

Issue 1

The Muse



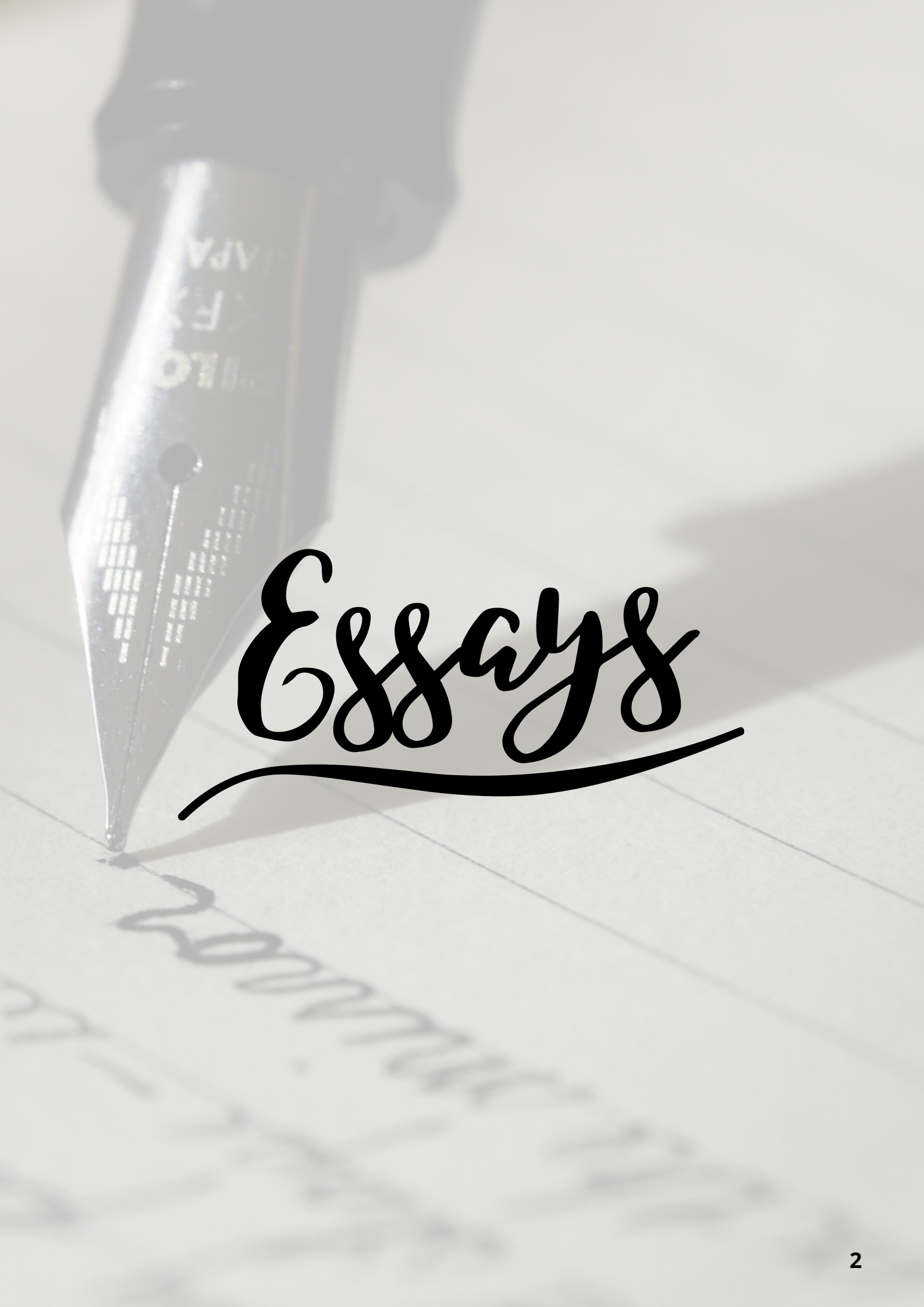
A collection of

ESSAYS | POETRY | SHORT FICTION

by the students of Jurongville Secondary School

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Essays

Education is the key to a better future. Do you agree?

