



JURONGVILLE NEWSLETTER

*Ignite
your
Passions!*

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Preparing for the
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Games!



Part One:

Events &
Happenings

Secondary One Orientation



Ng Yun Zhi (3IN)



Rishi Vathul
Rajeswaran (3IN)

At 6.30a.m. on the 4 January, while most of us were preparing to get ready for our first day of school, our Student Councillors were already in school, raring to go. They were busily setting up and preparing activities to welcome the new Sec-ondary 1 students to Jurongville!

The purpose of the school's Secondary One Orientation programme is to help the new students adapt to the new school environment and make them feel at home.

The activities were planned with the intent to help everyone open up to one other and become friends. We hope that all who walk through our gates will feel a sense of belonging to our school.

Want to find out what some of the highlights of the Orientation Programme were? Scroll on down to the next page!



What's Your Identity?

One of the most memorable moments of the Sec One Orientation Programme for us was the Class Identity Activity. Students were required to fill up a game board similar to the monopoly game, with places that represented memories that the class experienced a special connection to. This activity enabled the Secondary 1 students to reflect and reminisce about their time in Jurongville so far, and it became a souvenir that reminded them of the fun times they had during orientation!



Let's have a Nerf War!

For this event, our Sec Ones were split into groups of five, and battled it out with Nerf guns to see who could capture the flag of the opposing team. As they played, they got to pick up bigger and better guns on the battlefield.

Each time the Sec Ones shot a person from the opposing team, it restricted their movement for a few seconds, creating a path to go and capture the other team's flag.

As much as we wanted the fun to last as long as possible, after two short days our time with the new Sec Ones came to an end. We hope that the Secondary One students will treasure this experience and look back on it with fond memories!

A ROARING Good Time!



Bryan Tan Zhi Kai
(2EM)



Tan Kuan Hao (2EM)

In 2022, the students of Jurongville celebrated Chinese New Year in spectacular fashion!

The Peer Support Leaders (PSL) of each class first shared with us some common superstitions about Chinese New Year. Next, we got to do a paper-cutting activity with our friends, making shapes out of red paper. After that, we were all invited to play a game of Blooket Gold Quest! The students competed to be at the top by answering CNY-related questions as fast as possible, the reward being to earn or sometimes even steal gold from our classmates!





Elsewhere, in the School Hall, the Upper Secondary students were treated to an exciting traditional drum performance. It was a welcome change after two years of celebrations over Zoom! Some of our seniors even got to go up on stage to try their hands at drumming which was a chance for them to flex their rhythmic chops.

Although all good things come to an end, this year's Chinese New Year celebration was full of excitement, liveliness, and joy!



A Thrilling Cultural Experience!



Nerajaron s/o
Saravanan (2RP)



Muhammad Rizky
(2RP)



Kee Kai Xuan (2EM)

For our Mother Tongue Languages (MTL) Fortnight this year, the Secondary 2 Higher Chinese Language (HCL) students learnt how to write Chinese characters on strips of bamboo with black markers. Long ago, in Ancient China, writings were written on bones and tortoise shells. However, after the introduction of styluses and inks, bamboo strips became more popular among people as they were more portable and easier to use.

"It was a very interesting experience and I learnt a lot about the history of the bamboo scroll. It was really fun when we got to do things hands-on and make our own bamboo scrolls!"

- Xuan Kai, 2 Integrity



Throughout the process of making the bamboo scroll, many of us enjoyed it, while others felt that it was troublesome to make, as we were actually experiencing the difficulties faced by our ancestors in the past who did not have modern tools.





Sherwin from 2 Integrity, showing off his brightly-painted oil lamp!

Meanwhile, our Secondary 2 Tamil Language students learnt about oil lamps and even painted on them! Doesn't that sound fun?

Oil lamps are light sources that function like candles, but do require a container in the lamp itself. These oil lamps are widely used in Hinduism. You might have seen these before, especially on Deepavali, the Indian Festival of Lights. It is believed that the light emitted by these oil lamps keeps evil out of homes.

While working on the lamps, many of us gave it our full focus and concentration, hoping to avoid mistakes as much as possible. Though it was quite tiring having to be so meticulous, we all still had fun and learnt something new in this MTL Fortnight activity!

Finally, the Secondary 2 Malay Language students learnt about traditional Malay clothes and accessories from the 19th Century that are still used to this day.

After a short lesson, we did a hands-on activity where we used recycled materials to replicate the form of several traditional costumes and accessories, such as the *samping*, *songkok*, *tanjak*, *keris*, *capal*, *selendang*, *dokoh*, *kerongsang* and *pending*. At the end of the day, much fun was had while learning a lot about our own cultures!

Samping is a short sarong that extends to around the knees of the wearer. It is part of the national dress of Brunei and Malaysia.

