

THE POOR PRINT \$



Aptitude Test for Dyslexics

M. Davies (College Porter)

adly, it was never dyslexics who wrote the rules in education but then believe it way, but be prepared for embarrassing mistakes; the rules in education, but thankfully it is for Porters to interpret and enforce them in Oxford's colleges.

My school's 'Career Aptitude Test' sticks out in my memory (information gathered on a complex form type questionnaire). The top three recommended professions that came back as a result of my test were: 'Reporter or Writer, Housing Officer, or Teacher', followed by a short personal recommendation which stated: 'Mark would do well in a role of being of service to people.' This was the 1970's, and this test did not account for, or distinguish, dyslexics or job ability requirements. Nevertheless, it was a sophisticated test for its time that had to be sent away to be properly analysed, and it took weeks for them to come back with the results. If I recall correctly, they even gave a list of further jobs that the youngster could begin considering. For the non-dyslexic children, many found it a useful thought provoker, suggesting areas that may not have occurred to them. This probably sounds like cave-dwelling days compared to the number of tests now available in our algorithmic and instant online world. Then, as now with many educational establishments, what pupils went on to do was seen as an indicator of the apparent success of their institution. This was particularly important in my case, as we had a 'Special English' department and possibly as much of a third of the institution were full-time, boarding, test-certified 'Dyslexics'. Most teachers naturally thought such tests for dyslexics were a waste of time and money, inevitably giving people false expectations beyond our abilities.

My Careers Master laughed, 'ha, a dyslexic reporter or writer!' This to him was proof that such tests could only succeed in producing results that were comically wrong. He then looked up the necessary ability requirements for being a 'housing officer'. What surprised me on this topic was that there were pages of it, and I don't think I had ever heard of it before. He didn't have far to go before he could pick out obvious problems, 'writing letters, producing reports, producing public notices, note taking of meetings.' This suggestion too was quickly re-

'So, teacher? Well maybe, so long as it's not an English teacher of course.

The meeting went on for some time and moved far beyond the test results, and finally, his strong recommendation concluded that I may be interested in considering 'Army school.' At twelve years old, I 'could get experience in the cadets before applying and it would be full time from sixteen.' I would be driving trucks 'off-road' easily before the time I was seventeen, and then I would be able to go for a full road driving lia proper and realistic career' for myself.

Purely by accident, I found that by the time I was thirty, I had at some point in my life already earned my living by each of those dismissed suggestions - though admittedly as a 'reporter' it was only very briefly after successfully getting occasional articles into print. Ultimately, I failed to get the job I was seeking and even spelt 'journalist' wrong on a press pass application! What I am trying to say is that dyslexics often find a

the difficulty was just how often that happened in that pre 'spell check' era. As an 'English teacher' I was genuinely good at it so long as I avoided using the blackboard. On one of the few occasions when I did, I wrote 'elefant' instead of 'elephant' and there have been many times in my life when my credibility has been badly damaged, which still hurt when I remember them (I taught Spanish speakers abroad to speak English after some romantic notions of originally intending to teach 'Vietnamese boat people'). But the real irony is that I have spent most of my life's work primarily in 'Housing'.

Eventually, the Master looked me up and down. He wasn't impressed by my lack of enthusiasm to embrace his concluding suggestion.

'Well boy, no pipe dreams now. So, what do you realistically want to do?' The question was asked in all sincerity and probably with some desperation (I was not yet eleven years old) so I could start getting focused on 'a real-world career.'

His logic had been ruthlessly reasonable, and by the time he had reached his conclusions, he had eliminated doing very much anything that seemed to me worth doing career-wise. Also bear in mind I had just had what amounted to a long lecture on being realistic in my expectations, so I needed to become less 'astronaut' and more 'grave digger.' Instinctively, I thought it usually safer to ask a question rather than risk getting criticised for cautiously giving an opinion.

'Well, couldn't I work in an ice cream van if it was at an interesting place?'

