

English Boston Trip



After what felt like a lifetime of waiting and saving and meetings in Miss McConkey's room, the day finally arrived where Banbridge Academy would take on the States (or at least one of them). The airport scene was as you would imagine: lots of excited upper and lower sixths running round in their Star-Spangled Banner branded hoodies trying not to lose their passports and boarding passes before reaching Boston. Everything went smoothly, except, when the security targeted two gingers for their Super Serious Security Search, clearly expecting us to be up to no good. Seven hours of flying and taking photos out of the aeroplane window later, we landed in Boston.

We then spent our first day in the US with a long drive to Western Massachusetts, passing yellow school buses and Wranglers every turn we took and then went on a very culturally enriching trip to Walmart, where wallets left the shop half empty only a few hours into the country.

After a nutritious breakfast of sugar frosted pastries and a ferrel scramble for the last remotely nutritious food (a sole banana) we piled onto the bus and headed for Hyde Park for our first full day. However, our entry into the FDR museum was thwarted, by an army of American runners carrying their pride and joy, the star-spangled banner. A sight that would become familiar throughout this trip. Upon entering the museum, we

received a lengthy talk on the life of FDR, by an extremely enthusiastic woman who was radiating with adoration for the late president (an adoration very few of us reciprocated). The FDR Museum gave an insight into life as a president and throughout the eras of Roosevelt's presidency. FDR's Scottish terrier 'Fala' was certainly a hit with the students. A trip to the gift shop was a true necessity of the trip before piling onto our bus once more.

Our inquisitive and educated minds were further fuelled by a McDonald's for lunch, it must be an American delicacy to consume pink coloured burgers as that is what most of us received. Our next stop was Amherst. On our way we passed East High school (Umass)

where we were disappointed to find that Troy Bolton did not make an appearance. Our bus traversed through sorority and fraternity strip (Boston's answer to the Hollands) to reach the Emily Dickinson Museum. Witnessing the places where the late poet created her poems was insightful, some of us were even living our dream as a March sister, frolicking about a new England house. Sadly we were foiled in our attempts to catch a squirrel for a souvenir. I don't think Mrs Neill would've been pleased with Yank vermin in hand luggage anyway.

For dinner, we headed to the Michelin starred 'Golden Corral' for a fine dining experience. We tucked into many American delicacies, including corn bread, hot dogs and of course our favourite Red 40. Leaving dinner full from the lovely food and additives, we finished off the day with another pilgrimage to the promised land (Walmart). Our second morning began with an early start at 12am, as the legendary Taylor Swift released '1989 Taylor's Version', which we absolutely had to stream as soon as we could. Our actual morning began with a quick walk to the local Starbucks, where we kindly gave the poor American workers names like 'Siobhan' and 'Niamh' to put on our drinks.



After our pink drinks and iced lattes, we made our way to the famous Yankee Candle Factory, which is one of the biggest tourist attractions in the state of Massachusetts, second only to the historical Freedom Trail. The Yankee Candle factory happened to be one of the most exciting- and expensive- parts of the trip, with both teachers and students alike spending amounts ranging from nothing at all, to 20+ candles. The Yankee Candle didn't just have candles, however, it also had a regular snowstorm, a Christmas room, and several terrifying animatronics that serenaded us as we waited for the photo booth to be available.

Our gang- grouped into little families with special nicknames and theme songs, including the best team by a mile, 'The Nigels' - then hopped on the bus once more, this time our destination being Concord, where we spent our time traipsing around on a search of lunch. After embracing the culture (Cafe Nero), we walked to the Old Manse, home to revolutionaries such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, and the author of our AS text 'The Scarlet Letter', Nathaniel Hawthorne. All of the students and teachers decided that Longfellow the owl was the best part of the Old Manse, a horrifying taxidermy creature who has been a constant in our nightmares since.

To finish our day, we walked to the house that Louisa May Alcott lived in, the author of 'Little Women', and managed to stay for a few pictures before we had to leave for a well deserved rest.

