them into an instrument, when he plays it the king's got mule's ears bellows out of it. The king threatens to kill the barber but his subjects start to clap and he thanks the barber. This is saying don't judge a book by its cover.

Pinocchio

Ebony Church, Glyn Derw High School, Year 9

My favourite story is Pinocchio. Pinocchio was a boy made from wood. His father had no children of his own. A fairy from a star turned the wooden toy into a real boy. It is when Pinocchio disobeys his father and runs away. Now every time he tells a lie his nose grows an inch longer. It's later in the story where he is reunited with his father inside the stomach of a whale. This story tells me that honesty is the best policy and that to do the right thing is often the right thing to do.

Noughts and Crosses

Zoe Jean Gallivan, Glyn Derw High School, Year 9

The community is divided into two, there's the noughts, (the disadvantaged people), and the crosses, (the privileged society). Callum a nought, and Sephy a cross, are brought up as friends, but the divides of the community tear them apart. Callum's father is executed for being part of a nought terrorist group, and Callum turns against all crosses. He soon becomes part of a terrorist group himself, and they plan to abduct Sephy, whose father happens to be high up in parliament. Sephy agrees to meet Callum, but is abducted by the group of noughts. The two fall in love, despite the situation, but he gets caught and sentenced to death, leaving Sephy alone, and pregnant. All this is the result of not accepting people's differences; we need to all get along in the world, for us to be happy.

Best Friends – Jacqueline Wilson

Sarah Jean Powell, Glyn Derw High School, Year 9

This story is about two best friends Gemma and Alice who love to spend time together. Gemma and Alice have known each other all their lives but when Gemma reads her diary at her sleepover, she discovers that Alice is keeping a secret from her. The next morning Alice tells Gemma she's moving to Scotland. So they decide to run away together but a boy named Biscuits grasses on them and they get caught by their parents. Alice moves away and Gemma knows that Alice has met a new friend Flora and she thinks that Flora wants to break her Alice's friendship. Gemma gets worried. Gemma has a birthday party and didn't get a card from Alice and she's upset, she thinks Alice is best friends with Flora. The next day Gemma has a package with a card from Alice and a new charm with four words on it saying 'Best friends for ever'. This story tells me when you lose somebody there not gone forever, they will always be there. Friendship never ends.

A child named it

Kayleigh Randall, Glyn Derw High School, Year 9

The story is about a child named Dave (but he's named 'it' to his family) and his mum treats him particularly badly. She makes him sleep in the cellar and feeds him scraps the family are left with. She makes him bathe in freezing water and if he doesn't do what she says quickly enough she beats him. The thing I find important in this story is that families are supposed to love and support each other. I have learnt that even if you get treated badly you still have to try and overcome adversity. Even though he was treated like that when he was younger, he overcame adversity and became a famous author.

The Birds, The Beast and The Bat

Charlotte Busson, Gordon Schools, Year 9

This story is from Aesop's Fables. It is about when some animals went to war; it is the birds

against the beasts. The beasts would pull the birds' feathers out and the birds would pluck the beasts' fur out. Sometimes the beasts won and sometimes the birds won. Except the bat was always on the winning side. One day they all decided to be friends so they wanted to choose a king. The bat said that he should be King because he was clever and was always on the winning side. Instead of being king, the bat was chased out of the bird's and the beast's kingdom.

I love this story because it has a moral to it which is that real friends don't desert us when we are in trouble or need them. I think this moral is very important because you don't want friends who like you one day but the next they leave you by yourself.

"A kind word is like a spring day"

Russian Proverb, quoted by Jessie McNally, Putney High School

Ever After

Daphne Ferrer, Gracemount High School, Year 10

My favourite story is 'Ever After.' This story was based on Cinderella. Actually *Ever After* is a film. I like this story because even though the main character (Cinderella) was being treated by her step- mother like a slave, she remains kind, helpful and caring. She was full of happiness in her life even though bad things happen. She also changes the life of the prince she teaches the prince how to live life. Because living is just not money. You don't need money for everything in this world. You can't buy LOVE, PRINCIPLE and LOYALTY. For me this is a very inspirational story. I love it.

The Kite Runner – Khaled Hosseini

Laura Henderson, Gracemount High School, Year 11

My favourite story is The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini. The story provides a sense of Afghan lifestyle and culture. The two main characters Hassan and Amir both go through a lot of situations which cause a lot of atmosphere and difficulty. I like this book a lot as it really touches me because I feel so sorry for Hassan because of all the things Amir does to him and doesn't seem to help him, but Amir redeems himself by the end of the book. It also shows you that there is always a way to change your life and be who you want to be. This is definitely my favourite book of all time.

The Best loved bear

Gemma Hogg, Gracemount High School, Year 8

My favourite story is 'The Best Loved Bear'. It is about a boy called Toby, whose class is

having a best loved bear competition. As soon as he finds out he goes home to his cute, lovely bear. But there's a problem Toby feeds his teddy bear, Ted, ice-cream so his bear is all sticky. His nose has been kissed so much the nose has worn off and his fur has been cuddled so much that the ear is wearing off. There's no way Toby can win with this bear. So he tries to wash it, he puts bandages on Ted's ear.

Toby goes to school the next week. He takes Ted in a paper bag because he is embarrassed of Ted being so untidy. Everyone else's teddys have been groomed, have ribbons on, some also have little teddy t-shirts. Toby's worried. The judges look at the bears, 'oh, this teddy is lovely, it's even got a ribbon on it.' says one judge. They come to Toby's bear. Their faces looked confused and his teacher picks up the teddy and says in a cheerful voice 'This bear is the best loved bear. It's sticky from ice cream, the fur is wearing off from all the cuddles, the nose is wearing off from all the kisses. Well done Toby!!'

Toby collected his ribbon and put it on Ted. He was so happy. 'I love you Ted!' he said. And I love that story so much because it shows that nothing needs to be perfect as long as it has love!!

The Tsunami rescue

Katie Bruce, Grove Academy, Year 8

My favourite story is the true one that happened in Thailand when the tsunami hit. There was a mother with two children, one quite young and the other still a baby. The mother was walking in the deep water to safety but could not carry both children. She had to let one go and drown in the water so she let go of the oldest. There was nothing she could do. When the mother was rescued in a helicopter she was still devastated, but when she got up on board she found her other son was there!

The king and the diamond

Kirsty Boswell, Gryffe High School, Year 9

My favourite stories are ones that have a moral or hidden meaning at the end. Ever since I was very young the most memorable one of these stories has been one which my Gran told me after I thought I had ruined a piece of artwork. A foolish young king cared about one thing: only his huge diamond. Unfortunately one day he dropped it and there was a big scratch down one side – He ordered any brave jeweller to fix it, however they would be executed if they failed. So one young jeweller had turned the scratch into the stem of a beautiful rose. This is an excellent example of a story with a moral. It tells us 'don't give up' and 'keep trying'. This story has always, and continues to encourage and inspire me.

How birds got wings

Scott Rooney, Gryffe High School, Year 9

A legend says that God first created birds without wings. Sometime later, God made wings and said to the birds, come take up these burdens and bear them. The birds hesitated at first, but soon obeyed. They tried picking up the wings in their beaks, but found the wings too heavy. They tried picking them up with their claws, but found them too large. Finally, one of the birds managed to get the wings hoisted onto his shoulders where it was finally possible to carry them. To the amazement of the birds, before long the wings began to grow and soon the birds could fly. What had once seemed to be a heavy burden became the very thing that enabled the birds to go where they could never go before. I like this story because it shows how hard the birds tried and failed and finally managed to get the wings on so they could fly.

Robert the Bruce and the spider

Fraser Docherty, High School of Dundee, Year 9

Robert the Bruce had found refuge in a Highland cave after fleeing the battle; he was disillusioned and had lost faith in his own abilities. When he woke up in the early morning, he saw a spider trying to spin a web. The first time, he pulled down the web, but to his amazement the spider started again. The next time, a strong gust of wind broke the web, the spider fell once again and started again. For another hour or so that spider kept rebuilding his web, making it stronger each time, however with no success. Finally, the spider cracked it -- he'd made his web strong and durable and within the first few seconds it caught a fly. Robert the Bruce was astonished that this small, seemingly weak spider had learned from his mistakes and had kept trying. This immediately inspired Robert to go back to his men still fighting against the superiority of the English army. He thought of Scotland as the spider and the task to defeat the English. This led to his most remembered quote: 'if at first you don't succeed, try, try again.' And this helps me whenever I feel frustrated or I'm having difficulty. It spurs me on to carry out the task in hand.

The Good Samaritan

Callum Edwards, High School of Dundee, Year 9

This Parable tells of a man who was robbed and left for dead when travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho. Whilst he was lying at the side of the road he was passed by two people who he would normally have classed as good individuals. The third person to pass was of a faith and culture that the man would not normally trust and would not expect to be of help. The Samaritan stopped and helped by bandaging his wounds and taking him to shelter. The next day the Samaritan paid the innkeeper and promised to pay for any more services required on his way back from his travels.

I think there are two important points to this story; we shouldn't always judge a book by its

cover. The people we think are against us or act differently to us due to creed or colour are not always what we have been led to believe. We should take the time to know and understand everyone. And we should always strive to treat people the way we would like to be treated.

The dog and the meat – Aesop

Laura Lee, High School of Dundee, Year 9

This is a story about a greedy dog who stole a large and delicious piece of meat from a house. He grabs the meat in his mouth and runs off with it. Soon the dog passes by a river and decides to rest there – so he can feast on the meat and drink from the river. But as he went to put his paw in the water he saw another dog with an ENORMOUS piece of meat in his mouth just like him! (His reflection.) Out of greed he opened his mouth to bite the other dog's meat but of course, ends up dropping his own meat which was quickly carried away by the river. The moral? 'We should not risk losing what we already have due to selfishness and dreams.'

This story shows how with our own greed, we can often forget all the good things we already have and chase after silly dreams. I'm not saying that we should not try and achieve our dreams but that your dreams have to be realistic and you should take things step by step.

The Peacock and Juno

Jennifer Lothian, High School of Dundee, Year 10

This is the story of a peacock, who, despite the knowledge that he was a creature of great beauty, regretted the fact that he did not have the ability to sing like a nightingale. The goddess attempted to comfort him; 'Fate has allotted to all their destined gifts: to yourself beauty, to the eagle strength, to the nightingale song, and so on to all the rest in their degree; but you alone are dissatisfied with your portion. Make, then, no more complaints: for, if your present wish were granted, you would quickly find cause for fresh discontent.'

I think this story is of great importance. It tells us that we should not compare ourselves with others and that we should be content with what we have. Everyone is unique and all of us have different strengths. If we were to constantly seek perfection we would never be content.

“A man of genius makes no mistakes; his errors are volitional and are the portals of discovery”

James Joyce, quoted by Nicole Etherington, Bryngwyn Comprehensive School

Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody

Kasia Thomson, High School of Dundee, Year 10

This is a story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry because it was Everybody's job. Anybody could do it, but Nobody realised Everybody wouldn't do it. So Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done. We are all guilty at some time or other of saying 'someone else will do it' or 'why should I do it?' But still, we are very quick to judge others for not doing what we perhaps should have done ourselves. Sometimes we need to take the time to consider our actions and not dwell on the past.

Calendar girls

Alex Lyne, Inverurie Academy, Year 10

What I find most inspiring about this story is that something as small as buying a sofa for a hospital waiting room could account to raising £1.3 million for Leukaemia Research. The story I am talking about is the one of a W.I. calendar made by Kettlewell Women's Institute. Far from depicting fields of heather and peaceful sunsets, this calendar features the members of the W.I. nude. I imagine that this would take a lot of guts and will power but the women of Kettlewell managed. To this day they are still continuing to raise money for Leukaemia Research. I think many of us could learn from their good sense of humour and bravery and show admiration to these women who dropped everything for charity.

The three trees

Alexander McCall, Kemnay Academy, Year 9

There was once three trees and they stood on a hill. They dreamed of what they would be. The first tree wanted to be a treasure chest where great kings would put their treasure. The second tree wanted to be a ship, which kings would use to cross great oceans. The third tree only wanted to stand there forever. One day three woodcutters came up the hill and cut down the trees. The first tree was made into a manger, the second tree was made into a fishing boat and the third tree was cut into blocks of wood and left in a corner. And none of them were happy. Then one night a baby was laid in a manger and the first tree knew that it carried the most precious treasure of all. Years later a man stepped into the boat and was carried across a lake. And the second tree knew that it was carrying the greatest king that there ever was. Years later still, someone shouted, 'Grab that wood.' The third tree was grabbed and nailed into the shape of a crude cross. A man was made to carry it up a hill and then was nailed to it, where he died. And the third tree knew that it would always be free to stand there.

I think that this story is saying that whatever happens you always have to have hope.

Things will always work out in the end though maybe not the way you think it will. You only have to hope and push on.

The two bags

Darryl Peers, Kemnay Academy, Year 9

My favourite story is called The Two Bags. The Two Bags is one of many Aesops Fables; it shows that people are willing to look at other people's faults but never their own. The story summarised is:

A man carries two bags with him, one in front and one behind, both bags symbolise faults. The bag in front contains his neighbours faults and the bag behind contains his. It shows that men do not see their own faults but never fail to see those of others.

The story shows that we are all capable of seeing other people's faults but never our own. This story reminds me that no man is faultless and that everybody carries two bags of faults. It shows us that we have to respect one another and rather than point out a thousand faults in somebody else, point out one fault in yourself. It is always best to remember that.

Phillip Pullman's His Dark Materials

(Northern Lights, The Subtle Knife, The Amber Spyglass)

Simon Gregor, Kilsyth Academy, Year 10

These books are a work of sophistication; his use of language and structure is immaculate. They tell the tale of a girl, Lyra and her journey through many worlds to find her mysterious and evasive uncle and to find out about Dust. During her travels she meets a boy William in the city of Citigrasse where spectres roam free, he also is not from this strange and beautiful world. We follow the pair on their epic tale to find Will's father. In these books there is a topic of extreme controversy, the existence of there being a god. During the final book Asriel challenges the Authority who is the ultimate power. These books are immensely intriguing, and intelligently mind provoking. They envelope you in mystery and deceptiveness before delivering its blows in the final pages. The work of a master.

The boy who cried wolf

Kirsten Baird, Larbert High School, Year 9

This is about a boy who thinks it will be funny to make fun out of something that isn't funny. The boy cries wolf and the farmers come running to protect their animals, he repeated this again until one day no one believed him but it was true. There was a wolf.

I think the moral of this story is that don't lie because eventually no one will believe you and you will be caught out. It also tells you to trust people but if people trust you don't betray that trust because they will never trust you again and rely on you again. This

message is important to me because I think if someone trusts you, you shouldn't take advantage of that but instead you should respect it. Also if you lie you will get into trouble.

The frog and the monster

Lucy B, Latymer Upper School, Year 9

This is a simple fable. It is about a frog that is out on the pond, and he sees what he thinks is a huge scary monster who walks and grazes on the fields. He goes to his dad and tells his dad what he has seen. His dad says it is only an Ox and tells the young frog that the Ox is not that big. The young frog says he was and so the frog's dad blows himself out to be as big as the Ox but the little frog says that he was bigger. So the dad keeps blowing himself up to the size of the Ox when he bursts.

This story is telling us that we should not try to be someone that we aren't. It is important to me because if we try to be something or someone that we are not then people will like us not for who we are. I want people to like me for who I am not who I pretend to be. Also it is important to me because we are who we are and we should be proud of what and who we are and take pride but not too much pride that it turns to false pride.

The moral of the story is that self-conceit may lead to self-destruction. It means that trying to be someone else and trying to take false pride will in the end just blow back into your face and lead to more troubles than you started with.

The Ugly Duckling

Ceilidh Wright, Loudoun Academy, Year 9

This story is about a little duckling who is really ugly -- everyone bullies him and slags him off for being ugly. He sits behind a plant and cries as the snow falls on him and makes him shiver, then he finally falls asleep. He wakes up in the summer and sees himself in the reflection of the lake as beautiful as one. All the animals that bullied him apologise and say he looks beautiful. The story taught me a lot and says that we shouldn't judge a book by its cover. It is not what's on the outside matters, it's how people are on the inside. There might be two girls, one popular and pretty and the other and not as pretty. It's obvious which one the boys and choose, isn't it? They look for popularity and looks, not feelings and personality. That's mostly the cause of bullying, bullies look on the outside and people who are different from us. People should be happy for who they are, and not be ashamed because of what other people say.

Lincoln and the pig

Wesley Barton, Monifieth High School, Year 8

President Lincoln once saw a helpless pig stuck in the mud while on the way to Congress. He felt pity for the animal and asked his driver to stop the carriage so that he could pull the

pig out of the mud. He did this because he wondered what it would be like if you were in the pig's place. The driver stopped the carriage and President Lincoln got out. The driver said to the president, 'You wait, I will take him out. I don't want your clothes to get dirty.'

'I do not care for my clothes. The pig's life is more important.' The President replied.

The driver said, 'Please wait and let me try. If I fail, I will ask for your help.'

The driver tried very hard, but he couldn't pull the pig out of the mud. So the president helped, and his clothes became very dirty in the process. The driver offered to take him back home so he could change, but the President told him that he didn't want to be late for the meeting and asked him to drive to Congress.

When he reached the meeting, everyone wondered what had happened to the President. The driver explained everything, telling them how the President had saved the life of a helpless pig. Everyone was impressed with his kindness.

The three little ducklings

Catlin Davis, Monifieth High School, Year 8

Once there were three little ducklings. They needed a house so the ducklings worked very hard and were nearly finished when, 'WHOOSH,' the wind blew all the feathers and twigs away! The first duck was bored so he went to play. The other two ducks decided to persevere. They didn't mind the wind blowing their feathers and twigs away so they started to look all over again. The duckling's nests were nearly finished when the wind blew and 'WHOOSH' their nests were blown away again. The second duck was bored so he went to play with the first duck. But the third duck tried again, and she built her house. It was very soft and cosy. When it rained she could go inside and stay warm and dry. When it was hot it protected her from the sun and when she was sleepy she had a very comfortable place to sleep. She was very happy and proud because she had been patient and finished a job that was not easy. It started to rain. And the other ducks were very sorry that they had not been patient and they decided to make their own nests no matter how hard it was the very next day!

I think this story is about how it's better to do things now than to worry about it later, and there can be consequences if you don't do it, and also how it is important to persevere.

Goodbye dearest Holly

Danielle Ferns, Notre Dame High School, Year 11

When I read this story, it made me realise the horror parents have to go through if they have lost their son or daughter, and the agony of not knowing what has. On 4 August 2002, Kevin Wells and his wife discovered that their daughter Holly had gone missing along with

her friend Jessica Chapman. For almost 2 weeks no one knew what had happened to them until their bodies were discovered on August 17. It's written by Kevin Wells himself and is about how he copes with the loss of his daughter. It is very emotional and amazing how a dad can bring himself to write a story about his ordeal.

“True friendship is like sound health; the value of it is seldom known until it is lost”

Charles Caleb Coleb, quoted by Nicole Etherington, Bryngwyn Comprehensive School

Lion King

Samantha Parker, Notre Dame High School, Year 11

A young lion prince is born in Africa; this made his Uncle Scar 2nd in line to the throne. Scar plots with the hyenas to kill king Mufasa and Prince Simba, making him king. The King is killed and Simba is led to believe it was his fault, so he flees the kingdom in shame. After years growing up with Timone and Pumba he is persuaded to return and claim his place as king. By doing the lie completes the ‘Circle of Life.’

I learned a lot from the Lion King. Its message, I think, is always to be honest and don't get jealous because someone has something that you don't. I think this is a good message to send out in a children's movie.

The Catcher in the Rye – JD Salinger

Conner Gettings, Notre Dame High School, Year 11

When someone reads a book, words are not effective sometimes to describe how it affects them. The surprising thing about this story is that there is no actual main plot but rather a collection of events which cause the main protagonist – Holden Caulfield – to go through a series of dramatic and emotional experiences eventually leading to a mental breakdown. The important thing for me about this story is the myriad themes and symbols in the story which create a powerful atmosphere and also the characters in the story and through their actions they help show the delicate human soul and how it is destroyed.

Bruce and Douglas

Alexander Mulholland, Pitlochry High School, Year 8

Before he was crowned king, Robert the Bruce killed John Comyn in a church during an argument. For this terrible sin, Robert was excommunicated. As penance, he promised to go on a crusade in the Holy Land. However due to countless battles during the Scottish Wars of Independence, he was unable to do so and died of leprosy in 1329. Before he died, Robert

told his friend and comrade in arms, the Black Douglas, to cut out his heart and take it to the Holy Land on a crusade. Douglas put her heart in a casket around his neck.

While on a crusade at the Battle of Teba they faced terrible odds. Douglas threw the casket into the very worst of the Moors and shouted 'The Bruce! The Bruce! Follow the Bruce!' Douglas and his comrades ran in and although they defeated many enemies, nearly all of them were killed. The survivors found Douglas clutching the heart and took his remains and the casket back to Scotland where they were buried in separate abbeys. I think this story is important because it's a story of friendship, loyalty, keeping promises and bravery. My father told me the story when I was very young, so it had a big effect on me as a child.

The story of Jason and the Argonauts

Paul Sherriffs, Pitlochry High School, Year 8

In the days of the Greeks there were many stories of heroes and one of the best well known of these heroes are Jason and the Argonauts and these people are said to have gone to great lengths to retrieve the golden fleece. At first it was Jason's idea to go and retrieve the fleece so he advertised to the whole of Greece about his idea and people came from all around the land. Once people had come Jason held a competition to see who could throw a discus from the main land to an island and the people were all really strong so some easily threw the distance but it came to the turn of a man who wasn't as strong as the rest of the men so he decided to skim the discus and he did and hit the island and got to go with Jason. I think that this highlights the fact that brain can win over brawn.

The story of the rain . . . !

Sarah Elphinstone, Portlethen Academy, Year 9

It was summer last year I read this story about a little girl and rain. I have to say, that when I read the title 'The rain' I didn't think it would have anything to do with what it actually said. It gave out a very important and valuable message in life, one that I may have missed if never have read that single story, an inspirational story so it was.

It is the story of a little girl who had been shopping with her mum. She must have been only 6 or 7 years old as she was so small, with her red hair and dozens of freckles. It was pouring with rain outside the shop so she and her mother stood under the awning staring past the cars in the car park. The rain was too heavy to go through so the shoppers decided to stay in the shelter until it calmed down a bit.

People gathered as they all had the same idea of waiting till the weather calmed to return to their cars and brave the dismal weather. Minutes later a little voice spoke out from the crowd. The voice of the red haired child disturbed the daze of the shoppers gathered under the shelter. She spoke, asking her mother if they could run through the rain. Her mum replied back to her that they would wait till the rain slowed down a bit but the little girl persisted. The girl waited about a couple of seconds before saying to her mother again 'Let's run through the rain?'

Her mum replied with the same thing again, adding that they would get wet if they did so. The little girl stared at her mother and said ‘That’s not what you said this morning’. The crowd turned to find out the rest of the conversation. The mother looked at the girl in confusion and asked when she had said they would not get wet when running through the rain. The next words that were heard silenced the crowd of people. ‘You didn’t say that this morning’, she repeated. ‘When you were talking to Daddy about his cancer, you said that if God could get us through this, he can get us through anything. Don’t you remember?’

For a couple of minutes, no-one spoke. Some people may have just laughed it off then told the child off in privacy, or pretended that they never heard it in the first place. But this brave mum didn’t do either of these things. She realised that this was a very important moment in her child’s life. ‘A time when innocent trust can be nurtured so that it will bloom into faith.’ The mum turned to the crowd looked around and turned to her beautiful daughter. ‘Honey, you are absolutely right. Let’s run through the rain. If God lets us get wet, well maybe we just needed washing.’

Then off they ran. We all stood watching, smiling and laughing as they darted past the cars and yes, through the puddles. They held their shopping bags over their heads just in case. But obviously, they got soaked. But they were followed by a few who screamed and laughed like children all the way to their cars.

A hidden message that people can take away your health and your money but they can’t take away those precious memories and lessons in life. You can get through anything with a little bit of faith. I HOPE YOU STILL TAKE THE TIME TO RUN THROUGH THE RAIN.

The hare and the tortoise

Cicely Culmer, Putney High School, Year 8

I think this is a great story that shows a lot of perseverance from the tortoise. The tortoise also has a lot of self belief and confidence as well as courage. It is obvious that the tortoise is really slower but it is the overconfident hare who stops and rests during the race. The hare is like a show-off and in the end doesn’t really deserve to win. This story just shows that even if you aren’t the best and you don’t have everything, there is still hope in what you can do and you can succeed if you think you can.

Northanger Abbey – Jane Austen

Clare Muggleton, Putney High School, Year 7

This story is about a young girl called Catherine Morland who has an extremely vivid imagination due to reading too many novels. On arriving to Bath meets a young man called Henry Tilney. They become close friends or even more. When the sinister General Tilney invites Catherine to go to Northanger Abbey with them, Catherine is sure there is a mystery behind the house. She does not get to pry when, in the middle of the night she is banished

to her old home without an explanation.

The heroine has a vivid imagination and a great curiosity about the world and reads anything she can. But especially novels. It was a time when novels were becoming an important type of writing. Other characters make fun of the heroine because her understanding of the world has been formed to some extent by reading romantic novels. Because there was a lot of discrimination against women in the world of ideas when she acts according to what she has learned about human relationships. Jane Austen at first leads the reader to think that her conclusions are silly. However Jane Austen then writes the novel to show how the heroine understands the relationship and cruelty of Tilney's father towards his wife.

The instinct Catherine has learned from reading novels gives her an understanding of human nature which is proved right by Jane Austen in the plot. Jane Austen is striking a blow for the moral and educational value of reading good literature as a way of learning about the world; she is striking a blow for the deeper value of the novel, trying to explain it is just not entertainment for bored young ladies and gentlemen.

“Kindness is the only service that will stand the storm of life and not wash out. It will wear well and will be remembered long after the prism of politeness or the complexion of courtesy has faded”

Abraham Lincoln, quoted by Heath Gavien, Cwmtawe Comprehensive School

The umbrella man

Alexandra Owens, Putney High School, Year 8

There was an old man who had gone into retirement. As he was no longer working he decided to spend his time helping others. As this man lived near a bus stop, whenever it was raining he would invite people who were waiting for a bus to shelter under his screened porch, even putting up a sign saying ‘You are welcome to wait on the porch when it is raining’. He would also lend people umbrellas and ask them to return them next time they passed his house. Because of his kind generosity, people would return his umbrellas and he made many friends.

I really like this story because it describes how little acts of kindness can make your day. It is unusual for strangers to help you, but when a person puts their heart out (even when it's only a small part) to make you happy, it fills you with warmth inside.

This man didn't know any of these people he was helping yet he made them happy, and they would soon become friends. It's so rare to see someone helping another person in today's society, but when they do the effect is great. It leaves people with a glow for the rest of the day, and can turn a bad day into something enjoyable.

This story has made me realise I should help others more often. I try to offer help to people as much as possible, but most of the time I am worried that they will not accept it. However, if someone offered me help when I was feeling down, I know that it would make me very happy indeed. I doubt that anyone would want to reject small acts of kindness, because they can leave you smiling for the rest of the day, whether someone was helping you, or you were helping someone.

The umbrella man

Rose Woolhouse, Putney High School, Year 8

I think this story sums up love between strangers perfectly. You do not have to hug or kiss someone to show love, a generous act or a kind word and have the same result. The man with the umbrella gave up his time to help people who were getting wet at the bus stop. He didn't know them, or want anything back, but he still tried to help. He didn't know if people would return the umbrellas, yet still handed them out at every opportunity.

The teacher and the man

Iona Casley, Putney High School, Year 7

There once was a teacher and a man, sitting in a boat together talking, when the Teacher said: 'Have you ever learnt grammar?' 'No,' the man admitted. 'Then you've wasted half your life!' The teacher laughed at the young man's ignorance. 'Have you ever learnt to swim?' The man asked. The teacher frowned and waved a hand at him dismissively. 'No.' 'Then you've wasted your whole life. We're sinking.'

This tells us that learning languages, grammar, mathematics etc is important, but life skills are sometimes more; they save your life.

Fear

Abigail Darroch, Sarah Mathie, Siobhan Rivers, Queen Anne High School, Year 8

There was a lion who feared nothing except the crowing of cocks. A chill would go down his spine whenever he heard a cock crowing. One day he confessed his fear to the elephant, who was greatly amused. 'How can the crowing of a cock hurt you?' he asked the lion. 'Think about it!' Just then a mosquito began circling the elephant's head, frightening him out of his wits. 'If it gets into my ear I'm doomed!' he shrieked, flailing at the insect with his trunk. Now it was the lion's turn to feel amused.

Moral: If we could see our fears as others see them, we would realise that most of our fears make no sense!

The rose within

Sophie Rebecca Austin, Radyr Comprehensive School, Year 8

A certain man planted a rose and watered it faithfully and before it blossomed, he examined it. 'How can any beautiful flower come from a plant burdened with so many sharp thorns?' Saddened by this thought, he neglected to water the rose and just before it was ready to bloom . . . it died. So it is with many people. Within every soul, there is a rose. The God-like qualities planted in us at birth grow amid the thorns of our faults. Sometimes, we only look at the thorns, our defects and neglect the good within, so it eventually dies. One of the greatest gifts a person can possess is to find the rose within and reach past the thorns. Love, only love will make our rose blossom many times.

Lost in the Himalayas

Matthew Brettie, Radyr Comprehensive School, Year 8

There is a scene in the marvellous movie *Lost Horizons*, in which a group of travellers become stranded in the Himalayas. A guide who provides them with warm clothing meets them miraculously. The guide then leads the group on a journey that he describes as 'not particularly far, but quite difficult.' As the travellers trek up the steep, icy footpaths, they are all linked together by a long, well knotted rope. This is done so that if one of them begins to slip toward the abyss, the combined strength of his fellow travellers would save him. I love this story because someone has gone out of their way to help these travellers. The rope gives a sense of teamwork.

David Williams

Philip Marsh, Radyr Comprehensive School, Year 8

One of my favourite stories is David Williams swimming the channel and the Straits of Gibraltar. The shortest distance between England and France is 21 miles. He swam the channel in 10 hours 30 minutes. He swam the Straits of Gibraltar in 4 hours and 36 minutes. When he swam the Straits of Gibraltar he was really nervous about one thing . . . Sharks. He revealed his fear only days before he swam. This is my favourite story because I love swimming and I have to swim in a lake soon and it is 16° C. He did it for charity, so am I.

What Katy Did

Sophie Shenton, Radyr Comprehensive School, Year 8

Katy was a happy, lively girl, who was quite well off, but she often forgot how lucky she was. She would argue with her siblings, and feel miserable because she couldn't always have her way. One day there was a dreadful accident. She was desperate to try out a new swing, but

was told not to. However, she didn't know that it was broken. She ignored the warning and went on the swing. When she was swinging very high, the swing broke completely. She was thrown off and injured her back badly. She couldn't walk and was in a lot of pain. Her life was miserable until she decided to try and make the most of her situation. She cheered up a lot, learnt to be patient and kind, and found herself rewarded by the love of everyone around her. Gradually, the pain left her, and after a lot of waiting, she found that she could learn to walk again.

This story shows me that you should be grateful for what you have, because things could probably be a lot worse. Things won't get better if you just wallow in misery, so you should try to keep your spirits up.

Captain Robert Falcon Scott

Megan Thomas and Ashleigh Edwards, Radyr Comprehensive School, Year 8

We can learn a lot from Captain Robert Falcon Scott's story; it is one of immense courage and perseverance. He was an extremely courageous man and a good role model. He set off in 1910 to attempt to be the first man to reach the South Pole. The South Pole was basically unexplored territory so he was taking a massive risk and it wasn't all that likely that he would return alive. But despite this he led his group of 5 explorers with a huge amount of bravery and he never lost faith that they'd arrive there. The expedition was called Terra Nova after the men's supply ship.

They did arrive there although Roald Amundsen beat them. Unfortunately the expedition perished on the way home but Scott's amazing bravery and determination will be aspired to for many years to come. Scott may not be remembered for the first man to reach the South Pole but he will always be remembered for his incredible, admirable courage.

We can aspire to be as brave as captain Robert Falcon Scott. In our everyday lives we can apply courage by not being afraid to try new things and never giving up. Our courage may not be on the same scale as Scott, but it will help us excel in many aspects of our lives and encourage us to venture into unexpected territory. We can take the bold qualities of Captain Scott and try to apply them in our lives. If we don't take the risk and attempt to overcome high hurdles in our school and home lives we won't ever achieve our dreams. If you don't attempt the challenge you have failed before you've even began.

Robert Scott's story inspires us to take on new and exciting tasks in our daily lives, to investigate unexplored territory in our learning. He shows us that even though something seems impossible with enough courage and perseverance you can achieve it.

Turn up your cup

Heather Elizabeth Buchan, Robert Gordon's College, Year 8

A man once attended a large banquet. As the waiters moved among the tables serving the coffee, they twice passed him by. Other diners were served, but not this man. Finally, the man stopped a waiter and asked for coffee. 'Mister,' the waiter said, 'If you want coffee, please turn up your cup. We only pour for those who have turned up their cups!' Some people move through life with their cup of gratitude turned down and wonder why their life is unfulfilled!

This story has a very good moral to it. The message it carries is powerful. It basically explains that you should always realise and be aware of the situation you are in before you act or hurt anyone.

Chopsticks

Mark Sinton, St Aidan's High School, Year 11

A woman who had worked all her life to bring about good was granted one wish: 'Before I die let me visit both hell and heaven'. Her wish was granted. She was whisked off to a great banqueting hall. The tables were piled high with delicious food and drink. Around the tables sat miserable, starving people as wretched as could be. 'Why are they like this?' she asked the angel who accompanied her. 'Look at their arms', the angel replied. She looked and saw that attached to the peoples arms were long chopsticks secured above the elbow. Unable to bend their elbows, the people aimed the chopsticks at the food, missed every time and sat hungry, frustrated and miserable. 'Indeed this is hell! Take me away from here!'

She was then whisked off to heaven. Again she found herself in a great banqueting hall with tables piled high. Around the tables sat people laughing, contented and joyful. 'No chopsticks I suppose', she said. 'Oh yes there are. Look - just as in hell they are long and attached to the elbow. But look ... here people have learned to feed one another.'

The story is trying to convey the message that if you work together you can achieve anything. The difference between the joyful and sad place is that the sad place contains many individuals working on their own while the joyful place contains a team working together to achieve happiness. Sometimes you need the help of others to achieve your goal and you need not be afraid to ask. You helping another person may well result in you yourself being helped, as is shown in the story. By helping the others feed themselves, whoever was helping was fed as well. A group of people working together will almost always triumph over the person working on their own.

The two pots

Gareth Fleming, St' David's High School, Year 9

An elderly Chinese woman had two large pots; each hung from the ends of a pole which she carried across her neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, while the other pot was perfect. When she arrived home, the cracked pot was only half full. For a full two years this happened, with the woman bringing home only one and a half pots of water. The poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it could only do half of what it had been made to do. After two years of what it perceived to be bitter failure, it spoke to the woman one day by the stream. 'I am ashamed of myself, because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your house.' The old woman smiled, 'Did you notice that there are flowers on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, so I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back, you water them.' 'For two years I have been able to look at these beautiful flowers. Without you being just the way you are, there would not be this beauty.'

