



CULTURE VULTURE

Final Summer Edition



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July Evening

A bird's voice chinks and tinkles
Alone in the gaunt reedbed –
Tiny silversmith
Working late into the evening.

I sit and listen. The rooftop
With a quill of smoke stuck in it
Wavers against the sky
In the dreamy heat of summer.

Flowers' closing time: bee lurches
Across the hayfield, singing
And feeling its drunken way
Round the air's invisible corners.

And grass is grace. And charlock
Is gold of its own bounty.
The broken chair by the wall
Is one with immortal landscapes.

Something has been completed
That everything is part of,
Something that will go on
Being completed forever.

By Norman MacCaig (1910-1996)

Summer Films Watchlist!

Molly Shillinglaw recommends her just-watch films for the summer season!



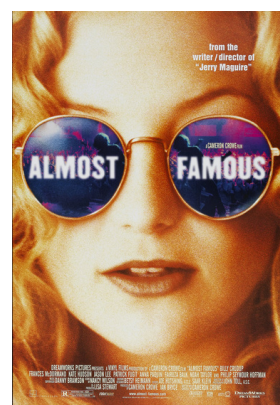
***Do the Right Thing*; Spike Lee, 1989**

Lee's comedy-drama explores racial tensions between the Italian-American and African-American residents of a Brooklyn neighbourhood on the hottest day of the year.



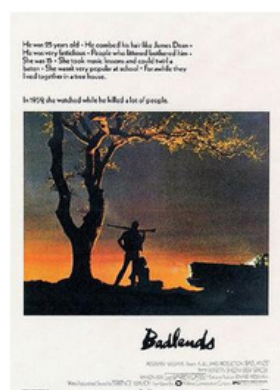
***Dazed and Confused*; Richard Linklater, 1993**

Stacked with a cast full of actors that would later become famous, *Dazed and Confused* follows the exploits of teenagers on their last day of school, undermining the pledge made to avoid any recreational activity that could jeopardize the football team's success.



***Almost Famous*; Cameron Crowe, 2000**

In 1973, 15-year-old William Miller's unabashed love of music and aspiration to become a rock journalist lands him an assignment from Rolling Stone magazine to interview and tour with the up-and-coming band, Stillwater.



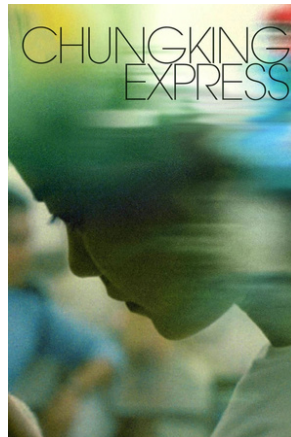
***Badlands*; Terrence Malick, 1973**

Dramatization of the Starkweather-Fugate killing spree of the 1950s, in which a teenage girl and her twenty-something boyfriend slaughtered her entire family and several others in the Dakota badlands.



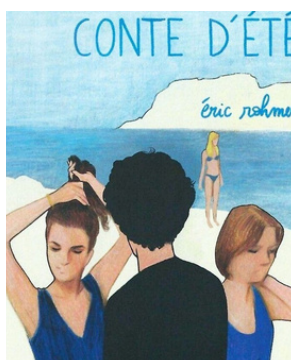
***A Brighter Summer Day*; Edward Yang, 1991**

Set in the late 1950s and early 1960s in Taiwan, the film centers on Xiao Si'r, a boy from a middle-class home who veers into juvenile delinquency, experiencing love, friendships and injustice for the first time.



***Chungking Express*; Wong Kar-Wai, 1994**

Two melancholic Hong Kong policemen fall in love: one with a mysterious underworld figure, the other with a beautiful and ethereal server at a late-night restaurant he frequents.



***A Summer's Tale*; Eric Rohmer, 1996**

A shy maths graduate takes a holiday in Dinard before starting his first job. He hopes his sort-of girlfriend will join him, but soon strikes up a friendship with another girl working in town.



***The Darjeeling Limited*; Wes Anderson, 2007**

Three American brothers who have not spoken to each other in a year set off on a train voyage across India with a plan to find themselves and bond with each other – to become brothers again like they used to be.

