A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Dear readers,

This issue is the result of a year of hard work, both from our editors and from our greatly talented writers.

The IB Herald prides itself in providing opportunities for aspiring writers, even artists, to express themselves. This issue continues to strive towards that goal, and includes a wide array of articles. In the following pages, you will find discussions of Hong Kong’s political environment, the value of education, and the entertainment industry in Hong Kong; you will also encounter various teacher interviews, reviews of TV shows and even a commentary on arthouse cinema. Of course, you will also hear from our aspiring artists — or photographers.

This issue marks the final issue of my term as Layout Editor and Editor-in-Chief, before I hand the publication over to a group of bright and promising successors. As it so happens, both the quality and quantity of articles in this issue exceed those of the previous issue; our magnum opus, if you will. And of course, I am confident that the issues to come will set the bar even higher.

If you have any suggestions or would like to join the team, please do not hesitate to contact us via dbsibherald@gmail.com. Once again, thank you for your kind support, and we hope you enjoy this issue.

Happy reading!

Linus Lam Yan To
Editor-in-Chief
Localists have received unprecedented support in the recent election. As a third major political power, could their inclusion in the local political scene break the pro-establishment and pan-democrat duopoly?

A forum was being attended by C.Y. Leung. It was early 2015, when the proposal of electoral reform in 2017 was being fiercely debated inside and outside of the Legislative Council (LegCo). Leung was asked how he would deal with the filibustering pan-democrats. He responded, “The short answer is that you [citizens] register as voters and use your votes to vote them out.” Leung’s call gave little traction to the campaign of pro-establishment camp. They, as well as the pan-democrats, lost support and resources to the increasingly vocal localists, who advocated either independence or self-determination, and gained small but monumental victories in the 2015 District Council elections and the 2016 LegCo elections.

Voter turnout also broke records, suggesting increased political awareness in society. The localists have the promising combination of new ideas and considerable public support, and should therefore attempt to steer Hong Kong in the direction they desire—but considerable hurdles lie ahead.

The first hurdle is political truth—essentially the boundaries of what can be done. For example, Hong Kong is an “inalienable part” of the People’s Repub-
lic of China, which has a less favourable political system (whether democracy is a preferable system is a debate for another time): a one-party socialist government which the national Constitution calls a “people’s democratic dictatorship.” This system conflicts with the ideals of democracy, and therefore our semi-democratic system is biased. The Beijing-controlled LegCo and Chief Executive election processes ensure that our executive and judicial branches are dominated by those who adhere to the values of the Chinese Communist Party and not necessarily the values of Hongkongers. Despite that the pro-establishment camp has never been supported by the majority, they are the group that we have been governed by. The crooked system limits the range of actions non-establishment forces can take. They cannot join the executive branch as so many of their ideals differ from those of the government. In the legislative branch, they are destined to always be the minority, as the majority of the pro-establishment camp is safeguarded by this biased system.

The second hurdle is political climate—what separates the principally plausible possibilities from the practical possibilities. The duopoly that was created and reinforced by a crooked political system has been deeply ingrained into local politics, save for rare occasions where the Liberal Party or the Democratic Party switches allegiances. This is extended to the general public, as the supporters of each side become more united and, at times, radical to battle against the other. Radicals do exist on the pro-establishment side, such as Leticia Lee. At the same time, communication and finding common ground among the two sides are extremely difficult. Recently, the Democratic Party negotiated with the Hong Kong government and the Liaison Office of the Central People’s Government across the strait, the legislative body of Taiwan, the Legislative Yuan, has a notorious history of fighting over bills. As Emily Lau, Hong Kong’s first ever female legislator, put it, “not only does undermining parliamentary order fail to promote democracy, obstructing LegCo’s functioning stalls Hong Kong’s development.” It is unlikely and unjustified that violent scenes should become frequent in LegCo, as it achieves nothing more than non-violent methods (barring perhaps slightly more media attention) but gives rather worse impressions and implications.

However, Lau does support non-violent acts of dissent, which she considers justified as they are in

advocates. Even a historic meeting between student leaders of the movement and top government officials during the movement yielded no results. We are, however unfortunate it may be, trapped in a vicious cycle of divisiveness and radicalness on one hand, and a mutual refusal to cooperate, with neither side having any incentive to make any compromises. It is analogously the Prisoner’s Dilemma with a twist, as in choices are not one-off but repeatedly made, and each side knows the other’s previous choices. Unfortunately, it is the society which pays for being in the wrong equilibrium—that is to say, not the optimum one—as no progress can be made with stalemates.

However, the problem with the localists as a third force in parliament and hoping they will bring change is that they are inherently against the government. This turns them into a subset of the “non-establishment” camp, a relatively new concept which effectively implies we return to the undesirable dichotomy albeit in a slightly different manner. The key to them being able to make a difference is then their ability to be different from the other two forces in a constructive way in different areas as political entities.

The first area of resistance is the parliament, such as filibustering, which Hongkongers are painfully acquainted with. Since 1997, we have gone from very long speeches to throwing objects at government officials and physical altercations. Indeed, some localists speak of using force against the tyranny of the government (以武制暴). However, not only has this
Yau Wai-ching, center, and Sixtus "Baggio" Leung, right, are escorted by pan-democrats to enter the legislative chamber in Hong Kong on October 26, 2016.

accordance with the Rules of Procedure and serve the political purpose of stalling the government’s “evil” bills. Here there is no room for impact for the localists. These acts are after all the prominent acts of the pan-democrats. Time again the pro-establishment legislators rally for and emphasise the importance of amending the Rules of Procedure, but ironically, they also have a history of filibustering—in 1999, Daniel Jasper Tsang Yok-sing and Tam Yiu-chung delayed the vote to ensure the Provision of Municipal Services (Reorganisation) Ordinance was passed under the support of their allies who were absent on the planned date of voting; this year, the entire pro-establishment camp planned a walkout in a meeting to prevent Youngspiration duo Sixtus Leung and Yau Wai-ching from taking their oaths. The government is also cooperating, tightening its control over LegCo by barrading candidates from entering the election and applying for judicial review regarding legislators’ oath-taking methods. What can be legitimately done very likely has been done, if they have not made illegitimate in the near future. Thus, localists are likely to have little constructive impact in this area.

Another area that can be explored is resistance in court, a manifestation of the checks and balances of power in Hong Kong, well known to even the average secondary school student. In the past, judicial reviews have been used numerous times by Hong Kong citizens to challenge government decisions, the most notable individuals being Kwok Cheuk-kin “Cheung Chau King of Reviews” (長洲覆核王) and Leung Kwok-hung “Long Hair” (長毛). However, this form of opposition is losing effectiveness for two reasons. Firstly, the government is now turning the tables. It has, at the time of writing, filed to invalidate the oath-taking of six legislators whose political stances range from pro-independence to traditional pan-democrat. As Long Hair put it, “I’ve got no money and the government has heaps [of it]. It’s using public funds to remove elected legislators from office and change Hongkongers’ political decisions.” The inconvenient truth is that court battles require big money, often in the millions of Hong Kong dollars. The playing field is inherently uneven since rarely can anyone match government spending. Secondly, Hong Kong’s “mini-constitution”, the Basic Law, was written in the interests of Beijing and not necessarily those of Hong Kong, and furthermore the National People’s Congress Standing Committee has the power to interpret it. It is widely agreed that each interpretation affects the rule of law in Hong Kong, although some suggest “damage” is the more appropriate word. The recent interpretation, only the fifth ever in the history of the Basic Law, poses a potential threat in which the Basic Law can be effectively amended for political purposes or otherwise. Article 104 of the Basic Law states that:

> When assuming office, the Chief Executive, principal officials, members of the Executive Council and of the Legislative Council, judges of the courts at all levels and other members of the judiciary in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region must, in accordance with law, swear to uphold the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China and swear allegiance to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China.

