



# COLOUR

**TERM 2+3**  
**25/26 EDITION**

**BIS NOVUS**

# EDITORIAL

**Imagine a path (or draw it for readers with aphantasia). Any path. There are colours you associate with it, right?**

**It's impossible to remove colours from our perception of reality. From birth until death, our eyes continuously register colours, and our brains use the visual information to make each and every decision. Consequently, humanity recognised: If colours are so pivotal, then they must be crucial in manipulating human decisions. This manipulation is scrutinized in Dakyung/Olivia's (Y11) article. Specifically, capitalism's harmful use of pink and blue that perpetuates gender inequality. This expanded into a commentary on how colours are inseparable from associations, making colours restricting or empowering depending on the situation.**

**This begs the question: Can colours exist outside the binary of 'bad' and 'good'? Most definitely. Gaeun (Y12) explored this by analyzing how colours are used in musicals to communicate emotions, themes, and author intentions. By identifying the particular ways in which colours are incorporated in named musicals, the writer sheds light not only on colours' versatile abilities but also their importance that may be overshadowed by overt storytelling mediums such as music and choreography.**

**Similarly, colours in fireworks elicit joy and awe from viewers. It is easy to acknowledge the entertainment value colours help generate, but perhaps trickier to appreciate the wondrous chemistry involved.**

**In Seungyeon's (Y12) writing, the process is described step-by-step: Fireworks' chemical reactions release thermal energy, and this energy is absorbed by electrons – causing them to move to a more excited state. Yet, due to the instability of this state, electrons quickly revert to their original energy levels by releasing energy in the form of wavelengths of light.**



# EDITORIAL

To further delve into our complex relationship with colours, we interviewed the school community and received insightful answers expressing diverse perspectives on colours. Even a seemingly simple choice like favourite colour harbors a wide variety of intentions. For our interviewees, their favourite colour can be a deliberate choice to reclaim power within the patriarchy. Or, it may reflect their love of the natural world and firm belief in protecting the ocean. Likewise, it can just represent aesthetic preferences. Whatever it may be, each person's relationship with colours is their own. As such, it becomes abundantly clear that there is no easy way to define humanity's connection with colours.

Veering away from the realm of human usage, colours exist in the natural world as warning signals used by preys to survive – independent of human intervention. In Colin's (Y12) article, this phenomenon (Batesian mimicry) is examined through the example of hover flies. Subsequently, the narrator leads into the astute observation that manifestations of Batesian mimicry are ever-changing over time, driven by changes in prey populations and predators' learned awareness.

Circling back to the symbol of a path, before I knew it my long journey at BIS Hanoi have come to an end. Standing in my position, I often wonder whether the decisions I made, the colours I used, were the best. Undoubtedly, I have my regrets. With this magazine, there were countless hurdles and struggles and mistakes. At the same time, there was happiness; fun; creativity; and understanding. Throughout my tenure as chief editor, I got to listen to and converse with many writers and designers and editors. It was a pleasure to learn about our team's multitudes of thought-provoking ideas and I feel extremely grateful for everyone's dedication and commitment. I sincerely hope that your experience with Novus was enjoyable and helpful, and that you are proud of the authentic and unique works you created or assisted in realizing as editor.

I wish all the best to everyone and am very excited for what lies ahead, and as always: Happy reading!  
**Thai Anh Hoang**



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# PINK & BLUE

Written by Dakyung (Olivia) Hwang Y11  
Designed by Mai Chi Pham Y11

You could cut into a cake to reveal **pink** icing, or pop a balloon filled with **blue** confetti. **Pink?** Congratulations, it's a girl! **Blue?** Congratulations, it's a boy! The first video of a gender reveal party was posted on YouTube in 2008 and currently lists hundreds of results when searched online (Guardian staff reporter). And as the baby grows into a toddler, they themselves become aware of the gender associations of **colour**. You may have walked past a little girl whining for a **hot pink** Barbie doll in a supermarket, while none of them even bat an eye to Ken dressed in his striped, **blue** shirt. **Pink** and **blue** hold great influence on human behaviour. They can be used to categorise consumers under the labels of feminine and masculine. The little girl's tantrum in itself is a result of clever capitalism that influences a consumer's psychology and preferences, by utilising **colour** to cement gender norms in consumers' consciousness. As colours become associated with stereotypes and therefore people's choices, this brings families to purchase two of the same products in **pink** and **blue** instead of letting siblings share gender neutral products. Outside the realm of childhood toys, such **colours** also affect fashion and branding, due to societal expectations of certain **colours**.

