

The Fabric of Time

You would think it hard to not notice going back almost two hundred years in time, yet I only thought to check my grandfather's tiny, bronze, Alice-in-wonderland-like pocket watch when a great ebony horse galloped past my window, ridden by a stout man dressed in a black suit and top hat.

I stood there, mesmerised. I looked down to see that my jeans and t-shirt had been replaced with a fine, blue silk gown with lace and sleeves as big as my head nor could I count the number of frills and fancies. To my astonishment - my normal straight, blond hair was in neat ringlets cascading down from an extravagant bun.

"Elizabeth," bellowed a deep voice. "We will be late for market - please do hurry up!" Not knowing what else to do, I carefully put one-foot in front of the other in my weighty gown. It was so heavy it felt like someone had wrapped an elastic band around my legs. As I stumbled- not-so-gracefully into the hall - I saw my house had changed. The walls once magnolia with a few wonky photos, were now grand wood panelled walls adorned with beautiful carvings and fanciful oil portraits that looked vaguely like ones I'd seen of my great grandfather in our attic.

The deep-voiced man, dressed like the man on the horse only no top hat and elegant in navy blue instead of black, beckoned to me, "Come Elizabeth there is much fuss to be made as the new King is to be crowned. We will be late for your gown fitting."

As I hobbled to our horse-drawn carriage (no matter how strange all of this was, I didn't let that stifle the excitement of riding in a horse-drawn carriage) I recalled the horses were light brown in colour with blond manes and tails that glinted gold in the afternoon sun. A young lady in a white dress walked by. "Good morrow, Mathew" She addressed the man with the deep voice cheerfully. "I hope I find you well?"

"I'm quite well Anne, yourself?"

"Good as ever!" She laughed lightly, then strolled around a corner out of sight. Ah Mathew, that's his name. For a while we sat in silence - I drank in the vaguely familiar landscape and Mathew seemed perfectly happy to do so too, though it was normal for him mind you. My town had changed a lot. The once paved, ugly streets, were now stony cobbled streets. In the park, fountains gurgled cheerfully, and the shops sold exquisite silks and apples so shiny you could practically see your face in them. Hand-painted signs swung gently in the breeze to reflect what the shops sold. A sign over a public house displayed a mouse and a cat walking happily into a brilliant-orange sunset.

Before long we had come across a shop; the sign displayed a seamstress in a peacock green dress holding a pair of sharp iron scissors, piles of cloth around her. Mathew jumped down from his seat and helped me down. On an uneven street it was hard to find your footing and I kept slipping and loosing balance – before long, my legs ached like a stubborn mule that refused to walk. We reached the shop and were greeted by a merry old woman who, at once, swept me into a world of colour: yellow the colour of candlelight; green the colour of a spring day; and a fiery orange. I felt like a doll being redressed until we found something to my liking. In the end I settled on a white dress; rather small (much to the old lady's disappointment) with an azure blue satin sash and some modest lace upon the sleeves.

When I came out, Mathew looked at me with admiration – smiling at the simplicity of the dress I had chosen. He gestured for me to twirl. I daintily span around feeling as though I were five years old showing off my chic style to a hastily set up audience of dolls. All of a sudden, I felt homesick for my family and wanted to get out of this strange place.

Afterwards Mathew and I hurried off to the market. It was a lively place full of music and elated people carrying new-born lambs and leading cows through the crown, making quite the calamity. We bought some rabbit and fresh greens for our supper and ginger beer to quench my thirst. The evening was young when I started to wonder if and how I would get back home. Mathew never questioned me about who I was so maybe I belonged here? Had I never quite belonged in the twenty-first century?

At half past eight Mathew sent me up to bed. I found a freshly laundered, ivory-white, cotton night gown. I went to bed. I can't deny it was the best night's sleep I'd ever had.

In the morning, I woke to find my room as it was. It was no longer candle-chinked; modern-day electricity filled the room with a blinding light.

As I opened my wardrobe, I felt the soft fabric of the ivory-white night gown that still remains in my wardrobe to this day.

By Alice T

The Austere Cliff

As the clouds in the forlorn sky turned a hazy purple, the sailors in the rotting boat started to yawn. Well, at least one of them did. Persistent, irritating yawns. Enough to make the captain's face turn scarlet. He walked straight up to the wrongdoer and whispered in his ear, "Do that again and I will throw you off the boat." The sailor began to tremble as the captain's threats whipped him in the face. He did not want to get thrown off the boat. He did not want to have to swim to a remote island and fashion a boat out of derelict firewood. But he did want to have a peaceful, lengthy sleep. The captain's beetroot face glared at him. But as he strutted back towards the steering wheel, his face turned pallid as a sheet. His eyes darted everywhere, searching for safety. Suddenly, a shadow was cast upon his face. The boat was heading for a cliff.

