
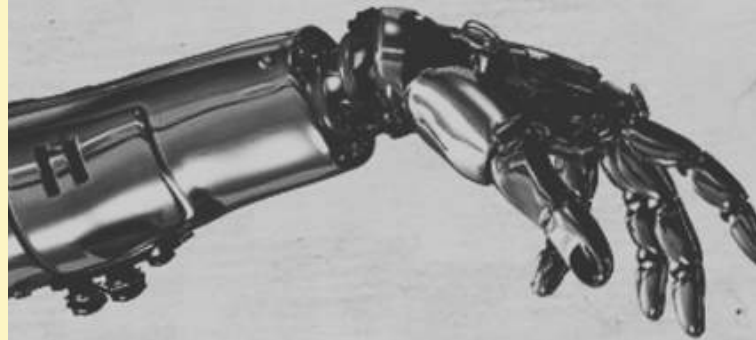


# School Almere Insights

 @isalmereinsights

Theme:  
*Perspectives on Society:  
Creativity & Curiosity*

July 2025 Edition



## **DISCOVER:**

*Anomalies of the  
Periodic Table... p25-27*

*Book Recommendations...  
p6-8*

*Common Myths  
Debunked... 15-16*



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# Isalmere Insights

# Isalmere Insights

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# ISAlmere Insights

## *Notes from the Editors*



Ridima Niranjana  
Founder & Co-Editor-  
in-Chief

Hey everyone! My name is Ridima Niranjana and I'm honoured to be the Co-Editor-in-Chief of ISAlmere Insights. A little introduction of myself - I'm a DP1 student at ISAlmere aspiring to become an International lawyer, I have lived in 6 countries, and my biggest hobbies lie in art and reading. Ever since I picked up my first issue of *Foreign Affairs* almost 4 years ago, founding my own magazine has always been a dream - a dream I have been able to realise through ISAlmere Insights.

In 2025, where information is increasingly abundant yet truth is harder to find, the relevance of meaningful journalism has never been higher. We, the students of the International School Almere, have both the fortune of being in a community that has an extremely diverse array of voices, alongside the privilege of being able to use them. We started this magazine to give an opportunity to the students of ISAlmere to share their passions, stories, and messages - an opportunity the lovely writers of our magazine have taken to create incredible articles on a vast number of topics!

Since the day Haya and I had the idea to create ISAlmere Insights, we have spent countless hours on the drawing board drafting proposals, proofreading articles, designing promotion content, and overall making this magazine happen. Our second issue of ISAlmere Insights features topics ranging from politics to science, and we hope that you enjoy your read of the second edition of ISAlmere Insights!



Haya Tamer  
Founder & Co-Editor-  
in-Chief

The role of founder and co-editor-in-chief of ISAlmere Insights is more than just a leadership title for me; it's a significant role and a commitment to emphasize our student voices and opinions.

Let me introduce myself: My name is Haya Tamer, and I am a DP1 student at the International School of Almere. And throughout my life, traveling and exploring various cultures and people, I have come to understand the power of knowledge when shared and the power of opinions and ideas. I believe a school magazine should reflect the diversity of thought and personal experiences within our community.

ISAlmere Insights began as a small vision I carried when I looked up to the older students who led the magazine club in my previous school. I was inspired by the gaps I saw in student media and the misinformation that spreads among us, as AI spreads rapidly. And today, with Ridima by my side, the quiet idea found its voice.

As we are wrapping up another school year and heading into summer, I'm proud to present to you the latest edition of ISAlmere Insights, where the students of the international school Almere represent their diverse and curious minds. Every article in this edition shows the diversity in this school. We didn't assign any topics or set any boundaries; instead, we gave them full freedom to explore what they are passionate about.

We hope that this edition makes you think, question, reflect, and, most importantly, have fun, whether you'll stay at home or go on holiday. Take a moment to appreciate the voices of our team, who have put in monumental effort to present to you ISAlmere insights.

Enjoy your read, and stay tuned for your next edition!



## *How Spaces Influence Feelings*

**Have you ever walked into a room and immediately felt calm, or anxious, without knowing why? It's not magic. It's design.**

The spaces we spend time in, our bedrooms, parks, even our classrooms can seriously affect how we feel, think, and behave. From the colors on the walls to the way furniture is placed, every little detail can change our mood.

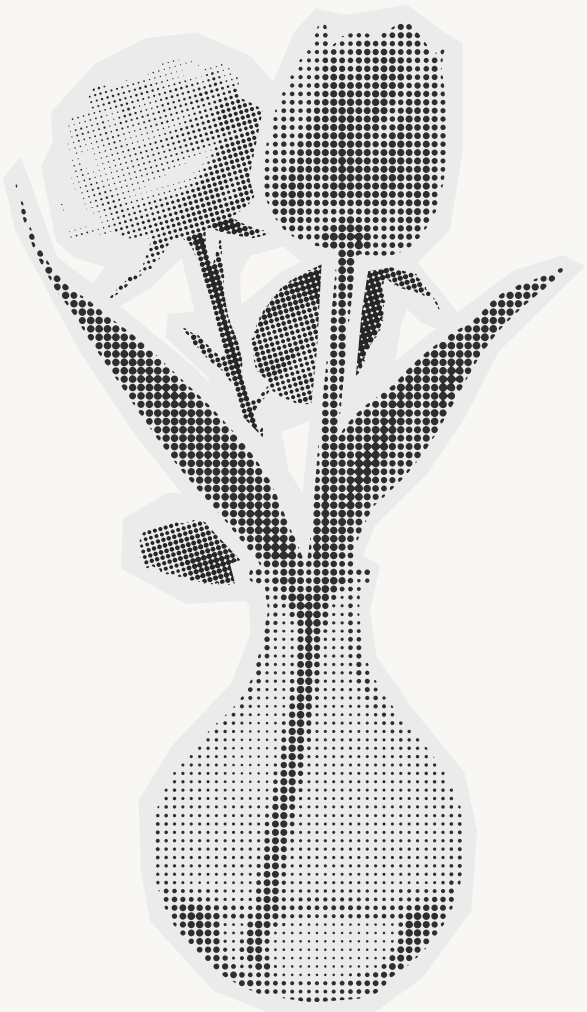


### **Color plays a huge role in how we feel.**

Blues and greens are often calming and connected to nature, while reds and oranges are energizing or even stressful if overused. That's why hospitals often use light blue or pale green walls, and fast food restaurants go for bold reds and yellows to speed up decision-making and eating. According to color psychology experts, "cooler hues tend to be calming, while warmer ones can stimulate energy and excitement" (Cherry). So, next time you feel oddly relaxed in a spa or tense in a neon-lit store, pay attention to the colors.

### **Natural light improves our mood and helps regulate our body's clock.**

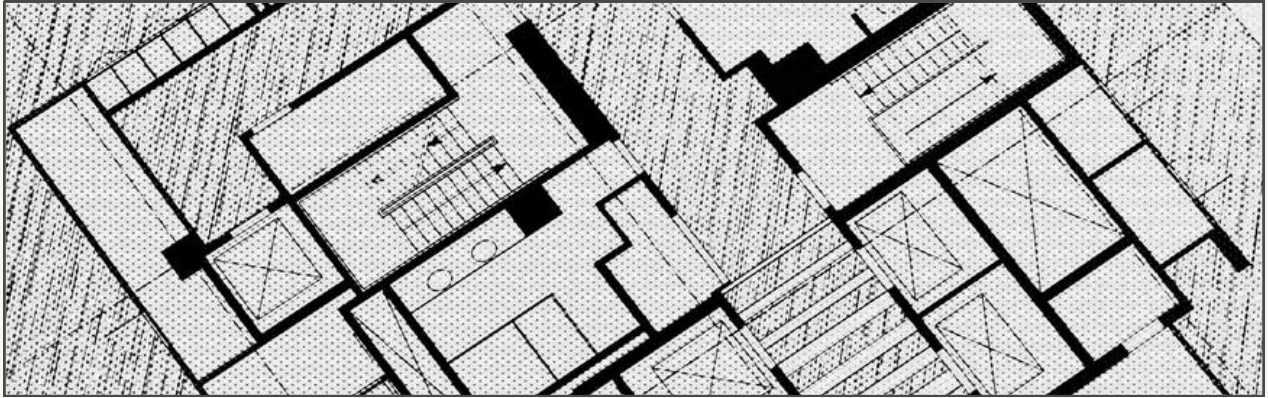
Too little light, especially in winter, can even lead to (Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)) a type of depression. A well-lit space isn't just easier to read in, it can actually make you happier. One study found that students performed better and reported more positive moods in classrooms with better daylighting (Kuller and Lindsten). Architects now design buildings with skylights and large windows not just for style, but for mental health.



