

E Pluribus Unum



Kanye West

Article By: Harman Dewan, Grade XII, SNS Gurugram

193 Member States<> One United Nations

Kanye West

-by Harman Dewan, Grade XII(IB), SNS Gurugram



Kanye. Ye. Yeezy. Regardless of which name you have heard, or even whether you have heard his name while talking about clothing, shoes, rapping, producing, or celebrity drama, it is a given that Kanye West has been talked about around you if not to you.

Born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1977, Kanye West has simultaneously had a diverse array of professions in his 26 year career and has pioneered unique styles in each field of work that he has occupied. His eccentric personality is one of his most recognizable traits and has caused him many troubles, but has also kept him relevant for almost 3 decades. However, he was not always as confident and controversial as he is today.

From an early age, he showed interests in multiple careers, stating that he wanted to be a basketball player in highschool, a videogame designer in the 7th grade, a rapper closer to adulthood, and a fashion designer in his early 20's.

At the age of 15, he took up a part time job at 'The Gap', a clothing chain, which would largely influence his interest in fashion. As for his career in music, he started out in the mid-1990's making beats and backing tracks for local hip-hop artists in Chicago, and spent the next few years building his portfolio by working with artists such as rap legend Jay-Z.

Throughout this time, he was supported by his childhood friends, family, and mainly his enthusiastic and endearing mother, Donda West. He would initially sell these beats to underground performers for prices near \$50-\$200, helping him and his mother stay afloat as he neared adulthood.

However, in 1997, at the age of 20, he sold a backing track to a highly proclaimed artist named Jermaine Dupri for \$5000, marking the start of his chain of success for years to come.

After having spent a few years as what many considered Chicago's best record producer, Kanye found an urge to expand his horizons and to express his ideas and emotions in a new frontier – rapping.

Most major record labels that he applied to rejected him, believing that his talents were spent best only on producing beats and melodies. However, after relentlessly pursuing this goal for months on end and writing and recording songs while still employed as a producer, Kanye was signed on to Jay-Z's label, Roc-A-Fella Records, as a rapper. From this moment onwards, he was able to both produce

and rap his own songs and started professionally recording his first album in the early 2000's, 'College Dropout'. However, halfway through recording this album, an incident occurred that would change the course of his life as well as change him as a person forever.

While recording his first album in 2002, West would constantly overwork himself and return home late at night all the way from California. One of these nights, due to constant work and burnout, he fell asleep at the wheel and his car crashed into an oncoming vehicle, resulting in multiple injuries for both the drivers. For Kanye, these injuries included breaking his jaw in 3 different places, which many people assumed would mean that his career as a rapper was over.



However, due simply to the fact that he survived a near-death experience, West was more determined than ever to find success as a rapper and musician. Prior to this event, he was seen as a humble, nervous, and somewhat socially awkward young man, but from the moment he went into recovery, both the media and his close friends noticed that he had become much more naive and confident.

His drive to achieve his dreams and goals was so strong that even while recovering from surgery for his jaw, he was rapping and recording for his new album with wires from the operation still in his

jaw. This inspired the title of his first hit single, 'Through The Wire'.



This was the song that convinced Roc-A-Fella Records to release his first album. With this album being a commercial success, he slowly drifted away from producing and released critically acclaimed albums one after the other.

Despite having changed as a person, West remained more humble than most rappers and musicians, always including honesty in his lyrics and singing about his insecurities as well as his hardships in life.

This made him unique not only as a rapper, but also as a person, cementing his place as an icon of a musician early on in his career. Another point on which West was considered unique was his sense of fashion. At a time when most rappers could be seen wearing oversized t-shirts, low-hanging jeans, and sports jerseys, Kanye would wear eccentric clothes including pink polos, crew neck sweaters, brown coats, and Khakis.

This eccentricity could be traced back to his employment at The Gap, where he would sell such clothes to a crowd which was mainly composed of rich white families.

In 2007, just 3 years after the release of his first album, Kanye's mother, Donda, passed away from a mixture of complications from cosmetic surgery as well as coronary disease.

Much like his accident in 2002, this event would make Kanye as a person feel further alienated from the rest of the world. From the extreme emotional response he had to this event, many people started questioning the stability of his mental health, while the media attributed this reaction to his expressive personality.

This impacted his behaviour for a long period of time, causing a number of controversial events and a downfall in his reputation. The most notable of these would be during the 2009 Video Music Awards, when West interrupted Taylor Swift's acceptance speech for Best Female Music Video and stole the mic from her hands to say that the award should have went to Beyonce for her song 'Single Ladies'.

This event was seen by many as a supportive gesture towards the wife of his long-time collaborator, Jay-Z, but the majority of the media saw this as an example of Kanye being an unacceptably misogynist and unstable personality.

For the next few years, he was ridiculed by the media, whereas fans and some artists stayed in support of his actions, especially after his apology to Taylor Swift during a 2-hour Twitter rant. Swift even forgave him for his actions and the two made up for the controversy that very year.

The feud between the two practically disappeared for the late 2000's and early 2010's, and West continued to focus on his career, as he released critically acclaimed albums such as "808's and Heartbreaks", which was meant to be devoted to his mother and, according to

Kanye, was made in her memory.



During this period in his life, his musical career flourished and helped him bring his net worth to tens of millions of Dollars, but his endeavours in fashion refused to take the back seat.

