

The Swaminarayan

EDUCATION IS THAT WHICH LIBERATES

Dear Parents, Guardians, Pupils and Friends,

Theme for next week

The theme for next week is “**The Value of Respect.**” I have written about it in the newsletter. I hope you find it of interest.

Prize Day: 25th November 2016

Parents and guardians are reminded about the Senior School Prize Day to take place on **Friday, 25th November 2016 in the front part of the Mandir Haveli at 6.30 pm.** All the GCSE and A Levels certificates have arrived, shields are being prepared to be awarded on the day. The dress code is formal Indian. The evening will be followed by a delicious meal at the end. Everyone is requested to be seated in the Haveli by 6.45 pm. Parents and guardians should also note that as it is usual for any school prize day, we will have a half day. Pupils should be picked up at 12.55 pm.

GCSE DRAMA - *Mr Benny writes....*

Herewith the remaining schedule for S5 actors' GCSE rehearsals and examined performance:

Friday 25 Nov (Prize Day): 1.30 – 2.30pm

Tuesday 29 Nov: 4pm to 5 or 6pm

Thursday 1st Dec (if required): 4pm to 5 or 6pm

Friday 2nd Dec (Payal, Adithya, Rhea): 4pm to 5 or 6pm

SUNDAY 4 DEC: 10am to 2-4pm (subject to progress)

Monday 5th Dec TECH & DRESS REHEARSAL : Periods 1 to 6 incl.

Tuesday 6th Dec: EXAMINED PERFORMANCE : Periods 1 to 4 (Audience : S4 and S3 actors)

Oxbridge Interviews

As we finalise the last of the University Applications, many of our students who had applied for competitive places at Oxbridge are starting to receive interview dates. While we will prepare them through mock interviews and support, I thought it might useful for the younger students to learn about the type of questions asked at interviews. Over the course of the next few weeks, I will explore some questions that are asked for several subjects. Today, some questions to enlighten the Humanities applicants.

Geography at St. Hilda's College

If I were to visit the area where you live, what would I be interested in?

The question gives candidates an opportunity to apply concepts from their A level geography course to their home area. They might discuss urban planning and regeneration, ethnic segregation and migration, or issues of environmental management. The question probes whether they are able to apply 'geographical thinking' to the everyday landscapes around them. It reveals the extent to which they have a curiosity about the world around them. By asking specifically about their home area the question eliminates any advantage gained by those who are more widely travelled and have more experience of a variety of geographical contexts.

History Interview at Oriel College

What would a historian find interesting about the place where you live?

We use this question to open a discussion that could go in a number of different directions. We want to encourage candidates to talk about a subject on which they know something, but where probing questions can lead them to look at what they know in a new and revealing light. It was very common for candidates to say that nothing interesting ever happens where they live, but this was a chance for the interviewers to encourage them to reflect on what we mean by historical significance, and why some places seem unremarkable in those terms. It also allowed us to hear candidates describe things like a town in decline, unusual street names, or pride in local sports teams, and then to ask them what questions a historian should ask in order to set these in context. It's also a good question because it allows us to steer candidates away from prepared scripts (which are always a waste of time), and for us to see evidence of some of the instincts and skills that are really important in good History students: observation, noticing the unusual, being interested in the world around them, a questioning attitude, and the ability to see things from new angles.

Is violence always political? Does 'political' mean something different in different contexts?

This pair of questions allows the interviewer to deal with historical material from any period the candidate is studying or knows about from more general reading. It could also be answered extremely well from contemporary or current affairs knowledge. The aim of the question is to get the candidate to challenge some received notions about what constitutes politics, and to think about how political history might be studied away from the usual kings, parliaments etc. A good candidate would, with assistance, begin to construct categories of when violence looks more and less political. A very good candidate would, with assistance, begin to construct a useful definition of 'political', but this is challenging. The main aim would not be to solve these problems, but to use them to find some new interest in a subject that the candidate already knows something about.

Interviewer: Stephen Tuck, Pembroke College

Imagine we had no records about the past at all, except everything to do with sport – how much of the past could we find out about?

I would say this to a candidate who had mentioned an interest in sport on their personal statement, though it could equally be applied to an interest in something else – like film, drama, or music. What I would be looking for is to see how the candidate might use their imagination, building on something they know about (probably much more than I do) to tackle questions of historical research.

Answers could relate to the racial/class/gender relations in society (who played the sports, and which sports, at any given time); international politics/empire (which countries were involved, did groups of countries play the same sport); economic development (the technological development of sports, how sport was watched); the values within a society (bloodthirsty sports to more genteel sports); health (participation rates); or many other issues – the list is long. I would usually ask supplementary questions, to push the students further – and often, I would have no answer in my mind, but would simply be interested in seeing how far the student could push their analysis.

Which person (or sort of person) in the past would you most like to interview, and why?

Candidates know that this is not a right/wrong type question. The question is not so much about which person the candidate wants to meet, but what sort of issues the candidate wants to find out about (which can be quite revealing) and then working out the best way to do so. 'Meeting' Elizabeth I or Winston Churchill might be exciting, but if the candidate wants to find out about, say, their leadership style, they might be better off asking questions of a courtier or member of the war cabinet. Or if they wanted to find out what we don't know about any given period, they might want to interview people who didn't leave any written records. Sometimes we might encourage the candidate to think through whether the person they selected would be willing or able to reveal the information they sought (and we allow plenty of time for the candidate to change the issue they want to find out about, and reconsider their choice of person).

The value of respect

Think

The most important relationship you will form is with yourself. You have to live with who you are and what you are, where you come from and where you are going. If you fail to develop this deep connection with yourself you will never respect yourself. In order to become a good and worthy citizen of your community or your country, you must understand all the goodness within you and all the changes you need to make in your life. When you respect yourself, you will also respect others.

Feel

I have always found that when I approach people with respect I can get them to do almost anything I want them to do. Approach your friends with respect, asking them to help you to do something, and observe their reaction. You will see that respecting what other people are without being judgemental enables them to see your own inner goodness and immediately makes them more receptive to anything you say. You will not always agree with people but that doesn't give you the right to be disrespectful to them. These days when people don't get what they want, they riot, vandalise property and start fights. It is a quick road to ruin. Approaching everyone with respect wins you many allies that you will inevitably need in your own march through life. Respect is the first step of that long march.

Do

Approach your teachers with respect and you will see that they will help you with any problem you have, even going as far as giving up their break and lunch times. If they are busy they will give you a time when you can go and see them. The same is true for friends, family and anyone else you meet on the street. Everyone wants to be treated with respect, to be told that they are important and that their contribution is valuable.

Yours sincerely,

Nilesh Manani