# Isalmere Insights

ELIF MINEL BOLUKBASI

THE EFFECT OF INTERIOR DESIGN



**The layout and clutter level of a room can make us feel peaceful or overwhelmed.**

Wide, open spaces can help people breathe easier, literally and emotionally. Cluttered environments, on the other hand, are linked with higher cortisol (stress hormone) levels. Interior design experts explain that organized environments help us feel in control, while disorganized ones can cause anxiety.

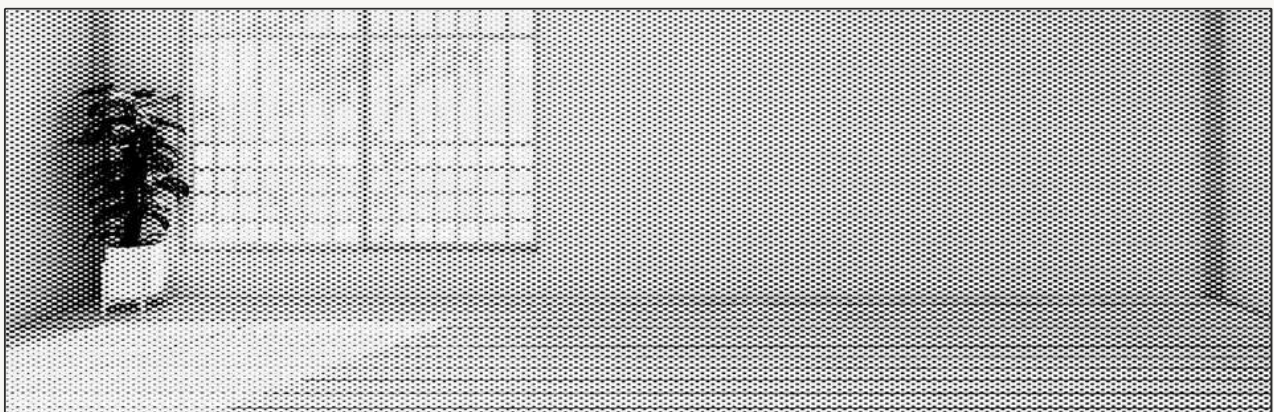
**There is also the forgotten factors like sound and smell.**

Though we don't think about them as much, background noise and scent also affect our feelings in a space. A cozy café playing calm jazz feels different from a school hallway with slamming lockers. Pleasant smells like lavender or cinnamon can reduce anxiety, while harsh smells (like bleach or synthetic perfumes) might create discomfort.



**So, why does it all matter?**

If your room feels "off" or your study space makes it hard to focus, try changing it. Move your desk near a window. Add a plant. Choose calmer colors for your walls or screensavers. These small changes can have a big emotional payoff. The bottom line? Spaces aren't just where we live, they shape how we live.





## Why Populism Works - Even when It shouldn't

Let's start with what populism actually is, Populism is like a political term that focuses on the idea of the people and often sees them as different from, or even opposed to, the "elite" or powerful people. It's like saying, "Us" (the regular people) against "Them" (the powerful and rich). Populist politicians often claim to understand and represent the common person, sometimes promising to fight for them against the people in charge.

Populism is everywhere right now. From Donald Trump in the US to Marine Le Pen in France and the AfD in Germany, more people are voting for leaders who promise simple answers to complicated problems. Even when these answers don't work or go against basic human rights, they still win support. So the question is, why?



The first reason is that populist leaders speak in a way people understand. They don't use political jargon or long explanations. They talk about real fears like jobs disappearing, immigration, or feeling ignored by those in power. Even if their facts are wrong, their message feels personal. It sounds like they're finally listening.

Populism also creates an "us vs them" feeling. It gives people someone to blame, like elites, immigrants, or global institutions. When life feels unfair or uncertain, that kind of blame feels good. It offers control in a world that often feels chaotic. Instead of saying "the system is complex", populists say "the system is broken and it's their fault".

### But, Why Does It Work?



Social media helps too. Populist messages are short and easy to spread. They fit perfectly into angry tweets or videos. Meanwhile, experts and fact-checkers often sound boring or too slow to keep up and this also doesn't appeal to a younger audience or generation which is now able to vote.

But the problem with populism is that it promises too much and delivers too little. Real issues like climate change, inequality, or healthcare can't be solved with quick fixes. Populism can weaken democracy by ignoring facts, attacking the press, or turning people against each other.

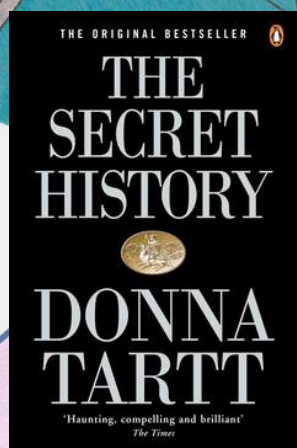
Still, it works because it speaks to how people feel, not just what they know. And until mainstream politics does a better job of connecting with people, populism isn't going anywhere.



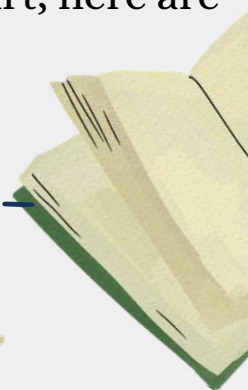
# Isalmere Insights Book Recommendations

*Ridima Niranjana*

Human societies are marked by our differences - different cultures, languages, customs, experiences, interests, histories, and more. Literature, however, transcends these differences. For hundreds of years we have been creating novels that demonstrate our ideas and experiences, and because of that we are able to expand our own knowledge to beyond just our personal experiences. A good book has the ability not just to entertain, but also to make you think. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of incredible books written by authors across time and space - each just as valuable as the other. We live in times haunted by the addictive spectre of social media, that has reduced our attention spans and curiosity and is slowly killing the literacy of our generation. Irrespective of your interests and level of bibliophilia - I firmly believe there is a book out there for everyone. To give a start, here are five books I believe you should add to your reading list!



## 1. *The Secret History* Donna Tartt



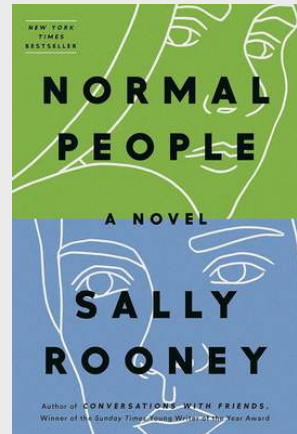
Starting off with my favourite novel of all time - Donna Tartt's masterpiece debut novel *The Secret History*. The book follows the protagonist Richard Papen, who joins a group of Classics students who become entangled in moral ambiguities and murder in an atmospheric Vermont college. Featuring an unreliable narrator, poetic language, and an ensemble of unforgettable characters - *The Secret History* is a truly beautiful and gripping novel you won't be able to set down.



# Isalmere Insights

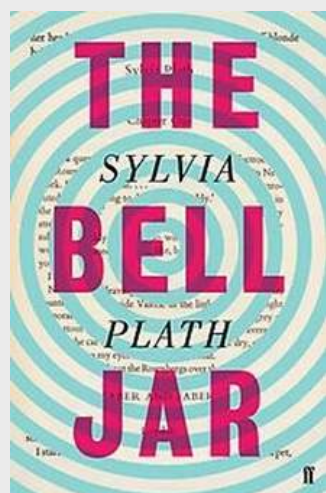
## 2. Normal People - Sally Rooney

Deviating away from Dark Academia and into romantic fiction, Sally Rooney's *Normal People* journeys Marianne and Connell's evolving relationship from school to university. Rooney's distinctive writing style crafts a realistic portrayal of love and personal growth through poignant characterisation and subtle exploration of societal themes like class. Now also a hit TV show, *Normal People* is an absolute must-read.



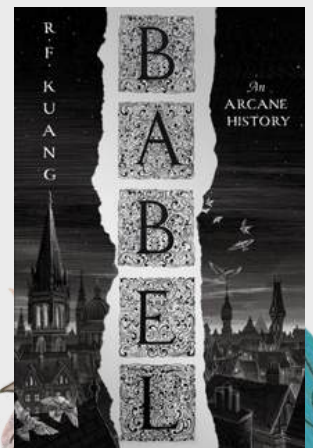
## 3. The Bell Jar - Sylvia Plath

A semi-autobiographical novel and a modern classic, *The Bell Jar* circles the life of Esther Greenwood - a talented young woman who's life begins to unravel due to her descent into mental illness. The novel paints a portrait of what it meant to be a woman in 1950s America, and explores themes of identity and depression.



