

# THE COLUMNS

by pupils; for pupils

HSD's Newsletter: Issue 96

Welcome back to the Form 4s! We on the editing team hope all of your prelims went as well as you hoped. After a snowy weekend and a few rainy days, we're very firmly in the depths of Winter now. With only a few weeks to Christmas, things unfortunately don't seem to be getting any more relaxing. Deadlines are passing, applications are being finalised, and competitions are heating up. This week's edition of the Columns features a reflection on the atmosphere of the school right now. We've got recent sports news, snippets of critical essays, charity announcements, and external news from a variety of new and old contributors. We're getting closer and closer each week to edition 100, where we're hoping to get one hundred 100-word articles from across the school. If you want to submit something, please send it to [clarki@HSD](mailto:clarki@HSD) or [mcinteer@HSD](mailto:mcinteer@HSD)



Editor, Izzy



# Help Out this Christmas

Jack Mitchell

According to recent Government statistics, over 30,000 people are homeless in Scotland alone. To help visualise this – although I'm not much of a football supporter – both of Dundee's football stadiums, filled, plus a sell-out week-long run at the Caird Hall would just manage to take everyone. That statistic is shocking and disgraceful. Even worse is the further half a million who are in severe poverty, and over a million who are in some form of poverty.

The festive season should be a time of joy for everyone, regardless of wealth. Yet tens of thousands face a Christmas of hunger and homelessness. Of cold and despair. We may think that they have ample access to help, but charities and government agencies are stretched at the best of times, let alone in Winter during the Cost of Living Crisis. But we can help. Some suggestions of where your money could go are:

**The Crisis at Christmas Appeal** – Crisis are running an emergency appeal for donations in time for Christmas. The charity will be providing homeless people with food (likely Christmas related) and accommodation, as well as running activities such as Bingo. Crisis operates in Scotland as well as the rest of the UK. Donate on the Crisis website.

**Barnardo's** – the children's charity also have a Christmas appeal. With your donation, the organisation will provide warm clothing such as scarves and hats, as well as food and accommodation for both Christmas Day and Boxing Day. Donate on their website.

**Dundee Bairns** – this is another children's charity, but only operates in Dundee. The local charity provides Dundee's children who are in poverty – of which there are over 10,000 – with much needed food and warm clothes for the particularly harsh Winter they face. As this is a local charity, you might actually be able to see the benefit around us. Donations can be made on their website.

**Food Banks** – though not an individual charity, food banks are one of the best ways to support those in the community who are less fortunate than ourselves. Tinned foods are often favoured at food banks, because they last longer than fresh produce, which allows for time to distribute them. Try to avoid fresh foods, unhealthy foods, and glass jars – which can shatter in transport. Most supermarkets have food banks on the way out, so it really doesn't take much to donate to them. However, if you go to food banks in person, they are quite keen to receive donations that contain fresh food or even items as simple as toiletries. Even a single item that could only cost you a pound may make Christmas special for someone on the receiving end.

These are only some suggestions; whichever charity you choose – whether you have always donated there or whether it helps something closer to your heart – it will be the right one. The same goes for every charity, not just food banks; however little your donation is, it could make a big difference to someone in need. Give people the Merry Christmas they deserve after the tough year they've managed to struggle through

# RUGBY

Imogen Kemlo

We made our way to Edinburgh on the bus early afternoon, all buzzing with school spirit. Having to wrap up and put on extra layers was necessary for the freezing temperatures we arrived in . Walking into the stadium, homemade signs in hand, we took our seats in the stands, waiting for the boys to run out. Despite the cold, morale was high between both schools and the sense of competition was building. The chants boomed and the beat of the drum intensified as both teams left the tunnel, entering onto the field. It was a fierce battle of strength and strategy between both teams with tackles and tumbles taken from each side. Despite the 41-25 loss, the boys played with endurance and determination, gaining many tries throughout the game. As seen by our masses of supporters, we were all very proud of the boys and their valiant effort on the field. As we ventured back home on the bus, conversations were filled with reflections on the game and mentions of supporting the boys being a cherished memory that will be shared by all.



via @scotlandteam instagram



via @scotlandteam instagram



# Comedy and tragedy and human absurdity

Aoife Stewart

Samuel Beckett's 'Endgame' is a play describing a post-apocalyptic world, void of all life and joy. He explores the life of Hamm and the generations above and below him, as they exist, waiting to die. Through a disturbing mixture of tragedy and comedy, Beckett shows a life waiting for death. In Beckett's own words, "Nothing is funnier than unhappiness".

