

# THE COLUMNS

by pupils; for pupils

HSD's Newsletter: Issue 112



The October holidays just flew by we can't believe that it's November next week but we have so many fun and festive articles in this edition in celebration of it being Halloween next Thursday. Many thanks to all those who contributed and happy reading!



Editors: Meagan, Roena and Megan

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF HALLOWEEN

Charlie Grewar

Halloween. Holiday of sweets, crappy costumes, tacky decorations, and general scariness. But how did it begin?  
And more importantly: why did it begin?

The story of modern Halloween begins in two parts: Samhain and All Hallows Eve.

All Hallows Eve was the evening before the Christian celebration of All Hallows Day or All Saints' Day, which was on November 1st. You know how there's a St Patrick's day and a St Andrews day? All Hallows Day was for all the other saints that there weren't enough days for. In Italy families left a meal out for the ghosts of their deceased relatives (because ghosts need to eat, but only once a year for some reason).

Samhain on the other hand began around the 9th century as the festival of which marked the beginning of winter and took place on the 1st of November. The Gaelic peoples believe that at this time the boundary between our world and the world of the dead thinned, allowing the dead to pass into our world and return to their homes looking for entrance. Which is pretty much where we get the customs of guising from ('trick or treating' for the Americans), which emerged in the 16th century. Traditionally children would go round recite semi-satanic poems in exchange for food or sweets. If the house didn't give them anything they were supposed to get bad luck. In the 18th century this evolved into prancing the house as retaliation. It also saw the emergence of carving turnip lanterns to ward of evil spirits.

Like several modern holidays (cough, cough Christmas) the similar dates of the Christian festival and pagan festival led to them basically being merged. Halloween didn't reach America until the large Scottish and Irish immigration in the wake of the potato famine of the 1840's. Carving turnips evolved into carving pumpkins and pastimes such as egging and tping houses replaced innocent tricks in trick or treating.

And so that brings us just about to modern Halloween, a time of horror films, and bands of children roaming the streets at night dressed in costumes plucked from the nearest Tesco's demanding sweets. Happy Halloween everybody.

# SHERLOCK HOLMES VS MISS MARPLE

Maisey Lafollette

Sherlock Holmes or Miss Marple? Sir Arthur Conan Doyle or Agatha Christie? Who's the better fictional detective? Who's the better author? Now that is certainly a puzzle. These fictional detectives have been around for a long time, and many have had the heated debate about who's the best. Is it

Sherlock Holmes with his scientific methods? Or Miss Marple with her reasoning and deductive skill set? Who earned their author more money?

Who is the greatest fictional detective?

Sherlock Holmes was written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in 1887, the first story being *A Study in Scarlet*, while Miss Marple made her first appearance in a series of short stories in 1927, *The Tuesday Night Club* being her first story. For those of you who don't know, Sherlock Holmes is set in London, and with his best (and possibly only) friend James Watson, he uses scientific methods to solve criminal cases, that oftentimes the police could and would not. The detective is self-entered, logical and in one television series had described himself as 'a high-functioning sociopath.' Miss Marple on the other hand is a pessimist when it comes to people, yet somehow merry and doesn't use science to solve crimes but her smarts and people skills.

At the time of his death, Doyle was worth £55,708 which according to the Bank of England would be £6,153,399.97 today. However, Agatha Christie in 2010, was worth nearly £10 million, but she had many other endeavours such as *Hercule Poirot* novels. Sherlock Holmes has been adapted for TV and films around 250 times, which shows how popular the character is, including the *Enola Holmes* franchise. From 1984 to 1992, there were 12 series of Miss Marple, who has had far fewer adaptations than Sherlock Holmes. Though some may say that is because Sherlock Holmes has been around far longer, which helped create his large fan base. While dozens have taken the reins of these stories the original authors have written several stories for these detectives, Christie having written 12 novels and 20 short stories, for the Miss Marple stories. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote 56 stories and four novels giving Sherlock Holmes sixty cases in total.