## 4. Babel - R.F. Kuang

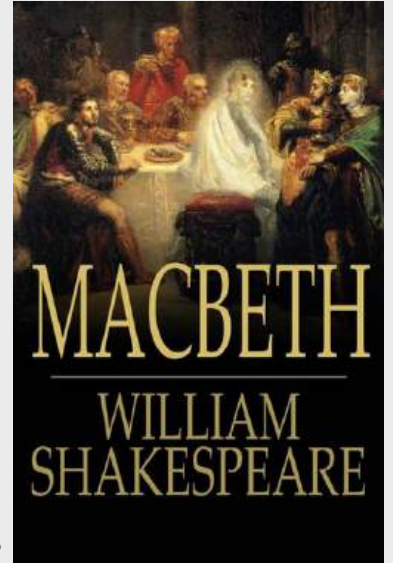
The most recent of my recommendations, *Babel* by R.F. Kuang is a dark-academia fantasy that has gripped the literary world since its release in 2022. The historical fantasy is set in an alternative 19th century Oxford in a universe where the British Empire is powered by translation magic. The novel explores themes of colonialism and the power of language in a writing style and setting unlike any other.



# Isalmere Insights

## 5. Macbeth - William Shakespeare

Shakespeare is one of those authors who's greatness is objectively undeniable, no matter how much we try to procrastinate actually reading them. Macbeth is a tragedy about the Scottish Lord Macbeth - whose ambition (accompanied by some magical intervention) leads to his spectacular downfall. Dramatic and gripping, Macbeth has captured readers since the 1600s - and for good reason!



These are only 5 books out of the hundreds I could recommend, but they are five books I think everybody should read due to how uniquely captivating they each are. Reading is a hobby I think everyone should have, and books that capture the stories and perspectives of diverse time-periods and groups elevate your broader worldviews immensely. I hope you enjoy these recommendations -

*Happy Reading!*



# Isalmere Insights

## SOCIAL MEDIA - A LOUDSPEAKER FOR THE VOICES OF WOMEN?

Piyumi Wickramatunge



Social media has been a constant in everyone's day to day life constantly evolving and serving a purpose to society as a whole. Initially used to connect with people but later on morphing into a place where women can share their experiences, stories and challenges that magnify their representation, by providing a platform for diverse female voices it can change how people view experiences, and even change the stereotypical expectations women are held to, giving visibility to a more united understanding of female empowerment. But however there's two sides to the coin, in over one year more than a million instagram posts included the hashtag #feminism but as feminism is trending online and is given so much attention real life policies that affect women's rights are constantly turned a blind eye on. So while we see both the positive and the negative sides of this story we are left with a question: has social media used feminism as a marketable opportunity? In this article we explore how feminism has been embraced but at times exploited by organisations.

Feminism is a quite frequently used term on social media nowadays, with the help of social media voices of women that would have gone unheard were given the recognition they deserve. With social media being a stage where women can voice their constant struggles it has been easier for women's rights activists to tackle issues on this path towards justice and equality. There have been many movements where women were encouraged to take a stand against the inequality and the injustices that were done against them, such as the me to movement.(UN Women) Tarana Burke established the #MeToo movement to create a public space where women can come together to talk about each other's similar experiences in a place that is safe and without judgement,(UN Women) and over time this movement was recognised globally. With time results were shown where the wrongdoers faced justice. Eventually there were so many movements such as the HeForShe movement and the TimesUp campaign that revolutionised the world, (LiveYourDream.org) challenging the stereotypical expectations and giving women from different places an opportunity to speak up.



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As always there's is another narrative which is well quite different, beside the amazing advantages social media presented everyone with it also has a quite dark side that could make it a toxic environment and even though it allows different voices to be heard it contains a lot of hostility when it comes to women challenging a lot of stereotypical ideologies.(Caldeira) Social media can also use feminism as a marketable opportunity where it can turn strong movements that help individuals to be seen or heard into some negligible trend. Feminism is a very popular trend on social media and while it helps to spread awareness about the injustices done against women however making it a popular topic haven't made it change the real life issues, women's rights are still facing issues being implemented and even through it is a well used term no one takes it to be a pressing matter because again feminism is decreased to something trivial as a trend or a marketable opportunity.Social media platforms fail to provide a place where women are not discriminated against or shunned for their beliefs and wants, after all isn't that what feminism is about letting women have a choice?

This not only about women's rights and how they are facing discrimination it is about human rights where everyone is allowed to live a life free of violence, discrimination online or offline, so at the end of the day even though it is something that benefits women to show their individuality and the person they are and what they believe in there's also a part where they are talked bad about, portraying unrealistic images and standards where women are supposed to be held to. But with more time and understanding and supportive communities social media can be turned into a more empowering space, filled with the main idea of feminism that is choice.





## HATSHEPSUT

BY HAYA OMAR



Hatshepsut, the first female pharaoh in the history of ancient Egypt and the 5<sup>th</sup> pharaoh of the eighteenth dynasty, is one of the most fascinating female figures in history. While names like Cleopatra are instantly recognised, Hatshepsut remains a mystery to many. In fact, most people today still struggle to pronounce her name (it's Hat-shep-soot!). try it now!

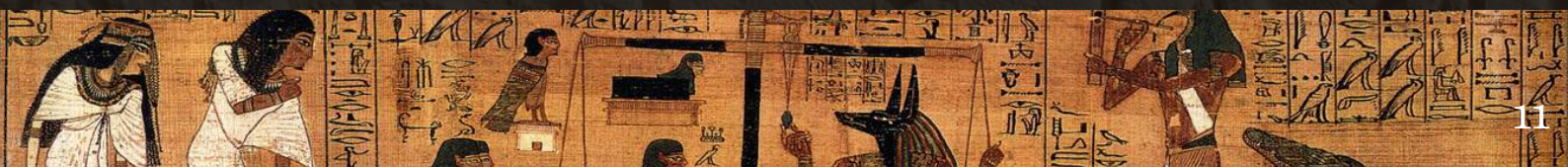
But who was she?

Hatshepsut was the daughter of Pharaoh Thutmose I and his wife, Ahmose. She married Thutmose II, but he fell ill, and his heir was too young to rule, so she stepped in as regent.

She lived in a male-dominated society. And now she needed to legitimize her rule. She used powerful religious and political strategies. She has claimed to be the daughter of the god "Amun" and that the god has chosen her to be queen. She also depicted herself wearing a traditional male pharaoh's kilt, royal crown, and even a false beard. She was also referred to with male pronouns in official inscriptions. Everyone knew she was a woman, but it was a symbol of power in a male-dominated society.

Hatshepsut's reign was a very peaceful and prosperous reign. Unlike many pharaohs known for their military campaigns, like Cleopatra and other pharaohs, she focused on the economic growth of the nation, religious development, and agricultural achievements. One of her greatest expeditions was to the land of Punt (the land of Punt was a region in Africa, most likely Somalia) (Mark Punt). She sent ships with gifts for the other kingdoms, returning back to Egypt with gold, ivory, ebony, baboons, and incense trees, which heavily enhanced Egypt's economic and diplomatic relations at the time. The expedition carved out the walls of her magnificent mortuary at Deir el-Bahri, near Luxor.

Speaking of monuments, Hatshepsut was a master builder. She launched one of the greatest construction projects not just as a female pharaoh but in Egypt's history. Her most famous one that people from all over the world go to visit is at Deir el-Bahri; this temple honors the gods and glorifies her reign. She also had built other monuments, but several have been damaged during foreign invasions, such as obelisks transformed into temples in Karnak.





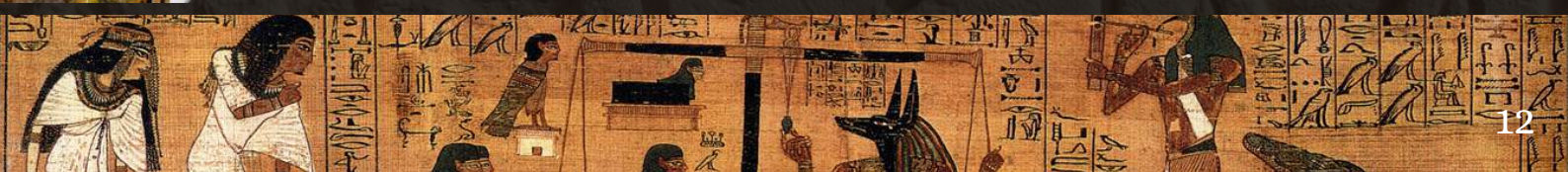
## HATSHEPSUT

BY HAYA OMAR

When most people think of Egyptian female pharaohs, Cleopatra is the name that comes to mind. Whether it is films, books, or pop culture, she is everywhere! But why is Cleopatra remembered globally, while Hatshepsut, who ruled over 1,000 years earlier and had massive achievements, is barely known outside of the history classrooms?

