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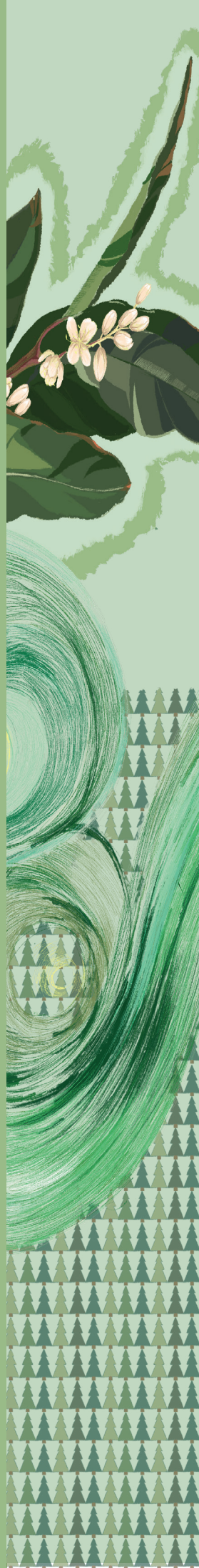
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Dear Readers,

“Am I in a slump? Am I playing back time? Did I lose my perspective? Everything's still romantic, right?”

— Charli XCX, “Everything is romantic featuring caroline polachek"

These questions haunt us in every season of transition. We hesitate to outgrow our old selves, we try clinging to our peaks on our way downhill, we get lost in the past, unable to move forward. Somewhere deep down, we fear that changes strip life of its magic.

The fact is, in certain phases of our lives, we would mistake stasis for stability, and resistance to change for preservation of the supposed best. This issue’s theme “Evergreen” is about reminding us of true vitality. True vitality is not unchanging, but a constant state of growth, renewal, and honest evolution blooming naturally within ongoing change.

Charli xcx’s 2026 mockumentary *The Moment* offers her interpretation of what it means to be evergreen by reimagining the fate of her “brat” era. Following her June 2024 release “BRAT” that brought hyperpop music from underground to mainstream, the green-cover black-word album unleashed an unprecedented international sensation that reigned pop culture for not just a summer—Collins Dictionary named “brat” its 2024 Word of the Year. “Brat Summer” was successful because the Brat spirit was widely resonant for being unapologetically authentic, and throughout the promotion of her album, Charli stayed uncompromisingly true to her core artistic vision. But as commercial pressure closed in, industry professionals collaborating with her team reshaped her bold, boundary-pushing aesthetic into a generic, hollow, family-friendly facade that strayed away from what originally made Brat unforgettable.

Faced with this clash as a newly mainstream artist, Charli’s every instinct begged to rewind, to play back time, and to salvage a dying era, a once culturally-defining and self-defining moment. Like the case with most artists, artistic distortion due to commercialization was an inevitable and involuntary consequence of Brat’s viral success. What is truly inspiring is that instead of futilely preserving an artistic era that was already ending, she chose to exercise her own creative agency. She purposefully accelerated the conclusion of Brat Summer by complying completely with the reinvented aesthetic designed for the commodification of her creation. She reconciled with herself and reframed the industry’s botched, inauthentic rework of Brat as a satirical farewell to protect her creative freedom. Charli is determined that her continued artistic experimentation is what gives her true self rebirth after the end of Brat.

Brat summer may end, but bold self-reinvention is evergreen.

This is the essence of being evergreen: no single moment, phase, or self can last forever. What endures is the courage to reinvent, the willingness to let go, and the persistence to keep creating and evolving, even when we doubt ourselves, even when we feel stuck in a slump, even when we worry the romance of life has faded again and again.

So, to answer your question: yes, Charli. Everything is still romantic, just not in what’s familiar. You’ll find the romance of life in the evergreen possibility of growing forward, upward, outward in every change you and I encounter.

May the newest edition of WLIFE, “Evergreen,” remind you that it is okay to outgrow your past, okay to question your perspective, and okay to close old chapters.

No rewind,
Angela Li
Editor-in-Chief

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01 Literature



Let me be a stream

Author: G10 SG1 Nathan Yu
Designer: G10 AL1 Lorina Gan

A captivating and introspective poem drawing inspiration from the poem "Stone" by Charles Simic, this poem praises and exalts the profound beauty of a stream and its qualities and characteristics. Using imagery, metaphor, contrast, personification, and a rhythmic structure that mirrors the flow of the stream, this exquisite poem reflects on what the narrator aspires to be – a person who's serene but powerful, imperfect but harmonious, curious but kindhearted, isolated but brave, carefree but resilient all resembling the character of the stream. Let this poem inspire you to navigate life's challenges with grace, embrace your imperfections, and overcome obstacles with resilience and persistence to achieve your life goals. After reading this poem, you will consider to become a stream as well. Let me be a stream,

That would be my way.
Flowing through the valleys,
Where the wild flowers sway.
Let the others rule the land,
The forests, the ocean waves,





I am happy to be a stream.

I have seen the stream, so calm and serene,
Other times it rushes down, wild and keen.
Venturing new lands, with courage and curiosity,
Slowly gaining strength, building in velocity.
Filled with motion and grace, so playful and free,
Through twists and turns, creating its own scenery.

From afar the stream sounds like a captivating song,
Joining nature's symphony, flowing gently along.
Creating a rhythm more beautiful than rhyme,
Where currents collide and weave, a harmonious chime.
A perfect blend of chaos paired with beauty,
Filled with imperfections, yet filled with harmony.

On the surface, it looks nothing but mild,
Something small and innocent, gentle as a child.
But inside, the stream is profound and strong,
A force that surges on, relentless and long.
Though calm and tranquil, it carves its own way,
Wearing down the obstacles, day by day.

Though the stream itself may seem quite simple,
It nourishes other souls beneath its ripples.
It nurtures life as it meanders on its course,
Sustaining the creatures that rely on its force.
Fish, frogs, and turtles all thrive,
A delicate ecosystem, keeping balance alive.



Beyond holding biodiversity and life,
It flows apart from worldly conflict and strife.
And as the lakes dry up, the forests burn,
The stream flows on, undisturbed at each turn.
While flames consume the forests, rising ever higher,
The stream stays resilient, untouched by fire.
While lakes freeze solid or fade in summer's heat,
The stream flows with vitality, never in retreat.

And though a pickaxe may shatter hard solid stone,
The stream remains unscathed, nothing is shown.
Attack its waters with the strongest blade,
It only splashes softly, completely unafraid.
Yet even the hardest rocks that try to resist,
Will feel the stream’s influence as erosion persists.
With patient dedication, it shapes the terrain,
Through deserts and mountains, forests and plains.

It gathers strength with every passing mile,
Its purpose clear, unwavering all the while.
It merges into rapids, lakes, rivers wide,
Its steady determination becomes its guide.
Building momentum as it nears the shore,
Rushing to the vastness of the ocean it adores.
Into the ocean, the joy of liberation,
Fulfilling its journey in pure elation.

Let me be a stream,
That is my way.
Its beauty and its power,
In gentle currents I'll play.
Let the others rule the land,
The forests, the ocean waves,
I am happy to be a stream.

The Catcher in The Cemetery

Author: G11 Phi Astrid Jiang
Designer: G11 Gamma Alice Qin

Isabelle Was Gone.

In this small country nestled in the heart of Europe, on a cold, damp early winter morning in 2025, a thin mist lay over the mountain town like a soft blanket. Arthur stood before the newly erected tombstone, looking at the name freshly carved by the mason: Isabelle Moreau. The script was elegant, just like her.

The freshly turned earth gave off its unique, pungent smell, mingling with the scent of rain-soaked grass. It was a smell he knew too well, one he had long grown numb to. He watched Isabelle's children and grandchildren, dressed in appropriate black, weeping softly, supporting each other, offering their final farewell to a departed loved one with the brief, intense sorrow belonging to mortals.

Arthur did not cry. He simply stood quietly, like an old bridge standing firm in the river of time, watching wave after wave of life, death, and parting flow past him, unable to wash him away or carry him off. He had lived too long, so long that death had lost most of its impact, leaving behind only a hollow, habitual silence.

Isabelle had been a historian, his last friend who knew his secret. "Arthur," she had once said to him, laughing, "don't think of immortality as so heavy a burden. You're just a living, walking reference book."

Now, this "reference book" had seen off his last reader.

Without saying goodbye to anyone, he quietly turned and left the hillside burdened with too many memories. His home was not far away, an old house covered in green ivy, sitting quietly on the edge of the town.

The next day, Arthur woke as the first light touched the sky. His body clock was more reliable than any alarm. He lay in bed, not getting up immediately, turning his head to watch the sky gradually lighten outside the window. The room was large and empty. In the silence, he could almost hear the sound of time crawling slowly across the walls. A familiar emptiness washed over him, like a cold, exposed beach after the tide receded. What was the point of living? This question, like a ghost, always found him on mornings like this, silently creeping into his long life.

He finally got up, his bare feet on the cool wooden floor. He walked into the kitchen.