"Abandon ship!" He cried desperately. The sky was a colossal cacophony of rain and sleet. Soon, everybody was off and kicking wildly in the vast ocean. Except for one. The one who had agitated the captain. He, unlike others, had seen a menacing, yellow eye in the cliff. He had also seen a huge, hooked horn protruding from the vast expanse of rock. He was sure that this 'cliff' was no cliff. This 'cliff' was the Kraken.

He sailed away on the silhouetted boat, not daring to glance back at his fellow crew mates. He could hear the screaming of the Kraken behind him; and the terrified shouts of his friends, surely perishing in the jaws of the giant sea monster. Water began to pool at his feet through holes in the ship. With a jolt of fear, he realised that the ship was sinking. Fretting uncontrollably, he hurled anything that he could off the ship: weighty spears in disintegrating barrels, fraying leather slingshots. Still, no use. The boat was sinking fiercely now, the great battleship slipping out of power's grasp. The sailor had no chance. He closed his eyes, and dived off the ship.

Cold was prodding him as though he were a piece of steak being checked for tenderness. The Kraken was gaining on him now, and he was defenceless, as vulnerable as a hog to the slaughter. He could hear the heavy breathing of the revolting beast now. Sweat started to seep out from his chest, despite the extreme cold. What was he going to do? Admit defeat like a wet Anglo Saxon? Certainly not. He was going to do something, something heroic that would save ...

Too late.

The Kraken had reached him.

Clearly his banquet of sailors had not satisfied him. The insatiable beast plunged forward, missing the Viking by inches. Panic lurched through his spine violently. He needed to stop this brutal sea monster but his mind swirled frantically and he simply could not muster the intelligence to think of a solution. The monster was behind him, planning his next meal perfectly. All of a sudden, an ingenious idea came to mind.

He needed to create a diversion.

Leaving his idea simple and unplanned, the Kraken suddenly jerked into action. Swooping his mammoth head over the tempestuous ocean, the monster scanned the waters for his prey.

The sea was wild and stormy as the two rivals fought. The Kraken could always see his foe out of the corner of his eye, fighting ferociously. However, as the enemies poured out their wrath on each other,

it was clear that the Kraken was going to win. The battered sailor knew that only his cunning brain, and his very weak plan, could help him to outwit the beast now.

He needed to steer the Kraken to his boat somehow, so that he could swim safely to an island, whether he wanted to or not. His brain whirred with possibilities, but he knew that only one had a chance of saving him. He felt around in his ripped pockets, to find a chipped piece of flint almost escaping out of one of them. Perfect. He threw it over to where his boat was. That was a throw that would mean life or death to him. That throw would cost him his life if it didn't work.

But it did.

The Kraken craned his giant neck over to where the piece of flint had dropped, and followed it. Relief filled the heart of the sailor. His plan had worked!

He swam all through the night, until he finally found a big, bustling island poking out through a thick clump of trees. He climbed upon it and gazed out into the night. He felt calm. Then a giant shape loomed out from the water.

The Kraken was back.

By Hermione C (Year 5) St Mary's School, Gerrards Cross
Word count: 798

ISA Essay Competition 2024: Science Fiction

Analysis

The cramped room was silent except for the glare of the TV and the occasional quiet clatter when Professor Julia Sprite lowered her cup of tea into its saucer. She was staring intently at the television, her ^{top} half leaning forward, ^{with her forehead} her face inches from the screen.

... The asteroid has crashed on the coast of South America, "declared the host in a slightly monotonous tone. Investigation aircrafts have been sent from the UK, USA and Germany. Each will be returning with a sample of the asteroid to be inspected by the selected following at 1pm, UK time: Prof. D. Harrell, Prof. J. Sprite..."

Julia leapt to her feet, white and pale with shock. Her cup smashed onto the floor making her cat jump up unceremoniously from his peaceful slumber and leaving an ugly stain on the once spotless rug. She felt as though her heart had leapt into her throat before rapidly starting to experience the sensation of having swallowed a brick. With blood pounding in her ears, Julia checked the watch on her trembling wrist.

12:53pm.