West partnered up with companies such as Bape to make hoodies and limited edition sneakers, Takashi Murakami to design album covers, and Adidas to design and make Air Yeezy 1's.

These projects continued to show the world how Kanye was not just a musician and a producer, but an all-round artist and visionary whose simple yet unique ideas would help him grow in wealth, fame, and even creativity through the years. **This creativity, however, was not an excuse for his multiple acts of misbehaviour.**

In 2015, Kanye released a hit single titled "Famous", in which he ridiculed Taylor Swift despite having made up with her, and stated that the only reason that she is successful is because of the controversy that West himself had caused. Although the song itself

was critically acclaimed to some extent, most people saw it as a sign of Kanye either causing controversy on purpose to make headlines, or as a sign of serious mental issues.

The alleged mental issues at the time got worse when West had his first manic episode in 2016, and got tested for his mental health. The result diagnosed him with bipolar disorder, a fact which he revealed to the world on his album "Ye", titled after a nickname of his.

After the media had ridiculed him for almost 2 decades because of his strange and controversial behaviour, the public, in Kanye's eyes, finally understood Kanye's issues to some level and started to empathise with him. Many people now saw that his personality, as well as his actions and reactions, were naturally eccentric and extreme due to the state of his mental health.

From this point onwards, Kanye started referring to himself as 'Ye' much more often, as he entered a new era in his career. He was solidified as a legend in the Hip-Hop industry, as well as in music history as a whole.

He would frequently collaborate with up and coming artists and help boost their careers, and appear on television frequently to express his opinions or announce new events. In 2020, Kanye West officially hit a net worth of \$1 billion, cementing his success in wealth as well. For a man who seemed to have every aspect of his life playing out perfectly at the moment, there was one particular part of his life that was depreciating; his marriage to Kim Kardashian.

Despite having had 3 children together, Kanye and Kim were reportedly facing harsh issues in their marriage. While West claimed that he was in love with his wife, she claimed that there were no

emotions or feelings involved from her side anymore.



In the middle of 2020, news broke that the couple were unofficially separated and that they would split custody of their children. During the same year, Kanye announced the release of his new album, titled after his mother, Donda.

The album was announced to release near the end of May, but due to delays in production, the album infamously faced multiple delays over the course of the year.

The release jumped from late may, to early june, to early july, to early August. Many assumed that the multiple delays were a tactic from West's side to attract attention to the album and to make sure that he remains more successful in album sales than his competitor at the time, Drake.

However, the album finally found it's release on the 29th of August, 2020, and opened to great critical acclaim. Many deemed the album worth the wait, and West's musical career continued to flourish.

As West and Kardashian continued to drift apart, they legally ended their marriage through divorce in February, 2021. Throughout the year, Kanye ranted on social media about how his ex-wife kept him from seeing his children and from interacting with them, gathering the attention and sympathies of the press.



Near the end of the year, in October of 2021, it was announced that Kim Kardashian had started a relationship with American comedian, Pete Davidson.

This once more angered Kanye, who continued to harass Davidson on social media and threaten him and anyone who supported the new relationship. This behaviour divided the media into two factions yet again; those who supported him and his emotional story, and those who believed that the harassment was taking it too far and that he should seek professional help for his current mental state.

He later stated near the start of 2022 that he would be leaving the two alone and that he would stop with the online harassment that had drawn so much attention to him in the last year. He continued to cause drama one way or the other, however, through the announcement that his new album, Donda 2, would only be available

on a digital record stem player of his own creation. Although this method of promotion was controversial, it did not stop him from earning millions of dollars through sales of his stem player alone.

Through all the hardships, controversies, highs, and lows that Kanye has experienced, his visionary mind and his tendency to stir controversy in every aspect of his life have stayed with him. While he does cause trouble in the lives of many others who have crossed his path, he cannot be ignored as an icon of music, fashion, and entertainment. Simply said, it is impossible to know where his antics and creative activities will lead the world next.



C. A Bhavani Devi

-by Amara Sood, Grade X(IGCSE), SNS Gurugram



From the streets of Chennai to the most glorious international event, Bhavani Devi has indeed come a long way. Born in a middle-class family to a Hindu priest and a homemaker, she has had her fair share of challenges in achieving glory.

She was introduced to fencing when she was 11 years old. Then, it was at a very nascent stage in India - unknown and unappreciated. Her high school had introduced four new sports (Swimming, Squash, Boxing, and Fencing) as part of the 'Sports for Schools' initiative led by the late CM J. Jayalalithaa. Each of these had a fixed number of students allowed to join, and when Bhavani's turn came, there was no spot left in any sport except fencing.

Without any knowledge about the sport, she reached the stadium the following day and was fascinated to see and touch the swords and protective gear.

“I had never heard of this sport, but I was happy to choose it. But then, I was into many other sports such as squash and wasn't very sure. Then one day, I lost a fencing match, and that's when I decided that I needed to focus on it,” shares Bhavani.



She represented India for the first time when she was 14 and was shown a black card during this tournament for being three minutes late.

Coming from a humble middle-class family with four other siblings, she faced an immense shortage of funds. **Yet, her family went the extra mile to provide for her. “Equipment was costly, and we had to keep purchasing new equipment.**

So, I used to train with bamboo sticks instead to keep my real swords intact for the competitions. **Also, for entry in each category, there were entry fees involved, which were difficult for us to pay. But my mother always said, 'If you want to play, you play; I will arrange**

somehow.'

