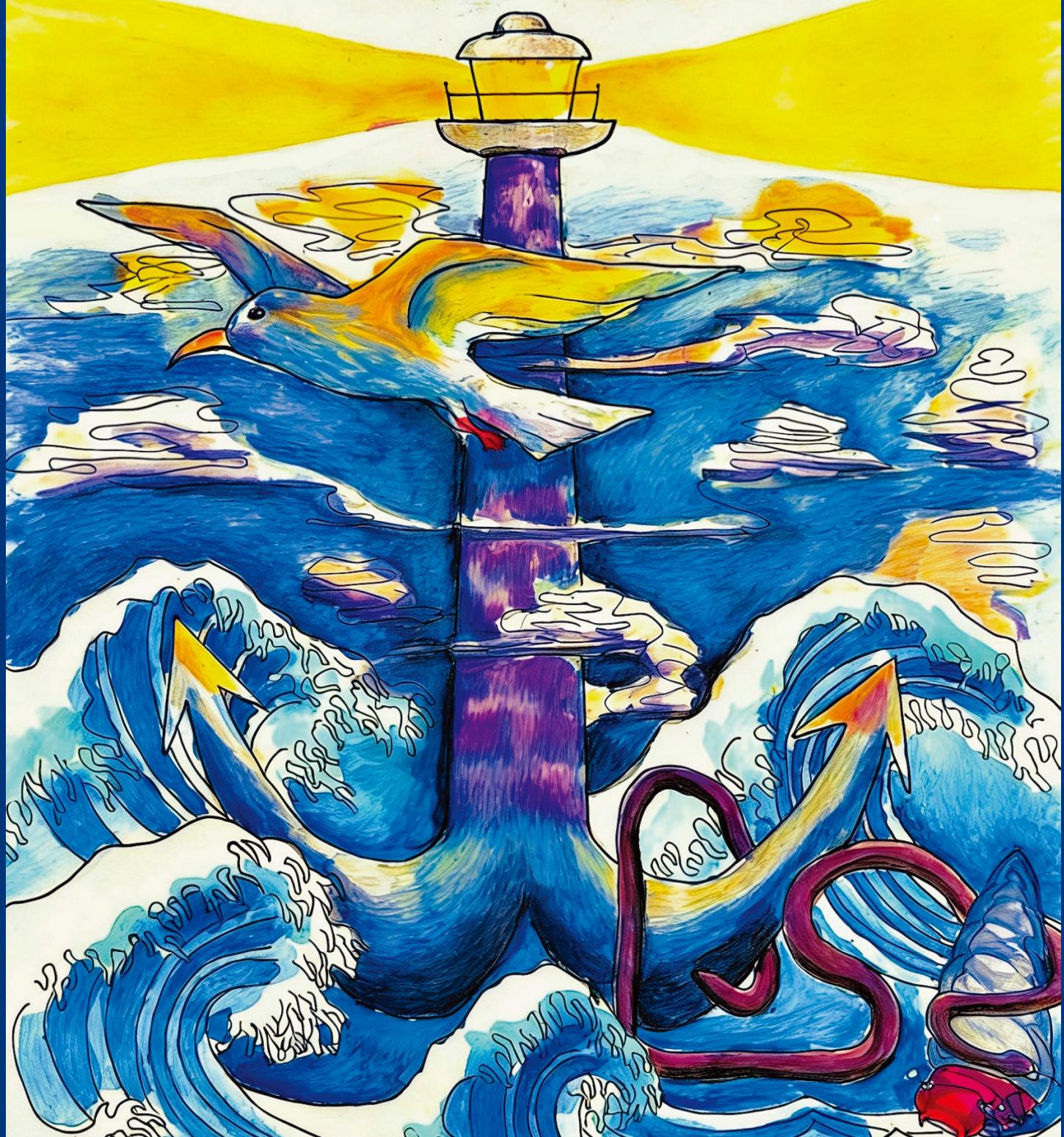


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Ride the Tide Till Down
Cover By Jedidiah Yao



WLIFE

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Dear Readers,

“Though the storms keep on raging in my life/and sometimes it's hard to tell the night from day, still that hope that lies within is reassured/as I keep my eyes upon the distant shore.”

-- “My Soul Has Been Anchored,” Douglas Miller

Autumn rolls in with its usual dramatic flair—leaves turning into new shades of colors, the smell of sweet potatoes baked to perfection, and—oh yes—the new semester hitting us like a rogue wave. Schedules are packed tighter than a subway at rush hour, deadlines lurk around like sirens, and somewhere in the 5-minute breaks and late-night self-study sessions, we all feel a little adrift. But here's the secret every good sailor knows: you don't fight the current—you drop anchor.

This issue's word is Anchor. Not the heavy metal kind that drags you down, but the kind that keeps you steady. Think of it like Odysseus tying himself to the mast, or like the North Star for ancient navigators—something constant while the skies spin. The kind of anchor made of dreams that refuse to fade, perseverance that shows up for the next all-nighter, passion that turns required readings into something you can't put down, and friendships that feel like coming home after a long voyage.

We're all looking for rhythm in this whirlwind semester—something reliable to return to when the world spins too fast.

Whether through poems steadyng the heart, stories mapping out harbors, sketches capturing seconds of happiness, and essays wrestling over what truly matters, we are reminded that anchors aren't about staying still. They're about choosing where to hold firm so you can move forward with purpose.

So take a deep breath. Find your rhythm.

Drop your anchor in whatever keeps you grounded—and let the waves come through.

Steadily yours,
Angela Li
Editor-in-Chief

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01 Literature



“On the shelf, the little plastic dinosaur looked back at me, head tilted.
I brushed the dust from his body and smiled knowingly.”

Dino, my anchor

Designer: G12 Eta Carol Dong

Author: G12 Gamma Joshua Ma

As a child, I adored collecting dinosaur figurines, especially a baby T-Rex called Dino who often wandered into my dreams. I even wrote a short story about him many years ago. In that old story, on a rainy night 66 million years ago, Dino sat with his mother, the last dinosaurs alive. She explained that their long period of comfort had dulled their adaptability. A sudden asteroid would finish what complacency had already begun. She whispered that humans would soon emerge, and perhaps they might learn to live differently on this earth.

After finishing that story, I abandoned dinosaurs. Dino gathered dust on the shelf while I moved on. Yet last night, after a heated debate with a friend about human's future, Dino returned.

My friend, once optimistic about technology progress, had turned skeptical recently as drone has become weapons to kill civilians. I tried to cheer him, but my words failed. I went to bed frustrated. As I drifted off, something thudded from the bookshelf. There he was—Dino—head tilted, lashes thick, trying to hug me but far too tall, nearly breaking the roof. I laughed, patted his feet, and asked him to lie down so we could talk.

Dino had grown quieter, like his mother. He confessed he had overheard my debate and decided it was time to leave the safety of the shelf. “Mom told me humans are the smartest on earth. You really are clever and well-spoken!” he said.

I chuckled. “Yes! With genetic engineering technology we can even revive species using DNA. I could bring your mother back!”

His eyes lit up, nearly toppling the ceiling lamp. But I explained: “Humans are smart. We bend technology to our future. The asteroid that doomed your kind is a disaster we could now predict and deflect with rockets. Soon we may colonize Mars. When that happens, I’ll bring you along.”

Dino shook his head. “The age of dinosaurs is over. Evolution doesn’t hit rewind. We enjoyed Earth’s gifts, but we never learned to sharpen our brains. Nature eliminated us. You humans are different—you already have enough wisdom. Yet I hear you built drone weapons, if that is true, wouldn’t you be no wiser than us dinosaurs?”

His words stung. He described pre-asteroid Earth: Alsophila trees, ponds alive with creatures, skies teeming with wings. Then he compared it to now: extinctions, pollution, habitats collapsing. “Your Earth is deteriorating like an abandoned mine,” he sighed. I had no rebuttal.

He continued: “When disease struck a few years ago, you could have contained it more quickly with cooperation—shared vaccines, shared data. Instead, politics slowed you down. Natural disasters you can manage; man-made ones still trouble you.” I admitted he was right. “That’s why I want to become a humanist to address flaws in human nature, to push for responsibility.”

Dino noticed the new books on my shelf—history, politics, philosophy—and nodded. “I’m glad you’re still optimistic. Humans seem small, but your understanding grows. You don’t need to bring back my mother. I’d rather stay as a figurine, close to you, reminding you of responsibility.”

He paused, breath heavy like a steam train. In his eyes I saw my reflection: still small, but stretching toward something larger. “Apply your wisdom not just for humans,” he whispered, “but for all life. That is what matters.”

His voice faded. I woke, rubbing my eyes. On the shelf, the little plastic dinosaur looked back at me, head tilted. I brushed the dust from his body and smiled knowingly.

Forms of Memories

Author: G12 Sigma Angela Du
Designer: G12 Delta Rebecca Kuang

Memories: Matches

Alice observed her surroundings closely, looking left and right, then right and left again. Then she moved toward an alley, clutching her jar of matches tightly to her chest. She glanced back at the world while stepping into the alley. The crowd kept moving as time passed; no one noticed her. After this reassurance, she slid down against the wall and squatted on the ground. The rough brick wall slightly lifted her jacket through friction. Alice didn't mind and continued fidgeting with the glass jar, tossing it from one hand to the other. The cylindrical glass jar felt heavy in her hands; the matches collided from one side to the other, producing a gentle sound. The smooth glass reflected the dim light of the gloomy sky. Alice pulled out the wooden cork. "Thuck." For the first time, the view of the matches became clear to her.

She navigated her fingers through the set of matches and pulled one out. Her thumb and index finger pinched the match while her hands trembled slightly. Alice struck the match against the side of the glass jar, closed her eyes, and took a deep breath. The action was quick. After the chemical reaction caused by the friction between the match and the sandpaper, a flame appeared. Wisps of grey smoke slowly rose into the air. The burning fire seemed foreign in the chilly, humid environment. Warm colors soon embraced her and the clearly defined buildings, making the harsh surroundings feel approachable. The image of her grandma soon appeared. It was the last time they met. Alice sat beside her grandma's hospital bed. The machinery beeped beside them, ticking like a clock. Alice held her grandma's hand; she had already fallen asleep. Oxygen and injection tubing lay spread

across the bed. They separated and intersected, like the raised veins on her grandma's rough hands. Alice felt the surroundings fading away, leaving only the peaceful expression on her grandma's face and the sound of their synchronized breathing. Soon, a constant beeping replaced the ticking—forever. Alice had expected this. She closed her eyes and brought her face closer to her hands as they grasped her grandma's lifeless hand. The flame soon died out, and the world returned to grey. A tear pulled Alice out of the memory. She sat on the ground and rested her head on her knees. Her vision went black, letting her sink into her emotions—like a boat drowning in violent waves. Tears rolled down her face, soaking her pants and continuing to spread. Alice felt drawn to explore more memories. She repeated the process, and another scene appeared. This time, she was around six years old. The weather was perfect. The bright sun shone down and reflected off the trees in spring, casting shadows of leaves and branches onto the ground. The bag of vegetables her grandma had just bought from the supermarket strained her delicate hands, leaving red marks that lasted a long time. Yet Alice couldn't care less. The younger version of herself looked up at her grandma proudly, as if she had just accomplished something incredible. Her grandma looked back and smiled benignly. Alice chuckled softly while watching this, though the streams of tears never stopped.

