

# "How we learn"

Despite a few technical hitches with embedded videos, Mrs. Walters approached the tricky topic of how we learn with the utmost vigour and enthusiasm. The talk was pre-empted by a pertinent question: why do we learn? An interesting query, and the answer which we very often gloss over is that learning is the most basic human function. Indeed, from the very birth of human life and civilisation, learning and progress has formed the basis of human evolution; whether it be the founding of agrarian societies opposed to hunter-gatherers or how our children are educated today, learning is a fundamental and necessary life process.

After resolving the somewhat philosophical initial question, the lecture progressed to the main talking point: how we learn – or at least how we should learn. An interesting diagram was shown to us that proposed the best ways of learning information and how useful different methods were in actually absorbing knowledge. Reading was surprisingly one of the lowest on the list, with the diagram claiming that

only 10% of the information in books, articles and websites would actually be remembered after reading. Ironically, listening to a lecture, was just above reading in the list of which activities we absorb the most from! However the main message was that actual engagement in an activity was by far the most effective way to remember information. Teaching or participating in an activity would result in the majority of information being retained, according to the diagram. A relief then that reading does still matter!

Another diagram also delineated the roles of different parts of the brain: the stem controlling unconscious activity like breathing while other parts were responsible for conscious thought, judgment, emotions and language. This was supplemented by an interesting medical diagram showing the different parts of the brain working while performing different tasks. The talk was concluded by a look into how phonics are used in teaching English and the different types of acronyms that can be used to help remember things

(ROYGBIV for the colours of the rainbow, for example).

Throughout the talk, I found myself pondering whether I was learning in the correct way and whether I needed to drastically change my approach to it. Personally, I believe that discussion and debate is paramount in learning – there is no better way to learn about something than to passionately form an opinion about it. My ability to engage in historical discourse through the Burke Debates, for example, has massively strengthened my own understanding of certain areas of history. It is not enough to simply read and listen, one has to engage to truly learn!

PS. Good idea, Mrs Burnett, to placate the grumpy Saturday morning teenagers with chocolate on the last session of a busy term. I would strongly recommend repeating this!

**Henry Raikes**  
Y13 Academic Scholar



## GINGERBREAD HOUSES GO HEAD TO HEAD

The annual MFL Sixth Form Social was a tremendous success and brought linguists studying various languages together; encouraging them to show off their creative

flair when it came to designing and building a winning gingerbread house whilst sharing a continental buffet and festive glass of Glühwein. Anna Glaser, Joss Blood and Agnese Sartor were the champion gingerbread house builders, whose creation gained the most points for its stability, idea and design. A truly enjoyable evening which celebrated cultural traditions from in and around Europe!

**Nicola Kirby**  
Teacher of MFL



CHALLENGE

NURTURE

INSPIRE