On our penultimate day we took a trip to Harvard University to embrace our dreams of becoming Elle Woods. As we walked around the grounds with our homegrown tour guide, Miss McConkey, we imagined ourselves studying in the same university as

JFK and Obama and wondered how mad John Harvard must be that a different man posed for a statue of him. After a photoshoot on the steps of The Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Library with some questionable artistic decisions by our Photographer Mr Clarke, the Banbridge Academy crew decided to head on to our next site to see.

A quick trip around the JFK Presidential Library and Museum followed, where they tried to trick us into buying a mug for the same price as a car!

The Freedom Trail tested us all as we walked against wind and rain. We visited so and so and so and so but I believe the highlight was seeing the grave stone of Elizabeth Pain at the end that is assumed to possess the inspiration for Hester Prynne in Hawthorne's 'The Scarlet Letter' (while most of us also agree the 'letter A' on the stone wasn't much of a letter at all).

Quincy Market was our next stop where money was spent in Ben and Jerry's, Crocs and Abercrombie, making the maximum weight for our suitcases on the way home seem more like a suggestion. We then danced the night away with busker Ryan Laperle who was kind enough to play 'Party in the USA' for us (totally discreet) tourists.

Laughs were had at Cheers (and cries of embarrassment were had by my parents at home when they realised I had no idea the sitcom existed), and the food went down a treat after our long days of education and walking (so much walking).

Then came the final day, which after a trip enjoyed by all, we were sad to see. We thought we'd kick off the day Halloween eve with a spooky trip to Salem. First came the culture; the Banbridge Academy group led by

our team of teachers, who do enjoy the odd witch's cackle (Mrs Neill we're looking at you) headed off to the Salem Witch Museum where we were met with scary animatronic robots and a foreshadowing of our school play, The Wizard of Oz. After reliving the trauma that was the horrific treatment and torture of women and some men, we decided we really should focus on the retelling of the 1692 Witch Trials rather than on the resurfacing memories of our time perfecting the school play.

Therefore, in order to lift our spirits, we decided to go into Salem for a browse at its most festive time of the year, Halloween. There, we were met with some familiar faces including Satan himself who gave free hugs (and then stared at you until you 'tipped' a dollar).

Needless to say, Miss McConkey was quick to urge us to stay away from 'strangers' on Halloween, also needless to say that this was disobeyed by some (upper sixth) who didn't want to listen (upper sixth) and did what they wanted (upper sixth). The day then drew to a close with a quick trip to Assembly Row for some last-minute souvenirs. Then, just as mysteriously (in a mass of matching blue hoodies) and effortlessly (weekly meetings and multiple pleas from Miss McConkey to hand in our passports and ESTAs) as we had arrived in Boston, we departed. I'd like to say that the trip home went as smoothly as the trip there, however Clare had other plans when she packed a cheese knife in her suitcase, as (apparently) a souvenir for her parents (TSA didn't believe her and neither do we!).

Finally, on behalf of the whole group, we would love to thank the teachers; Mrs Topley-Willis; Mr Clarke; Mrs Neill; and Miss McClelland, led by Miss McConkey for an unforgettable trip had by all!



English

Poetry

Mrs Hetherington's 9E Class created Personification Poems on subjects of their choice.

Sensational Summer

Kelsey McGaffin

Summer, the radiant Queen of the year;
Her golden rays spread warmth and cheer.
She wears a gown of emerald green;
Her crown, a sunbeam's sparkling sheen.

Summer's touch, a gentle caress-
A warm embrace, banishing all distress;
She beckons us to explore and roam,
To make memories and call them our own.

She whispers secrets in the ocean's roar;
A cascade of waves upon the sandy shore,
She stands open-armed greeting us with a
warm, loving hug;
She fills our hearts with summer's soothing
drug.

Her embrace, a sandy, sun-kissed bed,
Where dreams are woven, and worries shed;
Relaxing with cold drinks and tanned faces-
This is a great opportunity to venture and
uncover new favourite places.

Her laughter echoes in the gentle breeze-
A melodic whisper through the trees;
She dances through fields, a vibrant hue,
With flowers blooming, nature's debut.

Barbeques sizzling, burgers on the grill,
Kids catching butterflies, a magical thrill;
Beaches with sand, oh so grand,
Ice-cream in hand, a treat not at all bland.