"What's your favourite **colour**?" is a question we've all asked and answered at some point in our lives. The answer to this question may frequently change throughout our lives, but it often begins with **pink** and **blue**. During our childhood, whether it is from marketing strategies or adults' ideologies, labels such as "**blue** is for boys; **pink** is for girls," create division and becomes early lessons in gender roles.

This split between genders creates distance and almost rivalry. When such seemingly harmless words are spoken to a small and impressionable child, who easily absorbs information like a blank canvas, we are indirectly planting seeds for gender inequality.

Think back to the question about your favourite **colour** - if the answer was 'red', some might assume a bold and strong personality. If the answer was 'yellow', many people may draw quick conclusions of a bright and sweet personality. Subconsciously, people attempt to understand someone's whole personality through the answer they receive from this question. People rarely view **colour** as simply aesthetic preference, and it often always becomes evidence for someone's character. Beyond childhood toys, **pink** and **blue** still remain controversial as it is so normalised to overthink and over-read them. For example, if a woman liked **pink**, it may be mocked as being shallow or lacking individuality.



But if she were to reject this colour that is supposedly "designated" to women, she may receive criticism for being performative or attention seeking. With men, wearing pink is also read as a statement, where a pink tie would signal a feminist (a positive connotation). Every choice gets interpreted, and these interpretations seem inescapable. Choices related to colour can trap people in unending labels and constant assumptions, and capitalism further exacerbates this effect.

Perhaps not everything needs a "deep hidden meaning." A favourite colour might just be a colour and the colour of your childhood toy does not have to define who you are. So, should colour do nothing in our society? We shouldn't let colours define our identities or create assumptions about other people, but colour can and is being used to influence people psychologically. Many fast-food restaurants such as McDonald's and Burger King contain the colour red in their branding and logo to stimulate and excite our appetite (Harrington). Or branding such as Samsung uses blue to create a sense of trust, calmness, and intelligence (Martinez and Martinez). This isn't colour being used to define people or force them to commit to assumptions, rather to stand out from the crowd and invoke specific emotions in customers. Similarly, colours in fashion can be used to challenge these societal assumptions or as a form of self-expression. Vibrant, neon colours can show confidence and energy,

which can apply to both mood as well as who they want to be

perceived as (ELLE Education). By choosing what colours to wear, we can redefine ourselves freely. Thus, in this case, colours become empowering instead of trapping and oppressive.

It may be difficult to get rid of all the pink and blue aisles in the world as it benefits our capitalist world so much. But we are able to manipulate colour as much as it tries to manipulate us. With the wide variety of colours at our disposal, colour can become iconic and a way for self-expression. But will pink and blue ever lose their gender associations? Jo Paoletti, an academic and an author for a book named 'Pink and Blue', noted that in the late 1800s, wearing black would make people assume that someone had died or that they were mourning.

"Now we see young women wearing black all the time, and nobody asks them who died. It's just a colour," she says. Perhaps when we no longer need justifications to wear colours, pink and blue will finally become what they should've been all along: just colours.

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# FIREWORK

## *Spectacular*


Written by Seungyeon Hong Y12

Designed by Doyoung Han Y12

**One of the most spectacular displays of colour in the night sky is fireworks. They are used in celebrating festivals, national holidays, or any other special occasion. They can be bright red, green, blue, and gold - attracting our attention. Although fireworks might look like an entertaining spectacle only, its colours are in fact a result of very interesting chemical reactions.**

**When a firework is set off, the reaction releases a large amount of thermal energy. Electrons within atoms absorb this energy, which elevates them to higher energy levels. However, this excited state is not long-lived, and the electrons rapidly revert back to their original energy levels. As they revert, energy in the form of light is released. Consequently, we see different colours in the sky.**