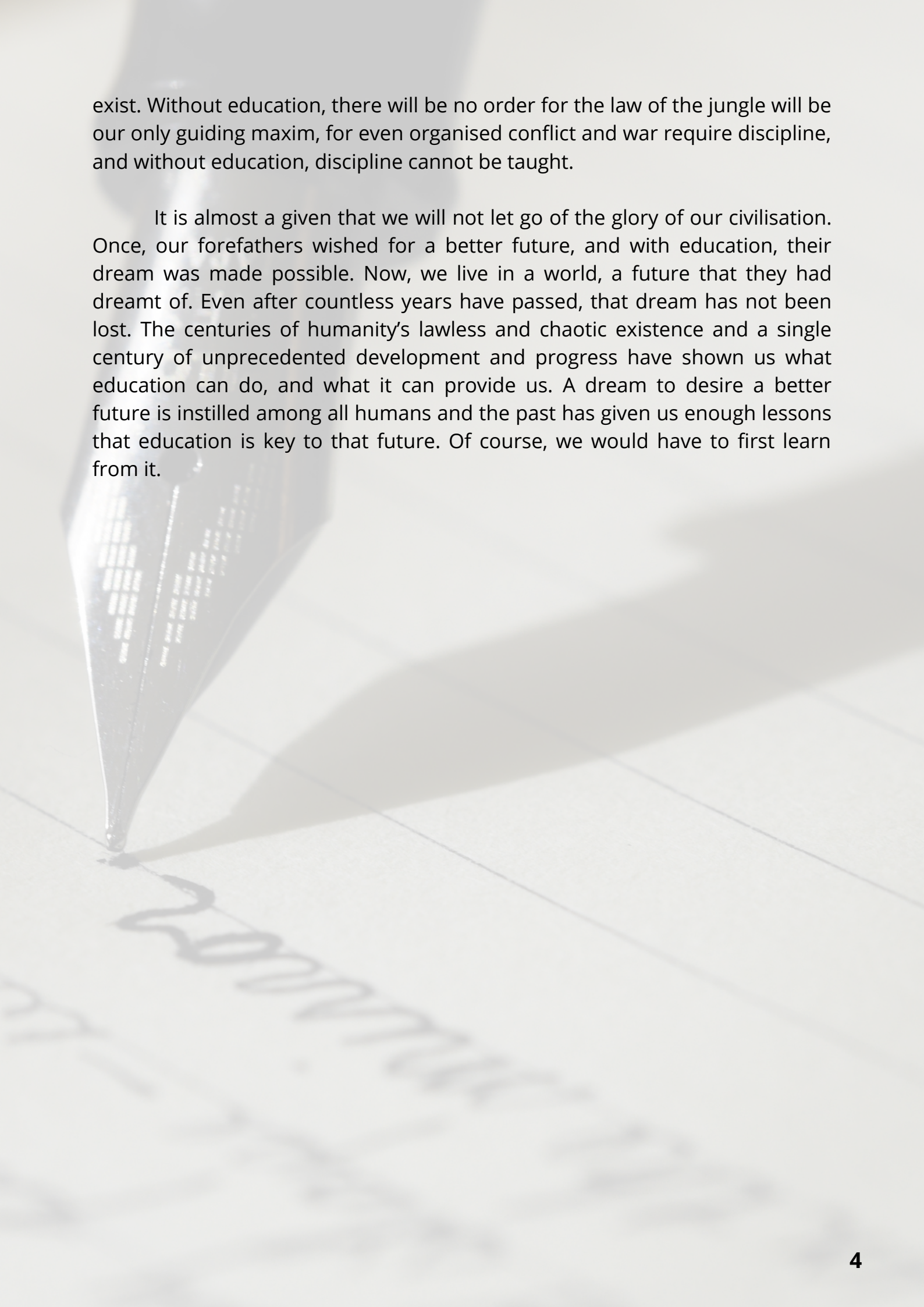
by Min Htut Thwin, Class 4E1 (2020)

You may have heard of the quote, 'Education is a weapon that can change the world.' Surely, no matter where they come from, no matter what their experiences are, most people will agree with this. It is blindingly obvious that education is the foundation of civilisation, and it is what the world we know—the modern, civilised, and advanced world—is based upon. Therefore, without a doubt, I agree that education will also be a key to a brighter world, a better future.