The interpretation stated that the oaths in question should be taken in a “solemn and sincere” manner; that an oath-taker who “refuses” to take the oath cannot retake it and should be disqualified; and that it is the duty of the oath administrator to confirm the legal taking of the oath. To many democrats, this explanation takes advantage of the phrase “in accordance with law”. Since practically the explanation has imposed new restrictions on the Basic Law and also the Oaths and Declarations Ordinance, democrats reasoned that this was in fact an amendment to the Basic Law, setting an unwanted precedent which allows the NPCSC to circumvent Article 159, stipulating the procedures for amending the Basic Law which have never been undertaken:

> The power of amendment of this Law shall be vested in the National People’s Congress.

> The power to propose bills for amendments to this Law shall be vested in the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, the State Council and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. Amendment bills from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall be submitted to the National People’s Congress by the delegation of the Region to the National People’s Congress after obtaining the consent of two-thirds of the deputies of the Region to the National People’s Congress, two-thirds of all the members of the Legislative Council of the Region, and the Chief Executive of the Region.

> Before a bill for amendment to this Law is put on the agenda of the National People’s Congress, the Committee for the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall study it and submit its views.

> No amendment to this Law shall contravene the established basic policies of the People’s Republic of China regarding Hong Kong.

The threat against our rule of law and judicial independence sounds far-fetched, but is totally legitimate. The Chinese government is well known for having a unique understanding of “rule of law” in that it is a tool for ensuring political stability and eliminating foes. In 2015, in an event that came to be dubbed “The Great Arrest” (七零九,大抓捕), over three hundred activists and lawyers were taken into custody in various locations all over China in a single day. One of them, a lawyer was named Xie Yanyi (谢燕益). His wife recalled when he first brought a lawsuit against Jiang Zemin, then Chairman of the Central Military Commission. She asked her husband, “Even the Chairman can be sued?” “Sure,” Xie responded, “so long as it is according to the law.” He and his colleagues suffered this fate: a forced disappearance, with means of communications to lawyers and family severed, and no schedule as to when his case would be taken to court. It frightfully reminds us of Lam Wing-kee of Causeway Bay Books, who was abducted and detained in secret for months in China and lived to tell the tale.

The irony is that the localists have made a large impact in this area of resistance, but in a totally negative way. Even though the Youngspiration duo started out intending to test the boundaries of the law, with consequences of unexpected magnitude, their fatal error was failing to present a case with a remote chance of winning. As Thomas Au, Judge of the Court of First Instance wrote (italics added for clarity):

> 13. It is important to note that, notwithstanding the caz and the sj’s above forefront contentions made in these applications, Mr Leung and Ms Yau have not put forward any positive case by way of submissions or evidence that they did not “desire or neglect” to take the LegCo Oath when requested to do so on that day.

And:

> 120. Thus, I agree with Mr Yu’s submissions that the outcome of this case as regards Mr Leung and Ms Yau is the same with or without referring to the terms of the Interpretation.
The actions of the Youngspiration duo were severely detrimental to the image of the localists as a whole. Not only have they drawn an interpretation from the NPCSC for the Basic Law for zero gain to the entire non-establishment camp, their decision to express their political views in their oaths undermined the localists’ efforts as a whole to spread their influence using what resources they would have been able to utilise as legislators. The pro-establishment camp also wasted no time in characterising the duo as childish figures. Consider Taiwan’s Sunflower Movement which took place in 2014. Kuomintang, the ruling party at that time, intended to rush the Cross-Straits Trade Service Agreement through the Legislative Yuan, Taiwan’s parliament. The Agreement came under criticism, as some feared that it would enlarge Taiwan’s economic dependency on China and increase political pressure from Beijing. KMT’s holding of public hearings was also attacked as notable opposing figures were deliberately uninvited. Students and other civic groups eventually forced their way into the Yuan, resisting attempts by police to expel them from the legislative chamber. After more than three weeks, the government was forced to put the Agreement on hold until all relevant legislation was passed. The Movement posed a dilemma in the use of force as a method of dissent. In Hong Kong, localists like to use the phrase “principles without a bottom line” (有原則無底線), which allows for higher flexibility than the mantra “peace, rationality, non-violence” (和平、理性、非暴力) as promoted by Occupy Central with Love and Peace in 2014. However, the argument against force in legislative chambers stands equally in the streets. Even so, it is important to understand that the Sunflower Movement is not representative of the concept of “resistance in society”. “Resistance” in this sense refers to the motivation of citizens to not sit idle in the face of government policies but take actions. The most commendable characteristic of civil movements is that they are based on virtues such as unity, cooperation, self-initiative, and so forth. They do not necessarily negate the government’s actions and policies, but rather may be constructive. For example, one policy that captured public attention would be public bazaars. Current government policy discourages such activity: it has to a large extent stopped issuing new licences to hawkers for decades. The very roots of localists suggest that hope is to be found among the streets rather than in air-conditioned offices in tall towers. It is where they can transform society from the bottom up and ultimately change the society for the better. As the saying goes, “insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” The pro-establishment camp and the pan-democrat camp have used the same set of methods for thirty years and set the pattern of binary opposition in stone. The Lennon Wall of Hong Kong, as it was named, was covered by the opinions and voices of citizens written on Post-its by the opinions and voices of citizens written on Post-its.
OPINION

Regardless of whether you were pushed by your parents, or in a moment of exam-induced terror, you’ve likely taken tutorial classes at some point in your school life. I don’t intend to contest whether or not a parent should force a child to attend tutorials, just the internal conflict a student may have when considering tutorial classes.

I have been told by many people that they could not bring themselves to take tutorial classes because they feel that relying on an external teacher is pretty much equivalent to selling yourself out. By taking extra classes, you feel like you’re admitting to yourself that you haven’t been trying hard enough, that you’re giving up on trying it yourself, and have decided to let someone else take over for you. For the sake of their own scruples and self-worth, they firmly refuse to take tutorial classes. The first thing to note is that people must have enough faith in themselves to recognize that they can do better if they try. But what of the students who don’t have that faith in themselves?

It’s undeniable that there are countless students whose self-esteem have been beaten down by the system (and themselves) more than once. Do they resort to tutorials simply because it is better than wallowing in their own failure? Possibly. But anything is better than stagnating in hopelessness. There is no shame in trying to improve yourself; would you discourage a drug addict from going to rehab? If you’ve reached a point where you have enough faith to rely on you and yourself alone, then by all means stop taking tutorial classes; but if you are like the countless students with insecurities and just feel more secure with something else to rely on, then you shouldn’t feel ashamed in trying to better yourself for the sake of your accomplishment and emotional security. This extends to everyone: you shouldn’t think less of people for trying to better themselves and recruiting someone to help them.

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Tutor terror

The issue of tutorial classes has polarized students and teachers alike. Regardless of whether you were pushed by your parents, or in a moment of exam-induced terror, you’ve likely taken tutorial classes at some point in your school life. I don’t intend to contest whether or not a parent should force a child to attend tutorials, just the internal conflict a student may have when considering tutorial classes.

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One may see attending tutorial classes as taking advantage of an opportunity and that we owe it to
ourselves to take advantage of this time-limited opportunity while we can. Never again will we so easily be able to trade money for knowledge and validation. In college and life beyond that, there are no experienced institutions that will reach out to try and help you specifically; you must rely on you yourself for accomplishment, validation, and most importantly, self-esteem. Validation is never as quantifiable as in school; anywhere else, it is far too easy to be left with only a vague idea of your progress (not to mention the paranoia of “I’m messing up so badly I don’t even realize I’m messing up”). Of course, one should always rely on other things to measure their self-worth even when in school, but when one can take a helping hand, why should one refuse?