Cleopatra's story has so much more drama and thriller. Cleopatra spoke multiple languages and had several romantic relationships with Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, which played a central role in her gaining power. Her life had all the ingredients of tragedy: politics, law, betrayal, and suicide. That kind of story usually stays in people's minds.

Hatshepsut, on the other hand, ruled during a time of peace and prosperity; she didn't rely on foreign power or fight in dramatic wars. Her power came from within Egypt and from within her trade and architecture. And because essentially some of her artifacts were destroyed, she had disappeared from historical records for centuries.





## Beating the burnout

Being an IB student can be rough, juggling school work, extracurriculars, personal goals, and maintaining a social life. The Middle Years Program (MYP) isn't just about grades and numbers, it's about developing your critical thinking, self management, and independence. Here, you will learn how to not just survive, but actually thrive in the MYP using **smart studying techniques, time management strategies, and shift to a healthier mindset.**

*"IB: where your reflection needs a reflection"*

### Interactive space

This table is an example of planning and keeping track of your studies. Write down the day and the study technique you used and how effective it was on a scale of 1-10.

Day	Study technique	Effectivity

*"It's okay to not know... that's why we inquire."*

### Studying techniques

Simply re-reading notes or highlighting textbooks gives a false sense of confidence without you actually learning something.

One of the techniques I find quite useful is the **"active recall"**. This method involves testing yourself rather than skimming past the material. Instead, use flashcards, quiz apps, or simply cover your notes and explain the concepts out loud as if you're teaching someone else.

Another powerful method is **spaced repetition**. Instead of cramming the night before a test (like I did several times), review the material in spaced-out intervals over days or weeks. This stores the information for as a long term memory.

For some, the **pomodoro technique** works best. The pomodoro technique breaks work into 25-minute focused sessions followed by short breaks. These short sessions keep your brain sharp and prevents burnout which is perfect for subjects that feel never-ending.

*"Every challenge in the MYP is just a new chance to grow stronger, smarter, and more curious."*

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*"Being principled isn't about being perfect. It's about choosing what's right, even when it's hard."*

## Time Management

Now let's talk about time management. Time management is an extremely important skill, especially in the IB, where you have multiple things happening at the same time.

### Techniques:

- Creating to-do lists and prioritizing important tasks: Each morning or evening, writing down tasks for the day and sorting them by importance or deadline can help immensely. It keeps your mind clear and your goals focused.
- Breaking down big projects into smaller bits: Large projects can feel extremely overwhelming if you leave them for the last minute. By following this technique, you can even improve the quality of your work.
- Taking the time to read the rubric to understand how to study and what to focus on: This tactic helps you in truly understanding what you have to do in the project and helps you in prioritizing what you should be focusing on, therefore allowing you to achieve a higher grade.

## Personal Advice

One of the biggest challenges in IB is maintaining balance (and staying sane). One of the things that really found helpful in my MYP years is building a support system (this includes study groups, group chat, or even a classmate that you check in with). Support systems make school feel a lot less stressful when you're not doing everything alone.

Also, keep in mind that the teachers, mentors, and coordinators want to see you succeed. Use the resources around you. Ask for help. Take breaks when you need them. And don't forget to celebrate small wins!

Being an MYP student is not only about managing deadlines, it's about learning how to navigate pressure, thinking critically, and taking ownership of your own learning. You don't need to be perfect. What matters most is that you stay curious, stay organized, and keep on trying.

Things won't always go to plan, and that's okay. What counts is how you adapt, grow, and keep moving forward. And while you're at it, don't forget to have a little fun, too.

## Your thoughts of the moment...

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## *Debunking Common Myths*



Let's face it, at some point we all believed something wild just because "everyone says it's true." But what if I told you that some of the most common facts we believe in today are total myths. Today, I will be diving into the truth behind different myths that people still get wrong, and explain the scientific explanation behind them. Turns out, winter isn't out to get you, it just gets blamed a lot.

### **MYTH #1: Cold weather makes you sick.**

Feeling cold doesn't give you colds. Viruses do. People tend to get sick more in colder months because we are indoors more often", in closer contact with others, the perfect setting for the germs to spread. Additionally, it's a fact that viruses spread faster in the cold, due to a change in the outer membrane of the viruses. There are also outer factors in the winter like cold air entering the respiratory system, or humans seeing less sun therefore getting less vitamin D to support their immune system. (Richards, Libby). So while you may feel more vulnerable, your cozy sweater isn't a virus shield, but the weather is not the villain either.



### **MYTH #2: You need at least 8 glasses of water a day.**

The minimum "8 glasses" rule is more of a guideline than law. Your need for hydration depends on your body, activity, and food, and yes veggies and fruits count! According to the Mayo Clinic - 2022, you should drink water when you are thirsty, active, or when you are hot. It's obvious that water is very important for humans and we need a lot of it on a daily basis. But don't forget that the conditions you are in can completely change how much hydration you need. So, no pressure to carry a giant water bottle 24/7.



# Isalmere Insights

ELIF MINEL BOLUKBASI

CORRECTING FALSE MYTHS

## **MYTH #3: Cracking your knuckles causes arthritis.**

We always have that one grown up around telling us it's dangerous to crack your knuckles and you will suffer with arthritis in the future. But according to research, this is not the case at all. The odd popping sound comes from the gas bubbles trapped between your joints, its not bone damage. That said, if you are cracking them constantly and feel pain, it may be a sign to give your fingers a break. But arthritis? Not the case here. (Healthline.com).



## **MYTH #4: Swallowing gum takes 7 years to digest.**

One minute you are chewing gum and suddenly the gum is in your stomach. On purpose or accident, we have been told many times that the gum will be there for 7 years and take our stomach a very long time to digest it. So, what really happens to gum in the stomach? The stomach of a normal human empties itself after 30 to 120 minutes, and that includes gum. While gum is a sticky one, it will not stick to your stomach or intestines. The reason we are told this myth so often may be the harmful artificial sweeteners that may cause nausea or headache if consumed in large quantities. However, no don't worry, the gum won't stick around for too long. (Duke Health).

**Myths are everywhere and sometimes they stick because they feel true. But digging a little deeper can show us how fascinating (and weird) the real world is. So next time you hear something that makes you raise an eyebrow, check it. You might just surprise yourself and your biggest enemy, the winter.**



# Isalmere Insights

Raazia Zaidi



## Voices That Changed the World

### The Power of Storytelling in Politics

The power of storytelling plays a crucial role in politics, especially when we look at famous speeches. For example, Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream", Malala Yousufzai's speeches about education and human rights and Nelson Mandela's "I Am Prepared to Die". These speeches show us how sharing one's own experiences and emotions can inspire people to bring about change.

The speech of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech was given during the 1963 March on Washington. He talks about the continuing of racial injustice in America and calls for equality and freedom for Black Americans, with techniques such as, vivid imagery and emotional appeal. King uses storytelling to explain how African Americans were still treated unfairly through segregation and discrimination. He compares America's promises of freedom to a "bad check" that hasn't been cashed yet for black citizens, showing how the country has failed to keep its word (Tanner).

King's speech is powerful because he mixes hope with reality. He dreams of a future where people are judged by their character, not skin color, and where all races are able to be and communicate peacefully together.

He also wants people to fight for justice without violence, using nonviolent resistance instead, inspired by Mahatma Ghandi's methods of non-violence (Tanner). This way, we see how his speech connects with people's emotions and encourages them to be one, making it a turning point in the civil rights movement, while using techniques such as metaphor and repetition ("I have a dream..."), as well as remaining a criteria for advocacy later on, such as nowadays (Littlehale, Pedro).

Malala Yousafzai is another example of how storytelling can influence politics. After surviving a Taliban attack for speaking about girls' education, Malala used her personal story to demand education for all children. She spoke on her own experiences and those of other children that were denied education, making her message relatable and urgent. In her 2013 United Nations speech on her 16th birthday, she called on governments to provide free education and fight terrorism (Ryan). Malala's speech is full of hope and determination, and she uses phrases like "We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back" to show the importance of equality and inspire collective action (Yousafzai). Her storytelling is persuasive because it is rooted in experience, making it more credible, and emotional resonance, motivating the audience and/or listeners to join her cause.



Nelson Mandela's "I Am Prepared to Die" speech, delivered during the Rivonia Trial in 1964, stands as one of the most significant political speeches of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Speaking from the defendant's dock, Mandela outlined his lifelong struggle against both white and black domination and showed his vision for a democratic and free society where all people live together in cooperation, with equal opportunities. He concluded this speech saying, "It is an ideal for which I am prepared to die." This speech was not just a defense against charges; it was a moral allegation of apartheid and an appeal to wake up the world ("I am prepared to die.").

