



P EACOCK

by the pupils, for the pupils
Februrary 2016



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edit.**

Editors' Notes



Unfortunately, we've now entered the post-Christmas depression period, which isn't helped by the loss of many of our childhood icons, including Alan Rickman and David Bowie. However, we must aspire to look forward and hope for a world where Donald Trump is not the President of the United States.

“I don't know where
I'm going from here,
but I promise it won't
be boring.”

David Bowie

11th January 2016 at approximately 7:15am, after scrolling through my Facebook newsfeed, I nonchalantly broke the news to my mum that David Bowie had died of cancer aged 69. I am almost ashamed to confess that, until that day, David Bowie was nothing more to me except a musical murmur that I had tried so desperately to drown out at a host of 50th birthday parties. It was obvious from my mum's immediate reaction that Bowie meant a little more to her; her face froze, her eyes glazed over with tears, and all I could tease out of her for the proceeding five minutes was a string of statements professing her disbelief. Just to add further insult to injury, I decided to say, "Don't be too upset, he is just a singer", – how wrong I was.

As the day unfolded, a myriad of clues led me to the conclusion that David Bowie was a pretty big deal to more people than just my mum. His death was the leading story on all major news channels; his Ziggy stardust portrait was plastered across the front of every tabloid – not to mention the lofty editorials dedicated to him in the proceeding days; there was a blizzard of celebrity tweets that descended on Twitter, ranging in origin from Madonna to the Vatican culture minister; over 4 million of us mere mortals tweeted in his honour expressing our despair; his newest album *Blackstar* had darted up the iTunes chart to number 1 by the time I returned home from school on the same day; a plethora of flowers and candles huddled around a painting of Bowie in Brixton. All is evidence for the fact that Bowie was not just a singer but an icon; members of 'Generation X' were having their 'Diana moment.'

Needless to say, the attention Bowie's death attracted was frowned on by some. A quick browse of the usually relatively tame and compassionate Guardian comment section revealed many readers were less than impressed. Some hailed the public mourning 'out of proportion' in relation to the limited coverage the junior doctor's strike received in comparison, and others stated that the triumph of pop music had marginalised poetry and literature (this is especially ironic when it is considered that Bowie was an avid reader who publically lamented the lack of interest in literature – "Nobody reads anymore, nobody goes out and looks and explores the society and culture they were brought up in. People have at

tention spans of five seconds and as much depth as a glass of water."). Both strands of criticism are tainted by cultural snobbery; no event happens in a bubble, and even die-hard Bowie fans were not attempting to suggest that Bowie's death would have monumental political repercussions. Bowie's death was significant because he was a hugely talented human being whose presence enriched the lives of a wide variety of people; nothing more and nothing less.

Love or loathe his back catalogue, Bowie's death mattered for a host of reasons independent from his music. For the young, Bowie was a figure who represented a freedom of expression unparalleled in the 1970s. A quick YouTube search led me to an electrifying 1972 performance of *Starman* on *Top of the Pops* whereby Bowie

pointed down the lens singing "I had to call someone so I picked on you, you, you"; it felt like, in his lycra jumpsuit and with his wacky fluorescent mullet, Bowie was summoning all the teenage misfits that didn't feel like they belonged. There was – and still is – a strange comfort in knowing that, no matter how out of place you felt as a teenager, there would always be someone taking it a step further, almost as if to deflect the attention away from you. In a similar

way, Bowie deserves credit for the way in which he brought homosexuality to the 'rock music table' for discussion and the much-needed challenge he posed to traditional and restrictive ideas of masculinity.

That said, it seems wrong not to acknowledge the masterfulness of Bowie's music. Even if you think you have escaped the reach of Bowie's musical legacy, you haven't: *Starman*, *Let's Dance*, and *Heroes* are amongst an extensive list of prolific records that ensure that even if it has been unintentional, all of us have listened to and probably even danced along to a Bowie record. Even his most recent material – the album *Blackstar* – that Bowie wrote with the knowledge that he was terminally ill was critically acclaimed. It was filled with hints everyone missed until after it was too late; Bowie died just how he had lived – a few steps ahead, waiting for us all to catch him up.

