

Press Release March 2016

TOP HISTORIAN JOSH WINS NATIONAL HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT ESSAY COMPETITION

St. Ambrose College historian Josh Travers has won the History of Parliament Society's national sixth form essay writing competition for a “gripping account' of the battle of wits between Gladstone and Disraeli, or as he characterised them “Bill and Ben.”



Josh, 18, from Hazel Grove impressed the learned judges from the national Historical Association with what Emma Peplow of the History of Parliament team, deemed to be “his gripping writing style and engaging approach to what some young people might think was a dry topic. Josh brought the tension between these two immense political figures to life with a detailed yet hugely entertaining narrative.”

Josh's essay starts: “In Westminster Abbey stand statues commemorating, amongst others, two of the greatest figures ever to grace British politics. Immortalised in stone as they lived, one with his back turned as if to give the cold shoulder to the other, who gazes on into the distance as if oblivious to the gesture. Not positioned across the aisle from one another as their eternal opposition would suggest, but instead side by side, together, bound by the rivalry that characterised their relationship and modern British politics: William Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli.”

His 3,250 word essay then details the at times epoch making but at times petty squabbles over the Empire, welfare reform, voting rights, education and their relationship with the Queen Victoria in an often hilarious light, comparing the relationship to squabbling puppets.

He said: "I am not in any way belittling their achievements, alongside Cromwell and Churchill they can be said to be the two of the most influential parliamentarians, who moved Britain forward more quickly than the rest of the world at that time, initiating welfare reform, improving education and beginning to recognise greater rights for women."

Josh, who got ten A*s and an A in his GCSEs and has an offer to study History at Hertford College Oxford, said: "I don't know why History holds such a fascination for me; I just really enjoy the subject; I suppose it's the exploration of ideas and then the interpretation of those ideas."

As a historian he can see history in the making and said: "I suppose if David Cameron leads us out of Europe, he will be seen as key figure as well, but whether for good or ill?"

He added: "I can also see that Parliament needs to evolve? Is it right that we still have hereditary peers who aren't there on merit? Is it right that Scottish M.P.s recently voted down proposals to change Sunday trading laws in England and Wales?"

Polymath Josh has chosen eclectic options in the St Ambrose College Sixth Form and is also studying Chemistry and Spanish, but is making no plans beyond life at university.

St. Ambrose College's Head of History Geraldine Scott said: "Josh is a remarkable young man possessing great intellectual clarity and a thirst for detail, but he is also extremely modest about his abilities. He is a joy to teach and an extremely popular member of the St. Ambrose College community."