He answered shouting about me taking his time up and how I should think about my future and that the test had cost good money, now all wasted. I was now in trouble and he would be speaking to my House Master. Perhaps a few strokes of the cane would straighten me out. The aptitude test entered my careers file never to be seen again and the meeting ended with 'just how dare you not take my careers meetings

In the lodge, I now wear a different uniform to the Army Cadets, which I did join when my age permitted. Upon it is the crest of a crown with three feathers in it. It is linked to the motto 'Ich Dien' and means 'I serve'. But I always had difficulty in acting servile; maybe that was my problem in my school life as much as the dyslexia. But then life does have a habit of toughening up dyslexics fairly early, and I maintain a healthy mistrust of authority, especially within academia. Ultimately, although you are busy people, you appear to be intent on finishing this article having read this far. Probably your interest is because you know me from College. If so, it is for you (rather than me) to judge, was my Aptitude cense. Provided, of course, that I 'showed suit- test's personal recommendation correct in my able attention.' In so doing, I 'would be building case? If that one is too difficult (remember I am the dyslexic and you are the academics), try a simple: should or could 'College Porter' have appeared in the further jobs for me to be





The Gavel, by Ayomikun Bolaji

Horrid Henry's **Silly Poem**

Noah S. Adhikari

Horrid Henry is a silly naughty, silly boy.

Perfect Peter is the nice cry baby for real – you will find out later!

Moody Margaret is Henry's worst neighbour everrr!

Horrid Henry is silly as a dog.

Perfect Peter, nice as a seahorse, cries as a little baby.

Moody Margaret is bossy as a cat, naughty as a banana.



Noah is part of the Oriel family (you can meet his dad, Puru, in the lodge). He is 7 years old, and we are very proud to be the first to publish his work!

UPCOMING ISSUES

Issue #72 - Sleep

Submission deadline: 21/11/2021

All kinds of submissions are welcome! You can find out how by clicking on the 'Send a submission!' link at the top of the website

READ THE POOR PRINT ONLINE

You can find all of our older issues, including art and music, as well as the link for submitting your own pieces, at thepoorprint.com!

The paper is open to contributions from the JCR, MCR, and SCR. We look forward to seeing your work!

SEND US YOUR FEEDBACK

The Poor Print is here with the intention of bringing out Oriel's creativity and flair. We want to encourage as many contributions from as many people around the whole college.

But it can be hard for us to know how we're doing. If you have any feedback, or advice on how we could improve, do send us an email. We would love to know!



Persephone: A Review

Monim Wains

[CW:mentions of mental illness, sexual violence, and miscarriage]

lyrics, sung fantastically throughout. That was a fun evening.

Persephone is a story that has probably brought many a classicist to tears, with origins far back in Ancient Greece. But Emma Hawkins's writing brings the story to life, and makes the characters up to date. The plot is an interplay between gods, who have a hierarchy even on Mount Olympus. The more manipulative side of the powerful is brought out, with the weak having to suffer the consequences. If you are familiar with the myth, then you will know that these consequences are more than relevant in light of our increasing realisation of the discrimination that women face. Persephone does not shy away from this. Rather, it is reassuring to see how the characters realise and humanise the emotions, as well as how they respond (some of them, at

The story follows Persephone (Bethan Draycott), first taking a stroll in the woods, where a dark figure meets her gaze. She is curious, and asks to know more. But her questions are dismissed, and the man is bashful, until his identity is finally revealed. It is Hades (Peter Todd), god of the underworld. You would not expect one of the most powerful gods in the pantheon to blush so much for another, but Persephone's reputation is well known, and her beauty strikes Hades a blow. Their first meeting, and a graceful dance in the woods, are the first sign of the strength of the choreography. Max Penrose's reputation preceded him, and it was good to see it for real.

Without giving away too much of the plot, what follows from there is really, unfortunately, what happens to Persephone, as the gods misuse their powers. Though the divine are given very grounded personalities in the acting, and I found Zeus's portrayal by Lorcan Alexander Cudlip Cook the most characterful of all. His arrogance

and ego come through horribly well. I mean that

classic tale rewritten with lucid modern The depth of the feelings that grow as the story worsens for Persephone were reflected in the writing. From love to tragedy, empowerment, and anger, the emotions shine through the words. There were several times when I was struck by the lyricism of the musical pieces. It is easy to forget that the script is student-written, but Hawkins deserves another applause.

> Lyrics would, however, struggle without voices to sing them. Fortunately, Persephone's cast delivered, with each main character getting a solo to highlight their ability. I was impressed by each voice, and the melodies were sung with emotive expression, making it easy to follow the thoughts of each player. The core relationship between Persephone and Hades was performed with a wide range, beginning with the awkwardness of a first date, falling to treachery, before recovering, in time, to an amicable agreement. The characters grow as the story went on, and so did the performances, with several notes properly belted out, particularly in the second act. Persephone's 'Call Me A Fool' would be my pick for the highlight of the evening. Along with the higher, faster- paced beats of the lighter songs, the darker pieces were sung just as well, with lighting and atmosphere to support the actors on stage. Persephone's tragedy is brought to the fore by Draycott, as well as the sadness in Todd's Hades.