I like this story because each of us has something that we don't like about ourselves, but we are still a wonderfully unique person with lots of special qualities. Even the parts of our lives that we sometimes think of as flaws can turn out to be real qualities. Each of us should take hold of the life that we have been given and live it to the full. Yes, there may be things that we cannot do, but if we focus on our abilities, rather than our disabilities we can all achieve far more than we thought we could!

"The minute you start talking about what you are going to do if you lose, you have lost"

Pele, quoted by Dale Thomas, Cynffig Comprehensive School

Ellie the Elephant

Tilly Elizabeth Mary Galbraith, St George's School for Girls, Year 8

My favourite story was one that I read when I was younger. It was about a coloured elephant called Ellie. Although she didn't fit in, as all the other elephant's were grey. She found a berry bush which berries had grey dye, so she rolled in them. When she returned to all her friends, she got a bit of a surprise as they had all died themselves multi-coloured. I used to think when I was younger that this was just a story but now I have realised that it also has a meaning behind it which is that you shouldn't have to change yourself to look like your friends because they like you the way you are.

The Rainbow Fish

Carla Maria Maran, St George's School for Girls, Year 8

The Rainbow Fish is about a fish with lots of sparkling scales. Another fish asks for one, but the rainbow fish wants to keep them all for itself. Everybody begins to ignore and avoid him. In the end, he shares his scales among his friends, and only has one left. However, he feels better for it. This tells you always to be willing to share and not to be greedy.

Everyone has problems

Ailidh Mather, St George's School for Girls, Year 8

A mother who lost her only son went to the man of religion in her village and said: 'Is there anything you can give me to reduce the pain I feel?' 'Yes,' he said. 'There is a wonderful thing you can do. I want you to go and get me a mustard seed from a home that has no problems. Such a mustard seed can ward off all problems. When you find it, bring it back to me and I will use it to relieve your pain.' So the mother started out came to a big mansion. Nothing could possibly be wrong here! She knocked on the door, told she was looking for, and they answered, 'You've come to the wrong house.' And then they told her all their problems. As she was listening to their problems, she thought, 'I know something about problems.... maybe I can help these people with theirs.' So she listened to them; and this helped people. She kept on searching for her magic mustard seed. But no matter where she went, she could not find that scene. Everyone everywhere had some kind of troubles.

The stone in the desert

Hazel Nobel, St George's School for Girls, Year 8

An Arab while crossing a desert came across a huge rock half buried in the sand. Scrawled on the boulder was this inscription: TURN ME OVER AND YOU WILL BENEFIT FROM IT. The Arab felt sure there was a great treasure hidden beneath it and worked mightily to turn it over. He succeeded after several hours. But there was no treasure there, only an inscription on the underside of the rock. The Inscription was: GREED IS THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL REMEMBER THIS AND YOU WILL BE A BETTER MAN.

I like this story because I feel it is important that we don't take advantage of what we have and that we care more about people than material things.

Mr Peabody's apples

Emily Tait, St George's School for Girls, Year 8

This story is about a boy called Tommy who thinks he sees his baseball teacher steal from the local grocer. Tommy then tells all his friends, who tell their parents, who tell everyone that Mr Peabody is a thief. Mr Peabody notices that nobody is being nice to him and realises that the apple he had paid for was seen as stolen goods. He then got Tommy to shake out

pillow feathers show how far untrue rumours can spread.

My birth

Jacqueline Kerr, St Kentigern's Academy, Year 9

My favourite story is when I was born; I had a Teratoma, which was a serious tumour. The doctors didn't know what it was so I got transferred to a children's hospital. Fortunately, a doctor knew what it was and told my parents. I was told I knew him until I was five but I can't remember him. My parents told me they were worried, because I had to get an operation and I was only a newborn baby. The operation went well and I was recovering. In case other children bullied me in the future because of what had been left by the operation, I had to get plastic surgery to fix the flab of skin I had, and now I'm left with a bit of a scar. Even though it wasn't such a good thing that I had the Teratoma, it's still my favourite story because I feel good that someone saved my life. I appreciate my life now, and try not to think what it would be like if I wasn't here.

Mr Rusty's new house

Victoria Roger, St Margaret's School, Year 11

The Rusty family were in great need of a new home, as theirs was beginning to fall apart. One night, when there was a fierce storm that caused the river to burst its banks, their house was destroyed. However, with the help from their neighbours, they built the Rusty family a new and improved house, that was just right for them.

In life today, I believe that if something abominable happens, then you can't let that affect your way of living by simply giving up and having self pity. In 'Mr Rusty's New House' if the Rusty family had admitted defeat when their house was devoured by the river, then they would never have gained their new house or the friendship from the neighbours and this is what the story is saying to me. This story makes me feel that no matter what happens, there will always be a positive result in the end, even if it does take some time to appear that way!

Blessed by simplicity

Mairi Chaimbeul, St Mary's Music School, Year 10

This is a true story told by a woman called Kathy Norris who was working part-time in a so-called discount store. It is about a time when three young women came into the shop. As they entered she realised that two of the young women were actually mentally challenged and that the third was their carer. The ladies shopped all around the store until they eventually stopped at the ring display. One of them had her arms laden with toys and other items for her friends back at the care home. She looked so happy and content with what she had chosen. One of the ladies formally introduced her other friend and carer to Kathy Norris, putting her arms around each one, hugging them up close and saying 'These are my

friends.’ The writer felt that there was such a joy in the simplicity that the ladies savoured and their satisfaction in choosing what to buy.

This story reminds me that we should live life to the full, whatever our circumstances. It is the simple things in life we should savour and this story really says to me that I should slow down, and look around at the things in life that matter. You only live once!

Under the lion’s skin

Amy Watt, Selkirk High School, Year 9

A donkey found a lion’s skin and put it on. By doing this, he thought he could fool everyone into thinking that he was a lion. He then grazed in a farmer’s meadow, laughing when he scared the animals he met. He felt great! The donkey met a fox and tried to scare him away too. The donkey stood tall and made a sound that he thought was like a roar, but it was a donkey’s voice. Fox laughed and said, ‘Silly donkey, if you really want to frighten me, you’ll have to disguise your voice. Clothes may disguise a fool you know, but his words away!’

The moral of the story is that no matter how much you change how you look, you’re always the same person on the inside. I related to this story because when I moved to Selkirk, I tried to change myself to fit in because I had been bullied at my old school and I didn’t want it to happen here. I changed the way I spoke, the way I treated other people and how I behaved. I was trying to do well at school, but also act like someone I wasn’t. I kept it up for a week, and then I couldn’t act any more. The real me came out and since then I’ve made some really good friends and learned that you don’t have to be the most popular person to be happy. I’m happy just being myself.

“The man who never makes mistakes always takes orders from one who does”

Daisy Bates, quoted by Shannon Fitzgerald, Bryngwyn

The donkey and the dog

Alex Clarkson, Selkirk High School, Year 9

There was once a wealthy man who had a donkey and a dog. They were both very well cared for, but that did not have to do any work while the donkey did. The donkey then thought that he acted like a dog he would not have to do any work, but when he did this he ended up breaking things and getting chucked out of the house. The moral of this story is that it is silly to attempt to be someone you’re not.

The tiger and the toad

Cameron Agnew, Stewart's Melville College, Year 3

One day a tiger was trapped in a pit, and asked a passing traveller to rescue it, promising to reward him. So the traveller poked a long branch down into the pit, and the tiger crawled out. But when it was safe again it turned on the traveller and roared with its mouth open wide, 'I am very hungry and I am going to eat you up.' The traveller protested and scolded the tiger. 'You are most ungrateful,' he said. 'You can't do that.' But the tiger ignored his protests, and so the traveller appealed to a toad. The traveller told the toad of the tiger's ingratitude, but the tiger insisted that it was hungry and that he wanted to eat the traveller. 'I must look into this more closely,' said the toad. 'Will you show me the place where it happened?' So they took him along the pit. Then the toad asked the tiger, 'How did it happen? Let me see just where you were.' So the tiger jumped down into the pit and said, 'I was down here at the bottom.' But the traveller took the branch out of the pit and said, 'Of course, this wasn't there then.' The toad turned to the traveller and said with a smile. 'You had better go now, and in the future don't help such ungrateful creatures.' And looking down at the tiger in the pit it said, 'You ungrateful wretch! You can stay down there now.' The traveller thanked the toad and went back home.

This story shows that when you are in a time of need and someone else helps you, you should return the favour to them and thank them. In the end the tiger got just what he deserved.

Making a Difference

Thomas Martinez-Blair, Stewart's Melville College, Year 10

Once upon a time there was a wise man that used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had a habit of walking on the beach before he began his work. One day he was walking along the shore. As he looked down the beach, he saw a human figure moving like a dancer. He smiled to himself to think of someone who would dance to the day. So he began to walk faster to catch up. As he got closer, he saw that it was a young man and the young man wasn't dancing, but instead he was reaching down to the shore, picking up something and very gently throwing it into the ocean. As he got closer he called out, 'Good morning! What are you doing?' The young man paused, looked up and replied, 'Throwing starfish in the ocean.' 'I guess I should have asked, why are you throwing starfish in the ocean?' 'The sun is up and the tide is going out. And if I don't throw them in they'll die.' 'But, young man, don't you realise that there are miles and miles of beach and starfish all along it. You can't possibly make a difference!' The young man listened politely. Then bent down, picked another starfish and threw it into the sea, past the breaking waves and said, 'It made a difference for that one.'

This is a good story because it shows that no matter how small your gesture, it will always make a difference. Just because it doesn't make a difference to lots of things, it doesn't mean that you should stop doing it.

The dog in the manger

Dominic Farley, Stewart's Melville College, Year 10

This particular fable tells of a dog, who, being tired slept in an ox's hay box – or manger – the ox soon returned to eat some of the hay, but the dog was fast asleep on it, in anger at being woken up, the dog barked at the ox, and whenever it came near, the dog scared it off. Eventually, the ox gave up hope, and turned to leave the door. This particular story tells us how some grudge the fact that others can have something that they cannot, they may even try to stop others from having it.

The Invisible Man – HG Wells

Gregor Forbes, Stewart's Melville College, Year 10

'The Invisible Man' warns us about the consequences of dabbling with forces we don't understand. It shows the gradual descent of the main character, Griffin's, mind, and how his associates react to this. Griffin had found a way to make himself invisible and of how he can make use of this to his advantage. Gradually his sanity deteriorates and he is desperate for a cure. His old friend, Kemp, is unwilling to help him and Griffin is intent on revenge. Eventually the invisible man is captured and dies.

This story tells us about hatred, greed, murder and fear, all caused by the foolish curiosity and headstrong arrogance of Griffin. He refused help and was fierce and violent when anyone got in his way. This book taught me not to be headstrong and arrogant and to accept people's advice, and also to use knowledge in a sensible and constructive way.

The grasshopper and the ants

Zoe Winter, Webster's High School, Year 10

The grasshopper danced all spring and summer without saving any food for winter and mocked the ants who did, and when it came to winter he had no food so he died, while the ants were well fed and warm. This is my favourite story as it helps you understand a little about growing up, because if all you do is go out all the time and have fun and don't do any work, then you won't have anything to live on.

Gold race

Calum Lawrie, Webster's High School, Year 10

A man tells five people that 'Whoever wins the race will win a bag of gold.' Both are running along, they come across a massive pile of stones. Four men decide to run over the top of the mound at one decides to move all the stones off the road for other people. Once the other four finish, they wonder whether gold is, but the man who challenged them said there was a greater purpose to the race than winning. It was the joy of helping others which can sometimes bring its own reward, like for the man who cleared the stones -- because the gold was under the pile.

Honesty is the best policy

Shannen Campbell, Webster's High School, Year 10

The story is something that happened to me that primary school. Three of my friends and I were drawing on the school wall with felt tip pens and writing someone else's name, but we got caught on camera. The point I'm making is that my friend got all the blame for it and then my other friend and I felt bad so we owned up and were honest, and got our fair share of the punishment -- which I truly deserved. In a way I felt good because I had been honest.

The hatchling

Jess Hidder, Webster's High School, Year 10

This story is about a hatchling called Nyroc. His dad is dead but his mum, Nyra, is around. She is full of hatred. Nyroc doesn't see how evil his mum is until he grows up. He leaves and spends his time as an outcast. He then goes to the great tree where he can do good things instead of bad. I think the story shows that no matter what your background is, even if it is pure hatred, you can do something good with your life. This is important as you shouldn't judge people by where they come from or what their parents are like, you should judge them for who they are by what they do and what they say.



“It always seems impossible until it’s done”

Nelson Mandela, quoted by Amy Louise Wilmott,
Cynffig Comprehensive School

Section 2: Inspirational Figures

Inspirational Figures

Octavia

Christian Brinsden, Aboyne Academy, Year 9

Octavia was the sister of Emperor Augustus and wife of Marcus Antonius. I think she was a very admirable person because she was courageous and selfless. Octavia looked after Mark Anthony's children from his last marriage as well as their own. She cared for them all equally as she did for the orphaned Juba II whom she adopted. She knew about Mark Anthony's relationship with Cleopatra but she continued to be a faithful wife and run their family home. When Mark Anthony went to be with Cleopatra, Octavia still took his clients and looked after the household, (I would have stormed out at this point!) When he was wounded in battle, Mark Anthony went to Cleopatra but she was a coward so she ordered for Mark Anthony to be lifted up on a stretcher to her window, rather than leave the safety of her room. Mark Anthony died soon after and Cleopatra killed herself not long after that. You would think that Octavia would want nothing else to do with Cleopatra but instead she took in the children Cleopatra had had with Marc Anthony (Cleopatra Selerie and Alexander Helios). I think her bravery and caring is admirable. Cleopatra is famous but Octavia is the heroine.

Claude Monet

Nicola Keenan, Aboyne Academy, Year 9

Monet was born in 1840. His father wanted him to go into the family grocery business, but he wanted to become an artist. He first became known locally for his charcoal caricatures, and in 1856 he met fellow artist Eugene Boudin who became his tutor and taught him to use oil paints. Monet travelled to Paris and would sit by window, painting what he saw. His *Camille or The Woman in the Green Dress* brought him recognition in 1866. He lived in a village on the River Seine, where he painted many of his great works. He inspires me because he persevered in becoming a famous artist.

Steve Irwin

Katie Parsons, Aboyne Academy, Year 9

Steve Irwin was a very much loved Australian celebrity. He had a wife called Terri and two children Bindi (age 9) and Bob (age 2). Steve had a nature programme called 'The Crocodile Hunter' in which he did amazing things whilst working with animals. He put himself through huge amounts of danger but it was fascinating to watch. Steve Irwin was an extremely funny man with his Australian accent when he said things like 'crikey' and 'she's a beauty!' On 4th September 2006, Steve Irwin was off the Great Barrier Reef in Queensland filming a stingray for his daughter's new underwater documentary called 'Ocean's Deadliest'. As Steve swam above it, the stingray pierced him in the chest. Steve Irwin was the 2nd man in Australian history to die in this way.

He inspires me a lot because he was an amazing, friendly guy who wasn't afraid to die. He said he wanted his death to be filmed and that's exactly what happened. At least he died doing what he loved for the daughter he loved. I think it is amazing that someone could always be so lively and energetic and I would just love to be able to look at things the same way that he always did.

Grandad

Melissa Jane Bremner, Albyn School, Year 1

My inspirational figure is my grandad. I someday hope to be as generous and loving as he is. I am very close to him, and I feel that I really know him. I researched my Grandad's life so far. I know that he was born in 1939; he married in 1959 and has one daughter – my mother. He loves maths and engineering, and he worked in British Telecom for many years. He has three grandchildren – my sisters Laura and Joanna, and myself. Although knowing this information does help me feel closer to my grandad, they are just facts. Feelings can tell us a lot more about a person, and I can certainly tell what kind of person my granddad is through my relationship with him and his daily actions.

My grandad cares for everyone, especially my Nana, who is unwell. He gives up his time and effort all day every day to be with my Nana and to help her live her life in the best way possible. He cares for my Nana and loves her so much that he looks after her as well as he can, and I hope to be like him. Love can make people do incredible things, and what my granddad does constantly for my Nana is amazing. As well as inspiring me to become a loving individual, he also gives me hope – hope that people are not just a body of facts, which live life to simply live, but that we have feelings, sometimes so strong that we give everything we have to live on them. I believe this is what my grandad does, along with many others, I hope to be one of these people, who follow what they believe, dream and love to learn and live.

Sir Edmund Hillary

Emma Farquharson, Albyn School, Year 8

The person who inspires me the most is Sir Edmund Hillary, who climbed Mount Everest with his companion Tenzing Norgay in May 1953. The two men reached the summit together, although there was some controversy about whether one had reached at first. Hillary inspires me because I think it proves that perseverance is the key to success. If you don't persevere you will never achieve great things. Hillary and his companion both struggled to reach the top of Mount Everest, but they persevered and managed to make it. When they reached the bottom they were national heroes and always will be. This is all because they persevered, and also applies to my favourite quote, 'if at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again.'

Elizabeth Blackwell

Emma Axelson, Albyn School, Year 8

Elizabeth Blackwell was the first ever woman doctor in the United States. She was rejected by all leading medical schools to which she applied, but persevered and was admitted to Geneva Medical School. I admire Elizabeth, as I have been thinking of becoming a doctor myself. I realise that this would not be possible for me if Elizabeth had not been brave enough to try and achieve her dreams, even though she was a woman. She was courageous enough to try something new, even though she knew people would laugh and try to discourage her. I admire the strength she had in achieving her goal. I tried to think of things that way when they aren't working out for me. Even if people say I can't do something, I should believe that I can do it even if I can't do it at first.

“You are built not to shrink down to less but to blossom into more”

Oprah Winfrey, quoted by Lily Mortimer, Glasgow Academy

Colleen Rintamaki

Rebecca Hobart, Albyn School, Year 8

Colleen Rintamaki is a 10 times World Highland Dancing Champion who started Highland Dancing at the age of four. She inspires me because I am a Highland Dancer as well and seeing her compete at Cowal was incredible, as I had never seen anyone perform Highland Dancing so well. She also has such a down to earth attitude as she would always check with her teacher for corrections after she had danced, proving that even the best dancer in the world wasn't above making mistakes, which makes me feel a lot better about myself! I was once lucky enough to attend a workshop with her, and although I learned many technical points, I also took away a lot regarding attitude, commitment and preparation, and shortly afterwards I won my first championship. Colleen may not have changed the world but she has shown what a dedicated Highland Dancer can achieve.

Vera Lynn

Ennae Baley-McKnight, Albyn School, Year 8

My inspiring person is Vera Lynn. I started admiring her when I was given her role to play in Dr. Who and the Timebusters. This was my first ever main part. I had never heard of this I went onto the Internet to find out what my character was like, and I was amazed at what she had done. I learned that song 'we'll meet again'. The first night I got my first line wrong when I sang the song it made me feel so much better. I could see why her songs later troops happy and I wished I was there to help out. She inspires me because she went to war camps

and sang to the troops. Even though she was in danger in the war zones, she did it to cheer them up because they were having a miserable time. I would love to do something like that to help people, something I would never regret. I just discovered that Katherine Jenkins has beaten me to it!

My grandad

Stephanie Moir, Albyn School, Year 8

My grandad inspires me for many reasons, the most prominent being his love of work. At 90 years old he is still working and has no intention of giving up and I would love to share his enthusiastic attitude towards work. I also admire his modesty -- you would never know that he was the director of a successful business. In addition, I feel inspired by his generosity and the love which he shows for all his family and friends.

My mum

Heather Banham, Amman Valley School, Year 9

The person I chose as my inspirational figure, that I would love to write about, is my mum Penny. She lost her mum at a young age of ten. She isn't like all the other mums, but she's perfect to me because she's her own person. My favourite quotation from her is 'You are who you are. If they don't like it, then that's their fault!' I love this quote because she doesn't just say it because I'm her daughter, but because she means it. After my father died when I was eight, my mum and I became a lot closer. Yeah, we have out petty arguments, but we always make up again with a girly day out shopping spree. She's been here for me through thick and thin and I'll always be here for her and she'll do the same for me.

Everyone thinks that a hero has to be old or had had experience with something life threatening, but my mum isn't old (unless you think 37 is old!) Although she isn't exactly the gentle kind, she is to me and my brother. Her hero was her mother. From all the stories I've heard about my grandmother. I think my mother has taken after her. She's taught me so much, like how to walk, eat and talk, who to support in football and who to trust. We tell each other everything, like who our first kiss was with and where it happened. This shows that I can trust her and she can trust me. I can tell her anything. When I grow up and have children of my own. I want to be exactly like her and show my kids how to set a good example. That's how proud of my mum I am!

My brother

Robert Llewelyn, Amman Valley School, Year 9

Many people would choose someone famous or someone wealthy, but the person I have chosen is someone that is famous to me and my family! This person is my older brother, Karl. He's 22 years of age and he's still got a long life ahead of him, but he's achieved so much already. He inspires me so much because he shows he cares in so many different ways. He's followed his dream and gained a degree for his chosen career. He's even

travelled the world. But these things aren't what makes him my inspirational figure. What does is the fact that he hasn't just gone and forgotten about everyone. He's gone and remembered everything. He still shows us he loves us and his friends know he'll never forget them. I'd like to be like him and achieve my dreams.

Christopher James Hardman

Bronwyn Clark, Baldragon Academy, Year 9

Christopher Hardman was born in 1990 and as a singer he is known as Lil' Chris. One of the reasons I have chosen him is that he is just an ordinary boy who has worked hard to achieve a great deal. He attended an ordinary school, a bit like mine, but he's worked hard to get a good career. But his life is not all focused on advancing his career, he has also been involved in charity work such as Children in Need. I like listening to his music and his lyrics are meaningful. Each one sends out a different message to teenagers e.g. 'We don't have to take our clothes off' talks about how people can enjoy themselves without having to have sex. Most of his other songs involve talking about relationships. Adults don't always like his lyrics, but I think they just aren't listening to what is important in life. Lil' Chris has some interesting things to say about how we should talk and listen to each other. When it comes to it, that is what life is all about.

Johnny Depp

Kirsty McLeod, Baldragon Academy, Year 8

Who is the real Johnny Depp? He is different. Not just from other so-called heart-throbs, but from his own reputation. Which is to say the real Johnny Depp, once known as a hotel thrashing, wild child, is actually nice. He is sensitive and really funny. Those who know the Kentucky-born actor will agree. He is described as being a laid back guy who is not aggressive even although one of his first roles was 'A Nightmare on Elm Street'. One day Johnny got a fan letter from a woman whose child was dying from cancer. The child's last wish was to meet Johnny so he paid to fly the family to see him. How generous was that! But he's not just nice. He's eccentric. He has made a name for himself as an actor with character and attitude. In *Pirates of the Caribbean* he's described as a batty, makeup wearing captain with the unlikely name, Jack Sparrow.

Eva Medes, his co-star in the film says, 'Everything I thought of him was true! Beautiful: check. Intelligent: check. Mysterious: check. What I didn't know is that he is so funny . . . I was like, 'Oh my God! You're funny, too!'

St Francis of Assisi

Stephanie Troup, Baldragon Academy, Year 9

I would like to work in a place to help animals who are sick or injured and help their owners love their pets away I love animals. This is why I am inspired by St Francis of Assisi. Although he came from a rich background and enjoyed himself when he was young, he

soon became disillusioned with the world. One day, he was selling cloth and velvet in the marketplace on behalf of his father when a beggar came to him and asked for charity. At the end of his business deal, Francis abandoned his wares and ran after the beggar. When he found him, Francis gave the man everything he had in his pockets. His friends mocked him for his actions. When he got home, his father scolded him in rage. However, I think it was a brave act of someone who was prepared to stand up for what he believed in. Francis didn't just take care of people, he also took care of animals. Early veterinary medicine can be dated back to his care, and some of the treatments still used today were first used by St Francis. Throughout his life, the more he did which was kind and considerate, the angrier his dad became. I'm glad my dad accepts me the way I am.

Sir Isaac Newton

Sam Huluckstein, Banff Academy, Year 8

Isaac Newton's curiosity inspires my own. I am very curious and ask many questions. I believe that Newton was very brave to publish his work on gravity in a society where people at that time may have seen his ideas as ridiculous. Although famous for his laws on gravity, he also solved many problems concerning mathematics, light and theology. This helps me see the importance of broadening my horizons to consider many different subjects. Although it is important to be focused, it is also vital to keep an open mind. Newton stood up for things he believed in even when it meant protesting against those in great power. This shows me the importance of being brave in stating your beliefs. This can seem difficult when people do things which seem wrong but if you genuinely believe these things to be wrong you must do something about it. In conclusion, Isaac Newton was a brave and intelligent man who changed the way the world thinks.

Paula Radcliffe

Carine Marchand, Berwickshire High School, Year 9

My inspirational figure is Paula Radcliffe, she is a great marathon runner and competes for the United Kingdom. She has run ever since she was a child and has always loved running. Paula has competed in running for over 10 years and has received a number of medals and awards. She was European champion and World champion. As well as that she has won the New York Marathon and several others. But receiving all those awards was hard work and took her a long time to achieve it. She has had several ups and downs in her career because of injuries. Paula has also helped with other athletes to promote healthy eating and exercise for children. She has done a lot of advertising for this and really believes and wants to make a difference for others. The next goal in her life is gold at the world Olympics and is hoping to achieve this in Beijing 2008.

Paula also has a family; husband and daughter. She has a very independent and determined mind and has a lot more to give. Paula is an inspiration to me because she raised her goals very high but has never stopped trying to achieve them. She is a hard-working person who deserves recognition for her running and will power.

Nicky Cruz

Shannon Reilly, Berwickshire High School, Year 9

Nicky Cruz was the gang leader of MauMau, the most feared gang in New York. During the two years when he was leader 17 people were killed by the gang. He was so bad he scared himself but he was trapped in the gang. One day he and the rest of the gang members attended a ceremony run by the preacher. This man helped Nicky turned his life around -- he went to Bible College and became a priest, married with four children. His aim was to help people who were in the same situation as he had been, preventing young people from getting into gangs. He has so much courage and has proved that even if you are suffering and in a bad place, you can still change.

Colin McRae

Kirsten Richardson, Berwickshire High School, Year 9

My inspirational figure is the world-famous rally driver Colin McRae. Five years after entering his first rally, he became world champion in 1991 and also won the World Rally Championship. Sadly, he was killed in a helicopter accident in September 2007. Thousands paid their respects to him in different ways, some with his design on their helmets and some with a picture of him on their cars. Colin inspired all these people with his outstanding talent and down-to-earth nature. He could have afforded a house almost anywhere in the world, but stayed close to his Scottish roots and always remained modest. His memory will live on as a legend.

Sonia Graham

Amelia Stokes, Berwickshire High School, Year 9

My inspirational figure is Sonia Graham, who lives just up the road from us and takes on old racing greyhounds that people no longer want. She has about 20 greyhounds, along with her other pets. They all need feeding, daily walks and care. On top of all that, she has four children of her own and three foster children. Sonia is forever helping others, even though it's very hard work with 20 greyhounds and seven kids! She is quite amazing.

My Auntie and Uncle

Liam Thorpe, Berwickshire High School, Year 9

My inspirational figures are my auntie and uncle because when my grandma had a stroke they looked after her and visited her almost every day in hospital. When she came out, they made her home safe and easy to live in. In the middle of all this, my auntie continued to work full-time and took on my grandma's shop. She only gets a few days off a year. She inspires me so that when I feel low and have lots of homework I think of how she just gets on with it and enjoys life.

Gandhi

Izzy Watson, Berwickshire High School, Year 9

Gandhi was never a born leader. He arrived in South Africa as a young, naive, inexperienced lawyer with no idea of the way society worked at the time. When he left he was a hero, admired by millions. This is why I think it is an inspirational figure. He was seeking a peaceful country where all races could live together in harmony. However, Gandhi did not believe in violent protests, and at first people laughed in his face. But he believed in his principles and persevered. Gandhi put faith into so many people's hearts with mere words. In the end he was killed by one of his own race, whom he had fought to save. To me, that doesn't matter because even after he died he still inspires millions, including me.

Ryan Ross

Nicole Etherington, Ysgol Bryngwyn, Year 9

'The sky is falling off the ceiling while I'm tucking fibs into a cookie jar'. My inspirational figure is Ryan Ross, a lead guitarist and lyricist for 'Picnic at the Disco'. I admire him because he gave up his scholarship at college to become a musician in a band with his best friend Spencer Smith and even though he came from a broken home and difficult upbringing he still continued to pursue his career choice. He started playing the guitar as the age of twelve; he later learnt how to play the accordion, drums and keyboard. He was inspired by his own musical influences like Blink 182, Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin and Third Eye Blind as well his favourite writers. When he made the choice to give up his scholarship at college and become a musician his father did not support him and their relationship quickly deteriorated.

I think the main reason he inspires me as a person is because even though he's bright and had the opportunity to gain himself a good, steady job he took a risk and went for what he really wanted, even though his family didn't support him and he had little hope of achieving it. His lyrics and music compositions are amazing and really inspirational and unique to listen to. Most of his words come from past experiences e.g. Both his songs 'Camisado' and 'Nails for Breakfast Tacks for Snacks' were written about his alcoholic father and the emotional distress it caused him having to sit by his hospital bed constantly. I think this is what makes his music so unique and heartfelt and just overall brilliant to listen to. He has also chosen not to use his fame or popularity for personal gain and has continued to be modest and level headed throughout his career where some might have been led astray.

*"The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity.
The optimist finds opportunity in every difficulty"*

Sir Winston Churchill - I chose this quotation because looking at the glass half empty (being a pessimist) gives you a bleak outlook on life and you find things difficult which optimists find easy. Being a happy person, I enjoy finding opportunities and tried to succeed in them. Gemma Milne, Inverurie Academy, Year 10

Julie Fleating

Shannyn Henderson, Carrick Academy, Year 9

I am inspired by the woman footballer Julie Fleating - she shows that women can be as good as men at football. She plays for Scotland and has trained extremely hard to get where she is. She has even broken her ankle playing football, but that doesn't stop her. Julie's experience shows me that you must never give up and always play your best.

Jimi Hendrix

Danielle Horton, Carrick Academy, Year 11

An inspirational figure for me is Jimi Hendrix. Jimi Hendrix was a fantastic guitar player and song writer. Although he is famously known as a drug abuser, not many people realise that when he was on stage he was completely sober. Jimi Hendrix was a musician who sang and played from the heart. He wore outlandish clothes and in no way changed himself just to fit in. He was himself and kept true to that. He enjoyed just playing, that was his drug. Unfortunately he died young, at the age of twenty-seven, but I believe his beautiful music lives on. He is inspirational to me as he stayed true to himself, he expressed himself through what he knew, and most importantly he lived his life to the full, and never regretted anything he had done. Many of his songs have not only urged me to keep playing guitar, but also featured advice on my views and my problems.

I do not think I would be who I am today without his influence about diversity and love for all living things, including himself. Although many people say his music is outdated, I believe everyone would benefit from his music. It has certainly helped me.

Aim for perfection

Callan Scade, Carrick Academy, Year 11

I feel that it is stupid to have an inspirational figure, or at least one that is a real person. I have never heard of someone who is perfect, the best at everything. Why would you aspire to be less than perfect? In my opinion it is a waste. Perfection includes happiness that is something that is never enough, so inspiration of perfection seems more appropriate to being a successful happy person. Instead of aiming for good, like someone who you have heard of, then why don't you aim for perfection? Perfection is a higher goal and one that people who wish to do well should strive for.

Simon Weston

Catrin Davies, Cynffig Comprehensive, Year 9

Looking in the mirror and not recognising the face peering back at you, friends you loved murdered beside you, the memory of the horrifying event on replay in his mind - this is the situation Simon Weston had to face when he was burnt by an enemy bomb on a ship just

off the Falkland Islands. Simon Weston inspires me because he was faced with a horrendous experience but he didn't let it hold him back he didn't hide away from his problem he faced it and overcame it. Simon Weston is now the spokesperson for the Welsh Give Blood Campaign, so he now helps many people. It makes me feel that you should never let anything hold you back no matter how big the problem you can always overcome it.

Helen Keller

Anna Underhill, Cynffig Comprehensive, Year 7

Walking down the street totally cloaked in darkness not able to hear or see a thing. My stick hit something and I was hit over the head, hard, but I ignored it, what did they know? I rose above the situation and walked away. I imagined them laughing and jeering at me, but I didn't care, I was stronger than that. My inspirational figure is Helen Keller.

My sister

Bethan Williams, Cynffig Comprehensive, Year 11

The last time I spoke to my sister she was in the middle of a busy market place in Delhi, India. She kept pausing our conversation to disentangle herself from overzealous salesmen calling for the pretty girl to come and buy a trinket. Over the past few weeks she'd been searching for tigers in Ranthambore, riding camels through the desert in Jaisalmer and watching the sun set over the Taj Mahal. But none of that really mattered; she just wanted to know if Wales had won the rugby.

I know that inspirational figures are supposed to be people who have made a difference in the world, or achieved something great, or changed someone's life. I'm supposed to be inspired by David Beckham because he's quite good at football. Albert Einstein because he was better at physics than I am, Martin Luther King because he stood up for what he believed in when I can't even tell somebody not to push into the queue in front of me at lunchtime. But to me, it's the little things that matter most that can really influence and change your life. And that's why my sister is so important to me she represents a lot of the things that I want from life. She is full of drive and ambition and enthusiasm. I watch the way she moves through life and I start to believe that I can make my dreams come true, that I can achieve anything I set my mind to. She is just an ordinary girl from an ordinary town, but to me, she is quite extraordinary. My sister makes me want to spread my wings and see the world. From what she says, it's a beautiful place.

Lorna Robertson

Nikki Brown, Elgin High School, Year 8

My inspirational figure is Lorna Robertson, who works in Asda with my mum. If my mum is working a late shift, then I go to Lorna's and she makes me a second tea. On Saturdays it's vegetable stirfry, which is my favourite. Every year she goes to India and buys clothes for the children. She went to an orphanage last year into the girl's side. 'Oh, it was beautiful, there were eight girls in a straight line one behind the other plaiting each other's long black hair.

It touched my heart.' One night she said she'd take me travelling the world if she won the lottery, so I hope she wins. I'm very close to Lorna, it feels as if she's my granny.

Stephen Hawking

Scott Simpson, Elgin High School, Year 8

Stephen Hawking has had to overcome his disability of motor neurone disease. Even with his power of speech and movement is taken away, he is one of the smartest people in the world. His disease usually proves fatal within five years, but after so many years it's hard to remember that he has this disease. Stephen Hawking has inspired me to keep going and take whatever life throws at me. I chose him as my inspirational figure not just because of how smart and intelligent he is, but rather because of what he has accomplished in spite of the difficulties. He just his battling through life and accomplishing great things.