Death is a theme carried uncomfortably lightly within Endgame. The stage itself is set up to resemble a human skull, implying in a rather blatant manner that each of the characters within it are nearing their end. This life on the edge of death is seen clearly in the life of Hamm's parents. His parents live in bins, physically separated only so much that they only just cannot touch one another. They, too, are fed only as much as they need simply to stay alive, and when they become an irritant to Hamm, they are shut away and ignored. When Hamm's father, Nagg, asks only for food, saying "Me pap!", he responds, saying "Guzzle, guzzle, that's all they think of". Hamm's reaction of his parents shows an illness of care, where he refuses even food to his father to keep him alive. Reluctantly, he is fed, following the ridiculousness of the repetition of Nagg, 'nagging' him for "Me pap". This childish begging makes Nagg, although a pitied character, a humorous character also. He can't even communicate using full sentences, and his only conversation at this stage is his begging for food. In a world of little, humour is found even in the most basic asking for needs. One's desire to live is seen as a means for hilarity, implying the characters have become accustomed to a lack of necessity, and now even the desire to live is laughed upon. Here, Beckett uses humour to reinforce tragedy.

A sense of misery is shown in the constant, slow, and edging movement towards the end of time. Clov's first words in the play are "Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished". Here, he echoes the words of Christ as he dies upon the cross, saying "It is finished". Clov's words imply a desire to end, to complete, yet he appears unsure even of the end as he says, somewhat exasperatedly "it must be nearly finished". Even in the case of Christ, there is a distant sense of hope, as the suffering has come to an end. Clov, however, is trapped in a state of unending misery – miserable because of its continuity. The comedy here, is present in his indecisiveness. Clov cannot even gauge if the end even will arrive, instead he mocks himself, making such a massive and summative claim, only to lose all grasp of grounding for it, and to go on to question the claim he himself makes. Beckett mocks all sense of human surety; perhaps through this side-by-side comparison to Christ he shows that humanity can be certain of nothing, and even to believe they can, is naïveté.

This tension between comedy and tragedy is seen, too, in Hamm's nominative determinism. In the Old Testament, Ham, the son of Noah, defiles his father, inhibiting his ability to procreate as he lies helpless. Ham's descendants are then cursed. This, too, applies to Hamm's life. Hamm berates and insults his father, calling him "Accursed progenitor". He curses his father for his help in the creation of Hamm himself, almost denying him as his own father. Further, Hamm keeps his mother and father in bins just far enough from each other that they cannot touch, and further cannot reproduce. Nagg asks his wife to "Kiss me", and they "strain towards each other, fail to meet, fall apart again".

Evilly, Hamm, just as the biblical figure Ham, refuses his parents their ability to procreate. And, just as in the Old Testament, where Noah and his family are the only survivors, forced to repopulate the Earth - Hamm and those in his household are some of the last upon the Earth.

The tragedy of loss is obvious here; however, Beckett reinforces this with the presence of humour. The helplessness of Hamm's parents is laughable, as, in the presence of everyone, they attempt to make even the smallest of romantic advances, but are restrained, as they remain within the bounds of their dustbins. The humour and absurdity of their complete lack of freedom builds upon the argument of the tragedy of their situation; the mockery of their situation dehumanising them.

Endgame completes with a sense of cyclicism. Although death has taken Nell, cursed by the lack of light, and Clov has chosen to leave, there is a sense of all returning to its previous state, that, as implied by Clov, all is perhaps not "finished". Death is not an option as Hamm asks Clov to "Put me in my coffin. /There are no more coffins. /Then let it end!". Hope is found, however, as Hamm reflects on his interactions with his (perhaps) son Clov, and he speaks of "My heart" which he previously did not believe he had, and also of "love" and "friendship", despite throughout the play treating those around him with anything but. However, although this seems to repeat the start of the play, the second time around we feel a sense of reflection and renewal. This finishing, which at the start was an end to misery, here seems to open the doors to something new and healthy. Even Clov speaks with clarity, saying now "one day, suddenly, it ends, it changes... I say to myself that the earth is extinguished, though I never saw it lit". Here he references Hamm's blindness and inability to see the light. He, however, goes out into the world bravely to take what it has to offer. Hamm speaks of the flip side of this. He speaks of his metaphorical blindness – ignorance: "You cried for night; it falls, now cry in darkness". Realising now the importance of connection, and understanding his mistake of blindness,