Julia could almost see ~~the~~ ^{the} life of her career flash before her eyes as she sprinted towards the oak front door, pulling on a coat and stuffing her car keys and phone into its pockets. She knew that if she arrived too late, her entire country would be let down, she would have failed the NASA company and she would be stripped of her job with not a penny to spend. Also, her horrible colleague Chloe Probertson would inherit her title: Head of Samples from Space Department she thought as she slammed the door shut and revved on the reluctant engine.

Julia just hoped there would be no traffic.

Julia was panting hysterically when she finally arrived - after what seemed like hours - at her destination. Was she too late? She had no idea. She decided it was too much stress constantly checking the watch, witnessing minute by minute slip away. She would check in the lab.

The long, whitewashed corridors seemed to be teasing Julia; they extended each path by at least 3m than how she remembered.

them and every wall shifted inwards, leaving Julia barely enough space to breathe. After joggling feverishly for far too long, Julia heard the muffled sound of urgent voices coming from a closed door. She swallowed hard, and pushed the door open.

The noise ceased immediately like a light getting switched off as Julia entered the ^{dim lit} room. A sea of eyes bore into her as panic flooded her mind.

"You're late," sneered an ice-cold voice, answering her ^{soundless} ~~voiceless~~ question. The voice belonged to Leon Pratt, who never let Julia forget about her clumsiness and in this case her ^{constant} tardiness. To her surprise, he gestured reluctantly to the microscope and sample on the desk. Keen to get started, Julia removed the lid of the glass container and inserted the minute greyish-brown particles into a dish with a trembling hand.

Bursting with curiosity and relief, she adjusted her horn-rimmed glasses. She heard quiet mutterings and gasps from behind her. Nevertheless, (though a bit irritated) she squinted through the microscope and caught a fleeting glimpse of what looked like a fastly expanding neon-green balloon before she was blown off her feet.

Julia scrambled up and opened her eyes except there was nothing to see: the room had gone dark. She felt around with her hands until she found writhing bodies; it looked like every one else had fallen over too. Each breath that Julia took was short and magnified in sound: fear was slowly strangling her with his murderous hands...

Suddenly, with no warning, something said, "Let us out."

Chloe Probertson squealed theatrically but she wasn't the only one: others shouted out loud too. ^{The} Three words were spoken not into the air around ^{them} but into their ^{them} ^{themselves} minds, like a thought but more clear.

There was a flash of eerie-green light and Julia thought desperately that the lights had turned black on again but instead, she noticed four, 2m tall figures emitting the light. They were human-formed but deathly still with no facial features at all.

The three words were projected into their minds ^{once} & more. No-one moved. Then, they attacked.

Name: Alexander M

School: Salcombe Preparatory

1 Imaginative Story Vikings

An Oversea Voyage

The ocean churned like the blanket of a child smitten by nightmares. Chilling waves reached through the water's surface like colossal hands. Relentlessly, the water swung its vicious axe at the sides of our vessel; the cleansing bloodshed of the beast sprayed at over our rows of shields but still we continued paddling. Our battered longship, Drakkar, was captained by the most powerful Viking of our village – Orm. Violent, merciless, malevolent. The ocean reflected the stormy leer on the face of our captain. Yet the combined wrath of Njord and Thor could not be stopped. What had we done to infuriate the gods? How could we repay them for our sins? Will they let us drown in the dens of dormant sea beasts?

Clouds were pale from the sight of death, as my lifelong friends were thrown from their seats and drowned in the brine beneath. Our journey had begun a week ago when we left our homes together, as companions, as friends, as brothers; only for my comrades to plunge into the foamy depths before my eyes. All hope was lost. Me and my few remaining friends pushed the oars in a blind rage. Slowly, a mountain-like claw emerged from the water, grasped Drakkar crushing it and sending us plummeting into the ocean.

Danger! Foam bubbles frothed in the mouths of my friends as we sank into the deep. the veil of darkness closed around me, yet light cut through. Safety! An island saviour peered through the water beckoning to me.

I awoke! Confused. The cold grip of the ocean still clung to me allowing the surrounding grains of sand to attach themselves. A beast like nothing I had ever seen before clambered out of a small hole in the sand, its eight spindly legs marched one by one like an army of soldiers as it approached me. Its dark, pearly eyes turned towards me; as it lifted one large claw, I reached down for my sword; however, it was not there so I scrambled frantically through the sand; but the creature, unphased by my show of weakness, continued its unorderly marching and snapped its claws in an attempt at intimidation. Swiftly, a malevolent streak – as white and sudden as an avalanche – swooped upon the clawed monster. As loud as a gunshot, it struck the earth sending sand, like shrapnel into my eyes.

