



# THE DUAL DIPLOMA TIMES

Fifth edition

February 2017

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## DUAL DIPLOMA NEWS

### College Counseling Live Session with Mrs. Nicole Harvey by Sara Varljen



On the week of December 19th, Mrs. Nicole Harvey held four live sessions about college counseling, for all the students interested in attending university in the United States. A lot of students from various countries participated in the meetings and asked a lot of questions, showing their curiosity about the subject.

The application process for American universities is quite different from the European one, but the first step you have to take in either case is to make up your mind about what are the subjects you are more passionate about. There are several factors you can take into account when choosing your future career path, but it's important to pick a course that will make you happy. As Mrs. Harvey pointed out, "If you love what you do you'll never work a day in your life". She suggested "[Bigfuture.collegeboard.org](http://Bigfuture.collegeboard.org)" as a very useful site to help you discover which universities could possibly meet your needs, when it's time to decide which college you would like to attend. She also advised to narrow your choices to just three or four colleges: your dream one, a couple of realistic ones, and an easy one.



**ACADEMICA**  
INTERNATIONAL  
STUDIES

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## College Counseling Live Session with Mrs. Nicole Harvey

by Sara Varljen

*Continued...*

Once you've made your decision you should start getting confident with the university's official website, especially with the "international admissions" page. Important information you must look for regards deadlines, tuition and fees, financial aid, test and language requirements, contacts. Most applications for American colleges are due by October or November of your last year of high school, so you should begin working ahead and signing up for tests and scholarships. Mrs. Harvey said it's "essential to stay organized and write down the various deadlines for each of the colleges you are interested in". You will definitely have to take ACT or SAT, which are two slightly different kinds of test that are offered only on certain dates. First of all you should know whether your favorite university requires a specific one or leaves you free to choose, and if it is necessary for you to take the writing part too. If the decision is up to you, try to take some practice tests online or on books, in order to understand which one is better for you. According to Mrs. Harvey, "most international students tend to be more successful at ACT because of how it is divided into sections, but this may not be true for everyone". Be sure to find more than a date when you can take the tests somewhere nearby, because if you take them more than once you are usually able to pick the best scores you got in the different sections and send them as part of your application. Most international students also have to take the TOEFL, which assess their knowledge of English language. As for scholarships, try to apply to as many as you can. There are many different types of them: some are for sports, other for academic success, other for specialties, and sometimes they just ask you to write an essay.

Mrs. Harvey also shared some tips and personal experiences you could find pretty useful.

**"You should be a well-rounded student, not only with good grades, but also someone who plays an instrument, or practices a sport, or does some volunteering."**

Universities are interested in people who can give a meaningful contribution. Being part of the Dual Diploma Program makes you stand out, and at the same time it means that, even though you are an international student, you have a good understanding of how to write and do research in American style. An important part of the application process are recommendation letters: ask most of your teachers for one, so that when you have to send them, you can choose which is the most appropriate one for a particular university. Remember that you can easily get the letters translated into English by the international admission office. Mrs. Harvey noted it's important to "ask the first person you contact in the admission office for his/her name and email, so that you can interact just with that person, without having to repeat yourself every time you would like further information". If you have any doubts, just send an email to your teacher or contact them on skype: they'll know how to help you!



# The Dual Diploma Fitness Challenge of 2016 By Dual Diploma Staff

by Alvaro Miguel Garcia Fernandez

From running to playing tennis to riding horses, Dual Diploma students enrolled in the Life Management Skills Course, along with their teachers, challenged themselves to become more fit. Participants competed from November 14 to December 16 to earn the highest points. Logging activity and using pictures as evidence in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, students could quantify their progress and calculate their totals. Best of all, they submitted their fitness challenge logs for credit in lieu of any Life Management Skills assignment of their choosing.

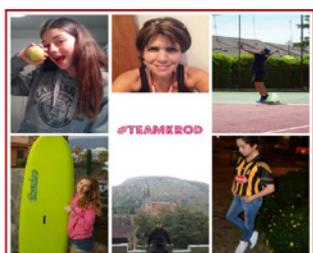
Lured by the opportunity to earn credit while becoming fit, students who persevered through the challenge made some surprising gains.

Olivia Martín García said, “This challenge has let me know how really fun it is to do sports. It has taught me that it’s great when people work together and I think it’s fantastic because it shows other people what a good, healthy lifestyle is.”

