LIENCE
Dedication

The collection is dedicated to

God,

the founders of the school,

and

the inspiring principals

and teachers of Pui Ching,

who seek to make the school the best cradle

for nurturing talents and leaders of generations

in the past

now

and the time to come.
Foreword

Mr. Ho Lik Ko

Oasis is the fruitful harvest of our students’ creative writings. Thanks to the continual untiring effort of our English teachers in promoting writing, Oasis has now become our tradition in Pui Ching. Many students have developed a passion and the readiness to write and to share their works with others. Some have considered making their contribution to Oasis as an important annual endeavor. As the principal of Pui Ching, there is nothing happier and more encouraging to see our students enjoy expressing themselves, their lives and their creativity through their works.

Time passes and the year goes. When a student no longer walks up and down the school campus, what brings him or her the heart-warming youthful reminiscences may be this ever-green collective classic of inspirations garnered years ago.

Students, why hesitate? Open your minds to the world around you. Read. Be inspired. Write.

Ho Lik Ko
Principal

2 May 2021
Words from the Editors

Subsequent to the previous revised publication of *Oasis*, there comes the heartwarming applause from various sides. With the precious experience and generous comments, we are now very honored to present to the readers yet another issue of this continual series, with a compilation of our students’ creative expression of their perception towards life.

*Oasis* is a collection of essays, which are primarily the creative work of our students who, through constant practice of reading and writing as well as shrewd observations of their immediate world, pour out their hearts in the form of short stories, novella, letters, diaries and articles. We understand that such precious perception and spontaneity towards life should never be allowed to be laid waste and it is our very aspiration to cultivate creativity in young leaders even at their early age. Sharing of insights, nourishing of the writing culture and an appreciation of literary writing can inspire introspection and unleash the beauty of human minds, thus rekindling our passion for living. Linguistically speaking, it is indeed also our intention to help our students to master the language to express themselves more than adequately.

We are so blessed that teachers and students are so supportive in conceiving as well as giving birth to this publication, despite all the sweat and blood through the travails.

In taking greater pains to bring forth this issue into existence, we very much hope that when you are reading through the pages, savouring a line or two, may you envisage the oasis of freshness on the parched land of modern hectic life.

May, 2021
Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the LORD!

Psalm 31:24
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Disclaimer:
We have strived to make every effort in ensuring students’ healthy imagination and avoiding encouraging superstition, glorifying witchcraft or dishonoring God.
In case of any mentioning of supernatural elements, the intention is purely to encourage students’ creativity and healthy imagination and to bring forth moral messages beneficial to students’ holistic development.
Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Isaiah 41:10
Go Green!
1A Hilary Kwok

Do you think pollution is serious? Do you want to save money on your energy bill? Are you taking taxis every day? Ladies and gentlemen, it is my privilege to talk to you all today about how to lead an environmentally friendly life. The purpose of my speech is to give you advice on how to go green in daily life. Let me share my experience and tips with you on diet, transportation and electrical appliances.

First thing first, have your ever heard of the idea of a plant-based diet? Becoming a vegan can help save the environment because consuming meat produces a high carbon footprint. If I were you, I would switch to a plant-based diet as it is not only beneficial to the environment, but also to your health. We should also buy from local stores, farms and markets instead of purchasing imported goods. When we eat, we ought to bring our own reusable utensils, containers and say no to plastic straws!

Besides that, how often do you take a taxi? Taking a taxi and driving your vehicle harms the environment. It causes serious air and noise pollution. Why don’t you take public transport when go to work or school? The burning of fossil fuels from the traditional petrol-powered cars emits smoke and exhaust fumes that heavily pollute the air. The sound of the engine also produces noise which causes disturbance to the neighbourhood. If you consider buying a car, why not buy an electric car? It has less environmental impacts.

On top of that, how much did you pay for the energy bill? When you are buying new electrical appliances like refrigerator or air-conditioner, you should pay attention to the energy label. Buying appliances which are grade 1 save energy and money! Changing your home appliances to energy-efficient models is the rule of thumb!

On top of that, how much did you pay your recent the energy bill? While you are buying new electrical appliances like refrigerator or air-conditioner, you should pay attention to the energy label. Buying appliances which are Grade 1, save energy and money! Changing your home appliances to energy-efficient models is the rule of thumb!

In a nutshell, changing our diet, taking public transport and buying energy-efficient appliances can save the earth! Act now before it is too late. Together, hand in hand, we can make a difference! Come join me and make the world a better place to live in!

Thank you!
The Troublesome Monkey

1A Wong Sze Ching

Last weekend, I went to Sunshine Zoo with my parents and little brother, Zach. The sun was shining, the birds were chirping and the wind sent gentle breezes throughout the day. It was the perfect day for a trip to the zoo.

The Zoo’s ticket booth was queued when we arrived there. I exchanged troubled looks with my parents’ but we still decided to queue up as Zach was obsessed with animals. At long last, it was our turn to buy the tickets. By then, Zach was already bored and twiddled his thumb in impatience. To cheer him up, we bought him a humongous lollipop after buying the tickets and going inside the zoo. He contentedly licked his lollipop after tearing off the wrapper quickly. We all laughed at his gusto for sweets.

We arrived at our first stop, the Monkeys’ Forest. My brother pointed out the three monkeys that were dangling from the tree and clapped happily as two of the monkeys did a backflip and dropped to the floor. I looked closely at the three monkeys and saw that their expressions were either bored or glum. I saw my parents’ and brother’s face drop as they noticed the same thing. I looked even closer and noticed that their gazes were all trained at the same thing, the cage door. I doubled in surprise as I realized for the first time that the cage door was right open and the only thing stopping them from escaping was us. I figured that they were quite clever as they knew they had to wait for everyone to leave in order to escape.

Suddenly, the only monkey that was still swinging between the branches of the trees jumped down, ran out of the cage, climbed the bar that was surrounding the cage and snatched the lollipop in Zach’s hand before it ran away, cackling with glee. For a moment, everyone was too shocked to move. Then the waterpipes opened and tears pearled in Zach’s eyes before coming down in torrents. I tried to stop his bawling with comforting words and a pat on the head but I knew right away that my efforts were in vain. I sighed in exasperation as my parents told me to fetch the zookeepers and tell them what had happened while they took turns soothing him. After finding the zookeepers and telling them about the incredibly naughty and cheeky monkey, they went to catch the monkey. I went to the snack shop to buy an ice-cream for Zach.
Zach cheered up considerably after seeing the ice-cream and brushed his tears away after having the first lick. After catching the woebegone and grumpy money, the staff apologized over and over again for the monkey’s folly and even gave us a free meal pass at the zoo’s restaurant! We forgave them and happily enjoyed a delightful meal in the restaurant. As the sun set, we went back home feeling thrilled despite the peculiar incident in the morning. What a blissful day!
Yum Cha and Dining Etiquette
1A Angie Li

Dear Miranda,

How’s everything going? I hope you are doing well in the UK. We haven’t seen each other for ages. It’s great to hear from you, my friend! I miss you so much that I cry almost every day!

I learned that you have been longing to visit Hong Kong. Let me introduce you to my favourite cuisine, Yum Cha. Yum Cha, the Cantonese traditional brunch involving dim sum and Chinese tea, is something you definitely have to try. Let me briefly talk about the history of Yum Cha. It can be traced back to the period of Xianfeng Emperor. Tea houses offered a place for people to gossip, which became known as “Cha Waa”, tea talk. It generally includes small portions of steamed, pan fried or deep fried dim sum dishes served in bamboo steamers. These tea houses grew to become their own type of restaurant. Hong Kongers go to Yum Cha with family and friends during weekends and holidays.

Let me share with you a funny piece of trivia about Yum Cha. It is a custom to tap the table with two fingers after receiving tea as a gesture of gratitude. It can be traced back to the Qianlong Emperor of the Qing Dynasty. While visiting the Jiangan region, he once went to a teahouse. His companions wanted to bow to show their gratitude when the emperor poured tea into their cups, but to do so would have revealed the identity of the emperor. Finally, one of the servants came up with the idea of tapping three fingers on the table.

Now, let’s talk about the dining etiquette before, during and after the meal. Wait until you are told where to sit at a formal dinner, the seating plan is set according to the hierarchy and seniority of the guests. The more important the guest is, the closer he sits to the host. About the chopsticks, if you are not using them, either lay them out in front of you. Never position your chopsticks upright in your rice bowl! This is very inappropriate as it is only done at funerals when people pay their respects to the ancestors. At the end of the meal, always insist on paying the bill as it is common to treat one another as a sign of politeness.

That’s all for now. I hope you are more familiarized with the dining culture and etiquettes in Hong Kong now. I look forward to seeing you in Hong Kong. Keep in touch and take good care of yourself!

Love,
Angie
How to Organize an Eco-Friendly Picnic

1B Darren Hung

Good morning principal, teachers and schoolmates. Please allow me to introduce myself. I’m Darren Hung from class 1B, a committee member of the Green Club. I’m glad to have this opportunity to talk about why it is important to go green in the upcoming school picnic.

Going on a picnic usually generates a lot of waste - the car ride to the destination will produce air pollution. Our dirty plates and food scraps might be blown away and pollute the picnic spot. All this waste is bad for the environment. Why don’t we all go green and organize an eco-friendly picnic?

Now we need 1.5 Earths to satisfy our current demands for energy and waste storage. According to research, if we still stay the same, we will need 27 Earths to satisfy our needs by the year 2050. If we don’t start to change, there will be serious problems like global warming, which causing icebergs to melt. This in turn makes the water level to rise and there will be more wildlife extinction because of irresponsible human behaviour. If you want to have a fun picnic and save the Earth at the same time, here are some tips I want to share.

To have an eco-friendly picnic, we should first choose a picnic site accessible by public transportation so that we can reduce air pollution. Second, prepare food that is organic and locally grown, and avoid canned and preserved food. Some scientific research pointed out that cans need one hundred years to decompose so it is better that we don’t use cans. Next, we should bring our own cups or bottles to contain our drinks, and avoid using disposable water bottles. Some research revealed that making the plastic bottle uses more water than it contains! Moreover, we should bring our own tableware, use a reusable lunchbox and bring cloth napkins. Then, for packaging, we can pack our food in reusable containers. Don’t use plastic wraps. Research said that it takes 22 gallons of water to make one pound of plastic so think twice before you use one. Nobody wants to get sunburnt. Avoid using sunscreen that contains chemical. Use natural sunscreen. Bug bites are annoying but don’t use bug spray though. Use essential oil instead. Lastly, when cleaning up, we should bring a garbage bag for collecting rubbish and leftover food scraps so that we can sort and recycle them.

To sum up, if everyone in the world can take a step to go green and minimize our carbon footprint, it will be a big change to the environment. I hope these green tips can help you to organize a zero-waste picnic. Thank you for your time. Please come and join me, and let’s go green together!
Speak Only English
1B Kyle Leung

I still really don’t understand or believe why in the world this could have happened. One morning, I found out I didn’t have the skills to speak any Chinese at all! On the contrary, I could speak fluent English, including Scottish and Punk accents.

I wobbly walked down the stairs from my bedroom, trying to act as chill as I could... But My Grand Plan was wrecked when my mom asked what I wanted for breakfast. I tried to speak in Chinese, but I couldn’t as I felt a zap in the brain, I couldn’t move my mouth nor my tongue - I was screwed!! My mom was still confused, she asked, “Son, today isn’t April Fool’s Day. Please tell me what you want for breakfast.”

I reacted fast, grabbed a piece of paper, doodled a few cartoons expressing that I couldn’t speak Chinese or instead, any language apart from English at all! My caring mom was blown away, in a negative way. She tried calling a doctor, but I didn’t care, I assume this was just some kind of potion effect which would wear off sometime soon. I left a slip of paper with “I’m off to school” in Chinese. I went jogging to school.

While I was walking to the bus station, a native Australian asked me about route information in an Australian accent. “Mornin’ mate, care to tell me where ya local bakery is?” Surprisingly, when I answered, it wasn’t a normal bland English accent, it was an immaculate Australian accent, “Mate, ya local bakery’s just down the road!”

I finally reached school and the first lesson was English, the teacher gave a mock test with a much short of time of 25 minutes compared to the other mock tests. When others were groaning and complaining about the small period of time after turning open the mock test, I beamed with happiness - the questions were as easy as 1+1!! Within the first 5 minutes of the test, I did the questions in a flash and handed in the paper. The teacher checked my test and amazed emotions on his face were priceless, I’ve aced the test! As I was swimming in my proud emotions, Mr Chan, the head teacher came in and announced, “1B19 Kyle, you were accused of cheating in an exam.” I felt like a deflated balloon, feeling sick. I didn’t cheat! Anyways, I was summoned to the head teacher’s room along with my handbook. Eventually, I was shouted at for a while, and my handbook had a few red sentences. “Cheating during a mock test” I have been wrongly accused, but I moved on as I assumed this wasn’t real.
Next up was Chinese History, usually I’m pretty chill during Chinese history. Since I couldn’t speak Chinese that day, I was praying all lessons wouldn’t be called up for questioning. As I thought I was safe when there was one minute away from the lesson ending, I was called up! To make things worse, the teacher asked an incredibly hard question which was impossible to answer in English. This time I fell short, I just couldn’t answer the question. I knew the answer deep in my heart but I couldn’t answer it! In the end, the teacher thought I was trolling the teacher so I got sent to the head teacher’s room. Mr Chan was annoyed to see me again. Without questions, a few new words in red appeared in my handbook, “Disrespecting teacher by ignorance.” What a sad day, I felt sick with innocence, my handbook had been written in twice just because I couldn’t speak Chinese or for being too good at English. What a joke!

I could not enjoy lunch either - I couldn’t order any food items, and I ended up with the most disgusting and gooey beef rice. Another disappointment.

As I walked home, I couldn’t stop thinking about the two handbook markings and my unluckiness. I felt like I’d been wrongly accused of a “crime” I didn't even commit.

Back home, I wasn’t in the mood to do anything, not even video games. After a few dozen minutes of homework, I felt tired and guilty, so I went straight to bed, thinking about the events that occurred.

The next morning when I woke up, I was desperate to try and speak Chinese again. Surprisingly, I finally recovered my Chinese speaking skills. I took a peek in my handbook. The red words were finally gone. As I bounced around in excitement, I thought about how good it is to be bilingual or multilingual.
The Battle Against Animals

1B Joshua Chung

Just now, my family members and I came to the living room, staring at the golden leaflet which was sitting there on the table. Fear was tearing our hearts apart. This all began last Sunday...

We weren’t any normal family but an agent family! We had missions to complete in order to save the world from different evil villains. This time, we had a very important mission to do. We could get promoted if we could accomplish it! We had to check up on the AEC (Animal Evil Company). They were our newest, strongest rivals. Their final goal was to make animals rule the world! We had to stop them!

We went to the zoo which was their base. Surprisingly, it was crowded! It seemed that many people wanted to join them. We had to be quick! After a few hours, we were finally in the zoo!

We were wandering all over the zoo, trying to find enough evidence to seize this company. With our own invention – the LolliPOP, we could easily see through walls and take photos. As we had collected enough evidence, we were about to leave when a monkey suddenly broke out of its cage and stole our LolliPOP!

We were all worried and my brother even cried! The files were exposed to them. Now our only chance of saving this mission was to execute the self-destruction command. But luckily, the monkey accidentally pressed the button while running away! And all the evidence was sent to the police office!

At last, the cops came and searched the whole base. They captured the monkey which turned out to be the boss of the AEC!

We were all celebrating so we didn’t see a broken lock and an opened cage...

And today, we opened the leaflet, which had 5 big words on it, “Welcome to Animal Abusement Park”. But that’s another story...
Why You Shouldn’t Visit the Zoo!!!

1B Kyle Leung

Last weekend, it was my magnificent little brother, Simon’s birthday. Simon had an absurd interest in monkeys. Since he was small, he had wanted to be a mischievous little monkey. So, our family decided to take him to Sunshine Zoo which was widely known for its wide variety of monkeys.

We took a local bus to the zoo located in the countryside about 45 minutes from our home. It was a long ride and everyone was exhausted, but just as we had our first glimpse of the zoo, bad news came rolling in like pounding waves. The ticket queue was an endless dragon, visitors and tourists came flooding. We realised if we didn’t queue soon, there wouldn’t be a spot for us in the zoo. Worst of all was the boiling, blistering temperature. Everyone’s face was like ice melting, sweat dripping off like tears, every second it felt like our soul was being drained bit by bit, fatigued as ever.

Simon was feeling the pressure, more and more intensely and as if a tap had suddenly broke under pressure, his tears came freely.

People started to stare at us. Dad twitched nervously, my mother looked vacantly with her head lowered toward the ground. They were both embarrassed and disappointed. Even at what seemed our darkest moment, Simon simply would not shut up. He continuously wept and wailed, getting louder and louder every second. At last, we gave up on calming him, and just simply gave him a jumbo lollipop. It was a miracle! He became completely silent.

Finally, we got into the zoo, but the reality was far from our expectation. We dashed to the “Monkey Utopia”, but it looked more like “Fear-topia”. The monkeys weren’t swinging around like energetic kids, they were as still as rocks. They were not having fun, they were miserable and they were simply not like any living thing – void of any value. I saw the fear in their eyes. They were petrified and disturbed. Lacking observational ability, we had no clue that the monkey cage was opened.

Suddenly, from a narrow and dim lit cave, a pair of bloody eyes peered at us. A weird mammal with unusual muscles came charging out! It was the alpha monkey squad! He snatched watches and glittering pieces of gold and silver from unsuspecting guests and had even been responsible for a number of high profile cameras and phone hijackings. Today the fruit of the monkey’s loot had included Simon’s lollipop. Simon was outraged, he felt the
shock of the uncontrollable anger, the fear of the robbery and also the helplessness. He weakly sobbed and nothing would stop him.

The zoo was out of control! Some people ran for their lives, some screamed at the top of their lungs. Thankfully we didn’t freak out. Instead, we handled the situation as calm as ever. “Hello? Is this Animal Control? Yes, understood, there is a monkey on the loose in the Monkey Utopia. We seek help. Thank you very, very much.”

A few minutes later, an elite squad of well-trained, armed men arrived ready, but not in a good way. They had an electric cage, zappers, stun darts and most of all a frightening shotgun! They went on the search. When they eventually found the monkey, they zapped it, and shot a stun dart to calmed it down! It was cruel! Pure cruelty to animals! Seeing my brother that downhearted, I bought my brother a vanilla swirl ice cream. He was delighted!! He licked and slurped that ice cream like the happiest kid in the world.

Meanwhile, the staff kept apologizing to our parents. “We are really sorry for our monkey’s behaviour!! It will never happen again!!” and offered gifts and discounts, “Here, it is a discount for your next visit, here is a plushie for your sad son!” Mom and Dad peeked at the monkey, it was lying there still like a statue, not making a sound. They thought of the cruelty from the zookeepers and the fright of the monkeys. They rejected the offers and left with a sentence “Sunshine Zoo is going down.”

When we got home, and expressed our feelings on social media, we also saw the dark side of the zoos. Simon and I both learnt that zoos are nothing but cruel places. The animals are slaves of zookeepers and visitors. The animals don’t feel like home. Instead, they are constantly stressed and lack space.

I really feel bad for those animals at the zoo.
A Travel Guide for a Friend
1C Belle Mun

Dear Sam,

How are you? I’m really excited after hearing that you’re going to come to Hong Kong for three days. In your last letter, you mentioned that you would like to see some places of interest, try different kinds of food, and buy a few things in Hong Kong. I’ve done some research for you. Let me tell you about my findings one by one.

One of the places that you shouldn’t miss is the Peak. It is one of the highlight attractions in Hong Kong. From there, you can see the panoramic views of the city as well as the picturesque Victoria Harbour. The view from the Peak is breathtaking. I’m sure that you will take a lot of snapshots and post them on Instagram.

To try a variety of food in Hong Kong is a must. A cha chaan teng is definitely a place not to be missed. You can find a cha chaan teng almost everywhere in Hong Kong. Whichever cha chaan teng you visit, you can find egg tarts, pineapple buns and Hong Kong style milk tea. These are peculiar types of food and snacks which well represent Hong Kong. The food there is of good value and the service is efficient.

If you want to buy some interesting items here, Ladies’ Market is the perfect destination for you. It is one of the best street markets in Hong Kong. There are different kinds of souvenirs which are not too expensive and you can find some good bargains there. The salespersons are really nice and they love to chat with customers.

Got to go now. I hope you like what I’ve recommended for you. I can’t wait to see you again at the airport. I hope you’ll enjoy this amazing three-day trip in Hong Kong!

Love,
Chris
Monkey Goes Wild
1C Belle Mun

“Dad, Sunshine Zoo is going to have a grand opening this coming Saturday. Shall we go there?” I asked, flipping through a weekly magazine.

“Sure! Why don’t we ask Mum and your brother and see if they want to go to?”

I was certain that they would agree and I was looking forward to visiting the zoo.

On that day, I woke up early and we arrived at our destination the opening time of the zoo at 9 a.m. To our surprise, there were a lot of people lining up at the ticket office. “How long should we wait? I really want to see the monkeys,” said little John. We had been waiting under the sun for nearly half an hour and were all sweating by the time Dad got the tickets in his hand.

When we entered the zoo, we went to “Mammal World”. The entrance was a humongous place where we could hear the echoes of our voices. The famous part of this “Mammal World” was the monkeys, which little John longed to see. They were jumping up and down whenever they saw people nearby.

While we were looking at the naughty creatures, we found that one of the cages was open. A monkey left the cage and grabbed little John’s lollipop, thinking that it was a banana. It ran swiftly and disappeared in the crowd. People who saw the monkey with the lollipop were screaming shrilly. Losing the lollipop, John was so scared that he kept on crying. We hugged him and told him that we would buy him another lollipop.

After a while, we saw some staff holding a cage with the monkey being locked inside. We were relieved as the monkey would not take away other people’s food.

Instead of buying little John a lollipop, Dad gave him an ice-cream. This time, he didn’t choose the yellow one as he was afraid that another monkey would take it away as it was the same colour as a banana. I guess John will give all yellow desserts to me in the future.
The Naughty Monkey

1C Simione Cheng

Last Sunday was a sunny day and the sun was burning like a ball of fire. My mum, dad, little brother Sam and I went to Sunshine Zoo because of the nice weather.

When we arrived, we found that it was crowded at the entrance so we had to queue up and wait for a while, but we still felt very excited.

We started looking around and found a sign after we went into the zoo. Under the sign, there were some guiding maps. We found “The Monkey Playground” most interesting so we went there, looking for monkeys.

Even though it was crammed with people, we still went there to see the monkeys because I had never seen monkeys before. The monkeys looked friendly and cute.

Just then, we found that the cage was unlocked by one of the monkeys. While I was calling the staff, the monkey got out of the cage and jumped towards my little brother, Sam, and snatched his lollipops.

The monkey ran everywhere and my brother cried loudly. My parents tried to comfort him and I tried to contact the staff.

After a few minutes, the staff came and the monkey was caught. Luckily, no one was hurt. The staff investigated the cage and discovered that the lock wasn’t tight enough and they apologised for their mistakes.

At last, I bought a new ice cream for Sam and we went home happily.

A week later, we received a letter from Sunshine Zoo with four tickets and some coupons. The letter said that they were very sorry about the accident and had already changed the lock, so they hope we could go there again.
A Letter to Chris
1D Conan Chow

Dear Sam,

How are you? It is great to hear from you after so many months. Is it cold in Canada? Hong Kong is so hot even though it is winter. I am excited that you will visit Hong Kong during the Christmas holiday.

Firstly, we can visit Ocean Park which is a combination of marine mammal park, oceanarium, animal theme park and amusement park. The park has various attractions and rides, including roller coasters, and also animal exhibits, such as a giant panda habitat, rainforest and polar displays, as well as the world’s largest aquarium dome. There is also a cable car system connecting the Waterfront and the Summit. During the eight-minute cable car journey, you can see the spectacular views of South China Sea.

Secondly, we can go to the Peak by taking the Peak Tram. It is the highest point on Hong Kong Island and there is the Victoria Peak Garden located on the site of Mountain Lodge. You can use the coin-operated telescopes to enjoy the cityscape. Moreover, you can find the stylish architectural icon – Peak Tower. There are many souvenir shops and restaurants. You can taste different kinds of food and buy some souvenirs.

Finally, I highly recommend you to visit Lei Yue Mun. It is famous for its seafood market and restaurants. Then, you can enjoy delicious, fresh seafood such as razor clams and lobsters for dinner. After dinner, you can buy some famous local sweets like “wife cakes”, coconut pies and almond rolls from the famous bakery – “Shui Heng Yuen”. Also, we can visit Tin Hau Temple which was built more than 200 years ago in honour of the goddess of the sea. There is a historic cannon – a reminder of the days when piracy was rampant in Hong Kong.

I look forward to hearing from you soon. Let me know what your plans are. I will wait for your reply. See you!

Best,
Chris
Alien Invasion

1D Sophie Tong

It was lunchtime on the first day of school and my two starving best friends, Ally and Jamie were in the playground drooling over the thought of lunch! Ally had a Mac and Cheese from McDonald’s while Jamie had chicken from KFC. They were also chatting about their lesson schedule.

Ally asked Jamie, “Are you excited about the English lesson? I heard the teacher was very gentle and kind.”

Jamie replied, “Yeah, I heard from the older form students that we were in luck.”

Suddenly, out of nowhere crashed a huge, oddly-shaped aircraft onto the pitch. Ally and Jamie were in awe. They were petrified, terrified but amazed at the same time. Shivering with fear, they slowly stepped away from the unknown aircraft, their teeth chattering. Smoke slowly billowed out of the engine. They were becoming more and more worried, their hearts beating as fast as a cheetah, the hair on their arms stood up! The door opened slowly. What could be inside, a ghost, a vampire, a prankster? No, it was a green thing with long antennae, big terrifying eyes, and arms slimmer than a stick.

It walked towards Ally and Jamie and asked in a very creepy, deep and squeaky voice,

“Take me to your Principal or you shall feel the wrath of Goblish Duf.” However, the two boys whispered to each other in a secret language.

“Oh no, it is the guardian of prison Alien,” Jamie told Ally.

Ally replied, “Calm down. They are terrible at fighting, or else why would we be here, free and safe?”

The boys led the Alien to the Principal. The Principal was scared and almost fainted.

The Principal asked, “Why are you.....here? I...... I am innocent.”

The alien replied, “Find me Ally and Jamie right now or you shall... DIE!”
However, the Principal didn’t surrender to his threat. He replied with no fear, “You criminal scum, you thought I was going to let you take students from my school?” He rolled up his sleeves. “If you dare to touch one of my students, I will find you, and I will kill you.”

Suddenly, my best friends both morphed into disgusting, ugly creatures exactly like Goblish Duff. The Principal and the alien were shocked. Ally and Jamie were shape-shifting spies who were fugitives from Mercury. They had escaped and now decided to shape-shift into humans. Ally was called Boop and Jamie was called Bappy. After their disguise was blown, they decided to wipe out the evidence by barfing toxic acid onto the outer wall of the school, injuring hundreds of innocents. When I saw them, I was petrified. I tried to talk to them but they tried to barf on me but missed by the closest bit. They seemed not to recognize me and I knew I was not a friend of theirs anymore. In fact, I didn’t know if they were in the beginning.

They however stopped shooting the school. They peered into the atmosphere and saw some big army arriving. The army yelled, “We are the prison Alien reinforcements. If you hurt another thing, we will open fire.” Yet they didn’t listen and continued to trash the school.

Then war was upon us. Jamie replied, “You guys couldn’t even keep me in prison, bring it on old man!” Then they were shot by extremely lethal lasers. Jamie then shapeshifted into a giant and Ally shapeshifted into a big club. It was a war between the aliens.

Jamie hit multiple spaceships like a baseball and yelled, “Homerun!” They continued to fight but the spaceship armies’ lasers were too powerful and both of them were full of burn marks. Thankfully, Ally and Jamie wore a little protective gear and weren’t fainting. However, they surrendered due to the pain their bodies were experiencing.

They both didn’t resist capture and the alien army used highly advanced technology to repair the school. Even though it was awesome to see aliens, I was devastated, not only did I lose two of my best friends, but they wouldn’t even visit me again. In fact, they didn’t even recognize me anymore. Our school reporter saw my sad face. He saw those tears streaming down, and he could hear my whimper. He walked over and handed me a picture of me and
my friends together having our first lessons. I then wiped my tears away and he said to me, “They may have forgotten you, but they are always in there,” as he pointed to my heart.

So, this was what happened to my best friends when I was just in Form 3. So, readers, you must use the precious time wisely with your best friends. You never know what is going to happen next... maybe they are vampires and want to suck your blood!
An Unforgettable Day at the Zoo

1D Conan Chow

Last weekend, it was my little brother, John’s birthday. My parents, John and I went to Sunshine Zoo to celebrate John's birthday.

After we arrived at the zoo, we realized the zoo was gigantic but very crowded. First of all, we had to queue up to buy the tickets for admission. But there was a long queue about a mile long. We queued for about 30 minutes for the tickets. Then we all felt tired and powerless.

Finally, we bought the tickets and went into the zoo. First, we visited the monkeys. They were all very cute and clever. The monkeys knew where they could find their favourite food—bananas, which were hidden by the zoo keeper in the cage. The monkeys also said “hello” by waving their hands to the tourists actively. However, some monkeys looked quite bored in the enclosure.

Suddenly, the cage door was open. A naughty monkey escaped from the cage and took the lollipop away from John in a split second. It ran to a corner and savoured the “tasty” lollipop.

Honestly, if I were that monkey, I would never take away John's lollipop because it was distasteful. After that, John cried his eyes out. He cried so loudly that he caught the attention of all tourists at the zoo. My mom and dad were trying to comfort him nicely but that was of little avail. Finally, I bought John a strawberry ice cream. Then, John smiled again and stopped crying. Eventually, the staff of the zoo caught the monkey and kept it in another more secure cage. They felt sorry for us because the monkey frightened us. As a result, they gave us free-permits to visit the zoo again in the future as compensation.

What an unforgettable day!
A Letter to a Friend

1E Justin Ho

Ahoy, Sally,

I miss you loads. How’s it going? I bet I’m way more excited than you are about my stay. I haven’t seen you guys for such a long time! I’m looking forward to seeing all of you. Your brother Frank is always so funny and Tuck is absolutely adorable. I’m glad they’re excited to see me too.

About the rock concert, I’d love to go! I’ve never been to one before. You said the whole town would wake up just to listen, right? That’s going to be quite a sight! I shouldn’t miss that. I’m just going to have to make sure I get plenty of rest before then to make sure I’d be chock-full of energy at the time. Let’s go straight away. I’m really hyped up for this.

You know the mountains are my favorite place to be. Of course, I’d like to do some climbing! I haven’t done so for quite a while, and I really miss doing it though it’s late autumn right now, and the mountains might be a bit cold. You might have to prepare a few coats for Frank and Tuck, and of course yourself. Hopefully they won’t get too exhausted from the trip.

I can’t really think of any new things to do, other than just touring around your town. I mean, the last time I visited was 2 years ago. Your town must’ve changed at least a bit since then, right? You can show me around, and we can do some shopping as well! Oh yeah, I think there’s a lake in your town, am I right? We could go swimming and fishing! Fancy that?

See you in a few days.

Best wishes,

Justin

P.S. Can you take me to the best pizza place in your town? I want to stuff myself with PIZZA!!
Mr. Nick Ho – an Approachable Principal
1E Damian Sin

Graduated in Pui Ching, Mr. Nick Ho became our principal in 2018. His mottos are “Work hard, play hard” and “A purpose driven life.” Although he wanted to become an actor at first, he still comes back to teach in Pui Ching because he regards Pui Ching as his second home.

When he was studying in Pui Ching Middle School, his favourite subject was the Chinese Language. He thinks that reading is of utmost importance and he likes reading drama scripts. That's why he looked forward to joining the Drama Club. He had his most memorable moments there. Do you know how many drama productions he participated in every year when he was a student? Three! That is a very big number. It shows that he was really dedicated to drama. “Drama is my second life,” he said.

During his teaching career, Mr. Ho taught Chinese, Liberal Studies and Drama Education. Among them, he likes teaching Drama Education the most. While teaching Drama Education, he expects students to learn the 4Ds principle from it. The 4Ds principles are Discipline, Dedication, Discovery and Delight. He has produced more than 10 drama and musical productions but he never brags about it. He also promotes Drama Education in school, fortunately, he hasn’t faced any difficulties up to now. Despite his career achievements, he still remains humble and modest.

As a principal, Mr. Ho also shows his humble and modest characteristics. He would like to be an approachable one. He doesn’t want students to feel he is distant from them. He has organized two projects in school, they are “Happy meals” and “Why not?” projects. Through “Happy meals”, he can understand students more by communicating with them. The “Why not?” project is for students to realize their dreams and let them listen to their inner voice as he encourages students to be courageous and pursue their dreams.

Mr. Ho’s message to Pui Ching Middle School students is that they should know more about themselves, listen to their inner voice, realize and follow their dreams. “Remember, Pui Ching is your second home,” he always reminds us. Thanks Mr. Ho for his 4Ds principle, the principle could be applied anytime and anywhere in life. It is indeed a whole-life concept. What a purpose-driven life!
Revenge – Seeking Aliens?

1E Bernice Kwok

“I don’t come here for no reason. We aliens deserve respect. People dislike us and it’s not fair, so I am here to seek revenge...”

Earlier that day...

“Ding dong! Ding dong!” The lunch bell rang at noon. The students at Happy Middle School took their lunchboxes and filed out of the classroom. The students sat in the playground, chatting and enjoying their meals. When suddenly, the students saw a spaceship spinning above them...

The spaceship slowly landed in the middle of the playground. A plume of smoke billowed from it. A blue, slimy alien with disproportionately big eyes hopped out of the spaceship. The students started to back away from the alien as it started walking towards the crowd. It tapped on a girl’s shoulder and demanded, “Take me to your principal.” Her friend was standing next to her, they both quivered in fear and they were too scared to answer. The alien took out a knife and threatened, “Take me to your principal, now!”

“O-okay,” stuttered the girls. The alien was satisfied by the reaction it got.

The girls slowly led the alien towards the other side of the playground when the principal came out of the school building to see what all the commotion was about. The alien took a step near the principal. It plastered a fake smile over its face and said, “You must be the principal, right?”

“I am, indeed. What do you want?” The principal asked. “it’s nice meeting you, but you won’t have much time left, not even enough to see the last sunset of your life!” answered the alien.

“I-I don’t understand,” stammered the principal. “Are-are y-you going to kill me?”

The alien cackled, “Oh yes! I’ve been waiting for this day for the last ten years. This is the day when I get to kill this man with my own hands!”

“But why? I didn’t do anything to you!” panicked the principal.
“We aliens deserve respect. People dislike us because of our colour and appearance and it’s just not fair, so I’m seeking revenge,” the alien replied. It continued, “As you are a principal of a school, you’ve taught your students to treat animals as well as they treat humans. But what about aliens? You’ve told your students that aliens don’t exist, which is a very disrespectful comment. People get the fright of their lives when seeing us. I’ve suffered enough, so I am on a mission to kill you and all the people who hate aliens. Get ready to suffer!”

Everyone froze. The sky turned cloudy and dusty. The alien let out a really eerie screeching sound and tackled the principal. Everyone was so terrified. They were literally glued to the spot. The alien raised its big, slimy hands, and started to choke the principal. When the principal had almost died, the alien saw the principal’s girlfriend, a boxer, running towards it with boxing gloves. The alien let go of the principal as soon as he realized that she and its ex-girlfriend looked so alike. It started to cry, out of guilt. He got dumped because he was too cold-hearted. He was once power-hungry and wanted to be well-known in the universe. And now more people feared and hated him...

The alien turned around and said, “Mere words couldn’t describe my guilt. Revenge is useless and dangerous, yet, I’ve spent a lot of time plotting it. I was always told for being too cold-hearted and sensitive, but from now on, I’ll change myself to be a nicer alien. I hope you will accept my apology for any inconvenience caused.” And it stepped into its spaceship and flew off.

The next day, a group of students saw another spaceship at lunch time. Did more aliens want revenge?
Solid Waste Disposal
1E Cortina Tam

Good morning, everyone. I’m Cortina Tam, student of Pui Ching Middle School. I’m here today because I want to share with you my concern and suggest ways of dealing with the problem of solid waste disposal in Hong Kong.

The solid waste disposal problem is getting more serious in Hong Kong. All kinds of trash are dumped, including plastic, paper and food residue. Therefore, landfills are reaching their maximum capacity. According to the government, more than six million tonnes of solid waste is discarded every day in Hong Kong.

The present way to deal with the solid waste is to dump trash into the landfills. However, the three landfills in Hong Kong are going to be filled up soon and they release disgusting smell which makes people feel sick. Another way is incineration. Incineration is environmentally unfriendly and people think it is dangerous and disgusting because it emits toxic gases which are harmful to our health.

Regarding this background, the government should set up a levy on household waste in Hong Kong. People will reduce household waste because they need to pay more if they dump a large amount of trash. However, a levy on household waste has been discussed for two decades, but the decision is yet to be made.

Therefore, we should start lessening solid waste on our own, shouldn’t we? Going green starts with small changes. At Mid-Autumn festival, Hong Kong people always buy lots of mooncakes. The packaging of mooncakes is hard to decompose. To reduce mooncake packaging, we can bring our own recyclable boxes when we buy or receive mooncakes. Also, we can reduce mooncake waste by giving non-expired mooncakes to different organizations, so they can donate them to people in need.

What can we do to save the environment? We will start with easier things. We can reuse disposable materials such as plastic boxes, straws and cardboards. We can be creative to turn these things into practical objects. For example, we can turn cardboards into a drawer which can store stationery or jewellery, etc. The most important way to save the environment is to recycle and reduce. Put clean plastic, cans and paper in the recycle bins. Reduce using plastic or disposable tableware.
Reducing solid waste is important. As a responsible citizen, everyone should fix the planet together and share the burden. I hope that all of you can contribute to the Earth and start cutting solid waste today.

Thank you.
The Problem of Solid Waste Disposal in Hong Kong

1E Sam Au

Good morning, everyone. I am Sam Au from 1E. I am here today because I want to share with you the problem of solid waste disposal in Hong Kong. The problem of solid waste disposal is getting more serious. More than 9000 tonnes of solid waste disposal is discarded in Hong Kong every day.

At present, most of the Hong Kong waste is dumped to landfills together with other municipal solid waste but the landfills will reach their maximum capacity within a decade, so we need to be environmentally friendly. We can buy less and consider buying second-hand so that we can reduce waste and maximize the utility of the products. It would be environmentally friendlier. According to the SCMP, half of the interviewees agreed incineration could be one of the ways to deal with the waste management. However, incineration is a waste treatment technology which involves burning waste; however, this emits toxic gases which are disgusting and hazardous.

Apart from waste management, we should work on reducing waste at its source. Do you know how many mooncakes Hong Kong people buy every year? Greenpeace interviewed 278 people after the Mid-Autumn Festival in 2020. The result showed on average, one family bought 2.7 boxes of mooncakes, but only ate 0.9 mooncake instead. I understand eating mooncakes is customary in Hong Kong, but the problem is we buy too many than we need. What is even worse? The survey also showed the more attractive mooncake packaging is, the more customers are likely to buy them. Several large chain cake shops even sold one gift set of mooncakes with 47 packaged items. How ridiculous it is. The packaging items can’t be recycled easily, so they become waste due to hygiene issues or low recycling value.

What can we do to be environmentally friendlier? Going green starts at home with small changes. We can turn off air-conditioners when we don’t need them because air-conditioners emit carbon dioxide as it intensifies the greenhouse effect and causes global warming. We can take public transport or get around on foot as much as possible because public transport helps to reduce air pollution. As a teenager like me, I bring my own water bottles instead of buying plastic bottles of water every day. I will also bring my own tableware because using plastic tableware is not environmentally friendly.

Let’s be a responsible citizen. Hope you join me and start to throw less rubbish today. Thank you.
A Letter to a Friend
1F Rebecca Chu

Hello there!

It’s great to hear from you. I’m looking forward to spending my holiday with you, too! I’m sure I’ll get along with your little brother and have fun playing with Tuck.

The rock concert that you talked about in the email sounds interesting! I really enjoy music so I definitely won’t miss it! I’m sure my tiredness will be gone once the music starts.

Oh yeah, I would love to go mountain climbing. I heard that Blue Mountain has beautiful hiking trails and scenery. Can we go there? What’s more, we can rent a caravan and go camping in the Blue Mountain Country Park! Besides hiking, we can set up a campfire and enjoy a night filled with starry dreams. It’s going to be cool, isn’t it?

Do you like marine animals? If yes, we can also take a trip on a glass bottom boat to watch the colorful tropical fish, rays, sea turtles, numerous species of coral and more!

As you know, I love to eat seafood very much, so I would like to go to the famous seafood market where I can pick any kinds of seafood and have them cooked right away in front of me! My mouth already starts watering when I think of all these tasty delicacies!

I’ll arrive at the airport next Friday at 5 p.m. I am afraid I don’t know how to get to your house. Can your Mom and Dad pick me up at the airport?

Can’t wait to see you next week!

Love,
Rebecca
A Letter to a Friend

1F Chase Chung

Hey Sandy,

I miss you so much! How long has it been since I met you? Do you remember when we first met? You accidentally spilled coke all over me. It was so funny!

I wonder what we can do together when we meet. I know! We can play with your fast RC car and your drone too. I love playing with them so much. Sadly, I can’t afford a drone because my room is stuffed with well, you know, stuff...

Wow! Your town is going to have a rock concert? This is so cool, man! I love heavy metal the most. It makes my adrenaline levels burst through the charts. My favorite instrument in heavy metal is obviously the drums. It gives the rhythm to the song, and it is like the backbone, the spine of the band. Although I might be exhausted and fatigued, the music will surely pump me up!

And sure, I would love to climb mountains with you! I really love the nature, but I’m sure you know that already, because you are my friend. Eh let’s chat on WhatsApp later. To be honest, I don’t know why I’m doing this...

Let’s also go diving! I just got the permit and I know you did too because of your Facebook status. Why am I doing this? It’s 2020 for heaven’s sake! Yeah, I will talk to you later on the phone. I miss playing with Tuck and Frank so much. Is Frank old enough to dive with us? I’ll ask him on the phone later. Hope Tuck doesn’t jump on him again!

Can you please tell me why you’re emailing me? No offence, but this is kind of annoying. You need to do homework, right? Oh right, you are in the “smart kids” class. But this is... I’m wordless. Can’t you get more interesting homework? Well good luck to you! :-)

Good luck on your homework! See you soon.

Cheers,

Chase
Going Green
1F Serena Hon

Good morning everyone, I’m Serena Hon, a committee member of the Green Club. As most of you are aware that our annual school picnic day is approaching, I think most of you will start planning for such an exciting event. May I spend a few minutes to share with you how to support going green and organising a zero-waste picnic?

Some of you may probably say there is nothing I can do as I’m just a little guy on Earth. No! It’s not true. The planet is ours and we are living here. Sadly, it is getting sick and suffering from lots of environmental problems now. Air and water pollution, global warming, climate change – there are more and more problems causing crisis to our human health or wildlife extinction. For example, some areas exposed to toxic air pollutants can cause respiratory problems. Millions of people are known to have died due to the indirect effects of air pollution. Though you may not see them threatening you right now, lots of evidence shows that the environment is deteriorating. Therefore, it is crucial for every one of us to react and protect our planet immediately, by starting from a single annual event, and then to further extend it in our daily life.

So, you may be interested in asking how we can plan for an eco-friendly picnic arrangement. This is simple and I wish to share some “Dos” and “Don’ts” with you so you can follow and refer to.

First of all, for “Dos”, I would advise you to follow the well-known “4R” principle to avoid wastage – Reuse, Reduce, Recycle and Replace. You can reuse any items and avoid disposable stuff like plates or glasses. Reduce unnecessary utensils by packing your food and snacks in reusable containers. Recycle any plastic, cans and bottles to give them a second life. And replace the plastic napkins with cloth ones. You can even consider sharing them among the group for the best implementation of these 4Rs.

Now, for the “Don’ts”, firstly, please don’t leave the trash behind after the picnic. Besides, we could even pick up any leftovers for tomorrow’s lunch or dinner. Secondly, don’t buy those picnic items wrapped in unnecessary plastic packing. To get healthy, why don’t we make our own delicious organic meals, like sandwiches, salads or fruits and serve them in the recyclable bowls?
I see some of you might have come up with good thoughts already. You are encouraged to share your ideas to promote “Going Green” in our coming picnic. Feel free to post them in our Green Club fans page on the school website. The best 3 ideas will be awarded a gift of the lovely foldable and reusable lunchbox that I am holding now. See how adorable it is!

I hope all of you can take part in this meaningful activity and support it. Let’s take action now to save our planet! Thank you all and have a good day!
Letter to Miranda – Be Prepared for the Cultural Differences on the Table!

1F Phoebe Lui

Dear Miranda,

How are you? Many thanks for your letter. You said you have been longing to visit Hong Kong, right? I’m looking forward to your coming! Let me introduce things about dining in Hong Kong.

Yum cha is a type of local cuisine in Hong Kong. Yum cha means drinking tea in Hong Kong but now it also means drinking tea and eating dim sum. You might be a bit surprised when you go to experience Yum cha. Restaurants in western countries are quite quiet but Chinese restaurants are not. You may hear people chatting and the noise of utensils colliding with each other. Well, let’s talk about dim sum. I’ve been eating dim sum since I was a kindergarten student. Steamed barbecued pork bun is my favourite kind of dim sum. It is a kind of bread with barbecued pork fillings. A plate of dim sum is about HKD$13 to HKD$44. Shrimp dumpling, shumai, rice noodle roll and sweet cream bun are also my favourite types of dim sum. You must try these when you come to Hong Kong.

As I have said, Chinese restaurants are quite noisy but there’s also some dining etiquette. First, wash your cutlery. You’ll be given a big bowl of hot water or tea. It’s for washing your utensils. Next, raise your hand to order. In some countries, this action may offend other people but this action is very common in Hong Kong. Then, watch your chopsticks. There are many rules about using chopsticks, such as not sticking them upright in a bowl of rice. Next, when it comes to sitting with strangers— as you know, it’s really busy in Hong Kong so you may sit with other people during peak hours. Last, the art of lazy Susans. The tables in western countries are usually rectangular but circular turn tables are popular in Hong Kong. Remember the most important rule of all – check if anyone is taking food from a dish before you try to spin it around to yourself!

That’s all for now. Can’t wait to see you. When will you come to Hong Kong? Please write back and tell me, also take care of yourself in the UK!

Best wishes,
Phoebe
Letter to Miranda – Dining Etiquette in Hong Kong
  1F Angie Chang

Dear Miranda,

Hello, are you all right in the UK? It is winter there now and I have heard that it is very cold. You have to wear more clothes and stay healthy!

Mum told me that you are longing to visit Hong Kong! I am very excited about this news. I remember receiving your letter asking about dining etiquette in Hong Kong. Let me tell you in this letter.

Chinese restaurants are very popular in Hong Kong. It was first found in Guangzhou and this kind of restaurant has lasted for many years. The first piece of dining etiquette I have to tell you is don’t point at anyone with your chopsticks and you must not stick them upright in a bowl of rice. These actions are related to paying respect to the dead. You know, this is not auspicious. But also, this is not respectful to the other people so don’t do that.

Secondly, raise your hands to order. I know that raising hands to ask people to come to your seat may be a rude action in other countries but there are a lot of people in a restaurant. If we don’t do that, no one is going to take our order. Just calm down and do not be angry when no one notices us.

Thirdly, check if anyone is taking food before you spin the Lazy Susan. The table is an object we will put plates of food on. When you want to take some food, you can turn the turn table to take some food. One more thing, the most senior person on your table will take the food first!

The fourth thing is about the tea manners. The least senior person at the table has to serve everyone else’s cup before filling their own. When you want someone to pour the tea for you, you have to tap the table with three fingers. It is also a way to thank someone at the dining table.

Fifthly, remember to eat with a bowl but not a plate! I know people from western countries like to eat with a plate, but don’t do this in the restaurant. We usually wash our dining sets before dishes are served but we won’t do the same with the plates. It may be dirty.
At last, a Chinese restaurant is a place for family gatherings so it will be a bit noisy because the atmosphere is very joyful. Hope you can understand our traditions.

This is all I can think of about dining etiquette in Hong Kong. If you still have anything to ask, send me a letter and I will tell you what I know.

Please write back.

Love,
Angie
Letter to Miranda – Introducing the Yum Cha Tradition
1F Charrisa Lum

Dear Miranda,

How are you? It’s been a long while. I know that you’ve been longing to visit Hong Kong! Oh yeah! I am expecting it. By the way, I am now going to introduce a type of local cuisine and the dining etiquette in Hong Kong.

I want to introduce yum cha to you. It is a Cantonese tea brunch tradition and it’s extremely popular in Hong Kong. We often order a pot of tea and several dim sum dishes while sharing the time with families or friends! The history of yum cha can be traced back to late Qing Dynasty. There were restaurants called “Yili” hanging a wooden board with the word “Tea Talking”, where the passers-by could rest. It served tea and cakes but the environment was extremely poor, with only a few wooden tables and benches available. Then the tea shops, the even larger tea houses appeared one after another. Since then, it’s become common for Cantonese people to go to a tea house to drink “morning tea”. With time passing by, the tea has been a constant in those tea houses while various kinds of delicate dim sum keep popping up.

A typical meal of yum cha usually includes tea and dim sum. There are dry and wet dim sum dishes. The dry ones are more delicate, such as dumplings, steamed dumplings with pork, steamed buns, pastries and more. Examples of the wet ones include porridge, meat, guiling jelly and jellied bean curd and more. The serviced tea is mainly black tea which warms the stomach, removes the greasy aftertaste of dim sum and is conducive to digestion. The common types include oolong tea, pu-erh tea and chrysanthemum tea. Some people also like to mix pu-erh tea with chrysanthemum to remove the internal heat in their bodies.

You can try a variety of food when you go to yum cha. A barbecued pork bun is one typical kind of traditional dim sum. It is a kind of flower-like steamed bun with barbecued pork filings. Shumai is also one of the most popular kinds of dim sum. Pork, shrimp, flour wrappers and eggs are the main ingredients with light soy sauce, sugar, salt, chicken powder,
pepper, starchy flour and cooking wine are the seasonings. I can introduce more food to you when you visit Hong Kong!

Yum cha is quite cheap as you know. There’re special waiters who push carts carrying all kinds of delicious dim sum dishes and snacks. As I say, if the cart comes, you can stop it and choose what you like. Dim sum dishes don’t need to be taken by yourself. The waiter will take the initiative to mark small seals on your record card. It’s quite interesting! The ambience is bustling with noise because there are many customers. Let’s eat dim sum together when you are in Hong Kong, shall we?

Let’s talk about the dining etiquette in Hong Kong. Firstly, taking food from the counter of the table and directly putting into your mouth is absolutely impolite. You should put it into your bowl first before you eat. Secondly, you should leave a bit of food on your plate to show that you are satisfied with your meal. Not doing that will embarrass the host and make them assume that you do not receive enough food. Thirdly, you should use communal chopsticks. Never point at someone or something with your chopsticks and position them upright in your rice bowl. Fourthly, you can leave the remaining coins as extra tips. Fifthly, you should raise your hand to order and not tap your hands. Lastly, you should be nice as you can because the staff work long hours.

That’s all for now. I can’t wait to see you soon! Take care.

Cheers,
Charrisa
The Alien Invasion
1F Rex Wong

My heart was palpitating, each second more rapid than the one before. Dash. Run. Go. They were the last and only words I remembered, and I'm barely moving.

It was quite what I would call a pleasant day. It was cloudless there. Students’ laughter tinted the air with euphoria. To one's bewilderment, even teachers burst into laughter while some boys told jokes to them. I grabbed a hoagie and my friend, Irene, got a bagel and we seated ourselves onto the benches near the playground. How winsome and charming the day was! All of a sudden, my heart skipped a beat – I had a premonition that something dreadful was about to happen. At that moment, I couldn't care less about my churning stomach, so I dug in anyways. Irene took a small bite, too. Soon I was so full that I was burping, my tummy was satisfied. However, that sense of something tingling inside me didn’t subside like my hunger did, instead it got stronger, from prickling gales swifiting through my hair, it slowly turned into a plume of smoke billowing out of nowhere, all of a sudden.

Then, I saw a neon-green object shifting through the smoke, and I could assure there hadn't been a meteorite that was green. My sight went blurry for a second, but I saw it was a flying saucer, and I swore it was heading in our direction. And it did.

It landed right in front of us. Of course, we were petrified, and quite abashed, really. As if it wasn’t absorb enough, an alien walked out of the sauces. As fearful as we were, we also felt perplexed. Looking at him or her or whatever gender it was, I was shocked by the pair of long antennae on its head and its slimy body.