In this world, everyone has the ability to explore their memories through a jar of matches. With each match lit, a chosen memory emerges along with the movement of the flame. When the matches in the jar run

out, so do their chances of exploring those memories.

the first time he truly became aware of his surroundings; lastly came that special summer experience in a new city.

Memories: Snow Globe

Snowflakes fell and floated like feathers. They soon landed lightly on the concrete ground, the rooftop, and on Kendrick's eyelashes. He looked up; it had been a long time since he last explored this memory. The moon lit one side of the wooden house and the forest beside it, creating a sharp contrast between light and darkness. Kendrick stepped onto the layer of crisp, pure snow. Crunch. It made a satisfying sound every time he took a step.

Then Kendrick leaped to another scene. Autumn wind blew against his face, filling his senses with the rich scent of *Osmanthus fragrans*. The sun shone down at just the right moment, warming his jacket, while the rustling of leaves in the wind served as background music.

The scene switched again. This time, the scorching summer sun showed no mercy. It burned the metal seats, sped up the melting of ice creams, and forced beads of sweat to slowly drip down Kendrick's forehead. The air was thick with the smell of tropical-flavored popsicles from the vibrant ice cream truck and orange sodas. Kendrick squinted and finally spotted a restaurant amid the distraction of the crowded street, where people spoke a foreign language he couldn't understand. As he took a seat inside, the strong air conditioning instantly cooled his body, sending an instinctive shiver through him.

After experiencing several of his memories, Kendrick grew tired. He finally jumped back to real life. Beside him stood a counter lined with countless rows of exquisite, unique, and nostalgic snow globes. Kendrick observed them in order: the first time he sneaked out of the house to enjoy the first snowfall of his childhood; the next was a walk around the school to release recent stress—



Memories: Leaves

Memories are preserved in the leaves of a tree. They are private; each tree belongs to one person.

Some leaves stay green and healthy, as if unable to age, always firmly attached to the tree. These are the memories that always stay with us. People might remember forever the moment they were accepted into their dream college—the trembling hands, the racing heart, the unbelievable scream released right afterward. People might remember the first time they fell in love: the first date, the flickering eyelashes of their partner, the laughter they shared, and the arguments they fought. People might remember the time their beloved ones passed away—every hand they held, every tear they shed, every conversation they had. It becomes impossible to forget every detail and sensation felt during those moments.

Some leaves begin to turn yellow and age. These are the memories where only partial details or general impressions remain. People might vaguely remember their elementary school classmates, the dramas that happened among them, and the stupid yet innocent decisions they made together. People might recall the urge to complete some mission, yet find it impossible to remember exactly what that unfinished mission was. People might remember the taste of a special childhood snack, but only an abstract, pixelated image survives in their mind. People might remember a key event that changed their life or personality—the instinctive, uncontrollable responses it triggered. Yet, as time passes and the leaves begin to yellow at the edges, they may realize the past cannot be changed and it's time to let go. Then those leaves start to feel intangible.

Some leaves turn red and fall in slow motion. They detach from the branches and swing gently left and right as they reach the

end of their lives. These are the memories buried deep within the heart. Once forgotten, it is impossible to turn back time and bring them to life again. People might not remember the Wi-Fi password of the last hotel they stayed in. People might not remember what they ate for dinner last Thursday. People might not remember what the previous TikTok video was about before the current one. People might not remember the pain they endured during the last semester while completing an essay. People might not remember why they shed half the tears of their lives. After all, these red leaves seem negligible—or carry only a faint sense of melancholy.





Halloween, 1993

We had dressed as ghosts, two blank sheets littering Cherry Street.

I left the house at 8:30 p.m., Sadie 15 minutes later because she lived closer to our designated meetup, the busted fountain at the Cherry intersection. The mayor said the thunder burnt the water routing and the rain washed out any remaining crisps when the storm hit us in July, and since we were all holed up at the time, we just took his word for it. There were a few bake sales and yard sales held by schools and families with

things to give, my mom even made a fat batch of cupcakes, but the efforts flattened out a bit by the time school started again, and now three months after, no one really talked about it anymore, only ever sighed when they passed it by.

Sadie was the only person I knew that hated the fountain, avidly so. She told me last winter, when the water froze it over and she laughed at it in genuine mockery, and claimed it “truly awful”, the “pit of our already pitiful town”. She wasn’t too good at hiding her disdain, but

Author: G12 Eta Emmie Zhang Designer: G12 Eta Emmie Zhang



I'm certain I was the only one she explicitly confessed to. We would tell each other things like that, not of anything particularly incriminating, but things that wouldn't come up with anybody else.

I didn't have anything against the fountain in particular, but I never understood the town's infatuation with it either. Hudson had a war hero monument for some WWI general; Millersburg had this real nice public square where people would gather and entertain; Parksville only had this worn down, fried up fountain. But we truly had it. Kids would dip their hands in the water to grow faster, more weddings were held in front of it than at our actual church, and even our official postcard had a drawing of it on its back. Somehow, it was the staple we all agreed on. When the storm ended, people mourned. Heads down, hats off, not even Sadie made a sound, though I could tell she was holding in a snarky comment or two.

Still, we chose to meet up there because it was the most identifiable place close to where we were actually headed – Stardust Hills, the rich-people neighborhood with all the plus-size candy bars. The ghost costumes had been her idea entirely, she said it'd be better to hide our faces.

This was our last trick-or-treating. I was set on going to college out of state. Even if it meant bussing tables for four years straight and the occasional sobbing phone call home, I needed anywhere that "Entering Missouri" sign was out of reach. Sadie had already promised her mom she would work at their family pawn shop, though she never talked about it unless asked.

We haven't held hands since fourth grade, but for some reason it came natural for our hands to lock as the October wind settled in. Our footsteps synced, and Sadie rubbed her thumb three times in circles against my palm before speaking.

"Do you think we'll ever do this again?"

It took me by surprise, because this night was built on the consensus that we wouldn't. But her hand felt heavier in mine then, and with the sheets covering her face, it almost felt like it was 7-year-old

her in there again, Winnie the Pooh sheets hanging over her head and dragging onto the floor as her veil. We were each other's maid of honor before even understanding what a marriage was, our something olds long tucked away already, each other's friendship bracelets made on the first day of grade school.

"I don't know, Dee." I answered truthfully, not saying the other half of it: "But it won't be the same."

We kept walking, though she grew a bit quieter when she echoed "I don't know either."



We arrived at Stardust after peak hours, more kids leaving than entering by then. We tracked down the houses with the fanciest porches, the ones practically flaunting its cursive handwriting and cashmere sweaters, and our bags by 9:30 were chaffing against the pavement with everything inside holding it down.

Arms tired, we started walking to the hill next to the high school without saying much. It was technically closed off to the public since one of the city hall officials fell there and broke his back, but no one monitored anything, so it was where we spent most of our time together now that Sadie's brother moved back into their house. We even set up a swing on the old birch tree at the top, though we never used it because it was too small for us both.

We climbed, out of breath a bit among the cricket hums, and laid down next to each other by the tree. The grass was slightly damp from yesterday's rain, but it was soft enough to ignore the dirt that would be on our backs by the end of the night.

We spilled our bags out on the grass, laying out a bed of candy rolls and chocolate bars, and fell back down to look at the night sky. I mostly spent my nights in Parksville counting down the days till I'd be out of it, but every time the sky lit up with stars, I'd forget I was put here to leave.

Sadie was breathing loudly next to me, and I was suddenly taken aback by how much we were alive together.

“Do you like this place?” My thought was cut short, her voice bare against the silence.

The dirt was starting to soak into my skin, but my head was resting on my hand, chest down to the ground, and something about not supposed to being here, neither in this place nor at this time, made me smile.

I wondered what we looked like from top down - two dents on the downward side of a hill, smudged, stretched. We must've barely looked like people.

“Yes.” I answered in full truth. “I think I’d like it a lot less if you weren’t here, though.”

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“Yes.” I answered in full truth. “I think I’d like it a lot less if you weren’t here, though.”

She hummed, hopefully in agreement, and opened her arms back up outwards. Under the brass starlight, something sticky sunk me into this dreaded

land, and with all the pain in me I knew that very thing would make it impossible for me to leave in a year, no matter how much I had dreamt towards it. Comfort. We had shared comfort.

We laid there, my hands on my stomach and hers against the sky, neither of us saying anything as time dragged on. Until:

“Do you want to do something stupid?”

We were halfway there when I started to think I shouldn’t have agreed as fast as I did. There was always at least one teenager every Halloween that would get arrested, and with our town that story could get spit around a full year until the next one would take its place. Last year, it was Gina Cooper that toilet-papered the police station on a dare, and the year before Finn O’Day threw up on the church porch. The town favorite story though was from 88’, when the formerly inseparable Bradley Mayfield and Steven Gilmore – star quarterback and linebacker – broke into the high school. They didn’t do anything, nothing was vandalized or stolen, they were just found lying smack in the middle of the football field by the security guard dressed as two loose skeletons. The reason had been spun a thousand times through different mouths. The popular version was they were trying to steal exam answers and wanted to practice a bit while they were at it, but Bradley’s little sister swore that wasn’t the case. Sadie said she knew what it was, but she wouldn’t tell anybody. I never asked. The kick was, they haven’t so much as looked at each other since they came out of the police station that night. Neither of them went to college, and they work on two ends of the town now. Word on the street was the Mayfields were moving out of town soon, and the Gilmores were doing well after their youngest got into the state college, the first in their family to break the gas station curse. The people moved on, but the story itself circled the air still. To this day, the Parksville Bugle called it the ‘Infamous Halloween Scandal’ and compared them to whatever new perpetrator came up. After all, how could one dumb drunk



teen beat two?