Orla Horan

“Bowie was not just a singer, but an icon”

Top Ten David Bowie Songs

1. Space Oddity
2. Star Man
3. Fashion
4. Heroes
5. Sound and Vision
6. Jean Genie
7. China Girl
8. Golden Years
9. Rebel Rebel
10. Let's Dance



In the news...

A simple line drawing of a hand holding a newspaper. The newspaper has a large headline and several columns of text, with a small illustration of a person in the top left corner.

An outbreak of the Zika virus, an alarming and disturbing infection, has been discovered in the Americas. Some areas have declared a state of emergency calling it “a pandemic in progress” but others, like Brazil, have not let it stop festivities such as the Rio Carnival. The Zika virus is thought to be linked to thousands of babies being born with microcephaly which means that they are born with small heads and underdeveloped brains. It is carried by the same mosquito breed that carries Yellow Fever and although it is especially dangerous for the development of foetuses, only one in five people who have it will show symptoms which include a fever, rash, and headache. The World Health Organisation has responded by prioritising research for a cure and vaccinations and by supporting authorities to implement strategies aimed at reducing mosquito populations.

On the other side of the world, in North Korea, it is believed that the regime owns more than 1000 missiles of varying capabilities – including long range missiles which could potentially hit the U.K. North Korea is also believed to own a wide variety of short range missiles too, which could easily hit one of South Korea’s military installations. This has been in the news because North Korea has recently claimed that it has launched a satellite into orbit and has pledged to launch more. However, it is not clear whether or not the launch was a success.

The internet has also been left curious in the case of “The Fine Bros” – a popular YouTube channel which has posted a series of “React” videos. On the 26th January they revealed a scheme to let other video-makers use assets from their version of the format. However, this has caused a huge backlash from their viewers for trademarking their “React” videos – a term widely used throughout YouTube. Jon, a YouTuber from “Many a True Nerd”, has expressed sympathy and understands that they feel they should protect their own work. However he thinks that they have gone too far, with trademarking such a widely used idea. Before they announced this they had over 14 million subscribers to their channel; they have now lost 1 million subscribers.

Leanne Potter



Serene Says

Alan Rickman

Snape's dead, in both the Wizarding world and the Muggle world.

The loss of actor Alan Rickman was a shock to the nation; he was widely known to all. From his classic bowl-cut hairstyle in *Romeo and Juliet* (1987) to falling out a skyscraper in *Die Hard* and, more memorably for our generation, playing Severus Snape in the *Harry Potter* movies.

It's social media etiquette to post a quotation from a celebrity who has recently passed away. It's become a way of paying respect, even though the captions never say: "My condolences go to his family", the quotations we decide to share show the impact they have left on us personally. However, half the time we've never heard the quotations we scroll through or the deceased didn't even say these words. For example, Alan Rickman never said: "When I'm 80 years old and sitting in my rocking chair, I'll be reading Harry Potter. And my family will say to me, 'After all this time?' And I will say, 'Always.'". This was actually said by a fan. Nevertheless, it was not his words that left an impact on me, but his background and his journey to becoming an actor.