There was no support from the government and no sponsors for fencing, so my mother used to take loans and mortgage her jewelry. That's how they used to support me, in the beginning ten years of my career," the fencer narrates.



She was always unsure whether she was on the right path to reaching the international level as there was no historical achievement and so no one to look up to. "All us athletes are spending our whole lives on winning some medal.

We can't go back again if something happens. It is a precarious career, especially in a sport like Fencing. But not a single time did this

hinder me. Everyone who has supported me is important to me. Even the ones who called after they saw me winning a competition and gave some money voluntarily," she added.

Finally, things changed for the good. Bhavani started receiving scholarships and funding and has become a haven of inspiration for thousands of players like her.

The nine-time National Champion has bagged many medals, starting at the 2009 Common Wealth Games to the 2014 Tuscany Cup in Italy. Even more inspiring is that she has continued studying throughout her journey. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from the Government Brennen College, Thalassery in Kerala, and an MBA Degree from St Joseph's Engineering College, Chennai in Tamil Nadu.

Her motto to inspire other Fencers like herself is: "Success won't come in a day. You have to be patient and continue to work hard. More importantly, you must crave and love your sport."



Isn't it strange

-by Miraya Joneja, Grade X, SNS Faridabad



This face masked in insecurity,
behind this mirror of mystery,
isn't it strange that people you thought you knew,
can become strangers so suddenly?

This heart beaten blue,
from the sorrows of a familiar hue,
isn't it strange that the dark honesty you once knew,
has now turned into a deceitful light?

This anxious mind,
that lives on a different axis and time,
isn't it strange that every single thought I bury,
still comes back to me and lets me know it's still alive?

Lustre

-by Yuvika Verma, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



Secrets, lies, truth, happiness, sadness
All these words what do they mean
Are they not the minds game
Are they not the hearts cover

Is it not all in the mind
To be disconsolate
Is it not in the mind
To speak with such mendacity

Now I question veracity
I question whether we have control
Over sentiment, or anything

193 Member States <> One United Nations

APRIL, 2022

But I know for sure
Once we lose control
We become indignant
And try to control what we can't

That lustre on the hearts shield is an illusion
For when real happiness comes
When truth comes out
The shield breaks
And your heart quakes

For now you have true lustre

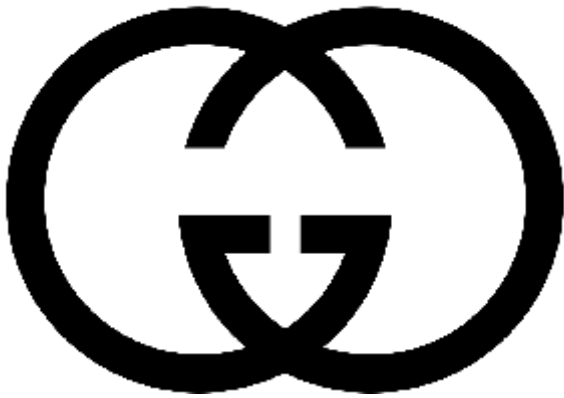


GUCCI

-by Aditi Kumar, Grade XII(IB), SNS Gurugram



GUCCI



Gucci hasn't really had the easy way out into becoming one of the biggest luxury brands in the world. **The history of Gucci dates back to 1921, when Guccio Gucci initially opened a leather goods shop for his Edwardian customers in Florence.** Following his footsteps in the 70s, his sons **Rudolfo and Aldo** started opening stores of the same on Rodeo Drive and Fifth Avenue in the US.

And in no time famous celebrities such as Frank Sinatra, Ingrid Bergman, Elizabeth Taylor, Grace Kelly, Jacqueline Kennedy and Sophia Loren were getting dressed up in the bamboo-handled bag, the Flora scarf and horse-bit moccasin.

By the 80s the flourishing business of Gucci was taken over by Maurizio Gucci, son of Rudolfo. Charming but lethargic, one mistake followed the other and ultimately this scion of the eponymous fashion house led to the initial downfall of Gucci by reportedly

spending lavish amounts of money on his expenditures and in addition to that, he even ended up selling his stock in Gucci to a private investment firm, thereby completely ending the family's association with the fashion house in 1993.

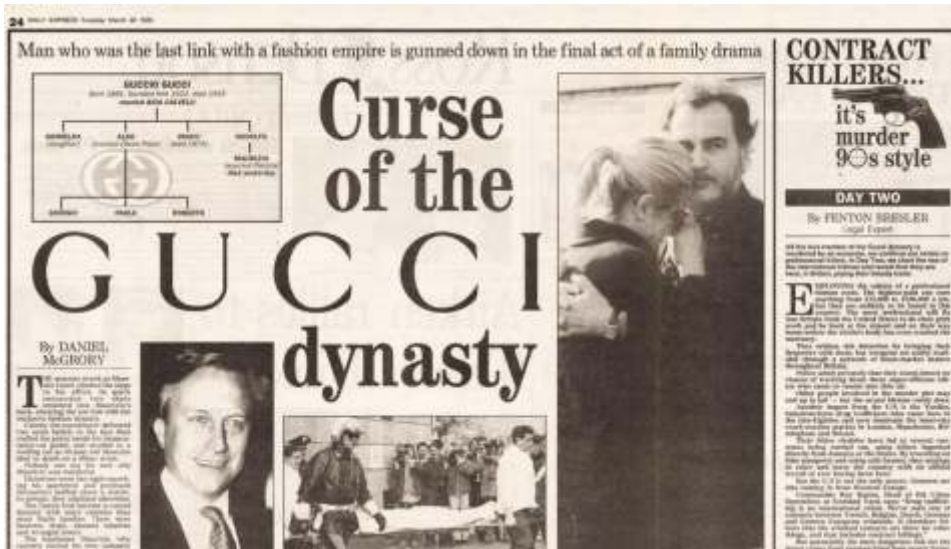


Leather shop of Guccio Gucci

Two years later, Maurizio Gucci was brutally assassinated by an unknown man on the steps of his Milan office. An official investigation later on led to the revelation of the main architect behind Gucci's death (brace yourself for a very trite plot twist!)

