

THE Keystone MAGAZINE



9

WAVES OF THE FUTURE

*Keystone Students Dive Into
the Ocean of Deeper Learning*

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THE KEYSTONE ACADEMY OFFICE OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

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FATHOM THE DEPTHS OF KNOWLEDGE

Our 2021 edition of *The Keystone Magazine* is all about the kind of learning that just keeps on drilling down, not only to the next level, but deeper and deeper. The examples in this inspiring publication range across math, various sciences, literature and writing, the arts, history and others. The discernment and depth shown by our students, our teachers, outside guests, and even in a selection from our annual calendar of events, are truly astonishing, in my view.

I feel honored to be quoted near the beginning of the opening story, in the good company of students from across our Keystone grades who show us various ways to ‘dive into the ocean of deeper learning’. I wrote this:

Our vision of deeper learning is a type of learning that develops understandings that are not inert, but transferable. Inert learning remains fixed in a specific context. Some learning is and needs to be exactly that. But deeper learning empowers the learner to transfer understanding from one situation to another where it can be equally or even more meaningful and productive. We want all our students to want to, and to know how to, take their learning deeper and deeper. This entails at least a combination of the critical and the reflective.

The phrase ‘deep learning’ is current, and topical, in the field of education. Indeed, the second book in our Keystone Research Series, recently published, has this title: *Deep Learning: A Journey in Critical Thinking and Reflective Knowledge*. From our beginnings as a place of learning, we have tried to infuse into our philosophy and practice a true sense of ‘deep learning’. In the past year or two, however, I have preferred to speak of ‘deeper learning’. ‘Deep’ learning suggests something that is finite, a fixed layer of learning that can be reached. ‘Deeper’ is more flexible and progressive. Deeper learning is a continuing exploration under a surface whose depths cannot be fully plumbed. And deeper learning is needed now more than ever because the amazing discoveries of the digital age carry within them a tendency towards superficiality. We need deeper learning in

order to link disparate discoveries and to engineer interdisciplinary connections and to solve complex problems.

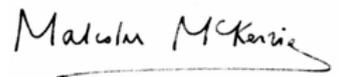
The final piece in this magazine is about the most recent Nobel Literature Laureate, Louise Glück, and her poetry. Keystone’s Sabrina Liu engages in a compelling conversation with Liu Xiangyang, Glück’s Chinese translator. Towards the end of the interview, Sabrina mentions Glück saying that the term poet ‘names an aspiration, not an occupation’. Mr. Liu says this in response: “We can say a ‘poet’ is an aspiration or a state of mind. We hope to be in such a state of mind. We need to see beyond the superficial.” That’s a fine statement about poets, and also about deeper learners whose learning is always an aspiration or a state of mind that is ultimately unfathomable. We do indeed need to see beyond the superficial, and then beyond again, and again. So much in this magazine shows Keystone students and our community of learners doing just that.

It is fitting, in the context of the previous paragraph, to end this foreword with reference to another poet. Alexander Pope published *An Essay on Criticism* in 1711. It contains this famous couplet:

A little knowledge is a dang’rous thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring....

In Ancient Greek mythology, the Pierian spring in Macedonia was thought to be the fount of all knowledge of art and science. While this edition of *The Keystone Magazine* for 2021 does not claim to be the source of such a river, it does contain some deep draughts of learning located a long way downstream.

Drink it all in deep, and then deeper, and deeper.



Head of School
Keystone Academy

DEEP LEARNING: ALL ANSWERS LIE WITHIN

© EDITOR'S NOTE

The faint glow of the sunrise slowly warmed up the chilly grasslands of Inner Mongolia. In just several minutes, the splendid golden hour blanketed the autumn steppes, much to the delight of a group of Keystone Academy eleventh graders and teachers wearied by an overnight train ride from Beijing.

Following a short break, the students traveled to Yulongsha Lake, to the northeast of Wudan, a town in Chifeng City, to survey the Gobi Desert and go hiking. They came back to the village at dusk, excited but anxious upon knowing they would spend the night at locals' homes.

After dinner, the group lit a bonfire that soon overpowered the faint twinkling stars. Seeing this, Brian Guo (of the Keystone Class of 2021) memorialized that breathtaking moment:

"We gather around the bonfire and watch the flames rise and dissipate into sparkles to join the stars. I think this is why poets try to avoid obvious descriptions of stars, as they carry meaning beyond human emotion. Describing the starry sky is as redundant as 'pouring a bucket of water into the ocean.' Even so, the lights that dot the heavens piqued my wandering imagination."

On the last night of this trip, which happened in September 2019, I talked to two other teachers about the value and essence of experiential learning. We engaged in deep thought about studying and understanding ideas—of yourself, others, and the rest of the world. Jorge Durango, a high school Business Management teacher, said, "Traveling makes us more inclusive," and

through it, we could learn to embrace differences in traditions, customs, values, and lifestyles. Andrew Scott, then Theory of Knowledge (ToK) coordinator, believed there exists "a common ground despite differences," which is much more important than anything else. Such common ground is worthy of attention, understanding, and recognition.

During that six-day journey—a brief yet rejuvenating period in my fast-paced life—it became clear to me that exploring one's inner self is a more mature and holistic learning process that leads us to a greater truth. Everything exists for a reason; you have to experience life personally to learn its truths because no one can do it for you. The same principle holds for the way you see the world, work, and live your life.

At Keystone Academy, inspirational stories are found everywhere. Over the past several months, we have observed classes, spoke to students and teachers, and written extensively on the topic of deep learning. Once again, we witnessed memorable experiences at Keystone—within classrooms, throughout the residential setting, and in the world at large—especially as students share the very interactions and ponderings that spark their curiosity and creativity and unleash their potential. This model of learning is about growing and improving through self-reflection; a student's education should include emotional exploration and self-discovery.

Throughout their forays into learning, students observe, raise questions, and find answers; they research, experiment, and go on diverse paths, accepting challenges and maturing as they go farther. Along the way,

they design and build connections, evaluate creative processes, reflect on setbacks, seek help when needed, optimize their goals constantly, and act on many possibilities. They open doors so others can take part in a mesmerizing opportunity for learning.

There is so much pleasure and excitement in seeing students emerge from the depths of wisdom. This edition aims to present a considerable part of that. From the wide array of topics in the cover story, you will know about how deep learning happens at Keystone. For example, the Primary School's Mission to Mars unit, which coincided with the historic Mars missions of the United States and China, was a multidisciplinary lesson that integrated new learning technologies, thus energizing students—our future spacefarers and scientists. In Secondary School, the Capstone Project essay of Sophia Du on surrogacy is among the many bold and perceptive student writings on the topic of "The Rise of Modern China." In addition, Michael Chang of the Class of 2022 brings home lessons and experiences from his successful United States Academic Decathlon (USAD) stints and shares them with a club dedicated to inspiring a new breed of academic challenge-seeking students grounded in the ideals of having a spirited character and united community.

We have seen how knowledge has changed and been applied to different contexts, especially in the current turbulent era. Learning, therefore, should be lasting, interconnected, and profound. As the Greco-Roman philosopher and essayist Plutarch put it in *On Listening to Lectures*: "For the mind does not require filling like a bottle, but rather, like wood, it only requires kindling to

create in it an impulse to think independently and an ardent desire for the truth."

Any truly excellent school must understand that students' capabilities for deep learning come from an unquenchable thirst for exploring life's mysteries and an inner, lasting desire for growth. When students connect the essence of their academic journeys with their personal experiences, and then transform their emotions, thoughts, and actions into meaningful creations, deep learning becomes a life-long pursuit.

More importantly, once students are ready to ride across the grasslands of knowledge, teachers must give way, for these young minds have taken the reins on the path to the world of endless discoveries.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sabrina Liu'.

Sabrina Liu

Director of Marketing and Communications
Keystone Academy

WAVES OF THE FUTURE

Keystone Students Dive Into
the Ocean of Deeper Learning





The journey to critical thinking may be complex and arduous, but its roots lie deep within the human experience.



We are living in an era of rapid information flow. The knowledge that used to be written in glyphs and bones, stored in libraries, and dispatched through printed materials has become much more readily available, just a smartphone tap away.

The coronavirus pandemic may have expedited the transition to innovative digital learning, but it has also worsened existing educational issues and magnified social inequalities. Knowledge alone is inadequate in addressing mounting concerns in our hyperconnected society.

Many teachers, scholars, and educational pundits worldwide have remarked that there is a need to reform the model of learning and teaching to prepare young people for an uncertain future. An educational concept that has gained ground in recent years is *deep learning*, which some educators describe as “the drive toward more substantive 21st-century learning” or “a set of competencies that students need to succeed in and out of the classroom.”

The so-called 21st-century skills advance a notion that young learners must be equipped with 3Rs (reading, writing, arithmetic), 4Cs (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity), life and career skills, and information and media literacy skills to become more competent to face the demands of the coming times. However, the dire circumstances that have marked the first two decades of this century—the irrelevant focus on the superficial, polarized political rhetoric on social media, critical thought stifling echo chambers propelled by algorithmic brainwashing, and the hypersensitivity that has come along with digital advancements—bring to light the need for and return to courteous discourse and civil behavior. For Keystone Academy Head of School Malcolm McKenzie, progressive schools must develop not only skillful students but also “characters with good character.”

Mr. McKenzie invites everyone to dive into *deeper* learning, “a continuing exploration under a surface whose depths cannot be fully plumbed.” He expounds:

Our vision of deeper learning is a type of learning that develops understandings that are not inert, but transferable. Inert learning remains fixed in a specific context. Some learning is and needs to be exactly that. But deeper learning empowers the learner to transfer understanding from one situation to another where it can be equally or even more meaningful and productive. We want all our students to want to, and to know how to, take their learning deeper and deeper. This entails at least a combination of the critical and the reflective.

The latter concept that Mr. McKenzie mentioned forms the foundation of the Keystone model of learning, further elaborated in *Deep Learning: A Journey in Critical Thinking and Reflective Knowledge* (cover image pictured above), a curricular book written by educators and former Keystone teachers Vivek Bammi and Sally Booth, Ph.D. The book, published in 2021, examines and promotes Keystone’s model of critical thinking through active learning—which draws upon the school’s synthesis of Chinese ethos and global mindsets—and looks at how the concept leads learners to a “journey [of] creating unique footpaths and identities,” the process and pleasure of which “far outweigh any obsession with predetermined destinations or outcomes.”

“The journey to critical thinking may be complex and arduous, but its roots lie deep within the human experience,” Mr. Bammi and Dr. Booth say in the opening pages of the book. “Chinese civilization has bequeathed to us an optimistic humanism, a trust in our ability to mold a pleasing world that benefits all its inhabitants. The bedrock for this vision remains good thinking and deep learning, an inheritance open to the world.”

In this edition of *The Keystone Magazine*, we join several Keystone students as they begin their dives into deeper learning. As they emerge from the depths of reflective knowledge, they make their envisioned futures happen right now, thus enriching their lives and inspiring communities to look forward to exciting times ahead.

EMERGING TALENTS: CURIOUS LEARNERS TAKE ON FUTURE TECH THROUGH PERSONAL PROJECTS

Leo Deng, Tim Gu, Ethan Dai and William Wang are best buddies on a mission to build Mars colonies—in the world of *Minecraft*, at least. The self-confessed “space geeks” are amazed at the possibility of having humans settle on another planet.

In 2018, Leo and Tim founded Mars Club KAP (Keystone Activity Program) out of their passion for space science. Their friends Ethan and William joined the club later on. By the first semester of the academic year 2020-2021, the club had recruited twelve students from the third to fourth grade, all helping the quartet construct Mars habitats while playing the video game *Minecraft*. Alongside this, the boys planned lessons and gave quizzes based on their higher-level Science lessons and other exciting resources related to making the Red Planet habitable, sharing all this with their younger members.

During club meetings, the boys busied themselves with teaching their recruits coding and programming concepts effortlessly, as if they had been in the field for some time. In the classroom, the Mars Club founders are just like any other Keystone Primary School students, all of whom are no strangers to becoming adaptable and curious life-long learners.