A-level Artwork

Arranged by Olivia Cooke (y12)



Oliver Bessant (yr13): 'Shoes'



Evie-Grace Cryer (yr12): 'The Human Figure'



Clara Jefford (yr12): 'Texture'



Izumi Pride (yr12): 'Who Am I?'



Denny Saunders (yr12): 'Who Am I?'



William Hall (yr12): 'Angles'



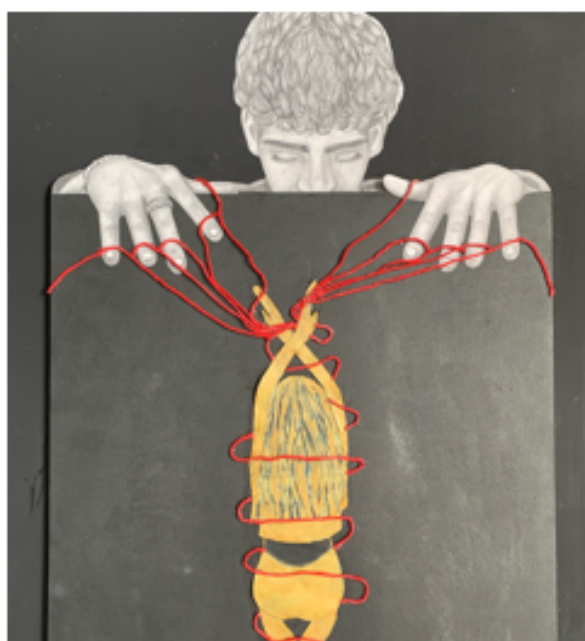
Jake McCarthy (yr13): 'Architecture'



Olivia Cooke (yr12): 'Spaces'



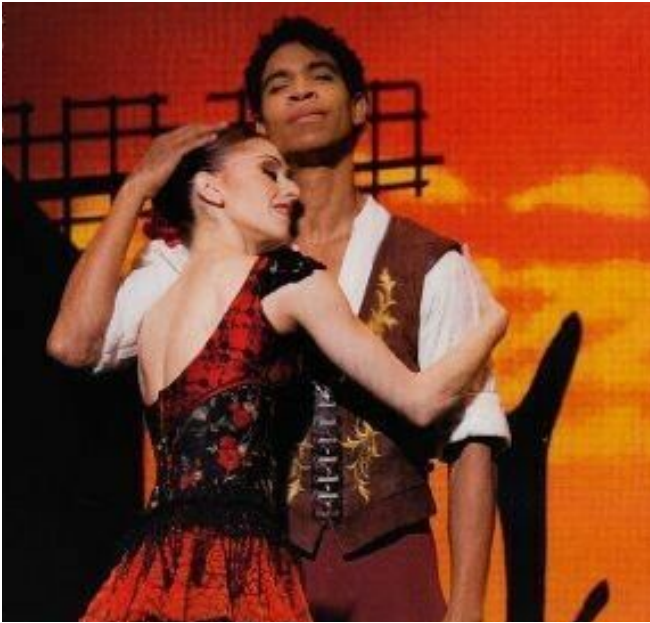
Evie Andrew (yr13): 'Natural Landscape'



Maddie Bright (yr12) 'Who Am I?'



Tilly Scott (yr12): 'Concealment'



"Don Quixote"

Grace Jappy explains the Don Quixote ballet, and why it is for everyone.

"Don Quixote" is a story with over four hundred years of influence, adaptation and intellectual discussion. It is the subject of countless disagreements, but as the dancers take the stage, the audience is reminded that the chivalric farce is not just an academic talking point – It's also a lot of fun. As the curtain rises and the performance begins, it's like a pantomime. The actors vibrantly move about the set.

In the medium of ballet the story can afford to be weaker, as the suspension of disbelief is different than it would be for a film or traditional play. "Quixote" has a particularly loose story, in that there is not much of it to begin with. A plot-heavy prologue is perhaps the only moment in the show that is dense with mime acting and story. The bulk of the ballet is, as one might expect, dancing.

And the dancing is incredible.

It is impressive every single time a dancer tosses something into the air while another actor catches it perfectly. Maybe that's not ballet, but it's very impressive. Coming to the conclusion of the show, the wear of the intense choreography was clear in the actors' movements, but the visible effort only served to make the successful execution more astounding.