Since antiquity, education has played a part in the development and progress of humanity as a whole. The importance of education was not visible at the dawn of human civilisation, as war and conflict were widespread, and might was right then. However, time to time, a civilisation may fall, and the next will learn. Truly, even in the age of ceaseless conflicts and turmoil, education heavily dictated who would be the winners. Armies led by the well-taught won battles and those led by people uneducated in the art of war lost. It is almost ironic how education in a sense supported war, which sought, in turn, to destroy it. The Romans' conquest and the Mongols' invasion are the epitome of combat education, while the Vikings' lack of success or the fall of Medieval European forces to the Mongols remind us that even bloodshed needed proper learning of skills and techniques.

Then, as eras passed, we humans arrived at the Age of Exploration and the Industrial Revolution. The educated drove the Revolution forward and without them, civilisation, as we know it, would be very different. Education gave rise to new technologies, such as the printing press, which in turn, gave rise to a better standard of education. When I look back into the past, it amuses me that for close to eighteen centuries, we were living in wooden cottages and killing each other, and a mere century later, we would form nations, live in skyscrapers, and speak to each other amiably on bullet train commutes. For this is what science and technology have given us, and the miracle of the Industrial Revolution would not be possible without the helping hand of education.

Education—the spread of knowledge, the passing of skills—is what differentiates us from wild animals. Humans can pass on their knowledge to others, and they can put their knowledge to good use. History has taught us many things, and one of them is that, without education, civilisation will not

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a fountain pen's nib writing on a piece of paper. The pen is dark, and the ink is a dark color. The paper has faint horizontal lines. The background is out of focus, showing more of the paper and the pen's body.

exist. Without education, there will be no order for the law of the jungle will be our only guiding maxim, for even organised conflict and war require discipline, and without education, discipline cannot be taught.

It is almost a given that we will not let go of the glory of our civilisation. Once, our forefathers wished for a better future, and with education, their dream was made possible. Now, we live in a world, a future that they had dreamt of. Even after countless years have passed, that dream has not been lost. The centuries of humanity's lawless and chaotic existence and a single century of unprecedented development and progress have shown us what education can do, and what it can provide us. A dream to desire a better future is instilled among all humans and the past has given us enough lessons that education is key to that future. Of course, we would have to first learn from it.

'Experience is a hard teacher because she gives the test first, the lesson afterwards.' In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of having to learn from our own experiences?

by Tham Xue'er, Class 4E1 (2020)

Experience is a hard teacher. She will give you a test on a topic you have never seen or heard about and only teach you after the test. However, this hard teacher is the one who teaches us the most, by coincidence or on purpose. So how and why is it good to learn through experience?

First of all, learning through experience makes sure the knowledge gained stays. You feel the direct effects of what you do, both the good and bad. You see for yourself how one change, one derivative, can make or break your hard work. When you see something for yourself, not just by text in a book or by word of mouth, you are more likely to believe in it. When you see and experience a mistake and its consequence, you will know not to do that again in the future. When you are faced with a similar predicament, you know what should be done for the best results and will not spontaneously decide to risk it all and repeat a past mistake. Learning through experience thus teaches us how to avoid our mistakes and improve as the knowledge gained from the past experience stays with us.

Secondly, learning through experience can strengthen the mind and body. If you get a really bad wound, your body automatically responds by sealing the wound and protecting the body from being infected by bacteria and other harmful substances. This kind of experience tests the body's reflexes and lets it become more prepared for future injuries, thus making the body stronger as a whole as repair is carried out quickly. If you get sick, the immune system learns to fight off the harmful organisms or viruses, strengthening the body and helping you become immune to it in the future. If there is some form of bad experience with a close friend or family, your brain reflects on what you have done which led to the bad experience as well as what could have been had you acted differently. This reflection eases the pain and you learn to be more careful of what you do and say, which helps your heart and mind to grow stronger through this experience. Thus, learning through experience can strengthen the mind and body.

