



# Redditch Rumours

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Issue #15

## Conventions—What are they and are they worth the hype?

Conventions. A place where like-minded people come together to share their interests, celebrate their hobbies, and bond with their community.

The idea of conventions stems from science conferences which first started happening in 1897 with the First Conference of Astronomers and Astrophysicists at the Yerkes Observatory. There were 114 attendees across the three days of the conference, and it was considered so successful that another was scheduled for the year after.

Enter science fiction, a genre of media which deals with the impact of real and imagined science. Think *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*. The first book that is considered to be sci-fi in genre is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, released in 1818, although there may be roots back to Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* from 1627, and the science fiction idea is credited to the American publisher Hugo Gernsback in the 1920s. The 20<sup>th</sup>

century is where the genre really took off, and in 1937 the golden age of science-fiction is believed to have started, which included John W. Campbell becoming the editor of the *Astounding Science Fiction* magazine. In that year, some small sci-fi gatherings happened too, notably one in Leeds for 20 fans, and then in 1939 the first World Science Fiction Convention occurred in New York City for a whopping 200 people.

Over time, conventions have gained popularity exponentially, so much that the largest ones can have up to 100,000 people in one space across the weekend.

For this article I'll be mostly focusing on MCM Comic Con and the others like it, seeing as I was lucky enough to go to MCM Birmingham in November. The real question is what is the point of these conventions and are they worth spending your money on?

My experience started strong when I assembled my group and embarked on

a train to Birmingham New Street. This train was good, decently crowded as it usually is on a Saturday morning. We didn't see anyone in costumes on the train to New Street, but after that, things changed.

If you don't already know, the NEC adjoins Birmingham International airport. To get there from Redditch via train, you have to transfer from New Street to International. It's a short walk through the station, and after we'd figured out which platform to go to, we got on the train and had our first problem. We'd got on the first-class side of the train, you can't get through to the normal side, and in addition the train was completely full. We ended up being stuck in a very crowded corridor where we found four other cosplayers who were going to the convention. They were thrilled to join us for a while, and we went through the entry hall as a giant group of eight.

There's a couple of things I need to explain here. Firstly, a common thing in comics, anime, and pop culture conventions is for people to dress up (cosplay) as their favourite characters. The word cosplay, coined in 1983, comes from the Japanese “コスプレ” (*kosupure*) which itself is a blend word of “costume play”, and it origi-

nates from fan costuming at the start of science fiction conventions. There are usually people cosplaying on the show floor for fun, people performing in cosplay masquerades, and people being judged on the workmanship and presentation of their own costumes.

Secondly, MCM is huge. It spans three of the halls in the NEC, one of them almost entirely dedicated to the entry queue! This year, there were three stages, a giant artists alley area with loads of artists selling prints of their artwork and accepting commissions, loads of stalls selling merchandise, an area to meet celebrities, and even an area full of Daleks for the Doctor Who fans!

We had some slight confusion in queueing due to a lack of signage as to which line to go to, but once we got into the con it was amazing. People everywhere, most willing to talk and be sociable, all roaming around and looking at stalls. Unfortunately, since we only bought Saturday tickets (as opposed to the whole weekend) we didn't get to see everything: most of the time we spent browsing merch and looking around, but we did get to see four of the events. We were able to go to the fan meetup for the game Genshin Impact, watch performances by music

group Lutebox and dance group PROJECT COVE, and take part in the K-Pop Random Play Dance, where random K-Pop songs play and people can jump in and perform the dances to them. It was all so much fun!

So, I think it's clear my group made friends, bought loads of stuff, and most importantly had fun. But I also asked two others who have been to conventions about their opinions – are conventions really worth it?

One person named Brad said, "As someone who's rather new to going to cons and cosplaying I believe they're worth spending money on as you get to express yourself around other people who are also interested in the same topics and interests, which is a really good supportive web which can come back and help you in the future if you're having issues with anything as then you're part of a community who are there to help one another"

Another more experienced cosplayer named Zak explained, "I have attended about 8 cons so far, and in my eyes the point of them is to be a safe space for people of all kinds (except wrongdoers) to just be themselves. They're definitely worth spending your money on."