Sherlock Holmes is paid for solving crimes, and he is very particular in what cases he takes on and how he solves them. He gathers all the evidence and analyses everything there is to know about the cigarette they find on the ground, the word written on the wall or speck of dust. His knowledge covers science, politics, psychology, language and many more unusual topics. However, when he has no case, he stimulates his mind using drugs even though Watson has tried to stop him several times. Holmes often complained about the incompetent police, and he always outshines them, solving what they deemed as impossible. One example is in *A Study in Scarlet*, where the word Rache was on the wall, the police thought it was Rachel, and they were looking for a woman, Holmes on the other hand knew it was German for revenge, and he avoided the rabbit hole and solved the case. Miss Marple is not paid for helping the police, she just wants to help, her lifestyle is paid for by a nephew. She solves crimes because she knows the people of her village very well, and she always sees the worst in people, which stops her from clouding her judgment, she isn't stopped by believing they would never murder someone, as she will say everyone is capable of it. She uses her knowledge of the way people act, common sense and people skills to solve crimes. In fact, in real life a baby was poisoned, and no one knew what kind it was except for a nurse who was a Miss Marple super fan, and due to Agatha Christie having described the effects of poison so well, was able to save the baby's life, this was not long after the author's death.

The two detectives are very different, and both are considered the greatest detective of all time, depending on who you ask. Doyle and Christie are two of the greatest crime authors and some would say revolutionised the genre with their unique characters and shocking plot twists. It would be nearly impossible to say who is greater regarding the writing or the fictional detective.

# HALLOWEEN RANT

Ayanah Adam

Ah, Halloween. Once upon a time, it was a humble day of reverence, reflection, and a bit of harmless fun. Now? It's a corporate monster, where every department shop transforms into a plastic-ridden graveyard, and the real horror is seeing your bank account after a trip to buy sweets and decorations.

Let's take a stroll down the haunted lane of how Halloween became less about spirits and more about, well, spiritless consumerism.

Halloween traces its roots to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, a time when the veil between the living and the dead was believed to be at its thinnest. People would light bonfires and wear costumes to ward off wandering spirits. It was spooky, sure, but with a purpose—acknowledging death and change and honouring ancestors. As the centuries rolled on, Christian influences morphed it into All Hallows' Eve, the night before All Saints' Day, meant for remembering the dead and the saints.

Sounds deep, right?

Fast forward to the 20th century and suddenly, it's less about souls and more about sales. Enter the 1920s and 30s, when Halloween in America started morphing into a community-centered holiday with parties and parades. This was fun, but still relatively harmless. But then, in the 1950s, trick-or-treating exploded, thanks to post-war suburban boom and good ol' American ingenuity. Sweetie companies rubbed their hands together in glee, realizing they could turn Halloween into a sugar-fueled feeding frenzy. From there, it was just a slippery slope to where we are now.

And today? What was once a night to commune with the dead has become a month-long consumer apocalypse. Every October, we're bombarded with an avalanche of advertisements for everything from pumpkin-scented dog shampoo to "sexy" nurse costumes. Sexy nurses, sexy witches, sexy pizza slices—seriously, why is everything sexy now? I'm sure the Celts would be thrilled to see the mystical traditions they started are now celebrated by someone dressed as a sexy minion.

But it doesn't stop there. Entire shops pop up overnight to peddle flimsy costumes that will disintegrate before you reach the end of the street. Garden inflatables of ghosts, zombies, and skeletons? Sure, because nothing says ancient spiritual reflection like a 20-foot inflatable Dracula awkwardly teetering in the wind. And the sweetie aisle? It's practically a haunted house of sugar-laden regret. Let's not even talk about the "fun size" chocolate bars—they're neither fun nor a decent size, and the only thing frightening is the portion control.

The commercialisation of Halloween has turned a holiday steeped in history, spirituality, and cultural meaning into a capitalist goldmine. What was once about honouring the dead and acknowledging the mysteries of life is now about who can buy the most garish decorations or have the flashiest Instagram-worthy costume. We've commodified the macabre, priced the paranormal, and slapped a barcode on our ancestors.

So, this Halloween, as you dodge the overpriced decorations and underwhelming "spooky" lattes, remember that behind all this madness was once a holiday about facing the inevitable truth of mortality—not just another day to boost retail sales.

# THE NIGHT THE GUYS SURVIVED...

Alastair Forbes

Archie and his friend, Jack, go on an annual trick-or-treat around the town of Dundee on Halloween. Now, both of them are too old to do so, with them being 14. This year, they decided to go to a pumpkin maze: a maze built with pumpkins and leaves. They decided to take two friends – Ben and Sam. We shall join all of them on the 42A, as they arrived at Cupar bus station, in a town far away, pitch black with barely any light, especially since all the street lights were off, leaving the full moon shining down with all its terrifying might and glory.