**Different elements produce distinct colours, due to the various energy level differences and thus wavelengths that can be emitted. As an illustration, when heated sodium gives a bright yellow colour. Therefore, sodium compounds are mostly used to produce golden or yellow sparks in fireworks. Strontium is the other element that is frequently used, and it gives vivid red hues. Thus, strontium salts are usually added to firework mixtures to make them red. Depending on the colours desired, specific metal compounds are used.**



**The production of green in fireworks is usually done by the use of barium compounds. Heated in a firework explosion, the atoms of barium will produce light within the green colour range of the visible spectrum. Blue fireworks are usually perceived to be the hardest to manufacture, due to the difficult process needed to induce the specific energy level transition that releases blue wavelengths. Specifically, copper compounds are required and these compounds necessitate very strict temperature conditions, as they are readily reduced by too much heat.**

**This understanding of energy level transitions has also been applied in laboratories to determine unknown substances e.g., via flame tests. In a flame test, a small amount of metal compound is heated and burns with a specific colour, allowing chemists to identify which elements are present.**

**Even though fireworks only exist for a few seconds in the air, the chemistry behind this short-lived spectacle is complex and highly refined. All colours are the result of certain elements, produced when electrons move to lower energy levels and emit wavelengths in the visible light spectrum. When watching fireworks illuminate the night sky, it becomes clear, that these vibrant displays are not only a form of celebration but also an example of chemistry in action. Through the interaction between heat and electrons, brilliant colours visible from great distances can be generated.**

# COLOR

Written by  
Colin Noah  
Gibson Y12  
Designed by  
Thai Anh  
Hoang Y13



## Batesian Mimicry and its pitfall

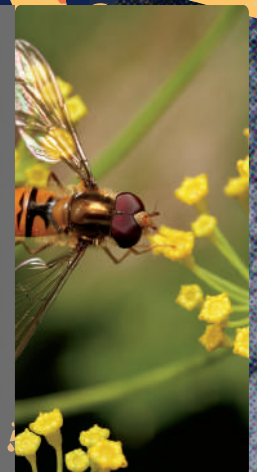
# DEFENSE

As humans, we perceive color and use them to create art. This art, through various forms including the random graffitis on the streets or paintings in a museum, is widely considered a form of communication. Likewise, wildlife also uses color as a means of communication. While these organisms couldn't "choose" the colors they display, these pigments and their associations became vital to their survival regardless:

Many organisms, such as the hover flies, will use bright warning colors to mimic those of more harmful animals, like the yellow and black worm. This is known as Batesian mimicry. It is used by preys as an attempt to avoid being hunted by predators. This is because predators will normally avoid species with those traits, due to the painful or sickening experiences. Due to pattern recognition, they learn to avoid organisms with similar characteristics in the future. As predators cannot differentiate between the harmless and non-harmless easily, preys exhibiting patterns and colors associated with danger will normally be avoided. However, the problem arises when too many starts to mimic these colors and patterns.

Overall, this Batesian mimicry will only ever succeed as long as the number of venomous and poisonous species largely outnumbers the harmless. Precisely, preys can cause a full shift in how colors are used in the natural world, showing that color as a form of communication is only useful as long as true threats remain prevalent.

When the non-harmless species outnumber the harmless ones, predators will stop associating the colors and patterns with danger and therefore stop fearing the warning colors. When predators start to eat these mimicking species too often, they will stop associating the specific colors and patterns with threat. This can render Batesian mimicry useless. The protective power of color could then entirely vanish - the benefits of hunting outweigh safety for predators. Truly venomous and poisonous species will also be attacked despite their toxicity. These species will then force an "evolutionary arms race" where species will have to change their distinct patterns and colors as a means to regain protection.



# Colours in Musicals

Written by Caern Zoo 212

Designed by Thai Anh Hoang 218

Colour appears in practically every aspect of life, yet it is most commonly associated with art. In Broadway musicals, however, colour becomes a storytelling tool: Conveying meaning and highlighting thematic shifts on stages. Designers draw on psychological associations, such as red for passion and blue for melancholy, to guide the audience's perception.