Even outside of offering impressive performances, Nureyev's choreography serves the comedy of the play. Small moments, like Kitri getting fully swung through the air by her father, Basilio's nonchalant fake death and Quixote's ridiculous horse – an actor in a wooden shell – produced audible laughter from the audience. Larger comic setpieces, like Quixote and Gamache's duel, or the Don's trip around the iconic windmills effectively combine the languages of dance and pantomime comedy to produce something entirely unique.

"Don Quixote" is certainly not without flaws. Some sets are a bit bare, the story shies away from some heavier aspects of Miguel Cervantes' original novel and big moments can sometimes fall a little short. In the execution of the windmill scene, for instance, Don Quixote's actor is switched for a dummy and this was not performed as cleanly as possible, with Rubin still visible behind the set piece even before the cowboy switch that brought him back to the scene. Still, a small error like that is part of a live performance and not remotely a dealbreaker. While "Don Quixote" is perhaps imperfect, it is certainly charming.

It may not be the deepest story or a perfectionist's dream, but "Don Quixote" is not trying to be. It is trying to be an entertaining exhibition of spectacular performance, inventive staging and a fun story – it manages all these things wonderfully. Even if one is poorly versed in the world of ballet, there is always the simple joy of watching extremely talented people do what they do best. Like its namesake, "Don Quixote" sets out to bring something brighter to the world, and while the ballet knows its means are silly, that doesn't make them any less effective.





Barbenheimer: Barbie's world or destroyer of worlds?

Mrs Ramsay and Mr Heysham go head to head in the Barbie V Oppenheimer debate



It is summer. The sand is warm beneath your toes, the sea sparkles invitingly on the horizon and your nostrils are full of the scent of coconut and vanilla from a smorgasbord of sun lotions and fake tan. You decide, to cap off this perfect day, to stroll into the multiplex cinema and take in a movie. Atomic bombs and the potential for mass extinction of the planet or a funny, colourful and intelligent tale that promises to be both faithful to childhood memories and parody the associations around Mattel's most famous product? I argue it is a no-brainer.

Why I will be in the *Barbie* queue and not the *Oppenheimer* one is essentially down to a few key things. Firstly and most significantly, the film has been co-written and directed by Greta Gerwig. *Ladybird* and *Little Women* were both fabulous movies that took both new and old material and gave them a fresh take. Gerwig promises to subvert our expectations with this film. She has promised it will be looking closely at the pressures faced by adolescents in contemporary America. Telling the story of Barbie (Margot Robbie) and Ken (Ryan Gosling), who end up in the real human world with all the chaos that promises. The teaser clip that was first released is another reason I will be viewing this film. A homage to Kubrick's *2001 A Space Odyssey*, the film is a certificate 15 and clearly aimed at young adults and their parents who can still recall their Barbie playing days and collections but also appreciate the ludicrous nature of the plastic perfection that Barbie offered and draws on recognisable tropes and other film references. Gerwig has Barbie battling with existentialism in a deadpan and humorous way. In one epic scene shown in the trailer Robbie, with a doll-like grin on her face, dances the night away whilst asking the other Barbies "do you ever think about dying?". Another perfect moment shows Robbie's heels dropping to the ground. No longer arched as permanently as the feet of Victoria Beckham, this is met with gasps of horror from the other Barbies in the scene. The fact **that the film hasn't even been released yet** and has already produced these viral moments, certainly sets it apart from the fatalism of *Oppenheimer*.

The film also offers a great cast of actors. Robbie has already shown her adaptability to a range of roles and Gosling, evidenced in the clips and trailer released, is clearly having the time of his life showing off his "Kenenergy" with dance and song sequences promised to be as entertaining as those he supplied in *La La Land*.

As for the music, a whole new album has been released with songs from Dua Lipa, HAIM, Lizzo, Dominic Fike and more. Definitely the songs of the summer!

The only Barbie films I ever endured were the sickly sweet animations as pink as Dolores Umbridge's office. My pre teen girls loved them at the time but the world of passive and picture perfect feminine dolls was never one whose message I was comfortable viewing. It will be great to see a live version of this world where Barbie is the main plot and Ken is just Ken. Gerwig promises to be offer just that: both a faithful reimagining of this universe and a glorious parody. The perfect tone for a summer release!