The **songkok** is a traditional black cap typically worn by Muslim males in South-East Asia. It tends to be made of a soft black cloth.

A **tanjak** is an elaborate piece of headgear made from a folded piece of *songket* cloth. It is typically reserved for formal ceremonies.

The **keris** is a distinctive, wavy-bladed dagger that has become an important cultural symbol in South-East Asia.

Talk the Walk!

A Behind-the-Scenes Featurette



Ng Yun Zhi (3IN)



Rishi Vathul
Rajeswaran (3IN)

The **Talk the Walk** series is something new and exciting that's happening in Jurongville Secondary. Last year gave us a taste of what this series is about, but this year the whole banquet is being offered!

So, what's it about? **Talk the Walk**—or **TTW**, for short—is completely home-bred: a collaborative project between our teachers, our very own Secondary 3 EL Champions and the Student Council. Consisting of five episodes, the series is designed to showcase the importance of our school's core values of **Perseverance, Respect, Integrity, Discipline** and **Empathy**.

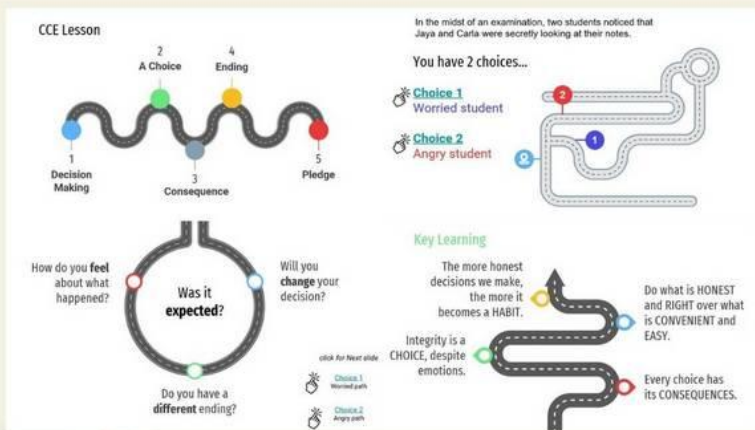
Here's how it normally goes: our teachers write a script and discuss it with the EL Champions, who then film it as a video. Then each video is featured during CCE lessons, facilitated by both class mentors and Student Councillors. At the end, students pledge to integrate the school value into their daily lives.





The **TTW** sessions serve as a way for both student councillors and EL Champions to engage with the student body. We get to learn what they would do and how they would react depending on what kind of situation they might find themselves in.

For example, in our most recent video on **Integrity**, students were asked to vote on whether they would tell on a classmate for cheating. From here, the path the video took depended on the students' decisions, with students discovering that certain paths held dire consequences that might even end up backfiring on them!



A sample of some of the slides used by our fellow Councillors presenting on **Integrity**.

As Councillors, we hope that all the hard work we've put into this series helps students to gain an understanding of how our school values can be applied in deeper ways. Ultimately, we all want to grow into responsible, respectable members of society!

A Day for Celebration!



Lim Hong Yu (3RP)



Koh Xiu Ling (3RP)

On the 4th of April 2022, the 29th Speech and Prize-Conferment Ceremony was held at Jurongville Secondary School. Compared to the past two years, this year's event was surely an amazing opportunity for all the prize winners to experience the ceremony together again. We were even treated to a magnificent display of showmanship by our very own Performing Arts groups!

Both of us are prize winners, and we felt that it was definitely different from previous years when we were told to receive our awards and then leave quickly due to the strict COVID-19 regulations. This year, due to the more festive atmosphere, we were able to experience greater feelings of affirmation in having done well, as well as our newly-discovered feelings of nervousness when going on stage to receive our awards.





This year, a pre-recorded video performance by the Chinese Orchestra reminded us that we were still adjusting to the new normal. Still, it was calming and relaxing to hear the traditional Chinese instruments being played together in harmony. This was then followed by live performances by the Modern Dancers with their beautiful dance moves, and the heart-thumping drums of Batucada which ended the ceremony with a bang. Our senses were truly awakened by the events in the ceremony and we felt truly blessed to have been able to attend it.

We definitely hope that the yearly event we fondly know and remember as Speech Day will return to how it was celebrated years ago with a bigger audience, more fanfare and all-out carefree fun! Perhaps next year? We can only hope!





Part Two:

Our Voices

Missing



Alcantara Althea
Shane Dela Luna (2DP)

My father has been gone for years now. Every time I asked my mother about him, she would tell me the same thing:

"He'll be home soon."

And I, of course, would always believe her.

Everyday I stayed positive and waited for the day he would finally come home and see how much his little boy had grown. My mother told me that if I studied hard enough, Dad would come back and praise me for being so hard working while he was away.