“It’s this way guys, just off the track and through the town!” Jack tried to sound happy about this, but, truth be told, he was terrified like the rest of them. They all set out through a field, with only the glimmer of a night café in the town leading the way-

SNAP...

The four boys all stopped and turned around in union.

“What the devil was that?” whispered Ben.

“Let’s pick up our pace a little,” said Jack, as he jogged ahead.

They galloped through the field until a shrill, high, girly voice spoke from behind- “Hehehe” she giggled, “wanna play tea party?” The girl had the English accent, of a spoiled little brat.

“W-w-who’s there?” spluttered Archie, “Show yourselves! Leave us!”

Only a giggle and a snap of a twig, then nothing...

They burst into running, zipping past trees, and houses where, strangely, no people were present.

“Jeez-” panted Sam, “I actually though-”

“Boo!” A whisp of black and pink filled the air, like a childish attempt to die a pink dress black, “helloooooo!”

“Go-go-AH” Ben let out a shrill scream, “I just saw red eyes-”

“Where’s Sam?” asked Archie.

“Sam... what a pretty little Prince.” The high-pitched voice surrounded the air, filling their brains and throats, suffocating and blocking them up, “Meet me in the centre of the pumpkin maze.”

“And if we don’t?” shouted Jack.

The giggle of the demon girl filled the air once more, “He dies, and you’ll be haunted until you go insane... and die!”

Suddenly, they fixed their eyes on a pair of eyes, staring at them from afar. The boys looked at them as the eyes got closer until they could see the girl.

“I actually changed my mind!” Her pink-black dress wafted up and down, her large eyes were red, her hair a mess, and her face pale. “I’m hungry...” behind her came something... something indescribable. Sam, half-eaten, trailing behind her. The last thing the boys remember was the girls teeth latching onto their heads... NOM NOM NOM.



# Alex Salmond

Jack Mitchell

During the October break, on Saturday the 12th of October, former Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond died suddenly in North Macedonia aged just 69. He had been attending a cultural diplomacy conference in Ohrid, North Macedonia and collapsed during lunch following his speech. Attempts to resuscitate Mr Salmond failed, and the death was announced to a shocked public later that day. The former First Minister's body was flown to Aberdeen on a charter flight paid for by Scottish businessman Sir Tom Hunter – the country's first homegrown billionaire.

Alex Salmond was born on the 31st of December 1954 in Linlithgow to two civil servant parents. He attended local schools and gained a joint degree in economics and medieval history from the University of St Andrews in 1978 after studying business at the Edinburgh College of Commerce, now part of Edinburgh Napier University. He then joined the now-defunct Scottish Office as an assistant economist, followed by a seven-year stint at the Royal Bank of Scotland, where he became an oil economist.

Mr Salmond had been a member of the SNP since his student days in 1973. He had been president of the party's student body at his university and was also a member of the social republican faction the 79 Group. When the left-wing organisation was banned from the party, all members – including Salmond – were suspended from the SNP. He was only reinstated after a very close vote and took this opportunity to stand for Parliament for the Banff and Buchan seats and won, ousting the incumbent Conservative member. Three years later, he stood for the leadership of his party following the resignation of then-leader Gordon Wilson, a Dundee MP, and won by a large margin over the only other contestant Margaret Ewing.

He was elected nine years later to the Scottish Parliament following the creation of the Scottish Parliament in 1997 following the devolution referendum victory, which he was a key part of. Mr Salmond resigned as SNP leader a year later following high-profile party infighting and led the party in the House of Commons instead. The current First Minister John Swinney replaced Salmond as leader, but following poor results at the 2004 European Parliament.

Election for the SNP, he too resigned, triggering an election for his successor. Mr Salmond announced that he would contest this election, a surprise announcement following repeated statements that he would not stand, and again won with a sizeable majority.