“The smoke...... I can’t breathe,” said Irene, who looked like she was going to faint. I panicked.

“Of course, it’s toxic. Take me to your principal, or else...,” it smirked coldly as it demanded, “you'll regret it.”

We were fossilised - how and why on earth did it know who our principal was? It glared at us blankly and mercilessly. Meanwhile, we were choking on and on the stronger the smoke got. We dropped our lunches on the floor, which didn't help our coughing.
Our principal...... she's on the second floor, there...... that block,” Irene surrendered as she pointed the way.

As the alien left, the smoke was gone, and the bitter air returned to normal. I was furious, as I had never had the thought that Irene was such a selfish person.

“How dare you!” I was so enraged I couldn't breathe, let alone talk.

“How dare I tell the alien the wrong location when the principal is actually on the fifth floor having a weekly meeting with the teachers?” she whispered and winked.

I gasped, surprised by her agile mind and while she clapped her hands and nodded as she gave me a smile that seemed to say the show would be on soon. So, we secretly followed the alien, not too near of course, but within our area of sight.

The alien checked the classroom thoroughly and as expected, it didn't find the principal. One after another, it finally stormed into our classroom, looking obviously irritated. “Click” was the sound - it turned around and banged on the door, but only got dark laughs from us. We locked the door. Irene was the monitress, so she took care of the keys, which I never thought would be this useful until this second.

“Hmm, how the tables have turned,” I heard it say, and with something like a smile, or more likely a smirk. It snapped its fingers and something came out from complete nothingness. I didn't know what it was, but my last thoughts were, Dash, Run, Go.
A Critical Issue – Animal Welfare
2A Chloe Lai

Animal welfare has become more widely concerned by the public in recent years. Have you ever thought about the serious consequences if humans keep torturing wild animals?

To begin with, let me describe the wretched states of the victims. For amusement purposes, some wild animals are kept in circuses or marine parks to perform tricks to entertain the audience and boost ticket sales. During the training process, they suffer abuse from trainers if they do not follow their commands. Moreover, some animals are slaughtered by poachers and sold illegally at high prices in black markets. For example, elephant tusks, rhino horns and tiger pelts are the most infamous items in the trade. Although the illegal transactions of animal parts have come under fire and the rich are criticized for owning wild animal products, the problem has yet to be resolved.

Why should we respect animal rights? First, if we do not tackle the root of the problem, many animal species will become extinct one day. The future generations will not be able to see some kinds of animals. Second, animals are living things and they too deserve to enjoy their rights and freedom. Third, killing is cruel. For example, sharks are caught and dumped into the sea after their fins are cut off by man. Without fins, they cannot swim and are left to die in pain. This is very inhumane. Last, animals living in crowded conditions will catch diseases more easily. Some animal-related diseases such as the Coronavirus and the Bird Flu may infect humans when we come into contact with animals. Our health is at risk.

Apart from, improving the treatment of animals, there are other ways to protect animals’ welfare. First of all, the government should enforce more stringent regulations and impose heavier punishments on animal abusers. Moreover, the media can help to raise public awareness of animal rights by exposing the cruel reality. At school, parents and teachers should educate the younger generation about the importance of animal welfare. Last but not least, as a responsible global citizen, we should stop buying and using animal products like ivory chopsticks and stop eating shark fin soup.

All in all, the extinction of more animal species is a detriment to both the ecosystem and humans. As a result, we have to make concerted effort and take actions now.
A Letter of Complaint About a Hotel

2A Mavis Wong

Dear Sir/ Madam,

My Unpleasant Experience at the Crown Hotel

I am writing to complain about the poor treatment that my friends and I received at the Crown Hotel in Macau on 1st November, 2020. My friends and I expected to spend a wonderful weekend in Macau, but our holiday was spoilt by your hotel.

First of all, we were dissatisfied with the sluggish service of the front desk staff. It took us more than one hour to check in. When I complained to them, they told me that their computer system was slow and unstable. It is ridiculous and unacceptable for a 5-star hotel to have such a poor network. After checking in, we went directly to our room. Opening the door, we saw a cockroach crawling on the wall. Besides, I found a long strand of hair on the pillowcase. Weren’t these instances disgusting? In the washroom, there was only one set of toiletries in a triple room, so we had to call the housekeeping to bring us two more sets. I wonder how your housekeepers are trained. Does your hotel give them a checklist for room cleaning?

From a foodie website, we learnt that your Italian restaurant is a Michelin 2-star restaurant, so we made an advanced booking. However, we still had to wait for 30 minutes to be seated. Furthermore, the food arrived late. Since we had bought tickets for a show that evening, we had to give up our dessert in the set dinner so as to catch the show. Unfortunately, when we asked for the bill, not only were we treated rudely, but we were also overcharged. What is worse, my friend felt sick after dining at your restaurant.

As a world-famous hotel, your facilities were outdated and old. We found that the swimming pool was small, unhygienic and crowded, so we went to the gym instead. However, the fitness equipment in the gym room was dilapidated. All these things disappointed us very much.

Honestly, our holiday was completely ruined by your hotel. I demand an apology and ask for a refund from your hotel. I have attached some photos for your reference. I look forward to receiving your reply.

Yours faithfully,

Chris Wong
A Lesson in Nobility and Dignity – The Old Man and the Sea

2B Brayden Lo

My favorite character is the old man because I really admire his spirit.

The old man is a hapless man. He hasn’t caught a fish for 84 days but on the 85th day, he really found a 1500-pound salmon. He said to the big fish, “I will stay with you to the end!” Finally, the old man won. However, the salmon was taken away by the shark at last.

Although his tenacious effort failed to get good results, he was a victor in spirit. His tenacious fighting spirit showed the nobility and dignity of the humans.

The old man has given me a lot of life inspirations. What is failure? Failure is to fall down and mutter up the courage to get up again. Failure is not terrible; the terrible thing is that I succumb to failure. Once I succumb, all my dreams will not be realized.

At last, the old man’s spirit told me, no matter how many thorns and frustrations there are in the future, I should believe that only with the old man’s unyielding quality, will I definitely be a strong person in life.
A Moment of Coca-Cola With Mr. Woods

2B Alice Tsui

After watching Mr. Woods’ video about Coca-Cola, I think the interesting fact that surprised me the most is that when you drink Coca-Cola, you will feel headaches and even abdominal pain. I was shocked because in real life I always think Coca-Cola can make me feel refreshed. The sweetness and taste resulted from the carbonic acid makes me addicted. I think these symptoms are more reasonable because Coca-Cola contains a lot of sugar, and carbonic acid is not very good for human digestion.

In addition, I also discovered a more interesting fact outside the video. The original shape of the Coca-Cola can was designed for soldiers and was identified as a symbol of international spirit and unity. After the war, some non-military factories would also make use of this kind of Coca-Cola. Even soldiers would also be proud of this drink as it could improve the morale of soldiers. This of course sounds rather weird these days.

In normal life, I like Coca-Cola because every time I practice running. I don’t care whether the sweetness in Coca-Cola is harmful to health. The taste of Coca-Cola is really unforgettable, and sometimes I rely on it. As for which flavor is my favorite Coca-Cola, my favorite flavor is the original Coca-Cola. This is mainly because I prefer the classic shape and taste, and I think the zero-sugar Coca-Cola is actually nothing like the original taste.
Coca-Cola – an Irresistible Mystery

2B Jasmine Chan

Coca-Cola, I’m pretty sure that most of us have heard of this popular sparkling drink or soda as “Coca-Cola” is the second most-known phrase in the world after “OK”. After watching “A Moment with Mr. Woods: Coca-Cola”, I was shocked as I didn’t know that cocaine was added as one of the ingredients in making coca cola in the early 1900s.

As I was scrolling on the internet finding fun facts about Coca-Cola, something caught my eye. It is said that nobody has been able to crack the secret recipe. Coca-Cola is famously secretive about the exact recipe for its world-famous soda. Rumor has it that only two company executives know the formula and each knows only half of it. It sounds crazy, right? I always wonder to myself what could be the ingredients of Coca-Cola while gulping some down my throat and thinking it’s just probably made by some normal ingredients from a normal recipe. But it turns out the back story is way more mysterious.

Even a person like me, not really a huge fan of Coke, still cannot resist the power of Cherry Cola. My favorite cherry flavor with Cola, gulping it down my throat just gives me chills. I enjoy it a lot with a bag of chips. I have to admit that Cherry Cola with chips is just the best combo ever. Of course, I've been preventing myself from indulging in them lately as they’re really unhealthy.
An Awful Dining Experience

2B Ethan Lau

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am one of the customers of your restaurant. I visited your restaurant on 14th June, 2020. I had an awful experience with the food and the appalling service.

To ensure I could get the seats quickly, I had booked the seats two days in advance but we still had to wait for an hour when we arrived. Worse still, the staff members rejected our choice of seating place that we had booked. I thought that I could get the seating priority. However, I was wrong. When I asked the staff members when I could get the seats, they even yelled at me and told me that I should have arrived there earlier next time so that I could get the seats faster. I was a customer of yours and I would regularly eat in your restaurant, how could your staff members be that impolite to us? This was really ridiculous and thoroughly unacceptable.

After waiting for the seats, I ordered an egg tart and a pineapple bun. The pineapple bun was bland, as there was no taste on top of it. More critically, there was a little water on the plate which made the pineapple bun watery. It was literally disgusting and it was totally different from my expectation.

Thirdly, the environment of your restaurant was terrible. I was totally stunned to see rats crawling around the tables and towards the kitchen. If the rats had crawled on our food, what could have happened?

Finally, once I had finished my food and while I was having my coffee, the staff member put the bill abruptly in front of my face and made me spill the water. Your staff’s attitude was extremely unacceptable.

I am disappointed that what I got was totally different from what I had expected. Because of that, I demand a full refund and a formal apology letter. If I do not hear from you by 20th June, 2020, I will have to go to the Consumer Council and report the whole regretful incident to the authority.
I hope you can take this matter seriously and take action as quickly as possible. If you need further details about the incident, I can be reached at 2777-4321.

Yours faithfully,

Sharon Ma
Sharon Ma
Is Hong Kong a Good Place for Pets?
2B Josephine Lo

Do you have a pet? Are you sure you can give it the best care here in Hong Kong? In Hong Kong, this seemingly glamorous city, most would agree that our weather is nice, that various types of high-quality pet foods and toys are readily available in our pet shops and that there’re no fewer animal lovers here than in other cities. But is it true that Hong Kong is a good place to keep pets? In the following, I’m going to discuss problems faced by pets in Hong Kong, for example, lack of care, lack of open area to exercise and insufficient legal protection against acts of cruelty to animals. Also, I will suggest ways to mitigate these problems.

Firstly, lots of pets in Hong Kong are often left at home for long hours and don’t receive much care from their owners. The main reason for this is the heavy workload of Hong Kongers. According to a report conducted by Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS) in 2018, Hong Kong labor works for 52 hours a week on average, which is the longest working hour among the 77 cities in the world in the report. People in Hong Kong have to work very hard to make a living and can only leave little, even no time to spend with their pets. Some people don’t even have time to feed and wash their pets because of their busy lives. If pets aren’t taken care of by their owners, they might suffer from serious health issues like skin disease and ingrown nails. Also, if pets are left alone for a long time and can’t interact with their owners, pets, especially cats, dogs and rabbits, may become lonely and sad and will even suffer from depression. Because of the lack of care and companionship from their owners, pets could possibly suffer from physical and mental problems.

Another problem is the insufficiency of suitable open public space for pets. Unlike some western countries, most public parks in Hong Kong don’t allow pets, especially cats and dogs, to enter. There are only 51 pet parks in Hong Kong and they have to be shared by 220000 dogs kept as pets in Hong Kong. It means that 4000 dogs have to share one pet park! In addition, the area of these parks is usually very small. Over 50% of the pet parks in Hong Kong have an area no bigger than 1000m2. Therefore, many pet parks become very crowded during the weekends and the dogs can barely run in these parks. The lack of public open space to walk a dog has caused a lot of trouble to dog owners over the years. Some owners don’t live close to pet parks. Some of them choose to ignore the warning signs in public parks and some choose to walk their dogs only when they have enough time to bring them to pet parks far away from their home. It seems like neither way is good for the owners and the dogs. Also, if dogs don’t get enough exercise outdoors every day, they will easily become
overweight and develop an increased risk for cancer and heart disease. Moreover, the love of open air and wide, open spaces and the desire to run freely is the nature of the energetic dogs. If they are trapped in an apartment for too long due to the lack of suitable places to walk a dog, they might become anxious and develop psychological problems. The lack of spaces to walk a dog would bring inconvenience to the pet owners and will eventually cause different health issues to the dogs.

One of the most concerned problems faced by pets in Hong Kong is that the laws cannot fully protect the rights and safety of pets. One of the main problems is that by law, authorities can’t step in to help a neglected animal until it has actually been harmed and hurt. In this case, the law can only punish the ones who have abused the animals but cannot really protect the animals from abuse and cannot do much in assuring the safety of pets. Also, licensing conditions for pet shops are out of date when compared to that of other places in the world, like Singapore. Moreover, even if an animal trader or a pet owner has been convicted of an animal cruelty offence, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department still has no right to revoke his or her license and the court cannot prohibit the accused owner from keeping another pet in the future. This means that these people have a chance to abuse other animals again. It is obvious that the government doesn’t pay much attention to the animal abuse cases in Hong Kong. For example, in a high-profile animal abuse case in 2020, 30 pets were thrown out the window of a residential building and 18 of them were dead. Two people who lived in that particular flat was brought to the police station, but they were not prosecuted. No one was charged or prosecuted or held responsible for the death of these 18 animals, not to mention the 12 that survived. All of these loopholes together reveal our lack of legal protection of animal rights.

To alleviate the above problems, people who want to keep pets should assess whether their working hours allow them to have enough time to take care of their pets. If you are a pet owner now, you must be determined that no matter how busy you are, you will still spend your time with your pets and let them exercise. The government should construct larger pet parks around Hong Kong and open some public parks to pets, at least for a few days in a week. Before the government does so, people who plan to keep a dog should first consider if there’s a suitable place for them to walk their dogs near their home, or else they need to make sure that they can afford the time to bring their dogs to a pet park far away from their home. To help combat animal abuse, laws should be passed to allow authorities to step in
and sue the pet owners who neglect their pets before the animals are hurt and allow the court to prohibit anyone who has been convicted of an animal cruelty offence from keeping a pet again. The maximum sentence for cruelty to animals should also be increased to deter people from abusing their pets. To draw the government’s attention to animal rights, all of us, especially animal-lovers and animal welfare organizations, should work hard in promoting new laws for animal protection and request the government to deal with these problems proactively.

Domesticated animals in Hong Kong are under constant threats. They do not have enough care, public space to exercise and legal protection. These are all serious issues but what can we do to help? In fact, you don’t have to worry about how to help them because there are a lot of animal welfare organizations nowadays. All you need to do is to fulfill your responsibilities for your pets and support these organizations by making donations or joining their activities. I believe if all of us do our parts, domesticated animals in Hong Kong will no longer suffer and will soon be able to live their best lives in Hong Kong.
No Ordinary Theme Park
2B Rachel Lam

How would you like to visit a theme park with marine creatures, a fabulous view and most importantly, thrill rides? Well, if you happen to be in Hong Kong, you will have this chance! All these are available at Ocean Park! Inside the park, you will be able to watch dolphin shows, see endangered species, or even have close contact with the animals.

Ocean Park is a theme park that includes more than 20 thrill rides, wet rides and family attractions. If you are brave enough to go on these rides, I would definitely recommend you go on the Hair Raiser and the Flash. The Hair Raiser is one of the most exciting thrill rides in Ocean Park. It brings you up high up in the air and suddenly everybody screams because it descends really quickly. The flash isn’t a roller coaster but it also brings you high up in the air, but it will spin you around numerous times before it lets you back on your feet. When you are on the ride, I guarantee that you will be amazed by the upside-down scenery of Hong Kong you see. That view is astounding and I’m sure you’ll be shocked. Sometimes, when the dolphin show has started, you can also have a peek of the show for a few seconds in the air, but of course, upside down!

If you want to take a break from the thrill rides, going into the aquarium or watching dolphin shows are your best choice! You’ll get very sweaty after going on the thrill rides, especially when it is really hot in the summer. The aquarium is really cool, so that’s a good resting stop. You can see nearly all marine species you can imagine in the aquarium, from tropical fishes to walruses, you can see them all! The dolphin show is suitable for everyone and also every entertaining! You can see the dolphins performing fancy tricks with their coaches and I’m sure you will enjoy that very much!

Ocean Park is open every day, with no exception to any public holidays. Tickets are available at their official website or at the park entrance and they are sold at HKD498 for an adult and HKD249 for a child. You can get there by bus, MTR or even minibus and taxi. I recommend you all visit Ocean Park at least once in your life and I’m sure you will fall in love with it.
When the King was Humiliated – The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe

2B Alice Tsui

This is an amazing book. The most impressive scene was when the White Witch and her group of people forced Aslan into a gloomy forest at night. Some people began to vomit. Others hit Aslan on the head with a wooden stick. Aslan felt a little nervous but kept calm. After that, the White Witch ordered the people of her clan to cut off his hair with a knife. At this moment, Susan and Lucy followed them where there was a light, hiding behind the grass, watching Aslan being insulted and abused. They felt very scared and nervous, and they didn’t know how to solve it. They wanted to help Aslan to escape but they didn’t have any way and felt very helpless.

Suddenly, the White Witch counted down and took a knife to stab Aslan to death. Aslan’s eyes changed from calm to very tense. At that moment, Aslan was stabbed to death, Susan and Lucy cried instantly but they could only do it secretly as they did not want to be discovered by others. But at the same time, all their hopes were gone.

Just like this, the cold body was placed on a big rock. When the others left, Susan and Lucy immediately sat next to Aslan, stroking his hair, hoping that everything was not true. The two of them were sleeping on the rock, spending the night just like this.

I feel impressed about this part because I think the atmosphere the author brought out from the text is very nerve-wrecking and uneasy to Aslan. In this story, the author wrote a lot about the how Aslan was abused in the story. I feel that it is very cruel, especially when all his hair was cut off by others. From the story, everything is lifelike. I was very curious about the scene and it was very fascinating, driving me to imagine the scene.
An Unpleasant Visit to Central Park Zoo
2C Justin Fung

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to complain about the mistreatment of animals in Central Park Zoo. I visited Central Park Zoo last week. While I was taking in the sights, I saw something terrible. I was shocked by the uncaring attitude of your staff and the places where animals were living in.

First, I would like to start by commenting on the irresponsible staff in the zoo. While some of the animals were sleeping, some visitors were throwing objects at the animals to wake them up. This would hurt the animals and affect them both physically and mentally. However, the staff who stood beside did not try to dissuade the crowd to stop. I was totally disappointed with their uncaring attitude.

The thing that concerned me most was how a zookeeper treated the animals. I saw a zookeeper mistreating some animals in one of the exhibits. I saw him using a whip to flog the animals because they couldn’t do the extremely difficult actions such as jumping through a fire ring and walking on the tightrope. Therefore, I strongly recommend the zoo provide adequate training for the staff to increase their quality.

Finally, there were too many animals in each exhibit causing overcrowding. For example, I saw seven monkeys being put in a very small cage. They could not move freely in the cage and looked sad. The hygienic condition of the cages was poor. If one of the animals is sick, the others will be infected easily. Therefore, you should pay attention to this problem so that the animals could live in a more comfortable environment.

I hope the zoo will take these complaints seriously and improve the situation immediately. If I do not see any improvements, I will inform the relevant authorities.

Yours faithfully,

Chris

Chris Wong
Why Animal Rights?

2C Trudie Li

I’m sure most of you have heard of human rights, but what about animal rights? Are they important? In my opinion, the answer is yes. It is common to see animals being mistreated or even killed brutally. Because of this terrible behavior, we must raise the awareness of animal rights.

People capture wildlife from the natural habitats to exhibit them in places like circuses or theme parks. Some of the animals are locked in cages, some of them are under severe strain. None of them are happy. What are people doing these terrible acts for? Money. Each time we pay to go to a circus or an animal show, we are actually encouraging this behavior. Besides amusement, people also kill animals to make expensive products. The most common example is leather. People rip the skin from animals’ bodies to make leather goods. What about the animals? They are killed in the process, but do people care? No, all they care about is how much they can gain from selling the leather products. People also kill endangered animals for food and medicine, such as sharks, bats and rhinoceros. We must give a helping hand to stop these inhumane acts.

We need to pay attention to animal welfare because what we are doing is not fair to the animals. Do they choose to be killed? No. Do they choose to be captured? No. We are just forcing them to entertain us, to work for us and to die for us. As a human, I’m ashamed. How selfish can one possibly be? Imagine if one day, some animals come to your house, capture you, lock you in a cage, then train you to do weird things every day just to make them happy. How will you feel? But that’s how animals are treated now.

Other than that, it is risky not to respect animal rights. A good example to illustrate this is the COVID 19 that is affecting all of us today. For me, it is like a revenge from the animals. We ate bats and look at us now. We have to wear a mask every day and countless people died because of this disease.

To support animal rights, we have to stop buying animal products, stop eating endangered wildlife animals and stop going to animal shows. That seems like a lot to do, but it’s just the makeup work for harming the ecosystem. It is necessary for us to protect animals and their rights.

So please, help the animals. They have done nothing to deserve this. Spread this message to your families and friends. Animals need your help.
Endangered Species

2D Katrina Shai

Do you want to dive deep down into an ocean that is filled with rubbish and oil? I certainly don’t think anyone would like to; however, there are lots of marine animals that have no choice but to live in these “liquid landfills” every single day of their lives. If this situation doesn’t change, the wonderful world that we are living in will lose a lot of adorable animals and we won’t have a chance to see them. In other words, they will simply become extinct! Therefore, in this article, I will talk about one of the many endangered species that lives in the ocean, provide some basic information about it, and suggest some ideas on how people and governments can do to help prevent its extinction.

The endangered species that I want to talk about is the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin, also called the Chinese white dolphin. It is very famous for its pink skin, but not all of them are pink. An Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin can be either grey, white or pink. These dolphins come to the surface to breathe for 20s to 30s before diving deep for 2 to 8 mins. Sometimes, they can leap completely out of the water or rise up vertically from the water. Mature females can give birth every three years so the reproductive cycle of the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin is pretty slow.

First of all, the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin is mostly threatened by both habitat loss and pollution. I think most people know that the pollution is definitely plastic pollution because it’s a global phenomenon that has no end in sight. Plastic pollution can severely affect all forms of marine life but Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins are specifically affected in an array of means. They are chemically exposed to organic pollutants. Since they inhabit shallow coastal waters, plastic can be easily absorbed into the dolphin’s tissue and organs. Sometimes, they swallow microplastics that are very small pieces of plastic smaller than 5 mm. These microplastics will make them feel sick and this is happening right at our city’s doorstep! A tour guide from Hong Kong Dolphin Watch spotted a group of pink dolphins helping a mother support the body of her dead calf above the water in an attempt to revive it. A spokeswoman from Hong Kong Dolphin Watch, Janet Walker, said that they’re 99% certain the calf died from toxins in the mother’s milk. This is definitely not an accident, so we must take action to stop this from happening.
Luckily, there are laws in Hong Kong, Macau and Mainland China to protect the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin but they don’t really seem to work. The number of dolphins in Hong Kong waters has fallen from an estimated 158 in 2003 to just 78 in 2018. It is clear that laws are not enough. However, in my opinion, the laws are fine but the government needs to do more to protect these endangered species. For example, the government can allow its respective agency to do more conservation work as well as promote the plight of these endangered species. It can also educate the general public on the topic too. Besides the government, non-government agencies can help too by organising volunteers to help clean the oceans and beaches.

To conclude my article, I want everyone to do their own part and try their best to help save these animals from extinction. Don’t think that just one person can’t make a difference. You can. Don’t underestimate the impact an individual can have. You just have to do a few things and you can save these endangered animals. Frist, use less plastic by using a reusable shopping bag instead. Second, recycle more, so that there will be less rubbish. Third, don’t litter as a great deal of it ends up in the ocean. As you can see, there is a lot that you can do! Help these animals out so that everyone can still have a chance to see them in their natural habitat, co-existing with us in this wonderful world!
An Awful Experience at Central Park Zoo

2D Hannah Chan

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I am writing to lodge a complaint about the mistreatment of animals in Central Park Zoo. I visited Central Park Zoo last week and was appalled to see the terrible conditions that the animals were living in and how the animals were mistreated.

I would like to start by raising the vile environment that the animals were living in. The exhibits were poorly maintained and dirty. Animal excrement was everywhere on the ground but nobody removed it. The smell in the exhibits was awful. It was definitely not a good environment for animals. Also, renovation work nearby was causing pollution and waste that was affecting the animals’ health. The noise was so loud that it made the animals feel sick and stressed.

My next complaint is about how the staff treated the animals. I saw one of the staff continually whipping the animals. Another staff member was lazy. He was addicted to the games on his mobile phone and forgot to feed the animals. When another staff reminded him to feed the animals, he kept replying “OK” but did not stop playing with his mobile phone. The animals appeared to be stressed and malnourished. I was shocked to see such situations.

Finally, I was extremely upset to see that the staff did not care about the well-being of the animals. Some visitors were throwing objects at the animals to wake them up and some of them kept feeding them with different kinds of food. As we know, the animals may get hurt when things are thrown at them. And allowing visitors to feed the animals in the zoo is dangerous as the animals will get sick after eating food that they should not eat. However, the staff ignored these problems and did not stop the crowd. I really could not bear to sit by and let it go.

I sincerely hope that you will take these complaints seriously. If you don’t address the problems, I would not hesitate to contact the relevant authorities.

Yours faithfully,

Chris

Chris Wong
What Animals Deserve?

2D Kiriti Lee

Many people often say that they love animals and consider their pets to be part of the family, but many draw the line at animal rights. Isn’t it enough that we treat them humanely? Why should animal have rights? What rights should animals have? How are those rights different from human rights?

It is common to see animals being mistreated. Here are some examples. Rabbits are burnt while conscious, drugged animals are killed and eaten, animals are treated cruelly in laboratories, feathers are torn from live birds’ skin, and so much more. From these examples, we know millions of animals are suffering because of us, human. However, who gives us the right to treat animals cruelly?

Moreover, there are some good reasons why we should pay attention to animal welfare. First of all, animals have rights, but humans fail to respect their rights. Second, killing is cruel and disrespectful to animals. Humans kill them for food, use them for amusement, use their body parts to make products, and so on. These all show how animals are unfairly treated.

So, what can we do to protect them? We can start by not buying any more products such as mink coats, tiger skin rugs and ivory chopsticks. In addition, we should stop eating delicacies such as shark fin soup. Shark fins are removed from sharks when they are still alive. After cutting the fins off, people throw the sharks back into the sea. However, the sharks are left to die as they cannot swim properly without their fins. That’s why we shouldn’t eat shark fins.

All in all, we should never do anything to harm animals as they have their rights and they deserve our compassion. Animals are also living creatures. We should respect them and love them. It is high time we started showing concern to animal well-being. If we don’t pay attention to animal welfare, they will go extinct one day.
A Perfect Dinner Ruined

2E Michael Cheng

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to lodge a complaint about our wholly unsatisfactory experience in your restaurant last week.

To begin with, our first complaint is about the terrible hygiene in your restaurant. As if it had not been cleaned for a long time, the floor was dirty, the water inside the fish tank was murky and the whole place was filthy. We even spotted cockroaches and rats running around and crawling over our food! All of them can lead to health problems and food safety issues.

Aside from the terrible hygiene condition, the food in your restaurant was unpalatable. After waiting for the food for over half an hour, the food was finally served. Yet, it was disgusting. The steamed fish was undercooked, the fried vegetables were overcooked and the noodles were as chewy as rubber. Not only were they disgusting, they were also nauseating. When my mother ate the food, she immediately vomited. In a word, the food was thoroughly unacceptable.

Worse still, your staff were not trained to be polite to customers. When we complained to one of the waiters about the food and asked him to serve another one, he shouted to us rudely. He told us to get out if we did not like the food instead of changing our food. Being furious, we left the restaurant.

All in all, the service was totally appalling and we were very indignant about it. I can assure you that I am not going to patronize your restaurant again. I hope that you will improve your service, such as cleaning the restaurant, hiring better staff and training them well so that no more customers will have a disappointing experience in your restaurant like ours.

Yours faithfully,

Chris Wong
Save Animals, Save Ourselves

2E Cynthia Kam

Animals being maltreated and killed by humans is no surprising news. However, have we ever reflected upon our brutal and absurd behavior?

Dogs and cats are killed cruelly as a source of food in some countries. They are not provided basic necessities, such as food, clean water or an individual cage. Also, they live in a vile environment. I was totally heart-broken when I heard dogs and cats cry in agony in those videos. The most dreadful thing is that their skin was peeled without any anesthetic when they were still alive. Can you imagine how bloody the scene was? Even more upsetting is that such a nauseating scene is happening repeatedly every day around the world.

Dolphins are imprisoned in dolphinariums to perform tricks to entertain people. If they don’t obey the commands of their trainers, they are left to go hungry. This kind of training makes dolphins suffer greatly. In extreme cases, the training can even cause self-harm behavior or the fish may commit suicide since they are under constant stress every day.

Every creature on earth is born equal and animals are no exception. They are the same as humans. Animals can also feel love, pain, fear and joy, just like us. Nevertheless, why do humans enjoy abundant resources and live merrily while animals suffer considerably at our hands? Animals are an essential part of the eco-system. If some species disappear and go extinct, the food chain will be broken and all of us will be affected somehow someday.

It is no exaggeration to say that keeping animals in crowded places such as chicken farms and piggeries is conducive to the spread of diseases. If we don’t improve the deplorable situation, diseases will go spread rampantly just as Covid-19, which has become a global pandemic. Also, if we keep deforesting the planet, most animals will lose their natural habitats and may migrate into the cities and cause danger. That is why we have to protect animals and support animal rights.

Mistreating and killing animals are morally wrong. However, there are many methods to curb the brutal behavior. We can lobby to legislate against cruelty to animals. For instance, culprits of animal abuse should be sent to prison for long sentences and pay hefty fines. What is more, we can spread the idea of animal rights to raise public awareness. Furthermore, we should stop patronizing amusement parks that offer marine shows so that they will not get any profit from animal shows. If we can make concerted effort to safeguard animals, it would be another step forward on the path of conservation and respect for animal rights.
A Letter of Complaint

2F Liu Wai Him

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Complaint about Thin-Tum Exerciser

I am writing to complain about the Thin-Tum Exerciser. In your advertisements about the Thin-Tum Exerciser, you claim that the product is a safe piece of equipment for working out.

On 19th October 2020, I bought the product in Fancy Sky Shop in Sha Tin. I still have the receipt here. Shortly after, I assembled the product carefully following the instructions in the user manual. Then, I tried to use the product, but the elastic band in the machine snapped when I used the product for the first time. The elastic band then flew into my eye and I felt immense pain. I quickly went to the hospital nearby to receive treatment.

I eventually healed up but my vision was permanently impaired. I am forced to wear eyeglasses to see things clearly. Therefore, I am asking for a full refund of the product and the medical bills which were about HK$20000 to be paid by the company.

If you don’t do this or not reply in 2 weeks, I will complain to the Consumer Council for your illegal business practices and I will also sue your company for this incident. I will also write to many newspapers to warn people about your product. I have included copies of relevant receipts inside the letter and I am expecting a quick reply.

Yours faithfully,

Chris Wong

Chris Wong
Food Waste Reduction

2F Sophie Tsang

Good morning, Principal, teachers and fellow classmates. 3,600 tonnes of food waste is being dumped into landfills around Hong Kong every day. This amount is equivalent to 300 double-decker buses! My name is Sophie Tsang, the chairperson of the Environmental Club and I am here today to talk to you about reducing food waste.

The problem of food waste is worsening at an alarming rate day by day. There are two main sources of food waste. The first source of food waste is generated from restaurants and institutions like schools, hotels and hospitals. According to Cornell University Food and Brand Lab, on average, diners leave 17% of their meals uneaten while 55% of edible leftovers are left at restaurants. This can be partially contributed to the fact that portion sizes have increased significantly over recent years. The second source of food waste is households. It is alarming that households are responsible for the largest portion of food waste with food spoilage being the main culprit behind this waste. Now, seeing a packed fridge is appealing, so why exactly do we have to stop wasting food?

The problem of food waste is serious and it affects all of us. First of all, many people don’t have food to eat. Millions of people around the world are malnourished and experience hunger on a daily basis. It is imperative that we make the most of the food we have. Millions of children and their families are starving while the people of Hong Kong irresponsibly waste food. This must stop! Secondly, food waste has a massive impact on the world’s climate. With more food being wasted, landfills are filling at a rapid rate. Once fully exhausted, how will the landfills deal with the excessive waste of food? Where will the food go? Will it just rot in our streets, releasing methane and other greenhouse gases into the air to further accelerate global warming? At any rate, something has to be done and all of us here today are in a position to make a difference.

If a train is coming towards you, what do you do? You jump out of its way. You act. Now, consider the food waste as the train. I call for you to act. Firstly, one of the simplest ways to avoid food waste as a consumer is to buy less. Make a shopping list and only buy what you need. By simply making a list based on weekly meals, you can save money and time as well as reduce food waste. Secondly, think twice before you throw food away. Ask yourself a question. Can I reuse this food? Perhaps the leftovers can be reheated for another meal. Thirdly, instead of buying food at school, why don’t you bring it from home? Investing in
quality food containers that do not leak and are light can help too. This can eliminate the need of spending extra time waiting at the cafeteria at lunchtime, which in turn means that you are not contributing to food waste at school. The last tip I have is when dining out don’t be afraid to ask for a “doggy bag”. Take any uneaten food home with you.

By respecting food, we are highlighting its importance and if it is important you will not waste it. Reducing food waste is vital. It will no doubt help the entire planet. Therefore, I call upon you all today to make food waste reduction a priority. Thank you.
Pasta Festival
2F Paco Chan

Pasta Festival is the public holiday in Hong Kong. It is a special day for the Hong Kong citizens and takes place on 12th November every year. It was started by Paco Spaghetti House in 2006.

Pasta Festival is held in the Historical Centre of Hong Kong Island. On this day, offices and schools close so that the citizens can go to the Historical Centre to enjoy the food. Over a hundred kinds of pasta and high-quality organic sauces are shown in the Centre. There are cooking shows held by international chefs and special guests. Different cooking classes are held for the citizens to join.

At Pasta Festival, children have lots of good pasta to eat. The festival is also child-friendly. Children and the elderly can take part in mini pasta workshops, while parents can participate in seminars about healthy eating. For those people who join the workshops or the seminars, they can get free key chains in pasta shop.

The highlight of the Pasta Festival is the cooking competition. No doubt about it, the main ingredient of the dish is restricted to “pasta”. With the given time limit, the participants need to use different types of pasta together with their new ideas to create the new style dishes. The judges will base on the taste and the attractive look of the dishes to choose the winner. The winner’s dish can be placed on the menu in Paco Spaghetti House for a year. The winner can gain 10% income from any customers who orders his dish. Starting from 2006, some of the winners have already operated their own pasta shops. We hope that this festival can be transmitted worldwide, and attract more visitors to come to our “Food Palace”.

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A Helping Hand Can Rescue Someone from the Dumps
3A Haley Wong

This is my first time to travel alone. I never expected this would be the most memorable experience ever.

As it was the last day of my trip, I decided to spend all my cash at the airport. I was totally exhausted. My backpack felt like a huge polar bear sitting on my shoulders. There were not many empty seats left. I sprinted to the nearest seat and held my luggage tight. Things were vague and my eyelids became heavier and heavier...

“Ding!” The place had started to be rowdy for a few minutes but what awoken me was a message from my phone, “We are sorry to announce that Thomas Cook has ceased trading with immediate effect.” The tour company from which I booked my ticket was exactly Thomas Cook. My brain stopped for a moment. While other tourists were discussing rebuying a return ticket, I followed the crowd and lined up for repurchase.

Suddenly I realized that I had no money at all.

“Next!” It was my turn and I told the staff my situation. “Why didn’t I apply for a credit card?” This question kept rising in my mind.

“I am sorry for your misfortune but we cannot provide a free ticket.” The smile on the face of the staff was the coldest one I’ve ever seen. My tears were out of control and I shouted at the staff. The security guard came to me and told me to leave.

It was raining and the floor was slippery. I almost fell down but fortunately there was a pillar for me to hold. But my luggage was not that lucky. It rammed into a tree and my belongings were strewn across the ground. I felt like I was bathing when I picked up my luggage. The difference was I didn’t have a towel and I had been soaked for hours.

A local woman approached me. “Do you need help?” she asked. I stammered out what had happened.
“Poor child, let me buy you a ticket.” I wiped my tears away and saw that the woman was dressed in a white coat and white dress - she’s like an angel. I knew a ticket was not cheap at all. However, I couldn’t reject her because I had no other choice. The woman said she thought of her teenage children when she saw me. She was too tender as if this was a scam. I asked for her contact information to pay back the money afterwards but she refused. She dropped me off at the departure gate and left.

I still can’t believe sympathetic people like that actually exist. She didn’t know me but she helped me without asking for anything in return. The spirit of giving without seeking recognition was so impressive. I have learned to be generous during this tour – indeed, sometimes a little help could save people from a trough.
Hong Kong Should Not Become a Cashless Society in the Near Future

3A Alwin Lam

Have you ever used any digital wallet? I am sure that most of you have. Using digital wallets and smart cards such as Octopus Card is making our lives easier. There are no more changes, miscalculations and you can complete your payment within seconds. However, is Hong Kong ready to become a cashless society in the near future? I am sure that the answer is “No”.

First of all, making everyone use a cashless payment method is a large and tough process. There are the elderly who don’t know how to use these methods. It takes a lot of time to teach them to use the apps correctly. Moreover, the cost of buying a device for everyone is sky-high. It is necessary to give everyone a device for payment. Devices are expensive and the poor might not be able to afford buying them. Even if they could afford it, why would they need to pay extra money just because a cashless society is wanted? Therefore, the time and cost are making a cashless society hard to realise.

Furthermore, the stability of the cashless payment system is also a problem that we need to be concerned about. There must be some common system that we all use in order to pay and receive. Imagine that one day, the payment system that you use is being maintained, how are you going to buy or pay for anything? Let’s think of a more serious situation. When the Internet is down, which happens from time to time, all of the users of digital wallets are not able to pay anymore. As a result, most of the financial systems are going to stop working. If cash is still used, normal transactions can still be carried out and our economy will not be disrupted.

Last but not least, the security and privacy of the payment system also matter a lot. Hackers are everywhere nowadays. It is easy for a professional hacker to steal your money and personal information through the Internet. Even if the security of the payment system is improving, the skill of the hackers also is. On top of that, we can’t ensure that the payment system companies are not stealing your information. There is no forever reliable way to protect our property at this moment.

The above arguments show that there are many disadvantages and risks for Hong Kong to become a cashless society. We still need better technology and a longer time for everyone to use a cashless payment system safely. Therefore, I strongly believe that Hong Kong should not become a cashless society, at least not in the near future.
Selfie – an Iconic Trend in My Childhood

3A Chan Xing Yi

If you ask me to find a trend to represent my childhood, I will say selfie. Selfies have been one of the most memorable things in my childhood. As a kid who was born in the 2000s, I grew up in the trend of taking selfies. We just love to take photos and want to take pretty pictures of ourselves. If I did not get it wrong, I think this trend started in Australia first before exploding in Asia. I guess Asians like taking pictures of themselves? Or maybe they think it was novel?

When I was in kindergarten, I used to take selfies with my cousins when we met. I especially like beauty filters with big eyes, smooth skin, and of course make-up effects. I guess I took approximately 8 to 12 selfies a day at that time. After a month, my camera roll was literally full of selfies. Well, this was a very iconic trend in that era. Until now, although I am ashamed to say this, I sometimes still take selfies not because I like looking at my face, but it is just somehow fun to take a selfie and send it to your friend. Then your bestie will definitely screenshot it and save it for your birthday and post it on their Instagram story to create memories between us. This was how all teens at my age grew up. For me, taking a selfie is not just a trend that I followed but my precious childhood memory, a record of childlike innocence – something I won’t really do again. Sometimes I feel a little ashamed when I think about it but I believe this isn’t just my personal feeling. I believe that most of the teens born in the 2000s share this feeling too, and we will certainly treasure it.

Nowadays, selfies have become a daily ritual, not to mention it fully integrating into our lives. For example, before eating, we would ask, “Should we take a selfie?” When buying a phone, in addition to looking at its functions, we also look at the camera function. We hope to find a phone with a good front camera because we hope that we can take high-resolution selfies. Therefore, I will say the ability to take selfie is one of the greatest inventions.
Social Networking Sites Should Not Be Blamed for Everything

3A Eugene Wong

As a teenager, we’ve probably heard this saying, “Go out and play, don’t be on your phone using Instagram or WhatsApp. It makes you unsociable. Go out and talk to ‘real’ people”.

The notion that because we are on social networking sites like Instagram, WhatsApp, and Tik Tok, we are not interacting with real people is simply vague and based on a lack of knowledge and experience with social networking sites. Hence, I must state my strongest of opposition towards this statement.

Firstly, when we are on social media sites, we are being sociable, just not in the traditional way of meeting in person. Social networking sites allow us to interact with friends from around the world, breaking the traditional barrier of distance. For instance, I can chat with a friend in England or Canada immediately, regardless of the distance. If I am using the “traditional” way of socializing, I would only see him twice a year or none at all because of physical distance. I can also interact and discuss topics with users with a shared interest in different aspects like sports, music or movies, and even befriend them. When someone shares a video or uploads a video, I can comment and express my feelings on it, and others can do the same to me too. Just because it isn’t the traditional way doesn’t mean it isn’t a form of socializing, and the notion of doing things online is different or worse than real life is just outdated and biased.

Secondly, social media sites can actually enhance real-life socializing. Normally when you meet someone for the first time in real life, there is a sense of embarrassment and weirdness, but with social media sites the feeling is eased up a lot, and wipes out a lot of uneasy and queasy moments. Also, for friends in school you don’t normally have much to say since you may not be sitting together or just don’t have time at school. Social media sites however, allow us to talk after school, and with greater depth about stuff we may be too embarrassed to say in real life or simply not appropriate at school. Social media sites do not restrict and limit social activities, but rather increase socializing and give chances for it.

Thirdly, people who support this motion may say, “Teenagers care less about their parents, and they just spend all their time on their phone”. Instead of blaming social media, parents should chat with teenagers themselves, and learn about their hobbies and interests. Maybe even through social media itself, rather than shifting the blame to social media.
In conclusion, social networking sites don’t limit social activities and make us less sociable, but rather enhance it in a different form, and to a certain extent increases real life contact and interaction. Parents should not blame social media for all the problems, but rather use it to learn and connect with children. Hence, I am opposing the motion that social networking sites make us less sociable.
A Letter to My Future Self

3B Wu Wing Yan

3rd September, 2020

Dear My Future Self,

How are you doing? I hope everything is going well with you. As for me, I’m busy preparing for the beginning of a new school year and I really miss going back to school.

Well, I like the teachers and friends there. When I am down, they always cheer me up. When I’m in need, they are the ones who help me. When I’m lost, they’re the light guiding me through the darkness. On the other hand, I dislike the rapid beat of the tests and examinations arrangements. It would be too harsh on myself and that would become a heavy burden.

As a challengeable student, my favourite subject is Mathematics. I love to solve complicated questions and I enjoy solving them. Every time I figure out a solution, a sense of accomplishment washes over me and I love that feeling. On the contrary, my least favourite subject is Art because it is so boring that I almost fall asleep at once. Besides, I’m not good at drawing and making sculptures so I always get a very poor score.

I’m good at playing the piano and I enjoy listening to the melody. Somehow, playing the piano can express your feelings, like when you are miserable, you can play a sad smooth tune. It can also lessen the pressure so it becomes one of my hobbies. I enjoy it not just for accomplishing the grades but also for fun. Another aspect is I think writing is hard for me because I have to pay attention to various aspects, for example spelling, grammar, the content, the plot, etc. I often make a lot of mistakes so I think it’s difficult to write a piece of good writing.

I hope I can get a good grade for every subject this year and not make the same mistakes that I’ve made before. Also, I am looking forward to having a beautiful memorable school life that will become one of my greatest memories.

What’s more, I would like to learn skateboarding. Although it is quite dangerous, I want to feel the swift pace and the feeling of rejuvenation. Also, I know the process of training is hard but I won’t give up easily and will keep going until I reach the target. “By perseverance
the snail reached the ark.” Right! We have to keep it up till we hit the goal, and that's what skateboarding teaches me.

My goals for the year are getting great grades and developing a good reading habit. I will work harder than before and reduce my playing time to get higher grades. As for the reading habit, I will read 50 pages a day and try to improve my writing skills.

Anyway, I hope you will have a bright future ahead and achieve your goals. Hope for the best and prepare for the worst. I have faith in you. Have a nice year!

Best wishes,
Myself
When a Not-So-Confident Girl Met an Alien

3B Ella Gee

Have you ever met an alien? Well, I did, yesterday morning on the way to school. There I was sitting on the bus sleeping. I am a timid girl with autism. Whenever people come close to me, I feel scared and want to find a corner to hide myself in. Then, I run away as fast as possible. I have many sad thoughts in my mind, but I can’t find a true friend who really knew me and care about me. In my opinion, everyone dislike me because I am shy and cool.

As I was closing my eyes to listen to a relaxing song on the bus, a storm suddenly appeared. All passengers ran and left the bus immediately but actually I didn’t know what was happening. There was strong light coming through the windows and someone took me out from the broken window and brought me to somewhere which was far away; somewhere which I had never seen before. I was frightened and then fainted.

After a while, I woke up. I was brought to an alien planet! There were rainbows everywhere. There were also some aliens around me. Although the views were wonderful, I was still scared of the aliens. Their appearance was not scary though. They had fat bodies and were fluffy. They prepared a lot of food for me. Their leader was called Friendly. He was a friendly alien and also a capable leader. He came forward and introduced himself. I was amazed to know that he was a teacher who taught the aliens how to make friends and be confident. Everyone loved him. He told me that every year six children would be brought to their homeworld to learn socializing and improve their confidence. I was surprised and felt thankful because of that.

The next morning, I saw the other five children. They were not good at socializing either. The aliens taught them to smile always and be polite to give a good impression to others. One of the girls, called Mary, came towards me and said, “Hi, nice to meet you.” However, I was scared and I couldn’t get out of my comfort zone. I tried to run away but Friendly stopped me and told me to smile at her. Feeling embarrassed, I tried to smile and turned my face to her. She was embarrassed too so I greeted her nicely.

After that, Friendly split us into three groups and prepared three rooms for us to communicate with our groupmates. I checked the list and I saw that my partner was Mary! She plucked up the courage to speak first. After listened to her, I had a lot of thoughts that I wanted to share with her too. Then, we were talking happily. An hour later, Friendly came in.
He spoke to both of us, “Can you see that? The two of you became friends! Trying to speak and coming out of your comfort zones are the keys of making friends! That’s easy! Adding a friendly smile while communicating leaves a good impression on others! So, after this lesson, remember to do this constantly in your daily life so you will not be alone anymore!” Then, I fainted and Friendly’s words were engraved in my mind.

When I opened my eyes, I was still sitting on the bus but there were no passengers except a girl... it was Mary. It was not a dream. It was real. Since then, Mary and I have become good friends who talk about everything.
Is This Love?
3C Marquis Lam

“Get up kid! Are you ok?” said a stranger with a wrinkly face and a long grey beard.

Old Barry White had been working at a fast food shop all day before he saw a kid lying in front of his house.

“Get up you little boy, get off my lawn!”

Mr. White poked the kid with his walking stick, but the kid gave no response. The boy was dead.

Soon several policemen arrived at Mr. White’s house. All his neighbors surrounded the house to see what was happening, except Mr. White’s weird neighbor, Mr. Filch, standing aside laughing. Mr. Filch was a weird man with long, messy hair. He loved peeking into his neighbour’s house. He had been accused of peeking at old Mrs. Truchbull while she was taking a shower last year. Due to Mr. Filch’s disgusting and unacceptable records, the police suspected that he killed the boy.

“I ain’t any killer! You shameful guy!” shouted Mr. Filch when he was carried away by three policemen.

After a few incidents, Mr. White finally got back to his cozy house. He told everything he had seen to his wife who was out shopping at the time the boy was found dead.

“You know, that disgusting man, I have always believed he will we go to prison one day,” said Mrs. White. “And I knew the boy too. He always steals food from his neighbours. I caught him once stealing pork from our fridge, but he ran away. I wish he hadn’t entered my house. I mean, he might not have been killed if he hadn’t met the killer.”

Feeling sleepy, Mr. White had fallen asleep before his wife finished her words.

In Mr. White’s dream, he dreamed about a little boy drinking a glass of milk. Suddenly the boy was caught by the killer. And then the boy was dead. Mr. White couldn’t see the killer’s face, but he could hear a women’s voice muttering, “I can’t let you leave me again!”
The next day was a rain day. Mr. White had had breakfast downstairs before he went to work. As his wife didn’t work, she often slept until 11 o’clock in the morning. That’s why Mr. White usually made his own breakfast. And when Mr. White was preparing his breakfast, he found something in the cupboard, a towel with blood on it. However, Mr. White ignored it because he thought it was just his wife is blood from accidentally cutting herself. Not wanting to be late for work, Mr. White ate his cereal as fast as he could and then went to work.

It had been another tiring day. His job serving hamburgers in the fast food shop had worn Mr. White out. He arrived home, exhausted. Then he saw a notebook on the dining table. He immediately recognized that it was his wife’s notebook. On the book, a few lines were written.

3.00 p.m.  Meet friends  
7.00 p.m.  Prepare dinner  
8.00 p.m.  !!

At that moment, his wife opened the door and entered the house.

“Hello darling, you survived a boring day, didn’t you?” said Mrs. White.

“Of course I did,” laughed Mr. White, “By the way, are you going out tonight at 8 o’clock?”

“No, I am not,” replied Mrs. White nervously, “Who gave you such a thought?”

“You wrote it on your notebook, didn’t you? It must be something important or else you wouldn’t have put an exclamation mark beside it.”

“Oh yes, I nearly forgot, it’s supposed to be a meeting with my sister, Janice, but she is sick so the meeting has been cancelled.”
Mr. White knew she was lying, because his wife had no sisters.

“What are you hiding from me, Jessica?” Mr. White asked his wife.

“I said nothing. Why can’t you just believe me?”

“I KNOW YOU ARE LYING. I KNOW YOU HAVE NO SISTER. WHAT ARE YOU HIDING FROM ME!” shouted Mr. White furiously.

Mrs. White bursted into tears.

“I didn’t want to do this, I didn’t want to kill the boy, I wanted my son back!” cried Mrs. White. Then she explained everything.

The Whites used to have a happy family, until their son had died in a car crash. Mrs. White had been in deep pain and had lived in depression and guilt since her son died. It had been 7 years yesterday, when Mrs. White was sitting in the living room watching TV. A boy tried to enter and trying to steal something. The boy looked so much like Mrs. White’s dead son and she missed him so much. She dashed to the boy and hugged him tightly. However, the boy was not her son. He was shocked and tried to escape. In that chaotic situation the boy bumped his head hard into the wall, then the boy died. Mrs. White didn’t know what to do. She just wiped the blood off the wall and then dragged the body outside the house. She was too scared and just ran away from the house.

Mr. White loved Mrs. White, and Mrs. White loved him too, but killing is a crime, and he believed the cops would chase her down. Not knowing what to do, Mr. White decided to take a shower, hoping it’s just a dream.
He entered the bathroom, then a light appeared. The light soon become brighter and brighter, a voice was talking next to his ears. Mr. White recognized the voice, it was his son’s. The voice said, “It will all be over.” Mr. White slapped his face, the voice disappeared. It’s just his own imagination.

After Mr. White finished his shower, the view in front of Mr. White had shocked him. His wife had just committed suicide by hanging herself. Mr. White looked at the clock. It was 8 o’clock sharp.
You Can Do It, Mike!

3C Marquis Lam

Dear Mike,

I received your letter recently and I totally understand how you feel. However, I’ve got some advice, which you might find useful.

According to what you said in your letter, you were dissatisfied with response your English teacher, Mr. Smith, gave you after you submitted your English book report. You complained about him because he criticized you for your laziness, which you disagreed with. Let us forget about that. Let’s talk about your attitude.

You claimed that you’ve spent a lot of time “copying and pasting information from the Internet”. In fact, “copying and pasting” isn’t the correct thing to do. This is the behavior of a copycat and it’s considered cheating. Though it seems nothing to you, actually you’ve already committed plagiarism and you could be expelled from school if it gets more serious. Infringing copyrights brings you consequences. You should have done the report yourself instead of copying it from the Internet.

Moreover, you said you did the book report the night before the deadline. It isn’t something I appreciate. You shouldn’t burn the midnight oil. Don’t do your work at the last minute. Why don’t you try and do the report days before the deadline? You would feel less stressed. Come on, Mike, don’t be a typical Hong Kong “deadline fighter”.