Hamm reconciles himself, crying no longer "Accursed progenitor", but now crying "Father". As he loses what he had, he understands its importance, and finally rests, in darkness again, with understanding of connection. In his final state, Hamm returns to his start as he "covers his face... remains motionless". In this final section, Beckett feels no need for this humour to mock the characters. They have recognised the foolishness and absurdity of their state and experience the tragedy of the human experience in this new-found knowledge.

Beckett, through his exploration of the nature of humanity in Endgame, expresses the absurdity of humanity through the reinforcement of comedy towards tragedy. Endgame sees humour mock the characters, who gain a sense of self-awareness, enhancing the tragedy of their situation as the humiliating leftovers of humanity. This blend and knitting together of humour and tragedy begs the realisation of the importance of human connection above all, allowing the final and vital understanding that life void of "love" and "friendship" is cold and dark, and not preferable even to death.

# WORLD'S LONGEST WALK

Izzy Clark

Are you a fan of hiking? I'm not. For some, trudging aimlessly around the wilderness in the freezing cold is enjoyable - personally, though, I'd rather not catch frostbite or drop dead from exhaustion. What I do enjoy, however, is travelling. I like road trips and long journeys - but definitely not on foot. Driving around scenic landscapes in a heated or air-conditioned car is far more enjoyable to me (probably because I'm not the one behind the wheel having to navigate up treacherous mountainside roads). Unfortunately, I'm the outlier in my family, the rest of whom enjoy hiking and trekking around the wet countryside. Every walk I'm reluctantly dragged on, I am guaranteed to proclaim that it's "the longest walk in the world".

So imagine my surprise when I come across what may - actually - be the longest walk in the world. Covering an astronomical fourteen thousand miles (over halfway around the planet at its widest point), this immense journey stretches from L'Agulhas in South Africa, right on the Southern Ocean, all the way to Magadan, a small city in the Far East of Russia. It features 123km of elevation changes (hills and valleys), and is entirely on-land, meaning you can't cheat by taking any boats across rivers or lakes. Overall, this gargantuan trek would take over 4.6 thousand hours to complete. At a pace of 2.5 miles an hour (the average walking speed for an adult), and walking eight hours a day, this cross-continental journey would take you over 700 hundred days, or over two years, to complete. If you're a slow walker, it could take you up to three years.

The journey starts at the Southernmost point of the African continent, in the town of L'Agulhas. From there, you walk through South Africa, up into and through Zimbabwe, briefly into Mozambique and then into Malawi, Zambia and then all the way through Tanzania into Uganda. From there, you cross into South Sudan, then Sudan, then Egypt, taking you up to the Mediterranean and the Levant. Crossing the Suez Canal will then take you through to Jordan, with a brief passing into Israel along the way, before sending you all the way up through Syria. This whole leg of the journey - from South Africa to Syria - is filled with dangers, from natural hazards like snakes, hippos and mosquitos, to temperatures of up to 47 degrees, to human threats, such as multiple active war zones, and the second and third-most dangerous countries in the world - Syria and South Sudan.

Things calm down a little once you cross from Syria into Turkey, then across the Caucasus mountains through Georgia, and then into Russia. Beginning on the coast of the Black Sea, you'll then make your way across the entire country, almost a dozen timezones and through some of the harshest landscapes in the world, to the city of Yakhutsk. Now that you're in Siberia, you haven't got far to go (only a few hundred more kilometres!) and you'll eventually make your way to Magadan on the Pacific coast, just North of Japan - if you don't freeze to death.

But then you've made it!

This walk, obviously, is almost impossible. You'd have to bear some of the toughest and most inhospitable environments on earth; travel through at least four active warzones; traverse the scorching deserts and the freezing tundra; and find enough food and water along the way to sustain your pace of 20 miles a day. But, if you did manage to do it, and you somehow survived, you'd see some incredible things - sights no-one else on the planet might ever see. As of December 2023, no-one in human history has ever completed this journey, leaving it as one of the last great human achievements left for us to complete.

(High School of Dundee Sunday Hillwalking Club, fancy a challenge?)