The smart housekeeper enthusiastically recommended today's nutritional breakfast combinations on the screen, but he didn't even glance at it. He skillfully took a can of coffee beans from the cabinet and poured them into an old-fashioned grinder.

The whirring sound broke the morning quiet, and the rich aroma of coffee soon filled the room. This habit was left to him by Anja. Nearly a century ago, in a street corner cafe in post-war Berlin, that ever-energetic waitress. She firmly believed that a cup of black coffee, no sugar, no milk, was the only way to awaken the soul. Arthur had initially hated the bitterness, but Anja would cheerfully place a cup in front of him every day. Over time, he grew accustomed to it, even beginning to appreciate the subtle sweetness that followed the bitterness.



He carried the steaming hot cup of coffee to the living room sofa and sat down. The heat warmed his face, but he didn't drink. His gaze inadvertently fell on the thriving Monstera plant in the corner. Louis had left it when he moved out. Louis was a somewhat neurotic botanist who always said plants, like people, needed companionship and conversation. Arthur had found him ridiculous, but for some reason, he had taken on the plant, watering it once a week and wiping the dust from its leaves each month, just as Louis had instructed. Watching this greenery grow quietly in the house did bring him a strange sense of peace.

After finishing his coffee, he decided to make something to eat. Opening the fridge and seeing last night's leftover rice, an idea popped into his head: make fried rice.

It wasn't a complicated dish. He took two eggs and a few spring onions from the fridge. Heated the wok, poured in oil, and when the oil was hot, slid in the beaten eggs, quickly scrambling them into golden fragments before setting them aside. Added a little more oil, fried the white parts of the spring onions until fragrant, then added the cold rice. He patiently pressed the clumps apart with the spatula, frying and heating it until the grains began to "dance" in the wok. Finally, he added the scrambled eggs back in, sprinkled the chopped green onions, and drizzled a circle of soy sauce down the side of the work.

With a loud sizzle, the soy sauce met the hot iron, instantly releasing a rich, savory aroma.He turned off the heat and served the fried rice onto a plate. A simple plate of soy sauce egg fried rice, each grain distinct, coated with golden egg and emerald green onions, emitting a simple, warm fragrance.

He picked up a spoon, took a large mouthful. This was the taste. He remembered Chen. It was the 1970s, in a noisy dai pai dong in Hong Kong. Chen was that always quiet cook who wore a greasy apron. Arthur was there, avoiding some minor trouble, and ate Chen’s fried rice almost every day.

One night, as the dai pai dong was closing, Chen had unusually spoken a few more words. “Young man,” he said, pointing at the rice in the wok, in his broken Mandarin, “Fried rice, most important thing: rice must be overnight, heart must be calm. If heart not calm, fried rice is just a sticky mess.”



Arthur never knew what happened to Chen later. But that simple, warm taste, and his brief piece of advice, had stayed in Arthur's memory and on his taste buds.

With the plate of fried rice in his stomach, his belly felt warm, and the empty beach in his heart seemed to have warmed a little, too.

In the afternoon, the weather unexpectedly cleared. Sunlight streamed through the windows, casting bright spots on the floor. Arthur sat at his desk, dealing with some trivial foundation documents. A small bird landed on a branch outside the window, chirping crisply. Almost subconsciously, Arthur looked up, pursed his lips, and a stream of equally crisp whistling came from between them, mimicking the bird's tune. The little bird, as if finding a companion, tilted its head, looked, responded a few times, then fluttered its wings and flew away.

He himself was stunned.

Lena had taught him that. A century ago, in a small village at the foot of the Alps, he had met that shy girl who studied birds. She could distinguish hundreds of bird calls and taught him how to "talk" to them with whistles. "You see," she had said, pointing at the birds in the woods, her eyes sparkling, "you don't need to understand their language. Just let them know you mean no harm, that you're listening. It's a gentle communication."

Lena later decided to continue her wanderings; nothing could truly bind her, just like the birds she loved. And this "gentle communication" had taken root in his heart like a seed.

After finishing the documents, he stood up and stretched. A slight ache came from his shoulders. He walked to the wall, leaned his back against it, squatted slightly, holding a standard "invisible chair" pose. He had learned this from a retired Russian gymnast named Ivan. Ivan firmly believed that even the strongest spirit needed a robust body to carry it. This simple yet effective exercise had helped Arthur's body maintain a decent condition throughout the long years.

His mind began to uncontrollably conjure more people and events. His habit of listening to classical music on rainy days came from a temperamental Parisian violinist. His skill in expertly winding a pocket watch and performing simple calibrations was learned from a watchmaker in Geneva. Even the little star he habitually drew at the end of his signature now was an imitation of a

joking Italian businesswoman from three hundred years ago.

He suddenly realized that the "self" he thought he was, was actually pieced together from fragments of countless people he had encountered. Some had taught him a skill, some had left him with a habit, some had shaped a way he viewed the world. They were all gone, but they hadn't truly disappeared. They had merged into his long life like drops of water into the ocean, becoming a part of him.

The "meaning" he had been desperately searching for might not be some grand goal or immortal achievement. His meaning was to be a living memorial, to continue feeling the world's sunlight, rain, the aroma of coffee, and the taste of fried rice on behalf of all those past lives. His immortality was not a curse, but a form of bearing witness.

He was not living alone.

An unprecedented peace and release, like warm seawater, slowly enveloped him. He stood up. The stone named "Nothingness" that had long been lodged in his chest seemed to have quietly dissolved.

He walked slowly to the huge floor-to-ceiling window. That window, perpetually shrouded by heavy velvet curtains, as if blocking something out. He reached out, grasped the cold curtain fabric, took a deep breath, and pulled it apart with force.

The view outside instantly flooded his sight.

There were no city neon lights, no town streets, but an endless cemetery under the cold moonlight.

Thousands upon thousands of tombstones, white, black, gray, stood silently in the moonlight like a silent forest, stretching to the horizon. His house was built on the edge of this city of the dead, the only building here with its lights on.

His smart terminal on his wrist gave a soft chime. A calendar app popped up automatically. Today's date was circled in red, with a line of small text next to it:

[Isabelle Moreau - First Anniversary of Death]

He reached out, swiped lightly on the screen, and opened the full year view. The next moment, densely packed names instantly filled every date box. January 1st: Chen. February 14th: Lena. April 1st: Anja. July 7th: Louis. September 30th: Ivan... Not a single day was blank.

Every single day he had lived until now was the anniversary of someone's death. To make it easier to remember, he had simply moved here.

He had thought it was just for convenience. Only now did he truly understand: he just wanted to be near them.



Arthur stood before the window, his face showing neither sadness nor joy. He just looked quietly at this landscape built from his years and memories. The night wind blew in through the cracks in the window, carrying the cemetery's unique, cold, clean scent. He slowly spread his arms, as if to embrace this vast, boundless silence.

Camphor trees in the wind

Author：Eva Xiong SG10 1
Designer：May Lin SG10 1



The camphor trees outside the classroom are the most familiar scenery throughout the year. As soon as the wind blew in the evening self-study, its shadow swayed on the bench under the tree. And my confused and helpless emotions were blurred by the light. I have thought countless times about what I should do in the future, whether to let a semester's bad grades pour into my bored heart with spring mud, or let my confidence drift away with the wind.

A day at WLSA was calm and fulfilling. After one class after another, I asked myself if I was really willing to let time slip away from the paper and pen in my hand. It's better to try to work hard. Hard work has always been meaningful in my heart, but sometimes the meaning is too small, too small to fit my expectations and lies. But spring is coming, the spring breeze is blowing, blowing the flame of ideals, and I need to prove it to myself. Look, if that evergreen. How could the leaves really not turn yellow? But as long as there are roots, the newly drawn notes will always make the yellow leaves fall with the wind.

Evergreen never withers, but always saves strength to grow in the midst of change. Those moments of confusion, hesitation, and unwillingness are all rooted in the process. The wind will blow off the leaves, but it will not blow away the roots of the tree with a strong will; Setbacks can disrupt the rhythm, but they can't defeat people who want to move up. I would like to be like the camphor tree in spring, slowly taking root and slowly moving up in time. Soon after, in the summer, I looked up at my increasingly prosperous future.



Evergreen

Author: G10 SG 2 Sophie Bian
Designer: G11 Sigma Sherri Sun

During the winter holidays, I went to study at Episcopal High School in Virginia as part of the WLSA exchange program. I came back from the freezing winter snow of America, bringing back with me, the flowing warmth of life and an evergreen summer.

The first time I set foot on the soil, the biting wind howled in my face, taking my breath away. In return, the snow was the deepest quiet I have ever known, thick, soft, icy cold, gleaming pearly white and majestic under the moon-- that was my first taste of an Virginia winter, fierce, yet solemn.

However, this impression soon began to dissolve during our actual residence in the school: cozy redbrick buildings out-looking the sprawling dark green forests, snug dorms filled with warmth and friendly faces, creative classes that bubbled with laughter...

