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Highlights

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Writers

Taipei Teen Tribune

Kira Chen
Kate Huang
Emily Liao
Kylie Ting
Brandon Su
Nicole Hsu
Wilson Lin
Gia Lee
Zoe Chen
Iya Wu

Tuesday - Basic Essay Writing

Ian Su
Alec Chang
Barry Chen
Sophie Chiang
Vita Huang
Anna Chuang
Ashley Chen

Wednesday - Basic Essay Writing

Valerie Chen
Vera Kuo
Emma Chang
Benny Hsu
Audrey Tsao
Joanna Liao
Zaria Chiou
Ian Kuo
Andrea Lin

Saturday - Basic Essay Writing

Sherlock Lin
Yannie Kang
Bella Wu
Anson Hsu
Michael Chiu
Leon Lin
Aiden Tsai

Monday - Writing Essentials

Andy Chung
Emma Chou
Vera Huang
Max Wu
Oliver Huang
Abbie Wu
Henry Kuo
Ray Wu
Quennie Mai

Tuesday - Writing Essentials

Lilac Tung
Alice Hsu
Amber Guo
Lena Huang
Annie Wu
Ian Lin

Thursday - Writing Essentials

Jessie Zho
Serene Yu
Sabrina Lee
Candy Wei
Sophia Ho

Friday - Writing Essentials

Guan Ying Chen
Melody Lin
Chris Ou Yang
Sam Hsu
Yuni Hsieh
Sheryl Lin

Saturday - Writing Essentials

Harry Lin
Vivian Chin
Sam Lee
Ryder Huang
Ariel Chen
Jay Lin
Audrey Hsiao
Ray Hsu
Winston Wang
Mia Huang



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Taipei Teen Tribune is Taiwan's premier English-language student commentary publication. Part blog, part newsletter, part reporting, Taipei Teen Tribune is a platform for students in Taiwan to write about the topics they care about.

Taipei Teen Tribune is operated by Englist, Taipei's top college prep and academic writing program. Taipei Teen Tribune writers are usually picked from Englist writing classes after they have developed a strong foundation in writing through the program's rigorous training.



BALANCING FRIENDSHIPS AND GPA

Kira Lei Chen

As a teenager, your life revolves around two main priorities: your Grade Point Average (GPA) and your friends. You struggle with all your responsibilities and never have enough time to balance both school work and your social life.

Finding balance as a teen is challenging but it is still important. Here is a guide on how you can balance your social life with your academic life.

What you and your parents want

There is a common misconception that to be successful, you need to have good grades. Although having good grades may factor into success, good grades don't guarantee a good life. However, this just means that GPA doesn't need to be your main focus. If you only focus on grades and neglect social life, you tend to miss out on important experiences, like friendships.

Being a teenager, you want to go shopping, play sports, watch movies, or just have fun hanging out with friends. That's natural. However, sometimes socializing is not all there is to life as a teenager.

How to balance school and friends

Both friends and GPA are important and you need to learn when to prioritize your GPA and when to prioritize your friends. For example, during exam week, the obvious choice is to focus on your exams. But when you are done with exams, hanging out with friends can be a great way to relax and unwind.

Realize that you are unbalanced

Most students and teenagers don't know that they are not balancing their school and social life healthily.

Some students are either too focused on their grades or too focused on their social life. Others may be overwhelmed when they want to focus on both their academic life and social life at the same time.

Balancing

Those who are too focused on GPA need to step back a little from Taiwan's toxic education environment to make room for their social life. On the other hand, those who are too focused on friends need to pull back on socialization and pay attention to education more. All people need both academic and social skills.

Here are a few ways you can avoid being too academic or social:

- Forming a study group
- Going on mini field trips to museums, galleries, libraries, etc.
- Participating in projects
- Participating in, or starting, clubs

These activities both require a blend of both social and academic skills. Doing any of these activities would force you to go out of your comfort zone. For example, study groups would force you to study through socializing and communicating with other people who have different perspectives.

One important idea to remember is if you think you are not balancing your academic and social lives well, you should not immediately change your whole lifestyle. For example, if you think you are too focused on GPA you should not just drop your school work and start to socialize 24/7. You should instead choose activities that are a mix of both aspects.

Balancing friends and GPA is all about discovering what you need. If you are already GPA-oriented, try to socialize more and build a life outside academics. If you are socially oriented, learn to invest in your studies. Life should be a healthy mix with awareness of where you need to improve.

Chinese music *in the 2000s* *was better*

Kate Huang

When the chorus to Jay Chou's Tornado plays, everyone sings along, even in 2024.

Jay Chou. Jolin Tsai. JJ Lin. These giants of Mandopop, or Mandarin pop music, debuted more than twenty years ago. One album after another, their music dominated charts and became the go-to songs at karaoke. These artists remain influential today.

However, no recent Chinese, Taiwanese, or Mandarin-speaking artist seems to match the popularity or impact of these 2000s stars. No artist or songs from the past five years has united a generation or shaped the cultural identity and music taste of countless fans. Why is the Chinese music of 2024 not as good as 2004?

There are three main reasons. They are:

People access music differently now

In the 2000s, major labels like Universal Music and Warner Music released music. Most Mandopop artists followed a structured process: shooting music videos, releasing albums, promoting their songs, and touring. With full support from their labels, many artists grew popular.

Now, with the rise of music streaming platforms, artists can release songs independently. They don't have to sign deals with big companies or follow the usual channels for promoting their work. While this opens up more opportunities for artists, it also means fans are less likely to discover new singers or bands.

Today fewer songs leave a lasting impact. Some still see massive success when they go viral on TikTok, but the success is often short-lived. Once a trend has passed, both the artist and their art fade from the public ear. The rise of new music platforms have fragmented the industry and fanbases.



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Nostalgia

People connect with great music.

When songs from the 2000s play, they bring back memories of childhood and teenage years. People who are now married with families remember how those songs comforted them through the breakups of their youth. Or they can recall using their pocket money to buy tickets to a concert for their favorite band with their best friends, singing along to Jolin Tsai with their light sticks.

Today, Mandopop doesn't carry the same emotional weight. While kids still make cute dance videos with trendy TikTok music, those songs usually don't elicit deep emotions or connect with personal experiences; they just have catchy melodies.

With so many artists and platforms, people no longer bond over songs collectively like before. Nothing beats the nostalgic pull of old favorites.

Political changes hold back music development

Twenty years ago, Taiwan and China had a more amicable relationship. Taiwanese artists could tour overseas and hold concerts without fearing political backlash. They didn't have to tweet and celebrate China's National Day in fear that, if they didn't, a surge of "fans" would rush to their social media pages and question their patriotism. However, the current relationship between Taiwan and China discourages Taiwanese artists from freely pursuing their careers in China.

In the past decade, the Chinese government has punished people for free expression. This is evident in the music industry. In 2015, the Chinese Ministry of Culture blacklisted 120 songs that they deemed inappropriate, threatening severe penalties for platforms that used them. Songs with provocative titles, like "No Money No Friend," and "One Night Stand" were banned for allegedly promoting violence and immoral behavior, which in turn "undermine national unity". Now, artists have to show support for the Chinese government and worry about censorship when making new music.

In contrast, South Korea has actively invested in their music industry. As one of the strategies to bring the country out of its financial crisis in the 1990s, the Korean government established a department devoted to promoting Korean culture. They built massive concert auditoriums and provided financial incentives for K-Pop businesses. Thanks to heavy national investment, K-Pop has gained listeners worldwide over the last thirty years. Music from popular bands like BTS and Blackpink topped both Korean and international charts.

China's music scene, however, has not received the same attention. Worse, they face increased political repression and censorship. Since China has the largest population in Asia, these oppressive policies hinder the creation of innovative, high-quality music across the entire Mandopop industry.

Mandopop stars in the 2000s made full length albums that defined an era. The melodies are catchier. The lyrics resonate with people better. Everyone bonded over these songs. But with stricter cultural control and diversified music platforms, the Chinese music industry failed to maintain, and has yet to return to, its former glory.

Call me old-fashioned, but Chinese music from the 2000s was better.

Don't judge other people's music taste

Emily Liao

Recently, my friends and I were scrolling through our Spotify playlists and recommending songs to each other.

A classmate chimed in as she was looking over my shoulder and said, "Why are you listening to that? Taylor Swift is so basic."

I thought, "Why do you care?"

I can listen to whatever music I want. The same logic applies for everyone: You should develop your own music taste without worrying what others think.

There's no such thing as bad taste in music

Music taste is subjective and personal, so no one is in a position to judge others. There isn't a standard for good or bad music when every artist has different styles, lyrics, and messages they want to convey.

For example, when my classmates look down on others who still listen to songs popular in 2017, such as "Shape of You" by Ed Sheeran, they say it is bad music. However, this song has none of the qualities indicative of bad music, such as awkward rhythms or random melodies. What my classmates mean is that they are tired of hearing overplayed songs.

Obviously classical music such as "The Magic Flute" by Mozart is, from a technical perspective, "better" than most pop music. However, this doesn't mean that people are dumb because they enjoy fun and poppy music made for younger audiences.

There are countless genres of music, and everyone likes something different. For instance, many of my classmates think K-Pop is "basic and repetitive," but that is also the point of the genre. K-Pop songs have simple and cheerful rhythms so that K-Pop groups can dance and perform to them. If you want more calming or sophisticated songs, listen to a different genre. But that doesn't make K-Pop bad.

Some people judge to feel special

Often, music taste is a way to find new friends. For example, when two people both love rock music, they bond naturally. However, some people think that their music taste is superior to others.

Some music fans buy indie records or listen to underground artists because they think this music is more unique than mainstream artists. Even if they may not even like indie music that much, they like the aesthetic and the sense of superiority they feel by participating in this subculture.

Music isn't a stereotype to judge people by

Music isn't made for grouping people together based on music stereotypes, such as how some jazz and blues listeners are weirdos.

Although sharing your Spotify Wrapped, an end-of-year analysis of Spotify user's top listening moments, to your friends is interesting, people shouldn't make assumptions about each other's personalities based on their music tastes. For example, although Billie Eilish makes melancholy music, her fans aren't always emo and depressed.

Music stereotypes only limit us when meeting new people. Instead, music brings people together. Our brains often synchronize when talking about or dancing to music. For example, when you are at a concert with thousands of people dancing to the same song, you feel a sense of belonging even if you've never met the person next to you.

Music is art. Why should we make people insecure and self-conscious about their music tastes?

Your music taste doesn't define your character, so don't judge other people's taste in music, and if you like something, don't worry what other people say about it. People should not feel self-conscious about their music taste when there is no "good" or "bad" music taste.

Stop judging other people's music tastes. Your choice of music may be unique but it's not superior.

OVERCONSUMPTION IS DANGEROUS

Kylie Ting

Imagine oceans overflowing with garbage, skies filled with thick pollutants, and soil filled with toxic chemicals. Animals are disappearing, and humans are dying due to extreme weather events like hurricanes and wildfires. Overconsumption is to blame for this catastrophic situation.

Overconsumption is a major threat to the environment, but many people don't recognize it.

How is overconsumption harming the environment?

Overconsumption, especially by large fossil fuel companies and the mega-wealthy, depletes natural resources. For example, rich people like those who fly in private jets, are responsible for half of the carbon emissions from planes.

Fast fashion is another serious issue. Trendy clothes use toxic and cheap textile dyes to cut production costs. However, once trends change, "old" clothes end up in landfills, where 92 million tons of clothes end up every year. These landfills can take over 200 years to decompose. Even if the clothes decompose, the toxic chemicals remain in the soil and groundwater, polluting the water and land.

However, our earth can't handle overconsumption anymore. According to research from Sentient Climate, people are consuming resources at 1.7 times the speed the earth is producing.

How is overconsumption harming us?

Overconsumption not only harms the environment, but also us.

The world population has increased, and overconsumption has become a habit for many people.

If we don't make any changes, rich people in wealthy nations will get to live decadent lives while poorer nations will suffer from the consequences of overconsumption. Inequality between rich and poor will only get worse due to environmental damage. This is already happening in some places.

According to UNICEF, "In some cases we are seeing countries providing relatively healthy environments for children at home while being among the top contributors to pollutants that are destroying children's environments abroad." People living in polluted areas are more likely to suffer from asthma, heart disease, stroke, and lung cancer.

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Sadly, many people living in polluted areas can't afford healthcare and some have lost their lives due to pollution and harsh weather conditions. In fact, poor air quality causes seven million deaths every year, and extreme heat takes about 489,000 lives globally every year, most of them people living in poverty.

Global warming and pollution also destroy agriculture, as it's impossible to grow crops in areas with extreme weather, water shortages, and polluted land. This means that more people will die from hunger, despite 2.5 billion tons of food being wasted every year.

Climate change, global warming, and pollution are consequences of overconsumption. These environmental issues are depriving poorer nations access to clean air, water, and food.

What can we do?

Overconsumption is out of control. As environmentalist Brad Meiklejohn mentioned, overconsumption is tied to wealth. Wealthy people buy too many cars, properties, planes, and yachts. For them, overconsumption is a symbol of social status and their way to indulge in a luxurious lifestyle. These lavish lifestyles destroy the environment, while millions of people struggle in poverty.

Nevertheless, overconsumption isn't caused by teenagers. Those to blame are oil companies that deplete and burn fossil fuels. They overuse natural resources to maximize profit, causing all kinds of environmental problems. Yet, these wealthy oil companies brainwash us into believing that we are to blame for environmental problems, when they are the ones responsible.

However, there are things we can do. Although simply consuming less can make a difference, we can elect leaders who truly prioritize our environment over short-term economic benefits.

Moreover, we can advocate for regulations that limit oil companies from consuming excess fossil fuels, and implement carbon taxes on large companies to hold them accountable for the pollution they generate. By doing so, oil prices would rise, and people would turn to cleaner and more affordable energy sources.

The earth is depleted, and overconsumption is the main cause of pollution, climate change, hunger, and numerous illnesses. We need people who are willing to take responsibility and drive change in our culture of overconsumption. By making large companies responsible for their pollution, we can reduce environmental impacts. Moreover, we can protect our planet and ensure a healthier future for everyone before it's too late.





NIMBYISM: AN ACT OF IRRESPONSIBILITY

BRANDON SU

NIMBY stands for “not in my backyard”. When someone is a NIMBY, they are against some type of development in their neighborhoods. In short, people become NIMBYs because new infrastructure or construction can depreciate real estate or harm people’s health.

NIMBYism is a problem. From blocking construction of power plants to NIMBYs protesting against affordable housing, NIMBYs are making others’ lives more difficult. NIMBYs want to enjoy the convenience of facilities while making others bear the burden, so NIMBYism is irresponsible.

NIMBYism hinders development

Many critical points of infrastructure, such as power plants and base stations, are necessities. However, because these facilities might affect health and lower land prices, residents of a neighborhood where a new plant will be built often resist their construction.

One recent example is the controversy of the construction of the Jiu Wei power plant. The Jiu Wei liquified natural gas (LNG) power plant is planned for An Din district, Tainan. However, the construction of the power plant has faced fierce local resistance, with locals holding protests and lawmakers complaining to the central government.

Protestors claim that the power plant will cause noise and air pollution. However, the proposed location of Jiu Wei is in an industrial zone, which allows the construction of power plants. Moreover, while the power plant will cause some pollution, the impact is not severe; no pollutants will exceed permitted levels due to the construction.

One other possible impact of the plant’s construction, however, is that landowners or corporations will lose money. Land prices might fall, and other companies will lose a site for new factories. These reasons, however, do not justify making it harder for Taiwan to provide energy for everyone. Taiwan needs new power plants to feed its rising electricity demands, and NIMBYism hampers Taiwan’s effort to ensure its people and economy have the energy they need.

NIMBYism is classist and racist

Hampering economic development is clearly irresponsible, but even more irresponsible is protesting against social housing. Social housing can provide homes for people on smaller incomes. NIMBYs oppose their construction because real estate values in their neighborhood may fall, or just because they don’t like the poor and disabled.

One example is when McDonald’s tried to set up a temporary shelter for sick kids in Taipei; some locals opposed the plan, saying that they thought the shelter would “make land prices drop”. After the protest, others were outraged at the protestors since the protestors were selfish and unsympathetic towards sick kids. Allowing the underprivileged access to proper housing is important to making our society fair, and NIMBYs are not only dodging this social responsibility, but they are making it harder for everyone to help those who need it.

There are many examples of NIMBYism against affordable housing across the world, many of which are due to classist or even racist sentiments; some NIMBYs are just simply against other races living among them. As for Taiwan, many people are angry about the high cost of real estate. Without enough affordable housing available for those in need, people who can’t afford homes will become angry. Widespread homelessness would lead to increased crime or even riots. Ultimately, NIMBYs who thought they could benefit from boycotting affordable housing, will face the wrath of poor people and get dragged into a class conflict.

In short, NIMBYs protest against local infrastructure development because they want the benefits of facilities like power generators, but do not want to face the possible consequences like pollution or potentially lower real estate values.

Many NIMBYists are just being selfish or irrationally resisting construction near their homes. If these people had some sense of responsibility, construction of crucial facilities can go smoothly, without anyone delaying or boycotting them.

Why everyone should be a leader at least once

NICOLE HSU

Have you ever been a leader? I have, and I nearly lost two friends because of my leadership role.

Everyone has a different personality; only some people want to stand up and take responsibility. But in life, there are times when if you don't like to take the spotlight, someone will force you to. Even if that doesn't happen, having the experience of being a leader can impact your life. Here are some reasons why you should try to be a leader:

Being a leader allows you to see the true nature of people

I always thought I was a good judge of character. After I became a leader, however, I realized I was dead wrong.

I had two good friends in my class. After I was elected as the director for the school play, they congratulated me and said I would be an awesome director. A few weeks later though, both of them abandoned me while I was drowning in my responsibilities.

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Why they suddenly wouldn't help me is unclear, but instead of talking to me about it, they got everyone in the class together and tried to remove me as director. Maybe they thought they could be better leaders than me, or maybe they had other complaints. But in the end, I was basically left alone. I was devastated.

However, a wise teacher reminded me to look at this obstacle as an opportunity. If I had never become the play director, I would've never seen how two-faced my former friends were. Being a leader can show you the true nature of people, which can help you to choose your friends more wisely.

Once you start to take on bigger responsibilities, people may turn on you, but you have to treat this as a chance to shed scumbags who called themselves your friends.

You become a more efficient and organized person

I had so many tasks to accomplish while being director, it was squeezing the life out of me. I also had to save time to work on my academic projects and find time to study to make sure my grades didn't fall. Doing all of these things at once required great organization, but I was the biggest procrastinator you have ever seen before becoming director.

I changed after I took the role of director. I started to schedule events in a clear and organized way. I improved my time management skills and learned what to prioritize and what I could skip. When you master time management you can save a lot of effort at school and have time to try new hobbies, or use this time to take a break.

Better speaking skills and more confidence

While being the director, I had to speak to everyone in class and all kinds of different teachers daily. To be a leader, I had to understand how to speak in front of the whole class to boost morale and get people to trust and rely on me.