Sometimes she's so hot we hide to keep cool-
Temperatures so high, we plead not to go to
school.
Mostly she brings joy and bliss for endless
hours;
I can't wait to get back from the beach and
take cold showers.

So let us celebrate this season so bright-
With endless days and starlit nights;
Summer's a friend who brings delight,
A sympathy of warmth, filling our sight.

Gate

Sam Johnson

In the garden of dreams a gate stands tall,
A guardian of secrets, a secret call;
Its iron arms reach out, embracing the sky
Like a sturdy soldier, standing firm and high.

This gate is a key,
Unlocking new adventures for you and me;
Its hinges creak, a whispered plea,
Inviting us to wander, wild and free.

The gate beckons with grace,
Its latch is friendly on its weathered face;
"Come closer," it whispers, with a gentle
sway,
"Discover the wonders that lie on your way."

Smiles dance, like stars in the night,
Comparing the gate to a beacon of light;
Strong as a fortress, yet delicate as lace,
A symbol of possibility, in this sacred place.

Both joy and despair dance through the air,
As the gate opens wide, and closes with care;
A gateway to new beginnings, of a farewell,
Its presence, a reminder of stories to tell.

Onomatopoeia echoes through the air,
As the gate swings open, with a creak and a
flair;
A symphony of sounds, as it welcomes us in,
A charge of possibilities, ready to begin.

Your hand weaves its magical thread,
As the gate mirrors the sky, with a shade of
red;
Reflecting our moods, in its rusted embrace,
A mirror to our souls, in this enchanted place.

It calls us, urging to explore,
To step through the gate, and seek something
more;
Embrace the unknown, with courage and
grace,
For beyond this gate, is a beautiful chase.

Anfield

Matthew Stinson

In Anfield's heart, where dreams unfold;
Echoes of cheers, like sails, they whirl.
They stand, like guardians, watch the pride;
Each goal, a symphony, echoing wide.
The grass, a canvas, where heroes tread;
Their passion, a fire, never fed.
In every brick, stories dug deep.
Of triumphs, sorrows, promises to keep.
The floodlight dance, casting shadows bold;
Whispers of legends, tales unfold.
Through victories sweet and losses grim;
Anfield's spirit, an eternal hymn.
In the tunnels embrace hopes collide;
Players emerge, with hearts open wide.
Their footsteps echo, a march to fate.
On sacred ground, where legends await.
The kop stands tall, a fortress ground;
Voices unite, a mighty band.
Their chants, a chorus, shaking the air;
Fuelling the passion, beyond compare.
In every corner history resides;
Memories woven, with glory as guides.
From Shankly's vision to Klopp's reign;
Anfield's legacy, forever upheld.
Through the seasons ups and downs;
Anfield's heartbeat continues to grow.
In victory's glow and defeats sting;
It is the soul of football, forever reigning.

Mars

Riley McBride

In the vast expanse of cosmic night;
Mars stands proud, bathed in crimson light.
A warrior of old with scars that tell
Of battles fought in a celestial spell.

Its surface carved with valleys deep;
Craters whisper secrets that they keep.
Dust storms dance in reckless spree;
Olympus mountain stands tall and free.

But beneath its rugged barren face,
Lies a mystery... a hidden grace.
For within its icy shadowed caves,



Hope of life's persistence bravely braves.

So let us gaze upon this red- hued sphere
With wonder, reverence and maybe even fear.
For Mars, the silent sentinel of the sky,
Speaks volumes for those who dare to pry.

Mars, the God of War they say,
In its crimson hue holds sway;
Valleys deep and mountains high
Are underneath the crimson sky.

Upon its surface rovers roam,
Exploring lands that once were home;
To rivers perhaps and oceans wide,
Before they vanished to Mars' stride.

But Mars, oh Mars, what tales you tell
Of ancient times when all was well;
Your canyons carved by winds so strong,
Echo with the past -both right and wrong.

So here you stand in silent grace ,
A symbol of endless space;
Mars the wanderer -ever bright -
Guiding us through the darkest night.

Football

Isaac Coulter

Football- I am a story of strategy.
In fields of green, where dreams take flight,
With the cheers under the floodlights;
With every pass, a story unfolds,
In a place where the only thing scored are goals.