↓
Primary Science teacher
Kirk McCullough acts as a
co-supervisor of the Mars
Club KAP





The Primary School opened the academic year with the idea of the growth mindset. It is a concept that resonates strongly, especially after the coronavirus pandemic turned the world upside down and made learning environments both more uncertain and demanding. Teachers built on the growth mindset to refine or reconceptualize lessons so students could become future-proof and adept at understanding multiple approaches in thinking and problem-solving.

This approach fits well with the school's definition of learning, where Keystone considers every member of the community to be a "learner." Associate Head of School and Dean of Curriculum Jia Lili explains that learning is seen in a very broad sense as it goes beyond the confines of the classroom.

"Our definition of learning encompasses values-based, experiential, and project-based forms of learning, rooted in heritage and outward in perspective, and framed by the school's shared values," she adds. "Teachers, just like students, are also learners in their own right, as

they continuously develop themselves through teaching. We also believe that learning is a life-long process, and so our ultimate goal is to encourage students to keep their enthusiasm for learning and spirit of inquiry going as they live their lives."

As the academic year progressed, so did the activities in the Primary School. One extraordinary unit that students experienced was Mission to Mars, which coincided with the historic landing of NASA's *Perseverance* and China's *Zhurong* rovers on the Red Planet in the first half of 2021. The missions were a remarkable moment for the Mars Club members, and for Primary students as a whole, especially as they watched history unfold. For educators, on the other hand, the occasion tested the effectiveness of their new teaching strategies. And they succeeded, big time.

Over several weeks, teachers from various departments collaborated on linking lessons to concepts related to sustainability and planetary colonization. Physical Health Education (PHE) classes, for example, conditioned students' physiques in an "astronaut bootcamp"

*Deep learning occurs
when knowledge expands beyond a classroom.*



←
Mars Club KAP members
use *Minecraft* to design their
ideal habitats on the Red
Planet.

→
The *Perseverance* rover
made its way to Keystone
Primary School with the
help of augmented reality.



as they prepared for their “trip to Mars.” In Science classes, students learned about rovers, landers, and satellites using augmented reality (AR) applications.

The unit was a “robust lesson that pulled from math, the sciences, art, technology, and PHE—it just covers a whole gamut of knowledge,” Science teacher Kirk McCullough said, adding that the activity was a “concerted effort” across various departments. There were teachers, he said, who found ways to combine lessons to make and strengthen multidisciplinary connections despite the difference in their curriculums. “And that’s where deep learning occurs—when knowledge expands beyond a classroom,” he added.

On the sidelines of the Mission to Mars unit, fifth graders explored other topics related to digital technologies. Mr. McCullough premiered the first episode of *Kids Special Course on AI* in one of his classes with Ethan, Tim, and William.

With movie clips on automatons and even an “interview” with

physicist Stephen Hawking on a future dominated by artificial intelligence (AI), the short film captivated the youngsters who learned more about the real-world applications of AI beyond virtual assistants and mobile domains.

After the showing, Mr. McCullough revealed that the video was created by tenth grader Vivian Chen for her Personal Project. She posted other episodes on the impacts of AI on transportation, finance, health and medicine, and education on her Microsoft Streams channel.

Vivian’s Personal Project product targets primary school children, specifically Grade 5 students who, for her, are “at the suitable age to learn about AI because of their basic knowledge of math and science.”

It took her several months of research to compose the scripts of the six-episode project because she lacked technical knowledge of AI. Her supervisor suggested that she create a trailer instead of a series,

but Vivian ultimately pursued her original idea, inspired by an on-line crash course introduced by her father who works in the AI field.

“At the end of my research, I found out that a completely AI-run future is really distant to our current lives,” she said. “Since super-intelligent technologies are based on our brains, which we do not completely understand with our current capabilities yet, that future is very far ahead from us.”

Ethan was impressed by the film’s quality and message, although it still left him wondering how “everything could get worse” if super-intelligent robots went out of control. William, meanwhile, thought it was “normal to feel afraid” of the repercussions, but he felt that “as humans, we have to think of and be prepared for the risks” if AI went awry.

When Vivian was at the same age as those students, she had also heard chatter about a possible future AI takeover. The thought may have alarmed her at first, but it also sparked her intention “to know whether AI will truly replace us.” And so, the tenth-grade filmmaker invited her audience to understand the current use of advanced technologies in improving our society, instead of imagining a gloomy techno-future.

Mr. McCullough recalled that students had a “wow moment” after watching the film, not only because it was made by one of their upper-grade peers, but also because they realized they could make a similar project in the future. Ethan felt energized by that possibility, especially as he had previously tried creating short videos during the distance learning phase in 2020.

At the time of publishing, he and his best buddies in the club have entered Middle School as sixth graders, hoping to learn more advanced video-making skills. The quartet will look into expanding their activities by selling “Mars caps” and other merchandise to fund their projects, such as MarsScript (a child-friendly programming language) and Green Tech (hardware focused on conserving energy).

The quartet has just launched their club website. Perhaps it is time for the boys to tinker with cameras to upload videos of their activities to attract new members.

ABSORBING PRINCIPLES: BUDDING BIOLOGIST CONSULTS VALUES TO TACKLE SOCIAL DILEMMAS

As Sophia Du was flipping through television channels, she came upon a documentary showing a group of Indian women inside a hostel-style house. The tenants looked cheerful, but there were others who lay on separate beds as if they were sick. Later on, the film revealed that the women were employed as surrogate mothers in a clinic run by a doctor accused of running a “baby-making factory.”

It completely shocked the tenth grader, who realized she had chanced upon a rerun of the BBC documentary, *House of Surrogates* (premiered in 2013). The film focused on the so-called commercial surrogacy in India and how it benefitted rural women who raked in life-changing sums of money in exchange for carrying a child that would never be their own.

Sophia watched the documentary sometime before the winter holiday of 2020. During the academic break, the self-confessed biology enthusiast scoured the internet for her Keystone Capstone Project essay topic, browsing mindlessly and typing random ‘sciency’ keywords until hyperlinks led her to journals about surrogacy.

These events seemed to brace the student for yet another encounter with the topic.

In January 2021, a Chinese celebrity couple became embroiled in a scandal after allegations of surrogacy and child abandonment, causing widespread furor, heated debates, and trending topics that mostly centered on morality and preserving familial principles. The social media firestorm further ignited the tenth grader’s interest in the topic. She puzzled over clashing viewpoints on surrogacy and why some people in other countries continue practicing it despite legal, ethical, and economic issues.

Sophia set about tackling those perplexities in her Capstone essay, in which she looked at social values and dynamics that affect the surrogacy laws of China, India, the United Kingdom, and California in the United States. She identified four key concepts central to surrogacy laws of the four locations: filial piety in China (as rooted in Confucianism); religious belief in India (as Hinduism accepts assisted reproductive technologies [ARTs], although the government strictly controls surrogacy due to legal disputes); mounting social acceptance in the UK (especially after its government allowed same-sex marriage); and liberalism in California (due to the state’s geography and immigration history). She has also recommended that future researchers consider conducting a wide-scale opinion polling or analysis of economic or political factors in surrogacy laws to further the study.

Such a detailed analysis has impressed Individuals and Societies (I&S) teacher Dr. Yuanqing Huang. For her, Sophia’s research is



Tenth graders (L-R) Jamie Zhu, Tracy Qu, Linda Cui, Sophia Du, and Emma Liu teamed up and unified their Capstone Project essays to form a “timeline narrative” of Chinese civilization.

socially relevant, especially as it looks at how values shape the dynamics of modern society. For Sophia, on the other hand, her recent foray goes beyond curiosity.

“So many new biological technologies have come out—surrogacy, gene editing, cloning, and the like,” the tenth grader said. “Our future scientists should be responsible for their inventions and interventions. We need to regulate them properly, otherwise our society would face more ethical problems.”

Sophia shared her essay insights twice: at the Capstone Project seminar on May 28, and at the “Colorful China” Capstone Project exhibition held after the Grade 10 Middle Years Programme (MYP) certification ceremony on June 11. The occasion, Dr. Huang explained, aimed at sharing students’ research results with the Keystone community, especially parents.

The latter event was the first themed presentation in the six years since the start of the Keystone Capstone Project, or the conclusion of the school’s China and the World program that links the Chinese Civilization and World Civilization courses. Dean of Curriculum, Ms. Jia, says the Capstone Project and the program it is built upon demonstrate the strength and uniqueness of Keystone’s Chinese Thread curricular framework.

“Keystone Academy is a school belonging to China. We firmly believe that China’s status on the world stage is decisive,” Ms. Jia said. “The China and the World program allows our students to have a profound understanding of the history and traditions of China and the world, and, at the same time, lead the action in the global financial, political, and cultural fields. This unique program also stimulates their love for learning and respect for their national traditions, tolerance of cultural differences, and the pursuit of academic excellence.”

Sophia teamed up with four other peers, who together linked their distinct essays into a unified presentation that captured an essential part of Chinese civilization. Their “timeline narrative” opened with back-to-back comparative essays: Tracy Qu looked into the creation stories in Christianity and Chinese mythology while Linda Cui explored the *Analects* and *The Republic* to understand how Confucius and Plato promoted poetry to shape values. The narrative continued to Emma Liu’s paper on the impact of Yuan Dynasty porcelain on Chinese culture, and then jumped to contemporary times with Jamie Zhu’s investigation into how comedy sketches in *chūnwǎn* (or the annual Spring Festival Gala) communicate or influence values and attitudes. Sophia’s topic on surrogacy represented the future aspect of the timeline.

Their team was among the 32 student groups that presented a unique narrative of Chinese civilization. Dr. Huang was delighted to see the extent of students’ perspectives and how they related their work to China’s future.

“The Capstone Project allows our students to be part of history,” Dr. Huang said, adding that this contribution to Chinese civilization—which is uniquely ongoing, unlike the comparative discontinuity in other regions over the ages—is sure to benefit generations of future students. She also urged students to use their understanding of Chinese culture and history and relate that knowledge to global experiences. That way, they will be equipped to take on studies and initiatives that find and celebrate common connections, while also learning from differences.

“To look at the past is to think about what we should inherit, adjust, and leave for future generations. The Chinese intellectual Liang Qichao encouraged everyone to look at history from different angles. If I may extend that, I believe we need to understand each of those angles so we can make sense of the changes happening in the present,” she added.

In the years since the launch of the Keystone Capstone Project, I&S teachers have guided tenth graders to approach their essays by looking at personal experiences or interests, or integrating perspectives from scholars around the world. In doing so, students prepare themselves for the more demanding Extended Essay (EE) in the Diploma Programme (DP), another challenging and rewarding research opportunity for deeper learning.

Mrs. Trisha Power, the EE coordinator and a Theory of Knowledge (ToK) teacher, considers the Capstone stage to be an opportunity for students to take on a topic about their heritage, allowing them to contribute to the academy and develop modern studies about China.

Sophia felt ecstatic upon receiving Dr. Huang’s commendations, even comparing them to the “start of a new mountain” to scale. For a student who has tried to avoid History and I&S subjects because she was “annoyed at remembering dates,” her Capstone topic choice was a fulfilling change.

“People always say, ‘We should learn from the past,’ but based on my History classes, it seems we do not learn from the past at all!” Sophia commented bluntly. “And so, I want to focus more on the future—maybe the only way to prevent past mistakes from happening again is to explore or consider a new way of doing things.”

To look at the past is to think about what we should inherit, adjust, and leave for future generations.



—
Free Walk
300cm x 210cm
Acrylic on canvas
Wu Mingzhong, 2019

IMMERSED IN THOUGHT: YOUNG ARTIST UNDERSTANDS LIFE THROUGH FATHER'S OEUVRE

In the artwork *Free Walk* (pictured above) by the late Chinese contemporary artist Mingzhong Wu, the Roman goddess Liberty, whose figure he derives from the renowned painting *La Liberté guidant le peuple*, is filled with rousing energy as she strides alone across a dull grassland under gloomy skies. Using his signature aesthetic style of representing images through glass filled with bright red wine, Mr. Wu expresses in this illustration that human fragility is the momentum that spurs humans to explore or escape the realm of freedom.

Free Walk was among the last images Mr. Wu produced for his final exhibition “In-Outward Observations” in 2019. Here, he reflected on human fragility—the long-running subject of his oeuvre—and his decade-long fight against cancer through paintings that depicted living with fortitude in the face of inevitable tragedies.