-Gucci's ex wife, Patrizia Regianni! The reason for his murder on her behest, are known to be a mixture of greed, resentment and jealousy. After their marriage had broken down in 1985, the black widow aka Regianni was offered a million dollars a year as a part of the divorce settlement.

However, she was far from content and complained by saying "Little more than a plate of lentils." She has even been known to written a diary entry-on the day of Maurizio Gucci's death, March 27th,1995- which contained of a single word 'Paradeisos' (Italian for 'paradise'), which she later Daily Express page 1995. denied by saying she had written the word because she liked it so much that she was considering using it for naming her next villa.



On November 3rd 1998, Patrizia and her accomplices were found guilty of murder and was sentenced to 29 years in prison. She later was offered parole in 2011 under a work-release programme, which she didn't accept and chose to remain imprisoned by saying, "I have never worked a day in life and I am certainly not going to start now."

When she was later freed in 2016, at the age of 67, she went shopping on Milan's Rodeo Drive, dripping with jewels and carrying a live parrot on her shoulder. She gave interviews, lamenting that she'd been limited to wearing Zara and that her adult daughters won't send her money or let her meet her grand kids.

Slowly but steadily, Gucci as a brand started pulling its socks up and was back in the game, in no time. De Sole, the chief executive back then, limited sales to wholly-owned Gucci boutiques, where the sumptuous settings added value to the items. Under his supervision, the image of the brand was monitored at all times. Gradually, a sense of exclusivity was reclaimed.

Tom Ford initially became a part of Gucci back in 1990 when he joined the brand as a designer and was later promoted to creative director



in 1994. His designs have said to revive Gucci back as an international luxury fashion house. Ford pursued the Hollywood elites while De Sole negotiated contracts, and the business flourished. Ford then went on to leave the brand in 2004 in order to start his own fashion line and is currently the chairman of Council of Fashion Designers of America.

Alessandro Michele is the current creative director of Gucci. He joined the firm in 2002 as a senior accessories designer at Fendi. In 2011, he was appointed 'associate' to Frida Gianni, the then creative director of Gucci and later himself was appointed the same in 2015. Between the year 2015 to 2019, Michele truly doubled the revenue and tripled the profits of the fashion house.

However there was also a time, when he was eyeing jobs in London to pursue his passion for cinema costume design and eventually contemplating leaving Gucci for good. Even the numbers have now shown the good that has come from his presence at the brand.

Arguably, his macro impact on androgynous fashion is considered to be the most influential. Through his influence in the fashion industry,

clothing has evolved into something more creative and touching, avoiding stereotypes while allowing people to be more self-sufficient and expressive.



Fiction and Non-Fiction

-by Anshika Kansal, Grade X(IGCSE), SNS Gurugram



Whether a bookworm or not everyone's familiar with the umbrella terms, fiction and non-fiction. Some individuals wish to leap into pools of words which create worlds beyond the bounds of their soul-crushing, monotonous and haplessly melancholic reality. At least that's how I'd describe the actuality we are prisoners of in comparison to the fictitious universes established in novels.

On the other hand some wish to gain knowledge from the astonishingly eventful lives led by equally exceptional people, or perhaps read about instances that will make you sob hysterically, laugh till you roll off the bed or transport you to the edge of your seat. After all, real life instances can have a profound effect when narrated by a skilled story teller.

However, the question still persists as to which of the two genres is superior. It is a herculean task to determine if one prefers nonfiction or fiction, as the combination of the two sounds considerably more appealing. Nevertheless, the answer may be discovered owing to the existence of opinionated individuals and research.

According to research done by Harvard Business Review, fictional books are far better than non-fiction. The characters and stories located in foreign parts of the world help nip difficult discussions in the bud.

The commonality amongst fans of this genre helps people openly and honestly deal with difficult and intricate themes. Research also suggests reading literary fiction, is an effective way to improve the brain's capacity to have an open mind while processing information, which is an essential skill for sensible decision-making.

Fictional books also generate fewer individual assumptions regarding alternative explanations, indicating that they are more secure in their own opinions.

On the other hand, non-fiction takes the lead over fiction when it comes to being truthful and relevant. Nonfiction has a lot of verifiable aspects of what we call the "real world." This might be the driving reason behind the idea that nonfiction is more relevant than fiction.

A study shows that non-fiction books are mainly beneficial for children. They provide solutions to real—world issues, an illimitable amount people all over the world struggle through challenges like hunger, deprivation of inclusive education and labour rights.

Non fiction books can offer youngsters information, new views, and life skills required to solve as well as understand the problems faced by their peers.