I believed my mother and studied hard, even topping my class and getting multiple awards. But he never came, so I thought that I wasn't working hard enough. I worked harder and harder to the point that I rose from topping my class to topping my school.

My mother was very proud and started to smile more. I get it, without Dad, Mum was probably very lonely. After a few more weeks we heard a knock at our door.

I opened it and there he was. Dad was finally home.

I knew the day would finally come. I was very happy to finally see him after so many years.

"I'm finally home, son," he said. "Close your eyes, I have a surprise for you."

I closed my eyes for a few seconds.

"Alright! Open them!"

I was so excited to see what he had for me that my eyes flew open. But all I saw was...

My bedroom ceiling?

I sat up, realising it was all just a dream. I sighed, a bit disappointed.

Oh well, he'll come back soon. I'm sure of it.



ARE YOU GAME?



Wong Yoke Bing,
Elizabeth (2RP)



Ong See Suan,
Xylia (2RP)

It is no secret that a large majority of JV-Nites indulge in mobile games from time to time. At the canteen, it is perfectly normal to find clusters of students in small groups, looking at their phones with an occasional cheer or shout as they compete furiously in online battles.

As stressed students, it is only natural that we find an outlet through hobbies such as art, videogames and social media. Since both of us are avid gamers ourselves, we are keen to find out what mobile games our fellow JV-Nites are interested in, as well as what the reasons are for this seeming obsession with video games.

Some who are unfamiliar to gaming may frown upon this activity and consider it a waste of time or a distraction. However, for those avid gamers who are able to juggle playing games and studying, it has become part of their daily routine that allows them to destress and decompress. Most of the time, students will start playing only when all of their homework is completed, so that they can fully focus on their game and not have to worry about work at all.

Personally, we belong to this very group of students, making sure to finish up all of our homework first before playing our games. This helps us set our priorities straight as studies are more important and playing games is merely to relieve our stress from studies.

Here's more of what we found out and what some JV-nites have to say about why they play the games they play:

Mobile Legends helps me and my friends bond with and understand each other as teamwork is needed to win!

Vivien

ML is competitive and relies on strategy. You need to use the right heroes and items to counter your enemies, and position yourself wisely.

You Jun

Brawl Stars is super competitive. Playing it makes me wanna win!

Anina

Genshin is an open-world game, like Legend of Zelda Breath of the Wild, which I also enjoy.

Hong Yang

This game has intricate costumes and excellent storylines. It's fun to see your character in all the different skins!

Gwyneth

Being able to play with friends and defeat our enemies is the most fun part about this game.

Jeslyn

We also asked how they balance their time between games and schoolwork:

Games: 2h30min.
Study: The rest of the day

You Jun

Schoolwork first.
Games later.

Adrienne

16

I only play games if my friends ask me to. When I play games, I take them seriously. But when I study, I will make sure I am serious about it too.

Fidelia

The Collector



Kiefer Tan Yu Ren (2RP)

As the hunter crept through the underbrush, he swiftly drew an arrow from his quiver, his eyes locked on the beast a few metres ahead of him.

The beast was—simply put—enormous. From head to tail, it was as long as the combined height of two men. Its chest rippled like a great wall of muscle. Its pelage was a burnished orange, splashed with vertical stripes of black. It was a majestic creature, something the seasoned hunter had never seen the likes of before.