Sadie was walking in front of me now, her footsteps a bit out of sync with the rattling sound from our candy bags. It was less than 40°F out, so the single set of sheets over our pajamas underneath was starting to feel like a mistake, but we kept trudging on as porch lights shut off around us. We barely talked the whole way.

We made our detour to the demolition site of the library's West Wing and picked up a couple of bricks.

Hiding them into our candy bags, I thought about Sadie's obsession with the fountain over the years. When we were kids and first met, we'd hang around the fountain with all the other kids, charging straight there after grade school ended. Since her family shop was nearby, we'd stay there until way late, then she'd walk me home to my neighborhood, and she'd go back to the store. She only started taking on her current beliefs on it when we went into middle school and she started quibbling with her brother. I guess it happened gradually, first by meeting at the hill instead, then by slipping in more and more sarcastic comments, eye rolls, titters and all that when it came up, but the actual hatred for it almost felt like she just flipped a switch one day. My mom always said that for something to become unbearable, there'd have to be too many people who bore it first.

When we finally got there, the night quiet by now and wind stilling, I was paranoid out of my mind that we'd be the next Bradley and Steven. But Sadie was cackling in a way I haven't heard in years, winding her arm up like Popeye, and even though the closest thing we had to wine was two grape lollipops two hours ago, I knew that in the grand scheme of being 17 and condemned to stupidity, we had no choice but to do what we were about to.

Sadie chucked her brick right to the center of the fountain.

I followed suit, reaching into my bag and hurling the first brick I felt at the highest nozzle in one fluid motion. The fountain didn't actually crumble much, but rubble did come down, and a couple of bricks later an edge of the top tier fell down, dust ringing outwards as it did. We jumped up instinctively in celebration, laughing like we should've more, as if the entire thing would be down in less than moments later. Growlingly motivated, I ignored the sore



in my upper arm and flung brick after brick, picking up rocks and shards from the pavement too when our supply started thinning.

It'd be scary if it weren't for how utterly funny it was. I'd forgotten what we were doing – vandalism, strictly speaking, and if not, utter idiocy – and only knew in the moment when that forsaken fountain deserved to split and rot, even if just by two caped teenagers. Its crumbly, decrepit marble edges, its soddy bottom with blown over gravel, its slightly sunken land around the base from all the footsteps that had paid their empty respects, the fountain was hideous, and everyone's worship was further fuel to everything that made Parksville the ridiculous, delicious poster child for the claustrophobic and self-indulgent small town it was: an idiot patch of land that held nothing but idiot patches of people with idiot patches of dead-end jobs, unearned nostalgia, and families after families of resentment. The town was built on resentment. Generations after generations of resentment. As it crumbled, shambles of its silhouette now rendering it even more unappreciable than before, I started to understand viscerally like a spreading virus why Sadie despised it the way she did. It was nothing but dirty water turning over and over.

As the entire edge of the top tier fell down, we laughed in our triumph, the goal never being to tear it all down it one night anyway.

“Serves this town right for herding you out.” Sadie finally said. I could tell her head was turned towards me even in the dark, but my eyes stayed fixed at what remained of the fountain in front of us.

I didn't tell Sadie ever, but the truth was I couldn't even imagine that what my days would look like in less than a year, out of the destined misery that was Parksville, Missouri. I spent my life here certain I needed to eventually leave, but these Halloween stories and folded postcards were knotted deep into the dreaded question of “Where are you from?”, because how could I ever even think anywhere but here?

My fingers dug into the pavement, scraping my

skin unlike the soft dirt on our hill.

“It didn't herd me out. Couldn't make me stay if it wanted to.”

She chuckled and laid down. “Couldn't make you stay if you wanted to either.”

Sadie took the fall when the police inevitably found us. By the time the blue and pink lights came, we were both laying on the ground nearly asleep, sheets as blankets. Neither of us did much to fight them, we just silently sat in the back seat of the car as they took us to the station for further interrogation. The town seemed much smaller through the holes of our costumes.

If Sadie planned the whole thing out I don't know, but she had two cans of beer in her bag she must've stolen from her brother's minifridge, so the police asked me a couple of questions and let me go, detaining her instead for attempted underage drinking. She was happy though, she said I couldn't risk having anything on my record with the schools I was applying to. In her case, the worse she would get was a newspaper swat from her mom, who was long used to her tricks by now.

An officer drove me back home, my eyes already dulling now that there wasn't much to look for, and even though I knew I'd wake up to outrage in the morning, I smiled knowing we'd get passed on through the stunted mouths of this town. I started seeing what Bradley and Steven kept between them all these years, and why Sadie wouldn't tell anybody either. Halloween fun was for those who knew how to put on a skin.

My parents were asleep, so I snuck upstairs to my room and trusted the speed of gossip to tell them before I'd be able to the next day. For now, we were on the brink of November. My sheets tangled into striped swirls around my tired bones, and I holed into its crevices as my mind replayed the grand sight of our newly broken fountain and Sadie's 7-year-old hand in mine.

Sea

Author: G11 Sigma Ella Yao

Designer: G12 Eta Emmie Zhang



1.

“I love the seaside.”

“You’ve never even been to one. How can you love something you never had?”

That’s not true, of course. There must have been a time when I stood at the edge of the sea, a whisper of salt clinging to my hair, but the memories have long abandoned me.

“Papa loved the seaside.”

“You’re only saying that because of the postcards.”

The postcards Lily’s talking about are the stack of one-dollar gift cards Papa left for me, printed with him at the sea, near a coastline, on a boat. When I was younger, I believed there was a hidden mean-

ing behind the cheap cards, a secret farewell written in invisible ink, a trail to a mysterious location, or perhaps just anything to do with how he simply left us one day, along with my memories of the sea.

“He probably had those postcards just because he worked near the sea, you know.”

I wouldn’t know. When he was still here it never mattered to me what his job was, only if he would make gumbo tomorrow or if he was going to chase down an ice cream truck for me. But this is an old scar of mine now. It shouldn’t bother me as much as it did now. “I still love the seaside”, I repeated.

Lily and I sat in silence, listening to the rustling of the leaves outside her window.

“Then let’s run away from this place and see that sea of yours.” I smiled. This is what Lily does best. She sees everything as a problem to be worked out, and she is the key to the solution. The problem she sees now is me, and I need to be solved before she tackles other problems.. It’s ridiculous, of course, and we both know it. I make a game out of this, throwing ideas back and forth no matter how absurd and ludicrous they seem. It’s my way of searching for the secret message in invisible ink; the trail to a mysterious location.

“Where would we go?”

“Galveston Island, obviously. We’ll visit Houston too, with all the bang-bang gunfires and NASA space rockets.”

“Of course, and exactly how long will it take us to get there? Probably just a whole day, right?”

“Nah, just about a five hour drive.”

“Then we’ll borrow your grandmama’s old car to drive there. It’s a shame we can’t rent a car.”

“So we know where to go, we know how to get there, we have money I got for my sweet sixteen, what’s stopping us?”

I was about to snort another comment because

this is wrong. This is reckless behavior, and two underaged adolescents under eighteen roaming around Texas never ends well. I shouldn't drag Lily into my own problems, but I shouldn't have done a lot of things. I need to think.

“I’ll pack our bags.”

2.

We borrowed Lily’s grandmama’s old Chevy from her garage. It didn’t seem like it belonged with the white neat houses and posh new cars, rather, it looked more as if it was stuck in time, with the fading blue metal and the wheezing tires crackling with age. According to Lily the beast of a car was once her Grandmama’s most prized possession, but now I’m forced to doubt the idea of driving this for 5 hours nonstop.

“I’m not sure the engine can start, Lily. We haven’t gone anywhere yet, so it’s not too late to go back, you know.” I wasn’t sure who I was talking to for the last sentence.

Lily ignored me. She sat down in the car, fished out a set of keys from her pocket, and pressed her thumb to fill the space where the key hang loosely from the keyhole. Finally, after a couple of tries, the engine roared to life, all the wheezing and coughing gone. Lily slammed the door with a triumphant shout, and turned her head to look directly at me. “We’ll not bailing. You don’t see it, but I do. I see it every time I’m with you, and I don’t understand what there is to grieve about over a man who left his own family and took no responsibility, but I do respect you. And I know for a fact

that you need this more than anything, because I’m sick of you coddling against that black cloud hanging around and that I can’t do nothing about it. So we’ll going to the seaside. Then you can finally love something that you had.”

I can’t do this. My hands are shaking and I can’t get them to stop and I’m clutching to my bag afraid that I’ll tear it apart, tear everything apart—
Lily’s hand over mine. They

feel warm.
I can feel
her cal-
louses from
climbing trees
when she was young-
er brushing my hand, and I breathe.

Lily hit the gas.

3.

“Okay, so today is the 17th, and your mama comes back from her business trip on the 18th, which is tomorrow. We use ten hours to and from Galveston, and let’s just assume we stay there for three hours. So a whole thirteen hours. Which means we need to be exactly on plan, otherwise you’ll be facing the wrath of your mama back home.” This was the fourth time Lily mentioned this. I nod, which is something I’ve been doing a lot for the last few hours. At first, the weight of our recklessness gnawed at me from the inside, but after some time I grew comfortable with Lily’s playlist banging inside the Chevy, and began to imagine what Galveston might look like. Will it have the same smell as the postcards? Of course I know the pictures on the postcard may look nothing like the real thing, but will there be palm trees? Will a seagull fly above me? I am grateful Lily stopped me from backing away from this trip. She was right; I needed this.

“Wait, is that smoke?”

I looked up. Lily’s paled expression mirrored mine. Because the smoke is coming from the Chevy. Lily stopped the car.

“Wait here. I’ll go check. It’s probably nothing, just something old cars do.”

I nodded. We knew will happen eventually, I reassured myself. We weren’t thinking straight when we took Grandmama’s old car, and using something antique as this for a 10-hour drive is nonsense.

“NO!”

I felt the car the moment it gave out. The beast roared its last breath, and collapsed into a dump of coughs and dust and smoke. "Lily!" I called out. "Are you alright?"

"I'm fine, but old Chevy here's definitely not! Come out, and call for someone to fix her!"

This is not what we've planned for, stranded in open space with a broken old car. I came out of the car quickly, and called for the nearest maintenance, describing the problem.

"What do you mean, two thousand dollars? So you mean to say that you need to take three hours to get here, then take two thousand dollars from us, and then make us wait for another couple of hours? Is that what you're trying to say?"