Miriam Ucendo said, “I liked this challenge because it is a good way to make yourself more responsible, connecting every day/night to write about what you did along the day. I learned how to use Excel, since I never used it before.”

## This challenge exemplifies how dynamic virtual education can be

Students first learned about the Fitness Challenge through the third Mandatory Live Session of 2016—a collaboration between Dual Diploma teachers, Alissa Longo and Lissette Pickard, who, according to Longo, were “really focused this summer on taking previous live sessions we created ‘up a level’ for maximum involvement for the kids.” And as a result, during the second week of November, teachers invited their students to gather in a Zoom Conferencing room to view a Prezi on the effects of exercise on the mind.



At least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise 3 to 4 times a week is proven to reduce the negative effects of stress as well as increase concentration. To embed this principle within the Fitness Challenge itself, Longo and Pickard added two questions for participants to answer each time they created an entry in their fitness log. “How do I feel before exercise?” and “How do I feel after?” The positive effect was trending! Participants tended to answer “Lazy” to “Full of energy”, “Stressed” to “Calm” or “Slow” to “Alert”.

Teachers also instructed their students that at least 7 hours of sleep and drinking half your body weight in ounces of water is important for recovering muscles and proper brain function. So Longo and Pickard included the possibility to earn points for enough sleep and hydration.

Adding to the fun, students could earn points for incorporating social media to the challenge. By posting progress, healthy recipes and motivational messages, students could add even more points to their log.

The highest score for students participating as a team was 5,873. That outstanding number was reached by the very hardworking **Team Kelly Rodriguez**. The student with the highest individual score was **Marc Fornells Miranda**. The fact that his teacher, Lisa Baber, was the highest-scoring faculty member shows how motivating virtual communities can become.

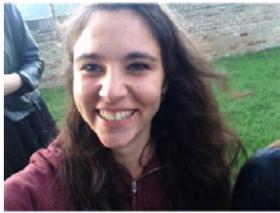


## Alumni Spotlight

by Sara Varljen

*Veronica Mazzocco, Lucia Sorbini and Rachele Moschetta, three former dual diploma students that graduated last summer, share their experiences studying online, explain how it is influencing their lives now, and give us some useful tips to be successful in the program*

First of all, some information about the interviewees



Veronica Mazzocco, 19, "Language, Civilization and Science of Language" student, Verona, Italy. Dual Diploma student from February 2014 to June 2016



Lucia Sorbini, 18, attending the 5th year of liceo classico, Modena, Italy. Dual Diploma student from October 2013 to June 2016



Rachele Moschetta, 19, Medical Biotechnologies student, Verona, Italy. Dual Diploma student from October 2014 to June 2016

## Interview

### **Why did you choose to join the Dual Diploma Program? Did someone suggest you to fill in the application form?**

The alumnae shared that they were fascinated by the opportunity to improve their knowledge of English and of the American culture, while working for a second graduation. Leaving their high schools with two diplomas is a significant advantage, especially because it opens the door to the prospect of studying or working in the United States. They were among the first students to enroll in the program in Italy, therefore the only people who could have possibly advised them were their parents.

### **Which course option did you choose and why?**

Veronica and Rachele chose the two-year option, because it gave them the possibility to complete the program at the end of their last year of high school.

Lucia opted for the three-year alternative in order to finish the Dual Diploma program during her fourth year of high school, being therefore able to focus on her final exam the following year. She thinks "this option is the best one because the courses are spread over a longer period of time."

### **How did you feel about studying on an online platform?**

The three students stated that learning online has its pros and cons. It's quicker to write on a computer than on paper, and resources and materials are way more accessible. Moreover, your studying schedule is up to you, which grants you much more flexibility than regular school. On the other hand, though, working on a computer might imply technical issues and many chances of getting distracted. In addition, being part of an online classroom limits your possibilities of **directly interacting with other students and with the teacher.**

### **What about the assignments and the courses? How much effort did you put into them? Did you find them easy or complex?**

According to Veronica, Lucia and Rachele, the various courses were all interesting, and so were the assignments, in most cases. Sometimes the instructions were not very clear, but their teacher, Dawn Stahl, was very helpful. Some assignments, such as quizzes and tests, required less time to complete, while written and creative ones demanded a lot of time and effort. The weekend was usually the best time to work on this kind of task.