It’s known that tutorial classes are controversial among teachers as well. The general opinion seems to be either that teachers are disapproving, or that they don’t see anything wrong with it. As a student I am unsure of the reasoning behind either of these perspectives, but I myself don’t think teachers should be disapproving of students taking tutorial classes. If a teacher takes it as a personal jab that somehow insinuates that their teaching is inadequate, the only advice I can give is that they shouldn’t take it personally. Students take tutorial classes because they know their teachers believe in them and expect them to do well; in order to meet those expectations to avoid disappointing their teachers and themselves, they can and will try to improve, even going so far as to *gasp* do well; in order to meet those expectations to avoid disappointing their teachers and themselves, they can and will try to improve, even going so far as to “gasp” take tutorial classes.

The choice to take tutorial classes may be an evaluation of one’s self-worth and esteem, and far more than simply about academics. Teachers, parents and often even students ourselves fail to understand what taking tutorial classes mean for us and for our education. Should one be judged for trying to get a good education; should one be judged by peers, teachers, and even ourselves for making an effort to improve? For the sake of education at large, I sincerely hope not.

It was an ingenious move for Starbucks to expand to Hong Kong. Hong Kongers are fueled by the pressures of a machine-gun onslaught of various responsibilities and issues, and coffee only fuels the manic rush of a teenager whose EE is due tomorrow. It is somewhat sad that confronting problems is what gives life meaning, but such is life. Too bad. It’s beside the point.

People, especially students, don’t go to Starbucks only for the coffee. The students who spend hours at Starbucks aren’t there to nurse a short black Americano sip by sip; they’re there for the atmosphere. The atmosphere of Starbucks is simply ideal for work and productivity. How could Starbucks, a corporation that has spent millions to cultivate an image of a cozy, smooth (jazz) and urban coffeehouse, be a hot spot for students churning out thousand-page essays on the daily?

One simple reason is that there are few better alternatives. Home is out of the running; a bedroom in∈ed for sleeping will invariably entice one to laziness. Someone else’s home is even worse; if studying at a close friend’s home, any attempts will descend into antics. If studying at the home of somebody you’re not familiar with, then how did you even get there in the first place? School is not ideal as where there are peers, there is pressure and not everyone does well under pressure. Being amongst strangers and a small cluster of close friends is far more com-forting. The blend of perfect strangers that Starbucks has gathered is even more ideal than their coffee blends.

The atmosphere that entices students is not Starbucks itself but rather the people it attracts, which in turn attracts more of the same people. The Houston Chronicle names Starbucks’ target market as “urban professionals from ages 25 to 40”. Does the fact that Hong Kong teenagers thrive in the same atmosphere as 25 to 40-year-old professionals imply something? Probably. Anyway.

When one goes to Starbucks and sees people huddled around tiny tables tapping away at their tablets (I absolutely adore alliteration), one can only smile at the sight of others being productive. Personally, this motivates me to be productive as well. Misery loves company and being productive is both miserable and gratifying. There’s an illicit comradeship between you and the kid hunched over integrals at the next table; you’re both there to be productive, and neither of you is going to judge the other.

I can safely say that Starbucks’ student culture is a direct product of the high expectations that Hongkongers have for themselves and for each other. In my eyes, this is not a bad thing. Trading forty bucks for a cup of mediocre coffee is fine by me if it gives me a comfy seat and more productivity in three hours than a week at home.
For some, the name possesses an inexplicable allure. In the summer of 2009, a ragtag team of alternative music lovers took a rehearsal studio in the industrial district of Kwan Tong, and did something nobody had ever cared to fathom. 1700 square feet, $7600 rent. This patched up teddy bear of a live house was anything but comfortable. The air was thick of sweat and dust, the floorboards cracked, the stage lights close enough to touch. Nevertheless, with each passing week, more and more would embrace this beat-up burrow. It became a stepping stone for local independent musicians, bands, and enthusiasts, distortion and dissonance...
Lamentably, the euphoria did not last. Our government's "Industrial Building 'Revitalisation' Act" forced an end upon the venue. Operating outside of the terms of lease, the eviction and termination of the venue had to be ordered. The names and memoranda of those who called it home covered the door to the venue, and that door was presented to the Art Development Council. It was this silent protest that spoke louder than any other.

"Service lifts in a street of garages reeking of gasoline and motor oil build character. I tell myself to ignore the red flags and push the button. An inviting chrome yellow lights up behind the translucent plastic. The ground only being two storeys from the stage, everything is audible in the lift. As we ascend, my chest cavity acknowledges the vibrations, threatening to cave in. I am welcomed by maroon brick walls, retro neon lights, chalkboard signs, graffiti, and folding doors covered in layers upon layers of stickers all illuminated by half-lit incandescents. It's the underground aesthetic that everyone notices first — the visual embodiment of postmodernist punk and grunge."

2A, Winful Industrial Bldg, 15-17 Tai Yip Street, Kwun Tong. The address was not in any way glamorous, nor was it meant to be. Supporters of the local scene reconstructed the new 4000 square foot industrial space from the ground up. The rectangular room was in no better shape than the first — the cracks and fissures must-filled, walls seasoned in a carpet of grime. Over time, it became everything that its predecessor had been, with a little extra room for improvement. A backstage lounge, sound and lighting, a bar, even toilets. A stronger foundation and a different stage brought around an underground renaissance. One year into its inception, over sixty shows were held. A multitude of genres spanned across a mass of performances, musicians and performers hailing from Hong Kong as well as countless other regions.

"I feel the floor beneath my feet irregular and potholed. So are the walls. A tinge of claustrophobia has its way in this room, what with the ceiling hanging just above our heads, not an inkling of space between us allowed to be wasted. Breathing becomes more of a chore as we file into whatever space is left unfilled. It could be the three hundred or so people in the room, or the ventilation, which is lovely. Absolutely impeccable. Then again, there was not much I could expect from an industrial building in Kwun Tong. My eyes fight the sting of sweat and mist, and I feel my hair getting damp. Deafening are the vibrations, the strobes blinding. The wave of chatter dissipates."

Having no license as a concert venue, a nightclub, or even a bar, the venue had to stay in the shadows — not that an active effort had to be made. Operating under the radar for seven years, evading the Lands Department at all costs, it did not come as a surprise when history inevitably repeated itself. The violation of land lease terms that limited the unit to "industrial use only" meant imminent eviction. After yet another blow to the local arts scene, they still would not concede. A crowdfunding campaign amassed over 500,000 dollars within ten days, greenlighting the latest — and current — generation on 15th September 2016. These resources from musicians and fans alike allowed the venue to be what it had always been, running under the license of a food kiosk. This time, they were hiding in plain sight.

Hong Kong's independent arts scene has never been able to thrive. For aspiring musicians, shows are the needle and Hong Kong is the haystack, having no choice but to reside in illegal establishments. In a flourishing world city, you would expect a decent background of artistry and music, not some secluded factory block in the industrial district. Says 28-year-old Hui Chung Wo, founder of Hidden Agenda — "Everyone knows the government won't support music. And it's not just music; they don't even care about how people live. If you want to stay in this business, it's only because you want to; it's because you're stubborn. It's like this in Hong Kong: if you can survive, then great."
**Ms. Lesley Croft**

is a new English teacher and Extended Essay coordinator in the DBS IB section.