"It's okay, hang up. Old Chevy here's not worth it. I'll call Grandmama, tell her that the car broke down and we can only leave it here now."

I'm infuriated. I'm terrified. I can hear Lily breathing deeply, in and out. The earlier guilt crashed down on me again, threatening to pull me over. "But this car's your grandmama's prized possession. We can't just leave it here."

Lily walked over to me. Being older made her taller than me, so I had to raise my head to look at her. "Hey. It's okay. A car like that breaks down eventually, it's just that we happen to be driving it when it broke down. Yes, we might have sped up the process, but Grandmama's way more concerned about our safety than that rusty old car. If anyone's to blame then it's me, because this entire thing was my idea. I'm sorry I didn't think things through before I took you on this trip."

Lily shouldn't be apologizing. "So what happens now?" I whisper. I'm too afraid to say anything else.

"We call someone to tell them we left a huge chunk of metal in the middle of nowhere. And we take a few buses back home. Is that okay with you? I know you were excited to finally see the sea for yourself. When we go back home, I'll talk to your mama about taking you on a vacation."



4.

Everything's over. Lily and I found a small town near where we were, and Lily asked for a place to rest. The nearest bus is still half an hour away, so we decided to stay for a while. I wandered the town. It seemed out of society, like the little villages in stories. There's a lake. Just the sight of water crushes me. But then I hear singing.

It's small, but I freeze. I know this tune. I run towards the sound, and I see children around the lake, singing and laughing. Something shifts in me. Something changes in me, because I know that tune, I know this smell of moss, I know this feeling of gentle breeze on my back. I know because I remember. My father didn't work at the sea. He worked at a convenience store near the sea, and every night he would sing this tune to me. He would take me to a walk on the beach, and there was no salty smell, but the smell of moss, just like right now. I feel tears stinging my eyes. Because for the first time in forever, I found peace in a small town in the middle of nowhere, and it's nothing like I've imagined it. I don't love the seaside. I loved. I loved my dad, even though he didn't love me just as much. I love Lily, just as much as she loves me. And I love the smell of moss, but it's not what completes me. I complete myself.

5.

We caught the bus and went home. Mama was back, and it was like nothing happened. Only we know what changed. I never bothered with the postcards anymore.

隨筆二則

张居正

我想我梦见你了，张居正先生。城门楼头的冰雪皑皑如画，浩浩荡荡洒满了天涯，天、地、风、雪，浑然一体，压得人一眼望去不着边际，而你轻轻抖了抖裘衣，笑谈风雪如棉。一路上有人问你：何苦呢？你只领首致意，撩开浓浓密雪，转身钻进去，留下一地碎玉声。那一天万历年大雪，满朝文武不见，惟你徐徐步入其中，让人赞婉“谁言天公不好客，漫天风雪送一人。”古来一相，风雪千山。

张岱

刚刚写作业的时候，写到湖心亭看雪的练习题。我心里曾不止一次地疑惑，为何张岱在不少解说视频里被称为“少爷”，是鼎鼎大名的“纨绔子弟”，却“前半生阅尽风流，后半生写尽沧桑，披发入信，誓死不侍清？”现在我突然想明白了。有时候，在天下太平时把太轰轰烈烈的情感大肆宣扬就如同褪去上衣把满身伤疤展示给人看一般，对于极有教养的人而言虽不失为一种表忠心的方法，却仿佛有“拍马屁”“求关注”之嫌，这样的方法不够纯，太玷污了这样宏大的气节。而等到国破家亡之时，有志之士、能上战场打仗之才又把人能尽之力、能表之言做到了穷尽，自己作为“风流公子”说出来倒像是随声附和，又没法挽大厦将倾、力挽狂澜。于是他只能如此了，在大雪中、西湖边，看雾凇沆砀，一切只如过眼云烟。

Author: G10 SG3 Lan Sun
Designer: G10 SG2 Aveline Cao

嬉溪間

风静愈使禅意弄，

灯下溪浅戏鱗游。

月磐星上已见缺，

无波水中自然圆。

斜倚桑槐目微合，

心步九霄访婵娟。

Author: G11 Jerry Zhai
Designer: G10 SG2 Selina Feng

02 Journal

POLAND IS NOT LOST YET: The Patriot Poet In Exile

I. The Polish Homer

The Polish Homer, Adam Mickiewicz, was a man who held the spirit of his fallen motherland through literature.

This man held no title, no public office, and spent most of his life exiled on foreign soil, yet he would later be remembered as “the architect of the spirit of the Polish nation.” When Poland had vanished from the map for over one hundred years, his poetry, beliefs, and language kept his people united in thought, preserving the life of the nation through decades of foreign occupation.

If we say Napoleon redefined the borders of Europe through force, then we can also say Mickiewicz reconstructed the soul of Poland through writing. He proved a fact himself: literature can be the last border of a nation when the state has perished.

I felt regretful for missing such a chance to express admiration for him. At that moment, I thought: our generation reads, writes, and speaks mostly for self-expression, to share viewpoints and perspectives; but Mickiewicz wrote to show people what work deserves the word “great” in an age of turmoil.

II. How A Nation Without A State Could Exist

In 1795, Poland was partitioned by Russia, Prussia, and Austria. A great nation that had

Author: G11 Eta Jason Xiao
Designer: G12 Eta Amanda Jin

prospered for over eight hundred years and saved Vienna from the siege of the Ottoman Turks ceased to exist and disappeared completely from the map. In the following 123 years, the three great powers made every effort to erase all signs of Poland. The Polish language was banned in schools. Polish history was deleted from textbooks. Even the word “Poland” itself became censored under the foreign regimes.

Such a fate is enough to force any nation to assimilate and wither. History offers countless examples—the Bretons, the Cornish, the Alsatians... Their languages, histories, and identities faded after the conquerors arrived. But Poland did not. Moreover, a special national spirit emerged during those thirteen decades and eventually rebuilt itself after the Treaty of Versailles. The key figure behind all this was Mickiewicz.





He used poetry to construct an entirely new narrative. “Polska Chrystusem narodów. Zmartwychwstanie jej jest zmartwychwstaniem narodów.” (“Poland is the Christ of nations. Her resurrection will be the resurrection of nations.”) — This verse from his poem *Dziady* (Forefathers’ Eve) became the tenet that the entire nation clung to through their darkest hours.

The greatness of Mickiewicz lay not only in the beautiful verses that flowed from his pen, but in his profound impact on his people’s self-understanding.

A fallen nation may easily descend into defeated rhetoric: we are weak, enslaved, and abandoned by history. But Mickiewicz used Messiah-like language to tell his fellow Poles: We are not doomed, but “the Christ of Nations”; we are

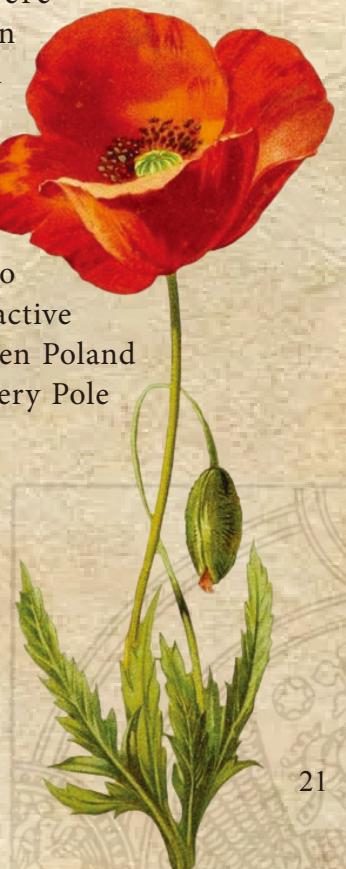
crucified not because we are weak, but because God has ordained us to bear the responsibility of liberating Europe.

This historical vision became the pillar of future Polish independence movements. It transformed the humiliation of lost sovereignty into the honor of martyrdom, redefining the destiny of failure as the mission of salvation. The sacrifice of Poland was not blood shed in vain, but the cost of building a free world; the loss of Poland was not the end of history, but the beginning of a universal salvation.

Such rhetoric may seem overly romantic, yet in reality it proved extremely powerful. It gave the Poles not merely the simple goal of restoring their state, but the role of apostles in a new chapter of human history. This sense of responsibility almost became the DNA of Polish nationalism: the Independence War of Italy, the Hungarian Revolution, the Paris Commune... In nearly every European revolution, Polish exiles took up arms. They truly and firmly believed that their fate was interconnected with the fate of the free world.

The strength of this type of writing lies in its ability to go beyond mere expression and construct an entire coordinate system for understanding the world: it helped people reframe pain, turning the oppressed not only into victims of history but into its makers. Through such active meaning-making, their fallen Poland survived in the heart of every Pole until the spring arrived.

III. Words Are Also An Institution



An empire can dismiss armies, ban languages, and destroy parliaments, but it cannot eliminate poetry. In a hyperbolic sense, Mickiewicz's works became the "informal constitution of the Poles." Children in underground schools recited his lines. Exiles in the salons of Paris read his Forefathers' Eve. Clergy preached the "crucifixion of the nation" in churches through his words. These words gradually became a kind of "spiritual institution"—defining "what is the Polish people," "what is our mission," and "what are justice and freedom." When their motherland lay in ruins, this "spiritual institution" became the last anchor for the Poles. A nation without a state preserved its common memory, values, and principles through poetry.

A classic thus expressed its greatest power: building order beyond the monuments of thought; creating identity beyond the telling of stories.

From then on, the word "Poland" no longer needed borders, military force, or a constitution to exist. It lived in the language itself, in the rhythms of their poetry and the structure of their faith, in every Pole who read Mickiewicz.

IV. From Mickiewicz to Now: Do We Still Understand Such Writing?

Looking back at the 19th century and those oppressed, banished nations that lost everything, we discover an interesting truth: what helped them endure the valley of death was not weaponry, diplomacy, or wealth, but poetry and literature—words that gave them a sense of meaning.

Today, the world is once again entering an era of radical change. The existing order is vanishing while new powers are taking shape. The old framework is collapsing while the new one remains in its infancy. We now have countless ways to express ourselves: short sentences on X, algorithm-recommended viewpoints, never-

ending slogans. These noisy words may satisfy users, but they never approach the level of Mickiewicz, the Pole who drew a spiritual map for a lost community.

Mickiewicz showed the world what truly great writing should be in a collapsing age—It does not merely appeal to people, but calls them; It does not merely incite people, but leads them; It goes beyond telling readers what to think, and instead invites them to reconsider: "Who am I?", "What is the world?", "Why is it worth existing?"