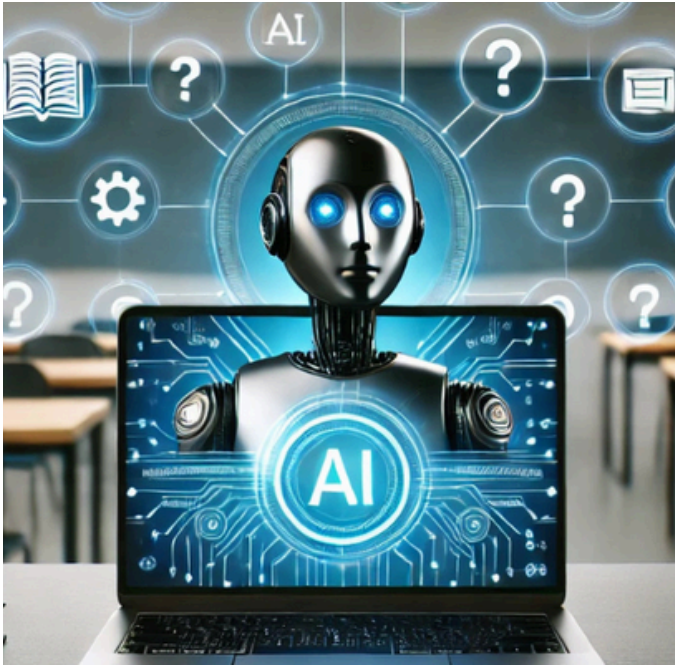
All of this requires speaking skills and confidence.

The same goes for a leader in any domain, whether you are a leader in a workspace or a leader in a class project. If you speak like a mouse and let others walk all over you, they won't respect you. You can develop strong self-esteem and charisma through the hardships of leadership.

Being a leader may sound tiring, boring, or even out of character for you. But in many cases, the benefits of being a leader outweigh the negatives and you can learn many skills to improve your life. Next time there's an activity that requires a leader, don't be shy and raise your hand and volunteer.

SHOULD STUDENTS BE ALLOWED TO USE CHATGPT?

Wilson Lin



C

ChatGPT became my new friend when it was released in November 2022. This chatbot has helped me a ton, making even the most challenging homework assignments manageable and providing insights across a range of subjects. I have been using ChatGPT since its release and its quick evolution has surprised me. Within a year, ChatGPT has become capable of handling more and more complicated tasks such as generating pictures, diagrams, and programming code.

However, since ChatGPT's release, professors and teachers have accused AI of being a homework machine for students. They worry that this chatbot will be a disaster for education.

This sparked a debate about whether teachers should allow students to use ChatGPT as an educational tool. Even though some educators believe that this chatbot is a cheat code for students, they should also see ChatGPT's potential as a tool for enhancing learning.

In other words, students should be allowed to use ChatGPT as a learning tool.

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Advantages of ChatGPT

Personalized assistance

ChatGPT offers personalized assistance to each student for their own complicated problems. This is valuable in big classrooms where teachers don't have enough time to give individual attention to each student every day. For example, ChatGPT provides instant clarification on questions students may have and can link to other resources. Moreover, thanks to ChatGPT's large database and advanced algorithm, AI can analyze a student's learning history to identify areas where the student may be struggling, and then offer tailored advice.

AI is tireless

One advantage of AI over humans is that it doesn't experience emotions or fatigue. You can criticize ChatGPT all you want, and it will remain ready and willing to help. Unlike a human tutor, ChatGPT doesn't get frustrated when asked the same question repeatedly or asked to explain a concept multiple times in different ways. It simply generates a response based on the prompt, no matter how often it's asked. With this tireless, 24/7 chatbot available, students can get as much help as they need, any time of day.

Boosts creativity and critical thinking

ChatGPT also acts as a brainstorming partner. Its ability to process vast amounts of information allows it to suggest new and varied approaches to a single topic or problem. This diversity is valuable when students are stuck with ideas or face challenges.

One friend of mine got stuck writing a report about climate change so he sought help from ChatGPT. After reading his current report, ChatGPT linked some sources such as the IPCC report and NASA's climate site. ChatGPT then generated a brief outline of my friend's report and showed how it could be more in depth. After that, this AI chatbot

advised my friend to explore the economic impacts of climate policies and provided additional sources for research. By reframing my friends' problems and linking useful sources, ChatGPT helped him dive deeper into his report.

Risk of misuse and exploitation

Since ChatGPT's debut, teachers have worried that students will rely on ChatGPT to complete assignments without learning what they are supposed to.

Solution:

ChatGPT is not the only resource students could exploit—Google and social media are also places where students commonly steal others' work.

Banning ChatGPT would not eliminate the problem of cheating or plagiarism. Crafty students would turn to other shortcuts for their assignments, causing an endless game of hide and seek.

To address this, educators should establish clear policies on acceptable and unacceptable uses of ChatGPT. For example, students could use ChatGPT for brainstorming ideas or seeking clarification but be prohibited from submitting AI-generated work as their own.

Englist, for example, established a plagiarism and AI use policy, setting up clear regulations for students on using AI as a tool. This not only prevents students from copying work from AI, but also teaches students how to work with AI more responsibly.

Inaccuracy of AI responses

While ChatGPT is powerful, it is not infallible. It can generate incorrect or misleading information, especially on controversial topics.

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Solution:

Teachers should teach students the limitations of AI and how to correctly use it. Students must understand that ChatGPT can't do everything and that if they try to use it incorrectly, they will face problems. ChatGPT is, after all, a language model, so it is not a good idea to feed it complex math questions.

Furthermore, this AI chatbot is not capable of having its own opinions. When considering contentious topics such as abortion or human cloning, ChatGPT is only going to analyze the pros and cons of these issues. Students must learn to identify some AI's misleading content. This not only highlights the limitations of AI but also pushes students to develop critical thinking, an essential skill for navigating any resource.

AI is not coming, AI is here.

Teachers can no longer stop students from using AI, so teaching students on how to use AI responsibly is the only way to stop it from being exploited.

One thing AI lacks is the "human touch"—empathy, encouragement, and the ability to connect with students on a personal level, which is why ChatGPT will never replace teachers.

However, students can use GPT to enhance their learning. Instead of banning ChatGPT, teachers should focus on helping students develop literacy, critical thinking, and tech skills to evaluate information from AI and other sources. Educators can also establish guidelines to ensure students use ChatGPT responsibly and effectively. By doing so, students can unlock the benefits of AI and have fun learning interactively.



AI MUSIC IS AWFUL

GIA LEE

In my media class, our teacher asked us to write a song for our final project. For the first few songs students presented, every track sounded amazing. Then things got weird because everyone listening could tell that all the songs sounded similar.

The teacher asked about our process for writing our songs. Only two people actually wrote the songs - everyone else had used AI tools.

AI generation in music might seem like a convenient shortcut to some people. However, as we learned from a discussion with our teacher, AI music is terrible. It is of poor quality, comes with a host of ethical and legal issues, and negatively impacts human artists, all of which we experienced in my class.

Quality

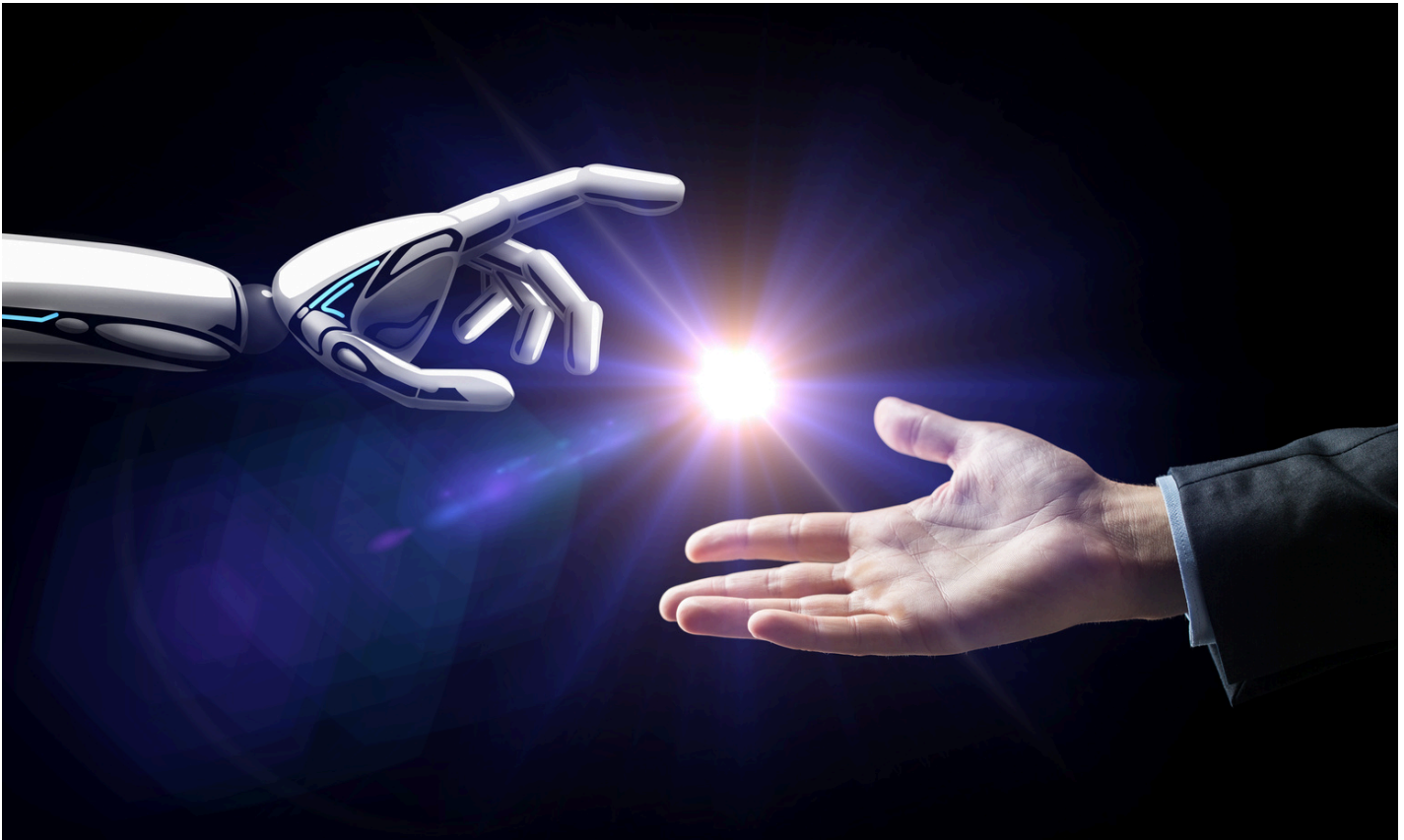
AI music is bad. First of all, AI-generated music relies on data collection, model training, seed input, and post-processing. Humans can customize the mood, genre, tempo, and instruments in the generator. While AI systems can change a lot of musical elements, like melody, harmony, rhythm, and timbre, they often rely on patterns from training data, which can make outputs sound similar and derivative.

The most important difference between humans and AI is that humans have feelings. AI music often feels robotic, predictable, and is less relatable because it lacks emotional depth and personal connection.

Sometimes the issues are technical. AI-generated music includes a lot of white noise in the track, like the hiss or crackle that people hear when listening to old radio or record tapes.

In other words, while AI music excels in efficiency and quick content creation, it fails to deliver an engaging listening experience or emotional resonance. This is reason enough to not listen to or use AI music, but if quality isn't your concern, the next reason should be.

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Ethical and legal issues

Laws regarding AI music are unclear. AI music is basically committing copyright infringement. Users don't know which songs the generator used as samples because the original artists are not credited.

In addition to not crediting original artists, who owns the copyright to AI-generated music is still unclear. The users who input prompts into AI generators can't claim the creation as their own, since they didn't put much of their creative thought into it, but neither could those who created the AI tool claim copyright to the AI music.

“People should reject AI music to celebrate real artists who make creative and relatable songs.”

Yotam Mann, co-founder of Never Before Heard Sounds, said "One risk of AI is that you end up with a song-generating machine that makes some beautiful compositions but it never credits any of the things it used to make."

Even if users use AI to generate a song, no matter how many ideas they put into it (lyrics, bpm, genre, etc.), they can't release it without committing at least some copyright infringement, and sometimes enough to land in legal trouble.

Impact on human artists

In my class, we debated whether the students who used AI generators should get the same grades as students who wrote the songs by themselves.

When it comes to instrument arrangements, AI may outperform the students who wrote their own compositions. But those students invested months of work and don't deserve to have their work so easily dismissed.

The same goes for professional artists. AI music reduces job opportunities for human artists, simply because it makes songs more quickly than people can.

However, excessive use and production of AI music leads to the homogenization of musical styles. While AI can mimic existing elements of music, it has significant limitations. AI doesn't have the ability to creatively break the rules and bring true innovation. Hence, people should reject AI music to celebrate real artists who make creative and relatable songs. In other words, music should be for people, not for robots.

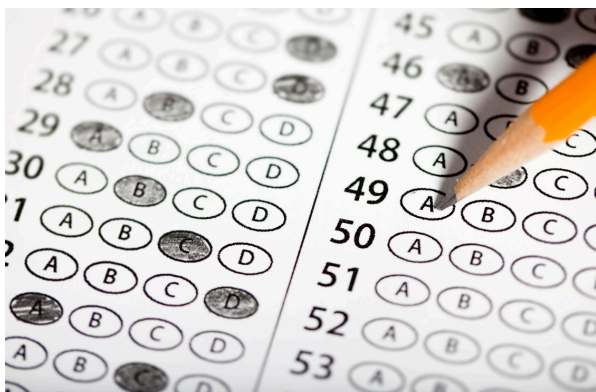
While AI music may offer speed and convenience, it comes at the cost of originality, emotional depth, and fairness to human artists. By relying on AI for music creation, we risk the diversity of musical expression and unresolved ethical and legal challenges. Therefore, we must prioritize human creativity and innovation over algorithmic convenience.

REFLECTION ON HUIKAO PREPARATION

ZOE CHEN

In Taiwan, almost every ninth grader has to stress themselves out for Huikao, a test that most kids need to take to attend high school. This May, my life stopped being miserable after finishing Huikao.

Though preparing for Huikao was stressful, I understood how to study more effectively and face academic stress. At the same time, however, I realized how Huikao limits our critical thinking, how depressing it is, and how it is an ineffective way to rank students.



What is Huikao?

The Comprehensive Assessment Program (CAP or Huikao) is a test for graduating middle school students in Taiwan to determine what high school they go to. Ninth graders have to answer questions on knowledge of Mandarin, English, math, science, and social studies.

Students have to understand all topics taught in middle school. Then, they have to answer multiple-choice questions for all subjects, finish written questions for math, and complete a Mandarin essay.

Preparation for Huikao

Since Huikao covers three years of academic materials, we started preparing for Huikao in July during eighth grade and continued until May of the next year, which means that we were reviewing past studies and learning new information simultaneously.

Tons of test booklets and practice worksheets stacked up into tremendous stress. Moreover, we used to take two mock tests in school each day, and it was overwhelming to learn new material while doing test prep.

After suffering from fluctuating grades in the first semester of ninth grade, I learned to embrace some of my poor grades. At first, I stayed up late cramming before tests, but this approach only made me second-guess myself during exams since I wasn't fully familiar with the material. I also struggled to concentrate in class and had to spend more time revisiting topics that weren't clear to me.

My solution was to prioritize reviewing my weakest subjects. For example, I reduced most of my review time for science to study history. Although my science grades dropped slightly, I knew it was still easier to raise them once I built a solid foundation in the more challenging subjects.

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Huikao is improving yet still flawed

Before Huikao, middle school students took the Basic Competence Test (BCT). BCT questions tested students on specific information, such as historical dates and names of important figures, which required students to memorize information to get high marks.

The government noticed that students were becoming test-taking machines rather than good thinkers, so they replaced the BCT with Huikao. Huikao is designed to encourage students to understand concepts instead of memorizing details. Students can achieve good scores by applying knowledge from different subjects to real-world situations. Furthermore, written sections for math and Mandarin allow students to express their ideas.

Regardless, Huikao still has major flaws. The exam relies heavily on multiple-choice questions. For example, reading comprehension questions often focus on interpreting the author's feelings or identifying symbolism. This pushes students to adopt the "correct" way of thinking instead of developing independent thought, which limits critical thinking.

Furthermore, students only get one shot at Huikao. The two test days determine which high school a student will attend. If they get sick or face an emergency on those two days, they might perform poorly on the test and end up in an unsuitable high school for the next three years.

Students often feel worthless when they do poorly on mock tests. Then we become anxious about having only one chance for Huikao and develop low confidence, which worsens our test performance.

Other students may not do as well as they want on the actual test. One of my former classmates had an emotional breakdown that lasted for two days. Six months after the CAP, my other friends still hate themselves for not doing well. Although Huikao only determines a student's future high school, which they will only study in for three years, it strongly affects students.

The cycle of stress creates mood swings, poor health, and poor sleep quality. Huikao shouldn't be a test that pressures students into this negative cycle.

Include other factors when ranking students

Huikao is a standardized test that only measures students' grades, so students admitted to top-ranked schools are often strong test-takers but may lack essential skills such as communication, leadership, problem-solving, or teamwork. Therefore, the government needs to fix the issue by measuring these skills.

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Unfortunately, the students who tend to possess these important abilities may not get a high Huikao score and are forced to attend lower-ranked schools. Top-ranked schools receive better resources from the government or other organizations, including special programs led by experts and premium features for online platforms. Therefore, students who have less access to resources are often shut out of those programs and then are funneled to lower-ranking schools in high school.

“This pushes students to adopt the 'correct' way of thinking instead of developing independent thought, which limits critical thinking.”

In other words, students with the highest Huikao scores have them not because they are fundamentally smarter or more inclined to be "critical thinkers," but because they lived in more affluent areas or their parents could afford to put them in a more diverse range of extracurricular classes. These resources should be accessible to all students who can make meaningful use of them.

Although the current iteration of Huikao includes more critical thinking and problem-solving skills compared to past exams that tested students' memorization, it still needs to improve.

Huikao shouldn't be stressful, and the Ministry of Education should evaluate Huikao's flaws by including other factors when determining a student's high school. Students shouldn't receive a lower education even if they didn't do well in Huikao. The government should make sure skills such as communication, leadership, and teamwork can be measured and considered, and that all students have access to programming where they can learn these skills.

Although Huikao is flawed, it shouldn't be abolished. Hopefully, the government can add more features to make a student's future high school suitable for them.

We need more restrictions on smoking



IYA WU

On a sunny day, you're taking a walk, and suddenly you spot someone smoking. The smoke drifts towards you, the smell disgusts you, and you find yourself holding your breath. Moments like this make you realize the current restrictions on smoking aren't effective.

We're exposed to secondhand smoke more than we should be. Even though it sounds less harmful than actually smoking, it still damages our bodies.

More smoking restrictions are needed in Taiwan. Smokers might argue, "There are already lots of rules! Smoking indoors isn't allowed, and even some outdoor areas are limited." This is true, but is it enough?

Why only ban smoking in particular areas? Since the harm caused by smoking is still serious, we should extend the ban on smoking to more public places.

Health Risks

In 2024, 13.1 percent of adults in Taiwan smoke, leading to 25,000 deaths per year, with 3,000 of deaths being non-smokers from secondhand smoke. What's more, Taiwan is aging rapidly. In January 2024, the population over 65 was 18.43 percent. Smoking can speed up age-related health problems, such as lung cancer, COPD, and heart disease.

