



Principal's Note



Hello Everyone!

With time, challenges increase manifold. The children of today are constantly exposed to a myriad of challenges—academic, social, and, at times,

psychological. As educators, our roles have undergone a paradigmatic shift. Teachers today are not only responsible for addressing the academic needs of the children but also for fostering mental resilience and helping them remain composed in the face of adversity.

Albert Einstein once said, “Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.” At Billabong, we strive to ensure that our children keep moving forward, whether in academics, sports, performing arts, or honing their soft skills. From their early years, they learn to pursue their chosen fields of passion alongside academics, gradually mastering the art of balancing work and personal interest.

To us, it is of paramount importance to help our children realize that challenges are nothing but opportunities for growth. This perspective empowers them to navigate pressure with confidence and optimism.

At the same time, despite living in a competitive world, we are mindful to ensure that our children do not grow into hi-tech individuals focused solely on achieving results, devoid of empathy for others. Our purpose is to nurture children who are not only academically proficient but also kind and altruistic.

We believe the impact of this unique microcosm we cultivate at Billabong will continue to empower our students to lead their lives with confidence and resilience.

With this trust and belief, I wish everyone a Happy New Year. Let us all have a blissful and productive 2025 in which we strive to balance all odds and keep marching ahead!

- Ashish Agarwal

Student Editorial Board



Anvi Dixit Siddharth Sachdev Kanishka Paltani Editor-in-Chief Kainaat Kapoor Anandi Mitra

Walking the WIRE



Imagine standing at the edge of the unknown. High above the ground, the air is sharp against your skin, the abyss stretching endlessly below. This is the tightrope walker’s world, a place where every step demands courage and precision. Now, imagine a storyteller walking a similar tightrope—not above a crowd but within the minds of his audience. The balance of physical tightrope walking and the art of storytelling share surprising parallels, both requiring precision, adjustment, and an understanding of forces at play.

In tightrope walking, balance begins with the center of gravity: an invisible thread that steadies the walker against the void. For stories, this is the emotional heartbeat, the core theme that binds the narrative. Take *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho, it’s center of gravity is the pursuit of dreams. It is a universal truth anchoring every twist, every desert storm, every omen. Without this core, the story would falter, untethered and weightless, like a walker without a balance point. A theme provides the foundation, a force propelling the story forward.

Stillness on a tightrope is surrender. To stop moving is to fall. Similarly, stories demand momentum—a force driving characters and readers into the unknown. In *The Hunger Games*, Suzanne Collins crafts a world in constant motion. Each arrow fired drives the narrative forward, while Katniss’s quiet reflections ground the reader. These alternating moments of urgency and calm mirror the walker’s measured steps. Like a bicycle climbing uphill, a story needs momentum: each plot twist is a pedal stroke, the climax is the hilltop, and the resolution is the exhilarating descent.

A tightrope walker steadies himself with a balancing pole, his weight spread across his arms. In storytelling, subplots and secondary characters serve as counterweights, enriching the

main narrative. In *Les Misérables*, Jean Valjean, Javert, and Marius act as counterweights, their arcs stabilizing the story and pulling it in different directions. Far from distractions, these elements are essential to the narrative’s balance, much like the walker’s pole.

Tension in tightrope walking builds with every step, peaking as the walker nears the destination. When they reach the platform, the crowd erupts in applause. Similarly, storytelling thrives on tension and release. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the tension between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy builds steadily. Darcy’s letter and confession break this tension, releasing emotions and reshaping our understanding of the characters. The catharsis of resolution mirrors the relief when the walker’s feet touch solid ground.

Even the most skilled tightrope walkers wobble. These moments remind us of their perseverance and mastery. Similarly, stories are imperfect, and their flaws make them relatable. In *The Kite Runner*, Amir’s cowardice and guilt ground the narrative in raw human experience, creating a connection with the audience through its imperfections.

As the tightrope walker takes his final step, the applause celebrates not just the destination but the balance maintained throughout. So it is with storytelling: a continuous act of resilience and adjustment. Through tension and release, harmony of counterweights, and beauty in flaws, both storytelling and tightrope walking reveal the dance of life.

Next time you watch a tightrope walker, think of the stories that have touched your heart. Just like the walker’s path, the journey of a story is never straight or simple, but it is always one of constant movement, delicate adjustments, and moments of profound release. Through this dance, both the storyteller and the audience find a balance.

- Saarah Jose (12A)

Editor's Note

“Throughout the infinite, the forces are in a perfect balance, and hence the energy of a single thought may determine the motion of a universe.” — Nikola Tesla

Balance is woven into every aspect of life, often unnoticed, yet profoundly impactful. The world thrives on equilibrium—neither excess nor scarcity, but a delicate harmony. An imbalance in nature manifests as disasters, a disharmony in our bodies gives rise to illness, and a lack of balance in our temperament breeds conflict. Even in science, we diligently balance chemical equations, honoring the law of conservation of mass. Without balance, the very foundation of existence begins to falter.

Dear Billabongers, with this issue, we embark on a journey to explore the art of balance.

Whether it’s finding harmony between ambition and rest, progress and preservation, or individuality and community, balance is the cornerstone of sustainability and peace.

The interpretations of the theme by students across all grades have showcased depth and certainly amazed us. From the youngest, who recognized the delicate balance in watering a plant—too much or too little of it can harm it—to the older students, who offered nuanced insights into the topic.

We hope this issue brings you the same joy and reflection that we felt in curating it for you. Let’s celebrate balance, and in doing so, find harmony in the ever-shifting dance of life.

- Kanishka Paltani, Editor-in-Chief





The Annual Event 2024

ELEVATE



The Annual Event 2024: ELEVATE for Grades 3-12 epitomized grandeur and brilliance, elevating the standards of excellence and energy. From the inspiring cultural performances to the thrilling sports drills, the beautifully crafted presentations and empowering displays by our young students showcased their hard work and passion, making the event truly phenomenal.





SCHOOL TOURS 2024



The IAYP trip offered transformative experiences across Grades 9-12, where students braved the rapids of the sacred Ganges and embraced Rishikesh's serenity. Grade 8 connected with nature at Reni Pani, while Grade 7 delved into Vidisha's rural governance and history. Grade 6 enjoyed Kalakund's thrilling adventures, and Grade 5 explored Orchha's heritage and farming.



OLYMPICS ENCORE-FAMILY DAY

Our preschoolers and their families celebrated Family Day with enthusiasm and inspiration. The Olympic theme instilled values of sportsmanship and teamwork among our young champs and their families, fostering a spirit of healthy competition while honoring the love and support inherent in family bonds.