At the end of your letter, you asked me for advice on studying. I’ve got loads of useful advice to share with you. First, you should form a habit to revise everything you’ve learnt from school that day. This can reduce the time spent on revision when examinations come. Second, you must go to bed before 11pm every day. Enough sleep is very important for students to concentrate during the lessons. Third, you should write down all the homework you are given and the deadline for the homework. Also, remember to finish your homework as early as possible so that you won’t have to do it before the deadline.

I truly hope you will improve your attitude on studying and hopefully my advice helps. I will always be on your side. Remember, hard work always pays off.

Best wishes,

Chris
Keep Your Head Held High!

3C Thomas Hoo

Dear Mike,

Thanks for your letter. I’m deeply saddened by your problems and really feel sorry for you. I understand that being admonished causes a lot of disconsolation and frustration. Yet, some of the problems can be solved.

First of all, I think that there is room for improvement with your attitude towards studying. Firstly, you should be an original thinker when doing homework. In an era of substantial information, people have the tendency to duplicate information from the Internet for their homework. In my opinion, the correct way to finish homework is actually quite the contrary. The right way to do homework is to try to do your best yourself, without any foreign help. It can help strengthen your foundation and develop your style of writing, instead of handing in an essay of roughly copied paragraphs. Also, as you previously mentioned, you asked me what the key to studying well is. According to research, a study schedule will be important as it can help you stick to a routine. It can set aside a certain amount of time for study and nourishment, providing a work-life balance. Studying in an appropriate setting with the relevant materials also contributes to concentration as it removes possible distractions and keeps you focused. Studying the materials you have been taught every day will be highly beneficial as you will remember materials for a prolonged period of time. With these methods, your learnt knowledge will slowly accumulate, thus there will be no need to cram up knowledge before tests.

Secondly, you could finish your work earlier. It can lower your level of stress as you can save yourself from the stress of an approaching deadline. Also, completing tasks early on can give you a lot of spare time to study or relax. Procrastination gets you nowhere as it keeps you from finishing your work. Criticisms from teachers may make you furious, but fractious actions will only complicate and exacerbate the situation. If I were you, I would not be angry but learn from this mistake. I hope that you would do the same, wouldn’t you?

When I was in the seventh grade, I wasn’t exactly the sharpest pencil in the box. I was an egomaniacal person back then. I thought that I had excellent grades and was superior to other students. As a consequence, I studied infrequently and always rushed my homework
in haste before the deadline. My awakening came when my new English teacher reprimanded me for my indolence and insouciance. Instead of shouting at me, he talked with me in a gentle and persuasive manner. Instead of scoffing at his words and being recalcitrant, I was motivated to be diligent, so I worked hard not to let him down. A few months later, I transformed myself into a whole new being. I strove to balance between study and relaxation, and my grades improved as I had more time and less stress. A good motivation is really essential to anything you attempt to do.

On the other hand, plagiarism doesn’t get you anywhere. According to research, the Internet can occasionally tempt some students to cheat when they finish homework. The urge to copy and paste information should be resisted at all costs. There are also sites which sell “homework completing services”. The Internet does not exist to render homework obsolete. Furthermore, much online information is presented poorly and is littered with numerous spelling and grammatical mistakes, and is detrimental to learning. Does a piece of plagiarized writing really deserve teacher’s attention? Doesn’t it bother your conscience know that you didn’t give your best to the teacher? I hope so. Actually, there are numerous ways to do your homework well yourself. You could go to the library which offers a vast variety of knowledge for reference and a quiet environment to do homework. There you can refer to knowledge which is reliable, while preventing distraction of electronic gadgets. Is a paragraph plagiarized from the Internet more precious than the vast knowledge provided by the library? It’s like putting the cart before the horse!

Don’t get frustrated. Keep your head held high! Although this will not be a bed of roses, I hope you will grit your teeth and stand strong. I hope my advice will help you. You’re always welcome to write to me.

Best wishes,

Chris
A Mini-Library Should Not Be Set up in Every PCMS Classroom

3D Alvin Kwok

“Why don’t you read the books in the mini-library in your classroom?

“As you see, the classroom is too noisy. Moreover, there are not many types of books for me to choose from. Why don’t we go to the school library instead?”

“I see. Then let’s go to the school library to discuss our book presentation instead.”

The above dialogue shows the situation of the students if a mini-library is set up in every PCMS classroom. Hence, I speculate that a mini-library should not be set up in every PCMS classroom.

Firstly, the environment is too noisy and students will be disturbed as they are reading. As we see, students will not have enough time to read in the mini-library during lunch time and their lesson time because they may go out to eat instead of eating at school and students should concentrate in their lessons. Therefore, students will only have time in the recess. That causes the problem. It is that students could not concentrate on reading because others’ voices are too loud in recess. It will make the students who are interested in reading lose their interest or will encounter the dilemma at the beginning of this essay. As a result, it wastes the function of a mini-library.

Secondly, the variety of books is not wide enough for students to choose from. There are mainly two purposes for the students to read books. First is doing projects or reports. Second is choosing the types of books to learn some specific knowledge. For the first purpose, students may not find the books they want on their booklist when the books in the mini-library are not sufficient. With the second purpose, students may not find the books which they are interested in. That will also lead to the situation in the aforementioned dialogue. Therefore, the original purpose on setting up a mini-library is gone and it is not meaningful to set up one in every classroom.

Thirdly, students may not have time to tidy the books. If someone collects books, they will know that they should really care about the books and tidy the books almost every day. If they don’t do so, it will cause a lot of problems. A smaller problem is that the books will have dust that makes your hands dirty. A bigger problem is that the quality of the paper can
deteriorate and become torn and yellow if the environment is moist. The biggest problem is that the books may give a place for some bookworms or other insects to hide in, making the books very disgusting. At last, they will be thrown away. Consequently, I don’t think it is a good idea to set up a mini-library in every PCMS classroom.

From the reasons above, I suggest arranging one day which is “School Reading Day”. On that day students should bring a book back and read it in a lesson for about 30 minutes. First, as students will participate in the lesson, the environment will not be too noisy. Second, students can read the books they choose. Third, that book will be protected by the students. The hygiene problem will also be solved. This can promote reading on campus, which is the original purpose of setting up a mini-library in a classroom. This will also solve the above problems.

In conclusion, because of the undesirable environment, the number of books and limited time, setting up a mini-library is not realistic. After all, there are other ways to encourage people to read. Therefore, I am against the notion that a mini-library should be set up in every PCMS classroom.
A Soldier’s Diary on an Unforgettable Experience of War

3D Alyssa Chow

25th December, 1995

Despite the fact that it’s Christmas today, it’s probably the worst and most unforgettable day of my life. It was my first day experiencing war. I had been assisting doctors in barracks as an army medic, but a week ago I had been trained as a special combat medic, who was in charge of both fighting and first aid. We were running out of soldiers that even female medics like me had to join the battlefield.

We entered the battlefield as reinforcements at 18:00. The revolting smell on the field was a combination of the flesh of fallen soldiers and choking gun powder. It made me feel nauseous. Clutching my first aid kit and gun tightly, I anxiously stepped into the war zone.

I frantically looked around to see if there were any injured soldiers. “Watch out, Med!” A comrade dragged me to the ground just as a bullet passed above my ear. “Thanks bud...” I muttered, although I wasn’t sure if he had heard it or not, since my voice was shaking and my body was trembling. I could have died if I didn’t dodge the bullet.

After spacing out for a while as I was extremely startled, I caught someone bellowing, “Med!” I ran in the direction of yelling, and discerned a young grimacing soldier who was heavily injured with a stab wound. There was a huge gash on his chest, and a huge amount of blood oozed from it. I gulped. Since the wound was so deep, I could see raw and weeping flesh in varying shades of red. The color of the stained uniform changed from olive grey to blood-red. Improvising, I tore my shirt into strips and tied it around the wound in order to stop the blood flow. After cleansing the wound, I applied IV fluid to stabilize the soldier. After confirming the stability of the condition, I left the wounded soldier with another comrade and left to check if there were any more injured soldiers.

Instantaneously, someone bellowed, “Missile incoming! RUN!” Sergeant Miller, who was the leader of our squad, roared as we bolted as rapidly as we could. I dropped my first aid kit in order to run for my life. It was fortunate that we had dashed fast enough to dodge the missile. “Constant vigilance, Med! Keep it in your mind!” Still panting, he then rushed to check on other squad mates. “Gosh thank- ” Being interrupted by a strident booming
noise, I forced my eyes to close tightly. As I opened my eyes again, terror struck me like lightning, and my thankful smile towards the Sergeant dropped immediately. Fiery flames and dust were violently bursting on the field, as a grenade just exploded approximately 6 meters away, right in front of my own eyes.

I ambled towards the Sergeant and another soldier, who were lying on the field lifelessly. “Sergeant Miller?” I gasped, but there was no response. Perhaps somewhere deep in my mind I knew that nobody could survive a grenade explosion from a distance less than 5 meters. The following minutes meant nothing to me, as I fired bullets towards the enemy, especially the one who threw the grenade. Nevertheless, it was crystal-clear that Sergeant Miller and the unknown soldier wouldn’t come back to life. I felt extremely guilty, like it was my fault. The feeling was unbearable, and tears rolled down my checks. I was not sure if it was because of the dust in my eyes or the guilt on my mind.

Afterwards, the medivac helicopter arrived. I assisted other medics by carrying the injured soldiers on board, but my eyes were focused on the limp body of the fallen soldiers who died from the grenade explosion. “Hate to say this but I’m sure that you can’t bring the dead back to life.” One of the medics muttered softly, patting my shoulders. “Let’s go, Med. We don’t have spare time to transfer the corpses.”

I always thought that combat medics and soldiers could save everyone. However, from this cruel yet unforgettable experience of my first war, I have understood that sacrifices have to be made, and we can do nothing to help it.
Eight Feet Tall
3D Alyssa Chow

4th October, 2020 (SUN)

Dear Diary,

Today was truly the worst day with an unexplainable experience.

Since it was the weekend, I woke up extremely late. My bed was unusually narrow and inflexible that I had even thumped my forehead on the desk next to my bed accidentally while I tried to turn over. I groaned as I sat up with my forehead pounding, realizing the bizarre scene in front of my eyes. Every single thing, including my bed, which used to be huge and congenial, the desk next to my bed, even the disheveled assignments on the desk, had shrunken into quite a tiny size. I was extremely bewildered by this scene, “Wake up, Lily. This isn’t a fantasy or Alice in the Wonderland.” I thought, as I stood up and headed towards the bathroom.

“Ouch-” I yelped as my head struck on the air-con on the ceiling. “How on Earth would I bump it when it’s in the height of 7 feet? I’m only 5 feet tall...” Or so I thought.

I strolled around my flat while slightly curling my body so that I wouldn’t experience another bump again. Abruptly, realization hit me like a punch in the guts. What if my surroundings are the ones that had shrunken? What if... I was the one who had grown? I was shocked and overjoyed at the same time. I had always wanted to grow taller and experience the life of tall people. What could possibly go wrong with my 8-feet tall body?

Still, 8 feet is way too tall and abnormal for a teenage girl’s height. I couldn’t have grown more than 3 feet in a night, right? In order to investigate the reason behind this, I phoned Dr Wilson, a family friend of mine, and requested him for help. Being an expert in medicine and chemistry, he worked at a Science Institute, where I was going to have my body check.

I dressed in my father’s extra-large hoodie which barely fit my gigantic body. His stretch pants which he usually wore during work-outs seemed like capri pants on me. I tried my best to bend down as strangers on the pavement stared at me with puzzled expressions. Afterwards, I got on the MTR and it was extremely exhausting, since I had to curl my body
so that I could fit in the carriage. I felt like my back was going to crack from the pain. Perhaps being tall wasn’t really an advantage...

I had finally arrived at Dr Wilson’s Science Institute. “Oh, hey Lily... look how much you’ve grown!” He joked with a hint of sarcasm to make fun of my height. He then led me to the place where body checks were done. During the wait, I explained in detail the situation I had this morning. I still couldn’t believe this insane fact that I was 8 feet tall.

Dr Wilson said that he had a meeting and will leave for about 2 hours. Holding the admin card Dr Wilson gave me, which was used as an authorization to get in the lift, I subsequently went for a walk to buy drinks. I got a glimpse of Jessica Lee, the famous cyber celebrity! She was heading to a prominent boutique with her Instagram live streaming. I was studying the elegant dress she was wearing. How expensive it would cost! All of a sudden, Jessica stopped walking and looked at the comments from her live precisely. She then turned around and searched for something, but stopped in track gaping at me with a weird expression, as if she was horrified or disgusted. She then aimed her phone camera at me and walked towards me. “Oh my god, are you a giant?! Or perhaps a clown from the circus?!” She covered her mouth while sneering, as passerby snickered as they glanced at me. “You look hilarious!” She cackled. Feeling humiliated, I turned away immediately and sprinted back to the Science Institute as quick as possible.

I slammed shut Mr Wilson’s office’s door, panting heavily. “Geez... What did you just do...” Mr Wilson shook his head in disbelief, with his eyes focused on the screen of his laptop. “What do you mean?” I enquired him hesitantly. My stomach was doing backflips inside my body, I was extraordinarily perturbed. “Lily, did you just encounter the ‘Instagrammer’ Jessica Jung?”

I was speechless as I scrutinized the forum page on the laptop screen. “I Just Met An 8-foot Tall Clown!” was the topic of the forum. I couldn’t bear looking at the malicious comments. “Look at her hideous height! I wonder what monster she is!” “Wow please tell me what milk she drank TT...” “She seems like a girl in her 10s... this height is ridiculous haha...”
I took my phone out of my pocket and scrolled through the forums frantically. My heart sank when I saw my name and my Instagram username in the articles. How could they dox me and spread my personal information?! Anonymous accounts messaged me with a mocking tone but were actually offensive to me. “It might probably be the best option if you go home safely first…” Mr Wilson suggested. Having picked up my tote, I entered the lift with my head lowered to avoid attention.

When the doors of the lift parted, I saw people in black with masks, who were holding huge cameras, standing at the lobby as if they were waiting for some celebrities. “Oi, there she is!” A man with a black cap bawled, pointing at me. In a matter of seconds, a bunch of these people in black swarmed towards my direction like bees, with their immense cameras aiming at me. Questions such as “How old are you?” “What made you grow to this height?” “Are you a semi-giant?” flooded the lobby of the Science Institute and I was intimidated. I quickly stepped in the lift, wiped the card and closed the doors instantly. My heart was throbbing rapidly and tears trimmed down my cheeks. I’d had enough of being 8 feet tall.

Having arrived at the office again, an idea popped into my mind. I dialed my older friend Taylor’s phone number and asked for her help. She was a reporter and she managed a news and entertainment account on Instagram. She asked me for the address and the password for the lift and replied that she’ll arrive in no time. After approximately 15 minutes, Taylor arrived, and I told her the ins and outs of my unbelievable situation. She then offered to do an interview with me in order to clarify the rumors on the internet.

An hour after, Dr Wilson phoned me to tell me the results of the research. It showed that there was an unknown drug somewhere in my intestine that he had never seen before. All of the sudden, I bolted to the washroom and to my surprise, I shrank back to my 5-foot-tall body miraculously after excreting. I guess I probably had just excreted that drug. My original petite height had returned, and I was very relieved. I had finally gotten rid of that horrific height of 8 feet.

Taylor shoved her phone in my face later on, with her interview with me on the screen. It must have been spread like wildfire, seeing the number of views, likes and comments being fairly large. “I really hope that the disturbing rumors and offensive comments to be
deleted,” Lily Lee stated, “And for the netizens who attacked and doxxed me, please don’t do that again to other victims, as height and looks are never acceptable reasons to discriminate or to insult people. Just like what she pleaded, please delete your coverages and comments.”

It was night time, and I had legally changed my name after informing my parents who were in the UK. That name reminded me of those absurd articles and the horrendous comments, my eyes were still puffy and red due to the crying today. From this unbelievable experience of being an 8-foot-tall person, I confronted real-life problems and negative effects of irresponsible netizens and reporters. I had also experienced the horrific side of the “keyboard warriors” on the internet, and cyberbullying. The incident today made me understand the importance of our mental health, which could be easily destroyed, and that we should be graceful for who we are and what we have. In my case, I should neither be embarrassed about my 5-foot-tall height, nor to hope for a tall body; instead, I should be graceful for who I truly am.

After all, despite the fact that the whole experience is unconvincing and might seem impossible, I had learned a lot today. I will spend my free time rethinking about moments of myself commenting on the Internet with heart-searching.

This might be ridiculous, but I would like to thank God for letting me have the unpleasant but meaningful experience of being 8 feet tall. I will try my best to live my life with gratitude and appreciate myself for who I am from now on.

That’s enough for today, I’m going to take some rest now. I’m sure that tomorrow would be a better day!

Best wishes,
Lily
Let’s Go Dancing Together!
3D Ivy Chang

Dear Taylor,

Thanks for your letter. I’m sorry I haven’t written for so long. I’m really sad to hear about your problems. You may feel desperate now, but take it easy! Your situation is alterable. Let me help you because I’ve experienced what you are experiencing now.

First of all, let me stress one thing. You are a really valuable person! You were the champion in numerous swimming and badminton competitions. You also get high marks in the exams. These are but some of your achievements.

Hence, I surmise that the root problem is that you are not confident enough. You always think that you are not good enough, you are not hard working enough, but actually you’ve already been a very fabulous person. However, you can’t see any of your strengths because people often tell you that you’re not good enough. But don’t worry! I think dancing can help you to get back your confidence.

You must be confused about how dancing can help you to find confidence. So, let me tell you my story. I think you remember I was really chapfallen when I failed my school exam last year. At that time, every day I was like a zombie and had no interest in anything. I thought I was useless like rubbish and simply felt inferior. I even wanted to leave this world. However, my friend, May, invited me to go dancing with her. At first, I had been totally against the idea, but after I went there for once, I fell in love with it. When you are dancing, you will forget all of the sad things and enjoy yourself on the stage. It brought me confidence and energy. I also realised that I am not useless. I can still dance very well. I think, to a large extent, dancing helps me to walk out of my darkest time, showing me that I am valuable. I think you should try it too.

Moreover, much researcher has found that dancing can improve your confidence because when you are dancing, you can get a sense of accomplishment. I have also asked my dancing classmates why they love dancing. They answered that it is because dancing changes their mood and dancing reminds them that they are alive. Also, I remember that you enjoy dancing on stage a lot when you were little. However, your mum thought that you were too busy with your schoolwork already, so she stopped letting you go dancing. But I
think you are freer now because it’s summer holiday. Hence, I think it’s time for you to dance again and gain back your confidence through dancing. And I’d like to invite you to dance with me in ABC Dance Studios every Friday. I think you’ll become a fanatic of dancing again and have a terrific memory with me after we dance.

Cheer up! Believe in yourself that you’re a very valuable person. I’ll be exhilarated if you can dance with me. Please write back to me. And please remember that whatever you do, I’m always with you!

Best wishes,

Chris
Social Networking Sites Make Us Lonelier

3D Anson Chan

Do you know that Facebook users worldwide spend a total of 10.5 billion minutes on the website, even though mobile users are not included? That’s 19,963 years! Actually, Facebook is not the only social networking site making this happen. Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, Pinterest, Tumblr, and many more sites and apps have been keeping people far apart more than we think. What will happen to us if this keeps happening? We may not know now, but one thing is for sure - social networking sites are making us less sociable.

To start with, we have to understand the original meaning of “social networking sites”. Just for you to know, the famous social media platform “Facebook” has a market capitalization of 752.58 billion dollars and 2.5 billion monthly active users at the moment. Mark Zuckerberg, the founder and the current CEO of Facebook, said he was simply solving a problem at the time. “Ten years ago, I was just trying to help connect people at colleges and a few schools. That was a basic need, where I looked around on the internet and there were services for a lot of things that you wanted, but you couldn’t find and connect with the people that you cared about, even when people are actually the most important,” said Zuckerberg. He could not have said that better himself; the point of creating Facebook was to “connect with the people that we cared about.” But is that the situation now? I’m afraid not. At the moment, I believe that a lot of social networking site users know how to text, how to take a photo or a video, but not how to speak and communicate. Imagine this: Patrick is having a reunion dinner with his dearest family and relatives. What is different from last year is that more relatives of his are getting on Facebook. He is so cheerful that he can finally chat with his cousins on Facebook. No one said anything since they make other friends on Facebook, except “One, two, three, cheers!” The elderly who don’t use or don’t know how to use a phone were so angry that they left early to play mah-jong. Is this what Zuckerberg wanted? I highly doubt that.

Secondly, after knowing the true meaning of social networking sites, do social networking sites make people closer, or lonelier? A 2014 study on college students suffering from Internet addiction found out that excessive and unhealthy Internet use would increase feelings of loneliness over time. This study also found that online social contacts with friends and family were not an effective alternative for offline social interactions in reducing feelings
of loneliness. What does that mean? It simply means that people are getting lonelier and lonelier as technology begins to develop, especially those who use social networking sites whenever something happens: when they have lunch or dinner, when they hop on a bus or a taxi, and so on. Maybe sometimes accidents happen beside them, but they would only take out their phone, take a video, and share them to their friends, while someone just beside them needs more help. Remember, this is what happens daily on this planet. Is this not enough to prove that people are not getting more sociable by using social networking sites? Is this not enough to prove that social networking sites can make people feel lonelier and more depressed?

Thirdly, are people using social networking sites correctly? Some people may argue that they are feeling happier and more popular as they use social networking sites. That is true, because they are using social networking sites correctly. But I’ll have to remind you that those people account for less than 20% of those who use those sites. Another 2016 study among 208 undergraduate students found that something called “the social comparison orientation” made all the difference. What is this “social comparison orientation”? The theory is that people evaluate their own opinions and abilities by comparing themselves to others in order to reduce uncertainty in these domains, and learn how to define the self. For short, it means comparing yourself to others. I will suggest that those 20% of people who feel happier may be just having fun or just communicating on the sites in their free time, rather than those who compete with their friends, their classmates, or whoever they wanted to. Is that really the way to use social networking platforms? Is that what pulls people away from each other? Are we becoming more sociable when we do that? Obviously, no.

In conclusion, using social media in a way that connects us with others can make us less lonely and more sociable. Unfortunately, as users of social media increase, we are becoming lonelier. This trend suggests that we may not understand the original meaning of a social networking platform, we may be lonelier rather than happier after using the sites, or we may not be using social media in the most appropriate ways. These factors increase the probability of experiencing social isolation rather than being sociable. That is why I think social networking sites are making us less sociable.
You Know What? I Love the Way I Am

3D Season Choi

4th November, 2020 (Wed) Windy

I woke up this morning and discovered I was eight feet tall. When I rose from my bed, I felt weird. I was rubbing my eyes and walking to the bathroom as I banged my face on the door frame. I realised I was taller than the door and screamed in horror. Mom and Dad immediately swung the door open and came rushing in with panicky expressions on their faces. Their eyes widened as they saw me.

"Oh my, Hannah, what happened to you?" they shrieked in great astonishment.

I was short ever since I was little. I always wished I could be taller, like one of those super models. Last night, I saw a shooting star flying through the sky, and I made a wish that I could be taller. People always say if you make a wish upon a shooting star, it will be granted, right? I guess my wish really came true. I’m starting to regret why I didn't say the exact height. This is a little bit too much.

Despite my parents telling me to stay at home while they tried to find a doctor to explain what had happened to me, I insisted on going to school. The finals are coming. I have to catch up with class. I can’t miss a single lesson. My classmates will probably make fun of me a bit, but it's no big deal, right? When I was on my way to West Lake High, I saw people giving me weird looks and whispering to each other. I even overheard a little girl asking her mother if I was a giant. To be honest, I expected all this. I mean, who wouldn't stare at a girl who is eight feet tall? But I still felt sad. When I entered the school gate, the first person I saw was Brandon. Yep, Brandon Kavinsky, my boyfriend.

Butterflies appeared in my stomach when I saw him, but I wasn't so sure that I wanted him to see me. Brandon suddenly turned around and my heart skipped a beat. I just stood there like a statue, looking carefully at his every detail. He was wearing a pair of worn out dark indigo jeans, an oversized beige sweatshirt and a pair of black Converse. Every part of him was perfect, his tousled chestnut hair, his sharp jawline, his amber eyes...

"Hannah, what happened?"
I snapped out of my day dream and met Brandon's inquiring gaze. He was standing right in front of me. "I...I have no... no idea," I stammered. When I was about to run away with embarrassment, I caught sight of a huge banner hanging on the wall. I stared at it in horror. The word "Homecoming" was printed on it with an elegant cursive font. As soon as I realised it was prom night, my eyes started welling up with tears and I rushed towards the girl's bathroom, almost smashing my face on the door frame again. "I still want to go with you!" I heard him yelling behind me. No, I won't go to prom looking like this. Why, why did this happen on prom night? No one would really want to go with me. Brandon probably just doesn't want to hurt my feelings. I locked myself inside a stall and let the tears escape from my eyes and race uncontrollably across my cheek.

When I calmed down a bit and decided to get out of the bathroom, I bumped in the most irritating person in the whole school. "Well well well, look who's here," said someone menacingly. It was Tyson Bowen, our school bully. I walked away quickly, trying in vain to elude him.

"Isn't this Hannah the ‘BFG’? By the way, don't get me wrong. By ‘BFG’, I mean the Big Fat Giant, not the cute and friendly one by Roald Dahl." A few of the boys snorted while chewing loudly on some kind of repugnant bright pink gum. As I ignored them and attempted to walk away once again, Tyson stuck his feet right in front of me. I stumbled and plummeted to the ground. I felt something wet, slimy and sticky landed on my neck. I gradually raised my hand, removed it and stood up wobbly at the same time. It was that piece bright pink gum that guy was chewing. They laughed hysterically and a few people passing by smirked. I was humiliated in front of everyone.

Gut wrenching sobs tore through my chest. I covered my face with shaking hands and rushed up the stairs to the balcony. Once I had reached the balcony, cold icy wind struck my face. I fell to my knees, crying out. My lower lips quivered and my shoulders dropped in resignation. Pessimistic thoughts and emotions started stirring up and I started to walk closer towards the edge. “I'm nothing, I look disgusting, no one loves me, no one would ever love me. Will I ever become normal again?” I murmured. I looked down, gasped and stumbled backwards. I was so high up. One leap and I will end up dead. My bones will be smashed into pieces, into nothing. I closed my eyes and whispered "Goodbye world." When I was about to take the last step, I heard a high pitch screech.
"HANNAH, WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING, COME BACK DOWN AT ONCE."

With my back facing that person, I said miserably, "Just let me die already, no one will care."

"But I care."

I turned around. It was Emily, red-headed Emily. How could I forget about my best friend? Emily has been my BFF since kindergarten, we were basically sisters. Emily was stunning as always, she was wearing a baby blue mini skirt, a black and white striped tee shirt and a warm grey cardigan.

"How dare you forget about me," she said teasingly. I hugged her tightly and huge drop of tears fell from my eyes.

"Woah woah woah, calm down girl, I need to breathe!" exclaimed Emily as she gasped for air. She then looked straight into my eyes and said, “Oh my poor Hannah. Remember, no matter what happens, I'll always be there for you and lend you a shoulder to cry on.”

Soon we were laughing and joking around. When Emily heard about what Tyson and his gang did to me, her face turned bright red, "The game is on, we really need to teach that guy a lesson!"

I bet Tyson will never forget this lesson we gave him.

It was sports class during the sixth and seventh period, my favourite lesson. The best part was we played volleyball. Yep, I'm a pretty good spiker in the Volleyball Team. It was boys versus girls today. I leaped up with all my might and hit the ball as hard as I could. It landed hard onto Tyson's face. The girls on my side cheered loudly, actually even the boys on his side cheered. Why did they cheer for me? Was it because of the score I gained? Or were they all fed up with his attitude? I guess we could only surmise. He got a bruise on his forehead and toppled backwards. Serves him right. This is what happens when you make fun of people, especially tall people.
At last, I went to prom with Emily. We danced and swayed smoothly with the music. When I started to wonder if Brandon was here and felt sorry about ditching him, Emily said she needed to go to the bathroom. When I was waiting for her and tapping my feet along with the beat, I heard a noise of metal clanging. It sounded like robots walking in one of those science fiction movies. I got hold of a glass bottle, ready to defend myself and spun around.

All of my friends, including Emily and Brandon were there. They were tall, some of them were even taller than me. But how? I soon realised they were wearing stilts! I was so touched, tears started forming in my eyes again.

"Honey, oh please don't cry," Brandon said softly into my ears, hugging me and burying my head in his chest at the same time, his voice angelic. "My heart aches every time you drop a tear."

I sniffed and bit my lip.

"I'm taller than you now, you don't have to be upset or ashamed. We'll figure this out together, ok?"

I snuggled my face in his warm and fuzzy wool coat.

"Ok," I said in a muffled voice.

Actually, there are some perks of being eight feet tall. First of all, I’m now invincible at playing volleyball. Secondly, I can reach things on higher shelves easily. But most importantly, I’ve learnt that I am loved. You know what? If things can’t be fixed and I have to remain eight feet tall for the rest of my life, I’m fine with that.

I love the way I am, and nobody is going to break my stride.
Into My Own Novel World

3E Chloe Au

1st November, 2020

I woke up this morning and discovered I was eight feet tall.

When I woke up this morning, I wasn’t on my own bed. I was on a huge bed with four pillars. I looked around. There was an enormous glass wall on my left side. I got out of bed and gazed at the breathtaking landscape. There were blooming flowers all over Emerald Mountain and some Icelandic mountains were surrounding it. I definitely wasn’t at my home. I could see my reflection from the glass. I was eight feet tall and the girl I was staring at wasn’t me. That girl was tall and slim, with thin-faced and straight silver hair. She had a pair of amber almond eyes, and cherry lips. She was beautiful and attractive. She was definitely not me.

“Lady Phoenix, you should go to the academy now,” a youthful female voice yelled. Phoenix. I knew where I was, I was inside my own novel. I had written a novel with three friends who wanted to become novelists in the future. The story was about four half giants who saved the Merlin Empire, a land of magic, from an evil witch called Maleficent. I was one of the half giants, Phoenix. I guessed I was in a dream, so I slapped myself to see if I was right.

“Ouch!” I screamed. It was not a dream, I was Phoenix and I was in the Merlin Empire. Therefore, I had to figure out a way to go back to reality, but before that, I had to live as Phoenix first.

According to my novel, Phoenix was studying in the Military Academy of Merlin. I went to the Academy by riding a gigantic horse. I had learnt how to ride a horse but it was extremely difficult to balance when I was a half giant. I almost fell off from it, seems like I still couldn’t get used to being an eight-feet giant. After I jumped off the horse, I still felt weird because I was looking at other people’s heads. Also, it was really embarrassing because others were staring at me. They were staring at me just like I was an animal in the zoo, like I was a weird creature. I remembered when I was in reality, I always looked at someone who was extremely tall. They must feel uncomfortable, I shouldn’t do it again.

However, I must admit that it was brilliant to be tall. I could see much further than usual. Newton was right, if he had seen further, it was by standing on the shoulders of giants.
I went to find Phoenix’s best friend, Archer. He was a heartthrob. He had an oval face and hazel eyes.

He was in the classroom, chatting with Elizabeth and Prospero. Elizabeth had wavy hair and a freckled face, with a pair of pointy ears. Prospero had wavy hair and was darker-skinned.

“Hello! Phoenix!” Elizabeth shouted excitedly. It was unusual. The setting of Elizabeth was she shouldn’t be so optimistic, she should act like a damsel in distress.

“Who are you, your highness? You look like one of my friends called Emma,” I murmured.

Emma was one of the novelists of this story, and it seemed like she travelled to our story too.

“I am Emma! Artemis, finally you have come here! We all come to our own story. Lewis is Archer and Prospero is Prospero.” Emma explained to me.

“I just can’t believe it! You guys are eight feet tall!” I exclaimed.

“Don’t forget that you are tall too!” Lewis laughed.

“We had to discuss how to go back first. You were the main novelist of this story. You should know more than us, Artemis,” Prospero said.

“Do you guys remember that it was Halloween before we came here? We met an old woman who was dressed like a witch when we were having dinner, and she gave us some strange cake,” I said.

“Just like Alice in Wonderland, the cakes could turn us to giants,” Prospero said.

“I believe the witch is Maleficent, she sent us here, but why?” Lewis asked.
“She wants revenge on us because we created her as a villain. We had a fairytale setting, the villain always deserves a bad ending,” I explained.

“Oh oh oh, my dear, what a shrewd girl!” A squeaky voice exclaimed, “It is too dangerous for me without a hostage after you have found out the truth.”

The voice belonged to Maleficent. She took off her invisible cloak. Maleficent is an old woman, her face was full of wrinkles.

“Help!” Emma yelled. Maleficent held Emma’s hand and she used her magic to transfer herself and Emma away. They disappeared from our sight.

“She took away Emma as her hostage. We must go to rescue her,” Lewis sighed.

“I start to regret that we wrote she caught Elizabeth away. However, that doesn’t matter, let’s go to visit Maleficent’s spooky castle,” Prospero sighed.

The castle was on a precipitous mountain. We had to climb to reach the castle. I couldn’t imagine how to reach the top if I were in reality. Luckily, my arms and legs were long enough to climb. I could grab the rocks easily so we quickly arrived at the castle.

There was a defensive wall around it, however it was too short to stop us. It was only a decoration for half giants. I stepped on their shoulders and I started to tremble. It was really high and they were too weak to support me. They were shaking. I wasn’t a brave girl however I kept telling myself that I was a half giant at that moment. I took out my courage and I made it! I went over the wall and I opened the gate from inside, so they could come in.

“It is a piece of cake!” Lewis shouted.

“No, I don’t think so, it was terrible!” I retorted. My heart was pounding when I was up there!

In our story, Elizabeth was locked in a dark dungeon. Therefore, we headed to it. The ceiling height was low. It was specially designed for Maleficent, who was a hunchback.
However, it was nightmarish for us. We kept bumping into the wall, again and again. Sometimes, being a half giant wasn’t as awesome as I thought.

Finally, we found that Emma was full of blood. Maleficent was torturing her.

“Emma, change the story. I will be the hero and those three detestable half giants will be the villains. I will set you free and send you back to your world. Isn’t it a good deal?” Maleficent said.

“Never!” Emma shrieked, “I will never betray them!”

“Well, how loyal you are, so loyal that you can sacrifice yourself for them. Oh, I love your friendship, you can even die for your friends. Too stupid, I will never do it. However, you will change your mind after the tortures,” Maleficent said. She started to torture Emma again, using her fire magic to burn Emma. Emma moaned with pain before losing consciousness.

“Stop!” Lewis yelled. “You wicked witch! Stop doing that to Emma!” He tried to attack the witch but she turned him into stone.

“Well, don’t you dare to defeat me or come to rescue her.” The witch discovered that we were here and mocked, “You are tall but useless.”

“There was a secret passage behind the witch. On the other side of the passage, there was a well. I will distract her, you go and get some water,” Prospero whispered.

We referenced the Wizard of Oz. Maleficent was afraid of water. Therefore, we created a well so the main characters could defeat her.

I darted to the passage, which was too narrow and low for me to walk. I had to crawl to get into it. I started to miss myself as a human. I used my highest speed but I still moved as slow as a turtle, because of my gigantic body. When I finally arrived, I heard Prospero’s scream. It was a signal, and the witch found out that I was missing. My heart was beating faster and faster. I didn’t know if I could take the bucket out of the well before the witch found me. Fortunately, I did it. As I splashed water at Maleficent, she melted and only her
clothes and a bottle, on which was written “Drink Me”, were left.

I took the bottle and went back to my friends. Luckily, they were back to normal after Maleficent vanished.

“Finally, this selfish wicked witch was gone!” Emma cheered.

“Thank you, Emma. For not betraying us!” Prospero said.

“I believe you guys will do the same for me, I trust our friendship,” Emma smiled.

“Let’s discuss after we go back to our world. Let’s drink it. It is the bottle from Alice in Wonderland which can turn us back to normal size,” I pointed at the bottle and explained.

“Cheers, see you guys in reality!” We said, then we drank the potion together.

Then, I woke up in the morning and I discovered that I was five feet tall.

Everything was back to normal, perhaps that was a dream. I looked at the mirror and the reflection was me. I was short again, I looked like a tiny dwarf compared to Phoenix. The view outside was tall buildings and busy traffic.

“Artemis! Wake up! You are a lazy pig!” My mum shouted. It was time for school.

When I was on my way to school, I saw somebody who was as tall as a half giant. This time, I didn’t stare at him rudely like before because I understood his feelings. Then, I went to school and found my best friends. I told them I visited the Merlin Empire in my dream. Do you know what they said? They said that wasn’t a dream. They had been to the Empire too.

I suggested we could write today’s experience into our novel. It would be much more interesting than our original story. Now, we are working on it. Don’t worry diary, I will let you see it at the first moment after we finish it! However, I definitely don’t want to visit the Merlin Empire again! I don’t want to meet Maleficent again, because I was scared to death!
My Wonderland
3E Chloe Ng

“Get up kid! Are you ok?” said a stranger with a wrinkly face and a long grey beard.

I was woken by a wobbly, husky voice. “Where am I? No, where is here?” I thought.

“Hello?” the old man asked,

“Can you hear me?”

I was pulled back to reality. “Yes, sure,” I answered,

“Where is here?” I had no idea where I had been nor what I had done the day before.

“Here is Wonderland,” said the old man softly, “which you created with your mind.”

I was totally shocked. To be honest, I was quite confused. What was he talking about? Wonderland? Was I daydreaming during class?

The old man seemed to notice my puzzlement. “It might be unreal for you,” he said kindly,

“But it’s true!” I was speechless.

“Oh, let me introduce myself;” he said in delight,

“My name is Jones, and I will lead you to complete your missions. You can return to your place then.”

“What are the tasks?” I asked anxiously,

“I need to finish them in a hurry. My mum is waiting for me.”

“Let’s go!” said Jones,

“It’ll probably be an unforgettable adventure for you.”
After that, Jones summoned a unicorn. Both of us sat down on its back. Suddenly, the unicorn spread its pair of wings and flew through the sky. I was astonished because of the spectacular view of “my Wonderland”. How brilliant it was!

Delivering us to the volcano, the unicorn left.

Jones said, “It’s the only task I assign. We’ll finish it together. But please take good care of yourself.” Jones told me with a dignified face.

“Ok, you too.” I answered in short, as I was so frightened.

We went into the entrance together, without knowing only one could come out.

“It’ll be alright, right?” I don’t know why I have a bad feeling about this. Suddenly, I tripped on a small stone.

“Be careful!” Jones shouted,

“I’ve told you, to take care of yourself! I cannot save you if you keep behaving stupidly.”

I was sorry and a bit mad. I felt wronged. Anyway, we kept walking. Finally, we arrived at the top.

“What are we going to do?” I asked. There was nothing except a bit of lava.

Unexpectedly, there was an earthquake. Jones and I held each other to keep our balance. Meanwhile, a dragon burning with fire broke through the ground and rushed to Jones. Jones took out his sword and fought with it.

That time, my memory recalled that Jones gave me a pack of powder and a key. He warned me not to take it out except if I was in danger. “So, is it the right time now?” I thought.

I inverted the gold powder on my body. Why was my body buoyant? I flew into sky just like how the unicorn did. Watching their fight, I was thinking how to help Jones and defeat
the dragon.

I flew around the dragon’s body without being discovered. I found a hole in a key shape. I immediately took out the key Jones gave me and put it in the fitted hole.

Meanwhile, the dragon was fighting with Jones. It suddenly stopped and looked back.

Oh no! I was discovered! I flew away immediately but it kept chasing me. When the dragon opened its mouth and tried to eat me, Jones stood in front of the dragon.

The dragon ate him! I was scared but I kept myself calm and flew to its back and put in the key. The dragon stopped moving.

I was safe. However, Jones has never been back since.

Suddenly, my mum was waking me up. I opened my eyes and saw some familiar stuff, my light, my table, my bed and my room.

“Is it a dream?” I struggled. I sat on my chair and checked my to-do list,

“Short story writing competition.” I immediately took out my pen and dropped down the amazing and yet frightening adventure in My Wonderland.
Powerman!
3E Christopher Wong

12th October, 2000

Dear Diary,

I woke up this morning and discovered I was eight feet tall. Yes, you heard it all right, eight feet tall. Not tall enough to break the world record, but nonetheless eight feet tall. (A little backstory, yesterday was my birthday and I wished for superpowers. Well? I’m just as confused as you are right now.)

I discovered this shocking matter when I first unfolded my eyes. I felt my feet dangling in the air, surpassing the dimensions of my bed. I immediately jumped, of course. What is this monstrosity? I thought to myself. I rolled over my bed and fell to the ground. The moment I put away my warm cuddly blanket I realized the fact that I was of bizarre height. To make matters worse, I couldn’t even stand straight. My head would hit the ceiling had I done that. I know most of you would scream for your mother the moment this happened, yet I was clever enough not to do so. Humans, by nature, are xenophobic and my mother demonstrates this perfectly. If I show my current state to my mother, animal control would arrive in less than five minutes. To make sure she leaves me alone, I blasted K-pop music as loud as my speakers could to divert my mother’s attention to my sister.

The longer I remain in public, the higher the chances of me getting caught, therefore I darted into the bathroom and locked the door. Even thought I am eight feet tall, there are still some morning routines that must commence. I reached for my tiny toothbrush and fruit flavoured toothpaste, but with no avail. I snapped the toothpaste in half without intention and squirted toothpaste all over the sink by accident. It seems, that my wish has come true!

I can’t believe it! This is all coming true! I crept out of the bathroom and made sure not to make a sound and snuck into my room. I pulled out the radio tuned to the police channel and listened carefully, just as Spiderman always kept his radio close. In my mind, I was a superhero.

Two hours passed and nothing popped on the radio.
By the time something appeared, it had been noon already and I was famished. No doubt, I couldn’t ask my mother to make me food, I did not wish to be sent away and put down. However, I was desperate for food. I grabbed my hoodie to conceal my identity and decided to leap from the 22nd floor from the balcony and find food to calm my growling stomach. Surprisingly, I landed with a smooth somersault and got back up to my feet.

Yet another superpower!

“Who is this person?”
“What is wrong with him?”
“He must be at least eight feet tall!”
“Did he just fall from the sky?”

Murmuring began and people were looking at me. Great! My first fan meeting! I thought I was going to become a celebrity then, but I was wrong.

“I am Powerman, the new superhero in town! I have been sent to protect you from oncoming dangers. Fear not, as Powerman is here!”

There were a few moments of silence, and then laughter broke out.

“Really? A name like Powerman? Did your grandma suggest it?”
“Just another delusional kid playing make-belief. I bet he hasn’t even finished school!”

It went on for ages.

“What’s so funny? I have real powers!” I could barely breathe in the stuffed crowd. The laughter of the crowd echoed in my head like a ferocious stream of wind howling in a hollow cave. I couldn’t stand it and I took off.

Yet another superpower.

I was going to protect them, yet they think that I’m an eight feet freak. In a matter of seconds, I was back in my room. I snatched an issue of Powerman: Hero of the Earth and
flipped through the comic. A sudden inch of pain ran across my fingers. I cut myself on the paper. I began reading a particular page.

It read, “to become a hero, you must overcome your fears. Start by overcoming yourself and your powers. You will soon understand that these are gifts, not curses.”

I knew I had to do something.

I walked out the parlour and confronted my mother. She was watching her favourite television programme, and was treating herself with a bag of snacks.

“Mom, you’ll support me all the way, right?”
“I will, with all my heart and soul.”

That was what I needed to hear. Even though she barely took her eyes off the TV, I understood and felt her kindness and warmth.

Back in my room, the waves were erupting from the radio, I could barely make out the words: “robbery” and “hostages” before I flew out of my room at maximal speed and reached the local bank in less than a minute.

“It’s a bird!”
“No, it’s a plane!”
“It’s Powerman!”

“SHUT UP AND GET DOWN!!!”
“THE KEY! THE KEY TO THE VAULT!”
“WHERE IS IT!”

Terror arose in the atmosphere. Screams were heard and gunshots fired. A thug was pointing his gun at an elderly woman, threatening her to give him the key to the bank vault when all of a sudden, a figurine stormed through the blast doors and knocked the thug into the air.
(Insert heroic music please)

“Okay, I can make out twelve criminals, let’s do this.”

I darted towards the criminals one by one, disarming them before they even knew what hit them. Nonetheless, this is my first day acquiring my powers, and I did not have full control over them. I lost my balance and crashed face first into a wall, falling on my back. I got back up to the view of two thugs pointing their firearms at me, and I was stupefied by this horrific scene.

“So long, hero.”

Hero.

I was a hero.

I refuse to go down without a fight!

I shut my eyes as hard as I could, telling myself over and over again that I was indestructible, or at least my willpower was indestructible!

A deafening band was heard, yet I didn’t feel anything. Did he miss? Oh no, he didn’t. There was a 9mm bullet hole in my favourite hoodie!

“Oh...”

I threw my arms upwards and leapt into the air with all my might, landing a gargantuan punch onto both their skulls. As I looked back at them, blood trickled from their nostrils and they gasped for air desperately.

“What are you? What do you want from us?”

“Me? I’m a hero, and I wanted justice to be served!” I exclaimed as I landed a final punch which knocked them unconscious.
I lifted the gates for the citizens to escape the hostage situation, then I exited the haul of mess myself and was immediately greeted by the press.

“Oh my, is that a bullet hole?“
“Do you have any thought about stopping a heist and saving dozens of lives?”
“What are your powers?”

This was my second fan meeting, but this time I’m not getting laughed at. This time, I’ve proven myself worth of my gifts!

“What is your name, sir?”

I hesitated. I needed a symbol for what I’ve done today. A symbol for what I will do in the future. I have overcome my fears and succeeded in facing myself!

“My name is...”

To be continued...

(dramatic outro music please)

Today was amazing. I have transformed from a messy teenager into a responsible man, I have proven myself worthy of this life. This will be my mission. I will serve and protect the people of this city!

Sincerely,
Powerman
War Journals, 1943
3E Christopher Wong

15th April, 1943

In five days, it will be the Adolf Hitler's birthday. Our platoon was given a special mission that day. We were to infiltrate Berlin and assassinate Hitler on the said day. Our commanding officer gave us specific orders to kill and extract. We were to bring back Hitler’s notebook and his plans for the future.

“Our contact in the Nazi party tells us that Hitler keeps a handy notebook that contains crucial information regarding his tactics and battle plans. Keep your heads cool and remember the mission.”

16th April, 1943

We had arrived in Berlin. Dropped from the transport vehicle, we parachuted our way into German territory, raided a local farm and killed the residents. We stripped them of their clothes and put on our disguises as German potato farmers. There was no hesitation to carry out the kill order given by the commander. Even though they were innocent scapegoats, we were trained to resist the restraint of sympathy. Hence the 14th platoon was known for its ruthless, aggressive executions. After all, taking a few lives for the salvation of thousands more to be an inevitable bargain for such a time of international chaos.

17th April, 1943

A Nazi came to look for a suitable bomb shelter location. He inspected the barn and gave a few comments about it. Fortunately, he didn’t notice the bodies we hid under the Nazi flag. How close but how fortunate we had been.
18th April, 1943

Today, a young boy from the neighbourhood came to purchase some potatoes from the farm. He gave us ten dollars in exchange of ten potatoes, which is far below the average price. However, I still gave it to him as the potatoes didn’t belong to us. Citizens of Germany were starving, just like in France. The government increased taxes to fund the manufacture of guns and ships, their own interests. Though my family was not affected as the house promised that there would be tax reduction for fellow soldiers. A typical tactic of getting more and more people into war together with propaganda. In this trying time, everyone is suffering.

Wouldn’t it be nice if there was no war? That I could just go home and give my wife and kids a big hug? Wars separate families and ruin relationships. Some may think that dying for their country is an honour. For me? Putting my family at risk is definitely not an option. Why am I here though? I should not be putting this on my mind. This will only distract me from the mission. That’s right! The mission is the only important thing now!

19th April, 1943

We left the farm at dawn and set off to the Hitler’s mansion, which is located in Central Berlin. We put on farmers’ clothing and put our firearms in gunnysacks. As we walked through Main street, we saw a stream of homeless men lying along the pavement. I took a glimpse of a child, not older than the age of ten. He had dirt across his face. Although the dirt covered most of his cheeks, I could still see the despair and pain hidden underneath the invisible cage in which he trapped his own soul within. What does he crave? Honour? Yet, right now he is powerless, and helpless. He is of course, not of age to join the battle in the frontline, for he would’ve been a weak link if he did. His love for the Führer was unwavering, as seen by the copy of Mein Kampf in his hands. To me, it seemed that he had given up everything to acquire this piece of literature. He had nothing - no toys, no food, no family. All he had was this book. Can the book give him anything? I doubt the boy could even read. Why would anyone give their all to support a tyrant? Perhaps it is national pride playing its detoxicating melody. The tune of arrogance, the hypnotic theme of belief that one race is superior to the other. What have we evolved into?
20th April, 1943

We left the motel at four in the morning and began our trek to the mansion. We wore disguises of Nazi officers. The people on the streets saluted and chanted the infamous “Heil Hitler!” motto. Today was the birthday of the Führer and he decided to have a party at where he lived. A perfect opportunity for us to arrive as fellow officers and wish him a happy birthday.

We were specifically trained in espionage, and therefore were naturals at remaining calm. We looked cool, but reticently trembled inside. We were going to save our country, and to end the war! Yet being pessimistic, one wrong move could tilt the balance and level the entire operation, thus alerting Hitler’s awareness and infuriating the entire German race.

Our platoon of ten people was divided into five groups of two. Each group with different tasks to manage. We had brought two boxes with us, in each were a clock and a tiny bottle of liquor. We had hidden the parts of a gun inside the clock and the ammunition in the bottle in order to pass security.

We later excused ourselves to the washroom to assemble the weapon.

We approached Hitler’s office with the two hefty boxes, walking side by side and greeted all German officers that walked past us. One, in particular looked at us and questioned, “Haven’t I seen you before?” I conversed with him in fluent German, explaining that I was in charge of a battalion in the front line, received orders to head back to headquarters for the gargantuan event of the birthday of our great Führer.

We reached the office of Hitler himself and politely knocked on the door. A guttural and croaky voice greeted us, “Enter.”

Hitler was on his desk; his hair was chaotic and eyes were half open. His writing hand had a 1942 parker limited edition scribbling across his notorious notebook. He was sweating uncontrollably and trembling. Was he tired, or scared? Perhaps he sensed that his death was near. Yet, for a man like Hitler, nobody would have believed that he feared anything. His success in military occupation was inarguably immeasurable. He brought Germany back to
its feet entirely alone. This is a demigod, right here, in front of me. I stepped up and tried to get a peek of his writing, but to no avail. In less than a millisecond he shot me a distinctive look and threw his pen on the floor. Even in such an unhealthy state he was still cautious of his privacy. I apologised and presented the two boxes.

In the first one was the clock. He held it in hand and said coldly, “What a futile assassination attempt.”

I was paralyzed by this sudden bolt of shock.

“The hands were twitching, which suggests that some compartments were taken out. Is it a bomb? Or did you hide something in the clock and take it out?”

My instinct was to pull the gun immediately but Hitler ceased my ideas with a simple flourish and a jab to the gut. I ached and fell to my knees, my comrade rushed to my side but was shot in the chest instantaneously with the pistol I had dropped on the ground.

“Next time, hide your weapon better. Try swallowing it without it going off inside your stomach!” he mocked.

I was swiftly flanked by a dozen other Nazis, each had a gun in their hand. Among them was the officer who I passed in the hallway. “I don’t suppose you remember me? I inspected your barn, moron!” He laughed in a menacing tone. Right after that, a gunshot soared through the air. I clutched my leg in gasp of air. It was excruciating.

The sharp slash across my leg had spread to my entire body in a matter of seconds. I was cramping over and over. I felt my blood vessels burst all over my limbs. My brain swelled and began to heat up.

“He is to be executed tomorrow morning. Let everyone know the consequences of offending my privacy.”

“Yes, Führer.”
In less than the blink of an eye, rapid fire deafened the voices of the Germans. It was my platoon coming to the rescue! I was impressed by their accurate deduction that I was in trouble. Four Germans collapsed to the floor, the rest grouped up around Hitler as a means to protect him from the speeding pellets. The flock of Nazis retreated from the corridor and back into Hitler’s office for cover.

“We need to kill him, now!” My comrade exclaimed moments before he was brutally shot to death.

I was immobilised and therefore had to crawl my way out of the crossfire. The medic tended to me while the others continued to suppress fire on the Nazis.

“Get him out of here, now!” The medic dragged me from the hallway and threw me over the stairs. I heard another scream but dared not to turn around. I set all of my mind to crawling to safety, I was determined to survive. I reached the front gate. There, two platoon members were waiting. They grabbed me and hauled me into the backseat, instantly applying pressure to my wound and stabilize my blood loss.