But the event that moved me the most of all was their musical *Hadestown* on a Saturday night. It told a sad old story from the Greek myths, of a music genius Orpheus
who went to the underworld to bring his wife back to life. However hat intrigued me was not just the story, or the wonderful dances, or even their band that played live background music, it was the purest passion that they poured into it, the gay rhythm, the radiant laughing faces, made me want to smile with them, and my feet just couldn't stop tap-tapping on the floor. It left me bursting with joy and warmed to the bones

After it ended, as the actors and actresses paraded around the opera hall, I stood in the freezing snow, cheering them on and on, not even feeling the cold. Something inside me was burning, perhaps a fire, somewhere in my left breast, flickering, dancing in the strong winter gale.

Yet the real inspiration didn't come from the fervent heat of crowds, but from the most common morning. The day started out gray, with us eating breakfast in the dining hall. I was feeling very sulky because I had to prepare for AP tests and couldn't play with the others. Suddenly, this girl just came out of nowhere and sat down casually in the midst of us strangers, and started chatting with us.



She told us that her name was Najia, she was learning Chinese and she really loved Chinese culture. She was from Pakistan, and she was a full- year boarder because she wasn't able get back home because of the war. She was the only person in her whole family to receive a formal education, travelling alone to the US with no friends, little money, and nowhere to live except at school. But even so, she still received a full scholarship at Episcopal with brilliant grades.

The more she talked, the more amazed I became. Walking out of the dining hall, I kept thinking: "How could she, in such a hard environment, grow up to be like this?"

My foot hit a snow bank, but instead of slipping on solid ice, my feet crunched past the ankle into freshly thawed snow. As I hopped back, startled out of my moody thoughts by the sharp wetness seeping into my sneaker, my eyes fell on the footprint I'd left behind.

Underneath the layer of heaviest, muddiest snow, were blades of grass-- not the withered yellow grass of last year, but fresh, young, and oh how tenderly green it was, as if it had always been there, all through winter, through the winds and blizzards, it stayed stubbornly, ever green, and thriving with life.

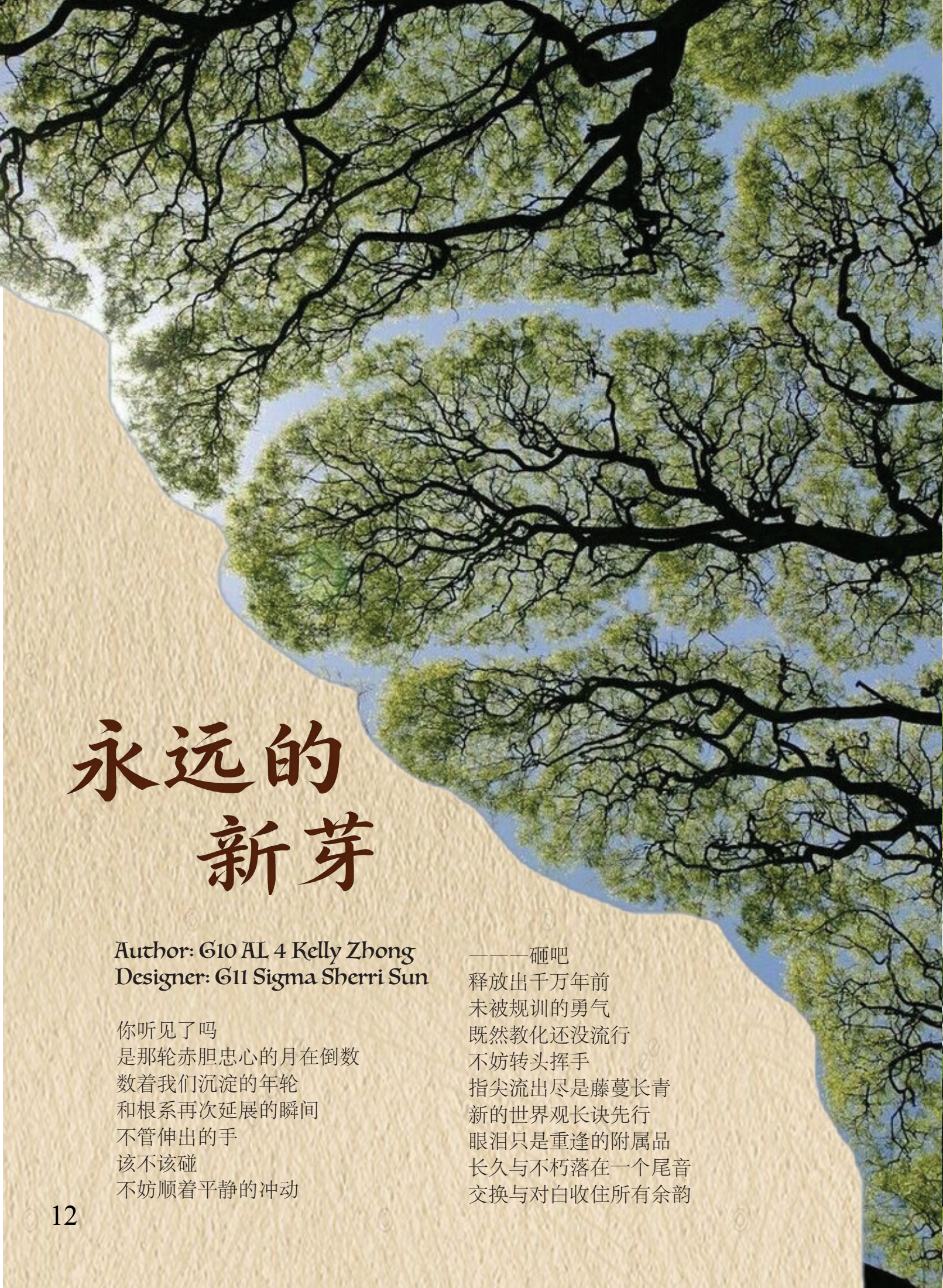
Looking at that impossible green, I finally understood. The "something" I felt during the musical was never a flame. A flame is brilliant, but fleeting. It needs to be fed, and it can be blown out by the same gale that made it dance. What had taken root in me, what I had witnessed in Najia, was something else entirely.

It was a seed.

Tender, yes, and quiet. It had been buried all this time, beneath layers of my own expectations, my familiar fears, the insulating routines. The musical had reminded me, if just for a few hours, of the vitality and passion that had been buried for so long, but her story, her mere presence, was the first true thaw.

Meeting her forced me to look at myself. Here I was, with all the opportunities I've sometimes taken for granted, and there she was, having carved a path for herself against all odds. It made my own challenges seem smaller, and my own possibilities seem larger.

Looking up at the sky, the clouds had cleared away, warm golden sunshine poured onto the grass, as if telling the first news of summer. I walked on briskly, with a spring in my step a quiet, and a gentle unfurling in my heart-- a verdant truth to grow with, to live with, from season to season. Evergreen.



永远的新芽

Author: G10 AL 4 Kelly Zhong
Designer: G11 Sigma Sherri Sun

你听见了吗
是那轮赤胆忠心的月在倒数
数着我们沉淀的年轮
和根系再次延展的瞬间
不管伸出的手
该不该碰
不妨顺着平静的冲动
———砸吧
释放出千万年前
未被规训的勇气
既然教化还没流行
不妨转头挥手
指尖流出尽是藤蔓长青
新的世界观长诀先行
眼泪只是重逢的附属品
长久与不朽落在一个尾音
交换与对白收住所有余韵