Mandela's storytelling was very varied. He used ethos by establishing his credibility as someone who had dedicated his life to the struggle for justice. He used pathos by invoking the suffering and desire of the South African people, and logos by logically explaining why the African National Congress (ANC) adopted sabotage as a tactic after peaceful protests failed. His words unified and inspired both his supporters and the broader international community, shifting public opinion and increasing pressure on the apartheid regime.

His later speeches, especially after his release in 1990, continued to emphasize reconciliation, unity, and a peaceful transition, further demonstrating the power of storytelling to heal a nation ("I am prepared to die.")

The speeches of Martin Luther King Jr., Malala Yousufzai, and Nelson Mandela demonstrate that storytelling is a powerful tool in politics, capable of shaping public opinion, encouraging movements, and changing the course of history. By weaving together personal experience, emotional resonance, and logical argument, these leaders transformed their struggles into universal messages of hope and justice. Their words did not only describe the world as it was, but they also painted a vision of what it could be, inspiring many individuals to join the fight for equality and human rights. The legacies of King, Malala, and Mandela remind us that stories have the power to unite people, challenge oppression, and change the world.





(Pinterest)

## Purrfection Defined : Why cats reign supreme as the ultimate companions.

Whether they're curled up into a ball in a small box or silently judging you from a windowsill, cats hold a unique place in both our homes and hearts. Their curious and funny behaviour, unmatched adaptability, and quirky physical traits have fascinated both scientists and cat lovers.

But what exactly makes cats so cat? Why do so many scientists behind feline behaviour and their physiology and yes, the IG Nobel prize award won regarding the fact that "cats are liquid" will also be included in this article.



(Pinterest)

*"If cats could talk, they wouldn't."* – Nan Porter

Cats actually have over 100 different vocal sounds, compared to a dog's 10. They choose silence sometimes."



(Pinterest)

Cats overtime have evolved over millions of years. They are stealthy and solitary hunters. Unlike dogs, who were domesticated to work alongside humanity, cats domesticated themselves. There is research that suggests that around 9,000 years ago, cats began living near human settlements to hunt rodents, eventually developing much more friendly traits through natural selection. They still have their independent origin in their behaviour today. Cats are social, but on their own terms.

Studies show that cats are actually capable of forming deep bonds with humans. A study conducted in 2019 found that cats can form attachments towards their caregivers (similar to human babies who seek comfort and safety when young). This may come as a surprise tho those people who see cats as "aloof". This ability make cats the ideal pets; they don't require constant attention but they are there when it matters.



(CGTN)

Yes, cats are common house pets, but when looking at the scientific data of their evolution, they haven't changed that much compared to their ancestors. Cats still hold most of their predatory instincts. It's like having a mini tiger living in your home! Did you know, the scientific name for cats is **felix catus**?

Even the most pampered house cat still contains the instincts of a predator. The brains of cats are wired for stalking, pouncing, and sneak attacks. Fun fact, their whiskers act as sensory tools, which helps in navigation through tight spaces and in detecting movement. They have good hearing and vision (especially in low light) which makes them nocturnal hunters (Bradshaw). This specific combination of stealth AND smarts makes them entertaining and surprising useful. No mouse is safe with a cat around. (Pinterest)



One of the most famous (and probably funniest) scientific acknowledgments of the feline flexibility came in 2017, when Marc-Antoine Fardin won an **Ig Nobel Prize** for his paper titled on the "Rheology of Cats". He asked a deeply important question: "Can a cat be both a solid and a **liquid**?" The answer, in short, is yes thanks to their ability to mold their bodies into tight spaces due to their flexible spines and lack of a rigid collarbone (Fardin). The images provided below help prove Fardin's argument right. While the award is humorous, the science is clear and logical, emphasizing how cats' anatomy allows them to survive, hide, and amuse us endlessly.



(Pinterest)

So, since we've gone over their evolutionary independence to their surprising emotional depth capacity, their ability to defy physics, we've discovered that cats are both a bundle of joy and a mystery. Whether you are a lifelong cat lover, or have newly converted to loving cats, one thing is perfectly clear. Cats aren't just cute, they are biologically brilliant.



(Pinterest)



(Pinterest)





# Isalmere Insights

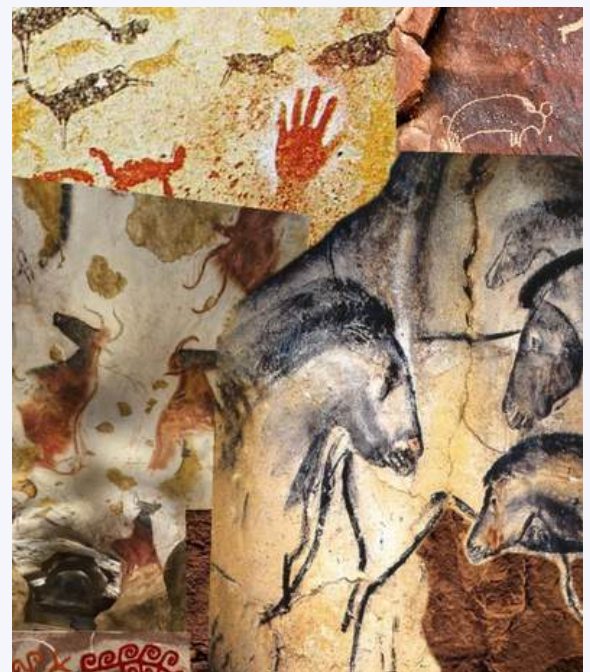
## Brush strokes through time - A deeper reflection of Identity?

Piyumi Wickramatunge



Art is never static but an ever evolving part in our day to day life. It's always been something that reflects the deeper parts of history and even ourselves. A blank canvas to be adapted throughout time about humanity, culture and society. The evolution of art has been inevitable throughout time so is art a reflection of society or does society evolve because of art? Let's delve into this topic unearthing the footsteps of the evolution of art and the influence it has on us.

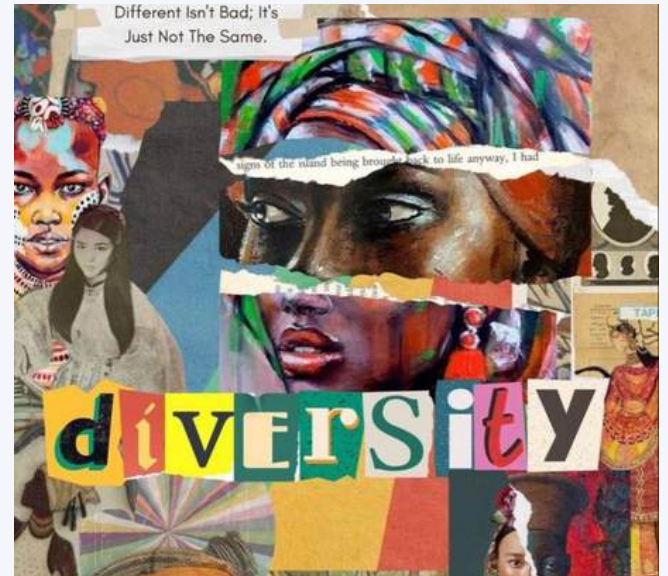
Art has always been something that we as a society adapted to fit our time frames and more importantly our identity. Going from art that could be found in cave walls where our ancestors conveyed their beliefs and experiences through rock carving to digital installations of art we can see how time has taken a toll on how we create and see art. During the Renaissance art revolved around religion portraying a society that was deeply influenced by the church, but in contrast to that modern and contemporary art has always revolved around individualism and portraying social justices or political awareness. 40,000 years ago humans left their brand on cave walls. Did they know that they were shaping our history?





# Isalmere Insights

In a world where globalization has taken over art has adapted to embrace many technologies such as virtual technologies, all while enhancing the voices of communities and individuals, this proves how art is a strong tool in everyone's day to day life to address the current issues in society. The globalization of art has allowed society to have a well diverse community of art that increases inclusivity of different identities. Having a reflection of different identities allows understanding of cultures and their beliefs.



Acting as a ledger for human creativity and exploration it shifts with the different artists who bring everything to life. However time itself adds another layer of peculiarity to the artwork as the times' societal norms, their beliefs and politics changed the course of art and will continue to do so. With each brush stroke their identity is reflected on the canvas which can have traces of culture, personal beliefs and religion. As the world around us changes so does its perspective of how they see identity represented in artwork.