I passed out when I received an injection or morphine.

I was back in the barn when I woke up, with the two soldiers who aided me in my escape.

“Where are the others?”

“They didn’t make it.”

“I’m sorry.”

“It’s not your fault. Our contact in the party betrayed us. He warned Hitler of the assassination beforehand. Now that Hitler knows that the French Government had tried to assassinate him, he will increase his efforts to conquer our motherland. We have endangered our own country even further.”
We failed the mission miserably. We could not eliminate Hitler, nor could we retrieve his notebook.

I was speechless, we mourned our fallen brothers in silence.

That night I could not sleep. Flashbacks and recalls diminished my determination to rest. Whenever I shut my eyes the souls of my brother would haunt and torment me, accusing me that I could’ve done more. They were correct, as my thoughts were to flee the scene. I could not give my apologies, nor could I express through words how guilty and depressed I was to know that none of my brothers-in-arms survived brutal combat. It was not a skirmish, there was a war in my mind.

I came to the conclusion that I did not act for my country, I acted for myself. The same applies to war. When without fear, people may still accomplish selfless deeds to impress others or make themselves feel important, yet in the face of bloodshed, humans will do anything to ensure their own survival. Selfishness was part of humanity afterall.

21st April, 1943

I return home from a failed assassination attempt. However, I could not tell anyone heroic stories of the heroes who killed Hitler and ended the war, and I certainly could not tell them how I fled the scene like a coward. For my own reputation, for my own consciousness.

I am just a tired veteran who wants to stay quiet for the rest of his life.

We are at war.
You Can Do It, Mike!

3E Charlotte Chan

Dear Mike,

It’s lovely to hear from you. Thanks for your letter. I’m deeply saddened by your recent experience and I feel really sorry for you. I understand that you may feel really helpless and puzzled right now, but don’t give up, I’m here to assist you with all my support.

Undoubtedly, you had put a lot of effort into your English book report. However, you had chosen the wrong approach as you should not have copied and pasted the information from the Internet. This could be seen as a serious wrongdoing; if it is a confirmed case of plagiarism, it will be taken as a crime and one can be charged and fined. Also, do not burn the midnight oil. This may probably be the main reason that Mr. Smith had criticized you for being lazy. To err is human. so please don’t feel disheartened. Let me give you some advice to improve your studies.

I understand that you copied information from the Internet to your English book report because you just wanted to write a better book report. In fact, this is just directly transferring “other’s report” into your report. Let me explain it to you with my own experience:

Two years ago, I was like you, thinking that copying useful information and well-written sentences would polish up my report. I anticipated that my marks would get higher and higher. On the contrary, it was getting lower and lower. I was as puzzled as you are now at that time. I soon figured out that copying will only lower my marks. What teachers want to see is originality - a report whose ideas inside are yours, not including anybody else’s. Just be creative! You can do it! I’m sure.

Having been criticized for being lazy while you had already tried your best is really dejecting. However, the more you’re criticized, the less you should be depressed. What you should do now is to work harder to prove to your teacher that you are not lazy. Get rid of your vices and prepare beforehand. I believe that someday, Mr. Smith will notice your hard work.

Nothing should dampen your enthusiasm. Keep improving. I know that you can overcome the hurdles. I am convinced that my advice can help you remedy your mistakes. Keep me updated when there is more coming up!

Best wishes,

Chris
An Alien Encounter on a Bus

3F Allie Wong

Have you ever met an alien? I did, yesterday morning on the way to school. There I was sitting on the bus when a lightning bolt struck in front of it. The weather suddenly changed. Lots of big thick grey clouds appeared. The sky turned dark and it started thundering. My friend, Chris, and I thought that it was only a thunderstorm but what happened next shocked us. There was a beam of green light from the sky. When I saw that, my jaw dropped.

“Chris! What’s that?” I cried with a shaking voice.

Before Chris was able to reply, an alien slowly landed on the ground. The alien was tall and thin. It was green and yellow in colour. It looked slimy too. It walked onto the bus and slowly walked towards me, who was sitting at the far end of the bus. Meanwhile, all other passengers escaped from the bus.

“Leave before the alien takes you away, Allie,” said Chris while taking off his seatbelt.

I nodded and tried to take off my seatbelt, too. However, it was stuck and I couldn’t take it off. Chris was about to leave the bus but he turned back.

“Just leave me,” I tried to calm down a bit. “I will get out in a second.”

However, Chris didn’t listen to what I said. He rushed back to me and tried to help me with the seatbelt.

“I’m not going to leave you in this dangerous place,” said Chris. “Trust me, I will get you out.”

The alien was approaching. Chris and I were both in danger. At least Chris would be safe if he left me and escaped. Suddenly, I found that two of my classmates still hadn’t left the bus either. We had chatted a lot in class and I thought that I might ask them for help.

“My seatbelt is stuck, can you help me...” before I finished speaking, they left the bus without listening, as if they didn’t know me.
Chris kept helping me to take off the seatbelt. Time was running short. There were only a few steps before the alien would get to me. Chris didn’t give up. The alien reached out its arms to me. I closed my eyes. At the last moment, the seatbelt was finally released. Chris turned around and hit the alien with his schoolbag. The alien stopped moving and Chris held my hand and we rushed out of the bus.

“I’ve told you that I would get you out,” Chris smiled, “We are friends, aren’t we?”

“Of course, my friend. Thanks for saving me,” I replied.

The alien was caught by the authorities in the end. Everything was back to normal. I was glad that Chris and I had become friends. A friend in need is a friend indeed. Chris saved me when I was in danger. I was touched and felt grateful for having an amazing friend.
Eight Feet and the Cursed Archeologist

3F Dickson Wong

23rd July 2035

I woke up this morning and discovered that I was eight feet tall. This was totally absurd! I went from a five-feet tall little boy to an eight-foot giant! Despite having lots of different challenges to be a giant, I experienced something exciting and totally new.

The morning started with a scream of me accidentally hitting my head against the ceiling. The next thing I knew is I was far too tall from my usual height. Without hesitation, I rushed to my bathroom and looked at the mirror: indeed I was taller, but I became thinner as if someone stretched me. I was afraid that I couldn’t blend in with society and everyone would look at me as if they were looking at an exhibit.

As I was hesitating, my phone rang. It was my boss dialing in. I then looked at the clock. It was 11:30 am. I had overslept! “Ben!” My boss roared through the phone, “Mr. Chan has arrived and waited for you for half an hour! Come back immediately or you are fired!”

At that moment, I had no choice but to go out and face society where everyone looks at you in a strange way. I had my brunch, put on my clothes which, magically, still fits, and hopped on my car, rushing back to the Nano Inc. Headquarters, where I work and spend most of my day.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Chan. I had some emergencies to deal with. Sorry for the inconvenience.”

“Never mind. I had time.” Mr. Chan replied with a strange look, perplexed by the sudden change in my height.

“Shall we start then?”

Fortunate for me, Mr. Chan was patient, or else I’d be doomed. After the meeting, I called on myself with the R&D workers, as they were in charge of the most recent prototype of the company -- The Enlarger, which can resize things as if it was stretched. I suspected that my sudden height increase was related to that machine as I went to inspect the R&D department a few days ago.
“Up to this point, there are no signs of the enlargement rays leaking out of the device,” said John, the head scientist of the R&D, “but security reports show that last night a mysterious figure appeared in the Lab area.”

“Maybe they are just spies from other companies, hoping to steal the data of our Nano Chip”, John added.

After the meeting was dismissed, the R&D staff left immediately, as if I were a mutant that would devour them. I left behind for a while, thinking about what John said, and I came up with the conclusion of the figure was definitely much more than an ordinary spy.

I took early leave from my work, saying that I felt a bit dizzy. In fact, I was actually dizzy due to all the mysteries. I went home and reorganized my mind, hoping to find some clues. I generalized a few facts after a lot of deductions. 1. When I am outdoors, no one is surprised by my “mutation”. 2. I was injected with anesthetic, as I found syringe that was left behind, and a bottle of anesthetic outside of my house, dropped in the bushes. Instead of making my mind clear, it confused me more. Who would do that? Why would they do that? I was confused. Very confused.

I looked outside, hoping to free myself from the confusing mystery for a while. Instead of a relaxing view of nature, my eyes saw something else. Something strange. A man was lying on a floating hologram frisbee, and the frisbee was flying towards the house next to mine.

I went next door courageously and knocked on the door. No one answered. I took out my master key and knowing that it was illegal, I broke into the house. I really wanted to check out what was happening.

The interior surprised me. The walls were made with a kind of white, rare alloy, with teal rays coming out in the gaps between segments of the wall. In the middle of the house, there was a box made with similar material to the walls, and a table next to it. The alloy that the house was made up with was so rare that our company, as the largest tech company in the world, could only produce a few grams of it every year. Where did the owner get that much that they could build with it?
The next thing I saw was the Enlarger on the table. I dialed John immediately to check if the Enlarger was still in place. It was missing. It went missing under many pairs of eyes of the R&D staff, and the sealed container for it was not opened.

I moved the lid of the coffin-like box next to the table, showing the inside of the box. There was a human-shaped mold, perfectly shaped for a normal human to lay inside. When I touched the mold, it extended and it was perfectly enough for me to lie in. I doubted if I should lie inside, but my instinct told me to do so.

When I lay in the box, it descended, revealing a basement underneath. The basement was equipped with advanced technology that as the manager of the largest tech company in the world, have never having dreamt of. Nano computers, holographic teleportation devices, self-controlled robots... everything you would see in science fiction, could be found here.

While I was amazed by all the advanced technology in the basement, a voice appeared out of nowhere.

“Get out of here or else...”

I had a hunch that this voice was related to my “mutation”, so I asked,

“Who are you? What are you plotting?”

“You don’t want to know this.” The voice seemed impatient.

I silenced.

“Maybe they have something they don’t want to tell,” I said to myself, “Don’t you want to know tho?”

I struggled on whether to ask them or leave it be. I decided to ask and I didn’t regret asking.
“I am Ewan and I am an archeologist and an Ancient Egypt expert. Until 10 years ago, I went through pyramids after pyramids, hoping to find raw materials for an astonishing paper. One day, I found a hidden entrance under the coffin of the great Pharoh, Khufu. It led to a room, full of technology that we humans dreamt of having. I kept it a secret and transferred those bit by bit to this basement. But my luck didn’t last long. I was hit by a curse. I couldn’t move and could only lie on a bed.”

“Thanks to the Ancient Egyptians, I lived by transferring my consciousness into this computer on the desk in front of you.”

I looked at the desk, and only barely saw the computer. I can’t imagine there was a human inside of that.

“Throughout the massive seas of data in this computer, I managed to find a way to break the computer with more advanced technology that the Egyptians couldn’t explain and was regarded as “the power of the Gods”. And that method is to make an eight-foot to break this computer.”

“But why? You are inside this and you will disappear along with it!”

“I have my body stored in a vacuum room, and I will transfer my consciousness back into the body first. The next problem back then was to find an eight-foot. Until one day, one of my hologram drones captured that your company was inventing an enlarging device, and I thought my time has come. I sneaked a drone carrying a robot into the Lab at night, and holo-teleported the device back here. Then through another robot, I used it on you.”

“I originally was going to use holographic camouflage on you so others wouldn’t be able to tell, but I couldn’t sneak the drones indoors. I also was going to lead you here through a drone, but you made it here before I sent the drone.”

“I saw a drone carrying a body, so I followed it and ended up here.”

“That was my body.”
After hearing the whole story, I agreed to help Ewan, but with one condition. “Can you join our company as a researcher afterwards? These technologies would help us for massive breakthroughs.”

“Sure.”

For the next hour, I set up the device to transfer his consciousness according to his voice command. After the setup, I placed the computer on the panel, and after a few moments, the body sprung up. I then smashed the computer on the floor, and it shattered into pieces.

After all of that, it was already midnight, but I still dialed my boss about this. We had an emergency meeting, and the CEO was so delighted when I showed him the photos. Then, he immediately hired Ewan, and promoted me to be the Head Manager. Also, I will have supplies of the new products that are going to be produced, and so as Ewan.

It was totally crazy today. I will never forget this day, although I would have to live as an eight-foot for the rest of my life since today. I never will.
I’m Sorry Society
3F Yasmin Wong

1st October 2020

Dear Diary,

I woke up this morning and discovered I was eight feet tall.

Staring at my reflection in the enormous mirror, not only did I find myself eight feet tall, the gorgeous tall slender feminine white figure staring back at me was unrecognisable, looking at her was like a dream that I couldn’t remember. I frowned, surprised that my throat suddenly felt tight but I just brushed it off. The only thing I could do is whisper, “Who in the world is she?” I stood for a moment in utter bewilderment. Then it clicked. Memories rushed back to me like a huge wave, drowning me in confusion. Before I woke up, I was Siri Wong, a five feet tall university student. After I woke up, I was... it couldn’t be... I was my favourite model, Iris Gnaw. I was instantly overwhelmed with confusion and questions. How did this happen? This must be a dream, but if it was, did I want to wake up from it? Suddenly, I heard a knock on my door as I slowly returned from my obnoxious questions.

“Come in!” I tried to sound polite but it came out as a yelp. The door swung open as a well-dressed young woman walked in, I guessed she was my manager.

“Just a quick reminder Iris, your photo shot starts 30 minutes later, please hurry up and get ready.” She said urgently but politely, calm and efficient.

I gave her a convincing nod.

She turned to leave but before the door closed, she added, “You look as gorgeous as ever Iris!” Then the door slammed shut, and with that, I got no choice but to go along with it.

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I got dressed in the most elegant clothes, the cloth was so smooth that it seemed to run through my fingers like water. During my majestic transformation, I found myself in a room packed with photographers.
“Good morning Iris!”
“Good luck today Iris!”
“You look gorgeous Iris!”
“Love how tall you are Iris!”

I knew these greetings weren’t for me, Siri, but for the super model, Iris. However, I had never felt so good about myself and had never felt such strong sense of love and belonging. If this was a dream, I had no intention of waking up from it. Being the tallest person in the room was amazing, I could see further and higher than I ever could! Being a super model meant I won a genetic lottery and was the recipient of a legacy. A legacy of health, youth and symmetry which people were biologically programmed to admire. Those were basically the definition of beauty and being Iris was great! I posed in front of cameras and lights. Even though the photographers somehow forced me to pose in uncomfortable positions, I was feeling genuine happiness that I didn’t even care. After a long day, the paradise like photo shot was over and I received the end photographs. My feeling of self-worth was erased by the photographs. The person in these photographs wasn’t Iris, instead she was a goddess, much more than Iris could ever be. As expected all the raw photos were retouched, they weren’t photos of me, they were constructions by a group of professionals, like the hairstylists, makeup artists, photographers, stylists, pre-production and post production teams. I pasted a smile around my face and called it a day, hiding my first bit of insecurity. The fresh insecurity hit like a punch to the gut.

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On my way home, I came across a store filled with elegant dresses. I walked in gracefully as if in a trance, mesmerised by the beauty of the dresses. The shop owner greeted me with a sense of respect and friendliness. As I chose a dress and brought it to the counter, I realised I don’t have enough money and the shop owner gave me the dress for free. I questioned her unusual action but accepted it and thanked her at last. I felt lucky and grateful but in the back of my mind I knew something was off. I found my car and drove home in silence. I was
a horrible driver and accidentally ran a red and got pulled over by an officer. My blood drummed in my veins but all it took was a “Sorry officer” and I was on my way. No this wasn’t right, I was treated above average because of how I look instead of who I am. Image is powerful but also superficial. There was very little that we can do to transform how we look but our looks had a huge impact on our lives. I remembered doing some research for my homework a while ago. Data said in 2012, 140,000 teenagers in New York were stopped, 86% of them were young black men. For them it wasn’t a “will they get stop” but a “when” and “how many times”. No this definitely wasn’t right. I felt disgusted by accepting the free dress and not getting a ticket for running a red on the road. However, at the same time, I was one of the biggest beneficiaries of gender and racial oppression so why was I complaining? My thoughts intruded, strangling me. Despite the sweltering heat in the car, these uncomfortable ideas had chilled me to the bones, leaving me disoriented and insecure as I drove wearily back home. I turned to look just in time to see the rain started falling outside, as if the sky had finally decided to weep for the inequality in our society.

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I arrived back home and immediately confronted my manager about my questions, including how I was in Iris’s body. My manager listened patiently with a poker face.

At last, I asked my last question, “Why did Iris become a model? Being a model is happy because everyone treats me nice and admires my beauty, but as Spider-Man’s uncle said, ‘With great power comes with great responsibility.’ Being a model also means being the most physically insecure women on the planet. ‘If teardrops could be bottled, there’d be swimming pools filled by models.’ Iris can be anything else, why be a model?”

Suddenly, it was as if a supernatural wind had swept through and sucked out all the comfort.
My manager let out a sigh and said in a low tone, “I told her not to.”

I was confused for a second.

“And she didn’t listen?”

She looked up and stared into my eyes, her expression wrought with Iris’ mysterious past.

“She craved happiness more than anything. She thought if she were taller and skinnier, she would be happy and fabulous.”

“Was she? Was she happy?” I asked curiously. I could hear my manager breathing slowly and deliberately, as if somehow trying to filter her sadness.

“She was high over heels for a while, she was finally at peace with her inner self. However, her looks and the free stuff she got freaked her out over time, she became insecure and depressed all over again,” answered my manager in a sad voice.

I continued my questions, “Then why didn’t you stop her from being a model?”

At these words, a deathly pallor spread over my manager’s face, it was full of guilt and regret, “Because I trusted her! I trusted her that she would finally be happy about herself but she didn’t! YOU didn’t!”

You didn’t? I didn’t? Normally I existed in a state of deep calm, in harmony with the world around me. But now, very suddenly, nothing made sense.
My manager saw the confusion on my face and declared, sounding more annoyed than concerned, “Yeah, you. Can’t you see it already! You are Iris, Iris is you. Iris Gnow spelled backward is Siri Wong. It’s always you. After university, you were depressed as hell and I offered a helping hand. I found a surgery doctor and you did plastic surgery. Happy model Iris was born and after a while depressed model Iris was back. The only way to get you happy again was... was for you to eat the forgetting pill. Start the journey of being a super model all over again until you found out the truth. Then eat the pill and the cycle begins.”

While I was listening, my whole body felt like it was electrocuted as the shock settled in. My nerves couldn’t process more than that.

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I was left alone in my room with my manager’s voice echoing for a long moment in my ears before dropping like a brick to the pit of her stomach. The truth rushed in, wrapping a frosty grip around me. In front of me was the pill. The restart button. There was no way I was going to be a model all over again. But at the same time, I had to believe there was a world out there for me. I had to believe my actions matter in this world. I wanted to feel love and respect. We all needed to feel love once in a while, I was no different. We all felt more comfortable acknowledging the power of image in our perceived successes and failures, I was no different. We all lied to ourselves to feel happy, I was no different. I rather be beautiful and depressed than ugly and depressed. “No one is born ugly, we’re just born in a judgemental society.” Lies could overlap society’s judgement in this case. Suddenly, a spark of determination ignited within me, craving for happiness and love.

Am I selfish? Yes.

Should I eat the pill? No.
But I was human so did I care? No.

Was I willing to lie to myself to be happy? Yes. My mood started to lift as I let the cycle begin.

2nd October 2020

Dear Diary,

I woke up this morning and discovered I was eight feet tall...
The Truth Behind the Scary Monster

3F Yanki Fan

Have you ever met an alien? Well, I did, yesterday morning on the way to school. There I was sitting on the bus when I heard a loud voice. This seemed to be a heavy object hitting the ground. Everyone on the bus was shocked because of this loud voice. I stuck my head out of the window to see what had happened. I was surprised when I saw there was a broken spaceship on a vacant ground. It was huge and cool. In addition, the ground was damaged. After I had seen this, I realised that the loud sound had been made by the spaceship when it had hit the ground.

Luckily no one was there so no one was hurt. The people on the street were scared and stayed away from the spaceship. Some people on the bus phoned 999 to call the police. A few moments later, a weird object came out from the spaceship. Its whole body was grey and it had a huge body. It had four eyes and it looked ugly and scary. Was it an alien? I couldn’t believe my eyes. Some people screamed and shouted outside. They ran away. The scene turned into chaos.

The alien’s face looked so confused and scared. I could see that he had wounds on his body. I thought he had been injured when he fell to the ground. It was in complete chaos when the police arrived. There were six police cars in total. The policemen told us to stay on the bus and evacuated people outside.

The alien was huge so the policemen couldn’t get closer to him easily. But he looked like he was not intended to attack the people. He still looked confused and seemed that he didn’t know where he was. The people on the bus were watching this scene and it was like a movie. “Does this alien want to damage the earth?” A child said to his mum frighteningly.

The policemen surrounded the alien and didn’t let him run away. He felt wrong and tried to run away. He couldn’t run away from this place because there were too many policemen. He tried to talk to them but no one could understand his language. He gave up running away and was handcuffed by the policemen. The people in the bus clapped their hands and cheered.

When the policemen were taking him away, the alien broke his handcuff suddenly. The policemen tried to catch him but he used a strange force to get rid of them. Everyone at the scene was frightened. He ran away and no one could stop him. The policemen kept chasing
him but the alien ran so fast! It wasn’t a speed of a normal person. He went to the entrance of a bank. Some people were scared of what he would steal the money from the bank. The policemen shouted at him and tried to stop him.

A few moments later, the alien caught a man. People were scared that he would be hurt by the alien, but no one could stop him! After that, the alien took something out from the man’s bag. Everyone was shocked. He took out a handful of money from his bag. The policemen realised that the man had stolen the money from the bank. I couldn’t believe what I had seen.

Finally, I understood that he was a nice alien. He ran away from the policemen when he saw someone was stealing things in the bank from a distance. The man stole things in the chaos. When the alien ran to stop him, he didn’t damage anything or hurt anyone. The people around sighed. This case was reported in the news. I told my classmates that I was there. They thought it was cool to see this. But no one knew what happened to the alien afterwards. After the policemen had handcuffed the man, the sky was filled with mist so we couldn’t see anything. When the mist had gone, the alien and his spaceship disappeared too.

From then on, I have learnt that we can’t judge people by their appearances. We should respect everyone. Even though some people look scary, they may not be a bad guy. Even aliens, they may also have their friendly sides too.
I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:13
The Black Dog

4A Christine Lai

I have lived for more than 27 years through ups and downs, laughter and tears. There’s always a silver lining. The sky always paints with light blue and some layers of white.

When I was much younger, I loved hanging out with my elder brother – Eden in this comfortable season - autumn. I hated staying at home as my conventional parents held prejudice against girls and I was treated disdainfully and, at times, elusively. As close as a park in my neighbourhood or as far out as a country park which was 20 minutes away from my home - No matter how I feel, there’s always a place to go within walking distance. I could have spent hours shuffling, kicking, whooping with the golden brown fallen leaves at my nearby park. I could also re-enact the opening scene of “The Sound of Music” with him by twirling on the mountain top as the theme tune. “I go to the hills when my heart is lonely...” still echoed in my mind. These were simply the best entertainments for me.

My brother was always being treated favourably, they listened to him and gave him whatever he wanted. But for me... they treated me as in a patriarchal family penetrating with gender stereotypes. I felt fretful and melancholy all the time. My parents loved to bring my brother travelling everywhere, London and San Francisco, to name but a few. I could just stay at home with my grandpa. I asked them whether I could have the journey with them, they just scolded me. I just wished to have a circumnavigate. But they never go on an excursion with me. At school, my friends always asked me whether I was born a singleton girl or not. “I have an older brother, but he is never a brother to me. He means nothing in my life,” I replied sourly. “He will never be my sibling,” I muttered.

My brother had to achieve perfect grades as my parents forced him to be a doctor after graduation, so he could acquire a high salary job and have a perfect rank on the ladder in the society. They always compared our academic results and reproached me as they thought that I was not paying enough attention to my study. But after the examination, he failed to get the chance to study in universities. At last, my brother chose to rent his own apartment and lived in his own place. My mother furnished him with some living expenses but he spurned.

“I finally have my own place without him.”
“Yah. Take your own place. No more cramming for space among us.”
“Don’t stress yourself too much.”
“Uh huh. Don’t start to invest in your occupation being a full time NEET huh...” I was ridiculed.

One day when I walked past a pedestrian subway, I saw him sitting on the floor with some filthy, nasty, seedy clothes. “What a horribly besmirched place to live...” I waved to him. He laughed hollowly. I found him reading a newspaper with a page giving out vacancies. “Can I help you...beggar...?” I satirised. “No thanks...” Then I left.

After a few days, I meandered along the Salisbury Road with vastly crowded people. I went to the Peninsula Hotel as I needed to have a gathering with my friends. But when I arrived at the gate of the Hotel, a car raced past, tousling my hair.

“Vroom, vroom...”
I was astounded by the rumbling of a sports car’s thunder. I looked at the sports car, it looked fabulous...exhilarating, harmonious, symphonic... I cannot even find a word to describe how racy the car is... “Is that a Porsche 911 Carrera? It looks protruded.” said Emma - my bestie.

“Hi, my sis...”
“Hi Eden...” I stammered, in my trembling voice. “How could he drive such an expensive sports car... it’s implausible...”
“Nice to meet you! Are you my sister’s friend? I am Eden, an entrepreneur,” he smiled.
“An entrepreneur?!”

I grabbed his hand and I found that he had a new tattoo which was a black dog on his hand. I asked “Why you...”

“We’ll talk about this later. I am busy with my job now,” he gave me his business card. “Call me if you want.” Then he left us. I glanced at the card. “Flex Company. What does it for?” It was still a question mark for me.

After the gathering, I searched the company. “Flex Company, a company provides different opportunities for people who have mental health problems to explore themselves with suitable workshops.” That’s good. But why was there a tattoo on his hand? He hated people putting tattoos. Then I called him.
“Hey, are you alright?”
“Yah. Quite good. You?”
“Finding some time to earn money and pay the bank loan for daddy.”
“He borrowed money from the bank for gamblings.”
“Okay. Are you studying in the university?”
“Nope. I don’t have money to study.”
“Uh huh. I am busy now. Talk later.”
“Bye.”

After a few days, I found he had transferred some money to my bank account. I called him many times afterwards but no one replied. I thought maybe he was busy. “Ling ling ling.” Emma called me.

“Yes please.”
“Watch the news now. You brother has just committed suicide.”
“What?!”
“The entrepreneur of the Flex Company - Eden Lam committed suicide this morning.”

I cut the phone and rushed to the hospital he was sent to. “Why will he be like that?” I shouted with my broken-heartedness.

“Actually, he has been our client for a long time as he is suffering depression. He wished to give you love and care but he failed. He doesn’t want you to be stressed as you have been agonised sexism for a long time at home. He has found the lawyer already. You will get what he wished to give you,” explained the nurse.

There was a tightening of my throat and a short intake of breath. Gut-wrenching sobs that tore through my chest. My body wracked with an onslaught of sobs and tears. My eyes bled with pain.

“You should have seen his hand with the tattoo - The Black Dog.”
“Yes. What does it mean?”
“Depression.”
Too late.
“Eden’s sister, right? I am his lawyer, here is his posthumous letter.”
“Thanks.”

“Depression has completely changed my life. It is like a rollercoaster. Sometimes, my emotions would go up steadily, intensifying. Most of the time, it goes down rather rapidly. It just keeps swinging from one extreme to the other: it never ends. It is eating my flesh, consuming my soul from the inside. It’s like a cunning snake which slithers its way inside my head. It will not stop until it has its mission completed to have my mind overtaken. That is so far I have eavesdropped from HQ. I am the walking dead, living nightmare. Days passed, I kept wishing someone could see me and my pain. I want my parents to know how I feel but I dare not tell them. “Hey, just ignore those who bully you, or maliciously gossip about you. Take no notice of those posts or words about you.” I want to do that too but I can’t. Those images keep appearing in my mind and keep on looping and looping incessantly. I am struck down totally by depression. Being solitary and lonesome. Being hopeless and exhausted. Feeling fearless and despair. I am literally my own enemy. I am sorry to let you suffer maltreatment from dad and mum. I could only choose to leave home. I am depressed as I cannot help you out. I am sorry. Take good care with my money and the company will be ruled by you. Save others. Many of these individuals and their families are afraid to talk about their struggles, and don't know where to turn for help. I love you.”

I bursted into tears again. “Why did I treat you unscrupulously before? Why didn’t I realise the tattoo earlier? All are too late.”

“Too late. But still you can help to make this world better with love and care,” encouraged the nurse, hopefully.

“Yes. Maybe we can turn the dark black dog into a colourful one.”

Try, Trust, Transfigure and Treasure.

Try to break the stigma.

Stop the black dog growling.

Not too late. Help others if you can.
The Phenomenon of Kong-Boy and Kong-Girl Stereotypes

4A Lui Cheuk Him

Dear Editor,

Solving the problem of “Kong-boys” and “Kong-girls” is vital since an increasing number of youngsters are labelled as “Kong Boys” and “Kong Girls”. It may damage Hong Kong’s image. That’s why I am writing to state my opinions on the phenomenon of stereotyping our youngsters these days.

“Kong-boys” and “Kong-girls” usually refer to the youngsters being spoiled. “Kong-girls” are always materialistic spending their plastic money like credit cards on the latest fashions and accessories that are exorbitantly luxurious. In addition, “Kong-girls” were egocentric: they believe that they were as noble as princesses and everyone should unconditionally obey their commands. They are also bone idle, hooked on luxuries and reluctant to do housework. For “Kong-boys”, described as “tram-boy” and “NEETs”, they are addicted to video games, an array of Japanese comics and sexy cartoon figures. Furthermore, they lack communication skills and are socially inhibited. Most “Kong-boys” and “Kong-girls” are also fragile and feeble in mind. They are easily struck down by minor problems such as being bereft of love and may wallow themselves in self-pity or even commit suicide since they lack problem-solving skills.

However, why have our youngsters turned into “Kong-boys” or “Kong-girls”? It is believed that the mass media should undertake the major responsibility for the problem. It is not difficult to find advertisements with celebrities in television disseminating materialism in this day and age. Because of the celebrity effect and pervasive advertising on the online platforms, the youths are then tempted to spending all the energy in pursuing these unrealistic desires. Therefore, as a matter of fact, the teens are victims of such advertisements about luxuries. Aside from advertisement, parenting style is another factor. Parents these days usually spoil their children and try to satisfy them on every desire as raised. They make them self-centered, focus on enjoying life since people around fulfill all their demands. In this case, parents should be held responsible. The third reason of the stereotypes is that unlike the bygone days, information technology is advanced and the fascinating online games such as “Call of Duty” and “World of Warships” always pop up. The teens are unable to resist the temptation to click the mouse finally and become “Internet addicts”. Gradually, they are not willing to communicate “face to face” with outsiders. This is the side effect of advanced information technology development. In addition, young boys and girls are also affected by the social system. In Hong Kong, growing welfarism allows
residents to have an increasing number of rights with less obligations, youngsters are growing with strong entitlement and weak sense of social obligation and family responsibility. Gradually, they start to think that it is not necessary to make contribution to the society and can just enjoy their life. They can be hooked on the Internet or luxuries.

It seems that our youngsters are doomed to failure and the situation cannot be improved. Yet, our government might help these “Kong-boys” and “Kong-girls” by putting poster with ethical virtue in MTR stations. These advertisements should convey the message of correct, positive thinking values to teenagers. In addition, the Education Bureau should cooperate with local schools to instill in students the idea that inner beauty is more vital than outfits. The mass media and Internet supplies should also support the government by telling teens not to over-surf via the advertisement. Eventually, parents should act as role model for children to follow suit. They should communicate with children and tell them materialism is wrong by action. If parents can pay more attention to children’s life, children will not need to rely on the Internet and luxuries to fulfill their loneliness. In addition, sending them to camping activities such as bootcamp is a constructive idea too since teenagers will learn to care for themselves without being spoiled by others.

To alter this horrendous phenomenon, all parties in the society should attempt to change the fate of our teens by offering healthy values and infiltrating Hong Kong with love and care in the future. I believe that if we can make great effort on education, the horrendous situation will be better off.

Yours faithfully,
Chris Wong
Chris Wong
Delay but Not Beyond Redemption

4B Justin Chan

Walking along the streets of Tsim Sha Tsui, chilly winter air blatantly pierced through my body. I looked up and though not a single resemblance of a cloud was palpable in the night sky, the same could be said for stars. Precisely zero entities obstructed the calmness of the crystalline night sky despite its presence just above the prime time for social activities in the global metropolis. Funny now, isn’t it?

Having just waved goodbye to my friends after hanging out, I couldn’t help but feel intrigued. Sure, my friends were compassionate a mutually selfless, making me cherish them to say the least. In spite of this, something just didn’t sit right with them and me. From when I met them in secondary school, they’ve transformed continuously to be more and more foreign to me over time, a lot of the tie in aspects and values which contradicted why I took them as my friends in the first place. My mind was swirling violently in midst of my calm muscles and body. Reminiscent of how the spotless night sky was towering up above the hustle and bustle of the cosmopolitan capital, borderline mindlessly, I walked pass the Peninsula Hotel when all of a sudden, an exceptionally loud “Vroom” somehow caught my attention.

Amidst my reluctance to care about what was going on in my surrounding environment, curiosity got the better of me and I searched for the source of the noise. Evidently, it came from a recently released Tesla Roadster, the quote, as per the manufacturer’s website, “the quickest car in the world”. As anybody could imagine, what came along with that statement was a hefty price tag. Before I even had the thought of admiring the owner’s wealth, the car had already stopped at the pick-up and drop-off area of the hotel. Enduringly, to my tremendous surprise and subsequent agonizing dismay, my brother emerged from the car door!

Yes, it was indeed him, my inadvertently obnoxious elder brother who had zero motivation or desire to strive and improve as a human being. This included wasn’t limited to academics, a healthy self-image and interpersonal relationships. He wasn’t always like this, but after 3 years of him being such a disgracefully selfish human-being, I moved out as soon as I enrolled in university, away from all the toxicity and emotional turmoil he had brought upon me. I can recall he was involuntarily forced by my parents to look for a job then after being an absolute incinerator of the family’s inheritance. What had he become after I left?
Why had he become so irresponsible all those years ago? How did he manage to afford such a cutting-edge sports car? Endless questions along the lines of these roamed through my mind, with answers of justifications disconsolately few and far between.

Before I had the chance to process what was being unveiled unto my eyes, I caught a glimpse of my brother walking towards me. Peering into his face, to say he was unrecognizable would in quite a paradoxical manner, be an understatement and utterly false simultaneously. He looked so clean and was so well-dressed in a formal black suit, a tremendous contrast from when I last saw him. Nevertheless, I knew that, without a shadow of doubt, that he was unmistakably my brother.

“Good gracious! Liam, is that really you?” asked my brother.
“Yes indeed, Jayden,” nonchalantly as I attempted to seem, my mind was in one hundred percent agitation.
“What have you been up to?”
“Studying for finals. You?”
He pointed at the sports car.
“What brings you here?” I asked.

He signaled me to come up into the sports car, and so I did.

We drove the miniscule distance to the Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade along the northern coast of Victoria Harbour.

Coming out of the car, we walked along the promenade while stiffly accompanying each other. At last, he spoke.

“I got the sports car on my own somewhat legitimately. I won the lottery.”
“Lucky you,” I said unenthusiastically.
“But then I applied and attended a university in Taiwan to study graphic design,” he seemed pretty eager to explain.
“I’m now the art director of a graphic design agency in Hong Kong. I just met up with my girlfriend here. I only got this sports car a few days ago... I only stopped because I saw you,” his tone suggested almost as if there had been some sort of wrongdoing he was redeeming for.
“Oh wow!” I said, conveying just the subtlest amount of sarcasm.
“Look, brother, I can explain...”
“Why were you so irresponsible back then? You were and still are supposed to be my brother, one of the people I’m willing to spend time with the most, my shelter from the disarray that is the human civilization, one of whom I cherish the most! But you did none of that. You became a NEET after your university entrance exam, which you even did the best in! And now you’re telling me that despite winning the lottery, you studied and worked to who you are today? “I screeched at the top of my lungs, blaringly deafening anyone within a fifty metre radius, remorselessly interrupting him in the process.

In those thirty seconds or so, I manifested my hatred, my incomprehensiveness towards him, and my jealousy towards his life of seeming luxury now. Interestingly enough this also had the remarkable effect of letting understanding and sympathy get the better of me.

He seemed to have been prepared for my intrusiveness. Urbanely, he explained and I listened. “During my graduation trip to Japan, I once ventured into a forest with my friends before getting stranded, alone and with the night shortly falling. Numerous animals, which I could only make out their silhouettes, walking beside me. Water and food ran out almost immediately following when I lost track of my friends. I was frightened, immensely anxious, panic-stricken, craving for consumables and contact with... civilization. The mental and physical torture persisted for thirty hours before I was finally rescued by the authorities. I was rebooked onto the earliest flight back to Hong Kong.

“When I got back, I was diagnosed with a severe case of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, commonly abbreviated as PTSD. Every day was like hell for me. I would wake up, think for five minutes, then somehow terrifying scenes from when I was stranded would appear out of nowhere, causing me excruciating pain every single hour when I was conscious. Mom and Dad insisted on not letting you know because they thought acquiring such an ill condition was a result of me being weak and languid. They wanted as few people to know as possible. In their eyes, I was an absolute invalid and disgrace to the family. I hated them for this. When things got a little better, I took this on them by spending most of their inheritance on insignificant and unwholesome pursuits.
“When you left, my condition intensified again to the point where I attempted to end it all. Mercifully though, mom and dad still looked out for me and I was brought to the ER. That was when I had finally come to my senses and epiphany that I realized how dire my condition was. In a year or so, I successfully had it cured and went back to school to where I belonged. After that, it was everything I have already made known to you...”

The whole time, I stood there, frozen, motionless. I was in awe. I never ever would have envisioned anything close to his actual confession. Retrospectively, why didn’t I? Though not outstanding, he had been a decent brother. To believe he simply transformed that much after that then in my eyes insignificant occasion was outrageous. I was so caught up in what were the things he didn’t do as a brother that I horrendously failed to consider the root cause of his uncalled-for attitudinal and behavioural metamorphosis. I was the one who took his needs before everybody else’s. For goodness’ sake, I even lived with him! How could I be so ignorant, blind and self-centred?

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“Look, brother, I’m sorry...”
“Don’t be,” I interrupted him again, this time voluntarily.
“Why? I owe you so much,”
“Well, so do I...”

In sync, we reached out for each other’s torso. Yes, it was indeed him. My long lost, inadvertently obnoxious elder brother. I felt the warmth and his slim body in my very own palms. Sure, the human civilization and emotions can be a mayhem more often than not, and some people do come and do go, sometimes too much of our remorse. Nevertheless, family and especially siblings, they will forever be unique in the sense that, for better or for worse, they are and will, with number of exceptions identical to the number of artefacts in the clear night sky, always be there for you.

Walking along the promenade in unison, my brother walked on the side closer to the harbour. With him shielding me from most of the gusty wintry sea wind, I felt it temperate amidst the reportedly most frigid storm in the last twenty-five years. It was an irrevocable epiphany of life.
I pulled out my phone and navigated to the text message group chat of my so-called friends, when we were, in fact, on the verge of drifting apart.

“Hey guys, this isn’t working out. It was fun while it lasted,” said I.

I exited the group chat altogether, ready to embrace my genuine friend and brother, long-lost but now recovered.
Dusk at the Beach
4B Elise Yeung

“45”. I looked at the red number written on my Maths test paper, again. I didn’t cry, nor even sigh. It seemed that I already considered failing as my weekly routine—I have a Maths test every week. I took a deep breath, went back my seat and started to worry about the Maths exam next week.

Being the only daughter, I knew my family had very high expectations for me. That's why I needed to work hard. I did, I really did. But things have never changed despite my efforts. It was okay, I believed that all my hard work would pay off one day.

On the day when we finally received our exam results, I was sweating from head to toe when the teacher called my name. I took my paper back, looked at the familiar red number, trying my best not to cry.

Since that day, I never studied or even opened the Maths textbook again. All my friends told me not to be too upset, it’s just an exam, I should move on and not waste too much time abandoning myself to despair.

“C’mon cheer up!”

“I will, as quick as I can.”

I replied to this encouragement which I heard a billion times since the day I received my exam results. I knew they were trying to show care for me, but I couldn’t control my feeling.

When I was thinking about all this, a voice suddenly came to me. “Hey, wanna have a walk with me after school?” Sherry waved and smiled at me softly, her dimple appeared vaguely. When I was just about to reject her, she started saying again, “Just a while.”

She kept asking me, so I accepted her invitation at last. She took me to a beach, the serenity and sparse population seemed to lower the temperature. The wind was not fierce, it made our hair flutter gently. I could see all this reflected in the crystal-clear sea. None of us spoke, we just walked together along the beach.
The waves were crawling gently to the shore, “Why don't you speak?” I asked. She didn't answer immediately, until I saw her dimple again. “This is a lovely place, isn't it?” I looked at her curiously. “There's nothing I can say, take a rest and appreciate this gorgeous scenery.” I didn't say a word, we continued our stroll. When we were nearly at the end of the beach, I asked again, “Aren't you telling me to cheer up?” Sherry suddenly burst out laughing this time, “What, why? It's okay to be upset. I still like you when you are sad. As I have said, take a rest and appreciate this gorgeous scenery!” Her voice kept echoing inside my brain. I collapsed, crying uncontrollably, as if I was venting all my great pain.

In the next second, I felt a warm hug, Sherry embraced me, very tightly. “You did a great job, really.” Dusk was falling, but her hug was cozier than the sun.
Online Shopping Makes Life Easier for Hong Kong People

4B Kelly Hui

Dear Editor,

As a faithful reader, I have some views about the recent article “Online Shopping Makes Life Easier for Hong Kong People”, that you published in the newspaper. I couldn't agree more that online shopping makes life easier for Hong Kong people, in views of the fast pace of life in Hong Kong and the epidemic.

First, online shopping is more convenient and it offers more varieties than physical stores do. Online shopping has no time or place restriction, and no attendant around to exert pressure, so no matter where you are, just click the purchase button and goods will be delivered directly to your home. Hong Kong people are notoriously short of time, so this convenient approach is perfect for busy Hong Kong people.

Besides, because of the epidemic, we should try not to go out, and online shopping allows us to accomplish our tasks while still being able to buy our daily necessities. Therefore, we believe that online shopping can bring benefits to Hong Kong people who are restricted by the epidemic.

Second, online shopping is relatively inexpensive. Hong Kong has a worryingly high consumer price index, and online shopping can eliminate this problem. This is because online stores do not have to spend as much money to pay for the rent and business license to operate brick-and-mortar stores, and they do not have to pay taxes. Also, there is no way to know the prices of different stores instantly in a physical location, so you can buy the same goods at a higher price. Online shopping, on the other hand, allows you to compare prices in real-time, so you can get what you need at the lowest price. Therefore, I think the financial benefits of online shopping make life easier for Hong Kong people.

I don't agree that online shopping reduces one’s contact with their community. We can see that the government's recent publicity that “the epidemic has brought us closer together” is the tagline. It is true that when two close people are separated, the more they miss each other, rather than becoming more distant. When we encounter a relationship worth maintaining, we would try to maintain it even amid a long quarantine, not to mention a short shopping trip. To maintain a relationship, it does not depend on the number of times we see each other, but whether we have the heart to maintain it.
In conclusion, I agree with the article that “Online Shopping Makes Life Easier for Hong Kong People”. In terms of Hong Kong people’s living habits, social environment, and epidemic factors, I believe that online shopping has brought Hong Kong people greater convenience and greater efficiency. I am looking forward to your reply.

Yours faithfully,
Chris Wong
Why Being Grateful Is Important?
4B Shirley Mak

Good morning, everyone. Do you know the word “gratitude”, or its relevant forms “grateful” or “gratefulness”? Gratitude the action of being thankful to someone or for something, doesn’t always exit in your daily life, does it? Today, I’m going to talk about why being grateful is important, and the three reasons are “HOW” - “happiness”, “optimism” and “willingness”.

First and foremost, “H” is for “happiness”. What does happiness mean to you? Winning a lottery? Playing video games? Or going to a concert of your favourite star? After some thought, you might want to ask: Why being grateful can give you and others happiness? Recent was research stated that a grateful person was always happy and full of joy. When being grateful to others, you’re also sharing happiness to the person that you are grateful for. Receiving gratitude improves one’s mood, and seeing someone’s smile makes you happier.

Subsequently, “O” is for “optimism”. People tend to think negatively when something bad happens, so how does being grateful make yourself an optimistic person? Grateful people usually think on the positive side, even in the worst situation. For example, you’re walking in a desert, running out of food and water, but you find a half a glass of water. What would you think? “There’s only half a glass of water!” or “I’m thankful that there’s a half glass of water!” Grateful people always think positively while being thankful for everything given, reducing the chances of thinking negatively.

Last but not least, “W” is for “willingness”. We are always willing to try something in life, right? So why is willingness related to gratitude? Being grateful to someone gives you the willingness to come up to that person and tell him or her about your feelings, it gives you courage in the process. Also, being grateful can help you build relationships, meaning you are willing to befriend others. Being grateful increases your willingness to act, to speak out, and become a sociable person.

In a nutshell, “HOW” - “happiness”, “optimism” and “willingness” are the reasons why we should be grateful. In the Bible, it says “Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.” Why don’t we try to be grateful, start from now on? Be thankful for your family, friends and teachers; be thankful for what you own, what you eat, what you wear; be thankful for where you live, where you go to school. Try to spread your gratitude to make the positive. Thank you.
Crash for Cash
4C Eunice Tang

“CRASH!!!”

A deafening sound of a few cars crashing into a ragged, blind beggar thundered across the whole street. Quickly, a crowd formed around the corpse, and everyone went bonkers of fear. Some screamed hysterically, some got a coma and went head first onto the ground, while the calmer ones called the ambulance.

“Peter!” my mother who was next to me was yelling and running to the cadaver, crying miserably. I walked lightly, wondering if that was really my brother, Peter. The body that I observed was Peter’s, was tattered and curdled in blood. I gasped. As expectedly, he was dead. However, I didn't even drop a tear, recalling the past few days...

My brother, Peter, is older than me by ten years. He is a good brother to me, always giving me the best that he can, although he does not earn much. My father died when I was young, so Peter often gave more love to me and we used to have good relationship and rapport. I was his loyal fan and I adored him a lot. A few months ago, he said he had moved to an apartment, renting with his friends and our relationship started to become distant and we were somehow alienated.

On a usual day, I was walking to the Science Museum with my classmates for research. When I passed the Peninsula Hotel in Tsim Sha Tsui, chatting with them, one of my classmates said, “Hey, is that your brother? His car looks cool!” I looked towards an orange-in-colour, luxury, streamlined Lamborghini, and a voice yelled to me.

“Eunice!”

That’s really my brother. But he was looking for a job when he called me two days ago, how come he got out from a Lamborghini, going into the Peninsula Hotel. I talked to myself and my feet walked towards him involuntarily.

“Peter, didn’t you tell me that you were looking for a job? What happened to you?” I asked, “Are you selling drugs? Or did you break into a bank? Or...”
“Hey hey stop it! Erm... come on and I will tell you everything, but promise me not to tell mother.”

I followed him into the lavish car. He drove us to the Peak, where he stopped in front of a white gate. The romantic and solemn temperament, the high-height foyer and the magnificent door, the round arched windows and the stone masonry at the corners all show grace and luxury. It is classic and cheerful, with a steeple-shaped sloping roof, plastered wooden frames and column decorations. Natural building materials and the vines attached to it contrast with each other, classic but not fashionable.

My curiosity couldn’t wait. I asked, “So just tell me now!” Peter finally started to confess. “In fact, I want to settle everything down and bring you and mother here as a surprise, but you found out now earlier. I was doing a job that earned at least ten thousand dollars a day. But...but I can't just tell in language. Wait for me a sec and see how it works!”

In a blink of an eye, Peter changed from an exaggerating, affluent shirt with sharp colors, into scruffy, patched clothes, wearing sunglasses, and holding a stick. He drove us down the mountain and stopped in a dumpy alley. He told me to stay here and watch his show time.

At first, he walked around, looking for something. When he set a target, he sat by the road. A man got in his car. When he switched on the engine, Peter went in front of the car, pretending to fall down. I suddenly realized the whole thing. Peter was an incident-faking extortionist. Pretending to be injured, he blackmailed the car owner. That was why he is so rich now. I was so disappointed and furious about what he was doing.

When he returned, I said, “Peter, I was so disappointed with you. You used to be my idol but you do such shameless things. As your sister, I hope you are doing it the last time today. Of course, you can continue doing this but I won't be your sister anymore.”

“Ok I promise you.” Peter said with a slightly shocked blank face.
After a week, when I was walking back from school, I saw my brother lying on the road again. I stared at him and he found me and was shocked. I passed by him straightly, not saying a word, like seeing a stranger. From then, we didn't contact each other.

Today, I was going to the supermarket with my mother. We bought a lot of things and she was talking about Peter, but I didn't say anything. Just as she was about to shoot me with her infamous question machine gun....

“CRASH!!!” A deafening sound spread across the whole street.

In a crossroad, a familiar man fell down, four cars in different directions crashed into him, the driver’s angry and scared. Quickly, a crowd formed around the corpse, and everyone went into craziness with fear.

“Peter!” my mother who was next to me yelled and ran to the cadaver, crying miserably. I walked lightly, thinking if that was really my brother, Peter. The body that I observed was that Peter was tattered and curdled in blood. However, instead of mourning for the “departure” of my brother, I simply just walked away without any pity on him. “This gruesome, greedy, foolish scammer deserved this,” I said to my mother, “He’s not my brother. I don’t know this beggar.”

Slowly, she started to figure out this was the “beggar’s” way of getting rich, and we both walked away in total disgust and fury, leaving him behind to learn his lesson that day.
Play More Sports
4C Jarvis Cho

Dear Editor,

I am writing to express my thoughts on why students should spend more time playing sports and less time playing electronic gadgets. In my opinion, students nowadays are spending too much time playing electronic gadgets and this is definitely not a good habit. The reasons below explain my views.

To begin with, playing sports is a natural way to loosen up and let go of stress. For example, while playing sports, you will forget what you are worrying about and focus on the sports that you are playing. According to recent research from Harvard School, playing sports can reduce “stress-inducing hormones”, and doing favorite sports can increase “mood elevation” and “a general sense of well-being”. As we all know, Hong Kong students are under a lot of stress because of the high-pressure education system. So, playing sports can certainly relieve their pressure.

In addition, playing sports is a great way to lose weight and get a healthy body. According to many statistics, playing sports is the most effective way to lose weight. It is a simple formula-burn more calories than you consume each day. Also doing more sports can bring numerous hidden health benefits such as decrease the chance of osteoporosis and reduce the risk of chronic conditions like heart disease. And obviously, in this day and age, the epidemic of obesity is no doubt one of the most serious health problems faced by the people around the world. Doing more sports is the key to success in tackling the problem of obesity. Moreover, because of the coronavirus, many students are now having online lessons every day. They have to sit in front of the computer for a long time. Therefore, doing more sports is of paramount importance to them.

Last but not least, it is easy to get addicted to playing electric gadgets. There are a lot of functions in an electronic gadget such as drawing, playing online games and taking photos. Once the students start using them, they will find a lot of fun and will get addicted to them. It is obvious that most students are unable to control their gadgets addiction. Excessive use of electronic gadgets can cause physical and mental damage to students such as vision problems and attention deficit. If they spend too much time on electronic gadgets, they will forget other important things such as doing more sports.
I strongly recommend students to spend more time playing sports. Playing sports can not only help students reduce stress, but also make their body healthier in a fun way. There are many different kinds of sports. Students can exercise anywhere, anytime. So why don’t you adopt a healthier lifestyle now and put away your electronic gadgets.

Yours faithfully,

Chris

Chris Wong
Protecting Our Environment Starts With You
4C Casper Chong

Good afternoon, teachers and students. I am the teacher advisor of the Environmental Club. As some of you may know, our school is going to implement a green measure next month. Instead of using polystyrene lunchboxes and disposable cutlery in the school canteen, we will be using reusable lunchboxes and you have to bring your own cutlery. I am here to share with you the reasons for carrying out this green initiative.

Currently, we are using a huge amount of disposable lunchboxes and cutlery and they are made of plastic. Plastic waste takes a long time to decompose. Plastic items can take up to one thousand years to break down. It is important not to use plastic items not only because it is difficult to decompose, but also because it is detrimental to our health and the earth. Most of us think that it is convenient to use plastic cutlery because they can just throw it away after use. However, burning these plastic items poses threats to our health and the earth. The burning process releases a significant amount of toxic gases such as dioxins and hydrochloric acid. These emissions will cause chronic diseases like cancer and respiratory diseases if we inhale them. These gases also pollute the earth and contribute to climate change.