## THIS WEEK IN PICTURES...





# Percy Jackson: TV News

Maisey Lafollette

It's finally December! The month I've been waiting for. Not for Christmas, or the two weeks off, but for the new Percy Jackson TV show!

Percy Jackson is a book series written by Rick Riordan. In 2010, the movie was released, but it was not an accurate adaption of the book. Rick Riordan was not that involved of making the movies, but he did see the script and he complained. He told them the book fans wouldn't like them, and he told them how to fix it. They did not listen, and he was right. The movies were so bad that he posted, "To me it's my life's work going through a meat grinder when I pleaded them not to do it."

It's not just the author who disliked the movies, many social media influencers have made videos on them such as MovieFlame. His video is named "The Lightning Thief Movie: How it Disrespected a Great Series." CinemaSins made a similar video named "Everything Wrong With Percy Jackson & The Olympians: The Lightning Thief." There are many many more you can find.

Though for the fans, there is hope for a faithful adaptation. On December 20, 2023, Disney + is releasing a tv show adaptation. There is a two minute trailer, which is more accurate than both movies put together. The book is famous for orange Camp Half-Blood shirts, which the movie did not have, but the show will. The first movie completely forgot about Ares who was an antagonist Percy fought and defeated, while from what we've seen the show will have him.

They also hired actors age-appropriate. In the book the prophecy is about when a child of the Big Three (Hades, Zeus and Poseidon) reach sixteen. In the movie the characters are already 16 or older while the show has actors that are about the right age. Those are some popular complaints about the movie that the show has fixed in a trailer, because it has been reported that Rick Riordan has worked very closely with the show.

To all the Percy Jackson fans out there, the show will hopefully fit our expectations, and after 13 years we'll finally have a faithful adaptation, and as Percy once said, "I'm not telling you it's going to be easy, I'm telling you it's going to be worth it."

# CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

Sophia Kapelyukh

I can't help but get a little bit jealous every year of traditional British people. The way they describe their Christmas dinners just turns your mouth into a sea of thirst; imaging the roasting hot turkey sitting in the middle of the groaning table, among perfectly baked potatoes – beautifully crispy on the outside and deliciously creamy on the inside. Plates and plates of spiced beans, carrots and stuffing... although I still have no idea of what stuffing actually is. But anyways, whatever it is, it sounds just as appetising as the rest of the mouth-watering meal.

My family's Christmas dinners are a little bit different. Rather than relying on poultry for our main dish, we pride ourselves in using fish, after all Christmas without caviar is unheard of among Slavic households.

Instead of turkey, our grand dish is called *селёдка под шубой*, which translates to 'Herring under a fur coat' – you can't think of a more inventive name for a dish prepared during freezing Ukrainian winters. It's made with a base of perfectly-salted herring that brings with it a fresh and delightful taste. On top of that some diced potatoes, egg, pickles and finally a sweet, crunchy layer of beetroot – the extravagant fur coat finish. Paired with this we always have *Оливье*, a colourful salad with potatoes, pepper, ham, egg and pickles with a creamy mayonnaise to bring everything sticking together.

Along our table we also have the famous caviar pot. The perfectly-poised pile of almost glass-like balls sits ready to be spooned onto a plate or a piece of buttered bread. Truth be told, I have never really been a fan of caviar. When you bite into it, it feels as if the entirety of the ocean is exploding in your mouth. This may appeal to some, but to me it's just way too much.

But as we do live in Britain and do get influenced by the dozens of Christmas adverts businesses push down our throats every year, we have to have something Western on our table. One of these things is pigs in blankets. As soon as the laden plate touches the table, all the crispy, bacon wrapped sausages are snatched up and squashed onto our purple-stained plates next to the beetroot dish.

For dessert we also love to engross ourselves into something outside Eastern European tradition - Italian panettone. This has got to be one of the highlights of Christmas meals. The panettone is always super light, like a sweet cloud that's full of chocolate chunks and flavoured with vanilla or tangy citrus juice. The top of it is covered with tooth-aching icing to which we sometimes add the last of our advent chocolate to, to make it more festive.

Christmas is the holiday of tradition. I would love to try the classic British dinner, but appreciating and carrying on family traditions is important to me too, and perhaps blending the two together is the best way to enjoy Christmas.