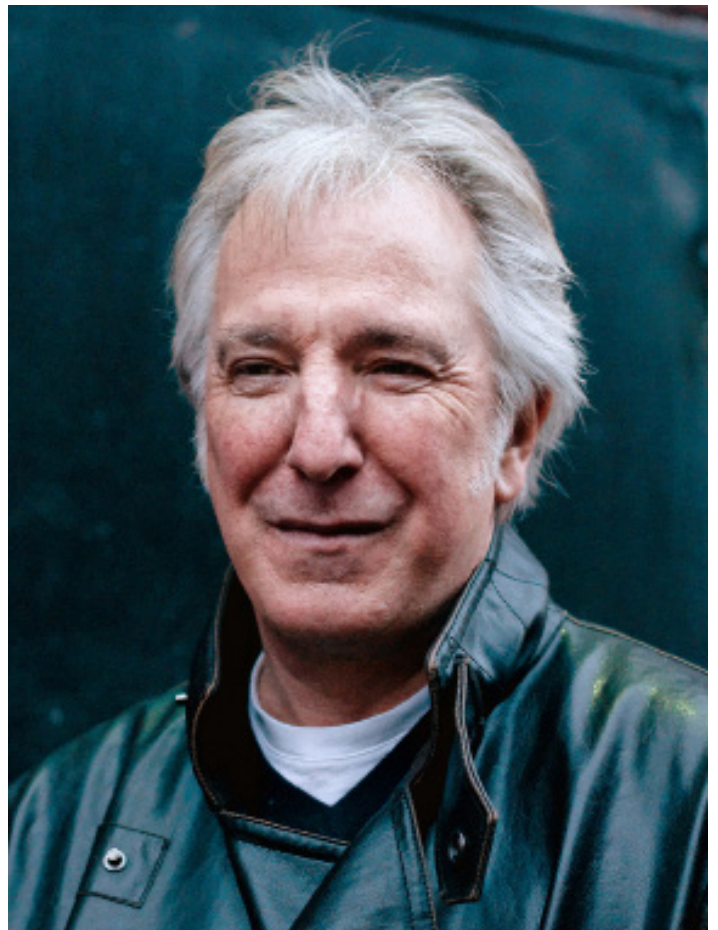
Rickman's passing may be seen as the death of the last notable British actor not to come from a privileged background. Currently, in the UK, only 1 in 10 actors comes from a working-class background.

Born and raised in a West London council estate, Alan lost his father when he was eight. His mother was left to raise three children, soon marrying again but this ended with a divorce after three years. Through hard work, Rickman managed to achieve a scholarship to Latymer Upper School and became involved in Drama. After studying at the Royal College of Art, he later went on to attend the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.

The most prominent British actors currently come from a privileged background: Benedict Cumberbatch, Harrow-educated, and Eddie Redmayne, Eton-educated. This is a silent issue; a career in the Arts starts with vast amount of work before any profit can be made and this is becoming increasingly out of reach for working-class kids. Their parents cannot financially support their children well into adulthood, to allow them to gain the experience required for their careers.

Whilst we can remember Alan Rickman for being the scariest Professor at Hogwarts, we must not forget that his career has highlighted the fact that one can achieve great things despite starting from unfortunate, poor, and unpromising beginnings.

Soyez Sage



Valentine's Day:

Is it really worth all of the hype?

Each year on February 14th, many people exchange cards, buy gifts such as chocolates, jewellery and flowers for their 'Valentine' and spend time together to celebrate the day of love and romance we call Valentine's Day. But does Valentine's Day really deserve all the excitement it currently receives or is it another commercial gimmick?

Valentine's Day (also known as Saint Valentine's Day or the Feast of Saint Valentine) is a celebration filling many with joy and others with dread. It is a festival in which many countries participate. It all dates back to the ancient Roman festival of Lupercalia – a celebration commemorated annually on February 15th.

Later, Pope Gelasius I, before his death in 496 AD, recast this festival as a Christian feast and declared 14th February as St. Valentine's Day. However, who this Pope intended to honour is a mystery; there were at least three Christian saints by that name at the time. One was a priest in Rome, another a bishop in Terni and all we know about the other is that he met his end in Africa. Unfortunately, though, we do not know which one because, rather astonishingly, all three Valentines were said to have been martyred on the same day: February 14th. Many myths exist about this legend: for example, Valentine is said to have secretly performed marriages when they were prohibited by Claudius II; he is also said to have fallen in love with the daughter of his jailor and, before he was executed, wrote her a letter signed: "from your Valentine."

Despite all these many theories, we will never know for sure who Valentine was and what he did. So, is it really worth wasting a day celebrating love because of an ancient saint we know nothing about?

Why dread "Valentine's"?

People dread Valentine's Day for a number of reasons.

One could be self-esteem. If everyone has someone else to share Valentine's Day with and you don't, it can lower your self-esteem a lot and make you feel a sense of loneliness. Another reason could be because of the personal loss of a loved one and every Valentine's Day could be a reminder of this loss of friendship and/or love.

On Valentine's Day 68% of women spend their day with someone else and 32% spend the day alone. While for men 31% spend their day with someone else and 69% spend it alone. In fact, 1 in 3 adults plan to celebrate the day of romance and love that is Valentine's Day, therefore 67% will not.