He led the party to victory at the 2007 Scottish Parliament election, in which he won a seat after a six-year absence, albeit

with a coalition with the Scottish Greens. This victory, coupled with his own electoral success, meant that he was now First Minister of Scotland. Throughout his first term, the matter of Scottish Independence had been lurking in the background, and following his next election victory in 2011, he announced a referendum would take place in the second half of the four-year term. At this point, however, he did not have the legal framework in place or permission from Westminster, which would have to be obtained to go ahead with the vote.

In mid-October 2012, Prime Minister David Cameron co-signed an agreement with Alex Salmond, granting the right to hold the referendum. An announcement was made in March of the next year stating that the vote would be held on the 18th of September the following year. Mr Salmond, as the main proponent of independence, campaigned for his side along with many others, including his deputy Nicola Sturgeon.

The referendum saw a defeat for Salmond, causing him to announce his resignation the next day, effective from the end of the SNP's conference in mid-November. The day he passed the Scottish premiership to his successor and former deputy Nicola Sturgeon, he said, 'My time as leader is nearly over, but for Scotland, the campaign continues and the dream shall never die.'

In May 2015, he announced he would again be standing as an SNP candidate for the House of Commons at the General Election, and again won the seat. He did, however, lose his seat at the 2017 snap General Election to the Conservatives. Later that year, it was announced that he would be hosting The Alex Salmond Show on the state-controlled RT channel. He presented this until the show's suspension following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

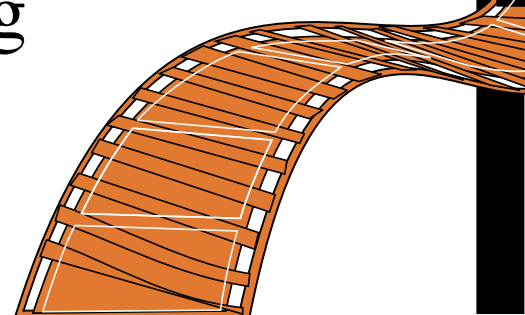
In 2018, the Daily Record made shocking sexual misconduct allegations, which were to have happened during his time as First Minister. He denied the allegations and later took the Scottish Government to court over its internal investigation and won damages of £500,000. However, he was arrested a year later and pled not guilty at his trial a year after that. Mr Salmond was acquitted of all but two charges out of the fourteen brought against him, with one dropped and another 'not proven'.

In 2021, he joined and became the leader of a new pro-independence political party called the Alba Party. He led this until his sudden death almost two weeks ago.

No matter your opinion of Mr Salmond, he was an extremely influential figure in Scottish and UK politics, and his death has been significant, and no doubt a blow to the independence movement.

It's Halloween next Thursday so if your looking seasonal to watch because you are procrastinating your homework or you are "too old" and "too cool" to go trick or treating, here are my top 15 Halloween movies.

- 1) Casper
- 2) Hocus Pocus
- 3) Scream
- 4) Sleepy Hollow
- 5) E.T. the Extra Terrestrial
- 6) The Nightmare Before Christmas
- 7) Trick 'r Treat
- 8) Monster House
- 9) ParaNorman
- 10) Happy Death Day
- 11) The Texas Chain Saw Massacre
- 12) Friday the 13th
- 13) A Nightmare on Elm Street
- 14) Halloween
- 15) The Shining





# Genetic Engineering in VET medicine

Edana Foster

**Edana Foster in F5 has won an amazing competition and will be travelling to Sydney for her prize which is a course on Vet nursing. You can read her spectacular piece below which discusses the role of genetic engineering in veterinary medicine and its potential impacts on biodiversity and animal welfare.**

Genetic engineering has become more popular over recent years, especially in veterinary medicine. The way genetic engineering has advanced veterinary medicine is outstanding: it has many uses that could one day cure diseases and save lives. Although it could also be catastrophic to the ecosystem as it could cause extinction of many animals as they would be overrun by more dominant new species causing a change in the biodiversity.

There are many reasons why vets use genetic engineering in their studies; diagnose, prevent, treat diseases, and even breed varied species that produce transgenic offspring for therapeutic proteins or xenografting.

Xenografting is when they can grow proteins that are useful to humans like hormones, insulin and lactoferrin meaning that they can replace living cells, tissues, or organs between varied species. The animals carry a foreign gene that has been deliberately inserted into its genome; they are easily produced and provide necessary proteins that are useful to the human body. This could advance both veterinary and human medicine.