Art is a way of representing you and your culture, the traditions and the experiences. They include different colours, symbols and material that represent their culture. Frida Kahlo who was a Mexican painter and often used her culture as elements that represented her work, she used a personal approach to her paintings while using her Mexican heritage and used elements such as Mexican clothing, animals and nature in her work to express her identity and culture through her work.



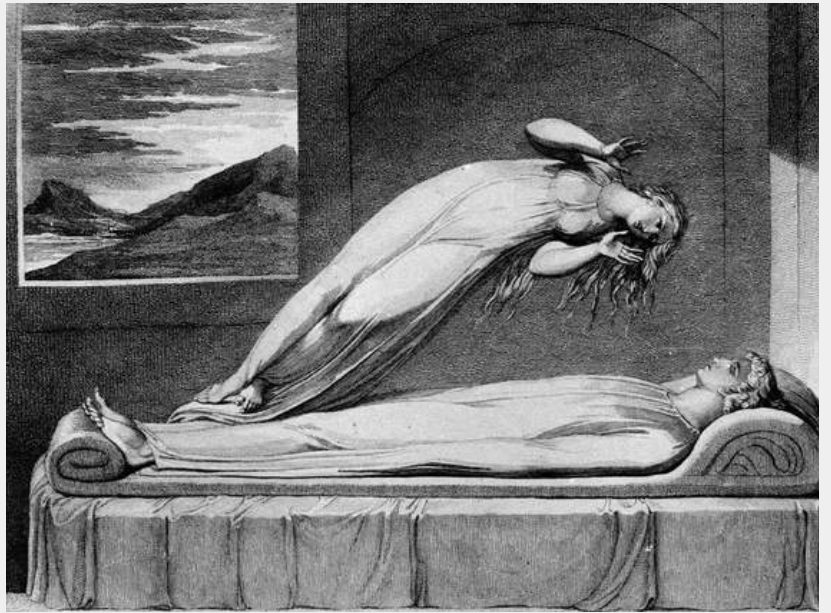
From galleries to social media navigating through this evolving landscape one thing remains evident. As audiences become more socially aware the demand for authentic representation is shown more clearly. The shift doesn't only show a change in our preference but also a deep social understanding, how their stories are told but who tells them.

## 21g – The Mass of Our Soul: MacDougall's Extraordinary Experiment

Hyunhei Kim

What if the human soul could be weighed? In 1907, Dr. Duncan MacDougall, a Harvard-educated physician from Haverhill, Massachusetts, set out to answer this question with an experiment that would become one of the most controversial in medical history.

MacDougall wasn't just an experimental researcher, he was a respected doctor working in an era when the boundaries between science and spirituality were more flexibly discussed. The early 1900s were a time of revolutionary discoveries with the emergence of X-rays, radioactivity, and quantum mechanics reshaping our understanding of reality. In this climate, MacDougall's question seemed reasonable, if consciousness was real, might it have measurable, physical properties?



### The 21-Gram Experiment

MacDougall's setup was both ingenious and morbid. He constructed a special bed mounted on an industrial scale sensitive to two-tenths of an ounce, sealed to prevent air currents from affecting readings. Between April and July 1907, he monitored six dying tuberculosis patients, choosing this disease because deaths were typically calm and predictable.

The first result came to a big surprise, at the exact moment of death, the scale showed a sudden drop of three-quarters of an ounce, 21.3 grams. MacDougall believed he had captured the moment the soul left the body.

But science demands replication, and the remaining cases told a different story. The second patient showed inconsistent weight changes. The third case was ruined by equipment failure. The fourth and fifth showed minimal changes MacDougall attributed to natural causes. Only the sixth showed another clear weight loss at death.





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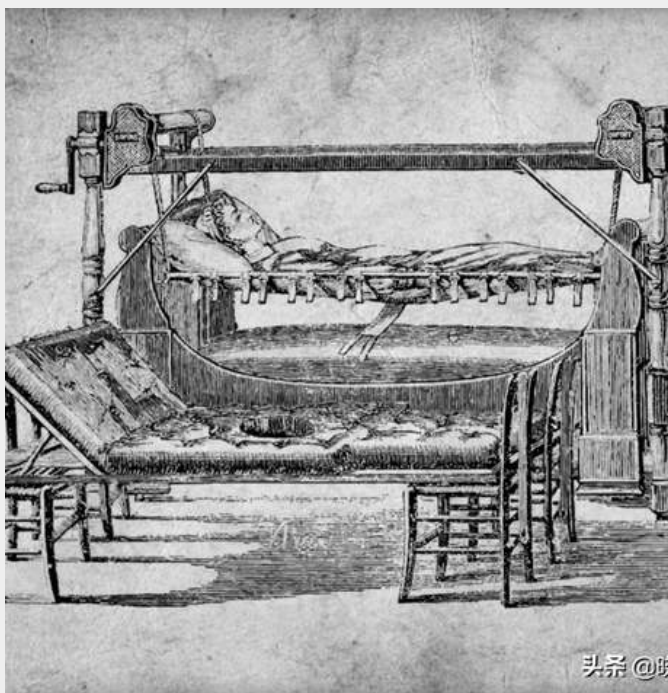
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## Scientific Problems

By modern standards, MacDougall's experiment was extremely flawed. His sample size was small, results were inconsistent, and controls inadequate. He failed to account for physiological changes at death like cessation of breathing, muscle relaxation and fluid release that could easily explain small weight variations. Most critically, the experiment carried extreme confirmation bias, interpreting ambiguous data to support his desired conclusion.

The weight fluctuations MacDougall observed can be explained by modern well-understood processes. When breathing stops, the body stops losing water vapor through exhalation. Muscle relaxation releases bodily fluids. Temperature changes affect skin evaporation rates. None require a departing soul.

Modern neuroscience has provided detailed explanations for consciousness that need no non-physical component. Brain damage can eliminate religious experiences or create intense spiritual feelings, showing the tight connection between mind and matter.



## The Continuing Question

More than a century later, we still explore the questions that drove MacDougall's experiment. Despite advances in neuroscience and psychology, the fundamental mystery persists. How does objective matter give rise to subjective experience? Why is there something it's like to be conscious?

MacDougall's experiment failed as science but succeeded as a bridge for further introducing human hopes about mortality and meaning. The 21 grams that allegedly departed his patients' bodies may have been nothing more than water vapor and wishful thinking, but they continue to carry the weight of our questions about consciousness.

MacDougall himself never claimed definitive proof of the soul's existence. He presented his findings as preliminary and called for further research, understanding that extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence. Yet he believed he had introduced a very valuable subject and an opening to a future where spiritual and material realms might be unified under comprehensive scientific understanding.



# Isalmere Insights

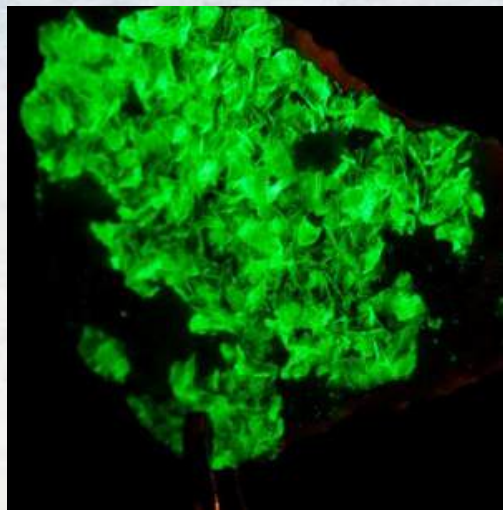
## The Periodic Table's Greatest *Anomalies*

The periodic table is often treated like a neat, logical grid — a map of everything that makes up our universe. But look a little closer, and you'll find it's full of exceptions and contradictions. Some elements are so unstable they vanish in seconds. Others are toxic, glow, or exist only in labs. Some of them were known only through theory before anyone could actually isolate them. Others exist in such small amounts that most people have never heard of them.

Bismuth looks like it was made in a sci-fi lab, forming sharp, stair-like crystals coated in rainbow colours. But what makes it strange isn't how it looks — it's how it behaves. Most metals shrink when they cool. Bismuth? It expands. Most dense metals are toxic. Bismuth? It's safe enough to eat (WedMD). What's even more weird is that for years, scientists thought it was stable, but it turns out it's technically radioactive — it just decays so slowly that its half-life is longer than the age of the universe (Fourmilab). It also happens to be one of the most diamagnetic elements known, meaning it actively repels magnetic fields (Atkinsonpublished).