Peter Forsberg

Tom Johnston, Elgin High School, Year 8

Peter Forsberg is a professional ice hockey player. During the 2002 World Cup he was playing Sweden when he fell and broke his ankle in the third minute of play. He played the rest of the 60 minute game. He went into hospital and found that his ankle was completely smashed. He was in the big plaster for two weeks, but was playing again within four weeks. Some people might have thought that stupid, but I think it was an act of great courage and perseverance to keep going even though he was in great pain.

"Kindness gives rise to kindness"

Sophocles, quoted by Jennifer Tait, Glasgow Academy

Daniel McLaren

Ryan Johnston, Elgin High School, Year 8

I've chosen to write about my greatest friend Daniel McLaren. As a young boy Daniel was very cheery and always put a smile on people's faces -- you'd never find him upset. The first time I saw him was at the school. I have made many friends and I felt really lonely and then Daniel came and introduced me to everyone and since then I've been really popular. So I guess it just shows how much friendship means in my life, and I owe it all to my great friend Daniel.

My granny

Louise Jolly, Elgin High School, Year 9

Recently, my granny died and I think she would be very proud of all the good things I do in life. Even though I can't see her, I know she is always here with me. At times it's hard to believe that she's gone and it hurts a lot inside, but I know she wouldn't want me to be upset, so I try to do things that would have made a proud call me her granddaughter.

Gerard Way

Holly McKenzie, Elgin High School, Year 9

My inspirational figure would have to be Gerard Way, the frontman of The Chemical Romance, a man who has inspired and influenced me greatly through the intricate art of music. The band's music is raw and comes straight from the heart, and is something that I can relate and connect to. I have always been different and never fitted the stereotype. After witnessing the 911 disaster, Gerard decided to make a difference. His music and words do many young kids in my situation. Since battling his way through drugs and alcohol, he has tried his best to help kids through these kinds of things. He tells his fans that they can be anyone and anything, and not to let others put you down. He offers free counselling to his fans and on one occasion saved a girl's life – the girl had given up the will to live and he talked her through this and drastically changed her condition. He is truly a fighter who has punched down every wall and has lived his dream of making a difference.

Anita Roddick

Eilidh McTavish, Elgin High School, Year 8

My inspirational figure who greatly influences me is Anita Roddick. I think because she was very true to herself and an excellent role model to others. I think it is one big joke that all these so-called 'celebrities' are people who people my age would look up to, and want to act and look like them. People who would starve themselves just to be an extremely size 0, which is also certainly not good for your health. To me Anita is a true star; she actually cares about others and the community, global peace and also global warming. You might not know about Anita Roddick but she is the one founder of the beauty and cosmetics branch 'The Body Shop' it started off as a tiny shop but has now expanded into a thriving business. That is also something that inspired me that she never gave up and through hard work came eventually to success.

Jane Austen

Lauren Taylor, Elgin High School, Year 9

There are many people I admire, people I feel have made a difference in the world and have had the courage to stand up for what they believe in, and for their countries freedom. If I had to pick one it would definitely be the British author Jane Austen, who was born on the

16th December 1775 and died on the 18th July 1817. She was the daughter of the respectable clergyman Rev. Austen, and always dreamed of writing a novel. Austen started writing as a teenager, and published her first novel *Sense and Sensibility* in 1811 and afterward she published five more, my favourite being *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) because it has a message behind it saying that you can never judge a book by its cover, and you can find love in the most unlikely places, and of course it's a wonderful story to read. Jane Austen has inspired many generations of young women, including my Nana and myself. Austen only wrote about the world she observed around her, and had the amazing ability to figure out how many people's minds worked. Jane Austen has made me the person I am today, thanks to her I have the courage to be myself and stand up for what I believe.

Henrick Larsson

Jack Thomson, Elgin High School, Year 9

Henrick Larsson is a Swedish footballer best known for winning four titles in seven years with Celtic. Prior to his retirement from international football in 2006, Larsson had won 93 caps in Sweden, scoring 36 goals. During a match against Lyon, Larsson suffered a career-threatening injury, breaking his leg in two places. He spent eight months on the sidelines. He inspires me because when he broke his leg he couldn't play for ages but came back and stuck to his career. I'm similar because for example this weekend I crashed my motocross bike, but I'm going to stick to my hobby and continue with motocross.

Andy Murray

Sean Thomson, Elgin High School, Year 9

Andy Murray inspires me because he's a Scot who has completed a lot of his tennis goals at a very young age. He has beaten Roger Federer against all the odds and at 20 he was already in the top 10 players in the world. He shows me that when I go and play football for my school and we're heavily backed to lose, I can go into the game with a great attitude thinking that my team can win.

Uncle John

Katie Williams, Elgin High School, Year 9

Uncle John became an alcoholic at a very young age. When he was an adult, married with a house, job, car and loving wife, he lost it all one by one and finished up homeless. He went between his dad in Ireland and his uncle in Wales, but was eventually turned away from both of them. He lived on the streets, begging for money and drink. After some years and to some unknown reason he remembered Jesus (he was preparing to be a priest when he was 12). He found help in the church, who supported him. He remembered his faith and stopped drinking. He now lives in a nice flat and is in the second year of his degree in public and social policy. He works every weekend for the church giving out food for the homeless and is a counsellor to people who have drink and drug addictions. He is my inspirational figure

because it makes me think that if things go wrong there is always hope and strength - we can find from others to help us carry on.

Walt Disney

Lucy Berry, Forfar Academy, Year 9

My inspirational figure would have to be Walt Disney. Walt Disney was a dyslexic just like me. I am amazed. I used to think dyslexic was another word for dumb, but I know that if Walt Disney can achieve all that then dyslexic is another word for smart. I see what Walt Disney has accomplished and I am proud to call myself a dyslexic.

My mum

Rachel Scott, Forfar Academy, Year 9

My mum is an inspiration to me because she has taught me to be patient and made me want to help other people and do a job related to that. I love reading and read all the time because when I was two or three years old my mum started to teach me to read and I used to take another book because I enjoyed it so much. I've read some books you need for Higher English and in top-class. I find reading very relaxing.

Harry Potter

Stephanie Barrett, Forfar Academy, Year 9

Harry Potter as an inspiration to me because he's so brave and managed to stand up to his muggle foster parents. He also went on living in the cupboard under the stairs and never being able to use magic to learning how to do spells at Hogwarts. He never stopped believing he could make it, and all his dreams came true. He is also a good friend to all his fellow students and has managed to grow up loving and kind even though he had been brought up with so much hatred and discrimination. He is even nice to his enemies who doesn't like, and overall he has inspired me to be a wizard like him!

Jack Horner

Steven Doctor, Forfar Academy, Year 9

My favourite story, Jurassic Park, first got me interested in palaeontology and has turned my life in that direction. My inspirational figure Jack Horner is the world's most famous palaeontologist. He has inspired me to follow in his footsteps and to try to do well in school. This has made me study creatures of the past, who make up 99% of life, and I would like to travel the world as part of my career.

My mum

Chloe Murray, Forfar Academy, Year 9

My mum is an incredible person who is very positive about things, which makes me think positively too. She always sees light at the end of the tunnel, and says 'think of life as a path, we don't know where it will take you or in which direction it may go, and sometimes objects will get in the way, but you will always find a way around them.' That saying has helped me a lot.

The 14th Dalai Lama

William Ayton, George Heriot's School, Year 9

I find the 14th Dalai Lama inspiring. I admire the way he resists the use of violence at all times and follows the principles of Buddhism. The most significant challenge that he has faced was the Chinese invasion of Tibet, and this was the hardest time for him to maintain nonviolence in his followers. He has not achieved his goal of independence for Tibet, but he is still fighting in a non-violent way. He conveys a message of peace and that nonviolence can help you win your battles. He is also an admirable example of perseverance, and he has been working at the same cause for over 50 years.

Norman Cousins

Kelsey Burnside, George Heriot's School, Year 9

In his book *Anatomy of an Illness*, Norman Cousins describes how he was diagnosed as terminally ill, with his chances of survival one in 500. You could see that the worry, anger and depression in his life might have contributed to and perhaps even caused his disease. He wondered if he could cure himself through positivity, if his illness had been caused by negativity. Laughing was one of the most positive actions he knew, and so he rented funny films. His pain was so great that he could not sleep. Laughing for 10 minutes solid, he found relief from the pain for several hours so he could sleep. Norman fully recovered and lived another 20 happy and productive years. Pretty amazing when all he did was laugh.

Rudy Garcia-Olson

Lucy Griffiths, George Heriot's School, Year 9

My inspirational figure is a boy called Rudy Garcia Tolson, who lives by a simple motto: a brave heart is a powerful weapon. Rudy was born with a rare multiple birth defect -- a combination of crippling Pterygium syndrome, a club foot, webbed fingers on both hands, a cleft lip and palate. At age 5, after 15 operations, he told his parents he wanted to move on. He would rather become a double amputee than continue to put up with what his life had become. He had both legs removed above the knee, and has never looked back. By the time Rudy was fitted with new high-tech legs, he was an athletic powerhouse. The loss of his legs marked the beginning of his life. When Rudy was eight, he told the world he would swim in

the 2004 Paralympic games. He was true to his word and brought home the gold in the 200 metre IM, shattering the world record for his class. Rudy continues to swim as a member of the US Paralympics Elite team. He has completed numerous triathlons and won several prestigious awards. Through his example, Rudy has helped CAF raise more than \$6 million to ensure that people with similar problems have the same opportunities that he did. He is a person with wonderful optimism and determination.

“I’ve missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 300 games. 26 times I’ve been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I’ve failed over and over in life, and that’s why I succeed”

Michael Jordan, quoted by Scott Rooney, Gryffe High School

Helen Keller

Felicia Law, George Heriot’s School, Year 9

Helen Keller is so inspiring in the way that she overcame her physical handicaps, becoming an excellent student and a lecturer and activist in support of the blind and deaf, socialism and women’s rights. She fought for what she believed in them was an inspiration to many handicapped people. She showed people that she could still do many other things that ordinary people can do, even though she was deaf and blind. Personally, she has helped me in many of my travel times. I only have to think of her and I am given strength to get round my problems. If she could get past her problems, I can get past 9, because they all seem so small compared with the challenges of Helen Keller went through.

Felicia Law

Clare Hyland, George Heriot’s School, Year 9

My inspirational figure is my friend Felicia Law. Before I became friends with her, I was on the verge of tumbling down the road of hair and make-up, which would surely lead to what has become of my old friends, i.e. doing badly at school, getting mixed up with the wrong crowd etc, all of which leads to an undesirable future. Felicia changed all my morals and ideals in a single moment. She showed me inner beauty, generosity and most of all an unstoppable work ethic. Everything, everywhere becomes more fun when you really do try your hardest. You can accomplish things which make you strive even more at the same time as growing and obtaining strong friendships. Whenever I am struggling I put myself in her position and I always find that she would not surrender at this point, so I don’t either. On the outside, Felicia may appear to lack confidence as she is a very quiet person; but I know that inside she has a warm and welcoming heart of immeasurable love, friendship and passion, and that she is the bravest of us all.

Martin Luther King

Tom McKeever, George Heriot's School, Year 9

Martin Luther King shows the true nature of mankind, and his actions have influenced the way we live our lives today. He has shown me that determination and peaceful thinking will get you where you want to go in life. He really demonstrates the core aspects of an ideal human being. Someone who will stick up for their rights and be patient and calm if things do not go to plan. Even though we may look different, we share the same principles of humanity and we must look after each other in this hard world.

Dr Tom Barnardo

Jessica McKinna, George Heriot's School, Year 9

Training to be a doctor in London, Barnardo constantly saw poverty around him, especially young boys sleeping on rooftops with no home or family, and he vowed to do something about it. As a Christian, he allowed many of the homeless boys he came across to stay at his house. Eventually, he built up to running schools and boarding facilities for hundreds of boys and girls. A very famous story was the time when he had to turn down a little boy who had heard of his hospitality and needed somewhere to stay. The doctor had no room left. The next day Barnardo found the same boy next to some dustbins -- he had died in his sleep. It was then that he decided never again to turn a child in need away and took steps towards finding larger premises. It is inspiring that his foundation has lasted over a century, and even now there are many charity shops under his name raising money for children in need. His admirable perseverance helped the boys of the 19th century and the children of today.

Steve Jobs

Joshua Richards, George Heriot's School, Year 9

Steve Jobs is and CEO of Apple. He inspires me because of his inventiveness and commercial acumen, having been responsible for the iPod and iPhone as well as various films including Finding Nemo and Toy Story. He has the ability to persevere with ideas that seem impossible such as storing thousands of songs in a small compact space. In this way he has helped bring technology into the mainstream. His other skill lies in honing and focusing this technology into award-winning enterprises like the 'Pixar' films which constantly use the latest graphics to produce some amazingly quirky stories. Because of his success, I am inspired to try and keep the childlike side of my imagination, but also to be mature enough to work out logically how I can accomplish the tasks I set myself.

Tiger Woods

Stuart Ogilvie, George Heriot's School, Year 9

Tiger Woods is my most inspirational figure. Why? Well, he plays hard and works hard.

He's not just a phenomenal golfer but is also a brilliant role model. He uses what he's learned to help other American children pursue their dreams. He and his dad started the Tiger Woods Foundation. He made me want to want to begin golf, and I've been golf mad since I started six months ago. He taught me never to lose my temper because it will affect my next stroke - he has earned himself the compliment of being the best mind in golf. Tiger has made golf multicultural sport and has already achieved what many would have wanted to pursue in a lifetime.

Michael Westcott

Michael Sturrock, George Heriot's School, Year 9

Michael Westcott is a family friend who has achieved great deal in his life. An example of his great work is that, while walking the streets of Edinburgh, he found a man lying in the gutter. The man was blind drunk. Over the next few years Mike looked after him and helped him, eventually finding this man a home, where he lived with his wife. Mike stuck by Alec even when he was very hurtful to him. Alec would have died very soon had it not been for Mike. His motto is: 'to thine own self be true then you cannot be false to any man.'

Sir Steve Redgrave

Jack Patterson, George Heriot's School, Year 9

My inspirational figure is Steve Redgrave, who won nine gold medals at the world rowing Championships and five gold medals at the Olympic Games. Many rowing experts have said that the most remarkable thing about him was not how he dominated his opposition, but how consistent he was. Just a year after his successes at the 1996 Olympic Games, he was diagnosed with diabetes and ulcerative colitis. These cause bouts of fatigue during physical activity. After this revelation, Steve was sure he would never row again, but thanks to his mental strength, special training and sheer determination he did, going on to win another gold medal at the 2000 Olympics and becoming sports personality of the year. The thing I find most inspirational about Steve is not his achievements, but how he managed prolonged success while coping with diabetes. As a keen sportsman myself, he's taught me never to give up, no matter what the adversity, and to keep going for what you want to achieve.

Aung San Suu Kyi

Lisa Scott-Pearce, George Heriot's School, Year 2

In 1945 Aung San Suu Kyi was born in the city of Rangoon to her mother, Ma Khin Kyi, a senior nurse at Rangoon General Hospital and her father, Aung San, a commander of the Burma Independence Army. Now, Suu Kyi is a Burmese Politician, campaigner for liberty and a Noble prize winner. Suu Kyi calls for a democratic government and freedom for all the people of Burma. However, in doing this she has been put under house arrest, without a charge or trial, by the Burmese soldiers. Aung San Suu Kyi is now 62 years of age but is continuing to speak out about the rights of civilians in Burma and her vow to serve the people until she dies.

Aung is someone with a rare ability to sacrifice her own liberty so that she might be able to win the right of an entire nation to have an enjoyable life. This shows utter selflessness and the expression of complete fearlessness. As a result she strengthens the claim of justice for the people of Burma. This is what I believe is a true quality in someone and so this is why Aung San Suu Kyi is my inspirational figure.

My brother

Amber Nichol, Girvan Academy, Year 9

My inspirational figure is my brother Austin, who has worked extremely hard to become a doctor. He also went to the Philippines and Ghana to work in an orphanage with children who were very ill and also children with special needs. He is extremely passionate about what he does, and loves working with children, something he has wanted to do since he was eight years old.

My papa

Fraser Shennan, Girvan Academy, Year 9

My figure is my Papa, who has gone through a very big operation and it took him a long time to recover when I visited him in hospital he was always asking was going on at the farm and when he got home, he was always trying to get up to the farm. He used to like helping at the farm, bringing in the sheep with his dog. He used to go to dog trials, where he won a lot of trophies and rosettes, even representing Scotland. That is why he wanted to go back to the farm and the dog trials. I would really like to achieve the things my Papa has done with the dog trials and on the farm.

Maria Sharapova

Nina Petric-Gray, Glasgow Academy, Year 9

My inspirational figure is Maria Sharapova, because she is a great tennis player as well as a person of great style. She originally came from very humble origins, living in a tiny one-bedroom flat with her mother and father, located in one of the coldest parts of Russia. Nearly every day, she played tennis with her father outside in the freezing cold. While at the tennis clinic in Moscow, Martina Navratilova recommended her to go to Florida to improve her game. Her family scrimped and saved for a year, and it was so expensive that her mum had to stay behind. Maria didn't see her two years. These sacrifices in education have inspired me. She won her first major tournament at Wimbledon in 2003, beating the number one seed.

“God gives talent. Work transforms talent into genius”

Anna Pavlova, quoted by Louise Dodds, Girvan Academy

Oscar Wilde

Sophie Reilly, Glasgow Academy, Year 9

Oscar Wilde was born in Dublin to Sir William Wilde and Lady Jane Francesca Wilde. He attended Portora Royal School in Enniskilen, and then Trinity College, Dublin and Magdalen College, Oxford. He married Constance Lloyd and had two sons, despite his ambiguous sexuality. He wrote many poems and stories, including the masterpiece 'The Importance of Being Earnest'. He died in Paris in 1900.

I find Oscar Wilde inspiring because of the genius of his humour but also the derivation and background behind it. Wilde's sheer cheek and arrogance manage to make him more likeable, which is a rare feat. He also carried this persona with him throughout his life, using it to keep himself going through very hard times – he was even prosecuted and imprisoned for his sexuality, but carried on to write more plays and carried on with his careless happiness and also to guide the rest of us, by writing his witty, relatable and most of all, meaningful philosophies. This outlook on life has taught me to enjoy all aspects of life, and to aspire to goals, but take pleasure in the journey towards them.

Olaudah Equiano

Gregor Stark, Glasgow Academy, Year 9

To kidnap our fellow creatures, however they may differ in complexion, to degrade them into beasts of burden, to deny them every right but those, and scarcely those we allow to a horse, to keep them in perpetual servitude is trying as unjustifiable as it is cruel.

This quotation comes from a letter by Olaudah Equiano to Gordon Turnbull after Turnbull had published his work, *Apology for Negro Slavery*. Equiano was an African slave who bought himself out of slavery and wrote his autobiography, *The Life of a Olaudah Equiano, the African*, and campaign for the abolition of slavery with such influential figures as Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce, as shown in the film *Amazing Grace*, until he died in 1797. He is one of the least appreciated abolitionists, and as a role model to us all -- you don't have to be given credit to do good.

Katy Miles

Lily Mortimer, Glasgow Academy, Year 9

Aged only six, Katy Miles was diagnosed with a rare type of kidney cancer, which contain more than a litre of cancer cells. Katy had to have six weeks of chemotherapy, but the cancer had spread, so she endured a further six weeks of treatment. At the same time, her best friend was also suffering from a brain tumour, so the two girls visited each other, played together and supported each other through their treatment. Katy survived, but tragically her best friend died. This story is inspiring because not only did she endure cancer at such a young age, but also supported her best friend. I could not have lived if I was in her shoes at six years old.

Elizabeth Blackwell

Eleanor Wilson, Glasgow Gaelic School, Year 8

If society will not admit of woman's free development, then society must be remodelled.

This quotation is from Elizabeth Blackwell, the first ever qualified female doctor in the world. I think it is inspiring and you thought the men's old-fashioned beliefs that women want is a clever. I would like to be a doctor when I grow up and that might not be possible if Elizabeth had not made a stand. She was born in England in 1821 and moved to America when she was 11. She became interested in becoming a doctor when she heard some women prefer to see female rather than male doctors. She studied medicine in private and later tried to apply to universities. She was rejected by all but Geneva Medical College where she was top of her class and graduated at the age of 28. She faced many challenges along the way but succeeded in the end.

Tracy Chapman

Moire McClintock, Glasgow Gaelic School, Year 8

I find Tracy Chapman inspiring because she has ignored taunts about her skin colour and made herself a good career. She started playing guitar and writing songs when she was only 11. One of these, *Behind the Wall*, refers to domestic abuse and how the police could not or did not do anything about it. Despite these challenges and her poverty, she succeeded in achieving our goal. Tracy Chapman has helped me change my view on the world for the better.

Alex Stubbs

Jennifer Tait, Glasgow Gaelic School, Year 9

Alex Stubbs is a star chorister, gifted pianist, organist and budding conductor. His musical talents have taken him on international tours, seen him perform for the Queen and won him a scholarship to Eton. Alex is extraordinary because he achieved all this despite suffering from cystic fibrosis, a disease which is slowly destroying his digestive system and his lungs. Over the years, the disease has attacked his bones and left him partially deaf, a major handicap for musicians. Despite all this, Alex is a livewire, buzzing with energy and set himself the task of coaching and conducting 62 of his schoolmates in a performance of Bach's Magnificat. I could relate to him for three reasons. First, the fact that he was only three years older than me made me think about how I would feel at this time of my life. Secondly, I know how difficult learning and practising musical instrument can be. For me, to do this with his illness and being partially deaf was almost unthinkable. Thirdly, despite Alex's illness, he was always laughing and nothing got him down.

My dad

Ebony Church, Glyn Derw, Year 9

My dad is my inspiration. 20 years ago he was forced to retire when the doctors found he had an illness with his legs. Over those 20 years my dad has devoted his life to the raising and upbringing of his family. Dad has always done what he thought was best for us. He tried his best to make sure we had the opportunities that he never had as a child. My dad has survived money deductions, burst appendix, gallstones and many more problems. He has always done what's right for other people. He moved my Nan into our house to keep her from living in a home. He spent 2 years looking after her and yet never let me see the struggle he was under. But he always says 'tomorrow is a brighter day'. It hit him very hard with the death of my Nan. But he didn't show it he spent his time caring for us instead of himself. He has raised me and my sister with discipline and manners and I love him for what he has done for us. It is now his time - at the age of 60 he has started his own business as a builder and is finally living his own dream.

My nan

Krean Joseph Emmott, Glyn Derw, Year 9

My inspirational figure is my Nan. She is not famous or received medals for what she has done but she has earned a load of respect from me. She is in her 50's and has looked after two of her own children (my mum and uncle) and then took on the job of looking after me, my two brothers and my cousin. She takes us where we want, gets us what we want, and gives us money to go out with our mates. She also does all the house work and tries as hard as she can to make my family happy. My Nan got terribly ill and we were told she was probably not going to live but she fought and lived and when she returned home she was still not great. After all she went through she still came back and helped us all and she acts as if she was never ill. But I know deep down she is still ill and covering it to keep us happy. My Nan tried hard to get her house and keep us all happy. She did this by working about five jobs. This is why my Nan inspires me, she's a great woman she is caring, loving and amazing, I love her to bits.

Stephanie Alyson Gallivan

Zoe Jean Gallivan, Glyn Derw, Year 9

My inspirational figure is Stephanie Gallivan, this is my mum. I'm inspired by my mum because she works two full-time jobs, and has looked after me throughout my illness. She stayed with me all the nights I stayed in hospital, and has cared for me ever since. She's given me a lot of confidence in myself and I know that she'll always be able to help me. I have a lot to thank my mum for, especially all of the support I've had over the last few years. Along with all of this, she's still found the time to keep a 19 year marriage with my dad. If I'm anything like my mum when I'm older, I'll be successful, happy, kind, hard working and supportive. I will also be a very proud person.

My mum

Kayleigh Randall, Glyn Derw, Year 9

My inspirational figure is my mum because she is almost always happy in everything she does. When I was younger my dad was back and forth and never stayed around for long. She is a very strong woman, she gave birth to me when she was really young and she's done an extremely good job in bringing me up to be the way I am today. My dad died when I was seven years old and when my brother was only four. It took a long time for me and my mum to get over it as we had to be strong for my brother who was too young to understand. She has brought me and my brother up with good manners and made sure we have a good education. She loves children as she is a helper in a classroom and when I see her she always puts a smile on her face, even when she's feeling down she always gives me the love and support I need and that is why I truly look up to her.

My mum

Sarah Jean Powell, Glyn Derw, Year 9

'Love is to receive a glimpse of heaven' This quotation is how I feel about my mum, Sherria Powell. My mum is my inspirational figure because she is a loving, kind-hearted person. My mum didn't have the childhood she has given to me. She didn't have a mum until she was 13; her mother left her when she was young. Even though my mum didn't really get love off my Nan, when Nan found she had lung cancer, my mum was there for her every step of the way. She put all her love into her work. My mum even looked after my Nan whilst she was dying and she didn't show any of her feelings. When my Nan passed away my mum kept happy and didn't shed a tear. My mother is the kindest person you can ever meet, she has never ever put herself before others. My aunty lost her house and my mum didn't have that much money and paid for my aunty to live with us and when my aunty had children, when it came to Christmas my mum bought every Christmas present for her sister's children. When my Nan's will was opened she had left my mum £10,000, and my mother was broke at the time but she didn't touch a penny, she is still keeping it in a bank for her children (me) when she passes away my mum always says 'when your enemies are in trouble, she will always help them'.

My family

Lauren Jacqueline Burnett, Gracemount High School, Year 8

When it came to having an inspirational figure, I was lost. You see most people only have one person, me, I have a whole family! Everyone in my family is special to me and they all have an impact on me. Whatever happens, good or really bad, well they always seem to be right behind me saying it's OK and well done. Especially when my great auntie Margaret died, my mum, dad, granny, aunties and my cousins were all there going through it together. Even though we don't always get along, we're always there for each other, especially my mum, she puts up with me all the time, cooking for me, tidying up for me,

helping me and just loving me! If I didn't have any of my family life wouldn't be worth living and I really want to be like all of them when I'm older, my dad's handiness, my mum's caring-ness, my auntie's working-ness, my grannie's happiness, my cousins' fun-ness and so much more amazing qualities. Most people say that you can't choose your family, well I say that I'm lucky that I can't. I would never have found such amazing people who love me as much as I love them.

My dad

Ryan Taylor, Gracemount High School, Year 11

My inspirational figure is undoubtedly my dad. He has done many things to be proud of. In my opinion, his greatest achievement is his walk to Hartlepool which he did for Alzheimer's and MS. Against all the odds, he completed it in 6 ½ days, walking 146.6 miles! He raised £2,000 between the two charities. He lost an incredible amount of weight, so I hardly recognised him. He showed great self confidence and determination, which demonstrated to me that anything is possible if you believe it is. He has always encouraged my brother and me to do our best, which has helped us a lot in our school careers and in our personal lives. I'm lucky to have a dad like him!

“Enthusiasm is at the bottom of all progress, with it there is accomplishment, without it there are only alibis”

Henry Ford, quoted by Remu Begum, Glyn Derw High School

My parents

Daphne Ferrer, Gracemount High School, Year 3

My inspirational figures are my parents because I know that they've been through a lot of things. Before having these things in the present I know that they've been into different kinds of problems. But still my parents did it together. Still they didn't depart from each other. They solve their problems together, they trust in each other and I know that they love each other. And this love and trust will keep them strong and will keep them together for the rest of their lives. That's why I exist in this world. I am born with love and trust. What matters most is when family are together. And will live happily ever after. I love my parents so much. They just believe in God and they did what they think is right.

Sonya

Gemma Hogg, Gracemount High School, Year 8

When I'm older I'd like to be like my diving coach Sonya. She dedicates most of her free time to making sure children enjoy themselves. As well as diving, she also coaches

trampolining and helps out with girls' brownies. I don't know how she has any time to herself. She always encourages us to do the best we can and always has a laugh with us to make it all the more fun. I want to be just like her and making a difference. We need more people like her!

Marie Curie

Matthew Andrews, Grove Academy, Year 8

Marie Curie was the founder of the Cancer Care Foundation in the early 1900s. She was a very special person to people who suffered from cancer and she and her staff to help them recover as much as possible. Many people around the world remember her life on a special day each year, when they can wear a little yellow daffodil badge on their clothes.

Carly Patterson, Olympic gymnast

Devon Campbell, Grove Academy, Year 8

The Olympic gymnast Carly Patterson is my inspirational figure, as that's what I would like to be. She's been ranked top in many competitions. At the Olympic trials she fell badly twice, which dropped her to third place. She never gave up though, and neither do I. She has won lots of medals, and so have I. In 2004 she was in the Olympics at the age of 15, and she won the all round Gold Medal. I intend to continue with my gymnastics and be a fit person for the rest of my life.

Third World Farmer

Douglas Clark, Grove Academy, Year 8

After a long time of thinking, I decided that my inspirational figure is the Third World Farmer. I know that if I was put in their position I could not manage. Many go without clean water, and have to travel miles to a well. All I have to do is turn on a tap. Farmers in Third World countries will have to grow their own food yet all we have to do is pop down to our local supermarket. Their communities throng with people and despite the awareness raised about their situation not enough help has been provided. And despite the in-depth media coverage they still uphold their dignity. These farmers use their own resources to build thriving communities. Therefore they are inspirational to me.

My great-grandad

Hannah Fuller, Grove Academy, Year 8

My great grandad is my inspirational figure. Even when things are really hopeless, he never gives up. In the Second World War he lied about his age to go and fight for his country. He was captured in Singapore and spent nearly 5 years as a prisoner of war in boiling hot conditions with no medicine and hardly any food and water. Even going through all this he had to work for about 14 hours a day. He had to go through watching his friends die in front

of him. He had no information about his friends and family back home and had no idea when the war would be over. He still managed to keep his spirits up! When he was released he forgave his captors and moved on. I'm so proud of him.

My neighbour Margaret

Emma Lindsay, Grove Academy, Year 8

My inspirational figure is my neighbour Margaret who with her husband Frank has fostered and cared for kids and teenagers who were abused and don't get on with their parents, so they go into care. She has devoted her life to helping others, and to me that is the best thing anyone can do. I know that Margaret and Frank are not world-famous, but they deserve a medal and plenty of respect. Every kid I've seen living there turns into a really nice person by the age of 16 when they leave. That's why they are my inspirational figures.

Anne Frank

Kirsty Boswell, Gryffe High School, Year 9

Sharing a room with your sister is hard. Sharing a room with your sister for 4 years during a war is even harder, and that is exactly what my inspirational figure did. She was very well known throughout the whole world mainly because of her diary. Yes, Anne Frank inspires me. Her life was definitely not charmed, it was terrible, however despite her horrible past she became one of the most renowned figures of the Holocaust, unfortunately she died in Bergen Belsen concentration camp from typhus.

For me Anne Frank is a truly spectacular example of an inspirational figure, she became famous because of her diary. However that is not why she inspires me. The quality which she possesses that I admire is her courage. In the darkest of situations her courage shone through and this aspect completely inspired me! I think an adult with her willpower and courage is incredible never mind a girl like her.

My grandpa

Charlotte Elder, Gryffe High School, Year 9

There are lots of people in the world to inspire me, like Martin Luther King and Anne Frank, but the one person in my life who inspires me is my grandpa. He went through a rough childhood, his family was poor and his dad an alcoholic. One night his father was in bed and had put the kettle on -- it was a gas cooker and there had been a gas leak. He had fallen asleep and was gassed. There was now only one income to support the whole family, and his mother was not earning enough to look after him and the rest of the family, so my grandpa left school and went to work when he was only 14. After a spell in Singapore with the RAF, where he received the General Service Medal, he and my Gran returned to raise a family. Despite recent health problems, he has kept a positive attitude and is very focused and determined. I'm inspired by the stories he tells me and want to be as great as him when I'm older.

“Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing”

Mother Teresa, quoted by Catriona Murray, Glasgow Academy

Gilbert Arenas

Scott Rooney, Gryffe High School, Year 9

I find the basketball player, Gilbert Arenas very inspirational. He was picked for the pro team, the Washington wizard. He spent his whole rookie year sitting on the bench; he didn't get to play in any game. He felt angry and sad but instead of giving up he went to the gym and practiced for hours and hours. He was determined to play. The next season he played in the games and became one of the team's main players. I find this story inspirational because he worked hard and never gave up on achieving his goal even though he felt down. 'Hard work beats skill; when skill fails to work hard'.

Alex Stubbs

Liam Torrens, Gryffe High School, Year 9

Alex Stubbs is not a celebrity or a pop star, just a normal British boy with musical talent, but he suffers from a life-threatening disease, cystic fibrosis. This is a disease which affects your lungs and people who suffer from it do not live very long. This does not stop him though, and on a TV programme he was determined to conduct one of the hardest pieces of music. He pulled it off and got a scholarship to Cambridge. He inspires me because although he has a life-threatening disease, he doesn't let that hold him back. He does everything he can and tries to live life to the full. I have learned from him that even if something has happened that can ruin your life, don't get down about it, just live life to the full.

Nicola Benedetti

Leann Chen, High School of Dundee, Year 8

I was astounded by the quality of the violin playing when I first heard Nicola Benedetti live in the Caird Hall a few years ago. She has released three albums since winning the BBC Young Musician of the Year in 2004. Nicola began playing the violin when she was only four years old and reached Grade 8 by the age of nine. At the end of her first year at a special music school, she played a solo at the annual concert and performed in London and Paris. Shortly after she won the U.K.'s brilliant prodigy competition, she left the school to study privately with Maciej Rakowski, the former leader of the English Chamber Orchestra. Her parents didn't in fact want her to leave the school, but she felt strongly that she needed private tuition. But when her first album was released, her mum admitted that Nicola had been right. After so many years of practice she has reached her goal. She never gave up or stopped trying, which is so impressive.

Jackie Chan

Laura Lee, High School of Dundee, Year 9

Let's face it, in today's reality many celebrities are either on drugs or have a completely different personality to the 'heroes' they play on our screens. But there is one man who is not only completely genuine but one of the most talented people in the world, Jackie Chan. He didn't have an easy early life as he was not academically bright, so his father enrolled him into Peking Opera School, where he worked extremely hard and pushed himself to the limits by vigorously training to perfect the movements of martial arts, playing music and acrobatics. I deeply admire his stamina and courage as students were frequently beaten and his mother and father moved to Australia, letting his Master adopt him. This tested his emotional as well as physical strength.

Due to his hard work, Jackie Chan is now one of the world's most famous actors, especially for his martial arts movies. He raises money for charities and has been named Goodwill Ambassador for UNICEF and Philanthropist for Children in China. It is not only his talent for acting that I find inspirational but rather the way he uses his fame to benefit charities. I would like to think that I too am a very determined person, but I admit that it sometimes seems easier to relax instead of pushing myself harder. Knowing about someone who is very hard working and has realised their dreams motivates me to work hard and wake up to reality. My parents won't always be there to look after everything for me.

Al Gore

Louise Soutar, High School of Dundee, Year 11

I admire Al Gore as he has dared show the world its faults and to try to help change them, especially in connection with global warming. The impact he has made is incredible as people are finally beginning to realise that we cannot keep abusing the planet as we are at the moment. Al Gore is inspiring to me as he is one lone man who is making a great change in the world.