GRANDPARENTS' TEA PARTY

The Grandparents' Tea Party was a joyous and heartwarming event filled with laughter and nostalgia. Preschoolers and their grandparents participated in various bonding and team-building activities. With music, dance, and moments of togetherness, the event created lasting memories for all.





Should Cancel Culture be viewed as a form of accountability or censorship?



ACCOUNTABILITY

Cancel culture is boycotting or shaming individuals or groups for misconduct and offensive actions or words. Cancel culture provides a means for holding individuals or institutions accountable for their actions, especially in situations where conventional methods of justice fail.

Cancel culture primarily serves as accountability because it empowers the voices of marginalized communities and allows these groups to speak up against unacceptable actions. Earlier, many individuals—especially those from racial minorities and women, were mistreated without receiving justice. Cancel culture, powered by

social media, gives everybody a voice. This cultural shift allows marginalized communities that had often been overlooked to demand change and action.

The movement, 'Black Lives Matter' is a social campaign that came as a response to racism. It amplified the voices of marginalized communities all over the world. The power of cancel culture and collective voices held institutions and individuals accountable for continuing racial discrimination. It advocated equality and the eradication of systemic racism against Black individuals. Black Lives Matter continues to challenge society and advocate for the rights of Black individuals and communities. Cancel culture sends a strong message that misconduct—whether it be racism, bullying, or exploitation, will not be tolerated, be it on social media or in real life.

Cancel culture pressures companies to reform as it holds them accountable for their unethical actions and harmful policies that might harm the environment or their employees, ultimately benefiting the companies themselves. Consumers and employees can easily voice their concerns or demand change through social media. This collective and public pressure can result in damaging the reputation of the company or lead to financial losses. Therefore, this accountability extends beyond individuals to institutions and companies, pressuring them to act responsibly.

Cancel culture can hold influential people accountable for their actions. They often avoid facing the consequences of their actions due to their wealth, certain biases, or connections. Cancel culture uses social media as a platform to expose such influential people's misconduct. Here, victims can expose their misconduct directly to the public. These campaigns attract widespread attention and, hence, ensure that these public figures face the consequences of their actions. Holding them accountable ensures that society and its standards are upheld and that such actions are not normalized, encouraging responsible behavior.

Public accountability also creates opportunities for reflection and acts as a catalyst for societal change and growth. When held publicly accountable, individuals are exposed to criticism and scrutiny. Cancel culture raises awareness about issues that otherwise might have been normalized. Many who have been canceled have apologized and engaged in self-improvement, meaning several others adopt higher ethical standards. It not only helps individuals realize and learn from their mistakes but also sets an example for others. It creates an environment where individuals are more likely to act responsibly and ethically.

By calling out misconduct, cancel culture encourages self-awareness and helps resolve systematic problems. With each accountability case, broader societal issues are addressed, promoting transparency, responsibility, and growth. Whether it is challenging stereotypes, gender discrimination, or confronting any such misconduct, discussing such matters is essential for societal progress. Cancel culture compels society to confront harsh truths, but, at the same time, aims for a more impartial and fair world.

Therefore, cancel culture should be viewed as a form of accountability.

- Simar Kalsi (10E)



CENSORSHIP

Cancel culture, in the modern world, has turned into an utterly destructive force and motive that stifles free speech, healthy dialogue, and justice. In this day and age, especially with the shift of daily life towards social media, cancel culture has become increasingly common. This has become a contentious social phenomenon.

On the surface, cancel culture appears to hold individuals responsible for their actions and words. Yet, in practice, it just leads to disproportionate punishments. Humans have a psychological tendency to conform to those around them, and form groups based on shared views and ideas. We have seen this throughout human evolution. This

primitive tendency to conform to the people around them finds a grave expression in cancel culture. This often means that cancel culture is governed by "social" laws of a particular group. This suppresses the truth due to this very social conformity that exists in us humans.

No one wants to be on the "wrong" side of any movement, because our human brains hate to be left out or alone, another human tendency that often hides the truth. Solomon Asch's famous conformity experiments prove that being "wrong" in a social setting leads us to doubt our very ability to reason, leading our brains to succumb to being governed by social justice, which is very perceptual. Once a survival mechanism, conformity manifests as cancel culture, amplifying groupthink and punishing dissent.

The biggest nail in the coffin for cancel culture bringing actual reform is the lack of proportionality and forgiveness in this punitive culture. This is greatly amplified by the emotionless space of social media, which allows the targeted individual to be stormed and face career destruction and public humiliation, with little room to recover. Worse, this trend extends beyond public figures to everyday people, who lack the resources to navigate the fallout. This creates an effect of self-doubt and danger in people wanting to share honest opinions and debates. What ultimately ends up happening is that cancel culture manages to stifle artistic expression and silence voices that offer unique perspectives, just because some people did not like the idea.

Cancel culture has been prevalent throughout human society for a long time.

One early, yet famous example of this is the "Great Hunt" (commonly known as the witch trials), which led to the prosecution and execution of 40,000 people without reason.

It is another great example of how social conformity leads to the loss of narrative and judgment. Cancel culture prioritizes an environment of punishment rather than education or understanding. It weaponizes outrage, leaving no room for empathy.

Ultimately, cancel culture creates an environment of fear, one driven by subjective ideas, disharmony, and hatred, rather than free speech or dialogue. Accountability is important, but it should also be developed in justice and fairness. If one hopes to build a future of justice, free speech and harmony, we must challenge cancel culture's elusive, yet destructive tendencies, and replace them with those of justice, fairness, and proper judgement.



- Siddesh Jain (10C)



Balance is the harmony between life's dimensions—work and play, ambition and contentment, solitude and connection. It's not about equal weights but adjusting life's scale as circumstances shift. Balance is about authenticity, juggling responsibilities and values, and adapting as priorities evolve. Like homeostasis, it's the tranquil state of managing life's changes.

Balance is unique for everyone, a dynamic concept that transforms over time. What feels balanced now may later feel restrictive, reflecting its fluidity. In childhood, it's a tug-of-war between play and learning. For students, it's navigating academics, friendships, family, and self-discovery amid deadlines and demands. Adulthood brings new challenges: balancing careers, family, health, and personal growth while prioritizing what truly matters. Balance means different things—a career-driven person may find it in vacations, a new parent in focusing on family, and an elder in cherishing health and loved ones.

Balance matters because it grounds us, creating a fulfilling life aligned with who we are. It's blending life's ingredients to feel whole, a compass through unexpected twists. Yet many struggle, overwhelmed by obligations and expectations, disconnected from their own needs.

Achieving balance requires conscious effort and self-awareness. It's letting go of the need to please everyone or meet every demand. Embracing life's ebb and flow means taking breaks when drained, finding joy amidst chaos, and prioritizing well-being. Balance isn't static but an ever-changing dance, allowing us to thrive in an imperfect but meaningful rhythm.