V. Writing, The Last Defense

In 1855, Mickiewicz passed away in Constantinople. He did not live long enough to witness the rebirth of Poland; that dream would only come true half a century and two decades later. His nation remained in the iron grip of empires, struggling in exile and oppression. But the verses he left behind empowered generations of Polish youths to dedicate their lives to a nation that did not exist on the map, keeping the life of Poland alive through the tides of history.

Great literature cannot change the balance of power in reality, but it can change how people perceive meaning; it cannot bring victory, but it can make failure meaningful; it cannot resurrect a nation, but it can keep its soul intact.

In an era of instability, things that appear firm may evaporate, things that seem heavy may vanish with the wind, yet things that seem the lightest—the words of a poet—may build the foundation of the future.

Mickiewicz's writing is the last defense of meaning.





Beauty Inducing or Seducing?

Examining How Advertising Influences The Consumption Patterns of Adolescent Chinese Females Aged 16-21 in Beauty Products

Author: G12 Theta Alice Jiang
Designer: G11 Gamma Angela Li

“Why don’t I look like them?”

1. INTRODUCTION

Women’s status has greatly improved in the 21st century’s social advancement, particularly in the economic sphere. Women currently influence about \$31.8 trillion of global spending. By 2028, women will control 75% of discretionary income, making them the largest influencers in the globe, predicts Nielsen. The “she economy” looks at how advertising affects adolescent Chinese girls’ consumption patterns by adopting both quantitative and qualitative methodology.

Through the classification of consumption habits, this project investigates the relationship between advertising and the purchasing power of young women in the beauty product industry.

The main hypothesis is that Chinese female adolescents between the ages of 16 and 21 who consume cosmetic products are greatly influenced by advertising.

The other assumption holds that due to disparities in social positions and economic freedom, college students are more susceptible to the influence of advertisements than high school students. Furthermore, the way that advertisements present beauty can have an impact on how female college and high school students view their bodies and make decisions about what to buy.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term “she-economy,” which is also called as “women’s economy,” describes how women’s purchasing power and social standing are rising. Working-age women increase in number as the population reaches prime working age, which increases their representation in the labor market, raises pay, and could

generate significant tailwinds for several consumer product categories. Comprehending she-economy of young Chinese women between the ages of 16 and 25, who are expected to drive the workforce in the near future, may assess women’s motivation as consumers driving discretionary spending.

Previous research has offered informed understanding of the developing “she-economy”, offering rich insights on the influencing factors of female consumption behaviors. As women’s roles change, so do their health, education,



and economic possibilities, empowering them to make independent purchase decisions. A woman's evaluation of an advertisement featuring a physically attractive female endorser for a socially noticeable company, product, or service will be more favorable the more dissatisfied she is with her body. Society often places immense pressure on women to conform to specific beauty standards.

In the streaming era today, women continue to be influenced by advertising, albeit in different forms, such as advertisements in streaming media and social apps. The term "femver-

tising" depicts the representation of women in the media. This article considers exploring the relationship between advertising and female consumer behavior in the context of the "she-economy" in the post-pandemic era. The emergence of new media has accelerated the advancement of gender awareness in society.

3. Research Methodology

In order to elucidate the reasons behind the conclusions reached in the project survey questionnaire and uncover new perspectives on the research topic, this project decides to conduct interviews with typical participants.

This approach aims to deepen understanding and combine qualitative and quantitative data to validate findings and hypotheses, providing creative and brand-new insights for an in-depth understanding.

Three young Chinese women were selected for this project: Evan (pseudonym), a university freshman in Shanghai; Lily (pseudonym), a 16-year-old high school student in Beijing; and Gloria (pseudonym), a 17-year-old high school student abstaining from using beauty products. The three participants are chosen based on their representative beauty product consumption behaviors. Since Evan is a university freshman, a valuable comparison between high-school and university female consumption behavior can be acquired through her change in identity. Lily can serve as a typical female Chinese high school student. In addition, Gloria is chosen to exemplify marginalized respondents in the survey who rarely uses beauty product.



Through more personal interaction in the interview process, these students provided in-depth information, addressing the "how" and "why" research questions. The project adopted semi-structured interviews for more flexibility in asking follow-up questions.

During the interview, Evan revealed using skincare and cosmetics but not opting for medical beauty services. Advertisements sometimes influenced her consumer behavior and sparked anxiety about body shapes. Evan concluded that her emphasis on beauty and brands stems mainly from the celebrity effect.

Visual impacts play a significant role, as the desire for beauty stimulates her buying decisions. The shift in her purchasing behavior from high school to university is influenced

by societal and self-identity factors. During high school, a majority of Chinese parents (including Evan's) mostly object to the idea of paying lots of attention on cosmetics. The code of high school student conduct as well as the strict discipline of schools also prevent her from putting on make-ups. Consequently, the influence of these advertisements is abridged. On the contrary, university students have more flexible schedules and freedom. Therefore, Evan can spend more time on make themselves beautiful by directing attention on choosing beauty products and watch related advertisements.

Compared to Evan who experienced an identity transformation from high-school student to university freshman, Lily focuses on skincare products and occasionally uses cosmetics. Efficacy and price are key factors in her rational purchasing decisions. Lily occasionally experiences body anxiety influenced by her surroundings, observing changes in her companions and seeking product recommendations.

The last interviewee Gloria stands for the underrepresented individuals who barely uses beauty product. As a 17-year-old high school student, she seldom uses skincare and cosmetics, holding a rational consumption concept unaffected by others. In her opinion, makeup does no good to the skin and skincare products cannot delay aging. Gloria is confident in her appearance, irrespective of age. Qualitative research in this project allows interviewers to explore human experiences and generate hypotheses on how advertisements influence young Chinese women's decisions to buy beauty products. Evan, as a college student, exhibits more irrational consumption habits influenced by social media, while Lily, a high school student, focuses on product efficacy and experiences occasional appearance anxiety due to peer influence. Gloria, one of the few uninterested in beauty products, remains rational and unaffected by advertising in the age of streaming media. Overall, qualitative research helps explain the processes and consumer patterns of young female students' behavior that can be challenging to quantify.

The project has collected 299 survey results and gathered 269 effective and viable sets of data in total, which will serve as the basis for the project's analysis after filtering out unfavorable age and genders.

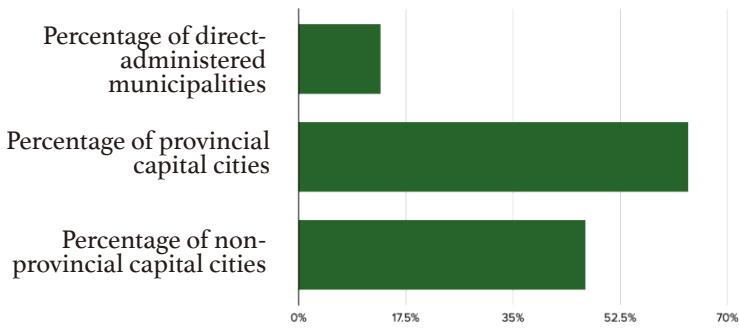


Figure 1. Geographical Distribution of Survey Respondents

As shown by the numbers in figure 1, 36.1% of the participants live in municipalities, which are independently self-governed cities; 40.9% live in provincial capital cities, which are the capitals of provinces; and 32% live in non-provincial capital cities, which are general cities.

According to figure 2, the majority of 192 respondents (71.4%) are currently in the educational stage of college or university, the rest 77 respondents (28.6%) are studying in high school now.

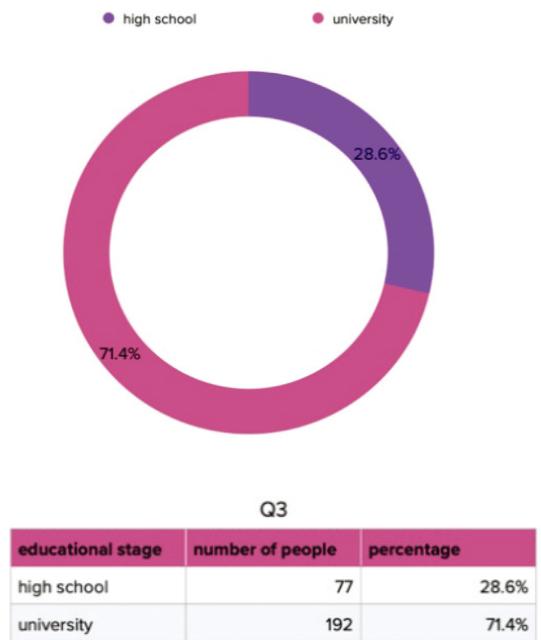


Figure 2. Percentage of Participants: A Comparison Between High School and College Female Students



types of products/services purchased/used	high school student population	percentage of high school students	university student population	percentage of university students	total number of people	percentage
cosmetics	41	53.2%	185	96.4%	226	84.0%
skincare	52	67.5%	186	96.9%	238	88.5%
medical aesthetics project	7	9.1%	47	24.5%	54	20.1%
none	15	19.5%	1	0.5%	16	5.9%

Figure 3. Proportion of Respondents Purchasing Skincare, Cosmetics, and Medical Beauty Products

Figure 3 demonstrates that in the project, 84.0% participants have purchased or used products related to cosmetics, 88.5% with skin care products, 20.1% with medical beauty services, and only 5.9% participants have never spent money in purchasing beauty products.

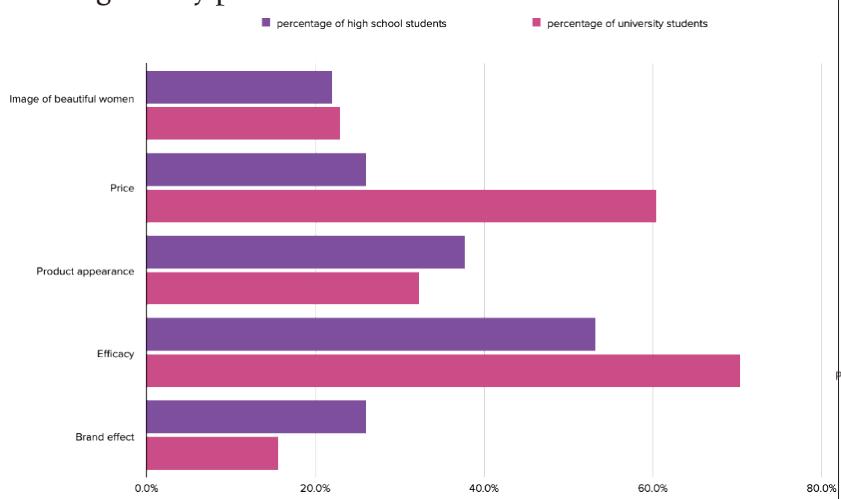


Figure 4. Factors Respondents Focus on While Watching Advertisements for Beauty Products

The project further examines the different levels of attractiveness of advertisements to female consumers in figure 4. It finds that, aside from participants who have not paid attention to or seen such advertisements, the most attractive factors for high school girls are efficacy and product appearance, while for college girls, it is efficacy and price. Clearly, the expenditure required for the product is a focal point for female college students when watching advertisements.