Josie Grove

Kasia Thomson, High School of Dundee, Year 10

I am inspired by the young and courageous Josie Grove, a girl whose bravery and endurance was astounding and inspirational to many. Josie is a dedicated pupil, sportswoman and fun loving girl. Josie Grove was only 14 (the same age that I am just now) when she was diagnosed with Leukaemia. She was always full of life and optimistic about the future – for example when Josie and her parents were given the devastating news that her condition was terminal, she simply filled the silence by saying 'what a kerfuffle!' During her remaining months Josie created precious mementos to comfort her family after her death, she spent time making funny scrapbook diaries for her younger siblings, bought her mum a ring inscribed with the words 'always with you' and bought her father a pendant.

Josie Grove inspires me. Before her death in February last year she set up an organisation called Josie's Dragonflies where to this day she continues to raise money and awareness for young children like herself who suffer from the effects of cancer. Having her own money (and support behind her) gave Josie the ideas of cash gifts – presents given to young children permanently in hospital because she said that 'having something to do in hospital could mean the difference between a good day or an unbearable day'. She only even thought about the feeling, comfort and wellbeing of those around her.

I admire Josie Grove because of her bravery and optimism, when Josie as a teenager stopped fighting cancer in order to enjoy the rest of her life with her family that demonstrated to me true values and amazing courage. Reading an article on Josie made me burst into tears just thinking what a fun loving and admirable person she was. Her acceptance of her illness has touched many, and her actions more than inspire me.

Tom

Aimee Elgin, High School of Dundee, Year 9

Tom is a friend of the family. He joined us last week for a meal and it was nice to see him again and to see how well he looked. He's been through a lot. He was once happily married with children, with a good job and a lovely house. He made a mistake of letting drink take over his life; he lost his job, his house and his family, and as a homeless person he took refuge in night shelters and wherever he could find a bed. You would often see him sitting with a bottle in the city square drinking during the day. Eventually, he sought help from Alcoholics Anonymous and began to rebuild his life, dragging himself out of the gutter. Today he is a nurse and devotes his spare time working for the same night shelter where he once lived. He is now chairman of the committee for homeless people dealing in millions of pounds every year. He appreciates the support of his family, without whom he says he would never have recovered. He inspires me because it's not easy when you're down and out to fight back and achieve what Tom has achieved.

Jane Tomlinson, CBE (see also Yasmin Bagli, Loudoun Academy)

Lucy Taylor, High School of Dundee, Year 8

After some tabloid articles, Jane received many abusive phone calls and letters. She did not let these people put her off, and she still carried on raising thousands of pounds for charity. I find this selflessness moving, since competing in this way was not good for health. I think she is a good role model, as her achievements prove that anything is possible, if you put your mind to it.

Jane Elliot

Jennifer Lothian, High School of Dundee, Year 11

Jane Elliot was a third grade teacher in a typical elementary school in Iowa. She was a strong believer in racial equality and devised an ideal method of demonstrating to her students

what it feels like to be oppressed as a result of racism, called the Blue Eyes, Brown Eyes exercise. She taught her students the value of equality, demonstrating the immoral and ignorant behaviour that constitutes racism. She successfully proved how much discrimination is absorbed subconsciously and also established the fact that it can be unlearn just as quickly as it is learnt. Elliot's work has had a great effect on today's society. She has challenged our assumptions and showed that everyone should be treated equally, no matter what the colour of their skin.

Nathan Thompson, Matt Croucher & Doreen Lawrence

Lucas Paas, High School of Dundee, Year 10

Choosing inspiring figures to write about is extremely difficult. There are so many truly good people doing good things that to pin-point one or two as my inspirational figures would be to do the others an injustice. Everyone who uses their abilities and resources to contribute to society in a positive way should be admired whether they are dedicated parents, kind neighbours, politicians or millionaires. Those people who give that bit extra and dedicate their lives to helping others or who instinctively do good and don't look for recognition in return are special and inspirational and are right up there with other great people like Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Camilla Batmanghelidh, William Wilberforce and Marie Currie. Three examples of such people are Nathan Thompson, Matt Croucher and Doreen Lawrence:

One act of selfless bravery and love recently on the news was that of Nathan Thompson aged nine years old who saved his mother's life when she was being attacked by an armed intruder. Nathan was badly injured and could have been killed but his instinctive love made him protect her and ultimately saved her life.

Another act of selfless bravery and love of his comrades was demonstrated when Lance Corporal Matt Croucher, aged twenty four, threw himself onto a grenade to save his company in Afghanistan.

Doreen Lawrence, whose son Stephen Lawrence was murdered fifteen years ago, still continues to fight racism within the police and our justice system and whose belief in good does not allow her anger at the people who murdered her son to take over her life instead she says: 'If you are not careful, the anger can eat you up and you become just like those who murdered Stephen. To allow myself to do that wouldn't be doing myself, Stephen, or my children any good'

My granny

Hayley Collard, Inverurie Academy, Year 10

My inspirational figure is my granny who lives in England. Her name is Janet Collard but everyone calls her Tilly. She is inspiring to me because if an opportunity comes her way

that means she can do something to help people, then she takes it. She has done many things which people have benefited from. Some aren't huge and they don't change the world like Mahatma Gandhi has done. But for the person she helps, the impact on them can be just as great.

One of the things she has done which I thought was really thoughtful was she raised money for a girl who plays golf. The money was so she could afford to go over to America to see if she could play golf professionally. Unfortunately she wasn't quite good enough to do so but my granny was still willing to help her. While my granny was doing all of this, she was suffering from breast cancer. Fortunately she has recently recovered from it. She has also recently been made Lady Captain at the golf club and I am so happy about this because after everything she does, despite her illness, I think she deserves it more than anyone.

Christopher Reeve

Alex Lyne, Inverurie Academy, Year 10

A person I find truly inspiring is a man called Christopher Reeve. Renowned world over as Superman he has brought inspiration to many people as a fictional character. However, I find the real man more inspirational than a comic book hero. In May 1995, he fell from his horse onto his head. This paralysed him from the neck down. After his accident he would wake up each day and cry for twenty minutes. He did this because he felt it important to acknowledge the feeling of loss that gripped him, yet after his mourning was over he would say to himself, 'and now forward.'

I think this is what is truly inspiring about him that a man who lost almost everything still perseveres onwards through life so that others will be inspired. Christopher Reeve once said, 'I think a hero is an ordinary person who finds strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles.' And all I can say is that, that is what makes him my hero.

Brian

Iona McCallum, Inverurie Academy, Year 3

I think the most inspirational person I have ever met was a man called Brian, who visited my primary school when I was little. When Brian was born, he had no arms, unlike the rest of us who all take them for granted. When he visited our school, I was really shocked as to how positive he was, and it was so nice to see him smiling. He always said there was no such word as 'can't' and if you didn't manage to succeed first time round, keep trying until you do. I was amazed to see how he was coping with his life, never letting anything hold him back. He inspired me always to try my best and never give up. He didn't care about the whispers and looks that he attracted because he was proud of who he was. He taught me to be proud of who I am, and never stop trying.

I also think he deserves to be an inspirational person, because he wasn't telling people his story for fame, money or even sympathy. He was just a normal forty-year old man with no

arms, who was trying his best to make sure everybody knew about people who were different, but didn't treat them any differently from others. He also wanted people to be grateful for everything they had, and never take anything for granted.

Annette Olzon

Gemma Milne, Inverurie Academy, Year 10

My inspirational figure is the Swedish singer Annette Olzon, who sings in a symphonic metal band called Nightwish. I chose her because she has such a beautiful voice and has been through so much in her life. She was brought up in a poor background and always wanted to be a singer and actress. She would teach herself to sing and put on plays for her parents. When she was older, she was unsuccessful at becoming an actress, although she got a small part in a Swedish TV programme. All she wanted to do was sing, then she joined the band Nightwish in 2006 and is living her dream. She has inspired me never to give up on my own dream to be a singer and try my hardest in life. Music inspires me in many different ways. I think that life is like a song, split into different things we may encounter during it, fitted with a beginning and an end. But then again, life isn't that simple!

Jeff Healey

Victoria Allan, Kemnay Academy, Year 9

Jeff Healey is an inspirational figure because he showed many virtues in his life that we should all look for in ourselves. He was born in 1966, and tragically died in March 2008 at the age of 41. At the age of one, he lost his sight to a very rare type of cancer. Despite being totally blind, this man was brilliant and accomplished guitarist, musician and singer songwriter. He is not giving up on his dream of playing guitar, sax and keyboard. He showed confidence by learning to play the guitar so well and sharing his talent with so many people. I find inspiring because he taught lessons about life through his courage, perseverance and personality.

Leonardo da Vinci

Laura Knight, Kemnay Academy, Year 9

Leonardo da Vinci was one of the great creative minds of the Italian Renaissance. His true genius was that he combined being a scientist and an artist. His science was expressed through his art, and his drawings and diagrams show what he meant, and how he understood the world to work. I would like to live my life like Leonardo, taking step at a time, taking each day it comes and living it to the full.

"I'm not afraid, I was born to do this"

Joan of Arc, quoted by Stephanie Morris, Kilsyth Academy

Alexander the Great

Alexander McCall, Kemnay Academy, Year 2

My inspirational figure is Alexander the Great. He was an ancient King of Greece and with his army conquered most of the known world. He was a great tactician and combined knowledge with fearsome fighting abilities. He was also good at solving puzzles in a direct kind of way. One story tells of him riding into the city of Telmissus with his army. There was some ancient prophecy that spoke of the chosen one being able to untie the Gordian knot. Alexander took one look at this knot and sliced it in two with his sword. Some might complain that this was cheating but no-one wanted to argue with Alexander; or his huge army for that matter. Alexander made a vast empire that spanned most of the known world but tragedy struck when he tried to conquer India and it came in a form that even Alexander couldn't beat. Disease struck his army and most of them died. Knowing that he was defeated, Alexander was forced to turn home. He eventually died through illness.

I guess that Alexander is my inspirational figure mostly because he shares my name. In fact its meaning, leader of men, is illustrated by him. But there's more to it than this. Alexander earned his title the Great and forever made his mark on history. He fought against the world and won. He inspired all around him and lasted a lot longer than he should have. And he was very young, only thirty-two years old. He showed determination; he had a positive outlook and was even against racism. He was a good leader and a man that history should always remember. And all this is why Alexander the Great is my inspirational figure.

Mary Seacole

Amy Jane Gainford, Kirkcudbright Academy, Year 8

My inspirational figure is Mary Seacole, who was a nurse in the Crimean War along with Florence Nightingale. Mary was born in Jamaica and had to work harder and endure more than Florence Nightingale. Her mother was a herbalist, and when she was very little she would practice medicine on dolls or stray dogs in the neighbourhood. When she wanted to go and help soldiers in the Crimean war, give her a job because she was black. She decided to take matters into her own hands, opening 'The British Hotel' on the front line. This was the place where soldiers could come to be healed and rest. Mary would look after them and some said she was like a mother to them. Once the Crimean war was over, Mary looked in all the British hospitals for a job, but no one would accept her. Luckily, the Queen heard what she had done and she was awarded three medals and had her own parade. I'm inspired by Mary because she was so determined and didn't let anything stand in her way.

Randy Blythe

Amy Kirkham, Kirkcudbright Academy, Year 8

Randy is with a band called Lamb of God. He started to drink heavily and got into verbal and physical fights with his band mates. One morning he realised how much pain he had caused to himself, his band mates, his friends and family, and also that he was killing

himself. To signal that this was the start of a new Randy Blythe, he shaved his head and stopped drinking heavily. He has inspired me because he has faced so many problems and has overcome them and now has a better, happier and healthier life. Randy and the band have also inspired me to pursue my drum and piano playing and have shown me that if you want to make it in the music business you have to try, practise but enjoy the music that you make and the gigs you play.

Brian

William McLean, Kirkcudbright Academy, Year 8

My inspirational figure is Brian, a friend of my mum and dad who passed away a year ago. I was used to be subject to bullying and my mum mentioned this to him and he said to me, 'they will be found out in the end, and if you fight you will be found out instead.' When Brian was young he didn't read any books and always got into trouble with the police. He got sent to jail, and on his way he managed to hit the sheriff, so he was sent to an even worse than cell. When he was inside he read almost all the books in the library, making up for everything he missed at school. He came out of prison an optimist and didn't get into trouble with the police again. He went to work with opera singers to boost their confidence, and always told me to look on the bright side of life. I would love to live up to his standards.

Abraham Lincoln

Sarah Joy Hall, Knox Academy, Year 8

Abraham Lincoln was born in 1809. His parents, Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks, were uneducated farmers who lived in a one roomed log cabin. Abraham had only 18 months of schooling and so was mostly self-educated. Over a period of 29 years (1831 to 1860) he had many failures in his political career as well as twice in business. After running for such things as Vice President, Senate and Congress and being defeated in each of them, in 1860 Abraham Lincoln was elected 16th president of the United States. In 1861, Lincoln went to war to preserve the Union. When the war ended in 1864 the Union was preserved and Abraham Lincoln eliminated slavery in the USA!

I have found Abraham Lincoln to be a great inspiration to me. In reading his story of failure I have learnt to keep on trying and trying even when I seem not to be getting any closer to my goals. I have also learnt that no matter how many mistakes we make, there is still an opportunity of success waiting at the end of the road. It may take years to get there but if you continue the long struggle you will make it eventually.

Leona Lewis

Kirsten Baird, Larbert High School, Year 9

Leona Lewis is my inspiring figure because she was a normal person that had a dream to be a famous singer but instead of just having a negative view she went out and won the X Factor and had the best selling single and album of 2007. During the X Factor her singing

got criticized sometimes but she still believed and still tried hard to pursue her dream. Leona Lewis went to Africa for a month to help a children's orphanage. She gave them essential living materials and also donated toys. During her time in Africa she bonded and tried to understand their standard of living and what they go through. She did this all for sports relief and she is also auctioning off a dress that she wore to the Brits Awards and is hoping to raise a lot of money as she got a lot of compliments on the dress. I would like to be like Leona Lewis because I want to be able to in the future to go out and pursue my dreams and not be negative about them.

Jamie Oliver

Albert Bates, Latymer Upper, Year 9

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

Winston Churchill

I think the above quote applies to Jamie Oliver, who is genuine, modest and has helped so many people and animals throughout his life. His career gives hope to many 'school failures', showing that success is still possible. Having achieved his success, he always remembered his origins and wanted to give something back. In 2004, he founded 'fifteen'. This is a foundation designed to inspire disadvantaged youths to recreate their lives in the catering industry. Jamie Oliver has given his time and money to open three charitable non-profit restaurants around the world has changed the lives of many troubled youths. This is incredibly inspiring. Not only this, but in 2006 he attempted to convert British school meals from junk to healthy food, whilst being filmed and making great TV. He managed to get Tony Blair to agree to commit £280 million for proper school dining ingredients, equipment and training. In 2007 he made a programme called 'Jamie's Foul Dinners' in which he attempted to convert Britain into buying free range chickens by exposing battery chicken conditions. What you may not know is that Jamie Oliver is dyslexic. All his recipes are dictated. His success despite his dyslexia offers hope to dyslexics across the globe. I think Jamie is an inspirational figure because he has a passion for life and food and has created a multi-million pound business. I would love to live up to his determination, passion and wish to help others.

"When you make a mistake, don't look back at it for long. Take the reason of the thing into your mind, and then look forward. Mistakes are lessons of wisdom. The past cannot be changed. The future is yet in your power"

Phyllis Bottome, quoted by Rebecca Henderson, Albyn School

Sandy Chipchase

Lucy B, Latymer Upper, Year 9

Sandy Chipchase is an interior designer and mother of two boys who got cancer in her 40s, but she did not let this stop her activity of helping at Belmont Primary School, planting and painting in the garden and organising fairs and events. I admire her because it takes a lot of physical and mental strength to battle with cancer. I admire her courage, determination and perseverance, qualities I myself would like to live up to. Determination does not mean you always get what you want; it simply means you feel as if you can. Sandy's values make her a person to look up to and aspire to be like her. I'd like to finish with a poem which reminds us that many good things happen in life:

*Always remember to forget
The things that made you sad
But never forget to remember
The things that made you glad.*

*Always remember to forget
The friends that proved untrue
But don't forget to remember
Thos that have stuck by you.*

*Always remember to forget
The troubles that have passed away
But never forget to remember
The blessings that come each day.*

Beatrice Wright – my great-grandmother

Ruby Rathbone, Latymer Upper, Year 9

My Gamma was only 10 when her father (who had worked as a spy in Russia in the First World War) had to flee to China to escape the Russian Revolution. Her mother was deaf, which meant she learned sign language as well as Chinese. Her husband John Rathbone was killed in the War and she took his seat in the House of Commons. She remarried had another child, whom she brought with her into the Houses of Parliament, where she was the first woman to breast-feed there. Later on she created a charity called Hearing Dogs for the Deaf, where dogs are trained to alert their owners if the phone or doorbell rings. So I look up to Gamma as a very strong character who came through all kinds of difficult experiences, did amazing work and was surrounded by the love of her children and grandchildren.

Oscar Peterson

Alan MacDonald, Sgoil Lionacleit, Year 10

Oscar Peterson was born on the 15th of August 1925. He was in my opinion, the greatest ever jazz pianist. He suffered a bout of tuberculosis at the age of seven and he decided to focus on the piano. He had also been playing the trumpet. He was taught classical piano by his sister Daisy and he was practising exercises daily. When he was fourteen he won a national music competition and after that he left school and became a professional musician. He became an amazing musician making numerous appearances as a soloist or in an ensemble. He also was making many recordings for famous labels. He also was a great composer and teacher. He was an influential player and he was honoured in Canada. He received numerous awards and worldwide recognition as a phenomenal jazz pianist.

Unfortunately he suffered a stroke in 1993 and his left hand suffered as it lost its mobility, however he regained mobility in his left hand and he received a Grammy for lifetime achievement and an international jazz hall of fame award which indicated that he was a legendary jazz musician and Bob Rae, a politician, an amateur pianist and a friend of Oscar Peterson said: 'a one handed Oscar Peterson was better than just about anyone with two hands'. He died in 2007 in Ontario, Toronto. He never copied anyone, he did his own style and that is why my inspirational figure is Oscar Peterson.

Socrates and Leonidas

Michael McGuinness, Liniclate School, Year 9

Socrates – born 470 BC, died 399 BC. He was a great philosopher and contributed to the vast development of western philosophy. He and his peers are more commonly known for the belief in that the earth is round. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle based this belief on provided and collected facts. They used the stars; they came to the conclusion that because southerly areas could see the stars the northerly areas could not see, then the earth must be spherical. Socrates is a great inspiration to me for many reasons. He did not allow other people to influence his beliefs (like I myself do). He was willing to die for his beliefs. He also viewed things with logic and reason. I am a firm believer in what Socrates stood for, therefore resulting in him being my inspirational figure. His beliefs tie in with my own, you stand strong with what you believe and nobody can influence you're beliefs.

Leonidas – Ancient king of Sparta, he was believed to be a descendant of Hercules. He is best known from the battle of Thermopylae. He stood with 300 brutally trained killing machines and made history for Sparta and her warriors. He fought with his men killing over 15,000 enemies, whereas only a few of his men were killed. Late in the battle Leonidas was betrayed and he was killed, beheaded and crucified. Leonidas is my inspirational figure because he cared for everyone as if all were family (as I do) and he was willing to die to save future generations and he did. He rejected annexation from Persians and was defiant until the very end. His ideals and his character are much like my own today but some I wish I

had. Leonidas was a pure breed warrior, a patriot, he defended his rights until the end, and he loved but was too strong to talk about it. I am almost identical to this man, but regrettably I am no hero. That is why Leonidas is such an inspiration to me.

Jane Tomlinson, CBE

Yasmin Bagli, Loudoun Academy, Year 9

Jane Tomlinson was a mother of three who was given six months to live by a doctor in 2000, but she vowed not to give in to the illness and to fight until she died. Her feats of endurance included cycling across Europe and the US, raising £1.7 million for charity. She was hailed as an inspiration to all those with incurable diseases. Her public profile led to her receiving at one stage 2,500 letters a week from the public. However, some tabloid newspapers suggested that her cancer was not terminal, a claim that proved to be untrue. Jane Tomlinson is an inspiration to people that she had a very big heart and was very caring.

Jane Goodall

Nicola Guthrie, Loudoun Academy, Year 10

“Let us move into the new millennium with hope, for without it is all we can do is eat and drink the last of our resources and we watch our planet slowly die. Instead, let us have faith in ourselves, in our intellect, in our staunch spirit. Let us develop respect for all living things. Let us try to replace impatience and intolerance with understanding and compassion. And love.”

Jane Goodall

Jane Goodall is my inspirational character that she believes we should be respectful to all animals and live in harmony together. I would like to research animals in the same way as she has done and look at their behaviour patterns. The main message she conveys is that animals are our equals and should be shown the same respect; by looking at their ways of life we can understand more about them. I would like to emulate her by campaigning to stop animal testing.

Ty Pennington

Alysha Hamilton, Loudoun Academy, Year 10

Ty Pennington inspires me as the leader of a television programme Extreme Makeover: Home Edition. I like the way he helps people, building them homes that suit their needs. For example, there was a boy in a wheelchair whose house was unsuitable, so Ty tore down house and gave him a huge house with a lift! This helped make him more independent. He is also inspirational because he brought his hands-on skills and design acumen into a career in the entertainment industry as a set designer. I think the reason he inspires me is that he doesn't ask for anything in return, and I think the world needs more people like him.

My dad

Christina Mitchell, Loudoun Academy, Year 9

When my dad was 21, he fell off his motorbike and broke his spine. He was on crutches for three years and had a walking stick for a long time after that. He inspires me because he fought his way through a hard time with a little bit of hope and he got there. He believed in himself and never gave up. He is now manager of J.H. Donalds' store in Ayr. His message is never to give up no matter what happens and always try your hardest to fight what you believe in.

Anne Frank

Ashley Wilson, Loudoun Academy, Year 2

Anne Frank, I believe, made such an impact on me with her diary, that she became an inspiration to me. One of my favourite quotes of hers is 'It only takes a moment to start to improve the world'. Anne Frank was a Jewish girl who was living in the time of the Jewish Holocaust. She lived in Amsterdam in Holland with her mother, father and sister. When Jews were starting to get taken away to concentration camps Anne and her family went into hiding, along with another family who had one son, Peter who Anne falls in love with. Sadly, Anne and her families were found in the Annexe they hid in and were taken to a concentration camp. Her mother, sister and even poor Anne herself died in that concentration camp. The only member to survive was Otto Frank, Anne's dad. When he found Anne's diary and realised she was never coming home he published her diary to show what horrors they and other Jews had been living in but also just to show how brave and strong his daughter was through the war.

Anne wrote in her diary every day, recording things about the war and her daily life. Her diary was her best friend. The key to her darkest secrets. Anne called her diary Kitty. Anne always wanted her diary published. Sadly, she never saw what an impact it had on society when people read what she went through. She really is an inspiration. She kept going and never gave up. I think the reason she made such an impact on me was because she was just an ordinary girl whose life was ripped apart but she always looked on the bright side and stayed strong. Anne inspired me to start a diary myself and I have kept one for 5 and a half years, though not as devotedly as Anne.

Holocaust survivors

Ceilidh Wright, Loudoun Academy, Year 9

My inspirational figures are the survivors of the Holocaust. These people have been through a very hard time. Whether it was through starvation, being gassed or not having enough sleep, too much work, being shot, or even having cruel experiments done on them. The survivors were rescued in May 1945, and there weren't many left; only a handful of the millions who had died. I really respect these people for not giving up, not ending their lives

by themselves. And thinking positively that one bright day they would be free and safe again in the arms of their family and loved ones.

“Perseverance is not a glamorous; it's many short races one after the other”

Walter Elliot, quoted by Mark Sinton, St Aidans High School

Jesse Owens

Ryan Christie, Millburn Academy, Year 9

If you never give up you can achieve greatness.

This was said by Jesse Owens who inspires me. He kept on trying and believing in himself and was very successful. Jesse met a famous runner in school and was told never to give up. He kept training and a year later went to the 1936 Olympics where he won 4 gold medals! Jesse Owens met a young boy on his way home and said 'if you believe in yourself and never give up, you can achieve anything.' That same boy won 2 gold medals at the Olympics 12 years later! Jesse Owens showed me that anything is possible if you don't give up and that the way you approach a challenge matters a lot.

Sir Tom Farmer

Timothy Ness, Monifieth High School, Year 8

Sir Tom Farmer had a good positive outlook and is an inspiration to me. Sir Tom Farmer started up the now turned giant company called kwik-fit which gained him millions. With all this money he could do anything and make his life even better than it was. He used his skill of a positive outlook to see all the much better things to do with his money, some things he did for the children, some for poor people but we know that he did it from his heart. He started many charity events and gave lots of his money to charity. He also gave lots of young people a chance of a good life in other, poorer countries.

My auntie

Laura Sanger, Monifieth High School, Year 8

My inspirational figure is my auntie Alison because she manages to fit a lot into her life but she still finds time for her family and friends. She has a very demanding full time job with a bank, she also teaches a Sunday school and she has her own family to look after. She takes the time to go and visit her mum and her relatives too. She never forgets our birthday or Christmas presents, my auntie is a very happy person even if things aren't going her way she stays calm and finds a way through it and tries to make it better for everyone. She has a daughter, a son and a husband (who also works at a bank). The challenge that my auntie

Alison faces every day is time because her children need her time, her husband needs her time and her job needs her, and she has to make time for herself. She also has to keep in touch with her family and friends and still have time to prepare for her work and go to church every Sunday with plans or work for the children to do and so that they enjoy church.

The thing that makes my Auntie so inspiring is that I have never seen her cross, she is always calm and doesn't see problems, she sees solutions to everything in life, and nothing can stop her!

A poem for my auntie:

*When I was little,
I looked up at you,
And now I'm older,
I still do.
Through thick and thin,
You've always been there,
I always know,
That you will care.*

Sir Alexander Fleming

Conner Gettings, Notre Dame High School, Year 11

Alexander Fleming is a person I admire because he made one of the most important discoveries in human history – and one that would save millions of lives. He came from a poor farming family in the Ayrshire Moors and thanks to a rich man's generosity (Sir Winston Churchill's father) he would receive the best education available. He would go on to do medicine and specialised in microbiology. It wouldn't be till another ten years until he would discover a mould that would create the first and greatest antibiotic penicillin. The first time he used this miracle drug was in a hospital in America. The problem was that he knew it could save lives but he didn't know how. So when he used it on the first patient he had no idea the effect it would create. It would work however, and the drug went on to save many more lives. It was the courage that he displayed that impressed me and the fact it had such a profound effect on society and at a time when the world was in turmoil – World War Two. A magazine at the time said 'it will save more lives than war can use up' and it was true: it has.

My nana

Jacqueline Haire, Notre Dame High School, Year 11

My Nana is an inspiration to me because throughout to 74 years of life she always put everyone else's needs before her own. She did all kinds of jobs caring for others -- nurse,

nursery nurse and even school attendance officer. She took early retirement to look after me and my mum and dad to work spent the last years of her life fighting for the healthcare of my Papa, who took a stroke due to an operation that went wrong eight years ago. She was everyone's rock and we all miss her terribly.

Evelyn Glennie

Samantha Parker, Notre Dame High School, Year 10

Evelyn Glennie is deaf and yet she was the first person in musical history to successfully create and sustain a full-time career as a solo percussionist. I really look up to Evelyn Glennie as even though she is deaf she proved everyone wrong and showed them that having this problem wouldn't stop her doing the thing she loved. She has shown me that I should never give up on my dreams and if I work hard and prove people who doubt me wrong I will have a better chance of achieving my goal.

My granda

Kirsty Harold, Oldmachar Academy, Year 9

The person who has been the most inspirational in my life so far has been my Granda. He has always been there for me for as long as I can remember, giving me piggybacks around the house and making me laugh, and more recently sitting with me for hours. He does not judge what I say or do, he only offers constructive comments and support. If I don't take this advice he doesn't get annoyed or not speak to me, but encourages me to make my own decisions and be responsible for the outcome.

All this gives me confidence to do well in school and to be a better person. One of the main things he has influenced me in is to follow my religion, to be proud of my beliefs and not to be embarrassed or ashamed in front of my friends. Because of this I now have strong beliefs which I find a great comfort and this has given me confidence to meet a whole new group of friends. As well as this, he is the most loving, kind man you will ever meet.

Sir David Attenborough FRS

Gaynor Lawrence, Oldmachar Academy, Year 9

Sir David Attenborough is a very caring person. He loves the environment and has dedicated his 50-year career to it. He spent his childhood collecting fossils and stones and other natural specimens. He received encouragement in this pursuit at the age of seven when a young Jaquetta Hawks admired his 'museum'. A couple of years after his adopted sister gave him a piece of amber filled with prehistoric creatures, some fifty years later it was the focus of his programme 'The Amber Time Machine'. This shows how he cherishes everything even small presents which is what I admire. He treats the animals as if they were human. He has had many big TV series such as Blue Planet and his latest series Life in Cold Blood. The animals in this programme are all very beautiful and also individual like the

Lyre bird. It can imitate many noises even a camera shot. It is so called named because its tail is shaped like a Lyre (harp). Sir David always treats the animals fairly, and that is why I appreciate him. He treats all as he would like to be treated.

“You cannot truly listen to anyone and do anything else at the same time”

M Scott Peck, quoted by Elizabeth Irvine, Renfrew High School

Tina

Heather Dickson, Peebles High School, Year 9

My inspirational figure is a friend of my mum's called Tina. She had breast cancer a few years ago but remained optimistic and cheerful the whole way through her treatment. She's now cured and works with teenagers with cancer and raises lots of money for charities through putting on events. She always manages to see the bright side of things and is very caring towards other people. If I ever got ill like Tina, I hope I would be as optimistic as brave as her!

Sir Douglas Bader

Robbie Leeson, Peebles High School, Year 9

What inspires me most about Douglas Bader is his perseverance. Losing both your legs would be enough to make anyone depressed. But to keep going in the circumstances is admirable. He was injured performing some low-flying aerobatics and lost both his legs. Later when he had recovered, he was out and about, driving with one leg. He met his wife to be at a restaurant and on the second occasion was able to dance with his new legs. He applied to join the RAF as a pilot when World War II broke out and managed to pull off the same aerobatics that had put him in hospital. Eventually, he was shot down and captured. Escaping twice, with and without legs, he was taken to Colditz until the war ended. It would be fantastic if everyone had the courage and perseverance of Douglas Bader.

Andrew Carnegie (1835 – 1919)

Niall Ridgeway, Peebles High School, Year 2

Personal wealth should be used to benefit society as a whole.

This is from Andrew Carnegie's Gospel of Wealth (1889). I find his wisdom and generosity remarkably inspiring as not many people in this modern day society would have the munificence to be as big hearted as he was. I admire his ability to give unselfishly and I would like to be as giving as he was. He was born in Dunfermline in 1835 and his family

moved to the USA in 1848. At the age of 13 he started work in a cotton factory but soon moved to become a messenger with a local telegraph company. He then became superintendent of the Pennsylvania Railroad in Pittsburgh in 1853. At that time he successfully introduced the first sleeping cars. At the same time he was investing money in Storey Farm at Oil Creek which yielded oil and a good return for Carnegie. In 1865 he co-founded the Keystone Bridge Company and also became a partner in an iron foundry. This created the Carnegie Steel Company. But in 1901 he sold out to J.P. Morgan for an estimated \$500 million after an industrial dispute.

From the 1880s till the end of his life, he funded over 2,500 public libraries in the USA, Britain and Canada. The largest charitable foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, disburses about \$15 million annually for the advancement and diffusion of knowledge. Other charities include the Carnegie Institute Washington, The Carnegie UK Trust, The Carnegie Institute of Technology and he also financed The Hague Peace Palace and The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. His humble background inspired him to create a better world. Andrew Carnegie worked hard for his money and invested wisely. He distributed his own personal wealth so that many others may benefit. There are many institutions named after this great man, so in many ways he is still giving long after his death.

The message that he conveyed was that no matter how much money you make, the feeling of giving is by far the greatest. Andrew Carnegie has a rightful mindset and has many admirable qualities that many people have tried to copy yet few have succeeded as they are the foundations of our society today.

My granny – Christina Margaret Butler

Paul Sherriffs, Pitlochry High School, Year 8

My Granny is a wonderful person who is charitable, hard-working and always giving up her time for others. She believes that we should live in a fair world and that everyone has the right to a chance in life, no matter how poor they are. At the moment she is supporting Amnesty International, Tear Fund, Oxfam, Trade Craft, the Donkey Sanctuary and Christian Aid. She gathers things for Malawi and Blytheswood homeless project. She also supports the community, for example the local school, the Church, the garage and the post office. She visits the local old folks home and does meals on wheels. My Granny has achieved so much by making other people happy and in turn that makes her happy. She has always played football, board games, cards and climbed trees so it's fair to say that she is great fun. I'm inspired by my Granny because she has always tried to make other people's lives better.

My mum

Sarah Elphinstone, Porthlethen Academy, Year 9

Although I find many people inspirational, I thought this year I would write about someone a bit close to home, Jill. A loving mother of three and a wonderful wife, my mum has always

been there for me and my whole family and has achieved many things in her life. She is 44 years old and works in an accountants firm. When she was in school, probably about my age (13), she was a bit of a rebel. She was never one to follow the crowd, a bit like I am now. Although she has managed to become a very successful woman, she made many mistakes when she was younger. One of these was not staying on at school and most of the time, not showing her full potential. She was always naturally bright but the majority of the time failed to even try and prove it. When she met my dad, Paul, they decided to have their first child. Unfortunately she had complications at birth and the baby died. Luckily, she was strong and moved on! 'When one door closes, another opens.' About a year later she gave birth to my older sister, Lucy and then about 18 months later, me.

She did not work as she wanted to spend the first couple of years with us as youngsters. A couple of years after that she had her first baby boy, Daniel. My dad was still the only one working most of the time although she did some cleaning jobs here and there. I feel that if you got paid as a mum she would have been promoted about a million times. We grew up to be polite, well behaved children although we all have a very vibrant sense of humour. We are all currently doing well at school as well. She is a very good teacher in the lessons of life. When she was forty she decided to pursue her childhood dream, becoming a nurse. She studied hard with my father helping take over many of her motherly roles. She managed to pass her degree with flying colours and as you would have expected she had a great sense of achievement.

Half way through her course she did think she was going to give up, but she knew she would be able to do it and wanted to prove it to herself. At the end of her 3 years she discovered there were no jobs in Aberdeen. Although this would have been a great disappointment for most people, mum decided it was for the best and decided to get a different job. Some people may have thought she was wasting her talent of nursing but I know that she would be good at everything she tries and the best possible thing she could do is be a good mum and I know she is.

A Great motto in life is 'To learn from your mistakes!' Nobody is perfect and therefore everyone at some point in their life will make a mistake. This would mean that learning from them and not repeating them would be the best way to move forward with your life and to keep a positive attitude.

If you never let go of the past you will never move on, if you continue to worry about something that has already happened you would not be able to pursue the dreams that you set out to do. For example, if in an exam you did not manage to get the required pass mark, it is pointless to worry and therefore you should move on and try to do better next time.