Over the years, his son Zhuoyang (a member of the Keystone Class of 2021) witnessed how Mr. Wu attempted to visualize his artistic focus through contemporary artworks that, for the teenager, looked “the same thing all the time.” Still, this exposure greatly influenced Zhuoyang, who slowly veered towards conceptualism as he grew up.

Zhuoyang understood his father *was* an artist and regarded him as a “guide who provided ideas to understand the world.”

As Mr. Wu’s condition deteriorated, the teenager observed how his father strove to “make a connection with his life” and put forth “energy and effort,” which ultimately led the older Wu to be “more insecure [and] reluctant to die.”

Following his father’s passing, Zhuoyang turned to literary classics, including those from Milan Kundera and Albert Camus, to seek solace and clarity. His loss also happened some months before the start of the preparation for the Extended Essay requirement in the DP.

The EE Coordinator, Mrs. Trisha Power, recalled Zhuoyang consulting her about his topic, a comparative literature review whose theme may have worked just fine but was still “a little dark” and therefore worried his mother. Mrs. Power then probed into Zhuoyang’s reasoning and eventually learned about his family’s loss.

Then a sudden shift happened.

Enlightened and energized by his talk with Mrs. Power, Zhuoyang cast his initial topic aside for what he felt was “the right choice at the right time”: to examine how his late father’s works demonstrated human fragility.

Zhuoyang began his research by returning to his father’s studio, not as a son but as a fellow artist and an art student who analyzed the nuances of his paintings and their descriptions. He identified several works that defined his father’s career ‘periods’ and noticed the gradual progression in Mr. Wu’s artistic philosophy.

Next, the teenager began what he felt was the “most rewarding part” of writing the essay: seeking the opinions and observations of Mr. Wu’s friends and colleagues, one of whom described the late artist’s concept as a “gnarled towering tree [that] extends uncontrollably.” For Zhuoyang, that metaphor captured his father’s winding exploration of freedom that ended up being a “permanent paradoxical dilemma” upon facing death.

Zhuoyang looked at *Free Walk*, one of Mr. Wu’s final paintings, once



This drawing, by Zhuoyang Wu, is based on a photograph taken by his mother. Wu Mingzhong is observing his son Zhuoyang, who holds a paintbrush.

For my father, “human fragility” was very personal and he approached it by looking from the birth and death of a person.

again, and finally realized that his father’s view of human fragility “was actually not vague.”

“Sometimes, we do not fully grasp the true meaning of language,” Zhuoyang explained. “For my father, ‘human fragility’ was very personal and he approached it by looking from the birth to the death of a person. And between these stages, life is all about the combination of choices. What do you choose? And why are you choosing that and sacrificing another?”

The young artist closed his essay with the caption written by his father for *Free Walk*:

“Destiny is the fountain of creativity; I wish my paintings can delectably melt the pain, the fragility of love and life, and I want my imagery to last in eternity.”

Looking back on his experience, Zhuoyang believes his essay has allowed him to not only meet his father once more, but also see how he “can still exist within [me]”. The opportunity to write about his father has given Zhuoyang a new understanding of life and death.

Zhuoyang’s work was among the EE pieces that surprised Mrs. Power. For her, the best essays are always those that have personal connections because they “always feel right for [students]”.

“He got so much more out of this process,” she added. “And that is the real learning here, as opposed to that product just being an essay. Zhuoyang had a chance to know his father. What teenagers like him learn in this activity goes beyond managing time and becoming experts in content knowledge, but also understanding their own lives, looking at themselves in the process, and reflecting at the end.”

During the “Life Outside the Box” exhibition in April, Zhuoyang incorporated his understanding of life and death into his installations themed “The Pathway to Immortality”. Inspired by a statement in the 1987 novel *Norwegian Wood* by Haruki Murakami, Zhuoyang produced a pair of antithetical door-shaped paintings that showed different states of being in a person’s life.

Zhuoyang has begun walking forward after a great loss, now with rousing energy to explore life further. Although Mr. Wu has passed on, his works will remain Zhuoyang’s lifelong spiritual guidepost.

RIPPLE EFFECT: HOW COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS ENRICH STUDENT EXPERIENCES

When Drama teacher Elizabeth Steck resumed her face-to-face classes in the fall semester of 2020, she noticed “a bit of regression” and loss of confidence when speaking or working in groups of her previous students. Back in the spring, they were suddenly thrust into learning remotely but managed to perform small-scale inter-class activities, including an interactive puppet play and a live sing-along session. At that time, Mrs. Steck and Global Music teacher De Anne Dubin combined their subject units, hoping to “bring back fond memories of class together.”

Mrs. Steck ended her third-grade Drama classes with an online tableau where students and their family members had to dress up and depict a scene from a superhero film or a legend. The activity was a hit for many students, although it was difficult for some whose family members were unavailable.

The third-grade tableau returned in the spring semester of 2021. This time, it was full of life, quite literally, because the young talents performed in front of their younger Primary School peers. Mrs. Steck and the third-grade Keystone IPC (International Primary Curriculum) team worked together and combined their latest class units (“Tantalizing Tableaux” and “Different Places, Similar Lives” respectively) to form the Living Museum of Celebrations, where third graders portrayed their understanding of worldwide festivals. The actors barely stayed still and struggled to contain their laughter as young audiences goggled at their poses and costumes.

Simply put, everyone was enthusiastic about seeing each other get back in action. Mrs. Steck felt the gathering reminded Primary students of the value of community: the activity celebrated the diverse expressions of happiness and family togetherness from different countries and cultures.

“That’s the goal of this activity: learning about other cultures to acknowledge the differences, respect the differences,” Mrs. Steck emphasized. “Students don’t have to be the same to understand that we are all human and we all come from the same human place inside.”

“Authentic experiences are usually the most successful for students to learn in,” she added. “Students have taken the tableau activity further than what I have given them—it gives them the freedom

to learn and be creative. If I can help them be creative and apply it anytime, then I feel I am doing my job.”

The concept of community is further celebrated and embodied by Keystone students as they go through the Secondary School. In mid-April, the Class of 2021 held one of their final exhibitions before graduating from Keystone. In the event titled “Transformations”, the twelfth graders expressed the school’s second keystone of building character and community throughout our residential setting, through artifacts that showed their past (before coming to Keystone), present (current changes and feelings), and future (lessons to be applied as they move onto university and professional lives). This process allowed them to express thoughts and feelings about the development and growth of their own character.

One of the seniors, Makar Cherepanov, brimmed with passion during his presentation. His ‘past’ artifact, a documentary collection of his grandfather’s research into Antarctica in the 1980s and 1990s, captured their family’s history and existing links to environmental work.

Makar recalled obtaining the files—scientific reports, climate data, and handwritten journals—in the attic of his grandmother’s house in Russia, hidden beneath heaps of dusty documents and faded photographs. The teenager then realized how the documents, now considered insignificant, connected three generations of the Cherepanovs.

“Finding out that someone from my past has done environmental work was definitely thrilling,” Makar added. “My grandpa wasn’t doing groundbreaking science in Antarctica, but he surely developed a basis for further research that has allowed for new and exciting revelations.”

Makar was greatly surprised when he saw a handwritten note in Chinese among the journals. He is fluent in Chinese and has been improving this ability since arriving at Keystone as a seventh grader in 2016. In fact, he wrote his tenth-grade Capstone Project—a comparative essay on the effect of the collapse of the Soviet Union on modern Russia and China—entirely in Chinese. For him, it was “both a process of learning and understanding the culture more.”

The jotting, as Makar read, had an address of the Polar Research Institute of China (PRIC) in Shanghai and the name of the officer who worked with Makar’s grandpa in Antarctica. Apparently, the note was given by the officer to invite the older Cherepanov to visit China as a sign of gratitude for their warm friendship during the coldest days in their Antarctic posting.

The officer’s invitation may have been lost for nearly 30 years, but his colleague’s grandson has responded to it. With the help of Keystone’s Office of Marketing and Communications, Makar learned



—
Makar Cherepanov featured *Baikal Around the World* as his “present artifact” during the Character and Community Presentation of the Keystone Class of 2021 in April.

Participating in a competition can make our high school life more exciting, but what makes it meaningful is we join as a group of friends with the same hobbies and interests.

that the officer is now a retiree, and that the PRIC already moved to a new location just several kilometers away from the address in the note. As of publishing time, Makar is still trying to establish contact with that officer.

The attic discovery indeed reinforced Makar's dedication to nature. Even before that find, he has supported initiatives about environmental protection. He and several other students created the *Baikal Around the World* picture book (his "present" artifact) to raise awareness about Lake Baikal's environmental issues. He is also collaborating with three other Keystone students on their Elephant Extinction book (his "future" artifact) about nature conservation.

The experiences associated with these three artifacts make Makar more confident that he "will have the necessary skills and passion for launching more initiatives in the future" as he enters university life. He will remain in China and head to Tsinghua University to study psychology.

Beyond this, Makar thanks Keystone for inspiring students to develop character and community in many ways, allowing them to "bring positive influences to anywhere they live." Other Keystone students, like Michael Chang, direct that positive influence back to the community that has nurtured them, before looking further. Michael is co-leading a club that aims to prepare younger students for the United States Academic Decathlon (USAD).

He and his teammates Ailing Duan, Zining Wang, Yutong Wen, Maggie Zhang, Roy Zhao, Eric Zhu (all G10 at the time) and Yichen Liu (G11) rallied to two USAD victories: first, as the top-ranking group in Division 2 of the China national finals in January 2021; and later, as the only Chinese team that won (second place, Division 3) in the global rounds in May.

The two-time USAD participant likes how the contest highlights the strength of team cooperation over competition. Its 2021 edition, he said, examined the Cold War as an overarching theme, leading global participants to "analyze the subject from different perspectives," thus "improving [our] interdisciplinary thinking advocated in our Keystone classes."

Michael aims to pass on knowledge and experience to fellow club members, which he hopes will create a new school tradition that encourages students to contribute to the success of everyone within and outside the Keystone community.

"Sure, participating in such a competition can make our high school life more exciting," Michael reflects. "But what makes it very meaningful is how we join as a group of friends with the same hobbies and interests and meet more students who will carry on our club's passion. The competition has allowed us to know one another even better, and in the end, we have gained extremely good friends! And I think that is really awesome."



People often imagine how the world will be in thirty years, a century, or even more. But just like the randomness of the waves in the ocean, the future is unpredictable. What we know, however, is the future is happening right now.

The unknowns that come along challenge us, the people of today, to stay curious and rethink our views so the coming generations can enjoy the fullness of life on this planet. Uncertainties may be unsettling, but they also encourage us to focus on the things that matter as we ride the waves of the future.

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SCHOOL NEWS ROUNDUP

ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-2021

September 2020



High Schoolers Reflect on Being Global Changemakers in CAS Day

Keystone juniors and seniors listened to inspirational talks given by five speakers from different parts of the world, including one Keystone alumnus, for their Creativity, Activity, and Service (CAS) projects. Keystone partnered with the Hong Kong-based Crossroads Foundation for CAS Day on September 4. Crossroads Director David Begbie told students that “the world can be changed through each one of us.”



Primary School Celebrates Students' Return with Flag Raising Ceremonies

Following a delayed school reopening in the 2020-2021 academic year, the Primary School marked the return of students with lively flag raising ceremonies, for which children donned colorful hula hoops and masks that transformed them into young “social distancing leaders.”

October 2020



Alumni Share How Keystone Education Has Prepared Them for College Life

Eight members of the Keystone Class of 2018 participated in a virtual sharing session on October 24 for Grade 9-12 students and Secondary School parents. This alumni group touched upon several topics about their college life, especially during the pandemic period.

November 2020



We Are from the Infinite Void: Keystone Publishes Education Salon Anthology

The Office of Marketing and Communications (OMC) released the Keystone Education Salons anthology, *We Are from the Infinite Void*, in November 2020. This publication documents the thinking processes, collision of ideas, and spontaneous expressions in these meetings so they will be remembered forever.