**You might have faced some difficulties while you were enrolled in the program. How did you overcome them?**

The three alumnae shared that they did go through a rough patch sometimes, because they were not very organized, or they did not understand how to write an assignment. When they were facing a challenging moment, first of all, they took a deep breath and reminded themselves of how hard they had worked up to that moment. Then they contacted their teacher, Mrs. Stahl, who was always willing to help them solve their problems. The Italian supervisors of the programs also did a great job answering their questions.

**Are there any tips for succeeding in the Dual Diploma Program you would like to share with those that don't have that much experience?**

Veronica emphatically advised to "work ahead!" As she pointed out, "teachers always tell you to do so, but you never actually do. If you work ahead, you won't have a hard time trying to submit assignments for the Dual Diploma during a particularly intense week." She also recommended to "take part in the AVE amici sessions whenever you can: they are a great chance to practice your speaking skills and get in touch with someone new."

## Lucia noted it is important "to print out the syllabus for each course at the beginning of the year, so that you have a general idea of the various deadlines in black and white."

Rachele would advised you to "plan a schedule and make time for your various activities ,or you will end up with a lot of assignments to submit and not enough time to do that." Furthermore, she would dissuade you from "choosing the two-year option, because it is the most concentrated one and requires a lot of effort."

**You took part in one of the student exchanges with Mater Academy in Miami. What did you enjoy about attending an actual American school for two weeks? How did this experience help you improve your knowledge of English?**

Veronica, Lucia and Rachele explained why they all loved the experience. They got to know many different people, both American and Italian, they have befriended from the very beginning, that made their two weeks unforgettable. It was fantastic to find out more about a culture so different from their own and so similar at the same time. They became more fluent in English by speaking with their American buddies, and they had the opportunity to learn many slang words. Travelling with many people from their same country somewhat limited the possibility to practice the language, but they tried to make the most of it, anyways.

**In retrospect, could you evaluate your improvements in English and in the other subjects you studied?**

The students believed the program has really born fruit. English courses taught them how to properly write an essay, which turns out very useful in various situations. They must thank the demanding Burlington for helping them improve their pronunciation without realizing it. Furthermore, it's undeniable that courses such as Psychology and Criminology, which they would have never studied in Italy, have enriched their cultural baggage and broadened their understanding of the world.

**How do you think the program will impact your future studies?**

Veronica thinks all the effort she put into the Dual Diploma program will turn out very helpful during my future university studies. However, she says," this experience has already begun to influence her scholastic life: she talked about Spanglish at her final exam, connecting it with her two-week exchange in Miami, and with the information she had learned throughout her two years of courses."

Lucia acknowledged she is "beginning to understand the importance of the program right now." She is sending her application forms to various universities, and "they often respond that they are interested in people with a second diploma because they have a leg up on most candidates."

Rachele believes this experience "has widened her cultural perspective and has given her extra knowledge she will definitely find useful later on."

## Live the Learning with Sara Ella

by Maria Hornero



**On February 17th, approximately 50 students**

**enrolled in Dual Diploma English III with Teacher Lia Seirotti, had the unique opportunity of meeting with a published author: Sara Ella**

Ella is a young woman who has already published a very interesting book for teenagers and is currently working on her second one.

Her book, *Unblemished* (Harper Collins, 352 Pages), had been a project she had always wanted to write and she was very proud of the result, as she told the students during the meeting. *Unblemished* tells the story of a girl with a birth-mark that covers half of her

face who becomes a hero in a parallel world while in her own she is always hidden from others.

From her books and her personal experience, Sara wanted to tell the students about self-worth; about how we are more than our money, our social status...

It was outstanding how she spoke about the insecurities we all have and how, by the end of the



meeting, she managed to make us feel like they were small and unimportant. She encouraged us to be proud of who we really are.

She also told the students about her personal issues and her own past struggles with bullying and not feeling comfortable with herself. Even under these circumstances, she could still pursue her dream.

In conclusion, Sara Ella was an inspiring writer that taught all the students who attended the meeting that "YOU are worth it and that YOU are more than just your insecurities."

## TV and movies on teenager's behavior

by Maria Hornero

**Did you know that an average child watches nearly 12,000 violent acts on television every year?**

The impact of movies and TV on the population, especially on teenagers has been well studied because, although movies and TV shows can be very entertaining and can develop their imagination; they can also have many negative effects like an early exposure to violence, inappropriate sexuality, and/or offensive language. In conclusion, not all movies or programs are bad; but many of them can affect negatively on the way a teenager grows to see the world.