**H:** IB Herald (Evan Cheng, Ron Ma)
**C:** Ms. Lesley Croft

**H:** Ms. Croft, thanks for taking the time to be interviewed by us today.

**C:** Sure, no problem.

**H:** First things first, we'd like to get a bit of background on you: what did you do before you came to Hong Kong?

**C:** I have done many jobs from legal secretary for a solicitor in a law firm to teaching swimming and even working on the check-out in a supermarket. I have worked in schools in various capacities since 1989. Seven years in Saudi Arabia at the British International School of Jeddah teaching swimming. In the four years before coming to Hong Kong I worked part-time at St. Christopher’s School in Bahrain as well as doing my degree with The Open University UK. That was distance learning. I have been in Hong Kong since 2001 which is when I started work as an English teacher.

**H:** The inevitable follow-up question to that is: why did you come to DBS?

**C:** A big draw was the luxury of teaching the IB diploma; I had previously taught 7th to 13th graders, and I was really attracted to the whole ethos of IB.

**H:** Let's go a bit more into specifics. What's your favorite part of teaching IB English?

**C:** There's the obvious bits: challenging students to think about how we're manipulated by the media is always fun. It's good to have a healthy dose of cynicism from time to time. Making students cynical and critical is my life passion! The last thing students need nowadays is to take everything at face value, especially with fake news. I also like the literary component of Lang Lit of course; the literature involved is always interesting particularly in how they link together. It's holistic.

**H:** That's your opinion of the curriculum; what's your opinion of DBS students?

**C:** Well my general impression of you bunch is that you're highly sophisticated; strongly ambitious is all I can say.

**H:** That's fair. What advice would or can you give students about to take IB English Lang Lit?

**C:** The first thing I would say is to read literature, of course. It's not Eng Lit, but literature does have a big part in it. The most important thing is to read from different points of view, for example news from different countries such as the US, India, Britain, France or even texts targeted towards different groups such as women’s, men’s or children’s magazines. The exposure to different styles of writing is the best preparation you can get; some news sources have political agendas that may influence their writing. Some students have trouble doubting sources that are obviously pro-Brexit, for example.
H: Could that be a cultural issue, though?

C: Yes, I suppose so; at any rate, students can’t blame themselves for that.

H: Alright, so that’s one issue students have. Any other things students commonly struggle with in English?

C: Sustained concentative reading. I’m not questioning students’ literacy; it’s just that many students nowadays have problems with being able to open a book and finish the entire thing. It’s an issue, especially in Lit where you have to read twelve to thirteen books for the curriculum. It’s because of the digital era; we can’t even stand to watch a thirty second long advert before a Youtube video. It makes us want everything quick, quick, QUICK! It’s not necessarily a disadvantage though, that’s what Lang Lit does: it makes us aware of how media manipulates and influences us.

H: Back to something both school related and a bit personal: What type of student were you back in secondary school?

C: Believe it or not, I was really, really quiet. I hardly spoke in class, but I really enjoyed school.

H: Were you nerdy?

C: No, definitely not! I was cool. I was very cool.

H: What literary work or author do you find most overrated?

C: George R. R. Martin and Game of Thrones is not my thing.

H: Last but not least, what’s your favorite joke.

C: I prefer short jokes, not long ones. If I had to choose one though, I would say “Stationery shops move”.

H: That’s certainly snappy. Thanks for your time!

Mr. Neil Hodgson
is a new physics teacher in the DBS IB section.

H: You said the kids you taught in London were less advantaged. How so?

N: Their families were traditional working class families and many of the adults were unemployed. In addition, there were a large number of new immigrants from Bangladesh, many of whom had no English capabilities at all when they joined school. School for them was the safe place to be. They were nice kids, tough but fair.

H: Why did you come to DBS?

N: I had been working at Shatin College for 18 years, so naturally I was looking for new challenges. I learnt a bit about the MYP [IB Middle Years Program] at ISF academy, which I felt was quite a hard curriculum for grade 6 students, but an excellent preparation for the IB diploma. I was fortunate that a permanent physics position was being advertised at DBS, so I applied. The job was offered and here I am. I’m glad that I can teach a group of motivated students here and have a headmaster who is very trusting of teachers, allowing me to experiment with different teaching styles.

H: Having taught at international schools like KGV and Shatin College, do you think the local background of DBS students has an impact?

N: Not really. Based on my experiences in Shatin College, international students and local ones...
share similar learning attitudes. There was a mix of international and local students there, but in terms of learning style, they were all pretty much the same. I have never taught the DSE students here, but I think the main difference would be the different learning styles made to suit each curriculum. Hongkongers are flexible though. They can adapt to different learning styles easily.

**H:** How about girls vs guys? What comparisons would you make based on your teaching experiences?

**N:** Girls are more organized in my opinion. For example, a few days ago I printed a lab handout for my students, which is rare for me. I don’t often print things out. Once I passed it out, the students started doing the experiment enthusiastically without reading the instructions. None of them bothered weighing the flasks, although it was stated clearly on the sheet. If they were girls, that wouldn’t have happened. Girls would have sat down and carefully highlighted all the key points. That’s what I mean by girls being more organized. But boys can be good to teach too. They have a lot more positive teasing among themselves, which is always nice fun as long as they see the fine line between positive and negative teasing.

**H:** What advice would you give to students taking physics?

**N:** Girls are more organized in my opinion. For example, a few days ago I printed a lab handout for my students, which is rare for me. I don’t often print things out. Once I passed it out, the students started doing the experiment enthusiastically without reading the instructions. None of them bothered weighing the flasks, although it was stated clearly on the sheet. If they were girls, that wouldn’t have happened. Girls would have sat down and carefully highlighted all the key points. That’s what I mean by girls being more organized. But boys can be good to teach too. They have a lot more positive teasing among themselves, which is always nice fun as long as they see the fine line between positive and negative teasing.

**H:** What hobbies/interests do you pursue in your spare time?

**N:** Academic, hardworking. As for extracurricular activities, I was on the rugby team. I also played the clarinet for the orchestra, but frankly I was rubbish.

**H:** What’s your favorite joke?

**N:** Oh I can’t repeat that.

**H:** That’s fine. Finally, can you explain what’s happening in your IB staff photo?

**N:** That’s a stereotypical physics teacher. You know how the headmaster or an English teacher would have a pen in his or her hand? A physics teacher would be on a Van de Graaff generator.
I would dispute that it's a relatively dangerous sport. There is an element of danger involved, but isn't that the same with every sport you play and even crossing the street? In the past few years outside of the classroom, even crossing the street? In the past few years, more people have injured themselves playing gymnastics or basketball, but we don't seem to be as hesitant with children engaging in those sports. To take myself as an example, I've been playing rugby since I was 7, but I have never broken a single bone. Having said that, we take player safety very seriously here at DBS. We have well-trained, professional coaches, who not only teach the players how to approach rugby in the right way, but also help them to develop good techniques and skills, so that they can play the sport safely.

H: Any students who are interested to find out more are welcome to come to rugby training after school on a Tuesday or Thursday. At DBS, rugby is a participatory sport – in other words, everyone is welcome, including those who have never played before. Many valuable life-lessons can be learned from playing rugby, from teamwork to discipline to mental toughness and resilience, so I hope that some of you will give it a go!

P: Even those who think they are not physically large enough?

H: Certainly. What I like about rugby is that there is a job for everyone: the big guy, the small guy, the short guy, the tall guy, the fast guy, the slow guy … It is only when we bring together people with different strengths that a good team can be constructed.

P: What type of student were you back in high school?

H: Strange! I don't know how exactly to describe myself, but I was a funny mixture: part sporty, part sassy. I was fairly confident, so I didn't mind not always fitting in, though not to the point of being "popular" or the center of a group.

P: I would dispute that it's a relatively dangerous sport. There is an element of danger involved, but isn't that the same with every sport you play and even crossing the street? In the past few years at DBS, more people have injured themselves playing gymnastics or basketball, but we don't

MRS. JEAN LEE

was previously an English teacher at DBS, working in the IB section. This year, she became the senior university counselor, in charge of applications to the US and Canada.