Primary School Duo Represent China in #ClimateActionDay2020

Fourth graders Amy Ye and Jeffrey Zhan presented Keystone's environmental actions in the worldwide livestream of Climate Change Day on November 5, where student groups from different continents shared the results of their six-week Climate Action projects with half a million listeners. Amy and Jeffrey represented China in the event and their report was broadcast between speeches by natural historian Sir David Attenborough and primatologist Jane Goodall.



Math Curriculum Development Experts Visit Keystone

The Dean of Curriculum Office and the Math Department organized a series of activities related to the school's math consultancy project, a three-year undertaking to promote and ensure the development of a world school math program for Foundation to Grade 12. Curriculum development experts Steve Leinwand, Jennifer Bay-Williams, and Richard Ren visited the school in November 2020 and spearheaded group meetings with faculty, conducted focus group discussions with parents and students, and organized professional growth sessions with selected faculty members.

December 2020



Keystone Swimmers Bag 45 Medals in Unique Virtual Tournament

Forty members of the Keystone Swim Team made waves in a one-of-a-kind virtual meet where the contingent bagged 25 gold, 8 silver, and 12 bronze medals in 60 events. Keystone swimmers and representatives of different Beijing international schools raced simultaneously in their own pools, and all the times were fed into a software program that compiled the results in real-time.

January 2021



Teachers and Essential Staff Prepare for Transition into Digital Learning

Keystone employees ensured a seamless transition into distance learning and regular campus operation following an outbreak and subsequent stricter pandemic control measures in Shunyi district in late December 2020. Primary School teachers and learning assistants sorted and packed learning resources and couriered these to families. Also, essential workers stayed on campus amid emergency closures of residential compounds in early January to assist the school's residents.

February 2021



Keystone's "Meatless Mondays" Introduced in Food Sustainability Forum

Head of School Malcolm McKenzie and the Operations Team presented Keystone's Ecological Eating Day, informally called Meatless Mondays, at the Food Systems Summit Dialogue, launched by the Good Food Fund of China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation in February. Since 2019, the school has been observing Mondays when all meals served on campus are vegetarian to show the school's commitment to environmental protection and conservation.

March 2021



Keystone Launches School App PortKey

The Keystone Office of Marketing and Communications releases PortKey, the school's brand-new bilingual mobile application that fosters a more timely and effective internal communication method between the school and community members. PortKey is aimed to become a one-stop platform for school information—all a tap away.

April 2021



Values Added: Keystone Hosts ACAMIS Leadership Conference

In mid-April 2021, Keystone welcomed 300 delegates from different schools across China to the two-day Association of China and Mongolia International Schools (ACAMIS) Leadership Conference, which tackled the theme of "Values Added" and leadership in times of crisis. Several Keystone leaders and teachers hosted sessions, group discussions, and workshops, while various student groups participated by covering the event and performing on different occasions.



PTA Presents Tokens of Appreciation to Keystone Essential Staff

The Keystone Academy Parent Teacher Association (KAPTA) presented tokens and cards of appreciation to Keystone's third-party workers in late April, in early observance of Labor Day. Keystone staff and parents express gratitude to security guards, cleaners and gardeners, bus drivers and monitors, Chartwells ays and chefs, Copy Center clerks, and Uniform Shop and Store staff who form a major and vibrant part of the campus life.

May 2021



Keystone's "Resilient Class of 2021" Receives Offers from Over 140 Schools Worldwide

Keystone's fourth graduating cohort achieved most encouraging results in the 2020 college applications season, receiving offers from more than 140 colleges and universities worldwide (as of April 2021).

Described by former Head of High School Diana Martelly as the "Resilient Class of 2021", Keystone's newest graduates set off to the next stage of their academic journey at top-notch institutions here and abroad after weathering many challenges since the start of the pandemic in 2020.

June 2021



Keystone Sishui Community Day Celebrates Experiential Education and Service Learning

The PTA Committee and the Parent and Alumni Relations Office hosted the Keystone Sishui Community Day on June 12, a special event to celebrate our school's commitment to experiential education and service learning. The event highlighted the Sishui project where Keystone interacts with a community in Sishui county in Shandong province in meaningful and sustainable ways.



"Global Initiatives" Expeditions Lead Students to Different China Experiences

The Experiential Learning Office launched Global Initiatives: China Experiences, a series of summer break expeditions that led students to experience China in different ways. The trips included exciting adventures in mountain ranges, deserts, and jungles; amazing discoveries of the country's historical, traditional, architectural, and cultural highlights; immersions in vibrant communities and experiences of culinary tastes, arts and architecture; and activities related to local community service and wildlife conservation.

SYMONNE LIU
THE MICROBIOLOGY ENTHUSIAST

01



TORI GU
THE BUDDING BIOLOGIST

02



STEM- POWERED GIRLS

JAMIE MO
THE YOUNG PUZZLER

03

ANGELA WANG
THE ASPIRING ENGINEER-ENTREPRENEUR

04

Meet Keystone's Young Leaders Who Challenge Gender Stereotypes

The field of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) has gathered steam in recent decades, especially after the world entered the digital age. However, a huge gender gap in this area persists as women still account for a small minority of the world's researchers. This imbalance often begins in education—the lack of it, or how it is shaped by cultural stereotypes and notions about the role of women—and continues in workplaces and other social settings.

Young girls around the world who are immersed in

STEM education are actively challenging constructs and breaking biases to make way for their peers and other people impacted by this disparity. Such is the undertaking of four members of Keystone Academy's Class of 2021, all of whom are being driven by their growing knowledge in the field and enlightened by the strength of their cultural identity. We introduce Keystone's STEM-powered girls: Symonne Liu, the microbiology enthusiast; Tori Gu, the budding biologist; Jamie Mo, the young puzzler; and Angela Wang, the aspiring engineer-entrepreneur.



01

MICROBIOLOGY ENTHUSIAST SYMONNE LIU WELCOMES EVERYONE TO HER “GARDEN OF EDEN”

It was very late in the evening, and yet Symonne Liu’s bedroom was still buzzing with activity, quite literally. She had the liveliest roommates ever: thirty-six fruit flies, each nestled in a test tube. She had recently snuck them into her “lab,” which also served as the 17-year-old’s bedroom, while her grandmother was glued to the television downstairs, which blared a program about the benefits of traditional Chinese medicine.

One peculiar herb that her *nainai* has always raved about was the caterpillar fungus, a medical mushroom formed when a parasitic fungus germinates in living larvae of various moth genera, consuming and mummifying them in the process. Symonne has wondered about the efficacy of the so-called divine elixir that could cure illnesses. Grandma supported her claims with either selections from Chinese philosophy or the television host’s ebullient spiels.

Unmoved by the hype, Symonne enlisted the help of the hissing fruit flies to uncover the mystery behind grandma’s favorite remedy. She published her findings in her Extended Essay (EE) for the higher-level Biology course in Keystone’s International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme.

In her “lab,” Symonne divided these fluttering insects into two “families” nicknamed Anna and Bob and spoiled them with a generous breakfast of freshly mashed bananas for 27 days. Only the Anna group, though, was given bananas coated with ground caterpillar fungus. Interestingly, that same family lived two days longer than the ones deprived of the fungus.

“It seems the herb wasn’t snake oil after all,” Symonne mumbled after reaching her eureka moment.

Symonne has had many similar breakthroughs since

her first dive into what she calls her “Garden of Eden”—the world of microorganisms made visible by a light microscope she received from her parent at an early age.

For a curious girl, this microcosm was a sight so splendid that she chaired a primary school biology club to introduce writhing life forms to her peers. When she was away from the microscope, Symonne zoomed out to behold their family garden, watching or occasionally joining her mother plant flowers. There, insects were her playmates, and blooming shrubs and grasses were their playpens.

Symonne’s childhood moments in nature have led her to a major hobby and unique niche, bio-art, or artworks produced by natural life processes or through using living matter. She has juggled it with laboratory explorations, especially during her time at Keystone. She once experimented on slime molds placed on a petri dish with two pinches of cereal grains. To her surprise, the mold slithered randomly across the heaps, leaving behind a yellow trail that resembled a *yin-yang* symbol. She likened the process to the “natural pattern of life” that challenges the “existing linear pathway” of human thinking.

“What’s wrong with a squiggly curve?” she wrote in an essay, reflecting on that experiment she did during the distance learning period in 2020. “When people decide on their life journeys, many will choose the shortest route—the straight line between points A and B. Don’t we all love quick wins? But by always picking the simplest path, we lose the infinite possibility of alternate opportunities.”

Symonne herself had a detour just before starting middle school. After completing traditional education at her primary school, she transferred to Keystone in Grade 7,



— Symonne Liu exhibited “The Shadow of shadow” (above) and “Xyue” (below) during the “Life Outside the Box” Arts Festival of IB DP Visual Arts students in April.

struggling to move from the traditional curriculum to the IB mindset. Back then, Symonne doubted the inclusion of martial arts as a class. Later on, she understood how the class strengthened not only a student’s body but also their cultural identity, leading her to consider teaching martial arts as a hobby.

Over the years, Symonne has breezed through the twists and turns of a new learning method in a new community, producing impressive works or taking on reflective experiments in the process, just like her moldy *yin-yang* test. Between 2018 and 2020, she came up with a striking collection of bio-artistic productions to comment on social issues.

In her “The Shadow of shadow” installation—where a waxy, blue grime drips from traditional shadow puppets hanging above a large bathtub—Symonne criticized the commodification of Chinese culture by the globalized society. Her “Xyue” sculpture—a depiction of the lunar cycle showing moon phases made of soiled tampons—alludes to the “natural miracle” of women’s fertility while challenging the “shame culture imposed by the patriarchal society.”

One of the recent co-curricular projects that she and fellow Keystone friends worked on was the “Living Gaoyao,” a thin film with organic substances targeted to soothe inflammation in knee joints. They attempted to find a long-term cure for arthritis, a condition that has hassled Symonne’s very own grandma despite trying various treatment options, including TCM. Their pursuit won them a gold medal at the 2020 International Genetically Engineered Machine (iGEM) Competition.

“My ambition is to dig into small organisms for a big cause,” Symonne said. “In the future, I want to study if genetically engineered bacteriophages can defeat multi-drug resistant bacteria to save the world from growing antibiotic resistance.” She will continue this aspiration in her biology studies at the University of Chicago, where she feels confident about linking her passion for microbiology to genetics, medicine, and other research fields.

Symonne has already made great strides toward that ambition—even back at their home in Beijing. She actually rushed downstairs after that test on the caterpillar fungus to inform grandma she was successful. With a smug grin, *nainai* said, “I told you so.” But Symonne paused and responded with a smirk, “No, my room-mates told me so.”

02

BUDDING BIOLOGIST TORI GU LEARNS ABOUT THE WORLD FROM OBSERVING NATURE

Tourists strolled across a trail at a koala sanctuary on Phillip Island in Australia, adoring the marsupials that were seemingly observing people. As they proceeded, a sweet, camphor-like scent lingered over the path, so strong and familiar that it stopped the student traveler Tori Gu in her track.

Some months earlier, Tori had gone on a four-week student exchange trip to Bogota, Colombia. Her local host family had a sprawling *finca* (ranch) teeming with exotic plants. Among them was a strange yet fascinating tree with blade-like leaves and bunches of white spikes that smelled like camphor. Those clumps were flowers of the invasive species locally known as *el arbol de la corteza de papel*—Tori's host brother explained in Spanglish—and that locals used their aromatic seeds to relieve nasal congestion. She procured some fragrant leaf samples and glued them onto some pages of her journal.

"I knew it was the exact smell," Tori gushed. "But the feeling was so different," because she recognized that tree, or the broad-leaved paperbark, in its native place in Australia, thousands of kilometers away from where she had first seen it.

Tori's almost-worn-out notebook was filled to the brim with stories like this, and even a plethora of specimens—from plant samples to short messages written in various languages by the random people she had met in her travels around the world. There was one memorable page from her home turf at Keystone: a pinecone seed that "[hints] at the magic of nature."

The school's tallest pine tree ushers students either into the Middle School library or toward the quadrangle. Tori rarely noticed it until she volunteered as a teaching buddy in Keystone's Summer Archway program in 2019. Upon hearing of a theory about germinating

pine seeds—that they needed to be burned first—she investigated on her own. She succeeded in growing a palm-sized pine tree on her first attempt, using seeds germinated in water, but was clueless about how it happened. Although her next trials were fruitless, Tori noticed that pinecones shut underwater but reopened when dried up.