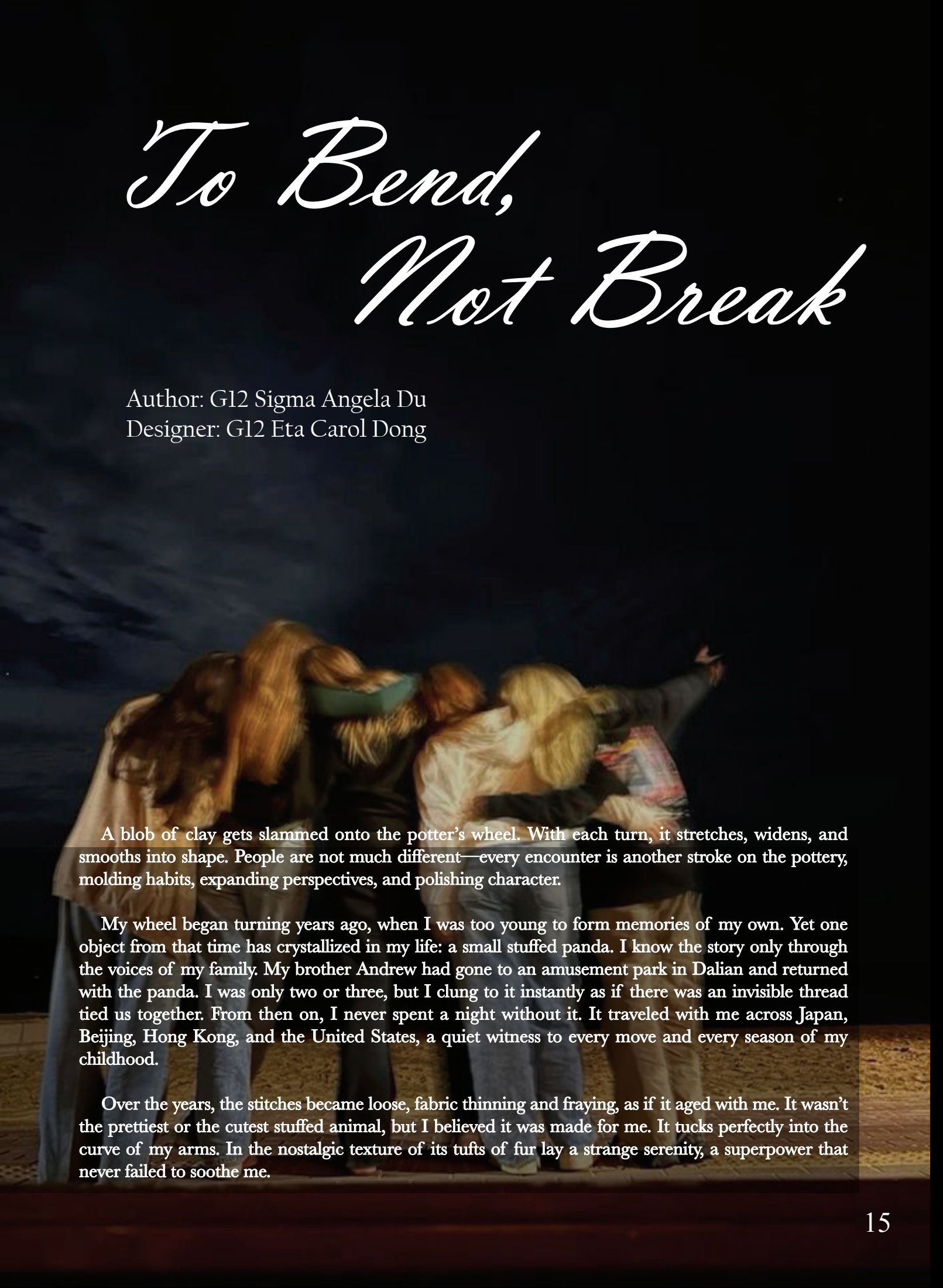
讲吧
闭上眼就不怕
镜中出现了自己
微动的闪烁覆水重收
改写一败涂地的棋局
可理想主义
是恶果的善花
残留的野性 只会让乌托邦崩塌
原来一切流动着，杂糅中哪句是真话
原来一切笑颜 只在走远后生根啊
原来想念只在分离后 才能被听见啊
你失去之前
怎知跳动是否是假

回头
别怕
我就在不近又不远的地方
和你把撕裂的共同缝合
我们只是胚芽
我们还没长大
时间线的枝丫 不断抽出稚嫩的花
还没露出落叶归根的疤
引针的手 带着生长的颤抖
别一不小心把种子弄丢
没关系 没关系
风吹雨落 都能嫁祸给天气
淋坏的纤维 不声不响间
粘连成一缕
弯弯浅浅 生生不息
蜷缩成奇迹

02 Journal

To Bend, Not Break

Author: G12 Sigma Angela Du
Designer: G12 Eta Carol Dong



A blob of clay gets slammed onto the potter's wheel. With each turn, it stretches, widens, and smooths into shape. People are not much different—every encounter is another stroke on the pottery, molding habits, expanding perspectives, and polishing character.

My wheel began turning years ago, when I was too young to form memories of my own. Yet one object from that time has crystallized in my life: a small stuffed panda. I know the story only through the voices of my family. My brother Andrew had gone to an amusement park in Dalian and returned with the panda. I was only two or three, but I clung to it instantly as if there was an invisible thread tied us together. From then on, I never spent a night without it. It traveled with me across Japan, Beijing, Hong Kong, and the United States, a quiet witness to every move and every season of my childhood.

Over the years, the stitches became loose, fabric thinning and fraying, as if it aged with me. It wasn't the prettiest or the cutest stuffed animal, but I believed it was made for me. It tucks perfectly into the curve of my arms. In the nostalgic texture of its tufts of fur lay a strange serenity, a superpower that never failed to soothe me.

Call me delusional, but I was sure it had a soul. To me, it was never just fabric and stuffing—it was a companion, a mentor, a silent friend who stayed awake when I closed my eyes. And most of all, it was my brother's reflection: his gift, his presence, his love stitched into its seams. Just as the panda never left me, my brother never did either. He listened, guided, and stood beside me, the constant sculptor of my earliest self.

I don't remember my parents as steady figures in my childhood; the guardian of my days was my grandmother. One afternoon, I stood before a wall of glittering stickers at the grocery store, dazzled by tiny pieces of art that were comparable with Da Vinci's, but worth only eight yuan.

"Grandma, this one's so pretty! Can I please get it?" I asked, attacking her with the puppy eyes as practiced.

"Of course. But just two, alright?" she replied without hesitation.

I grinned, clutching the sheets like treasure. On the way home, gratitude swelled inside me, heavy and urgent. I ran to her side and reached for her bag. With one hand gripping the groceries and the other holding onto her hands, I felt like a superwoman saving the day. The sun struck her pearl necklace, scattering light into the trees above us. Spring's breeze rustled the leaves, echoing the crinkle of the plastic bag that banged against my legs as I struggled forward. The handles cut into my palms like metal straps, but I stayed silent, savoring the pride of that moment.

From that day on, I tried to take on more weight—washing dishes, sweeping floors, even learning to cook. Now, years later, I can carry every bag without a blink. More importantly, my hand now steadies hers, guiding her steps as she once guided mine.
My grandmother raised me, but she also taught me something lasting: that kindness is a duty, and gratitude is not just felt but practiced. At six years old, the clay was widened.

If my grandma widened the clay, my friends smoothed and steadied it. Last few years of high school were anything but easy, yet here I am, writing a personal statement in my senior year. I cannot claim the credit for enduring; that belongs to the people who shaped me, especially my best friend Amy. Her presence was always a kind of therapy. One evening after a long study session, my stomach growled. When my eyes met hers, we both snickered.

"Pasta?"

"As always," I answered.

We ordered our usual lemon garlic carbonara in Cheesecake Factory. Its citrus and creamy scent drifted toward me, making my hunger sharper. We set aside the gossip session and started savoring the most wonderful creation on Earth.

"MMMM," She hummed her usual sound of approval, with her index finger pointing to the pasta as she nodded. I smiled and nodded with her. While we devoured the velvety pasta, the chipmunk with cheeks full of noodles looked at me and said, "Life is good."

I stared at the pasta till my vision blurred. Yea, life is good. What she gave me was intangible but transformative. She always carried a gratitude for the smallest moments: a breeze on a stifling day, the rosy sunset glowing between the skyscrapers, or a lone flower blooming against the sidewalk. The taste of the buttery sauce lingered, but what stayed longer was the lesson she taught me: these small moments are enough to tether me to the present, reminding me that joy doesn't erase struggle but steadies me through it.

Every person in my life has touched the clay that I am becoming. My brother stretched it, my grandma shaped it wide, my friends softened and balanced it. Every brush is a lesson, and a gift. I'm not yet finished, but a form shaped by their hands, made more complete and fulfilled because of them.

What's the Story Morning Glory

Oasis Lyrics, Its Historical Implications,and Further Lycial Analysis Patterns for Generational Mentality Insights

Author: G12 Kappa Tony Liu
Editor: G11 Phi Astrid Jiang



ABSTRACT

This essay explores how Oasis's lyrics construct and reflect working-class identity within 1990s Britain. Situating the band within Britpop and "Cool Britannia," it argues that Oasis's songs are cultural texts through which identity, belonging, and generational mentality are expressed and shaped. Drawing on Peter Trudgill, Joan Beal, and Robert Le Page, the essay examines pronunciation, vernacular language, recurring imagery, cultural references, and political undertones as acts of identity.



INTRODUCTION

In the history of British popular music, few bands have achieved the commercial success and cultural resonance of Oasis. Dubbed a "second Beatles," Oasis was one of the most prominent figureheads of the Britpop movement, which celebrated, and in some cases reimagined, British identity during a period of social and political transition.

From the council estates of Manchester in the early 1990s, the Gallagher brothers Noel and Liam created a musical miracle with nothing but a few friends, a few instruments, and more than a few shots of alcohol. Oasis songs are known to be characterized by rock-anthem melodies, working-class-youth context allusions, and apparent lyrical simplicity to the extent of vulgarity. Yet beyond their commercial success lies a deeper Masterplan: Oasis's lyrics offer a lens through which to examine how identity and cultural belonging are constructed and expressed in popular music.

Identity and cultural belonging were prominent trends in Oasis's historical context. Following the socio-economic paradigm shift of the 1980s under Conservative PM Thatcher's economic liberalization policies, the 1990s saw the emergence of "Cool Britannia." Britpop positioned itself in opposition to American grunge and pop music, emphasizing instead distinct British contexts, accents, and experiences. Oasis, alongside nemesis Blur, played a central role in this cultural shift.