Through the years, TV and movies have proved to be a source for good deeds. A 2009 study

published by the Centre for Youth and Media Studies, University de Montreal (Canada) aimed at youth found that among shows aimed at preschoolers, nearly half focused on social relationships, while a third focused on learning, with none focusing on fighting or violence.

Thanks to TV we also get informed: the news programs and weather forecast; cultural documentaries and sports. Some programs share very important values and life lessons; the same way as they can develop critical thinking at an early age.

On the other hand, more recent studies like the one published by Active Healthy Kids Canada in 2011 have proved that the average Canadian child watches about six hours of screen time per day, with TV programs (watched on a variety of different screens) accounting for much of this time.

*Continued...*

## **This means that by the time of this kid's graduation, he would have spent more time in front of the TV than in the classroom.**

Also, one of the problems parents are now most concerned about is how TV and movies project an unrealistic body image on teenagers. In this case, we have both ends: on one hand, we have kids who spent too much time in front of the TV and become obese consequently; and on the other hand, we have celebrities' portrait as the society ideal and that can cause a teen to feel inferior; because some teens may want change their body image and put pressure to lose weight. This can be especially problematic for those who are already battling weight issues or struggling with obesity.

In other studies, we find other results that show how movies and TV shows influence on the teenager's actions. Per a May 2007 report published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, teenagers who saw the most instances of smoking in movies were nearly twice as likely to try smoking themselves when compared to teens who saw the fewest instances of smoking in movies. In a separate study published in the January 2006 issue of the Journal of Studies on Alcohol, researchers found that teens exposed to alcohol use in movies were more likely to start drinking at a young age.

The most concerning matter are the more than 1000 studies, although we can highlight one done by the University of Nebraska Press in 1992 which confirmed that exposure to

heavy doses of television violence increases aggressive behavior, particularly in boys. On a separate study published in 1988 by Gould MS, Shaffer D, Kleinman M. is shown how television or newspaper publicity of suicides is linked to an increased suicide risk.

Some of the ways movies and programs can influence on a teenager's behavior include:

Desensitizing the teen to real-world violence: there is evidence, as the study published by Montag, Christian in October 2011, that shows that a high exposure to violence can end by thinking violence is acceptable or unremarkable.

Teaching aggressive behavior and encouraging violence to solve conflict: increasing anxiety and stress by making the teen more afraid of becoming a victim of violence and making the teen less likely to report violence in school, domestic violence, or violence on the part of a boyfriend or girlfriend per the Teen Zeen Organization.

Also, Lawrence Kutner and Olson Cheryl K. explained in their book *Grand Theft Childhood: The Surprising Truth About Violent Video Games* (2008) how violent movies are shown to increase aggressive behavior.

Finally, movies and TV programs have very positive effects, and can be a great resource to learn, get informed and learn some important values. However, at the same time we need to be careful with how we analyze and apply what we have learned. We need to have a critical thinking to know what is good and what is not.



## Conflict in Syria

by Maria Fernandez

War, refugees or the Islamic state are terms that we identify with the Syrian conflict, but, are we aware of what is really happening? Do we know how it all started?

**These questions are more than frequent, however, very few people have a minimum knowledge of what is really happening in Syria and thanks to globalization, it is a war that concerns all of us.**

The conflict in Syria has been present for four and a half years already. It started with revolts against the dictatorial regime that was in charge of leading the country. These riots took place in a period called the Arab Spring in 2011, and in them, a large number of countries such as Egypt were involved in major conflicts started by citizens who became “rebels”.

Unfortunately for Syria, a wave of crime and violence led to a terrible civil war. The civil war continues today and the introduction of chemical weapons in the conflict, as well as the increasing number of deaths, prompted the intervention of the great global powers.

However, foreign intervention only aggravated the conflict when the United States supported the rebels and Russia supported the regime of Assad. And with the civil war still under way, we must point out the entry of another new component in the war, the Jihadists.

In case you do not know, the self-proclaimed Islamic state is composed of a group of terrorists who carry out atrocious crimes in the name of god to all those who do not share their religion or who they consider “unpure”. This new group has managed to expand in a minimal period of time and among its crimes we find beheadings and terrorist attacks in western cities like Paris.

That said, the Islamic state tries to conquer significant cities of Syria such as Palmyra leaving behind a seemingly infinite number of deaths.