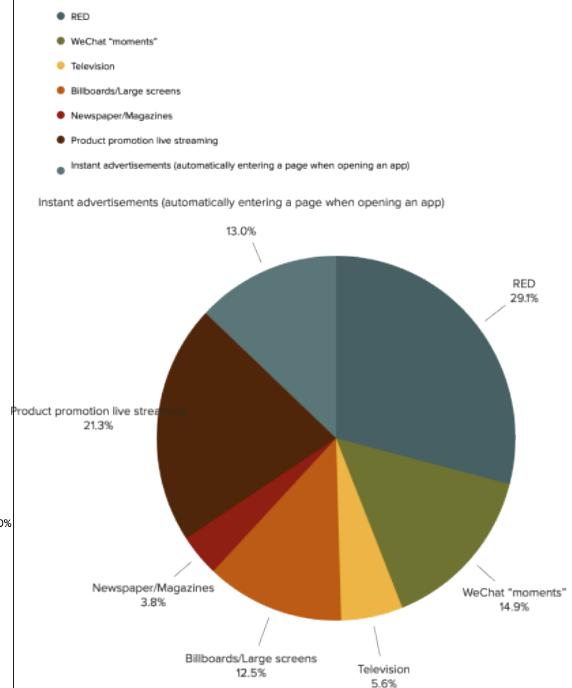


Figure 5. Channels Through Which Respondents View Advertisements for "Beauty Products"

Additionally, RED is the primary channel for high school and college girls to watch advertisements. High school students tend to watch advertisements displayed on billboards or large screens (60.8%), while college students prefer watching livestreaming for product recommendations (73.5%). Thus, the project concludes that college students approach streaming media more than high school students because their social role changes from a minor to a young adult. Changing social roles also mean they have higher purchasing willingness as independent individuals, making them more vulnerable to advertisements for beauty products.



Moreover, the percentages of university students who choose "slightly influence," "moderately influence," and "very much influence" are all much higher than those of high school students, with the majority of "very much influence" coming from metropolitan areas and provincial capital cities. Among high school and college students, the proportion of those who occasionally feel anxious about their appearance due to such advertisements is highest among the five options. 92% of college students and 60% of high school students feel anxious because of such advertisements. Thus, the degree of appearance anxiety is higher for college students than for high school students.

Combined with the information the project collects from the case study of three young women, the project concludes that the appearance anxiety of college students may be due to the habit of comparing themselves with those around them.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research results demonstrate that while young Chinese women prioritize practicality, their approach to beauty products focuses on functionality, increasing their willingness to purchase. They prioritize product effectiveness over brand or fashion trends, paying attention to economic aspects and comparing product differences for optimal cost performance.

Contrary to the stereotype of emotional women's consumption, the hypothesis that college students are more influenced by advertising than high school students is valid and confirmed by my survey data. Even if college students are rational, they are more likely to be swayed by live streaming and social media ads emphasizing product efficacy and affordability. Furthermore, it's notable that there are still marginalized individuals whose beauty standards and use of related products are unaffected by social media. The reasons behind the infrequent use of beauty

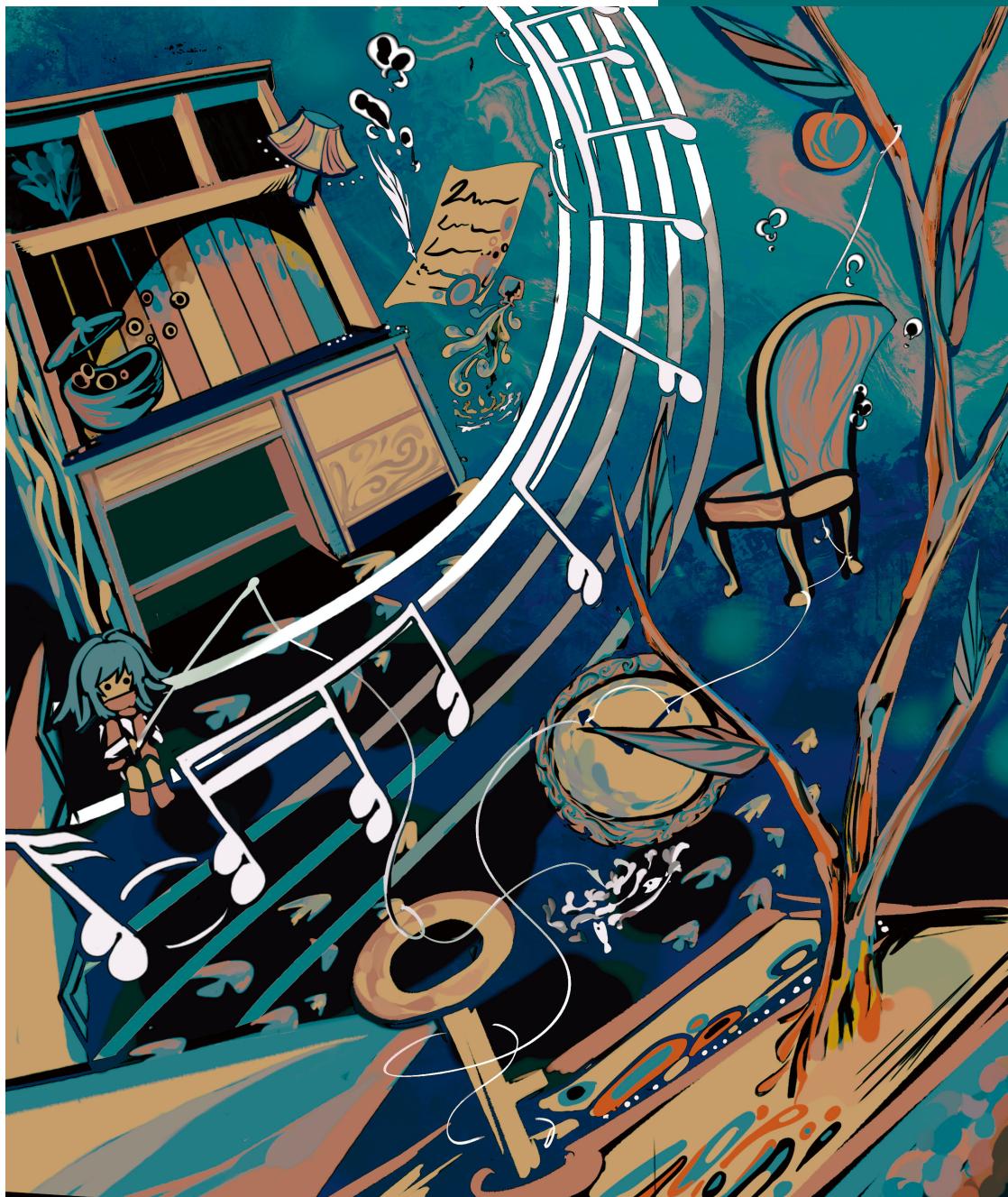


products among certain individuals present an insightful avenue for future research, offering the potential to uncover diverse consumption behaviors and underlying social, economic and cultural influences that contribute to the differentiated purchasing decisions.

Overall, this project uncovers a shift away from past pressures on women's appearance in beauty products. For young women, awareness of the deliberate influence of beauty ads on aesthetic trends is crucial to avoid undue anxieties.

Advertisers should prioritize efficacy and price in female-targeted ads. In an era of rising female status and self-awareness, promoting empowerment and body positivity presents an opportunity for excellent business results. In this era, both the "she-economy" and "he-economy" are becoming more influential and powerful consumers in the economy.

03 Art



THE RABBIT HOLE

My desk is where I used to work and create. Sitting there, I need to focus my mind until inspiration comes to me. Therefore, the process is somehow similar to falling into the rabbit hole in Alice in the Wonderland, and my desk could be seen as the intersection between my imagination and reality around me. The rearrangement of furnitures refers to the scene in rabbit hole. On the corner of the picture, a girl is fishing. The fishing line tied to several items and finally binds to the branches. This represents the process of coming up with an idea.