# Climate Workshop: how to prepare for a sustainable future

Clara Fraser

On the 22nd of November, Aiden, Niamh (your eco committee representatives) and I attended the 'Careers and skills for a future climate' workshop in Perth. This was a very valuable day, with many messages relevant to us all. The organisers emphasized those industries at the forefront of our battle against climate change, however, they also made it clear that to succeed we must all take on our role.

The conference began with lectures from 4 large industries: agriculture, engineering, energy and fashion. Each sector had an individual perspective on dealing with the impacts of global warming and achieving net zero.

The speaker on agriculture and food stability began with a surprising statistic: that the world currently produces enough sustenance to feed all 8 billion inhabitants and it is due to unequal distribution that many face malnourishment and famine. To combat this problem, we need a second Agricultural Revolution. We need new industries and researchers into methods for the production, storage, transport and disposal of food. Furthermore, our farming needs to revolutionise to allow wildlife to survive, maintaining our ecosystems. We are lucky that in Tayside we have the world-renowned 'Huttons' centre, (the cohosts of the conference) and a representative was there to answer questions. New methods of recycling food waste are being actively researched right now, for example, the first commercial jet flight across the Atlantic using fuels from food waste and plant matter took place on the 28th of November.

Next was engineering – this was given by a PhD in building materials and safety design from Abertay University. During her talk, she gave lots of insight into her recent project in sustainable lightweight concrete using recycled tyres. She also talked about using treated wood in structural design to avoid the excessive release of greenhouse gases that is a consequence of building with concrete.

Next came energy. Delivered by a previous marine biologist, now fuels consultant, it shows how many companies including previous fossil fuel multinationals are beginning to turn their back on oil.

The final industry to talk was fashion, and in true form, this was delivered by a very well-dressed PhD in marketing. She discussed the importance of having a circular fashion industry, with clothes being reused by many people before they are themselves recycled into new garments. The speaker emphasised that self-expression does not need to be sacrificed, but instead, new ethical and sustainable methods of achieving this, such as fashion rentals, should be encouraged.

Following the lectures, we had a vegan lunch while learning about opportunities and work experience in everything from vertical farming to flood prevention. We then spent the afternoon in workshops, discussing topics including insects, world peace and artificial intelligence. One speaker interestingly stated that in previous ages we were in the time of labour, now we are in the time of technology and the sale of knowledge, and in the future age with artificial intelligence, humanity will provide the empathy that AI lacks.

All in all, a very positive day. The overall message of the conference was that we need to work together towards climate solutions without succumbing to climate anxiety, for ourselves and future generations. Optimism and activism are our only way forward.

# PERTH LIGHTS, EH?

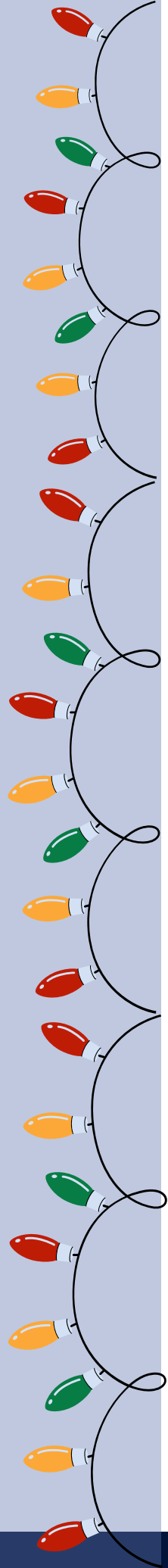
Despite not being one for Christmas, on the second of December I went to see the Perth Lights switched on. This was altogether a disappointing affair. Once we had ambled from the hideous “attractions” that lay about the streets to the main screen on Tay Street, we witnessed two failed attempts of actually switching the lights on after the countdown. The announcer’s third go was potentially even worse; he began counting down from twenty, but the on screen, the countdown began when he reached seven.

This was very confusing to the audience who were unsure which count to follow along with. Ultimately, it didn’t matter, as the fireworks began a full five seconds after both countdowns had ended.

The fireworks, in all fairness, were quite good. It is difficult to not have good fireworks, though. The Perth fireworks were bright and loud to an appropriate degree - nothing special - just good.

The evening took a turn for the worse after the first few songs, when the first act began to add their own lyrics to already-established Christmas songs. This mockery of tradition continued far too long until the saving grace of the evening came on: Boney M. They came on, played some hits, I saw some wonderful attempts at the dance for Rasputin from several columnists, and then the band left. Seemingly in an effort not to let the night end on a high, the organisers put on a dismal tribute act as the finale.