However, learning by experience may not always result in learning and growth. If an experience is extremely traumatic, a person may even die from it. It may be because the experience was severely debilitating and the person just

decided to end their life or the physical wound obtained by a mistake may have been fatal. Either way, in such instances, experience, though a good but hard teacher, may take lives away rather than improve them.

A milder form of experience, which comes in the guise of guidance, may be a better teacher as it can always help those who lose their way rather than drive them off the edge with a harsh lesson. Unfortunately, this milder form of experience can only take us so far, for eventually, the unknown and unrestrained experience will take over to give you its lessons. However hard a teacher experience may be, she will still be the one to shape us, nurture us, and help us thrive throughout our lives.

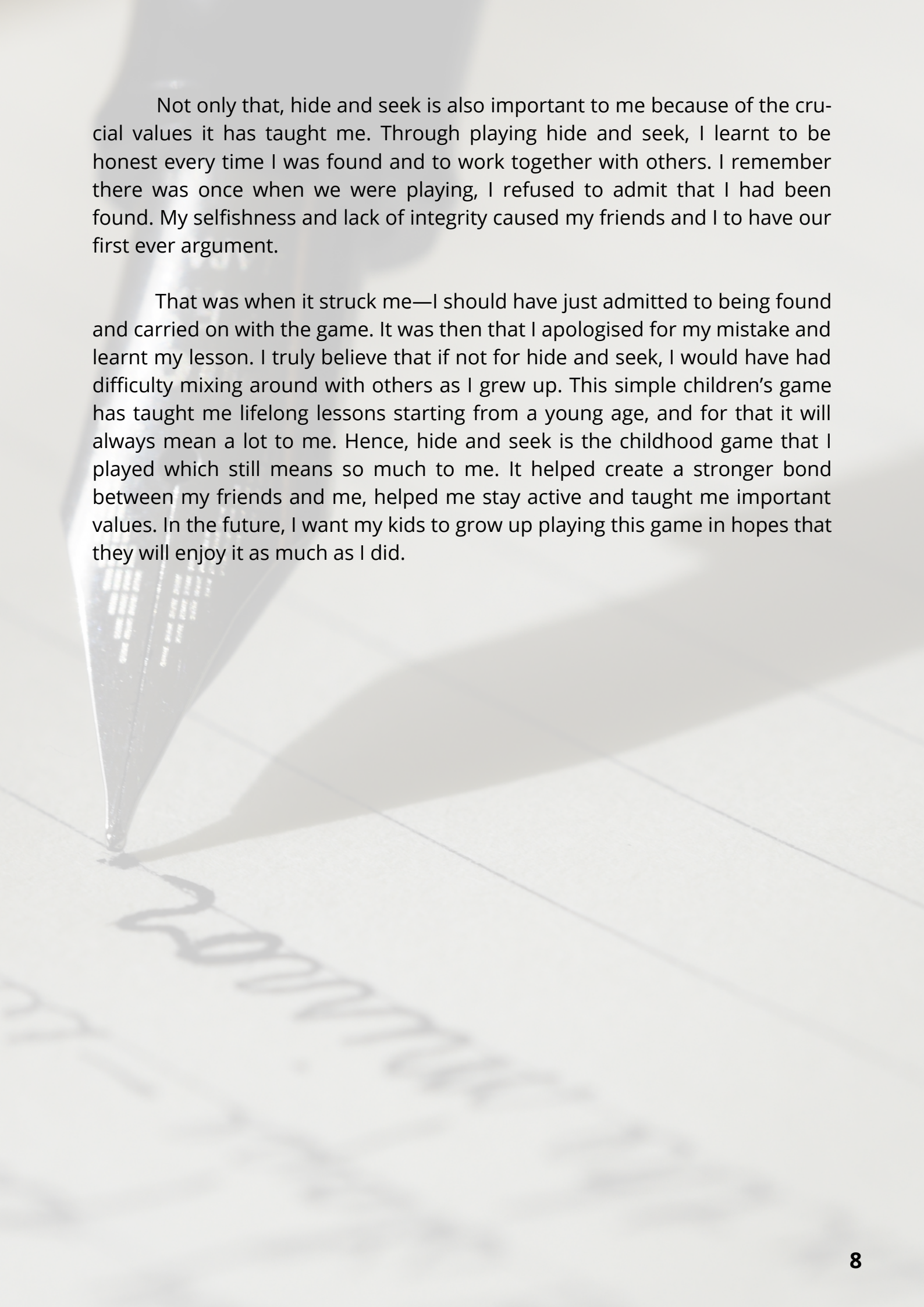
Describe a childhood toy, or a game you played, which still means a great deal to you. Why is it so important?