Author: G12 Phi Aster Li
Designer: G11 Gamma Angela Li

Recluse

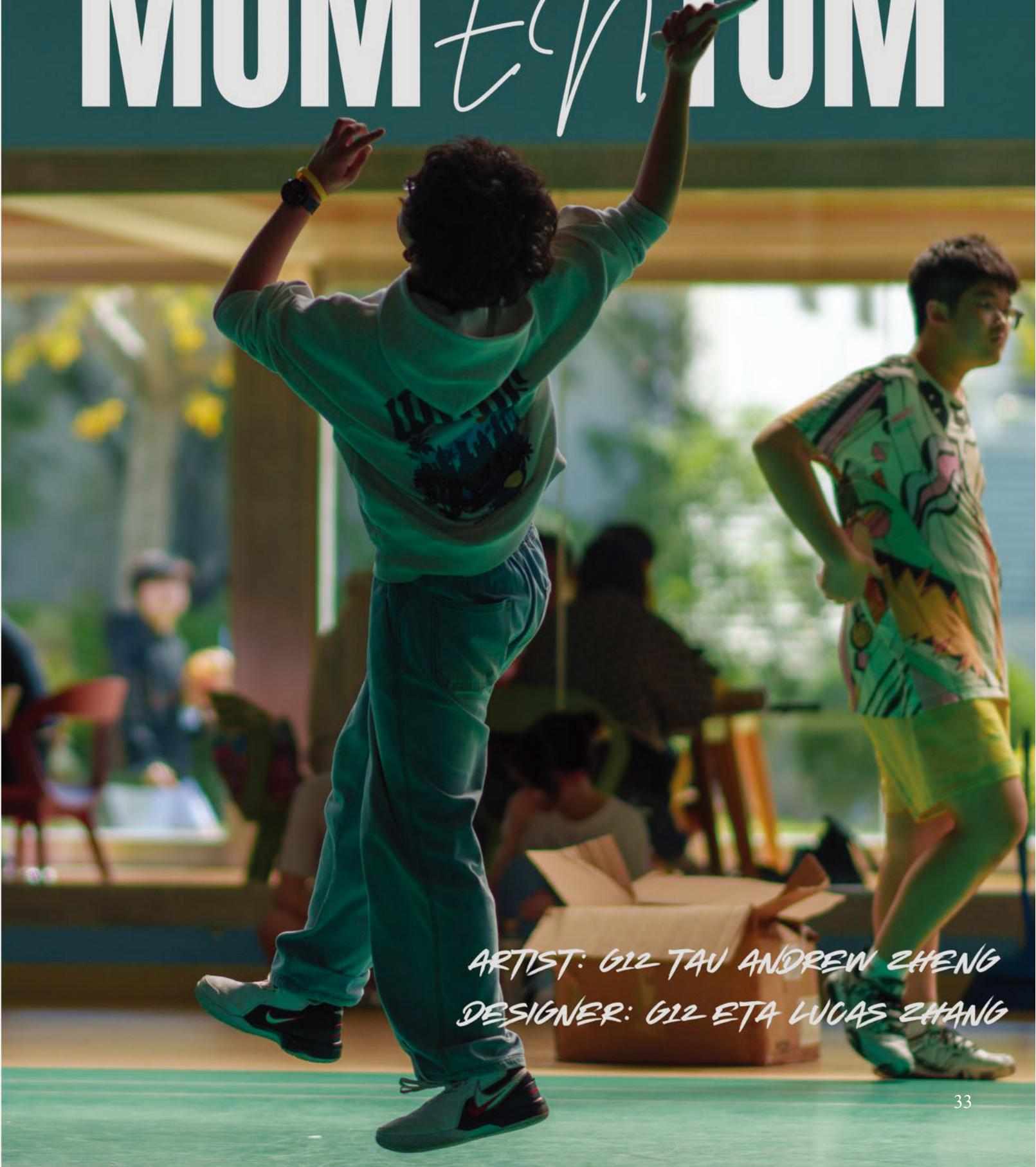
Author: G11 Gamma Angela Li
Designer: G11 Sigma Sherri Sun



The sunflower symbolizing “loyalty” and the hyssop and tears for “purification” and “redemption” show that the spirit of peace, love, authenticity and individuality in counterculture is central to my personal pursuits and helps anchor myself as I gradually figure out my identity in my coming-of-age. In a world that often undervalues these things, though living these values fully can make one feel withdrawn—like a ‘recluse,’ it can help me reaffirm my loyalty to myself.

wfsga

MOMENTUM



ARTIST: G12 TAU ANDREW ZHENG

DESIGNER: G12 ETA LUCAS ZHANG



Through the lens, I witnessed the most heartwarming scenes during the school spirit week. Friendly conversations, creative collaborations, and infectious smiles filled every moment - every photo was a tribute to the warmth of the campus.



These images carry the essence of connection: strangers become friends, inspiration bursts forth, and happiness is freely shared. Cherishing these fleeting yet incredibly precious memories, they remind us of the beauty of interpersonal interactions. May these moments forever remain the kindness and vitality of this wonderful week!

04 School Events

Spirit Week

Author: Mr. Jordan Fraser

Designer: GI1 Phi Astrid Jiang



I knew Spirit Week was going to be big from the moment my proposal was accepted. We had planned it for weeks, mapped out schedules, arranged performances, sorted out house points, and crossed our fingers that everyone would actually want to take part. But I don't think any of us were fully ready for what happened once it began. What unfolded over those five days was the kind of joyful chaos that only comes when students are given both freedom and a visually appealing and tactile competitive scoring system. You could feel the shift in the atmosphere the moment the first costumed students walked through the gates on Monday morning. Something had officially started.

The first day was Memes and Jokes, a theme I thought might inspire a few creative shirts and maybe one or two "ironic" fashion choices. Instead, there were some hilarious interpretations of the theme. Assistant Principal Young Jiao made a hilarious costume that parodied other members of staff, which was an excellent example of how wide the inspiration spread. Students transformed themselves into viral images, familiar reaction faces, and oddly specific jokes only their friendship groups understood. Between the costumes, early distribution of spirit coins, and the first ever WLSA Fete; Spirit Week wasn't just on, it was alive.

The second day shifted to World Culture and Food, and suddenly the campus felt like a festival of heritage, memory, and identity. Students wore clothing tied to their families, their travels, their dreams, or simply the dishes they loved most. My favourite example was a group of friends who all dressed as separate elements of a McDonald's hamburger. Then came Spirit Hour, our singing showcase. I don't think anyone was expecting just how talented our student body actually is. One moment it was a solo ballad that could have belonged on a competition stage; the next, a duet harmony performance that had the entire crowd in the palm of their hands. People who had never seen each other perform suddenly saw one another in a completely new light. This was also the first time students saw each other winning handfuls of coins, causing a serious boost to some of the house scores.

Future Self Day arrived on Wednesday, and this one might have been the most unpredictable. Some students came dressed in professional attire, ready to become lawyers, doctors, teachers, stylists, designers, and diplomats. Others took a more imaginative route. One student came as an angel who had lived out her life and had passed on to a better afterlife. It was hilarious and sincere all at once. That afternoon, the energy peaked again for our Dance Eisteddfod. Some performances were polished and well-rehearsed, while others seemed to have been choreographed during lunch and held together by pure enthusiasm. But every group, no matter the skill level, performed with confidence and pride, and the cheering was loud enough to shake the windows of the nearby gymnasium that housed the simultaneous sport matches. Even the most unexpected performances received the kind of applause that performers remember for the rest of high school life. Not to mention the milk teas that passed around for all that joined in!

By Thursday, the school had settled comfortably into a rhythm. Hobbies and Talents Day revealed skills we had only seen glimpses of before. The standout was a group of teachers who all dressed as the cast members of a popular Chinese comedy series. This hilarious group reminded everyone that spirit is not only loud, colourful, and performed under bright stage lights, sometimes it is thoughtful, emotional, or precise. Sometimes the strongest expression of identity is the one you create with your friends. The day concluded with a “race till you drop” running event that lasted two hours and only stopped so that the students could have dinner and go to their evening study. Having covered 18km over the course of the event, those dinners were well earned indeed.

Then came Friday, the day where everything converged. House Colours Day. You could see the pride before anyone even spoke. Students arrived soaked in their house identities as they took part in the many sports events at the stadium. Spirit points this week had been close, especially between Ethos and Atlas, who had spent several days trading point leads back and forth. Atlas looked like they might surge in the final stretch, their performances being strong, and teamwork undeniable.

But Ethos had been consistent. Quietly at first, then noticeably, then unmistakably.

When the final points were calculated and the announcement was made, the reaction was instant. Ethos didn't just win; they pulled ahead with a dramatic and undeniable lead. Their cheers rang out across the gymnasium, and the joy was contagious, especially with Mr. Dallas dressed in theme and beaming with pride at his carefully orchestrated victory. Even the houses that didn't win clapped, laughed, and smiled, because at the end of the week, the competition was real, but the celebration was shared.

Looking back, Spirit Week wasn't just a themed event or a schedule of organised activities, it became five days of discovering the people we sit next to every day. The quiet students who turned out to be brilliant dancers. The class clowns who revealed they could write beautifully. The friends we thought we already knew who surprised us with something new. The sense of community felt genuine rather than forced, not artificial, not decorative, just real. We entered the week as four houses; we left it as one school.





2025 Spirit Week Microstory Contest Finalists

“You failed again.” The voice of the deity echoed in the empty valley, carrying the acrid smell of dust. The rough edges of the boulder once again ground against my shoulders, leaving a burning pain. Never before have I wanted so much to escape.

“When will it end?”

“Until you become the God yourself.” God says. My soul is unable to understand. But if I were god, I would forgive mistakes. Watching the falling stone, I whispered to myself for the first time, “the falling of the stone is not my fault.” The mountain seems to shrink by one inch.

“Run away and call the police!” I was startled awake from the nap by the sound of gunfire again, and the pungent smell of blood filled the air. I saw everyone being chased by a mysterious shadowy figure, but I was the outlier, even as a bullet struck me between the eyes, piercing the neck of the person behind me. This is my fifth cycle, but I still can’t prevent all this from happening, I stood amidst a pool of blood, twittering “goodbye my loves.” I believe this is my last loop. I opened my eyes from beneath the pillow soaked with my tears-- today is a new day.

GII Zeta Elizabeth Zhao, GII Pi Gabriella Chen,
GII Zeta Rule Zhong, GII Epsilon Asmode Chen

GII Zeta Tracy Xie, GII Lambda Cynthia Xu,
GII Lambda Jeannie Jin, GII Pi Nora Huang

A micro-story is a type of literary text that is characterized by its extreme brevity.

Character Limit: 100 Words

Prompt: “Your worst day ever repeats in a never-ending loop, only broken by self forgiveness...”

The alarm rings.
Two cups of coffee on the table.
One cools untouched.
He leaves. She waters the dying plant, its leaves fading into yellow.
The calendar never turns.

At noon, they trade words like currency—small, tired exchanges.
By night, they divide the bed into equal halves, breathing in sync but dreaming apart.
Morning resets.
The same coffee, the same silence.
Suddenly one day, the cup slips, shattering on the floor.
She kneels, sunlight reflecting off the shards into her eyes.
For once, she doesn't clean it up.
The next morning, she opens the window.

GI2 Tau Cathal Yang

Designer: GI1 Gamma Angela Li

The weather here in UK is always unpredictable, rainy and moist, I always forget to bring my umbrella. Walking on the street, stepping into the shop, I am still confused with the salesperson's strange accent. Entering the place that used to be my “dream school”, it seems that it's as simple as eating for everyone to learn advanced knowledge at college, except for me. It might be because I ate British food. After school, I choose to visit a Chinese restaurant in the corner of the street. In this narrow space, I feel the generous warmth from China.

GI2 Lambda Kally Xu

Around the third month, I realized this wasn't going to suddenly get better. “My words sound borrowed,” I murmured, my tongue heavy with translation. The air smelled of milk and loneliness; even sunlight here had an accent. Each morning, I rehearsed the same smile, stitched together in a language that wasn't mine. Days looped like scratched film reels--blurred, brittle, and repeating. Mom was wrong. There's no tomorrow across the twilight line. “At least I've still got a chance to make one.” I said to myself. It will be a brand new day, a tomorrow just for me.