This essay aims to explore Oasis's role in the movement and, by analyzing patterns in Oasis's lyrical content, inform the understanding of broader generational mentalities and identities. Hence, the central research question guiding this essay is: How can patterns of lyric analysis inform our understanding of a generation's mentality and identity, using Oasis as a case study?



LITERATURE REVIEW: STANDING ON THE SHOULDER OF GIANTS

To analyze how Oasis constructs and incorporates working-class identity, this essay adopts a sociolinguistic framework grounded in the work of Peter Trudgill, Joan Beal, and Robert Le Page. Central to this framework is the premise that language — particularly in popular music — is not passive or subconscious narration but an active process of belonging-seeking.

Trudgill's Acts of Conflicting Identity provides a foundational empirical basis to fulfill this purpose. As he argues, singers are "modifying their linguistic behaviour for the purposes of singing" as pop music is a traditionally American-dominated area. British pop singers sometimes adopt Americanized vowels or post-vocalic /r/, forming a "pop-song style" singing. Oasis music is virtually entirely contrary to this phenomenon; the Gallagher brothers — Liam in particular — exaggerate the extent to which their pronunciation differs from this style.

Oasis music further asserts its Mancunian roots by integrating Northern England accents into their singing. Joan Beal states in English Dialects in the North of England: Phonology that while "there is no single 'Northern accent'," Northern accents differ from the speech of Southerners in "a range of varieties sharing certain phonological features." Northern varieties often carry "covert prestige," functioning as "markers of regional identity and solidarity despite wider social stigmatization" (Beal 2008). This dual status of Northern speech constructs the central conflict and source of power in Oasis's musical expression.

Furthermore, Le Page's "theory of linguistic behavior" provides the conceptual backbone for this essay. In Projection, Focussing, Diffusion, he frames language use as an act of identity projection: individuals' linguistic behaviors are motivated to "resemble as closely as possible those of the group or groups with which from time to time we [speakers] wish to identify." Speakers actively select linguistic features to align themselves with particular social groups. As a Britpop band emerging in the 1990s, Oasis's linguistic choices can therefore be understood as deliberate acts of identity.



METHODOLOGY

Methodologically, this project has shown the value of reading lyrics on multiple levels at once. Rather than isolating a single "message" or narrative plot in one song, this essay's framework traces patterns across Oasis's entire discography: vernacular speech, recurring emotional vocabulary, cultural references, and political undertones. First, literature review is

used to place lyrics in their historical and social context. Second, vocal and lexical choices are identified and statistically compiled. Third, repeated words, imagery, and semantic pairings are tracked across songs. Finally, cultural and political allusions are interpreted for the social world and generational thinking they represent.

CHASING YESTERDAY: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Vernacular Language

Vernacular language would strike thedience as one of the clearest markers of class and regional identity. Oasis lyrics repeatedly prefer spoken, compressed, non-standard forms over formally written English transitional phrases: "gonna," "gotta," "ain't," "don't got," "nothin'," "somethin'," "d'you," "yer," "yerself," "outta," "comin'," "tryin'," and "shite" are prime examples of this apparent vulgarity. In accordance with Le Page's theory of linguistic behavior, however, this corresponds to an "act of identity," as these street-words, rather than their more refined counterparts, have been chosen to align with a specific social world, the world of the working-class and the youth. In this sense, Oasis uses the lyrics as a tag of belonging to their



working-class compatriots, of which they were once, and still remain, members.

Repetition and Lexical Patterning

Across the span of Oasis's 116 tracks, the strongest repeated trend is not just literal repetition inside choruses, but the recurrence of the same small yet emotional vocabulary across many different songs: mind, soul, shine, sun, sky, time, way, live forever, get away, be yourself, maybe. Grouping them into physical (sun, shine, sky, fly) and metaphysical (time, away, love, way, mind, soul, dream, maybe, forever, free), it is apparent that Oasis pursues both material optimism — by creating a blooming imagery of light and freedom — and spiritual liberation by returning often to lexicon with uncertain yet positive connotations.

The pattern of uncertainty-to-aspiration is ubiquitous in Oasis's works. In "Rock 'n' Roll Star," dreams and self-belief transform the fantasy of a rock dream into a status-quo-defying declaration that echoes Oasis's own story of rising from the bottom. Even in later songs, when disillusionment creeped in, Oasis preserved the same pattern through songs such as "Little

by Little" and "Stop Crying Your Heart Out."

Just as important is the recurrence of certain semantic pairings: stars with shine, mind with soul, sun with freedom, and city with alienation. These associations suggest that Oasis lyrics are less interested in narrative complexity than in constructing emotional patterns with symbolic heuristics. Their songs often sound like variations on the same emotional script: the protagonist is trapped physically by "the city," but not spiritually chained down; confused as the times "fade away" and people "slide away," but still capable of dreaming an optimistic transcendence. Rather than mere lyrical laziness, the similarity across songs reflects the "Oasis feeling" that becomes generational common mind and soul.



Cultural and Political Allusions

The cultural allusions in the lyrics are often less scholarly or historical, and more everyday, recognizably British references; this lack of formality, however, argues the point of Oasis's cultural significance. While formal patriotic language and clear political affiliation are not found in their lyrics, the array of familiar objects, habits, and pop-cultural residues subtly suggest Oasis's ideological and cultural tendencies.

For instance, "Supersonic" mentions The Big Issue, while "Digsy's Dinner" stages a comic invitation around tea and a specific afternoon hour. Elsewhere, references to "Yellow Submarine," "Fool on the Hill," and "Let It Be" place Oasis self-consciously under the cultural aura of the Beatles.

On a darker note, many of Oasis's political references elicit sentiments of disillusion at the status quo. "Mucky Fingers" invokes the "Union Jack" appearing side-by-side with "plastic believers," suggesting a mockery of government manipulation. "Cigarettes & Alcohol" asks whether it is worth finding "a job when there's nothing worth working for," which speaks to the disaffection with wage labor and the plummeting living standards offered to working-class youth. "Bring It On Down" names "the underclass," directly invoking class hierarchy; "Don't Look Back in Anger" gives the famously ambiguous phrase "start a revolution from my bed," which can be read as a sigh of powerlessness. This nativeness endows Oasis with their cultural strength to create a lyrical world built out of declining community housing, "shitty" weather, everyday tea, magazines, queueing, condescending "Cockneys," but an unerasable sense of resilience and identity.

CONCLUSION AND APPLICATION: BE HERE NOW

This essay has argued with Le Page's theory of linguistic behavior that Oasis lyrics do far more than accompany melody: they function as a cultural language through

which identity, class feeling, and generational mentality are expressed, negotiated, and, to some extent, created. Through the theoretical frameworks of analyzing speech and the inherent identities attached to them, informed by Trudgill's work on the Americanization of British pop-singing and Beal's studies on accents of the North of England, this essay presents the cultural and political tendencies that Oasis belonged to, conveyed, and in some cases created.

The methodology outlined above may also prove effective when used to analyze the complete collection of other artists' works, by first gathering statistical data from lyrical compilation before pulling semantic codes with increasing depth. This framework could be applied well beyond Oasis: to hip-hop, punk, indie rock, or even contemporary pop, wherever artists use language to situate themselves within communities, ideologies, and generations.

At the same time, this method is not without limitations. Lyrics are only one part of a song's meaning; composition, performance, production, audience reception, marketing, and media representation all shape artists' perceived value and identity. Some allusions remain ambiguous, and Noel's well-known laziness when it comes to songwriting means that not every repetition is necessarily intentional or ideologically significant.

As "The Masterplan" suggests, uncertainty, partial understanding, and the recognition that "we're all part of the masterplan" remain central to Oasis's worldview. As this essay decodes the resilient generational voices of the 1990s and unravels Oasis's notes in these voices, hypocrisy, manipulation, and identity erasure remain ominous themes in today's masterplan; Oasis demonstrates an alternative to passive existence within it, with a foolhardy courage to face obscurity and insist on possibility.



Her

Author: G12 Theta Seven Xu
Designer: G11 Pi Isabel Wan

Valentine's Day.

I dated her because neither of us had anyone else, and the arrangement felt light, almost incidental.
I bought her the elephant plush she adored. It was small and tender, its round eyes mirroring the one in her profile pictures across every platform.
She smiled softly.
For a moment I believed she had forgotten mine.
"Close your eyes."
I counted seventy-five heartbeats before she turned her bag and drew something out in silence.
A small black box landed in my palm, sealed by a sweet blue sticky note like a postage stamp.
On that blue square: a black cat crafting delicate jewels, surrounded by fish drifting through the air like weightless dreams.
Blue, the hue of sky, of ocean, of fresh snow.
I no longer cared what lay inside. The box itself was already the gift.
She kept explaining how she had searched through maybe five hundred others, how long she hesitated, how deliberately she chose this one.
Then she fastened the real present around my wrist.
A bracelet with exactly seven diamonds.
"I counted them myself. Seven. Precisely."
So she made my friendship bracelet in that instant, held the moment, let it linger on the tongue like something sweet and irreplaceable.