Voices! They swirled around me, a school of fish; loud squawks and shrieks, snaps, and scrambles, melted into one. Hands! They grabbed at me, octopus tentacles; painful restraints, chains, iron clasps all held me like a prisoner. Smoke! It pierced my nose, a needle; flickering lights surrounded me, encircled me.

“Valhalla?” I whispered, “Odin?” Two figures in white cloaks approached me, they murmured to each other in a mysterious tongue and began chanting. The chanting went on for what seemed like an age; a third figure entered the room through a mysterious curtain which I had not noticed before, he held two wooden spoons which he passed to the others. As he got closer, I noticed that the spoons were red, stained red. Blood red!

Fear and horror choked me, restrained me, I could neither move nor speak. Swiftly, the third figure whisked his cloak, then disappeared through the curtain; he returned not long after with a bowl and bottle of red liquid.

“Druids,” he announced, a violent banging of drums began. The other two began pouring the liquid through the spoons.

I turned to see a crowd of people behind me. The floor fell beneath me; everything faded to nothing.

It was as if an artist had spilt ink over the canvas of my vision. I reached out a trembling hand, it felt a hard rock as chilled as the icy bowels of the ocean. I bent down on my knee and prayed to Baldr – God of light – to share with me his wisdom and reveal to me my surroundings. Like a flash of lightning, fire was born in the graves of wood and hay. I looked around my surroundings; the dilapidated bones of victims before me were spread across the floor like butter on toast. No exit. No escape. No freedom. The innocent, shy glint of metal shone through the bales of hay. I reached out my hand. A sword. I turned it over in my hands, it had a name engraved on it.

“Orm,” I read aloud. If these strange men had claimed the life of a warrior as valiant as he, I stood no chance against their twisted influence upon my mind.

I waited for salvation, yet no-one ever came. I could have been there for hours, I could have been there for years; it did not matter to me: the tragic realisation that I would most likely perish in this pit of graves was to break me. I lay on the dusty floor and sensed a dark presence. Despair in its purest form. The regrets of souls who could never find peace with their mistakes. My own, joining this darkness to be only known by the guilty.

Wordcount: 758

A News Article

Reducing Carbon Footprint at Sylvia Young Theatre School

This is my report on how to reduce “**Carbon Footprint**” and help the damaging affects this is having to our world. There are many ways schools can reduce their carbon impact, and just as many reasons to do so – from protecting the planet to lowering heating bills and inspiring students and their families.

It is so important to include our fantastic school. I think if we make the changes below that I’m putting across, it may look like really small steps but could make a huge difference in time to come.

The main topics I would like to change within our school are Energy, Reducing CO₂ Emissions and Recycling. Please do read my report that I have put together and hope you enjoy!

Energy

My idea to minimise energy and we could start this immediately which will save energy and help the environment, even save the school some money!

- Change to energy-saving light bulbs.
- Switch off lights in empty classrooms and school halls.
- Avoid leaving computers, TVs and printers on standby.
- Unplug chargers when not in use.
- Turn your school’s heating down a degree or two.

We can arrange for students from all year groups to be on a weekly rota to incorporate this and record this down.

Reducing CO₂ Emissions

We all know that students travel from near and far places to our school but we can all do our bit by making just a small difference to help the CO₂ Emissions.

- Even if pupils need to travel from far just a walk from their main station to school as to getting the bus/tube can make a difference.
- We can really now encourage local staff and pupils to walk or cycle to school. In London there are bikes for hire and also good cycle lanes to our school. Traffic of cars, taxis and buses is a major cause of CO₂ emissions and air pollution.
- Arrange for bike racks to be installed to help store bikes whilst at school.

- We can even organise a green travel plan for our whole school to encourage everybody to change their ways.
- Arrange weekly meetings to encourage new members to travel different routes.
- It is a known fact that the benefit of swapping car journeys to walking can include better health and more focused students.

Recycling/Waste

This is such a huge part of helping the planet. We all need to do this at school and at home. I would like to arrange at the school “Environmental Prefects” for Year 6 and Year 7.

The arrangements would be that four students get chosen from Year 6 and Year 7 and this would be alternated each term. There will be green bins in each classroom whereby all students would place all recycling items used over the week to be put into this bin. Year 6 will cover the bins in Years 6,7,8 and also the ICT and Art rooms. Year 7 will cover Years 9,10,11 and the Spanish Classroom and the Science rooms. Once the prefects have collected all the rubbish from each area this will be put into a big bin for recycling.

Here are some items that should be recycled:

- Paper
- Plastic
- Glass
- Ink cartridges

We could as a school make a plan of reducing paper use whereby each year group is given an allocation of paper each month.