by Nurul Saharalynna Binte Taib, Class 4E4 (2020)

Growing up, I have always been active and full of energy. I loved playing games that would get me up on my feet and make me move around. As a natural born extrovert, I enjoyed interacting with others and making new friends. This is why the most important childhood game to me is hide and seek—it has helped me make the most out of my childhood in more ways than one.

Even to this day, hide and seek remains of great significance to me as it helped me bond with my friends. I would always play hide and seek with my friends every day after school at a nearby playground. I always became the seeker, counting to 30 before finding my friends. I would hear them giggling and running to their desired hiding spots. Sometimes I would even hear the leaves of the nearby bushes rustling—this was a dead giveaway of where they were hiding. After counting, I would look everywhere for my friends—behind trees, under slides, in the bushes. I would feel the rough tree bark and sharp branches of the bushes as I searched high and low for them. As soon as I found them, I would tap their arm, feeling their cold sweat against my fingertips. They would groan in disappointment that they've been found, but would carry on to help me find the rest. Although it was a tiring game to play every day, hide and seek has definitely helped me get closer to my friends and made our bond so much stronger. This game helped me forge lifelong friendships that I will cherish forever, and that is why hide and seek will always be important to me.

The game also means a lot to me because I was able to stay active. Although I am usually the seeker, I would sometimes let my friends take on the role as well. Whenever it was my turn to hide, I would run, climb, squat and jump just to secure a hiding spot of my own. I would see my friends running to their hiding spots as well. I would always feel really nervous every time the seeker was done counting, afraid of being found. Despite the racing heartbeats and sweaty palms, I will always be thankful that I grew up playing this game. If not for hide and seek, I would have been cooped up at home with my face behind a screen for hours on end. It has allowed me to keep in touch with the outdoors, which I might not have been able to do without this game. Hence, hide and seek will always have a special place in my heart for developing me into an active individual.

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a silver-colored ballpoint pen resting on a white notepad. The notepad has a faint grid pattern. The pen is positioned diagonally, with its tip pointing towards the bottom left. A dark, wavy line of ink is visible on the notepad, suggesting the pen has just finished writing. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

Not only that, hide and seek is also important to me because of the crucial values it has taught me. Through playing hide and seek, I learnt to be honest every time I was found and to work together with others. I remember there was once when we were playing, I refused to admit that I had been found. My selfishness and lack of integrity caused my friends and I to have our first ever argument.

That was when it struck me—I should have just admitted to being found and carried on with the game. It was then that I apologised for my mistake and learnt my lesson. I truly believe that if not for hide and seek, I would have had difficulty mixing around with others as I grew up. This simple children's game has taught me lifelong lessons starting from a young age, and for that it will always mean a lot to me. Hence, hide and seek is the childhood game that I played which still means so much to me. It helped create a stronger bond between my friends and me, helped me stay active and taught me important values. In the future, I want my kids to grow up playing this game in hopes that they will enjoy it as much as I did.

'Most teenagers are too reliant on social media.' Discuss

by Lee Siyun, Class 3E2 (2020)

Do you think social media was a beneficial creation? There are different views about whether teenagers are too reliant on social media. A group of people will agree that teenagers are too reliant on social media but some beg to differ. However, there are also people who are neutral about that statement; they think that teenagers are neither too reliant or not reliant on social media.

