

A couple of years ago, when I was scrolling through my social media, I saw an article by BuzzFeed which was titled "A Woman Delivered A Speech To Students At NASA Wearing A Sequined Dress Because Girls Wanted To See A 'Sparkly' Scientist." The Scientist who made the speech, Rita J. King, seemed to address an issue that not many people talk about in a very intriguing way. I was so interested in her story that I got in touch with her and managed to interview her.

**What inspired you to pursue a career in science?**

I actually began my career in journalism. In high school, a group of friends and I got together and interviewed some local politicians about issues within the town. I distinctly remember my friend asking a specific politician a difficult question and his face slowly turning red from embarrassment. I enjoyed the problem-solving aspect of journalism because before then they were just expected to report on the issue, but around the time I started, investigative journalism started to become a real thing. I carried that problem-solving aspect into my career as a futurist and I felt it fit nicely because I have always had an interest in science.

**What does a futurist do?**

It's a marriage between the more academic sciences such as biology and chemistry as well as social sciences. I look at current and past trends and use them to predict what the future in some industries may look like.

**What projects are you working on?**

The company I co-direct, Science House, has created a new project called model meetings; it looks at the way companies are now hosting their meetings online and how to use that time efficiently.

**Did you expect wearing the dress would have such an impact?**

The reason I actually wore the dress was because a group of girls who were attending the talk had sent me a letter asking if I could wear a sparkly dress. At the time I gave the talk which was in 2011, I didn't think much of it, however last year I tweeted about it (the dress). It still had the NASA sticker on it and then it just blew up and I was flooded with tweets from other female scientists and their experiences!

## The Sparkly Scientist



TEDxYOUTH / YOUTUBE

**Have you ever had any negative experiences working as a woman in science?**

I went into a company to pitch a two-week workshop with Science House. I was wearing a black suit as I would but with a pair of silver dangly leaf-shaped earrings. The room I was pitching to was all-male except for one female. After the pitch, the woman walked up to me and said "don't wear those earrings, they're distracting." The company declined the two-week workshop and instead took us on for six months!

**What piece of advice would you give any young woman who wants to go into science?**

My main advice would be, be curious, and nurture your curiosity. It's okay if all of the things you want to pursue are unrelated, do them anyway because there will be a reason why in the future. The common thread that connected my passions is solving complex problems. Another thing is bring creativity and imagination with you because they're your best skills. They're my best skills too.

I felt so inspired talking to Rita because she has achieved so many unique things but it didn't feel like she had to pick and choose what she could achieve because of her main career. She's also so different from so many female science role models on TV. Many of them feel very one-dimensional and intangible because they aren't like real people. Talking to a real scientist and seeing how she has many sides and passions and is breaking the mould of what a scientist should be according to TV and media. I recommend to everyone to actively seek out role models and talk to as many people as possible because you can learn so much. The last thing I asked her was if she had any advice for young women who want to pursue a career in science and she said be curious. This not only applies to science, which is founded on an intrinsic curiosity, but to life and the world in general. If you are curious then you can unlock many hidden passions of your own which will help you decide what you want to do, help you realize you can follow your dreams and grow as a person.

MADHU K

## The Rose

Last year my Mum and I saw a beautiful rose in a front garden on our way to school. One day we saw a lady next to it, she said it was her Mother's. When Lockdown happened, we popped a postcard through that letterbox with our number. Not long after we got a call from Lilian, who told us she was being helped by kind people (later Lilian and her husband Eric were lucky to get food deliveries) but that her daughter was abroad. From time to time we've helped Lilian and Eric, getting bits and bobs. We've written this poem about them. I learnt about acrostic poems during Home Schooling – the start of each line makes a word.

**Lilian & Eric (an acrostic poem!)**

Lovely rose is why we meet,

I hear my Mum on the telephone to you, in the early Spring heat,

Lilian, you make my Mum laugh as she checks if there's anything you need to eat,

I run back home through the hidden path when we leave you a small treat,

A moment when I see you both on your doorstep, we stand apart several feet,

Now roses are on our table, bright orange and red, opposite my seat.

&

Emails from your daughter Penny in America, flowers and picture books sweet,

Remembering my name when I see you, your knowledge of the news is hard to beat,

I hope when I am 98, like you I enjoy music and walking with purpose down the street,

Countless thank yous for inspiring us in Lockdown and making our days feel more complete.