It also helps us to feel at ease in the environment we live in, whether it's learning about the history behind our favourite fast food chain or understanding why the world can sometimes reek of chaos and smell like a meadow at the same time.

In conclusion, it is tough to tell which of the two genres is superior; I suppose it relies entirely on the reader's preferences and requirements at the end of the day.



Reality

-by Miraya Joneja, Grade X, SNS Faridabad



I escape the reality every now and then,
as a form of my grief,
and I try and relive what already has passed,
in an attempt to change my deeds.

I escape reality every now and then,
so I can convince myself,
that maybe this ever changing world,
is too complicated for me to comprehend.

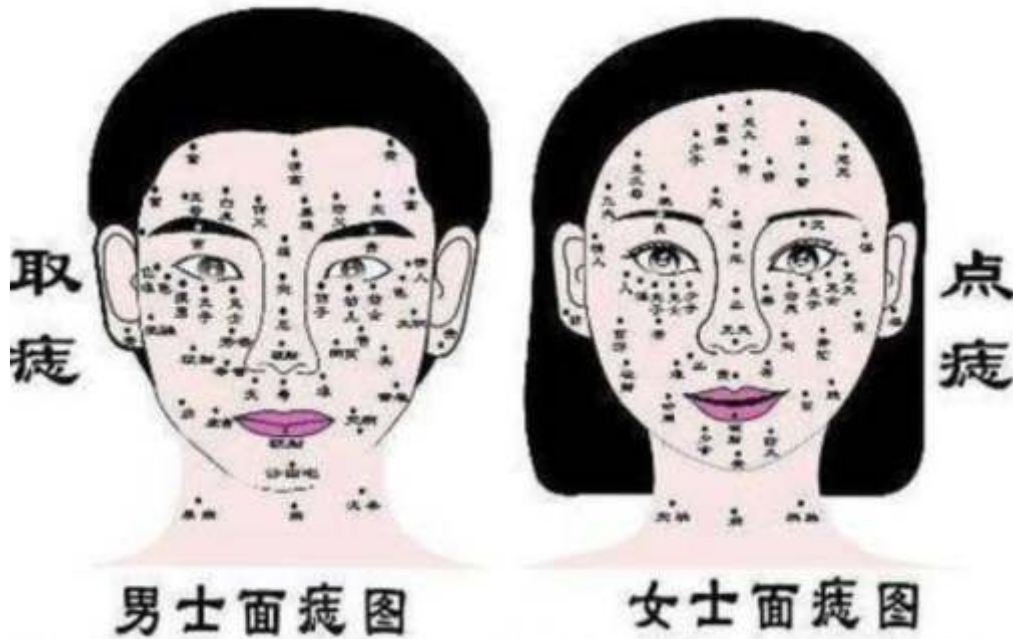
I escape reality every now and then,
so I can for once,
far away from this dreadful world,
dance among the swaying flowers and the setting sun.

I escape reality every now and then,
as I feel wistful,
but it can't bring back what used to be,
yet maybe time can mend your scattered pieces,

Beauty marks and face moles:

A history lesson you never knew you needed!

-by Janhavi Makhijani, Grade XII(IB), SNS Gurugram



Beauty marks are often associated with famous faces like Cindy Crawford, who with the help of their beauty marks made a place for themselves in the fashion industry, but are beauty marks just glorified moles? or do they have a historical context to them, which is more than just a symbol of beauty.

In ancient China, moles were related to the art of face reading. Imperial China developed Mian Xiang, the art of face reading, Around the same time as Hippocrates. It was already a topic of serious discussion and debate in academia and military strategy in 403-221 BCE, during the Warring States period. **Gui Gu Tze, a master of face reading and military strategy, ran one of these schools. Chiang Kai-shek used face reading and mole divination to find the right general for military maneuvers.** When those strategies failed, and he and his followers fled to Taiwan in 1949, Mao Tse Sung banned face reading, mole reading, and hand reading for decades.

The ancient Romans were historically the first to use face moles. They used fake moles to distinguish between the free and the enslaved Romans. Enslaved Romans were more likely to have wounds, scars, tattoos, and brands due to their abuse but were not given the ability to conceal them.

The formerly enslaved would sometimes cut off or burn their branded skin, concealing the scars with fake moles. This was used to differentiate class rank. In medieval Europe, moles were associated with witchcraft and black magic.