To conclude, conventions are absolutely worth going to. Even if you're not into anime or pop culture, there are always other conventions for different subjects where you can meet people who have the same interests, make friends, and have fun. While they can be expensive to go to, it's great to get out every once in a while, especially when it involves meeting new people and doing things you love.

**By Joe Leaver**

### **Study tip of the half-term**

**Be sure to take breaks!**

**While it may be tempting to study 24/7 to get the grade you want, studying too hard can lead to burnout and can result in you getting less done overall.**

**Take enough time for yourself to rest so that you stay motivated to get the best results.**

## What is the Government's new Education policy?

Due to the increased decline in literacy rates worldwide, on the 5th of November this year, the government have introduced a necessary update to the school curriculum. This is the first update in over a decade and is very significant because it is trying to address the class divide in education. The final curriculum will be posted in spring 2027, and it will come into effect at the beginning of the 2028 academic year.

After Professor Becky Francis led a review of the current curriculum, a panel of experts have found areas that desperately need improving in children from disadvantaged and disabled backgrounds. As a result, this new policy aims to "equip young people for the modern world" through a variety of helpful and interesting new topics, like media literacy, financial education, democracy, climate change, personal rights and law.

The push on financial education is a particularly clever initiative, with the stagnation of wages ever since 2008, and the ongoing cost of living crisis, the British economy is inching closer and closer to a recession. Children learning about money early on will prepare them for the impossible-to-navigate housing market, constant barrage of ads from every screen and online scams specifically aimed at

young people who lack to knowledge and experience to recognise them.

Around 1 in 4 children leave primary lacking basic reading and writing skills. Because of this, the government is introducing statutory reading tests in year 8 and further focus on writing in year 6, which would give schools enough time to spot pupils that require extra support and put systems into place that are effective for that individuals learning needs. This would give teachers more time to address gaps in knowledge, which is incredibly beneficial to a large portion of working-class young people who will 'fall behind' at the beginning of secondary school. This assessment would significantly improve the final grade of those individuals with additional learning needs. Over 40% of people leave school without Maths or English GCSE, and this programme aims to improve that figure. There has been a steady decline in the pass rate since the post-COVID era: many students lack vital knowledge that they would have gained in the key years that they missed, and many schools did not have the appropriate funding for proper online learning.

With this change, also comes the removal of the EBACC programme, which is a set of subjects that aim to keep young people's options for further careers and study open. This programme has unproportionately discriminated against neurodivergent people, work-

ing-class people, and creative students. Dictating that all students must pick either History or Geography instead of subjects they love and excel in is cruel, and this programme being removed has been celebrated by those who have been negatively affected by it. EBACC also forces students to pick a language, and whilst languages are great to learn, allowing for connection with those from different countries and cultures, many people would rather pick a subject they adore. When students are forced to take a subject which they don't care about, their behaviour and effort in said lesson will worsen, which in turn ruins it for those with a passion in the subject.

There is also going to be more engagement in oracy for young people. In state funded schools, there is little to no focus on public speaking and being heard, compared to private schools where they have enrichment programmes like debate clubs, poetry reading, and confidence coaching. Oracy is one of the most undervalued and poorly-taught skills in the UK. Because it has never been prioritised, people cannot functionally articulate themselves, making it more difficult for the upper classes to properly understand the wants and needs of the working-class population, who are arguably the people who require the most help.

This new initiative sounds incredible in theory, but the implementation is

where it could go wrong. Years of austerity and budget cuts have destroyed the British education system. Overworked, exhausted teachers will likely struggle to find the time to be trained properly in the new curriculum and schools currently lack the funding to effectively implement these new programmes. Despite that, this is a step in the right direction that this country desperately needs.