To unravel that mystery, Tori has collected a jar full of seeds to experiment on for a paper, a bucket list item that she wants to write alongside her biology studies at the University of Rochester in New York.

"Biology is about observations ... [as much as it attempts to] explain things," Tori said. "I like to discover things, especially those that we think are so usual—for example, why muscles move in a certain way. It fascinates me how our thoughts can be converted into action."

Her curiosity about life's mechanisms began in childhood. At two, she wondered if her tummy would burst if she kept on eating. Her three-year-old self initially wanted to become a dog so she would be able to "run around without worrying about work—and there's food all day."

Yet on those endearing occasions, Tori was exposed to nature such that she would spend afternoons looking at greenery or playing with bugs, eventually inspiring her to be a scientist. As she grew older, her focus shifted to human physiology while retaining that penchant for observing plants, but not insects. Now at 18, Tori aims to be a doctor, and possibly a volunteer for *Médecins Sans Frontières*.

Tori has already met virtually with several newcomers and upper-level students from her college, some of whom have informed her that she can take on a double

major. She has since decided to pursue biological science and forensic science, with a minor in Spanish, and sign up for a student-led first aid team. She previously shared her first aid knowledge with Keystone dorm proctors in an emergency first response training just before the Spring Festival break in early 2021.

In her four years at Keystone, Tori joined numerous activities outside her interest in biology. She served as a dorm proctor upon her arrival in Grade 9 and was promoted to head proctor two years later. Alongside dorm duties, Tori joined the Global Issues Network (GIN) Conference committee thrice (from Grade 9 to Grade 11), interned for Inspire Citizens, and became part of Keystone's Round Square executive board (both in Grade 10).

She also traveled extensively for co-curricular reasons in between those years: first to Canada (in late 2018) and India (October 2019) for Round Square's global conferences. She also went to Colombia (February 2019) for a student exchange where she quickly picked up Spanish, attended an international youth conference on media in South Korea (May 2019), and briefly volunteered as a student teacher in a primary school in Australia (June 2019) during her summer break.

Tori considers these trips as her stand-out Keystone experiences as they have "opened a whole new world" where she has "[found] common grounds with people who you might perceive as so different from you."

Between March and May 2020, she and her Peruvian classmate Medaly Retamozo partnered with a local school in Lima for a remote English teaching program for students affected by sudden school closures. Tori built upon this foundation, and her medical aspirations, to launch a summer project on educating more Peruvian students about preventing transmissible diseases. She presented her strategies in a virtual gathering of high schoolers accepted into the Global Public Service Academy's (GPSA) Global Pandemic eCOURSE & Response in July.

"Getting to know about the world sciences is a great thing," Tori said about her pursuit of biological studies, and the sciences in general, as they are "objective [and] do not change regardless of who you are."

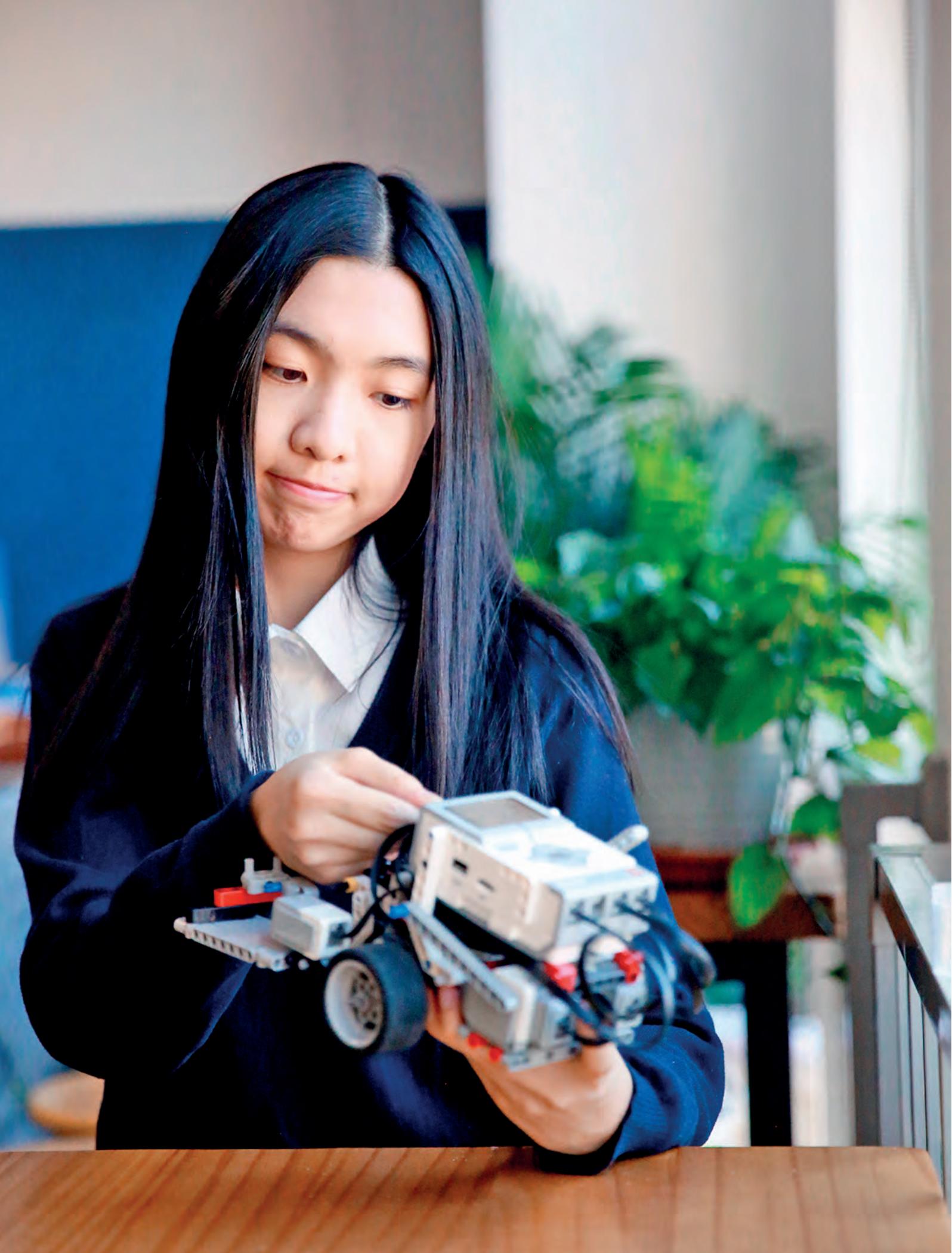
Tori has closed her scruffy but jam-packed journal as she prepares for her move to the United States. Her fresh gray-covered notebook awaits new entries to accompany the opening message on its first page: "Tori Gu, *Hakuna Matata* ("no worries")."



As an active student leader, Tori participated in class exchanges and seminars, including the Global Issues Network (GIN) conference (left) in 2019. Meanwhile, she and the Keystone Class of 2021 traveled to Inner Mongolia in September 2019 as part of the Outdoor Education Program. Tori is pictured (right) while recording her observations of vegetation in the region.







03

YOUNG PUZZLER JAMIE MO CREATES AMAZING PATHS FOR RURAL STUDENTS

Jamie Mo spent several hours sketching a series of shapes and lines on pieces of paper. The designs looked jumbled at first, but when she transferred them to her computer, the pattern became clear: it was a trail. But what lay at its end?

“There were presents,” she said proudly, explaining it was for a scavenger hunt for the birthday party of a family member. The then sixth grader digitally designed printouts and cards that substituted letters hinting trail stops, while others sported symbols, secrets, or shared memories unique to the holder.

Jamie has always looked forward to occasions like this to bring her puzzle-making prowess into play, and to celebrate, of course. This amazement began in kindergarten, when she once devised a way out of the very first maze she saw in a children’s magazine. It even inspired her to hand-draw her own labyrinths.

As Jamie moved to primary school, her appetite for puzzles grew such that she ate challenging sudokus for breakfast. But when Jamie was not solving puzzles, she would spend her free time at Peek a Book, a community library just across from their family house. It gave the young puzzler her “best childhood experience,” listening with other kids to stories read by volunteer librarians and reading picture books, inspiring her to do the same with other children.

“I wanted to bring education to more [people],” Jamie said of that chance, “just as how the four teachers in my family encouraged me to explore the world and pursue my passion.”

She participated in a teaching service organized by the library. On her first volunteer effort in Jiangxi province in 2013, the then fourth grader slept on a bed of six tiny,

dilapidated desks in a room where moths fell from the ceiling. She saw first-hand the impact of poverty on children and understood their ardent wish to be taught by people “willing to [share] knowledge and glimpses of the outside world.”

Jamie has since gone to rural schools in Anhui, Shanxi, and Hebei provinces. She improved her craft every year, moving from teaching basic math and English to more activities such as crafting and storytelling, all of which she developed during her volunteering experiences at Peek a.

Her endeavors progressed further as she entered Keystone’s middle school in 2016. At school, she reveled in challenging yet reflective math classes; outside classrooms, she used that learning to devise scavenger hunts and puzzle games for friends and families on various occasions.

In that year, the then eighth grader stumbled across *The Code Book: The Science of Secrecy from Ancient Egypt to Quantum Cryptography* by British physicist and author Simon Singh. That book revealed to her the broader world of cryptology, a domain several levels more perplexing than mazes or sudokus.

For Jamie, “the more puzzling puzzles become,” the more she felt joy. She knew cryptology could galvanize her passion, so she actively engaged in the subject while at Keystone and discovered its wide-ranging applications in computer science. She later realized how computer codes have the potential “to turn what exists only in my imagination into reality.”

She spent the summer holidays of 2018 and 2019 joining workshops and online courses on cryptology offered by various American colleges and learned

computer programming. She attended the prestigious FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) for high school students. Its interdisciplinary nature weaved perfectly into her various passions—engineering, programming, merchandising, photography, creative writing, and digital designing. She brought home her enjoyment and new ideas and founded Keystone’s very own FRC club.

Throughout her experiences, Jamie noticed that only a few girls engaged in cryptology, programming, and robotics, especially in Beijing. She believes a “historical stereotype” has discouraged girls from taking on the path of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), “but I hope the cycle can soon be broken so each individual can bravely pursue their own passions with fun instead of concerns.”

Jamie has drawn on her journey to raise STEM education awareness, using robotics simulation games to help her teach her students. She and her Keystone friends also made a series of video lessons on basic robotics and its application in real life and sent these recordings to various rural schools.

“I saw how these children desired new knowledge, cherished our relationships, and gave me warmth,” Jamie said, “which inspired me to record these precious memories.” She wrote *Paths*, a novel that recounts her stories with her students since 2013.

As Jamie developed her knowledge of robotics and programming, one would think a Higher Level Computer Science course would best suit her IB Diploma Programme journey. She had considered that but eventually went for the equally tough Higher Level Mathematics: Analysis and Approaches, Physics, and Economics courses. It was a “satisfying choice” because the courses gave her “prerequisite knowledge” for her further exploration of computer science in college. Jamie has received an offer from the University of Waterloo.

“Computer science is a discipline shaped precisely by problem-solving processes,” Jamie said. “The world is one gigantic puzzle formed by distinct challenges or smaller riddles that billions of puzzle solvers approach with perseverance, logic, and creativity every day.”

“I hope to continue on my paths,” she continued, “so I can deliver an accessible form of education that will enrich the minds and warm the hearts of many children across the globe.” She has been doing just that ever since the first scavenger hunt she designed for a birthday celebration.

The participants counted their steps toward the end of the trail, all hurrying to unveil Jamie’s surprises. Their eyes brighten upon reaching the destination, feeling moved and grateful for the process of reminiscing their amazing moments with the young puzzler—the “mischief manager.” Of course, they got their presents.



↑ After joining the FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) in 2019, Jamie founded a similar club at Keystone.

↓ Meanwhile, Jamie has drawn upon her STEM experience to improve her volunteer teaching lessons.

04

ASPIRING ENGINEER-ENTREPRENEUR ANGELA WANG CHARGES TOWARD A FITNESS BREAKTHROUGH

“One... two... whoooo...”