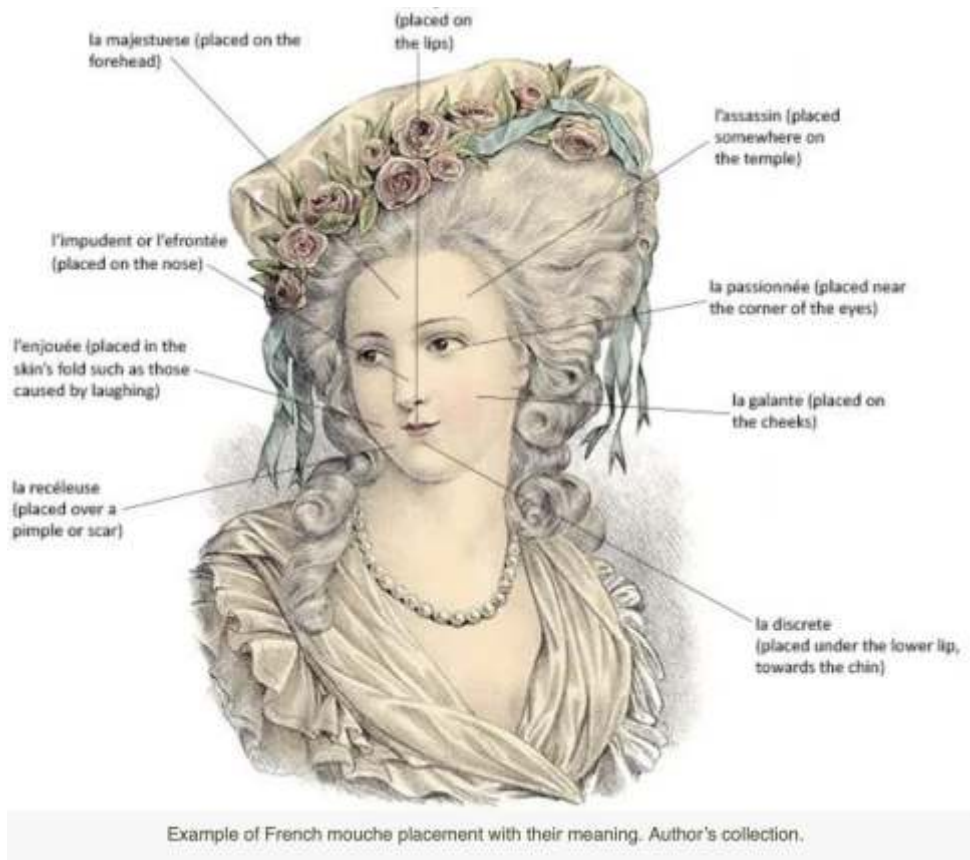
Moles and other bodily "abnormalities" were seen as signs of witchcraft and the devil's mark on his subject, where he or the witch's familiar suckled. Suspected witches were stripped, searched, shaved, and frequently tortured into confessing.



French mouches of the 17th century were used by the French, and both men and women would put velvet patches on their faces. This was essentially done to respond to smallpox since skincare and cosmetics didn't immensely help.

The French were fascinated by the mole, and soon they gained popularity and were called mouches ("flies" in French), and the materials they came in were as varied as any other fashionable object. You could get fake moles in silk, taffeta, and velvet in the shape of a heart, a club, a wand, and more if you had the money for it. And moles again started indicating class and privileged.

If one was poor, they were usually stuck with homemade mouches made of rat skin; once again, fake moles could delineate your class privilege; if you were a woman of limited means, you were not spending your money on the fancy fake mole.



Besides hiding signs of smallpox and explaining your class privilege, fake moles were also in political conversations. In the 18th century, counterfeit moles were strategically placed on one side of the face to show support for a particular political party.

However, these moles in Britain were seen as how **John Bulwer** would describe them as "mad and cruel Gallantry, foolish bravery, filthy fineness, and loathsome loveliness... [a way of] fashioning and altering bodies from the mold intended by nature."



In His 17th-century book, *Anthropometamorphosis: Man Transformed; Or, The Artificial Changeling*, Bulwer took an anthropological approach to popular body modifications in various cultures worldwide.

cultures worldwide.

Bulwer included an illustration in the 1653 edition comparing the European affinity for Face patches with tattoos, henna, masks, veils, and piercings in other locations, deliberately exaggerating the trend by depicting a woman wearing a patch shaped like a horse-drawn carriage. Even a parliament bill was introduced in Britain to deal with "the vice of painting, wearing black patches, and immodest dresses of women."

Due to the popularity of syphilis as a disease in these times, beauty moles were often used by sex workers to hide their marks, hence why the trend was associated with the sexual immorality of women.

The painting "a harlot's progress" tells a fictional story of a woman called moll Hackabout , who becomes a harlot and eventually dies of a disease at the age of 22. The painter explicitly used the moles as a symbol, and we're not just used as a decorative detail .