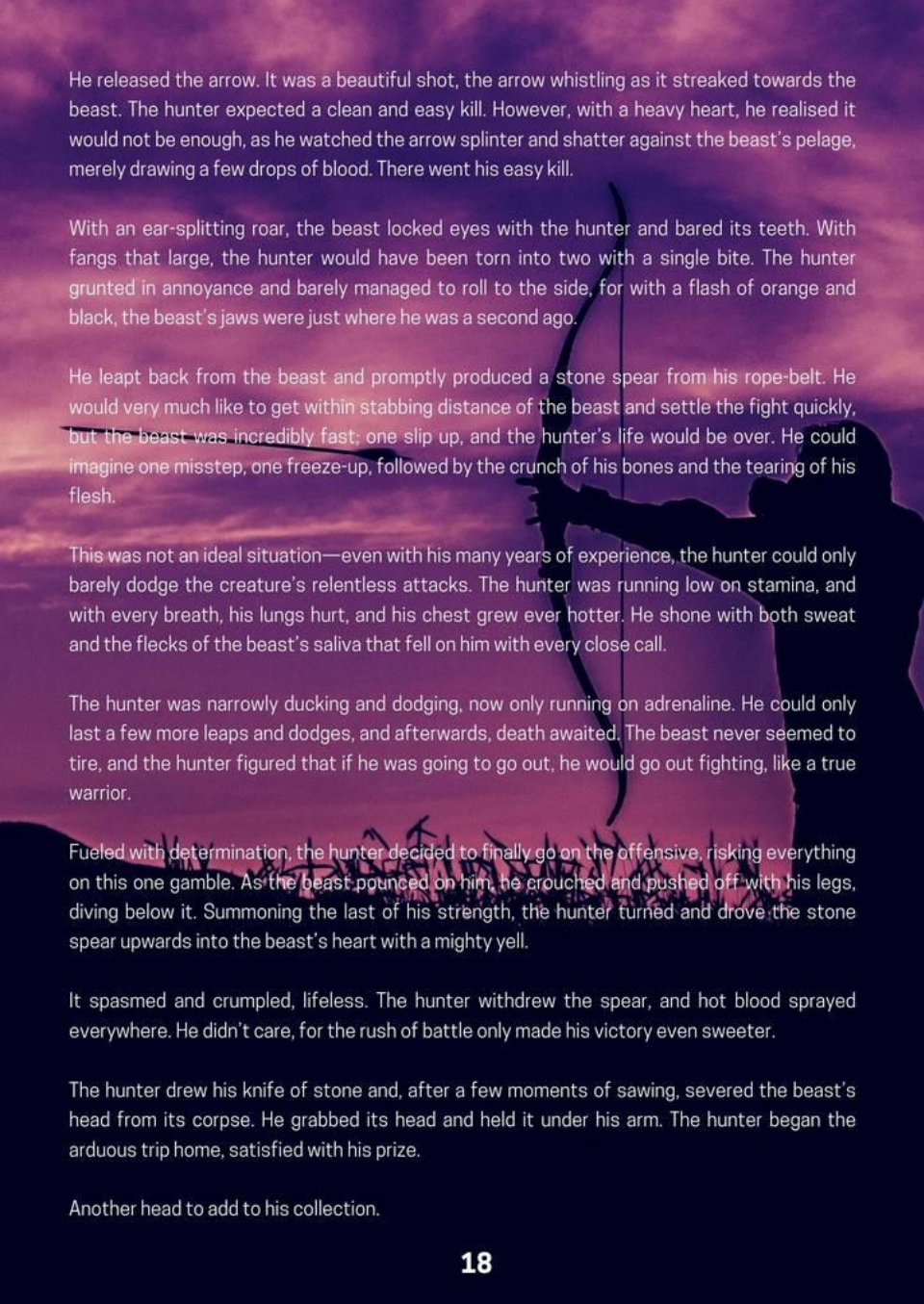
He absolutely had to have it. A great hunter deserved nothing less than a great prize, and this beast was certainly not lacking.

He promptly nocked an arrow into his yew bow, scanning his target for a vulnerable spot to aim for. He had to kill it instantly, lest the beast go for him after it found him. The beast's trunk was as thick as a tree, its heart practically impossible to reach. Aiming for its brain was the hunter's immediate solution. However, his prize would be the beast's skull, so he couldn't aim for its brain, or he would damage it. No matter how difficult it would be, he begrudgingly decided to aim for its heart.

As he raised his bow, his mind began to wander. If he managed to kill it with a single shot, his fame and prestige would skyrocket. He would be known far and wide as the hunter who took down a beast the size of a bear without spilling a drop of blood. However, if he failed to slay it instantly, and the beast found him ...

He shivered just thinking about it. He doubted his skin would fare well against those finger-sized fangs.

The hunter steadied his bow, taking a deep breath as he pulled the drawstring back. This would have to be the greatest shot he had ever taken. Anything less, and he would meet an undesirable fate at the hands of this beast.



He released the arrow. It was a beautiful shot, the arrow whistling as it streaked towards the beast. The hunter expected a clean and easy kill. However, with a heavy heart, he realised it would not be enough, as he watched the arrow splinter and shatter against the beast's pelage, merely drawing a few drops of blood. There went his easy kill.

With an ear-splitting roar, the beast locked eyes with the hunter and bared its teeth. With fangs that large, the hunter would have been torn into two with a single bite. The hunter grunted in annoyance and barely managed to roll to the side, for with a flash of orange and black, the beast's jaws were just where he was a second ago.

He leapt back from the beast and promptly produced a stone spear from his rope-belt. He would very much like to get within stabbing distance of the beast and settle the fight quickly, but the beast was incredibly fast; one slip up, and the hunter's life would be over. He could imagine one misstep, one freeze-up, followed by the crunch of his bones and the tearing of his flesh.

This was not an ideal situation—even with his many years of experience, the hunter could only barely dodge the creature's relentless attacks. The hunter was running low on stamina, and with every breath, his lungs hurt, and his chest grew ever hotter. He shone with both sweat and the flecks of the beast's saliva that fell on him with every close call.