In addition, many teens start smoking before they turn 18. Teenagers might light up their first cigarette thinking it's just a harmless decision, unaware it can lead to addiction and severe health problems. While teenagers might recognize there is some risk from smoking, they still do it from a desire to fit in, look cool, or feel rebellious.

Environmental Impact

If you've ever walked around any city in Taiwan, you know that cigarette butts are littered everywhere. They aren't just unsightly, but also contain harmful chemicals that damage the ecosystem by leaching into soils and waterways.

If you think discarding cigarette butts isn't a serious problem, then you're wrong; cigarettes often start fires. For example, in 2023, a worker's discarded cigarette butt sparked a fire at a Carrefour warehouse in Taoyuan's Yangmei District. One cigarette butt can consume an entire forest, destroy homes, and take lives in just minutes, leaving nothing behind but only remains and loss.

Policies Taiwan Needs

Cigarettes aren't just harming people's health, they are also harming the environment. Therefore, to effectively address smoking, it's important to promote strong policies. By creating a supportive environment, citizens can finally live in smoke-free areas.

Here's what we should do:

- Increase the price of tobacco products, so people may find it too expensive.
- Set up strict policies to ban smoking in all public places with strict penalties.
- Raise the legal age for smoking to 25 years old.
- Ban cigarette sales in convenience stores near schools, universities, hospitals, and other places where public health, environmental protection, and vulnerable populations are at greatest risk.
- Make plain packaging, by removing all advertisements or branding, and replace it with big health warnings instead. Studies have shown that plain packages can reduce the appeal of smoking.
- Increase fines for littering and smoking in prohibited areas.
- Make tobacco products an official exclusive product and limit legality to only three brands.
- Increase anti-smoking education, and programs for people of all ages.

Smokers get frustrated when people nag them about quitting, and often argue back "It's a free country!" However, the next time you smoke, don't forget about the health and environmental consequences that everybody else is forced to face. This issue is not only about smokers' rights, others also have the right to breathe in fresh air. The government needs to set new policies, and smokers should stop being selfish.

BASIC ESSAY WRITING

TUESDAY

ESSAY WRITING BEGINS WITH A FOCUS ON THE SIMPLE PERSUASIVE ESSAY (SPE), A TEACHING TOOL DEVELOPED BY ENGLIST. THE PURPOSE OF THE SPE IS TO INTRODUCE STUDENTS TO EACH COMPONENT OF AN ESSAY, HOW TO STRUCTURE AND CONNECT THESE COMPONENTS TO CONVEY IDEAS, AND THE LOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF COMMUNICATION AND ACADEMIC WRITING. STUDENTS ARE ALSO INTRODUCED TO SIMPLE EXPOSITORY AND NARRATIVE ESSAYS, AS WELL AS BASIC STYLISTIC FEATURES LIKE TRANSITIONS AND DESCRIPTIVE WRITING.

IAN SU

Writing Task: Write a descriptive essay describing a painting, as well as the feelings the painting evokes in you, and why you enjoy this painting.

The Last Supper was painted between 1495 and 1498 by the Renaissance artist Leonardo Da Vinci. This masterpiece, displayed on the wall of Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, captures the intense moment when Jesus reveals that one of his disciples will betray him. In this painting, there are thirteen different men sitting at the table. All of these men are wearing colorful clothes that drape from their shoulders over their bodies with a mixture of red, blue, and green robes.

Furthermore, all of Jesus's disciples have a mix of confusion and fear and anger on their faces. When Jesus told them that one of the disciples there betrayed him, the reactions on their faces showed the tension in the room. The person on Jesus's right, Thomas, is holding up a finger, as if questioning Jesus about the accusation. Everyone is pointing fingers at each other and whispering rumors to the people sitting next to them. Some of Jesus's followers are holding up their hands to show innocence while others are defending themselves from accusations. One disciple even seems to be arguing with Jesus. In contrast, Jesus is simply sitting there calmly, observing the situation. His face contains no emotion, and his hands are outstretched with his palm facing upward. He seems to be indicating that he is accepting his fate and that he's not worried. This supper takes place in a dimly lit room with gray walls and ceilings giving a sense of sadness to the painting. The walls are carved with strange heart patterns, repeating over and over. However, when you look past the walls and out the windows in the background, you see a sun-lit field with flowers blooming, and , beyond the meadow in the background, viewers see mountains in the distance. The outside of the room contrasts with the sad and tense mood inside.

When I first saw this painting, I felt a sense of sadness and curiosity. The painting holds a lot of secrets and I felt myself drawn to it, unable to look away. In *The Last Supper*, all of the disciples are men, except for a woman on the right side of Jesus. She has blond hair and is wearing similar clothes as the men. She is painted leaning her head towards an older man wearing blue robes with a head of white hair. She seems to be listening intently to what he was saying, and it leaves me wondering what was going on in that conversation. The thing I like most about this painting is that da Vinci paints *The Last Supper* in a way that is open for interpretation. Some people might think that the woman betrayed him, while others might think that Thaddeus, sitting to the right of Jesus, is the one who betrayed him from the way he is turned away from him. However, even though each character is painted uniquely with each of their faces showing different kinds of emotions, there's no doubt that the feeling in this painting is sad.

In conclusion, *The Last Supper* presents one of the most miserable moments in Chirstian history. The intense emotions on every disciple's face leaves people wondering what really happened. And people still look at it in wonder to this day.



ALEC CHANG

Writing Task: Write a descriptive essay describing a painting, as well as the feelings the painting evokes in you, and why you enjoy this painting.

Vincent van Gogh, was a Dutch Post-Impressionist painter who died in 1890's. He was famous for the striking colour and emphatic brushwork of his painting. Van Gogh painted *Starry Night*, a painting that draws viewers into a swirling sky full of light that feels distant and intimate. Set above a quiet town, the night sky dominates the canvas with curving strokes of vibrant blue, soft yellow, and deep indigo. The stars are not only dots of light but more like glowing orbs, filled with energy, lighting the sky like beacons. Each star seems to be alive and to radiate, and is connected by rushing waves of colour. This interplay of light and motion, juxtaposed with the quietness of the town below, creates a sense of wonder that captivates the viewer.

In the foreground, there's a towering tree, dark and slightly ominous, contrasting the lively background. Its pointed shape disrupts the flow of the painting, reaching upward as if it is touching the stars. Meanwhile, the village beneath the night sky is painted with straight, controlled strokes, unlike the unrestrained motion in the sky. The houses are small and straightforward. Their lights are dim, suggesting a place of slumber and dreams, and away from the dancing stars overhead.

Starry Night is intriguing due its unique portrayal of the sky and movement in the night. Instead of a static sky filled with distant stars, Van Gogh presents a sky, which colour blends and collides like waves in the ocean, as if the stars and the sky are always moving. Furthermore, every brushstroke of the sky feels intentional and the swirling forms creates a sense of motion, pulling the viewer's gaze around in circles, giving the sky its own life and form.

The painting evokes a mix of feelings in me. By looking at the quiet town, a place that rests safely under the watch of the stars, I feel peace and serenity. In contrast, the sky connotes a feeling of chaos and complexity because of the swirling colours all mingling with each other. In addition, the spiralling stars suggest a feeling of astonishment because of the contrast of bright yellow and deep blue. Furthermore, there's a sense of desire in the painting, such as to touch the stars, or to understand the mysteries of the universe.

I like *Starry Night* because it conveys so much emotion without words. The colours and movement fills the painting with life, reflecting Van Gogh's struggles and complex feelings about the world. Every brushstroke feels intentional and meaningful, while at the same time, the painting is open to interpretation. This makes *Starry Night* feel personal, as if it speaks directly to the viewer's experiences and emotions. I enjoy *Starry Night*'s beauty and the sense of isolation that accompanies that beauty. It makes me feel that in all this chaotic, luminous, and dark sky, there is always something worth exploring.



BARRY CHEN

Writing Task: Should your school be allowed to monitor your social media presence and discipline you for conduct violations?

In the last decade, as technology has improved, social media has become more popular and it now plays an important role in the lives of students. Since students spend a lot of time on social media, it has become one of the best ways to communicate with people. While social media allows students to share their thoughts, sometimes it might lead to problems. My school should be allowed to monitor our social media activity to stop cyberbullying and protect us from being scammed.

The first reason why our school should monitor our social media is because it would prevent students from getting cyberbullied. For example, bullies spread lies about a victim on social media or send harassing messages to the victim via social media. Cyberbullying could cause a victim to lose confidence and not be able to concentrate on learning. If the situation gets serious, the students might even face mental health issues like depression and anxiety.

On the other hand, privacy advocates argue that schools should not monitor students' social media activity because doing so is an invasion of privacy. But if parents can't monitor students, there won't be any privacy issues, but harms of social media. According to Healio, cyberbullying on social media is one of the major reasons why so many young students decide to commit suicide. As a matter of fact, the suicide rate of teenagers has risen since social media was created, so schools should keep an eye on students' social media accounts to keep them safe. In short, our schools should start monitoring our social media activity to prevent students from getting cyberbullied and to protect students' physical and mental health.

Another reason why our school should monitor students' social media is because students often get scammed through advertisements and by chatting with strangers. According to an SBS news report, many scammers target students and one in four teenagers will be scammed on social media platforms. One way that students get scammed is being tricked to buy and sell items online. Most students don't have much money, so when they see cheap items offered by a scammer, they might try to buy the product. Once the students have paid the money and bought the product online, the scammers suddenly disappear. Furthermore, if students use their parents' money or credit cards, the parents might be unhappy about them using their money on random items. When students use their parents' money to buy items they shouldn't be buying, this can cause problems in families. Therefore, our school should monitor students' social media to protect them from getting scammed.

In conclusion, our school should be allowed to keep watch over students' social media because it would protect kids from getting bullied and prevent them from getting scammed. Even though social media can document your life and help you communicate with people, social media sites aren't totally safe for teenagers to use. So schools should start teaching students the right way to use social media.

SOPHIE CHIANG

Writing Task: Why do you think Donald Trump won the 2024 US election instead of Kamala Harris?

The 2024 U.S. presidential election was an important moment in American History. It was in headlines worldwide when Donald Trump won a second term as the president of the United States. He won because of issues connected with inflation, immigration, and the fact that his opponent, Kamala Harris is a woman. Voters believe that Donald Trump is someone who could make the economy better. At the same time, some voters focus on Kamala's gender instead of her policies. Trump took advantage of inflation, immigration, and sexism which helped him win the election.

One significant social issue during the 2024 election was inflation. After Covid, many Americans experienced rising housing, grocery, and gas costs. People decided to vote for Trump because during the Biden administration, the average year-over-year inflation rate was at 5.2 percent, while during Trump's, it was at 1.9 percent. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, the Trump administration passed an act to provide relief to individuals and businesses. In 2021, Biden signed a \$1.9 trillion plan to help the country recover from COVID-19. However, after recovering from the pandemic, gas prices went up due to the Ukraine and Russia war, and the inflation rate hit a record high of 9.1 percent in 2022. Trump's campaign focused on blaming Biden and Harris's policies for these problems, arguing that the government caused the high inflation rates. Many voters, especially the ones in the middle and lower class, saw Trump as someone who could stabilize the economy. Trump promised he would raise the tariffs on goods from Mexico, Canada, and China starting on the first day of his administration, a policy that will increase costs for American businesses and consumers. His proposals stood out to his supporters.

Immigration was also a factor that helped Trump win the election. Trump constantly uses the fact that during Biden's term 8 million undocumented immigrants crossed the southern border to say that Biden and Harris were doing a poor job at controlling the border. During the Trump administration, only 2.1 million illegal immigrants entered the US. Trump emphasizes that there were around 420,000 non-citizens with criminal convictions during Biden's term. Trump kept saying to voters that weak immigration policies were making the country an unsafe place and that illegal immigrants took away job opportunities. Trump has proposed domestic deportation operations and ending birthright citizenship for the children of undocumented parents. Kamala Harris, on the other hand, wanted to provide more funding for border agents. Trump's approach is to target immigrants who are already contributing members of society and block new immigrants from coming to the United States. His approach attracted voters who were concerned about their safety as Trump promised stronger regulations and border control to provide safety for everyone.

Another reason for Trump's victory was Kamala Harris's gender. She was the first woman and the first black person to serve as California's attorney general. A communications professor at Colorado State University said, "American voters tend to believe in the abstract that they support the idea of a woman candidate, but when they get the real women in front of them, they find some other reason not to like the candidate." According to BBC, 54% of men voted for Trump, a 34-count felony and a presidential candidate who was openly accused of rape and unconsented kissing by 26 women, over a female candidate.

In conclusion, during this election, Donald Trump's focus on proposing stronger laws for inflation and immigration gave him an advantage over Kamala Harris, who faced challenges not only because of her policies but also due to biases against a female candidate. Voters saw Trump as someone who could "Make America Great Again". Her loss shows that the country is still not fully ready to accept a female leader.

VITA HUANG

Writing Task: Write a descriptive essay describing a painting, as well as the feelings the painting evokes in you, and why you enjoy this painting.

The Kiss is one of the most famous paintings and the most romantic piece by Gustav Klimt, an Austrian symbolist, impressionist, and art nouveau artist. This piece of artwork is from the Art Nouveau movement, a time period where artists used organic lines, intricate patterns, diverse materials and earth colors in their work. For example, in Klimt's painting, he uses gold-leaf in the background and the robes of the subjects. *The Kiss* is a self-portrait of Klimt and his partner, Emilie Flöge traveling to Attersee in summer.

When I look at the painting I can see the man and the woman's bodies wrapped in lavish golden robes that almost look like they're merged together. Each robe has a different pattern. The man's robe is filled with black, gray, and golden rectangles and squares. On the other hand, the woman's robe is filled with colorful circles of different sizes. The colors of the circles are mostly bright compared to the man's rectangles and squares. These two robes have their own unique identity. However, they come together with perfect harmony. I can also see the man leaning over the woman kissing her cheek. Her cheeks are flushed from the warmth of the man's kiss and the warmth of the golden robe. Her hands gently grasp the man's neck, pulling him close to her. Her eyes are closed and her lips curved into a soft smile. The man and the woman kneel on a shore where it is decorated with blooming flowers. The golden vines glide gently over the woman's leg.

When I look at the painting, I can feel the love from the woman and the man even through the canvas. The golden background represents luxury, which creates a dreamy atmosphere. It is like the man and woman are in a timeless space of just the two of them alone, enjoying the moment. This simple golden background contrasts with the complexity of the robes, highlighting the face of the woman. The flower meadow where the man and woman are kneeling is actually the shore of Attersee. Therefore, the meadow didn't continue to the end of the frame, it curved down like a shore.

I am in love with this painting. Whenever I see it, I can see the beauty of love. I admire Klimt's work because his painting is filled with details that I need to get close to see. The man and the woman cuddling together shows the love between them, which is like a visual love letter that Klimt paints. *The Kiss* is the most stunning painting I have ever seen.



ANNA CHUANG

Writing Task: Write a descriptive essay describing a painting, as well as the feelings the painting evokes in you, and why you enjoy this painting.

American Gothic was created in 1930 by artist Grant Wood, a painter in the Regionalist style, as America entered the Great Depression. During this period, the nation experienced an economic crash which led to societal changes like widespread unemployment and poverty. Wood captured American farmers' resilient spirit and values, venerating America's rural heritage. His painting is an important cultural artifact in American art history.

At first glance, the man and woman at the center of the canvas captures the viewer's attention. The old farmer is dressed in dark blue overalls and a light plaid shirt. He has big ears, a big forehead, wrinkled skin, dirty circular glasses, and a bald head. He holds a large, heavy pitchfork with three sharp tines. His unwavering gaze locks with viewers. Altogether, the old farmer seems like a stoic person who has his own principles and is ready to confront anything that comes his way. Beside him stands a younger woman dressed in a brown, white dotted wool vest over a plain black gown. She wears her blond hair in a neat bun. Some of her hair curled and carefully slicked beside her head to cover her ears. She hangs her arms loosely around her waist. She has furrowed brows, observative eyes, and pursed lips. She stares into the abyss, as if seeking a solution to the impossible.

Behind the man and woman stands a farmhouse that contrasts with the somber mood of the foreground. The house is painted in relatively bright colors – soft yellows, warm whites, and hints of faded greens that create a sense of nostalgia and rural charm. The vertical wooden slats on the exterior of the architecture also align elegantly with one another. These arrangements and earthy colors create an air of stability, highlighting the resilience of rural lifestyle.

Before the Market Revolution in the 1820s, American families were primarily yeoman farmers. After the North industrialized and more people relocated to the urban areas, the South and West became the primary regions that maintained the way of life of the old America. Grant Wood is known for being a regionalist. I believe, through the careful portrayal of the figures' facial expressions, their postures, and the depiction of the rustic farm setting, he intends to emphasize the resilience, stoicism, and empowerment of rural farmers. By doing so, I believe Wood seeks to honor the strong and lasting foundations of American culture, thereby fostering a sense of nationalism and patriarchal values.

In conclusion, I enjoy Grant Wood's *American Gothic* because it holds deeper value than the paint strokes on the canvas. The painting is creative on its own, but also leaves room for the viewers' imagination. The contrast between the characters and nostalgic farmhouse serves to highlight rural farmers' perseverance against the ever changing society. This juxtaposition not only enhances the emotional impact of the painting but also evokes curiosity about the rural experience during a tumultuous period in American history.



ASHLEY CHEN

Writing Task: Why do you think Donald Trump won the 2024 US election instead of Kamala Harris?

On January 6, 2021, Donald J. Trump caused the Capitol Riot because he couldn't stand to lose the presidential election to Joe Biden. During his speech before Congress certified the election results, Trump encouraged his supporters to "walk down Pennsylvania Avenue," and told them to "fight like hell." After that, a group of his supporters stormed the Capitol. Due to Trump fueling the Capitol Riot, he was charged with two felonies. However, despite his status as a felon, in the next election in 2024, Trump managed to beat Kamala Harris, who had been the Attorney General of California in 2010. Trump won this year's election for two main reasons: he promised to implement popular policies like imposing tariffs on imports, and because he argued that Harris was the same as Biden.

One of the reasons Trump won the election is because of how his clear message regarding his plans for the economy spoke to voters. According to a report from the BBC, people are suffering from inflation and feel like the economy was better when Trump was in office. During Trump's campaign, he frequently asked, "Are you better off now than you were four years ago?" He is feeding people's annoyance at the economy to boost their inclination to vote for him. According to statistics from the Bureau of Labor, inflation spiked during Biden's presidency, which is why inflation is one of the main themes in Trump's campaign. Despite president Biden spending money in response to the COVID outbreak, which led to the spike in inflation, Harris wasn't able to answer Trump's questions about the economy. This led the public to believe Trump in saying how Biden wasn't able to manage the inflation. Furthermore, Trump gave many clear speeches on his plans for the economy, for example, how he plans to raise tariffs and lower the price of housing through deportations. This convinced people to vote for him because it makes them think that he has a clear plan to solve pressing issues. According to the Peterson Institute for International Economics, while the policies Trump plans to implement would not cause an economic disaster, they aren't practical. This means that while people believed in Trump's promises made to them, they wouldn't get the effect they're hoping for.