Many people don't celebrate Valentine's Day as they believe it is all just very commercial. On average, men spend £40 on their partner on Valentine's Day, whereas women spend an average of £24. Also, 1 in 10 men spend £75 for their Valentine! The generous age group: 25 to 35 year olds spend on average £34. This shows that today's Valentine's Day is a big business. Valentine's Day overall is expected to generate millions in retail sales around the world. In 2014, £595 million was made as a result of Valentine's Day... £262 million of which was spent just on flowers!

Another issue related to money is: what do people really want for Valentine's Day? After a survey was completed it was concluded that women (especially) are expecting a lot on February 14th. The results showed that, for women, many wanted jewellery, spa treatments, holidays and some even wanted a car!

Money aside though, Valentine's Day, from a behavioural aspect, improves your mental attitude and also makes you more susceptible to humour and thankful for kind gestures.

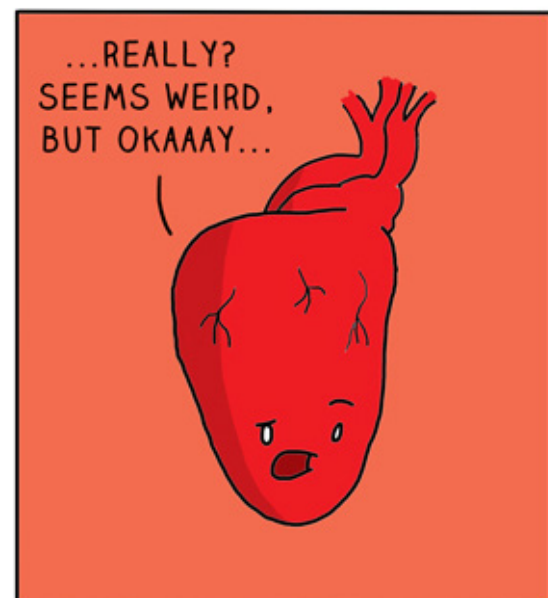
It has been scientifically proven that we go shopping on Valentine's Day because we believe that everybody else has "bought" into this concept of love.

Arguably, Valentine's Day is a perfect opportunity to give back to the one you love a gesture of thanks. It is also a day where people are nice to one another; however, surely we should be nice to our 'someone special' every day? Do we really need a festival as an excuse just to be nice to the people we love? Personally,

I think Valentine's Day doesn't deserve the hype it is getting and is a celebration widely promoted for the shops to make money. This is because the event was instigated in the first place for a man named St. Valentine whom we know nothing about and it is highly unlikely we would make such a fuss over another unknown Saint. The shops just need a day where they can sell and produce a large profit.

I believe the ultimate gift that humans desire is affirmation that they are loved. This may explain to us the reason why 10% of all marriage proposals happen on Valentine's Day and also why 22% of women think Valentine's Day is the best time to propose (14% of men agree). Perhaps, with less hype around the material aspects of Valentine's Day and more emphasis on spending time with the person we love.

Rohan Magdani



Ask Prab



Tech of 2016: CES and the Future

As the New Year rolls in, it is always started with the annual Consumer Electronics Show (more commonly known as CES). As in previous years inventors and tech giants from around the world spring into action in Las Vegas, in order to give us a glimpse of the year ahead. Every year we never cease to be amazed by the rapid improvements in consumer-grade tech that will, before long, find itself in our “homes of the future”.

Despite the traditional hype of every year, this year I was slightly underwhelmed. Do not mistake me when I say this; there were several pieces of tech which got me very excited and enthusiastic. However, I felt as if there was no single stand-out piece of revolutionary tech which would funnel our focus in 2016. There was nothing like what we have seen in years before such as Virtual Reality becoming a booming industry in a matter of months.