So, how will you create your balance?

- Krishanali Merchant (9B)

QUANTUM COMPUTING: A New Generation of Computer Science



Quantum computing represents a major technological advancement, capable of solving problems that current computers cannot handle efficiently. While we know how to solve many complex challenges, it would take too long to use today's technology, which limits their practical application.

In the future, quantum computers could replace silicon chips, much like transistors replaced vacuum tubes. These computers could perform complex microsecond calculations, factorise large numbers, recognise images, understand natural language, and enhance machine learning. These abilities are beyond the reach of classical computers.

Quantum computing is based on the principles of quantum physics, allowing computers to exist in multiple states, and process many possibilities simultaneously. As quantum computers evolve, they will tackle complex problems with high accuracy, complementing classical computers rather than replacing them. Quantum machines will handle specific tasks more efficiently, but classical computers will remain essential for general computing.

Applications of quantum computing include image recognition. It is used in industries like security, medicine, robotics, and advancing artificial intelligence through natural language processing and machine learning. Quantum systems could enable machines to understand human language, learn from experience, and assist with household chores, surgery, and defence operations.

Ultimately, quantum computing will extend the capabilities of classical computing, offering new ways to solve problems and understand the world. Its potential to revolutionise technology holds immense possibilities for the future, making it an exciting frontier in the evolution of computing.

- Manas Rai (9C)

AN UNKNOWN NEED

Balance is always interpreted as time management, juggling work and life, but it runs deeper. There is something underlying that is unknown to most of us. Balance stays within us without us realizing the inner magic it holds. It transcends external aspects of life, from challenging our fears to confronting our insecurities. It bridges the gap we often neglect. Sometimes, it is about listening to our intuitions or embracing tranquil moments in a world full of chaos and motion.

Something extraordinary about balance is that the harder you work towards it, the farther it moves from you. It is something out of our control and reveals itself when we least anticipate it. On the other hand, there is something very unique about balance. It is not about perfection to none but embracing and moving with the flow of life's challenges. Being in balance instills the ability to bring peace amidst the harmony and disarray and to move smoothly between the extremes.



Balance is often neglected in our daily lives because we tend to replace it with hard work and burnout. We push ourselves beyond our limits, anticipating that relentless hard work will pay off. Later, we realize it disrupts our internal tranquility and mental peace. This may seem efficient and productive in the short term, but it adversely affects us, leading to a mess that greatly impacts various aspects of life—personal relationships, stress, poor decision-making, and hampered productivity.

True balance is not about sacrificing one aspect of life for another in an endless loop; instead, it is about recognizing the need to nurture and embrace all aspects of life, even the unknown ones!

- Manvi Bhandari (8E)

MY BALANCED LIFE



In the morning, my loud alarm wakes me up, reminding me to balance my day. Within 30 minutes, I get ready for school. After greeting my teacher and meeting friends, I focus on studying to balance my school time.

We have snack and lunch breaks to balance my hunger and energy. After school, I head home, change clothes, and play outside to balance my physical health.

Next, my mother reminds me to attend Mindspark sessions to challenge my brain. In the evening, my family returns home, and we spend quality time together, nurturing my happiness and emotions.

We share dinner, and I reflect on my day's experiences with my family. Then, I wind down with my grandparents, strengthening our bond.

This balanced routine repeats daily, and I thrive on the harmony it brings.

The 4 'B's of my life are:

1. Balanced Body (physical health)
2. Balanced Brain (mental growth)
3. Balanced Books (academic focus)
4. Balanced Bonds (family and relationships)

This is my balanced life, and I'm grateful for it.

- Jiyaan Moolchandani (4B)



Celestial Form of BALANCE

A thin line between day and night,
Neither dark nor shimmering bright.
A stunning form of pure light,
truly a breathtaking sight.

Every step, a gentle sway,
Where all beings form a grand array.
Held up and steady with ethereal hands,
The essence of life lies only where balance stands.

- Laraib Hasan Khan (6C)

CONTRAST

One is not frightened by the dark as much as a blinding light,
Because while few people find beauty in the dark, many find
beauty in the bright.

We know not what can be when there is an absence of vision,
But it's worse when we are able to see and know what is, by our
intuition.

We are accustomed to the darkness, seeing it every time our
eyes close,
Yet, we often forget how scary the life-giving light can be- even
unforgiving, morose.

Perhaps we find comfort in familiarity,
Since we choose to make it a fear,
We don't give it clarity- simply;

"The sun will explode, the volcanoes will erupt, all in bright
light, as the end is near."

- Rhythm Rohani (10D)

THE DANCE OF EFFORT



What happened, lies where the story tells,
What will be, is lying in our hands.
Focus and build a path to glory's peak,
But what matters is the journey beyond the books, the key to express,
Feeling what is held from within, a power you shall seek.

"Hard work brings tomorrow's success,"
A quote overheard and quite cliché.
But what if success is not a goal waiting to be chased,
But an adrenaline lingering in the heart of fate.

Balance, a term undefined,
Believe me it's not living in your own confines.
It's putting yourself out there,
Not always in your comfort zone but you'll get there.

So put your efforts in, sure!
But remember the key factor,
And I promise it never fails to cure.

- Nancy Chawla (7F)

The Aftermath



The calmness that comes after the storm,
World in balance, the gentle psalm.
It seeks the line between full and null,
In life's great dance of push and pull.
To seize too tightly is to let go,
To hold too loose, we'll never know.
In every tear, a joy can bloom,
In every loss, there's still more room.
Joy and sorrow intertwine and paint,
In some quiet found in life's restraint.
If the heart shows too much, it will bleed,
If the heart takes too much, it will need.

Learn to bend not to break,
And find all that the soul can do.
Truth lies in a balance.
Cherish both the highs and lows,
That's just how life goes.

- Poorvi Verma (11C)

Image credits: Anurag Dubey (Kalakund Trip 2024)



The Juggle of Life

How do you see balance?
Is it just juggling or is it a balanced diet?
Is it walking on a rope at a great height?
Or is it just the right quantity of food?
Balance helps us to walk across the room.
Even a car uses its balance to go down a slope, vroom vroom!
Just zoom in a little,
Balance is also used in art, essential to make the design stable.
Balance is essential for the kitchen, to bring a flavourful dish to
the table!

Balance is what we need in our daily lives,
Because without balance, how would we get better and rise?

- Samridhhi Saini (3F)



THE BALANCE OF FRIENDSHIP

Lily and Sam had raging fun as best buddies in the small town of Willow Creek. They engaged in every dare, rode cycles, played soccer, and looked forward to seeing each other the next day as the sun dawned. It was, however, with great exasperation that they realized that each had their own interest which caused them difficulty in meeting one another as frequently.