GI2 Lambda Chloe Yang

Countdown to Colors: Behind the Scenes of House Reveal 2025

Author: G11 Phi Jason Wang
Designer: G11 Sigma Sherri Sun



October 20th, 2025 marked a significant moment in our school's history—a day destined to remain in the memories of everyone who witnessed it. On that day, the four academies—Atlas, Ethos, Logos, and Pioneer—were officially unveiled, and all 870 students were welcomed as founding members. Each student was thoughtfully placed into an academy that reflected their personality, values, and unique spirit.

I am Jason Wang, Class of 2027, a current junior and a founding House Prefect in the College of Atlas. Today, I'll share with you, through my own perspective, the insights and stories behind the scenes of this grand ceremony.

Months Before the Ceremony

The House system could be compared to a seed buried in the soil for several months before finally emerging during the reveal ceremony. Its managing body—the Prefects—was formed around the same time. Interestingly, the Prefect program was originally created to promote care, support, and mentorship from junior and senior students to their younger sophomore peers. The Prefects were tasked with guiding sophomores through their transition into high school—offering academic advice as well as support for their adaptation to school life.

Us senior students embody the spirit of WLSA to help the younger students and bring



the whole WLSA community as one. As time passed, our roles expanded, intertwining with the newly developing idea of bringing students with shared qualities together—a concept that became the foundation of the House system.

Weeks Before the Ceremony

With the establishment of the four academies confirmed, the next step was determining how students would be assigned. The rumor that students were sorted randomly is completely false. In fact, extensive attention and effort were devoted to the placement process. Reaching a consensus was challenging, and personal tendencies often became key points of discussion. To make the process more equitable, we created a comprehensive survey addressing students' attitudes toward life, learning, relationships, and personal values. Through this, we were able to understand what each student was like at their core—their “inner soul.” Once we identified these traits, we matched them to the four symbolic colors: blue, red, yellow, and green, representing logic, courage, empathy, and wisdom. These corresponded respectively to Logos, Pioneer, Ethos, and Atlas.



A Day Before the Ceremony

The day before the ceremony arrived quietly, yet there was a shared sense among us Prefects that we were standing on the edge of something historic. Although it was a Saturday, the halls were not empty—they echoed with the sound of tape tearing, cardboard sliding, printers humming, and soft, concentrated discussions.

We worked like an assembly line: some typing, some trimming, some sorting, others double-checking spellings with the carefulness usually reserved for exam papers. I remember holding a stack of name cards and realizing that each card represented a real person whose high school

experience would change the very next day—new friendships, new community, new belonging. The cards were small, yes, but they were symbols—silent passports into a new chapter. On that day, we were not simply preparing a stage. We were preparing a moment—a moment of identity, unity, and belonging. And we knew that if we executed that moment correctly, even for just a second, it could remain with every student for a lifetime.



Ceremony Day

I woke up that morning with sweat in my palms. It was Ceremony Day—the day we had planned, worked, and waited for. It arrived slowly, almost stubbornly, yet full of excitement. In the hall, Prefects were already moving with practiced urgency—some adjusting microphones, some checking rows of chairs, others quietly rehearsing their lines for the fiftieth time. We gathered for one final run-through. The instructions were brief. We no longer needed long discussions—we had already put in the work.

“Remember your cue.”

“Don’t rush the pacing.”

“If anything goes wrong, stay composed.”

From behind the stage curtain, I could hear the students gathering—their footsteps merging into a low hum of curiosity, impatience, and half-awake energy. None of them knew what was about to unfold. None of them knew that their colors, identities, and stories were about to take shape. The lights shifted.

The music coordinator raised his hand.

Someone whispered, “It’s time.”

The hall doors opened.

And the ceremony began.

The rest, I believe each of you remembers.

This was everything—quietly, carefully, passionately—behind the scenes of the 2025 House Reveal.



Anchor Editor's Picks

Journalism:

Teenagers Redefine AI Ethics in School-Led Research (The New York Times)

(Recommended by G10 Class 2 Aveline Cao)

This piece shows peers building real-connection spaces—no big budgets, just heart. It proves your small idea can fix what bugs you. Relatable and inspiring for any student wanting to act.



Song: "Heroes" - David Bowie

(Recommended by G12 Eta Emmie Zhang)

This song is hauntingly beautiful. It's about love, fighting against all odds for it, and continuing to do so even when it begins crumbling down.

I've always had a special love for old music, and I think David Bowie is

one of the few to me that perfectly capture that magic of putting one's entire soul into their art.



Did You Know?

(By G11 Gamma Angela Li)

Lighthouse keeper Thomas Wake says in the 2019 film "The Lighthouse" that it is "bad luck to kill a seabird." Seabirds are widely believed among mariners to carry the souls of dead sailors to the afterlife. Injuring or killing them brings bad luck to the living and endangers the soul of the deceased.



Movie: Homeless to Harvard

(Recommended by G10 Class 2 Selina Feng)

Liz's story tells us that "birth" may determine the starting point, but "choice" is always in one's own hands. Her "success" does not lie in getting into Harvard, but in the fact that she never gave up her aspiration to "become a better version of herself" even in the darkest days.



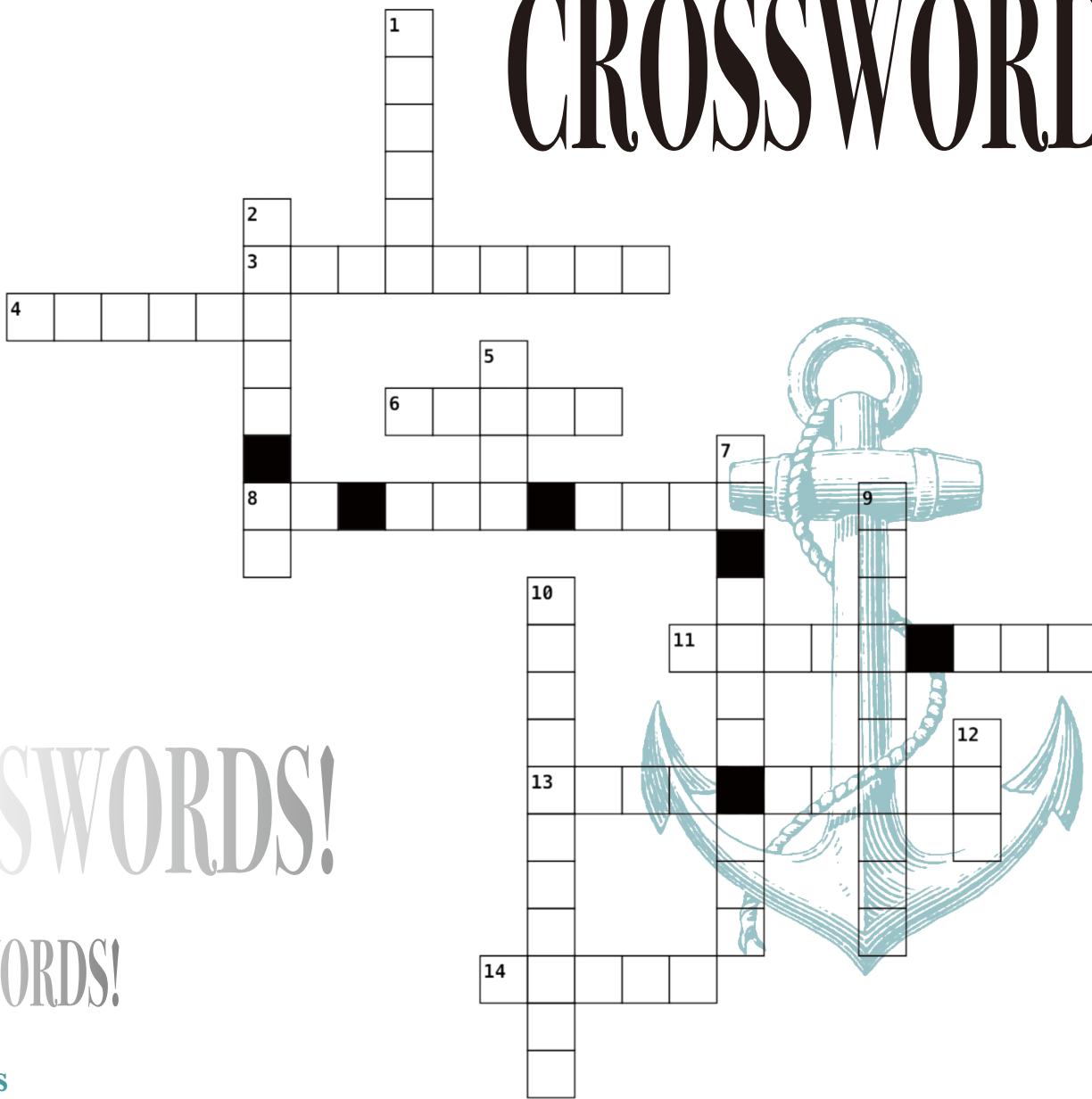
(Recommended by G10 Class 2 Selina Feng)

Taking "female growth" as the entry point, it integrates the waves of The Times, the struggles of human nature and the texture of the region, and possesses both literary depth and emotional resonance. The novel takes the lifelong "symbiosis and confrontation" between Lenon and Lila as its main thread.



Book: The Neapolitan Novels - Elena Ferrante

CROSSWORDS!



CROSSWORDS!

CROSSWORDS!

ACROSS

- (noun): A state of calmness and peaceful awareness.
- (adjective/verb): Relaxed and calm; to become or make someone relaxed.
- (phrasal verb): To take a moment to assess one's own feelings or thoughts.
- (phrase): A directive to focus one's attention fully on the present moment.
- (noun): The act of recognizing and acknowledging things as they are, without judgment.
- (noun): A comfortable, rhythmic pattern or way of functioning; a state of ease.

DOWN

- (idiom): Being fully focused and immersed in an activity.
- (verb): To relax after a period of stress or activity.
- (noun): The practice of maintaining an awareness of one's thoughts, feelings, and surroundings in the present moment.
- (noun): The general feeling or atmosphere of a person or place.
- (verb): To pause and restore oneself to a calmer or more functional state.
- (noun): A mental condition of complete absorption and focused energy in an activity.
- (noun): One's current mental or emotional state.
- (idiom/verb): To depart or disengage from a situation, often implying leaving stress behind.

(Answers will be revealed on WLIFE's official account before the release of the following edition.)



WLSA 上海学校
WLSA SHANGHAI ACADEMY