That day we walked through grass, through wind, through sunlight, through moonlight.
It was time to part.
"It's been a long day."
"Good night."
"Don't forget the box."
"I don't have it."
"I handed it to you at the restaurant."
My driver was already here. I stamped my feet, patted down my coat, her coat, our bags. Once. Twice. Nothing.
We had crossed half of Shanghai on foot. The box could be anywhere now.
Beep beep. Time.
But I might not see her again for a very long time.
No, it's fine. Go.
She looked at me as though she'd found me again.
And in her eyes, I found her.



On the ride home I wasn't myself. My mind kept circling back to that small black box drifting somewhere in the dark, and to the messages I sent her that went unanswered.
Moments after I stepped through my door, the phone rang.

"Look outside."

I raced down the stairs, nearly tumbling.
I opened both doors.
There she stood, rain-soaked, holding the little box.
Fifteen minutes by car; she had pedaled the same distance on her bike.
Tears then. Arms around each other.
This year, early in the new year, I stood at Kiyomizu-dera in Kyoto and drew my omikuji. I got this message from god: Do not lose the things you hold dear. Once something slips away, it will never find its way back to you.
She didn't look at me like she'd merely found a lost thing.

Like Interstellar wind, cloud, rain, or perhaps time itself,
the plane descends.
Through the window they glide past: lines, linear at first, then softening into strands of noodle, osmanthus petals, Altay grassland, rainbows stripped of their full glory, never quite rings.
The lower I sink, the finer they become, the denser.
A low hum fills me.
Among the ashen filaments drift sudden sparks, brief as fireflies.
Then Shanghai appears.



In that tangled web of threads, one spark suddenly holds steady.
One beam.
On the ground.
I cannot be certain whether it is my home.
Rain falls harder, gains shape and edges.
I fix my eyes on that single glow.
In the downpour she stands so clear, so startlingly bright.
After landing I run.
Dragging the suitcase behind me, I run and run and run.

I need to know if that light is truly mine.
A long time passes.
I stand before my door.
A bunch of sunflowers waits there, blazing even in the rain.
No need to guess who bought them, who placed them.
She is inside, waiting for me.

My mom machine-washed my wool sweater.
It shrank.
That sweater was the very first thing I bought while wandering the streets of Kyoto.
I passed many stores without stepping inside.
This particular store I hesitated before for a long while.
I never rush into small shops. I fear the staff’s warmth, fear my own softness yielding to enthusiasm and buying things I don’t really want.
I’m easily persuaded by kindness.
Inside there was an old lady.
From the moment I entered she brought clothes, helped me try on them, spoke in gentle, intermittent English.
I felt shy, almost apologetic.
From the street the shop looked vivid with color; inside it was quiet with black, white, gray, nothing like my usual palette.
Yet at last she pulled out a soft gray sweater.



Unassuming.
But extraordinarily gentle to the touch, like her.
I could have left with gratitude alone, yet conscience wouldn’t allow it.
So I bought the sweater.
She wrapped it with quiet joy, walked me to the door.
But it has never been worn once; now it is small, diminished.
I felt anger, though I knew not at whom.
I kept thinking the old lady’s tenderness had shrunk along with the wool.
For a long time I held the sweater in quiet sorrow.
Until one day I found mommy had dressed our cat in it.
“Look! It fits perfectly!”

When I was little I was a boarding student and rarely spent time with my cats.
I treated them carelessly, roused them from sleep, clutched them close.
Later I noticed one of my cats started to keep her distance from me.
She no longer slept beside me.
No longer ran to greet me at the door.
No longer allowed my hand more than a single passing pat.
So I tried, slowly, to rebuild what had frayed.
I learned to meet her eyes.
To recognize her loneliness, her quiet anger.
I sat near her, keeping distance.
Soft strokes along the head, scratches at the neck.
She preferred the right side of her neck, never the left.
She permitted three gentle touches on her belly.
On good days I could rest my head in her paws.
She would tap me lightly with her tail, then place it softly across my forehead.
I think I’m starting to understand her.
Little by little.



03 Arts

EVER GREEN



JIUZHAI VALLEY

These two photos were both taken at the Jiuzhai Valley National Park (九 寨 沟) in Sichuan Province. The first picture captures a tree that felt particularly spiritual to me—the atmosphere around it reminded me of the forest where Xuanli cultivates in the Chinese comic Lanxi Town (像蓝溪镇里玄离修行的那片森林).

The second photo brings to mind the scene in The Hobbit movie where Bilbo has just begun his first exploration—the sky is blue, and the sun spreads a warm blanket over the mountain ranges.



Hope we all remain the evergreen in ourselves. Hope we all can calm down and hone ourselves, ignoring the external noises. Hope we all can take the first step on an exploration, bravely and ambitiously, when our hearts tell us, this is the life I want.

Author:
G12 AL Tau Emily Zhao
Designer:
G10 SG7 Jerry Zhu

This photo of the Sakura blossoms was taken a year ago at Luxun Park (鲁 迅 公 园) in Shanghai. This spring, I returned to see the flowers again, and they flowered exactly as they had before. In that moment, I felt as though spacetime had been altered. No matter what we go through over the course of a year, when spring returns, the Sakura is still there, blooming in quiet beauty.

SAKURA BLOSSOM LUXUN PARK





The Green Pulse

Author: G11 Gamma Anya Xu
Designer: G10 SG2 Aveline Cao

This striking illustration anchors "Evergreen" in the fragile yet enduring pulse of our planet. At its core, a matchstick blooms into a vibrant green leaf with lasting light.

Its veins represent the symbols of life, joy, and human impact (playing children, lush trees, delicate flowers, and even a cigarette), all coexisting on this single surface. Swirling tree rings frame the leaf, a quiet testament to time's passage and the ever-present potential for renewal.

The work asks us to reflect that every choice we make will shape whether the world remains forever green. "Evergreen" is not just nature's endurance, but our commitment to keeps life vivid, alive, and unbroken.29

EVER BLOOM

Purple flowers rise from the green grass, standing tall under the bright sun. Golden wildflowers grow all around them, their bright color lighting up the meadow. In the distance, tall pine trees line the clear blue lake, which mirrors the snow-capped mountains and soft white clouds above.

The mountains stand strong, just like the evergreen trees, which stay green all year. These purple flowers, too, hold a quiet strength, growing wild and bright in the mountain valley. Together, they show nature's endless life—always growing, always blooming, even in the quiet, wild corners of the world.



Author: G10 SG4 Sarah Chu
Designer: G10 SG2 Aveline Cao

04 School Events

Echo of the Epoch: Systems, Responses, and the Question of What Remains

2026 Event Recap

Author: G11 Geroge Ren/ Queenie Zhou
Designer: G11 Pi Isabel Wan

On March 22nd, TEDxWLSA 2026 brought together students, educators, and members of the community for an afternoon of ideas, reflection, and dialogue. Centered around the theme Echo of the Epoch, this year's event did more than present a collection of perspectives—it revealed a growing tension that defines our time: as the systems around us become more powerful, efficient, and interconnected, the space for individual agency, awareness, and control seems to quietly diminish.Rather than offering simple answers, the event unfolded as a deliberate progression of thought across four phases — Epoch, Cope, Workshop, and Echo.





a deliberate progression of thought across four phases—Epoch, Cope, Workshop, and Echo.
Together, they guided the audience from observing the structures that shape
our world, to questioning how we respond to them, and ultimately to confronting what remains of identity in an increasingly complex and editable
reality.

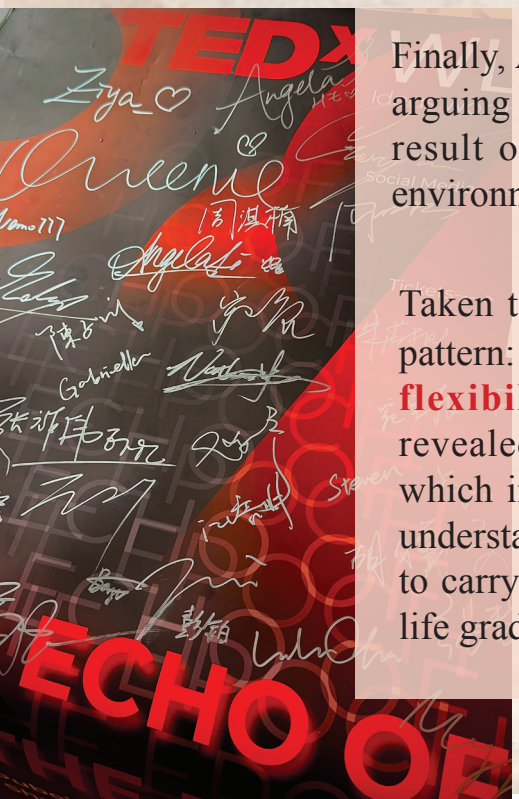
In Phase 1: Epoch, speakers examined the systems that structure contemporary life, yet what emerged was not merely a series of isolated issues, but a shared condition.

