

Guest Article

Find the joyous moments when you read, write and research and cherish them

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If 2020 taught me anything as an undergraduate student, it is that reigniting my love for reading, writing and researching was the main thing which helped navigate through a very unpredictable time. Amidst the chaos I sought refuge in finding practical things to fill the days to keep my mental health in check. Whether it was finally picking up *that* book which I had been meaning to read, double checking a fact I had heard on the news, listening to a podcast, or getting an old notepad and scribbling down what I had been feeling that day, it all made three national lockdowns a little more manageable.

I was finally doing all of these things for pleasure again, and it was a breath of fresh air. After years of compulsory academic study, I think we can often feel burnt out at the thought of voluntarily conducting research, reading or writing. We lose joy and pleasure in these skills because we see them as things which serve a narrow purpose: to help us pass exams. All too often by association we see them as a means to an end in our studies, rather than things which can be experimented with and that we can do for fun.

Covid-19 came along and created a rift in academia which could have never been predicted. How on earth would we judge the intellectual capabilities of our young people if we did not have exams? Institutions began to question the necessity of timed exam papers and shifted the focus onto alternative forms of assessment. I fundamentally believe that this issue would be far less contentious if we were more willing to embrace young people writing for pleasure, conducting independent research and thinking critically about the ideas and institutions which surround them.

It is incredibly hard to identify parts of compulsory education which aren't overshadowed by rigid mark schemes and core textbooks. Which is why programmes like The Brilliant Club should be cherished by education institutions and those within them; it is in these moments of analyses, lateral thinking, and inspiration which we will find joy in studying again.

I took part in The Scholars Programme when I was in sixth form. I appreciated any alternative forms of examination and particularly enjoyed delving into topics beyond the realms of my A-Level specification. Since then I have always held onto the feeling of accomplishment when an idea hits the page, or one question leads you onto another and you are free to explore new concepts and change your mind along the way.

As always, this edition of The Scholar is rich with ideas from bright young brains. It is a testament to inquisitiveness and enjoyment of reading, writing and researching which makes these papers so wonderful. Particularly with the challenging year, which was 2020, it is a hunger for knowledge and finding joy in reading and writing once again which will prevail above all other things and carry them along their own paths of education. I do hope they can cherish these moments in the future as much as I have done this year.

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