Having genetically modified animals means they can choose the desirable traits like faster growth, immunity, and improved milk production in livestock. These advancements can lead to productivity and efficiency in agricultural systems. The use of genetic engineering in the food industry is growing everyday, it potentially improves agricultural yields and conservation, it is creating plants and animals that are more resistant to diseases, pests, and environmental stress, but also risks a reduction of genetic diversity and unforeseen ecological consequences.

Many animals are used to produce each line of genetically modified organisms, meaning tens of millions of innocent animals are involved in genetic engineering experiments every year. The research and development of genetically modified organisms often entails painful and invasive procedures, often there are complications resulting in unanticipated disease syndromes, physical impairments, and many others. Most animals involved in this do not receive protection under the Animal Welfare Act. This is why many people disapprove of genetically engineering animals, particularly for food use, making them less popular amongst the public.

In 2021 the BBC published an article about genetic engineering and an experiment that took a turn for the worst, Mr Jiankui was a researcher at the Southern University of Science and Technology in China. He had been working on a top-secret project where he made the first genetically modified babies, after many years it was clear his project did not work. His plan was to make babies that are immune to HIV, but he made new proteins that had never been seen before and do not exist in any other human genome. The babies had uneven base pairing meaning that there could become a mutation and could lead to genetic diseases like cancer.

In conclusion genetic engineering has many advantages, the main ones being increased food production, higher yields and more resilient organisms. The disadvantages are that the animals welfare isn't always top priority and other greater risks to consider. Continual monitoring is essential to ensure the positives always outweigh the negatives.

# PERCY JACKSON

Rosie O'Ready

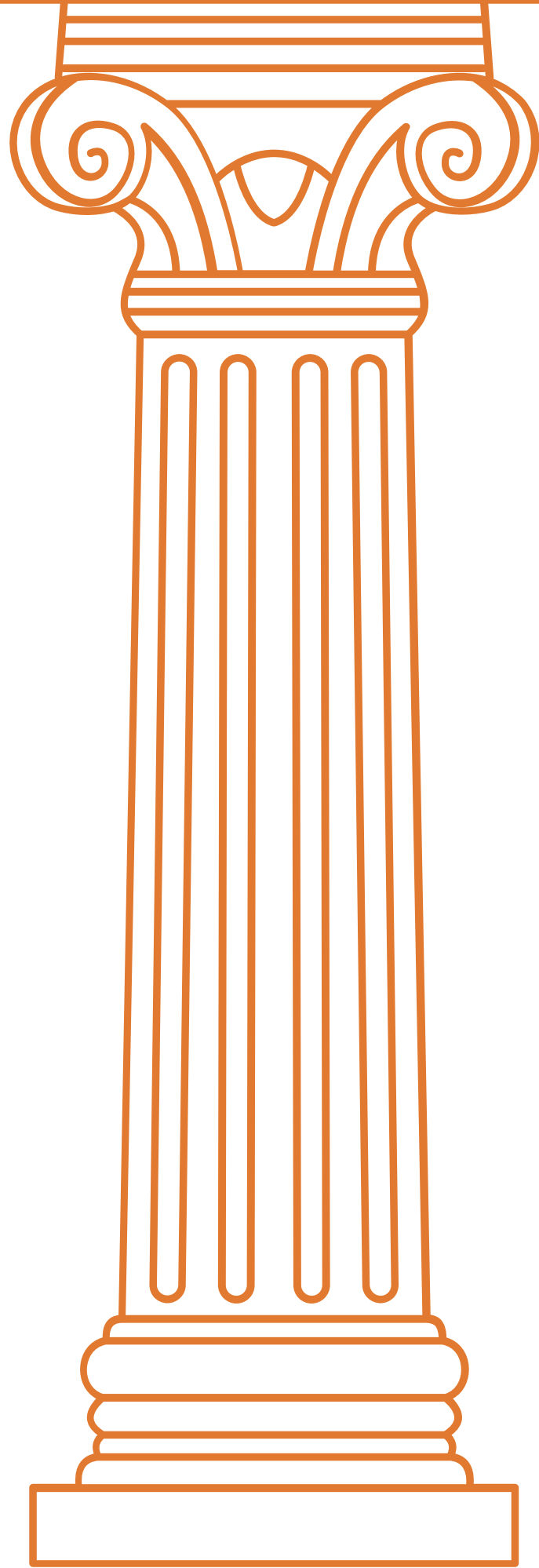
Percy Jackson is an incredibly popular and well-known book series (and now a TV show as well!) written by Rick Riordan, and the series is still not finished! The newest release, Percy Jackson and the Wrath of the Triple Goddess was released on the 24th of September this year.