Due to the introduction of this new component, the European powers have decided to intervene in this conflict in order to stop the increasingly numerous Islamic state.

This horrible war which still remains today has provoked one of the greatest humanitarian crisis of the 21st century, forcing the departure of thousands of emigrants from Syria. These migrants are known as “refugees”. Sadly, these refugees still do not have a stable home as the great world powers are still discussing how to make a “beneficial distribution” of so many millions of children, women and men.

The Syrian war continues, and because of the indecision over which side the United States would take with the election of the new president, the future of the war is still uncertain.

Fortunately, these days the Islamic state is losing strength in many Syrian cities, yet the war has proven to be unpredictable and cycles and changes of power are constant.



# Paris

by Maria Morant Aranda

## 83 million tourists visit Paris every year! That's impressive!

This year, I have gone to Paris and is a very wonderful town, the architecture is very beautiful and there are lots of monuments, museums, theaters, and shopping centers! If you like to travel, you must visit Paris! I'm sure you will enjoy it!

I've gathered a list of popular places and their lesser known backgrounds.

### **Tour Eiffel**

Gustave Eiffel built this iconic steel structure in 1889 for the exhibition of Paris. Few people know that it was meant to be demolished right after the exhibition. However, thanks to a lack of funding for the demolition, this monument is one of the most visited in the world!

### **Cathédrale de Notre Dam**

This is the oldest Gothic church that exists in Paris, and it is spectacular because it is surrounded by the Seine River. It sits on the Ile de la Cite.



### **Musée de Louvre**

This national museum is one of the most important museums in the world. There are lots things to see, including sculptures, pictures, art objects, and lots of antiquities. You can stay there for hours!

### **Sacré Coeur**

This is a very important religious temple which is situated at the highest part of Montmartre hill. Next to the Sacré Coeur, there is little village, Montmartre, that is famous because there are lots of painters that want to portray you!

### **l'Arc de triomphe:**

This monument was built to commemorate the victory of the "Austerlitz" battle. It is situated in the "Charles de Gaulle" square.



### **Disneyland**

In Paris, there is also the famous park of Disneyland! I think that the dream of all children in the world is go to it!

### **Observe the Architecture**

In the architecture of Paris stand out a man, Baron Von Haussmann. During the mid-1800s, he ordered the destruction of unhealthy medieval neighborhoods, the building of wide avenues, parks and squares, the annexation of the suburbs surrounding Paris, and the construction of new sewers, fountains, and aqueducts. And, finally, he was dismissed by Napoleon III.



## Mexican Art Exhibit. Frida Kahlo – Portrait of a life

by Tanja Paulmichl

### She was the wife of Diego Rivera, a friend of Trotzky, a rebel and a revolutionary.

In Bologna, her self-portraits, paintings, photographs and clothes illustrate the artist's fascinating and fateful life.



"I don't paint dreams or nightmares, I paint my own reality."

This is how Frida Kahlo defined her own nonsurrealist art of the first half of the 20th century, well received by her contemporaries. A European emigrant couple Jacques and Natasha Gelman, close friends of Frida

Kahlo and her husband, soon became admirers of their art pieces and established an own collection in 1941. These remarkable works are now open to public until March 2017 in Bologna for visitors of the exhibit "The Gelman Collection: Mexican Art of the 20th century. Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, Rufino Tamayo, María Izquierdo, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Ángel Zarraga". Then it will travel to Phoenix, Arizona.

The story of the artists Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera is told simultaneously to another intriguing account: the Mexican Renaissance. The dream of a modern Mexico was represented by world famous artists, among them, Diego Rivera. The first part of the exhibit, indeed, is dedicated to him and his manner of expression in art: Rivera intends to speak to the mass and to educate people about his communist beliefs. In his painting "The Last Hour", among the first works of the exposition, he shares this ideology after a sojourn in Paris where he met Picasso and met the revolutionary and artist Amadeo Modigliani. As showed next, his wife Frida confided in the same ideals. They shared in a controversial political identity.

In fact, the second section of the exhibit further explains her own position in and view of society.



Since Frida Kahlo was a little child, she was concerned with art as her father was a photographer. Her talent combined with her experiences, both pleasant and painful ones, is what makes her art so unique.