My granda

Gregor McLaren, Porthlethen Academy, Year 9

My inspirational figure is my Granda because he had a very bad lifestyle and paid the price

with two heart attacks. Then the doctors told him he had to change his lifestyle dramatically or he might not last long! So he's tried his hardest and now plays 18 holes of golf a day and doesn't eat any more fatty food. He is my inspiration because the odds were against him. When this happened I was so worried because we are very close and I thought I was going to lose him. This thought kept me awake most of the night. I spent about a week in hospital with him before coming back to school. I now love to play golf with him and treasure every day as you don't know when it may be his or even your last day! I believe you don't realise how much you love your family until something like this happens.

Henri Matisse

Zoya Afzal, Putney High School, Year 7

Henri Matisse was a French artist born in 1869 and known for the bright colours he brought into art. He grew up in north-east France, where his parents owned a seed business. He only started to paint when in hospital suffering from appendicitis. His mother came to visit him and brought him a paintbox. He immediately fell in love with art and described it as a kind of paradise, deciding to become an artist and disappointing his father who had other plans for him. He started with still-lives and landscapes but soon began to use brighter and more exotic colours. His main influence was another artist called Chardin. Matisse in his turn influenced many other artists. He died in 1954. He inspires me because of the changes he made in art, showing me that everyone can create change if they try. I really admire the originality of his work and the way he developed abstract painting.

Florence Nightingale

Iona Casley, Putney High School, Year 7

Florence Nightingale was brought up in a rich family, and although her parents strictly forbade it, started to become a nurse. She knew what she was going to be at my age (twelve) when she had already saved an old shepherd dog's life. She stood up against her parents so that she could work in a dirty diseased hospital when the Crimean war started. She became known as 'the lady with the lamp' and saved many, many lives, for which she grew famous, even though she didn't want to. I admire her for standing up against her family for what she thought was right, helping thousands of people, contributing to the healthcare today (she wrote lots of letters pressuring hospitals to improve their hygiene), and, after all of that, not even particularly wanting to get famous for it, as if she thought that everyone should do what she did, not just her so it wouldn't be different and special. I admire her for being determined, brave and very, very kind. She was a multi-life-saver and multi-life-savers deserve a chance to be thought about.

Jehan Sadat

Eleanor Conradie, Putney High School, Year 8

Jehan Sadat is a campaigner for peace and women's rights, who at the age of 16 fell in love with Anwar Sadat, who was later President of Egypt and was assassinated in 1981. She

destroyed the divorce laws that ruin women's chances of starting a new life and set up many village cooperatives for peasant women. She set up the Talla Society as a women's support centre teaching handicrafts. She created a city for injured and disabled veterans and their families. I chose Jehan Sadat as my inspirational figure as she shows that people can carry on helping others even when their husbands have been assassinated. She is a very kind, caring and loving person who has changed many people's lives.

Mary Seacole

Jessie McNally, Putney High School, Year 7

Mary Seacole was born in Jamaica in 1805. At the age of 12 she started helping her mother nurse sick patients, but she longed to travel on ships. During the Crimean War she opened the British Hotel 2 miles from the front, providing care and good food for injured soldiers, as well as a shop. The book she wrote about her life was a bestseller, and she was awarded medals by Turkey, France and Britain.

I find her inspiring because even though she was turned away by different hospitals she persevered and had the courage to follow her dream. I would like to live up to her perseverance, courage and kindness. She rescued injured men from the battlefield, risking her own life in the process. Her impact on the world today is that everybody deserves to be cared for, whether black or white, English or Jamaican, male or female. Many people today find Florence Nightingale inspirational, but when I look back at how she shooed Mary away so as to get more credit herself it annoys me because the patients should come first.

Martin Luther King

Alexandra Owens, Putney High School, Year 8

I think that Martin Luther King is an inspirational figure, because he never gave up. On his journey to achieve equal rights for black people, Martin was sent to prison three times and seriously injured after an attack made on him, however none of this stopped him. Martin Luther King knew what he was doing was dangerous, yet he still stayed true to his beliefs and risked his life for what was right. He is an inspiration to everyone because of his courage and perseverance. Martin Luther King showed how you should always believe in yourself and never give up on what you truly believe. No matter how much danger he was in, or how many people were against him, Martin Luther King never stopped believing in what he thought was right. Sadly he was assassinated on April 4th 1968, but Martin Luther King is never forgotten because he has influenced people in so many ways, showing that one person strongly believing in the right thing CAN make a difference.

Mevlana-Rumi

Mareeha Ahmed, Queen Anne High School, Year 8

Mevlana, also known as Rumi, is my inspirational figure because he was a philosopher and

mystic of Islam. He used to teach men from all religions about peace and love. Melvana was born on 30th September 1207 in Balkh, now known as Afghanistan. Mevlana was a philosopher and mystic, but not a Muslim of the traditional type. His principles advocate unlimited tolerance, goodness, positive reasoning, charity, and awareness through love. To him and to his disciples, all religions were more or less truth. Looking with the same eye on Muslim, Jew and Christians alike, his peaceful and tolerant teachings appeal to men of all sects and creeds.

When he died, 30th September 1273 in Konya, now known as Turkey, he was laid to rest beside his father and over his remains, a beautiful shrine was erected. The 13th century Mevlana Mausoleum with its mosque, dance hall, dervish living quarters, schools and tombs of some leaders of the Mevlevi Order continues to this day to draw pilgrims from all parts of the Muslim and non-Muslim world.

“The integrity of men is to be measured by their conduct, not by their professions”

Junius, quoted Nicola Black, Notre Dame High School

Dame Ellen MacArthur

Ellie Brisbane, Queen Anne High School, Year 8

My inspirational figure is Ellen MacArthur. She was only 19 when she sailed around Britain solo in a 21 foot yacht. At 21, she sailed solo across the Atlantic and at 23 became yachtsman of the year. I think her biggest achievement was when she broke round the world solo record in 2005 in 71 days. I really admire her for this because it must be so hard to keep going with no one to talk to and especially when things go wrong. Ellen MacArthur inspires me because she must have put in so much hard work and determination to achieve what she has. In 2003 she had failed round the world record attempt when her mast broke. She still persevered, though, and two years later broke the world record. It can be so easy to give up, and I really admire people who keep trying.

Colin Jackson

Naomi Fox, Queen Anne High School, Year 8

I have chosen Colin Jackson as my inspirational figure because he is really done something with his life and achieved his dream of becoming an Olympic hurdler. I am a keen hurdler and would like to achieve similar things. My favourite poem reminds me of him.

Love the game.

Love the game for the pure joy of accomplishment.

Love the game for everything it can teach you about yourself.
Love the game for the feeling of belonging to a group endeavouring to do its best.
Love the game for being involved in a team whose members can't wait to see you do your best.
Love the game to the challenge of working harder than you ever have at something and then harder than that.
Love the game because it takes all team members to give it life.
Love the game because at its best, the game tradition will include your contributions.
Love the game because you belong to a long line of fine athletes who have loved it. It is now your legacy.
Love the game so much that you will pass on your love of the game to another athlete has seen your dedication, your work, your challenges, your triumphs.... and then that athlete will, because of you, love the game.

Oskar Schindler

Heather Houston, Queen Anne High School, Year 9

Oskar Schindler was born on 28th April 1908 in Austria. Had he been alive today he would have celebrated his 100th birthday. However, he died of a heart seizure on 9th October 1974. He had expressed to a number of Schindlerjuden (Schindler Jews) that he wished to be buried in Jerusalem; permission was granted for him to be buried in the Latin Cemetery of Jerusalem. He was directly responsible for saving the lives of 1,100 Jews during WW II. Today, six thousand descendants of Schindler Jews live on. The Nazi's exterminated 6 million Jews during World War II. Oskar Schindler saved the lives of Jewish people whilst putting his own life in constant danger and he made himself bankrupt, spending his personal fortune on bribes to keep the Nazi leaders from seizing 'his Jews'. Oskar Schindler was honoured by the Jewish community in his own lifetime and when he died he was mourned in every continent throughout the world. I think he was an inspiration to all as he saved so many lives and gave everything up for people he hardly knew.

My brother Ross

Melissa Kilday, Queen Anne High School, Year 8

My inspirational figure is my little brother Ross because of his bravery and courage through everything that has happened. He was diagnosed with an illness called aplastic anaemia, which affects your bone marrow. I wouldn't like to be like him, but I can't believe an eight-year-old could cope with all the blood transfusions and operations. I couldn't have done it. He is in remission now and on the mend. He has enough energy to fight me anyway, but I win, obviously!

My dad

Lauren Miller, Queen Anne High School, Year 8

I chose my dad is my inspirational figure because when he was young he always wanted to

be a footballer and play for his favourite team, Hibs. One day when he was playing for a Hibs children's football club, the Hibernian manager came and asked him if he could sign a contract, which meant that when he was 16 he could leave school and play for Hibs. My dad did play for quite a lot of famous football teams such as Hibs, Dundee and Scotland. I find this inspiring for anyone who has a dream for their future, since it shows that they can follow their dreams and become a success if they believe in themselves.

Cleopatra

Jennifer Wright, Queen Anne High School, Year 8

Cleopatra was born in Alexandria, and became Queen by marrying her brother. She falls in love with Julius Caesar and has a son by him, but he is killed before she can make him emperor. She marries Mark Anthony who dies after being wounded in a battle. Only a few days later she herself is killed by a snakebite - the snake had been hidden in a basket of fakes. This woman inspires me to fight for what I believe in and to be as kind as possible. I hope that in a few years I will know my mind well enough so that I know my dream and will be able to move forward in life, and also help others find their dreams.

My dad

Kieran Watson, Queen Anne High School, Year 8

My inspirational figure is my dad, because he once swam in the Commonwealth Games, and I would like to do so as well in Glasgow in 2014, like my dad. He now works as a sports manager for Perth Leisure. He grew up in a small village with the famous footballer John Thomson, and started swimming for his local club at the age of six, going on to swim for his country and later for Great Britain. I think my dad is an inspirational figure to many people in Scotland. I am very proud of him and would like to be just like him when I grow up.

My mum

Ashleigh Edwards, Radyr Comprehensive, Year 8

When I was a child we lived in a really rough place. My mum didn't have a job so I thought I'd never be able to achieve things I wanted to. My life turned around when she found out about a university course, and ended up as a first class honours student in law at Oxford University. She inspires me because she showed a different side of herself determined to accomplish her dreams. Previously she didn't have enough self-confidence to think she could accomplish this dream. Now I'm becoming more self-confident every day and I'm so proud of her.

Richard Hammond

Philip Marsh, Radyr Comprehensive, Year 8

My inspirational figure is Richard Hammond. I think he is very strong mentally and

physically. As you probably know he crashed whilst going at 288 mph. He was treated for serious brain injuries; he has no memory of the crash. 10,000 bhp will have thrown him off course. If that was you or me we would have said that's it, I have had my run but no he said, 'Oh well, let's get another fast car and try not to crash.' He is my inspirational figure because he does not back down when something goes wrong and I admire him for that.

Emmeline Pankhurst

Sophie Shenton, Radyr Comprehensive, Year 8

Emmeline Pankhurst was a suffragette, one of the people who believed that women should have equal rights to men. She founded a major group, The Women's Social and Political Union. She was arrested on several occasions for her demonstrations and would protest while in prison by going on hunger strike. This resulted in violent force-feeding, but she kept going. Eventually, after a long struggle, her cause was successful and women were allowed to vote.

Without women like her, men might still be seen as superior. She fought for a good cause, and even though it was tough, she persevered and won more rights for women. She shows me that if you work hard for something that you believe in, you can succeed. She may have had a daunting task and many people against her, but she achieved a great success, which has had a good affect for many, many people.

“What is wonderful about great literature is that transforms the man who reads it towards the condition of the man who wrote, and brings to birth in us also the creative impulse” - EM Forster

“The most wasted day of all is that on which we have not laughed” -Sebastien Chamfort

“Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent”

- Isaac Asimov. All quoted by Joshua Richards, George Heriot's School
I enjoyed looking for quotes, as I found many good ones but the quotes from Chamfort and Asimov are very simple statements that are some of the wisest words I have read. If only society could actually act on all these proverbs instead of just letting them in one ear and drain out the other.

Martin Luther King

Megan Thomas and Ashleigh Edwards, Radyr Comprehensive, Year 8

If you or someone you care about was suffering would you be able to co-operate or would you worry? You need to co-operate so you can become well by taking clear instructions or giving them. Admirable people such as Martin Luther King have desperately strived for their goal and have courageously risked their lives campaigning for better lives for not just them but the people around them. Martin Luther King cared strongly about the suffering of the black people and he co operated with other inspirational people to try and achieve proper freedom for his race. Martin Luther King could have been a normal man and could not have bothered to risk everything to privilege all black people, but instead decided to, not just for him but for all black Americans as well. He showed his courage through his amazing determination.

He didn't start off life as an inspirational, courageous person; he became that by persisting throughout his admirable life. As the old Chinese proverb says 'Even the tallest tower was started from the ground'. He has shown that one person really can change the world. This shows that we can achieve whatever we want too. If we persevere and never lose faith in our dreams we could be as brave and influential as Martin Luther King. Currently we are not important people to the world but we can persevere and become important to the welfare of the earth and everyone on it.

It is important that children and young adults have good role models that motivate them to do brilliant things, change the world around them and grow up to be clever, confident, kind people who achieve their dreams and make sure that they and others can live happily and harmoniously in a fair world.

Annie Lennox

Clare Pearson, St Aidan's High School, Year 10

My inspirational figure is the Scottish singer-songwriter Annie Lennox. Although I admire her musical talents, I also think her work raising awareness on human rights issues is highly commendable. She has used her media profile for the good of many other people all over the world. I have always been interested in Annie Lennox's style of music -- pop and rock mixed with blue-eyed soul, music I have grown up with. As a singing enthusiast, I love her interesting and unique voice.

Kylie Minogue

Rebecca Somerville, St Aidan's High School, Year 11

Kylie Minogue is a 40-year-old pop star. I did not admire her much when I was younger, but now I have a different view. This is mainly because of the battle against breast cancer. 'She used to look fab wearing the latest fashion, now, she just needs to wear her smile.' (Shout

Magazine) Cancer is a horrible process to go through, and having to watch a loved one battle against the disease is even worse as you feel so helpless. Many of my family members had been diagnosed with the illness, including my four year old cousin. So Kylie helps me to deal with similar problems and be happy and grateful for my life.

Leopold Socha

Gareth Fleming, St David's High School, Year 9

Leopold Socha is a really inspiring figure to me. He was a sewer worker in the town on Lvov who used the tunnels to hide stolen black-market goods which he sold on for a profit. One day he discovered a group of Jews hiding in the rat-infested tunnels of the sewer in the summer of 1943. They had fled there as the Nazis murdered the last Jews of the Lvov ghetto. The tunnels had been the only place that they could find to hide. The Jewish men, women and children could not leave the sewer and had no way of obtaining food, water or clothing. Socha knew that helping Jews was punishable by death and that if he betrayed the victims' whereabouts the Nazis would reward him. The reward would be handsome and he would be able to have a much better standard of living. It was a huge temptation to a man like Socha, but he did not give in. The Jews spent 14 months in the sewer and Socha brought them food every day. Although the Jews did pay him, the amount did not even cover the cost of providing food and clothing.

He also brought them a Jewish prayer book and Sabbath candle sticks that he found in the ghetto. It was a really risky thing to do as the families contained two small children and a baby. At one point Socha had to lead the Nazis very close past the families when they were searching the sewers. Tragically, soon after Socha was able to bring the Jews out of the sewers and back as he called it 'Into the daylight' he was killed in an accident with a tram.

I find this character so inspiring as he is just an ordinary man who acted in an extraordinary way to help other people. He knew that he could face death, but he put the lives of the fourteen people in the sewer before himself. He sacrificed everything and put his life on the line for people that he did not even know. The story also tells me that you do not have to be famous or wealthy to make a difference in the lives of others. I suppose if someone like Socha could act in an extraordinary way, then a boy called Gareth Fleming could also act in an extraordinary way to help others. This story inspires me to make a difference in the world.

My dad John

Tilly Elizabeth Mary Galbraith, St George's School for Girls, Year 8

My inspirational figure is my Dad, John. My Dad is inspirational to me because he is always thinking of others. He flies to London or Kazakhstan every week for work. He works for me and my family, so I can go to the school I want to go to and so can my sister and brothers as well. He has also earned us a safe secure and homely home that I can return to every night. Even when he comes home he is either taking me and my sibling's to places we need to go to.

In 2003 he also cycled to Rome to raise money for a charity called MS which sadly caused my uncle Philip, to pass away and my aunty suffers from it. It took him three weeks with only two days rest and he cycled over the Alps, all completely unaccompanied. He hoped to raise at least £10,000 but managed to raise over £40,000. He devotes a lot of his time to others. When I am older I would also like to help others by raising money for charity. I would like to devote myself to others like he does to me every day.

My granny

Catriona Logan, St George's School for Girls, Year 8

The person I admire most is my Granny, who is 82 and still as active and bubbly as a younger woman. She never complains about the jobs and tasks she faces. She has good Christian ways and always attends church, which inspires me to be like her. Granny always had a smile on her face and a sparkle in her eye which makes you feel warm inside. She runs a B&B in Harris. Her door is always open and she gives you the warmest welcome. When I first see my Granny she tucks me into her arms and I never want to let go! Her baking skills are excellent and when I wake up in the morning it is to the fresh smell of pancakes. I love her smile and the way she has lived her life to become kind, friendly and caring woman. Hopefully, I will turn out to be like my Granny.

Orlando Bloom

Lauren Bircher, St.Kentigern's Academy, Year 9

People who never give up and always give their best in life inspire me. One person in this category is Orlando Bloom. He had many difficulties at school due to dyslexia, but did well in creative subjects and left to join the National Youth Theatre at the age of 16, moving on to the Guildhall two years later. In 1998, he fell from a three-storey building and broke his back. In interview, he explained, 'it wasn't as unfortunate as it could've been. I landed between an old washing machine and a wall. It could've been worse. The fire brigade had to be called out because I couldn't move. I was just in so much shock.' He was sent to hospital and had many operations to fix his back, which was broken in several places. The doctors told him he would probably never walk again but miraculously he walked out of the hospital within 12 days on a pair of crutches. His breakthrough came when he gained the part of Legolas in Lord of the Rings. The message he conveyed was 'Believe in yourself and you can achieve anything,' which is why he inspires me.

Gordon Ramsay

Nicole Eadie, St.Kentigern's Academy, Year 2

My inspirational figure is Gordon Ramsay. I admire him a lot because he had a rough and troubling childhood. He still managed to become one of the most successful chefs, and has many people looking up to him. He inspires me to try my hardest to achieve my dream of becoming a successful vet. Gordon Ramsay had a really tough childhood, his dad was a womaniser and beat his mum, at the age of 16 his brother Ronnie became an addict.

Gordon and his wife had trouble conceiving their first child, because since he worked as a chef it meant the heat from the oven lowered his sperm count. Eventually they conceived a beautiful baby daughter. Gordon Ramsay had a very big obstacle to overcome, getting his brother Ronnie clean. After sending him to countless clinics. Ronnie finally gave up drugs. Gordon Ramsay has a massive impact on many people across the globe. He entertains us with TV shows such as 'the F word' and 'Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares'. Gordon Ramsay has, and always will, inspire me to chase after my dream no matter how big.

Jenny Thomson

Elaine Livera, St Margarets School, Year 9

The person that inspires me is a person that I see almost every day. She is always trustworthy and has given me most of the confidence I have today. My quote; 'If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again,' is a very good reflection of her and that is the attitude that she has drilled into my head from the first day I met her. Her name is Jenny Thomson and she is my hockey coach.

Jenny is always kind and never turns her back on you when you need help. As well as coaching me and a whole lot of other people like me, she is also studying at university and playing hockey at national league level. You can always count on her being there for you being it in the rain, snow, sleet or hail. She will always be out there making you feel better. She never says 'Oh, I can't be bothered to go training tonight.' No ... she is always there for you. She never gets upset or angry if 'at first you don't succeed' or can't do it. She will keep teaching you until you get it. She has always told me to 'Never give up' and 'keep working at it and then someday it will all click into place'. It has now.

I am not the little shy girl in the corner anymore. My confidence level has gone up dramatically since she has been my coach and I hope to be like her someday, balancing learning, coaching, and playing hockey all at once no matter where I am in the world.

Doreen Roger

Victoria Roger, St. Margaret's School, Year 11

Not all heroes have to wear flashy capes and possess supernatural powers. My mother, Doreen Roger, was one such hero, but instead of fighting an evil arch nemesis, she fought cancer. She isn't my inspiration because she fought cancer, but also because she inspired me to gain confidence and that I could achieve anything I put my mind to. I learnt a lot from her, such as the ability to stand up for myself and other who are in need, even if pressured by others not to do so.

Without a doubt, she was not perfect, but that is what connects us to 'heroes'. She did, however, have four main aspects that I respect: love for her family, courage when it seemed that all hope had fled, the ability to listen when no one else would and turning what most people would deem an impossible task into something attainable.

When someone dies of cancer or any type of disease it is often said that they have 'lost the fight' but this cannot be said about my mother. Yes, she did die, but to truly lose a fight, one must give up completely and admit defeat. Not once did she ever stop fighting and this is why my mother, Doreen Roger, is my inspirational figure.

Stephani Victor

Mairi Chaimbeul, St Mary's Music School, Year 10

Difficult things take a long time, impossible things a little longer – Anon.

Stephani Victor is an inspiring young woman whom I read about! Stephani Victor was brought up in Pennsylvania and dreamed of being an actress and film-maker. Shortly after graduation in 1995 as an outstanding film student she was the victim of a devastating accident, after which doctors had to amputate both her legs in an attempt to save her life. Many doctors told her that she would never be able to walk again, but in spite of all the odds she learnt to walk and has since become a world class mono-skier, winning an Olympic gold medal in the sport. Stephani had an outstanding will to live, and amazing perseverance in the face of so many odds.

While she was in intensive care she even had the dream of making a film about her tragedy, which has since been made – 'The Lengths I will Go.' She endured countless operations and surgery over the next 3 years. But in 1999 she tried alpine skiing for the first time since her accident. She then began to pursue her goal of a Paralympic gold medal victory and by 2000 had already won a U.S national title in Slalom.

By persevering and overcoming the many, many factors which could easily have worked against her, Stephani Victor not only achieved the impossible, walking, but is now the world champion skier, overall world cup winner, and 8 times U.S national champion. I believe that Stephani Victor is an incredibly inspiring person whom I truly respect for having conquered so many difficulties where so many others would have simply given up. I now realise that if I persevere and focus that I can really achieve something otherwise thought impossible.

"I am not an Athenian, nor a Greek, but a citizen of the world"

Socrates, quoted by Jessica McKinna, George Heriot's School

Henry Ward Beecher.

Tegan Todd, St Mary's Music School, Year 10

"Hold yourself responsible for a higher standard than anyone else expects of you. Never excuse yourself" - Henry Ward Beecher.

This quotation makes me think of my inspirational figure – my great grandmother – Rena Moisenko. I am honoured to be related to a lady of such strength, courage and determination and someone who never excused herself even though she had reason to at times. I hope that I will have the same belief and determination and ability to never give up and the same courage to face adversity as Rena did.

Rena was born in Moscow and came from a very wealthy, aristocratic Russian family. She had a natural talent for languages and music. She was a professional concert pianist. She met her English husband in Russia and they lived for a number of years in Estonia. They had two sons. Sadly her husband died when the boys were very young. At the same time, Rena's family estate was confiscated along with all her money and valuables, by the Russian revolutionaries. Rather than stay in Russia where life was about to become very oppressive, Rena left the country and made for her husband's home in England. She fled with very little money sewn into her fur coat, hand luggage and her two boys. She got to England (a foreign country to Rena) and found she had to provide for her children. The only way she could make ends meet was to teach Russian and give piano and singing lessons. Severe tennis elbow prevented her from resuming her career as a pianist so she made another bold and daring decision – to retrain as an opera singer. She went on to become a leading soprano at La Scala, Milan. When she retired she returned to England and wrote two well received specialist music books which are still read and referred to today.

Rena was a strong lady who faced difficult situations throughout her life. She showed huge determination to provide for her boys in the best way she could. She faced each situation head on and would not let anything defeat her. She had enormous perseverance and courage and yet she remained loyal to herself. Rena knew the importance of family life and knew that she had the sole responsibility of her two children. She never gave in or gave up. She knew her strengths and weaknesses and was able to use her strengths to the best of her ability. She gained the respect of fellow musicians for her achievements. She was adored by her children and even today her strength of character lives on in other members of my family. Rena remained true to her principals and always thought of others before herself.

I don't know if I can achieve half of what Rena did in her lifetime. She had such courage and motivation and inspired others around her to do their best and succeed themselves. She had her life taken from her in Russia along with all her material possessions and had to flee the country to a strange place where she only had herself to rely on to bring up her children. Nothing seemed to stop her achieving what she knew she had to. I chose Rena as my inspirational character because of her amazing courage and determination. She had a fascinating life full of twists and turns. Throughout it all she was true to herself – she believed in herself and she achieved her purpose in life with dignity.

Jane Goodall

Rachael Armstrong, Selkirk High School, Year 8

Jane Goodall is my inspirational figure because she has done so much work over the years to improve the lives of chimps and monkeys. She started her work in 1960 when it was very rare for a woman to venture into the heart of East Africa. As she observed them, she began to recognise each individual and give them a name. In her diary, she wrote, 'Everybody thought it was just humans who could make tools, but here is evidence. Now we must redefine tool, redefine man, or accept chimpanzees as humans.' One of her dreams as she was watching her chimps was to try and get more of them into the environment, so 1977 she set up the Jane Goodall Institute for Wildlife Research and a home for the newborn chimps whose mothers had been killed by hunters. She also looked after old chimps who were maybe struggling in the wild to find food. Since setting up the Institute and doing her research, Jane has received a number of medals and has been recognised around the world. I find her inspirational because she must really care about the chimps and work she's doing.

Sir Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell (Lord Baden-Powell)

Ben Boyes, Selkirk High School, Year 8

We shall never fail whilst on duty, but we always fail when we neglect it.

Robert was born on the 22nd February 1857 and three years later his father died. His mum was left to bring up ten children. The family didn't have much money and Robert's mother encouraged her children to make their own amusements. Robert could draw well (with both hands) and entertained his family with imitations of wild life. At school Robert didn't do well in his lessons and he wasn't a great sportsman but he was a first class marksman, a natural actor, artist, and he had a lively sense of humour. Sometimes Robert wanted to be alone so he would go to the 'Copse' a patch of out-of-bounds woodland near to the school. There he studied and tracked animals and birds. He discovered nature for himself.

One of the things I find inspiring is probably Colonel Baden-Powell's best known military success when he and 1000 of his men were surrounded by 9000 Boers in Mafeking in South Africa. At Mafeking they held out for 217 days until reinforcements came and this made him a national hero. He also became the army's youngest ever Inspector General of Cavalry when he was 46 in 1903. The other inspiring thing is how he started Scouting. He wrote a book called 'Aids to Scouting' about army training and when he got back from Mafeking he found that boys had bought the book. So, he wrote another book 'Scouting for Boys', and tested his method on the first camp in 1907 on Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour. So if it weren't for B-P there wouldn't be Scouts, and I wouldn't be a Scout learning lots of new skills. Thanks Robert!

William Wilberforce

Zoe Turnbull, Selkirk High School, Year 9

I have chosen William Wilberforce as my inspirational figure. When William was 14 he began to think about the slave trade, he even wrote a letter to a newspaper calling it 'the odious traffic in human flesh'. Later he went to Cambridge University and was left a fortune. Having a good time seemed to be better than working. At the age of twenty-one he was elected Member of Parliament for Hull. It wasn't long before his boyhood thoughts of slaves came back to him. For such a long time of his life he concentrated on his religion and the slave trade. He had talks with a London rector, a man named John Newton. Many years before, Newton had been captain of a slave ship.

The slave trade was important to England, from this trade they gained great wealth, but this 'odious traffic in human flesh' was an evil trade. Natives, taken in Africa, were marched to the coast tied together and beaten to make them go faster. They were crowded into small ships and chained below decks. There with no sanitation when they were taken to the West Indies and America. Many of the slaves died on the way and their bodies were thrown overboard. William made up his mind to fight this slave trade; he joined others with the same idea. With the help of the Prime Minister, William Pitt, he began his huge task to abolish the slave trade. He used his own money and any more that came from his friends. Not all members of Parliament were with him.

He had many enemies outside too, but that didn't bother him at all. William told one story in Parliament that made many members want to help him. It took a while for the Parliament to get rid of the slave trade. Most of England's wealth came from the slaves. Many people wanted to duel with William for doing what he was doing. Before his death in 1833 the slave trade was done with. He had a public funeral and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

William played a huge part in stopping the slave trade. He was a very inspirational man and people may still talk about this man to make sure that the slave trade doesn't happen again! People will follow him to this day and look up to him as a great man. The qualities this man had were amazing; he had courage, compassion and definitely commitment. He had many more qualities but these were the main ones. He was committed in stopping the slave trade and he had compassion to do it! He was brave to stand up to people to stop the slavery!

"Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it"

Helen Keller, quoted by Felicia Law, George Heriot's School

Mahatma Gandhi

Caitlin Ann Ross MacKenzie, Glasgow Gaelic School, Year 8

One of the main reasons I look up to Mahatma Gandhi is that he stopped doing something that he strongly believed in, to stop the Civil War. Mahatma Gandhi was born in 1869, in a place called Porbander Kathiawar, and he was the son of a politician. His mother was a devout Hindu, and he got much of his pacifist belief from her. He studied law in London, but in 1893 he gave up working in Bombay legal practice to live in South Africa, only earning £1 a week.

He was really against killing animals, war and things like that. And I don't think it's right how animals that are not free range or organic are kept. He was eagerly against racism, and I'm against it to. At the time when he was alive the places in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh were owned by the British Empire. So the British own the country. The poor native people were slaves to them, and they were racist towards them. And this is what Gandhi had to overcome. He was trying to get Britain out of India. And he went to deadly measures to try and get them out and for them to get their country back. He even went on hunger strikes, and he went on a 200-mile march to the sea to collect salt in symbolic defiance of the government. And thousands of people followed him. He was put in prison many times, but all the hard work that he had done had finally paid off. Britain realised that the country would not support Britain unless they were given their freedom.

Jack Nicklaus

Cameron Agnew, Stewart's Melville College, Year 10

I have chosen Jack Nicklaus for my inspirational figure because he is regarded as one of the best golfers of all time. He was born in 1940 in America, he turned pro in 1961 and just a year later he won his first major. At his peak he managed to win 18 'Majors', more than anyone else ever. Even though Nicklaus was probably the best winner ever he was also probably the best loser ever as well. He was so gracious in defeat and never got angry with himself. He always played to his full potential. He came 2nd 19 times in his major history. Probably his most famous loss was in the 1977 British Open at Turnberry. He lost to Tom Watson in the dubbed 'Duel in the sun' he said after he had lost that 'it was the most thrilling one-on-one battle of my career.'

I think that the best attribute any sportsman can have is not who can score the most goals, who can score the lowest round, who can score the most points but sportsmanship and to acknowledge when someone has beaten you and congratulate them. I think that Nicklaus was one of the best ever at doing that.

Ricardo Izecon dos Santos Leite

Thomas Martinez-Blair, Stewart's Melville College, Year 10

My inspirational figure is Ricardo Izecon dos Santos Leite, A.K.A. Kaka. He is a footballer currently playing for A.C. Milan in Italy. Kaka is Brazilian and plays for his national side on a regular basis. He has just been voted the FIFPro World Player of the Year and has won this year's Ballon D'Or. Although this makes him probably the best footballer on the planet, that is not the reason that I admire him most for. Sure I wouldn't know of him if it weren't for his skills with a football, but it's his life story which is amazing.

Kaka was born into a middle class family, different from most of his Brazilian national team-mates. He is also white, again different. Kaka was born with a bone deficiency. This meant that at the age of 12, he looked 10. This made it extremely hard for him to play with boys his own age, never mind the 15 and 16 year olds he was playing with due to his talent. However, by the time he reached 16, his body had normalised. Kaka then made his way up through the ranks but this again was stunted by a horrific accident in 2000. When jumping off a diving board, Kaka smashed his head on the bottom of a swimming pool, fracturing spinal vertebrae in the process. The doctors said it would be a miracle if he could walk again, never mind becoming a world class footballer.

However, Kaka believes that it was faith that took him through these testing times; he says 'I think it was God - He saved me from something worse.' Despite not being religious I admire him for his faith in God. He is a devout evangelical Christian.

Angelina Jolie

Katie Setterington, Turriff Academy, Year 9

Angelina Jolie is an inspirational person to me because she has done lots of humanitarian work. She is a goodwill ambassador and works in many different countries trying to help people. She said, 'we cannot close ourselves off to information and ignore the fact that millions of people out there suffering. I honestly want to help. I don't believe I feel differently from other people. I think we all want justice and equality, a chance for a life of meaning. All of us would like to believe that if we were in a bad situation of someone with help us.' Her success in the movie industry made her wealthy enough to help people in other countries. Recently, she pledged \$5 million towards a wildlife sanctuary in the Northwest province of Battambang. She was the first recipient of the new award, Citizen of the World by the UN Correspondents Association.

Sir Ranulph Fiennes

Tanya Lakin, Turriff Academy, Year 9

Sir Ranulph Fiennes has visited both the north and south poles, and was the first man to cross the Antarctic on foot. After leaving the Army, he has been an adventurer since 1960.

When he walked across the Antarctic in 1993 he was badly frostbitten, then on his 2000 expedition he got necrotic on his fingertips, and had to saw them off himself. Despite a heart attack and double bypass four months previously, he ran seven marathons in seven days on seven continents all for the British Heart Foundation. When he came back in 2004 he found his wife had stomach cancer, and later died. I am inspired by Ranulph Fiennes because he kept on going with enthusiasm, putting other people before his health. He has inspired me to go into the army, to keep going and never to give up.

My grandad

Gabriella Lirissa Louise Hall, Webster's High School, Year 10

My inspirational figure is my Grandad. I admire him because no matter how cruel and evil life was to him he never gave up fighting right up until his last breath. I would like to live life and never stop fighting for what I think is right so that I can make him proud of me. My Grandad was a lonely child who had no brothers or sisters. He married my Gran at a young age. He got his hand torn off when he was farming. He had loads of medical problems but still found time to care and love his animals. He was always ruled by love and honesty and he always had a positive outlook on things. He is like me in lots of ways, as my heart rules my head and I always try and be honest. He faced a lot of challenges as he went through cancer. Losing my Gran when he was 31 and had to keep up his farm on his own with little help. He took a stand by refusing to give up and he fought because he believed in himself. He also conveyed the message that you should never give up on any dream because the one you give up is the one that would have made you complete.