**Slight spoilers ahead!** This book is set in the week leading up to Halloween and on Halloween itself. Percy, Annabeth and Grover, two demigods and a satyr, are together again: Hecate – the Greek goddess of magic and crossroads – has got a job for them. They need to look after her pets while she's away celebrating the spooky season all around the world! The trio must temporarily move into Hecate's house, and somehow care for a terrifying hellhound, several eels, and a... gassy polecat. All while abiding by Hecate's many rules and trying not to die. Simple enough!

Despite several challenges, near-death experiences, and one of the most terrifying Halloween parties ever held in New York, the trio make it to the end of the week alive!

This book is a perfect Halloween read for any fantasy and comedy lovers out there. Percy Jackson fans around the globe have not been disappointed.

The next book has not been announced yet, but sadly it will most likely be the final book in the Percy Jackson and the Olympians series. However, with 7 books in the series, and almost 20 books in the whole Percy Jackson universe, there's plenty to read!



# Gold Price Skyrockets

Prithvi Sudarshan

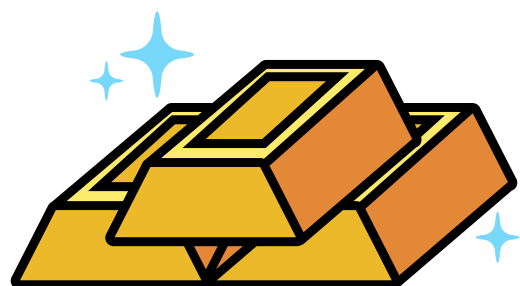
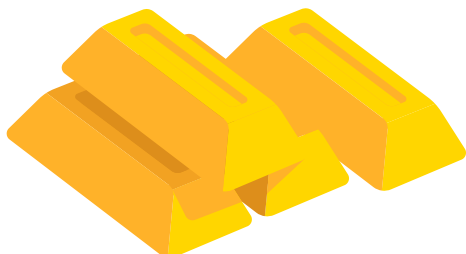
Gold, a precious metal, universally seen as a symbol of wealth and prosperity since the beginning of time, is used to make everything from electronic components in our phones to Oscars and Olympic medals.

Gold prices have climbed over 30%, reaching an all-time high of £2,118 per ounce, up from £1,620 per ounce this time last year.

But why has the price of gold risen so dramatically despite ongoing conflict in the Middle East and uncertainty surrounding the U.S. presidential race? The answer lies in these very uncertainties. Unlike conventional stocks and shares, which often fluctuate during periods of economic instability, gold tends to thrive as investors seek the safety of assets with intrinsic value.

Gold's global reverence also makes it an ideal asset for central banks to hold large reserves of bullion as a hedge against economic instability, such as the potential collapse of a nation's currency.

In recent years, many countries have increased their gold reserves to diversify their portfolios and reduce reliance on the U.S. Dollar. This is particularly evident in China, which has increased its gold reserves from 1,050 tonnes in 2015 to 2,260 tonnes in 2024. This increase can be linked to the U.S.'s use of trade barriers (government induced policy or regulation that restricts international trade) such as sanctions and tariffs (a tax on imported goods), as a means of demonstrating political disagreement with other countries, as seen in the sanctions imposed on Russia. By simultaneously decreasing its dollar reserves and increasing its gold holdings, China can reduce U.S. influence on its economy.



# PROBLEM OF THE WEEK

Haoqi Liu

Unfortunately last week there were no solutions sent in for the problem, so I'm trying another approach. As this is the Halloween edition, I've tried my best to make it Halloween themed.

**One year, there were exactly four Tuesdays and exactly four Fridays in October.**

**On what day of the week did Halloween, October 31st, fall that year?**

Please send your solutions to [LiuH@highschoolofdundee.org.uk](mailto:LiuH@highschoolofdundee.org.uk) to win a special Halloween treat!



Have a  
Good  
Weekend!

The Columns  
Team