**By Ashe Reid**

## Matilda Jr: The Musical

Trinity High School is immensely proud to announce that in February of 2026, they are presenting Matilda Junior: The Musical. This musical is a classic that most people would know, therefore it makes the perfect play for students to get involved in and perform. The characters, including Matilda, Mrs Wormwood and Mr Wormwood, are played by fellow students.

Musicals are a friendly way to bring students together and show a demonstration of teamwork. It also helps to bring students' confidence/self-esteem up and make them feel comfortable. Students who are musically inclined are urged to get involved with this play and be themselves.

Musicals bring people together with a positive energy and create memories for the students to remember in their school years. It grows confidence as well as giving the opportunity to make new friends and experience social encounters. The student playing Mrs Wormwood herself says that the musical has inspired her to get out her comfort zone and do something she has never done before but wanted to; she also says that she is amazed by the school's music department, more so

Mr Keady's dedication towards this play.

Another great aspect of school plays is for the parents getting to see their children perform and do what they love with confidence. Being a parent and getting to see your child in their full element, being themselves is a joy many parents would love to see. Teamwork is a huge part of the musical, as students are pushed to work together and help each other out. Teamwork is already a great enough skill as it is but there are many other skills such as acting, singing, and doing both at the same time!

Musicals bring stories to life in an exciting way and with mocks and exams around the corner, it gives students something to look forward to. It creates memories. When students look back on school, they won't remember anything about their classes but instead will remember the satisfied feeling of nailing the school play. Another skill it helps develop is creativity. These skills are effective everywhere and are always handy.

**By Olivia Troth**

## What the hell are they on about? Teachers Guide to Teenage Slang around School

I am often left clueless as to what kids are on about, particularly in the lower school, and due to my age I'm supposed to be one of this generation that keeps on top of this sort of thing. So, I can only imagine how the teachers feel when the cooked sigma rizzler is skibidi lowkey fire.

These slang words and trends are constantly changing. Some get used in every sentence for about a month before disappearing completely, apart from the one kid who thinks it's still cool and mentions it in class before they get absolutely gunned down by people who were saying it at every opportunity two days ago. Others stick around for much longer and get properly integrated into language. Consider this less of an article and more of a guide or dictionary of trend words that was fairly painful to write.

### 1. 6-7

How could I not start with this? – This has been absolutely everywhere and if you've managed to escape this then I hugely congratulate you. I had zero idea as to what this meant, and it turns

out it doesn't actually have a proper meaning. What I can tell you though is that it originated from the song "Doot Doot" by Skrilla after its inclusion of professional basketball players being listed as 6 ft 7 tall. I know what you're thinking and, yes, I'll sleep better tonight as well.

### 2. Rizz/Rizzler

I'm assuming this is pretty well known as the effortless ability to flirt and charm.

### 3. Lowkey

This is a good example of one that seems to be here to stay. This just means an opinion that you are trying to be subtle about. So essentially, you've got an unpopular opinion that you know will get you laughed out of town and think that dropping in the word lowkey should do the trick to avoid that.

### 4. Smacks

An indication that something is very good, which is ironic, as this is very bad.

## 5. Skibidi

I really hope no one says this anymore. I certainly haven't heard it in a while, but then again maybe I'm just not listening hard enough. This is a completely pointless word and apparently can be used to describe something very good or very bad. You may have heard this word be paired with the word toilet. Your guess is as good as mine.

## 6. Glazing

Something that is overrated, like this word.

## 7. Lock in

Entering a deep concentration to get something done, which coincidentally is what I'm doing now.

## 8. Jarring

Annoying or agitating, just like when you hear this ten times an hour.

## 9. NPC

Stands for non-playable character. Originally from video games, this would often be used as an insult to people with no personality.

## 10. Sigma

Someone who is independent, confident and strong.

## 11. Brainrot

When someone spends too much time online, especially TikTok, to the point where it affects their thinking in daily scenarios. Usually combined with the other words in this list.