The hunter was narrowly ducking and dodging, now only running on adrenaline. He could only last a few more leaps and dodges, and afterwards, death awaited. The beast never seemed to tire, and the hunter figured that if he was going to go out, he would go out fighting, like a true warrior.

Fueled with determination, the hunter decided to finally go on the offensive, risking everything on this one gamble. As the beast pounced on him, he crouched and pushed off with his legs, diving below it. Summoning the last of his strength, the hunter turned and drove the stone spear upwards into the beast's heart with a mighty yell.

It spasmed and crumpled, lifeless. The hunter withdrew the spear, and hot blood sprayed everywhere. He didn't care, for the rush of battle only made his victory even sweeter.

The hunter drew his knife of stone and, after a few moments of sawing, severed the beast's head from its corpse. He grabbed its head and held it under his arm. The hunter began the arduous trip home, satisfied with his prize.

Another head to add to his collection.



Cultural Appropriation

The What, the Why, and the How



Chit Su Thu (2IN)



Muhammad Zahirulhaq
(3IN)

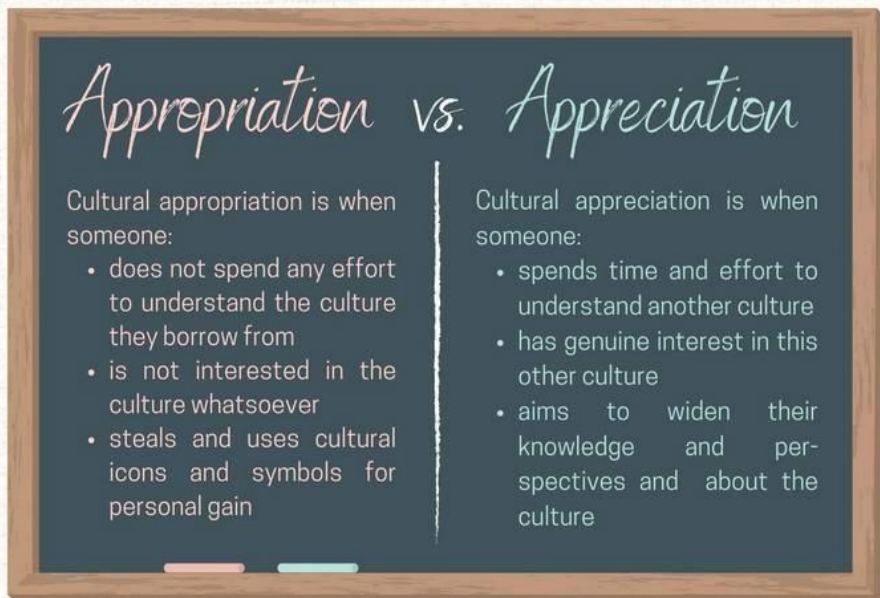
Cultural appropriation is a very broad topic and one that is often brought up on our favorite social media platforms. But what is it, exactly? Cultural appropriation occurs when members of a dominant or majority group adopt cultural traditions or elements of a certain minority group in a disrespectful, stereotypical or exploitative way. To put it simply, someone takes a cultural aspect of another group that does not belong to them, yet uses it for their own personal gain and discredits the original people whom the culture belongs to.

Obviously this tends towards the more negative side of things, and it is often considered something very rude, disrespectful and selfish. The wrongdoer totally disregards the fact that these cultural aspects actually have significance and importance to the original people. So, put yourself in their shoes, how would you feel if someone were to use something that is important and serious, something that belongs to you and your culture, as a means to gain personal wealth and fame?

It's not all bad though. There is a "proper" way to borrow from the cultures of others, and it's called cultural appreciation. Despite looking like very similar terms, cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation are rather different in their connotations and what they mean.

Appropriation vs. Appreciation

Cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation are in fact polar opposites! You can find some key differences written on the blackboard below:



Believe it or not, cultural appropriation can be found all around us: in TV shows, in movies, on social media and many other forms of entertainment. People find it especially offensive when a dominant group of people, most often the majority population in a given culture, snatches up bits and pieces of a culture from a minority group and uses it for their own gain — often even discrediting them by showing the said culture in a highly disrespectful and offensive way.

One simple example is the purchasing and use of accessories, pieces of clothing or other items that have an important cultural significance to the original group. Although seemingly an innocent fashion choice, many minorities can find it horrifyingly inappropriate, as these items or accessories could hold deeply religious or sacred meanings to them.

To find out more about who the worst cultural appropriators are, read on!

Who's the Worst Appropriator?