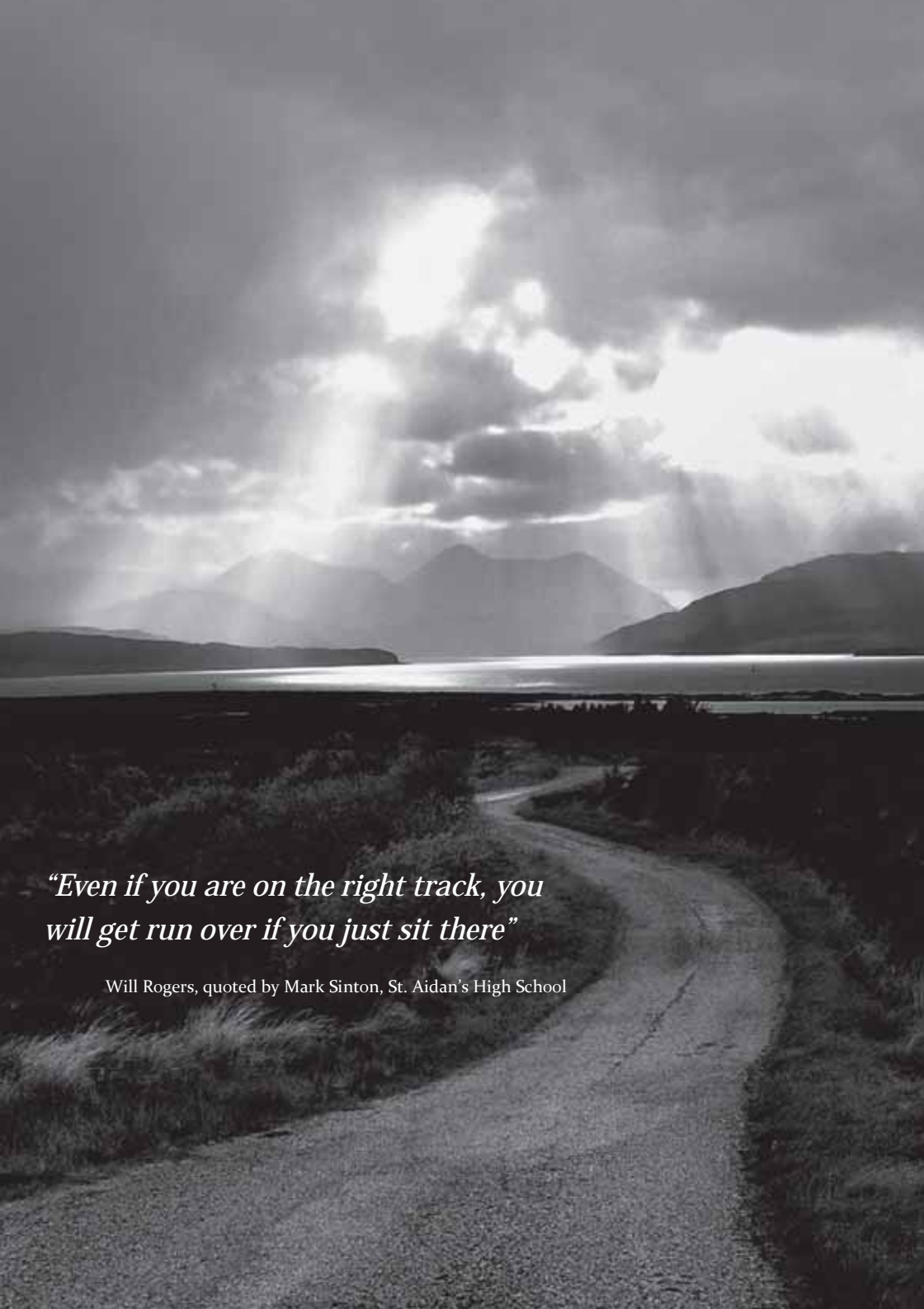
Unknown soldiers

Ian McVicar, Webster's High School, Year 10

When I think of inspirational figures, famous people don't come to my mind. Instead, I think the underappreciated, the faceless soldier, the rank-and-file troops. They are inspiring as they fight for what they believe, not seeking fame. These soldiers are perfectly willing to charge into a battle they know they will lose, to sacrifice everything without any promise of fame or fortune and often knowing that there's a good chance that they won't be coming back to all.

“When you reach for the stars you may not quite get one, but you won't come up with a handful of mud either”

Leo Burnett, quoted by Felicia Law, George Heriot's School



*“Even if you are on the right track, you
will get run over if you just sit there”*

Will Rogers, quoted by Mark Sinton, St. Aidan's High School

Section 3: Personal Reflections

Personal Reflections

Be yourself

Dove Ashrowan, Selkirk High School, Year 8

There is no wealth but life – John Ruskin.

This is my favourite quote. I came across it when my Dad was doing work at John Ruskin's house. My family and I went down there for a weekend last year. Just before I left I came across this quote. It made me really appreciate life. It's short and beautiful. Why worry about money when there is so much of the world to be seen? I started going outside more and just looking, seeing what an amazing place the world is. The rivers, the trees, the plants and us. It's more special than money.

I am a girl who doesn't care about make-up. I like to be out and about on the farm where I live. I have my own ideas about where I want to go in life and it has nothing to do with make-up or fashion. I want to do my bit in the world, make my mark. I want to write books and become an author. I do not want to end up working in Tesco. I will do my thing and not what my friends do. This is what I believe is important in life. If you just follow your friends and let yourself be pushed around, you will just be one sheep in a flock. What use is that? You would be a copy of someone else. I have my ideas and no one but me can change them. I want to be myself all through life. This will make me stubborn but it means I wouldn't finish up as a sheep.

What matters

Kasia Button, Aboyne Academy, Year 9

This project has helped me find out what is important in life and what matters. The four things that stand out for me to live life to the full are gratitude, courage, turning pessimism into optimism and listening. I learned about courage from seeing the African children's choir and hearing their stories including mistreatment, neglect and their parents dying of AIDS. These children have changed their pessimism into optimism and all have a purpose in life - hoping to become future leaders of Africa. This project has given me a set ideas on how to live my life and what I want to achieve. It has helped me to think outside the box. Once I discovered my inspirational figure was (Anne Frank) and what my ideals were, everything fell into place in my mind. I know what I should change in myself and how I should react to different circumstances. I have changed and matured during the project and have learned a lot of life skills.

Bricks

Melissa Bremner, Albyn School, Year 8

For every failure, there is an alternative course of action. You just have to find it. When you come to a roadblock, take a detour.

Have you ever thought you knew something, but later found out that you didn't? Did you then want to know more? I have had this experience. I don't mean that I forgot how to pronounce a word in French, or how to solve a problem in Maths. No, I mean something much more important. I mean how to live. Living life is a lot more complex than just eating, sleeping and working to earn money. Without joy, love and hope in our lives, I feel that we wouldn't be alive.

The only way our hopes become possible and for us to stay positive is to be confident. We have to have confidence in others to support them to achieve their hopes. Most of all, we must be confident in ourselves so that we can follow through our own ambitions. If we turn a problem into a solution, we have another opportunity for learning.

I don't think we should let life bring us down. Instead, we should let it build us up. I feel that we are the bricks in our lives, and chances are the cement. If we use our chances, we can build up our lives to the best of our ability. I think the most important thing to remember is that everyone is different. I know that I and I alone can build up my life. The job of my mum, dad, siblings, friends and relatives is to mix up the cement for me to use. It's up to me to use the cement.

The biggest choice I will ever make is what to build my life on. Will I build it on confidence? Will I build it on forgiving others? Will I build it on taking my chances, or will I make the best of a bad situation? One thing is especially important to me, and if I build my life on this, I know that I will achieve my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I will lead a life of happiness, living with others in peace. If I built my life on this, I will be able to be inspired and may one day inspire others. I will be confident, forgiving and positive. This will bring out the best in me and others, I know it; I will build my life on **love**

Be an individual

Rebecca Henderson, Albyn School, Year 8

He who trims himself to suit everyone will soon whittle himself away -- Raymond Hull

Always be a first-rate version of yourself, instead of a second-rate version of somebody else -- Judy Garland

These two quotes are examples of what I think, that everyone should be an individual in life. People shouldn't copy others just to be friends with them. Everyone should accept everyone else. I know someone who in front of some of her friends tries to be girly but then in

front of her other friends she's sort of like herself; she isn't into pop music but in front of some others she's really into indie etc. I know the real her because I knew her before she moved school. I think it's really important that she is herself because she is not any of people she pretends to be. This upsets me because I accepted her at our old school the way she was, so I don't see why she thinks the people here won't accept her.

A can-do attitude

Rebecca Hobart, Albyn School, Year 8

Whether you think you can or think you can't – you are right. Henry Ford

The one thing I have learned you need to have in life is a can-do attitude. This attitude encompasses many things: perseverance, persistence, confidence and respect for yourself and others. Without this you aren't going to go anywhere. It doesn't matter what you want out of life, if you tell yourself that you can't have it or can't do it, then you will be right! In my life as a Highland Dancer I believe that if I hadn't had this can-do attitude, I would never have been able to overcome the challenges that stood in the way of my winning a championship. When I had injuries – like breaking my wrist ice-skating with some friends - I had to believe that I would get better even though stopping while everyone else was healthy and able to compete drove me insane!

Most successful people in life have this attitude. Dame Kelly Holmes getting two gold medals at the 2004 Olympics after suffering many injuries. Helen Keller learning to read, write and speak even though she was deaf and blind, and Stephen Hawking, who although he is disabled due to ALS/MND is one of the greatest scientists of our time. The sad thing is that all around me I hear people focussing on the negative, saying 'I can't do that' when they don't know because they won't even try. I have always found that even if I can't do something really well, I will certainly do it better than I would have without a can-do attitude. 'Soon or late the man who wins is the man who thinks he can.'

“If you must speak ill of another, do not speak it, write it in the sand by the water's edge” - Napoleon Hill

“Never look down on someone unless you're helping him up” - Jesse Jackson

“When the well is dry, we know the worth of water” - Benjamin Franklin

All quoted by Christine St Clair, George Heriot's School

Perseverance

Kate Farquharson, Albyn School, Year 8

Perseverance is vital in life because if you don't persevere you won't achieve great things. I am a very keen musician and play the flute, recorder, piano and am learning guitar. Over the years I've played many pieces, especially on the flute. Each new one is a great challenge. For example, when I first glanced at the three tunes that I was to play for my grade 5 I never thought I would be able to play them and that I shouldn't even try. However, I gave it a go and within a few months I could play them fluently. I persevered patiently in preparing for the exam and when I received a letter through the post saying that I had passed, I was delighted. It was definitely worth the struggle as I achieved what I thought was impossible.

Less is more

Sarah Davidson, Albyn School, Year 8

Last summer I had an experience which changed my view on life and made me appreciate all the good things I have. I went to Ecuador where I met many different people who lived in a society very different from mine. I lived as they do for a month and in that time experienced happiness beyond belief. It proved to me that having less is more. Older children at a school where I was helping were excited and truly grateful for my time. As well as showing me the values of life, the trip fulfilled one of my dreams. I set a goal of going on this trip and I succeeded. Helping the children at the school and helping people I met was very rewarding and it made me feel invigorated. I experienced great kindness from these people, and they were filled with happiness to think they were helping. 'Keep dreaming, let's talk about your future' is very important to me because I think no one should ever stop dreaming about what they could do to improve life for others and themselves. I know I won't.

What is reflection?

True Happiness – Sri Chinmoy

Caroline Suttie, Albyn School, Year 8

True happiness is not a mental hallucination.

True happiness is not a complacent feeling.

True happiness is the spontaneous feeling of joy

that comes from knowing you are doing the right thing and leading a divine life.

Reflecting on myself

Kate Falconer, Albyn School, Year 8

Until recently I never thought I would have to reflect on myself. I didn't know what it meant until I looked it up. I got two definitions.

Reflection -- an image; representation; counterpart.

This is when we look at ourselves on the outside. Sometimes we complain about how we look. Thinking of things to make ourselves look better and prettier.

Reflection -- serious thought.

This is when we look at ourselves on the inside. We think about our lives and our goals. So this is what I'm going to write about.

I used to take everything for granted. I was really happy and at the same time easily disappointed. I was so caught up in everything that I'd never thought about more important things and how some people don't have the same life as me. Then one day I was driving in a poor part of the city and I looked through a window and saw a big family in a small house eating a small meal. I saw another family in another house just like them. On the same journey, I realised that happiness doesn't come from what you have but who you share your experience and happiness with.

The meaning of love

Hollie Craik, Amman Valley School, Year 9

To me, life is precious. You have to hang onto every minute that goes by. When I was younger I didn't realise what good and bad things life could throw at you. As I have got older I am beginning to realise that what matters in life is how much I love the people and things that matter to me. Love is so important in life. It is such a strong word. Love is shown between families, friends, couples and pets. Love is a bond between people that stays with you forever. When I was younger, I didn't really know the meaning of love. I thought it was just an everyday word people use. But I have learned how powerful it is. Films like 'The Titanic' and the play 'Romeo and Juliet' make me realise what love actually is. Love may get you down at times but it's in your heart and it will never go away. My family? Yes, I would die for them. If anything happened to them I don't know what I would do. As I have got older I have now realised they have done a lot for me and I admire and respect them so much for that. They have taught me right from wrong and that's why I'm the person I am today. From this project, I have learned that anyone can be a hero, and just by showing a bit of love and care you can be one too.

Real life

Rachel Hirsch, Banff Academy, Year 8

When I moved to Israel, I had to open my eyes much wider. Every day when you got up for school, you never knew if you would return home or even see your family ever again. Although this was really scary, I gradually got used to the new routine. We then moved to a house in a small village, and my parents started up a new business. All went well until the war between Gaza and Israel got out of hand. Every night you could hear explosions from both sides of the border. My sisters and I could see the Israeli gunships firing into Gaza from our bedroom window. It came to the point where mum couldn't take it any more, so we came back to Scotland to have a proper education and a safe life. I think my five years in Israel have taught me that people from Scotland don't know that they are living until they see it for themselves.

Grasp the opportunity

Shaun Priest, Banff Academy, Year 8

I believe the only way to live is to grasp the opportunity that hides in times of difficulty. I've discovered that sadness doesn't last forever when we walk in the direction of our heart. We can grieve and more on for a while, as is only natural, but then it helps us to move on and embrace the new.

This quote is a good description of my life since I lost my beloved grandad. He died in January 2001, having been diagnosed with cancer in November 2000. He was told he didn't have long to live, which was very hard for us and especially for him. He tried to live life to the full, but it wasn't easy. We just had to take each day as it came, even though it was clear that he could barely walk, eat and sleep. Since my grandad died I haven't been as sad as he's been gone a while, but there is still a part of me that is sad.

Robert the Bruce and the spider

Kerry Drysdale, Baldragon Academy, Year 8

When spiders' webs unite, they can tie up a lion – Ethiopian Proverb

Everyone knows the story by Robert the Bruce and the spider which succeeded in spinning its web at the 14th attempt. This inspired Bruce to try again and succeed, thanks to the spider. What is our attitude to success and failure? Do we give up easily, or do we keep trying to reach a particular goal? One approach to this question is to do things without thought of the results, without worrying about success or failure -- just do the necessary work. I think there is a lot we can learn from Robert the Bruce's life, but the most important thing is that when life seems daunting and the hurdles great, there is always a spider working for you. Spiders can be clever like Charlotte in *Charlotte's Web*, but one thing you notice when you study them is that when their web doesn't work they just go back and do it again. Unfortunately, life is not like a spider. We can't make mistakes and then go back and do it again, only better. What is important is that we should keep working and trying all the days of our lives. Not just the odd number days, but every day and it's good to keep that in mind when you're down. 'Remember the spider, try and try again.'

Reincarnation?

Kirsty McLeod, Baldragon Academy, Year 8

We have been studying reincarnation in class recently. This is the belief that an individual human soul passes through a succession of lives, and is connected with the idea of karma or the results of action. If the good karma outweighs the bad, then the life situation will be better next time round. I wonder if it is possible to know if we have had a previous life. We were told about Ian Stevenson's work in the USA – he interviewed 2-5 year-olds who talk freely about a previous life, including many details. Stevenson spent a lot of time checking this information and in a few cases it seems that a normal explanation is unlikely.

Do I believe? I don't know for sure. One case sounded believable to me, where a girl is brought up in a Mennonite community. She has never travelled out of her village, which has no electricity, TV or computers. Yet at the age of 5 she was able to draw a street map of a small village in Austria and talk intimately about the people who had lived there in the 1880s. Stevenson was able to verify this, so it's almost plausible, but I'm not convinced. Re-incarnation is a nice idea. The idea that this life is a practice for one to follow is cool. But in reality this is all we have, so I'm going to make the best of it.

Don't think about bananas

Kirsty Lancaster, Baldragon Academy, Year 10

Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

As I did my research for this competition, I came across this experiment. If someone says to you, "Don't think about bananas," What happens? Most people will immediately have a mental picture of a banana right in the middle of their consciousness! So, to tell yourself to stop thinking about something doesn't do a great deal of good, does it? Replace the undesirable thought with a desirable thought. If you don't want to think about bananas, turn your focus to something else such as apples, oranges, or coconuts! Once you bring another image to the forefront of your mind, the image of bananas is gone. How? It is because the mind cannot focus on too many different images at the same moment. This is called the "crowding-out technique." If you fill your mind to capacity with positive and productive thoughts there's no room left for negative ones. In essence, you release or "crowd out" the undesirable thoughts and fill the created vacuum with desirable thoughts.

The point I'm trying to make is that you shouldn't just focus on one thing like the banana. You should look at the whole picture because if we only ever think about the same idea over and over again a permanent status quo will develop. This is not a good thing, it's better in life to remain open to new ideas, as the world is forever changing. Nothing, as Buddhists say, is permanent.

As I mentioned before, I believe without new ideas the world can't improve 'ergo' if we all open our minds and let ideas find us then there will be no barriers to learning and living. I stand by the quote I began with but adapt it as a motto for living "Make your own thoughts, follow them and in the end create your own path!"

Make the most of life

Chelsea Mitchell, Berwickshire High School, Year 9

While writing this poster, I realised that you must have things in life that are important to you in order to enjoy it, whether this is work or a hobby. Besides family and friends, my passion is horse vaulting, which I love. I love the thrill of not knowing what's going to happen next. No training session is the same as another one, and the people are so much fun, making the best of everything. I love life, the sad times as well as the happy times!

“A man who doesn’t trust himself can never really trust anyone else”

Cardinal de Retz (1613—1679), quoted by Eileen Mairi Morrow, George Heriot's School

Get your head in the game

Alex Robertson and Lucy Nelson, Broxburn Academy, Year 10

Lucy and I wrote this poem to the people out there who want to make something of their lives.

*Life is life
it is what it is
sometimes you get caught
caught in the biz
a person is a person
a face is a face
no matter the height, weight
or even the race
do what you can
do what you do
if it's to be it's up to you
let no one stop you, this life is yours
face the challenges that you shall endure
stand up and be counted, don't be afraid
step out in the sun, don't hide in the shade
consider your future but live for today
it's about what you think, not what others say
so here's to life, fortune and fame
get up, get involved, get your head in the game*

Looking on the inside

Jennifer Martin, Broxburn Academy, Year 10

Eyes that look are common. Eyes that see are rare – Oswald Sanders

When we studied euthanasia, I couldn't believe how hard many people's lives are, that they were in such pain that they wanted their lives to end. It made me realise how precious life really is, and that many people aren't able to do anything about their condition. We also discussed charities, and I was ashamed that I didn't know many of them. But these people are raising money, many without the help of governments. They want to make a difference for others. I also feel strongly about discrimination. Skin colour, religion and language shouldn't matter. It is just our appearance, not who we are. Who we are inside is what really

matters. I believe that to love someone truly you have to see right through their appearance, to see who they truly are inside.

Love to live

Sadie Lewis, Ysgol Bryngwyn, Year 9

Doing the Learning for Life poster has actually made me realise how much life means to us. Also how much these simple posters can change our thoughts. People tend to ignore the things that help us with our lives, our thoughts and our beliefs. I think that these posters will change the thoughts of young children throughout Britain. People have stopped believing in Love. They don't realise that Love is being generous, like the 'Umbrella Man' it's a short story about an old retired man who has a bus stop outside his house, and invites people into his porch for shelter or lend out umbrellas. The concept of Love in a religion is the rich variety of world religions and creates a tapestry of amazing beauty – a testimony to the essential spiritual nature of our human visit on earth. And yet, within this amazing and sometimes fascinating diversity can be found an equally amazing unity. People should learn to love to live. Otherwise they won't get anywhere. LIVE. LIFE. LOVE.

The silver lining

Jessica Ann Thomas, Ysgol Bryngwyn, Year 9

This poster I can safely say is the most touching topic we have done this year in English or any other subject for that matter. I was always aware of poverty and the difficulties that those less fortunate than us face but this poster award has reinforced the fact and opened doors I never knew were there.

I had a lot of fun and enjoyment working on my poster because I feel it has taught me some valuable life skills. It touched on all the qualities and key skills that we need to get through life. It reminded me that there are always bumps in the road but perseverance and positive thinking will help us through these. As the saying goes 'every cloud has a silver lining' although we often have to look harder to find the silver lining – from this journey through my poster I can guarantee there is always one there somewhere. We learn greatly from the mistakes we make 'Failure is the source of success' – Japanese proverb. Mistakes are what make us stronger - 'Mistakes are portals of discovery' – James Joyce.

The Learning for Life website has to be the best website I have visited. It has taught me that following the crowd isn't always the best option. Individuality is the best gift I could possess. I now enjoy being a sheep in a herd of cows. Having confidence to believe in yourself is definitely the way up. I am a firm believer that self confidence encourages others around you to gain confidence too. It's almost like a catching disease.

The ideal of friendship

Sam Currie, Carrick Academy, Year 11

Wherever you are, it is your friends you make your world -- William James

I think the most important thing in life is friendship, because without friends and family you are alone in the world. I've been let to think this way due to an event in my life. I was on a school trip with a few friends. We were having a great time but there was one boy that everyone went for, and who was left on his own for meals. This made me think about what it would be like to have no friends and no one to talk to and confide in. In the end, we invited the boy into our group, and it turns out that he was an okay guy. That's why I think friendship is an ideal worth standing up for.

Poem by J. Marquez

Calum Stoker, Carrick Academy, Year 11

*Bullies like pulverised their pain
unleashing torrents of humiliation.
Love can little do but bide its time,
letting go the currents of the crime,
in bitter knowledge finding consolation.
Eventually, all must turn again
stripped of all but fear and adoration.*

Kindness

Heath Savien, Curmtawe School, Year 8

Kindness is the only service that will stand the storm of life and not wash out. It will wear well and will be remembered long after the prism of politeness or the complexion of courtesy has faded.

Home is where the heart is

Bethan Williams, Cynffig Comprehensive, Year 11

I live in a house. It has four walls made of plain red brick. It has a kitchen and a living room and a table where I sit and eat. I live in a house. I have a bedroom where I sleep and relax and keep my things. I live in a house. It is not my home.

To me, a home is something that has no fixed shape or form. It is something that lives and breathes and is as much a part of you as the sun is a part of the sky. I have many homes. I have a home that smells like sweet perfume and a motherly love found nowhere else in the entire world. When it all gets too much sometimes and I feel as if I'll break, warm arms circle me and help erase the rigours of the day. When my mother hugs me, I feel at home.

I have a home that cooks. Anything, for it is not about food, but more about escaping a 9-to-5 existence and finding a place away from it all. It is about the experience and sharing it with someone else. It is about the simple enjoyment of a well cooked meal. When my father cooks, I feel at home.

I have a home that understands. Understands me, understands that sometimes a sizeable bar of chocolate is the only answer to one's problems. When that feeling overcomes me, the one that says 'go on, stay in bed!' this is where I turn, or there will be no judgement. When my sister listens, I feel at home.

I have a home that is horrible to me just for fun. When things get too serious, sometimes it is all that I need. A moment in which name-calling is a respectable answer to all your problems. A moment when violence is completely justified and actively encouraged. When I fight my brother, I feel at home.

I have a home that is a swirl of different faces and personalities. A place where opinions and thoughts differ and clash, and where somehow, none of it even matters. Here things just are; there is no changing the world or making a problem go away. There is just togetherness. When I am with my friends, I feel at home.

To me, these people are home. They are the bricks that surround me, that build up my life. They are constant. They are perfect to me. I live in a house. It will never be my home.

The brightest star

Laura James, Elgin High School, Year 9

Many things have happened to me in my life. At the age of six my big sister was diagnosed with a life-threatening disease. She also has arthritis and has been told that she could die by the time she is 30. She is now 23, but she is very brave and gets on with life and enjoys it to the full. Around the same time my dad died. I was very young and didn't really understand what was happening but what kept me going was something my mum said to me on the night my dad passed away: 'he will always be the brightest star in the sky, whenever you feel sad or you're about to do something you know is wrong, look up at the stars and find the brightest one, just remember your dad is there watching over you. My mum also helps me to keep a positive attitude, and doing this poster has helped me remember the good things in life.

"Never try to teach a pig to sing. It wastes your time and annoys the pig"

Anon. Quoted by Eileen Mairi Morrow, George Heriot's School

Looking for the best

Eilidh McTavish, Elgin High School, Year 8

When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but we often look so long at the closed door we do not see the one which has opened for us. - Helen Keller

When Mr Hinchliffe first introduced me to the poster I thought it would be an A4 sheet you have to colour in. But it's exactly the opposite. This poster has really made me think about my life and my ambitions for the future. After looking at this I have learned much more about myself and I have been amazed what I have never known about myself and probably it would have stayed that way if we never did this project.

There has been a lot of hard times in my life but now this project has taught me to hold my head high and what happens, happens and things will never go according to plan just exactly as you want. Now I am more optimistic about things and I always try to look for the best, no matter how hidden and disguised.

Life is precious

Zoe Grant, Elgin High School, Year 9

Ever since I was 7 I have had to look after my mum. She has had many strokes and has now got fibromyalgia which makes her very tired, and her muscles hurt. It upsets me to see her in so much pain, but she keeps smiling and stays positive. My mum tries her best to look after me and my younger brother, but we don't mind looking after ourselves. Sometimes I get annoyed having to do everything, but in a way I'm glad as it's made me much more mature. I see life in a different light and have a more positive outlook. My mum has made me realise how precious my life is and when an opportunity comes I should grab it with both hands. I have managed to get through a lot of my life, and feel that if I can get through all of that, then I can get through anything.

Embarrassment

Ryan Johnston, Elgin High School, Year 8

Isn't it weird how we get more embarrassed as we get older? I bet we can all admit that we've done something really embarrassing and just wanted to become invisible, but what I found out is that when we were babies we didn't seem to care. Once when I was a baby my friend came over to my house and we got hold of the burn cream. Before you knew it we were completely covered in it and we weren't a bit embarrassed, in fact we found it quite funny. When you're older you want to look cool, but I think it's pointless. I'm not going to get embarrassed, I'm just going to act like it never happened.

Reach for your goals

Lauren Jones, *Elgin High School, Year 9*

I can't say that the last few years have been full of happy memories and great times, but I can say that through them I have grown a lot as a person and learned a lot about myself and the people around me. The following poem reminds me to reach for my goals and be the best I can be.

Bring out your best – by Marilyn Barker-Smith

*Life can seem hard when you're put to the test,
But never give up, just bring out the best
That you have in yourself and search for solutions,
Just keep going forward with new resolutions
That within every problem opportunities lie,
Keep searching to find them, don't lay down and die.
You're capable of more than you'll ever realise,
Success has a huge variety of disguise.
So don't get disheartened, keep stretching and growing,
When you find the solution, your heart will be glowing
For you'll know that the next time you're put to test,
That you'll never give up, you'll just bring out your best.*

Embrace life

Lauren Taylor, *Elgin High School, Year 9*

*God grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can
And the wisdom to know the difference.*

After keeping a learning for life diary for a few weeks, I have learned a lot about myself that I never knew before. I have realised that there are more important things in life than wealth and fame, that nothing is just black and white, and that we should love life and embrace the challenges thrown at us. I used to take life a day at a time, being pessimistic and worrying about everything, but now I believe we should all be optimistic and move on instead of dwelling on the past. We should think of the future and have the courage to stand up for what we believe in, treasuring our friends and family like stars. I used to take them all for granted, expecting them always to stand by me and be there, but now I really appreciate all they do for me. The prayer above meant a lot to me when my Nanna died a couple of years ago - it helped us both accept her death.

I'm going to jump

Michael Welsh, Forfar Academy, Year 9

The event that has had the greatest impact on my life when I was out in the park and a man who was drunk and had been on drugs was hanging from his bedroom window saying 'I'm going to jump', then he did. I watched the police cordon off the park and try to work out why he had jumped. So when I'm older I'd like to be a policeman and try to stop crime, drugs and murders. And even if I never become a policeman I will always remember that day.

My operation

Hannah Soutar, Forfar Academy, Year 9

Last October I had a serious 13-hour operation on my spine, and now have two titanium rods in my back. I was in intensive care for nine days and during that time I was on a ventilator for five days. My mum was with me all the time and she showed me with presents, but all the presents in the world wouldn't have made me much better. I know everyone has dreams of being rich or having loads of expensive things. But I don't think this is important. It's people that matter, not money. I'm so grateful that my spine was fixed, as I feel so much more confident as a person. In later life I would like to be a teacher and help children to learn.

Music changes your life

Lori-Jo Curran, Forfar Academy, Year 9

I love music. Music is my oxygen and it's what has made me what I am today. My favourite band Escape the Fate has made a huge impact on my life. When I first heard one of their songs at primary school, it sounded exactly like how difficult my life was. It helped me move on and stop remembering the past and through difficult times when I didn't like myself very much. Their music has given me a better outlook on life. Their lyrics tell me, 'Don't give up' and 'Move on', but most of all, 'Stay strong.' You have to make the most of your life and change yourself if you're not happy. So I'm going to change myself and my life for the better.

Smiling through our challenges

Clare Hyland, George Heriot's School, Year 9

It's better to be hated for who you are known and loved for something you are not.

Andre Gide

But who am I? I never really thought about this until my parents separated and I lost myself. It was then that I began to search for myself, to find out who I was, and be that person. My friends were an important part of this process - friends bring new hope and happiness

and are always there to comfort you. But one of the main things that kept me going through these difficulties was a smile. A smile may seem insignificant, but to me it is the key:

*A smile is like a fire;
It will shine a light on the path you can follow,
It brings warmth in the darkest times,
Even though it cannot protect you,
It fills you with courage and joy,
Most importantly of all,
Friendship comes naturally with a smile.*

Live life to the full

Kelsey Burnside, George Heriot's School, Year 9

Live your life to the full, only you can change the direction it is heading. If you feel like just giving up, stop! Think why! Why is this stopping me from living my life? Look at what's good in your life, and how lucky you actually are and you see that little everyday things we forget about are essential for being happy. Don't let anything or anyone getting in the way. Here is a poem I thought was very motivational:

Don't quit

*When things go wrong as they sometimes will;
When the road you're treading seems all uphill;
When the funds are low and the debts are high
And you want to smile but you have to sigh;
When care is pressing you down a bit
Rest if you must but don't you quit
Success is failure turned inside out
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt
And you can never tell how close you are
It may be near yet seems afar
So stick to the fight when you're hardest-hit.
It's when things go wrong that you mustn't quit.*

Two key qualities

Alasdair Falcon, George Heriot's School, Year 9

A society grows great when old people plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in. - Greek Proverb

I take this to mean that if we are to live prosperously, we should do things that we know we

will never benefit from in our lifetimes. If everyone lived by this ideal, there would be no selfishness or greed in the world, and the children of the future would not be living in poverty. We should all do our bit for the citizens of the future.

Failure lies not in falling down. Failure lies in not getting up. - Chinese Proverb

This is important to me because it teaches me to persevere and never give up, which I believe is the way to succeed at anything.

“I have found the paradox that if I love until it hurts, there is no hurt but only more love”

Mother Teresa, quoted by Kelsey Burnside, George Heriot's School

Hope

Helena Scott, George Heriot's School, Year 9

Hope has two beautiful daughters. Their names are anger and courage: anger at the way things are, and courage to see that they do not remain where they are. - St Augustine of Hippo.

When I think about all great leaders who've stood up for something they believe in, they all have one thing in common, and that is hope. In life there are many things that are important to me, but I think one of the most important is hope. Because without hope, where would we be, without hope, could we ever overcome bad things like disease, war, destruction and death? If hope had not been let out of Pandora's box, would we still have all the riches we have? Would people like Helen Keller or Martin Luther King have had the courage to overcome disability and racism? Without hope, where would all great leaders find their followers? Without hope, would we have the courage to change our minds and not just stick to the rules? If inventors didn't have any hope that in their inventions would work, would we still be living in a cave?

The Candle of Hope

Isla Scott-Pearce, George Heriot's School, Year 9

Without hope, many people would see nothing to strive for. They would stop believing and lose faith in the people they love and admire the most. I see hope as a sort of candle. This candle is the light inside you. It pushes you forwards, it gives you something to hold onto and can even take you away from dark miserable places. Hope can make things happen. In Aung San Su Kyi's darkest hours, she must have had only hope to keep her going. Hope

comes from within, and she still manages to be the source of hope for millions of people. Despite her torment and despair, she has kept so many people's candles alight. Her rare ability to sacrifice her own liberty serves to win the right of an entire nation to have a more enjoyable life. This shows utter selflessness and is the expression of complete fearlessness. For me, hope is the greatest virtue of all because it is the key to all other core values.

Doing small things can change the world

Alice Slipper, George Heriot's School, Year 9

If you look around at all the different people, you see that they are all unique. Their lives tell a different story and different thoughts run through their minds every second of the day. It is not what you look like on the outside that counts, it's what is in the inside that makes you who you are. I think that the most important things in life are love, happiness and keeping positive because if you don't have these things, you will not be able to deal with situations properly and then will find it hard to go far in life.

A few years ago I went to Africa with my family. We visited a family who were living in great poverty and hardly had a home to live in. Even though they had no money they were a very close family because they had got through the rough patches together. Life was very tough but they were extremely cheerful and optimistic. Everybody had lots of fun because they taught us to do cloth printing. They were very grateful for the bit of money they did accept from us because they had earned it and we had not just given them it. This is why I think it is so important to do the small things in life to help change the world. Examples of this are like buying fair trade goods, recycling and doing all you can for different charities. It is the small bits of help from every individual that could help improve the world.

A big issue

Kate Keohane, George Heriot's School, Year 10

Until recently, my perception of the homeless was pretty negative. I viewed them as unfortunate, idle people who were too lazy to get work or had dug themselves into a hole of poverty through misuse of drugs, alcohol or sex. It wasn't until I met a local homeless person that my perception changed forever. Alex Mitchell sells *The Big Issue* outside my local supermarket; he is always there with his dog, politely asking for money. He was born in Fife, and was one of four children. Alex's dad left him when he was five and his mum gradually fell into a spiral of alcoholism and abusive boyfriends. Alex was a very good and quiet boy at school but after a particularly violent argument with his mum's latest 'boyfriend' he ran away from home when he was 15. Alex's story is the same as thousands of homeless people. Fortunately, the positive news is that after being in trouble with the police for theft and dabbling in illegal drugs, Alex is determined to change that to create a stable life for himself and any future family. At 24, Alex got involved with *The Big Issue*, which has helped him get his life back on track, and he has recently moved into his own flat.