Later on, Sam tried some leisure time practice but was to learn that Lily with her art instances more and more which only growing between the two. Lily decided to text to meet the next day wanted nothing solve this quickly as



engaging Lily in after her soccer disappointed was busy class. These became regular, helped the distance One evening, Sam, arranging at the park as she more than to problem as possible.

When they met, they expressed how much they hated being far apart from each other. Lily spoke first, "I think we have to get our priorities straight. We need to find a way where we can have fun and hang out as best friends." Sam nodded in agreement and they decided that there were a few days in the week that they would not allow anyone else to be in their company.

They even combined their interests – Lily went to sketch during Sam's football practice, and Sam sat in art class and encouraged Lily.

As the summer went on, they understood that although you can be busy, there is always time to be made for each other because that is the bond they cherished.

Sam was cheerful and grinned as he said, "It's wonderful that we solved all this." During their picnic at the lake on a sunny afternoon, one of them exclaimed, 'This is so cool. I'm raising a toast, so to speak—a toast for their friendship never to cease. Forever!' They understood that their friendship was invaluable, and it was worth taking out time from their busy schedules. In Willow Creek, they were able to finish their quest together and remembered to be thankful for each day spent in equilibrium.

- Arush Dwivedi (8F)

THE GIRL WHO LOVED SKATING

Once upon a time, there was a cheerful little girl named Mira who loved to go skating. One day, while skating, she began to feel bored. She skated up to her mother and said, "Mom, I'm starting to lose interest in just skating."

Her mother thought for a moment and replied, "Mira, why don't you try something new? You can explore other activities along with skating. That way, you'll find balance and enjoy different things. Doing the same thing every day can make it feel less exciting."

Mira frowned and said, "But Mom, I don't know what else to do!"

Her mother smiled gently and said, "You can try many things in life! When you explore new activities, you'll always have something fun to look forward to and won't get bored doing just one thing."

Mira's eyes brightened, and she said, "Okay, Mom, I understand now. I should try different things to keep life balanced."

Her mother gave her a warm hug and said, "Yes, my sweet Mira. Life is full of possibilities!"



- Inaaya Mulchandani (1E)

BALANCING AMBITION WITH SATISFACTION

Tommy wanted to become an athlete. He would train for many hours of the day until his body and mind reached their breaking points. His parents were proud of his determination and ambition, assuming that nothing was impossible for him if he worked hard enough. Tommy began to feel a rising sense of discontent as he grew older.

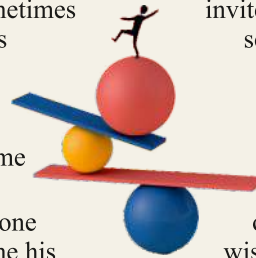
He had friends who would sometimes was too busy with practice. His his time on his sport; even his more distant. He had dreams, but something was next goal without taking the time

One evening, after a grueling practice session, Tommy sat alone frustrated. Into this misery came his "You've got talent, Tommy," she said, "but you need to find your balance. Ambition is fine, but not over your happiness or well-being. If you're always running towards the next achievement, you'll miss the moments that matter."

At that time, he did not know what she meant, but her words stuck in his mind. For the next couple of weeks, he slowly began changing himself. He started hanging out more with his friends and family. He even learned to paint outside of sports. He felt the joy in these simple things and realized it wasn't a surrendering of dreams but rather the appreciation of the journey.

More and more, these lessons taught Tommy to balance ambition with rest and joy. He gave his heart to purpose. He understood that his dreams were valid, but peace in the present was too important to let go of. His trail brought him to realize that success is not only about achieving but about experiencing as well.

invite him just to hang out; however, Tommy schoolwork piled up because he spent all family noticed him becoming more and compromised too much in pursuing his missing: he was always chasing the to enjoy the present.



on the bleachers, exhausted and wise coach, who had years of experience.

- Samar Pratap Singh Bhati (8A)

THE GARLAND TREE RITUAL

The house stood comfortably nestled in a quiet neighborhood, where mornings were kissed by sunlight streaming through a single tall tree just across the street. It was a tree that had grown alongside Georgina, who now watched her two children playing beneath its branches. The garland tree, as she called it, had always been her sanctuary, being a silent witness to her joys and struggles over the years.

Her life was a whirlwind of responsibilities: managing deadlines at work, meeting expectations at home, and navigating the chaos of daily life. Yet, every evening, she made her way to the tree, often with a simple garland in hand. Her children, curious and observant, noticed this ritual. They saw her sit quietly under the tree, her hands moving gently as she placed the garland on one of its sturdy branches. It was a moment of peace that marked the transition from her office life to her home life.

One evening, her eldest son, Alex, couldn't contain his curiosity. "Mom," he asked, "why do you always go to the tree when you come home?" Greta, his younger sibling, chimed in, "Yeah! And why do you put a garland on it?"

Their mother smiled warmly and gestured for them to sit beside her. She placed her hands gently on their small shoulders and said, "You see, when I come home, I leave behind all the stress, the office pressure, the politics, and everything else that weighs me down. I hang it all on this tree with the garland. The tree holds it for me so I can come inside and give you both my full attention, my love, and my best self."

A few days later, Georgina stood at the kitchen sink, scrubbing the remnants of dinner while a cacophony of laughter erupted from the living room.

"Mom! Come see what we did!" Alex's voice rang through the air like a

bell, pulling her momentarily out of the chaos of her thoughts.

She dried her hands, her heart lifting as she found Greta and Alex under the sprawling branches of the old garland tree in their yard, colorful ribbons and twinkling lights draped like a cozy blanket.

"Look!" Greta beamed, pointing to the garland they had hung. "It's our office pressure tree!"

"What do you mean?" Georgina asked, feigning confusion while her pulse quickened.

Alex grinned. "You always say you hang your work stress on the tree. So, we thought we'd try it too!"

Georgina knelt, her heart swelling with pride. "What did you hang up?"

"Um, homework stress and... and not enough playtime!" Greta giggled, her innocence brightening the cool evening.

"Good priorities," Georgina whispered, the weight of her own pressures dissipating like mist.

Years later, she watched them returning home from college, each carrying a small garland.

"You wouldn't believe how much pressure I've got this semester," Alex laughed, hanging it on the tree.

Greta smirked. "Let's just say it's time to decorate."

Life was about balance, about choosing what to let go of and what to hold close. As she watched her children embrace the wisdom of the garland tree, she smiled, knowing they were ready to face the world.

- Aishwarya Baghel (12B)



Image credits: <https://pin.it/76ZICaSA9>



I recently read a book by Sudha Murthy titled “How the Mango Got Its Magic.” The story begins in a beautiful mango grove that belonged to Dinkar and his son, Shyam. One day, when it started raining heavily, a man came to their doorstep and asked if he could stay until the rain stopped.