I am an emotional adventure,
Through tough defeats;
With freshly cut oranges to eat
At the halftime seat,
To fuel you up, to get the wonderful win.

Suddenly, before the match,
You and your opponent's eyes catch...
He gives a scary stare,
But we don't care.
Because the game has just kicked off.

Upon the pitch, where grass meets cleats,
The drama unfolds, in heart stopping feats.
With each touch of the ball,
A story is spun,
A tale of passion, of battles won.

Each player is a knight,
Armoured in might.
They chase the ball like waves in their might.
| Crashing upon the shore,
A sympathy of fight.

The pitch a battle field, where dreams alight,
Every pass a whisper; every tackle a fight.
With each kick, a lightning strike;
The crowds roar, reaching heights-
The goal, a sanctuary, a beacon in sight,

Where victory awaits, in a world of might.

So let the game unfold,
In the glow of the floodlights,
Where heroes rise, in glory alight.
For football is more than a game-
A tale of courage, of passion , burning bright.

Cancer

Hannah Millen

Cancer is a word to fear,
As it hurts the ones we hold near.
It wrecks and torments people we adore,
As it changes who people were before.

To those who live with it, we know not what to say,
To watch and hope, for them we pray.
Hoping, for them to be cured some way,
Hoping, for them not to become cancer's prey.

Sometimes it travels too far,
And life can wither like a flower.
Cancer lingers in our thoughts,
As it sits and plots.

Hurting, destroying, breaking,
Seeing it harm loved ones gives us the chills -
As we all know cancer kills
As we are left with the permanent hole that cancer drills.

Crushing our hearts
As we hope for peace,
As it leaves us with a permanent crease,
And still cancer will never cease.

But cancer cannot kill hope;
Cancer cannot kill love;
Cancer cannot kill faith,
Cancer cannot kill perseverance.

Although cancer may steal their light,
They will keep fighting with all their might.

Homework

Edie Scott

Three-twenty pm and I'm finally free
From the clutches of school- the stealer of glee,
Out of the gates we dance and prance,
The final bell has us all in a trance!

But behind the excitement
Of free time and my phone,
Lurks a monster of misery...
Ready for torturous calamity.

Pouncing on me as I start to forget;
Now my free time is a tangled wreck!
It's a relentless tyrant- it never sleeps-
throwing assignments, making me weep!

Assignments pile up high;
I protest and sigh,
I'm in knee-deep,
I feel the pressure starting to seep!

I am ready for this malevolent monster-
I'm ready for battle;
I'm ready to fight;
I'm ready to give this all my might!

Homework: joy-stealer; time-taker;
Boredom-bringer and brain-puzzler.
I stand quaking with fear,
Difficulty and danger starts to loom near.

Notebooks and pens my only shield,
Knowledge the only sword I yield
Against its army of assignments- a formidable force,
Can I rise to the challenge, and stay on course?

Equations and essays- my fearful foes;
However, in my heart determination grows.
With each conquered task I'm gaining ground,
Victory starts to creep in all around!

The war effort continues, suddenly I crumble,
but fear not,
I stab at the Beast with my pen in my hand,
Before I tumble down to the land.

I complete my assignments,
I slay the Beast;
The monster has left us...
'Till tomorrow at least...

Halloween

Alexander Ervine

For the brave, Halloween is a spirited friend;
For the scared, they would rather it came to an end.
On that one night a year, it dances with glee,
A mischievous companion for you and me.

In the cloak of darkness, it comes alive,
Whispering secrets, making us thrive.
With a playful grin and a twinkle in its eye,
Halloween beckons, saying, 'Come, let's fly!'

It wears the colours of autumn's embrace,
Orange and black; a perfect chase.
Its laughter echoes through the night,
As jack-o'-lanterns glow, casting eerie light.

Halloween whispers in the rustling leaves,
As the wind carries its mischievous pleas.
It dances with shadows; a spectral waltz,
Leaving you a trail of enchanting thoughts.

It brings out the child in all of us,
As we dress up in costumes with a fuss.
Halloweens spirit - bold and free,
Inspires us to be who we want to be.