THEO M (aged 6)

## An interview with Head of English at HBS

Hampstead Garden Suburb is full of inspirational women, past, present and future, but one clearly stands out, Henrietta Barnett. As creator of the suburb, and founder of HBS, she has inspired many, and continues to inspire us all. As some of the readers may know, the team of girls that run Suburb News Youth all go to Henrietta Barnett, so I wanted to interview a teacher, to get their unique perspective on what it is like to work in the school. I interviewed Alexandra Hedges, head of English, to get her view on how Henrietta Barnett's legacy has inspired her, and how Miss Hedges has inspired students and passed on the legacy.

**Who is your biggest female literary inspiration?**

For me, that's an easy one – it's got to be Virginia Woolf. Firstly, Woolf understood that – in order to break new ground in literature – you had to "tolerate [...] failure." She spoke passionately about the need to accept mistakes or setbacks in yourself and others if we are to create new kinds of writing or art – I find that both inspiring and reassuring. Secondly, she understood the practicalities of working as a writer – her famous essay 'A Room of One's Own' reminds readers that a woman who wants to write needs a space to herself. She understood the challenge of balancing work and family responsibilities – something a lot of us have been facing during lockdown!

**Who is your favourite female fictional character?**

I have a real soft spot for Maggie Tulliver in 'The Mill on the Floss'. She's a character with whom I've identified in different ways at different points in her life. She's so desperate to do the right thing and to achieve in life – but she so often finds herself on the wrong path! But the ending of the novel is unspeakably sad – I warn you...

**Who was your female role model growing up?**

My A Level English teacher, Miss Harvey, was, and is, a real inspiration for me. She introduced me to the poem 'Ode to a Nightingale' by John Keats and at that point I knew I had to choose English at university! Whenever I teach that poem, I have her in mind.

**What do you feel is most important about Henrietta Barnett's legacy?**

When Dame Henrietta Barnett was trying to purchase the land on which she founded the Garden Suburb, she was told by an agent that there was little chance such an important estate would be signed to a woman. She described being advised: "If only you would get a few men behind you, it would be all right!" Undeterred, she continued to work hard to bring her plans into fruition. Her imagination, resilience and independence have not been forgotten at the Henrietta

Barnett School – these are definitely qualities which characterise the students. This has been made particularly clear during the school closure due to coronavirus – the students' self-motivation, creativity and desire to progress have been truly impressive.

**How does it feel knowing that you inspire students to pursue careers in your field?**

It feels great! Leaving school can be a scary time, and it's often tempting to pick a degree for which there is a more obvious or ostensibly-secure career path. As a department we therefore work hard to make sure that students are aware of the breadth of options open to someone who opts to study English at A Level or beyond. Every year, we invite back students who have gone on to study English or the Arts, to deliver an English Extension session for our sixth formers. These are wonderful opportunities for current students to hear about careers that the Arts can lead into – as well as a lovely chance to catch up! And we're hoping that some of the reporters for Suburb News may go on to be full-time journalists one day...

**Who is the strongest woman you know?**

As predictable as it may be, I would have to say my mum! Like me, my mum was a teacher, but, unlike me, she never seemed to complain of being tired, or to resort to making pasta every night just because it's easy and quick! I have always been proud of my mum, but it is only since becoming a teacher myself that I have fully understood just how much she was achieving on a daily basis. I think it's easy to underestimate how much physical and emotional energy teaching demands; while it has the advantage of being a career that is compatible with raising a family, it's important to recognise and celebrate all the women who are managing this balance.

**What is it like being part of such a female department, and with the headteacher being a woman too?**

It's a joy to work somewhere that gives its staff such autonomy and which is built on mutual respect, rather than hierarchy. What I value most about leading the English department at HBS is being part of a team which comprises people with a range of approaches, ideas and perspectives, but all of whom are keen to collaborate – and to have a laugh over lunch!

Henrietta Barnett was an inspiration to all as the mastermind behind the Hampstead Garden Suburb and HBS, and we are grateful for amazing teachers like Miss Hedges, who continue her legacy and inspire us further.

JOANNA C



KATHERINE HEDGES

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