Dinkar allowed the man to stay, and in return, the man gifted them a mango. They were instructed to cut it in half and eat it. This mango was unlike the mangoes in their grove; it was extremely sweet and delicious. The man encouraged them to sow the seed in their grove so that they could get many sweeter mangoes.

As soon as the man left, Shyam ran to the grove to sow the mango seed in the soil. Shyam told his guards to take extra care of that particular tree. It grew quickly and bore mangoes in no time. However, one day, when Shyam came to check on the fruits, all the mangoes were gone.

He asked both the guards, but they had no clue about what had happened. Shyam decided to stand guard himself to catch the thief. Shyam eventually caught the thief and also found out why the mangoes were stolen.

To uncover this secret, you must read the book! I'm sure you will enjoy it as much as I did.

Happy reading!

- Hitakshi Jhawar (3D)



Image credits: <https://www.amazon.in>

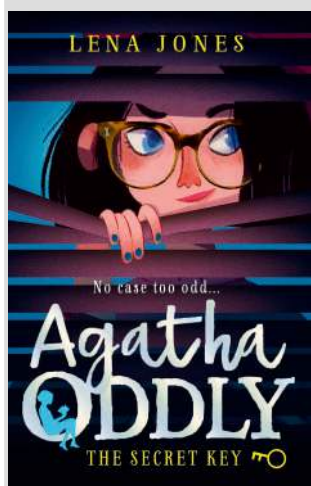
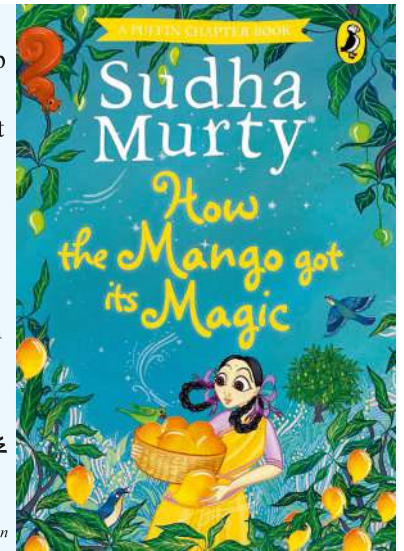


Image credits: <https://www.amazon.in>

Agatha Oddly is an engaging series of books written by Lena Jones. The books in this set are very mysterious. The Secret Key is the first part of this series and is my personal favorite.

In this part, Agatha Oddly, a 13-year-old girl, gets her first mission. It was a hit-and-run case. Agatha shared this news with her assistant and best friend, Liam. Soon after, she began investigating this matter by sneaking out of her school. However, the next day, she and the entirety of London faced a huge problem: instead of water, a red slime-like liquid began coming out of the taps.

Soon after, she stumbled upon one of her mother's old books, which explained everything that was happening in London. The book also had a key in it. Overall, Agatha Oddly: The Secret Key by Lena Jones is a must-read book.

- Riddhi Jhawar (6E)



Image Credits: <https://www.latimes.com>



THE ZONE OF INTEREST

“The Zone of Interest” is a powerful film based on Martin Amis’s haunting novel, offering an unsettling look at life next to Auschwitz.

The story follows the life of the Höss family, who live seemingly ordinary lives right next to one of history’s darkest places. The film revolves mainly around the life of Rudolf Höss, the commandant of the camp, who is portrayed with calmness. He manages his family life while overseeing terrible events that occur right next to his house. This contrast shows how people can accept wrongdoings casually, which is deeply unsettling.

Cinematographer Lukasz Zal’s work deserves a special mention for his essential role in conveying the film’s themes. With a mastery of natural light, he creates striking visuals that capture the family’s tranquil life while constantly showing the darkness that takes place beyond their walls. His visuals draw viewers in and make them feel the emotion of the story.

While the film can feel slow to many, it shows a sad reality that is faced by the characters beautifully. The quiet moments convey deep emotions, enhancing the film’s impact. Although there is little dialogue, the visuals speak volumes. Through this method of direction, the film draws us into the world of its characters, keeping us engaged throughout.

“The Zone of Interest” looks at how people can be involved in evil without even realizing it. The film stays with you long after viewing it, prompting self-reflection. Its uniqueness in every aspect and its great storyline have rightfully earned it two Academy Awards.

- Uddish Sharma (9C)

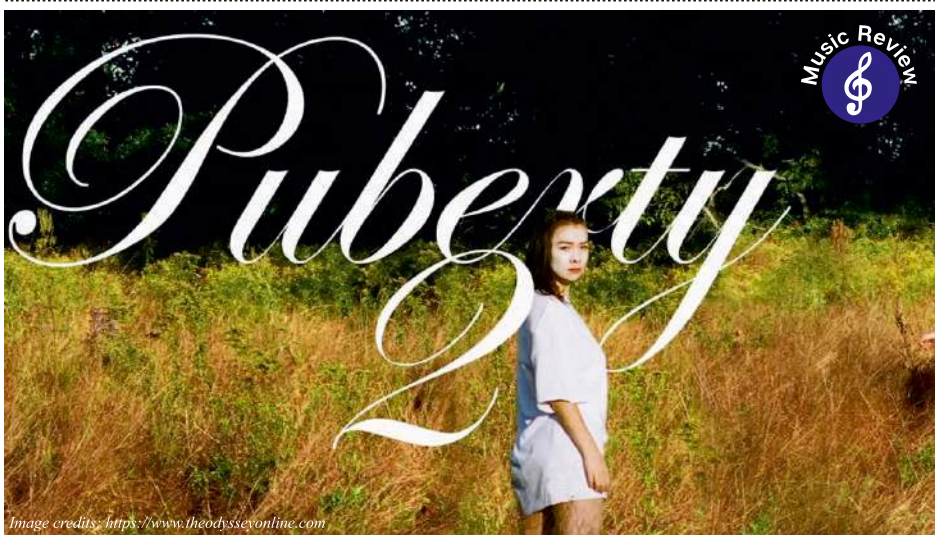


Image credits: <https://www.theodysseyonline.com>

Mitsuki Miyawaki, iconically known as 'Mitski,' is a Japanese-American singer and songwriter. Popular for her intensely emotive music and soul-searching lyricism, she has tugged at the heartstrings of people with her ability to create poetic and vulnerable melodies.

One of her most adored creations is 'Puberty 2'. Released in 2016, it is regarded as a breakout album for her career. It balances melancholy with euphoric epiphanies, exploring the pleasures and discomforts of being human. She displays her lyrical genius as she shifts from deep, introspective themes, such as processing grief in "Fireworks," to the catchy rhythms dancing around long-awaited self-identity and acceptance in "Your Best American Girl." A feature I love most about her music is the balance between slow-paced, acoustic starts to electrifying explosions of guitar riffs and optimistic vocals.