A high-pitched exhale resonated across a small gym as Angela Wang dropped the barbell on the floor. Being the only girl in the free weights area, Angela boomed a puff that broke the monotonous grunts of the male bodybuilders.

“Hwooooo...”

Angela raised the fifty-kilogram barbell with a sibilant, forceful inhale, looking triumphant even if her lower and upper body muscles tensed under pressure. The sorer they became, the better; she needed that to strengthen her thighs and core to support her in dancing jazz and hiphop.

There is another hefty challenge to the eighteen-year-old’s fitness journey: “a culture that discourages women from lifting weights.” Some people around her even joke that she will end up looking like She-Hulk.

“But I embrace such a unique identity,” she wrote in an essay, “because it signifies my fitness aspirations and personal ambition to rock the engineering industry as a girl!”

Angela has set her sights on becoming an engineer-entrepreneur whose products “bring substantial health benefits to consumers.” One of her promising ideas is a set of safe, versatile, and accessible AI-powered training equipment that calibrates the physical parameters of different users. This goal powers her drive to learn biomechanics under the mechanical engineering program of the Johns Hopkins University in Maryland (which is world-renowned for its medical and biology programs).

She has long been fascinated with how the human body

maintains balance especially under pressure, just like weightlifting, or even on a roller coaster, her favorite machine. During a trip to an amusement park in the United States, the joyrider tired herself out on roller coasters with varying heights, body positions, and motion.

“Then it clicked,” she said, “that my fascination with human body mechanisms and roller coasters stems from my curiosity for complicated mechanical structures.” This is also why she relishes the intensity of working out or the vigor of jazz and hiphop dancing because they give her an adrenaline rush akin to a roller coaster ride.

Her interest in mechanics solidified further after she was introduced to Lego in 2017, just before she entered Keystone’s middle school. Angela and her older sister—a Lego enthusiast—constructed a model of the robot *WALL-E*, the titular character of the popular animated film.

The fun experience brought out Angela’s inner engineer such that her bedroom has since become a workshop full of various Lego structures, including a mini Empire State Building and foot-long models of the 1967 Ford Mustang GT and the Porsche 911 RSR. She patterned these cars after the famous vehicles in her favorite film franchise, the *Fast & Furious* series.

Angela has even imagined herself as a cast member, especially during dance workshops where she has repeatedly channeled the racers while looking at the studio mirror, stomping and pivoting on jazz-funk beats. For her, these movements were liberating, especially as she had been told before that her “body proportion would restrict [her] from becoming an accomplished dancer.”

“Like Letty’s [one of the protagonists] pursuit of speed

as a female racer,” Angela continued, “my growing determination to smash stereotypes in STEM as a machine-obsessed girl is unstoppable.”

As preparation for her studies at Johns Hopkins, Angela chose Higher Level Mathematics, Physics, and Economics courses in the DP and participated in activities related to mechanical designing.

In the summer of 2020, Angela had her first taste of creating her own industrial prototype when she apprenticed with a product design engineer for a tools invention project. She re-envisioned the traditional electric kitchen mixer by adding a brush as an auto-cleaning function. Her mentor, however, dismissed the concept because “it was risky financially.” But Angela countered him, sketching her vision and explaining how the new gadget could employ the same rotation mechanism for both the mixer and the brush to minimize costs. Although Angela could not complete the product due to limited time, she found herself “empowered to voice my dissent from traditions.”

Angela felt a “qualitative leap” in high school as she devoted more time to herself, mainly by improving her physique in the gym several days a week or joining intense dance camps during summer and winter vacations. This decision might have meant losing bonding time with friends or the chance to participate in many co-curricular activities on campus, but Angela

understood well that her energy was limited and that she wanted to spend it on fulfilling pursuits.

When the coronavirus pandemic struck China in early 2020, the then eleventh grader juggled her distance learning studies at Keystone with a massive fundraiser for front-line hospitals and affected communities in Hubei province. She co-founded the Yuema Charity Foundation and collected almost RMB 230,000 (about USD 35,000) from various donors around the country in just three months.

“When you have an idea that you truly like and you want it to happen, then start doing it now,” Angela said. “No matter what that is—building structures out of Lego, growing vegetables, or volunteering—if you don’t act, it will remain an idea.”

At Johns Hopkins, she aims to join courses and research activities to investigate the interface between robotic and human kinematics and strengthen the viability of her goals, including her smart fitness equipment concept.

Angela readies herself for her next roller coaster ride after Keystone. For now, she lies next to her Mustang mini-model in her bed, preparing to call it a day. But her bedroom that looks like a Lego workshop is still lively as ever, as she replays in her mind the breathtaking scenes from *Fast & Furious* for the hundredth time.

—
Angela is an avid hip hop dancer, a style she learned when she was 15.







The Unfathomable

How Brian Guo Found Order Through Literary Creations

There was a sense of disquiet in the visual productions Brian Guo showcased at a recent Keystone Academy exhibition. Almost all of his works were inspired by classic literature works and paired with captions written so pensively they led lookers further into imagination or illumination.

For much of his childhood, Brian studied visual arts so that this almost became his field of study in university. But it was only two years ago when his trajectory veered off to the realm of literary creation. Since then, his talent in writing has progressed explosively.

Now, Brian is set to leave Keystone for Dartmouth College in New Hampshire to further his burgeoning talent—and to take on a shining path in the midst of his struggles.



CHAPTER 01

— The World Is Still New in My Eyes

*How dimly fortunate have we been,
Blindfolded and swaying upstream,
Sitting, downcast, in a chair that flies
Across landscapes and docile rivers of time;
With fragmented proofs,
Of elapsing days
Flitting through the calm surface
Of the slightly flaming lake.
The gossamer secretly forming
Coiling over the languid torso.
And in our heads,
With haphazard flowers the weeds mature,
Thrusting their lullaby into our minds.
Until a faint, distant star
Returns from a thousand fathoms of forgetfulness,
Knocking on our doors.*

Brian wrote the poem “The Unfathomable” (the first stanza shown on the left) in March 2021, when he faced intriguing thoughts and “fatalistic views” on the human race, faith, and choices. Then, he mused upon how religious works and science fiction could unravel the mysteries of “a giant power... [or] some sort of a deity ... [or] some higher laws” in the universe.

“I have not really lived much,” he says bluntly of writing about his experiences. “I do not even know who I am now because the world is still new in front of my eyes.”

More than eight years ago, Brian arrived in Beijing with hesitations as he could not keep count of the times he had changed schools and the houses their family had moved to—from Chicago, where he was born, then to Xuzhou, and later, to Shanghai.

Now, the capital has become his home for the longest time, and yet he still does not feel a sense of belonging to or yearning for anywhere.

If there was a relatively regular activity Brian did throughout those years, it was painting; his father even felt Brian had such a deep interest in it that he encouraged him to join art programs. On some occasions, however, Mr. Guo noticed how his son pored over books for a long time.

↑
The Rise of the Fig Tree
Acrylic painting
40cm x 50cm
→
Brian's literary talent has
grown immensely since he
joined Literature Playhouse

As Brian started his ninth-grade year at Keystone (he entered as a Grade 7 student in 2015), his interest in literary creation also sprang up. He contributed pieces for the Keystone Poetry Club despite lacking a background in poetry writing. The group later came up with *Whisper from the Stone*, a collection he saw as an affirmation that students could be published. But it was the emergence of a full-fledged literary society on campus that helped change Brian's path.

In early 2019, Keystone's Office of Marketing and Communications (OMC) launched a Keystone Activities Program (KAP) club named Literature Playhouse and sought middle and high school students eager to go on a "wonderful adventure into the forest of literature" by delving into classic texts. Brian was accepted as a member.

At Literature Playhouse, Brian found a "high sense of identity and participation" and "a direction amid the chaos" surrounding him. He was very participative in club activities, often taking notes during discussions, asking reflective questions, and sharing admirable "homework" or critical reviews of literary texts.

The club's organizer, OMC Director Sabrina Liu, knew that Brian had "already stepped into the realm of literature" even before joining Literature Playhouse. She sensed how "he might have begun looking at the world with doubts and hope" and how his perceptiveness may have played a role in developing his literary talent.

"In his literary creations, he expresses the weakness and complexity of human nature, and the subtlety and obscurity of human emotions," Ms. Liu says. "They have allowed him to find proof and resonance when he is at a loss and strengthened his desire to continue exploring literature."

In just two years, Brian became one of the club's fastest-growing talents. Ms. Liu has seen the meteoric rise of his ability: for her, Brian is a philosophical writer, daring to experiment with language while seeking answers to life's questions and confusions.

"Literature Playhouse's impact on Brian is that it just accelerated his growth," she adds. "With that kind of talent, what are the possibilities that await him?"



— I Live the Same Life

*And ruefully, we account for our losses,
Each end in the maze we never reached,
Each dying unsure memory
Of a lurking insect in a weedy nook.
We, rummaging with our burdened limps,
While the crows of dawn fly warbling above,
And the dunes appear,
The mountains surfaced,
While we, stooping like a fragile statue,
Sleep etherized through the change of things.*

“Wake up from your dreams,” Brian says, “I live the same life as everyone else does for most of the time. And I’m not that kind of person that exists only in fiction, like those passionate about their dreams and nothing else.”

When Brian reads or writes, he does it with pure curiosity. He often seeks explanations to concepts he comes across randomly through books—and sometimes, he finds pleasant surprises.

Sometime in 2019, Brian encountered James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, a modernist novel that utilized experimental narrative techniques and thematic content from different eras, making it one of the most important literary works in the modern English canon. Joyce’s masterpiece was such a formidable read that Brian almost gave up.

“He even asked, ‘Why would anyone write this kind of thing?’” his good friend Aurora Yu shares. “But every time he found out something in the text, his eyes would shine. For me, though, I cannot really stand it.”

Aurora is among many others who have found the novel to be incredibly challenging, but Brian sees it as his comfort zone. Upon finishing *Ulysses*, he regarded Joyce as “an impressive writer, in both form and theme, who overturned literary traditions and made his hometown Dublin come alive under his pen.”

Analyzing such texts has given Brian deeper understanding of literary creation and the relationship between writers, and he often shares these insights in class discussions. His high school English teacher and Extended Essay (EE) supervisor Marcella Cooper is impressed with his “sensitivity to the nuances within literature.”

One particular text he found interesting to read but tough to analyze was T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*. He used his essay to deconstruct Eliot’s commentary on modern society—how its dilemmas were “caused by spiritual emptiness and bewilderment” and how it could pursue salvation.

Further into his analysis, Brian felt Eliot’s vision for salvation was unrealistic. However, Mrs. Cooper felt the piece prompted Brian to “address a broad range of literary themes and concepts, such as existentialism.”

“When someone is so invested in their love of literature like Brian is, one of the best ways to support them is to allow them room to explore,” she adds. “Questioning him further, pushing him to more deeply explore the intertextuality within and between texts allows Brian the space to shine but also to grow.”





↑
Mrs. Cooper, Brian's EE supervisor, finds him "so invested" in literature.
→
Brian is very active in volunteering for Literature Playhouse events (left)...
→
...he even hosted the "Harbor That Secret Dream" poetry and folk rock night organized by the club (right).

*Alas, with too many images we will not possess,
That vanishes
Before we could glimpse its shape,
Or in ephemeral attempt
To imprint it on the boulders
That would last a short span beyond our flesh.
Yet we witness the waters have risen
Soaking into every rotten board
In the shelter of reality we herein built.
We could not descry it, as it overwhelms,
Silent as a swift storm,
As we flounder
In the maelstrom of the undulating, stormy ocean
That forms, for our long overdue senses,
Too suddenly and too randomly...*

— It Could Be the Way I Think About the Future

“Some of the views I convey might be interpreted as pessimistic; they could be just as calm. Some would say it is indolent in one way or another. But that isn’t the way I live my life. It could be the way I think about the future, but it doesn’t have to be. It could be just some sort of ideologies or emotion that I came across.”

Brian had already decided on taking Visual Arts as one of his high-level Diploma Programme (DP) courses when he discovered his interest in literary creation. To him, his course choices were a “worthy attempt,” although some “were mistakes that I had to experience.”