After hearing Alex's story I realised that being homeless is something that could affect anyone. I realised that if I lived in a house with a succession of strange men that I too might run away. Reading books about homelessness gave me a better understanding of what life must be like for the people living on the streets after being driven from home by abuse. Some people find they cannot cope, but others are able to turn things around and maintain a strong, optimistic and motivated attitude. This is something I admire greatly, and I wonder how I would act in such times of trouble and whether I would be able to take responsibility and move on. Completing this project has enabled me to understand how vital it is in life to remain positive, be strong and not to be determined by events. There is a proverb which characterises defeat as nothing but education. As a teenager, it is sometimes seen as cool to be negative and cynical, but after learning about homelessness I have been reminded how incredibly lucky, privileged and blessed I am to live in a house with a loving family and have opportunities in my life.

Embracing my core values

Tim McAlpine-Scott, Glasgow Academy, Year 9

Learning for Life has really made me embrace my core values and think who I am as a person and how I can help others in need. It has taught me not look to footballers and rugby players for inspiration, but look to people who have really made a difference in the world. If I look up to such people, I can make a difference and help myself in later life. I feel a changed man after writing this. Before I raise my voice in anger I will ask myself what the point is in making someone else sad. If I can't think of anything to say, then I will say nothing. Before I give up I will think, why am I like this, how can I help myself out of this mess? I hope people will in future see me as a helper and a friend. My current goal is to carry on learning for life.

Belief and happiness

Sophie Reilly, Glasgow Academy, Year 9

In every human being there is a spiritual capacity that does not come from themselves. It can be nurtured or rejected, but it is always there it is never withdrawn. It is a wellspring of confident trust placed there by the spirit of the living God. It is passionate expectancy. From it everything flows – Roger of Taizé

The concept of God is one that I have dwelled on for many years of my life. It scares me, but above all enthral me. I am an agnostic. I take this to mean 'belief pending'. I am terrified of the concept of set out rules and religions, and people forcing belief on me. This terror has stemmed from my sibling's adamance that God is fictitious, my father's more modest atheism, my mother's imprecision and my friend's strong Hindu and Christian beliefs. Of course these many perspectives have left me confused, and even jealous.

One of my main ideals in life is to do anything (within reason) and work however hard to be happy, and so what I believe would make me happy would be to have a 'father', a being to

be forgiven by, to look up to, and to always be there, looking after me in the hard times. I do not believe in the concept of eternal gratitude, guilt and inferiority to this being but for it to be an equal to whom I owe nothing by simply being.

Although I will continue to ponder about God until the day I die, I have at least reached some conclusions. I deem that the most important qualities in life are perseverance, trust and consideration. As long as these are the ideals which I strive to attain in my life, I will be content with the way I have spent my time. If I wish to take the hand of a 'spirit' who is on my side and will help and guide me in hard times towards my ideals, I should go ahead. As long as I accept the responsibilities which come with such a belief, do not harm myself or others in the process, and above all do not blind myself with this religion and let it rule my life. True religion is true to the person who adopts it. It should assist and comfort, not dominate. Basically, believe in whatever the heck you want if it makes you happy!

Life is precious

Suhaib Siddiqui, The Glasgow Academy, Year 9

As soon as I started this poster, I started to think very differently. All of the themes and inspirations lit up many paths in front of me. It suddenly hit me how precious life is. When looking for inspirational figures it pained me to see what some people have been through. I began to see how lucky and blessed I am. I now see life as a very complex and fragile network of choices and paths, each one leading us into a new world. To me, my choices are about my future and other's safety. I try to always be optimistic about my choices too, which makes the world a lot brighter and happier.

“Life is like a game of cards. The hand that is dealt you represents determinism; the way you play it is free will.”

Nehru, quoted by Patrick Frech, George Heriot's School

Kindness

Jennifer Tait, Glasgow Gaelic School, Year 9

I have chosen kindness as the theme for my project as there seems to be an awful lot of violence going on in our country at the moment. Sometimes I don't even want to watch the news. On a global scale we hear of terrorism and wars far too often. I would like to combat this in my theme kindness, and especially the quotation from Sophocles that 'kindness gives birth to kindness.' If we can be kind to other people, then there is a chance that they in turn will be kind. This is the message I would like to get over this project and this poem.

*All it takes
Is one small act
Of kindness every day.
All it makes
Is peace and happiness
The world today.
We all have a duty,
Kindness is not blindness.*

If everyone practised kindness more in their daily lives, hatred would be abolished, there would be fewer wars, crimes and prejudices and the world would become a better place.

Make the most of life

Caitlin Mackenzie, Glasgow Gaelic School, Year 8

I think that it is important to do something you enjoy, because you should make the most of life. You should try to look on the good side of things. You should respect others even if you strongly disagree with their views and feelings. I believe that it's bad to discriminate against people for any purpose. You should always be grateful for what you have and should trust people and respect them. It's important to work hard and have enthusiasm in what you do. All in all, you should just make the most of life.

Similarities and differences

Eleanor Wilson, Glasgow Gaidhlig School, Year 6

When you like your work, everyday is a holiday. - Frank Tyger

I think life is all about making a difference in the world by doing something you enjoy. My parents always taught me to follow my dreams and that they will support me no matter what I do. I think you should stand up for your dreams and do as much as possible to make them come true, because they're not going to come true on their own. We all have similarities and we all have differences. The similarities help us to understand and work with others. The differences make us stand out as being individual. You should never try to change yourself to please others if it doesn't please you. The thing that makes you different makes you special. You should stand up for what you believe in and follow your heart.

Rules for life

Charlotte Hewings, Glyn Derw High School, Year 9

In life I have learnt that saying things to other people doesn't make you a better person. 'Don't judge a book by its cover.' Also this saying is true, someone may be ugly but it doesn't matter, it's what's inside that matters. Everyone is different so just let them be different. When you hit a downer in your life try and be positive, be a strong person because there is

always going to be someone out there who is worse off than you.

Rules for Life which everyone should know:

Don't trust too easily, but do trust the people you know you can,
Don't keep it bottled up inside!
Don't judge people by how they look.
Treat others as you want to be treated yourselves.
Be honest and trustworthy.
Always look on the positive side of life.

Overall, I think that in life there are two sorts of people, good and bad. The good are lovely and they should be treated how they deserve to be treated. The bad, well just don't get involved with them. In life respect is one of the most important things you'll come across. You should treat everyone with respect and expect the same thing back. You will be a lot more popular person if you have respect and will find yourself with a lot more friends. If you want any sort of relationship this will play an important part in it!

Powerful beyond measure

Grace Cameron, Gracemount High School, Year 11

These are inspiring lines for me from a speech by Timo Cruz from the film The Coach Carter (based on Marianne Williamson and quoted in part by Nelson Mandela in his inaugural address).

*Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.
It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us
Your playing small does not serve the world,
There is nothing enlightened about shrinking
So that other people won't feel insecure around you.
We are all meant to shine, as children do
It's not just in us, it's in everyone,
We unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.
As we are liberated from our fears, our presence will automatically liberate others.*

Dream it, dare it

Daphne Ferrer, Gracemount High School, Year 10

By writing this Learning for Life booklet, I've learnt and realised that I should always believe in myself, listen to my heart, trust my instincts, see my own strengths, dream it, dare it. Do what you're afraid of, keep the faith, follow your vision and remember that anything is possible if only you believe. We should not be scared or have fear, because the only thing we have to fear is fear itself. I've also learnt that people in this world won't stay long, they won't

live permanently in this world, that's the cycle. I've learnt that goodbyes will always hurt. Pictures never replace having been there, memories good or bad will bring tears, and words can never replace those feelings. I've learnt that you should trust the people around you. Don't do things that you don't want people to do to you. Be yourself, take chances, don't waste a single opportunity, live your life as well as you can.

Don't forget about the gift

Gemma Hogg, Gracemount High School, Year 8

12 years have gone by, and I have definitely had my ups and downs, but mainly ups. I believe that everyone is given a gift, but some people spend their whole lives searching for it. Mine is sport, which leaves a lot of windows open for me. My mum always says that as long as you stick at what you do, you can be whatever you want and no one can hold you back. It's a shame how some people just forget about that gift and don't live life to the full.

In my life so far, I have broken my leg twice, my arm three times, my thumb once, and I've almost fractured my cheekbone, I've pulled a ligament in my ankle and I've had four operations on my arm because they were bad breaks and I'm about to have fifth because I'm getting a metal plate taken out and that has been bothering me. I've been worrying about and thinking what if I break my arm again if I did it taken out, and other what-ifs. But I shouldn't really do that, should I, given my positive outlook.

One of the best parts of my life has been participating in the 12-mile great Scottish walk and raising more than £200 for the Royal Hospital for sick kids in Edinburgh. I have done the walk three times now with my mum, who encourages me to keep going. This year I think I need to challenge myself a little bit more, so hopefully my mum and I will compete in the breast cancer moonwalk. If we do this we would take our time and not powerwalk. At the moment I dive twice a week, play for a girls' football club and do ski race training. I really love diving, something about it feels free. There's always something to improve on and if something goes wrong you know it can be improved. I love the fact that it is a sport where people can say wow, I wish I could do that. I still say that myself, but I know that I'll get pretty close. I've been very lucky in all I've done, and appreciate what I have. This exercise has helped me a lot to reflect, and now I'm going to try not to say 'why me?' – always look on the bright side of life.

Make the most of every opportunity

Douglas Clark, Grove Academy, Year 9

On February 6, 2007 my mother collapsed in the street. It was later revealed that she had suffered a brain haemorrhage due to high blood pressure. She would have to undergo an operation. 80% of people who have a brain haemorrhage die, and 40% don't even reach the ambulance. My mother was one of the lucky 20% and has since made a full recovery. She was in hospital for over a month.

During one visit, I became intrigued by the heart rate monitor. As I watched the green line

rise and fall, and rise and fall, I realised how short and precious life is, and how it can just slip away. I left with that thought on my mind, as really life is too short. It made me realise how wonderful our world is, and to make the most of it, we need to make the most of now. We all need to think hard about our future, I thought, and plan it out. So when the time comes for you to go out and live your life, you can do it, and not waste a second, as you know where to go and what to do, effectively making the most of it. The moral that I follow is: make the most of every opportunity that comes your way to fulfil your potential for happiness and success. And that's what I intend to do.

Happiness is a smile

Kirsty Boswell, Gryffe High School, Year 9

Smile and the world smiles with you.

The idea of happiness does not appear only when I think about it, it goes with me everywhere I go. One way you can build your joy is to be optimistic and friendly. These two qualities are vital for a successful and enjoyable life. At says the best gift I received from my family and friends, which I will share with other people and improve my own happiness.

Happiness - A Poem

*If you smile you'll find a smile
Wherever you want to go,
And though you may sometimes feel sad,
You'll never be alone.
The simple smile I received
Has never left my side,
It stays with me everywhere
During the day and night.
Once you get your first smile
Pass it on and on and on, and through your life
You'll pass each day with a with a whistle and a song,
The smile I got will always be the cherry on the cake,
It provides me with a life of love, not a life of hate.*

Push yourself

Blair Michael, Gryffe High School, Year 9

Attitude is the key: if you are positive, then most the time things will turn out the way you want them to.

In life, I think you have to push yourself in every situation, whether you're making a presentation or just speaking in uncomfortable situations. If you push yourself, you feel good and satisfied, but if you don't then you will probably regret it afterwards. I get all of this from my

mum, who tells me I have to push myself. At first I didn't really listen, but the more I thought about it the more I realised that these are words of truth and that we should learn from them and do better in life.

“Life is a tragedy for those who feel and comedy for those who think”

Jean de la Bruyere, quoted by Patrick Frech, George Heriot's School

Two worlds

Siobhan Chien, High School of Dundee, Year 10

Looking out across the Malaysian skyline of the capital, Kuala Lumpur, from the 26th floor of a luxury hotel room, I could see for miles across the city. In the distance were the Petronas Twin Towers, soaring up into the clouds, surrounded by hundreds of modern office blocks and shrouded in a combination of opulence and elegance. It was the first time I had returned to my dad's home country in 10 years, and the sheer magnificence of the city bewildered and excited me. Stunning skyscrapers competed for my attention as I watched the sun rise over the dozing city. Yet it was the patchwork quilt of humble shacks among the lavish splendour that caught my attention. I gazed in amazed wonder at the absolute poverty masked in the disguise of exquisite luxury and sophistication. Yet, worryingly, I dismissed the unmistakable poverty and returned to the modern fanfare of delights.

A year later I returned to Malaysia, this time to Langkawi, an island on the west coast of the country. In December 2004 a horrific tsunami struck at East Asia, unleashing death, destruction and devastation on what had once been an oriental paradise. The world looked on in disbelief and dismay as an already underdeveloped nation struggled to deal with the consequences of the total catastrophe. Although shocked by the dreadful images of the disaster, I was thankful that my relatives have not been affected, and within a few months the communities involved seemed to be slowly rebuilding their lives. It was only on this visit that I realised the absolute destitution that some families were forced to endure. However, the struggling Malaysian community exuded an unavoidable sense of positivity and determination to rebuild and repair the damage caused by the tsunami.

In 2007, I returned once more to Malaysia. This time, we visited my mother's childhood home, a typical Malay village called Bentong. There was a strong sense of the importance of family, as well as the delicious smell of oriental cooking oozing through the streets of the village as we passed endless cafés and small family shops. This was a far cry from the opulent splendour in Kuala Lumpur, yet there seemed to be an inescapable feeling of happiness and contentment infused into the atmosphere of Bentong. The bravery they show is the most powerful emotion of all as they embrace their poverty-stricken life with enthusiasm,

positivity and, above all, happiness. In spite of this, however, it is incumbent on us to remember their plight and do something about it. We do not have to do much – merely trivial actions, like offering our services during the hour we may spend watching television, or donating a spare few pounds that we spend on chocolate or magazines – yet it is the ordinary, everyday actions of compassionate individuals that make the biggest difference.

Making a difference

Callum Edwards, High School of Dundee, Year 9

You must be the change you wish to see in the world – Mahatma Gandhi.

I never fully understood this quote until the night I watched *Idol Gives Back* on TV. I have always believed that it was very important for everyone in the world to be grateful for what they have been given and to try and share what they have with those less fortunate. Throughout my years I have always felt that as a family we have done our best to help those less fortunate than ourselves but this programme showed me how little I actually knew about issues like poverty and how small amounts of money could make a big difference to others less fortunate than myself.

Watching the sad faces and emaciated bodies of the young children made me feel so guilty for all the material possessions I had and I still wanted more. I had to ask myself where on earth my Christian values had gone. As the commentators gave us the facts, like giving £2 a month would ensure four children were vaccinated against malaria and that giving £1 a month would help to build a well so that the people could have access to clean water, my thoughts kept slipping back to my desire for a new phone when I already had a good enough one. This was when the guilt started to creep in.

This programme and others like it have made me realise how much I have undervalued everyday things such as having constant access to food and water. Seeing the people in Africa who don't even have access to clean water but whatever they do have they are always willing to share with others who are less fortunate was a very humbling experience. Here I was wondering where I would go on my next holiday, what type of new phone I would buy and grumbling because my favourite ice cream was finished, yet these young people on the screen in front of me seemed so happy with the little they had.

Even as a young person these stories have made me realise that I am truly blessed. I had not realised how much in life I took for granted and how material possessions ruled many aspects of my life. From this day forward I have made a vow to myself that I will be part of the changes this programme was trying to make. Instead of placing such high value on possessions and what I can buy for myself with the money I have, I will be part of the change by giving some of what I have to those less fortunate in the hope that it will make their lives a little better.

From this programme I have learnt a valuable 'law of life' – giving and sharing.

Making the most of life

Laura Lee, High School of Dundee, Year 9

If you find yourself in hell, keep going – Sir Winston Churchill.

Ambition and perseverance are the two most important things which will or may get you anywhere you want in life. I look among my friends around me, and so many of them say they are ‘content with just staying here when they are older’ yet I find this almost unbelievable. I want to travel far and wide, see new sights, smell new smells, hear different sounds, taste different cultures and walk different landscapes. Many would just laugh in my face if I told them I wanted to go to Harvard or Oxford, but it’s truly what I want to do.

My mother told me ‘You have 13 years in education but after that you still have at least another 60 years of your life to live. Make the most of school now before it is too late.’ So I do. I listen hard during a lesson and try my best when doing work.

Happiness

Jennifer Lothian, High School of Dundee, Year 11

Happiness it is no laughing matter – Richard Whately

We possess many qualities which combine to help us lead fulfilled and successful lives. However, I believe that the greatest gift we possess is happiness – the feeling epitomised by a sense of appreciation, inner harmony and affection for ourselves and others. Happiness is something we all strive for, but few of us ever truly achieve. We believe that by being able to afford a bigger house or a faster car, we will be happy and content – but this is rarely the case. At weekends I volunteer for a charity and through this work I have met people who, although they are not very wealthy, are some of the happiest individuals I know of. They are content with what they have and the lives they lead. This has taught me to be more optimistic about life, and be more appreciative for what I have.

For most of my life I have been a very competitive person. I used to think that being the best at something or coming first would ultimately make me happier, but I was wrong! When I was little, if ever I was upset about something I’d always talk to my parents about how I felt. After listening to what I had to say, they would always give me the same reply: ‘you can be happy no matter what.’ This idea always cheered me up, but it’s something that I failed to understand until recently. Somewhere in my desperate attempt to come first, I had lost sight of what I set out to achieve in the first place. As I’ve grown older, I’ve realised that things have to change. I’m now much more laid back, and although I still work hard I make sure I enjoy every step of the way! My parents were right. I now understand that true happiness is a choice determined more by our own state of mind than by external events.

Love

Lucas Paas, High School of Dundee, Year 10

Hate looks through a microscope, love looks through a telescope.

When I heard this quotation recently in church, it got me thinking. In order to survive the many different experiences and challenges life is likely to throw at us, all we need to have is the confidence and ability to bounce back and carry on. Although we are all unique and individual in every way, the benefits of loving and being loved are consistent. Love is by far the most powerful emotion we experience, it is what gives us our humanity, and when it is unconditional it can overcome jealousy and anger. This is what separates us from animals, it is what inspired great poets and writers. In my opinion, in order to achieve anything in life you have to love and be loved. In order to fulfil all your purpose, you must be courageous and confident enough to set goals and actively try to achieve them.

There are various forms of love, including romantic and parental love. However, love is not only an emotion attached to people. It can come from love of life, nature, animals, a specific subject and even a love of learning itself. When you feel confident and content, everything seems simple and no challenge seems too great. The other extreme is hate, but this makes you lose all sense of right and wrong and life becomes very hard – if I hate a subject at school, I know I'll do badly in it – it's a self-fulfilling prophecy. To be a good person and enjoy a successful life, to be courageous and confident, to have strong bonds with friends and family is only possible if you have felt love and can give it.

*“Blessed are those who can give without remembering
but take without forgetting”*

Princess Elizabeth Bibesco, quoted by Susan Mawbey, George Heriot's School,
who comments: this is a great quote to help make people less selfish.

Never be jealous

Kasia Thomson, High School of Dundee, Year 10

Olivia Giles is an amazing woman who at the age of 36 unfortunately contracted Meningococcal Septicemia and whilst she was unconscious the decision was made to amputate her hands and feet, to stop the spread of gangrene. But now Olivia lives a fulfilling and remarkable life. Although when I first heard of Olivia Giles it was in a different context.

For years I have competed in various public speaking and poetry competitions - some years would be very successful and I would win plenty and other years if a certain person was competing against me I could win nothing. One day my mother's friend was at my home

when she heard me moaning that there was one person who always pipped me to the post in the festivals. My mum's friend (who is now a school teacher), also competed in festivals as a child and told me that the same thing happened to her. Trish said that anytime she competed she knew that if Olivia Giles was in for the same competition she would 'naturally beat' her. Trish told me she spent many years being envious and frustrated by Olivia until one day in adult life she read a story about a woman named Olivia Giles who had sadly lost both sets of limbs in the space of four hours by meningitis.

After Trish telling me this story I decided to research more into Olivia Giles and read of her absolutely remarkable story and numerous achievements, especially the winning in the festival now seems so insignificant to me and in comparison to how their lives could have turned out in years to come. I think that there is a valuable lesson to be learned here, particularly never to be jealous of people, as nobody knows what God had mapped out for us in the future. We will all have our highs and lows in life and we will all discover hidden strengths we have inside us, to help others and ourselves to deal with whatever life throws at us.

Looking on the bright side

Hayley Collard, Inverurie Academy, Year 10

I have chosen to write about something personal – my parents separating when I was 6 and my brother was 8. I didn't really understand what it meant but I knew it was bad as everyone was upset. This meant that my dad wasn't living with us any more and my family life changed – it was hard to look around and see other families with dads. Gradually I became more sensitive and scared that my mum would leave as well, which made me really clingy. But it was a real help speaking to someone outside the home, who taught me to look at the positive things that could come out of the situation. Even if my dad was a long way away, it was exciting to get on a plane to go and visit him. And things were better because my parents were a lot happier and my brother and I were not stuck in the middle. I realised that having a positive outlook is important for getting over things. This allows you to focus on the good things instead of moping around feeling sorry for yourself. So divorce isn't that bad if you look at it in the right way.

A near escape

Leila Farnat, Inverurie Academy, Year 10

One summer, there was a conflict in the Middle East between Lebanon and Israel. Two hours before Israel bombed Beirut airport, my grandparents left to go to Canada for the summer. This made me realise how lucky they were to have missed that, even though I have plenty of family still there, and was really worried about them. It made me think how lucky I am to live in Britain, where we have food, water and security. In Lebanon and many other countries there is no clean water and there are multiple power cuts every day. This made me realise how much I take granted. And even though I have so much, I still want more. I live a very peaceful life and don't have to worry about the building being bombed. I never

thought about how lucky I am to live here until this incident. Now I try to appreciate everything I have. I try never to throw away my food, because I know I am so lucky to have it. I try not to complain if I don't get everything, because I know so many other people live happily without luxuries or even basic necessities. This is a day I will never forget, and which has had a big influence on my outlook on life.

In the eye of the beholder

Alex Lyne, Inverurie Academy, Year 10

A problem is an opportunity wearing a funny hat – Tom Holt

In an age where looks are everything, what is it to be beautiful or to see something as beautiful? The glamorous model perhaps, a sunset, or blossoming cherry trees. What I think makes people beautiful is not what appears on the outside, but what shines through from within. Inner beauty cannot be bought or won, but can be created with a positive outlook on life, a little grace and good manners. If beauty is in the eye of the beholder, is this eye in fact a physical one? Eyes are said to be the gateway to the soul. Someone with a twinkle could be considered more beautiful than someone with cold, dull eyes, but I think this is a matter of opinion. It is easy with so many procedures available for people to change their appearance, but they can lose their beauty and even themselves in the process. It is changing who we are inside that can create a new person.

Real friendship

Iona McCallum, Inverurie Academy, Year 10

A real friend is someone who is there for you when they would rather be anywhere else. - Len Wein

The first time I really noticed the impact of giving up something for somebody else was when one of my friends was feeling down. She had been arguing with her mum about the usual things, but this time it seemed to be a big deal. The main problem though was that she felt she had no one to speak to, so she turned to me for help. She told me about how she felt mad and upset, and what had happened. I already had plans to go into town with another friend that day, but I cancelled my plans just to help her.

She came round to me and we spoke about what happened, then I tried to cheer her up as best I could. To be honest, it seemed to have worked because she was happy and smiling again. I felt so good to know that my best friend was fine and happy all because of me! This showed me that giving up something to put someone else first wasn't such a big drama. To be honest, I was gutted that I had to cancel my plans with my friend, but by the end of the day I felt great because my friend was happy, so I was ecstatic! People really appreciate you being there for them and it's even better if you're there someone you love.

My philosophy of life

Jasmine Anne Barnard, Kemnay Academy, Year 9

Until you try, you don't know what you can't do -- Henry James

My main philosophies on life are:

Trust yourself, your own decisions on your own instincts because they usually lead you to where you want to go.

Be open with people about your opinions and beliefs.

Share your feelings.

Never change for someone else to accept you, and be proud of what you believe in.

Don't deny that you believe in something for fear of being abused.

Do what you think is right.

Stay true to yourself and be who you are.

Don't wear something or do something because that's what other people do.

Try your best.

Be honest unless you have to lie to save yourself or someone else.

All through my life I have stayed true to who I am and I'm not afraid to admit it. I'm quite confident, but it doesn't always come naturally. People seem to think that I don't get nervous about things, but I do, just the same as other people. The difference is that I choose not to show it most of the time. You should always have a positive outlook on things, and as my mum always says, 'think of the glass as half full not half empty.' This saying has got me and my friends through a lot of situations.

You can do it!

Nicola Howitt, Kemnay Academy, Year 9

This project has changed my outlook on life and has made me think more about the world itself. I had never actually realised just how important smallest things in life are, such as the people who care about me for who I am, clean water, a roof over my head and also being thankful for what I have. Indeed, the most important things in life are friends and family, happiness and education. I could never come to believe in myself until I looked beyond my negative thoughts. I used to think, I can't do it, but now I realise it's not what you think you can't do, it's how you do it. When I read about families in Africa, I realise that they have very little to show for life itself, but they still have a smile on their faces because they are happy and believe that something good will come out of everything they have worked for. They smile in hope and belief, showing that you don't need all the luxuries of the world to be happy.

Not only have I realised a lot about myself doing this project, but also the real value of friendship. Friendship grows with time, and your friends will become some of your closest companions for life and although everyone has their ups and downs, your true friends will

always be there to support you. I hope to remember this project in the future, to help me out and benefit me in the situations I may find myself in. I know that everyone has their own point of view but I will stand up for what is right! My ambitions in life are to work my hardest to reach my grades and to follow a career path, to travel and experience the many wonders of the world, living life to the full and never letting a moment pass me by!

Treasuring life

Darryl Peers, Kemnay Academy, Year 9

I treasure my life very much, especially since I was hit by a car and wondered whether I was going to live at that point. This makes one value life because of this, I have to make the most of my life and achieve what I can while it is possible. We have to take risks in life and life will reward us. Life is a mission, an opportunity to make a difference. Life is more important than anything, so selling yourself short is a crime.

Love all you can

David Creigh, Kinross High School, Year 9

What has happened to me has shaped me. Everyone makes mistakes but the wise learn from them, as someone said. That's also why they put rubbers on pencils. I've heard of karma and I read about the law of attraction, which is why the story of the Boy and the Echo appeals to me. Basically, if you want friends, be friendly. If you want help, be helpful. The way to change the world is with one small random act of kindness at a time. Don't expect anything back. Just revel in the feeling you get. Work together. Sharing the load is much easier. You wouldn't lift a piano on your own, so why do other things on your own. Love all you can, because love is the greatest gift of all. It makes your heart beat and reinforces all happiness.

Making a mark

Albert Bates, Latymer Upper, Year 9

He who wants to do good knocks at the gate; he who loves finds the gate open.

Rabindranath Tagore

The world is incredibly malleable. Each and every human being can make a difference. To me, life is a chance to make a mark on this world. My ideal is to eliminate poverty. Two years ago my family went on a trip to India. Sitting on the coach listen to our iPods, we passed a rubbish tip with children searching for food. It was all too much. It wasn't right. I see it on the TV but it didn't seem real. What I saw spelled out how badly some people live, searching through dustbins just to get food. Since then, I have sponsored an Indian child for my birthday and regularly give to charities changing lives. In future, I aim not just to donate money but to visit poverty stricken areas and really make a difference.

Rebuild your happiness

Sana Sanai, Latymer Upper, Year 9

The wisest man has something yet to learn.

The most important things in life are love, happiness, perseverance, emotional strength, willpower and determination. It is during times of difficulty and struggle that you discover what is truly important to you. This is when you realise what your essential values are, which will help you through life. You realise the importance of emotional strength and how worry will get you nowhere. With love, emotional strength and perseverance you can be happy, and when you are happy nothing more is wanted. Everyone faces difficulties in life; they are actually a part of life but no matter how bad things get, happiness can always be regained. I realised this as a result of losing someone very close to me, someone with great emotional strength and willpower. Although I went through a difficult time, I realised that worrying about it would not change the experience, things would not rewind. I could not go back to happiness, I had to go towards it. So I moved on, refocused myself and rebuilt my happiness.

“There are no language barriers when you are smiling”

Allen Klein, quote by Mhairi Deuchar, Berwickshire High School

Spreading peace and love

Charli Patterson, Sgoil Lionacleit, Year 10

I strongly believe in helping others and having respect for everyone even if I don't like them that much. I find that a little respect means a lot to a lot of people; for example, I'm not religious, but if someone else is and their religion gives them peace and happiness, then I truly respect that because everyone has the right to be happy. Seeing happiness in someone else is one of the things I love most because I really think that smiles are contagious. Some people say that one person can't change the world, but I think they can; one person at a time. If I can make a few people close to me happy, then they can make others happy, and it goes on.

I think I'm all about spreading peace and love. These two things mean so much to everyone, even those that won't admit it. I am very willing to help anyone who needs it even if I don't normally get on with that person. I think this way because everyone needs help sometimes, that's one rule that has no exceptions. I personally need help a lot of the time; I could not survive if I had no one to turn to, and so I want to give others someone to turn to when they need it.

True miracles

Jessica Hufton, Loudoun Academy, Year 9

I think life is about making the most of it! We only live once, which should make us determined to think more about our lives. All the people you see that take drugs or drunks in the bushes don't think much about the lives that they are currently living and don't understand that drowning their sorrows is not going to help. I don't think miracles are about winning the lottery or having an amazing Christmas. It's about young people who say no to drugs and yes to education and the kind of person who helps the poor people on the streets of hungry in Ethiopia. They are the true miracles! Life is like a delicate flower -- if you treat it wrongly it can wither away and die, but if you treat it correctly, the path will unfold for you and lead to greatness. We tend to take our life for granted, e.g. when we turn on the taps and see nice clean water. Third World countries have lice and parasites in theirs, and still have to drink it! We all need to do something about this.

Appreciating your family

Claire Boyce, Loudoun Academy, Year 9

It all started seven years ago when my mum went into hospital with a brain tumour. She was in hospital for a very long time because she was too ill to stay at home where the illness could have got worse as the days went by. I don't remember much about her being in hospital, but I do remember that she was in a lot of pain. The reason I'm talking about this is because little children in Africa have no parents left due to illnesses like AIDS and have a 50-50 chance of surviving. My mum had 5% chance of surviving at luckily enough she pulled through and is still alive today. However these families in Africa must still feel worse today than I did seven years ago as the diseases are far worse even than what my mum suffered. The point is that we are very lucky to have our families.

Friendship

Nicola Guthrie, Loudoun Academy, Year 10

The thing in life that matters most is friendship, since friends are always there to support you and stick up for you when something is wrong. Just now as I'm waiting to go for surgery on my foot, my friends are supporting me through it to help make sure I get better afterwards and that I am prepared for the operation. Although I know it will be painful, and support of my friends to make the pain seem much less. The surgery is a scary prospect for me, but it's the only way I be able to pursue the career I would like to: to be in the police or to work with endangered animals abroad.

Who is the Bravest?

Ashley Wilson, Loudoun Academy, Year 9

Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.- Helen Keller

This is probably one of my favourite quotes from one of my most inspiring people. I feel you have to have courage to make a life for yourself. You only live once. Make the most of it. If you want to bungee jump or even learn to drive but are too scared, you have to believe in yourself. Tell yourself you can do it and you surely will be able to. If you live a life of boredom and fear, you will have a wasted life. I feel if you believe that you can make something of your life if you have courage and bravery. When you hear about people who have done something amazing, like sailed around the world, or saved a person's life you're always in awe of them. But really, all they had to do this amazing thing was courage, and I feel anyone can do anything if they put their mind to it.

Think about it. Who is the bravest person in the world?? Is it a soldier fighting a war? Is it a fire fighter fighting a fire? Or is it a cancer patient holding on for life in a hospital? Or is it an old woman living alone fighting each day away? That's the thing; there isn't a bravest person in the world. We are all brave and we are all special in our own unique way. I once knew a woman who had suffered with cancer for many long years and eventually she lost the battle. But that's not the point; the point is that she never gave up, only at the very end. She was an inspiration and was always positive. It's strange to think she's gone but I know she went with courage. I think she was an amazing woman. She inspired me to be brave and to rise against my problems.

Living in peace

Caitlin Davies, Monifieth High School, Year 8

Whatever will be, the future's not ours to see. - Doris Day

While doing this poster I have learnt that you should live life to the full, because it is short and there is no use in worrying about things. I realise that there are wars, causing harm to those around them. I believe that the life we lead is influenced by war and poverty and we should all be more peaceful to one another and help each other along life's open road. There may be many different ways to go, but don't they all end up in the same place, and when we get there we will all harmonise together and cease warring? I believe that only the people who have been to hell and back can fully understand why we must stop this stupid fighting. We invaded Iraq to help people, but in Africa the situation was the same, the only reason we went to Iraq was because it has something we want, oil. If Africa had oil we would be over there 'helping' them. But what is the point if we are only 'helping' to fill our greed.

I hope that the government will learn that we may be saving one life, but is it worth it if we are killing a thousand more? People should stand up and use their rights to get the people out of Iraq. In contrast to that I think that we should all live in peace and do our best to be good Samaritans and help those around us as we would like to be helped in times of suffering and hardship.

“He who lives to live forever never fears dying”

William Penn, quoted by Robin Gillie, Berwickshire High School

Resilience

Lily Hosie, Monifieth High School, Year 8

It's important to be strong in life because anything can turn up and you will have to fight it. For instance, my mum had breast cancer in 2003 and had to have all kinds of operations, tests and injections. She was strong and managed to get the all clear. But life is full of surprises and my mum had another lump in her liver so she went to the hospital to see what it was. The doctor said that she had cancer again and we need to go through it all again. My mum is still here and she still healthy and working and she will be until she's an old lady. My mum shows she is strong and happy and full of love. This poster has made me think differently about life and enabled me to understand life more. The whole time I've been doing this I have understood more what type of person I'd like to be.

Be grateful for what you have

Laura Sanger, Monifieth High School, Year 8

Doing this poster competition has really made me think about the less fortunate people in the world and how lucky I am to have things like the T.V, Computer, a phone, running water, food for my breakfast, lunch and dinner. These things I take for granted, but are unheard of to a child of my age in Chad. There are poor people throughout the world, but Chad is one of the poorest countries in the world with 6.8 million people living there. More than half the people living there are poor; most of them don't have electricity, running water or food every day of the week! This is because there are too many people in Chad and not enough food to feed everyone, families are bigger in an attempt to have more income, but this just means more mouths to feed. The climate and lack of farming knowledge has meant that crops more suitable to the conditions in Chad are not grown in favour of others, which are less productive.

I am able to look to the future and map out what I want to do when I am older, the children of Chad can only look to the following day to see how they are going to survive. I can say that I'm going into town or swimming with my friends but in Chad the people don't have those luxuries. I hope that the people of Chad will live a better life one day but as for now I can only be a bit more grateful for what I have and not moan about what I don't have. Speaking personally, my dad was soldier in Iraq for 7 months and we only saw him once during that time. He told us about the poor conditions he had to stay in, which made me think of the people of Iraq, who also don't have TVs, computers, phone, electricity and many other things. I lost my dad for 7 months, but he came back safe and I gained a bit of knowledge about not taking so many things for granted.