The title is a perfect choice for the soundtrack, as it cleverly reflects themes such as growth and the constant search for identity we experience as adolescents. It points towards the confusion that we face when growing up while triggering a sense of defiance and independence. How one learns that change is the only constant, and every experience and feeling—anger or happiness—should be cherished. How the yin and yang, or periods of darkness and light, are necessary to maintain an equilibrium—more suitably, a counterbalance—in life.

- Aiman Fatima (9B)





TRASH IS FOR TOSSERS

Can you imagine fitting years of trash into a single mason jar? Lauren Singer, founder of Trash Is for Tossers, has done just that since 2012. Her zero-waste lifestyle proves that sustainability can be practical, creative, and accessible to all.

Lauren champions simple, impactful changes like composting food scraps, using reusable containers, and shopping for package-free products. She even makes her own beauty and cleaning supplies, turning sustainability into a fun, hands-on experience.

Her journey shows that true sustainability is achievable, emphasizing a balance between consumption and conservation. Imagine if students brought reusable cups or packed waste-free lunches—small changes like these can create a ripple effect.

Lauren is a testament to a waste-free lifestyle, demonstrating that true sustainability is attainable. Lauren's story inspires us to take that first step toward a greener future. Whether big or small, every effort counts. What will your first step be?



CLIMATE AMBASSADORS
 - Roopsi Chawla (11C)
 - Parth Jhawar (9C)

TOWN OF ADVENTURE – A TRIP TO PONDICHERRY AND AUROVILLE

As the wise saying goes, “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.” This is especially true for students just like me! As we know, our bodies need a balance of exercise and rest. Likewise, our minds need a balance of studying and play. Last holiday, I visited Pondicherry and Auroville and had an unforgettable adventure trip.

I began with snorkeling in the Bay of Bengal, exploring the underwater world. The depth made me wonder whether there would be treasure down there in a sunken ship. Next, I strolled through the French colonies, admiring the rich architectural heritage buildings. Savoring delicious local cuisine was a treat. I also attended a music festival, which was not my cup of tea.

Sadhna Food Forest is where they transformed barren land into lush greenery. Here, I learnt harmony with nature. These experiences taught me valuable lessons in compassion and empathy. Seeking relaxation, I discovered the serene Watsu session, experiencing soothing hydrotherapy. But the most profound experience awaited me at the compassionate Sharanya NGO. Here, we met resilient dogs that thrive despite past cruelty. I visited this place twice and made a new friend, “Wilson,” the licking German Shepherd. On my second visit, he was so happy that he almost bit my ear while licking it. Rohit Uncle used to talk to all his 20 pets as if they were his kids.

While visiting the tranquil Matrimandir Ashram, my mom reminded me of the importance of inner peace. And I could only think of Kung Fu Panda's “dinner please” dialogue. This trip was a perfect balance of adventure, compassion, and self-discovery. I hope to do more such trips, hopefully with my friends someday.

- Raaghav Saboo (4D)

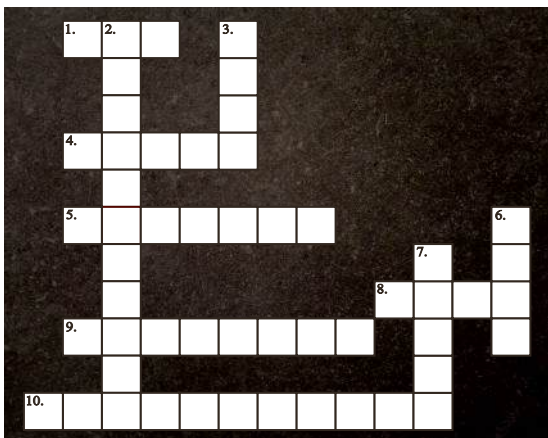


Balancing Wings Through the Wind: Bird Sighting

Birds are one of the major faunal taxa that have been studied predominantly in Bhopal. A total of 274 species of birds are listed from the city, among which 108 species occur in the urban area of the city. A variety of birds can be observed all around, like these spotted in Ekant Park, Van Vihar, Kolar Dam, Samardha Forest, JLU forest area, Kaliasot Dam, Indira Gandhi open air exhibition, Kolar area, and many more. Birding doesn't just include spotting birds; observing them for hours, feeling connected, and understanding them as a whole is the essence of it all. Since Bhopal has such a huge variety of birds, one just needs a keen eye, patience, and observational skills to be introduced to such fascinating creatures (and a pair of binoculars, of course). Connecting with nature in such unique ways is essential for us to remember where we come from and, in a way, give back to our roots.

Image credits: Prapti Arora

- Prapti Arora (12E)



Love Prangal

MIND BENDER

Across:

- 1 Japanese word for state of calm
- 4 Central point of balance of an object
- 5 Betterment of health
- 8 Yoga (group of physical and spiritual exercises that originated in ancient India)
- 9 Chinese symbol for balance
- 10 Organism's process for internal stability

Down:

- 2 State of balance
- 3 Balanced eating plan
- 6 Recover
- 7 Concentration and mental balance





Tête-à-Tête with *Kathleen Naglee*

Award-winning leader of innovative educational and strategic foresight practices



Excerpts from the Interview

Q As a leader in international education, how have your experiences shaped your approach to integrating technology, particularly AI, into learning environments? Reflecting on your journey, what key moments defined your path to becoming a global thought leader in education and technology?

My early teaching in indigenous, low-income U.S. communities shaped my educational perspective. I learned that committed teachers can make a huge impact on students' lives. Much of my work now focuses on fostering deep connections to help us grow together in learning. I view technology, especially in recent years, as a tool to assist learning. Technology can remove barriers, as it did for my son, who has a visual disability. For him, access to education was through technology.

With my work on KATBOT, a digital twin, I'm exploring how technology can improve learning for individuals. I see this project as a "crash test dummy" for education—an experiment to uncover potential problems and help school leaders and students avoid mistakes. My goal is to identify opportunities that others may have overlooked, ultimately improving the learning experience for everyone.

Q The concept of your digital twin named "KATBOT" is truly groundbreaking. What inspired this phenomenal idea? Could you also share insights into its inception and the journey of bringing such a vision to life?

In our podcast 'Unhinged Collaboration,' my partner Trisha Friedman and I explore the world of AI. Trisha, a former tech integrationist, and I have been experimenting with various AI tools, pondering the potential risks and rewards. We began with a digital friend on the "Replica" platform, which even included romantic gestures to draw users in. Trisha used transcripts of our podcasts and my speeches to create a caricature of me in ChatGPT. We then used "11 Labs" to make a voice clone—KATBOT.

