**Austin Warfe**

**Green eggs and ham**

I would not like them here or there. I would not like them anywhere. I don’t like green eggs and ham. I do not like them, Sam-I-Am.

Growing up, my favourite book was ‘The Gruffalo’. And it wasn’t just my favourite book to read, but for some reason I thought it was absolutely terrifying. There was something about his “terrible tusks and terrible claws” that scared me as a 7-year-old. Yet tragically, when hopefully I read this book to my children in the future, they won’t be even a tiny bit scared. Why? Because the Gruffalo’s eyes won’t be orange, his tongue won’t be black, and he won’t have purple prickles all over his back. Instead, his eyes will shimmer, his teeth will sparkle from good brushing after a snack, and he will be seeing a dermatologist for a skin condition on his back. Are you scared yet?

In the world today, there is an alarming misinterpretation of words. People are becoming more and more unable to appreciate the nuances of language. And so, we are in a crisis. A crisis that threatens to ruin literature. A crisis in which the only way to solve it is simple; in our world today, we need more understanding and celebration of language, instead of just taking it at face value.

Just like the classics of Dr Seuss being censored in 2021, over the past few months the words of Roald Dahl have been erased from history. More than 300 changes have been made to almost 15 of his children’s classics to ensure they align with a woke audience. But the reality is, they weren’t written for a woke audience. But the most ironic thing is that the very people claiming to understand why these phrases are offensive are the ones who have completely misunderstood their meaning in the context of today's society.

How do I know this? Well, in Fantastic Mr. Fox, the word “black” – describing the colour of a tractor – was removed because it wasn’t appropriate. In the Witches, the lines “you can’t pull the hair of every lady you meet” was changed to “besides, there are plenty of other reasons why women might wear wigs and there is certainly nothing wrong with that”. And my favourite of them all, the word ‘fat, describing Augustus Gloop, has been changed to… ‘enormous’. I don’t know if I’m the only one, but calling someone ‘enormous’ doesn’t seem much nicer than calling them ‘fat’.

But there is more to changing Roald Dahl than just ruining his books. These words, in every context, are a teachable moment. We need to keep books like these classics as they are, so that we can teach younger readers that we no longer use these words. What we need more of in the world is to preserve literary culture, otherwise we may as well go further and paint over the bodies in the Sistine Chapel or put pants on Michelangelo’s David, and continue our erasing of anything that might be offensive in a modern society.

So, I don’t like that, Sam-I-Am. And, I don’t like green eggs and ham. Let's strive to understand words in their frame, and appreciate the subtleties that gave them their fame. For when we grasp their full context and hue, we can communicate clearly and connect anew.

**Luke Evans**

In a country which once saw bashing, arrest, and genital mutilation as an appropriate response to homosexuality, we now have the opportunity to watch tens of thousands of people celebrate who they are live from Oxford Street Sydney in the Mardi Gras pride parade every year. This is all thanks to some of the bravest of battlers who in the past half century have made the courageous decision to simply be who they are. Each and every one of these valiant human beings has made our world a better, safer and far more understanding place just by showing their true colours. These regular people have made it possible for me to openly express my feelings of inspiration towards the LGBTQ community at my all-boys catholic high school. The world needs more of you.

Now, some of you may be comfortable in your own skin and you may truly believe that you are yourself, 100%. Some of you may be right. But it's extremely easy to enter your own bashful bubble when fear of the uninhibited is keeping you at bay. Others may be hindering you from reaching your own potential, but that’s only for fear you may prove them wrong, show them up, or steal their thunder. That or they’re just a plain dick. Upon introspection, I can personally say that for every time I have regretted speaking up, there are countless more times where I wished I’d had the determination to let my passion burst from my chest. Our world may be one massively loud mess, but just ask any of the teachers in here. The only thing that shuts up a bunch of loud voices, is another even louder voice! The only way to really break free from whatever kind of shackles you may not even know are keeping you back, is to give more of yourself; to every situation, every fight, every dilemma, every discussion and every affair you face.

Humanity is built on cohesion, following the herd, unwavering loyalty to the alpha, strength in numbers. But your pack might not always get it right. The deindividuation that comes with being a part of a united group can create breeding grounds for toxic masculinity, speaking without thought, and violence. Psychology professor Philip Zimbardo, creator of the Stanford prison experiment states that mob mentality is not the work of a few bad eggs spoiling the dozen, but that of each and every one of them taking advantage of the facelessness of the situation. Diffusion of personal responsibility, blind obedience of authority and uncritical conformity to group norms are the symptoms possessed by every individual a part of the hive minds involved in the crusades, Spanish inquisitions, Salem witch trials, Woodstock 99, The Astroworld concert and the S’Kevies tram chants. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn states that the line between good and evil is drawn down the heart of every human being. The way we act is a choice. If only one person sees error in their ways, then perhaps they can help the herd to see the light. But if you are ever booted for malfunctioning in a flock of drones. Your world has to update its software, not you. To anyone of you who would rather remain a part of an anonymous mob than be yourself, I say I’ll see you, when I see YOU.