H: IB Herald (Evan Cheng, Ron Ma)

L: Ms. Jean Lee

H: Why did you first come to DBS?

L: This is my fourth year here at DBS. When I first applied for a teaching position here, it was mostly because of DBS's excellent reputation. Also, Hong Kong is an amazing cosmopolitan city, so the city's appeal was part of the reason why I joined the school.

H: What did you do before you come to Hong Kong?

L: Last year was my 15th year of teaching, so I can say I've been teaching for a long time and in many different countries. I once got a Fulbright fellowship to do a teaching exchange in Bulgaria, which was challenging due to the cultural differences, but it was all great fun. After that, I went to Amsterdam, Qingdao, Korea, Seoul, Taiwan and Argentina before finally coming here to Hong Kong!

H: Has your experience as an IB English teacher helped you as a university counselor?

L: Absolutely. To know the IB program has been incredibly useful because I have a foundation on which to base further knowledge. When I see teachers submitting predicted grades or reference letters, I know what subject that teacher teaches, and that is always helpful.

H: How about dealing with university applications from DSE students?

L: To be honest, IB students are the bulk of my work. I do feel that the DSE education system is quite different from IB, although the application process is pretty much the same.

H: Which role, university counselor or teacher, do you find more challenging?

L: They are both challenging, but in totally different ways. As a teacher, the challenge is to find the best approach to teaching students. IB teachers abide by a philosophy called "backward design", meaning we start with the goal and then work backwards. For example, if the goal is to produce a final product, we need to give the students practice; but before that, they need to see exemplars to know what to write, and I need to know very clearly what the final product should look like and how to get them there. So that way I'm working backwards and I know how to get the students to their ultimate objective.

Being a counselor means that my objective has changed. The assessment of my ability is whether or not students get into universities. Although the "backward design" principles can still be
Many people think that local universities are the only option, unlike my experiences as a teacher. In a nutshell, I don’t think either role is definitively more challenging. They are both uniquely engaging in their various forms and functions.

L: Whether they will get into universities, but I don’t think being nervous is necessarily a bad thing. A certain amount of nervousness helps you stay on top of your game, so it’s actually quite beneficial. Perhaps the word detail-orientated is better. Being nervous makes you pay more attention to details, from internal deadlines to ManageBac messages [intranet for IB students], which is the crucial first step for a successful application. But if students do become overly nervous, the CFFS is always there to help. We have set up a pretty good calendar of internal deadlines this year, and we’re always finding ways to make it more efficient and streamline our operations. Hopefully, this can help ease students’ nervousness.

H: What are students generally most nervous about when applying to universities?

L: The first thing I would say to them is that there are many other ways out. You could apply to Hong Kong universities, which feed directly into the universities that you would like to debunk?

H: What should students do during a gap year?

L: I totally understand why some would think so. The ends justify the means, even if not identical, to most students. I understand that fewer IB students apply to HK universities, which is the crucial first step for a successful application. But if students do become overly nervous, the CFFS is always there to help. We have set up a pretty good calendar of internal deadlines this year, and we’re always finding ways to make it more efficient and streamline our operations. Hopefully, this can help ease students’ nervousness.

L: Are there any common misconceptions about universities that you would like to debunk?

H: What role should parents play in their son’s application process?

L: Back when I wrote my CV, high school students didn’t even know what that was. I wrote it before Facebook was invented! But let’s back up. It was technically not a CV, but more like a list of extracurricular activities. I got that idea from a 10th grade English teacher, if I recall correctly. She told me to write down all the activities I participated in or else I would forget by the time I applied for universities, so I did! Thank you English teachers, kids.

H: Did you have to make a CV back in high school?

L: I did everything, since US schools at the time were looking for all-rounded students. I was a jack of all trades, master of almost none. I did volleyball and was part of the track team for a few years. I also did a lot of public speaking, debate, and even some theatre productions.

H: How would you describe your sense of humor?

L: Perfect. Deadpan.

H: What is your best joke?

L: I was in Moscow last month for a conference, and I couldn’t find a taxi. I was very late but I thought, meh, I’m not Russian.

MR. DAVID LEACH

is a new English teacher in the DBS IB section.

J: Jeffrey Lau
M: Michael Lau
L: Mr. David Leach

J: What advice would you give to students taking English Literature?

L: I think they’ve got to have a lot of reading to start with and I think they’ve got to be prepared to put in a lot of time outside school with their texts and not just think they can get by looking in Sparknotes. They’re going to have to spend time looking into the same text more than once. I think they should also be prepared to read extra texts — if they’ve got that real passion for reading I think they will do well; if they just take it because English is a compulsory subject, then it’s going to be a sad time for them.

J: What do you think students most commonly struggle with in literature courses?

L: I think it’s just the sheer amount of reading, particularly in the higher level. I think a lot of them feel that reading is different from a written piece because if they fail to hand in a written piece the teacher is going to know and
they are going to lose marks and get punished. However for reading, if they've got to read the next five chapters for tomorrow but they haven't really got time for that, they would think that the teacher probably wouldn't realise. That is a big misconception. (looks at Michael)

M: You shouldn't look at me while you're saying this.

L: Well I'm giving both of you equal amounts of attention.

J: What hobbies/interests do you pursue when you are not teaching?

L: In the little free time that teaching allows me, I suppose my main interest is classical music and opera.

J: Oh! So who's your favourite composer?

L: Well I'm particularly fond of Anton Bruckner. He's only become popular in the last 20 years or so, but I think he'll be up there with the top composers in about 20 to 30 years' time. I particularly enjoy his symphonies; they're very spiritual. Besides classical music and opera, other hobbies of mine include travelling and gardening. Back in England where I have a house, there is a nice garden. I spend most of my summer tending to the plants. Oh yes, I like cars also.

M: You mean buses and minibuses? Or the Disney movie "Cars"?

L: Oh definitely not that movie. I love to look at cars, especially race cars, and I purchase cars too. I've got a Jaguar here in DBS.

J: Where did you teach before you came to Hong Kong?

L: Well, my first job was in England, where I taught for around 10 years in a school very similar to this one – it was an all-boys grammar school with selectively high academic standards. So in a sense, I'm back to where I started. I also taught in the Middle East, in Kuwait, and in Thailand.

M: What was it that attracted you to come to Hong Kong, and more specifically, DBS?

L: I was working at a French school in Hong Kong for 16 years before coming to DBS. Hong Kong attracted me partly because of its cosmopolitan nature... it's sort of a central hub for travelling. Besides the activeness, I also like traditional Chinese culture. DBS, in particular, attracted me due to its high academic reputation, and it's also a school with traditional values and a Christian ethos. Additionally, the boarding school here reminds me of the typical English boarding school.

J: So, after a few months of hands-on experience here, is it reality or just reputation?

L: Oh, no, the reality is so. The students are very driven, expectations are high on their teachers and vice versa. I'd say that the written work I receive here is of the best quality I've ever encountered in any school.

M: Thank you so much.

L: Well you can certainly take that in as a compliment directed towards you, Michael.

J: If an advisee of yours, or any other student, feels depressed and came to you to ask for advice, what would you say to them?

L: I've encountered a lot of such cases in previous schools, but it's hard to say because every case is different. The one single piece of advice I would give to almost everyone in that situation is that they have to be perfectly prepared to talk openly about their problems, and not feel embarrassed about them.

M: How about if a student comes up to you with academic issues?

L: Well I would have to question him if this is a suitable learning environment for him. In the student's best interest, he might have to switch to a new curriculum. Having square pegs and round holes, you know; however good the school is, not every student in that school is going to feel they're a perfect fit.

J: Do you have a motto for life?