It is undeniable that the disposable lunchboxes and cutlery will produce a lot of rubbish. This will increase the burden of the landfills. This is a pressing problem in Hong Kong. According to a survey conducted by Friends of The Earth, plastic waste accounts for more than twenty percent of Hong Kong’s municipal solid waste and it takes ages for it to disappear. So, we, all of us, should do something to avoid this problem. What can we do to decrease the amount of plastic rubbish we produce every day? Use your own cutlery is one of the easiest ways to save the earth.

As the saying goes, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” If we don’t want other people to destroy our home, we should encourage them to pay more attention to environment protection and take action to protect it. With concerted effort, I’m sure we can make the world a better place to live. It’s high time we did something to protect the environment. Why not make a difference by taking small action? Thank you.
How to Become a Good Student Leader

4D Vivian Leung

Are you a junior form student who wants to take up positions of responsibility in extra-curricular activities? A new semester has started and students have begun signing up for different extra-curricular activities. Junior form students will soon take up positions like chairperson, vice-chairperson and treasurer in different teams, clubs and societies. For students that lack confidence and experience in being a student leader, I believe my experience as the leader of the school choir will help you. I will give you advice on how to be a good student leader.

Being a choir leader has made my school life busier than a normal student. At the beginning of the school term, we needed to collect a fee from all members for the purpose of organizing different choir events. We have a total of two hundred members in different classes and forms. That’s why we needed to contact all members one by one. We needed to check if anyone had forgotten to pay the fee and contacted them personally to remind them. After that, we needed to confirm everyone’s age because some singing contests had age restrictions. If we were not careful enough, we might be disqualified due to our violation of the rules. That’s why we had to be very discreet when we cross-check the contact information and the personal information of our members in order not to mess anything up.

The most challenging task for me was to organize the school music festival. We had to put up a performance at the school hall for all students and our teachers-in-charge said we should collaborate with the school orchestra. That was my first large-scale event after becoming the choir leader. I remember it like it was yesterday. The first thing I did after being told about the collaboration was to contact the orchestra leader and organize a meeting with him to discuss the arrangements for the festival. Unfortunately, we both had tight schedules, both of our groups had competitions and events in different periods of time. We had only been in contact on the social media and agreed on the songs we would perform but we didn’t discuss which chords or which version of the song we would use. After a month of practicing individually, we finally organized a one-hour practice with the orchestra. Then, we realized we had practiced different versions of the songs. The realization made me panic, but no one seemed to care about the mistake I made. They started discussing how to remedy the situation and make relevant arrangements immediately. I asked the orchestra leader how he could be so calm in face of all these unpleasant surprises. He looked at me intently and said, “I didn’t, but time is running short and we don’t have all day. Solving the problem is more important than blaming others and being scolded by the teachers like pre-schoolers.” I was
amazed by how he handled the situation. The performance of the festival was perfect. Everything turned out to be fine. That experience is what shaped me to a calmer person who can lead my teammates to achieve in face of difficulties.

Based on my experience above, I would like to give you some tips on how to be a good student leader. First, if something unexpected happens, discuss the problems with the teachers or people that are involved. Do not keep it as a secret because the problem will find its way to grow bigger, making it more difficult to solve. Trust your teammates and let them support you. Consider their advice and not to be self-centred just because you are “in-charge”. It is very immature to do so.

Second, ask when you don’t know something. As a junior form student, this should be the first time for you to hold a position of responsibility in extra-curricular activities. Not being familiar with the system, how things work and how things should be done is very normal. Do not be afraid to ask. No one will judge you just because you want to learn more about your position and do a better job. I can guarantee you that your teachers will welcome your questions with open arms and the senior form students would answer your questions nicely too.

Third, always be respectful and courteous. Do not be rude, arrogant and high-maintenance. Don’t make it unbearable for others to work with you and deal with your attitude. Be polite and friendly. No one wants to be shouted at or deal with your temper. Being a leader doesn’t make you more superior to other members. You are there to serve, to listen to and to understand the needs of your members. Being a nice and approachable person makes your members more willing to communicate and work with you and listen to your instructions.

In conclusion, a good student leader should listen to others, seek help actively when needed and be polite and humble. These are easy things to do. So, what are you waiting for? Go and sign up now for position of responsibility in the extra-curricular activities that interest you. I am sure you will find the experience worth your time and effort. I hope all of you will enjoy your coming school year have a wonderful time here.
Debate – a Metamorphosis
4E Chan Cheong Chak

Good morning principal, teachers, and fellow students, I am Chris Wong from the debating club. It is my privilege to be able to stand here and share with you the benefits of debating. I am sure most, if not all of you have kept up with the US presidential elections, and have seen all the jokes of how uncivilised the debates were, but were they? How many of you actually understand how debates work? At first, I was just like all of you, I thought debating only consisted of mindless rambling and ad hominem, but after I joined the debate club, I started to understand the nuances and art of debating. That’s why I’m here today, to tell you 2 activities of the Debate Club and how debating can be useful in life.

The first activity is debate analysis. Like what I’ve mentioned before, a lot of people have misconceptions about debating. That’s why we have an activity where we analyse debates in professional settings, either in political debates or just debate competitions. By doing this, you will be able to have a better grasp of debating and have a solid foundation on how debating functions. You know, a lot of people think debating is vapid or monotonous, as debaters are constantly regurgitating the same techniques, but Sun Tzu once said “There are not more than five cardinal tastes, yet combinations of them yield more flavours than can ever be tasted.” This quote is from the Art of War, yes, the ART of war. By analysing debates, not only will you be able to wield these techniques and adapt to your opponents. You will in process create a piece of art, the art of linguistics.

The second activity is mock debates. How many of you have written a debate script? But how many of you have actually experienced a debate first-hand? I bet almost everyone would answer no to the latter. You see knowing debate techniques and rules is different to debating first-hand, like handling nerves or having to adapt to your opponents arguments and plotting a “counterattack” by providing corroborative evidence, all of which are skills that cannot be learned through books and analysis, but instead require real experience. In this, students will have the opportunity to participate in real-time debates, and experience what a real debate would feel like, giving students more experience, and in turn sharpening their debating skills.

By joining the debate club, you can improve your language skills. But first let me share something about myself. I like cooking my family and my pets... Wait a minute, that doesn’t sound right. What I meant to say is I like cooking, my family, and my pets. You see intonation is the difference between wanting to cook your loved ones and talking about what you like.
This is why learning to debate is important. You can learn to effectively communicate what you actually want to convey, by doing mock debates, you can learn different vocabulary and phrases to make your sentences more precise and concise, by analysing different debates. All of these are able to improve your linguistic skills. Of course, it can also help your listening as well, as you need to listen attentively to your opponents and jot down their arguments in order to be able to effectively retaliate against them. You also need good grammar so that it won’t impede people’s comprehension. As you can see learning to debate is a very potent way to improve linguistic skills, and is paramount to a balanced language skill set.

You will be able to build more confidence by joining the Debate Club. You know, if I were asked to do this speech before joining the Debate Club, I would’ve definitely declined, as I was a very introverted and shy person before, but after doing numerous mock debates, I’ve got used to public speaking, and it has bolstered my confidence, and I assure you that you will unequivocally have more confidence, and feel more comfortable in your own skin. Doing debates means you have to vocalise your sentiments towards certain problems, and people will disagree with you no matter what you say, or how correct you are, that’s immutable, but you have to realise that, and express yourself trenchantly.

“You’ve been praising debating so much, but does it even affect our normal life?” You might be asking yourself right now, well of course it does. Debating basically boils down to effective communication, saying the correct things at the correct time, by learning how to debate you can develop a great savoir-faire, and elucidating will become a piece of cake. You will also become a better listener and decipher what is being implied. Socialising is based on communication, so if you are able and adept at communicating, you will be able to socialise more effortlessly. “Communication is your ticket to success, if you pay attention and learn to do it effectively.” Theo Gold once said, as you can see communication is crucial, and that’s why debating can help in all of your daily life.

I really cannot extol debating enough, so if you would like to try it out we welcome each and every single one of you to join. We will be expecting your presence in our Club. Thank you very much!
Is This the Fault of Envy?

4E Miriam Chang

In the cool wind of a midnight in spring, I walked unhurriedly alone in the street. A breeze crept into my unfit T-shirt sending a shiver down my spine. It was my 135th time being rejected for a job, or was it the 145th? It didn’t matter, did it? I couldn’t help but recall the days I cried and felt sorry for myself. It was those people that made this happen. It’s all their fault.

My stomach rumbled as my face twisted into a snarl. A loud “Vroom” woke me from my thoughts. I looked up. It was the lavish Peninsula Hotel, the noise came from an expensive sports car that started its engine from the entrance of the hotel car park. I rubbed my eyes as a thin mist started to form and squinted to have a better look at the grey Porsche.

A good-looking young man dressed in a well-tailored white suit stepped out. For some reason, he looked...familiar to me. He readjusted his bowtie and took out a handkerchief to rub the car’s headlight carefully.

I stopped peering as he scanned his surroundings, and attempted to stride past him without him noticing.

“Excuse me, Mister. Do I know you? You look awfully like someone I know.” He put a hand on my shoulder hesitantly. That voice, it’s HIM. No wonder he looked familiar. He’s my brother.


“Brother?” He quickly put his handkerchief back and buttoned his cuff. “It’s been a long time. You’re unrecognisable without your round glasses!” He exclaimed. “What happened to them?” He looked genuinely concerned.

Oh! Stop being pretentious.

“Lost’em. No time to buy another pair.” I rumbled. “What’s this?” I motioned towards his car and his whole attire. The last time we spoke, not a good memory by the way, he was looking for a job. Well, we both were. Now, he’s a different person.
“Oh, I started a company and got some money,” he looked down at the ground. “So...how’s life?” He piped up after a bit of silence.

“Life’s gooood.” I stressed on the “good” sarcastically.

He nodded awkwardly. For some time, none of us spoke, only the distant engine noises and the beeping of traffic lights filled the air. He reclined on his car and rubbed his hands nervously.

After some awkward minutes, he patted his ride and offered, “You want a ride home?”

I snapped. I finally snapped. For all those years away from my memories, I thought I’d never see that perfect yet disgusting face again. “Shut your mouth! Did you know how much you’ve taken from me?” I spat those words out with such venom that I’d never known I would.

“Ever since you and that witch came, there wasn’t a day of peace for me! None physically and none mentally!”

He went silent.

I went on, “You took everything from me. I already lost my mum, and you came. You snatched everything!” My pulse rate went up immensely.

All the colours drained from his face. He opened his mouth, but I wasn’t finished. “I don’t know what that witch did to steal my pa, but it all went downhill from then. You stole my pa’s love, my friends as you transferred to my school, my popularity, my life!” My face twisted with rage and I pointed a shaky finger at him. “You! You made all these happen. Did you know what I could do? NO! you never know how it feels! I couldn’t do anything, but...but...cry...” my voice broke into a wail.

He took a step back, “I was always sorry for what happened, but I had no control over their marriage. I’m sorry.”
“You know what you did, don’t you? That day, it was my birthday. You took my presents.” My voice shook as I recalled the day everything changed drastically, the day a week after my mother’s death.

“Technically... he gave it to me...” He began weakly.

“No! I’ve never seen him look at me and mum the way he looks at you and her! You must have done something!” I growled, grabbing him by the arm.

He slipped away nimbly and put his arms in front of him to stop me from stepping closer.

“What about school? What about my friends? What about my classmates? They all looked at you and praised you...what did I get? A title – The Perfect Man’s Brother. I was only your shadow!” I remember those days when I became a nobody, “I came home and cried every day, rethinking every day. What did I do to deserve this? What did I do wrong? What did I not do?” My voice cracked as I burst into tears. I covered my ace. I didn’t want him to see me cry.

He stretched his arms as if to hug me but stepped midway as I sat on the driveway powerlessly.

After thinking carefully about his words, he raised his voice softly. “I tried. I tried. In all those nights guilt stabbed me. I tried my best to be a good big brother, to be a perfect man.”

“Oh, did you?” I sneered.

“Yes, I did. Maybe you didn’t notice, but...yes...I did.” He went slowly. “But you never seemed to warm up to me...”He trailed off. “I worked hard to earn everything.”

My thoughts were all over the place. No! I refused to believe it. It had to be his fault. Whose fault would it be if it wasn’t his?

“Look...I gotta...” he was interrupted by a tremendous honk.
My world spun and my vision went blurry. “NO!” he screamed.

The good riddance in my expectations never came.

Was he crying?

So...he cared.

I drowned into this black ocean. It felt calm and welcoming.

So quiet and peaceful.

So it wasn’t his fault.

Tell me, whose fault was it?
Rays of Hope

4E Katrina Yeung

Standing alone at the platform of the train station in China, with a tattered iron suitcase raised above her head, Amina, an Indian girl, dressed in her sari and wrapped garments, was staring at the empty station, not able to articulate a single word. Amina watched as another train passed, leaving her rotted to the platform, alone. She would get on the next one, she told herself with less certainty than the last time she had said it. She had known that leaving would not be easy, but she had not realized it would be this hard.

It was her abusive husband in India that made her so terrified. Two years ago, her parents married her off to a man they hardly know. Unknown to her parents, her husband was addicted to alcohol and gambling. Their living standards were deteriorating and her husband always beat her when he was drunk. Amina’s body was covered with bruises and scars. She wanted to escape from this prison-like life, but she couldn’t. Her traditional patriarchal belief had quenched her bold spirit. “When can I live an ordinary life?” she asked herself at night, when she locked herself up in her dilapidated room.

An opportunity had come nine months later, when her family had already got almost nothing to eat. Her husband sent her to China to work. She felt freedom, for the first time in her life and she started to think of running away and never returned to India. But quickly she gave up such thought as she knew her husband would torture her harder if he found her and she couldn’t bear to think of the consequences.

Amina had been strolling along the railway for hours, possessed by fear and doubt, which had held her up. She sat down on the ground desperately, and took out the only book she had in her suitcase. It was about an American girl who rose up and fought against her abusive father. The girl had overcome many difficulties and finally she resolutely mustered her courage and she did it. She had won her freedom back. Amina read the book cover-to-cover as tears filled her beautiful eyes. She knew that she wanted to be just like this American girl. Instead of running away from her fear, she had to embrace it and overcome it. She did not want to run like a fugitive, looking over her shoulder to check if her abusive husband had got to her.

Another train had come. Amina stepped onto the train and took a deep breath, with her heart leaping with thrill and her whole body broke out in a sweat. She finally made her
first step to real freedom, being free from her fear. She didn’t know how many hours had passed. Her train finally arrived at China and there stood her husband, shouting at the top of his lungs, “You should have arrived this morning! Where have you gone?” He reached out his arms to pull her hair.

Amina was once again struck with extreme fear, yet she talked back hysterically with a trembling voice, “I am not going with you! Never!” Her husband was. For a few moments, he did not know how to react. He soon regained his composure. He quickly raised his hand trying to slap her in her face. Amina stopped him. She caught his wrist in midair as if it was her only chance to freedom. “I have my rights and I am going to live my life free,” she said calmly. Hearing the train whistle, she turned around and boarded the train she had alighted from again, leaving her husband standing petrified alone at the platform. She did not know where the train was heading to, but she knew it would be a place where her dreams would come true. She looked out the window and saw a ray of sunlight falling on her huge luggage box.
What Makes You a Great Student Leader?

4E Isaac Cheng

Have you ever thought of becoming the captain of a sports team or the chairperson of a club or a society? Being a leader is not just a challenge for yourself only, but a challenge for the whole team because you have to lead the whole team to achieve success. Also, being a captain of a team is like a one-way road; once you start, you can’t quit in the middle, so if you really want to become a student leader, please consider if you have enough time first.

As the basketball team captain this year, I would like to share with you my experience in leading the team. I used to be a captain whom everyone in the team hated. I remember when I was still in Form 2, I was a selfish player. Although I scored 80% of all the points my team got in nearly every match and took a lot of rebounds, I never offered any assistance to my teammates because at that moment I just thought about my own achievement, but not that of the whole team, so some team members left the team because of me. After that, I tried to be a better captain. I changed my attitude and tried to prove to my teammates that I was not the “old” me anymore. Although I am still improving myself now, I can clearly feel my relationship with my teammates has become much better. From my experience, I have learned three major ways to make one a better student leader.

First, try to be the best member in your team. If you are the leader of a sports team, but you can’t play the sports well, it is hard to win your teammates’ trust and respect. If the team does not feel a connection with the leader, then there won’t be any meaningful teamwork, which means the whole team won’t win any game, so if you really want to be a great leader, just tie your shoelaces and work your socks off.

Second, stay humble and listen to others. Sometimes, you might think that your way is the best way to solve the problem. But actually, it might not be the best way, so listening to others is quite important. It can make the team more united and the tips that others give you might help you too. Also, being humble is important. If you are arrogant, your teammates won’t respect or listen to you from their hearts, so “sit down and be humble”

Third, try to be selfless. I know, there are a lot of benefits of being a selfish player: you can become the most valued player or a legend in your team because of the record you have made. But is it worth it? Obviously not! Of course, having great personal achievement is a big temptation, but the cost is to sacrifice your teammates’ happiness. Think about that: is
building your achievement on others’ pain something to be proud of? I believe if you do so, within three years you will have no teammates. No one will be willing to work with you.

The key to becoming a good student leader is to be a better person. Polish your skills and make yourself best of the best. Stop thinking about yourself only, think about what you can do for your team and listen to them. Also, put yourself in your teammates’ shoes and stop being a selfish person. If you can do all this, I am quite sure you will become a great student leader very soon.
Forget the Old and Try New

4F Martin Chik

Newspapers, radio and books are the few ways how the elderly connect with the world. Are you still getting information from these channels but do not know what your classmates or friends are talking about like the new band “Rock Star” and the new movie “Final World”? If you do, congratulations! But if not, this article will benefit you for chasing the pop culture to build and maintain the connection with your friends.

TV and movies are definitely a part of pop culture. It is not easy to get the information from the old ways so I am going to share several sources. For posting the latest TV shows and movies, the website www.newvideo.com shows all movies from now to the next six months in America, Europe and Asia. The movies are sorted by their release dates so it is very easy to see when we can watch them. Movies are usually discussed among friends. Discussion is also important in pop culture but I suspect some of you even don’t know how to comment after watching them. On YouTube, there is a great channel which comments and reflects on each film. From your normal life to a psychological level, videos on this channel tell you more about films and this is a great method to learn more about “pop culture”. Sunny Wu is a blogger and he regularly recommends various hot TV shows like the reality show “Living in Forest”, television series “White Mirror” and the talk show “Elain Time”. Other highly discussed TV shows have also been posted on his blog with some introductions and his ratings. I always find great TV shows from his blog so there is no need to mind where to know them. It can be a feasible shortcut to approach pop culture.

Girls enjoy listening to K-pop while boys enjoy rap. They are forms of contemporary pop music but not classic. Radio is still recommending the music of the old times. Now, you can also use an app to listen to music. Have you tried it before? Jukebox must be the most downloaded music app among teenagers. One of the most special things is the music rank showing the top 20 popular songs depending on how many people listen to it all over the world. Numerous songs and different types of music can be found on this app too. There is no need to worry about whether your favourite songs appear on Jukebox. We can have access to a large amount of music plus a range of the most popular music. I believe that you can stick with pop music. If you are interested in concerts, www.popconcert.com, which is created by a group of secondary school students, provides different types of concerts to let teenagers know the information. The most awesome thing is that sometimes they help you secure the tickets. It’s good for you to know and maybe buy tickets for the latest concert.
In the past, it seemed to be hard to follow pop culture. However, pop culture has become a part of our life today. The world won’t stop changing even though we stop. We cannot still only get information from newspapers, radio and books. Forget the old and try the new.
How Perilous Is It to Neglect Sex Education?

4F Angus Chan

Do you think sex education is important? I am sure that everyone of you can unanimously reach a consensus and reclaim that sex education is of utmost importance. Albeit its importance, however, sex education is frequently neglected in Hong Kong. Sex refers to a set of biological attributes in humans and animals, according to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. In other words, sex is an essential inclination. No one is discharged from the responsibility of understanding and recognizing sex. Thus, it is high time for us to inculcate a healthy attitude towards sex to our children.

First and foremost, let us confer on why sex education, which is an unequivocally critical topic, is neglected in Hong Kong. To begin with, Chinese people’s conservative mindset is to be blamed. Chinese people are awfully insecure when talking about sex, and find it shameful to publicly discuss such topic, as sex is deemed to be a taboo topic. The aforementioned attitude significantly hinders the promotion of sex education, as the educators themselves are unwilling to do so. Speaking of who should be held accountable to sex education, such burden falls on the shoulders of parents and the school. Parents are evasive towards sex education, as they feel particularly embarrassed when discussing this topic with their children. Furthermore, some parents believe that such knowledge can be acquired and discerned elsewhere, and the obligation to educate their children is not theirs. Parents aside, schools are not notably beneficial towards the promotion of sex education either. Schools nowadays are severely academically oriented, where academic results are the most dominant. How students perform academically is the most eminent concern to schools, and other non-academic related matters or subjects, including sex education, do not have a position in the school’s curriculum. An opportunity is not available for teachers to tutor students about this topic as it is not incorporated into the syllabus. Moreover, even if there is an occasion for teachers to provide sex education, it would not be ideal as resources are not readily accessible, guidelines are not previously established, and teachers are not well-equipped with the required expertise to teach students.

Everything mentioned before are the reasons why sex education is overlooked and deserted in Hong Kong, but what are the consequences of doing so? The repercussion will be punishing and brutal. Despite the aspiration of adults, the negligence and disregard of sex education is unable to eliminate teenagers’ necessity of perceiving sex, as sex is, stated above, a primary impulse which is impossible to be eradicated. On the contrary, such
avoidance will only escalate youngster’s curiosity about sex, as it is depicted to them as inscrutable and mystical, in tandem with the fact that adults are averse to talk about it. Correspondingly, teenagers will proceed to search for answers themselves through other means, including the mass media, the internet, and their peers. However, these ways of gaining insight on sex may be potentially hazardous. First of all, the mass media often transmit an incorrect image and take a false approach towards sex, as they usually portray sex as exhilarating and stimulating to attract audience. By the same token, the internet has its own fair share of obscene websites, smutty videos and lewd content. These sources may be seductive and captivating to teenagers, provoking them to dive even deeper, while they usually scorn and ignore the adverse results of sex. Additionally, fellow peers of teenagers are as equally naïve and oblivious to sex, misinterpreted ideas and concepts will spread like wildfire among themselves. Ultimately and perhaps the most pivotal consequence is none other than the risk that youngsters will attempt sexual intercourse themselves in order to gain more knowledge about it. Horrifying consequences, including pre-marital intercourse, pregnancy, unlawful births and illegitimate abortion will ensue. Compensated dating, sexual offences, teenage prostitution and immeasurably more other appalling trends may also be exacerbated.

Henceforth, it is categorical that sex education is a prominent matter and the consequences are harrowing. Therefore, how can we enhance and promote sex education? Fundamentally, different stakeholders including parents, school, and the government should acknowledge and start taking up the responsibility of sex education. First and foremost, parents should be more amenable to discuss sexual topics with their child. Due to the fact that the relationship between a child and his/her parents is the most intimate and extraordinary, parents have the greatest influence on their child, thus communication between parents and children is crucial to rectify their children’s wrong concept about sex. Likewise, schools should take a step forward as well. Sex education should be integrated into the teaching syllabus, subsequently providing more accurate information about sex to students. At the same time, providing sex education training to teachers is just as critical, as such training can arm teachers with professional knowledge when dealing with this delicate topic. Last but not least, the government and other associated organisations, such as Mother’s Choice, should initiate more pitches, seminars or exhibitions to disseminate precise and appropriate knowledge and advice about sex. Such activities can clear up misguided
perceptions of youngsters and resolve the mysteriousness of sexuality. In addition to these, hotlines should be established, counselling services should be arranged and more educational websites should be introduced, in order to advertise positive messages of sexuality which are not deceitful and construct a channel for assistance if someone is in need for guidance.

In conclusion, sex education is of paramount importance. To ensure that our future generation’s attitude towards sex will not be misled, sex education should not be neglected and should be promoted proactively.
Resurrection
4F Wing Wing Leung

I am Amina. I was married.

I first met him in an evening. The sky was ablaze with the fire of the setting sun, and he turned and looked at me with his deceptive smile. At that moment, I couldn’t hear anything else but my heartbeat. At that time, I was 19 and he was 25. He looked handsome and mature, which deeply attracted me. I quickly fell in love with him and love made me blind. Being in love, I skipped class and went on dates with him. In the tests and exams that followed, my grades were failing but I never minded about it. “He” had become the center of my life.

After graduation, I ignored my parents’ strong opposition and went to the city where he lived. On the day I arrived, he proposed to me. At that time, although I had no money and didn’t know anyone in that city, I was still hopeful and optimistic. I thought I was the princess in the fairy tale who would live happily with my prince forever.

However, the story did not end here. In the first year of our marriage, he treated me like before, romantic and warm. We also gave birth to a cute little boy.

In the second year, he started to be cold to me and came home late every day. In the third year, he started to be rude and impatient to me and he vented his dissatisfaction in life on me. But I just thought he was under too much pressure. Everything would be fine.

In the fourth year, he started hitting me. It really hurt. My body was covered in bruises but I could show it to nobody. When I showed any hints of resistance, he would hit me harder. I had tried to escape, but he threatened me with our son.

“If you dare to escape, your son will take your place. So do not even try to think about running away.”

His words hurt me. He didn’t even think Timmy was our son! The anger in my heart was growing but I couldn’t lose my temper, it would only worsen the situation. I must hide my anger to protect my son and myself.
Two years like hell had passed and I had turned 29. I was no longer that young naive girl. In the last two years, I had thought of countless ways to escape, and finally came the day to implement my plan. Once I was shopping, I secretly went to the black market and bought a knife and a bottle of sleeping pills. Before he came back, I put a few sleeping pills into his cup. Covered in coffee, he could not smell anything. I watched him nervously. With not much hesitation, he took a sip! It took effect very fast, and he fell asleep after 30 seconds. I took the knife out. I knew that with just a little force, “my dear husband” would die immediately. But I found that I couldn’t force the knife down. I had frozen there for 10 minutes. At last, I threw the knife away and got out of there. I had thought of many ways to bring my son with me without being noticed. Luckily, my son was clever and sensible. He got into a giant box himself so that I could bring him with me together. Finally, I stepped out of the “cage”. “I am free,” I yelled in my heart.

“…… Amina watched as another train passed, leaving her rooted to the platform, alone. She was holding the box with her kid inside on the top of her head but she didn’t find the luggage box heavy because the luggage was her hope, her future and the real love of her life. She would get on the next train, she told herself with less certainty than last time she had said it. She had known that leaving would not be easy, but she had not realized it would be this hard. At last, she got on the next train successfully before her husband could get to her. She looked at the scenery outside the window and whispered to herself, “I am free.” After her grand escape, she emigrated to Hong Kong and reunited with her family. She has changed her name. She is now called Anastasia, which means “resurrection”, and is having a brand-new life with her son.”

“Mummy, what is this story about?” a young boy asked.

The woman laughed and said, “Love is not as beautiful as a fairy tale. Don’t believe in happily ever after. Train yourself and stay strong. Your destiny can only be changed by yourself, not a prince or princess that marries you.”

The young boy hesitated and asked, “Mummy, what was your name in India before you came to Hong Kong?”

The woman smiled, “Amina.”
The Wealth on the Canvas
4F Angus Chan

I cursed as I stepped into an irritating puddle while I trudged ahead towards the bus station. This sporadic downpour was surely getting under my skin. That was the last thing I wanted after my dragging and tiresome day at work. I glanced up and saw the Peninsula Hotel in all its glory. The sheets of rain blurred the alluring framework and extravagant lights, giving the glamorous architecture a fuzzy silhouette. The rain gave this prestigious hotel a seductive, almost magical feeling. How I yearned for a night of rest there. That would be the exact thing my overworked bones needed.

I shuffled forward with my fatigued legs, as an magnificent, dazzling azure Lamborghini Aventador zoomed pass me. Abruptly, the car drifted into the hotel, tires screeching loudly, and came to a sudden halt facing me. The drift marks scorched the road and singed the air, leaving a pungent and acrid odour of burnt rubber in the air. My nose twitched at the nauseating scent as my eyes got a better focus on the car. The sleek, streamlined frame, the immaculate, impeccable form, looked somewhat... familiar?

Beep, beep, beep...

My mind drifted into an older memory three years ago. I was storming down the stairs impatiently and violently barged open the door. The door to my brother’s room. The room stank of paint, as always. I stared into the room and saw an azure Lamborghini on a wide canvas, located in the centre, under a cerulean sky, with a few patches of clouds visible. The painting was only half completed, with the right-half of the landscape left blank. The room looked like it had been swept by a hurricane. The room was ablaze with an array of colours, a smudge of sanguine red here and a riot turquoise there. I glared at my brother who was sitting on a stool, paint brush in hand. His form was no better than the room. His whole body seemed drained of stamina, his back bent, his hair in a frenzy and his exhaustion distinct in his weary features. He hadn’t slept in quite a while. The only thing that sparkled was his green eyes, glowing like an emerald, looking affectionately at his painting.

“Have you been painting again, Jonathan?”

“Y...yes?” His voice quivered with tiredness. No. There was something else. Fear.
“Even though you should be looking for a job and for once do something for the family?” Anger and aggravation leaked through my voice. Jonathan looked as if he was cornered by a dreadful beast, retreating to the edge of his room.

“You know, Jonathan, it has been years that we have endured rebellion. You have reached the limit of Mother, Father, and my patience, and all you do is sit here and paint. You won’t find an actual job, Jonathan, you’re a disgrace to the family.” Rage has muddled my brain, I looked at the painting and it stung my eyes. I rashly grabbed the handle of a paint can and swung it in a wide arc...

“No no please no!”

...and scattered blotches of crimson red on the painting. The crystal clear sky was blemished with stains of scarlet blood. My brother’s knees gave away and sagged on the floor.

“I never had a brother like you.”

Beep, beep, beep...

My mind snapped back to reality as the door of the car gradually unlatched. A tall man in a dashing black suit stepped out of the car. His obsidian hair gleamed with wax, with his head high chest out. He surveyed the area like a military commander, then marched towards the hotel lobby like a soldier. He has transformed so much, but I still recognized him, his glittering emerald eyes are unmistakable.

I caught up with him hastily with my quick, long strides. I patted on his shoulders and he flinched so suddenly that I took a step backwards.

“Who is this?” He said as he whirled around. “Ah, if it is not my miserable, pathetic brother,” he sneered mockingly.

“It’s been long since we met, Jonathan, where have you been?” I inquired doubtingly. My eyes uncontrollably drifted to the splendid blue car.
“Wondering how your poor, pitiful brother got so wealthy unexpectedly? Well, I heard your advice for once and got a job, a job even more favourable than yours,” he gloated arrogantly.

“No one could have made such a fortune in such a short amount of time!” I declared.

My brother’s face darkened. “Do you know what I’ve gone through to achieve such status? First you discourage me from my hobby, then you distrust me when I am successful. What had I done to have a brother like you?”

“That isn’t what I meant…”

“You had always despised me,” His voice rose, filled with vehement aggressiveness as he took a step forward, and shoved me backwards with all his might. I tripped onto the road behind me, and saw a blinding white light and heard horns blaring from my right. Excruciating pain overcame me, and all I could sense was my brother’s cackling...

“I never had a brother like you!”

Beep, beep, beep...

I sluggishly opened my fagged out eyes and was overcame by the bleach white background of the hospital. The monotonous beeping from the cardiac event recorder was reassuring. Fragments of memories from my accident came back to my mind: I was leaving my office in Tsim Sha Tsui when a champagne gold car slammed into me.

“You’re finally awake.”

I shifted my head to my left and saw my brother. His hair was in a frenzy and splotches of paint still lingered on his shirt. He got his jacket folded into something like a pillow and placed it on a table. He must have slept here.

“I... I got something for you.” He stammered bashfully as he reached for a large flat item under the table. I took in spectacular painting with my eyes. It was the painting I ruined.
However, the blotches of red paint were gone, replaced by a stunning sunset that gleamed like a ruby. Inside the automobile, my brother and I were chatting joyfully, driving into the sunset. I felt a pang in my heart.

“D...do you like it?” He asked timidly.

“I like it very much.”
Save Our Environment

5A Moses Lee

Dear Editor,

I’m writing to express my concern about the aggravating problem of our daily municipal solid waste disposal. According to the statistics from Greenpeace, more than 9000 tones of solid waste disposal is discarded in Hong Kong every day.

Although the solid waste may be thrown to the landfill, the landfill in Hong Kong is reaching their maximum capacity.

In Hong Kong, there are three landfills to tackle the solid waste but all of them are now reaching their maximum capacity. You may say incinerating can be a good idea to deal with the solid waste disposal, but Hong Kong has no incinerator. Using incinerator is deleterious to our health too as it will release toxic gases and carbon footprints. To remedy this pressing situation, first we need to know is how this problem was engendered. As of now, there are more and more food residue and household waste, the consumption behaviour is to blame because the lay public are becoming wealthier. There are conspicuous consumption, excessive consumption and emotional consumption. These consumption behaviours are reasons that cause the aggravating solid waste disposal. Facing this problem, the government had not even set up any useful levy or laws to alleviate the problem, such as polluters-pay-scheme, it has been discussed for two decades but it has not been implemented yet, a levy on household waste has been discussed for a decade but a decision is yet to be made.

To deal with this problem, we need to have some immediate actions, short-term measures and long-term strategies.

For immediate actions, we can donate leftover to the Food Bank or change the consumption behaviour. Consumerism is to blame. Hong Kong is a prosperous city, our people tend to buy a lot more than necessary. Excessive consumption is a common problem in Hong Kong. This is a result of both conspicuous and emotional consumption. People buy more than they need just to show off their wealth among peers in order to stand out. They also buy without thinking twice. Although it is hard for us to change the consumption behaviour immediately, we can start from now on, try to think twice and more carefully before buying things, don’t be impulse-driven.
For short-term measures, legislation is a good idea to deal with the problem. Let’s take Taiwan as an example, it is doing extremely well. Their success comes from the polluters-pay-scheme. The Taiwanese government charges ten Hong Kong dollars for every kilogram of waste produced by the public. This act does not only make their people produce less waste, but it also leads them to look into the problem seriously. Throughout the process, the public awareness towards environmental protection has significantly risen. Besides polluter-pay-scheme, household waste levy or plastic bag levy is a good measure to alleviate the pressing problem. It can urge the people not to produce that much household waste and not use so many plastic bags as the landfill may need more than 20 years to decompose plastic bags, using incinerator will release toxic gases.

For long-term strategies, the best way to eradicate this problem is through education. We need to teach our next generation about environmental protection and green lifestyle. Let’s teach them to live without producing solid waste which is unnecessary, such as food residue or buying some commodities with luxurious packaging. It is only through education to turn around the distorted mindset of some consumption behaviour or wasting food.

Having a green future is in sight! Let’s collaborate and have concerted effort! Little difficulty is there to conceive having a green Hong Kong!

Yours faithfully,
Chris Wong
Solid Waste Disposal
5A Marco Lam

Dear Editor,

I’m writing to express my concern about the serious problem of our daily solid waste disposal. According to a survey conducted by the Environment Protection Department, more than 9000 tonnes of solid waste is discarded in Hong Kong every day and the situation is even more severe since our society doesn’t have enough awareness towards environment protection. To remedy the situation, we must recognize this problem and alleviate it as soon as possible.

Currently, the way to discard waste is by bury it at three landfills, which are reaching their limits. Besides, incinerators were demolished due to the emission of toxic gases, which are detrimental to our health. The key point is that the government isn’t developing some effective and feasible solutions to rectify the problem. A household waste levy has been discussed for more than a decade but a decision is yet to be made. Why don’t we learn from other countries’ policies?

Let’s take Taiwan as an example. Their polluters pay scheme is doing extremely well. Charges are given to each kilogram of waste produced by the public. This do not only makes their citizens produce less waste but also draws their attention to the serious problem. As a result, public awareness has significantly risen which I believe our government can learn from. For a long-term strategy, the government could start by educating the next generation that environmental conservation is of utmost importance.

Excessive consumption is also one of the problems in Hong Kong. Our people buy a lot more than necessary while little emphasis is devoted to recycling. Greenpeace interviewed 278 people after the Mid-Autumn Festival in 2020. The result depicted that on average a family bought more than 2.7 boxes of mooncakes but discarded 0.9 of them. So why do Hong Kong people tend to buy so many mooncakes? This is a result of both conspicuous and emotional consumption under consumerism. People buy more than they need to show off and don’t consider the decisions and their impacts before buying them. Yet, the case of mooncakes boxes is just a tip of the iceberg. To resolve this problem, we need to start with education, which is a very long-term strategy. For now, short-term measures like campaigns
and propaganda have been carried out by society to raise people’s awareness of wasted moon cakes. Although it only alleviates the pressing issue, it’s definitely better than doing nothing.

How about the unsold mooncakes? Should we recycle, donate or discard them? For example, Wing Wah Mooncake Factory throws unsold mooncakes away directly. The mooncakes themselves would not be the problem, but their excessive packing is. Luxurious packaging is applied on mooncakes since it is believed that people find the packaging appealing and want to show off. Again, consumerism is to blame. Donating them to people in needed would be the best form of short-term measures. However, the best way to eradicate this is through education. Teaching the next generation about environment protection is paramount. Education is the only way to turn change the distated mindset of a generation. I hope that one day our next generation can lead us to a greener future.

Yours faithfully,
Marco Lam
Tuesdays with Morrie – Reflection on the Chinese Education System

5A Muggie Chan

Good morning educators, teachers and parents. Nowadays, many parents believe that their children need to have a sharp competitive edge in the academic area. Therefore, many people believe that the Chinese education system is better than the Western one because the former places a strong emphasis on academic performance, which can give children an edge over their competitors, while the latter focuses on the overall development of students. But is the Chinese teaching methodology really more successful and beneficial to students? I really doubt it. After reading "Tuesdays with Morrie", I came to realize the meaning of education is much more than just academic results, but about helping students to develop their own perspectives and independent mindsets. Now, I would like to compare the differences between the Chinese and Western education systems and find out why the latter is more suitable for students in this time and age.

First of all, the Chinese education system focuses too much on results rather than process, and everything is about getting higher marks. Also, with various regulations and restrictions, students are forced to learn things they are not interested in and follow instructions blindly. This kind of education can turn people into "exam machines", but it fails to develop their critical thinking. Moreover, lessons are being taught in fast pace in order to catch up with the packed schedule, which only puts more pressure and burden on students. Also, because of the monotonous and dull learning atmosphere, students have no interest in learning and even develop huge resistance to it. With this cramming method, students may be able to get high marks but beyond the scores, everything else is a failure.

On the other hand, the Western education system focuses more on the progress than the results, which means it’s a more liberal and friendlier method. In “Tuesdays with Morrie”, the writer mentioned that Morrie is a teacher who does not care much for the grades. Instead, he teaches his students about empathy and love, things that are more profound than the scores. Students are motivated to show their creativity and raise questions beyond textbooks. Under the Western education system, teachers are able to use the most suitable teaching method for different students without too many restrictions. They are also able to motivate their students to take control of their own learning while offering helpful and constructive advice. Only in such way can students unlock their full potential and develop a healthy learning attitude.
Other than the learning environment, there are also huge differences when it comes to the bond between teachers and students. Under the Chinese education system, teachers are often demanding and harsh to their students as they have common understanding that strict teachers make outstanding students. However, it does not. It only intimidates students and discourages them from their studies. Students may become afraid of making decisions, being worried about making mistakes and being given severe punishment. Moreover, those who fail to live up to their teachers’ high expectation will be blamed; in the end it will only lower their self-esteem. It comes as no surprise that students fail to develop a good relationship with their authoritative teachers. On the contrary, there is a casual relationship between teachers and students in most Western countries. In “Tuesdays with Morrie”, the writer called Morrie “coach” and he was pleased with it. He even replied “I’ll be your coach and you will be my player. You can play all the lovely parts of life that I’m too old for now.” Instead of being a traditional and serious teacher, they are more like true friends who are willing to give you advice anytime. In the Western education system, teachers tend to encourage students to make decisions on their own and have interaction during classes. Their teaching methods are more reasonable and equip students with good communication skills and make them into a team player. Not only do they provide emotional support, they also spare no effort to nurture proper moral and civic values in students, allowing students to become an eligible citizen.

However, the two education systems are in line with each other. Both systems have the same teaching goals; they all aim to impart knowledge to the next generation. Despite their differences in the methodologies and the understanding of morality, the two systems both guide students to be better people and provide them with moral education. According to Han Yu, a well-known educator of the Confucianism, there are 3 roles teachers should play: the one who imparts knowledge, the one who teaches students the skills and the one who resolves students’ doubts. So, just like the Western education system, we can see that the Chinese teaching methodologies also value the morality and bond. The two systems might not be that different form each other on some concepts.

To be frank, the Chinese education system has its advantages but there are also even more loopholes that we should not ignore. We must rectify the mistakes in order to strive for excellence and provide our next generation with better education. Thank you.
What Makes a Great Teacher

5A Ceci Yao

Good morning, everyone. It is an honour for me to share my views today on the topic of “What makes a great teacher”. Before I start my speech, I want you to think of a great teacher you have come across in your life. Well, probably you are now wondering how I define the term “great”. Of course, the word, “great” can be interpreted in various ways. Here I would like to share five qualities that a good teacher should have and I will summarise my ideas below with the word, “GREAT” itself.

To begin with, the letter “G” means being “Goal-oriented”. As the old saying goes, “learning without an aim is like sailing without a compass”. An outstanding teacher should be like a shepherd guiding and leading students on the path of learning. This is particularly important in a society like Hong Kong, which has an exam-oriented education system. A clear goal steers ones towards their dreams. In the context of the HKDSE, teachers should set a target for students such as what they should master at the end of each class so that students can work their way around to preparing their exam or going into the workforce in the future.

Second, “R” stands for “Respect”. Hong Kong is a melting pot which means students may come from a myriad of backgrounds, be it their ethnicity or socio-economic status. Under no circumstances should teachers have bias on any of the students on grounds of their culture or language. Instead, a good teacher respects and acknowledges those differences and tries his or her best to cater to students’ individual needs, interests and abilities.

Moving on, “E” stands for “Effort”, which is of paramount importance. You should put your heart and soul into teaching - creating lesson plans, setting lesson objectives, planning activities, and devising assessment plans before each class. You should also devote your time to fostering a positive and supportive, yet challenging learning environment. Moreover, an extraordinary teacher should look for opportunities for self-improvement by reflecting on their own teaching and pedagogical methods.

Next, “A” stands for “Amusing”. The HKDSE can be boring, but teachers cannot. This is made easier with the advent of technology as teachers can integrate different IT tools into their lessons. For Maths teaching, teachers can use some interactive apps like “Hakitzu Elite” which lets teens compete with their friends in a fun robot combat game while learning to code. As far as language learning is concerned, “Kahoot” or “Quizlet” are definitely the apps
to go to. You can customise your teaching using those apps. As we know, game-based learning not only allows pupils to have fun, but it also helps ignite a love for learning by drumming up the interest.

Last but not least, “T” stands for “Teachable”. You should believe that all your students are teachable provided that you have the right teaching methods. Encourage your students to be autonomous. Independent learners are more self-motivated and they are more willing to take responsibility for their own learning. A great teacher should guide and lead them to find the solutions to problems instead of giving them the solutions right away.

Let me recap the five qualities, “Goal-oriented”, “Respect”, “Effort”, “Amusing” and “Teachable”. Together, they make a GREAT teacher. I hope my speech has shed light on how to be an excellent teacher. Thank you.
Don’t Distort Beauty!

5B Charlotte Pang

Dear Editor,

Nowadays, it is inconceivable that a large number of people are taking cosmetic surgery too lightly. They deem that undergoing plastic surgeries are like changing clothes. This phenomenon is alarming. Celebrity effect, craving for better job prospect, and peer pressure are the culprits behind this worrying trend.

Most laymen judge people by their appearance. In order to gain self-confidence, people are driven by a desire to have cosmetic surgery to enhance their look. However, surgeries are only a quick fix to your outlook, every time a surgery is completed, you will always find it is not enough and are tempted to have another enhancement. It turns into an addiction. Not only your self-esteem is not boosted, complications may also arise when you go under the knife. When things fall apart, it is too late to reverse all the irreversible.

In addition, teenagers are blinded by the belief that going under the knife can help them gain recognition and approval from their peers. During puberty, youngsters face peer pressure. When their friends decide to have a nose job, in order not to be isolated and become lonely, they would succumb to the pressure and follow suit. Manipulated by bandwagon effect, they sometimes make impulsive decisions. Nevertheless, be it a small change in one’s nose or a radical change in our body, there are always risks. Cosmetic surgery poses a serious threat to health, it deals a lethal blow not only to physical health but also psychological well-being. Failure in surgeries, scars and medical complications can put people’s life in jeopardy.

Better job prospect is another driving force behind the prevalence of cosmetic surgery. In the showbiz, celebrities, actors and models rely heavily on appearance to maintain, if not heighten, popularity. They place much emphasis on their outlook and body shape as these are linked to their fame and the ability to generate income. To illustrate, Kim Kardashian has undergone several surgeries, from getting a nose job to injecting botox, from getting a fuller top lip to opening up her eyes, just to attract more followers and sponsors.
To be frank, whether a person is beautiful depends not on her appearance but her inner beauty. “Beauty is only skin deep, ugly is to the bone!” An attractive outlook may give others a good first impression, but it will not last and is superficial. We should all learn to appreciate the virtue and characters of others. A kind heart and respectable personality should always be valued over temporary appearances. That is why we should never see plastic surgery as a remedy to your self-confidence and popularity among friends.

All in all, cosmetic surgery brings unimaginable harms to us. We are all responsible to stop this disturbing trend and the obsession of beauty. Our abilities cannot be enhanced by surgeries, our true beauty cannot be uplifted by surgeries and our future cannot be rewritten by surgeries! Never distort what true beauty is!

Yours faithfully,

Chris Wong
4Es – The Secret Behind a Great Teacher

5C Phoebe Cheung

Good afternoon young ladies and gentlemen, from university to society, what a major step in life! I am very honoured to be given the opportunity to speak with you at your congregation! It was just a decade ago that I was sitting in your seat wondering what future lies ahead of me. Henry Adams once said, “A teacher affects eternity, he can never tell where his influence stops.” Upon reading the quote, I started questioning myself. What can I offer to my students? How would I influence the next generation? How do I achieve greatness in what I do? By adopting the 4Es, the mystery of my life has been solved.

The first E means the obvious, education. When it comes to the roles of a teacher, the first thing that spring into our head is being an educator, to pass on knowledge to our students. It is true that as teachers, we should enlighten them intellectually. Under the exam-oriented education system in Hong Kong, students face cut-throat competition, exam results play a large part in determining their future. The system puts too much emphasis on scores and grades. What about Teenagers’ holistic development? Their whole person development is often undermined if not ignored. Bear in mind, we teachers should go beyond passing down knowledge, we ought to educate them morals, we ought to teach them how to be an upright person, we ought to show them how to cope with the ever-changing world. The current education system is nothing more than a spoon-feeding machine. We are not machine, we should take the wheel and be the beacon of light to enlighten the ducklings not only intellectually but also morally!

The next E stands for encouragement. Not all ducklings are brave enough to take on challenges and jump out of their comfort zone. That’s the time teachers come in handy. As the old saying goes, “Children are born with wings, teachers help them to fly!” As a facilitator, we should encourage them to make mistakes and learn, encourage them to dream, encourage them to fly! Don’t ever underestimate your influence! My teacher once told my class, “When you are going through hell, walk through it!” Little did he know what he said had engraved in my heart and became my booster in worse times. Without his words of wisdom, I would still be in hell! Dear graduates, everything we say means something to somebody in our classroom. So never shy away from emboldening your students to challenge the status quo and to overthrow the age-old stereotype. A little goes a long way. It is our duty and we are born to impact the future pillars of the society!
The third E refers to equality. Every duckling is unique in its way. As the Confucius saying, “To teach students in accordance with the aptitude.” Our job is to embrace its uniqueness and let their individuality blossom. Since every student is different, each has a distinctive way of learning. Employing diversified teaching strategies and being broadminded are therefore essential to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Crash the old tiring thinking that grades is only indicator for measuring how successful one is. Discern talents! Stretch potentials! Be the one letting each of your students end up happily in their lives as an architect, a singer, a chef, a lawyer, a dancer... Instead of conforming to a standard, give room for them to become special. Instead of counting achievements, aim for bringing happiness to them. Treat everyone equally regardless of their scores and grades. Every piece in a puzzle is distinctive, and a full puzzle requires all pieces to fall into their place. Allow them to stay in their own shape. That is the solitary way for a puzzle to be completed.

The last E represents enthusiasm. “Do it with passion or not at all!” Passion is the driving force that keeps us going. It is of paramount importance for us not to let our enthusiasm fade away with time. We should always be 100% dedicated to our job and our students. Without passion, how can we discrete talents and inspire our kids? Sound easy? Truth be told, sustaining passion over years is easier said than done. Prospective teachers, being a teacher is not merely a job, it is a lifelong commitment! It can be tiring sometime. The outcome, however, triples if not quadruples the inputs. The sense of accomplishment you can get by all means is tremendous and immeasurable. That is also the elixir for me to stay enthusiastic in my career up till now.

All in all, fellow teachers, are you ready to leap into society? Let’s turn from spectators into participants. We are soldiers finishing training and ready for combat. We are here to fight the war and the only winning formula is to education our future pillars with enthusiasm and equality. Learn the 4Es. Practice the 4Es. Spread the 4Es. Thank you!
Don’t Conform, Be Transformed!
5C Anthony Lam

Dear Editor,

I am writing to discuss the worldwide trend of obsession with physical beauty. Thanks to such obsession, cosmetic surgery has become a multi-million industry. According to a recent survey, the number of people who have considered going under the knife for a more appealing appearance has quadrupled throughout the last decade. It is doubtless that such a trend is alarming as plastic surgery, whose seriousness is undermined by the world, can be detrimental if not fatal.

One of the reasons behind the success of the industry is the common belief that an improved appearance can equivalently improve one’s life. A 24-year-old university graduate who is now working in an insurance industry shared her belief in an interview that her current job is the fruit of not only her hard work, but also the rhinoplasty surgery she decided to purchase, being faithful that it will boost others’ impression on her. It is added by the interviewee that her reshaped nose is one of her secret weapons persuading potential customers as it gives her confidence. In addition to job opportunities and work performance, marriage prospects and romantic relationship will bloom with the help of her adjusted face injecting botox. As joking as the pun “your face your fate” gets, that appearance plays a pivotal role in first impression and romance is undeniable. In general, it is believed that “upgraded” faces help people climb up the social ladder.

Ironically, as much as plastic surgery brushes up one’s confidence, it is a universal truth that people have an endless desire to beautify themselves. The one fatal side effect behind the glittering glamour cosmetic surgery brings is addition. It starts out as an afterglow and going back to have another surgery performed. However, things can escalate quickly as people dissatisfied with their looks would not be satisfied after just one surgery. The never-ending will to “perfect” their faces results in undergoing surgeries again and again. A reliance on cosmetic surgeries to acquire confidence is created in the process and eventually a vicious cycle is formed. Mentally, people having such disorder feel insecure, diffident and unconfident as time passes, ending up under excessive plastic surgeries leading to a heavy
bill. The society does not lacking examples of plastic surgery addicts carrying monstrous debts and going bankrupt. Be it mental or economical, it is deleterious to one’s life.

To make matters worse, the rising popularity in teenage plastic surgery is disturbingly. Teenagers are desperate to be impressive in real life and more importantly on social media, which turns them into cash cows for the industry. Peer pressure aside, prone to celebrity effects, teenagers frequently get influenced by advertisements featuring popular stars, causing them to fall prey to cosmetic surgery. The change in views of society to plastic surgery plays the last straw. Through the years, cosmetic surgery has become less a taboo, one of the reasons being the influence of pop culture. A celebrity who has undergone surgery is no longer something shameful. As a case in point, Korean pop star Jessi openly and proudly addresses that she had her breasts augmented. Companies tend to play the risks down and coin them merely beauty services. Unfortunately, adapting new universal values, succumbing to peer pressure and under celebrities’ influence, teens or people in general are unaware that plastic surgery can put one’s health in jeopardy.

Scarring should be considered as a fortunate outcome as the hazards of cosmetic surgery can get disastrous. It comes as no surprise that surgeries will end up nasty as medical complications arise. As attractive as an upright nose looks, rhinoplasty, occurring close to respiratory related organs can be lethal. Having difficulty in breathing and even suffocate to death can happen. When extremely slim is considered fit in this time and age, liposuction is popular among teenagers. Potential pitfalls are that teenagers are premature for surgery, affected by excessive fluid loss, ultimately suffering from organ disorders for the rest of their lives. Without a doubt, going under knives always comes with risks, not to mention illegal doctors out there risking infection or even surgery failure to perform unauthorized cheap cosmetic surgery.