To wear one’s heart on their sleeve is to better the community, better themselves and better the world.

I’ll see you when I see you.

**Sam Anthonisz**

What do we need more of in the world? I mean, who am I to decide what is needed in the world? I don’t even understand the unique struggles of the people closest to me, let alone those on the other side of the world. This is why we need a greater awareness of other people and their struggles and hardships.

A lot of conflict in the world is derived from misunderstanding or a lack of knowledge about other people. People fight over religion, politics, and gender identity all because they either don’t truly understand the people they are fighting with or refuse to learn about them.

Social media exacerbates the issue. Social media is constructed in such a way that the opinions and voices you are most familiar and comfortable with are all you hear. This echo chamber of one’s own opinions forms, creating an environment where one’s thoughts are never challenged. No one is able to civilly talk through their differences, it's all torches and pitchforks at the slightest disagreement. Social media allows people to write anonymously to people far away, which gives them the opportunity to be loud and aggressive with no repercussions. This rage and anger found online prevents people from understanding others and their issues, in preference to aggression and fighting which accomplishes nothing.

The internet and social media also have an effect on people who don’t affiliate themselves with such behaviour. There is just so much information on the internet. A constant barrage of terrible news from all over the world, like the Russian invasion of Ukraine, or the climate disaster, or the earthquakes in Turkey, and it all becomes too much for people to handle. People become indifferent and apathetic to the struggles of others, and choose to live in blissful ignorance of other people’s struggles, and start to not care about others' problems. People cannot deal with the weight of the world because the world has gotten bigger, due to social media. People no longer care about others, and this ignorance and apathy towards others only allows these issues to develop and worsen, hurting the world.

Even in our own friend groups, families, and the people we interact with daily, we struggle to understand their problems. An estimated 1 in 5 people in Australia have mental health issues, and although there have been many advancements in public awareness of mental illness, there still remains a stigma surrounding it that makes it hard to understand. It is often thought of as weak to share your feelings and problems with others, to seek help with anything, especially in today's world where things are constantly moving all the time and slowing down for a second is seen as feeble and weak minded.

It is impossible to understand the inner workings of others' minds, their unique struggles and problems, which is why a greater level of awareness of others is needed. We need to be conscious of others, try to view things from their perspective, and understand that we don’t know the whole picture. Show others kindness and respect while also being open to new ideas, not blocking out everything you don’t immediately agree with. It is only when people start to accept others, when people are open to others' perspectives, when people actually care about others' problems, that true change can be accomplished in the world.

**Dylan Collins**

In preparing for this speech, La Salle Vice Captain, Charlie Clarkson, very kindly offered to share his misunderstanding of the term empathy.

Clarko defined empathy as “being able to chat to someone about anything and making sure they’re alright about it. Because you would want people to do the same for you.” It sounds a bit selfish, but maybe Clarko’s onto something… perhaps empathy can be selfish.

According to ChatGPT, “empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others.” Empathy has the ability to increase feelings of connectedness, compassion and build a just society.

Not only this, but it allows us to selfishly diversify our own perspectives. So how can we cultivate empathy within ourselves, and utilise empathy for our own selfish gain?

Well, the answer is empathetic listening. Empathetic listening involves the listener suspending their own frame of reference and fully attending to the speaker. The trouble is, our listening brain is wired to directly oppose the goals of empathetic listening.

We naturally try to simultaneously evaluate what we’re told, predict outcomes and make judgments. This mode of analytical listening has evolved as the brain’s strategy to use its limited capacity efficiently.

Typically, our listening brain is wired to disregard hard to understand, potentially meaningful information, and to replace it with what we know. We wouldn’t know that this happens, because it’s a seamless process that isn’t supposed to be noticed.

In the workplace, school-yard or even in politics, the vast majority of conflict is caused by a laziness to comprehend what we hear, and the tendency to combat what we hear because it doesn’t fit what we know. Empathetic listening is the cure to this.

Unfortunately, our lazy listening brain creates what we hear, rather than truly listening to what we are being told. Empathetic listening opposes this closed-minded form of listening, and if we all adapted to this, then perhaps conflicts of lazy listening would not be such a concern.

As Clarko suggested, empathetic listening is selfish too. Through empathetic listening, you are able to steal the experiences and thoughts of others, and the lessons associated with them. Instead of bending and twisting what we hear so that it can filed into pre-existing thoughts, empathetic listening creates new files within our brain, composed of other people’s thoughts.

This allows us to develop our ability to recognise and manage emotions, and also develop relationships built on foundations of strong emotional understanding.