Firstly, the people who agree that most teenagers are too reliant on social media will think that way because mostly everyone has social media and seem to always be on it. Teenagers rely on social media to communicate with people and to interact with the world outside of their homes. Most teenagers rather stay at home and be on social media than go outside to have a face-to-face interaction with others. Teenagers do not know how else to spend their time than by being on social media. They will feel like they are missing something vital in their lives without social media. There are cases about teenagers having an addiction to social media, always being glued to their phones, being reported around the world. Therefore, people believe that teenagers rely too much on social media to keep in touch with the world and spend their time.

On the other hand, people might think that teenagers are not reliant on social media. They believe that teenagers can live without it and it will not affect them a lot. They believe that it only seems like they are on social media too much but they are just born in a generation who grew up with such technology. Thus, spending time on social media and using it to communicate is normalised for that generation. However, this does not mean teenagers are too reliant on social media. There is a trend that has been going around called the 'Social Media Detox'. It started off with social media influencers posting on YouTube about their lives without social media and their abstinence would last on average for a week to a month. After the detox period, the influencers will reflect about how things have changed without social media. The trend started because people started finding social media to be hazardous so they wanted to take a break. Eventually, it encouraged more teenagers to try it out too. More teenagers were willing to live without social media for a while and have admitted that taking a break from social media has benefitted them a lot. This tells us that teenagers are not overly reliant on social media as they did not

complain that they cannot live without social media and were even willing to give up for a healthier lifestyle.

Lastly, there are people who are neutral about teenagers' use of social media. They believe that while there are those who are too dependent on social media, there are also others who choose not to rely on it at all. These are people who have seen teenagers spending time on other hobbies besides social media, such as reading books. There are also teenagers who would much rather go out and spend time with others to get away from their phones, rather than being glued to the screens all day. However, they have also seen teenagers who need their phone everywhere they go and are always on social media even though their friends are right in front of them. These teenagers are likely to feel lost about what to do with their lives without a phone. Finally, there are also teenagers who strike a balance between being on social media and going out for social interaction. They balance their time spent on social media with other hobbies. While they can live without social media, they would prefer to use it for entertainment purposes. Thus, these are people who are able to be neutral about social media because they know how to find that balance.

In conclusion, there are different views about how much most teenagers rely on social media. There are three camps: teenagers who are too reliant on social media, teenagers who do not rely on social media, and those who are able to strike a balance. Which camp do you think you belong to?

What are some ways in which you manage your stress, and how are they helpful to you?

by Nur Alisha Amani Binte Mohamed Amin, Class 3E3 (2020)

As a student studying in one of the highest ranking education systems in the world, I face stress almost daily. Whether it is good or bad stress, I have the tendency to escape from it. Hence, I have a few ways to manage my stress, all of which I have experimented with in my many years of schooling here in Singapore. In this essay, I will be sharing with you some ways I cope with stress.

The first way I manage my stress is by listening to music. To me, one of the most therapeutic things in the world is plugging in my headphones and silencing my thoughts temporarily. When I have my favourite music blasting in my ears, I will be at peace and in my own headspace. The taunting and stressful thoughts in my head will be drowned away by the voices of my favourite singers. My belief in music remains intransigent—it is able to calm me down greatly. Besides laying down and relaxing with my headphones plugged in, I can also groove to the music. In this way, I am focused on the rhythm of my feet and the movement of my body, with not a care in the world. Hence, listening to music is my go-to stress reliever.

Secondly, to deal with the overpowering stress and intrusive thoughts, I cook. Cooking has always been a passion of mine but I do not have the confidence to pursue it because all my time is directed towards school. So, I cook for leisure and to de-stress. When I am cooking, my mind is no longer wandering towards thoughts about the school examinations. Instead, I would only think about the amount of salt I put in a dish or if the chicken has been cooked well enough. When cooking, my main focus is preparing the dish and not meeting deadlines for assignments. In addition, cooking is a learning opportunity for me. Each time I hold the ladle, my skill improves and my curiosity for the world of different types of cuisines expands.

Lastly, going out with my mates has helped me get out of the stressful state of mind. Every time I am bombarded with schoolwork and I cannot cope, I just give my best buddies a ring and we head downtown for a day of fun and relaxation. Being in the company of others helps me forget about my stress and stay present in the moment. I like to grab a meal with my friends and then we can catch up with each other's lives. This is a great time to bond. While talking, I am able to vent and go on a rant about my hectic life which I have found to be quite the stress reliever.