At the recent Grade 12 IB DP Arts Show titled “Life Outside the Box”, Brian displayed eight visual productions he created over two years. Almost all of his works alluded to or combined classic literary works. His Visual Arts teacher Bolsyn Urmuzov found pleasure in reading his artwork analyses and critiques through the masterful use of metaphors and subtle epithets.

His painting “Hail Captain Ahab” (see the DP Arts Gallery section for more) references the protagonist of the same name in *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*, and attempts to connect the fanatical whaler to his life-long foe, Moby Dick. Brian previously analyzed excerpts of the novel in his English class with Mrs. Cooper.

In their discussion on a scene about a meal being partaken of by two significant characters, Brian dismissed it as a “redundant chapter” but listened to the interpretations of his classmates—that the food could establish cultural relevance and relationship.

Brian attempted to reveal a “profound unity” between human civilization and the wild in his mixed-media production “Into the Mountains”. Here, the juxtaposed Mount Kilimanjaro and an Egyptian pyramid are split by the bus used by itinerant hiker Alexander Supertramp (the subject of the non-fiction book *Into the Wild* he studied in his English class). The serpent described by Paul Celan in his poem *Death Fugue* rattles behind the bus and “runs through the entire fate of the human race.”

In “Wolf’s Lair”, Brian depicted a pack of wolves howling behind the trunk of the Goethe Oak in the Buchenwald concentration camp. He wrote a related prose piece titled “An Ordinary May Morning” where he “desire[d] to perform an examination on our civilization” and “rethink on our arts.”

Brian composed that prose and other pieces of poetry under a pre-university virtual course on creative writing offered by Emerson College in the summer of 2020. The five-week session exposed him to more literary and artistic methods.



*In the unfathomable flows of time,
One morning, after all,
When we wake up to a grotesque sight
Of such strange and appalling void,
We would have once again recollected
That we slept through too much.
That we lost too much,
That we, for once,
Would be doomed to discover with grief,
The true faces
Of the wild, howling gale that carried us there.*



CHAPTER 04

— I Listen More When I Write

“It’s hard to be fair to yourself when you look at your past,” Brian says of writing and the part of his life he wants to remember in the future. “In one way or another, if I lose emotion and aesthetics, it’s not writing anymore; it’s not literature anymore. And if you stay silent, sometimes your heart opens up and everything around you can enlighten you a little bit more every day.”

The year 2019 led Brian to a clear direction for his university studies—a sudden reversal to the same student who had hardly given attention to college applications a year before.

Mr. Guo noticed the positive change in Brian’s mindset after he became part of Literature Playhouse in February and joined a tour of visiting liberal arts college representatives and alumni in Jiangsu Province later in the year. He reminded Brian that “it is never too late” to pursue his interests.

Also in that period, Brian strove hard during his IB studies, receiving high scores in almost every DP course, including a perfect 7 in his two language courses (Standard Level English A and Higher Level Chinese Language and Literature). Mr. Guo, at the same time, remained in close contact with the Keystone Office of

College Counselling and paid close attention to the progress of his son’s application.

Brian applied for a number of highly selective institutions in the United States, including Yale University, Northwestern University, and the University of Chicago where his father had studied before.

In December 2020, Brian received an admission letter from Dartmouth College, one of the Ivy League schools. He was among the 571 students who were offered early admission. Although Dartmouth attracted a record number of 28,000 applicants for the next academic year, its acceptance rate stood at 6.17 percent, the lowest in 40 years.

Brian is attracted by Dartmouth’s “unutterable charisma”—its stunning environment that resembles “the world I long for but refuse to live in.” In addition, Dartmouth offers the 13-week Dublin Foreign Study Program where enrolled students will participate in lectures on Irish literature and reading groups on *Ulysses*. Such a thought of walking into Joyce’s Dublin makes Brian look forward to his college life as an English major student.

“This is a school that truly understands and cherishes literary traditions and cultural values,” he says. “And after learning such a course, every student can find their own place in the future and find the unique narrative of their city.”

When Brian looks back on his years at Keystone, he ponders over how he has changed so enormously. Now, he is curious about living in another environment and experiencing new insights.

“I listen more when I am writing,” he says, “and I think that’s the only way I can live with myself. You can never know everything in the world, but you can always know more. If you are capable of listening to those voices in your life—I think that’s enjoyable and that’s the nature of humility I want to maintain as I write.”



*Let there be light, he said:
Wander along, there'll be light, for you need no wings.
“Oh flightless bird, walk into that gentle night
With your splendid childishness.”
Yet, is that true? I suspected in unease.
As I flew across the seas,
I glanced among the promising cloud,
How my resting soul once opened up its eyes.
Noah's dove, messenger, poet among poets.
You see, we all climb a mountain in our dreamy seas.
Therefore, I don't intend to belittle myself, I dare not speak.
When we stood in silence and see,
The shadows vanish by our sides into the glow of day;
Among the restless muttering sites fell all the forgetful snowflakes.
So I might say, none of these I've been through,
But only feeling it along the edges,
In our brain it glowed into fiery points, and became savagely still,
Along the edges, we glanced at this harsh winter.
Therefore, we're mere ants crawling among the foggy cracks,
Climbing up dunes and reason that we've seen the stars.
—excerpt from “The Mountain”*

—
Brian played a major role in
the play, *The Tempest*

KEYSTONE IBDP A



ARTS EXHIBITION

LIFE OUTSIDE THE BOX

© GALLERY

DP

THE 2021 IBDP VISUAL ARTS GALLERY

PRESENTED BY
THE DP VISUAL ARTS MEMBERS OF
THE CLASS OF 2021

- 01 HARBOR BAI
- 02 BRIAN GUO
- 03 ALEX HAN
- 04 LEO LI
- 05 SYMONNE LIU
- 06 ANNA REN
- 07 WILLIAM TIAN
- 08 ZHUOYANG WU
- 09 NATALIE XIE
- 10 CONNIE XU
- 11 RITA YANG
- 12 TONY ZHAO
- 13 MANSHEE ZHENG
- 14 JUDY ZHU

LIST OF ARTISTS

Art is more than just a form of personal expression or communication; for students, it is a method by which they reflect deeply on social and global issues.

At the “Life Outside the Box” exhibition, fourteen visual artists from the Class of 2021 surprised their community with their media mastery to display artistic expressions and youthful worldviews. Inspired by literature, bio-art, experiences, and rich imagination, and more, the showcase led viewers to appreciate life beyond confined borders. Most of the student presenters have chosen to pursue art-related post-secondary majors and are committed to exploring art.



WUKONG. / Ballpoint pen drawing



COMPLEXITY BEHIND SIMPLICITY

—
This exhibition explores the complexity behind simplicity, with most artworks showing a machine structure to denote intricacy and the human skin as the ordinary. Yet, as we have worn a mask during the pandemic, our thoughts, attitudes, and perceptions are sometimes hidden under our “masks”. This artwork series also focuses on life and machinery, showing the relationship between humans and technology in the future and the complexity of everything under the skin.



SELF. / Digital art



Into the Mountains / Acrylic painting on canvas and cut-out wood boards / 50cm x 60cm

THE INNER WILDERNESS OF HUMANS

I was strongly inspired by the renowned novelist Jack London. In his works *Call of the Wild* and *Love of Life*, he depicted the mesmerizing awakening of human's inner wildernesses. Since then, I have been ruminating on humanity's innate desire for complete freedom and liberation of the soul, reflecting on its duality, and facing and exploring its inevitable connection to violence and barbarism. My exhibition aims to guide the audience through the different emotions of humanity's wild nature that is complicated and intriguing. It went from blazing and grotesque, full of emotion, to dark, quiet, and insidious. Presenting the duality of humanity's such fascinating nature, I take the position of a calm watchman, reflecting upon and relishing in it.





Hail Captain Ahab / Acrylic painting on canvas / 49cm x 59cm



Tears / Digital drawing / 45cm × 60cm



ANXIETY AND ENTANGLEMENT

The theme of anxiety and entanglement comes from my mood when I feel extremely tired of the breakneck modern lifestyle. In each work, anxiety and entanglement are highlighted by the media, the use of different textures, and the complexity of presentation. The overall exhibition was created using oil painting and digital painting so my ideas could flow effortlessly. I also challenged myself by designing elaborate layouts.



Let Me See You / Digital drawing / 45cm x 60cm



Melting Iceberg / Serial cardboard sculpture / 150cm x 40cm x 70cm



TRANSFORMATION

“Transformation” consists of two contrasting parts. Both “Aurora” and “Lavender” illustrate the theme of emphasizing the beauty of nature before human intervention. The two other serial artworks, “Bumping Sphere” and “Melting Iceberg”, are composed of three independent entities that show the process of natural transformation, revealing the adverse effect of humanity’s overexploitation of resources.



Bumping Sphere / Acrylics serial painting on canvas / 50cm × 50cm



Xyue / Installation



ORGANIC

—

The word "organic" is the tenor of my exhibition, where I represent the organic atmosphere through various artistic approaches ranging from two-dimensional media (oil painting, acrylic painting, and sketches) to three-dimensional models (installation and sculpture). I constructed grotesque mixed-media paintings and installations which act as my stinging satire on traditional values. The mystical power of Eastern philosophy is the mainstay of the production; I am especially inspired by traditional Chinese folk culture, a system based on ancient Chinese ideology, clan, and pseudo-science, as well as day-to-day kitsch. In addition, I like to banter with profound concepts, which push me to infiltrate a visible sense of humor into the production.



Semi Hunger / Installation



Avaritia: The Desire of the Peacock / Procreate / 100cm x 140cm



AVARITIA

My exhibition explores the theme of *avaritia*, which is the Latin word for "greed" and one of the seven deadly sins. *Avaritia* summarizes the pervasiveness of greed. This exhibition looks at the distortion of humanity when facing such temptation. Its stylistic approach is apparent and consistent, with each artwork having neon or bright undertones to imitate greed's overwhelming sway over humanity.



Tone Deaf / Oil paint on canvas / 60cm x 90cm



Oblivion # 1 / Acrylic painting on canvas / 60cm x 80cm



CITY, ORDINARY HUMAN WORLD

The inspiration for my exhibition is the city where I currently live, Beijing, along with other places that I have visited. Our fair city teems with people and events of all kinds; everyone lives an entirely different life here. This urban fantasy and cold and ordinary reality fuel this exhibition, and I express this through various media. When considering my exhibition name, I thought of a pair of homophones in Chinese that expresses living a city life: one means "city" (城市), while the other means "ordinary human world" (尘世)



Cardboard City / Installation / Found objects, cardboard, acrylic



Vague / Sculpture / Artificial fur, construction foam, wire



THE PATHWAY TO IMMORTALITY

—
My inspiration and attitude toward this theme are derived from a statement in the 1987 novel *Norwegian Wood* by Haruki Murakami: "Death is not the opposite of life but an innate part of it. By living our lives, we nurture death." Thus, death may not be an end but the inevitable pathway that guides people to immortality. I hope that the audience will be more aware of mortality and discover that death lives with us; the living are the minority due to join the majority of the dead. Nevertheless, just as living is temporary, death is not absolute as well. The preserved spirit will define us; it is an identity beyond mortality.



Life & death / Installation and photography



MMM~ / White glue, grass, hair, plastic beads, video projection / 240cm × 220cm



MMM~

—
The series MMM~ is inspired by my previous installation, “Chandelier”, which aimed to show the unrealistic societal expectations against females and how women’s self-perception and behaviors are manipulated covertly. By reflecting on the previous installation, I discovered a personal connection to the “female”. In the *Dream of a Red Chamber*, one of China’s four great classical novels, the protagonist Jia Baoyu once said that “women are made out of water” to praise the softness and purity that he saw in females. But that is not true. Females can be water, and they can be iron, air, rocks, mountains, rivers—anything. I express that through a technique where I manipulated organic material to create “Chandelier”.



Chandelier / Grapefruit segment membrane, silica gel, synthetic pearls, plastic beads, poker cards / 250 cm x 6cm



Red Utopia / Fashion design / PU fabric, knitting, damask, beads / 140cm × 100cm × 180cm



FROM ILLUSION TO REALITY

My exhibition demonstrates warmth through various media and shows the complete process of how I deliver my illusion to reality. Warmth is a non-literal expression that can convey a range of ideas and emotions—from blissfulness to brutality. Most of my work employs vivid colors to exaggerate visual impact and scandalize my viewers. The formal quality can be magically altered through different themes.