> The story's heart is the relationships between the gods, so we can continue with those. Hades and Zeus have a sibling rivalry with stakes far higher than what mere mortals could fathom, but their dialogue and interactions were entertaining and volatile, depending on the time. Both were played with clear personality; Cook's acting and Todd's singing were of particular

> In between the two men is Hera (Maggie Moriarty), tired of having to clean up Zeus's messes.

With her frustration, annoyance, and more than a hint of divine pride, she is a goddess no one dared to cross in Olympus, and I could see why... Her character's strength came with a stage presence to match, and Moriarty held the space powerfully. Though Hera's actions in the story are difficult to justify, the writing lets you see how it would be what she would do. The interplay between her, Zeus, and Hades is great.

Throughout the whole myth, Demeter (Maddie Hall) and Aphrodite (Abi Watkinson) are perhaps the only characters to really care for Persephone, as a mother and a friend, respectively. Their characters are, I think, what make the myth redeemable, and it was a necessary balance on what would otherwise be a very defeating tale. Just as much as Zeus's actions were shown to deserve disgust, Demeter and Aphrodite deserved praise. Demeter's pain as a mother, and her vengeance in anger, were hard to miss. Hall's voice was powerful enough to get that across, though I hope she can rest it in time as well!

Hermes (Franco Lopez) and the narrators brought together the story, connecting pieces and providing exposition where needed (though the story played out with very little exposition needed). There were some nice harmonies between them, and I have no idea how they can sing while carrying a sofa off the stage.

A point to note, however, would be that lines were sometimes difficult to hear. From what I could tell, this seemed to be a technical issue more than something on stage, so it can hopefully be remedied for future showings. It was not a constant problem, but the first few words following a character's entrance were often lost, and I found Hermes's lines difficult to pick up. Not too much information was lost in those words, but it is an improvement that can be

Other than that, however, the presentation of the earth and the underworld was very cleverly done – I did not expect the trees to lift into the air! It is good to know that the underworld lies below, with roots in the sky. The technical crew often get missed, but it was a good student production, and I would think that the transitions will get even smoother with the performances. I have done the tiniest of technical work at school, and the scale of a production that is as large as Persephone deserves respect.

The choreography complemented the songs as well. Highlights would be Persephone and Hades's first dance in the woods, and Aphrodite's 'Leave Them Wanting More', which got the loudest applause of all. Watkins as Aphrodite must have had a challenge preparing for that, but it paid off well.

As for the music, each piece flowed in and out, and the songs were boosted by some enjoyable beats to boot. The matching of the mood between the melodies and the words was done sensitively; it is again impressive to know that it was composed originally. Kudos to Carrie Penn.

Finally, it would be remiss of me not to mention the producer, Ana Pagu. The performance has clearly been put together in a very organised way, and though I know that it is the work of a whole team of people, it is the producer who

All in all, the cast's voices are probably what stands out most from the performances. Draycott's range in Persephone's love, sorrow, and defiance, were brilliant throughout. And even more so, in my view, the writing deserves

Persephone is a great student musical, and some of the team deserve professional-level praise. It is an enjoyable retelling that takes an ancient myth, and presents it in a way that a modern audience will find relatable. The light is made light, and the darker themes are handled well.



Persephone ran from Thursday 11 November to Saturday 13 November at the Oxford Playhouse.

Disclosure: I am Maddie Hall's (currently very proud) college dad, though I did not properly realise her role in the musical until the performance, and I have been in many a Computer Science tutorial with Max Penrose. The review ticket was provided free of charge; thanks to Ana Pagu for arranging that.



The King of **Applause**

Siddiq Islam

The King needs to hear the extent of his power,

So crams to the corners his grand vestibule

With columns of courtiers, whom every sixth

He orders applause from to honour his rule.

But crowds often tend to start clapping in tandem.

Which lessens the roar of a self-crafted fandom.

The cheers must sound full, and the King thus mandates

That all must applaud him at differing rates.

And he who relaxes his crimsoning fingers,

The King's burly henchpeople whisk him away

To dungeons where nighttime endures without

And wrench off his hands with mechanical

For if a mere subject possesses such gall,

He does not deserve to be clapping at all.

The Illusion of Institution

Monim Wains

Institutions have always been interesting to me. There is a realisation that I have had as I have gotten older: they don't actually exist, do they?