Beauty does not last forever! Aging is inevitable and all the glamour eventually fades. What people should pursue is not temporary artificial physical beauty, but inner beauty to be truthfully respected and a healthy lifestyle to maintain physical condition even when we
age. Appearances can be deceiving, what truly makes a difference in the society are knowledge, skills and inner beauty. Holistic excellence is far more valuable than physical beauty in the long run. As the saying goes, “Our bodies-to every hair and bit of skin-are received by us from our parents”, we should learn to appreciate our own beauty. Only by learning to admire ourselves, we will be able to stop the society from blindly being obsessive and going after physical beauty.

Yours faithfully,

Chris Wong
Is Signing up for a Tutorial Class a Must?
5C Kei Chi Sum

Start a conversation about students joining tutorial class and there will be a staggering number of conflicting ideas. Take a stroll down the streets and it is not hard for you to see posters and advertisements of famous tutors and tutorial centres boasting how professional their teaching is. While some stakeholders comment that students who have not signed up will be at a disadvantage, I believe that their achievements may not be higher based on a number of compelling reasons.

Firstly, one of the pros of parents sending kids to tutorial centres is their kids can learn more exam techniques in tackling their exam papers. By paying several thousand dollars to those centres, students will be able to get condensed teaching notes and abundant supplementary exercise that enable them to score high marks in exam with ease. Take Chinese as an example: without having to do background reading or research, students going to tutorial centres can receive handouts and notes on skills on reading materials on classical Chinese, writing handouts, you name it. It is not an overstatement to say that students can be outstanding on academic performance if they study the booklets diligently.

Apart from learning more skills, another pro is students can learn to manage their time more effectively. Joining tutorial classes means students’ time will be more occupied. Very often, the tuitions do not start until late in the evening and finish well into the night. When they are home, they are then required to finish their homework from day schools. In other words, they are required to juggle with their schoolwork and assignments from tutorial centres. In order to reap the full benefits of going to cram schools, students must pay heed to their time management.

Still, roses come with thorns. Exam-oriented as they are, tutorial centres simplify or only focus on the exam syllabus. In order to achieve the highest possible score for students with the least time and effort, tutors tend not to analyze the questions in detail. Instead, they provide sample essays and model answers for students and ask them to memorize the answers. Gradually, not only will students lose the ability to think independently, but they will also fail to fully understand the subject, which can be counterproductive to students’ lifelong learning.
Secondly, tutors and tutorial centres undermine the importance of students’ whole-person development. The ultimate goal of these celebrity tutors is to boost students’ results and help them ace exam. They do not care if students feel desperate about their school life or whether they have struck a balance between their studies and rest. In most cases, students do not even have a chance to ask questions let alone communicating with them.

By and large, I am greatly convinced that it is not worth the time and money to send kids to tutorial centres as it may bring more harm than good in terms of students’ all-round development. I deem that teenagers should be allowed more freedom to enjoy their life and explore the world.
An Excellent Teacher is a Treasure in Life

5D Abbie Poon

Good morning ladies and gentlemen,

Have you ever thought about what an excellent teacher should be like? An excellent teacher is hard to find, difficult to part with, and impossible to forget. Just like many other young people, I hate attending lessons, studying or doing assignments. I failed most of my examinations when I was studying in primary school. Had it not been for Mr. Lam, the most exceptional teacher I had ever met, I would not have been inspired to become a teacher myself being awarded the Chief Executive’s Award For Teaching Excellence today. It is undeniable that a teacher should be knowledgeable, broad-minded and interactive. So, what are the essential qualities that make a remarkable teacher?

Let me tell you my own story. I was not a good student in my teachers’ eyes when I was young. They insisted that I was incorrigible that I was just a parasite in the society. When I felt despair and decided to give up, I met Mr. Lam, who was my English teacher. He was not any ordinary teacher for he didn’t give up on me. Instead, he taught me bit by bit from basic English to professional English, and he lightened my path to be a teacher.

An excellent teacher should showcase patience. We all know that not every student comes to school with a cooperative attitude. Some of them may be arduous to deal with, some of them may have undergone different traumatic incidents while some others may be rebellious and radical. As great teachers, we should instill into them positive values and attitude of being students. Acting as role models to them and embracing their deficiencies are two fundamental qualities for unsurpassed teachers. We should also be ready to face unexpected challenges anytime anywhere. Only when we address the crux of the matter can we succeed in being excellent teachers.

The Tang Dynasty Scholar Hang Yu once said, “A teacher is one who could propagate the doctrine, impart professional knowledge and resolve doubts.” A sterling teacher should be able to resolve students’ doubts and guide their future. A great teacher is like a candle – it consumes itself to light the way for others. Students are often lost when they are pursuing their genuine interest. As excellent teachers, we should offer them a helping hand; when they raise questions, we should provide them with a solution; when they misunderstand
something, we should provide guidance to expel their misconceptions. Be it academic or personal growth, brilliant teachers should give students handy tips to open them up to new paths and possibilities. We should go beyond passing on wisdom and be a mentor to our students.

Some may say, an excellent teacher is a teacher who treats all students equally. They should not be biased. However, the myth that teachers should treat every student equally should be rectified. How can a teacher expect students who are struggling to pass in a subject to score as high marks as the elites students? Therefore, an extraordinary teacher should understand the limitation of each student clearly. By understanding them thoroughly, teachers can teach them according to their ability and talents, setting different targets for different students. Confucius is a case in point. He taught his students according to their aptitude and most of his students eventually became masters in their expertise. An exceptional teacher realizes students’ capabilities and unveils their strengths. Teachers can adopt the most effective pedagogy only when they truly understand each student’s competence. By doing so, teachers can not only pass knowledge onto students, but also inspire them to be responsible to their own learning and explore a different path in their own lives.

To be an outstanding teacher is easier said than done. An excellent teacher is a treasure in life. Today, I am here to share the qualities of an excellent teacher to all of you, and I hope each and everyone of you will become a remarkable teacher. Education is always the perfect fertilizer to the cultivation of a new generation. Now it’s high time you contributed your part. Let us bear in mind what an unsurpassed teacher should be like and put it into practice.

Thank you!
Build a HOUSE and Be a Great Teacher!
5D Edmond Chan

Dear Graduates,

“Teachers encourage minds to think, hands to create and hearts to love.” Good evening ladies and gentlemen! Since most of you are going to be a teacher someday, let me start by asking you a question. What makes a great teacher? What qualities does an educator who changes life possess? Do you want to be a life changer? I see some of you are nodding your head. Allow me to talk about how and what I think a great teacher is.

Nowadays, education systems worldwide are pushing teenagers to their limits, Hong Kong is no exception. Despite implementing diversified teaching strategies, Hong Kong education system has always been notorious for its exam-oriented nature. The potential pitfall is that it puts youngsters under immense stress and pressure and therefore undermining students’ intrinsic motivation to carry on their studies. Stuck in the fixed mindset and stereotype of the system, they only do what the society expect them to instead of realizing their potential and talent. In this miserable plight, what can we, teachers can do?

HOUSE is what we can strive for to help our students! A house protects us from danger. A house is the place we feel safe and comfortable. A house is where we nurture our future pillars of the society.

“H” stands for humor. How can students learn in a boring class? It is undeniable that students these days lack motivation to learn. A joke or a pun can be the panacea to arouse their interest. Once they are engaged in the lesson, effective learning and teaching will fall into place. Preparing well before class is the prerequisite of a rewarding and fruitful lesson, yet, it takes two hands to clap, teaching and learning should go hand in hand to constitute a successful lesson. Cracking a joke or two at the right time can definitely raise and sustain students’ interest.

“O” refers to opportunities. There are so many new things to try in this world. Teenagers are unpolished gems, they are full of possibilities. As teachers, not only should we pass on knowledge to them, we ought to offer ample opportunities to our students to explore themselves and to discover their hidden talents. To illustrate, the “hall of fame” NBA basketball player Lebron James used to be an American football player when he was at high school. Then his PE teacher saw his potential in basketball and invited him to play in the team,
and the rest is history. Everyone, maybe your student is going to be a hall of famer in music, in dance, in design, to name but a few. You should be the one to provide them with abundant chances to shine! Who knows what your students will become when you give them a shot?

“U” represents understanding. Everybody needs somebody to care about. During puberty, adolescents face issues and problems. Educators should serve as the beacon of light to guide them through storms. Failing to hand in homework, being late to school and falling asleep in class are only the tip of the iceberg. What are the culprits behind all these ill-behaviours? Only by putting ourselves into their shoes can we understand the roots of the problems. Establishing rapport with them and understanding what they are going through is the only way out to deal with the crux of the matter! It is through communicating not complaining their mischievous acts can we overcome the ups and downs with them!

“S” symbolizes being strict but supportive. Being tough, holding students to high standards and being supportive should never be mutually exclusive. Some may consider that maintaining classroom orders and penalizing students means putting the harmonious teacher-student relationship in jeopardy. The fact is a great teacher should be strict but supportive at the same time. Practicing tough love, which means to constrain students’ behaviours and call out their mistakes for the betterment of them is a necessary evil. Giving constructive criticism and setting high standards for them may seem tough at first glance, yet, eventually they would understand it is for the sake of their improvement.

“E” corresponds to engaging students. Adopting a student-centered approach is of paramount importance when it comes to designing a lesson. It is worth pondering that cultivating plants to flourish takes time. Different plants require different nutrients, amount of sunlight and watering, so does nurturing students! Instead of spoon-feeding them knowledge, why not develop their autonomy and independence by imparting lifelong learning and independent problem-solving skills to them? As cliché as it may sound, “give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”

In a nutshell, grooming the next generation is like building a HOUSE! Understanding them, actively engaging them in lessons in a humorous way, supporting them through thick and thin and showering them with plentiful opportunities are the fundamentals to become an excellent teacher. Thank you!
E-learning is an Effective Substitute for Classroom Learning at Secondary Level

5D James Lee

Good morning adjudicators, ladies and gentlemen. Today’s motion is “E-learning is an effective substitute for classroom learning at secondary level”. As the first speaker of the affirmative side, I strongly support this motion because e-learning provides students with an unforgettable experience, which is beneficial to both teachers and students. The captains of both the affirmative and opposition have just agreed that e-learning is composed not only of E-books, but also E-teachers and E-learning engines. Based on this understanding, there are three irrefutable reasons why this motion should be supported. Not only can E-Learning connect teachers and students more closely, it is also a convenient and effective way for students to enjoy learning.

Before I go through our major arguments, I would like to take a moment to address some comments that my learned friend, the Captain of the Opposition, has just made. He claimed that E-learning would build a barrier between students and teachers, preventing active communication. My learned friends must be able to offer a long list of sound evidence showing their perspectives and vision. However, if we digest the statement and chew the cud, any clear-minded person can point out that this view has ignored the unlimited possibilities of means of communication. In fact, I am convinced that E-learning does not only provide a channel for teachers to stay connected to students, but it also makes it more effective by consistent monitoring while staying online. One of the main features of E-learning is that you could possibly have peer-to-peer interaction between a teacher and a single pupil. Teachers could conduct E-learning online, anytime and anywhere, meaning that there would always be a ‘warm-blooded’ and ‘lively’ human being capable of answering students’ questions, possibly through using private chat or call functions. This provides both effectiveness and privacy to both the students and the teacher. Should teachers receive the required training, E-learning would be an effective substitute for classroom learning at secondary level. Perhaps we are not yet ready for E-learning, but it’s the time to get ready.

Moving on to the argument on convenience, E-learning has facilitated students’ access to learning resources. With a stable internet connection, you could connect to different kinds of study materials, on a portable device such as mobile phones, laptops, and tablets. These
include live tutorials, various E-books, and even a stimulating study engine that could simulate various showcases that teachers would normally conduct during normal face-to-face interaction. While some might say E-learning is too technologically advanced, which would be an uneasy task for most students to access the E-learning materials, I strongly contend that students could eventually overcome the hurdle in a short period of time. As technology is leapfrogging forward, it has become easier and easier to make the most of the Internet. Furthermore, the ability to resolve challenges could possibly benefit students in their future career. It would be a pity to see secondary teachers or students get turned away simply because of an error occurring in their electronic device.

Last but not least, while face-to-face interaction might be intriguing for both students and teachers, it does not mean E-learning’s effectiveness is inferior compared to face-to-face interaction. Surely, E-learning does not involve physical interaction between students and teachers. However, E-learning could be far more interesting than you would normally assume. E-learning consists not only of E-books, but also live broadcast by teachers, which can involve some mini games being played online while in class. E-learning could be far more interactive with different teaching methods such as a competitive tournament scheme which involves students’ answering questions to receive awards or additional scores on their final student report. Students would also be amazed by the astonishing complexity and uniqueness of E-learning. Thus, E-learning could be an effective substitute, depending on what methods teachers have chosen to approach students.

Ladies and gentlemen, as aforementioned, our team firmly believe that E-learning, with care and dedication, could be an effective substitute for classroom learning at secondary level. Thus, today’s motion must stand. Thank you.
Be the Soul that Touches Another Soul

5E Karina Chik

Good morning, young ladies and gentlemen.

What essential qualities do you think an excellent teacher should have? The best teachers teach from the heart not from the book. Here are some characteristics a great teacher should possess. You can become a remarkable teacher who makes life-long impacts on students too if you follow the following tips!

A brilliant teacher is a gardener. Brilliant teachers demonstrate effort, passion and enthusiasm in teaching. They are dedicated to teaching and willing to spend time on it. With ones’ patience and care, students absorb and digest information better. So, the young ones are more eager to learn, thus knowledge is passed on effectively and that’s what excellent teachers do! What’s more, devoted teachers adopt diversified pedagogy to cater for students’ needs and inspire them to learn. They encourage students to learn outside the classroom instead of just learning from textbooks. I remember learning to ride a bike when I was five years old. My dad got behind me and began to push. I kept falling and yet we kept trying, until he finally let go and I began to ride the bike on my own. That’s what I did to learn how to ride a bike! However, can you imagine if I learned to ride a bike with my dad in a classroom? What would it be like? It’s definitely impossible! Students wouldn’t be inspired to learn in that way! Effective teaching is just like a gardener taking care of his seedlings patiently and carefully. Let’s plant a seed into students’ hearts and help them grow strong and develop, if not blossom.

An exceptional teacher is a coach. Exceptional teachers are able to motivate students and ignite passion, opening up students to new paths and possibilities. With the stimulation of exploration, intrinsic motivation is boosted and learner autonomy is nurtured. A remarkable teacher never spoon-feeds his students, let alone churns them out as identical products. With a strong and tight bonding between the teacher and his students, students dare to take risk because they believe they will be supported even if they fail, just like a coach putting his arms around his players. Outstanding teachers showcase expertise and pursue
excellence. The higher the expectations, the better the performance. This is how respected teachers nurture self-learning and make their students take charge of their own learning.

An incomparable teacher is a student. I know it sounds rather strange, doesn’t it? Can you visualize what this teacher looks like? I’m a teacher. Yes, but what I really mean is “an unsurpassed teacher acknowledges and respects students”. A capable teacher is not only a content expert, but also a dear friend of students. Teachers have to treat students like equals. They stay “foolish” and humble before students. They learn together with their students, along with and in front of them. Outstanding teachers not only love teaching, but also love learning. They think like a kid but act like an adult. They understand what’s inside students’ heads and the world inside them, but at the same time remain calm to protect and keep them safe. Excellent teachers listen to students, not just hear them. Imagine your teacher shows up in the classroom and says, “I can’t wait to learn with you!” You must feel excited and can’t wait to learn more with him. Students are imprinted in mind that learning is important when they see their teacher struggling through something they don’t actually know and then eventually discover the answer together.

Education is the key to success. We teachers are life transformers. Henry Adams once said, “A teacher affects eternity. He can never tell where his influence stops.” In the classrooms are the future. Let’s teach from our hearts, shed light on dark places and transform lives.

Thank you!
The Answer to Sustainability
5E Eunice Lau

Dear Editor,

I am writing to express my concern on the issue of rampant consumerism among teenagers. According to the Hong Kong Research Association, there is 30% more young adults filing for bankruptcy in 2010 in comparison with the data of 2008. And it is due to their failure to repay their debts, showing that living a materialistic life has been an alarming trend in our society. I would like to account for living with less, as well as explore how a simple lifestyle can be manifested in teenagers.

To begin with, preserving our planet would be the most compelling reason why we should opt for a minimalist lifestyle. In the past few years, the condition of our earth has been aggravating. Bushfires have been swirling around, turning the Amazon Rainforest and Australia from heaven to hell and cyclones sweeping across the Philippines, putting lives of many in jeopardy. This is owing to the escalating global warming crisis caused by this highly-materialistic era. Fast fashion is a salient example of mindless consumption of profound unsustainability. According to the 2017 Pulse of the Fashion Industry Report, the global textile industry was responsible for the consumption of 79 billion cubic meters of water, 1,715 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions and 92 million tons of solid waste. It is estimated that the horrifying numbers will soar by at least 50% in the coming ten years. The polluted water is then returned to the ocean, suffocating if not killing the marine animals. In the end, humans will taste the bitter fruits of our selfishness. Heavy metal and microplastic that we released into the ocean will accumulate in fishes, which will enter the food chain and end up poisoning our body when consumed. Global warming will also speed up the melting of the icebergs in Antarctica rising the sea level, devastating not only the vulnerable ecosystem but also people living in island countries like Maldives. We have to bear in mind that we humans cannot live without the planet but our earth can live without us.

On top of that, living with less benefits our health, both physically and mentally. Vicious work-life imbalance in the pursuit of wealth and material satisfaction jeopardizes our health. According to a recent research released by the University of Hong Kong, 97% of Hong Kong citizens have at least one symptom of “suboptimal health”. For example, fatigue, depression, indigestion, to name but a few. These symptoms of sub-health not only affected our performance at work, but also our family and social life, leaving us exhausted with no energy

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and no spirit. However, the psychological effects of owning a lot appears to be more severe. In this contemporary society, things change from time to time, especially during a pandemic. It is easy for humans to feel powerless as nothing is in control. Things that people own may have sentimental values and provide us a sense of security. It is totally fine as it is mankind’s innate nature to have a desire for material comfort. When we were infants, we stopped crying when we were giving a pacifier. In fact, the human brain is not equipped to deal with so much stimulation. Our possessions hinder us from examining our life. As our mind is shackled by the desire of owning more. By living with less, we may focus on quality over quantity, freeing ourselves from fear, as we would never need to worry about not catching up with the latest trend or not being as competitive as others. It also allows us to focus on the present, on what we already have. Material stuff is no longer needed to satisfy our sense of vanity.

Furthermore, living with less unshackles us from financial burden. Thanks to the consumer-oriented culture that has penetrated into every aspect of our lives, youngsters are obliviously indoctrinated to a hedonistic lifestyle. Being frugal is part of our traditional Chinese teachings, from Confucianism to Taoism - not buying things that we already have should have been imbedded in our minds. Yet, this clearly isn’t the case for the canning businessmen. Christmas, New Year and Easter have become spending sprees. Monday? No, it is Blue Monday. Friday? No, it’s Black Friday. Citizens are flooded by continuous promotions and advertisements. People on television and social media share how much their lives have changed after buying a product, as well as their luxurious daily lives reminding you that you can still buy more. The rise of social media also leads to conspicuous consumption tempting teenagers to buy luxurious brands and show off their lives. With the help of a little credit card, we can buy anything we like. Unlike the conventional wallet, it doesn’t slim down. The result of our consumption is only revealed on the last day of the month. It is when the youngsters finally find out that they have all been unconsciously dragged down into the abyss of spiraling debts. Living with less, in contrast, helps lower our craving for material comfort and helps us to escape from the vicious cycle of unsettled debts.

To prevent the above tragedy from happening, we ought to educate teens when they are young and inculcate into them the potential problems with consumerism so that we will never be enslaved by it. Campaigns could be held at school. A “Buy-Nothing Week” could be
introduced to teenagers. In that week, nothing could be bought except for food and daily necessities. This could help students realize that they could actually practice a frugal lifestyle. Living with less is not as complicated as they expect.

Schools and parents could also teach students to think twice before consumption and distinguish between need and want. It is also important to instill into teenagers that the possessions they own couldn’t define their value. They are still “they” without being “supreme” and “off-white”. Students could start simply from recycling, which has long been ignored in our society. Many a little makes a mickle. However miniscule our eco-friendly endeavours may seem in the face of the dominant mainstream trends, somehow someday, it will become conspicuous. It all starts with the individual and it starts with us.

Yours faithfully,

CW

Chris Wong
“True” Beauty of Instagram Hotspots
5F Kim Cen

Social media has integrated into our lives. People snap photos of beautiful spots and capture some special memories on Instagram posts. Recently there has been a prevailing view in Hong Kong that some housing estates are picked as the photogenic destinations on Instagram posts for a generation of Instagram users. Among them, Choi Hung Estate and Yik Cheong Building have come to the top two in terms of popularity. Every day, dozens of people flock there to get the perfect Instagram shots. The beauty of the housing estates has somehow become a burden of the residents living there. After all, what makes the issue so controversial? Why don’t we take a closer look at the opposing views towards the trend?

It is generally perceived that appealing pictures of hotspots are more likely to collect more likes from others on Instagram. Everyone pursues more likes and craves for a higher popularity among friends. “Having more likes gives me a sense of satisfaction. Therefore, in order to get more likes, I usually visit photogenic sites such as the housing estates, more than 1000 likes could be obtained in this way. It just made me feel like I am famous,” Mary Chan, a famous Instagrammer, said contentedly. The more likes gained, the more you’ve been recognized, the more satisfied you feel. We are gradually in conformity with getting more likes. Due to peer influence, we are more desired to collect likes. As a result, Instagram hotspots become people’s top picks and ubiquitous on Instagram.

It is a natural instinct for people to seek beautiful spots and share them on social media. Why are people shooting these public estates? One reason may come down to the unique architecture – and the color of Choi Hung Estate is particular. Choi Hung, whose name in Cantonese is rainbow. It is famous for its vibrant colors and pastel rainbow paint on the facade. It has 7 appealing colors of the light spectrum which is surprising, stunning and staggering. Comparing it to those conventional housing estates which are made of concrete in the typical grey color, beyond doubt, Choi Hung Estate definitely stands out and that is why Choi Hung Estate has won a standing ovation from many. Even the trendy Korean pop stars shot their music videos there in pursuit of aesthetic and eye-catching backdrops. Choi Hung Estate also draws in teenagers’ attention. Who doesn’t want to take a contoured, warm and popping selfie in front of the bright and beaming buildings for their graduation photo or Instagram that can’t be found anywhere else? Indeed, that everybody enjoys appreciating attractive and peculiar things and pose for photos with them is an unarguable truth.
More than the remarkable design of colors, the incredible structure of the Yik Cheung Estate also catches people’s eyeballs. The symmetrical patterns of the blocks and windows match with each other, just like an image of another half in a mirror. Hong Kong is known for its industrial and residential complexes, Yik Cheong Building is an ideal spot to capture Hong Kong’s famed urban density. “This is a prime location to view how some of the people in Hong Kong live. You can best feel the density of the city when you stand in the courtyard amid the buildings, which somehow gives you an illusion that you are in a big prison if not look up at the sky,” explained an Instagram photographer, Pricilla. It is the most well-known location and has been featured in movies like *Ghost in the Shell* and *Transformers: Age of Extinction*. Movie lovers surely crave for a fascinating adventure standing in the middle of the courtyard, the dark and moody tones of the buildings and the feeling of the mysterious atmosphere created in the movie.

Other than for its beautiful exterior, these housing estates are also the collective memory of the public. Many Hong Kong people came to explore and recall their nostalgic experience. “Whenever I step in the housing estates, I cannot stop recalling those by gone days that were filled with happiness,” smiled Peter Lee, a famous Instagrammer we interviewed. Here they could find the sense of belonging and human touch felt younger. The public housing estates are the miniature of the grassroots families. Choi Hung is one of Hong Kong’s first low-income housing estates, designed to be a permanent home for underprivileged families. The estate represented safety, security and a modern, affordable new home. A photographer Jimmy Ho won Sony World Photography Award with the picture of Choi Hung Estate and the title “Childhood”. It carries the collective memories, dreams and endless hope of the working class and the poor.

Speaking of which, the beauty of these scenic sites has led to some conflicts with estate residents and caused disturbance to the local residents. Influx of happy snappers flooding their hoods and hordes of people occupying the public spaces for residents is disturbing tenants. In Choi Hung Estate, scores of photo takers mean residents are often unable to use the basketball court and some residents have even reported visitors entering the building to take pictures. The privacy of the residents is invaded. Serious noise pollution is made by the tourists as well. “Our regular life mode has been thrown into mess. My family are getting
irritated about the noise made by the tourists,” a resident complained. In Yik Cheong Building, which is known for its incredibly dense and stacked flats, people flocked to the building and made there extremely crowded. One cannot even imagine how the life of the residents will be when there is packed with droves of people. The housing estates are now becoming a tourist attraction and the actions of the tourists are disdained by the residents there. The consequences can be formidable if there is no action to stop it. Even there are signs cautioning visitors against taking photos and urging them to have consideration for residents, but they have done little to remedy the perpetuating situation. The passion of the Instagrammers has caused them to ignore the signs and enjoy themselves at the expense of the residents. Surely the owners of the building have to do more than just put up signs, setting security guards at the sites might be effective to bar the Instagrammers from entering the housing estates.

Apart from the drawbacks, one resident Marco sees otherwise, he deems that the coming of tourists brings vibrant vibe to livelihood. “I can’t see a problem with people coming. I think it is good that they were coming to an estate that is ageing, to spend money and spread some vitality,” Marco commented. People made consumption here which hence boosts the economy. Small and traditional shops could have the benefits of it. Such vitality arouses awareness from the public and draws in conservation in prevention of demolition.

After all, what is the most important element to balance the residents’ lives and taking a beautiful photo? No one will deny that mutual respect and consideration for the residents are indispensable elements for constructing a harmonious yet dynamic society. With well-controlled number of visitors, wonderful Instagram posts and respect towards the residents are never mutually exclusive. Everyone in the society can hence shower with each other the joy of having a beautiful Hong Kong. And this could ultimately lead to the true beauty of Instagram hotspots.
A Four-Day Work Week: Innovative or Jeopardizing?

5F Yip Wing Yu

Ever since the dawn of civilization, mankind has always worked to the greatest lengths not only to attain our aim in social development, but also to garner a sense of competence while standing head and shoulders above our companions, colleagues or even competitors. It comes as no surprise that in this hustling and bustling society, there is a depiction of an overwork haul. Statistics show Hong Kong employees work 42 hours weekly, and nearly 90 percent of employees are enduring workplace stress, both leading to an unbalanced lifestyle. Desperate as it seems, is there a conducive yet commending solution to eradicate the above issue?

Yes, there is. With the advent of technology, working methodologies are significantly sped up. With that being said, some workplaces perceive that a five-day work week is no longer obligatory, implying employees only have to work four days or fewer. Extra day-offs are provided to enhance the quality of life. Yet, some show concern that it alters society’s operation too massively that fruitful rewards are not guaranteed. Can these concerns be debunked? Or, do these deep-rooted obstacles impede us from attaining such a favourable situation?

That a four-day work week is conducive to bolstering quality of life is an inarguable truth. Having more relaxation, you could feel a boost in your health well-being—and this is the most invaluable gain. Barely do we urbanites have time to wind down due to the breakneck development of our metropolis. As a compelling result, nothing is left behind but the emergence of sub-optimal health symptoms—colds, chest congestion and chronic fatigue. Imagine having an extra day-off. It is your choice to determine how to make the day wholesome and worthwhile. You might want to escape from the sedentary lifestyle since doing this reduces the risk of chronic diseases. Playing sport, or even just relaxing, can relieve the stress following the release of joy-manufacturing chemicals—endorphin. It releases a heavy burden on our shoulders and results in physiologically better health. Speaking of health, mental health also benefits from a four-day work week. While people might argue constant brain stimulation is vital for brain health, examples speak otherwise. When Gothenburg, a city in Sweden introduced a time-reduced work week for nurses, these nurses felt healthier, more content and energetic. Shopping, local sightseeing and accompanying significant others are the simplest yet effective methods to become more jovial in emotion. However, what we lack is time. Therefore, a striking opportunity is provided by the four-day work week.
For a workplace advantage, a company’s competitive edge can be sharpened through a holistic amelioration. The opposition may regard this claim as ludicrous. How can we increase our competitiveness if we have more time to rest? In recent years, our workforce has shown incapabilities. Exhausted employees, poor efficiency, abysmal financial management, the list goes on. It is of no dispute that our city is falling behind. Having the above factors summed up, inadequate productivity is the utmost contributing component. Studies have depicted that working hours and employees’ productivity have a crystal-clear correlation. The fewer the working hours they work, the higher the productivity they have. Are there any solid examples? Major enterprises tried to put the findings into practice, and the turnouts are indubitably coinciding. In 2019, Microsoft Japan rolled out the “Work-life Choice Challenge,” closing their offices every Friday. As expected, the overall labour productivity did increase, but with an unforeseen boom of 40%. Shake Shack, a prominent fast-food chain from the United States, trialled a four-day work week as well. After the trial, employees are more inclined to initiate work and are more willing to remain in their positions. With increased productivity, companies can reach an extra mile; with inhibited productivity, companies are entitled to fall behind. Be it engaging new work-techniques or enlarging envision, a four-day work week allows companies to become more preeminent, starting from the employees. The phenomenon is further illustrated with a quote from Takuya Hirano, President of Microsoft Japan: Work a short time, rest-well and learn a lot.

While it seems that a four-day work week is so picture-perfect that it deserves a standing ovation, we must first take a closer look at some concerns regarding this system—which lead to polarizing opinions and an impeded implementation.

A potential halt in our society’s operation is what bothers critics the most, defying one of the advantages emphasized by advocates. The concerned highlight the fact that the service industry is mainly composed of the service industry, with financial services, tourism, logistics and professional services being the four pillars. Some services are even meant to serve citizens 24/7 to facilitate convenience for more effective social development. Yet, with these vital services inaccessible on holidays, people are unable to deal with urgencies. At first glance, it might not seem to be a serious issue. However, when these unhandled cases stack up, it is arduously challenging to accomplish all the tasks, thus terminating the society’s operation. Therefore, the claim “a four-day work week is not feasible for the service industry”
is made. While this may seem to be a stumbling block, our skyrocketing technology development can mostly amend its flaw. ChatBot and Artificial Intelligence-powered services could fulfill customers’ needs as another approach. Nonetheless, tailor-made services should rely on office-based staff as they require circumspect details. It is up to employers to draw out a solution, perhaps letting employees have a day-off with rotation to ensure that at least some staff are present.

We are not to forget a possible infringement of labour welfare as well. Employees are having doubts about whether they can retain their labour rights and welfare. This concern can be traced back to unsuccessful experiments. In those attempts, employees are still expected to work for the weekly hours, but compressed in four days. In other trials, employees work for standard daily hours, yet they receive the same hourly wage as before. Employees feel that extending the working period each day is the same as working overtime, reducing work motivation. On the other hand, having fewer working hours yet the same hourly wage results in an inadequate income. The detrimental outcomes are even a wreck to the quality of life, considering the decreased engagement, productivity and happiness. Indeed, this can be averted with better workplace management. Employers could regulate the daily working hours to ensure that maximum productivity is reached. Raising the salary can be another option. For financially-insufficient companies, they might need to seek help from government authorities to subsidize welfare. The bottom line is that both the enterprises and authorities must cooperate and communicate. Or else, how can we maintain labour rights under such circumstances?

So, should we adopt the four-day work week? While our society is under development, we need to protect and promote our work-life balance sooner or later. A four-day work week is one of the viable options. Yet, it is still waiting for an opportunity to attest its effectiveness. Meanwhile, employees, employers and the government should join hands together to establish the groundwork for a work-life balance. With mutual acceptance and endurance, a desired quality of life is within our reach.
Cram School – a Panacea?

5F Vicky Hu

Tutors well groomed, duping themselves “exam prophets”, bragging about students’ results – the extensive media coverage has been a unique culture in not only the territory, but in Asian countries as well. From billboards to the sides of transport vehicles, gimmicks are omnipresent, in which tutors promise to help students ace exams. Considering the beaming achievers on the ubiquitous adverts, some give merits to the tutorial centers for sharpening students’ competitive edge, while critics assert that it is a total waste of time. After all, what makes the issue so controversial? Why don’t we take a closer look at the opposing views towards cram school culture?

According to a recent study, more than half of all secondary school students incline to have tuitions, either privately or in tutorial centers, principally to pass exams with flying colors. It is a natural instinct to wish to be highflyers, according to a pious follower of a prominent tutor, Mr. Smith, due to the high-stakes exam, the DSE. The make-or-break situation determines students’ future, either bright or bleak, prompting them to pursue additional classes for that additional support. In recent years, tutors successfully predicted exam questions, which admittedly uplifted students’ performance, additionally give rise to students’ crave to follow suit. Little imagination is needed to conceive how outstanding and prominent those could be, possessing detailed explanation and model essays. In this case, those who have not done the mock exam may be at disadvantages.

Speaking of which, many benefits do follow when one has taken tutorial courses, and that is why both parents and students consider it as indispensable. The bestselling point of tutors in the modern marketing hype is that they provide you with additional information and exam techniques. Most grammar school teachers, if not all, focus on inculcating knowledge to students mainly by understanding theories, which may require more time for students to master the curriculums. Given the limited class time, they may not be able to cover some basic concepts or formulas from the exam syllabus, which may help students’ understanding. On the contrary, tutors have a more flexible time and aim to equip students with concepts through mnemonic phrases. Complementary to day schools, cram school teachers may have a more detailed elaboration on related information, provided with some tips. A case in point is reading graphs of particles motion, where you may obtain more precise details through under curve area and slope with different x- and y-axis. DSE is indubitably a race against time, every single precious second should be well used in order to seize more
points. On no account should you attempt questions step by step slowly, while the skillful candidates have chosen the right answer promptly for those easy grades. Indisputably, students signing up for additional lessons can make them more skilled in dealing with corresponding tests.

Apart from being more knowledgeable both in curriculum content and exam skills, condensed notes and shortcuts to good grades offered may uplift students’ effectiveness in revision. Not only are the tutors proficient in what is covered, but also, they are more resourceful. With the help of a crew of elite assistants, tutors may arrange all sorts of “must recite notes” in an orderly and a systematic manner, either for better mastering of topics or enhancing memorization of “main points”. Some may even attach a scientific forgetting line, proposing “the most efficient” studying plan to boost students’ grades. Those outlines with several points out of paramount importance made, unquestionably save students’ time on making own notes in pandemonium. From the celebrity tutors surrounded by a crowd of candidates holding up handfuls of “5***” result slips, it is crystal clear how successful those handouts could help teens. There is no dispute that going to cram schools can give students timely and instant help with their public examination.

While proponents hold the view that without these extra lessons will make oneself lag behind, sceptics put forward the view that the functions of tutors are not irreplaceable, imperative nor indispensable. The downside of a plethora of time consumed outweighs the upside of “so-called tips”.

Some tutors pander to students by using vulgar expression or indecent anecdotes to please students, putting the quality and effectiveness of the teaching aside. “Why shall I pay for and spend time on enduring such unpleasant classes deviated from the original purpose?”, Mary, a candidate of DSE this year said. She added that due to the considerable sum of students, long queues before classes along the staircase or road has become no stranger to young adults. Adding it up with long class hours and traffic, which on average takes up to two to four hours per lesson, which in turn can definitely be used in a more productive and effective means by oneself. “I may have gone through several more past papers than the others every week”. It is asserted that the more flexible time allocation can let her focus on studying without being interfered with shattered tuition classes. Those who joined extensive courses, in fact, are counterproductive and at a disadvantage.
As for examination skills, those could be obtained through regular drilling. Regarding this issue, Tom, an achiever in DSE also reckons that solid foundation is rather crucial. With comprehensive understanding, you may find the tricks and the concepts covered in each question, which is applicable to all similar questions. From the suggested solutions, teens may improve themselves and summarize the tips, which can be equivalent to what can be obtained from cram schools. Though memorizing all “special formulas” from tutors, without clear images of the topics, all effort will be in vain. This view is supported by his own experience, in which his mark was fluctuating around the passing line in junior form, joining a wealth of cramming classes compared to gradual and steady rise in academic results in senior forms with own effort. From this case, we can safely conclude that the spoon-feeding and reinforcement of rote memorization in cram school does not guarantee success.

After all, what pave the way to a bright future? No one will deny that self-discipline and a love of learning are cornerstones of progress and success. With motivation and determination, even the most mediocre youngsters can become remarkable. With an indolent and hesitate mindset, even the most retentive and gifted adolescents are deemed to failure. Students, hence, should not feel compelled to enroll in tutorial classes. Whether jumping on the bandwagon or not, the choice is yours.
Irrational Discussion
5F Samuel Chung

Since we humans first embarked on technological advancement, social media platforms have become ubiquitous, indispensable and omnipresent in our daily lives. From Facebook to Instagram, from Snapchat to Twitter, we cannot live a day without them. But why did Mark Zuckerberg create Facebook back in 2004? It is generally perceived that when first created, social media platforms were thought to be a place where rational debate and logic would prosper. Yet, is that the truth?

The answer appears to be unexpected yet pessimistic. No. Constructive discussions are rarely seen on social media platforms. Instead, the platform is fumigated with blatant criticism, imprudent comments and polarized opinions. Users are constantly standing on the high ground, nitpicking and criticizing others in order to depict their moral one-upmanship. In fact, the original intention of creating social media platforms has been being skewed, twisted and distorted over years.

That commenting anonymously can protect one’s privacy is an undeniable fact. Whereas, it is hindering one’s tendency to bear social responsibility. It is unarguable that social media users have the right to say, but they have the responsibility to say the truth as well. By having an anonymous identity on social media platforms, users do not have to bear the consequences of sharing fake information and ill-conceived statements. Do you often see well developed, neatly organized ideas on Instagram? I don’t think so. Rather than logical debates, emotional and impulsive discussions are commonly seen on social media platforms. Through grinding out ridiculous statements and comments, users can stir up heated controversy. On the contrary, logical and fruitful ideas will just be sorted at the bottom of the list as they cannot catch users’ attention. It’s a natural instinct for humans to pursue and crave for ludicrous, exaggerated and irrational statements. From time to time, emotional ill-informed discussion is sure to follow its forward trajectory and invade various social media platforms, undermining rational debates and logic.

As a matter of fact, algorithms behind the platforms are conducive to the propensity of polarized opinions. Have you ever had the experience that advertisements appearing on the Interment are all your favorable items? Algorithms behind social media platforms work the same way. They are smart enough to only provide you with information that is in line with
your stance, no matter the political, environmental or ethical aspects. To garner users’ interest, computer engineers design such algorithms. Now imagine ten people with identical beliefs and stances sitting together, can they have a debate? Definitely not, there is nothing left to debate. This is exactly the image in the mirror of today’s social media platforms. Groups of individuals with the same values exist on the platforms. This, by no means can advocate, cultivate and thrive rational debate. Worsening the issue, when these groups meet each other by accident, futile, fatuous and feeble-minded criticism will be tossed and launched against each other. Under polarized ideas, logical debate cannot strive for a life.

Speaking of which, the leaders behind these social media platforms are to blame. As we lay it on thick for their innovative ideas, we must not undermine their significance in the current environment. These founders or leaders of social media platforms are unremittingly passing the buck over and over. They are not willing to shoulder the responsibility of amending, improving and enhancing their platforms to what people have conceived at the emergence of them. To acquire users and profit, they are always urging their engineers to develop the aforementioned algorithms. Little difficulty is there to conceive why social media platforms are that far apart from their original aim of prompting logical and rational debate.

It is of no dispute that social media platforms are not and have not been the breeding ground of rational public debate. The influence of the platforms in the US presidential election well exemplifies the problem. People tend to believe extensive reportages churned out by unauthorized media rather than the authority, which, according to some critics, is causing a great impact to the election result. Instead of being the breeding grounds of public debates, social media platforms have always been the so called “content farm” containing ludicrous content to attract users’ interest or the battlefield of polarized opinion groups. Only if we heavily underline the importance of critical thinking, mutual acceptance and respect, we humans, can shower each other with the greatness of social media platforms.
Light in the Dark Night

5F Jerone Chiu

What most teachers and students may not know is that depression is affecting more than 264 million people worldwide, according to the World Health Organization. In Hong Kong, as we all know, a place with fast pace, great pressure and high expectations, depression is undoubtedly more severe than many other places. Mental health issues must be dealt with as soon as possible, especially among youngsters. With a lack of resilience, we secondary school students may find it hard to overcome difficulties. With insufficient experience, we might not have a positive attitude to face the upcoming obstacles in our lives. Desperation, dread, despair build up, and depression may follow. That depression brings a great impact to a patient is an unarguable truth. One may lack confidence, lose friends, and might even commit suicide. Some of you may wonder, “Are there any ways to get rid of depression?” The answer is certainly yes. Every problem we encounter could be managed in several ways, and depression is not an exception. So, what can we do to cope with this horrible mental disease? Why don’t we take a closer look at a successful example in fighting depression?

It is often said that “misery loves company”, but it isn’t always the case. My friend Lucy, instead, went through a rough patch all on her own. Since primary school, Lucy had been joining several extra-curricular activities, such as skiing, table tennis, drawing and violin. Despite her packed schedule, she enjoyed her life and could even attain achievements in her studies and activities. Nevertheless, as we students all experience, secondary school life is a lot busier than in primary school. What Lucy didn’t expect was that revision was not as simple as that before. Imagine if you were not allowed to quit the activities but were imposed much more academic pressure, what would you do? Would you go to your great lengths to persuade your parents to let you manage your activities yourselves? Or would you try to prove that you have the ability to keep up your achievements? I believe that most of you will choose the first option, but Lucy did otherwise. She laid much emphasis on revision, but her activities consumed most of her time. Then, she performed well in neither her extra-curricular competitions nor her exams. She was afraid to tell her friends her failure, and she was even scolded by her parents of her laziness. She started to lose confidence and often thought that she was not doing well enough. Sadly, these accumulated more and more pressure, and Lucy finally suffered from depression. She could not concentrate in class, often wept silently in the washroom, and stayed away from others. She even told me afterwards that she had once dizzily stood in front of the railing by the sea, clutching her sweaty and shaky hands tightly. Had it not been her sudden fear of death, she would have dived deeply
into the saliva of the sea monster, and disappeared forever. Even I, as her bosom buddy, neither understood the tortures of sleepless nights or nightmares, recognized the hundreds of cuts on her forearms, nor quieted the thousands of Satan’s calls of death in her mind.

Fortuitously, a talk inculcating mental disease in an assembly made Lucy pluck up her courage to face her depression squarely. She solicited support from a social worker, and consulted a psychologist. She learnt how to manage her pressure, time and relationships. Guided by professionals, her parents agreed not to impose unnecessary pressure on her, and her situation became better. After knowing Lucy’s unimaginable experience in those few months, many of her classmates and I took the initiative to give her the warmest care and concern. With fewer activities, more emotional support and regular counselling, just after a few months, Lucy recovered from that horrible disease.

Depression is like a balloon. When too much pessimism accumulates inside, the balloon may explode and all the negative emotions burst out and overwhelm our mind. However, Lucy’s example tells us that battling depression is not as impossible as we conceive. Her story also reminds us that there are still many depression patients around us, be them our friends, our classmates, or our colleagues. Different people have different ways to help depression patients to get out of the dark. Here, I will provide three pieces of advice on how to fight depression.

For the patients themselves, they are highly recommended to wind down more. One of the most prevalent factors leading to depression is the cumulating pressure inside one’s mind. If patients consider spending their time for relaxation, this could help relieve the stress in their daily lives, thus making them feel more comfortable. For instance, working out can not only make us healthy, but can also release endorphins. Endorphins are useful to trigger a positive feeling in patients, helping them to extricate the bad emotions for some time. Another choice is to listen to classical music. Our brain will release dopamine, another chemical with similar effect with endorphins. These examples manifest that spending some time relaxing can be advantageous in nourishing optimistic feelings in patients, helping them defeat depression.
To combat depression, companions play an essential role. That everyone needs a source of support and encouragement is an unarguable truth. For a depression patient, what one needs the most is, beyond doubt, a person who understands one’s situation and is eager to be in touch with him. With similar background, it becomes easier for peers to stand by him, comfort him, and encourage him. Albeit that family members could also be able to communicate with patients and relieve their bad feelings, the generation gap makes it difficult for parents to accept and truly understand the patients’ thoughts. Many of us students will discover that our friends understand us more than our families. The power of friendship should by no means be underestimated. Sometimes, a simple care from a friend can warm the cookies of the heart. Therefore, there is a plausible possibility that the solicitude from friends can make the patient feel better, and this can conduce to a higher chance of recovery.

Are there any better choices for patients besides seeking help from their significant others? Absolutely yes! As a matter of fact, advice from psychologists is always highly encouraged. As professionals in mental health issue, psychologists have the knowledge, experience, and ability to help depression patients. Psychologists could judge the severity of the disease, and give appropriate treatments to patients. Medicines and counselling are universal ways to deal with depression, and statistics show that the therapies from psychological doctors have a greater impact on the recovery of depression patients. Furthermore, when significant others seem to have no use in comforting patients, psychologists can tackle this problem. Authorities often have a greater influence. With the same piece of advice, patients are more inclined to trust those from professionals than from others. Patients are willing to follow what psychologists tell them, and this can bolster the chance of complete recovery. Thus, seeking help from professionals is undeniably an effective way to eradicate depression.

Lucy’s story proves that there are always methods to grapple with depression, only if we pay effort to help the depression patients. I hope that every reader can enshrine the mental health problems in Hong Kong, and even in our campus. Confronting this mental disease cannot withstand complacency. In response to the severity of this mental health
issue, why should you teachers and students hesitate to refer to the three pieces of advice, and go to your great lengths to give a hand to depression patients? Prevention is always better than cure. Please bear in mind that even a simple aid may rekindle light in their dark moments. With endurance and encouragement, little difficulty is there to conceive how optimistic our future world would be.
Overcoming Onerous Obstacles 101
5F Mason Ma

You may have heard that a formidable creature lurks in the metropolitan shadows. It is irritating, melancholic and, worst of all, lethal. It exists intrinsically and extrinsically, and you would never get a siren or clue before the monster launches its siege and mauls and crushes your soul. It asphyxiates, it slashes, it stabs, and tragically, someone who just can’t bear the monster would go the so-called “easy-way-out”. What exactly is this vanquisher of human souls under its masquerade? Well, it turns out to be something that seemed to be imperceptible until the victim has reached his/her critical point, something that we walk past every day but neglected frequently – depression.

According to WHO numbers, approximately 264 million people suffer from this mental disorder. Generally speaking, the disorder causes difficulty in behaving rationally since the patient has been triggered by something that exists as a symbol of unfortunate events that the patient has experienced before. This makes the patient infuriated, stressed or even feeling obnoxious which trigger mood fluctuations spontaneously, and that may ultimately lead to suicide, which is the second-most predominant reason of death in teenage and young adulthood years.

Due to its extensiveness, the proximity to a depression patient may be unexpected. This is exactly what happened to me, who discovered that my friend, Merriman, had depression. When I knew this fact, he had already overcome this onerous obstacle in his brisk life so far.

Merriman, as his given name suggests, was a merry and jovial teenage boy at the age of 15 before he encountered depression. He always wore a grin on his face and not anyone of my friends would have envisioned that he would become a victim haunted by the horror of depression. However, when he had vanished from school for one week, my friends and I knew that something had gone wrong. According to his mother, Merriman was revising for his term test in his study break, but then he started remaining reticent even when his parents asked him what his frustration was. All of a sudden, Merriman yelled at his parents, “You don’t even understand me!” and went straight back to his room. In the following few days, Merriman easily got irritated when he encountered trips and falls in his revision. At one moment he would feel zealous and pumped up, the next moment he would feel hollow,
miserable and meaningless. These emotional roller-coasters became more and more frequent as the date of the test approached. Finally, he could not bear the pressure and seek cathartic release – he wept melancholically before the day of the test that he fell ill and could not attend the test. Considering that the problem was getting severe, Merriman’s parents sent him to the psychiatrist and he was diagnosed with depression. After questioning his parents, the psychiatrist unravelled the underlying cause of his depression: that his parents were having a very high expectation on Merriman’s academic performance and gave him unwanted pressure through words and conversations. Over time, Merriman had learnt to express his stress frankly to his parents without concealing. Also, the psychiatrist advised him to let go of it when his parents are not having a fuss over something very imperative. After a few weeks, Merriman has learnt how to deal with his vexations genuinely and soon overcame this notorious mental disorder intrinsically.

From Merriman’s example, it is clear that the intrinsic mindset is the key to overcoming depression. Here are three pieces of advice that I have integrated and compiled from Merriman’s case.

To start with, the first and utmost action to take when you observe drastic mood changes in your own emotions is to turn to help. When you are muddled by your moods, chances are that you would not be able to think of a solution because your rationale cannot function properly. Before you burst into tears or get infuriated again, seek help from someone that would genuinely listen to all your stresses and anguishes to stop the domino effect of mental breakdowns. Make sure that he/she has time to listen to you and do not veil or ravel up anything so that the person that gives you consolations and pieces of advice can understand your true agony. Sometimes you would also release your emotions cathartically and spontaneously, like how Merriman did. When you have to review your stresses, so make sure that the person you ask for help is someone who can bear your emotions and would not think that you’re whining with him/her. In situations of uncertainty, you may consider seeking help from social workers.

Some of you may not think that “thinking of a solution” in such devastating times is ludicrous. If so, talk to those who imperceptibly give you pressure if people’s criticisms and reprimands are adding burden to you. Sometimes, those people, especially if they are your
parents, are simply caring and advise you for good deeds. However, when those messages are transmitted to you, you may not feel concerned in a positive way because they cannot perceive how you feel. That is why you would need to inform them how they are stressing you out. Make sure that you politely inform them to avoid further altercations, and that they are in a positive mood too. However, if you are stressed because someone teases or libel you, you may also need to seek help from someone you trust or a social worker as it would not be pragmatic for you to tell that person to cease his/her insulting actions.

These may be extrinsic supports, but a positive mindset is an ultimate and inexplicable approach to tackling depression. When you are in a steady progression towards overcoming depression thoroughly, you would need to let go and forget some trivial annoyances. When you are affected by depression, you would be easily triggered by glitches and bugs in your daily lives. You would need to learn not to be exasperated by these negligible nuances and stay positive like Merriman. Once you have established a positive mindset in your life, you would soon be able to conquer depression. Nonetheless, keep in mind that you should be free of drastic mood changes before you adopt this measure, as it may cause your pressure to overload and aggravate your depression when you have not gained rather constant serenity in your own emotions.

The above three are general suggestions, to varying cases these may only be austere textbook guidelines. When you start to observe that the above three measures are ineffectual at assisting you to fight depression, you may need to seek a different kind of treatment because depression may have got the better of you. In other words, you are getting severe depression, indicating that there is a disorder in your cognitive chemicals functions. In that case, you may need to take psychotherapy or even antidepressant medication. Regardless of your depression level, it is always feasible to seek help and walk with others. Nevertheless, for those who are not affected by depression, you should still prevent it as you would never know when depression will lay its hands on you. Together, we join hands in tackling depression, and this monster will be kept at bay.
Photography Influencers – The Prominent Instagram Trend

5F Yip Wing Yu

The fad of photoshoots at public housing estates is emerging on social media platforms. With the arousing popularity of photo-based applications such as Instagram, people have begun to partake in this Internet sensation, from a hangout with significant others to captures of remarkable events. While many are fascinated by this prominent trend, some are curious about the reasons behind it and will wonder its compelling consequences. Let’s delve into this issue and find out the highlights of this mania.

What are the causes behind the rise of this fad? It is generally perceived that these photos often appeal to like-obsessed Instagrammers, especially youngsters. “I feel dejected when I do not catch up with my peers—I am scared of missing out on this trend. Perhaps I can unlock more common discussion topics with my friends,” says Chris Cheung, a teenager who has just taken a selfie of himself looking up at the sunlight inside the eminent Yik Cheong Building. He initially fell in love with these spots after he had seen his friends capturing these astonishing moments and posting them on social media. To receive recognition, it is inevitable for fellow Instagrammers to fall into conformity. The number of likes, views and followers make up the bedrock of their satisfaction. It seems the rise of social media platforms lets people escape from the miserable reality, yet there are other factors that result in the ubiquity of photogenic photography.