L: I am particularly fond of something said by Oscar Wilde, in fact. He said, "We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars."

M: Oh, but I've heard of a better quote from him -- "I have nothing to declare but my genius." That's my motto for life.

L: Well of course it could be applied to you, couldn't it. Speaking of geniuses, Shakespeare had also said something which lingered in my mind. He said, "There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so." So it's all about your attitude towards life, isn't it -- the source of happiness lies within yourself.

J: Speaking of attitudes, what do you think is the most essential trait for a student to succeed in the IB program?

L: I think time management is very important, because there's a lot of material thrown at you, and many deadlines to meet. I think you also need to have a high capacity for work, because it's a really demanding course.

J: So finally, could you try to describe the IB in one word?

L: Grueling is the word I would choose. Students have to realise that the IB is going to be a great challenge and be prepared to put in a hundred percent effort into it. Otherwise, they are probably going to fall by the wayside.

M: Wait a minute. Does the word grueling suggest any possible negative connotations?

L: Well the word simply means it is hard work, it doesn't mean that it is unpleasant and I think you have to be prepared to perform at the very best of your abilities all the time.

M: Wrapping up with a bonus question: do you support a particular football team?

L: My local team at home is Newcastle United. Unfortunately however Newcastle were relegated from the Premier League just last year, but I'm sure they'll bounce back this year.

J: And here is the end of our short interview with you today. Thank you for your time.
Ms. Julice Yeung
is a new history teacher in the DBS IB section.

J: Jeffrey Lau
M: Michael Lau
Y: Ms. Julice Yeung

M: What advice would you give to students taking history here in the IB program?

Y: I think they need to think about what history students really do. I tell my students that history students are detectives and lawyers. They are detectives in the sense that they look at what happened critically and then decide whether they want to trust different evidence or not. And they are also lawyers in the sense that they look at different arguments and think of their own arguments, where they might agree or disagree with some people but that is perfectly fine. They are definitely not story-tellers, which is the general perception of historians.

M: I see, and what do you think students most commonly struggle with in history?

Y: For G10s, the struggle is that they are too nice to others. They accept other people's arguments too easily without much critical thinking, which makes it difficult for them to form their own arguments. By contrast, G11s and G12s are too nice to themselves. When they make their arguments, they accept them too easily and sometimes forget to criticize their own use of evidence. But students can usually master this skill in the end.

M: Let's move on to some less academically related questions. So, what hobbies do you pursue when you are not teaching?

Y: I think there are two main things. One being painting, because I like art in general, especially oil painting. I rented a studio with a few friends of mine and we had an art exhibition in the Hong Kong Cultural Centre in 2005. Another interest of mine would be snorkeling. Not only did I study history, I also majored in geography. Hence, when I was in university, I worked part-time as an eco-tourist guide which involved bringing people to marine parks to observe wildlife and telling them about the importance of protecting the ecosystem, as well as explaining why it is so connected to us.

J: So, do you still have a snorkeling license?

Y: Yes. When I have time during holidays, I often like to go snorkeling.

J: What was it that attracted you to come to DBS this year?

Y: I guess DBS has a unique culture, which makes it probably the best place to teach history in, because boys here have a critical mind. They're not just receiving information, but they actually think about it and find ways to disagree with others. And that's what I think is the most important thing for learning history.

M: But there exists a convention in HK that boys study the sciences and girls are more into humanities like history. Would that change your mind about the study of history in DBS?

Y: Well, boys do have their strengths in history. I myself studied in a co-educational school and we had more boys than girls in history class. Some boys are really good at understanding wars and the strategies used in them. And the boys here wouldn't confuse respect with opinion. Sometimes many students in HK think they can't disagree with teachers and textbooks as a form of respect. But that's not the case for history because there are always different opinions and they can all make sense.

J: If a student was depressed and came to you to ask for advice, what would you say?

Y: First thing, I would thank him for trusting me and opening up a more delicate part of himself to me. I would like them to know that I really cherish that. Then, instead of lecturing him, I'll probably let him talk first to understand his problems better. Then, I'd help analyze possible solutions and risks and let the students themselves make their own decisions. At your age, you should learn to make decisions for yourselves and we teachers are here to facilitate that, instead of making the decision for you.

J: So now to a philosophical question: what is your motto for life?

Y: It is a quote from the US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, which is "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself".

M: Oh, haven't heard of that one.

Y: I'd say it's holistic in a sense that students have a high degree of freedom to decide how they want their IB experience to be. For CAS, you pretty much decide and plan what to do by yourself. Although you need to fulfill C, A and S, what's in those is up to you, so you have a degree of freedom there and can manipulate your IB life somewhat holistically. Also, you can choose the subject your EE will be based on. That's quite holistic to me.

J: Thank you Ms. Yeung for your time with us today.
As a result, the titular question is one that I have been asked rather frequently. I must admit that I fall easily into the category of an arthouse viewer, but that response contains a questionable implication. Does it mean that the average moviegoer cannot appreciate arthouse cinema?

That seems to be the prevailing viewpoint today. While many reasons can be suggested, I personally find style to be most responsible. After all, the content, filmmaking techniques, and ways to judge a film are shared by commercial and arthouse cinema alike. It would be unreasonable to say that certain themes or long takes only exist in arthouse films. What makes such themes or shots distinctively arthouse is the way the director handles it, i.e. the director’s style. It is understandable why one might not be intrigued by a static shot with barely any dialogue. Frankly, even I may be compelled to sleep. Such an extreme demonstration of style is often what makes arthouse cinema seem so “different”.

Yet one must ask if this should be the case. It would be pointless to analyze what distinguishes arthouse cinema from mainstream films, if there is no reason to distinguish the two in the first place. The question thus becomes: should arthouse cinema be so “different”? To answer this, it would be best if we examined a polarizing arthouse film from recent years: Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives.

**SPOILERS AHEAD, PROCEED WITH CAUTION!**

RON MA • I’M SURE EVERYBODY KNOWS SOMEONE WHO REFUSES to watch films online, enjoys strange movies you haven’t ever heard of, and knows about the smallest details of cinema history. I guess I’m that person to many of my classmates.
If this sounds like a mind-bending science fiction film to you, trust me it is not. This Thai film captures the final days in the life of Boonmee, a man suffering from kidney failure, and his encounters with his dead wife and long-lost son. Despite winning the 2010 Palme d’Or, generally considered the most prestigious award for “artistic” films, the honor has not stopped the film from dividing critics. On one end of the spectrum are those like A.O. Scott, who hailed the film as “something close to bliss”; on the other end are those like Olivier Delcroix, who stated bluntly that “boredom sets in.”

It is precisely such a contrast in opinion that reveals the problem with trying to be “different”. Director Apichatpong Weerasethakul adopts a unique style at the risk of losing some viewers’ attention, burying his thoughts within the abstruseness of the film. Even those who praise Uncle Boonmee must acknowledge that the slow pacing and lack of a traditional narrative will upset some audiences. In the end, the film’s profundity and craftsmanship can hardly be appreciated because people lack the interest to attempt comprehending the film, let alone successfully doing so. The director’s efforts are lost within his “different” style.

The opening scene alone epitomizes this problem. For the first five minutes, the audience is greeted with nothing but an ox roaming through the woods, haunted by an unidentifiable figure with glowing red eyes. You could interpret the ox as one of Boonmee’s past lives, although the film never establishes clearly what his past lives are. You could interpret the scene as a reflection of the tranquility of nature. You could interpret the theme to be the fluid identity of man, free to transform into an ox or the unidentifiable figure, which is later revealed to be Boonmee’s son in five full minutes of a wandering ox to convey. The text preceding this scene already hints that the ox could be one of Boonmee’s past incarnations, so the scene’s length is inconsequential to such an interpretation. Moreover, the other themes can barely be deciphered by a first-time viewer, so even if Weerasethakul provides much room for thought, there is nothing the audience can do unless they have seen what follows. The scene demands the audience’s attention by emphasizing every single moment, but ends up losing the audience instead.