Katy Perry

For the absolute best (or worst) example of cultural appropriation you will ever find, look no further than pop star Katy Perry. She has repeatedly stolen from cultures all around the world, leading her to be labeled "pop music's worst cultural appropriator" by a long shot. Her 2013 music video for the song "Dark Horse" (pictured top right) was so over-the-top that it basically made fun of the Egyptian culture that she claimed to respect and appreciate. Perry has furthermore done the same thing with cultures as diverse as the Japanese (bottom right) and Native American ones, adopting their dress without regard for whether it is proper or not.



Robert Downey Jr.

Even Iron Man himself can be said to have engaged in cultural appropriation before, in the movie *Tropic Thunder*. In this movie, Downey played an actor who was actually white, but who felt he had to "act black" to get roles in movies. Cultural appropriation or just harmless fun? You decide.

Beyonce

Pop star Beyonce received backlash for her part in the music video for the song "Hymn for the Weekend". She sported henna tattoos and was clad head to toe in traditional Indian garb, despite obviously not belonging to that racial group.



How to Appreciate Other Cultures

Be respectful

Firstly, ask yourself: do you understand the meaning behind what you are doing and/or wearing, and do you respect the traditions behind it? The easiest and most basic rule for showing respect to another culture is to treat it as you would want others to treat your own.

Educate yourself

Be humble. Be willing to make mistakes and be wrong so that you can learn the right thing to do. While this is a useful thing to remember and practice for other things you might want to learn in the future, it applies especially to learning about culture. Talking to someone from the relevant culture and asking questions to them can give you an exciting conversation topic and widen your knowledge too!

Along with asking questions comes a willingness to accept corrections. In the event that you do make a mistake in your manner of getting to know another culture, don't recoil from it. Instead, listen and learn, and appreciate the person for taking their time to educate you.

Check your biases

Based on your own culture's practices, do you assume things about other cultures? Have you allowed these assumptions to affect the way you behave around others? If so, you may want to re-examine your own beliefs and how much merit they hold.

Use social media wisely

Social media has elevated cultural appropriation as an issue, both in positive and negative ways. Users could contribute to highlighting cultures online, but they could also face criticism if they appropriate items or traditions from other cultures. When this happens, users should be held accountable and politely informed. Being overly toxic is not helpful and could even drive the appropriator to form a bad impression of the racial or cultural group, furthering harmful stereotypes.



To Wait



Isaac Cho Seong Hyeok (2IN)

I still remember it, as clear as day.

My sister, Daryna, and I were playing with the other children of the city. Mama, an elegant lady in her early 40s, was peacefully preparing deruny for us, just the way we liked it. We couldn't wait to go home and have our fill of those delicious potato pancakes.

Then it happened.

The screaming, the sound of the buildings collapsing... I can still hear them now, images so clear in my mind it's as though it just occurred yesterday. The rumbling of the earth, as if it was about to crumble into pieces at any moment, right beneath my feet.

I felt Papa urgently grab my sister and I by the arms, his grip so tight I could feel his fingers digging deep into my skin. He dragged us to his car, a weathered 18 Yugo, which had already witnessed the collapse of the Soviet Union.

And now this.

"Dashnya, take care of your sister. No matter what happens, promise me!" Papa demanded, as he hurriedly fastened on our seatbelts.

I nodded my head, thinking he'd come into the car with us. But all he did was peck us both on the forehead...

And just like that, Papa, my only hope. He was gone.

The next few hours that passed were nothing but a blur. We waited and waited, in the shelter of the tough old car.

But Papa never came back.



It was only until the night sky blanketed over the city, kept aglow only by glowing embers and crackling fires. The city around us was nothing but piles of rubble—and I tearfully, painfully had to come to grips with the looming possibility that Papa *might* be dead.

It's now been two whole months since the invasion. The once chubby cheeks of my baby sister are sunken in, her face as tired and haggard as the expression Mama seems to wear permanently now.

But it's not over. It's so far from over.

Only until the invaders are expelled from the lands of my people.

Only when the monsters leave, taking with them their weapons and tanks and missiles that have brought so much death and misery to what was once a beautiful, thriving country.

Only when we are released from the tight, relentless grip of the merciless Kremlin, who ruthlessly turn children into nothing but casualty statistics—who turn brave sons, courageous fathers and even daring daughters into pieces we have to bury.

Only when those who have been left behind, to continue living on with only the memories of their loved ones to keep them safe and warm at night, can finally grieve in peace.

Only then will it be over.

But until then, we shall have to wait.

And wait.

And wait.

For Ukraine to finally be free once more.

Getting Back

in the

GAME



Muhammad
Mateen (2EM)



Ivo Tan Kun
(2EM)



Tan Yek Chuan
Eugene (2RS)

Don't you miss the days when we would cheer our friends on as we watched them compete for glory in heart-pounding matches?