Another reason why Trump won the election is because he sees how annoyed many voters are about the amount of money spent on the Ukraine war. According to Ukraine Oversight, the US Congress appropriated over 150 billion dollars to the war between Ukraine and Russia. Based on a poll taken by CNN, most Americans disapprove of more aid to Ukraine. Trump realizes this and talks about enacting policies to decrease aid given to other countries. He frequently uses the phrase "America First" during his campaign, and it struck a chord with voters, making them believe that Trump would "Make America great again."

Another reason why Harris lost the election is because she couldn't change the fact that people see her as President Biden's partner. During her appearance on the daytime talk show, *The View*, Harris said that she would not change a thing about Joe Biden's administration. According to a poll taken by Reuters, 57 percent of citizens disapprove of Biden. This means that because Harris chose to support Biden's decisions and policies, people think that she would make similar decisions to Biden. However, if she hadn't stuck up for Biden, she would have been seen as disloyal. Therefore, Kamala was put in an impossible position in terms of her association with Biden.

In conclusion, Trump beat Harris in the election because he made the public believe he had a clear plan for his future policies as president, and because of how the public sees Harris as Biden's partner. Donald Trump made many big promises during his campaign, and while they might have sounded appealing, he wouldn't be able to make good on his promises to the people because they wouldn't work out as he thought they would.

BASIC ESSAY WRITING

WEDNESDAY

ESSAY WRITING BEGINS WITH A FOCUS ON THE SIMPLE PERSUASIVE ESSAY (SPE), A TEACHING TOOL DEVELOPED BY ENGLIST. THE PURPOSE OF THE SPE IS TO INTRODUCE STUDENTS TO EACH COMPONENT OF AN ESSAY, HOW TO STRUCTURE AND CONNECT THESE COMPONENTS TO CONVEY IDEAS, AND THE LOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF COMMUNICATION AND ACADEMIC WRITING. STUDENTS ARE ALSO INTRODUCED TO SIMPLE EXPOSITORY AND NARRATIVE ESSAYS, AS WELL AS BASIC STYLISTIC FEATURES LIKE TRANSITIONS AND DESCRIPTIVE WRITING.

VALERIE CHEN

Writing Task: Which sport is the best sport? Why do you think so?

The player jumps into the air, hits the ball at an angle that makes it curve, and it sails over the net, starting the game. Volleyball was invented in 1895 in Massachusetts, USA, and has been on the rise. In fact, this sport has around 900 million fans in the world and is still rising in popularity. Due to its promotion of teamwork and its benefits for overall health, volleyball is the best sport in the world.

One reason volleyball is the best sport is because, as a player, you have to cooperate with your teammates effortlessly on a small court. Volleyball is a sport that relies a lot on the players' overall cooperation, teamwork, and communication on a court smaller than a basketball court, but with more players. They have to work together to align their movements, look out for each other's actions, and communicate effectively to be successful. All these skills promote cooperation between team members and improved communication with other people.

Another reason why volleyball is the best sport is because it benefits health. Even though it seems tiring and takes a lot of energy, it encourages respiratory and circulatory functions that improve people's overall well-being. By improving the respiratory and circulatory systems, people's energy levels increase, along with contributing to more clear-minded days. In addition, it can also improve reflexes, burn calories, and promote coordination, balance, and speed at the same time in a short period. Volleyball may seem tiring and energy-wasting on the outside, but it maintains our health long-term.

Volleyball is a sport that encourages teamwork and benefits our overall well-being. Its combination of teamwork and health benefits makes it a sport that everyone should consider since it encourages people to get together and also maintain their well-being at the same time. So, next time you are looking for a sport that you can play with your friends and also allows you to watch out for your health, volleyball is the best sport for you.

VERA KUO

Writing Task: Which sport is the best sport? Why do you think so?

Every week, stadiums are filled with huge crowds, wearing the same color, and all cheering for their teams. Every sport has its own unique way of connecting people and bringing them together. Among them, soccer stands out for being loved by over half of the population in the world. Soccer is the best sport because it connects people globally and is also accessible.

The first reason why soccer is the best sport is because soccer connects everyone together. According to Sportsepreneur, over 3.5 billion people watch soccer and are fans of it worldwide. This amount of soccer fans is almost half of the population in the world, which shows how soccer is involved in many people's lives. For example, during the World Cup, people from all over the world cheer for their own country's team. This shows how people are all involved and interconnected by this particularly popular game. In conclusion, soccer connects people in a different way by having fans cheering and watching it.

The second reason why soccer is the best sport is because settling up a soccer game is easy. Soccer games only require a ball and an open space to play. This simple setup allows everyone to participate and get access to soccer games, regardless of their financial status. Additionally, a ball isn't so expensive for anyone to purchase and get access to. Thus the easy setup of soccer games welcomes everyone all over the world to play it.

To conclude, soccer brings everyone together and is easy for anyone to play, making it the best sport in the world. Even though many other sports are fun, soccer is the most accessible and most popular worldwide. Maybe soccer players can fight in soccer games, instead of having wars in reality.

EMMA CHANG

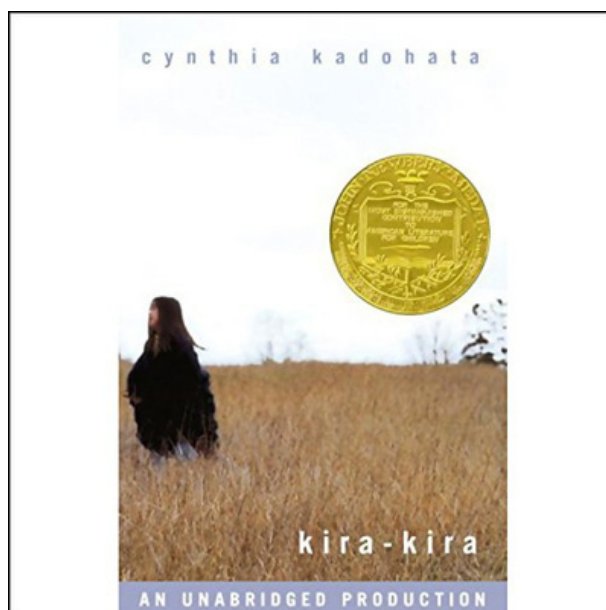
Writing Task: Which supporting character in Kira Kira do you find to be the most compelling? Why do you feel that way?

Out of all the compelling supporting characters, who catches the audience's attention more? Some supporting characters in Kira-Kira leave a longer first impression in the reader's mind and some don't. Uncle Katsuhisa is the most compelling one for how he always has a way to make people laugh, and how he is able to stay cheerful every day even after the melancholic events he went through.

The first reason that Uncle Katsuhisa is the best supporting character in Kira-Kira is because he always makes people laugh in any situation. Every time the atmosphere gets awkward, or when he meets his family, he will always do something silly to make everyone laugh. This makes other people think that he is funny and want to know more about him. For example, once when he was playing chess with Lynn, the atmosphere was getting slightly awkward due to the long period of time Uncle Katsuhisa spent thinking on his next move. He continuously popped his ears and made funny noises unconsciously which made Katie, who was watching, laugh. Another time is when Katie and Lynn met Uncle Katsuhisa in Iowa, he would pop and wiggle his ears with some funny noises. This made Katie and Lynn excited to reunite with Uncle Katsuhisa again. In conclusion, all the humorous movies and sounds he makes, everyone delighted to see him again, making him the best supporting character.

Another reason that makes Uncle Katsuhisa the most compelling supporting character is that he is able to stay positive and happy every day after what he has gone through. Even though he went through a tragedy years before Katie and Lynn were born, he was able to walk through it, so that no one knew he had gone through something like that. Due to the way he acted every time he saw Katie and Lynn, Katie was shocked that Uncle Katsuhisa had gone through such a sorrowful event as watching his first born baby die at such a young age. Being able to stay perfectly fine and live happily every day after going through such a miserable event shows how mentally strong Uncle Katsuhisa is, and how brave he is as well. Uncle Katsuhisa's courageousness influenced and helped Katie through Lynn dying, and taught her how to not let it affect her life forever. Overall, Uncle Katsuhisa's ability to stay positive no matter what happens, and how it influences other people, makes him the most compelling supporting character in the story.

To sum up, Uncle Katsuhisa is the most captivating supporting character for his ability to entertain other people in all sorts of situations and to not let things that happened in the past affect his future. Uncle Katsuhisa is be considered the most compelling supporting character in Kira-Kira for bringing more joy to Katie and Lynn's life. Even though Uncle Katsuhisa is odd, he plays an important role in Katie's family life which makes him the best supporting character in the story.



BENNY HSU

Writing Task: Besides Taiwan, which country do you think is the best one to live in? Why do you feel that way?

Canada stands out as one of the best countries in the world to live in, offering a unique combination of cultural diversity, great quality of life, and favorable career opportunities. Canada welcomes individuals of all ages to immigrate to, making it a considerable destination for people all over the world. Whether you like the bustling city, or the peaceful countryside, Canada has something for everyone who visits. With its welcoming environment and various opportunities, it is a great place to pursue your dreams. So if you are still struggling for a foreign country to move to in the future, Canada should always be on the top of your list. Here are some reasons that Canada is the best country to live in.

First, Canada is a very safe country to live in. In fact, Canada was ranked by World Population Review as one of the top fifteen safest countries to live in the world. This reflects the country's commitment to keeping a safe and secure environment for its citizens. Furthermore, when it comes to crime rate, Canada has a relatively lower rate compared to its neighbor, the United States. Specifically, the homicide rate in Canada is much lower than that of the U.S. According to the recent statistics, there were 6.3 homicides in the U.S. and 2.27 homicides in Canada per 100,000 residents. This shows the difference in safety between the two countries, making Canada a more secure place to live in.

Moreover, Canada offers a high quality of life, marked by a stable economy, strong social system and great public system. As the tenth largest economy in the world, Canada provides a wide range of opportunities for both wealthy people and others willing to improve their financial performances. Wealthy individuals can seek investments or start new enterprises, while the poor can find new job opportunities. Furthermore, Canada's universal health care makes sure that citizens' medical needs are met without the financial pressure often seen with healthcare costs in other countries. In short, Canada provides a great environment for financial growth for people from all economic backgrounds. With its strong social systems and opportunities for everyone, Canada stands out as a country that supports its citizens both personally and financially.

To sum up, Canada is an excellent choice for anyone looking to move to a new country. With its high safety standards, strong economy, and universal healthcare system, it offers a great quality of life for people from all ages of life. Whether you are looking for job opportunities, a peaceful environment, or access to essential health services, Canada is a welcoming and supportive place to live. These elements make it one of the best countries to move to.

AUDREY TSAO

Writing Task: Besides Taipei, which city is the best city in Taiwan, or which area is the best area in Taiwan? Why do you think so?

Hook: Taiwan is a country with many places to live. One of the most recommended areas is Tainan.

BTS: According to World Population Review, there are 875,392 people in Tainan, so it is obvious that many people choose to live there.

Thesis: The truth is that Tainan is the best area in Taiwan because of its cheap prices and unique culture.

TS: The first reason that Tainan is the best is that almost everything is cheaper there than in other cities in Taiwan.

CD: According to Cost of Living, a cup of bubble milk tea is around a hundred NTD in Taipei. On the other hand, a cup of bubble milk tea is only 60 NTD in Tainan.

CM: Food is something that people need every day. If people live in Tainan, they can save a lot more money than living in Taipei or other cities.

CM: Moreover, again according to Cost of Living, renting an apartment with one bedroom per month in the center of Taipei costs around 20962.50 NTD per ping. In Tainan, a comparable apartment only costs 9666.67 NTD per ping. Many residents of Tainan have a lovely home to rest in while people in other cities are still working for one.

CS: Thus, Tainan is the best area because things like food and houses in Tainan are much cheaper than other cities.

TS: The second reason is that Tainan has a unique culture.

CD: Tainan was the first city in Taiwan; its culture started more than 300 years ago.

CM: For example, there are many monuments in Tainan like the Anping Old Fort and the Chihkan Tower. These are a few of the most known monuments in all of Taiwan.

CM: Furthermore, many popular foods from Taiwan are from Tainan. Danzai noodles and rice cakes are two of the most iconic ones.

CS: In conclusion, Tainan has more iconic monuments and foods compared to other places in Taiwan.

Sum: In the end, Tainan is the best city in Taiwan because of its culture and cheap prices.

UO: Those who live in other cities should immediately move to Tainan.

FT: Once there, they will have a great time exploring all of its unique and wonderful corners.

JOANNA LIAO

Writing Task: Which relationship between two characters do you think is the most important in the novel Kira Kira? Why do you think this relationship is so important?

Siblings are just like best friends. In the book *Kira Kira*, written by Cynthia Kadohata, this is perfectly exemplified. When parents are not around the house, siblings are the best partners in crime. Siblings are close to each other when compared to parents, as the age gap between siblings is closer. The most important relationship between the two characters in the novel is the sibling relationship between Katie and Lynn, as Lynn impacted Katie the most, and they spent the most time together.

Through various literary devices, such as similes, Kadohata presents the idea of how Lynn impacted Katie the most. Starting off, Lynn could take anything ordinary in their lives and turn it into fun and new things to add excitement to the ordinary. This is shown through this memory Katie has, "In a few minutes hundreds of tissues sailed over the cornfield...The tissues looked like giant butterflies." This quote showcased how Lynn could enhance ordinary objects in life to make greatness out of it. Through the use of simile, Kadohata conveys the idea of enlightening one's life by having imagination. This emphasizes the impact that Lynn had on Katie. Lynn made Katie appreciate the boring things in life. Lynn acted like a motherly figure to Katie, teaching her the ways to life, according to her experiences. With the constant absence of her parents due to not having enough money, Lynn took care of the entire family, making sure it was fully functioning. This was evident when Lynn became sick, as without her patching up the problems that the family encountered, Katie had to take that role in order to keep the family going, thus showing the importance of Lynn to Katie.

Kadohata conveys the idea of how Lynn and Katie stayed with each other for the longest time, through various literary devices. Time is often counted as a major factor when evaluating one's reliance on another individual. The reliance of Katie on Lynn would be just like how the earth relies on the sun to provide energy: "I saw the sun again, a quarter of it, and then a slice, and then it disappeared, the last time ever that the sun would set on a day my sister had lived." Kadohata used metaphor in this quote to convey its meaning. The sun, which symbolized Katie's sister, Lynn, set, alluding to Lynn's death. This sun was shining on the earth for eternity, just like how Lynn was always there for Katie. By saying the sun appeared and disappeared showed the change of Katie's emotion. Thus, proving how important the relationship was between Lynn and Katie.

To sum up, the relationship between siblings, specifically Katie and Lynn, was the most important relationship in the novel for various reasons. Kadohata conveys the idea of how Lynn impacted Katie the most and how they were together for the most time, by using various literary devices, such as similes. Cynthia Kadohata expresses the importance of siblings through this novel. This highlights the magnificence of siblings and how they change and influence each other.

ZARIA CHIOU

Writing Task: Which school subject do you think is the most important for students to be good at in high school? Why this subject and not other ones?

Hook: Fail in math and fail in life, or be good in math and have a better life; those are the options.

BTS: Some people believe that math serves no purpose, but it is not true.

Thesis: It is of the utmost importance for Asian students to be good at math in high school.

TS: The first reason is because Asians get picked on if they aren't good at math, with other people even bullying and laughing at them because of the low grades they get.

CD: For example, according to PISA reports in 2018, the top 7 countries with the highest overall math achievement score were all from Asia.

CM: This shows most Asians are generally better in math, which leads to a common stereotype that all Asians are good at math.

CM: This, in turn, leads to humiliation when some Asians are found to be bad in math.

CS: Therefore, if an Asian student does not want to be the odd one out, they need to be good at math.

TS: The second reason why Asians need to be good at math is because it helps develop our critical thinking skills, which is what helps them thrive under the competitive Asian economy.

CD: Many Asian industries that are rapidly growing rely on technical skills like engineering, technology and finance.

CM: All of these require strong math and logic skills.

CM: Asian students will struggle to find jobs in the future if they do not succeed or stand out because of the requirements for the jobs that are growing and in demand.

CS: Therefore, students have to be good in math if they want to have a good job and stable financial life in the future.

Sum: To sum up, Asians have to be good in math because of how it can affect their present and future.

UO: If Asians are bad at math, it takes a toll on them and results in them failing in many circumstances.

FT: Being good at math or not is a choice; however, in the end, being good at math is always the best option.

IAN KUO

Writing Task: Which school subject do you think is the most important for students to be good at in high school? Why this subject and not other ones?

Many students recoil or shudder upon mentioning the word “math”, but, in reality, it is the most important subject the education system has to offer. While math may require talent and certain skills in order to excel at it, it is an effective and practical knowledge that plays a big part in our lives. Thus, math is the most important subject for students to be good at in high school for it is the fundamental for sciences and trains logical thinking.

Foremost, math is one of the most basic elements in all sciences, making it practical in our understanding of other subjects. Often hailed as the “language of sciences”, mathematics is an important and widespread subject students need to grasp. Since many subjects are related to natural sciences or social sciences, math surely plays its role at the base of these fields and their respective theories. Also, as more and more data and analysis are needed, math is only becoming more prevalent in the world, and those who perform poorly at the subject will face replacement. Therefore, math is the most prominent course for high school students because of its influence on different branches of study, and the world.

Moreover, math trains pupils in critical thinking and logic, as well as practical problem solving skills. Obviously, clear reasoning is a skill everyone of every occupation should possess, as it plays a huge part in the efficiency and accuracy of production. By learning math and solving different problems, high school students can practice and learn multiple approaches to tackle any issue. Also, because many mistakes occur due to irrational thinking, math, which trains the opposite, is a prime subject. Thus, math is the most important subject due to the special set of skills it leaves its students with, even long past their high school years.

In brief, math is the most important subject high school students need to master because it is a fundamental element, and because it trains reasoning and thinking. Thus, students who can fully grasp the essence of mathematics can lead lives where they can implement what they’ve learned to solve real world problems logically. On the other hand, those who despise math should reconsider and view math more as a way of thinking, rather than just confusing numbers and theorems.

ANDREA LIN

Writing Task: Which school subject do you think is the most important for students to be good at in high school? Why this subject and not other ones?

Hook: In a world where people lack the ability to calculate prices, measure things or understand reports, it is terrible if high school students don't participate and learn in math class.

BTS: Math can help with critical thinking and reasoning skills. When you understand a problem, identify the knowns and unknowns, and then solve it, this can be applied to other areas and subjects of your life and school.

Thesis: As a result, math is the most important subject for students to be good at in high school due to its importance of developing problem-solving skills and its application to other subjects.

TS: The first reason math is the most important subject in high school is because students can develop problem-solving skills.

CD: For example, when they solve various math problems, they have to break the question down into many steps, then calculate to find the answer.

CM: By doing this, they focus on analyzing the question and get a deeper look in order to know what the question is asking.

CM: Moreover, this requires students to think critically by using context clues which could help them understand the meaning of words in each question.

CS: Therefore, due to the significance of critical problem-solving skills, math is the most important subject.

TS: The second reason math is the most important subject in high school is because it serves as a foundation for several subjects.

CD: For example, physics, chemistry, economics, and history are connected to math.