"I have experienced two serious accidents in my life ... the first was the tram crash and the second Diego", she wrote in her diary. In her art, all of her personal tragedies

as well as her deepest beliefs can find place. Like her husband, Kahlo was a sympathizer of a communist-oriented society, a position she clearly explicated in some of her works. The exposition highlights some of these aspects: her particular and difficult relationship with Diego, the influence of social and political circumstances on her art and the role of medicine in her life. Frida Kahlo, indeed, defined herself as a "biologist and naturalist", a subject important to her as fate condemned her to be a chronic patient. Therefore, a great part of her art pieces revolves around the study of body, which she analyzed, according to her husband, with the "precision of an anatomical pathologist".

Her own body is a crucial theme of her art: one third of her works are self-portraits. In countless photographs and paintings, she represents herself with beautiful hairdos, special jewelry, animals or plants and with her singular clothes. These inspired, as shown at the end of the exhibit, modern designers such as Antonio Marras, Gianfranco Ferrè and Valentino. Frida Kahlo is present more than ever. For the moment her life fascinates Bologna.





# Real Madrid

by Jaime de Andres Lerma

## REAL MADRID BASKETBALL TEAM:

### “A club made of people and not of stars”

#### A BIT OF HISTORY:

Invented by Canadian-born James Naismith in 1891, basketball took three decades to make its way to Spain. In the late 1920s and as a result of the sport's growing popularity, Ángel Cabrera proposed that the Real Madrid Club create its own basketball team. This team would be decisive in making basketball such a popular sport in Spain. On March 8, 1931, an advertisement was placed in the daily newspaper, ABC, which said the following: “Men who are interested in practicing this sport are kindly asked to visit the club secretary, Caballero de Gracia 15, to receive further instructions”.

This was the birth of a legendary team, a group of friends who met to practice its favorite sport, basketball.

90 years later, the Real Madrid Basketball team has become one of the most important teams in Europe with 9 European Cups, 33 Spanish Leagues, 26 Royal Cups, and more in its list of achievements. But good sportsmanship has always been the essence of their success, on and off the court. The players are very active in community service, exemplifying a core belief: give others the same opportunity you have been given.

#### RUDY FERNANDEZ FOUNDATION:

Rudy Fernández, Real Madrid's small forward, is the best example of these kind people we've talked about. The foundation's web page hails Rudy Fernández as “an illusion and collaboration project.” One of its projects is the Basketball BSR project, designed to let disabled people play basketball, not only in a familiar ambience but in an official way like the normal basketball league.

#### OTHER FOUNDATIONS:

This is just an example of this Great Spirit, other important players, such as Sergio Llull or Felipe Reyes, also collaborate with other foundations as The Real Madrid Foundation and One Euro league Team program joined Foundation students to spend a day with their idols, and play and train with the first team of basketball players. These foundations have different names, different projects, different volunteers but the same objective: **make others' dreams come true.**

If you want to learn more about these foundations and become involved through events or donations you must consult this websites:

<http://www.realmadrid.com/sobre-el-real-madrid/fundacion/como-colaborar>

<https://www.facebook.com/ONG-Apadrina-un-Rebote-1053382141405322/>

<http://www.fundacionrudyfernandez.org>

<http://www.one1team.org/>

## Personal opinion on learning languages

by Anna Berenguer Mateo



Finding us in a moment where being well-educated and being the smartest in everything continues feeding the public debate, we add to the debate the diverse opinions about languages and everything that surrounds them. Is it better for the children to learn more than one language?

In my humble opinion, for I'm no expert, I totally believe in languages and their extreme power. Several studies show that children who start at a very young age to learn other languages increase their expression and inter/intrapersonal skills, which is very important for a good mental development. Besides, studies made by Harvard University confirm that learning languages increases critical thinking skills, creativity and flexibility of the mind. These studies also prove that foreign languages aren't just a linguistic activity but a cognitive one, for the pupils are also better in verbal and math test. In addition, memory is very important to the current educational system, and learning vocabulary and rules from different languages helps strengthen the brain and thus, memory. So we can agree on the fact that languages are indeed important to study and not just math and science. Plus, children who learn languages from a very young age (because their parents are from another country, they make extracurricular language learning or just because at school they teach another language) gain more empathy and curiosity towards external cultures and will be more prepared for the future, academically and personally.

But when should we start learning other languages? There's obviously not an age in which you have to start learning more languages, but of course, the sooner the better! Considerable experts have determined that the best age to start this practice is at the age of 3! So, as we've said before, it's really important. At this age, kids don't have any embarrassment or fear for their acts, so they'll be less self-conscious about learning a new language and will be more receptive. But this doesn't mean that we can't learn another one when we're older! This stimulation is energy for the brain; we make it stronger and smarter.