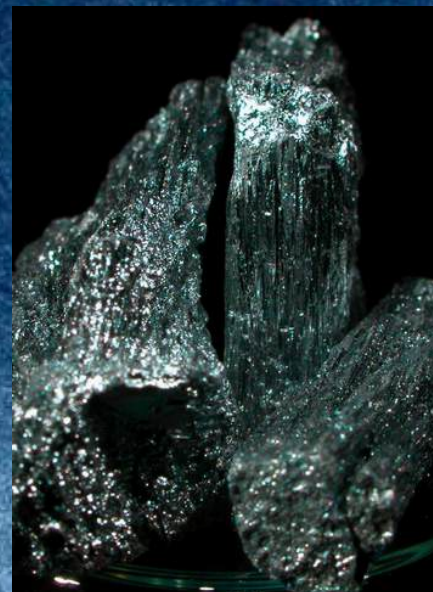
Astatine is the ghost of the periodic table. Astatine is so rare that no one has ever seen a visible chunk of it. In fact, it's estimated that at any given time, there's less than 1 gram of astatine on the entire planet. It's radioactive, unstable, and decays so quickly that even when scientists manage to create it in a lab, it vanishes in seconds or minutes. Its name comes from the Greek word *astatos*, meaning "unstable," which pretty much sums it up. It sits below iodine on the periodic table and might behave like a heavier version of it, but no one really knows. Astatine is so reactive and short-lived that most of its chemistry is still a mystery (Periodic-table).





# Isalmere Insights

Tellurium doesn't get much attention, but it should because it's one of the strangest elements you've never heard of. It's a brittle, silvery metalloid that looks pretty ordinary. But here's where it gets weird: it smells like garlic, and if you're exposed to enough of it, you will too. Your body can start releasing tellurium compounds through your sweat and breath. The result is that you smell like garlic for days now, and there's no easy fix (Berriault and Lightfoot). Beyond that, it has an unusual mix of metallic and non-metallic behaviour. It's used in thermoelectric materials, substances that can turn heat into electricity, and in solar panels (Periodic-table). It's toxic in larger doses, yet some organisms can metabolise it like sulfur. Tellurium also forms weirdly shaped compounds and shows up in places scientists didn't expect, like deep in the Earth's crust and even in some stars.



Francium is the rarest naturally occurring metal on Earth, and one of the most unstable elements ever discovered. At any given time, there's probably less than a gram of francium on the entire planet, and even that's constantly decaying. It sits at the very bottom of the alkali metals, under elements like sodium and potassium. Based on its position, scientists predict that francium would be insanely reactive, probably more explosive in water than any other metal. But here's the twist: we don't actually know (Periodic-table). Francium decays so quickly that we've never had enough of it to observe its chemical behaviour directly. Most of what we "know" is based on theory and a few brief lab experiments using single atoms. And because it's so rare and nearly impossible to isolate in quantity, francium is also considered the most expensive element on the periodic table. Some estimates suggest that 1 gram of Francium could cost around 7 billion dollars, though no one's ever owned that much (ABP). It's not just valuable because of its scarcity; it's valuable because it's almost completely out of reach.





# Isalmere Insights

Polonium is one of the deadliest elements on the periodic table. Discovered by Marie Curie, it gives off intense alpha radiation, which can't even penetrate skin or paper. But if polonium gets inside the body through a cut, inhalation, or ingestion, it becomes a microscopic weapon, tearing through cells and DNA from the inside. Just a few micrograms can be fatal (Periodic-table). This element is so radioactive that it heats itself up and can literally glow from its own decay. What's even stranger is that polonium can build up an electric charge just by shedding alpha particles. This radioactive decay releases a constant stream of tiny, high-energy particles, and when they hit nearby objects, they knock electrons around which allowing polonium to charge itself and its surroundings electrically. That effect has been used in anti-static devices, though handling it requires extreme safety measures (Radiacode).



Gallium is a metal, but it refuses to act like one. For starters, it melts in your hand. With a melting point just under  $30^{\circ}\text{C}$ , gallium turns into a silvery liquid at room temperature on a warm day or when you touch it. It's metal behaving like water. One of gallium's strangest traits is how it interacts with aluminium. Even a tiny amount can break down aluminium's structure, turning it fragile and crumbly. This reaction can compromise aircraft parts, which is why gallium is banned on aeroplanes, not because it's toxic, but because it can sabotage metal without warning (Periodic-table). When gallium is mixed with dilute sulfuric acid and potassium dichromate, the resulting solution starts to beat rhythmically like a living heart. Scientists still don't fully understand the chemistry behind it, a chemical reaction where a blob of gallium pulses on its own, as if alive (Fleming).



## The Sweet Secret to Feeling Calm and Happy

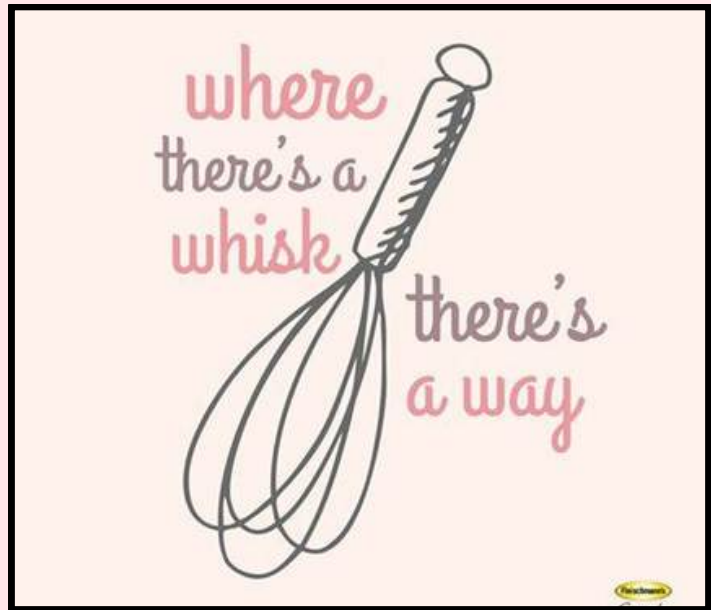
Raazia Zaidi

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Have you ever noticed how baking a batch of cookies or kneading bread can instantly lift your mood? You're not alone. More and more people are turning to baking not just for delicious treats, but for the surprising mental health benefits it brings. In fact, psychologists and mental health experts say that baking can be a powerful tool for reducing stress and boosting happiness.

Baking stimulates all five senses, touch, smell, sight, sound, and taste, which can be deeply therapeutic. The smell of freshly baked bread or cookies, the feel of dough in your hands, and the sound of mixing ingredients create sensory experiences that boost mood and appetite. This is a form of mindfulness, which has been shown to lower stress and improve overall well-being. When you bake, you have to focus on measuring, mixing, and timing. This focus helps take your mind off worries and negative thoughts as well as for individuals experiencing depression or low appetite, as sensory stimulation can encourage eating and improve overall well-being (The Mental Health).

Baking is often a social activity, whether it's baking with family or sharing treats with friends and neighbors. This social bonding can strengthen relationships and reduce feelings of loneliness. Sharing baked goods can serve as a form of nonverbal communication, expressing care, gratitude, or celebration, which further supports emotional health (5 Reasons why).



According to psychologists, activities that require attention and creativity, like baking, can act as a kind of “active meditation”, giving your brain a break from stress (The Mental Health). The repetitive motions involved in kneading dough or stirring batter also provide a calming, almost meditative experience that helps release tension (Mann). Completing a baking project also triggers a sense of accomplishment and pride, which releases dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure and motivation. This reward system activation can enhance self-esteem and happiness (Anas).



During challenges times, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, many people turned to baking as a way to regain control and find comfort. This sense of control is crucial for mental health, especially for those struggling with aspects of it (Mann).



In conclusion, baking is an approachable, powerful, accessible form of therapy that can help reduce stress, improve your mood, and promote social bonds. Whether you're kneading dough to calm your nerves or sharing cookies to brighten someone's day, baking offers a sweet secret recipe for feeling calm and happy. So next time life gets too much to handle, consider putting on your apron and letting the therapeutic power of baking takeover.





## The First Ever Witch Tituba

Isabella Irwin

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### Meet the first ever Witch - Tituba - Or was she?

When we think of the Salem witch trials, images of witches, black cats, and fear-driven hysteria often come to mind. But at the centre of it all stands one woman, Tituba. Often referred to as the first accused witch in Salem, Tituba's story is not only the beginning of the infamous 1692 trials but also a powerful reflection of how fear, race, and power collided in colonial America.



### Where did it All begin?

Tituba was likely born in the Caribbean or South America and may have been of Indigenous Arawak descent. She was enslaved and brought to Massachusetts, where she lived and worked in the household of Reverend Samuel Parris in Salem Village. In a society dominated by strict Puritan beliefs, Tituba stood out, she was a woman of colour, enslaved, and culturally different from the European settlers around her. She was already seen as "other," which made her especially vulnerable in a community obsessed with sin and the supernatural.