CM: Math skills are essential in these subjects in order to calculate data and numbers.

CM: Furthermore, reasoning and analyzing skills gained from math are also useful for these subjects.

CS: Therefore, students should be good at math due to its usage in other subjects.

Sum: In conclusion, mathematics is the most important subject in high school. It develops critical problem-solving skills and serves as a foundation for other subjects.

UO: Math isn't just about calculating numbers; it's more about thinking widely and logically.

FT: By thinking of mathematics as the most important subjects, students are better prepared for academic success and real world problems.

BASIC ESSAY WRITING

SATURDAY

ESSAY WRITING BEGINS WITH A FOCUS ON THE SIMPLE PERSUASIVE ESSAY (SPE), A TEACHING TOOL DEVELOPED BY ENGLIST. THE PURPOSE OF THE SPE IS TO INTRODUCE STUDENTS TO EACH COMPONENT OF AN ESSAY, HOW TO STRUCTURE AND CONNECT THESE COMPONENTS TO CONVEY IDEAS, AND THE LOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF COMMUNICATION AND ACADEMIC WRITING. STUDENTS ARE ALSO INTRODUCED TO SIMPLE EXPOSITORY AND NARRATIVE ESSAYS, AS WELL AS BASIC STYLISTIC FEATURES LIKE TRANSITIONS AND DESCRIPTIVE WRITING.

SHERLOCK LIN

Writing Task: Besides Taipei, which city is the best city in Taiwan, or which area is the best area in Taiwan? Why do you think so?

Hook: Years ago, some people from Taipei made bold claims on social media, about Taipei being the best city in Taiwan, and comments that disagreed soon flooded in.

BTS: The debate about which city is the best in Taiwan has been ongoing for years because it. It is hard for people to decide which city is the best.

Thesis: The best city in Taiwan, however, is Tainan, for its food and culture.

TS: The first reason why Tainan is the best city in Taiwan is because of the authentic Taiwanese food.

CD: Most Taiwanese foods such as coffin bread, turkey rice, and braised pork over rice originated in Tainan.

CM: These dishes represent the cultural heritage of Taiwan, with recipes passed down through generations.

CM: For tourists, trying authentic food is one of the most important goals of a trip, making Tainan the best place to visit.

CS: Therefore, Tainan is the best city in Taiwan because of the authentic food you can find there.

TS: Another reason why Tainan is the best city in Taiwan is because of its unique attractions.

CD: Since Tainan was the original capital of Taiwan, many historical buildings there, such as Anping Old Fort, hold great historical value.

CM: Anping Old Fort, built by the Dutch in the 1700s, reflects Tainan's colonial past and reminds visitors of the early years of Taiwan's history.

CM: The fort represents a mix of foreign and local cultures, showing how Taiwan's history has shaped its modern culture and identity.

CS: Therefore, Tainan's historical sites, like Anping Old Fort, are a reason why Tainan stands out as the best city in Taiwan.

Sum: In conclusion, Tainan is the best city in Taiwan because of its delicious, authentic food, and unique historical attractions.

UO: Therefore, more tourists should visit Tainan and experience the unique adventure only Tainan can offer.

FT: If you ever get the chance, it is worth visiting Tainan.

BELLA WU

Writing Task: Name one writer who you respect. What kind of writing do they do? Why do you like their writing? What lessons can you learn from them about writing? Explain.

One writer who I respect is Firdhaus, a Malaysian singer who is known for sad love songs. His famous songs are "A Divorce in Ghana" and "Gulf of Alaska." One of the reasons why I respect him is because some of his song titles are meaningful. For example, "Gulf of Alaska" refers to a natural phenomenon where two oceans, due to different density, never mix. Firdhaus uses this imagery to show that some relationships just can't work, even if the people are close. Another reason why I admire him is because his music blends heartfelt emotions with relatable and simple lyrics. At the end of the song "Gulf of Alaska," although the man broke up with the woman, he wishes that she can find a better man to be with. Firdhaus sings, "Don't let someone else walk into her heart then leave her in the end again." In this lyric, listeners hear how the singer puts the man's heartbreak and concern into words. By listening to Firdhaus's songs I can find the interesting deeper meanings in his songs and appreciate the ways he describes complex emotions through simple symbolism.

YANNIE KANG

Writing Task: Besides Taipei, which city is the best city in Taiwan, or which area is the best area in Taiwan? Why do you think so?

Hook: According to the Institute for Quality of Life, other than Taipei which ranked 42, Kaohsiung is ranked 64 in the world for happiness in people's lives.

BTS: Kaohsiung is located in southern Taiwan and known for the amount of concerts happening and convenience in getting around.

Thesis: Therefore, Kaohsiung is the best city in Taiwan besides Taipei since it has a great music culture and has a quality transportation network.

TS: The first reason why Kaohsiung is the best city besides Taipei is that they have more convenient transportation.

CD: Kaohsiung is one of the only four cities in Taiwan with an MRT system, and the city also has ports, airports, buses, and light rail services.

CM: With all these systems in Kaohsiung, it makes traveling more efficient and takes less time.

CM: Moreover, these transportation systems allow people to both go abroad and travel around the city easily.

CS: Since there are so many different kinds of transportation in Kaohsiung, it makes it the best city in Taiwan.

TS: The second reason that Kaohsiung is the best city in Taiwan is because it is the only city in Taiwan with the most famous concerts going on.

CD: Many famous performers and celebrities only hold their concerts in Kaohsiung, including Bruno Mars, Coldplay, and Maroon 5. There are also classical musicians that held their concerts in Weiwuying which is the most famous performance arts center that has not only music but other forms of arts there.

CM: This means that instead of holding concerts in the capital, Taipei, Kaohsiung is better for concerts.

CM: In Kaohsiung, people can enjoy everything from classical music to pop music from around the world in a single city.

CS: Since there are many music performances in Kaohsiung, it is an important center of art, so it is the best city in Taiwan.

Sum: In conclusion, because there are a variety of music shows and convenient transportation systems, Kaohsiung is the best city in Taiwan.

UO: This is important because these two factors mean people living in Kaohsiung have a good quality of life.

FT: Because Kaohsiung is a city full of art culture and has well-rounded transportation, it should be the capital of Taiwan.

ANSON HSU

Writing Task: Which school subject do you think is the most important for students to be good at in high school? Why this subject and not other ones?

Hook: Without math, hypotheses cannot be proved and inventions cannot be created.

BTS: Through mathematical models, equations, and algorithms, we can predict outcomes, solve problems, and uncover patterns that are not obvious.

Thesis: Obviously, math is the most important subject because it is the basis of every science subject and learning math can make people good at processing.

TS: The first reason why math is the most important subject is because it is an essential part of all science subjects.

CD: To learn physics, chemistry, biology and engineering, people need math.

CM: In those science subjects, people encounter a lot of math formulas and counting.

CM: If someone is bad at math, they will do poorly in all science subjects.

CS: Without math, all science subjects are incomplete, so it is surely the most important subject.

TS: The second reason why math is the most important subject is because learning math can improve one's processing ability.

CD: According to Mathnasium, learning math can develop children's problem-solving skills, logical reasoning, attention to detail, and creativity.

CM: Math requires people to solve complex problems, which improves people's ability to analyze, process facts and information faster, find solutions, and make decisions.

CM: If people have those abilities, they will be more efficient in work, study and daily life.

CS: Because math enhances a student's ability to process everything, it is the most important subject.

Sum: To sum up, math is not only the core of every science subject, but it also has the power to make people smarter, making it the most important subject.

UO: Because of how important math is, people should study it more.

FT: In fact, we should replace useless subjects such as Chinese literature and history with math.

LEON LIN

Writing Task: Name one writer who you respect. What kind of writing do they do? Why do you like their writing? What lessons can you learn from them about writing? Explain.

Gillian McAllister is a writer that I respect. She wrote many mystery novels that are so intriguing that you cannot put them down. I enjoy her novels as they often have multiple plot twists and unexpected endings. In one of her novels, *Just Another Missing Person*, a police officer conducting a gang crime investigation turned out to be the gang leader in the end. These unanticipated endings always grab the reader's attention. In most of McAllister's books, the plot revolves around a court case. This setting allows the reader to understand how a court works and why a prosecution or defense barrister performs specific actions, such as why the defense barrister often encourages defendants to do a "no comment" interview. According to Old Bailey Solicitors, people often believe that by giving a "no comment" interview, your silence would signify guilt. However, in McAllister's novels, the defendant often remains innocent by deliberately not providing any evidence that might harm their defense. Overall, these unprecedented plot twists and fascinating knowledge about the justice system in McAllister's books will never let you put the book down.

MICHAEL CHIU

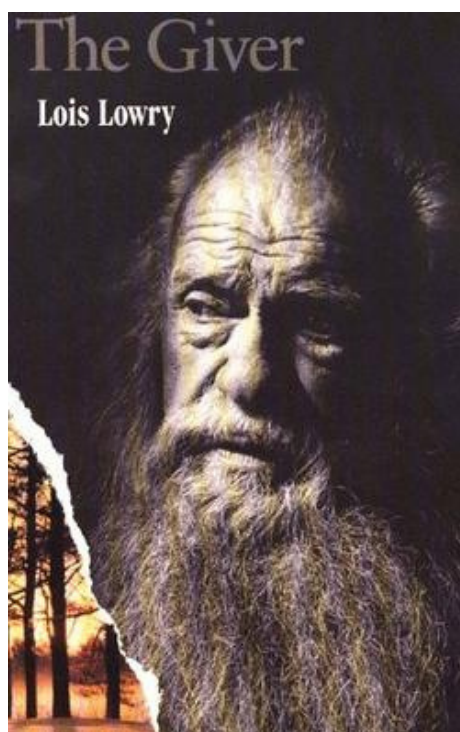
Writing Task: Do you think Jonas's "Father" in The Giver is evil? Why or why not?

In the novel, *The Giver*, how the characters in The Community think is crazy. They believe wild things like candles are dangerous, twins will cause big problems, and people shouldn't see colors. Therefore, to say a person in the novel is good or bad is difficult. However, Jonas's father is definitely evil. We can see that Father is evil by the fact he killed a baby and enjoyed it.

Let's start by looking at Father's worst action: he killed a baby just because the baby is a twin. He took the lighter of the two babies and gave him a shot, and the baby died. This killing shows that Father is evil because the reason for the killing, which is that the baby is a twin, is a bad reason for killing. First of all, because to be a twin is not the baby's choice, being a twin is not his fault. Since the baby didn't do any bad things, he has the right to be alive just like everyone else. Also, there are other ways that can make sure The Community won't have any twins in it without killing anyone. For example, they could exchange one of the twins with one from another community. This solution is so easy that of course Father could have thought of it, but he didn't. This shows that Father doesn't want to avoid killing people. Both killing the baby and not looking for other solutions shows that Father is evil.

Next, readers should look at Father's emotions. He didn't show that he didn't want to kill the baby when he gave the baby a shot. He even laughed before he killed the baby. On the other hand, the Giver had a solemn look when he talked about killing babies. The difference between Father and the Giver proves that Father is evil. This is because the reaction of the Giver is how a normal person will react. Most people will be sad if they see a baby die in front of them. Laughing before killing the baby shows that Father didn't feel regret about killing, and even felt happy about it. Also, Father knows that to be released is a bad thing. He put the baby in a box, and pushed the baby into a chute. This is dangerous for the baby. Father did this because he knew the baby died already, so he didn't care if the baby would get hurt or not. Father knows that to be released means "dead", but he still released the baby.

In conclusion, Jonas's Father is evil because he killed a baby and didn't regret it. This is so evil that Father would go to jail if he were not in a novel. However, Father not only doesn't go to jail, but he gets a job taking care of babies. We can see how crazy the community is because in the community, people who kill babies are the ones who take care of them.



AIDEN TSAI

Writing Task: Do you think the Community in The Giver is similar to your society? Why do you feel the way you do?

In *The Giver* by Lois Lowry, the author explores the positive and negative sides of a utopian society. The “Community” of the Giver is an utopian society which aims to eliminate suffering and promote equality. The Community is similar to our society because of the lack of choice and lack of pain both societies hold.

To a great extent, the Community is similar to our society due to the lack of choice both societies offer. On the surface, the Community offers little choice in life while our society has freedom to be whoever you want. However the norms of our society are similar to those of the Community. For example, we are all raised with two parents we cannot choose and are required to go to school. Furthermore, in both societies, people spend their school years preparing for jobs. While we might have more freedom than the citizens in *The Giver*, there are still elements of our society that limit our choices. For example, economic circumstances we cannot control, like being born in a poor family, can limit our opportunities. This shows how people in our society can have choices based on variables they cannot change. This lack of choice in our society is similar to that of the Community.

Next, the community is similar to our society because of the lack of pain both societies promote. Our society aims to minimize pain as much as possible whether it is making us lazier with each new invention or giving us more dopamine to avoid reality. Similarly, the people in the community have no pain because they suppress their emotions. For example, Jonas was forced to take pills for having “stirrings”, which were strong feelings of love. Our society also suppresses our emotions and pain by distracting us with drugs and entertainment. Both the Community and our society minimize pain in order to create social stability. In our society we have painful emotions we cannot control like grief. However, the painful emotions we can control like physical pain are being minimized as much as we can. Jonas’s pills are like the drugs in our society, as they minimize and temporarily let us avoid pain. This shows the goal for both societies to minimize as much pain as possible, which makes our world and the Community similar.

Some readers say the Community is nothing like our society. They say major aspects of the Community society are different to our society, like family units or the Committee of Elders. However, our society has a similar committee of elders called “the government,” and we also have family units where we cannot choose our parents or children. Although our society and the Community may seem vastly different, they are similar in important ways. If you were a 10 year old living in the Community, you would not easily notice the switch between our society and the Community in *The Giver*.

WRITING ESSENTIALS

MONDAY

WRITING ESSENTIALS INTRODUCES STUDENTS TO THE IDEA OF WRITING AS A COMMUNICATION TOOL AND AS A METHOD OF DEVELOPING DEEPER AND MORE ANALYTICAL THINKING. STUDENTS WILL BE CHALLENGED TO EXPLORE IDEAS THEY ENCOUNTER AND LEARN TO PRESENT THEIR IDEAS IN A CONVINCING AND CLEAR MANNER. STUDENTS ARE ALSO TASKED WITH DEVELOPING MECHANICAL SKILLS THROUGH REWRITING EDITED WORK.

ANDY CHUNG

Writing Task: Write a review of the book you read with your class.

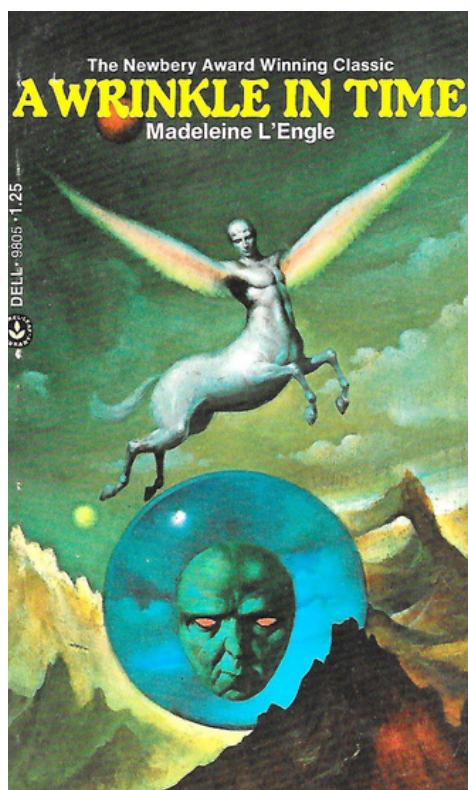
A Wrinkle in Time, written by Madeleine L'Engle, is a fantasy science fiction book. Sometimes this book makes no sense. Weird things happen and the author never explains why. Also, the book is too complex to read. Although sequences in the text are unique, they also can be so confusing that it becomes hard to understand the narrative.

The main characters are Meg, Charles Wallace, and Calvin. Meg is a self-conscious teenage girl. Charles Wallace is a smart little boy, but overconfident. Calvin is a tall basketball player and a good communicator though he's often a weird person. For example, he says that Meg is a moron, but after that, he says that she is the nicest thing that has happened to him in a long time. The story starts with Meg, who feels insecure about her looks and smarts, and misses her father. Meg, her brother Charles, and their friend Calvin spend the majority of the book "tessering" from one planet to the next in order to save Meg's father, and even the whole world.

The biggest problem with the story is that it lacks details on important events. For example, the author doesn't explain why Ms. Who's glasses can escape the prison. There's no explanation why there is a brain called IT on a planet called Camazotz. L'Engle too often describes places the characters visit only briefly. The story should be more focused and connected, but it sometimes makes no sense. For example, Charles Wallace kisses Ms. Whatsit seemingly out of nowhere. The book never explains why Meg, Charles Wallace, and Calvin are the chosen ones.

However, while this story sometimes makes no sense, some elements are very unique. They teleport around different planets, and there are always problems to solve on those planets. The part when they fight with IT is very special, because they use love to defeat IT, not by violence.

I'd give this book five out of ten. Although the story is unique and creative, there are still many ways that it could be improved.



EMMA CHOU

Writing Task: Write a letter you will never send.

To my best friend, Fayme

I'm glad I met you in elementary school. Back then, we were always in the same group. Even though we didn't attend the same junior high school, we still shared everything with each other. I know about all the drama at your school, and I liked to hear about it. In seventh grade, you helped me so much. I wanted to give up badminton, but you reminded me that I have been playing for so long. If I gave up, what a pity it would be. I'm still playing badminton now because of you. Do you remember when we were in ninth grade, when we often went to the library together? We taught each other whenever there was something we didn't understand. We improved together and got into our dream school. We still go to the library and shop together. You taught me how to match clothes and help me pick out the right make-up; your help always makes me so happy! I appreciate your friendship so much.

All the best,

Emma

VERA HUANG

Writing Task: Write a short personal narrative about a time you learned an important lesson that you think other people should learn through your experience.

When I was in elementary school, I joined a "natural experience" class, in which all the members went hiking together. In the class I met a girl around my age and we became close friends in a short time. She was pretty and friendly. I was so happy to spend time with her in every class. Each time we went hiking, the mountains were always full of our laughter. We had many wonderful experiences together. We played different games along the way, including collecting different pine cones or beautiful leaves. One day, she went river tracing with a different outdoor class, while I stayed at my grandparents' house. At some point that day, I saw the news on television that some people had been washed away by a flooding river. Later on, the report showed that it was the same place that my friend had gone to. When I heard the news, my mind went blank. I kept praying for her to be saved, but when I found out she'd gone missing, I cried so hard and was truly shocked. I couldn't believe what happened. When I heard that they could never find her, it was impossible to accept. I cried for weeks, and I missed her so much. I was supposed to meet her the following week, but she was gone. When I go to the mountains, I always feel empty: the laughter in the mountains has gone. Through this story I learned to always cherish my time with the people that I love. The happy memories with them will always stay in my heart.

MAX WU

Writing Task: What is an injustice you see or experience? Why is it unfair, and why does it make you angry? How would you change it?