### I'm keen on learning new languages whenever we can

Language is present in our everyday lives and it's extremely important, so from the chair where I'm sitting right now, I encourage you to learn new languages to gain not only self-confidence but to have new experiences, friends and have lots of fun!

## My Trimester in Ireland

by Claudia Mateos



I wanted to practice my English, so I decided to do it in Ireland. And I have no regrets. At first I expected Ireland to be similar to the UK. But I was so wrong!

Ireland is a beautiful country; that's the main conclusion I draw from my completed

journey. I was scared, but my parents told me to embrace the experience, and so I tried to do that.

Now I know that these types of "adventures" are so good for you. You can learn and grow a lot of them. Is so interesting how the lifestyles are so different from one country to another. In only three months I have met incredible people and I have done lots of things. It has been only a little time, but has meant a lot to me.

### I went to Ireland from September to December of 2016

I didn't go to Dublin like most people do, I went to Galway, another town and province, with so much beauty and color. I stayed with a host family, like the other exchange student friends that I made. The routine of my day was like in Spain. I went to school, I did things with my family, and I even hung out with friends.

In my Irish school, I was in a "Transition Year", but everybody calls it TY. It's a year that is not mandatory to do. I would describe it as an experimental year of discovery and non-stress. We used to do at least 2 trips per week.

I also met lot of people, most of them students from other countries too. German, Polish, Finnish, Croatian, English, Romanian... Only three Irish people were in our class, so imagine how many people go there to learn English!

I lived my normal life, but all the while discovering; everything was new so that's why I liked it. Going on trips with the school, meeting new people all the time and having fun learning.

Travelling is knowledge, and don't miss the chance.

# The Lasting Effect of Harry Potter's Magic: Eliminate Prejudices.

by Gaia Ugolini

Reading the Harry Potter books can decrease prejudices in children and in adolescents, according to an Italian study conducted by Modena and Reggio Emilia University in 2014. The objective of this work was to understand if the reading of these books can improve the attitude towards people often discriminated, like immigrants, homosexuals or refugees. The research was carried out on elementary, high school, and college students in Italy and the United Kingdom.

In the first part of the study, 34 Italian fifth graders filled out a questionnaire about their attitude toward immigrants. Then, after reading sections from Harry Potter books that had to do with prejudice, the students answered the questionnaire again and showed increased empathy toward immigrants—especially if they also identified with the main character, Harry Potter himself. In the second part of the study, the attitudes of older college students in England were examined and the researchers found that reading Harry Potter books had reduced prejudice toward refugees.

In an interview, author Dr. Loris Vezzali, a professor at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, said: "Harry Potter empathizes with characters from stigmatized categories, tries to understand their sufferings and to act towards social equality. So, I and my colleagues think that empathic feelings are the key factor driving prejudice reduction.

The world of Harry Potter is characterized by strict social hierarchies and resulting prejudices, with obvious parallels with our society."

In fact, in the Harry Potter books there are different groups like "muggles," who are outcasts in the world of wizards because they haven't got any magical ability, the "mudbloods," who are wizards and witches whose ancestors aren't from a "pure" bloodline of wizardry. Then there is the figure of a dictator, Voldemort, who wants to eliminate "mudbloods" because they're not pure-bloods. The researchers point out that there is an analogy between Lord Voldemort and Adolf Hitler.

The Harry Potter series represents our daily life and our society. In this way children can understand how racism and other forms of discrimination; through fiction, they can recognize reality.

## Sparks of Happiness

by Sònia Monfort

*The truth is that, after all,*

*we're not just animals learning how to  
crawl,*

*we're made of moments and memories,  
which seem to claim: "remember me".*

*The emotion of diving deep into the  
ocean,*

*staring silently at the stars from the  
back of cars,*

*when you stand with your toes in the  
sand,*

*or when you drive and think about the  
feelings you hide.*

*The taste of the unknown when you're  
far away from home,*

*feeling the rain falling on your face  
again and again,*

*or running through the nature being  
completely immature.*

*The best memories come from those  
who erase your miseries,*

*the delicious smell of the ones who  
know you well,*

*and that maternal gaze that should be  
sempiternal.*



## Maze

by Aitana Ramos

All of them are in that outstandingly long queue, waiting in the corridor of the dark red walls. Everyone is talking and laughing in groups except her. However, that doesn't bother her, as she is mentally preparing herself for the things she'll encounter inside that maze. She's not scared, but needs to gain some more self-confidence in order to face whatever comes her way.

