

Here, waiting for news
22nd May, 2020

Dear 6H,

I hope you are all well and, in some way, enjoy the sunshine (in accordance with the rules). Believe it or not, the friend who came up with the 'Fan/ Not a Fan' quiz round is highly critical of the Sun (the star at the centre of the Solar System rather than the daily newspaper) – this seems a little ungrateful given its relatively important role in our lives.

Obviously, we are still restricted in what we are able to do, but I hope you have opportunities to pursue some of the things you enjoy (in accordance with the rules). If social distancing prevents you from taking part in your favourite activity – I know that many of you are missing sport – then try and learn more about it by reading; perhaps* you could also improvise a little (for example, by playing badminton against a wall). However, a couple of pieces of advice will help: don't play with a cricket ball indoors; and don't practise taking free kicks indoors by building a defensive wall out of treasured family objects (you will be in trouble no matter how great a defender you say the Ming Vase is/ was).

For those of you who enjoy drawing and measuring straight lines, please continue to do so in accordance with the rules (that attempt at humour comes with an instant apology). Incidentally, I wonder if two metres has been the most measured distance during lockdown? If it is, I shall spend my weekend measuring 3.7cm lines to get my favourite back to the top of the charts.

This week, I am including a *Letter to My Younger Self* – you will be asked to write one of these for yourselves after half term. Whether you agree with my choice of hobby or not, the key point is that it's important to have a place where you go (in accordance...) whether literally or figuratively, or something that you do, which lifts your days above the ordinary. Something to anticipate (when you can't do it) and relish when participating. I hope that you all have that.

The letter below may be about cricket, but you could substitute that hobby for art (perhaps I'm such a terrible artist because I try to paint with a cricket bat) or anything else you feel passionate about. It's about finding something that fits your personality.

Whatever is your cricket, there will be plenty of time to do it in the future. When the time comes, be ready and hope it doesn't rain.

Have a/ an [positive adjective here] half term,

Mr Hudd

* *Other soft drinks are available, but this one might be the best.*

20 May, 2020

Dear Master Hudd,

That is a strangely formal opening to a letter, isn't it? At the time of writing, I am a teacher and some of the children still don't know my first name.

It is summer. You are about to visit Tesco supermarket in Northfield, Birmingham in the summer between your fourth and fifth birthdays. Once you get past the dull stuff like food, you reach the strange miscellany of an aisle towards the end of the trudge around the store. You will be offered the choice between a cricket set and a football.

Although the cricket set has a much smaller ball, the different bits of wood will make it seem better (it just has more 'stuff') and you choose that.

It will be an excellent choice.

Through the years, you may be embarrassed or self-conscious about aspects of your personality (we all pretend to be someone else sometimes). However, you will never pretend that you are anything but a fan of the game.

Something about cricket will just fit.

No matter how bamboozling this game may seem to others, you will love it and, at times when life allows, you will live it. You will play it whenever you can until the last cracked tennis ball disappears over the fence (sometimes hit by your dad out of sheer exhaustion) or until it is time to revise.

You will spend your summers watching cricket with your nan and grandad, play in front of your proud father (your mum is too nervous watching you play) and eventually coach several teams (the start of a journey that will lead to teaching).

Initially, you will hone your skills in the garden, throwing balls up against a wall and practising your shots. When you do not have a bat in your hand, you will still play shots, making that clicking noise that all cricketers make (this is pretty much the only drama you will ever participate in).

When the time finally comes to play your debut match for your primary school, your first experience of hay fever will see your left eye swell up to the size of a tennis ball. You will be devastated to miss the game. Don't worry: you will get to play hundreds of games (and miss several dozen others because of the weather).

Within a year, you will find yourself in a trial match for Warwickshire U11s: you will have batted ordinarily, you will soon bowl ordinarily and have so far done nothing to stand out.

You will notice that the batsman is looking to hit the ball straight and in the air, and ready yourself in case he should do so. The problem is your catching is terrible: even now, a potential catch makes my legs turn to jelly.

The ball will be lofted high into the sky and you will have a long way to run (running is another weakness, so a running catch is unthinkable). As the ball approaches the

turf, you slide in on your knees and take the catch in your lap. At the side of the ground, your dad will join you in not believing what just happened.

It is a moment of sheer joy (one of many you will get from the game). A minor miracle.

Whatever is happening in life, cricket will make the summer yours.

Occasionally, cricket will get you into trouble. A window will break when a ball bounces unpredictably off a slab (don't use a cricket ball in the garden or, failing that, be careful). You will hit a tennis ball into your mum's forehead on a beach (she will be cross, but your dad will defend you, saying that you are not good enough to hit the ball with such accuracy).

Of all the lessons cricket will teach you, here is the most useful: look before you sit down in the changing room. In your first game for an adult team – at 13 years old – you will be dressed in your solitary pair of whites between innings. You will sit on a slice of chocolate cake, smearing the seat of your whites with chocolate icing.

Sure, you can hide it whilst waiting your turn, but when you walk out to bat, prepare yourself for two hours of laughter that most stand-up comics would die for. You will score 26 not out.

Watching cricket will also be a big part of your life. In 1987, England will win the Ashes series in Australia. Enjoy that – you will wait another lifetime before you know what that feels like again.

When it happens, you will be there. And through your life, cricket will give you great days like that.

Many people will tell you that cricket is boring. Many people will tell you they do not understand it.

Be kind to them. It is not their fault (actually, it is, but always pretend otherwise).

All this is a rather long-winded way of saying - yes, choose the cricket set. Anyway, you will always be truly terrible at football. In fact, one of the few things worse than you playing football will be a self-portrait of you playing football (but that is for another time).

Yours sincerely,

Mr Hudd (formal for the aforementioned reasons)