

Models of Excellence

Learning Expeditions at XP Trust



Being Human

What does it mean to be human?



XP and XP East Schools (XP Doncaster)

Key Stage 3 | 2025





XP.



XP.
EAST

Being Human

What does it mean to be human?

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Expedition Leads

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Expedition Authors

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This Expedition investigated the essence of humanity by integrating biological science, social history, and expressive art. Students analysed the complexity of the human body through anatomical dissections, explored themes of empathy and resilience by studying neurodivergence and the history of social justice, and developed technical portraiture skills. The project culminated in a micrography art installation featuring NHS workers, which now serves as a community legacy promoting blood donation and celebrating our shared human identity.

Case Studies

- 1 Raiders and Rulers and Unlocking the Mysteries of Matter
- 2 Magic, Myths and Shakespeare and Elements through Time
- 3 Why was the Industrial Age a Game Changer? And Heat Beneath our Feet

xpschool.org xpeast.org



Fire exit

NHS
Blood and Transplant

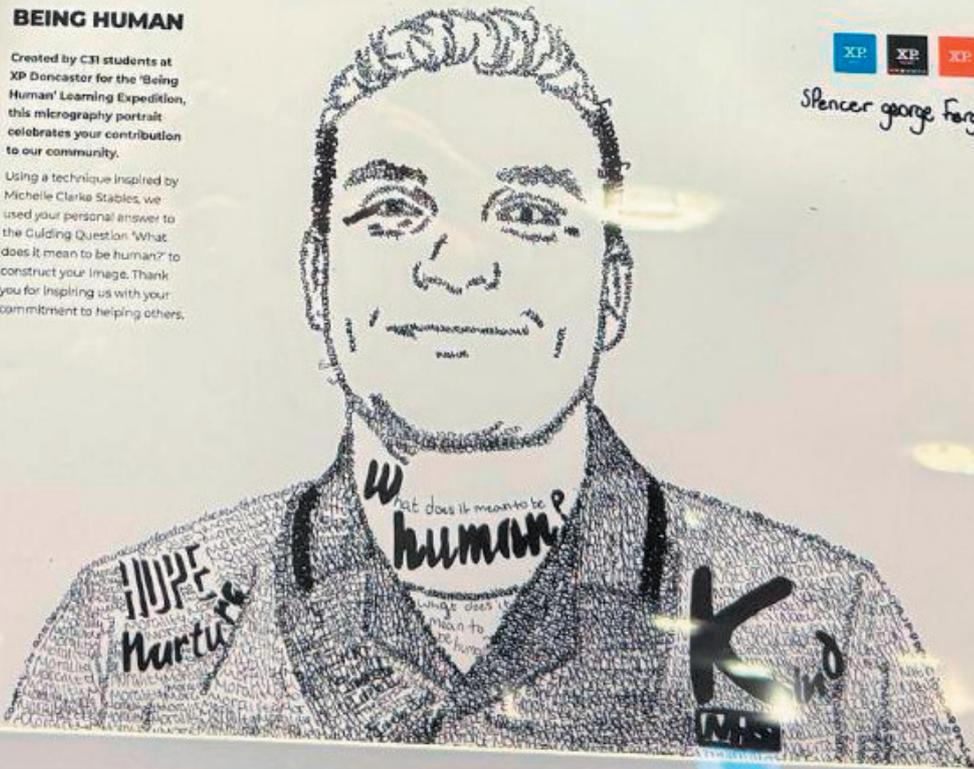
BEING HUMAN

Created by C31 students at XP Doncaster for the 'Being Human' Learning Expedition, this micrography portrait celebrates your contribution to our community.

Using a technique inspired by Michelle Clarke Stables, we used your personal answer to the Guiding Question 'What does it mean to be human?' to construct your image. Thank you for inspiring us with your commitment to helping others.



Spencer George Ferguson



Expedition Summary

In Autumn 2025, the KS3 students at XP Doncaster (XP and XP East Schools) embarked on a Learning Expedition called 'Being Human', where they aimed to answer the guiding Question 'What does it mean to be Human?'

Through two in-depth Case Studies the students developed a range of skills:

As artists, they used various techniques to create portraits of workers in the healthcare sector.

As scientists, they explored the human body including the respiratory system and circulatory system.

As writers, they read and analysed texts considering the intentions of characters.





Immersion

The Learning Expedition began with Immersion. We examined our own identities and how societal factors influence them, using resources and images to prompt discussion and reflection.

Lessons then shifted to analysing the book and film ‘Wonder’, prompting us to explore character presentation and themes of empathy. We also explored different creation stories, comparing scientific and religious perspectives, specifically focusing on Sikh beliefs. We looked at the development of modern humans and studied why they became the only remaining species of human left on Earth. We began by watching ‘Cave of Bones’, a documentary which focused on Homo naledi and some of the behaviours which are similar to modern humans but were thought unlikely in that time period.