The caste system has been a tradition in India for 3,000 years. This discriminatory social system is rooted in religion called Brahmanism. It divided people into five levels: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Shudras and Dalits. These groups are not allowed to intermarry. That means that the poor are rarely able to improve their lives. At one time in Indian history, a man called Sakamuni (or Buddha) tried to overthrow Brahmanism. His philosophy, Buddhism, was never officially accepted by the Indian government, but it did become a popular religion. Given that Buddhism works to combat the prejudice inherent to Brahmanism, it's not hard to see why it became popular.

Though there's no caste system in Indian law any more, it's still a big problem. Many people still practice it because of their religion. There are many people who suffer discrimination. This is injustice and it needs to change! If I was in charge of the Indian government, I would include an article that all people are equal and prohibit discrimination. If someone violated those laws, he would be sent to jail. Although this sounds extreme, I think it would effectively curb discriminatory behaviors.

OLIVER HUANG

Writing Task: Should school start later in the morning or not? Why?

School should start later, preferably at 9 a.m., because students need more sleep. If school starts very early, students will feel tired during class. They won't be able to eat breakfast before school. Not getting enough sleep and not eating breakfast is unhealthy. If students lack energy, they won't be able to perform well in school.

According to research from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, a lack of sleep causes high blood pressure, can increase the likelihood of strokes, and many more health problems. Missing breakfast is also a big issue. If students don't eat breakfast, they can experience blood sugar imbalances. For all these reasons school should start later.

We sleep late, wake up early, and do not have enough energy to go to school. If school can start later, these problems would be solved. Happier, healthier students mean a brighter future for everyone.

ABBIE WU

Writing Task: Write a letter you will never send.

Hello Enna,

I still can't believe that it has been three years since Ethyria debuted. These're numerous wonderful memories carried between you and aloupeeps. You have reached so many accomplishments in these three years. Good for you! For instance, you have released original songs and covers, participated in lots of comic con, and had concerts and fan meetings around the world.

In the beginning, I was attracted by your heavenly voice. Your songs are so powerful and touching. When I am depressed, your singing is heartwarming; it heals and stitches up every wound I carry. Through your soft, tender music, I found the motivation to keep me going. It is hard to choose a favorite song of yours. But if I have to choose the only one, I will say it is "Mushroom."

My love for this song is beyond words. I have repeated it hundreds of times since it was released. The lyrics express well how a person loses one's own self, being obsessed and blind to something is harmful to us. The bridge is awesome. It made me associate with how I was grieved and depressed chasing perfection. That time was one of the hardest in my life. However, I'm glad that I got through it, and appreciate that there is someone who can feel me and understand my feelings and emotions.

Also, you created countless funny streams, and these made me relax and eased my stress so much. I love that you joke about the tragedy of life for fun sometimes, like "I like myself 123". Your humor showed me that it is totally fine to have negative emotions and we can face them in another way.

Remember the *Mario Party* collaboration with Ethyria and Kyo? That was crazy! Your interactions always make me laugh until I'm nearly dead. You guys were roasting each other for fun as usual. Over time, when it was time for Kyo to leave, you faced it optimistically, and said some sincere words of blessing. But, what made me impressed is that you were kidding while holding back your tears. I was moved to tears myself. Saying goodbye is really tough, especially to someone you have deep affection for. By seeing your relationship, I learned that we don't have to always grieve when someone departs from our lives. Even though life is hard, there are ways to face it and embrace the sadness positively.

Though I'm really bad with words, I still want to tell you that your work and movement means a lot to me. I appreciate everything you have done and the incredible memories you've given me. How I wish I could give you a huge hug! I hope to one day share these words with you in person, and continue to see your success because you deserve the moon and stars.

Sincerely,
Abbie

HENRY KUO

Writing Task: What is an injustice you see or experience? Why is it unfair, and why does it make you angry? How would you change it?

Many feminists advocate for equal rights in countries that already have laws on the books promoting gender equality. One area where gender isn't equal is in the military service system. Women comprise half of the country's population. It seems fair that they should share the responsibility of protecting the nation by attending military service. Israel, for instance, has standard military service for both women and men. The military has a variety of jobs such as medics, therapists, and soldiers. All these kinds of jobs are suitable for different people, therefore there is no excuse for women to not serve in the military.

When war is happening in a country national defense should be every citizen's responsibility, regardless of gender. Women should not be exempt from the responsibility. We have to ensure fairness between genders, so it's essential that women are prepared to stand up for their country instead of retreating when war occurs. This isn't a new idea: in both World Wars women helped their countries by being nurses on the front line. This made people realize the importance of women's rights. From a modern perspective, if women serve the military alongside men, this could ensure the rights of women and facilitate a gender equal society.

RAY WU

Writing Task: Choose a character in the novel you are reading as a class. In your response, compare and contrast that character with yourself. How are you similar to this character? How are you different from this character? Why are those similarities and differences important? What can they teach you and readers?

In the story *A Wrinkle in Time*, Charles Wallace's personality shares some similarities with mine, but we're also different in many ways. Starting with the similarities, both Charles and I are curious about the world around us. This personality helped him discover many clues to finding his dad. However, it also brought him many dangers. I'm similar because I'm curious about things I find interesting, such as math or soccer. I like to read books about math or soccer players' biographies. What's more, Charles and I are both stubborn. He rarely changes his mind, and the same goes for me. If I make a decision, as time passes by, if my choice seems to be wrong, I won't change my mind.

Although we are similar in some respects, we are still quite different. For example, Charles Wallace doesn't like other people's ideas, but I can listen to others. This is one reason why he got brainwashed. For example, I can take in other ideas from my classmates, teammates, or family. There is one more difference between Charles and I. He is confident in front of other people, but that is my biggest problem. I'm not confident in front of crowds. Charles is too confident, which is another reason he gets brainwashed. For me, even if I know the answer to a question my teacher had asked, I'm not confident enough to say it in front of the class. I think I should learn from him, and he should learn from me too.

QUEENIE MAI

Writing Task: Write a letter you will never send.

Greetings Mr. Parker,

First, allow me to say that I am an enormous fan of your work. I've been hooked on your shows ever since I first watched them.

I hope you're working on your next masterpiece. Since I watched seasons 1 and 2 of *One Of Us Is Lying* during summer vacation, I've been counting down the days until season 3 is released.

However, I recently learned there won't be season 3 for this show, due to low viewership. But I really enjoyed watching it, and I believe this show has a diehard following. Netflix is short-sighted and does not recommend your shows to a wide enough audience. If more people watched it, they would undoubtedly love this show as much as I did.

I want to tell you how much I admire your ability to build so much suspense in your narratives. The pacing, intrigue, and quick wit in your dialogue makes me excited. Every time I get bored with my schoolwork, I enjoy watching your show because it keeps me guessing about who the real killer is. I also love how you create interesting, complex plots. For instance, at the beginning of the series, I thought Simon was pulling the strings because he was always holding his laptop and typing surreptitiously. However, I found out that he couldn't have been the killer, because he had died. I also love how you make the audience think Simon was murdered rather than died by suicide. I really love how you create so many interesting characters and plots that always hook audiences, and I hope that one day you can complete season 3 of this show. I swear that I will share this show with my friends and force them to watch it with me!

Once again, I just wanted to share my thoughts. Keep up the awesome work, and I look forward to whatever you write next. Have a nice day.

Sincerely,
Queenie

WRITING ESSENTIALS

TUESDAY

WRITING ESSENTIALS INTRODUCES STUDENTS TO THE IDEA OF WRITING AS A COMMUNICATION TOOL AND AS A METHOD OF DEVELOPING DEEPER AND MORE ANALYTICAL THINKING. STUDENTS WILL BE CHALLENGED TO EXPLORE IDEAS THEY ENCOUNTER AND LEARN TO PRESENT THEIR IDEAS IN A CONVINCING AND CLEAR MANNER. STUDENTS ARE ALSO TASKED WITH DEVELOPING MECHANICAL SKILLS THROUGH REWRITING EDITED WORK.

LILAC TUNG

Writing Task: Write about yourself.

I was preparing for the junior high entrance test during the sixth grade. I spent the whole semester learning all the questions that are going to appear on the test papers. The process was tough and I was suffering because the questions were beyond the scope of study. I wanted to give up after working hard for one month because I didn't get good grades on tests. My confidence was gone and, suddenly, everything seemed hard. However, I noticed the people around me were all working hard to improve, even if they didn't get good grades. After noticing that, I decided to work harder and make sure I was well prepared before the tests. I started to take many review tests and ask the teacher questions when making mistakes. Surprisingly, I got good grades on every school's entrance test so I had the opportunity to choose the junior high I liked. My hard-working attitude helped me a lot because if I didn't write that many worksheets, I wouldn't have had those good results. I became a diligent person during this period and I'll never forget this memory.

ALICE HSU

Writing Task: Choose a character in the novel you are reading as a class. In your response, compare and contrast that character with yourself.

In the novel *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*, I find several similarities between myself and the main character, Minli. First, we are both friendly. We enjoy helping others. Minli shows kindness when she cuts the ropes tangled around the Dragon, helping him out of his difficult situation. Similarly, I try to help others whenever I see they are in need. For instance, when my friend was absent from school, I made sure to help her catch up on the work she had missed. Second, we both share a strong determination to accomplish our goals. Minli leaves her home to find a way to change her family's fortune, facing many obstacles along the way. Despite the challenges, she never gives up on her mission. Like Minli, when I face hardships, I push through and refuse to give up. Once, during a performance, I accidentally fell, but I didn't stop. I got back up and kept dancing, ignoring the laughter. Instead of wasting my time on worrying about other people's opinions, I use this time to focus on myself. Thinking about those negative thoughts could influence your mood and destroy your confidence.

However, there are some ways in which we differ. Minli is adventurous and takes risks, even running away from home without her parents' permission. I, on the other hand, would never take such a big risk. Running away feels too dangerous to me. I think there are other ways to solve problems without putting myself in that kind of danger. Another difference is that Minli always remains optimistic, no matter how tough things get. She spreads happiness and hope wherever she goes. In contrast, I sometimes find it hard to stay positive, especially when I face difficult situations. It's something I'm working on, but it's not always easy.

In conclusion, Minli and I share some traits, like being kind and determined. However, we approach things differently when it comes to taking risks and staying positive during tough times. I admire Minli's adventurous spirit and optimism, even though it's not always easy for me to be like that. Still, both our similarities and differences shape the way we handle challenges, and I hope to learn from Minli's courage and optimism as I try to improve how I face difficulties.

AMBER GUO

Writing Task: What is an injustice you see or experience? Why is it unfair, and why does it make you angry? How would you change it?

A gay influencer on Instagram, Yi-Yi, used to be a warm and diligent boy when he was little. At the age of twelve, he was ignored and bullied by other children in class because he admitted that he was in love with a boy. The bullying only got worse in middle school. In that period of time, his classmates would push down his desk and chair, as well as write bunches of hurtful words on it. "That was the worst period of time in my life," said Yi-Yi. "I felt very stunned at the moment, and my mind went blank. I didn't understand what I had done wrong."

As exemplified in this story, LGBTQ+ youth are often more likely to be bullied than other normal students at school. According to Bullies Out, "55% of LGBTQ+ students report having experienced homophobic, biphobic or transphobic (HBT) bullying,," which is much higher than the percentage of normal students being bullied, as reported by the national bullying prevention center.

There are several reasons for students bullying homosexual students at school. One of them is societal stereotypes of homosexual people. News has portrayed gays as promiscuous. These stereotypes show that the information we get from news is often untrue and unfair. Beyond that it might cause more bullying incidents at school, because people would want to bully those who they think are dirty and immoral. These kinds of reports still exist in our news media, and it should absolutely not be allowed to happen in a time in which everybody has the right to be themselves.

Furthermore, if we keep allowing the bullying to happen, it may lead to higher suicidal tendencies in teenagers. According to statistics, LGBTQ+ young people are more than four times as likely to attempt suicide than their peers. We should never be willing to see students commit suicide due to bullying. Therefore, we must be kind to the LGBTQ+ people and treat them equally.

In an effort to remedy this, we have the responsibility to teach children that LGBTQ+ students are actually the same as them. They can also feel happiness, sadness, loneliness and every emotion that normal people have. Teachers must help students establish the correct concept of respecting different kinds of students since they are young. If the students are already exposed to the concept of diverse gender equality, their chances of discriminating against LGBTQ+ will be greatly reduced.

Just like every person in the world, the only thing LGBTQ+ people want is to be respected and liked. If we can accept people with different sexual orientations, we will find out that there's actually no difference between those people and us.

LENA HUANG

Writing Task: Write a short personal narrative about a time you learned an important lesson that you think other people should learn through your experience.

On a hot and humid day, while everyone was falling asleep in the classroom, our English teacher said something that made our sleepiness dissipate and excited us all immediately.

“We have an exchange program, called CAIS, with some San Francisco students. They will come to our school and live in your home for two weeks. Then, you will go there and live with them, too. This activity is very meaningful and interesting. It will be a good experience,” he announced.

Many classmates started whispering to each other excitedly. At first, I was enthusiastic and wanted to sign up, too. But then, I was thinking about the consequences that could happen. Going alone to a strange country would be scary. Also, it was too much of a hassle to go to San Francisco because I would need to prepare a lot of things. Thus, I convinced myself not to sign up, and refused what was a wonderful opportunity.

Later, the exchange program started and many of my friends joined. The activities for the CAIS students were so much fun, and there were some things that I had never experienced before. They made moist cake and dumplings, did handicrafts relating to Taiwan, and went to many museums that I had never been to. When I saw them doing the fun activities I was mad at myself that why should I refuse this chance. The students from San Francisco were all very cheerful, enthusiastic, and kind. I was envious of my friends because I always wanted to make a friend from another country. This program made the CAIS students and our classmates build friendships, and they also experienced many new things. I started to badly regret that I didn't sign up.

The next time there was another CAIS program was the next year in grade 6, and I grasped the chance and signed up immediately. The buddy who lived with me in Taiwan was nice and humorous. We both had a good time. Thanks to her, I have also been to some places that I haven't gone to before, like Taipei 101. Before she came, I had never been to the top floor before. I found it very beautiful and cool.

I found many interesting and new things in San Francisco, too, like the differences between Taiwan and America, their culture, how they go to school in San Francisco, and what their school looks like. They got out of school at 3:15, and they had much less homework and exams than Taiwan's school. Also, while our school is quiet and cautious, their school was lively and unrestrained. By going to a country that I had never been to alone, I learned lots of experiences which have been useful since.

Because of this experience, I have learned that you won't know if you enjoy it or not until you try it. If you only think and do not actually try it, then you will never learn new things and lose lots of opportunity too. It is important to try new and scary things. Don't just hesitate and miss your chance.

ANNIE WU

Writing Task: Write a short personal narrative about a time you learned an important lesson that you think other people should learn through your experience.

This fall, I finally got into my dream high school. It was supposed to be a great achievement for me. On the contrary, it has been my toughest time.

On the first day, the exciting new beginning, the teacher gave us a task to do a self introduction for my classmates. While my classmates were giving their self introductions, I was nervous and my heart was pounding. All my classmates have special experiences or skills. It seemed like any of them were smarter than me.

My turn was coming in the next three minutes. I tried to take a deep breath to make me calm, but it didn't work at all. I got goosebumps and still felt nervous. I was afraid that I didn't have anything cool to share and they would think of me as a boring person and didn't want to make friends with me. My introduction ended up in a short paragraph, "Hi, my name is Annie. I like listening to K-pop and pop songs."

After that day, my worries and fears of high school had become more and more. I was anxious about everything more seriously. I care about my grades and mistakes more than I did in junior high, Proving that I wasn't the dumbest student in the class. Therefore, My brain popped out many negative thoughts while I was in class. At the same time, I became more anxious when I noticed that I didn't focus on the class. I got stuck in a negative thinking cycle and made me want to skip school.

On the seventh day of the semester, I suddenly cried for no reason. I wanted to stop crying because crying in front of a bunch of people that I just knew for a few days is embarrassing. Unfortunately, I can't stop myself from crying. My tears kept falling, just like an open faucet. Luckily, it happened in an earth science class so that the classroom's lights were turned off. Everyone was looking at the beautiful nebula slideshows, nobody noticed me. But the sense of insecurity was still excited, strongly. I wished I could leave there as soon as possible.

Twenty minutes later, the situation didn't get better. I was so afraid this feeling wouldn't go away, so I called my mom and told her that I wasn't good at that moment and needed to go home. Soon, my mom came and drove me home. Along the way, she didn't say anything comforting but kept holding my hand and played some soft music.

As soon as I got home, I couldn't hide those feelings anymore. I cried so loudly and explained my feelings to my mom. I worried that I would stay in this state forever. I was so sick of my life. My brain kept thinking those negative thoughts all day. I was exhausted and depressed, like I was living in a prison, but that prison was my own mind.

"I want to get better. I want to be as normal as other students." a voice echoed in my mind.

"I want to see a therapist," I said with a red nose and eyes.

"Sure. I will make an appointment for you. I'm happy that you are talking about your feelings with me," Mom said gently.

While I was taking the counseling, I could share all my thoughts with my therapist without caring about others' opinions. Then she asked something about my responses which made me reflect on why I would feel that way. I found that I often doubt myself at the first moment when I have to do something

Also, it is hard for me to explain my tho clearly and completely. So during the counseling, I have had the opportunity to practice how to improve these bad habits. Now, I have been taking counseling for two months. My mental health is getting better and I have started to have more positive attitudes towards anxiety. Though I may not be out of the woods, I'm glad that I turned to my mom for help and it did make my life better.

IAN LIN

Writing Task: Write a short personal narrative about a time you learned an important lesson that you think other people should learn through your experience.

The gym was shaking with cheers. As I was holding the ball, my hands felt sweaty, and my heart was pounding. The scoreboard showed a tie game with 15 seconds left. Coach called us and pointed at the corner.

“Get the ball to Steven. He will take the shot,” he said softly. I nodded, but my eyes looked back to the hoop.

“I can make it,” I thought.

The whistle blew, and the referee passed my teammate the ball. He inbounded it to me. The crowd was cheering, but all I could hear was my own breathing. I dribbled down the court and spotted Steven wide open in the corner, just like Coach had planned. I was having a hard time deciding what to do next. My grip on the ball tightened, my knuckles whitening. As I was holding it, I finally made my decision.

I stopped at the three point line and took the shot. The ball spun through the air, hit the rim, bounced four times, then rolled off as the buzzer sounded. My shoulders dropped. We lost.

I stood there. Steven walked over, gave me a small pat on the back, then walked away without saying anything. Even I could feel his frustration. I looked at Coach., He didn't yell. He only shook his head and turned around. I felt a strange lump in my throat as I glanced at Steven's back. He had been waiting, ready for the shot. That should have been his moment. That was when I learned that basketball isn't about being the hero. It's about trusting your teammates and sharing the ball.

WRITING ESSENTIALS

THURSDAY

WRITING ESSENTIALS INTRODUCES STUDENTS TO THE IDEA OF WRITING AS A COMMUNICATION TOOL AND AS A METHOD OF DEVELOPING DEEPER AND MORE ANALYTICAL THINKING. STUDENTS WILL BE CHALLENGED TO EXPLORE IDEAS THEY ENCOUNTER AND LEARN TO PRESENT THEIR IDEAS IN A CONVINCING AND CLEAR MANNER. STUDENTS ARE ALSO TASKED WITH DEVELOPING MECHANICAL SKILLS THROUGH REWRITING EDITED WORK.