Musicals are typically recognised and celebrated for their music and lyrics, but this sometimes causes subtle nuances to be overlooked. In addition to music and choreography, colour is essential in creating engaging performances, since it reinforces emotions in ways that the audience may not be aware of.

This use of colour as a storytelling device is clearly shown in 'Wicked', where the audience's perception of morality and character is actively shaped by colour. In its opening number, 'No One Mourns the Wicked', the stage begins in almost complete darkness, with a faint green light coming from the background. Elphaba's constant association with green serves as a motif that identifies her as different and reinforces her sense of otherness. In the viewpoint of both the characters and the audience, her green skin serves as a visual metaphor for prejudice, instantly making her appear as an outsider.

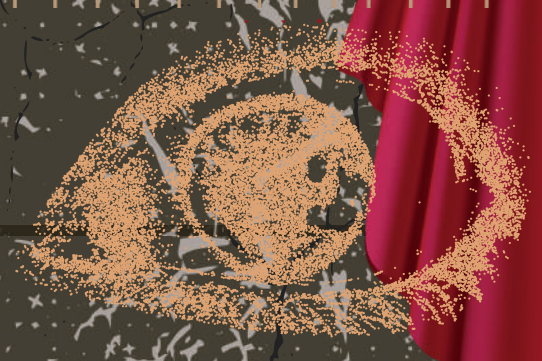


The lighting suddenly changes when it is announced that 'the Wicked Witch is dead.' Bright pink and gold, which are colours associated with Glinda and represent perceived 'goodness' and societal acceptance, replace the darkness. These brighter tones fill the stage as the Ozians celebrate, turning criticism and collective judgement against Elphaba into a joyful ceremony. In doing so, colour actively shapes the story rather than simply reflecting it, leading the audience to accept the oversimplified belief that Elphaba was 'wicked' and that her death restores 'goodness'.



In addition to defining characters, colour in musicals often conveys sudden disruption and loss of control within musical storytelling. 'The Phantom of the Opera' uses this through its chandelier scene. Before the fall of the chandelier, warm gold lighting dominates the stage, representing the performance's controlled elegance and order. But once the chandelier collapses, the lighting suddenly changes to harsh and intense tones indicating chaos and danger. Instead of staying constant, the red light flickers rapidly, creating a sense of instability and unpredictability. This visual effect heightens tension drastically and implies that there is an uncontained, escalating danger which will subsequently cascade into a continuous breakdown. As a result, when the underlying danger (represented by the collapse of the chandelier) is suddenly revealed, the audience is drawn into the loss of control and experiences the collapse of illusion.

Throughout a musical, colour is used repeatedly to reinforce its central ideas across scenes. In *Les Miserables*, colours emphasise themes of struggle and violence. For example, red shows up in key moments associated with rebellion and sacrifice, carrying meaning about shared effort along with struggle. In contrast, scenes showing control and oppression use dark and greyish tones, building a heavy atmosphere through visual alone. Consequently, the audience begins linking what they see with underlying ideas and meanings. In this way, colours shape the narrative of the musical, proving that visuals are not mere embellishments to the stage. They carry weight across scenes, and as motif returns, so do the colours that mark them.



Colour in musicals steers meaning, and thus how the audience understands motives, feelings and meanings. Though the music of musicals takes center stage, shades and tones equally command audience engagement and forge interpretation, sometimes without drawing attention to themselves. A shift in colours can symbolise inner conflict, even before any speech is delivered. Where lighting turns cold, tension rises. What we see shapes what we feel, even without words at all.

# INTERVIEW WITH OUR COMMUNITY

This edition's theme is Colour, which opens up many different discussions and interpretations of our relationship with colour. The subjectivity of this theme gave us a wide range of responses.

**Disclaimer:** The answers below are the interviewees' personal opinions and have not been fact-checked.

**Questions:**

**"What's your favourite colour?"**

**"How far has patriarchy influenced your favourite colour?"**

**"How do colours impact human beliefs?"**

**STUDENT:** My favorite color is pink because it's, like, super vibrant, super happy, and it's just been my favorite color since I was a kid.

**MS FORSYTH:** I don't really have a favorite colour, but I like pastels because I'm obsessed with the color analysis videos on TikTok. I have done it myself on myself, and I feel pastels are the best. And orange! Bright orange looks good. My sofa's bright orange.