Next time you are having a meaningful conversation, have only one objective: comprehension. Only try to understand what the person is trying to convey to you. Don’t listen to critique. Don’t listen to object. Don’t listen to convince. Listen solely for comprehension. Restate what you believe you are hearing to the speaker, to ensure that your understanding hasn’t been polluted with your own thoughts.

Empathetic listening is a tool that undoubtably can be implemented by every single one of us, with the goal of enhancing our compassion, leading to a more accepting and understanding world.

**Liam Casey**

**We need better Sporting Officials**

Whilst there are many things the world may need, as a country that is so sport-focused, I believe there’s a need to zero in on the negative impact of sporting officials. Fouls not being called, unwarranted 50 metre penalties, and terrible LBW decisions are just some of the game-changers experienced in the world of sport due to poor officiating. Sport is an integral part of Australian culture, but, for us to enjoy watching and playing the sports that we all love, it is vital that they be run well and officiated fairly. How many times have we seen umpires, administrators or technology ruin the outcome of a game?

The whistle hungry umpires in green are destroying our iconic national game. The most exciting games are a close, goal for goal affair that goes down to the wire. But, how many games do you remember due to a controversial free kick that impacted the game’s result? Remember the 2021 and 2022 Geelong vs Brisbane games at the GMHBA where there were unpaid decisions in the dying moments of both games, decided by less than a goal. Afterwards the AFL then conceded a call should have been made, but Brisbane remained on the losing end. ***The game ends up not being decided off the player’s boot, but the umpire’s whistle.***

Not only this, but constant rule introductions have greatly impacted the footy. The AFL administrators over recent years have introduced new rules, or variations that are now famously known for being over the top, confusing and ineffective, for both players and umpires. A player can’t move an inch off the mark otherwise it results in a 50-metre penalty. Think of the golden days of footy, ranging from the likes of Jesaulenko and Gary Ablett Sr. It was a rougher affair where the whistle was put away for the benefit of the game. And what did we see? A high scoring, entertaining game. Afterwards, fans remembered the amazing moments and not the whistle piercing through the jubilant screams, to overturn a key event. Rules were less restrictive than they are now and players were more effective than an umpire.

Moving on to cricket, where more technology and pre-game administration sap the lively action out of a test. Technology plays a massive role in deciding the outcome of the game. Decisions can be made on the basis of “Umpires Call”, meaning there has to be overwhelming evidence to overturn a decision. If it’s out, the player should walk, that is the entire reason there is an umpire present. If we have technology providing an image of it being out, but we stick with the incorrect umpire, what’s the point of referring to our technology at all?

The game that is cherished by our entire nation is being tarnished by the whistle on an umpire's hand. So, why are we letting overzealous umpiring and the reliance on technology take over yet another aspect of our lives?

**Noah Honey**

"The individual who persecutes a man, because he is not of the same opinion, is a monster" – Francois Voltaire, a famous philosopher critical of religious intolerance wrote this sentiment in his “Reflections on religion” in 1764.

Centuries later, society is still in desperate need of tolerance towards each other. So, what exactly is tolerance?

In a society so diverse and wide-ranging in terms of perspective, there will always be differences between people, whether that’s due to religion, culture or lifestyle choices - there’s no way around that fact – however, our world calls for our willingness to tolerate the existing opinions of others, even if their opinions are different to our own.

There will always be differences in our society, often relating to the preconceived notions we have towards others.

We all have biases, conscious and unconscious, whether we like it or not – after all we are all human beings at the end of the day.

“We are all human beings at the end of the day” – a common phrase that some may apply when it fits their prejudiced narrative. We are contradicting ourselves if we blame our intolerance on simply being an imperfect human being, however are unable to tolerate our fellow human beings due to their culture and beliefs.

I’m not asking you to respect the viewpoints of the people, I’m just asking you to respect the people, themselves.

Jacinda Ardern, an exceptionally honorable leader and former prime minister of New Zealand displayed the promotion of tolerance and its value in society, following the 2019 Christchurch massacre, a hate crime towards Muslims, killing 51 and inflicting damage over the entire nation.

“Racism exists but it is not welcome here”

“Even the ugliest of virtues can exist in places they are not welcome”

In the face of despicable adversity, Ardern stood up as a leader amongst her community, publicly displaying her disgust for the intolerance and deep-rooted hatred of the monsters who inflicted these attacks and therefore, reminding us of the importance of tolerance in our society. And that is what I’m asking for, from all of you here today.

Even though we may not always see ‘eye to eye’ with those around us, if we are to come together and not be divided, we must learn to tolerate others. After all, it is not a matter of “us” vs “them”, it is simply just us – the desire to be a united community, intrinsic to a happy, loving, triumphant life for all.