#throwback to the last full National School Games in 2019, when our 'B' Division Football boys were crowned National Champions.

Well, fret not, because as of 29 March 2022, certain sports competitions have started up again at the National School Games (NSG), as the Covid-19 Safe Management Measures (SMM) are starting to loosen, and thus more people can start to play together again as a team!



Our 'B' Division badminton boys strategising with the aid of their coach.

Ever since the start of the pandemic, the Covid-19 restrictions prevented many JV-Nites from experiencing what competition truly felt like, whether as spectators or competitors. As a result, many JV-Nites, especially those of us from Sports CCAs, were greatly affected.



Our Tchoukball players preparing themselves for a match.

Now, let's take this opportunity to train hard and succeed at our competitions so we can bring pride to JVSS. I am sure that everyone's hard work will pay off! This year, many of us are looking forward to more competitions in the near future. After two long and arduous years, we JV-Nites are finally back and ready to bring Jurongville to greater heights! We cannot wait to see every sport succeed!



This year's 'B' Division Football boys at the West Zone Semi-Final. They went on to win the match, and progressed to the West Zone Finals.



A mix of our 'B' and 'C' Division Basketball boys training hard for their upcoming NSG matches.



Our 'B' Division Netball girls at the West Zone National School Games.



Our 'B' Division Tchoukball girls at the 14th Inter-School Tchoukball Championships this year. Both teams (one in red and one in black) placed first!

What do our friends think?

We interviewed a few members of Sports CCAs regarding their preparations for the upcoming NSG. Here's what they had to say:

Covid-19 affected my CCA training badly. We weren't able to attend training for a long time, and when we finally could, we were not allowed to play doubles. This year I'm a bit overwhelmed but also excited to finally get to play badminton competitively. Now that NSG is here, we are all starting to train more seriously.

Aishwarya, 'C' Division Badminton

Because of the restrictions, we weren't allowed to train with the Sec 1s or play as a full team. Although I am quite stressed because the coach has chosen me to represent the school in NSG, it also feels great to have the chance to play. Right now we are training hard and we feel a sense of accomplishment after each session.

Jia Hui, 'C' Division Netball

I'm happy just to be able to participate in NSG as it's my first time being able to represent the school. However, I still feel like we aren't all fully prepared for the upcoming games. The training sessions before the competitions start will be crucial, and we will have to train very hard to be able to compete with the other schools.

Benedict, 'B' Division Tchoukball

We're excited and proud to be able to represent JSSS at the NSG. We're pretty sure that we're all well-prepared to compete. Although our training is more intense and strenuous, we just have to push ourselves at each and every training and give it our 110%!

Haidel & Rauf, 'C' Division Football

I feel happy because we can finally get to compete with other schools after two years of no competitions. However, it's very tiring, as we have to train more than usual. But I would say that our CCA is prepared to compete with any school out there.

Dani, 'B' Division Football

I am glad as we can finally play against other schools. The training is way more intense than before. But, the preparation for NSG is going on very well now and I do think my CCA and my team are well-prepared for whoever we are going to play against.

Sanjay, 'C' Division Basketball

Misunderstood



Faith Ng Cheng Gin (2IN)

All I wanted was shelter, just a roof over my head, and some food.

But everyone despised me—and I do mean everyone.

Maybe it was the way I approached them in public, begging for food. But instead of helping me, they would scream in my face until I backed off.

Maybe it was the colour of my skin, too brown and black for them perhaps.

Maybe it was the fact that they didn't think I was clean. To be honest, I couldn't blame them. The only time I felt the cool gush of water was when it rained a week ago.

I wandered through the streets, making my way through the dark alleys, and eventually found a potential place to stay for the night. The door was open, so I quietly crept inside, hoping not to draw any attention.

Almost immediately, however, someone shouted.

Oh no, I thought. I've been caught!

"GRAB THE INSECTICIDE! NOW!"

Before I could even run, a toxic mist wafted through the air and seeped through my nostrils. I tried my best to unfold my wings and fly out of the door—but I couldn't gather the strength, I was too light-headed. I struggled to escape the venomous cloud, but it was as though a heavy burden was weighing me down.

WHACK! WHACK! WHACK!

The beating came with no mercy. Again and again and again, the impact so relentless that I could feel my body explode from the force. I collapsed, feeling my organs burst from within me, the poison engulf me.

Unable to bear it anymore, my eyes closed on their own—and then there was nothing but black.

Feeling Anxious?



Santhosh Velu (3DP)

Have you ever felt anxiety or other similar emotions at times? That's a question many of us would answer with a resounding "yes".

However, have you ever wondered *why* some people might face anxiety more often than others? Could it be, perhaps, the result of habitual procrastination or even some sort of compulsive disorder?