Mrs Ramsay is right about one thing. This choice is indeed a no-brainer. You can either watch a migraine-inducing ultra pink plastic film about a child's doll or you can get involved in what might be one of the most important events in all of human history. I know the *Barbie* film has a great cast, and there's no doubt at all that Greta Gerwig is a hugely talented filmmaker. But let's be honest - this film is not going to tell us anything we don't know. No no, I argue here that your time is going to be far better spent watching *Oppenheimer*, made by another talented filmmaker, Christopher Nolan. Let's unpick this:

1. The world changed in the late 1930s and changed utterly, as Einstein predicted it would. Did you know he wrote a letter to the President in 1939 which is quite eerie to read now. "I expect that the element of Uranium may be turned into a new and important source of energy [but] this new phenomenon would also lead to the construction of ... extremely powerful bombs" You better believe it, Albert my son. Just ask the poor unfortunate citizens of Hiroshima 6 years later.
2. You need to understand that world politics is about power and little else. What is the main reason NATO and Russia never went from Cold to Hot War? Nukes. What is the main reason Pakistan and India, two countries constantly at each other's throats have never gone to war? Nukes. What is a reason the West glibly chose to topple Saddam Hussein in Iraq but leaves the brutal communist dictatorship of North Korea well alone? You guessed it. Nukes. And Barbie? Where does Barbie figure in this fascinating story? Nowhere, that's where.
3. Why does your own country, the United Kingdom, an increasingly isolated, post-Empire declining world power still have a seat at the top table of the United Nations Security Council. Anyone? Top marks for you at the back - because we have an arsenal of thermonuclear weapons that has the power to extinguish mankind's place on this Earth within a few minutes of the Prime Minister giving the order. Unlike Barbie. Barbie only has the power to give you a pounding headache as hour after hour of noisy pink nonsense flicks in front of you in the cinema.

Well, I think we can all fold our arms and nod sagely as we acknowledge the fact that I have demolished any possible argument from Ramsay that Barbie is going to be better than *Oppenheimer*. One last point. It is sometimes strange to think that these enormous, seismic changes in human civilisation, which is more certainly what the creation of atomic weapons is, must of course be created and built by human beings. This is the heart of the *Oppenheimer* story. How would **you** feel? Imagine it - you're one of the single greatest minds of the 20th century, up there with Einstein and Bohr. And what is your life's work? The Atom Bomb. What does that do to a man? To his soul? The power to destroy the world and you made it happen. I don't know about you, but I can't wait to find out.



The Perfect Summer Song

Miss Ramsay explores what makes the perfect summer tune

As the nights get longer, and school finishes for the summer, I can guarantee a few firepits and BBQs are in your future for the upcoming weeks. The ambience may already be set by the smell of woodsmoke and quickly applied aftersun, but the main feat - the playlist - takes the most fine-tuning. A mix of new and old, uptempo and mellow; the perfect playlist is the one which can fade in and out of the background - adding to the vibe, but not ruining the conversation. So, without further ado, here are some tunes that always have (and always will) be on my summer playlist. As always, no judgement allowed (unless of course, it is a compliment to my excellent taste...):

- Brazilian Soul - The Knocks (feat. Sofi Tukker)
- Sunny - Biig Piig
- Baby - Aitch feat. Ashanti
- Tennessee Whiskey - Chris Stapleton
- Billie Bossa Nova - Billie Eilish
- Mary Jane - Raye
- Carolina - Harry Styles
- Flowers - Miley Cyrus
- All Falls Down - Kanye West feat Syleena Johnson
- Disco Yes - Tom Misch feat Poppy Ajudha



Recommended by a student -

The Last of Us - Streaming on Sky Atlantic

"It follows the game's story and does so very accurately. It's mainly for people who are into the game, but is quite interesting because it centres around a fungus infection and how it affected the world. If someone is into Dystopian stories, then this would be a good series to watch."



Soundtrack to the week:

This week's soundtrack to the week has been built by editors and readers. If you would like to have your say, follow the QR code on page 8!