Final Product

Our Final Product was a set of portraits completed in the micrography and text based art style influenced by expert MC Stables. The portraits included text which was the subject’s answer to the Guiding Question. The portraits were curated in different healthcare settings across Doncaster and used to support blood donation within different areas of the community as well as a number of the portraits being gifted to the individual subjects of the pictures.



Case Study One

In Case Study One, the English component explored neurodivergence through the anchor text 'The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time.' Using the 'Faster Read' technique, students tracked the development of the protagonist, Christopher, while acting as literary critics to debate the ethics of authors writing outside their own lived experiences. The study concluded with students analysing persuasive techniques in famous speeches to craft their own orations.

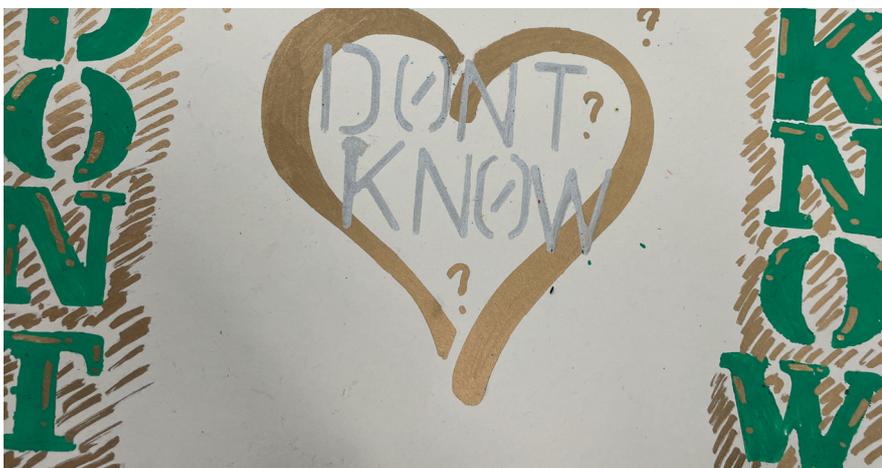
Using the 'AREDFOREST' framework, they synthesised their findings from Science, Art, and Humanities to answer the Guiding Question, 'What does it mean to be human?'

In Science, the Case Study examined the organisation and function of human organ systems, focusing on the circulatory, gas exchange, and reproductive systems. Through analysing pig hearts and lungs, students observed how organs are biologically adapted to transport oxygen, while a chicken wing exploration highlighted our shared traits with the wider animal kingdom.

In Art, students developed their portraiture skills under the guidance of expert artist Michelle Clarke Stables, studying facial proportions and the expressive works of Loui Jover, Frida Kahlo, and Jean-Michel Basquiat. This culminated in a micrography project where students created portraits of NHS workers using text and contributed to a large-scale "XP Legacy" gallery piece.

In Humanities, component, the expedition investigated the sanctity of life through the lenses of Abrahamic faiths and Humanism. Students explored the consequences of ignoring our shared humanity by studying the transatlantic slave trade. The study concluded by evaluating the ethical conflict between slave traders and abolitionists, reflecting on how the abolition of slavery fundamentally redefined what it meant to be human.





Case Study Two

In the Science component, the Expedition explored the 99.9% genetic similarity shared by all humans, framing biological variation as an evolutionary advantage rather than a basis for discrimination. Students investigated inheritance by using Punnett squares to predict traits and studied the acquisition of blood types to promote blood donation awareness. This journey further examined human development from a single-cell zygote to a complex organism, highlighting the uniquely lengthy maturation period that facilitates learning. This biological study encompassed puberty, sexual reproduction, and foetal development via the placenta, ultimately concluding with an analysis of how natural selection enabled species to adapt to environmental shifts over time.

In the Humanities component, the focus shifted to the historical and social roots of injustice, encouraging students to view issues like the ‘Black Lives Matter’ movement through the lens of empathy and an awareness of privilege.

This exploration of the human experience included a Humanist perspective on living ethically and a study of how enslaved people preserved their culture through music and storytelling. These traditions were linked to modern British identity via the Windrush generation and the Notting Hill Carnival, which served as a symbol of resilience and unity.

Finally, the Expedition evaluated global inequality by examining the effectiveness of intermediate technology and various aid strategies in reducing the development gap.