In this case, I will start out with the most obvious part of CES: Virtual Reality. Last year’s convention showed consumers how a low-resolution, high-latency, very bulky device could slowly be improved upon into a practical device for the tech-geek in our lives to drool over. As we saw last year, many tech companies, like Google and HTC, quickly developed their own versions but delayed releases until early this year. At CES in particular we got a look at the finished products of the most popular VR headset – The Oculus Rift – which came with a surprisingly high price tag of around £400. This suggests that VR still has a way to go before the

average consumer would be willing to buy one, as opposed to the tech-obsessed gamers and enthusiasts of today. With regard to the VR at CES this year, we saw vast improvements upon already acceptable designs, with added features to make them more “consumer friendly”.

Adding to the surprise surge in different industries, drones are now becoming mainstream devices.

Last year at CES we saw very specialised devices costing several hundred (sometimes thousands) of pounds. Suddenly, out of nowhere, companies began to create simpler, more user-friendly devices: you can now buy drones with an HD camera and easy controls for around £150.

Not only has the market for low-budget drones increased but, at CES, we saw some massive leaps in camera technology in drones. You can attach industrial standard cameras to drones and have little-to-no worry about stability problems. Also drones made from simple paper and foam have been exhibited to be able to fly for hours at the high speeds previously only seen on expensive model aeroplanes.

Their sudden integration – and their popularity in society – is clearly evidenced by America having to create a registry of drones so that they are regulated and clear rules can be defined about flying them in order to prevent possible problems with air traffic.

Drones at CES furthered their appeal to consumers, especially with very low-budget drones with very capable motors.

Not only is technology being introduced into our homes, but also into our cars. Of course with pioneers of car technology, like Tesla Motors and BMW, they are always looking to improve the driving experience. At CES in particular, BMW showed several ways drivers could interact with their car's media and information without needing to use a screen or a remote: by gestures. This would reduce the distractions of having to use touchscreens to change your radio for example. Moreover, Head Up Displays (HUDs) are being used in a variety of cars, helmets and products so that people do not have to look away from the road. BMW in particular created a motorbike helmet with a subtle HUD which could link to your phone to show directions, speed and important, relevant, notifications.

In terms of computer hardware, there were no massive improvements as companies are waiting until later in the year to unveil new architectures. However, we still saw new laptop designs and interesting concepts. In my opinion the most appealing was having external hardware which could attach to your laptop. This would essentially mean that you could carry around a thin, light, portable laptop for your everyday needs, but when you sit down at your desk, you could plug it in through one cable and improve its performance almost twofold. Potentially, we will not have to sacrifice capability for portability (a problem which many people struggle to deal with) without spending obscene amounts of money.

Overall, CES this year brought some great improvements of consumer-grade technology, especially technology based around "smart homes" and connecting several devices. In the year to come, I am sure there will be several technological surprises; certain companies hold onto products till the spring, meaning there will always be new technology to research and implement into our consumer lives.

Prab Grewal



The Teenage Socialist

Don't Blame the Immigrants for Welfare Cuts



I was at a protest against the war in Syria a few weeks ago, and a man came up to me to talk about it all. He was the classic example of someone completely and utterly let down by the system: late forties, unemployed for several years, sleeping rough, not receiving benefits despite the fact he was eligible.

This man had lost faith in the Government and authority, and not without reason. His local MP, Liz Kendall (a Labour politician who recently stood for leader of the party), had done nothing to help him or others in his position. When he went to see the Council, he was turned away before he got a chance to even speak.

When I asked him who he blamed for it all, his answer was very clear – the immigrants.

He told me that the reason he couldn't get a job was because immigrants had taken them all; the reason he couldn't get his benefits was because foreigners had been put above him; the reason he was at the bottom of the council housing list was because the refugees had been prioritised.

This is a common position now. I very rarely speak to someone in difficulty who blames the current government for their problems, even though many of these issues are quite clearly caused by the decisions of those in power – the lack of job-creation projects and funding for the Welfare State have led to thousands of people being in this man's position.

Whenever you pick up a right wing newspaper such as the Daily Mail or the Telegraph, it's easy to see where this idea comes from:

"Immigrants bring more crime!"

"Soft Touch Britain!"

"Migrant rapes and kills girl, 9!"