MONDAY:

Recommended by a student

Yesterday - Loyle Carner



TUESDAY:

Recommended by Lucas Smith

Cake by the Ocean - DNCE



WEDNESDAY:

Leave Me Alone (explicit) - Caity Baser



THURSDAY:

Dance The Night - Dua Lipa



FRIDAY: Recommended by a student

Little Things - Jorja Smith



SATURDAY:

Recommended by a student

Vampire (explicit) - Olivia Rodrigo



SUNDAY:

Golden House - Frankie Stewart and Harvey Gunn



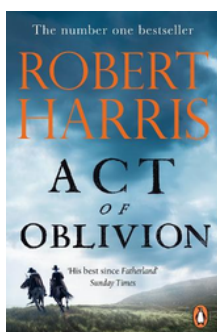


As the six weeks of summer break approaches, the Culture Vulture team wanted to share some suggestions for summer holiday reading. These ideas are taken from a variety of websites including Waterstones and Portishead's own Max Minerva bookshop as well as some of our own favourites. Next term we'll review any new books we sample from this list and would love to hear your summer favourites too.



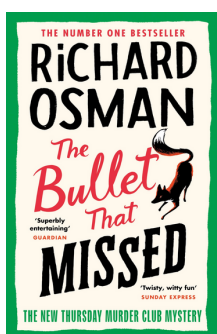
This 2022 hit novel takes a 1960s female science genius and pits her against the sexist establishment of the time. At times very sad but also very funny, this book is empowering and makes the central protagonist an unconventional woman who proves that to bring about change, you have to be prepared to take a route you had not originally planned. When I read this it made me laugh and cry at various points!

One on Mrs Ramsay's to-read list is this modern re-imagining of Dickens' David Copperfield. Winner of the Orange Women's Prize for fiction, this book by the writer of the Poisonwood Bible has a hero Waterstones declares you will 'fall hard for' as you hurtle through the pages of this expose of the dark side of American society.



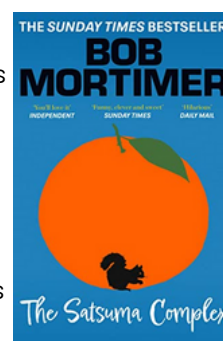
If you enjoy historical fiction as well as crime/mystery, this sounds like a novel for you. Described as an epic journey across continents, and a chase like no other, the novel tells the story of the hunt for the assassins of Charles 1st and the man tasked with bringing them to justice.

For fans of Stephen King, Waterstones writes of this novel (being sold in an exclusive edition in their stores), 'the master storyteller returns with a spellbinding story of mysterious houses, parallel worlds and reluctant heroes as an ordinary high school kid discovers a portal to a universe populated by classic fairy tale archetypes'



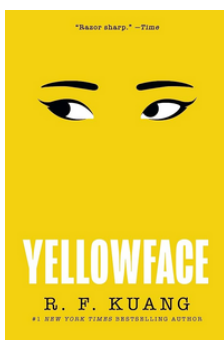
Fans of Osman's series of retirement home detectives with a very special set of skills will enjoy the third in the series which has just been released in paperback. You will look at your grandparents in a new light if you give this a read!

Comedian, fisherman, and many people's favourite guest on WILTY, Bob Mortimer has now turned his hand to writing a novel. With an ordinary and unremarkable male central character on a quest to track down a girl he met in a pub, this book has been hailed as a triumph of off the wall surrealist humour - just as we would expect from the pen of this hilarious man!



Currently still in hardback (but Kindle editions may be cheaper!), this novel takes as its premise the question of what happens when you try to pass off a novel written by your fellow novelist and friend as your own. The complication is that the friend has died and is of a different ethnicity. Raising questions about racism in the literary world, Kuang has been hailed as a name to look out for with this entertaining and well written first novel.

Finally, Waterstones Book of the Month for July and a Radio 4 Book of the Week, this non fiction text promises in Waterstone's words a 'A revelatory tour of the animal kingdom through the sensory properties of a wide variety of creatures, ...[it] features courting insects, electrical fish, the astonishing eyesight of giant squid and much, much more.



WANT TO GET INVOLVED?



If you would like to make your own creative suggestion, or have a piece of work that you would like to see in the next magazine, scan the QR code. Alternatively, if you would like to contribute an article, film, album, book or podcast review, or have an itching to write a features piece about a current cultural affair, email aramsay@gordanoschool.org.uk with your idea.

Make sure to encourage your tutors and friends to get involved, and let's make creativity central to the Gordano Sixth Form experience!