JESSIE TZOU

Writing Task: Choose one of the following themes: friendship, kindness, or identity. Now, pick one of the characters from the story Wonder and use examples from the novel to show and analyze how this theme is reflected in that character and the novel.

Olivia Pullman, known as Via, is the older sister of August "Auggie" Pullman, the protagonist of *Wonder*. As a significant supporting character in the story, Via's growth and exploration of her identity provides readers with a profound emotional connection.

Via is a loving, mature, and responsible person. She deeply loves her younger brother, Auggie, and often takes on the role of a protector, especially when Auggie faces judgment and scrutiny from others due to his disfigured face. Since most of the family's attention is focused on Auggie's needs, Via has learned to be independent and resilient earlier than her peers. Her maturity is not a choice, but the result of being forced to grow up quickly in her environment.

However, being Auggie's sister also brings many challenges for Via. She sometimes feels like she lives in her brother's shadow, with both her parents' attention and the impressions of those around her dominated by Auggie's unique circumstances. And because of Auggie's situation, Via is often known merely as "Auggie's sister." Unhappy with this, Via strives to break free from the identity of "Auggie's sister" and find her own identity and value.

As she transitions into high school, her social circle changes, and her drifting apart from her childhood friend Miranda further undermines her sense of belonging. Via and Miranda were best friends before high school began. Miranda changed a lot, even her best friend Via can't know her anymore. She changed her own identity because of other students. Via feel alone since Miranda...

Maybe it's because her parents got divorce, and she saw Via ...

Faced with these challenges, Via gradually learns to discover her multifaceted identity. She is not only a loving sister to Auggie, but also an independent teenager with her own thoughts and aspirations for personal growth. Through her interactions with her family and friends, she finds a balance. For instance, supporting her brother while pursuing her own identity and life goals.

Via's story teaches us that forming one's identity is a process full of contradictions and compromises. Her experiences highlight the tug-of-war between familial roles and personal pursuits, inspiring us to reflect on how to maintain our individuality within a group and how to grow into better versions of ourselves through love.

SERENE YU

Writing Task: Choose a character in the novel you are reading as a class. In your response, compare and contrast that character with yourself.

Via is one of the main protagonists in the novel *Wonder*, and I've noticed some similarities and differences between us. One of the similarities is how much we value our parents' love and support. Via's parents love both their children unconditionally and stand by their decisions no matter the circumstances. I can confidently say the same about my parents. However, just like Via often feels overshadowed by Auggie's needs, I sometimes feel neglected because of my sister. Auggie has special needs that draws much attention to Via's parents, and my sister has a mental health issue, so I occasionally feel left out by my family. Although my parents worry about my sister more, I know they're trying their best to make both my sister and me feel included. I entirely understand why and keep to myself most of the time, just like how Via understands why her parents care about Auggie more. Reading about Via's experience makes me feel like I'm looking into a mirror. I sometimes picture myself as her, navigating the same emotions and struggles.

Similarities aside, Via and I still have one major difference. Via and Auggie have a very affectionate relationship. They hug, kiss and constantly show how much they care for one another. In contrast, my sister and I don't show much affection to each other. For us, we consider it a miracle if we say a simple "thank you" to each other. Although we may not show our love by kissing and hugging, I know my sister and I love each other deeply. We just express our love in different and quieter ways. While Via and Auggie's bond is more openly affectionate, I don't think it's necessary for all siblings. I've come to appreciate the way my sister and I share our love, and our bond feels equally as special as Via and Auggie's.

Whether it's being a daughter trying to understand her parents, or a sibling learning to navigate a complex relationship with her sibling, the similarities and differences I share with Via have shaped me into who I am today. Via's character has given me a new perspective on my own life. By reading *Wonder*, I've felt seen, heard, and understood. It has helped me connect with Via on a much deeper level and inspired me to continue learning more about myself and my family.

SABRINA LEE

Writing Task: What is an injustice you see or experience? Why is it unfair, and why does it make you angry? How would you change it?

In 2024, there are still lots of sports that don't have women's leagues. Ski jumping is one example. Women weren't allowed to compete in the Olympics until 2014. And now, there aren't any ski jumping leagues for women. Also, bull riding and rodeo, baseball, and cricket and some other sports have women's games, but no formal leagues. The main reason why women have this situation in sports is because of gender stereotypes. According to "Women in Sport: Gender Stereotypes in the Past and Present" by Kristin Wilde, many people think that women lack physical strength and are less competitive, because women are too gentle or not as competitive as men, they're less athletic than men, and women are more likely to show vulnerability. As a result, people choose to watch men's sports. Those reasons are unfair to women that are interested in sports. Women have limited career opportunities and reduced media visibility and sponsorship because of these negative stereotypes and their impacts. People in famous companies always want famous singers or sports players to endorse their products, so if women players don't have a chance to prove themselves, they won't have people who know them and who want to buy the things they endorse. Also, women players' earnings are lower than men's players by a lot. For example, the average salary of WNBA players in 2024 is \$119,000, and the average salary of NBA players in 2024 is \$11,910,649. Their salaries are about 100 times different. That also makes fewer women want to play sports for their job. In conclusion, people think women can't play sports as excellently as men because of gender stereotypes. That's why the audience of women's sports are less than men's. This concept is not true and it's unfair to women, so it has to change from now on.

CANDY WEI

Writing Task: Write a review of the book you read with your class. What did you enjoy about the novel? What did you not enjoy? Do you think other people should read this book? Why or why not?

While reading the novel, R.J. Palacio impressed me by the amazing job she did to write this story. She has successfully created images in my mind, and made me feel like I am one of the characters who participated in the story.

The first thing that impressed me was the different perspectives in the novel. I like the way the author uses all characters' to express their opinions and true feelings in order to keep the story going. For instance, in the novel, Auggie's sister, Olivia, felt depressed after she found out that her best friend, Miranda, ditched her. At first, the author creates this feeling upon the readers, making us feel the same way as Olivia does. However, later on when the perspective changes to Miranda's, Palacio uses Miranda's perspective to explain why she ditched Olivia and why she didn't invite Olivia to the popular group in school. By writing in this way, the story slowly reveals the truths while leading the readers to investigate events. Also, while the perspective changes, the way of the writing differs as well. For example, in Auggie's sections, the words are just normal. However, when it is Olivia's boyfriend, Justin's perspective, words were not capitalized and there were no quotation marks when someone spoke. This helps the readers understand the characters' personality by showing how they write and talk.

Secondly, I love the way R.J. Palacio writes this story. She clearly and realistically describes the settings in the book, creating images in my mind and helping me relate to the story. Additionally, Palacio writes about what the characters are thinking. This could either be their opinions on something or what they see. By writing about their feelings and speeches, the readers can understand what is happening around the character without the author directly explaining what is going on. Furthermore, I also like the rhythm of the story. It helps me read smoothly, and creates the mood of the surroundings and the feelings of the characters. For example, after Olivia performed in a play, Auggie and his parents went backstage to find her. Not long after, Olivia and his parents left him alone backstage, which made Auggie start to panic. When this part happens in the story, the sentences become short, with some only having one word in it. This shows how Palacio is attempting to create an anxious mood, helping us relate to Auggie.

Last, I love the precepts in the story, which are written by the characters. Throughout the novel, Auggie's teacher, Mr. Browne writes a precept on the chalkboard each month. In the end of the story, he tells his students to each think of one precept. Auggie wrote "Everyone in the world should get a standing ovation at least once in their life because we all overcometh the world." This quote isn't just proof of the growth in Auggie, but also teaches all people a lesson to make the world more fair. Other precepts, such as "What is beautiful is good, and who is good will soon be beautiful," can also be inspirations for kids and adults.

Overall, I highly recommend people from all age ranges to read the novel *Wonder*. It is a great book that is both motivational and educational, and it is entertaining to read how R.J. Palacio narrates August Pullman's journey throughout the school year.



SOPHIA HO

Writing Task: Write a review of the book you read with your class. What did you enjoy about the novel? What did you not enjoy? Do you think other people should read this book? Why or why not?

Wonder is a touching children's novel by R.J. Palacio, centered on August Pullman, a young boy with Treacher Collins Syndrome, which causes facial differences. Due to his appearance, August faces challenges when starting school in fifth grade, especially with bullying. His peers often react cruelly to his unique look, and at times, August even contemplates leaving school.

However, his family offers unwavering support, which helps him navigate these struggles and find comfort. Along the way, he forms meaningful friendships, such as with Summer and Jack, who accept him for who he is. Their kindness, along with his family's, lifts his spirits and gives him the strength to keep going.

As the story progresses, August learns to build new relationships, practice kindness, and gain confidence. Over time, the way people treat him begins to change, and he evolves into the true "wonder" that the title refers to.

Wonder is a captivating and relatable novel, addressing themes like acceptance, self-confidence, and dealing with differences—issues many children encounter. A powerful moment is when August forgives Jack Will after overhearing hurtful words. His decision to forgive demonstrates his prioritization of friendship over bitterness. Even in moments of loneliness, he chooses kindness, offering support to others and maintaining a positive outlook. August's bravery and empathy inspire those around him to treat him with the same compassion.

One of the novel's most striking features is its use of multiple perspectives, allowing readers to understand each character's feelings and experiences. For example, when August first starts school, his nervousness contrasts with his sister Via's view of the situation as an opportunity for independence. This contrast highlights both the challenges and possibilities that come with change. The book's bold and engaging narrative serves three main purposes: exploring identity, fostering self-acceptance, and emphasizing the importance of kindness.

A central theme in *Wonder* is the development of identity. A pivotal moment in the story is when August begins to see himself beyond his physical appearance. Although he initially worries about how others perceive him, he builds confidence through school activities and the friendships he forms. Over time, he realizes that his worth is not defined by his looks.

As the school year progresses, August embraces his uniqueness. Initially, he is too self-conscious to even look others in the eye, but as he learns to accept his individuality, he gains the courage to walk through school with his head held high. By the end of the story, others begin to see him as he deserves to be seen—just another student.

Kindness is a central theme throughout *Wonder*. For instance, Summer's decision to sit with August at lunch out of kindness sets a powerful example. Additionally, when Julian and his friends bully Jack, Justin steps in to defend him, demonstrating the importance of standing up for others. This theme is woven throughout the entire narrative, showing how small acts of kindness can have a lasting impact.

Dr. Wayne Dyer once said, "When given the choice between being right or being kind, choose kind," a reminder to prioritize empathy and compassion in our interactions. Ultimately, *Wonder* is a heartwarming and inspiring read that offers valuable lessons for both children and adults alike.

WRITING ESSENTIALS

FRIDAY

WRITING ESSENTIALS INTRODUCES STUDENTS TO THE IDEA OF WRITING AS A COMMUNICATION TOOL AND AS A METHOD OF DEVELOPING DEEPER AND MORE ANALYTICAL THINKING. STUDENTS WILL BE CHALLENGED TO EXPLORE IDEAS THEY ENCOUNTER AND LEARN TO PRESENT THEIR IDEAS IN A CONVINCING AND CLEAR MANNER. STUDENTS ARE ALSO TASKED WITH DEVELOPING MECHANICAL SKILLS THROUGH REWRITING EDITED WORK.

KY CHEN

Writing Task: Should school start later in the morning or not? Why?

School should start later in the morning because students will perform better academically and it will benefit students' mental and physical health. According to U.S. News & World Report, research shows that delaying the start time by one hour can improve test scores in subjects like math and English for students of all grades and overall productivity. Teenagers need 8 to 10 hours of sleep each night, but an early start time prevents them from getting enough rest. In my experience, I only sleep for 6 hours a day and wake up early. This causes a lack of sleep. My classroom is on the 5th floor and I often walk with my eyes nearly closed. Every step feels like I have 100kg sandbags on my feet.

Additionally, according to the National Library of Medicine, more sleep improves both mental and physical health, such as lowering instances of depression and anxiety. With more rest, students can handle stress better, control their emotions, and feel more positive. Moreover, more sleep also helps the body recover, strengthens the immune system, and keeps us healthy. It also helps students concentrate better and remember what they learn, which can improve their grades. It also helps with thinking clearly and solving problems which are important for schoolworks. In conclusion, starting school later would not only help students do better in school, but also makes them healthier and happier.

MELODY LIN

Writing Task: What is an injustice you see or experience? Why is it unfair, and why does it make you angry? How would you change it?

Unequal pay between black people and white people for equal work has existed for centuries and still exists to this day. Although it is not as unfair as a hundred years ago, there is still some differential treatment in modern society. According to 2020 U.S. Census Bureau data, the average annual salary of black professional workers accounts for 75% to 80% of that of white professional workers. Black people put in the same effort but don't get the same pay as white people. This makes them look less important in the eyes of white people and reinforces existing stereotypes about the social status of black people. For example, in 2019, a survey found that black Uber drivers earned about 30% less on average than white drivers. Specifically, if a white driver makes \$1,000 a week, a black driver may only make \$700. This inequality gap has received much attention, and more people have tried to solve this problem in recent years, but this inequality has not completely disappeared.

Furthermore, this inequality causes companies to lose outstanding black employees, resulting in brain drain, affecting the company's diversity and innovation. Without a diverse and inclusive environment, companies not only lose talent, but also miss out on fresh perspectives, which limits innovation and long-term growth. In addition, continued wage inequality may trigger protests and social movements, lead to social instability, and then affect public safety and economic development. Such instability can erode investor confidence and slow economic recovery. To improve this problem, we can push for legislation to ensure equal pay, prohibit pay discrimination based on race, and require companies to disclose salary data to promote transparency. In conclusion, society should be more concerned about the unequal pay between blacks and whites for equal work.

CHRIS OU YANG

Writing Task: Write a short personal narrative about a time you learned an important lesson that you think other people should learn through your experience.

It was a sunny Sunday. I walked towards the basketball court ready to play my first game. It was a simple friendly game, but it meant a lot to me. I was excited to meet good players and improve my skills, but I was also cocky and knew that I would win. I saw my friend and walked towards him. Just as I was going to chat with him, the opponent came from the other side of the court. I looked at all of them, searching for the strongest. The coach told us to warm-up for the game. Soon after, we began.

Beep! The referee threw the ball upwards and we got it. Immediately, I called for it. I received a pass and started dribbling. I dribbled towards the basket, no one guarding me, and shot it. It went straight in the bucket with a “swoosh” sound. I smiled and walked slowly towards the basketball court ready to guard them. But the moment I turned around to face them, the opposing team drove towards the basket and made the simple lay up.

I took a deep breath and focused on offense. I dribbled towards the defender, but, the next thing I knew, I was double-teamed. I tried to get past the defenders, but they stole the ball, went down the court and made another shot. My heart started beating faster and faster. I was scared to make a mistake again, but they stole the ball from me again. By the end of the first quarter, we were already ten points behind.

The coach benched me for the next quarter. I stared at the floor not knowing what to do, my mind recalling everything I had learned about basketball. I watched my friends on the court trying to defend the opposing team and I recalled a word: teamwork.

As soon as the timeout whistle blew, I was on the court again. We were almost 20 points behind and sweat was dripping down my face. For the first time, I scanned the whole court, looking at the enemy and all of my teammates. Then, I smiled. I sent a fast pass to my friend who was open he hit a three. The rest of the game was a blur.

Soon, I heard the buzzer. I looked at the score board. We lost by ten. I walked off the court disappointed, but also with a smile, knowing how much I could still learn and improve. Ultimately, I learned the importance of teamwork and trusting my teammates.

SAM HSU

Writing Task: What is an injustice you see or experience? Why is it unfair, and why does it make you angry? How would you change it?

The gender pay gap has been a major issue plaguing the world for centuries and it stubbornly persists even today. Kate Rotondo was a software engineer. She found out her male co-workers earned more money than she did. She made \$25,000 less in base salary than a colleague doing the same work as her, and about \$20,000 less in restricted stock units. It's unfair and makes it difficult for women to survive in society. In Taiwan, the average hourly rate for women is 318 NT dollars, and the hourly rate for men is 373 NT dollars. The gender pay gap is 14.7%. It means that a woman needs to work 54 more days than a man to get the same pay in a year. This shows the gender pay gap is egregious in Taiwan, too.

Recently, people have given more attention to this problem, but it still hasn't been solved. Here are ways to overcome the gender pay gap: First, improve enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, including the Equal Pay Act. Making laws is a strong option to help women attain better rights. The next way is to give subsidies. In this way, it can make women's lives better. These are ways to close the gender pay gap. The gender pay gap is a serious problem. It should be fixed and women should be treated equally.

YUNI HSIEH

Writing Task: Write a short personal narrative about a time you learned an important lesson that you think other people should learn through your experience.

“Our neighbors will report us. We can’t light fireworks in our backyard!” I said to my dad nervously.

“It will be fine, right Rex?” he asked my little brother.

“Yeah! Fireworks!” yelled my brother excitedly.

“Okay, fine.” I answered, not at all convinced.

My dad, brother, and I were in the backyard. I stood near the door between my brother and my dad.

There were lots and lots of fireworks strewn about. The one that my brother liked best was called the Seven Dragon Eggs, so we decided to light it last.

We put a plastic rack underneath the Seven Dragon Eggs firework to hold it in place. The Seven Dragon Eggs shoots out seven fireworks, each its own color. It made me think of a rainbow. It was beautiful.

We lit it, and it shot the fireworks into the sky. The view was spectacular. It was like stars shining in the night. While I was enjoying the view, I was fascinated by the sight. Suddenly, the plastic rack was blown by the wind. It wobbled, then the Seven Dragon Eggs firework collapsed. It was still shooting out fireworks, nonstop. A firework shot out, hitting the wall and bounced towards me. I wasn’t paying attention when it fell. I was at a loss when I saw a firework flying towards me.

I lit up like a human firework when it hit me, my pajamas aflame. I ran wildly, waving my hands while shouting loudly and helplessly. After catching me, my dad helped me to extinguish the flames. I got injured, but not too badly.

After cleaning my wounds, I went to bed. I lied there thinking, “I shouldn’t have let my father light the fireworks., Parents aren’t always right. From now on, I will think first, and only then decide whether what grown ups tell me to do is right or wrong.”

SHERYL LIN

Writing Task: What is an injustice you see or experience? Why is it unfair, and why does it make you angry? How would you change it?

Two Taliban members boarded the 15-year-old's bus to prevent her from going to school and shot her in the head. Luckily, she survived and recovered. Her name is Malala. She has fought for women's right to education because the Taliban has banned 330,000 Afghan girls from school. Despite the Taliban repeatedly warning her to stop, she has still continued to give speeches around the world, telling governments to protect girls' right to education.

As a result of her actions, people started to pay more attention to women's right to education all over the world. Of course, the problem is not easy to solve. According to Christian Daily, there are more than 62 million girls around the world who are unable to go to school because of their poverty, discrimination, and other problems. There are also 16 million girls between the ages of 6-11 who have never been to school, which is twice the number of boys of the same age who are out of school. This is a serious problem because if people are uneducated, their social status will be lower than others. This lower status inevitably leads to them being treated unfairly.

In conclusion, Malala's effort has aroused people's attention for girls who are unable to go to school in the world. We should follow her lead and promote the importance of gender equality in education to avoid these injustices.