Angela Li opened with the looming extinction of commercial bananas, tracing it to monoculture farming and the spread of Panama disease TR4. What appeared to be a singular agricultural crisis instead revealed a deeper fragility: systems optimized for uniformity and efficiency often lack the resilience to withstand disruption.



Mark Qu extended this perspective into the realm of technology, mapping the evolution from early computational inventions to modern artificial intelligence. Rather than emphasizing breakthrough moments, he highlighted the cumulative and pathdependent nature of innovation—suggesting that technological progress is less a series of leaps and more an accumulation of layered constraints and possibilities.

Isabel Wan turned attention to environmental systems, framing human activity as part of a feedback loop in which short-term decisions generate long-term consequences that return, often intensified, through ecological disruption.



Finally, **Alex Zhu** challenged the common perception of "laziness," arguing that what appears to be a lack of effort is frequently the result of cognitive overload and systemic pressure in modern environments.

Taken together, these talks in **Phase 1** pointed toward a shared pattern: **systems designed for efficiency tend to reduce diversity, flexibility, and ultimately, human autonomy.** What they revealed is not only fragility, but dependency—a condition in which individuals increasingly rely on systems they neither fully understand nor meaningfully control. In this sense, progress begins to carry a paradox: the very systems designed to empower human life gradually redefine the limits within which that life operates.

If Phase 1 exposed this condition, Phase 2: Cope explored how individuals respond to it. Faced with constant stimulation, pressure, and fragmentation, the question becomes not how to escape, but how to reclaim a sense of agency.

Isabella Zhang addressed the growing disconnection between mind and body in an "always-on" culture, proposing Tai Chi as a simple yet effective means of restoring balance and awareness.



Sophie Zhang approached the issue from a different angle, presenting comedy not as mere entertainment, but as a powerful medium through which individuals can confront uncomfortable truths, express collective anxieties, and challenge dominant narratives.

Queenie Zhou reframed music as an accessible form of personal documentation, demonstrating how technology has lowered the barriers to creation, allowing individuals to transform fleeting emotions and experiences into lasting expressions of identity.

Across these perspectives, coping emerged not as passive adaptation, but as an active reconstruction of control. **To pause, to create, and to express are not acts of withdrawal—they are deliberate attempts to reassert agency within systems that constantly demand and distribute it.** Yet these forms of reclamation remain inherently limited—operating within the very systems they attempt to resist.

The **WORKSHOP session, Phase 3**

extended this inquiry further inward. By **encouraging participants to look beyond appearances and engage with underlying structures**—whether in art, society, or the self—it emphasized a skill increasingly necessary in contemporary life: the ability to distinguish essence from surface. In an environment saturated with comparison, distraction, and external validation, stability is no longer given; it must be actively constructed. The workshop thus reframed introspection not as a retreat, but as a practical response to complexity.



This trajectory culminated in Phase 4: Echo, where the discussion reached its most fundamental level.

Ziya Zhuang explored the implications of a world in which reality itself becomes increasingly editable—from historical records to personal memory to digital identity. Drawing on examples ranging from manipulated photographs to neuroscientific insights into memory, the talk challenged the assumption of a stable, singular self. Instead, identity emerged as something constructed, fluid, and vulnerable to alteration. In such a context, the question is no longer simply who we are, but who has the authority to define, preserve, or erase that identity. In such a landscape, visibility itself becomes unevenly distributed—those without the means to record, assert, or defend their narratives risk being edited out entirely. Agency, once understood as a personal capacity, becomes entangled with power, technology, and visibility. The "echo" of an epoch, then, is not merely what is expressed—it is what is allowed to remain.



Beyond the ideas presented on stage lies another dimension of the event itself. As a student-led initiative,

"TEDxWLSA 2026 was not only a platform for reflection, but an embodiment of it."

Over the course of several months, organizers, speakers, and volunteers worked collaboratively to shape an experience that could hold complexity without simplifying it. In doing so, they did not merely reflect the conditions of the present—they participated in shaping how those conditions are understood and discussed.

Echo of the Epoch



Ultimately, TEDxWLSA 2026 resists a simple conclusion. Instead, it sharpens an underlying tension: as the systems around us grow more complex and more invisible, our responses more necessary yet more constrained, and our identities more fluid yet more contested, **what responsibility do we carry in determining what endures?**

Perhaps the true echo of our time is not found in what is said, but **in what is preserved—and in our willingness to decide, consciously, what should remain**. And perhaps, what we choose not to question may shape the future just as much as what we do.

SHAKESPEARE



In memory of the **462th** anniversary of William Shakespeare's birth...

DAY

To be, or not to be: that is the question. Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to The slings arrows

SHAKESPEARE DAY

Author: Mr.John Maxwell
Designer: G11 Omega Kelly Song



April 23rd (Shakespeare’s birthday!) was **the first ever Shakespeare Day event** at WLSA. It is probably the most fun I’ve ever had as a teacher, and we were amazed to see the level of participation and support from across the school.

This event was unique in a lot of ways: Faculty-led but student-centered; Based on writing complex even for native speakers (“Is this even English?”); a collaboration between English, Drama, and students’ own athletics groups; proposed by AL but taking place across both programs; a combination of senior year performers and young audiences…







Shakespeare Day

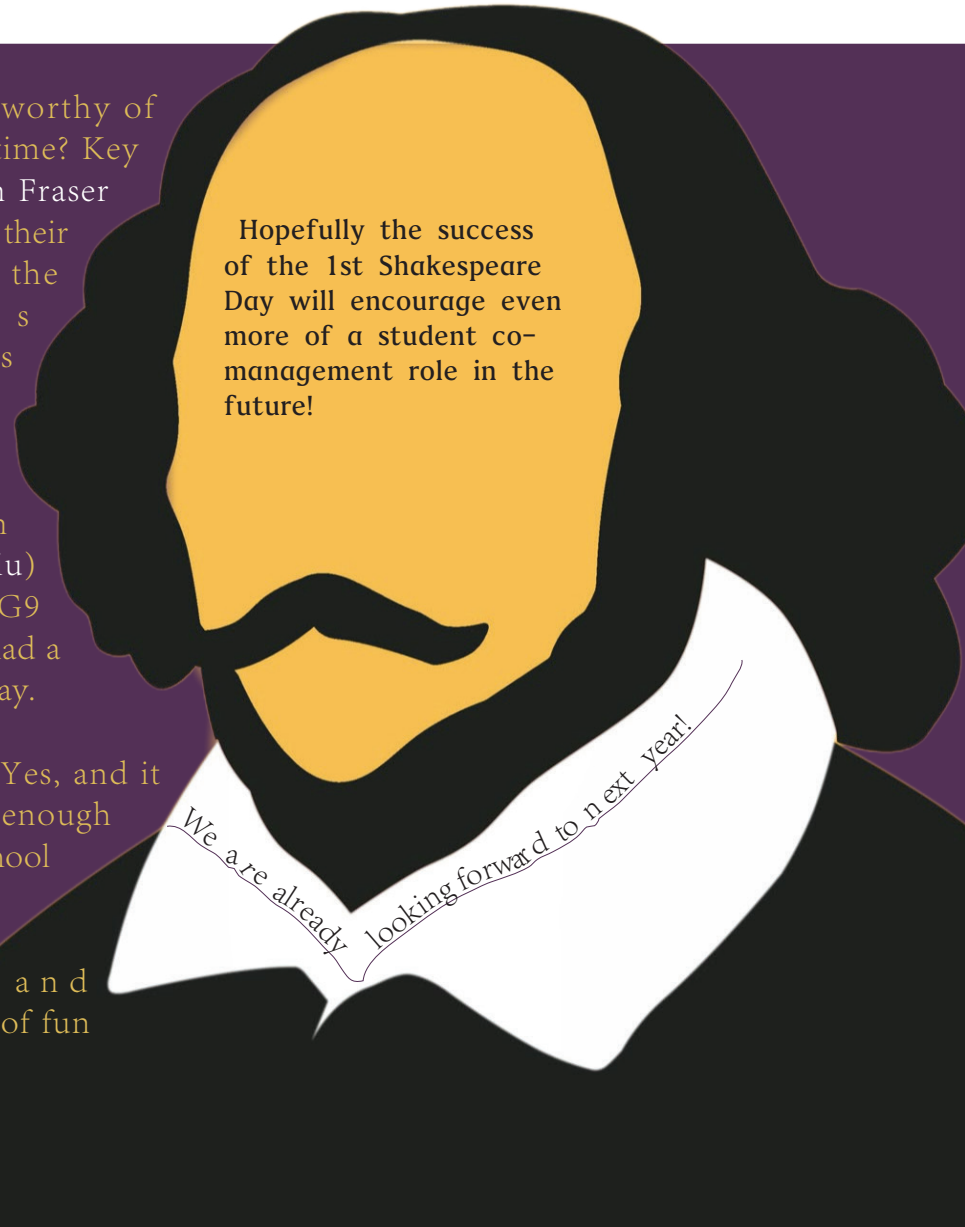
initially presented both a lot of questions and a lot of opportunity. The lead up to the event was a hectic scramble to both build up excitement and make order out of potential chaos. What was this event supposed to be, anyway?