English

The poem below by Yr 13 pupil Molly Davidson was entered into the Christopher Tower poetry competition, a UK wide competition which attracts over 1750 entries. This year's theme was 'Mirror'. Molly's poem was longlisted, meaning it was in the top 10% of entries.

Just the silver between us

Molly Davidson

Just the silver between us,
I trace the rifts along your forehead,
Infused with inky gold,
Ebbing, flowing.

Just the silver between us,
I kiss the specks of copper across your cheeks,
They've flourished in the years,
Ripened, mellowed.

Just the silver between us,
I twirl the spun-gold, woven from your scalp,
Now argent,
Weathered.

Less than the silver between us,
They scorn your broken lines,
And cracked shell,
Hardened, splintered.

Less than the silver between us,
I feel your gaunt nail pierce my plump flesh,
Mine, a fresh cut,
Yours, a seasoned scar.

Less than the silver between us,
I feel my own forehead,
Now etched in aureate,
Charting stars, constellations.

Nothing between us,
We share our crinkled features,
Sunned cheeks,
And gilded thread.

So instead of fearing meeting you,
In the gleaming, Midas day,
I've known you all along,
Through the sweet, silvered decay.

At GCSE pupils are asked to create a piece of creative writing based on a photograph. The following short story by Scott McShane (Year 12) was written in response to the photograph of a window:

Scott McShane Creative Writing

Any passer-by taking an evening stroll past the rows of apartment blocks that stretched like a barricade of concrete against the road leading out of town and towards the green expanse of lush fields in the distance, wouldn't have detected anything unusual. In fact, it was a rather pleasant June evening. The final pinkish glows of the light that travelled in a steady gradient towards the fast-disappearing burning sunset cast a dreamy hue over the sky, a pleasant backdrop to the silhouettes of the trees that reached upwards towards the purplish sea of clouds; nature's city skyline. The echoes of friends and families, crowded around plastic tables for a barbecue, card games, and laughter, drifted over back garden fences and rolled over the streets, floating out to the countryside. Yes, indeed, it was a perfect summer's evening by all means. Or, that's how it would seem, to any passer-by...

The only indicator of something more sinister happening under the cover of an ideal summer night was the open apartment window beside the balcony. The apartment

was inhabited by an elderly man by the name of Mr Harold Smith. He had led an ordinary, uninteresting life by all accounts, leaving school to join the family business, a local butcher's shop (the best in town, by the citizen's report.) After decades of working in that butcher's shop, he had racked up a modest share of accomplishments, reaching various milestones in his life. He had been married, had children and made enough money to live quite comfortably. But his wife was dead ten years now, and his children off to larger cities in pursuit of the ever-elusive goal of "success" and "making it," much to his dismay. His lack of company is what led Harold to sell his farmhouse and land, and

to purchase the small apartment in which he now resides. Or, perhaps I should say in which he used to reside. For that June night was the night Harold Smith died...

The window hung open, the curtains whirling in the gentle summer breeze like ghosts. The light of the TV illuminated the dim living room, bathing everything in the shifting colours of an old Western movie, the hissy, dated audio blaring out from its speakers. On the far side of the room was a small kitchen area, dirty dishes still abandoned in the sink, even hours after dinner time had come and gone. However, all but one of Harold's glasses sat sparkling clean in a glass cabinet that reflected Clint Eastwood's face from the TV; the glasses stretched the artefact-ridden image across their transparent surfaces. The other glass, a tall wine glass, lay on its side on the carpeted floor, the crimson stain of the liquid it once contained spread like a

firework before it, decorating the beige canvas that it seeped into. In fact, the wine almost concealed the other red stain left on the carpet. As much as the cool evening air tried to cover it up, the unmistakable

stench of blood tinged the atmosphere.

It would be days before the body of Harold Smith would be found, sprawled on his living room floor in front of the TV. The autopsy revealed two shots in the head: most likely an instant death. The question on everyone's lips in town was "Why?" - after all, who would want to kill a lonesome widower, the owner of a well-respected local business, a frequent church-goer and a good citizen? It would be a perfectly valid question if Harold Smith had been any normal 74 year old man. But he wasn't.

That's why I killed him.