Equality

Fraser Knox, Oldmachar Academy, Year 9

The most important thing in life is to remember that everyone is equal and we're all the same. It doesn't matter if you're black or white or Hindu or Christian, everyone is equal and we should treat others the way we want to be treated. Discrimination and racism are unacceptable and should not be tolerated.

In the 1950s people were much more racist than they are today. If a white man walked onto a bus, a black man had to give up his seat. The police even beat up black people and they weren't even allowed to protest. There are a lot of benefits in Britain being a multicultural society, but still many people don't like people from other countries 'stealing' jobs and houses.

When I was at the Aberdeen versus Celtic match and Celtic's Polish keeper Artur Boruc made a great save to an Aberdeen player's shot, a fan behind me branded him a Polish immigrant and said he should go back to where he came from. The guy sitting beside us got up and started shouting at him and told him that even though it's only a game, he's a good person and it doesn't matter if he's Polish or not. He then questioned him, asking if Boruc played for Aberdeen, would he still slag him? Then the nearest steward escorted the men out of Pittodrie, which shows that racism is being stamped out.

Run in the rain!

Sarah Elphinstone, Portlethen Academy, Year 9

Last year, I came first in this same competition and the best thing I got out of it was learning that my opinions were shared by others. It also made me learn a lot about myself. I felt the prize money given was extremely generous, but what I found even more generous was the feeling I got when I gave some of that money to charity. You really feel like you are doing something for someone else and although you may be losing something, you gain so much more. Although the £20 was not a huge amount of money, I know that the person I gave it to would appreciate it so much more than I did. It has also encouraged me to do a lot more for people. At Christmas time my family is hoping to go and help in the soup kitchens for the homeless.

Every time I smile I know someone will be smiling with me. Working hard, making mistakes, learning, smiling, crying, laughing, and living. These are things you do. But what and who for? It's all worth it in the end! REMEMBER: Loving people is easy. They say it takes a minute to find a special person, an hour to appreciate them, a day to love them, but then an entire life to forget them. Take the time to live!!! Keep in touch with your friends; you never know when you'll need each other. Always smile about the past. Only cry with laughter! And don't forget to run in the rain!

Going on a journey

Iona Casley, Putney High School, Year 7

Getting there is all part of the journey – Unknown

I never used to believe or think about this saying – ‘How is getting there part of a journey you haven’t even begun?’ I asked myself. I had absolutely no idea how much I didn’t get about this quote.

Last summer we went to Ladakh, which is meant to be a mountain desert, but that year it had the most rainfall in recorded history. This is a perfect example of our fantastic luck (I’m being sarcastic by the way)! We arranged a trek all the same, however to start the trek, we had to have a whole day in the car to get away from Leh, the capital, and out into the proper mountains. Disaster. The jeep we were driving in was most likely illegal in England, it was too unsafe, and the rain had destroyed most of the way we were heading with tremendous landslides. We had to literally camp in people’s back gardens, which was excruciatingly embarrassing!!! We finally reached the mountains after an enormous number of near death experiences that I don’t think either me or my mum or dad will ever forget. The trek, compared with getting there, was easy. This shows that getting there really is part of the journey, and sometimes more of it than the thing itself.

Feeling hopeful

Cicely Culmer, Putney High School, Year 8

In life moral values will help you to progress, which is vital, helping you to be who you are. Moral values to follow are things such as self-discipline, love and hope and they will help you throughout life. If you follow them and stick to them you will live your life well and most definitely feel like you have achieved something in it. For example having self-discipline will let you have a limit in life. Though it doesn’t matter sometimes if you go over this limit, it means that when you do you know that you have. The limit means that if you have a choice and one is good and the other bad, you will choose the sensible one. Doing this will take a while because you have to learn that this is what to do. Just because there is a limit, it doesn’t mean that you can’t enjoy yourself.

Love in life will make you happy and more confident. It will mean that in the bad times when you are feeling down, you have someone to go to and rely on. You don’t have to love just one person. You should show love and respect to others too though as well as receiving it. Hope will give you self-belief in yourself and in others. For example, having hope doesn’t cost anything but it could still happen. If you hope and believe in something then it is more likely to come true than if you don’t because if you have hope in yourself in doing something, then you will try harder and work harder so that you can do it and achieve what you set out to do. Having hope will make you more optimistic and will make everyone else around you feel hopeful too.

Keep going!

Sae Kohara, Putney High School, Year 8

There are lots of things that really matter in my life. Firstly I think that perseverance is very important and I hope I don't give up in challenges that lie on the road ahead. I think that if you believe that you can do it and you truly want to do it you can achieve anything. One of the reasons that I admire Gandhi is because he kept going, even risking his own life to get their rights. Even if you really don't want to do something I think that it is perseverance that keeps you going and which makes you get a fine result at the end. If you give up hope it is likely that you'll lose or fail because your brain automatically makes you feel down and depressed. If you have enthusiasm in never giving up there will always be a reward at the end for the amount of hard work you put into it. I think that this is true because of my personal experiences.

Have faith!

Kimberley Marsh, Putney High School, Year 8

I think the things that really matter in life is to have faith; have faith in your friends, to be there for you when you need them; have faith in your parents, that they will bring you up properly; have faith in your teachers, that they will teach you properly but most of all to have faith in yourself. If you don't believe in yourself how can you possibly expect anyone else to believe in you? Life's there to be lived. There is a lovely line that I like from Titanic that reads '*I figured life's a gift and I don't intend wasting it*'. I think that if we thought like this that the world would be a much better place to live in. People wouldn't be backwards in the way they think or the things they do.

I have actually had experience of people not believing in themselves. They let all their problems pile up and then they suddenly let them all out in one emotional flood. Instead of tackling the problems they let them get to the stage where they are overwhelmed by them and they forgot to believe in themselves. They forgot to believe that they had the power to change their life, to do something about these problems.

Listen with both ears

Jessica McNally, Putney High School, Year 7

The things that I think really matter in life are love, good health, families and friendship. I think these because some people aren't lucky enough to have some or any of these things. I also think this because my dad has a friend who is very ill, in a wheelchair and will never be able to walk again. It really makes me think how lucky I am.

My ideals are:-

Treat people the way you want to be treated

Make the most of everyday

Smile

Listen with both ears

I chose these ideals because you can make yourself and other people happier and have a better and more enjoyable life. I think no. 1 because the nicer you treat people the more likely they will be nice to you back. For no.2 I think even if you didn't have a very good day think about those who are less fortunate than you are and how much luckier you are. I think that smiling is always good, because it gives people a good first impression; that you are kind and happy. No. 4; it is a bit like the quote '*you cannot properly listen to some one whilst doing something else at the same time* – Anon' I think that this is true because if you were doing the washing up round the corner from the person talking a) you can't see the person talking, b) you will not be able to hear them properly and c) you will be concentrating fully on the washing up instead of what the other person is saying to them.

Don't hurry

Katherine Monks, Putney High School, Year 8

The way I see the world and the way others see the world is different, but I do know that everyone who has done this project will have changed their ideas about how they see things. I now appreciate the things that are really important.

SLOW DANCE

*Have you ever watched kids on a merry-go-round?
Or listened to the rain slapping on the ground?
Ever followed a butterfly's erratic flight? Or gazed at the sun
Into the fading night?
You better slow down. Don't dance so fast.
Time is short. The music won't last.
Do you run through each day on the fly?
When you ask, how are you? Do you hear the reply?*

*When the day is done do you lie in your bed
With the next hundred chores running through your head?
You'd better slow down don't dance so fast.
Time is short. The music won't last.
Ever told your child, we'll do it tomorrow?
And in your haste,
Not see his sorrow?
Ever lost touch, let a good friendship die
Cause you never had time to call and say 'Hi'
You'd better slow down. Don't dance so fast.
Time is short. The music won't last.*

When you run so fast to get somewhere you miss half the fun

*Of getting there.
When you worry and hurry through your day, it is like an
Unopened gift... thrown away.
Life is not a race. Do take it slower
Hear the music before the song is over.*

For three years my cousin fought a courageous battle with a malignant brain tumour, before she lost that fight and died 5 days before her 15th birthday on April 20th 2005. She was only 14 when she died, and I know that many young children have died. This shows that you should live life to the fullest, all the time because you never know what could happen. Disease and terrorism could strike at any possible time. Although I think you should never waste time, the poem above. Written by a girl with cancer, also says that you shouldn't try to hurry through your life. I really love the poem above, I think it is just as good as any poem written by an adult and I hope that the girl will make it through. More importantly, I think that this poem portrays a message that everyone should be aware of.

A friend in need

Claire Muggleton, Putney High School, Year 7

I think that love is extremely important, so is freedom and forgiveness. With forgiveness it is important on both sides because once you have forgiven someone the feeling of a black cloud passing over is immense. Many people say that money is important; I suppose it is, but too much can be harmful. The really important thing is sticking together. Kindness always shows that love is hidden underneath, maybe a shy way.

A good friend of mine at school once became very upset because she had lost her keys for her locker and all her homework was there. She had asked one of her friends to look after her keys while she had a music lesson. I found her really distressed and so I walked round with her to help find them. It turned out that her friend had asked someone else to tell us where the keys were. The girl who had been asked to remember forgot, and then after a while came after my friend. Eventually she found us and my friend was happy again. Sometimes you just need a friend to talk to and be there when you are distressed. It is not feeling alone and that you have to deal with something on your own that is important.

Never give up

Alexandra Owens, Putney High School, Year 8

We can all learn something from Martin Luther King, that is never to give up. If people were

“Curious people ask questions, determined people find answers”

Anon, quoted by Emma Nicol, Queen Anne High School

half as hard today as he did, the world would be a much better place will stop looking at his life, I have learnt that any one person can make a difference to our world if they truly love what they are fighting for. This has helped teach me precious lesson in life, which is always to be confident in myself and not to dwell on the past and worry about what other people think of me. I have realised that I can make my own decisions and that I am my own person. As long as I truly believe in myself, it doesn't matter what others think. I want to take every opportunity I am offered, live life to the full and never regret and I have done.

Do what you think is right

Aamnah Abaid and Stephanie White, Queen Anne High School, Year 8

What I consider very important to me is that you need to be yourself. If you find yourself in uncomfortable situations, think rationally about the consequences! For example a friend wants you to steal something from a shop, don't get involved as the result would be that you will be punished for something that wasn't even your idea. The same goes for bullying. If you're part of a gang and they decide it makes them look cool to pick on someone. It does not! Try and put yourself in the victim's shoes. Would you like to be on the receiving end? Don't be forced into something you know deep down is wrong. Walk away because that will make you a stronger person.

Believe you can do it

Cameron Boggan, Queen Anne High School, Year 8

I think what really matters in life is what you think! It doesn't really matter what the government says, what laws they put out saying you must do this and you can't do that, but it is what you think you must do and what you think you can't do. You can sit on the couch watching the TV seeing people stop wars, cure diseases or prevent world hunger and think how great it would be to do something that would save lives or even save the world.

So what really matters in life is your mind. Your choices are either a mind that thinks and believes you can do something amazing and would go to any extent to do so, or a mind that would wish you could but you give up the very next day. So if every person on the planet thinks and believes they can do something amazing, the world would be a much better place.

I believe that your mind is the only good and bad thing in this life. It is the only problem there is, just set out in different ways. I've been led to believe this because I've seen lots of different shows on the TV about all the problems in the world and people trying to do something about them, and seen the government and news programmes telling not just me but everyone how things are, and how they are not going to change. This has impacted on me in a way that has made me realise that TV has transformed people's minds to make them think that no matter how hard anyone tries nothing is going to change.

So if you think and believe you can do something amazing, then life will be a lot easier and

much more exciting. Remember 'curious people ask questions; determined people find answers!'

What I want

Claire Hutchison, Queen Anne High School, Year 8

I think animals and nature are worth standing up for and trying to save, as animals' lives are quite similar to ours. I also believe in stopping world poverty because 'if you give to the world the best you have, the best will come back to you.' The world turns into a beautiful place where there are no people suffering without a roof over their head or enough food to eat, and animals could live without the fear of hunters and poachers. The world would be a better place if we all just knew what was going on about people less fortunate than ourselves -- we can make a difference!

What really matters

Heather Houston, Queen Anne High School, Year 8

This project has made me realise that there are more important things in the world than the latest gadgets and gizmos. I realise that friendship, beliefs and opinions are always more important. It has made me realise that the most ordinary person could be someone inspirational, like my mum and sister. It has also reminded me that the way you live your life can affect others' way of life. I quote from the gold ring that was presented of Oscar Schindler by the Jews from whose tooth fillings the ring was made. It is inscribed in Hebrew, 'He who saves one life, saves the world.' After doing this project I agree 100%, for one life can make all the difference in the world.

Aim big

Matthew Brettie, Radyr Comprehensive, Year 8

There are many amazing things that have happened to me in my life and some things that have made me feel so low I've felt rock bottom. A lot of my life revolves around acting and sport. In my life I have performed in the millennium centre and in London. Also I have been attending drama school for 8 years. But other things like not getting picked for big parts in top shows and I know deep down I should have got it isn't so good. I think that a positive outlook is vital in life, without it you wouldn't get anywhere near where we are now. I also think that if I don't do well in school I'll be saying 'Do you want fries with that?'

I think in life you have to aim big because if you don't what do you aim for? In the future things have got to change. Global warming needs to be stopped. Also I think that the people in China should have better rights and one day I wish that the whole world could live in harmony. I have made difficult decisions in my life. When I was 10 I had to choose between Cardiff rugby and my acting career. I chose acting because I have been doing it all my life. I want to be a professional actor when I am older and I look up to Queen for their courage and determination.

*“It is not how much we have, but how much we enjoy,
that makes happiness”*

Charles Spurgeon, quoted by Maya Wotherspoon, Queen Anne High School

Happiness

Aliya Hossain, Robert Gordon's College, Year 8

Happiness is not a horse; you cannot harness it - Russian proverb

Happiness does not necessarily come easily. It is not something that you can buy or hunt or collect. A while ago, whenever I was depressed, I would play with my hamster. It was great to have someone to talk to who would never get mad at me or argue with me. Unfortunately, last month, he died. For the three weeks that followed, I was unbelievably depressed. Recently, though, even though I still desperately miss him, I have found happiness and can go on with life again. This incident has caused me to believe in happiness more than I used to. Kindness is also linked to happiness. Your kindness can make other people happy and when you've made somebody else happy then you will probably be happy too.

Mutual respect

Heather Elizabeth Buchan, Robert Gordon's College, Year 9

Relationships are very important because you need people to rely on and people need to rely on you. I think that living in Brunei for three years has led me to this conclusion. I experienced different cultures and travelled widely all over South East Asia. The people I met there were usually happy and content with what they had. They had very few material possessions therefore they relied on their family and friends a lot. Their culture and religion meant that they had to respect their elders. I notice a big difference in the sense that children in the UK do not have the same respect as they do. Experiencing this situation has definitely had great impact and has had a long lasting effect in the way I live my life. I value my family and friends more than I would if I hadn't lived in Brunei.

Another thing that has also led me to think this way is the wildlife. In Brunei I observed lots of animals that acted in much the same way as the families in South-east Asia did. Animals such as monkeys, orang-utans and elephants have a strong family bond, the children respect their elders and they help each other. I learned a lot from my travels and have definitely learned how to value my family and friends. You should always stand up for yourself. Be confident and don't let others defeat you for what you believe and learn to say no. The most important thing is to not worry or let anyone put you down in the gutter.

Be your own person

Mark Sinton, St Aidan's High School, Year 10

Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

I believe that most important thing in life is to be yourself and express your uniqueness. Your life will be pointless if you simply follow the lead of others and let others make decisions for you. You must be your own person and make your own decisions; in this way your success will be more special. By being unique and forging your own path others will follow your trail instead of you following them. One example that has led me to this conclusion is the example of Albert Einstein, who is unique in a way that some people even considered him insane, but he would never have got as far if he had not been convinced of his own uniqueness. He was always prepared to take risks and ignore what others thought of him as long as he achieved his dreams. I would like to live up to this ideal of being unique and leaving my own trail.

The ordinary and the extraordinary

Gareth Fleming, St David's High School, Year 9

As I have worked on this poster, several things have kept coming back to challenge me. I have stopped to think about the meaning of life, why we are all here, and in response to that how short life can be. I feel that we really have to grasp hold of each day that comes, to live to the full, and be really thankful for the friends, family and people that we share our life with. It has made me realise that I take a lot granted. My mum loves me unconditionally, and I'm thankful for that because I get an awful lot of things wrong. Not that I'm terribly behaved anything like that or the teenager from hell, I just mess up a lot...and she is there to help pick up the pieces. The best thing is that she doesn't often say, I told you so; she just helps me to work out what went wrong and how I could do it better next time. Sometimes, I even listen! I think that we all need to be much more careful to try to understand how other people are feeling. One of my sisters often tells me that every time I open my mouth, I put my other foot in it! So I have learned that we need to be more sensitive to the people around us.

Another thing that really challenged me was looking at inspirational figures. I realised that many of these people are just ordinary people who have acted in an extraordinary way. They were not famous, they did not have extraordinary courage and superhuman strength, nor had they been action heroes. They were ordinary people leading ordinary lives and found themselves in an extraordinary situation and behaved in a remarkable way. I couldn't work out why they had done so. What makes one person rise to a challenge and another lie down and hide? I think that many people have deep down convictions that they will defend at any cost. Fighting for what you believe in, taking a stand against those who would devalue your beliefs is heroic. I think we all need to be ordinary people doing extraordinary things in

whatever way we can, then the world would be a better place. If we can make life better of even one person, we should, no questions, no buts, and no excuses. In Scotland today, it doesn't often come to risking your life for other people, like my inspirational figure Leopold Socha, but there are challenges every day that we can either rise up and face or run from. Doing this piece of work has made me realise that I need to make more of an effort to stand up and be counted for what I believe in.

Love in action

Tilly Galbraith, St George's School for Girls, Year 8

My main targets in life are to stretch myself as far as I can, have a family and devote myself to others through charity work. In order to do this, I need to have confidence in myself, enthusiasm and love. This means believing I can achieve my goals, enjoying everything I do and making the best out of bad situations. Sometimes it is hard to see love in people, but it will always be there even if behind closed doors. I like to put love into the things I do. To me, love means enjoyment, kindness and willingness. It can be shown in many ways and I wish to show love to others through the things I do. I hope one day I can inspire others to do the same!

Gratitude and family

Ailidh Mather, St George's School for Girls, Year 8

Count your blessings and you will have an attitude of gratitude. An attitude of gratitude creates blessings. - Sir John Templeton

Last year I used to take everything for granted, including my parents. I used to think that everything I got just appeared and didn't need to be earned, then something happened that my dad's business which ended up with him having to work from home.

A few months later a letter came out from school informing us that there was going to be a geography camp. I got all excited as I scanned down the letter, reading about all the fun activities we would be getting up to, until I reached the bottom and saw the price. It hadn't dawned on me till now that I might not be able to go because it was too expensive. I was really upset and longed for the day to be over so I could go home and ask my mum and dad about it.

When I got home I asked my mum first and she said to wait until later to discuss it with my dad, so I waited. When he got home I sat down and I started to talk about it with him. At first I saw his face looked uneasy, trying to work out whether or not we would be able to afford it. After a while, he said he had made up his mind and that I could go. I was ecstatic and very pleased, and wondered why he had said yes when he knew we couldn't afford it.

It wasn't until later in the week when I finally got round to asking him why he had let me go. His reply was simply 'It was because family is more important than anything else.' This showed me that no matter how expensive something is, family is worth much more.

Being myself

Georgina Stewart, St George's School for Girls, Year 8

I think this project has helped me make one of the easiest decisions of my life. That sounds bad but it was not making the decision that was tricky but rather following the path you have chosen. It was a choice between a comfortable and an uneasy life. It is important to be happy with the life you lead but even more important to be happy with yourself! But it's so easy to stick with the crowd, trying not to be noticed and not to be different. This is my best explanation of an uneasy life. So from now on there is no more trying to be cool and changing, so as to fit in. As long as I am a good friend and fun to be around, we should all be happy.

Life as music

Mairi Chaimbeul, St Mary's Music School, Year 10

Life is like music, it must be composed by ear, feeling and instinct, not by rule.

Samuel Butler

One of the things that mean the most to me in life is music. From a very young age I have played musical instruments and I am now at a specialist music school in which our main focus is music. This has grown in me a deep love for very many different genres and types of music, from classical to jazz; from rock to folk.

All of this learning and development in music has made me think that perhaps life itself is somewhat like a piece of music. Firstly, in the same way as life, the music is always moving forward, and however many times we do go back to the same bar – or circumstance – it will never be exactly the same twice. In music practice, we need to learn from our mistakes by correcting them and trying not to make the same ones elsewhere. The same is true of life. In my practice, as well as in daily life, I often become bogged down by the bad things; I forget to be optimistic. But by looking at the positive things in our existence, or in our music, or in our sports, it can assist us in having so much more self-confidence, focus and courage. Sometimes, when I am performing, I will be playing in the most disgusting concert hall, or a room with the worst acoustics. This can be a problem, but there is no point in complaining, so I must simply make the most of the situation. Anyway, I will say, I am making music, or bringing this wonderful pleasure of mine to a new audience. What more can I ask? In our lives, it is also better just to make the most of it, whatever our circumstances.

When I listen to performances with my friends, sometimes when we are discussing the performance afterwards we scorn the performance as being too technical – that there was no music. In music we cannot simply learn the notes and expect to be able to penetrate the meaning of the piece. It is a journey in which we must dig deep into the music to find out what it is really saying to us. We must also take pleasure in the simple things of life and music, or whatever else we may find pleasure in, it is so easy to forget how beautiful the

simplest of things can be. The complicated things in life can be seen as a journey on which we can embark and explore. If we focus and persevere, the most complicated and supposedly impossible things can be achieved. And finally, as in life, we can never achieve the absolute, full, optimum potential of a piece. However, the most important thing is to persevere and strive to achieve it. I hope that someday I will become close.

A passion for music

Mathew Fields, St Mary's Music School, Year 10

It's not how long it takes you to get the top, it's how long you stay there.

Perseverance, focus and realising my potential are some of the most important qualities to me as they are the lights that guide me in my dream to become a solo violinist. But something much deeper is required, something that has to burn inside you, something that has to drive you on even when you are feeling depressed. That something is passion. I first realised my passion for music when I took part in an orchestra at the age of 10. I was in the back of the seconds while my sister Amy sat in the leader's chair. When I saw her there I could feel something burning strongly – this was desire and passion. I too wanted to sit in that chair one day. I wanted to be as musically and technically developed as her. I felt as if my life had just started.

Around that age I was accepted into the National Children's Orchestra of Scotland. We rehearsed intensely for a week and performed in front of hundreds of people, which was an exhilarating experience. I started practising hard and my playing improved dramatically, and I showed real determination and perseverance to succeed as I had to do a 400-mile round trip for a two-hour lesson. I'm immensely grateful for my parents' support and belief that some day I could become a solo violinist. Many kids at the school don't have ambition because their parents don't support them. Passion and my parents' support drove me on to win the overall instrumental prize at the Inverness Music Festival and to being leader of the Highland Regional Youth Orchestra, where I played one of the biggest solos in their repertoire. My teachers have also been very important, but last year I felt as if I had hit a wall. I didn't fit in with the boys at my last school – I didn't have long hair and wear baggy clothes, but I didn't let them crush me into being the same as them. It was my passion for music which kept me going, and I think it's important for everyone to have a passion – it makes the world a more interesting place to live in.

The audition

Tegan Christie Todd, St Mary's Music School, Year 10

I recently went to an audition for an orchestra. When I arrived I heard all the others warming up. I was so overshadowed by everyone else's talent that I didn't unpack my violin to warm up for ages. I sat there thinking about it – part of me wanted to leave before anyone noticed me. But then when I really thought about it I realised that it was my audition not anyone else's. It didn't matter what happened in the warm up room, when I went into the

audition it would be me playing. My great grandmother Rena (see her story on p110) taught me that to have courage, to believe in myself, to be honest with myself. I knew I had done the work for the audition. I knew that I was as prepared as I could be. So I unpacked my violin and did the audition and I am pleased I did. I don't know the outcome yet but I did my best and if I don't get a place in the orchestra it will not be because everyone else was so good, it will be because I wasn't good enough this time around. It won't stop me from trying again - it will just make me more determined to be better next time.

So after reviewing my poster I have come to the conclusion that respect, self belief, determination and honesty are all important to me in life. These are the values that I am going to try to live by and not lose sight of.

“As a day well spent brings happy sleep, so a life well spent brings a happy death”

Leonardo da Vinci, quoted by Scott Marshall, Queen Anne High School

Taking things for granted

Amy Watt, Selkirk High School, Year 9

Before I started this project, I thought that my friends had it better than I did. I thought that trying to fit in was the most important thing in the world, which I know is superficial, but it mattered to me at the time. When I really started to think about Anne Frank's life, I realised that life for me is actually really easy compared to some people. Anne had to deal with being Jewish at the time of Adolf Hitler, being completely shut away from the outside world, putting up with the same people 24/7, and coping with being a teenager. I only have to cope with being a teenager, which isn't always the worst thing in the world. I now realise that even though I'm not a millionaire, I'm really lucky to have mum and dad who love me I have enough food and water, a roof over my head and warmth.

This may sound like I'm saying the same things as many other people, but I honestly feel that something happened to me when I read about Anne and her family while researching this project. It made me realise how often I take everything I have granted, like basic food and freedom, when some people have nothing. I'm really lucky, even if I don't have everything. But I'm happy, have some good friends and most importantly all I need to grow up in healthily. This is the thing I took for granted the most, but I definitely won't any more. A lot of people don't have these basic things, and that's why I'm glad I had the opportunity to work on this project.

Leadership

Erik Cummins, Sgoil Lionacleit, Year 9

Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.

John F. Kennedy

Having a dream, a sense of direction and a sense of purpose are important ideals for young people, especially having a dream because it gives encouragement, a goal and motivation. As Joe Darion's song says:

*To dream the impossible dream,
To fight the impossible foe
To bear with unbearable sorrow
To run where the brave dare not go*

This ideal applies to me now because I'd like to pursue a difficult career in law, and once I achieve my goal I will be able to tell people that it was by being motivated and encouraged that I was able to do this. My inspirational figure in this respect as Marcus Tullius Cicero, a great orator and a lawyer.

The currency of time

Dominic Farley, Stewart's Melville College, Year 3

Time is the most precious jewel, as time is what records our life, each second that ticks will never occur again at that precise moment ever again, not on any day. The minutes that you have spent reading this will never happen again ever. This page, or poster, has stolen a fraction of your life. The only thing that will reverse time is memories. Good memories are the best; when you were young – 4, 5, or 6 – in the summer holidays, in your garden. The outdoors or the evenings keep the best memories alive. This brings me back to time, don't waste your time playing video games or on Bebo or MSM, as you will never look back on those times as fond memories. Don't squander your life, whatever heaven or afterlife that you believe in, you only have one life. Make the most of it!

The winners

Ross McPhail, Stewart's Melville College, Year 3

Some people set high standards for themselves; they come out early and stay late ... Funny how they are usually the winners.

The key to success

Sarah Grant, Turriff Academy, Year 9

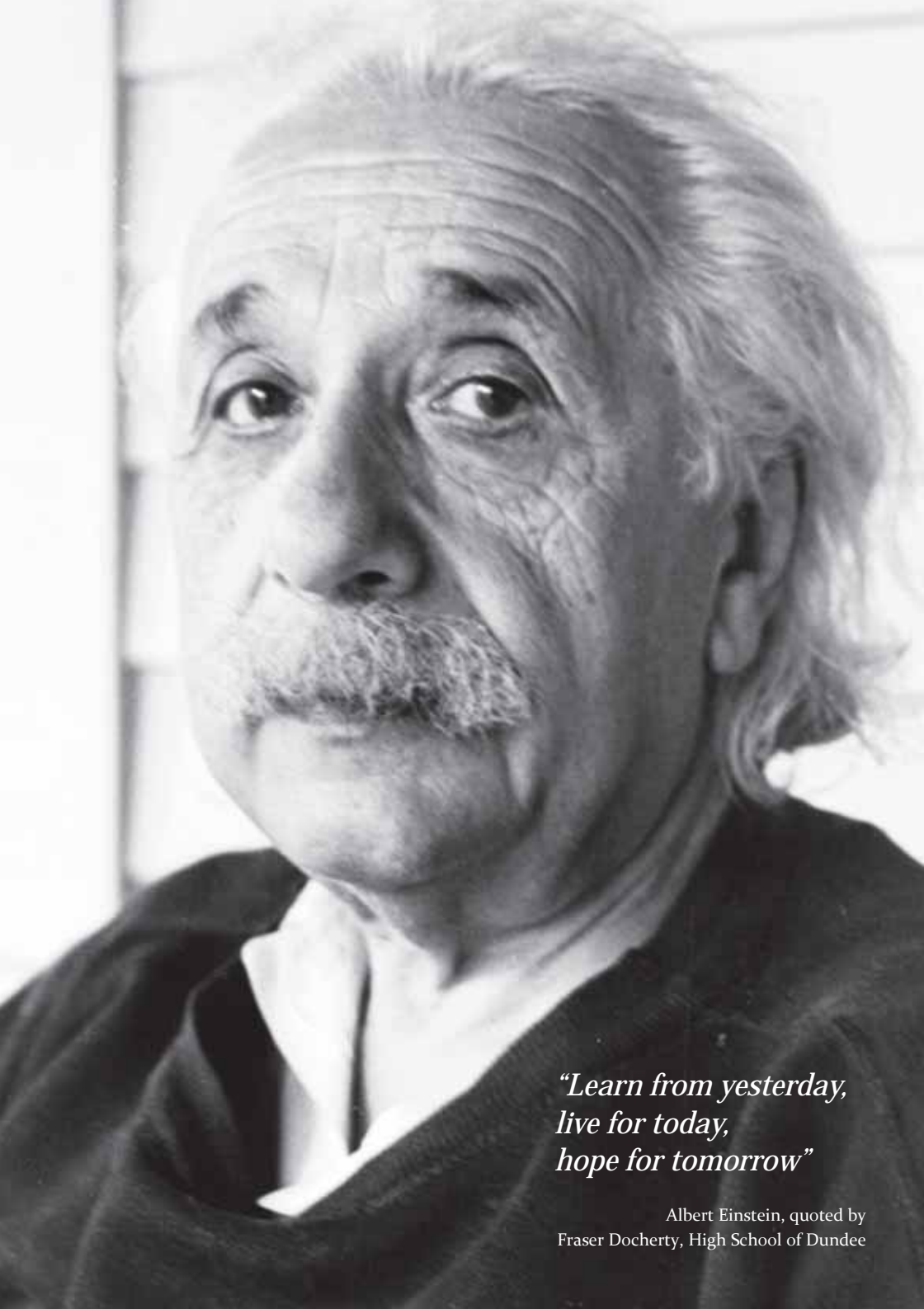
Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.

Helen Keller

This poster has been a good influence on me because it showed me important traits and qualities in our lives such as honesty and integrity. It has also made me think about the future as we had to research our own inspirational figure. Researching Helen Keller has taught me that if you want to be successful in life you have to have perseverance – do not give up at the first hurdle. You also have to have respect and confidence, which Helen demonstrated.

“As a day well spent brings happy sleep, so a life well spent brings a happy death”

Leonardo da Vinci, quoted by Scott Marshall, Queen Anne High School



*“Learn from yesterday,
live for today,
hope for tomorrow”*

Albert Einstein, quoted by
Fraser Docherty, High School of Dundee

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Claire Muggleton, Putney High School, Year 7
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Rose Woolhouse, Putney High School, Year 8
Aamnah Abaid and Stephanie White, Queen Anne High School, Year 8
Mareeha Ahmed, Queen Anne High School, Year 8
Cameron Boggan, Queen Anne High School, Year 8
Ellie Brisbane, Queen Anne High School, Year 8
Abigail Darroch, Sarah Mathie, Siobhan Rivers, Queen Anne High School, Year 8
Naomi Fox, Queen Anne High School, Year 8
Claire Hutchison, Queen Anne High School, Year 8
Heather Houston, Queen Anne High School, Year 8
Melissa Kilday, Queen Anne High School, Year 8
Lauren Miller, Queen Anne High School, Year 8
Kieran Watson, Queen Anne High School, Year 8
Jennifer Wright, Queen Anne High School, Year 8
Sophie Rebecca Austin, Radyr Comprehensive School, Year 8
Matthew Brettie, Radyr Comprehensive School, Year 8
Ashleigh Edwards, Radyr Comprehensive School, Year 8
Philip Marsh, Radyr Comprehensive School, Year 8
Sophie Shenton, Radyr Comprehensive School, Year 8
Megan Thomas and Ashleigh Edwards, Radyr Comprehensive School, Year 8
Aliya Hossain, Robert Gordon's College, Year 8
Heather Elizabeth Buchan, Robert Gordon's College, Year 9
Clare Pearson, St Aidan's High School, Year 10
Rebecca Somerville, St Aidan's High School, Year 11
Gareth Fleming, St David's High School, Year 9
Tilly Galbraith, St George's School for Girls, Year 8
Catriona Logan, St George's School for Girls, Year 8
Heather Elizabeth Buchan, Robert Gordon's College, Year 8
Ailidh Mather, St George's School for Girls, Year 8

Hazel Nobel, St George's School for Girls, Year 8
Georgina Stewart, St George's School for Girls, Year 8
Emily Tait, St George's School for Girls, Year 8
Lauren Bircher, St. Kentigern's Academy, Year 9
Nicole Eadie, St. Kentigern's Academy, Year 9
Jacqueline Kerr, St Kentigern's Academy, Year 9
Elaine Livera, St Margarets School, Year 9
Victoria Roger, St. Margaret's School, Year 11
Mairi Chaimbeul, St Mary's Music School, Year 10
Mathew Fields, St Mary's Music School, Year 10
Tegan Christie Todd, St Mary's Music School, Year 10
Rachael Armstrong, Selkirk High School, Year 8
Dove Ashrowan, Selkirk High School, Year 8
Ben Boyes, Selkirk High School, Year 8
Alex Clarkson, Selkirk High School, Year 9
Dove Ashrowan, Selkirk High School, Year 8
Zoe Turnbull, Selkirk High School, Year 8
Amy Watt, Selkirk High School, Year 9
Cameron Agnew, Stewart's Melville College, Year 10
Dominic Farley, Stewart's Melville College, Year 10
Gregor Forbes, Stewart's Melville College, Year 10
Thomas Martinez-Blair, Stewart's Melville College, Year 10
Ross McPhail, Stewart's Melville College, Year 10
Sarah Grant, Turriff Academy, Year 9
Tanya Lakin, Turriff Academy, Year 9
Katie Setterington, Turriff Academy, Year 9
Shannen Campbell, Webster's High School, Year 10
Gabriella Lirissa Louise Hall, Webster's High School, Year 10
Jess Hidder, Webster's High School, Year 10
Calum Lawrie, Webster's High School, Year 10
Ian McVicar, Webster's High School, Year 10
Zoe Winter, Webster's High School, Year 10