The catfish scene is another example often raised in relation to this problem of inaccessibility. While I find this scene intriguing, I can easily understand why some viewers find it off-putting to watch a talking catfish engage in sexual activity with a princess. Weerasethakul’s motive behind this seems clear enough. Prior to such activity, we see the princess talking to her reflection in a pond, expressing her craving for youth and beauty. The catfish responds in a godly voice, offering solace in the midst of her troubles. Such context indicates that the princess’ intimacy with the catfish is not meant to be a repulsive artistic exercise, but rather a symbolic gesture of the soul being filled with youthful energy, a process of reinvigoration. Despite such conventional ideas, the lack of build-up to the unconventional event forces some to construe all this as ridiculous. The themes are established, but many are deterred from examining how they relate to the excessively bizarre actions. What we are left with is a case of style overshadowing story, form obscuring content, director alienating audience.

A common counterargument against such criticism is that a director need not pander to the audience. If one sees no better approach to a certain subject
matter, then one should not be compelled to do otherwise. That argument in itself makes sense and is one I certainly agree with. Many landmarks throughout the history of film, such as the French New Wave and the introduction of Soviet montage theory, emerged as a reaction against the norm. The depths of cinema can only be discovered when creators adopt the style they see as best, rather than merely fulfilling the audience’s expectations. Yet I stand by this argument only when a director has no better approach, which includes making a film more accessible. I should stress that I view accessibility differently from pandering. To pander is to do what the audience likes; to be accessible is to do what the audience understands, in hopes that they like it. If there exists a more accessible style, then doing otherwise would not be pandering. It would be the appropriate step to take.

Let us return to the catfish scene for a moment. My interpretation of the sexual acts is that they serve as a representation of youth, illustrating the princess’ transition from the human realm to the natural one and in doing so, attain eternal beauty. But prior to such acts, the film makes no attempt to prepare the audience. We go from a princess talking to a catfish, immediately to the two engaging in implied sexual intercourse. The jump happens without warning, as if the audience is meant to keep up with the director’s train of thought, which is an impossible feat to many. It is hard to look past Weerasethakul’s eccentric and inaccessible style, explaining why many feel unable to dive into the film’s philosophical core.

However, if Weerasethakul had hinted at the sexual undertone, or even replaced the sexual acts entirely with, for example, a visual transformation of the princess, it would express the same idea I interpreted without losing the audience. For me, this is a better approach to the subject matter. It retains room for contemplation without filling certain viewers with disgust, hence solving the issue of inaccessibility. Weerasethakul does not need to pander—to reiterate, I don’t think anyone should do so either—for there are better ways to uphold the mystical and unique style while maintaining the audience’s attention. I know that not everyone will agree with my suggested approach to Uncle Boonmee, and I don’t claim to be a master at filmmaking. The point I wish to illustrate is that there are ways to make the film more accessible and thus enhance the aptness of the style. The same argument applies to all of arthouse cinema. Arthouse films have been regarded as “different” because time and time again, filmmakers have treated stylistic qualities as if they were incompatible with mainstream films, but that should not be the case. Why obscure a film’s themes if a more accessible and equally effective style serves the purpose?

The reactions to Uncle Boonmee tell us that when style is employed extensively, it does not merely alienate the average audience, it alienates critics as well. Being adamant over maintaining arthouse cinema as a “different” genre thus seems pointless, when it is perfectly fine to weave it into commercial cinema. It might have a vastly different tone and approach, but it is not any less accessible and interesting. When that is achieved, the titular question would no longer need to be asked. Instead, here would be a better question—why don’t you watch arthouse cinema?
HUMOUR IS A POWERFUL THING.

Whether employed for mindless entertainment, or for imparting important lessons embedded in said mindless entertainment, humour holds a unique place in human culture. Indeed, the jester of multiple European courts who offered wry and hilarious observations on the world best illustrate its esteemed position. Through social media, mutual but repressed feelings of awkwardness or outrage over similar occurrences have become shared and “relatable”. We found things funny. Given the year that’s just passed, everyone deserves a bit of comic relief (especially if you’re in the IB) and more importantly, new sources of humour. Therefore, we at the Herald now challenge you to laugh out of your comfort zone, and maybe learn a few things along the way.

TURN UP THE FLAMA

YouTube is everybody’s go-to source of entertainment and information in audio-visual form, and in recent years it has produced its share of media moguls. Among these, BuzzFeed has become one of the best known. Despite its multiple channels devoted to basically everything a person can experience, it has nonetheless garnered accusations of pertaining to a fairly limited audience. Indeed, most of their content seems to be churned out of its main Los Angeles location, with occasional contributions from its Indian, Australian, and British offices. Although their videos cater to a diverse audience belonging to multiple races and the LGBT+ community, they are still viewed as highly “American” content.

Naturally, this empty niche was noticed by some media hopefuls and exploited— with stunning results. Introducing FLAMA (pronounced flah-mah), a channel created by Latin Americans, for Latin Americans (and everyone else who stumbles upon their clips). However, the laughs can be enjoyed by virtually anyone. Much like BuzzFeed, FLAMA offers content on pretty much everything, but with a distinctly Latin flavour. From the low-down on Latin American Spanish (very different from Spain’s Spanish) and food to hilarious dramatisations of abuela (grandma’s) antics, FLAMA is new and informative as it is relatable, and nobody can argue against something educational, can they?

One of the channel’s stars (not unlike BuzzFeed’s Try Guys) is Joanna Hausmann. Despite her red hair, Jewish heritage, and decidedly (or stereotypically) un-Latina surname, she is Venezuelan and proudly so. Besides detailing her Jewish-Latina upbringing in weird, wonderful and delicious spots. With these turns up the flame, Joanna is surely a star on the rise.

Another person to watch is Yessica Hernandez-Cruz. Sounds familiar? That’s because she interned briefly for BuzzFeed, featuring in Latino-centric content on BuzzFeed’s Latino channel Pero Like. Since joining FLAMA, she has starred and produced in Más Mexican (pronounced mahs-MEH-sikohn), a channel created by Latin Americans, for Latin Americans, featuring in hilarious stand-up routines, she also hosts Joanna Hausmann. Despite her red hair, Jewish heritage, and decidedly (or stereotypically) un-Latina surname, she is Venezuelan and proudly so. Besides detailing her Jewish-Latina upbringing in hilarious dramatisations of abuela (grandma’s) antics, FLAMA is new and informative as it is relatable, and nobody can argue against something educational, can they?

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In most of the Spanish-speaking world, the above words mean “This rain makes me horny.” In Colombia it means “This rain pisses me off.”
Polandball is your average Polish stereotype in ball form: he has an often-rocky relationship with his neighbours, Russiaball and Germanyball, occasionally cleans toilets for UKball, and wishes his crush/nemesis Ukraineball would move to the European Union soon. Together they star in comic adventures with friends—and enemies—from all over the world, forming the Internet-famous Countryballs comic series.

Countryballs (or Polandball to those better-versed in Internet culture) had the most unconventional of beginnings. First drawn as a caricature of the Polish on German Internet forum Krautchan.net in two.oldstyle/zero.oldstyle/zero.oldstyle/nine.oldstyle, the character was quickly adopted by Russian netizens and became an Internet sensation. Nowadays, such comics can be created by anyone and new strips surface daily on various forms of social media. Balls depicting all nations and territories can be found, guaranteeing an international selection of lampooning and mockery that literally never ends.