The media makes it clear to us who we are to blame. A scapegoat is always provided; a scapegoat that is never the ruling power. The plot thickens when you discover that Rupert Murdoch, owner of many of these news outlets, and David Cameron, the Conservative leader implementing the hard-line policies, are friends – they are regularly seen together at parties, most recently at Murdoch's Christmas party, which half the Tory cabinet attended. Isn't it convenient that Murdoch's newspapers provide a view on the political world that helps his good friend Cameron?

Looking back over history, a scapegoat is always provided, whether it be the Irish in the 70s or the Trade Unions under Thatcher. It is important to keep in mind the true causes of problems. Whatever Nigel Farage says, expert opinion continues to agree that most areas of the public sector are severely under-funded, rendering them over-stretched. John McDonnell, the Shadow Chancellor, has said that "the cuts are hurting people badly across every service area, from health to policing". In terms of numbers, almost 6% has been cut from the already-tight Welfare budget since the 90s; it is just not sustainable.

In the words of Eisenhower: "the search for a scapegoat is the easiest of all hunting expeditions".

Mary Osborne



Diverse Issues



Gender Agenda

What does the adjective “girly” mean? That someone likes pink? That they love lipstick? Or simply that they are missing a Y chromosome?

Most people would probably assume the first two, and, to be honest, so would I. From a young age, we are programmed to connect certain things with each gender. When a little boy is born, he is wrapped in a blue blanket. When he gets his hair cut for the first time, it'll be cut short whilst his sister's will be left long. By the time he gets to big school, he will be very aware that his interests are robots and machines and sport and cars and that he definitely doesn't like Barbies.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying these aren't all applicable. A lot of little boys do prefer getting muddy and a lot of little girls do like playing calmly. My mother made a huge effort to raise me and my brother as gender-neutral as possible. We were wrapped in yellow blankets, we had our hair cut however we wanted, and we could play with whatever toys we pleased – therefore my mother was alarmed when my brother immediately was fascinated by machines and I wanted long, blonde, princess hair. We were fitting the stereotypes that our gender expected of us; perhaps those wishes came from within, or perhaps we were influenced by the media and our peers.

At the end of the day, however, it's not a big problem for us. He enjoyed watching *Cars* and I enjoyed watching *Cinderella*.

The problem arises when a child is born who doesn't fit what is expected of them. When there is a little girl who wants to play rugby and play with cars, she does not fit in. I meet lots of girls who tell me this is what they were interested in when they were young. By the time they had been exposed to society for several years and were teenagers, they'd had this beaten out of them; they fitted the mould.

We risk losing valuable attributes to our society because of this: boys who are talented singers could be hiding their ability under a mask of football interest. Girls who are brilliant sprinters could be hiding it because their mothers told them not to get their socks muddy. You can have the body of a man and display stereotypically female qualities and vice versa. It's important to recognise the difference between sex and gender – sex is what your genitals are, gender is the expectation placed on you based on your sex. Gender is a spectrum.

Mary Osborne



Taylor's Travels: Denmark and Sweden

After surviving what felt like a never-ending and particularly stressful term, with UCAS deadlines and EPQ presentations, I was excited to have a break from studying and see somewhere new. In this case, it was Denmark's capital city, Copenhagen. It is a typically Scandinavian city, with clean streets, polite, beautiful blonde-haired people and extortionate prices (£6 for a hot chocolate!). On the first day we wandered down Strøget, the longest pedestrian street in Europe at 1.1km long. At the heart of this cobbled street lies the main square, which was home to cosy little wooden cabins selling all kinds of Christmas decorations and food. As it began to get dark (at 2.30pm...) we headed to Tivoli Gardens, one of the main features of Copenhagen. A magical winter wonderland that was crammed with thousands of Christmas trees, as well as cosy little eateries and even a few low-key roller coaster rides, all lit up by thousands of twinkling fairy lights. We were all full of Christmas spirit and rather a lot of glögg, Danish mulled wine, and never wanted to leave.

Day two dawned bright and early and a short stroll across the city took us to Nyhavn, a quaint canal flanked either side by brightly coloured buildings. The Danish seem to have what can only be described as a candle fetish, as Nyhavn was crowded with them. In restaurants, cafes, even outside shop doors and windows. We also saw the bronze statue of The Little Mermaid, paying homage to the author Hans Christian Anderson who resided in Copenhagen.