Another good option is to ensure that around all the main areas of the school such as canteen, hallway and reception that we have bins with difference coloured sections for cans, bottles, paper, so that when the bins are emptied each day it is recycled properly.

Recycling is a simple way we can have a positive impact on the planet. I think in our busy school with a few simple changes we will make such a difference and this will help get all staff, students and even parents see the changes. By reducing the amount of rubbish that goes to landfills, recycling saves energy and helps save natural resources like trees.

Isabella C Year 6 – 682 words.

I've owned my great grandfather's watch for some time but was surprised when its date suddenly changed to October 1824!

Luscious, coiling thread masked my porcelain face like an impenetrable shield. Painted-on eyebrows furrowed arduously as my azure eyes widened. Furnished with gold lining, the brazen watch lay there, scrutinising me.

Time clutched my mind, pulling me away from the present and into a distant memory. I slithered into my mother's room, hitching myself onto an armchair. I brought down a shabby box. As my fingertips traced a swirling pattern, I was set on one thing: unravelling the intricate web of lies that my family had weaved. As the sound of footsteps landing on the carpet echoed, my heart was beating. A million thoughts dived into my head, as I hurried out, grasping the box. My gaze fell upon a sign, drizzled on the door: 'Genevieve!' Marble tiles layered across the floor as ivory pillars towered above. I began to open the box with baited breath. Documents and photos began to flood out. Startled, I began to collect them. I noticed a portrait of a young man. Edged underneath read: 'Bernard Laurent'. So, this was what my great-grandfather looked like! Lounging at the bottom of the box was a fragile watch, laced with gold string and I knew instantly that this once belonged to my forbidden great-grandfather.

An ear-splitting shriek dragged me back into the present where I was, once again, gazing at this family heirloom. In the swish of a clock's hand, the watch was enclosed in the barrier of my sleeve, hidden from sight. My door banged open.

"I have been calling you for over an hour," my maid began, "you worried me!"

I knew this wasn't true. It was time for dinner. Once every two weeks, my mother dragged herself out of her study and ate with us. We always put extra effort when she came. I groaned as I slumped downstairs and thrust myself into a chair. When everyone arrived, I spoke.

"Tell me about my great-grandfather!" I stated.

This was a mistake. Screeching across the patterned carpet, my mother's chair moved and she shot up.

"Go to your room and don't come out for the rest of the evening!"

"But, but..." I stuttered.

My face became a tear-stained glass window as I huddled under my duvet, stroking the watch. Fatigue engulfed me as I fell asleep.

Slumped on the floor, my eyes opened. I swayed out of the alleyway in which I had ended up. As my sight came back, my tongue fell out of my mouth. In front of me were lines of horse-drawn carriages. Glancing at the watch on my wrist, I gasped. The date had changed to October 1824. Nerves racking inside of me, I shrunk into the walls until my eyes caught something peculiar. I noticed that the street name was the same as my own and, as I rambled down the street, I found my exact house! Peering through the window, an unfamiliar sight pulled me in. Two parents were arguing with a young man who, I believe, was my great-grandfather! He threw a watch and it shattered into a million pieces! He picked up a piece and ran out. As the present pulled me back in, I noticed something. My watch was missing a bolt!

Skulking down the streets, my eyes swivelled to the carpet of rubble. I spotted a desolate shilling and whipped it into my pocket. Noticing a forlorn man slumped on the ground, I tossed it into his cap. A brisk chill shot

down my spine. Under that sheet of woe plastered onto his face was someone I recognised. But who? Peering into the hat, I noticed a bolt. I froze, gobsmacked. Crouched on the pavement was my great-grandfather...

Flabbergasted, my eyes met his. My icy fingers pulled out the watch. He lit up at that. Trembling, his large fingers picked up the bolt and held it out.

"This is hard to explain but I am your great-granddaughter and I came from 2024. I thought I might find you," I told him, breathless.

"I was disowned by our family a while ago because," he began, "they told me that if I kept on hiding relationships with poorer women, I would no longer be welcomed. I ignored them and smashed the watch on the floor, taking one bolt with me. Everyone only wanted me for my wealth, I later realised," his lips pursed and he had turned deathly pale.

My heart fell. There was only one thing to do. I popped the bolt in.

There we were, back in the cosiness of my mansion. We grinned at each other. Was this real? I pinched myself and winced. Yes. It was. Leisurely, we strolled out of my room and headed down the stairs. Both of my parents were gawking.

"Mother, father," I began, "this is Bernard."