Hopefully Perth can organise a better event next year.



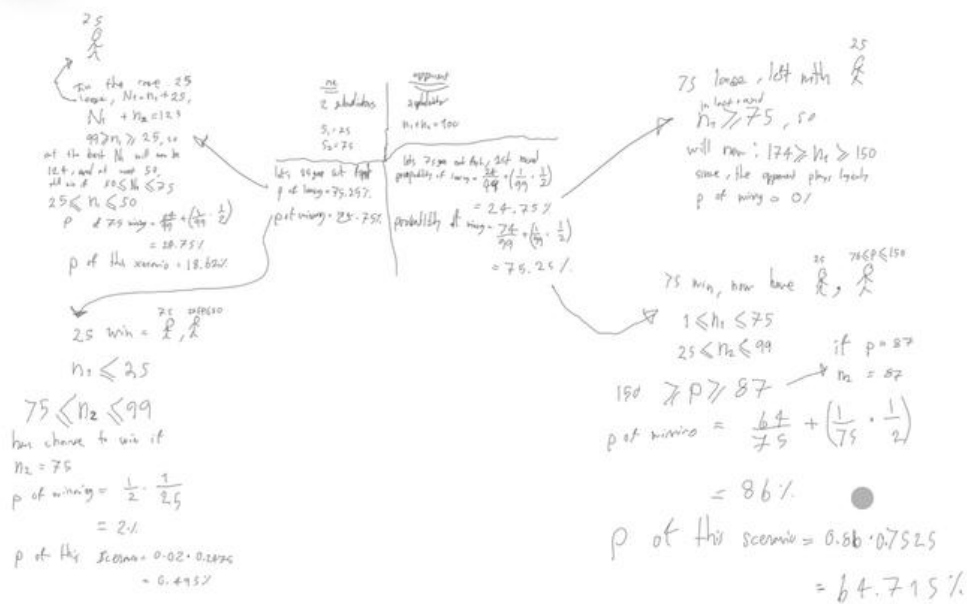
# PUZZLE OF THE WEEK: SOLUTIONS

Neil Bhat

Chrispope Abhiteachapan of Form 5 wrote a solution to last week's problem. There was regrettably ambiguity in the problem, meaning it could have been interpreted in multiple ways.

Chrispope attempted a probabilistic calculation to solve the problem. He was right that the strongest gladiator is right to play, although there appears to have been some understandable confusion over the meaning that the opponent is playing logically.

However, this is otherwise a good attempt.



25%

In conclusion the safest pick is to pick strengths 75 to go out first, and follow by 75 +  $N_1$  strengths, to secure the chance of 64.715% of winning the whole thing.



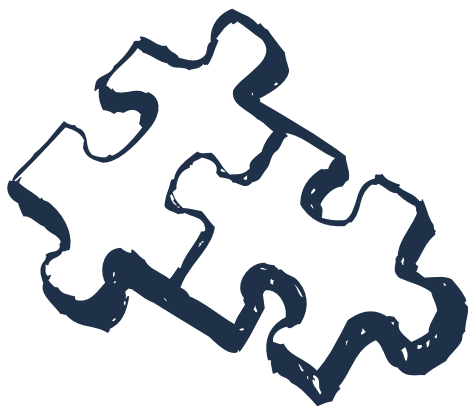
# PUZZLE OF THE WEEK

Neil Bhat

Puzzle for this week is as follows:

A frog starts on the leftmost 'H', and makes hops of lengths between one and four onto another square to the right. The letters that the frog land on (including the starting H) must spell out 'HSD', repeated any number of times. The frog must arrive at the rightmost square, and stop once it arrives. How many ways is it possible for the frog to do this?

H	S	D	H	S	D	H	S	D	H	S	D
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## EDITORS' NOTE

Well done to the form fours who have recently completed prelims and the form sixs who are just finishing their UCAS! While Christmas is fast approaching (and Hanukkah is already here), it is important to pay attention in these last few weeks of school. Well done to all of the contributors this week, without your articles this edition would not have been possible. For anyone who wants to contribute, please email! Next week is a Christmas themed edition!

Editor Ruby

*Have a fab weekend!*

THE COLUMNS TEAM