193 Member States <> One United Nations

MARCH, 2022



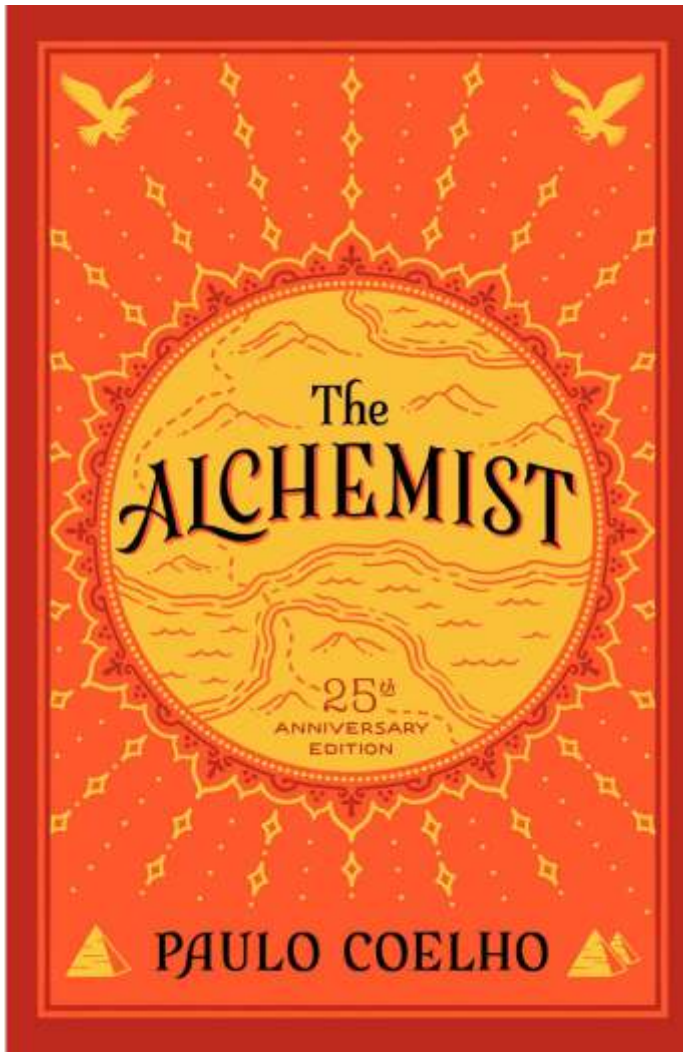
193 Member States <> One United Nations



The black patches drawn in the painting were ill-positioned and significantly large , indicating that these women were trying to hide their diseases rather than looking youthful or beautiful . Writers at this time also claimed that one could tell if a woman was a sex worker or not purely based on the number of patches they wore on their face and how they were positioned.

Book Review: *The Alchemist*

-by Avani Varma Datla, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



Everyone has a destiny.

It's not written in the stars. It's not written on our foreheads by a celestial being.

As per *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho, to realise one's destiny is one's own obligation.

"There is only one thing that makes a dream impossible to achieve: the fear of failure."

This book is the journey of a shepherd boy, Santiago. Santiago has one recurring dream as he sleeps- treasures hidden in the pyramids of Egypt. We follow him as he perceives his dream as an omen, a message conveying what he could achieve.

Santiago's journey is a simplified version of life. The sacrifices we have to make, the lengths we have to go to achieve what we desire.

“Why do we have to listen to our hearts?” the boy asked.

“Because, wherever your heart is, that is where you will find your treasure.”

Paulo Coelho beautifully illustrates the idea of 'Personal Legends'. Essentially- they are our goals, what we strive to achieve. Santiago's personal legend is to find the hidden treasure. He meets various personalities along his journey, the same way we do in life. All these people play a role in his journey in various ways and shape his destiny.

“If we want something, the whole universe conspires to help us achieve it.” But we should first be ready to start and not settle for what has already been presented to us. In a way, *The Alchemist* is a philosophical take on the idea that no one else will achieve your dreams for you. The book is a trove of gems of knowledge.

“It's the possibility of having a dream come true that makes life interesting.”

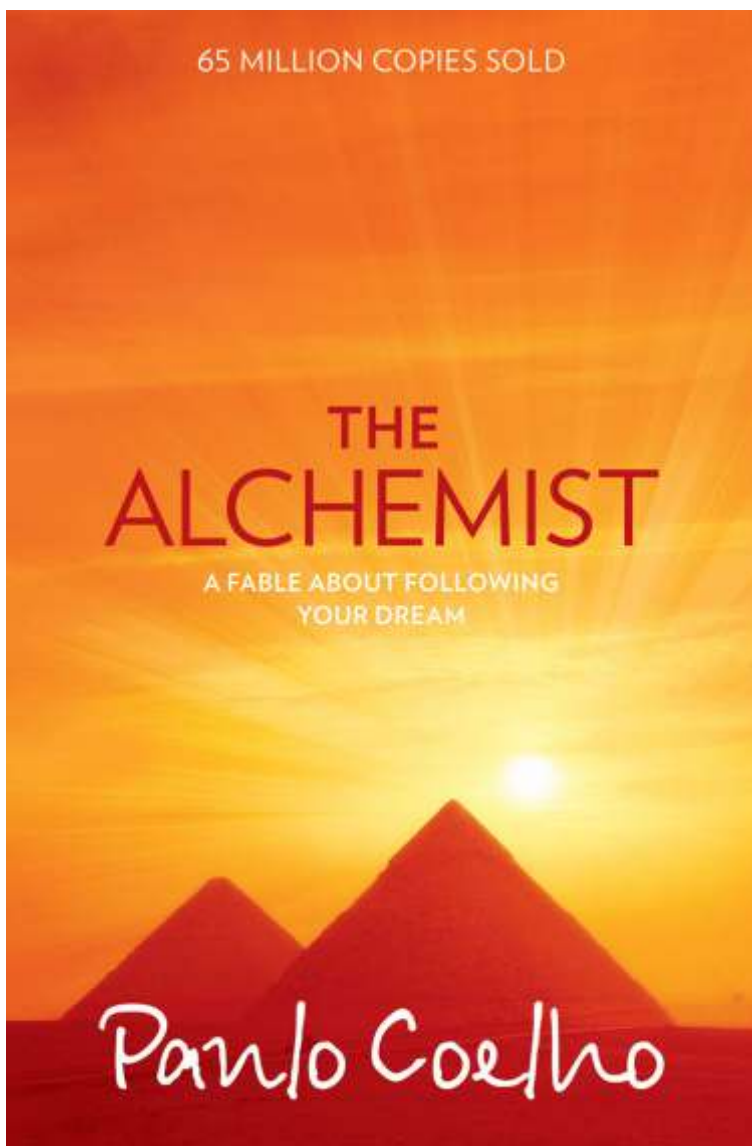
What stands out to me the most is, contrary to popular belief, this book portrays love as an obstacle rather than the goal.