This AI assistant now answers general questions about my areas of expertise and provides deeper insights through ChatGPT. We've used KATBOT for tasks like coaching leaders, handling school crises, and introducing courses for EdIndia, an initiative for teacher training. One question we've explored is whether people learn better by hearing their own voice or the voice of someone they trust, like a favorite teacher or parent.

But with this comes a psychological risk: as AI's responses become more personalized and accurate, we might trust it too much, opening the door to manipulation. While we're excited about the possibilities of AI, we're also cautious about its impact on education. We're still uncertain about the long-term implications, especially in schools, but the potential for both positive change and unintended consequences is clear.

Q With the advent of AI, students use it disproportionately because it is convenient. Naturally, AI generated work has a voice but not a soul. What approach can educators use to tackle this intricate and complex problem? Where do you see education heading in the next decade, particularly with AI's increasing role?

It's a question many educators are asking me about. Of course, ChatGPT and other large language models can produce instantaneous answers very easily and I don't want to prevent people from learning just because it can produce an instantaneous answer. What I've been telling people about is why are we worried about the output of what students are doing and instead analyse the input.

For example, if I ask a student to learn about the 12th-century architecture of Bhopal, I would want to see the full recording of their ChatGPT interaction. This includes all the questions they asked and how their understanding developed step by step. The idea is to focus on the prompts students present to ChatGPT and how they lead to the final output. Then, they would use what they learned to teach others about it in their own way, such as through a presentation or lesson plan.

This approach helps us understand their thought process and how they apply knowledge. The goal is to prepare students to work alongside AI as partners, using it to support bigger and better projects while improving their thinking skills. This way, students can focus on

meaningful and interesting work.

Everything is a test, and I know this is a huge issue in India, there's continuous testing and you're always in a competition to be better than the person next to you. To me, that's an old style of learning and thinking and obviously with the questions you've put together you're super deep thinkers so let's, let you take off and let you do big things.

Q Finland supposedly has the best education system in the world. It widely differs from the education imparted across the globe. What are some notable differences that you have noticed that set it on a pedestal? What was the vision behind your school- The International School of Helsinki?

I think the first is that they recognize the neuroscience of learning and what that means for each age of development. They understand very clearly that a 3-year-old, a 4-year-old, a 5-year-old, for that age, the most important aspect of learning is social learning. So, they're going to do everything that's possible about supporting good social learning, because that's the developmental stage of a child at that age. They're worried about children learning to express themselves, having a voice, and building their own independence.

In Finland, from that age all the way on, every child has their own learning plan, and every child contributes to the development of that learning plan. So, this development of independence and you have a voice that you can contribute to your own learning starts very young. A second thing that is very important in Finland is outdoor education. And, so they believe that your body has to be integrated into your education. It was very common in my school. No matter the

temperature, even if it's negative 20 degrees, we might still go outside.

I was at a conference in India a few weeks ago, and they were talking about India having some of the lowest rates of students participating in exercise in the world. So healthy bodies, healthy food, this is kind of the Finnish way, building of independence. And, you know, I would say the last thing is they really believe in this kind of deep dive work. Once you get to your age, you're choosing these mini modules of classes. There's choice, there's voice, and there's a recognition of the need for

autonomy and healthy self-development. And I think those are good lessons for the rest of the world.

Q In an episode of your "Unhinged Podcast," you talked about the challenges women face while taking up leadership roles. Could you shed more light on that topic, especially the prejudice that still perpetuates our society?

Gender equality remains a global challenge, even in countries like Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Iceland, which have been working toward it for over a century. Early in my teaching career, I didn't see these issues clearly, but as I moved into leadership roles, I noticed how differently I was treated. This experience confirmed many stories I had heard about the barriers women face in leadership, such as being spoken over in meetings or being labeled as too bossy or too weak.

In response, I organized retreats to help women navigate these challenges and present themselves confidently. Over time, I also became more aware of intersectional discrimination—where race, gender, and other factors combine to affect leadership opportunities. Recognizing this, I focused on creating equitable environments where everyone has a voice and feels seen, heard, and understood.

As a school leader, my goal was always to create a space where students and staff felt valued and cared for. I renovated the school to create cozy, welcoming spaces and worked to promote inclusivity for marginalized groups—women, people of color, and those with disabilities.

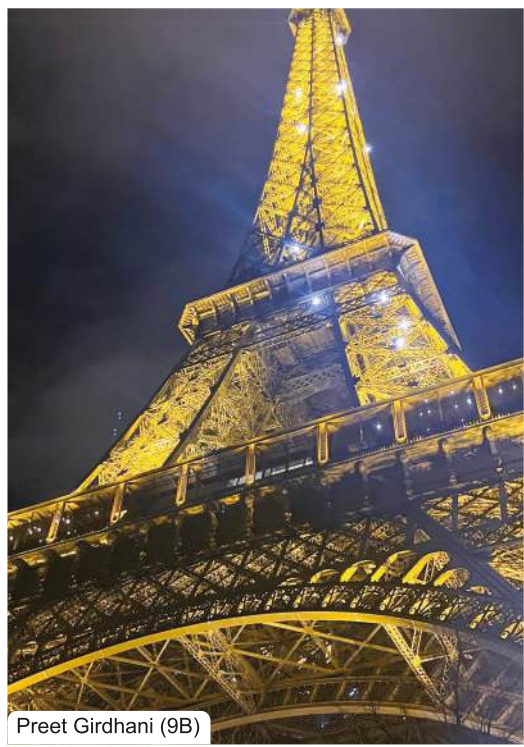
In my global leadership role, I encourage other leaders to prioritize creating schools where students not only achieve academically but also feel joy, support, and belonging. Academic success matters, but the true measure of a school is whether students leave feeling loved and empowered. When students feel joy, great learning follows.





“In photography, there is a reality so subtle that it becomes more real than reality.”