That various groups of people are captivated by the exceptionality of the architecture of these housing estates is undeniable. Even though they have stood the test of time, their structures are still aesthetically unique, gorgeous and pleasing. Choi Hung Estate, for example, radiates the seven colours of the light spectrum along its walls, which is not much of a surprise if you acknowledge the fact that Choi Hung means rainbow in Cantonese. “As an Instagram model, I indulge in capturing the most precious moments in local, vintage and structurally picturesque backdrops,” says Lily Wong, “and what Choi Hung Estate draws my attention is its humbleness from the rainbow.” On the other side of Hong Kong, Yik Cheong Building, also known as Monster Building, is renowned with its five dense and stacked residential complexes. The symmetrical patterns of the windows create matching patterns, just like the reflectional symmetry of a mirror. Being barricaded by the density of buildings, many can even feel the mysterious atmosphere, giving an illusion of a roofless prison in a vibrant city. “The symmetric structure of the building is just mesmerizing, which makes a decent composition of the piece of art,” says Adam Brown, a professional photographer from
Canada. “It is like being in a concrete jungle, and this is an uncommon scenery in my country,” Brown adds. Brown is not the only foreigner who is intrigued by these peculiar destinations. In recent years, celebrities around the world have paid visits to them, whether for sightseeing like Korean pop groups or show business like Hollywood. Films like Transformers and Ghost in the Shell coincidentally had some scenes shot here. Perhaps the celebrity effect is the one that takes this trend to a more preeminent level.

Other than their stunning exterior, these housing estates act as the childhood memories of Hong Kong citizens. Standing in the city for over half a century, the housing estates are the growth places of many. Nostalgic feelings can be sensed while tracing the concealed memories in these down-to-earth places, but the demolition of the buildings is becoming a menace. Not wanting to witness their collective memories dismantled with the tide of modernization, people try to grasp the final opportunity to unearth the traditional Hong Kong community. “I spent most of my childhood in Choi Hung Estate and as I return today, the sense of belonging is getting all over my mind. Words could not express my joviality during those bygone days,” says Peter Yeung, an Instagrammer. Peter is not the only one that regards the estate as his early years. Jimmi Ho, a local young photographer, was honoured with the Sony World Photography Award with an entry named Childhood, a photo of Choi Hung Estate. With a handful of family-based stores, Yik Cheong Building also represents the essence of nostalgia. Store owners greeting with residents while a couple of elderly are playing chess on the other side, this is the prime scenery of our recollection. This is the miniature of grassroots families, which is filled with human touch and bonding simultaneously. Deemed as the representatives of our collective memories, no wonder why the estates take a storm on prevalent trends.

While many people raise their thumbs to these photogenic spots, which are the hybrid of meticulous architecture and collective memories, residents have polarized opinions.

Although not conspicuous, these photographers are taking photos at the expense of the interests of residents. Flocking to a crowded environment, inevitable noise pollution caused by avid Instagrammers is causing disturbance to residents. “The chatting, the laughing and the screaming are gradually making me feel indignant,” says Thomas Ho, a resident of Choi Hung Estate. That fame of his residence has brought him complacency, he feels discontented
about the behaviours of some of the visitors. Noise pollution has been one of the major nuisances, but the disrespectful attitude makes things worse. According to Ho, it is somehow arduous for him to enjoy a game of basketball due to the visitors invading the estate’s amendments constantly. He once asked them to leave with politeness, but he received ignorance in return. “When I was able to play, things did not go smoothly either. I was accidentally hit by a selfie stick without any apologies.” Residents generally do not oppose the idea of taking hipster photos here, but the infringement of privacy may result in them feeling infuriated and resentful.

Some residents regard the surge of visitors as otherwise beneficial. For local traditional shops, it can be a boost to their economic status. Mrs. Lam, the owner of a local grocery store in Yik Cheong Building stated that it used to be a stagnant place with little to no visitors, and her customers were mostly residents here. She barely had enough earnings for her daily life, and at one point her store was on the verge of shutting down. However, after the popularity boost of the Monster Building, more visitors have made purchases from her store. Many youngsters are keen to try the nostalgic snacks from the shop, such as candies and chips. It undoubtedly has a bolster in Lam’s income, making it quite a lucrative business. Had it not been the fad, we would not be able to see the shop still serving us today. On the other hand, more vitality and energy have been brought into this former spiritless estate. Visitors are fervent to chat with the residents here to take a closer look at their lives. “It is like reconnecting with my sons,” says Lam, “and now I feel very proud of being a part of Yik Cheong Building due to its prominence.”

Another consequence of prestige can result in a controversial action – the redevelopment of the estates. The government might regard it as a potential plan for redevelopment, which might be advantageous for those who are looking forward to better living conditions. Indeed, some constructions may impose potential danger, but this can be ameliorated after renovation. Nevertheless, some are defiant about it. Many residents feel like they may lose their distinctiveness after undergoing construction. After further development, it will be difficult to treasure the old memories, not to mention some old-established businesses might vanish, including Mrs. Lam’s grocery store. Many housing estates have become homogenous after refurbishment, which is disappointing to witness.
How can we capture the inspiring photos of housing estates but not making residents feel irritated at the same time? Mutual respect is of utmost importance. With a civil attitude, the fad can become a win-win situation. With a discourteous mindset, visitors will be disdained. Both mutual respect and communication are indispensable in constructing the cornerstone of a harmonious environment. With acceptance, multiple generations can enjoy exploring these engrossing residential areas through photographs.
The Four-Day Work Week – Dream or Destiny?

5F Issac Cheung

With the taking off of the third Industrial Revolution, we are promised a breakthrough in informatics. The advent of computers and AI has assured to shake up our mode of living, giving rise to relentlessly optimistic vision towards a future that is perhaps far-fetched.

In the recent decades, the chatter about the four-day work week has grown noticeably louder. Advocates of the policy assert that the burgeoning of automation technology has allowed workers to work less hours while the company maintains profitable, quoting trends of a gradual reduction of working hours since the late 19th century, where workers worked for an average of 100 hours a week. Our current work week in Hong Kong stands at 42 hours, whether we can cut it down to 30 hours is the question.

The idea of a four-day work week is heavily based on the assumption that most companies have achieved a level of automation to significantly alleviate workers’ workload. However, the statistics show otherwise. According to Adobe’s 2018 Digital Intelligence Briefing, only 15% of businesses currently use AI. With the majority of companies still relying on workers to operate their machines and maintain their businesses, an extra day off every week is detrimental for any company’s operation.

What calls for attention next is Hong Kong’s economic structure, which is overwhelmingly service-oriented. The service industry in Hong Kong itself takes up 93% of the local GDP, and it was a notoriously difficult industry to automate.

Take the retail industry as example. There are currently no widely-available commercial robot that can perform the myriad of chores that sales workers perform. Maintaining the cleanliness of the store, restocking and categorising different products, these tasks that seem trivial for humans can be a real headache to transfer to robots. Even though in a future where these hurdles are surmounted, how can robots replace the charisma and cordial smiles of the sales workers? How can they emphasise with their clients’ needs? How can they present their products or services with dexterity? It is of no dispute that human labour is irreplaceable when it comes to dealing with customers, and an extra day off means a whole day out of business.
In addition to the impediment of replacing workers, a couple of complications also arise in the workplace. For instance, some businesses can’t stay stagnant for about 43% of the week. Machines and amenities need staffing, customer hotlines demands answering and the stock market requires monitoring. Companies currently tackle this by employing skeleton staff to deal with the necessary paperwork and opportune encounters that pop up. If a four-day work week is implemented, the workload of these staff will increase dramatically, as not only they have to be in charge of a near-vacant office for almost half a week, they may very well take up the surplus of work from the other employees’ diminished work week. With an increased workload comes elevated stress levels and escalated dissatisfaction levels for the company. At this point, companies might as well be split off into two teams of workers, one staffing the office for the four-day week, and the other occupying the workplace while the former are enjoying their long weekends. This complicates work division as well as coordination within the company. What’s also worth noting is this impairs a company’s spirit or even morale. By dividing the company into two, a veil that cultivates misunderstandings between parties is created.

A four-day work week means less time for socialisation at work. Google, inspired by a fad from Japanese companies, created exercise programmes and mandates employees to participate during work hours. The company’s efforts was met with less sick leaves and reduced health spending, but also increased its productivity, morale and sense of camaraderie. More time for water-cooler conversations can be a stumbling block in terms of productivity, but so are apathetic workers tearing through their work just to arrive home earlier. More time at work translates to more time spent with colleagues, and more time for meetings, or even just exchange with colleagues from other departments. The company also has the flexibility to host Christmas parties and group functions – more opportunities to foster connections between employees. With more time at work, staff can develop a sense of unity and worth from mutual support. They are more persevering, malleable and constructive. Without a doubt, a company must have healthy and sturdy employee-superior relations to maintain light and upbeat vibes around the workplace, a cornerstone to high productivity, attachment to the company and satisfaction of life.
Perhaps the most compelling of arguments against the four-day work week is that a four-day week is not as cost-effective as a five-day one. That all enterprises strive for profit maximisation is an irrefutable truth. Even as the ever-increasing prominence of machines brings an ever-growing profit to corporations, it is not ever an occasion to share the benefits of economic triumph by granting employers a day off every week. Globalisation has escalated competition from a local to a global level. And if a company does not keep its competitive edge razor-sharp, it is abruptly replaced by more ambitious ones, becoming obsolete. Here, the employee’s work life balance, which rests at the bottom of the company’s list of concerns, is out of the picture. The same goes for the benefits of a reduction of the carbon footprint. Both are independent of the corporation’s economic development, which is the real matter of life or death. Taking into account our city’s limited utilisation of automation, even if a universal four-day week can be achieved locally through legislation, it may cause a blow to Hong Kong’s competitiveness as foreign enterprises still have the combined productive prowess of a five-day work week and advanced machinery.

The only way that a four-day work week could be carried out is on the global level, through a consensus reached by superpowers. However, this is not seen as a priority nor has a high probability of occurrence.

The idea of a four-day work week has been fantasized about since the early 20th century. It was a glorious outlook, one that merges economic development with a concern for employees’ work life balance. Yet, lacking automation infrastructure, cost-effectiveness and time restraints grounds the idea from taking off. Perhaps radical shifts in the future in these aspects will allow it to prosper, but for now, the four-day work week remains a dream.
Tutorial Centres: Boon or Bane?
5F Anson Lam

In recent years, there has been a rapid development of the cram school industry in Hong Kong. With the emergence of more and more tutorial centres, to make sure their business stay afloat in this make-or-break situation, everyone would try all means to entice more students: advertising from billboards and the backs of the buses, dressing in formal attire, appearing like serious-looking professionals. Parents seem to be unable to resist these promotions, sending their kids to tutorial centres immediately. Here comes the questions: Are students who have not signed up for the tutorial centres at a disadvantage? The issue has sparked off a debate in town because tutorial centres can usually provide students with condensed notes and short-cuts to good grades. However, some people tend to believe that they make students exhausted, which can be counterproductive. Let me put the pros and cons of sending kids to tutorial centres under the microscope and discuss their respective arguments.

To begin with, cram schools can sharpen students’ competitive edge. In tutorial centres, tutors will crack exam questions and equip students with useful exam techniques. At school, it is a race against time, teachers may not have enough time to explain the exam techniques. In this case, the class will focus on knowledge. Students will have to figure out those techniques themselves. On the contrary, cram schools provide condensed notes and offer last-minute help by offering crash courses. It is a matter of money but not time. They also teach students useful skills and techniques. For example, they teach students how to balance the chemical equations quickly so that students can have more time to focus on other questions in the exam. Besides, cram schools offer more intensive exam drilling. It helps students to consolidate the knowledge that they have gained. With exam-oriented skills and techniques, students are able to perform better in the HKDSE. This cast light on the fact that students are more likely to secure a place at a prestigious university.

Furthermore, tutorial centres offer more interesting lessons which makes it easier for students to concentrate in the classes. Motivations are great assets to learn. Some tutors crack jokes and use slangs in their classes as their gimmicks to lure students to attend their lessons. They strike up friendship with students in order to turn students into their loyal fans. In addition, they issue gift-redemption points. It is beyond dispute that these actions can provide incentives for students to work hard and pay attention to classes. There is also research showing that more than four fifths of the respondents stated that they have
improved after attending tutorial centres. On the other hand, normal lessons at school may not be as fun. Students may fall asleep during classes. Without a doubt, nothing can be absorbed in classes. To put it simply, sending children to tutorial centres can let them learn in a more favourable condition which benefits their HKDSE results.

While proponents hold that view that the upside of sending children to cram schools cannot make us neglect the demerits of that. If I am to play devil’s advocate, I will say that cram-schools undermine the importance of all-round development and it is counterproductive to let students endure long class hours.

Speaking of which, don’t you think cram-schools defeat the rationale of education? Cram-schools stifle students’ creatively because they are encouraged to recite model answers. That explains why some educationalists are sceptical about the idea of tutorial centres since they reinforce rote memorization and spoon-feeding, which defeat the purpose of education: train students to think critically and creativity. Under this learning environment, it is beyond a shadow of doubt that students will become an “examination machine” who can only write the model answers on the answer sheets. In contrast, day schools focus on knowledge building. Students will know the whole concept instead of just learning the DSE syllabus as cram schools will tell you that HCl, H₂SO₄, HNO₃ are the only strong acids. In fact, there are many other strong acids but they are not covered in the DSE syllabus. In other words, you should know that reaction occurs because of strong acid, not HCl. Normal schools will tell you the former one. No one would dispute that cram-schools will hinder the long-term development of a child.

Enduring long class time is a hindrance to the performance of children in the exam. Students going to cram schools have to endure long class hours. By the time they get home, they will have been drained, which can be counterproductive. It is by no means certain that students face tremendous stress without appropriate rest. They may not be able to focus in schools, falling asleep during lessons. Research findings show that a lack of sleep for a long time can affect children’s concentration, which adversely affects the overall performance during examinations. Besides, they cannot gain knowledge from schools. It is useless to get only the exam skills without having the basic knowledge. That is to say, sending children to tutorial centres is counterproductive.
For the aforementioned reasons, therefore, I am inclined to believe that students who have not signed up will not be at a disadvantage. Indeed, cram schools can provide many examination skills and techniques and their lessons are more tailor-made. But if you pay enough attention in day schools, going to cram schools does not guarantee getting good grades. Many people are under the misconception that cram schools teach what you will not be taught at school. Contrary to the common misconception, those techniques and skills have already been taught to you. Besides, learning is our responsibility regardless of how uninteresting the lessons are. More importantly, cram schools will bring you pressure and deprive you of your time to wind down. In the light of this evidence, it is crystal clear that students who do not attend the tutorial centres not only will not be at a disadvantage but they also may be at an advantage.
What Makes a Great Teacher

5F Eagle Zhen

Before I begin, one quick question – have you ever come across a teacher who really makes an impact on your life? Lucky me. I have. I have met several great teachers for whom I am still very grateful because they were those who shaped who I am today. Then, the next question is, how can you, perspective teachers, follow in your teachers’ footsteps to become excellent teachers? Today, I would like to introduce some essential qualities of an excellent teacher.

In the first place, a good teacher should be like an explorer uncovering students’ hidden talents. Because first, we need to understand that the aim of education is not only getting good grades, getting a place in a prestigious school, graduating with a promising degree and securing a well-paid job, etc. These can be superficial. The real purpose of education should be unleashing the potential of every student instead of moulding them into someone they are not. As Einstein said, “Everyone is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.” Therefore, a good teacher should guide students where to look, instead of simply telling them what to see in order to cultivate students’ positive learning attitude and discover their talents.

However, if the students are not interested in you at all, how can they be willing to learn under your wings? Therefore, a good teacher also needs to establish a harmonious teacher-student relationship and mutual trust will follow. Provided that there is mutual trust, teachers can better guide their students to showcase their talents in various aspects. Take my ICT teacher in my primary school as an example. He was very approachable and very tolerant of students’ mistakes. In class, as long as you dare, he wouldn’t mind what you were trying in computer programming. At the same time, he would instruct you on how to improve it step by step. In my opinion, going to his class was one of the most rewarding activities I did at that time. Gradually, my interest in programming grew and I outshone others in this area. So up till now, I am still very grateful to him for igniting my interest in programming.

Nevertheless, it never stops there. The word “teacher” is quite self-explanatory – a person who teaches. A good teacher should possess the necessary knowledge and wisdom to impart. Needless to say, students’ life experience is rather limited when compared to an adult’s, so they still need some clear guidance and proper instructions from us. In other words, we need to have the correct values and extensive knowledge. In short, teachers should keep themselves abreast of the latest development of their own subject area.
The three qualities mentioned above are the basic building blocks of what a good teacher is expected of having. All of you sitting here have your own unique characteristics and you should tap into your talents and life experiences to help your students fare.

Thank you.
Depreciable Me
6A Lois Chan

Good afternoon, teachers and students. I am working in an employment agency. It is my pleasure to be here to share our views on degree inflation. Do you know what it is? How does it influence you? How does it affect our society? To put it simply, degree inflation means more people have a four-year college degree. As a result, the degrees are devaluing.

Going back to the 70s, there were only two local universities in Hong Kong. Therefore, a university student was treated with respect and admiration and seen as a future member of the local elites. However, a degree worth has lessened the years you will encounter varying difficulties. For instance, job opportunities are fewer and fewer because tertiary graduates don’t have advantages anymore. Even if you can find a job, it is possibly low-paid or requires no special skills. Your wage might be similar to a high-school graduate. The job itself, boring and tedious.

This phenomenon has arisen not only in Hong Kong but also in different countries such as Taiwan and America. In America, more semi-skilled jobs have a new requirement, due to degree inflation, which is to have a four years college degree. Before degree inflation, Americans who didn’t have a college degree could still get a semi-skilled job. Degree inflation has become a widespread problem. What will you do as a university student?

In order to tackle the problem, I have some tips based on the experience of our employment agents. Americans can still get a job if they have relevant experience. The relevant experience is really important because it helps people work effectively and efficiently. If you were an employer, would you choose either candidate A, who has great working experience without a degree, or candidate B, who has a degree without experience? I am sure that most employers would choose A. The companies tend to hire the best of the best so having a degree is not enough. I highly recommend that you take a part-time job or join an internship to gain more experience and soft skills such as communication and vocational skills, which may not be readily available in the college courses. Furthermore,
some people are hired by the companies in which they have had their internships. Treasure every opportunity to get a job. Give it a try to get closer to be the best of the best.

Apart from accumulating the experience, changing your mindset is also necessary. Although the job might be low-paid, you should participate in it wholeheartedly and keep learning from it. Despite the low-income and although no special skills are required in the job, you should take the offer to learn the soft skills. A few years ago, one of our clients worked in a creative-media company that was related to her sector but her job was basic and unskilled. Now, she is a manager because her outstanding creativity and organizational skills were noticed in a meeting. She has been learning from the projects and daily work to improve her creativity. She has also acquired organizational skills by observing the operation of the company. Some of our clients have become supervisors and entrepreneurs. Don’t fear being taken advantage of. You need to treasure every chance and learn from it. Take the chance to learn more and more.

In a nutshell, both of the tips are about improvement. Our world keeps developing. The challenge today is degree inflation. What is the next challenge? We don’t know yet so we need to adjust our mindset and action according to the unpredictable world. It is never too late to change. I believe that everyone is unique and will be seen one day unless you give up yourself. If anyone needs help on getting a job or wants to get more information about workplace, you can always contact us by calling, emailing us or visiting our centre. Thank you. I wish you all an exciting and prosperous future.
Housewife? Househusband? It’s Your OWN Choice!

6A Demi Li

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, this is Demi. It is really my privilege to stand here and talk about the topic of Father Parenting with you here.

To commence with, I would like to talk about the general background. One point to emphasise is that gender stereotype and prejudice have been severe in our society and have lasted for a long time. Let’s picture a visage of an excellent mother in our mind: Is she a perfect housewife who cooks every meal, tidies up the mess at home, does the dishes and always provides the most thoughtful care to the children? Is that what you thought just now? Actually, this impression towards women was formed thousands of years ago, while males have always been associated with power and authority. According to some statistics, 51.9% of households had stay-at-home mums in America back in the 1970s. Fortunately, due to the emphasis on gender equality and the need for improving women’s economic status, the situation is gradually ameliorating. Meanwhile, a new trend has appeared. Contrary to stay-at-home mums, the concept being put forward is stay-at-home dads, which means fathers of the family drop out of the workforce and take most of the responsibility of doing housework and giving childcare. However, the number of males who really do full-time parenting is still minuscule. Over the last decades, the percentage increased to 3.5% in America, which is still a lot less than the number of housewives. Comparing these two sets of data, I have realised that if we want father parenting to be acclaimed in society, we still have a long way to go.

Even though it is not advocated by the majority, we can’t deny that a stay-at-home dad arrangement can bring many benefits to the family. Other than releasing mothers’ stress resulting from bringing up children, mothers will have more opportunities to develop their career paths. Amy Green, who is a wife of a house-husband, has made the decision of moving across the country to finish her PhD. Amy was thankful to her husband for his understanding and support.

Secondly, being a father does not mean earning money for the family only. They can establish fulfilling relationships with their children. Take David Beckham’s retirement life as an example. He decided to be the primary caregiver to his kids, and their chauffeur to school, sports matches and play dates. According to Beckham, bringing up his own kids has transformed him into a more mature person. Being the main breadwinner of the family,
many fathers are under the pressure of earning money and they have fewer opportunities and time to establish strong bonds with their children. A survey conducted in Minnesota interviewed 600 dads to find out the most crucial role of a father. Of the 6 options, the majority of interviewees chose “show love and affection to kids”. It shows that many fathers think that they bear a role more than just the breadwinners of the family.

I was not born a feminist. I first encountered feminism when I was a teenager. I listened to the sharing of a first-time mother who felt overloaded from rushing between the office and home, but still insisted on taking more responsibility with housework and childcare due to the traditional thought that women should take care of her family. Then, I decided to speak up for females, because I wanted to safeguard females’ rights and improve their well-being. Nevertheless, as I was growing up, I also read the news about house-husband being discriminated. A Japanese house-husband said that he sometimes had to put on a suit in order to pretend to be an office worker, otherwise he would have felt slighted. Therefore, I gradually realised that stereotyping is a great stumbling block of Father Parenting. We are all born equal to choose the lifestyle we like.

A society full of stereotypes is not what we want. An ideal society is a community that includes females and males with different roles and responsibilities. Whether a man chooses to be a house-husband or a woman refuses to be a full-time mother is their right. As the saying goes, “You will often feel as if you don’t fit, but it has never been your destiny to fit in.” And I sincerely hope that you will never be defined because of your gender because no matter who you are, you are born to stand out.
Rest, Then Go the Distance
6A Dandelion Lee

When JK Rowling embarked on a gap year journey, she wanted to take a break from academic pressure. Alongside her are countless others, including Emma Watson, Steve Jobs and Vera Wang. While popular in Europe and North America, Hongkongers rarely hear about local students taking a year-long sabbatical away from tertiary education upon graduating secondary school. The root reason for Hongkongers’ dismissal of the idea is the debate between dreamers and pragmatists. The former prefer following one’s heart to find their destinies, while the latter argue that being a year behind one’s peers means having a lower net worth compared to them by a year’s salary. Personally, I find realists’ notion too money-minded; fantasizers on the other hand, take into account their desire to self-discover, as well as to regulate their public exam-induced sky-high stress levels.

When I talked to my mom about taking a gap year, the first thing she told me was that it was unsafe for an 18-year-old girl to be out there alone. While on a gap year, students are stripped of their comfortable lives of living with their parents, and are, as my mother put it, “thrown to the wolves”. The outside world could be full of traffic blind spots, unannounced earthquakes along with ill-intentioned triad gangs, none of which parents can protect their gap year-immersed cubs from. During their gap years, students would have to handle their lives on their own without the support of those who had given them life, and every hardship or hazard that comes their way would be theirs to deal with, ranging from paying hefty bills to contracting lethal diseases like malaria. For these exact reasons, parents are rightfully worried. Surely, moms and dads did not have children just to watch them put themselves into harm’s way. But with zealous blood flowing through their veins, the youth often rebut parents’ concerns with “I’m an adult now”—which is true. Graduating from high school is a milestone, a threshold that marks the transition from absent-minded adolescence to life-savvy adulthood. Gap year adventurers will learn to be capable of taking care of themselves; they’ve reached the age at which parents should learn to let them (temporarily) ride off into the sunset without training wheels.

Besides, being thrown to the wolves and living among them would compel youngsters to hide their tracks so that they don’t get eaten alive in the wilderness. Independence is a sore subject for the children in Hong Kong; the term “Kong kids” was coined specifically to attack the egos of Hong Kong’s next generation as some of its members are said to be
incapable of tying their shoes or brushing their hair. But when one resides in the wild, one would have to learn to comb one's own disheveled chevelure, as well as not be tripped by a stray shoelace. Without the warmth, food and protection provided by their parents, young adults would be left to pilot their lives by themselves. They will make their own choices, which develops their decision-making skills, find their own jobs, which gives them a taste of the sweet and sour that comes with being a part of the workforce, and discover their own hobbies, which aids them in realizing what they want in life, guiding them to enter the coordinates of that next destination at which they so desperately desire to arrive. Having to live away from their parents would also equip them with the necessary life skills for when they move out of their parents' homes, such as cooking, driving and grocery shopping, breaking the unhealthy cycle of codependence they experienced as children. “All the world’s a stage”, and for some, a gap year marks their debuts on that stage, with it being the first time they survived the whirlwinds of life without their guardians’ care, qualifying them to become full-fledged adults instead of remaining as featherbrained “Kong kids”. At the end of the day, gap years could be for chasing stars, but they also have an element of pragmatism in terms of guiding the youth on how to survive on their own.

At this point, a gap year may sound gnarly, with sandstorms and poison ivy lurking in the backwoods, wickedly waiting to strike their next victims. While gap years have a dark side, it is inconsequential compared to the benefits they could offer for one’s mental health. Hong Kong is notorious for overwhelming students with frequent cortisol-inducing influxes of homework, projects and examinations. 53% of local students spend over an hour daily doing their homework, which is higher than the global average. In 2016, Quartz announced that at any given time, around one-third of college-aged students across all campuses suffer from mental illnesses like anxiety as well as depression. It is indisputable that all these assessments are causes of undue pressure for pupils, severely denting their psychological wellness by hammering textbooks and formulae into their lethargic minds. Taking a break away from these “benchmarks of excellence”, along with academic expectations, could allow students to take a breather, pursue their interests or broaden their horizons, as they envisage what they want their futures to look like, and make plans to self-actualize during their sabbaticals. In the best case scenario, they achieve their goals, and are granted lifelong satisfaction. Even if they fail to reach the stars, a year of sitting back and relaxing on a beach

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in Maldives or braving the rocky terrain of Annapurna, Nepal, will still do wonders for their low spirits, as they get to put aside their academic momentum and just inhale through the nose, exhale via the mouth. In this sense, gap years could be the chicken soup for the decaying souls of fresh Form 6 graduates.

Whatever arguments pragmatists bring to the table cannot snuff out the significance of rest. If they insist on being realistic, I doubt shuffling from university dorm to classroom in a mummified state of mind or dragging zombie-esque footsteps to work is the way to do it. After all, “all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy” – not just in terms of Jack’s personality (and withering spirit), but also his colorless life. So, to all the Jacks out there, if you’ve got a year to spare, and a passion to respond to the siren song of the world while energy still hums in your bones, why not consider coloring your life by taking a gap year? It will definitely be a distinctive addition to your resumes.
The Future is Cashless

6A Ryan Chan

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. Have you ever heard of the expression “cashless society”? Have you tried to pay using the popular Alipay and Paypal? Or are you always confused by the complicated process of an electronic payment? As a senior citizen in Hong Kong, I would like to discuss the benefits and limitations of Hong Kong’s gradual transition to a cashless society. I would also like to provide recommendations for the implementation and improvement of any future electronic payment systems.

What would you think of when the term “electronic payments” comes to your mind? Speed? Convenience? Technological advancement? Needless to say, electronic payments have been a sign of social development in recent decades. In fact, there are many benefits coming along with the introduction of electronic payment. Firstly, electronic payment simplifies payment as it reduces society’s reliance on physical coins and paper banknotes. In the past, I have always imagined a world where coins and paper notes would no longer be dangling in people’s pockets. Not only are they difficult to be carried around, but the need to count and collect the amount to be paid takes enormous efforts. Electronic payment is a blessing in this regard. I can pay anytime and anywhere only with a swipe of my finger. Coins and banknotes are no longer a headache, and I can easily de-clutter my wallet.

Moreover, it mitigates the troubles arising from currency exchange. You would know how tedious exchanging currency is if you’re a travel lover like me. The popularization of electronic payment in the UK makes my trip exponentially more pleasant. I can very easily pull out my credit card and pay instantly, without all the searching for coins. I don’t need to go through the chore of going to a currency exchange and calculating the right amount. Thirdly, it ensures safety. As we do not need to carry huge stacks of paper banknotes around anymore. Robberies would cease to be a problem because one cannot pay electronically without using their biometrics features, such as fingerprints or inputting their password. As a matter of fact, research on crime shows that over 67% of victims of robberies and pickpockets are the group of senior citizens. Therefore, an online pocket will possibly decrease the danger of being robbed and the chance of financial loss. Moreover, if you happen to be forgetful, you also do not need to worry you would lose your wallets anymore, because no one would seize your lost physical banknotes.
However, this is not to say that electronic payment is without its flaws. The first prominent limitation is that it is unfriendly towards the technologically illiterate elderly. For example, in my social circle, many friends of mine don’t know how to use their electronic gadgets to pay. I have also experienced difficulties in signing up electronic payment apps, as it involves a lot of complicated procedures. Imagine an old man taking ages to use an electronic payment app just to buy a bottle of water. It could be extremely inconvenient and awkward. However, the problem could be easily alleviated. I suggest the government or electronic payment companies host free talks and workshops for the elderly, so that they could have hands-on experience and expertise in using the apps.

Apart from the difficulties facing the elderly, the popularization of electronic payment may lead to leakage of personal information. When signing up for electronic payment apps, users would have to input a lot of personal information and particulars, including their bank account, balance, address and so on. Although electronic payment apps have promised to keep personal data confidential and have striven to improve online security, there is still the risk of data leakage and secretive selling of users’ information. However, many online payment apps require you to hand in many personal information such as your identity card number. The more information floating around online, the more likely it is to wind up in malicious hands. In 2016, the Hong Kong Hang Seng Bank accidentally leaked over one million account owners’ information to the public. Since then, many Hong Kong bank online account owners receive unknown calls or emails. I also receive some of these calls on a daily basis.

Therefore, Hong Kong’s transformation to a cashless society is beneficial in multiple ways. However, since electronic payment methods are still immature and warrant improvements, it has not yet been universalized. To all my elderly friends out there, are you still resistant to the concept of a cashless society? Worry not. It will be accessible to us in the near future.
A New Trend of Travel: Staycation

6B Christy Chan

I believe that most of you have heard of the term “staycation” amid the Covid-19 pandemic. This word is a combination of “stay” and “vacation”, which literally means taking a holiday at home. Prevalent as it is, most people, if not all, do not really know when this term first popped up. In the following text, I am going to explain the rise and the benefits of this trend.

Let us now rewind to the year 2008, a year of financial turmoil across the globe. This financial crisis had hit many countries. Thus, the whole tourism industry was in the doldrums. At that time, the term “staycation” emerged because people had to cut their travel budget. Instead of taking a trip overseas, people decided to stay at home or visit the countries close to their home to unwind due to financial constraints. In 2020, the term “staycation” has regained its popularity. The outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic has brought devastating impacts to all walks of life. With a view to curbing the infection rate, most cities have implemented stringent quarantine measures and even locked down the borders to stop visitors from bringing the virus in. Under these circumstances, people have no choice but stay in their own countries for a vacation and discover the beauty of local spots. As a result, the trend of staycation has again been reinvigorated.

In fact, the trend of staycation is worth promoting. First of all, compared with travelling abroad, a staycation is more conducive to relieving a traveller’s anxiety and stress. Can you try to recollect how tiring and troublesome it is to plan an overseas holiday and pack your luggage cases? Besides, going to famous cities such as Venice and Tokyo, very often people cannot really relax since everywhere is packed with tourists. Therefore, visiting a foreign country may not always be a good choice to let their hair down. On the other hand, vacationists do not need to prepare so much before a staycation.

In addition, the concept of slow living has been embraced by many city dwellers in recent years. A staycation is fully in line with the slow tourism trend. Nowadays, more and more holidaymakers have changed their perception of a holiday. Instead of following a tight schedule when travelling abroad, they find living in the present moment and discovering the beauty of the nature of their own country is equally, if not more, enjoyable.
Another obvious advantage of a staycation is it is a form of sustainable tourism. Staying at home for a vacation means a reduction of carbon footprints because people do not need to travel long distances. As a result, planes and ships are seldom used in a staycation. People can even ride a bike or walk to their destination. It is a more environmentally friendly form of vacation and should be greatly encouraged.

Last but not least, the growing trend of “staycation” has, to a certain extent, saved the hotel industry from the plight. The industry, which strongly depends on tourism, has experienced an ice-age during the pandemic. Many hotels are fighting hard for survival. In view of this trend, many prestigious hotels such as the Peninsula, the Shangri-la offer a myriad of packages and discounts to the locals to boost the gloomy market. Many of these packages provide tailor-made plans to attract different age groups. A staycation provides an extra source of revenue to the hoteliers during this difficult period.

To sum up, a “staycation” indeed opens a window for the tourism and hotel industry. Hope they can make good use of this growing trend and keep pace with time. Hotels should continue to promote staycation and offer some unique packages to local customers even after the pandemic.
More Than Flesh and Blood – Father Parenting

6B Amy Tuo

Good morning ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the forum. It is my privilege to share my opinions towards the cause and effect of father parenting as the CEO of HKkids. The reason that I’m standing here today is to eliminate the bias towards father parenting and share our aspirations of making a better childhood for our future generation.

To begin with, males have fewer chances to establish an intimate relationship with children. Currently, the paternity leave allowed is 51 days in Hong Kong, while the maternity leave is 14 weeks. We all know that mothers have to spend more time recovering and taking care of their infant but how about fathers? Do you want your children to ignore you in the future?

Hong Kong is still a patriarchal society, a conventional social norm instils the value that males have to bear more financial obligations. Speaking of child-raising, females should take the predominant role. Even with the increasing number of family-conscious fathers, the recruiters still refuse to hire the one who applies for flexible working schedules as their dedication to the workplace might be hindered due to the extra time spent on their children. Hence, father parenting is neglected.

This stereotype would deteriorate the family relationship. As a father of 3 kids, I once focused only on my enterprise. My wife took up the overwhelming responsibility, and I neglected the needs of taking care of my children since it was still not seen as culturally acceptable in the workplace. Lacking the awareness of the father-son bond, my children still kept an alienating distance from me after their puberty. Until the day when I found my son refused to chat with me, I started to value family more vital than earning a living.

Mutilated by regrets, I strive to promote father parenting to other entrepreneurs, trying to eradicate the misconception and emphasize the advantages.

Firstly, father parenting encourages male employees to strike family-work balance, directly benefiting the corporate. To take care of toddlers while handling workload is the path to cultivating one's patience, concentration, and a sense of responsibility. With the aforementioned characteristics, the multitasking abilities of the staff will be enhanced, and the productivity of the company will be boosted. Meanwhile, a more appreciative corporate image will be established as the enterprises are not only focusing on maximizing profit.
Most significantly, it stimulates the future development of our society. While father parenting is innocuous to the corporate, research done by the UK shows that more tight-knit relations between fathers and children allow fathers to have a deeper understanding of children, stopping them from juvenile delinquency and leading our future generation to a more upright path. They are the future manpower for making a more sustainable development.

Still, lots of companies do not find it beneficial to approve father parenting whereas some of the men might not have the sense of childcare, the entire society will be stuck in a vicious cycle, affecting ourselves, our offspring, and our society.

To halt the consequences and promote a more solid father-child relationship, social awareness ought to be raised. I believe that a thousand miles begins with a single step and our company can act as a pioneer by promoting family-friendly atmosphere at workplaces. Hopefully, the stories I have given can urge all of us to help alleviate the problem as soon as possible.

It is not flesh and blood, but the heart which makes the relations between father and son. None of us has the privilege to deprive the love of a father with the so-called rules of the workplace. Thank you.
Online Entertainment – a World of Traps

6B Aldric Wong

Greetings, ladies and gentlemen, I am from Netflix representing the Board of Directors for Advertising, and today I would want to breach the topic of online entertainment.

Knowing that many of the people here are aspiring to become future directors and film writers, it would be best I skip the pleasantries on the pros and cons of online entertainment, and instead talk about the fundamental core of creating a successful online entertainment series or movie.

My speech will be divided into three main points, firstly, media censorship, secondly, building creditability and thirdly, advertisement.

Firstly, I want to talk about media censorship. Media censorship can make or break your next big film.

The US has always dominated the global online entertainment industry with the likes of HBO Now, Netflix and YouTube, which boast an extremely high user count of one billion users worldwide. With such numbers, many of the starry eyed people here who may want to make a big name for themselves may zero in on the US market. However, you must not forget that reaching a broad demographic is as important as prioritizing one. China and Turkey both have strict censorship rules, with China censoring huge online entertainment hubs like Facebook and Turkey blocking online entertainment near or during an election, these times must be noted. The reasoning is because an ill-timed uploading of an advertisement during these periods could mean a loss of potential viewers and users, as many of the platforms might have been temporarily shut down, so this is a point to take a grasp on.

Secondly, I will talk about building creditability with the point on advertisement integrated into the justification. Building creditability is the path that will bring you from the bottom of the barrel and turn you into the apple of everyone’s eye. Remember Sonic the Hedgehog movie? What was eye catching? The movie? No, it was most likely the trailer and the poor first design that accompanied it. During the release of the trailer for Sonic the hedgehog movie, the outlook of Sonic was ridiculed for its design and instead of capturing the audience, it alienated the audience. This led to negative brand perception. Since news
spread like wildfire on online entertainment platforms, it further led Paramount to be compared with other film companies. To fix this, Paramount had to scrap the entire design of Sonic and rebuild it from scratch, this cost Paramount a lot of money, and caused the audience to begin doubting Paramount’s creditability.

You all are aspiring personnel that want to make a big name for yourselves and perhaps your fellow colleagues. However, you must remember to never cut corners. The trailer is as important as the opening shot, and your work will leave a mark on online entertainment platforms. Therefore, it is extremely important to build up creditability by producing quality content and making sure that you never, ever cut corners, as it could lead to negative brand perception and jeopardize your future at becoming a big wig on the online entertainment industry. As for building creditability, it isn’t about the amount of work that you dish out, it is the quality of work and what gets people talking is free advertising, be it good or bad. This is the reason why quality checking, and organizing screenings before final post production is extremely important. Remember - quality over quantity.

In conclusion, online entertainment is a very delicate field of expertise and I stress the importance of keeping track of media censorship laws, building creditability and being careful on advertising to avoid negative brand perception.

That is the end of my sharing, thank you and I hope for the best of luck on your future endeavors.
Overseas Study – to Go or Not to Go

6B Jessie Chang

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, fellow parents, teachers and students. Welcome to our annual career night. I feel very honored to speak under the limelight and share my thoughts regarding the recent trend of overseas study.

Do you want to study overseas? Or have you been planning to send your son or daughter to study overseas?

I have been a career guidance mistress for more than ten years, and I have witnessed a significant rising trend of studying abroad for university. It is no longer something surprising or shocking when your classmate tells you that he/she is going to leave Hong Kong and study overseas for the coming four years.

Throughout the countless discussions and counselling sessions, I found that a majority of students have the impression that overseas study is easier and better than local study. But I don’t totally agree with this. Here are two of the most common reasons for studying abroad.

In an international city, employers value graduates with international experiences and language variety. When you leave your home town, you have to immerse yourself in an entirely different environment. You will learn foreign languages besides English since you will be in touch with international students in your study period. Due to globalization, business companies often require employees to deal with cross-countries projects. Being acquainted with a few languages undoubtedly makes you superior to others in the workplace. Therefore, studying abroad may increase your career opportunity and provide you a head start in the workplace.

Studying abroad requires you to step outside your comfort zone and forces you to grow up and be independent. You can’t fully rely on parents anymore when you live abroad. As a foreign student, you have to pick up living skills, finding house, cooking, learning a new language, familiarizing yourself with the city, and managing your finances, to name but a few. By learning how to cope with obstacles and hardships by yourself, you will be more mature and independent after experiencing a lot.
However, you can also have a similar experience in local university. Most of the universities in Hong Kong provide halls for students. Living in a hall, you have to cope with the new environment. You are actually experiencing independent living. For example, you will seldom go back home when you live in a hall with your hallmates, which means you have to prepare three meals on your own. You also need to wash your clothes, dry them and fold them all by yourself. If you stay in a hall, you can learn many living skills during your university life. Therefore, it isn’t necessary that local schools are nothing like foreign schools.

Although studying overseas seems to have many bright sides, you shouldn’t ignore its downsides, though I think our guests tonight may not agree with me on this.

Hindering students’ mental health is a general impact of studying abroad. Many of my students who went overseas told me that they felt homesick, lonely and helpless due to language barriers and racism. Some of them failed to cope with these feelings and resulted in some mental illness, ranging from depression to anxiety. In 2019, 3 students in the University of Toronto committed suicide under great depression. It was a heartbreaking news for all of us. Students should never get a certificate of diploma at the expense of their mental health. Therefore, overseas study is definitely not a wise choice for those who are vulnerable to adversity.

It is also noteworthy that overseas study may hinder the development of graduates’ local social network. Finishing a degree of university usually takes four years, in other words, students have to live in a foreign country alone for a long period of time. They can only receive local news from social media or international news reports, especially those about social issues. Most of my students tend to return for their future career, but not having common topics with their peers becomes a thick, unbreakable wall between them. Moreover, since they haven’t met their peers for a long period of time, they might not be as close as before. As a result, graduates returning from foreign countries need to rebuild their social network, which may lead to a sense of inferiority while employers value employees with a stronger social network.
Is there no better alternative to overseas study? I don’t think so. Overseas study cuts both ways, it may add some bonus marks on your CV, but please don’t overlook the disadvantages. So, this is my advice for all parents and students - please make thorough consideration instead of just going with the current trend.

Once again, thank you for listening to my sharing and I hope all of you can benefit from tonight’s gathering.
Should Hong Kong Students Take a Gap Year?

6B Christy Chan

Owing to the competitive education system, hardly can Hong Kong students spare time to wind down. It isn’t surprising, therefore, that P.6 graduates welcome the idea of a gap year in Hong Kong with open arms. A gap year, which is prevalent in Europe and North America, provides a chance for young people to relax, travel and equip themselves with knowledge before enrolling in university. At first glance, taking a year off seems unwise, especially in such an exam-oriented society. Yet, when carefully scrutinized, perhaps a gap year may be beneficial to students.

In terms of mental well-being, taking a year off provides fresh high school graduates with an opportunity to escape from their hectic life. Being stuck in an arguably distorted education system for a decade, adolescents are overwhelmed by pressure and drained by the daily regime of all work and no play. This undesirable situation indeed sets alarm bells ringing as research revealed that the stress level of most Hong Kong students was high. If students who suffer from emotional problems enroll in universities without taking a break, there is a higher tendency that their mental well-being will further deteriorate. When their stress level exceeds their anxiety threshold, it may cause irreparable consequences. On the contrary, taking a gap year can help students recharge their batteries. Moreover, through traveling around the world, students can have a taste of different lifestyles and relieve themselves from the pent-up tension after months of intensive revision. It also provides a period for teens to get ready and prepare for a new chapter in their academic career.

Apart from adjusting their mood, taking a gap year helps to equip oneself in order to gain a competitive edge. In this new era, universities, be it local or overseas, do not just place a premium on academic results, they also attach great importance to other learning experiences. This means that students nowadays are required to be all-rounded and to excel in different aspects. Sadly, during their school life, so busy are the students that it is hard, if not impossible, to make time for extra-curricular activities and devote themselves to voluntary work. Hence, having a year off provides gap year takers with a chance to take on voluntary work such as tutoring impoverished children in developing countries. What is more, due to globalization, universities are also in favor of students who recognize their identity as a global citizen and possess an international perspective. Thus, taking a gap year helps students broaden their horizons and strengthen their sense of belonging in the global community by traveling to different countries and communicating with locals.
Unfortunately, the concept of a gap year has long been castigated for undermining students’ motivation to learn. Critics contend that by no means should teens put a halt to pursuing further education and take a year off to do things seemingly unrelated to studies. However, this claim is misleading, if not fallacious. According to a study on GPA conducted by the former Dean of Admissions at Middlebury College, gap year takers tend to outperform their peers in university by 0.1 to 0.4 on a 4.0 GPA scale. This highlights that taking a year off neither affects students’ motivation to learn nor halts their pursuit for knowledge. In fact, taking a year off may even enhance students’ academic performance.

In addition, opponents are also wary that adolescents might get distracted and that their determination in enrolling in college may falter. Most importantly, they speculate that having a gap year will hinder students’ academic progress, causing them to lose focus on studying. Yet, it seems unwise to treat a gap year as a threat to students’ academic career. It is better to treat it as a double-edged sword. If students use their gap year wisely, it may help them discover their goals and strengthen their determination. On the other hand, some who use it unwisely may end up being carried away and lose interest in pursuing further education or even worse, pick up bad habits during that year. Therefore, cliché though it may sound, there are always two sides of a coin. Whether a student has a fruitful gap year or not depends on his or her determination and self-discipline. Also, I am thoroughly convinced that F.6 graduates, most of whom are mature enough, will make the right decision.

Taking everything into consideration, I firmly believe that taking a year off indeed brings a host of benefits. Life is about exploration and self-discovery. A gap year provides the opportunity to mull over how one desires to spend his or her life. Therefore, it is high time for the Education Bureau to eradicate the misconceptions in Hong Kong society and encourage students to consider taking a gap year.
Studying Abroad – Why It Matters

6B Joshua Leung

“He that travels far knows much.” Ladies and gentlemen, good evening and welcome to this career night organized by the PTA about this prominent matter regarding overseas studying.

Have you ever thought of sending your kids abroad to study? When asked about this, many answer: Why go, when there are already prestigious universities in our city? As a father of a form five student, let me walk you through the three main reasons why, according to a study done by the HSBC, a staggering eighty-six per cent of local parents would prefer their kids to go overseas for tertiary education.

Firstly, we hope to boost our kids’ linguistic abilities. English is the International Language, and by soaking them in an all-English atmosphere, our children’s communication proficiency will flourish, opening doors to many career opportunities. My son aspires to become a lawyer in future, and attaining his degree in the UK is undeniably conducive to posing him in an advantageous position when pursuing a career in this language-oriented industry.

Secondly, overseas study can bring with it cultural diversity. Besides, clichés about how experiencing drastically different traditions can broaden our kids’ horizons, studying in the west grants our kids a chance to live another lifestyle, meeting people from France, Brazil or even Africa with distinct upbringings and beliefs. Our kids who long for an extensive view of the world can leave their echo chamber and dive into the world of diverse, exciting voices, acquiring that worldview which is beneficial especially in this age of globalization.

Thirdly, children can learn the indisputable spirit of self-reliance. Our kids are long criticised of their high vulnerability to adversities due to the prevailing problem of helicopter parents. My son, who fails to do the simplest household chores, is an awful case in point.
But by sending our kids to foreign lands, they will no longer have mommies and daddies to rely on, but only themselves to be responsible for, achieving self-discipline which leads to a prosperous life.

Overseas studying, as we can see, benefits our children in multi-dimensional ways. But before you purchase that one-way ticket to London so quickly, I will tell you some of my biggest worries and see if they resound with you.

For one thing, it is the hard feeling of segregation with the kids. Dear parents, how badly have you thought of your children when they go on a school trip? Now multiply that feeling by a hundred. Through parental sharing groups, I’ve learnt that a significant amount of moms and dads struggle to cope with missing their beloved children who have gone abroad. It must be hard for us to let go all at once, and may, therefore, bring emotional dilemmas to our lives.

Another concern is the high costs of studying abroad. Average tuition fees for popular boarding destinations vary from two to three hundred thousand Hong Kong dollars annually, posing a financial burden on the shoulders of many parents. Unlike government-subsidised colleges in Hong Kong, academic fees of renowned foreign schools are notoriously high, not to mention the equivalently immense, if not more, appalling rents and travelling costs.

It is high time we rethink our children’s future life paths. “He that travels far knows much.” Overseas studying is more than an academic choice but may just be our kids’ opportunity of a lifetime to discover limitless possibilities and inspiration, enlightening their career path ahead.

Thank you.
Tertiary Education – A Ray of Light? A Strike of Lightning?

6B Yanki Chan

Greetings, ladies and gentlemen. I’m a student from the University of Hong Kong.

In the past, many praised that university degree was the key to the kingdom and tertiary education was associated with a good life. Once you had it in hand, a bright future would be waiting ahead of you. But is the statement still valid? I’m afraid not. The table has turned in recent years. And now, degree inflation is keeping our society hostage.

In this speech, I am going to untangle the reasons and impacts behind the phenomenon.

For starters, the main driver for credential inflation is the built-in stigma among the society, that physical labour and blue-collar jobs are inferior to office jobs. Under the social norm, high school students have no choice but to attend college if they want to get to the top of the pyramid. Even when they are not qualified for regular universities, parents will pay a higher price for kids to gain a place in self-financing private institutions. So that, hopefully, they can transfer back to local universities, getting access to a more decent and well-paid job in the future.

Together with the SAR government’s ambitious plan, the situation got heated up. Tracing back to 20 years ago when the first Chief Executive, Tung Chee-hwa, intended to raise the ratio of secondary school leavers receiving advanced education to 60 per cent, self-financing private institutions were established and places available in the postsecondary sector were increased., According to Census and Statistics Department figures, in 2017, 24.8 per cent of citizens had degree-level education. It shows that owning a degree has become a new normal. Although this seemed to be constructive to Hong Kong, as times goes by, the saturation has devalued degrees and its superiority. Therefore, university graduates now have to compete for an insufficient amount of jobs, causing credential inflation.

These points lead to the first impact I would like to touch on. Degree inflation is not a vanguard idea, it first appeared in the late 20th century, yet has become spiralling more than ever.

Generally speaking, credential inflation hinders students’ competitiveness. As the number of graduates is mounting in Hong Kong, the supply exceeds the demand in the job
market, sharpening competition between students. Under the circumstance, many fail to find employment in their desired sector and may turn to low-skilled jobs ultimately. A government study has provided solid evidence by saying that fresh graduates now earn about 9.6 per cent less in their first job than 25 years ago. Meanwhile, institutions may put emphasis on grades to meet up with the heightening barrier under the new normal, yet, failing to cater for the pragmatic need - vocational skills. As a result, this hinders local students from developing more roundly and their competitiveness.

Nevertheless, the burdens of credential inflation fall most heavily on the low-income individuals, diminishing their upward mobility. Asking job applicants about their criminal histories used to be the priority. Ironically, the place has been taken over by the question of one’s bachelor degree. A dear friend of mine, who comes from a less privileged family, once told me she was struck by the fact that it is nearly impossible to apply for a middle-skilled position without a college certificate. Unlike the average students, advanced education posts a substantial burden to low-income individuals, restricting them to merely entering the labour force early, losing the opportunity to enhance social mobility by setting foot in the tertiary education. Hence, the overflow of college students triggers employers to raise the bar to hire fresh graduates only. Even if the grassroots have more requisite skills, they still won’t be hired, obstructing their chance for socioeconomic advancement.

Yes, indeed, it is undeniable that advanced education has raised the education level of Hong Kong and brought wealth to many. But for the majority, it closes more doors than opens. Although it is candid that we cannot reverse the damage, the least we can do is to start seeking antidotes, to keep the future students out of the mud. Therefore, it is my sincere hope that the authorities and related industries can provide assistance to the academia. By doing so, I deem that tertiary degrees can be brought back to the table in no time, alleviating the harms to students. Thank you.
A New Travel Mode – Staycation

6A Rachel Yu

Good morning, everyone. I’m Chris Wong, the CEO of Hong Kong Travel. I’m glad to be here to talk about staycation, a worldwide trend in the tourism industry. As students studying Tourism and Hospitality, you must have all known about this new trend. It may sound unfamiliar to Hong Kongers, but in fact, it’s not a new concept. It originated in the United States during the market crisis where many households had to cut their vacation budget. The recent global COVID-19 pandemic has led to a revival of the popularity of staycations.

The rise of staycation in Hong Kong is caused by a combination of factors, amongst which include measures such as the closing of borders and the quarantine policies. Staycations promote the idea of discovering the beauty of one’s city or region and living in the moment. It meets the needs of the hectic and fast-paced lifestyle of city dwellers. Exploring local attractions can enrich one’s knowledge and enhance the appreciation towards the heritage of one’s hometown. Besides, staycations can boost the local economy. It provides an opportunity for locals to support small businesses, particularly during this unprecedented and difficult time. From a global perspective, staycations are an eco-friendlier way to enjoy holidays as opposed to traveling overseas. Almost all means of transportation involved in traveling abroad, airplanes in particular, emit greenhouse gases which are harmful to the environment. Yet when it comes to staycation, you can simply ride a bike or even walk to your destination. Thus, staycations are a way of spending your vacation with a greatly reduced carbon footprint.