To conclude, I rate this book a solid 5/5. It taught me many life lessons in the form of a story, which is something I rarely come across.

If you are looking for something with action, thrill or romance, this is not for you. This book is very philosophical and intriguing. It is full of metaphors and thought provoking quotes.

"The simple things are also the most extraordinary things, and only the wise can see them."

Happy reading!



Military Power

-by Naisha Arora, Grade XI, SNS Gurugram



1. Diminishing significance of military power in contemporary politics. To what extent is military power still relevant as a means of exerting political influence?

Power is defined by Max Weber as the probability of an actor in a social relationship to achieve a desired outcome despite resistance. It is a fundamental concept which governs every interaction in international relations and can be applied to most case studies. Power by Joseph Nye has been defined as influence and the ability to achieve change per will. Joseph Nye has classified power into:

a) **Hard power:** Power exerted by states through the use of force and coercion- using military and economic threats as well as incentives in order to pressurize an entity into achieving a desirable outcome

b) **Soft power:** The ability to achieve desired change/ result through the use of influence, diplomacy and persuasion.

Historically, as seen through events like world wars, the cold war, etc. **hard power which is often considered synonymous with military power has been the most powerful tool in order to achieve national interests along with desirable political outcomes.** However, with the advent of globalization, armament and technology, there can be examined the shift from military power to more soft power strategies in contemporary politics.

Power can often be defined as military capability which equates to the amount of military resources possessed by a state which it can use to exert its influence upon other actors. However, in contemporary politics with factors like globalization and the advent of technology along with the evolutionary nature of dynamics in politics, military power/ strength is not the only factor which determines influence or success.

This can be seen through US intervention in Vietnam where the USA did not prevail despite having significantly larger military resources. Furthermore, non- state actors like terrorists exert power not through military means but by the fear they inspire in the minds of the government and/ or population as can be seen through the example of Boko Haram in Africa where power and control was exerted despite lack of conventional military resources.

Moreover, it can be argued that the cost and resources of maintaining as well as applying military power is fairly large. **Ergo, it is wise for a country to conserve these resources and approach a situation through more diplomatic/ passive means.** A country could instead approach a situation through more passive, diplomatic

means, using military intervention only as a last resort. The resources used to sustain a considerably large military can be diverted and better used to promote development and improvement in the standard of living of the citizens of a country.

This can be seen through the very relevant example of Costa Rica's demilitarization in order to promote a better standard of living for its citizens in terms of health, education, etc.

The development of nuclear arms and technology have made countries unwilling to disturb the global balance due to fear of retaliation and mutually assured destruction. This is seen through the stagnant (but still hostile) military relationship between US and North Korea where neither country is willing to use military force for fear of equal retaliation, mutually assured destruction and even a potential world war.

Added to this, the emerging theories of liberalism and interdependence, the advent of soft power, persuasion and diplomacy have increased in the political sphere. This is as military power is often unsustainable and impactful for lasting change in the long term.

This is perfectly modeled by the example of the USA deploying peacekeeping troops in Afghanistan. As soon as the troops were rescinded, Taliban takeover was immediate which negated any change/influence which had been made. In this manner, diplomacy and cultural influence through soft power can be seen to yield greater impact in contemporary politics.

Soft power is often exercised through economic diplomacy as can be evidenced through China's Belt and Road initiative. This can also

facilitate cultural imperialism. Soft power prevents further escalation of a situation and results in more lasting change as can be seen through the processes of peacekeeping and mediation.

On the other hand however, power that has military capability helps exert greater influence in international politics if not through direct intervention then through the threat and significance of military backing it is conceivable that other than certain exceptions, states with greater military power are more powerful & more influential in global politics(eg: USA, China, Russia).

This also corroborates the realist world view of state power being defined by and dependent on its military as a pillar of support. Military power still retains significance in the sense that it permits more efficient action as it does not require extensive bureaucracy and trust as soft power does.

Building trust to exert influence through soft power is a lengthy process and can easily be shattered. An example of sovereign influence and exertion of military power can be seen through the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 despite resistance from NATO.

Moreover, military power aids in a state being able to protect itself and its sovereign status till date. It also allows a state to promote its national interest without hesitation and exert a dominant influence in international relations.

This can very evidently be seen through the South China Sea dispute where china has fought for its claim to territory through its military buildup on an artificial island in the area. China has also been able to gain Philippines as an ally by reducing military pressure in the country and making peace with the same. In this manner, China has

been able to use its military to secure greater power that can allow a state to pursue its interests despite strong resistance. It allows a state to pursue expansionist policies and acquire greater resources as is also seen through the recent Russia-Ukraine conflict where Russia continues to wage war against Ukraine despite imposed economic sanction, Russia's strong military power and influence has allowed it to threaten even the west into non-interference, warning of 'disastrous consequences'.

The last argument given which aids in building a case for military power still retaining significance is that of its invaluable role in the process of humanitarian intervention. It is the bedrock of peacekeeping and its significance in this sphere has not decreased despite the globalized world. In fact, it can be said to be more international (eg: UN peacekeeping forces) and co-operative.

In conclusion, despite a shift from military/ hard power to soft power politics, we can see that military power has not completely declined in significance. In my opinion, a combination of diplomacy with military backing is perhaps the most effective form of a state exerting its desired control

E Pluribus Unum



SHIV NADAR SCHOOL

Education for Life

193 Member States <> One United Nations

APRIL, 2022