– Alfred Stieglitz



Preet Girdhani (9B)



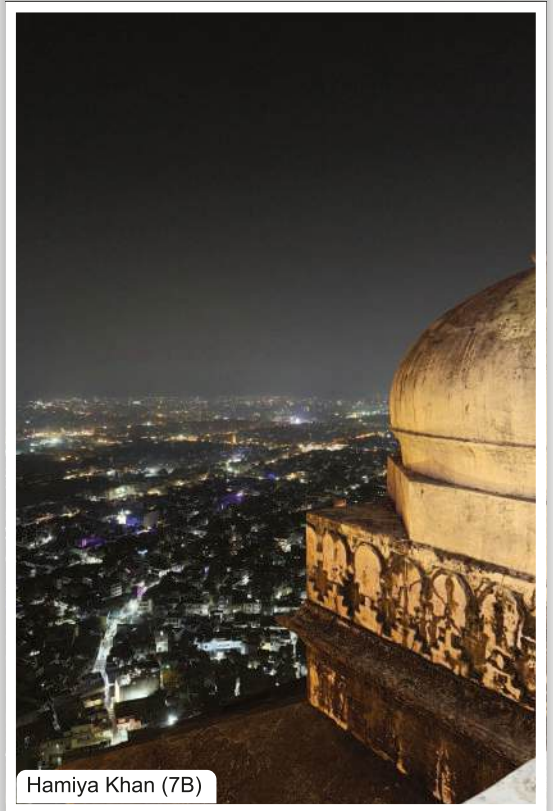
Shaurya Pratap Singh Tomar (8F)



Anam Aamir (8F)



Mustufa Sher Khan (9F)



Hamiya Khan (7B)



Viraaj Vaid (2E)



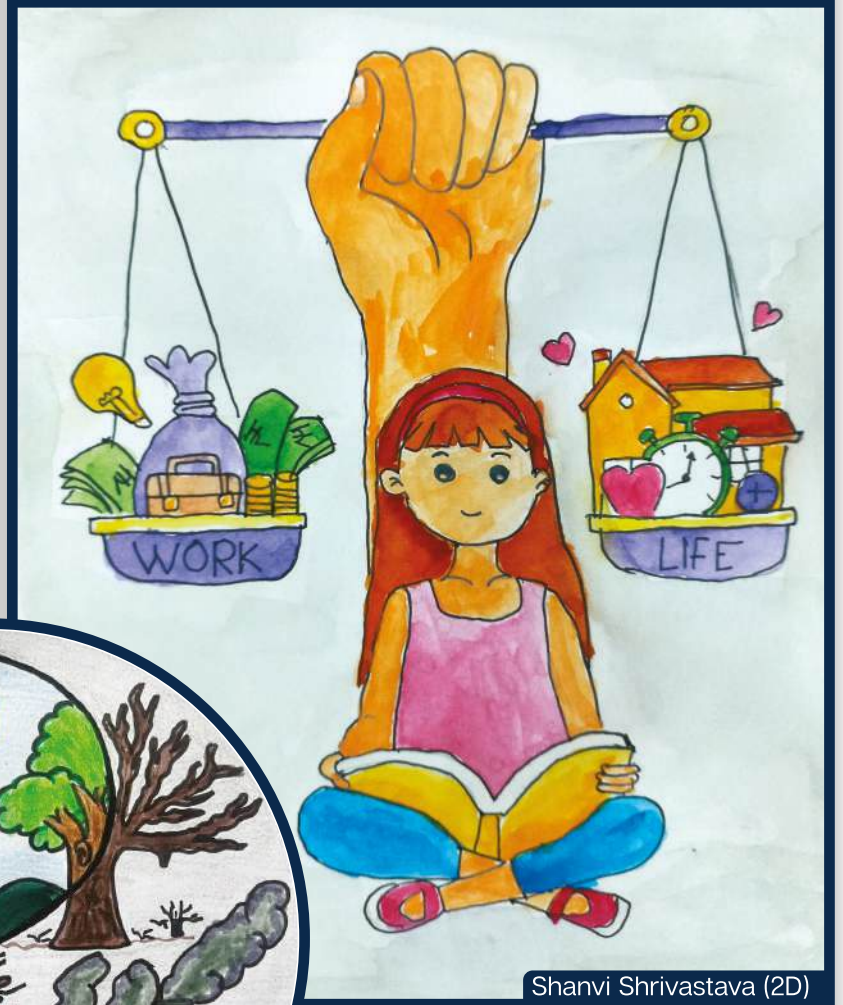
Pahal Nayak (7B)



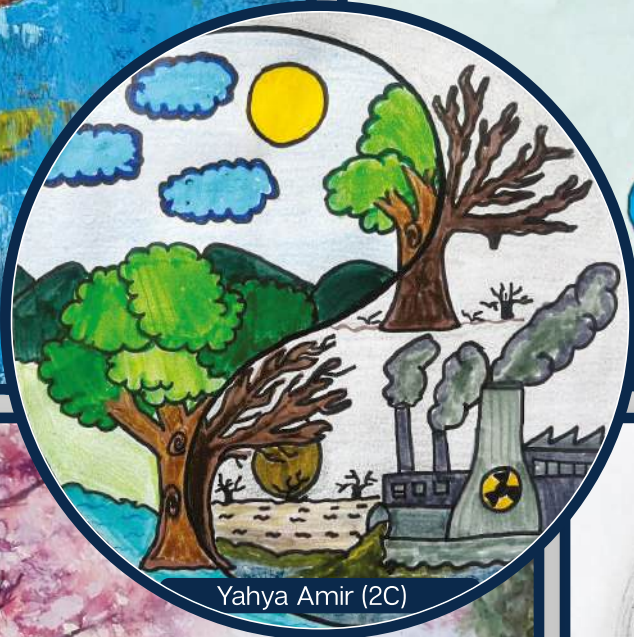
Maan Rajani (9B)



Shreen Goyal (10D)



Shanvi Shrivastava (2D)



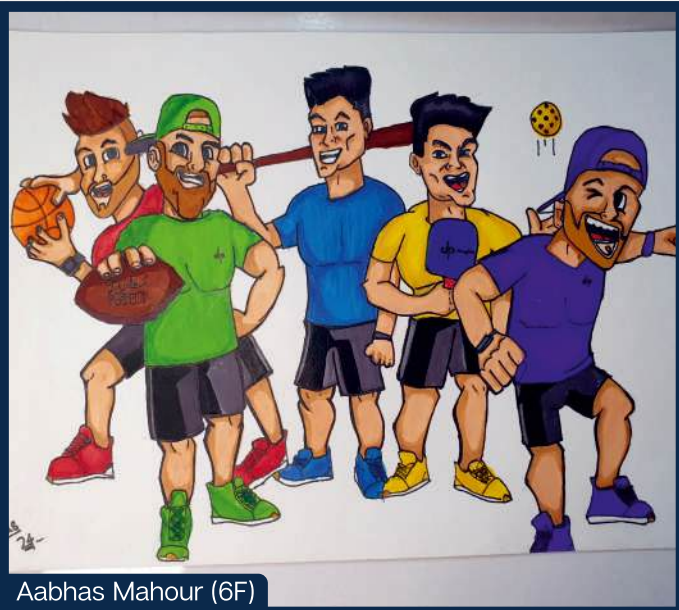
Yahya Amir (2C)



Advait Singh Rajput (3A)



Sara Songara (7B)



Aabhas Mahour (6F)



Siddhi Saini (10C)



Eiraa Shukla (3E)