## 12. Crash Out

A sudden outburst of emotion, predominantly anger.

Those seem to be the main ones that are heard floating about relatively often, but here are three gems that you may encounter soon, according to [slangsphere.com](https://slangsphere.com). You may want to remember them so you can get ahead of the game!

1. Glowdown – When something starts off amazing but declines quickly.

2. Vibe Swipe – Flipping the mood completely.

3. Flop Spill – When someone's attempt to impress or show off backfires massively.

There you have it; you are now an expert on something you wish you weren't! I've no doubt that you've had some idea of what most of these meant already but, nonetheless, you're welcome. My final thing would be to say, if you ever hear me using any of these words around school, have a word with me. Hopefully next time I'll be back on the sport, or should I say the skibidi lowkey sigma sport that smacks.

**By Freddy Pope**

### **Word of the half-term**

**Yule-Hole– The extra hole you have to make in your belt after indulging over the festive period.**

**We hope you all have a wonderful break!**

### **Will digital ID cards tear the nation apart or glue it together?**

In September 2025, the UK government announced a new scheme to tackle illegal immigration by issuing every legal resident of the UK a free digital ID card. There have since been many debates on the effectiveness and requirement of them, with several protests occurring in October 2025 and petitions opened on the UK Parliament's website. The aim of these digital ID cards is to combat illegal working and to stop those with 'no right,' hoping they deter the substantial amounts of small boat crossings each year across the English Channel from France.

The ID cards are mandatory for the Right to Work checks at the end of this Parliament, when they are rolled out by Labour in 2029. They are said to help the public access services like driving licences, tax records, childcare and welfare easier, saving time for complicated legal checks as little paper records are needed. These digital ID cards can be downloaded onto all phones, working like the earlier NHS app or mobile contactless payments, hoping to add improved security compared to physical copies, and can be claimed by anyone above the age of sixteen. The Government are also considering giving them out to thirteen-

year-olds and above as they also have part-time jobs, but nothing has been decided.

The IDs will include name, date of birth, nationality/resident status, photo for biometric security and potentially addresses, however this is still being consulted on. We have been assured that if any phone is lost or stolen, that all digital credentials will be revoked and reissued, preventing any identities being leaked, however not much has been said about phones being hacked with worries of whole identities being stolen. There are many other issues of not everyone having a phone, as they may not be able to afford one or they own other devices such as iPads instead, preventing them from accessing any work. Same goes with any refusals to the ID cards, stopping people from working but all other services can be used with other forms of ID, e.g. a driving license.

There have been multiple protests against the scheme in the capital and even around local areas, with the same doubts over whether this is mandatory or voluntary. For example, in October 2025, London protestors claimed it was “a digital prison”, Cardiff protestors stated, “Is this the end to all our rights and liberties?” and even locally at the Bullring (Birmingham) in early November they chanted “If you accept digital

ID today, you’ve accepted social credit tomorrow.”

All these protests expressing they’re dislike in the new system and how it might trap us in the future, with other negatives of how it may affect the economy if not everyone can work due to lack of access to these digital ID cards.

Overall, the digital ID card scheme has seen lots of hate and concerns for what may come in 2029, making the nation question what the future will hold and how it may affect daily lives.

**By Lydia Carr**

Merry Christmas; here's a wordsearch!



# CHRISTMAS

## Word Search



- |             |             |             |           |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|
| CANDY CANE  | GATHERING   | PRESENTS    | STOCKINGS |
| CAROLS      | GIFTS       | REINDEER    | TREE      |
| DECORATIONS | GINGERBREAD | RUDOLPH     | TURKEY    |
| ELVES       | MISTLETOE   | SANTA CLAUS | WINTER    |
| FAMILY      | NORTH POLE  | SLEIGH      | WREATH    |
| FRIENDS     | ORNAMENTS   | SNOWFLAKES  | YULETIDE  |

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