The abovementioned ways are how I keep my stress at bay.

per bird in my heart
own making
s are creased
cannot fly

Poems

one of these days
i'll unlock the cage
soothe her wings
and we'll rise in the sky together

A Wilting World

It's for the better, they said
Trees torn down
Animals pleading and begging
To have a chance at life

It's for the better, they said
Blocks of concrete popped up
Sucking life out
Poisoning our land

It's for the better, they said
Skies, no longer clear
Engulfed by dull and hazy fumes
Barely peeking through

It's for the better, they said
But is it true?
Is this what we needed?
Is this change?
Because I speak for the voiceless

When I say
No, it is not.

by Sandi Noe Noe Thet, Class 3E2 (2020)

Se pourrir*

How did it happen?
From holding cats
To swinging bats

You were slowly wilting
Like a rose

The smiles started to falter
With your head under water
From endless hugs
To being behind bars
And waterpark bands
To cuffs around your hands

**French: to rot*

by Nadra Raishah Binte Mohammad Nazri, Class 3E3 (2020)

The background is a soft-focus photograph of an open book. The pages are filled with handwritten text in cursive. A dark pen lies on the left page. The overall tone is light and artistic.

Short Stories

Fairy Tales

I woke up in total shock one day. I looked around. *Where is the castle and the guards who were supposed to protect me?*

What if I had turned into a monster?

I then came across a mirror. Thankfully, I was still a toad.

Ng Yun Zhi, Class 1E4 (2020)

"I was always bullied by my step-mother and sisters, I wish they treated me nicely."

Cinderella cackled as she wiped away the dark red splatter.

"Now I'm finally free, I can do whatever I want now."

Cinderella turned and smiled at her animal friends locked in cages.

Yee En Tong, Class 1E4 (2020)

Seeing the empty porridge bowls on their return, the bears sneaked upstairs. They checked Little Bear's bedroom. The bed was messy. Then the Middle Bear's bedroom: slightly. But in Big Bear's bedroom, the bed was neat. He exclaimed, "You two lazy bears! Don't you make your own beds?"

Sundaram Rahul Prasanna, Class 1E2 (2020)

Horror

"The time has come," my father muttered morbidly. A man entered and tied our limbs up, as we got dragged into a lorry.

"Give me a chance to live, please," I pleaded, but my words fell on deaf ears.

Well who am I to speak? I am just a young goat.

Aurelia Sarah Binte Ramli, Class 2E2 (2020)

I'm shivering in fear, cold sweat rolling down my face. I'm just staring at the door, waiting. I know, I'll be facing a nightmare. I'm here on my chair, biting my nails, heart beating faster than ever. Oh no, here she is...

"Class, please hand in your homework."

Muhammad Darwisy bin Rahiman, Class 2N1 (2020)

I was only two years old when I started seeing something. Every time I was alone, a white scary figure shadow appears. 'Til now, I see the same thing. I see it everywhere and it never stops following me. It is the most loyal ghost I have ever been with.

Nur Farhysha Beevi Binte Mohamad Faizal, Class 2N1 (2020)

Sci-Fi & Fantasy

A beam of starlight shines into the ward through the window, like a signal from another planet. I knew it was time to go back.

"Remember to tell me when you reach your planet, I will miss you forever."

"So will I."

'The heart monitor stopped beating.

Cheng May Sing, Class 3E1 (2020)

Year 2060.

"How are you today, Charles?" The AI voice rang in my head. My personal robot assistant which I treat as my wife, asked.

"I wonder, did God create year 2020's epidemic?" I asked bluntly.

'No, Charles.'

"Did I?" I jokingly asked.

"Yes, Charles."

Wong Jun Yuan, Class 3E1 (2020)

She went around my shoulder as I stood in fear. She told me there was bigger stuff to be fearful of. As she rose up slowly, she turned around and smiled before turning into a being with marvellous wings. Looks like the gods have betrayed us all.

Joseph Yap Chee Meng, Class 3N1 (2020)