**"What's your favourite colour?"**

**MS COOPER:** My favourite colour is purple, and I'm not really sure why because it used to be turquoise when I was younger, but I kind of grew out of it, and now I like purple a bit more. I think what's special about purple is that, like, it's like, a mixture of, like, cool and warm tones. You know, it's obviously a mix of blue and red. So, yeah, mix.

**MR WRIGHT:** My favorite color is blue and my favorite color is blue for two reasons. Number one, it represents the sky, and number two it represents the ocean, which in my opinion is the most important natural thing on the planet that we need to protect.

**MS BILTON:** My favourite colour is green because I like wearing green. It's a great colour to wear, but I also think it's a colour that brings life and nature and happiness to the world. Yeah. So, beautiful colour. You can also have a lot of shades of green. I like that. No green is the same.

**“How far has patriarchy influenced your favorite colour?”**

**MS COOPER:** Oh..! Well, obviously, like I said, I used to like turquoise, and now I like purple. So now I'm wondering: purple, is it slightly more feminine compared to turquoise? Have I developed a like for purple as, like, an opposition to the patriarchy? Maybe!

**MR WRIGHT:** Patriarchy hasn't influenced my favourite colour being blue, but I do understand that blue traditionally was a male colour. However, nowadays in contemporary society, I think that blue is not seen as masculine as it used to be. So I don't think that patriarchy has influenced it very much.

**STUDENT:** I think pink is a colour that's typically assigned to girls, like, immediately when they're a kid. And most girls have a phase where they absolutely hate pink. But as I grew up, I've learned that femininity is also a type of power, and you can find power in being girly or enjoying feminine things. And, yeah, that's partially the reason why I like pink and how patriarchy has influenced my liking of colour.

**MS FORYSTH:** Wow, we're getting deep. It's hard because I feel like as a woman, you sometimes have to perform gender. And when we're talking about this colour analysis, part of the colour analysis is trying to look good. Who am I trying to look good for? Do I dress for myself or do I dress for society? And that is a question I don't know the answer to.

**MS BILTON:** How far has patriarchy influenced your favorite colour?

**MS DANIELS:** Sorry, from green (the first question) to patriarchy?

**MS BILTON:** I don't think... I mean, not that I'm aware of at all. I don't know.

**“How do colours impact human beliefs?”**

**MS COOPER:** I wonder... There's obviously, like, theories to do with colour. Like, for example, if you want a calm colour, you choose green. And so in hospital environments or like in schools, we paint things green. Tend to. So that does that. Maybe the colours around you in your environment, do they impact you in some way? That we've learned that we can impact people's behavior by using colour. So maybe do colours that you interact with on a daily basis, do they impact your thoughts or beliefs? I don't know. I can't answer the question. I'm just posing more questions. It feels like a ToK essay.

**MS BILTON:** I suppose that when you see colours, they can make you think certain things or feel certain things. If my bedroom was red and everything in my bedroom was red, I'd be angry in the mornings. So I suppose if you live in a place with certain colours, that can change your mood. And then if you live in a place with no colour, then I think that maybe that can be a way to control you. Controlling oppressive societies don't have as much colour.

**MS FORSYTH:** Oh, well, colour, like, symbolism is big with belief. And some cultures, like red is the colour of luck. I guess if people dress in all black, then they could be showing that maybe they're alternative?

**MS VANS:** What are you trying to say about me?

**MS FORSYTH:** I don't know how much it shows beliefs, but it shows maybe how you want to be perceived.

**MR WRIGHT:** I think it's down to the person that you ask. It's down to their education level; it's down to their cultural capital and their exposure with other things around the world. If they're brought up in a very traditional household, then colours may be a little bit more bland and maybe are less significant. If they've been brought up more in an upper class or higher class, they've had more awareness of the arts and fashion, then probably colour will be more important to them.

**STUDENT:** I think colours can give you a different view of life, essentially, if you really like, or if you immerse yourselves in vibrant colors that are super happy, like bright yellows, bright blues, it can make your life more positive from what I've experienced.



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**WHAT**

**IS**

**YOUR**

**COLOUR?**