As an undergraduate with barely two decades of life under my belt, you might already be switching away from this article, wondering what on earth I could know. I think I agree with you! But there is a suggestion in what I would like to put to you. It is based on little experience, I admit, but it is not wrong, I think, and it is powerful. I wonder if you will agree.

What I have found as I 'become an adult' is how there is no such thing in the first place. An 'adult' was meant to be someone who knew what they were doing. 'Adults' knew how the world worked; they could make plans and organise things; they had the answers. But, of course, no one has ever managed all of that – or any of it. Adult or not, we are all adrift in the waves of fate, going on day by day without really knowing how, where to, or why.

I think this realisation about adulthood is common, but have you thought this way about institutions? Have you ever considered whether the 'system' or the 'culture' really knows what it is doing? And more so, are any of those things really there in the first place? I think not. They are but a mirage, like 'adulthood', which disappear in a puff of self-confident smoke.

Consider the university, for example. Or even, the JCR/MCR. It is at a smaller scale, but it is an institution, is it not? It has a voice, an opinion, a position it sometimes takes on in a strongly-worded open letter. It feels like it's a real... thing, of some kind.

But it is nothing except you; nothing but students who have decided to make a few decisions. It is not there at all. Rather, it is a bunch of people in meetings, behind minutes, behind

structure, who have become respected as one.

And this goes for the largest institutions of all. The bodies that make up our democracy: the government, the courts, and more. Their machinery is no doubt more complex, and perhaps more stable, but is it really so different? We hear of so many in the government right now, who walked in Oxford just a few years ago. They were not 'the institution' then, so why would they have become so, now?

Nothing much has changed in them, I suggest. Instead, it is the smoke and mirrors of 'institution' that have hidden them. It is a powerful trick to make it so that it is 'the government' at fault, when 'the government' is really a few known, named, individuals, as fallible and normal as you and me.

Remember, many editors of the national news may well have cut their teeth in the Cherwell. The politicians hashing it out in the chamber may well have honed their debates in the Union. Even then, they were in 'the Union', 'the Cherwell',... 'The Poor Print'. All different scales of things trying to be some sort of institution. All different versions of a group of random

It is perhaps a terrifying thought that, inherently, they know no better, but they happen to be in charge. Just imagine that you were to become Prime Minister in twenty years. You wouldn't become a different person in that time. You wouldn't suddenly know the answers any more than those 'adults' when you were vounger. But you would have become an institution for all to follow. 'The Prime Minister said...' but it was really only you.

For a few individuals, that imagined scenario just happened to come true.

But this is not a reason to revolt. I am not suggesting that those institutions be ignored. Nor should we disrespect them.

But when the 'institution' fails, or becomes the reason why you do things, refuse to believe it. It is an illusion to hide behind. It is a group which has made those decisions, and individuals who must be held to account. Do not let them hide.

But, one the other side, it is just individuals. All of 'the system' is really up for change, by people like you. That, I think, is reassuring. ■

'Dear Beary...

Beary McBearface

Jeary McBearface, treasured Oriel mascot and JCR staple, is here to help you with your troubles. In this column, Beary will attempt to find solutions to your little college worries; trust him, he's seen it all. To contact him, all you have to do is email thepoorprint@oriel.ox.ac.uk with the subject line 'Dear

Of course, if you'd like to remain anonymous - and Beary encourages naming no names, we don't want any beef here – just drop a note with your Beary con-cern to one of the editors' pidges. And please do; Beary needs a hobby in his twilight years.

[If you're really struggling, or if your problem contains sensitive information, be aware that Beary has received no formal welfare training; please message Harriet Tubb and Aidan Robertson, our beloved JCR Welfare Officers, for more information, or get in touch with the peer supporters, Welfare Deans or the College Nurse.]

1) Dear Beary, does innate morality exist?

I'd like to think that horrific treacheries like stealing from tuck are innately immoral and do not rely on human construction to exist.

2) Dear Beary, what are the massive birds flying around Oxford?

If you're talking about the red kites, they have been steadily rising in number in the past few years, and are commonly found around Oxfordshire. They have bright red tails and a wingspan of six feet and make cute little whistling noises.

However, if you see one circling above you, hide your Najar's - they are known to attack people

3) Dear Beary, someone ate the half a cake in our shared fridge which I was saving to eat later and now I'm sad.

Who keeps cake in the fridge? You put it in a sealed container. I'm glad someone stole it. You probably left it there long enough to go dry anyway. Taking up fridge space too, shame on you.