In early 1692, strange fits and unexplained illnesses began affecting Reverend Parris's daughter Betty and niece Abigail. In a haze of fear and superstition, their behaviour was quickly blamed on witchcraft. When the girls started naming people they believed were responsible, Tituba was the first to be accused.



## What Happened to Tituba?

Unlike many of the accused, Tituba survived the trials. She spent over a year in jail before someone, possibly an unknown buyer paid to release her. After that, she disappeared from the historical record. What became of her remains a mystery.

Still, her role in the Salem witch trials lives on. She is remembered as the first accused and the one whose words lit the spark that grew into a wildfire of paranoia and injustice.

Tituba was not a villain. She was a victim of circumstance, fear, and a society that was quick to blame the powerless. Her confession, likely forced, became the foundation of one of America's most tragic and cautionary tales. So next time you hear about Salem's witches, remember Tituba. Not just as the first accused, but as a symbol of survival, injustice, and the consequences of letting fear control truth.

## The Confession

Tituba's confession gave the authorities something they lacked: a story that matched their fears. Her words provided the so-called "proof" that witches were among them and that a larger satanic conspiracy was at work. The authorities used her statement to justify further accusations, arrests and eventually executions. Her dramatic confession set the tone for everything that followed.

But historians widely agree that her confession was likely a survival strategy. In Puritan society, denying an accusation could lead to hanging. Confessing however, often spared one's life. As an enslaved woman with no rights or protection, Tituba may have seen confession as her only chance to avoid death.







# Isalmere Insights



## Time Management: 101

**-Gargi Harshad Inamdar**

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You know that feeling when you're waiting for something and are so bored that it feels like time is going twice as slow, or that feeling when you're rushing and late and time seems to speed up twice as much? Yeah, I can guarantee that either of these has happened to everyone at least once. It's me, Gargi, your relatable article author, from Procrastination 101 last time (hint hint GO READ ISAlmere INSIGHTS EDITION 1 RN), well, after you read this edition), back this time with the topic of time management.

Sometimes, time is just not on our side, and when it is, we take it for granted. And to defend our guilty conscience, we often tell ourselves, "I'll do it when I have more time." Spoiler alert: you won't. You can't wait until your schedule clears, the piles of figurative 'homework' piled in your Managebac disappear, and the universe gently nudges everything coming in between you and your dream away. When we look at those those busy people that still get everything done, we wonder how they do it. It's their ability to 'time keep' their time management. They aren't making a detailed to-do list and daydreaming their day. The real, actual time management is about using any available time to your advantage, no matter how motivated you are or tired you are.

Time isn't found; it's made. It's defended like the last Oreo in the packet, or the last piece of gum, or the last Dorito in the bag. Waiting for more time is like waiting for tomorrow to come. Every single time you flop around on your couch, at your desk, or in bed wondering what to do with the inconvenient time span you have until your next event in the day, you should use to get things done.





# Isalmere Insights

First off, start on something in the time frame you have and use that time effectively to achieve a small goal. If you only have 10 minutes and you have a pending essay, plan the essay or write the introduction in those 15 minutes so you have less work.. If you use these little gaps of time you have in your day, you will ease the load of pending tasks.

Secondly, stop multitasking. Don't do 5 different things all at once unless your goal is to do all 5 terribly. Focus on one thing. Do it fast, however ugly, and get it done.

Then move on. This breaks the habit of obsessing over, or even delaying doing, multiple things due to the fear of being unable to make it perfect (aka perfectionism). Once you get used to being able to complete a task in a strict time frame, this habit will gradually disappear.

And lastly for the love of god, if there's anything you take away from this article at all, please let it be this: GIVE UP ON THE IDEA OF PERFECT PRODUCTIVITY. Some days, you will crush your list, and other days, you will accomplish nothing but the bare minimum. And that's fine, because that's life. Good time management isn't about being perfect—it's about being organised enough to do the things you care about before collapsing in bed and wondering why your responsibilities still exist.

You're not less worthy because you took a nap instead of unloading the dishwasher or had crippling writers block and procrastinated for 3 whole months to write an article (that sounds a lot like the writing process of this specific article). You have to be forgiving to yourself. So take a breath, grab your task, start to save time. Especially if you stop reading this and start. Right. Now. Well, not RIGHT NOW right now, but, you know, in 2 minutes.





## Streaming Wars? More Like Recycling Bin Wars: Where'd Our New Stories Go?

Shubh Shiromani



Remember the hype? Streaming was gonna save us. Ditch the boring network formulas, blow open the doors to wild, original stories we'd never seen before. Disney+, Netflix, Prime – they rolled in like revolutionary heroes, wallets bursting. Yeah, right. Fast forward to today, and what's the real legacy of this trillion-dollar "Streaming War"? It feels less like an explosion of creativity and more like watching a bunch of panicked execs rummage through the same dusty toy box, desperately gluing action figures back together while muttering about quarterly reports. Originality? It's gasping for air under a mountain of reheated leftovers. We were promised a revolution; we got a corporate yard sale.

Look, I'm not against a good sequel or reboot. Sometimes. But Disney+? Come on. They're sitting on a literal Fort Knox of beloved stuff – animation gold, Star Wars, Marvel – and their big, galaxy-brain play is... rehashing animated classics shot-for-shot in creepy, soul-sucking "live-action"? (Lion King, I'm still glaring at you). Or endlessly milking Star Wars until the teats are dry and churning out Marvel shows that feel like contractual obligations (She-Hulk, anyone? The Mandalorian S3?). It's not expansion; it's brand maintenance on life support. Gotta feed that insatiable content beast, right? Who cares if it tastes like cardboard after the third bite? Remember Obi-Wan? Exactly. Pure nostalgia extraction, barely disguised as storytelling.

# Isalmere Insights

**And Netflix! The OG king of the surprise smash hit! The place that gave us Stranger Things when no one saw it coming! Where'd that scrappy, risk-taking energy vanish? Now it feels like their all-powerful algorithm just screams "MORE NOSTALGIA! MORE KNOWN QUANTITIES!" at max volume, drowning out anything faintly original. Avatar: The Last Airbender reboot? Check. One Piece live-action? Check. Cowboy Bebop (RIP, deservedly)? Check. Wednesday Addams? Check. Anything with a pre-built fan club, no matter how niche, gets dragged out of retirement for the content grinder. Their actual "original" stuff often feels like cheap photocopies of whatever worked last year – derivative fantasy sludge, predictable rom-coms, true crime rehashes – buried under an absolute landslide of reality TV that's all the same show with different haircuts and slightly more staged drama. Where's the next genuine surprise? Probably lost under the avalanche of safe, algorithmically-approved bets. Remember 1899? Cancelled. Remember The OA? Gone. The message? Don't get too original.**



**Amazon? Oh, they play the big spender. Chucking a billion dollars at a Lord of the Rings prequel (The Rings of Power), nervously tiptoeing around Tolkien's ghost and the minefield of existing canon. Meanwhile, genuinely new, weird swings they do take (The Peripheral, Paper Girls, Night Sky) often vanish without a trace, starved of promotion or faith. The message is deafeningly, insultingly clear: In this cutthroat fight for your monthly subscription dollars, the only thing these terrified giants trust is the warm, fuzzy, pre-sold blanket of familiarity. Nostalgia. Sequels nobody asked for (Hocus Pocus 2, really?). Prequels exploring backstories nobody needed. Reboots of reboots. It's content for content's sake, designed to trigger a recognition synapse, not spark genuine excitement.**



# Isalmere Insights

This isn't just boring. It's creatively bankrupt. It screams, at the top of its lungs, that these platforms have zero faith in actual new ideas, in unknown voices, in taking a damn creative risk. Why gamble on something fresh, exciting, and potentially groundbreaking when you can just crank out Scooby-Doo reboot 47, Ice Age 7: The Quest for More Acorns, or yet another grey, gritty anti-hero show? They're locked in this insanely expensive, self-inflicted battle for dominance, and the path of least resistance – endlessly recycling the old, the familiar, the safe – is the only path they're willing to walk. So here we are, drowning in a meticulously curated digital theme park built by committee. Every ride is just a slightly repainted, algorithmically-tuned version of the one we rode twenty years ago. The thrilling, uncharted territory we were promised? Feels like a cruel mirage, fading further with every unnecessary spin-off and soulless remake. Originality didn't die; it got slowly, deliberately smothered under an avalanche of sequels, prequels, and reboots absolutely nobody was clamouring for. Seriously, who was sitting there begging for more of this? Raise your hand. Anyone? Yeah. Thought so.



*STAY TUNED*



*for the*



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*2025 WINTER  
EDITION...*





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