On the 3rd day we decided to venture out of the city centre of Copenhagen and got the Metro to a district called Christianshavn on the outskirts of the city. This neighbourhood has developed a bohemian feel to it, as the residents there like to distance themselves from the hustle and bustle of the city centre. Christianshavn is also home to one of the strangest places I have ever visited, called Christiania. It was created when hippies took over army barracks and developed the area

to an alternative society with own set of rules, independent of the government, and with its own currency. As we walked along the aptly named 'Pusher Street', there were stalls completely covered by camouflage, the faces of the vendors hidden. Why? Because although they are not allowed cars, guns, bullet-proof vests, or hard drugs, hash is still (illegally) sold on the streets. Cameras are not allowed, to protect the identities of people who sell it so, unfortunately, I don't have any pictures of this strange but fascinating place. The police tried to close Christiania down for good a few years ago but the citizens fought back and it has now become a bizarre sort of tourist attraction, and definitely one I won't forget!

One of the reasons we picked Copenhagen as a city break was so that we could see two countries in one trip. After a 30 minute bus ride across the Oresund Bridge, we arrived in Malmö, the third largest city in Sweden, on a sunny but bitterly cold morning. Despite being so close geographically to Denmark, there was a more industrial feel to this Swedish city, famous for the skyscraper named the 'Turning Torso'. It was fascinating to experience a different culture and my sister and I hope to interrail round more of Sweden and Scandinavia next summer. Copenhagen is a truly fascinating city for so many reasons, and I would recommend a visit to anyone who wants to experience a bit of the weird and wonderful.

L & R





Is the Media Portraying Greece Fairly?

In the modern world, we are used to the press bringing us all of our news, whether it's online, on the television or in a newspaper. We have access to the news 24 hours a day and can listen to 'experts' telling us what is happening and helping us to make our opinions but can we always trust the media?

Many of you will remember that much of the news in the summer holidays was about the Greek debt crisis. We were warned every day on the news that Greece was running out of money, that Greek shops were no longer able to sell food, that companies were unable to pay their staff, that banks had no money left, that people would have to queue outside the banks for hours to get any cash and that the Greeks were rioting in the streets.

It all sounded very bad, especially if you were due to go on holiday to Athens at the beginning of July like my family and I were.

Based on what journalists and the media told us, my parents were warned that they should get extra travel insurance, that they should avoid the main square in Athens and that they should carry enough cash for our entire three week holiday. As we stepped off the plane at Athens airport we were all really worried about what would happen

during our holiday, based on what we had seen in the media. Even I was wearing a money belt full of Euros.

However, within a couple of hours of being in Athens, we realised how different the reality can be compared to what the media tell us. Athens did not seem to be a city in trouble. All of the shops were open, we never saw a single queue outside a cash machine, the shops were all taking credit cards as well as cash and the Greek people were really pleased to see tourists and wanted to help us in any way they could. We even visited Parliament Square and had our photos taken with the traditional Greek guards on the same day that the BBC world news were telling people that there had been riots there – we saw nothing.

I had a brilliant summer holiday and learned lots of things about Greece and its people. But I also learnt a really important lesson about not always relying on what I see in the media to form my opinions. If I can, I should find the facts out for myself and make my own opinions. Maybe next time you are planning to stand up and speak, you will think of this article and back up your opinion with true and precise facts that have been verified.

Lili Mephram



“If you judge the character,
you can’t play it.”

“A film, a piece of theatre,
a piece of music, or a book
can make a difference. It
can change the world.”

“If only life could be a little
more tender and a little
more robust.”

“It’s a human need to be
told stories. The more
we’re governed by idiots
and have no control over
our destinies, the more we
need to tell stories to each
other about who we are,
why we are, where we come
from, and what might be
possible.”

Alan Rickman

1946-2016

“I do take my work
seriously and the way to do
that is not to take yourself
too seriously.”

“It would be wonderful
to think that the future
is unknown and sort of
surprising.”

“I want to swim in both
directions at once. Desire
success, court failure.”

“I think there should be
laughs in everything.
Sometimes, it’s a slammed
door, a pie in the face or
just a recognition of our
frailties.”