G12 AL students were receptive to Shakespeare in class (even without having taken any English lit classes before!). And those restless, goofy guys battling with swords in the hallway between classes? Hmmm…they're actually quite good!



But would Shakespeare Day be worthy of cancelled classes and students' time? Key figures saved the day! Mr. Jordan Fraser and his Drama students drew from their previous experience performing the delightful A Midsummer Night's Dream. Veteran school leaders including Mr. Marcel Gauthier, International Principal and Mr. Brian Jordan lended guidance and encouragement. Student Union (especially Angela Li and Tony Liu) were happy to help out. Pioneer G9 kids wanted to perform. Teachers had a penchant for hand puppets and cosplay.

Still, would the archery be safe? (Yes, and it was a highlight!) Would we have enough costumes? (Thanks to combined school and student efforts, yes!) Would all performers be able to show up on time, or get stuck in exams and surveys? (Adrenaline and a spirit of fun helped everyone deliver brilliantly!)



WLSA CAN 2026:

Here's What Admissions Officers Want You to Know About University Applications

When most students think about university admissions talks, they probably imagine the usual checklist: GPA, APs, extracurriculars, essays, financial aid. And yes, all of those topics came up during the 2026 WLSA CAN China Tour. But underneath the practical advice, there was a much more interesting conversation happening — one about what universities are actually looking for, and what students may still be getting wrong about the admissions process.

After listening to admissions representatives from universities including COLUMBIA, Barnard, Vanderbilt, Cornell, UChicago, NYU, BOSTON, USC, RICE and Michigan, one thing became very clear: modern admissions is becoming less about creating the "perfect applicant" and more about understanding the real person behind the application.









The "Perfect Student" Is Probably Overrated

One of the biggest misconceptions challenged during the session was the idea that universities are searching for students who are perfect at everything. Admissions officers repeatedly emphasized that they are not trying to fill campuses with identical overachievers who all have flawless grades, leadership positions, and twenty extracurriculars.

Instead, they care about context.

What opportunities did a student have access to? How did they use them? What actually excites them intellectually? Did they pursue activities because they genuinely cared about them, or simply because they looked impressive?

Again and again, speakers returned to the same idea: curiosity and authenticity matter more than students think.

Yes, Course Rigor Still Matters in the Senior Year

Despite the growing focus on holistic review, academics still remain extremely important. Admissions officers encouraged students to challenge themselves with AP, IB, or dual enrollment courses whenever realistically possible.
But interestingly, they also pushed back against the "collect every AP" mindset.

The emphasis was less on stacking credentials and more on showing consistent academic engagement. Several representatives noted that senior year still matters significantly, and universities do notice when students suddenly reduce their course rigor after applications begin.

In other words: universities want students who continue learning, not students who strategically stop trying.

The Essay Is Not Supposed to Sound Like a Linked-in Profile

If there was one word repeated throughout the session, it was probably authenticity.
Admissions officers openly admitted that many applications begin sounding the same after a while — polished, overly formal, and carefully optimized. What they actually want, however, is a clearer sense of the student as a person.
They encouraged students to avoid turning essays into résumé summaries and instead focus on communicating personality, curiosity, perspective, and voice.

There was also one surprisingly direct warning: don't use AI to write your essays.

Not because technology itself is forbidden, but because admissions readers can often tell when writing feels generic or emotionally disconnected. Universities are increasingly trying to evaluate individuality, and overly manufactured applications work against that goal.

Universities Are Selling More Than Prestige Now

Another interesting shift was how much universities focused on support systems rather than rankings.

A large portion of the discussion centered on:
-Mental health counselling
-Tutoring and academic advising
-Internship and career support
-Identity-based student communities
-Peer mentoring programs



This reflects a broader change in how elite universities present themselves. They are no longer marketing only academic excellence or prestige, but also the idea of a supportive environment where students can grow socially, emotionally, and professionally.

For students, this changes the admissions conversation entirely. Choosing a university is increasingly about asking: Where will I actually thrive?

Summarized by GetNote AI
Designer: Gil Phi Astrid Jiang

Financial Reality Still Matters — A Lot

At the same time, the session did not ignore the less glamorous realities of international admissions.

Representatives discussed how financial aid policies for international students can be extremely competitive, especially at universities with need-aware admissions. Families were encouraged to have realistic conversations about affordability early in the process rather than building college lists based entirely on prestige.

Still, universities also highlighted expanding access initiatives, including funded campus visits and aid opportunities for lower-income students. The message was complicated: elite education is trying to become more accessible, but significant barriers still remain.

Admissions Is Also an Emotional Process

One unexpectedly memorable part of the discussion involved stress management.

Admissions officers acknowledged something students rarely hear from universities directly: the application process can become emotionally overwhelming very quickly. Constant conversations about college decisions, comparisons, and deadlines can easily consume students' daily lives.

One speaker suggested that families set aside a single scheduled time each week to discuss applications instead of bringing them up constantly.

It was a small piece of advice, but an important one. Applying to university is not only an academic process — it is also a psychological one.



Maybe Admissions Is Less About "Winning" Than Students Think

Perhaps the most important takeaway from the session was the idea that admissions is increasingly about fit, not just prestige.

Students were encouraged not to apply somewhere simply because friends were applying there or because a university ranked highly online. Instead, speakers emphasized thinking carefully about campus culture, learning environment, financial reality, and long-term personal growth.
The conversation repeatedly returned to the same underlying question:

Not "Which university is the most impressive?"
But rather: Which university makes sense for you?

Final Thoughts

The 2026 WLSA CAN China Tour revealed something interesting about the current state of university admissions. On one hand, the process remains highly competitive and shaped by structural inequalities. On the other hand, universities are increasingly emphasizing individuality, self-awareness, and authenticity over perfection alone.

For students, that creates both uncertainty and opportunity.

The application process is no longer just about proving you are accomplished. More and more, it is about proving you are genuine and proving you are accomplished. More and more, it is about proving you are genuine.

Editor's Picks

Designer: G12 ETA AMANDA JIN

01 So Easy (To Fall In Love) - Olivia Dean



Recommended by G11 Gamma Anya Xu

This song is pure, sunlit joy in under three minutes. Olivia Dean's warm, soulful vocals glide over breezy guitars and a gentle beat, reminding us that love doesn't have to be complicated. It's a celebration of letting go, and finding magic in the everyday. Every time I play it, my mood lifts instantly. Perfect for lazy afternoons, morning commutes, or whenever you need a little sparkle. Trust me, you'll be humming it for days!!

02 All Creatures Great and Small James Herriot

Shared by G10-2 Sophie Bian

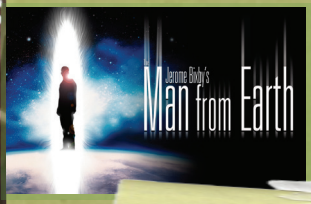
This book offers an escape from the dull routine of daily life into the English countryside. James Herriot shares his stories of veterinary life in the 1930s, which are hilariously funny, deeply touching, and it fills one's heart with warmth. Most important of all, it reminds me of the purest joy of life itself: a soft newborn calf struggling to its feet; a loyal dog brought back from the edge of death; the tough, and yet kind farmers who never bent their heads to the hard soil they sow; and the fresh golden breeze of the wild Yorkshire...It fills the heart with warmth and a renewed appreciation for the world we live in.



03 The man from earth

Shared by G11 Kappa George Ren

Unlike conventional science fiction movies that rely heavily on action or visual effects, this film stands out through its dialogue, atmosphere, and philosophical depth. It encourages viewers to think critically about history, belief, identity, and the nature of human experience, while remaining accessible and engaging throughout. For students interested in psychology, philosophy, or simply thoughtful storytelling, it is a memorable and highly distinctive watch.



04 "The Power of Kindness: Its Meaning, Impact, and Importance" - Young Master Challenge

This article deserves a wide readership for its exploration of kindness through psychology, society, and literature. It shows how compassion shapes identity and relationships. Its message is especially relevant to the theme "evergreen," as kindness remains timeless across generations, cultures, and changing societies.

Recommended by G10-5 Sarah Chu

Do you know?

Shared by G11 Kappa George Ren

Did you know that many "evergreen" foods stay relevant across cultures and generations because of their nutritional value? Foods such as oats, beans, yogurt, nuts, and fermented breads have been consumed for centuries due to their balance of fiber, protein, and essential nutrients. Unlike many modern food trends, these foods continue to support long-term health, energy, and digestion. Nutrition scientists often emphasize that sustainable eating habits are usually built on simple, minimally processed foods rather than short-lived diet trends. In many ways, truly evergreen nutrition is not about finding the newest superfood but about maintaining balanced habits over time.

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