### Finally, her turn has arrived

A very shiny white light is coming out of the door which intensifies as she opens it. She stares three seconds at the light and mentally says "goodbye" to the rest of the world.

She is now in a house, a really weird one. Walls are placed randomly in all the space available, which seems not to have an end. The walls are painted in different colors depending on the area. The decoration doesn't follow any concrete style, it just looks like a lot of old paintings and stuff placed without any criteria. She takes a deep breath and begins walking around. It is not until a quarter of an hour later that she realizes the rooms are changing every time she gets out of them. Later on, she begins finding other classmates in the house, mostly groups, and some of them her friends. However, all of them end up going into another room and disappearing, despite her telling them repeatedly not to go there.

Sometimes, there are places where the background gets darker and creepier, but she still manages to stay calm, going straight ahead and keeping her mind empty... until she arrives to a point between four rooms. She realizes she still hasn't seen any horrific creature, as she expected. She had also expected some mysterious noises, seeing dark shadows, objects moving, hearing children singing... The lack of noise was, in fact, the strangest thing. There wasn't

a single sound in there. It was almost as if the air wasn't even moving. Her head began to hurt a lot, so she took a minute to calm down. It was in that moment that her brain decided to continue its thought: She hadn't seen any ghosts, hadn't noticed any electricity fails or had not seen any horrific clowns... at least not like the one who was standing right in front of her.

She woke up on the cold and hard floor, in the exact same place. It only took her a few seconds to realize that she had fallen unconscious. As she kept on walking, more things like that started to happen, and despite knowing they were in her mind, it was still difficult for her to control her shaking hands and the sudden headaches. She kept going forward, telling herself she had no reason to be afraid, that she was strong and nothing could affect her. When she experienced another terrible silence, she began to lose control of herself. Not only her hands, but her body began to shake without control. Some time later, sweat was suffocating her, tears didn't allow her to see and her thoughts were torturing her. She still wanted to get to the end, no matter what, but she just could not. Finally, the anxiety became so unbearable she thought she was going to die right there. Suddenly, she remembered how she had agreed to come to that virtual reality horror simulation, so confident and happy that she would overcome the challenge and stop regarding herself as a coward. That was when a part of her realized that she came first before the maze. She wanted to get to the end, but, above all, staying alive was the most important thing. Rage began growing inside her, and gave her more energy. She wasn't going to give up that easily. She would get out of there one way or another. After charging bravely against the wall twice, it broke as if it was made up of cardboard. Outside, there was darkness and fresh air. She got away from there as fast as she could, feeling the breeze and the tears in her face. She was free.



## Talking about the future: Graphene

by Borja Medina de las Heras

### Scientists predict that newly discovered graphene may have a lot of use in the future because of its diverse properties

It is flexible and transparent. Its electric and thermal conductivity is very high. While it is light, it is more resistant than a diamond. It may be used in many fields, such as computing, medicine, electronics and mechanics.

Graphene is a derivative of graphite. In 2004, two professors from Manchester University, Andre Geim and Konstantin Kostya Novoselov, began experiments on the remains that stayed glued to the cell tape when trying to extract the purest graphite. For the first time, they discovered how to separate one atom thick graphene particles from graphite.

Since then, Graphene's properties have been found to be highly adaptable to most forms one can think of molding into. It can also generate electricity from solar energy. So how can its versatile properties be adapted for every day use? Researchers are developing ways to use Graphene that may allow you to charge the battery of your phone in only 5 minutes, manufacture transparent and flexible screens and make superefficient car batteries. Graphene may revolutionize photovoltaic power.

In medicine, graphene may lead to the development of better treatments for cancer, which may have less secondary effects than the existing treatments. It may even be possible to prevent some diseases thanks to a sensor made of graphene that would enter your blood vessels and send information to doctors in real time.

So why aren't we using graphene in a more massive way? Well it's very simple: because the graphene has to be of a very pure quality to conserve all of these attributes. The commercialization of graphene has caused it to be very expensive. Before we see the proliferation of graphene and enjoy its benefits, there must first exist a way to produce it much cheaper without losing its.

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