WRITING ESSENTIALS

SATURDAY

WRITING ESSENTIALS INTRODUCES STUDENTS TO THE IDEA OF WRITING AS A COMMUNICATION TOOL AND AS A METHOD OF DEVELOPING DEEPER AND MORE ANALYTICAL THINKING. STUDENTS WILL BE CHALLENGED TO EXPLORE IDEAS THEY ENCOUNTER AND LEARN TO PRESENT THEIR IDEAS IN A CONVINCING AND CLEAR MANNER. STUDENTS ARE ALSO TASKED WITH DEVELOPING MECHANICAL SKILLS THROUGH REWRITING EDITED WORK.

HENRY LIN

Writing Task: Choose a character in the novel you are reading as a class. In your response, compare and contrast that character with yourself.

Calvin is one of the main characters in the book *A Wrinkle in Time*. Even though he is a fictional character, we can still find useful information by comparing him to an average person like me. First of all, Calvin has the supernatural ability to communicate with anything. Even though I can communicate, his supernatural version of communication is far superior. He was close to being able to remove IT's influence from Charles. This speciality clearly demonstrates his personality of trying to understand and communicate with people, which makes it a key factor to Calvin's character.

Another difference is that Calvin experiences tessering multiple times, which is a form of traveling between space. The most I have traveled is between countries, which is nothing compared to the massive distance that tessering covers. This is very important, since it clearly separates the lifestyle Calvin and I have.

Despite these supernatural things Calvin can do, he is still just a normal person. Being dragged into these crazy things is the only thing that really separates him from the average high schooler. The first similarity between us is shown through his passion for sports. I like sports, like badminton and tennis. I play them at least once a week. Although Calvin doesn't play these sports, he still plays basketball. This shows that he is rather athletic and likes to play sports. Finally, Calvin also does well in school, which is shown when he was able to skip grades. I personally wouldn't say my grades are as good as his, but my grades aren't bad either.

Overall, Calvin is a well-written character. Although he is not the most relatable character due to his unique abilities, he definitely shows some common features that makes him closer to a normal person than not.

Calvin is one of the main characters in the book *A Wrinkle in Time*. Even though he is a fictional character, we can still find useful information by comparing him to an average person like me. First of all, Calvin has the supernatural ability to communicate with anything. Even though I can communicate, his supernatural version of communication is far superior. He was close to being able to remove IT's influence from Charles. This speciality clearly demonstrates his personality of trying to understand and communicate with people, which makes it a key factor to Calvin's character.

SAM LEE

Writing Task: What sport is the best/worst sport? Explain.

Nowadays, selecting a good sport is always an issue many people are concerned about. There are a few reasons why martial arts is the best sport. First, martial arts is a more functional sport than others. It doesn't matter what martial arts you learn; martial arts can always enhance your personal safety. This is significant when facing a street fight or physical quarrel. Secondly, practicing martial arts can train your muscles and flexibility, reinforcing your strength and conditioning. While training in martial arts, the person can target the muscles from both the lower and upper body by using their limbs to hit the sandbag. This can build robust body strength and practice flexibility. Thirdly, martial arts can substantially help you to relieve stress, anxiety, and emotion. This was proved by psychologists and scientists. Last but not least, practicing martial arts can also improve your concentration. The movements of steps and dodging of punches, force us to be concentrated or else you will be knocked down. In conclusion, practicing martial arts can improve your body function, allow you to relieve stress, and enhance your personal safety.

VIVIAN CHIN

Writing Task: Write a short personal narrative about a time you learned an important lesson that you think other people should learn through your experience.

Five years ago, I signed up for a dance class. I loved dancing, but I was nervous because I had never taken a formal class before. On the first day, I walked into the studio and saw everyone else warming up. They looked so confident. I felt pressure immediately.

During the first class, the teacher said there would be a performance in the last class, so everyone practiced very hard. When the class started, the teacher taught some really hard moves. I tried to keep up with her. I started to doubt myself and whether I was suited for dancing. I couldn't remember the steps, and I felt embarrassed when I saw my classmates performing better than me. I pushed myself to keep up with the music, but I just couldn't. At this moment, I felt awkward and angry about why I couldn't dance well. I really didn't want to do anything at that time. I kept looking at the clock to see when I would get out of class and then go home.

One day in class, I noticed a girl named Ruby. She looked like me, and couldn't catch the music. I tried to talk to her and asked her if she wanted to practice with me after class. She agreed. After class, we helped each other to correct our mistakes. As we practiced, I realized how much easier dancing became when I was working with someone else.

The closer to our performance we got, the more confident I became. Each practice made me believe in our skills. Regardless, when the big day arrived, I was nervous. Backstage, I could hear the audience, which was both exciting and a little scary. When it was time to go on stage, I took a deep breath and focused. As we started, my nerves calmed down, because I saw the audience looking at us with smiles. They seemed to enjoy our performance, the music, and also the time that I danced on the stage.

In the end, I learned that everyone has their own pace, so I should never give up easily. Dancing is not just about dance steps, it also helps us make friends and learn that giving up is not the only option.

RYDER HUANG

Writing Task: Choose a character in the novel you are reading as a class. In your response, compare and contrast that character with yourself.

The book *A Wrinkle in Time* is nothing less than familiar: a book about a boy, a teenager and a girl traveling in different dimensions and fighting against mighty enemies. Despite the fact that I am not an important boy or one with special abilities, I still have a lot of similarities with Charles Wallace, one of the main characters.

Charles Wallace and I both have strange personalities. Other people call both of us morons and weird guys. Actually, we are not strangers even though we are the same. Charles Wallace knows telepathy and I think 5 to 10 things at a time. Another similarity between us is we both overestimate our prowess. For example, Charles Wallace got stuck inside IT because he thought he could get out and control it, but he couldn't. I once tried to write Olympia math in just 3 hours and I bet I could with my friend for 100 dollars, but it turned out I didn't answer 3 questions. There were only five. I didn't win the money.

Although there are a lot of similarities between us, we still have big differences. Charles Wallace needed to fight against IT to eventually get to his ultimate goal, but I only need to get good grades on the exams to gain respect from classmates, and they will stop criticizing me. Another difference is he faced far more difficulties than me. Because others know me as a smart guy, they say I am a moron, but they know I am not. But when Calvin met Charles Wallace, he didn't know he could talk. But everyone who know me know I am a smart guy, so that is how we're different.

As we compare and contrast, we can see that although Charles Wallace is in a fictional novel, there are many similarities and differences between us.

ARIEL CHEN

Writing Task: Choose a character in the novel you are reading as a class. In your response, compare and contrast that character with yourself.

While Meg Murry, from the novel *A Wrinkle in Time*, and I share some similarities, we are also very different. Like Meg, I sometimes have trouble feeling confident. I have moments when I doubt myself, especially in new or difficult situations. For example, I sometimes feel unsure of myself when I think I'm not as good as others or when I face challenges at school. Meg's story shows me that these feelings are normal and that even when things feel hard, it's possible to get through them and grow stronger.

Meg is also very close to her brother, Charles Wallace, and I feel the same way about my brother. We both care a lot about our siblings and want to help them, even when we don't always know the right thing to do. Family is very important to both of us, and it gives us strength when things are tough. Seeing how much Meg cares for her brother reminds me that love and kindness are some of the strongest forces we have. It's a good reminder that we can push through fear when we care deeply about someone.

However, Meg and I are different in some ways. Meg struggles to fit in at school and often feels lonely, but I usually get along well with my classmates. I haven't felt the same kind of loneliness Meg feels, which makes me appreciate how lucky I am to have good friends. Another difference is that by the end of her story, Meg learns to believe in herself and becomes more confident. I'm still working on trusting myself and feeling sure about who I am. Meg's story gives me hope because it shows that it's okay to take time to build confidence and that everyone grows at their own pace.

Comparing myself to Meg helps me see that we all have challenges to face. Even though I share some of her struggles, I know that I can grow and change, just like she does. Her story reminds me that it's okay to feel unsure sometimes, as long as we keep trying to figure things out.

JAY LIN

Writing Task: Write a short personal narrative about a time you learned an important lesson that you think other people should learn through your experience.

I sat on the sofa in the living room of my grandparents' house with my mom, arguing.

"Why can't I just stay here and watch TV instead of taking a nap?" I asked my mom.

"You have been watching TV for the whole morning. You should go take a nap," my mom scolded.

"I am already 6 years old. I don't need to take naps. Naps are for toddlers,," I said, indignantly.

"Just go and take a nap and I will wake you up after an hour," my mom said, clearly getting impatient, probably because of my attitude.

"An hour? That is way too long! I will go crazy if I am stuck there for an hour," I said, surprised.

"If you don't take a nap, you cannot watch TV in the afternoon,," my mom replied, trying really hard to persuade me.

"Fine," I said reluctantly.

As I went into the dim bedroom, I knew that I was definitely not going to take a nap. I would make an escape plan. I sat on the soft bed, pondering about how I could escape this prison of a bedroom. As the time passed, the plan was starting to form in my head, like a puzzle slowly being put together. I smiled happily, knowing that a few minutes later, I would be free.

I laid down and pretended to sleep, waiting for a few minutes so my mom wouldn't be suspicious. Then, I quietly walked across the dark room, trying not to bump into things and make any noise. Any noise could alert my mom that I was not sleeping, even a creak of the wooden floorboards.

As I opened the door, I heard my mom walking down the hallway, so I swiftly and quietly closed the door and went back to bed. Just as I laid down, my mom opened the door and took a peek inside the room to see if I was sleeping or not. After a few seconds, she closed the door and I heard her footsteps as she walked down the hallway and the stairs.

After about five minutes, I repeated what I did the first time I sneaked out of the room. However, I became more aware of my surroundings and more careful about where I was stepping. I felt like an agent going on an important mission for the government. Despite all my awareness, I stepped on a towel that was on the floor. Why it was there, I had absolutely no idea. I almost slipped and fell face-first onto the floor.

After evading that pitfall, I continued my escape. At first, I had no idea where I would hide, but now I realized that the storage room would be perfect. However, it was on the first floor. That meant I had to somehow get there without being noticed. As I made my way down the hallway, I found my grandma humming while doing the laundry. As soon as I saw her, I hid behind the wall to make sure she didn't see me. If she did, she would definitely tell my mom about it.

Carefully, I crept down the wooden stairs. That was when I heard the sound of the TV and knew my mom was watching TV, enjoying herself while I was supposed to be taking a nap. As I was descending, I got distracted because I was looking at the colorful pictures that were on the wall. Due to that, I slipped and fell down the stairs. The next thing I knew, my mom was next to me, asking me if I was hurt or not. Fortunately, I didn't get an injury, but it hurt a lot.

Finally, she gently took me up the stairs and into the bedroom to put me to sleep. This time, my mom was sitting on a chair right next to me to make sure I wouldn't try to escape again, which I was definitely not trying after what had just happened. While I was lying on the bed, I was thinking about my ridiculous plan that had failed miserably. I should have just listened to my mom.

AUDREY HSIAO

Writing Task: Write a short personal narrative about a time you learned an important lesson that you think other people should learn through your experience.

As I usually do, I was sitting in front of my desk, thinking about how much I sucked at math. I always have lots of problems that I don't know how to solve, so I decided to ask my mom.

She read the question, took out a piece of paper and a pen, and started to explain.

"I don't think that's the right way to solve the problem. It should be like this," I said while I wrote some formulas on the piece of paper.

"No, there is something wrong in your formulas, and I think you've misunderstood the question. How 'bout I explain it again?" said mom.

"Okay."

After she taught me again, I still couldn't understand what she meant, and I thought she was wrong. It was late at night already, and I still had a pile of homework on my desk that I hadn't finished. I was getting impatient, so I started being rude.

"You're wrong! That's not the way to solve the problem!" I protested

"Yes it is! That's the way to solve the problem! Look!" said mom, pointing at the formulas she wrote with a pen and explaining to me again.

"And your handwriting is so ugly," I said

This made my mom furious. She threw the pen on the desk and yelled. She roared like a lion, making me quiver. Even so, I was not going to stop arguing because I still thought she was wrong.

This was not the first time we had had a fight. We had fought many times, and every time it made us unhappy.

"Can you stop arguing?" mom yelled

"Nope, cuz you're wrong," I said.

I put my feet on the desk, which drove her crazy.

"Put your feet down!" she said furiously.

"No. I'm not going to."

"Is that the way you talk to your parents?"

"Yeah, maybe," I said, shrugging my shoulders.

"How dare you say that."

AUDREY HSIAO

Writing Task: Write a short personal narrative about a time you learned an important lesson that you think other people should learn through your experience.

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

“I’m being rude because you didn’t listen to me! Fine, you don’t even need to teach me because everything you said is wrong, and you’re stupid,” I proclaimed.

I felt terrible and sorry right after I said it. I could see tears and anger in my mom’s eyes. She must have felt angry and hurt.

“If you think you’re smart enough to handle your homework, then I won’t help you anymore,” she exclaimed before she left the room.

I could hardly sleep that night. I felt ashamed. My mom’s words kept appearing in my mind. I knew she just wanted to help me, even if the things she said weren’t right, I still shouldn’t have been rude. In the end, I realized that it was actually my fault after I reread the question again the next day.

I learned not to be too disputatious, and never disagree with others’ ideas before you ever think about it.

WINSTON WANG

Writing Task: Write a short personal narrative about a time you learned an important lesson that you think other people should learn through your experience.

A few years ago, I decided to try rock climbing. I was excited but also nervous, so I joined a climbing gym.

At first, it was really fun, but I found it hard to climb even the easy walls. One day in the morning, I went to the gym very early. I tried to climb one that I hadn’t done, but I didn’t succeed. Then I thought it’s because I didn’t warm up first, so I went for the easiest wall and tried to reach the top, but I failed at that, too. I was disappointed in myself, so I sat on a mat feeling frustrated.

While I was sitting there, I saw an experienced climber nearby. She was climbing a hard route and seemed relaxed and confident. I watched her pause to think about her next move, and when she slipped, she quickly adjusted and tried again.

After she finished, I asked her how she stayed so calm. She smiled and said, “Every fall teaches me something. It’s not about being perfect; it’s about trying and learning from mistakes.”

Her words stuck with me. I realized I was so focused on not making mistakes that I was missing the chance to learn. Feeling inspired, I got back on the wall. This time, I welcomed my mistakes and tried new ways to climb. I learned to see my slips as part of the process. With each climb, I felt more confident and started to enjoy it more.

This experience taught me that failing isn’t the end—it’s part of learning. Whether in climbing or life, we should accept our mistakes, learn from them, and keep going. I think this is a lesson everyone could use, especially since so many people worry about being perfect instead of just making progress.

RAY HSU

Writing Task: Write a short personal narrative about a time you learned an important lesson that you think other people should learn through your experience.

It was a summer day and the beams of sunlights shone in the classroom. Our English teacher, Samantha, brought chess for us to play. I had no idea how to play, so I felt excited and curious. After teaching us the basic rules, Samantha gave us some free time to play. I found my best friend, Sam, to play with me.

While I was playing with him, all I thought about was how to win. When I eventually checkmated him, I was ecstatic. Moving my bishop to knock down his king, I didn't notice the slight disappointment in his face. Instead, I started to brag. I felt an unprecedented proudness filling up my chest. I didn't realize something had gone wrong until Sam left his seat and resisted to play another round.

I kept asking him why he didn't want to play anymore. He was angry and shouted at me. I was kind of pissed off because I didn't know what I had done wrong, so the awkwardness between us stayed for a while. We didn't talk about video games together. We didn't play basketball after classes anymore.

One day after our midterm exam, Samantha brought her boardgames to class again. Feeling confident, I once again chose chess again. However, I played a different classmate this time, and it was tough. One by one, I kept losing my pawns. I started to feel a bitterness in my throat. I wanted to leave my seat and pretend that this game didn't exist. My thoughts turned into a mess. My decisions were driven by my opponent's tactics. He was in control.

Ultimately, I lost the game, and my competitor emitted a joyful cheer. Suddenly, I knew what Sam felt. I didn't want to admit that I'm unhappy, but I did feel ashamed of myself for not realizing how stupid my behavior was and went straight up to apologize to Sam. It was weird to admit that I did something wrong.

"I am sorry," I said reluctantly, noticing he was just watching me play.

"I shouldn't..." I felt the words sticking in my throat, and the heat of shame made me blush.

I lowered my head. Looking back from what I had done, the regret of me being arrogant arose and somehow turned into courage for me to finish what I was going to say.

"I shouldn't have been arrogant when I was playing with you. I was obnoxious and arrogant. I am really sorry."

I kept my eyes half-closed to pretend that I wasn't talking to him. However, I did feel relieved afterward.

"Fine, I like winning as well, but if you ever do that again, I will not play with you anymore,." He demanded.

I smiled and asked for him to play with me again. We played a couple rounds afterward. When I lost, it didn't feel as awful as it did. The competitive ambition makes me want to play another and another round with him. However, when he lose Since that day, I have understood why being humble is essential for everyone, and it has helped me maintain a friendship I cherish.

MIA HUANG

Writing Task: Write a short personal narrative about a time you learned an important lesson that you think other people should learn through your experience.

During summer vacation before the start of high school—a crucial period for students planning on applying for foreign colleges to start the preparation—, most of my classmates filled their days with countless camps and volunteer activities. I, too, signed up for several educational camps, but one particular experience left a lasting impression and taught me an essential life lesson.

Since I've always been infatuated with biology and chemistry, I was excited when my mom informed me about a medical camp held by Taipei Medical University. The camp was a four-day program, and the first three days were exhilarating. We measured each other's heart rates, which made me feel like a doctor. There were also other intriguing lectures, including observing parasites through microscopes and testing urine samples from diabetic patients. However, it was the last day that changed everything.

"Students, put on your lab coats, we're heading to the anatomy building for a human dissection lesson," the teacher announced with a matter-of-fact tone.

"A...what?" I asked the person next to me, unable to believe what I had just heard.

"A human dissection lesson! It'll be so much fun!" she replied casually, as if it was the most normal thing in the world.

"Fun? We'll see, and even touch a real human body!" I thought to myself, still processing the absurdity of the situation.

As we walked to the anatomy building, scenes from horror movies, where corpses would come to life and drag people into their graves wouldn't stop replaying in my head. Each step felt heavier than the last, and when we finally reached the building, intense fear washed over me. The teacher led us into the dissection room, but my legs refused to move, as if they were stuck to the floor. I felt like as if there was a huge rock pressing its weight on my chest, making it hard to breathe.

Just then, I noticed the photos hanging in the hallway. They were photos of the donors—individuals who had chosen to donate their bodies to science. These donors had made a difficult decision to give a part of themselves to help others learn, yet I was scared, and refused to make the most of their devotion to learning. This is when I realized that rather than fearing these bodies, I should appreciate them for their great generosity.

Gathering my courage, I took a deep breath and stepped into the classroom. I participated in the lesson, and my initial fear slowly disappeared. I learned not only about human anatomy, but also about the selflessness of those who had donated their bodies.

In the end, I learned a meaningful lesson: don't let fear hold you back from experiencing new things. Instead of letting anxiety stop me, I realized that taking that first step could lead to unexpected discoveries. When I did so, I found that the experience was not as terrible as I had imagined. Sometimes, the things that scare us the most can teach us the most valuable lessons.