Staycations have brought revolutionary impact to people’s perception of how they spend their holidays. Many people now realize that vacations are no longer the privilege of the affluent. At a much more affordable price, one can enjoy a relaxing holiday. Moreover, instead of shopping overseas, people start to treasure spending time outdoors in nature with close friends and family. Rather than rushing from one scenic spot to another in a foreign country, travelers now discover the joy of taking their own time and doing what they really enjoy. In short, they care about the quality of their holiday experience, which leads us to the next part: suggestions for a unique staycation for our clients.

With a view to promoting and supporting local crafts in Hong Kong, I suggest planning a local handcraft tour. In this tour, guests will have the opportunity to visit local workshops
or factories, many of which are sadly being phased out. For example, we can visit Yuet Tung China Works in Kowloon City, the last remaining hand-painted porcelain factory in Hong Kong. Visitors can observe how porcelain is painted. Through this kind of cultural tour, not only will guests discover the diminishing Hong Kong handicraft industry, but also recognize the value of preserving it. This cultural tour will undoubtedly give an extraordinary experience for our clients. Apart from exploring our unique culture, health-conscious clients will also embrace an eco-tour. Being deemed a “concrete jungle”, Hong Kong actually never lacks some world-class natural scenery which has often been overlooked. In the nature tour, guests can visit places like Ha Pak Nai, Garden Hill, and nature trails where they can go hiking, picnicking, and admire sunsets. All the aforementioned activities can refresh their minds and bodies.

Tourism is one of the most important sources of revenue in Hong Kong. Hopefully, the new trend of staycations can bring new opportunities to the tourism industry amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you!
Cashless Society: A Boon or a Bane?
6C Toby Chong

Recently, the advantages and disadvantages of using cashless payment systems such as Alipay, PayMe and Apple Pay, have stirred up controversy. While it has become a worldwide and prominent trend nowadays, some skeptics still refuse to follow the trend and insist on using cash payments. The pros and cons of being a cashless society are discussed below.

Thanks to digital technology, using cashless payment methods can shorten the time for queuing up at cashiers when making purchases. The sight of customers lining up and waiting for over ten minutes at the cashier of a supermarket during peak hours is a common phenomenon. Waiting is a tedious job and makes shopping less enjoyable. To mitigate this problem, using mobile apps to pay is a welcomed alternative to the younger generation. All you need to do is to scan the QR code in your app on the self-checkout device, and in a matter of seconds, the transaction will be completed. Compared with the conventional mode of cash payment, e-payment is certainly less time-consuming.

Coupled with its efficiency, using cashless payment methods can prevent the spreading of contagious diseases through banknotes and coins. During the global Covid-19 pandemic, it is of utmost importance to keep our surroundings in a clean and sanitized condition so as to prevent the virus from spreading. As such, more and more people start to realize the benefits of using e-payment and prefer to adopt it during the pandemic.

Another obvious benefit of cashless payment is that it can help reduce crime rate. With cash, it is easy to have money stolen. Also, illegal transactions such as drug trade are typically done in cash so that there is no record of the transaction. Financial crimes should also wither since it is harder to hide income and evade taxes when there is a record of every payment you receive.

Yet, cashless payment is a double-edged sword. Despite the above-mentioned benefits, it is not free from flaws. First, cashless payment will pose difficulty to the elderly, the impoverished and the unbanked. They will have an even harder time in a cashless society since many of them lack the technological know-how and the expensive electronic devices for conducting cashless transactions. Without a doubt, downloading payment apps and inputting banking information is an ordeal for them. These groups will be further left behind in a cashless society.
Another concern in a cashless society is security. Electronic payments mean less privacy. You might trust the organizations that handle your data and thus lower your awareness when revealing information in order to sign up for the payment platforms. As a result, your payment information could turn up in ways that are impossible to predict. Moreover, hackers are the muggers of the electronic world. In a cashless society, if somebody drains your account, you do not have any alternative ways to prevent it and you will feel helpless. It is also possible that your phone may be stolen or lost. In this case, it will be troublesome because your phone contains all your personal banking information and will leave you penniless for some time.

Lastly, e-payments will easily lead to overspending. When you spend with cash, you feel the “pain” of every dollar you spend. But with electronic payments, it is easy to swipe, tap, or click without noticing how much you have paid. It is undeniable that online shoppers are more vulnerable to overspending and purchasing a lot of unnecessary goods. In more serious cases, they will find themselves in heavy debt.

All in all, cashless payment methods have both benefits and drawbacks. It is necessary to weigh them carefully before rushing to a decision. One thing is certain: before promoting a completely cashless society, a mature regulatory environment is a must.
What You Should Know About Photography

6C Christy Tsui

Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. I am Dr Tsui. It’s wonderful to be here introducing photography to you. We live in a time flooded with visual information, be it social network, the Internet, television, advertising or anything that you could imagine. Images containing a wide variety of subjects are thrown at us. In the 21st century, I believe that all of you have at least one mobile phone with a good working camera in it. This allows us to take pictures and capture different moments in our daily life. We take photos of our meals, buildings, selfies, and every part of the world. It’s an ordinary thing to do, isn’t it? Despite using camera every day, how many of you have ever figured out what photography really is? As a professor of art history, you’ll soon be guided to understand “photography” in a few aspects.

Photography “saves” the world. It is the art, application and practice of creating durable images. It began with the human desire to capture the reality. Drawing and painting were initially developed as ways to imitate and represent things of our surroundings to aid in capturing the reality. Humans are always curious and creative. Therefore, they invented the camera obscura. Where did this idea come from? It’s seen in the literature of an old Chinese philosopher, Mozi, in 400 BC. Afterwards people followed his theory and discover how to make it as an image. Finally, in 1826, a French inventor used a camera to capture a view outside his workroom window. This image still exists today and it has been the world’s oldest photograph. At this time, you may think: why can we take pictures with multifarious colours nowadays? The colour photograph dates back to 1848. It’s by a French physicist, Edmond Becquerel, who found that we could use the three primary colours, red, blue and green, to add colours to photos in addition to the boring black and white. As its development goes, photos are surely better than drawing when it comes to recording the world. Gradually, photography has developed as what we see today.

Which camera do you use today? Is it Fuji X-T4 or Sony A7 III? They are the state-of-the-art cameras with THE best functions. Old cameras, however, weren’t as good as the current ones. The evolution of cameras started in 1500. Cameras were not originally used to take pictures. They were just for entertainment, viewing, drawing, and painting. Did you know how the cinema used to project movies we watch today? It’s all different from the past decades. Cameras in 1864 could not only shoot photos but also record scenes. It’s called
Stereo camera. The cameras we use today use the most advanced technology with different features. Through the evolution of camera, we can capture the beauty of the world in this day and age.

Photography can be described as the second nature of art. We share photos by using Whatsapp, Instagram, Facebook every day. Could you imagine how many images these apps had to process if everybody in the world sent out at least one photo a day? 900 million! This shows us photography has already fully integrated into our life. So, how’s photography used today? You may think that it’s normal to take pictures to capture the moment of life. Yet, the true meaning of taking photos is to record your youth and your memories. These photos are also a way to pass your memories to future generations. Photography is not only a tool for you to share what you see. Most importantly, it is to recall your memories about what you have experienced and what you feel.

As the saying goes, “We are making photographs to understand what our lives mean to us.” Here’s a mission for you today - choose your favorite photo and look at it. Could you remember the feeling when you took this picture? You’ll feel lucky to have taken the picture because memories are precious.
A Year of Blankness or Benefits

6D Casper Yu

Recently, some students from secondary school have decided to take a “gap year” before they are ready for their college life. You may wonder what this “gap year” means: is it beneficial? Is it about taking a time-off, having a break to let you think about your life? Or is it just a waste of time, leaving an “uncolleged” blank in their life? There are apparently many options for a gap year: having a job, traveling to other countries or doing charity works, these are mainly common options for the students taking up a gap year in Europe and North America. But now some employers and educationalists suggested that Hong Kong should do the same, that arouses a question, should we?

Some people think that students having a gap year can bring many benefits to them, such as improving their personal growth and giving them life experiences, this can be proven by a study in 2015 done by the American Gap Association. 98% of the participants agree that the gap year helped them develop as a better person while 96% experience the increase of self-confidence and 93% achieved improvement in communication skills. Some of the students that had experienced a gap year said that the experience that they gained during the gap year helped them to become more motivated, focused, mature, and independent. These are not just the lies of the students without proof. A study done by Robert Clagett, the former Dean of Admissions at Middlebury College, revealed that the students actually did improve their academic performance after a gap year by analyzing their GPA result. Statistic show that gap year students tend to outperform other students in College by a 0.1 to 0.4 on a 4.0 GPA scale. This data proves that gap year can help students be more focused on their future academics. Also, a gap year in other country allows students to learn how to take care of themselves, making it a great chance for developing their independence because they need to solve the problems that they encounter during the gap year on their own, including the language barriers between the students and the foreign people they need to communicate with. They can practice their communication skills, which allow them to get ready for their adulthood.

Besides, another advantage of the gap year is to give a break to the students in the marathon of learning and competing. Hong Kong is such a smothering place where everyone is, or being forced to be competitive. Parents, teachers, or even society itself all aspire students to have a good start in their life. Some of the parents even force their child to participate in different activities when they have to prepare for the DSE, trying to seize the
very last bit of their time to create the brightest star among other students, competing for a chance to get into a university. The competitiveness creates a high-pressure environment which could be detrimental to the student’s mental health, which is an issue that has always been overlooked. Yet, it is undeniable that mental health takes a major role in student’s personal growth and learning. In America, 30% of the students seeking mental health services have seriously considered committing suicide, and there is only 56% of them have completed their six years bachelor’s program, some of these students even get addicted to drugs. These have pointed out the results of ignoring the mental health of the students. But a gap year can provide some space for them to calm down, recharge their batteries, and pull themselves together. As the saying goes, “Resting is for walking further.” Giving the students a break after these years of non-stop learning can reduce their risk of psychiatric disorder, the results of the 2015 study also includes that 82% of the student’s motivation to go for a gap year is to take a break from the academic track.

Moreover, a gap year can provide a chance for the students to think about their life goals and interests. Most of the Hong Kong students have never thought of anything about taking a gap year, because they are being told that there is nothing more important than studying. They study just to get into a university, fulfilling their parent’s expectations, but not their own desires. With a gap year, when the students are no longer being trapped inside the cage of academic pressures given by their parents, they can finally get the space to think more about themselves, for example, what they really want in their life, what their interest are, and what they are capable of doing. This could help a lot on their academic results and their future career because they are more focused by having a clear goal, and they know how their strong suit would assist them in their future, therefore taking a gap year is always beneficial for students in Hong Kong.

Having mentioned the potentials that a gap year can bring, you may suddenly be very motivated to go for one immediately, but everything has its pros, and cons. Some may consider a gap year a bad thing, because a year of blankness sounds unfavorable to some. They think that a gap year might lead to a derailment, because some of the students just spend the year playing video games and doing nothing meaningful at all. For those who work during the gap year, they might suffer from unhappy experiences and cannot withstand the
heavy workload, making them waste a lot of time and fail to catch up with the others in academically. So, it is not possible to make gap year compulsory for six formers. Some of the activities that people usually do when taking a gap year are overlapping with what is already existing right now, for instance part-time jobs for gaining work experiences, study exchange programs for traveling and living in another country, and volunteering for nothing more than that. These can all be achieved without the gap year program, students can go for a part-time job and volunteering in Hong Kong. There are already many exchange programs such as one provided by the ANS Foreign Exchange. There are so many ways to achieve those benefits which make taking up a gap year a pointless thing. The other drawback of taking up a gap year is the financial burdens during the gap year. Everything, including the flight to another country, or basically the everyday cost within the duration of the gap year, requires money. It is not possible to have everyone being able to get sufficient resources for the gap year. In this situation, students might think that making money to get the resources they require is of utmost importance. They might not decide to go back to the university at all, making them lose their academic skills because they no longer focus on the learning. This also requires a lot of time to recover, making the gap year a risky move.

To me personally, taking gap year is basically beneficial. You get the chance to organize your thoughts and plan the way you want to go, experiencing what the world looks like and how it works... There are just so many things one can get in that period of time. For those who consider it a waste of time is basically because they lack a detailed plan before they make the decision. That leads to the students being lost, not knowing what they should do, and ending up giving up thinking about their life and wasted the whole gap year. The solution to this is to have a detailed plan. To resolve the problem of the lack of resources, students can take up part-time jobs. For those who think that making money is more important than anything, all they need is the determination and perseverance on their goals and dreams. This is a common issue where everyone in this society has, many people end up following the majorities and forgetting their dreams and targets. It is not just the flaw of a gap year itself, but the mindset of the student as well. So, the only solution to this is not to give up on their dreams, no matter how many obstacles there are.
An Experience for the Body, the Mind, and the Soul – Taking a Gap Year

6E Jaden Chan

I once watched a documentary on Animal Planet, following the story of two lion cubs and their mother. One lion cub lived his life obediently tracing the paw prints of his mother and their pride, while the other rapscallion was distracted and went astray. As seasons pass and the films are rolling, one would assume that the lion cub let loose into the wilderness would not last a day. Yet as the cameras follow his footsteps, we soon see that not only has he matured into the majestic king of the grassy plains, but he even leads his own pride - standing mighty and powerful in front of his reunited brother.

In today's society, the hustle and bustle of the metropolitan battlefield emulates that of a bloodshed-filled fight of the fittest in any South African savannah. Hong Kong, in particular, gifts all of her beloved form 6 graduates with nothing more than years’ worth of honing a sword, before putting them on the back and sending them into a gunfight. There lies little doubt that any F.6 graduate welcomes their hazy future with open arms, as they look to universities with over HK$42,100 in tuition fees as their only sanctuary. But with changing times, an alternative has emerged from the lands of Europe and North America, it is called Gap Years.

A gap year refers to anybody bold enough to take a whole year off of their everyday lives, and intercept their resumés with a year of self-defining and rejuvenating experiences, usually in the lines of volunteering or travelling to exotic areas. However, such a choice is rather controversial in concrete jungles such as Hong Kong and Shanghai, as judgmental voices stem from the taboo of F.6 graduates having to subject themselves to a set itinerary in life - after school comes university, then you have to find a handsome-earning job, then buy a house, get married... they are all for the betterment of the society as a whole, the legacy of your family, and you as an individual. Blinded by social norms, such accusations are proofs of the benefits of gap years being severely overlooked, whereas in reality, it leaves golden nuggets for the body, the mind, and the soul.

If you were to ask any teenagers from 15 to 17 what occupies their mind the most, indubitably they’ll start to rant on how the HKDSE has left a bind on their daily lives, bombarding them with insurmountable amounts of stress and pressure. That is not far from the truth. A student's sole purpose is in their name - studying. An average student spends
almost 10 hours a day with their towers of books and school work, with 8 hours at school and 2 hours of extra tutorial, on top of that juggling an extra few hour learning some sort of instruments, not to mention a few hours of their sports practices... It is no wonder by the end of their DSE they seem like a sack of unfortunate bones murmuring Pythagoras theorems and the property of waves carved into their hollow skulls. But by taking a gap year, those worries and baggage can all be left behind as they embark on a new odyssey, seeing new sceneries, meeting new people. There exists programmes that supply participants with once-in-a-life-time chances to climb the glaciers of Patagonia or scale the ranges of the Himalayas. This allows Hong Kong students to start their adult years by challenging themselves with new encounters, which will relieve them off their shackles from studies and focus on living their lives to the fullest, and invigorate their youths from years wasted on mind-dulling exercises and repetitive tasks.

What's worse is that most F.6 graduates are fantasizing the summers that were erased by mindless studies would result in a comprehensive understanding of the field they'll cast their bodies into, or even society as a whole, not knowing that what they've amassed in wisdom and experience is just the tip of the iceberg - nay, the mere reflection of an iceberg. The moment they step into the real world, they'll be instantly melted away by the fierce embers of the competition in a society like Hong Kong's. This gives another incentive to take a gap year, as a gap year allows them to gain a fundamental grasp on how the globe turns. Programmes such as volunteering in rural countries allow students to experience the daily life in a poverty ridden world, oblivious to most people stuck in the bubble of Hong Kong. Not only will they follow the daily routine of a local cocoa beans' farmer, but they might even uncover first-hand the malice of businessmen taking advantage of these poor souls. The students could also establish new bonds with locals, fellow volunteers, and learn through an irreplaceable opportunity the value of empathy and compassion, teaching the mind lessons in the world surrounding that exceed chalk lines on a blackboard.

Reminiscing on the days in a classroom, countless college students often regret wasting their limited days they had with their closest schoolmates, who by then had become total strangers and split their separate ways, following that thought usually comes the question - WHY did I spend those days grinding through books and notes, casting everything and
everyone aside, to chase a star that shimmers brighter afar than up close? Reality strikes those coming off age like an assassin always lurking in the dark, as they ponder on what their lives and efforts are all for before calling on their knees, having realized that their enrollment in college is no more than following the herd, and petrified by the concept of gambling what they have in pursuit of a future of uncertainties. This can be wisely seen in a city like Hong Kong, where children feel pressured by their parents to follow the aforementioned "taboo" in the factory of a world we live in. This is where a gap year can bring the most benefits to the students, as it gives them a break to take life slower and reconsider their goals, before setting a purpose in life to follow. There are some programmes where students can join nature conservation teams in their endeavors to protect rainforests from the impending doom of rotten-hearted human activities. Students can therefore surround themselves with people adhering to a single noble purpose to save mother nature, and the flares of determination can inspire them to dare to reach for the stars, and exterminate the stubborn mindset that they have to align with a set pattern in life, instead finding their own purpose before stepping foot into the world.

As a lion cub strays from the pride, their inert nature as a pack animal usually results in their demise going solo. But if a lion cub can take that experience of unfamiliarity and strive for self-improvements, even he can lead the pride and take charge. As humans, this final step might seem intimidating, but this single year may be the trigger for a complete change in who you are as a person, for the benefit of the body, the mind, and the soul.
Gap Year – Giving a Meaning to Life
6E Lead Choi

Have you ever thought about the meaning of life? What’s your answer? From my observation, people nowadays seem to value money a lot. This explains why some parents are so overwhelmed to know their kids failed a test. In their minds, getting bad results means no offers from universities and without a professional degree, you’re doomed to be poor and your life is ruined. Is life all about good grades and jobs with high income? No! Life is nothing close to that. It is a process of seeking happiness and taking a gap year is one of the ways to achieve that.

Over these last few, taking a gap year has become a new trend in western countries. Whether it is to take a break from studies, gaining real-world work experience or traveling around the world, taking a gap year for whatever reason has the potential to be tremendously beneficial to your personal growth and to better prepare you for adulthood. However, there are always pros and cons and gap years are certainly not an exception. We are aware that some students have shown concerns as to whether he or she should take a gap year. To shed some light on the matter, we will detail some of the positives and negatives that come along with taking a gap year in order to help you make a more informed decision.

Taking a gap year gives you time to pursue other passions rather than just studying. Taking a year-long break from your academics gives you the opportunity to reflect on your heart’s desire. In such a ruthless and result-oriented society, have you ever had any thoughts about chasing your dreams? Is there anything you really want to give it a try but you haven’t just because of the limitation of time and chances? If that’s the case, you could spend a gap year pursuing hobbies and interests that are often neglected in favour of studying. A gap year is a year for you to discover more about yourself by gaining life experience. You may change a lot in the year, develop new strengths or end up in a totally different direction from you or your parents’ “perfect” vision of the future. For example, if some students are interested in wildlife and eager to work with animals, they may take up gap year programmes offering job opportunities at animal shelters or conservation centres. In an elephant conservation volunteer programme in Sri Lanka, participants are given the chance to save wild elephants which are hunted by the locals. During the programme, volunteers observe and monitor the behaviour of elephants and their interaction with humans. Moreover, they are involved in solving conflicts between wildlife and humans. That’s going to be a fresh experience for urban people like us to get this close to nature. Wildlife lovers, here’s your chance to make your dreams come true.
If you don’t have any specific interests, don’t turn away yet. You can still take a gap year and find your interests in that year. Keep trying something you haven’t tried before. You may be surprised when you set foot in a brand-new realm. A friend of mine, Andy, who was a F.6 student last year, still didn’t know what he wanted to pursue as a career and what to study in university even after his DSE. He then went off for a gap year, trying different activities in various countries. When I saw him after he was back, I almost couldn’t recognize him as he had a great change. I did not only mean his outfit but also the way he spoke. He used to be a pessimistic person, talking about his worries all the time. Yet after his gap year, our conversation often began with “You must hear all the occurrences in the year. It’s legendary!” He sounded full of joy and energy. During the conversation between us, he smiled all the time and he was enthusiastic. He ended up studying music in university, saying that music is the bridge that brings people all over the world together and brings us joy. He would like to encourage people with his music. Isn’t it amazing?

Giving your life a meaning is certainly what gap years could do but there’s even more. Most of the work in gap year programmes are no or low-paid voluntary jobs. The above elephant volunteering programme is an example. Graduates can do meaningful jobs while pursuing their interests without pragmatic financial consideration. Moreover, a good gap year could look impressive on your CV for job application afterwards. Volunteering for endangered elephants sounds cool and gives others an impression of kind-hearted as you have to be truly in love with animals in order to do voluntary work for a whole year.

With Andy’s real-life example, you may be fascinated by the life-changing power of gap year, yet a gap year could be a waste of time if it is not fully-planned and implemented. You might realise the most productive activity done in a day is binge-watch an entire series on Netflix. It is surely not going to look good on your CV. Therefore, it is crucial to have your gap year plan mapped out clearly. You could make a list of goals you would like to achieve, skills you want to learn and experiences you want to have. Then gather the relevant information. Last but not least, plan for college life after the year.

Apart from an unplanned gap year, another risk is losing motivation to study after a year’s break. Since gap year takers start university a year later than others, they may still need time to adopt the change and catch up with the learning progress while the others are
already well-settled into college life. Some may lose the motivation of studying because it is too challenging for them to catch up. The later they catch up, the more they are lagged behind. Consequently, students will be frustrated and don’t know where to start in order to keep up with the progress. The worst scenario is giving up and dropping out of university.

Despite the fact that gap year may be a risky decision as it may ruin your college life and seems to be a waste of time for some people, I am still encouraging students to give this once-in-a-lifetime experience a try. It is a chance to get to know yourself and the path of your life better. By knowing yourself more, you will understand your desires and hence be able to achieve happiness. Someone thinks that dreams are naive and unrealistic. We can’t feed on dreams. Yes, we can’t, but life is not just about money or being excellent in every subject at school. Life is all about happiness. Try to imagine this: you are a rich person with everything you want but joy or you are a rather normal person with an income that isn’t high but enough for living. However, you are having fun every day. You enjoy your work, your family, and your life. Which sounds more attractive? Remember, you have only one chance to live. The most pathetic ending would be having a job that you don’t have passion for at all. When you look back, all you see is dull, exhausting, colourless life which you don’t even have a chance to listen to yourself, or try understanding what you really want. Let's seize the day and don’t let any regret appear in our treasurable lives. Before getting into the workplace like everybody else, take a gap year and chase your dreams while you still can.
I Speak with Courage – a Tragedy of Cyber Bullying

6E Suen Wing Hay

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. It is my pleasure to be here and share my opinion on cyber bullying. Right now, standing right here, I have mixed feelings. On one hand, I’m glad to see many of you pay high attention to cyber bullying. On the other hand, it really takes a lot of courage for me to give this speech as a victim of cyber bullying.

I believe all of you know what bullying is. However, you may ask what cyber bullying is. Cyber bullying means that bullying someone on the Internet and it has become a looming social issue over the past few years. In this speech, I’m going to share some differences between cyber bullying and traditional bullying and how harmful cyber bullying is to the victims. Besides, I will share my experience and some solutions while facing cyber bullying.

As I have just mentioned, cyber bullying means that bullying someone on the internet. And in this day and age, as long as everyone has access to the internet by using their own electronic devices, cyber bullying can happen anywhere anytime. A few months ago, I could find numerous rude comments on my social media from the moment I woke up until the time I went to sleep. That made me feel extremely stressed. It is like you are trapped in a cage and you can’t escape from it.

Apart from happening anywhere and anytime, cyber bullying actually gives the offender an extra degree of protection. But why? Because when you are on the internet, bullies can harass and attack their targets anonymously without taking any responsibility. One month ago, Hana, a Japanese cast member on the Netflix show Terrace House, committed suicide due to cyber bullying on Twitter. Until now, no offender has been punished by law because of anonymity. It is unfair, isn’t it? Obviously, the internet encourages the bullies to attack the victims again and again which makes us collapse in depression.

Experiencing cyber bullying is a terrible thing for me. Fortunately, at that time, I figured out some solutions for handling cyber bullying. In the following, I will share my tips to all of you.

The first-and-foremost tip is to tell a trusted company if you are being cyberbullied. It is not your fault for being cyberbullied and you should not be ashamed of it. You can express
your feelings to anyone you trust, be it your parents or a social worker. It is important that you don’t suffer in silence and you tell someone about it straight away. Remember, you are not alone and you can get support from people around you.

Secondly, don’t respond to the offensive messages. I know it is hard not to write back, but it is always best not to retaliate. Sometimes the people bullying you are looking to get a reaction out of you and answering back can just make it worse. Instead of replying to them, you can block the bullies so that they will no longer be able to contact you and send you nasty and rude messages on social media.

As the saying goes, “when there is a will there is a way”. Although it may feel like you do not have control over the situation, you can. Stay positive and I believe things will get better very soon.

To the bullies, while the internet can be fun and super cool, it comes with responsibility. A joke is meant to be funny but not at the expense of another person's feelings. Look before you leap and stop cyber bullying together.

It is the end of my sharing. Thank you.
On the Verge of Inevitable – an Era Without Cash

6E Henry Tse

As the old saying goes, “Cash is king”, but does it still hold against the uprising trend of a cashless society? Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am Henry Tse, owner of a convenience shop in Hong Kong. I am honored to have the chance to speak in this forum and express my view on a cashless society.

First of all, we have to know what a cashless society is. It means an economic state which financial transaction is not conducted with money in the form of physical banknotes or coins anymore, but rather through the transfer of digital information between the transacting parties like Apple pay, Visa or PayPal. In short, people’s money will exist, recorded, and exchanged only in digital form online.

So, what does it have to do with you, a consumer, or me as a shop owner? The most obvious benefit is a much faster transaction speed for both customers and owners. Don’t you get tired of lining behind other customers? What about waiting for them to take out their cash slowly when they arrive at the counter, as a result, lengthening the waiting time of all customers. Or when you just want to buy a pack of candy or a bottle of water but end up spending minutes in the shop queueing. Isn’t it just frustrating and irritating in these kinds of situations? In a cashless society, a scan with the QR payment code using your mobile phone or just a tap with your credit card - this can all be done in a matter of seconds while vastly increasing the efficiency at both ends. Chain companies like Sweet Garden and Tender Greens found out that they were able to process 5-15% more transactions per hour with cashless payments along with 4-5 times faster transaction speed than cash.

Moreover, for any shop owner, a cashless society can reduce the running costs and business risks for them. Cashless payments can eliminate business risks such as cash stolen by employees, counterfeit money, or robbery of cash. One study by American and German researchers found that the crime rate in Missouri dropped by 10% when the state’s public welfare benefits changed from cash to cashless. This means that crime in a cashless society is much harder to prevail. As a result, it will reduce the costs of security when withdrawing cash from banks or transporting it and time for its management. Spending time and resources moving money around and protecting large sums of cash could become a thing of the past when there was no cash around anymore.
Besides, better hygiene is another major advantage of going cashless. It is no secret that coins and bills are covered with bacteria that can easily make us sick. During the recent pandemic of Covid-19, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has recommended people using cashless transactions to fight the spread of the virus. As the cash is circulated all around the society, it is easy to be contaminated and creates the perfect warm bed for any viruses to survive and spread. We would never carry around somebody’s used tissue in our back pocket, so why are we doing it with cash? Nobody touches our credit card or mobile phone except for ourselves, and that is a good reason to get rid of our bills and coins.

With all kinds of benefits brought by the cashless society, the greater point I would like to bring up is whether Hong Kong should and can transform into one. My answer is no, or at least not yet. Hong Kong has had its e-payment method for a long time - the Octopus Card. Introduced in 1997, it has since issued more than 35 million Octopus Cards, but it has to be constantly topped up with cash which does not make it cashless. Although there are people using e-payments for online shopping, it is not very common yet. According to a study from VISA, cash is still the primary choice for 70% of Hong Kong people while more than half of them believe Hong Kong is still at least 7 years away from becoming a cashless society.

Although cash still has a crucial role in Hong Kong, major companies like Apple or Amazon are shifting their focus to cashless payment with the introduction of Hong Kong’s virtual banking license. We can expect Hong Kong to become a fully cashless society in times to come. Cashless payment may not be a phenomenon right now but it can have a bright future in Hong Kong. A cashless society may be a thing in the future, but for now, we are still living in a mix of present and future.
Being Cyberbullied: Not a Laughing Matter

6F Michael Lai

Have you ever been bullied? Well statistically speaking, one-third of students have been, or maybe you just see it as friendly banter. Greetings everyone, as a victim of cyberbullying, it is my honour to share with you about traditional vs cyberbullying, mitigating measures as well as speaking out about my disheartening tragedy of getting harassed virtually.

Usually, bullies think "I want to repeatedly inflict harm on this individual, for I am in power and is superior, or just want an ego boost." They pick on the weak not to get lunch money, but to gain clout. Bullies have low self-esteem from the lack of selfhood, envying others with actual worth and thus demeaning them for a shot of dopamine and concealment of shortcomings.

Now that you know why bullying happens, let's sidestep to a pretty ironic cyberbullying story first. Bullyhunters.org was an organisation aimed to combat harassment in video games through "vigilante bully hunters" killing offenders in the game CS: GO. Seems well-intentioned on the surface, right? Yes, just at face value. Turns out their allegedly live demo was staged and pre-recorded, and the host has a history of assaulting others on Twitter and Twitch. Netizens immediately caught on and it went viral, drawing in more bullies piling in on the toxicity. Having received overwhelming amounts of threats and harassments, the host ended up staying off the Internet for quite a while and the organisation shut down. Just think of how ironic this is, an initiative stopping bullying gets bullied. On a serious note, this illustrated how the instantaneous and boundless nature of the Internet facilitates bullying even more so than traditional ones, which is limited to direct interactions.

Onto my story. I was chilling on a multiplayer game server, building my house and minding my own business, and then out of the blue, another player showed up. Seeing that I was new, he offered some help and initially led me thinking that he was friendly, it was not before long I realised, I was mistaken. "Do you want me to blow up this house and start over? It looks trash," he asked in chat, which I thought was just a funny joke. Then it started crossing the line. He repeatedly mocked my skills, destroyed my base and called upon his gang to spawn-kill me. All that's going through my mind is "please stop, just stop", yet they stabbed me again, and again until I snapped and left the server. You thought that was it? You're oh-so-wrong. Somehow, they managed to dox me and spam insults and death threats on my
social media. For a while, I felt helpless, distrusting others and intimidated from getting online, and would cry myself to sleep rethinking that day. It seemed to me that bullies have less remorse and empathy online compared to traditional bullying.

I've learnt that I need to square up to bullies and defend myself. Like in traditional bullying, simply ignoring their teasing and leave could drive them away. The second line of defence is to set privacy settings so that personal info isn't disclosed. Third, just block and report them. If all else fails, take a break from the Internet, they'll lose interest quick. If you took too hard of a hit, talk to your trusted ones or even a therapist.

Cyberbullying is very much different from traditional bullying, and neither of them is a laughing matter. A lot of cases are far worse than what I experienced, even involving a SWAT team killing an uninvolved innocent. Us victims should square up and speak out about our encounter in hopes of suppressing all forms of bullying. It's time to take a stand and call for action.
Co-Living: How Is This a Thing?
6F Kuang Da

Whenever the word “co-living” gets thrown out, most people would give me that funny squint, like, seriously? You live with random people? Well yes, but actually no. Let me explain.

I’m no connoisseur of co-living but being an occupant for two years, I think I’m qualified to say no, co-living does not involve sleeping with strangers. So, let’s get that out of the way first, shall we?

For a start, people for whatever inexplicable reason assume that you get no privacy in co-living spaces, which couldn’t be further from the truth, in fact private space is a major element of co-living. The bed space and the bathrooms are in fact private. What gets shared are the living room, the kitchen and electric appliances, which are more share-able, if that makes sense. Most private spaces also come with security features, such as a smartcard or biometrics so that random people can’t just get in. It just goes to show that the lack of privacy is nothing more than a misconception. From a matter of experience, I haven’t got stabbed yet so you don’t really need to sweat over it too much.

There’s still the giant elephant in the room. Why does it exist? Well, for a few reasons, the most straight-forward one being the cost. It’s no news that houses over here are at a premium. According to the Global Living Report, we have to face up to, by far, the world’s most expensive housing market. Affording a house has become a heavy cross to bear. Co-living spaces in comparison are more affordable. Mind you they are not cheap. Thousands of dollars for a capsule space isn’t exactly charity, but it’s better than nothing for the desperate. Such is life.

What’s also worth mentioning is that renting a house is a lot of commitment, especially in these ever-changing times. Children of this generation are doomed with a blurry prospect, where settling down is no longer name of the game. Renting a house entails to a fixed contract, a lot of paperwork, and setting up the whole house. Some people don’t fancy spending the springtime of their life on such tedious work when they could use it to realize their dreams or whatnot. Plus, who knows where their future lies? A co-living space doesn’t limit your options; on the contrary, it encourages occupants to be far more resilient in these confusing times.
But why people opt for co-living goes beyond these reasons; it comes with a few enticing reasons for good measure.

For one, it reduces social distance, which is very convenient although it’s kind of awkward these days. Being a member of the sharing economy, it works in tandem with co-working. I was doing a start-up project with a few friends, and we have to work really closely, that’s why I chose co-living in the first place. We worked and lived together, we had discussions whenever we wanted, which was really conducive to the progress.

Moving on, it also helps strengthen social bonding within the community. It ties back to personal development and interpersonal relationship. It always does. Hong Kong isn’t exactly known for its affable aura, with isolation being a particular notoriety. Touted as the panacea to urban loneliness, co-living spaces get people to speak, share and get acquainted. No man is an island. This makes it a lifesaver for those new faces who have no relatives here. I’ve talked to a few foreign students in the shared space before. They decided to study here for some reasons, interesting choice. They told me that they were struggling to socialize with locals. But they had no troubles here; other co-livers actually listened to them. People who live together tend to have stronger relationships, and that’s certainly the case here. We still regularly make contact to chat about different culture and things. It’s definitely a plus. Although make no mistake; you don’t have to be from overseas to pick up a few companions.

On the flipside, co-living helps teenagers be independent and mature. Thanks to the absurd house prices, teenagers have no choice but to stay with their parents, who wait on them hand and foot. This may not sound like a detriment, but it actually hampers teens’ growth. Because they don’t get to live alone, and be responsible for their decisions, they cannot learn to be a mature individual. Not anymore: now they have a choice. They can join a co-living space, try out what living by themselves feels like, and it can train their mindset to be more well-rounded and sophisticated. It also makes them more self-assured and less insecure facing the wider world, which is instrumental to personal development.

That’s a lot of information, I know, I know this is still a bit hard to take in. If you still prefer having a definitive place to call home, so be it. But for the needy, the neglected, and the ones seeking versatility, I couldn’t think of anything better than the concept of co-living. So here I am, imploring you to give co-living the respect it deserves and spare a thought for the people benefited from this new lifestyle. It’s about time such alternative came forth.
Embrace Your Chance of Working Abroad

6F Zoe Chan

A miserable young PhD holder sighed heavily after his fifth interview in a day. Desperate university graduates scrubbing the filthy dishes at the murky alley. Discouraged art graduates pushing the trolleys of bulky goods with those fragile hands. Due to credential inflation and intense competition in the labour market, hardly can Hong Kong graduates find an ideal job. Having received high education, these ambitious young graduates, ironically, ended up as blue-collar workers with low salary, if not jobless. Seen from this light, you may be feeling a bit discouraged and directionless. Fortunately, when there is a will, there is a way. Under globalisation, territory barriers have diminished and working abroad is no longer building castles in the air. With advanced technology and comprehensive transport system, young graduates who fail to find a job in Hong Kong can consider looking for opportunities in other cities in Asia instead. It is succinct that working abroad in Asian cities is the perfect antidote to the current problem.

Looking for job opportunities in Asia offers a wide range of career choices and brighter career prospect. In Hong Kong, many industries are facing saturated market. Some prominent examples are the filming industry or the fashion industry. That the glut of graduates competing for a single job position only adds fuel to fire. As a result, graduates in these fields finds it difficult to be employed due to the ferocious competition in the labour market. Therefore, if graduates can seek job from other Asian cities instead, they can opt from a greater variety of jobs. For instance, Hong Kong animation makers can consider working in Tokyo, which is renowned for its animation industry and there should be more job opportunities related to these graduates, be they video editors or animation designers. Also, due to the flourishing development in the animation industry in Japan, it can be anticipated that more resources are invested on this industry and graduates in the field will have a brighter career prospect. Therefore, graduates should seek job globally but not locally to make good use of their strengths and professional knowledge.

Apart from career development, working abroad in Asian cities can broaden one’s horizons. In Hong Kong, our perspective is limited to a single spot on a sphere. Often are Hong Kong graduates labelled as “smart but lacks common sense” due to their deprivation of global vision. By working abroad, Hong Kong graduates can encounter and befriend with a diversity of people from different ethnic backgrounds. They can dive deeper into different cultures and learn to respect different cultures. Moreover, while working with local Asians,
Hong Kong graduates can familiarise themselves with a broader working environment and be exposed to the latest global trend. For instance, working in other cities like Guangzhou and Shenzhen, allows graduates to experience the famous cashless society. Thus, these experiences can broaden their horizons and let them acquire global vision.

Working abroad can also hone graduates’ life skills. Alone in a new city, graduates have to be independent. Trivial matters ranging from cooking your meal to doing the chores all fall on their shoulders. Through the process, they will simultaneously be more mature and more capable of taking care of themselves. Moreover, unexpected incidents always happen and since graduates are distant from their family, it is impossible for them to seek help from family and friends. As a result, all they can rely on would be themselves. So conducive are such experiences to develop their problem-solving skills. These attributions are of utmost essence in their workplace and can sharpen their competitive edge. In short, working abroad is beneficial to young graduates as they can acquire lifelong skills and can cope with adverse situation.

Some claim that young graduates working overseas will alienate themselves from their parents. Filial piety is a crucial Chinese zeitgeist and is advocated by schools and many traditional families. The traditional Chinese society promotes collectivism and having a strong family bonding has always been the first priority. While young graduates work abroad, they would dwell in another city and could no longer stay by their parents’ side and show their reverence for their parents. Not only does this contradict with the Chinese traditional belief, but young graduates may also distance themselves from their family due to lack of interaction. It would be particularly pity for young graduates to end up in such unfavourable dilemma.

Yet, in the light of technological advancement, lack of communication which resulted in estrangement from their family should no longer be a major concern. The invention of multifunctional apps, namely WhatsApp, Wechat and Skype, gives young graduates the ability to contact their parents at their fingertips. Wherever they are, they can simply dial the string of phone number and chat with their parents virtually. Moreover, under globalisation, the Earth has diminished to a global village and with comprehensive transport system, young graduates can conveniently return to their homeland from other Asian cities.
with ease. For instance, a flight from Taiwan to Hong Kong takes about 2 hours only. It is tantamount to your local journey from Fanling to Tai Koo Shing. Thereby, given that it is increasingly convenient to maintain contact with their significant others, the lack of communication with family should not be bothersome.

In short, looking for a job in Asian cities bring substantial benefits with negligible adverse consequence, most of which can be eliminated by state-of-the-art technology. Fellow vigorous university graduates, don’t panic over finding a job or worry about your career prospect. Why not consider working overseas in other Asian cities? You may be astounded to discover a wonderful future awaiting you.
Fathers’ Involvement in Parenting – Breadwinner or Babysitter?

6F Chung Wong

I am here today to share with you the importance of the father’s involvement in parenting and further introduce to you the concept of “stay-at-home fathers”.

In bygone days, women were considered to be housewives while men were the breadwinners. However, in recent years, fathers’ responsibility is not only defined as being the breadwinner, but their involvement in parenting is also considered. Some dads even have become a stay-at-home parent to look after their children. According to the Pew Research Centre, 2.2 million dads are staying home with their children, which has nearly doubled in number since the 1990s. These intriguing facts have shown the turn of the tide when it comes to the roles in parenting. But you may wonder what benefits could be brought by a more involved father-parenting. Let me start by the positive impact of the father’s involvement in parenting.

For the impact brought to children’s development, research from The Daily Telegraph reveals that children who spent more time with their fathers have a better brain development. Their average IQ level is 5 points higher than those who spent less time with their fathers. What’s more, for the children who grow up in the absence of fatherhood, the possibility for them to conduct crime is 13% higher than those who have close relationships with their fathers. This phenomenon echoes with the ‘pathology of the matriarchy’ hypothesized by the psychologist Moynihan (1965). In simple terms, the more a father is involved in a child’s early childhood, the better person the child will be.

For the impact brought to fathers themselves, it is interesting to point out that fathers who spend more time with their children earn 1% more income on average than those who spend less parental time, as shown in data from European Sociological Review. This means the time taken for father parenting is not at the expense of working time and quality. The possible reason for this is because fathers would gain motivation and aspiration from their children when they are considered role models. Moreover, research done by neurologist Eyal Abraham revealed that taking care of a child would activate cortical socio-cognitive circuits in fathers. That means the father’s brain becomes more sensitive to not only the infant’s physical and verbal signals, but also others’ feelings and actions, hence spotting others’ needs at first glance and gaining better interpersonal relationships. So, father parenting is not only conducive to a child’s development, but also to the father’s wellbeing.
Let me take a step further to the full involvement of fatherhood, stay-at-home fathers. Stay-at-home fathers can be divided into two groups. The first group chooses the path actively while the other is forced to stay at home due to unemployment or illness. There are many reasons why fathers have actively chosen to take up household chores rather than office work. Maybe his child has physical or mental illness, maybe he likes dealing with children more than work, or maybe his spouse has a higher income and they have compromised to flip the roles in the family.

Being a full-time dad is not as easy as you may think, prospective fathers. It is not just changing diapers and feeding the babies. “Sesame Street” on TV, milk in a bottle, lullabies at night, that’s not the case. In fact, being a stay-at-home dad is more challenging than dealing with your manager. Be prepared to get no sleep at night, because you need to feed the baby three times a night, once in every three hours. Be prepared to be peed on the face when changing diapers. Be prepared to answer infinite questions proposed by the little brain while not getting annoyed. Be prepared to soothe the baby when they burst into tears in public. The first month is tough, be prepared.

Whether to adopt a partial or full involvement of father parenting is up to your choice. If you think the father should take more responsibility, then go for it, don’t let social stereotypes hold you back. Please be reminded that father parenting in children’s development is vital. Taking care of a child is the mutual responsibility for mum and dad. Parents should divide work and know their roles in the family. Remember, communication is the key, if any of you have difficulties taking care of a child, do ask for help from your partner. Hope you all become successful parents in the future. Thank you.
Inner Voice of a Street Performer
6F Zoe Chan

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. As a street performer, I’m honoured to be standing here and share my experience on street performing with you. Street performance, also known as busking, means performing in public space.

So, why did I become a street performer? This is an FAQ from my family, friends or even strangers. Honestly, we, street performers, don’t earn much. As you can see from this container, 50 dollars is all I got from my 4-hour performance on the street today. And our earnings aren’t stable. Sometimes you get a hundred and sometimes you get ten, if not none.

With such unstable source of income, you may wonder – why street performing? As a performer, I’d say the major reasons of busking can be attributed to the 2Ps – passion and practicality.

Passion is the key for street performance. Performing has always been my dream as it’s delightful to witness the joyful laughter and applause from my audience. Devoted to bringing vibrancy and joy to the city, I started performing acrobatics on the street with my partner. It wasn’t easy at all, but we enjoyed our audience’s smile and this motivated us to persist. There are many other performers specialising in a variety of busking, be it music performance, dance or magic. Most of them, if not all, hold the passion that have inspired them to begin street performing.

Practicality is another factor for street performance. Every street performer has that dream of delivering their performance under the limelight, but is this feasible? Who can afford renting a stage in a theatre? The cost of a stage is high, and maybe unaffordable. Moreover, we have no fame and no audience. For inexperienced performers, it’s not feasible to hold a proper show in the concert hall. We are discouraged, directionless and desperate. And street performance is our way out. We are ready to perform, anytime and almost anywhere and can gain a good reputation and accumulate experience with the hope that someday we can perform on that stage.

Having mentioned the causes of street performance, I would like to move on to some effects of street performance with 2Ds.
The first D refers to the diversity of culture converging and integrating with each other. In street performance, art is delivered from different people in different ways. There are innovative artists singing their own-produced Cantonese songs and at the same time, just across the street, there may be a magician turning her scarf into a pigeon. Street performance can showcase the diversity of culture and that is one of the unique features of Hong Kong that we often take pride in. Also, visitors love us. Once, a traveller from Australia asked for photographs and complimented that we, street performers, were like the ambassadors of Hong Kong, promoting the unique street vibes of this place.

However, street performance can sometimes bring troubles. Disturbance, the second D, has been a major concern regarding busking. Undeniably, noise pollution and road congestion can sometimes be caused or aggravated because of busking, especially for street bands as they generally have bulky amplifiers and instruments. I have also received several complaints from the neighbourhood, claiming that I blocked the road and caused congestion. This was very disheartening as we had never intended to cause trouble.

So, what should we do now? Does this mean that street performance should be banned?

Despite the disturbance to the neighbourhood, that street performance can do good to the society is without doubt. Therefore, I hope the government can consider arranging more open space for street performance in the downtown and street performers can freely choose where to perform at their own choice. Not only can this curtail the disturbance to the neighbourhood, but it can also benefit the society. I hope through my speech, every one of you can acquire a broader understanding of street performance from our point of view. While street performance is important for us, performers, it’s also a crucial part of Hong Kong that shouldn’t be wiped out.

This is the end of my speech, thank you for listening.
Let’s Dance to the Wave – K-Pop
6F Melody Chan

Good morning everyone. Let us begin by recalling our very first memory of listening to Korean pop music. I bet it is PSY’s Gangnam Style, right? It took the world by storm back in 2012. Everyone simply jumped on the bandwagon to catch its beats and practice the cheesy horse-riding dance. As a journalist of an international entertainment magazine, I am more than excited to share my insights on K-pop culture, how it has become a global phenomenon and how greatly it has impacted the world.

How on earth can people be familiar with K-Pop? This is definitely because of the Internet. All K-Pop content is released constantly through different online platforms, like YouTube and Instagram, which provides opportunities for people around the globe to recognize K-pop culture and to keep up with it. With just a few clicks, people in different countries can watch those appealing live music videos and give instant reactions at the same time. How easily accessible they are. As obvious as it seems, the advancement of the Internet technology enables K-pop to go viral worldwide.

But do you know why the K-Pop industry can withstand the test of time and keep prospering? The answer has to be something related to the government. Not only running a department to support K-Pop, but the Korean government also sets aside around 280 million US dollars for K-Pop every year. Indeed, the amount of funding to the industry is even larger than that to other social categories like tourism and sports. Whether you are a K-pop fan or not, you probably have heard of “MAMA”, a yearly overseas Korean music awards ceremony. The government arranges trade agreements with other countries and records a welcoming video for the opening of the ceremony.

With the unwavering support from the government, combined with the flow of the virtual world, it is not hard to see why the Korean Wave is growing bigger and bigger, spreading infectious sensation throughout our global village.

What’s more? K-Pop is also dominating the world of fashion. Fans look up to their idols and therefore imitate their dress styles. The trend of wearing over-sized T-shirts is a case in point. When BTS, a famous boy band, started wearing them, young boys followed them, and this eventually became a global trend. Usually, high-end brands take advantage of these idols to raise their sales through the halo effect. Then, loyal fans will tighten their belts just to buy a Supreme sweatshirt worn by their idols the next day.
Okay, so is K-Pop just a trend? No, the answer is not that simple. K-Pop idols are using their massive platforms for good. Just two weeks ago, BTS donated $1 million US dollars to the Black Lives Matter movement, showing their support for racial equality. This encouraged millions of fans to do the same as well. Being the role models of many teenagers, most K-Pop idols have done their job well. They are using their fame wisely to deliver moral values in public.

Besides, through heart-warming lyrics in their songs, many fans have been empowered to go through their own struggles bravely. I had once interviewed a K-Pop fan who overcame mental illness. She told me how the songs make her feel less lonely and sometimes help her fight with her own suicidal thoughts. It is moving to see how these songs can actually rescue someone’s life.

So, what is K-Pop? I hope your answers are not only limited to entertainment. It is a well-supported industry that will keep flourishing. It is a beloved culture, carrying many hopes and dreams from all over the world. Let us admire the hard work behind all these and embrace this influential, inspiring and irresistible culture while we can.
We Must Work Together to Improve the Virtual World Experience

6F Azariah Chu

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I, as a Facebook I.T. specialist, am honoured to speak to all of you today. In this day and age, the Internet is utilized for more and more reasons, the most popular of which being social media sites, like Facebook. Thanks to advances in technology, we can now instantly share our thoughts with the entire world, without needing to fear that your information might be sold to advertisers at all. However, much like how dynamite can be used to break nearby stones or other people’s bones, social media sites have been, sadly, maliciously used as well.

As an employee and frequent user of Facebook, I have seen other users generally sharing with the world interesting content, yet some choose to post snide remarks. I have, time and again, seen users post pictures of someone’s embarrassing skin condition, make fun of a less desirable admirer, or even dox others, meaning personal information, like one’s address, is leaked. Sounds familiar? It probably does, that’s because intimidation on the Internet takes inspiration from its real-life counterpart. But why use cyberspace to torment people when you can just beat the living daylights out of them?

If I’m not mistaken, people can’t deliver a physical punch through a text post. Therefore, some might think they have to get creative with the insults to deliver the equivalent amount of psychological damage. As it turns out, there are a few elements in play here that make harassing people online easier. First and foremost, there is no hiding in cyberspace. If you want to avoid coming across a thug in real life, you can hide behind objects and wait for them to walk away, or even go as far as to study their daily habits, so you can never run into them. However, the Internet is pretty reliable when it comes to connecting people, since it’s always running. As a result, it is far easier to feel humiliated from seeing all those notifications emerging from a post making fun of you.

Another thing that helps, or rather, doesn’t help, is the publicity of social media. In cyberspace, there is no talking behind backs. The potential publicity of a post means it might be seen by hundreds, thousands, or even millions of people. Should false information of one be spread throughout the platform, people might mistakenly think the victim is in the wrong, and the victim would not only gain massive notoriety in the virtual world, but also be regarded, at first glance, as an unlikeable person in real life. This can make a significant impact on their career and love life.
Paradoxically, people care a lot about privacy when it comes to using their devices. I mean, when was the last time you allowed someone, a friend or otherwise, to look at your screen? Not to mention victims would probably not share their sadness with others, lest their opinions get invalidated as usual, so people who care about them, like their parents, have little chance of finding out that they are being harassed, and the victim, feeling helpless and alone, might easily become depressed.

As you can see, this is all wrong. Social media shouldn’t be a dispenser of disgrace, and all victims should be assisted in any way we can. You may be asking, “Why should we trust you when 87% of the cases occur on Facebook?” Indeed, stopping harassment online is a challenging task. The main reason is that, in current culture, self-deprecating jokes are somewhat normal. Plus, some groups of friends insult each other, but don’t actually mean it. If we censored each and every insulting word just because it appears in a post, the Facebook home page would look like a dark void in space.

Although we can’t lock tormentors up, or have a serious talk with their parents, we have developed a few methods over the years to combat intimidation on the Internet, one of which is that if you block an account from a tormentor and they make another one, Facebook will automatically block that account as well. A couple years ago, we also allowed users to block multiple comments at once, which can help those who are constantly bombarded with negative notifications. As for word censoring, we believe the continued implementation and improvement of artificial intelligence can censor insulting statements more effectively and efficiently. At the end of the day, however, it is best that victims muster up their courage and talk to someone they trust, for others’ voices of comfort can help lead them out of their downward spirals.

Tormenting people, through cyberspace or otherwise, cannot be tolerated, and we must act together to eradicate it. The advance in technology may have improved our lives, but it is still subject to us to make technology better and the virtual world more harmonious. In the words of Maria Karvouni, “At the end of the day, what is life? A beautiful journey. ...So why not vanish the hate and forgive?” Let us continue the journey, not side by side with a flawed being, but side by side with a friend.

Thank you!
Have I not commanded you?

Be STRONG and COURAGEOUS.

Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your GOD is with you wherever you go.

Joshua 1:9
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