Well, it turns out that there are two main factors that could contribute to someone having anxiety attacks on a regular basis:

Averse past or childhood experiences could leave people traumatised. This could include events such as being abused by others or getting attacked by a fierce animal. These events leave significant mental scars, causing them to be anxious.

A person's lifestyle and habits could also be possible causes, depending on what activities they carry out on a daily basis. This includes procrastinating doing their school homework, forgetting to complete and submit assignments and prioritising distractions over revision, resulting in individuals doubting if they are themselves capable of doing well in their exams.

In some cases, changing one's lifestyle may be enough to help one overcome their anxiety. However, sometimes professional help is needed. Meanwhile, remember to stay safe and talk about your burning issues to a trusted adult or a counsellor. Let's work together to terminate mental illness and maintain a resilient body and spirit.

Recognising the symptoms

How do we know when someone close to us may be suffering? Here are a few signs that may help us know when we might be needed:

Depression is a mood disorder that causes people to exhibit mood swings, sleep disturbances, changes in appetite, and bodily pains with no apparent cause. Others might notice that they tend to neglect their hobbies, avoid classes and social activities, and be fixated on negative thoughts.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder is another symptom of anxiety that is a result of irrational thoughts and fears, and causes a person to carry out repetitive behaviour and routines.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder causes terrifying flashbacks in a sufferer's mind, and in severe cases may make a person believe they are reliving the traumatic experience.

Social Anxiety Disorder is a symptom that shows itself in a tendency to be awkward in social situations, leading to frequent embarrassment.

A Deep, Dark Secret



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As I sat outside the classroom, I knew I was in trouble.

The final exam was ending and everyone started to file out of the classroom. My best friend, Stacy, turned back to give me a sympathetic look. "Good luck," she mouthed as she walked away.

As I waited to be called into the classroom, I thought about Mr Kelvin and his, quite frankly, weird habits. He looked like a K-Pop star who had never seen the sun a day in his life. I had always wondered how someone could be that pale without resorting to plastic surgery.

He always came to school before dawn and left after dark. Nobody had ever seen him out in the daylight, but that didn't stop my female classmates from fangirling over him. Honestly, it was exhausting to hear all the *oohs* and *ahhs* every time he walked past.

Unfortunately, despite his good looks, Mr Kelvin as a teacher was... pretty bad, and that was already a rather polite way to say it. All the information he had given us was several years, if not decades, out of date. Worse still, no one dared ask him questions because of his menacing classroom demeanour. It was for this reason that I had decided to slip a cheat sheet into my pencil case. Of course, Mr Kelvin had found it within a minute of the exam beginning. It was as if he had seen right through the solid brass of my pencil case.

The sound of Mr Kelvin calling my name jolted me back to the present. With a resigned sigh, I trudged back into class.

Mr Kelvin was waiting for me at his desk. Glaring deep into my eyes, he started to interrogate me.

"So... how were you planning to get away with this?" I stayed silent, my head hanging down, feeling as if my mouth had been taped shut.

"Adam. You do know cheating is a major offense," he said. "Do you want to get suspended?"

Still looking down, I offered him no response.

Irritated at my lack of reaction, he slammed his fist against the desk, and I thought I saw the solid wood crack. I jumped out of my skin at the sound, and it startled me into saying what I said next.

In that moment of trepidation, I blurted out, "I know your secret."

Mr Kelvin narrowed his eyes. "And what exactly is my secret?" he asked, oozing fake politeness.

"I-I know you're a vampire," I hesitantly mumbled. Instantly, I regretted bringing it up. Now I was well and truly stuck in this mess. I could either pass it off as a joke, or tell him the truth.

It was already too late to take back my words, so I just decided to go with the flow. "I'll expose you to the whole school."

Mr Kelvin suddenly stood and started walking around his table towards me. His eyes remained fixed on mine, and in the light I could see that they were blood-red.

Someone had taken over my mouth, and was recklessly continuing to speak. "Let's do this: if you don't suspend me, your little secret will be kept with me and between these four walls."

Mr Kelvin stopped and looked straight into my eyes. "Promise me that you won't suspend me," I said with a sickly grin, and reached out my hand to shake his.

Mr Kelvin glared at my hand, ignored it, and suddenly rearranged his expression into a smile. He finally spoke.

"You're mistaken," he said. "I'm *not* a vampire."

I felt cold sweat trickling down my back as my last hope drained away. "What?"

Had my last gambit failed? Was I about to be suspended for cheating after all?

With a sudden hiss, Mr Kelvin bared his fangs and lunged at me, stopping an inch from my trembling throat. On his breath, I caught a faint whiff of a coppery, metallic scent.

"And you should be glad I never drink from students."

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