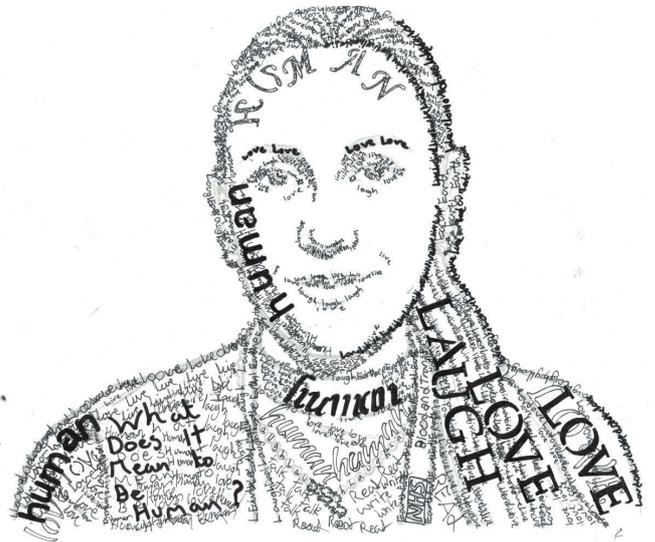
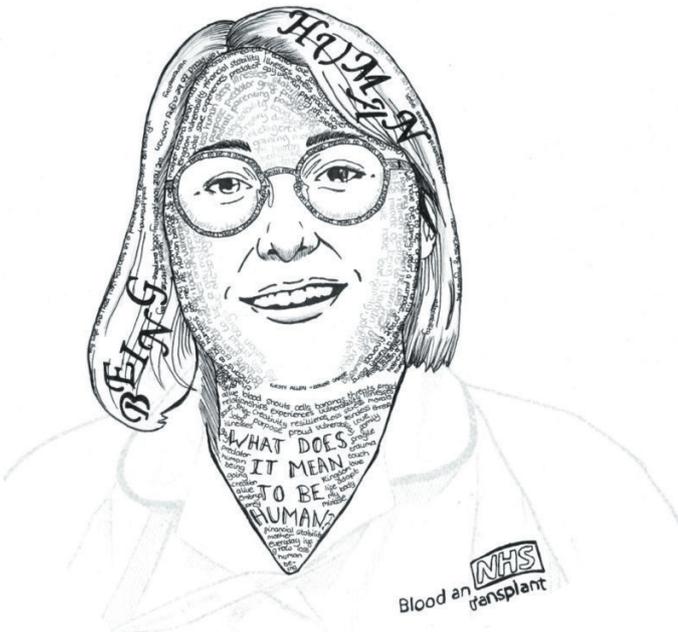
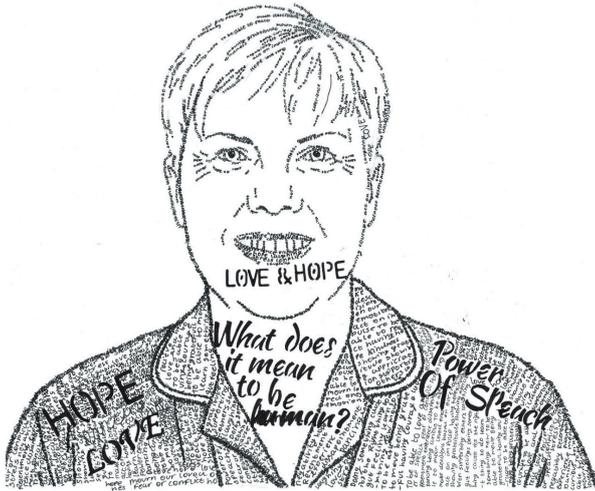
Presentation of Learning

Our Presentation of Learning was designed to be an authentic, student-led experience as students introduced the evening and delivered aspects of their speech.

Students then toured parents round different zones where groups of students presented different aspects of the expedition such as: live dissections; the blood drive which was in partnership with the blood donation service; an art workshop, exploring Da Vinci's vitruvian man and the impact and legacy of the slave trade. The evening culminated in the a gallery walk of student artwork. When parents looked at student artwork, students then delivered their individual speech to them.

As a results of the Presentation of Learning, and the relationship formed by staff and students with the blood donation team, we were able to encouraged new donors to sign up to give blood and saving lives in the future. Student work was gifted to the Blood Donation service and now takes pride of place in their building with a call to raise the profile and importance of giving blood.





Connection to Community

Fieldwork

Fieldwork played a vital role in our Learning Expedition, in the past students have visited the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool to gain a deeper understanding of the transatlantic slave trade.

Experts

To deepen and enrich our Expedition, we engaged with expert artist Michelle Clarke Stables, who works extensively with themes of humanity in her art. This hands-on experience gave them valuable insight into materials, processes, and the layered thinking that goes into creating professional artwork.

Furthermore, experts from the blood donation service were able to work with students both in advance of and at the Presentation of Learning to support the understanding of the importance of blood donation and to encourage people to sign up to donate blood.





Models of Excellence

Learning Expeditions at XP Trust



XP is a multi-academy trust. All of our schools have Crew at the heart of everything they do. We deliver our curricula through cross-subject Learning Expeditions and developing strong links with partners and community. All of this is done through the prism of our Design Principles and three rich Curriculum Seams.

xptrust.org

BUILDING COMMUNITY
ACTIVISM
LEADERSHIP
EQUITY
SHARING STORIES

CURRICULUM SEAMS