Since its creation, Polandball has been notable for portraying various international issues in light-hearted and even humorous tones. However, the gravity of such events still stands starkly clear. Multiple strips feature island nations such as the Maldives drowning, reflecting the very real and unfunny risk of them being lost beneath the waves. The annexation of Crimea has often been shown as Russiaball ‘violating’ Ukraineball. Be of good heart, however, as relations between talking shapes with eyes can only get so graphic (i.e. not at all).

Apart from being a (not quite) mildly profane parade of national stereotypes, Polandball also has a surprisingly educational side. It is, in essence, a lesson in world history and politics with the occasional bad pun. Where else would you willingly learn about Scandinavia’s role in World War II? By embedding morsels of history and politics into squabbles and the occasional murder (deaths are hardly ever permanent), the comic actually makes readers go read up actual historical events, all to understand a joke! After all, you’d hate not to get a joke … right?
If the previous two offerings still prove a bit too alternative for your tastes, prepare for your trip to veer a bit closer to reality, but only a bit. You’ve laughed at The Simpsons’ antics in Springfield and paid Family Guy a visit at Quahog, Rhode Island, but might you know their equally hilarious (if not more so) friends at Langley Falls, Virginia? Meet the Smiths, and don’t worry, they’re not half as generic as they sound … or are they?

There’s Stan, secret agent by day and apathetic father by night; Francine, whose polished veneer hides equal parts of ingenuity and idiocy; Hayley, the rebellious daughter independent enough to get married but not enough to move out of her parents’ place, and Steve, the quintessential foil to his hyper-masculine father. Needless to say, there’s never a dull moment in the Smith household, and that’s before you factor in Roger, their housemate who’s literally an illegal alien, and Klaus, their CIA-experiment goldfish with a human brain.

Created in 2005 by the great Seth MacFarlane (Other works include Ted, Family Guy, and the Cleveland Show), American Dad! is markedly different from its contemporaries. You can’t quite put your finger on it, but from the moment Stan leaps out of his star-spangled bed in the title sequence, you know you’re in for a ride that’s completely different from anything you’ve ever seen. Maybe it’s the absence of incomprehensible cutaway gags, or maybe it’s the fact that all characters are in their appropriate skin colours. Or maybe—just maybe—it’s the familiar mix of real-world family issues and out-of-this-world adventures. It’s definitely not unheard of, but the show’s execution seamlessly meshes everyday occurrences with absurd encounters, with the odd splash of dark humour. Where else might you witness someone being forced through all five stages of grief in a day, just so she could referee a tennis game? Or a family religiously keeping their Lenten vows, on pain of losing a finger?

While shows such as South Park (introduced last issue if you missed it) make their mark by being abreast and even ahead of everything that’s going on in the world, American Dad! stands out for being (or appearing to be) the new classic animated sitcom: just wholesome family fun and bickering. With guns. And an alien who runs over six people because they owed him nineteen U.S. dollars. It earns the ‘American’ in its name both for the amount of stereotypical yet relatable situations the Smiths encounter, and for the overreaction to literally everything that makes each episode an audio-visual acid trip. Not that I’ve ever experienced an acid trip. Its relative timelessness and unconventional take on humour makes the show a true television gem that will stay relatable for years to come. Well, as relatable as losing your husband to alien abduction can be. To sum it up: Sometimes a family sticks together because of all the good times they’ve shared, and sometimes because they cannibalised their camp activities director (don’t worry, she died in an accident).
**Boutade**

His last line of defence:
Humph! 好笑 [Funny]!
And months of deathly silence.

**On the absence of news from a friend, who had just taken an Admissions Test and whose future one imagines to depend thereupon**

From yonder offing I cannot make out
The cry announcing victory or rout.
Towards triumphant Cambridge will he sail?
Or meet what makes all seamen deathly pale:
The Inchcape Integral – Fate’s fancies fail
Their prayers to spare their lungs and fearful tale!

**A request**

May one unwanted fluids swiftly purge,
Before in floods untimely up they surge?

**Turn the lights out**

Let day make way for night! And nothing blight
The darkness wherein sight sups not on light.
James Lee
Untitled
Watercolour on paper
58 × 42 cm
What you’re going to see below is an amateur trying to sound professional. The photos he has taken are certainly not of top-notch quality, but that is precisely the point of his gallery—the ordinary is the most extraordinary.

I enjoy being a photographer. I like it not because I’m good at it (obviously I’m not an expert at all), or because it appears professional to have this hobby, I like it, instead, because of the process. Since I don’t have any professional equipment, I take photos with my phone anywhere, at any time, of anything.

Having been an owner of an iPhone for years, I believe moments captured unpreparedly and unexpectedly are often the most fruitful. Of all the candid shots I take, I particularly love the ‘involuntary’ snapshots of our community—ones that capture our city vibrant at work; ones that are so commonplace that we don’t take notice or find them special anymore. I hope by sharing my precious moments in this gallery, it will remind you to remember the old stories of Hong Kong that we have long forgotten, and more importantly, appreciate the beauty in life.

“She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die”

Time flows. Memories fade. Our transient life is cruel but beautiful at the same time, since not a single moment we’ve had can be relived again. That is why photographs are so precious in that they are frozen time forever, and keep our memories imprinted and remembered.
IB LIFE — A PICNIC WITH ANGELA CARTER AND JOHN KEATS

Taken on 25/11/16 when we were preparing for our oral exam
(Individual Oral Commentary [IOC])

Taken on 1/12/16 when this pair of parents were taking
their child to the second interview for a place in DBSPD
**Mood - Blurred and Scattered**

Taken on 28/11/16 of the sky at DBS

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**The Hustle** — 一蓑煙雨任平生

Taken on 18/8/16 in Central during the lunch hour of a rainy working day
STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE

Taken on 1/10/16 on a random street in Wanchai

RUBBISH

Taken on 31/8/16 in Mongkok while waiting in line for the minibus
STATIC MOTION UNDER THE BRIGHT STAR

Taken on 13/11/16 after the opening of the new school field at the annual school fete
CROSSWORD

ACROSS
3. Where all students' instruments are from
5. Good for IB and your diet
8. Shortest but hardest exam
11. Leaves as lightly as he comes
12. When you've already served creatively
13. Because essays are just too short

DOWN
1. Benzene goes both ways
2. Just V is fine
4. Price, income and cross
6. When you need to pray for a 7
7. When a part means the whole
9. Poet's run-on sentences
10. Energy at no charge

ANSWERS:
ACROSS: RESONANCE, VANDERHEIDEN, TEXAS, ELASTICITY, BALANCED, AUGUSTINE, INTEGRATION, NINEMINUTES, ENJAMBMENT, GIBBS, XUZHIMO, ACTION, EXTENDED
DOWN: AVOGADRO, NEOCLASSICAL, PERMUTATION, RECESSIVE, VOLUMETRIC, DEBROGLIE, VANDERWAALS, TERTIARY, MIYAKAWA, CUMULATIVE, TRAGAKES

GAMES BY EVAN CHENG

WORD SEARCH

S E K A G A R T A I A O U R G
U V O U A M I Y A K A W A R A
L I L M N N R G E B B G L V I
E S G A O A A V E R A V N A V
M S L U I I V G S M I A T N E
D E K T T V E G O N E K V D N
I C R L A C I S S A L C O E N
I E V I T A L U M U C R L R V
T R E V U Y G G A N R S U W I
C L A E M E O T O C Y U M A C
A A U O R R R W S N Y A E A E
A W R T E E B O S T K A T L E
A A T R P N E E N S N C R S A
O A V O G A D R O M N I I L W
E R K A E AT C A E A N C A T

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NEOCLASSICAL MIYAKAWA
PERMUTATION CUMULATIVE
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