I will leave you with the words of Voltaire once again, “Tolerance has never brought civil war, intolerance has covered the world in carnage".

**Tom Gregory**

How many world leaders have shown true integrity whilst in a position of power and influence? Not too many spring to mind. However, a significant number have demonstrated dubious and dishonest behaviour.

**Our world needs more leaders who have integrity**, who lead by example and demonstrate a high moral code. Many of the world’s problems, such as conflicts, wars and poverty would be resolved if the leaders of these countries lifted their moral compass and worked for the betterment of all.

What is integrity? It covers an array of high moral principles such as honesty, respect, humility, and genuine interest in bettering the situation for others. Unfortunately, there are very few leaders of countries who fit this bill.

There are many areas of the world where conflict has rumbled on for years because the relevant leaders have not had the integrity to resolve it. For example, Benjamin Netanyahu. As Prime Minister of Israel, he has been more intent on power and on crippling Palestinians, by squeezing them out of the minuscule remaining land which they occupy, than on working towards a two-state solution, where both Palestinians and Israelis co-exist harmoniously. Of course, it’s over simplified to sum up the situation this way, but that’s it in a nutshell. A leader with integrity would treat Palestinians and Israelis as equals.

There’s a long list of other world leaders lacking integrity…Zimbabwe’s Robert Mugabe, Italy’s Silvio Berlusconi, and more recently, USA’s Donald Trump, North Korea’s Kim Jong Un and, Russia’s Vladimir Putin. That’s just a small example of leaders who have resorted to varying degrees of corruption, resulting in poverty and even death for their citizens. The actions of these leaders have had a detrimental effect on the lives of their residents.

So, with the world’s many problems, we clearly need more leaders with integrity. We need Nelson Mandela’s and Mahatma Ghandis – leaders who did not resort to violence, and who lead their nations peacefully. It’s very telling that when researching great leaders with integrity, most are from history, think Joan of Arc and Constantine the Great. Currently, Ukraine’s Volodymyr Zelenskyy has shown integrity against a mighty force. It’s HIS leadership which has kept Ukraine’s hopes alive in a war which, on paper, they should have lost months ago.

Ultimately, our planet needs more leaders who rise above corruption and personal gain, who stand up for the weakest, who lead their armies against brutal forces for their citizens’ protection, and who work honestly and transparently with others. THESE are leaders who have integrity, and THIS is what OUR world needs more of.

**Hugo Risvanis**

In a world that often seems to be plagued by inequality, conflict, and suffering, it can be difficult to identify what we need more of, as in Today’s society we are run by the likes of social media and technology. We need to focus less on materialistic things ideally phones which cloud our judgment.  it is only then that we can focus on establishing a greater need for the expression of emotion to combat mental health.

Seven and a half hours, seven and a half hours, this is the duration of time 15-18 year old’s spend being brainwashed by the likes of social media and electronics daily, for a short burst of dopamine we will spend hours scrolling like mindless robots through social media, we need to face the harsh reality these are unhealthy numbers and simply too much, it is an addiction, It is always want want want, rarely do we ever take a moment to step back and acknowledge what we have as we are  blinded by our lust for materialistic things in hope they will deliver true happiness. Phones are like a virus, controlling the minds of almost 5 billion people worldwide, is this not proof we are a society who live in the digital world. A 2019 study found a positive relationship between social anxiety, loneliness, and social media addiction. Social media use can cause FOMO The fear of missing out and a sense of inadequacy. This may lead to loneliness, anxiety, and depression. I am truly scared for our future, if we do not pose a reduction in what we already have, we will be unable to move on and identify what we need more of.

Inside us a there is always a struggle, a lie, a truth, a piece of who we are which we decide to conceal, to some it affects them greatly, eating away at them, from the inside, unable to speak about these issues due to how they will be perceived, what this is, is depression and mental health issues. Approximately one in five teens (aged 12 to 18) suffer from at least one mental health disorder. Mental health disorders can have a significant impact on daily life and overall wellbeing, and depending on what type, may affect relationships, physical health, academic performance. What I find disgusting is when the cliche “just be a man” or “man up” is thrown around as a joke, it completely eliminates how as young males we must act, as a result of how we are perceived. What we need to understand is that it is okay to be who we are, it is ok to express our thoughts feelings and emotions, as friends and family to some who may be experiencing this, you need to be supportive, because sometimes simply listening does more than any available advice. There are a countless number of organisations who stand with me, are you okay embodies this ideology that it is Ok to not be Ok, and lifeline Australia act as ears when nobody else will listen.

I'm not suggesting we eliminate phones and social media completely, but we must understand that the toll it has is far greater than the reward, instead of confiding in a small rectangular piece of technology, we mustn’t hide our emotions like the phones in our pockets, we must be confident in expressing who we are in order to fight mental health.