IMP / Fashion design / Fabric, beads, cotton, sponge / 140cm × 100cm × 180cm

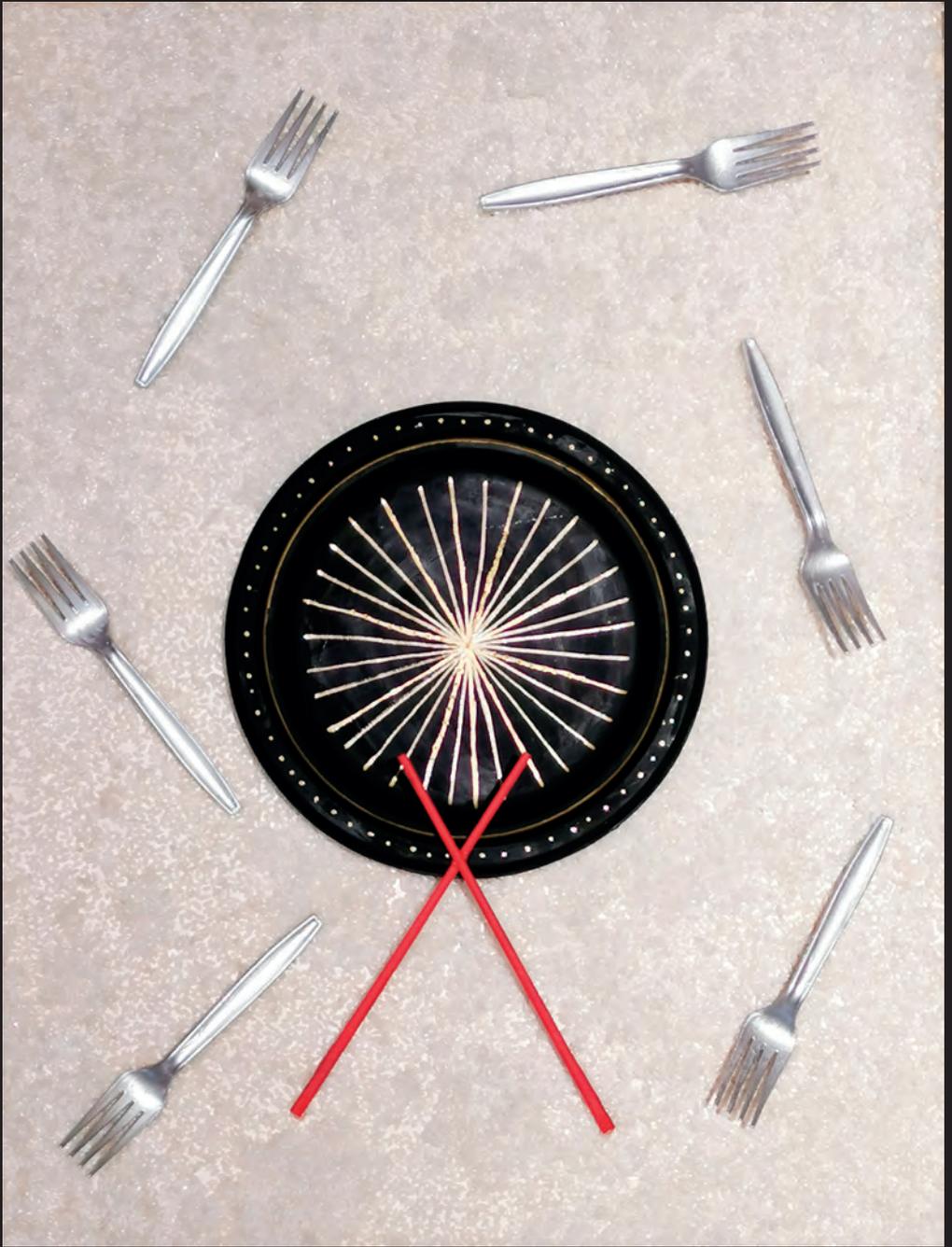


DNA / Digital painting / 60cm × 90cm



CHANGE AND INTEGRATION IN CHINESE CULTURE

My artwork's theme explores change and integration in Chinese culture. Growing up in Beijing, I was immersed in Chinese traditions, shaping my thoughts and actions and this made me wonder about the evolution and future possibilities of culture. I used rice, chopsticks, and other materials related directly to Chinese culture to present the theme. Red, the most representative color of China, is also present. The curved line is a crucial point appearing in various forms and representing the development of culture.



Is rice delicious? / Rice, chopstick, fork, wood board / 45cm x 60cm



vet / Oil on canvas / 50cm x 60cm



NARRATIVE ARTWORKS

My artwork explores ideas on narrative artworks, or a series of productions that tell a story. The narratives featured in my works are open-ended, showing a few components of the entire story while setting an emotional tone. This allows my audiences to imagine or continue the story using their experiences and cultural identities. I developed and adapted several different media types, combining formal presentation methods with unique structural spaces and stories from animals to humans, which are the primary focus of my artworks.



Lost / Oil on canvas / 100cm × 70cm



Transformation / Oil on canvas / 85cm × 45cm



DECONSTRUCTION

My artwork explores the concept of shape and form in the deconstruction of the human body. During the pandemic, I found it quite challenging to cope with inner feelings and situations. These circumstances had affected my creative activities as I was trying to tackle the relationship between reality and internal reality. That evoked my intent to discover a diverse range of voices that communicated emotion, memory, and beliefs, so I could grasp the experience to tackle the questions such as "Where do I come from?", "What am I?", and "Where am I going?". By exhibiting this series, I hope to bring viewers to my experiments on deconstructing the subjectively beautiful life.



Disposition / Oil on canvas / 120cm x 120cm



Silence / Digital painting / 100cm × 146cm



KARMA

My exhibition recreates aboriginal styles using digital media. "Silence", which features a newborn amid a noisy world, is inspired by a recent hot topic about a Chinese celebrity abandoning her child. The "Withered" installation contains flowers made of cardboard, focusing on the natural aspect of karma. After a glorious blossoming period, all flowers perish and return to the soil. In this process, karma sets out to maintain balance and equity in nature. The common expression 落叶归根 (*luòyè-guīgēn*, "The falling leaves settle on the roots" frequently used to describe a person coming home) inspires me to think about how things go in cycles.



Withered / Installation, cardboard, oil paint spray, strings / 100cm x 120cm

IBI

ARTS EXHIBITION

DP

KEYSTONE IBOP /



Along a fifteen-meter corridor, Baldeep Sawhney and a group of Keystone Academy teachers arranged a deck of cards and slowly unraveled a long rope. He asked his colleagues to place the cards about the circumstances after the Big Bang in chronological order, with teachers mapping out the distances through quick calculations. Some got confused by the vast gaps, but Mr. Sawhney provided some clues.

The timeline looked lopsided, with the end opposite Mr. Sawhney's Physics

laboratory having a palm-sized clump of cards representing the events since the dawn of humanity until the present.

The gathering, titled "A Brief History of Time", was part of faculty orientation sessions in 2019 where teacher-facilitators showcased classroom engagement ideas to new and current colleagues. Mr. Sawhney shared his Universe Timeline lesson as an example of his many classroom activities that have always elicited insightful reflections from students.

"It is already mind-blowing for students to know that the universe is vast, but still, we have no way of comprehending it fully. But looking at what humanity has achieved in the past 10,000 years gives them that spark to think, 'We can achieve more, together.'"

Mr. Sawhney describes his classroom as always having fun science lessons that students can relate to daily life, because for him, it is always the "bonds between students and teachers" that make children always eager to learn more about the world.

A Force *of* Interaction

TEACHER PROFILES

Science Teacher Baldeep Sawhney
Bonds Engagement and Experiences Together

EVERYONE FEELS HOME

“How do two people become friends? How do they stick to each other?”

Mr. Sawhney asked his eleventh-grade high-level Diploma Programme (DP) Physics students those questions just before their lesson on particle physics, specifically, the Feynman diagram or the visual representation of subatomic particle interactions. He knew the topic was so abstract that students would find it challenging unless they had the knack of grasping theoretical concepts. To simplify that, he used the metaphor of friendship: to him, both have a mysterious, abstract force that binds connections, subatomic or personal.

“Sometimes, analogies fall off if you go too much,” he jokes, especially when his prompts pique the wild imaginations of his students, “[so] I remind them, ‘Okay, now we need to stop and get back to the topic!’”

Mr. Sawhney is always after such class interactions because they are “the experiences that students will remember for a long time.” For him, the fun engagements, the relatable stories, and the anecdotes that he somehow manages to connect to otherwise complex theories move his classes forward.

He has employed such classroom engagement methods for almost two decades, never running out of real-life links. Every year, he says, he feels like “a new teacher” who absorbs fresh perspectives from students and colleagues from different backgrounds quite quickly. He attributes this quality to growing up as a “third-culture child” within India, where “everyone [feels like] home.”

As a Sikh born and raised in predominantly Hindu southern India by parents hailing from the northern Punjab region, Mr. Sawhney understands the complexities of multiculturalism. But even if his upbringing allowed him to pick up multiple languages (Punjab, Hindi, Telugu, and English) and mingle effortlessly with various people, he was not spared from the challenges of the caste system.

The teenage Baldeep had always dreamed of becoming a mechanic for his family’s automobile business. But getting into an engineering school was already a pipe dream: it was costly and extremely competitive. He needed to battle against thousands of youths for an elusive “free seat”—or a merit- and exam-based admission given by private universities or offered by the

government to those who achieve high ranks. In any given year, close to 200,000 students vie for 3,000 free seats in a popular university, unless they can shell out thousands of rupees to get a “management seat”, or a non-merit admission to fill in quotas.

Since it was almost impossible for him to enter an engineering school, the young Baldeep took the alternative path of majoring in science and specializing in physics. Throughout his college years, he doubled as a tutor to peers and even younger students, which sparked his passion for teaching.



← Mr. Sawhney (leftmost) received an award for being a top achiever in the graduating class in his alma mater, Andhra University.

→ Mr. Sawhney came to Keystone in 2016 as the Science Department Head.

Upon finishing his master’s degree in 2002, Mr. Sawhney taught physics at a college in Andhra Pradesh for two semesters before venturing abroad in Thailand where he tried teaching middle school science at an international school in Bangkok. His compatriot colleague, Ashok Shanishetti, noticed Mr. Sawhney’s “exceptional adaptability” that helped him “get along with folks from all walks of life.” Even the least motivated students were encouraged by his relatable interactions and lessons, Mr. Shanishetti says.

While in Thailand, Mr. Sawhney’s brother arranged his marriage to microbiology researcher Kuldeep Chabada, whom he later convinced to pursue teaching. After their marriage, the couple explored another setting in Jakarta for two years before returning to Thailand, where they stayed for eight more years until 2016.

“In physics terms, ‘the displacement is not matching up’ as our family was all over the place,” Mr. Sawhney jokes once more, adding that while everything in their life in Thailand went fine, he “was ready to jump on any boat that would take [him] to any distant shore.” He received opportunities from as far as Tanzania, but the shore that would become his new home was closer than he expected. It was in China.



OVERLAPPING VALUES

“Except for the Great Wall, I had absolutely no idea about China,” Mr. Sawhney says. “I wasn’t even looking at it when I was looking for a job to begin with. But I was open and thinking, ‘Anywhere fate takes me.’”

By the time Mr. Sawhney and his family moved to China, Keystone had just begun its second year with about 600 students. “It felt like magic,” he says, upon knowing about the school’s three keystones and the five shared values, as they resonated well with his personal beliefs.

According to Mr. Sawhney, Sikhs are guided by the “Three Pillars”: *Naam Japo* (practicing gratitude), *Vand Chhako* (giving back to everyone irrespective of their backgrounds), and *Kirat Karo* (living with high moral values). Sikhs also have the ‘Five Ks’, or the articles of faith that they need to have on their bodies all the time: *kesh* (unshorn hair out of respect for God’s creation), *kangha* (a comb to keep *kesh* neat), *kara* (a ring representing the circle of life), *kirpan* (a sword to defend the needy), and *kachera* (an undergarment symbolizing one’s commitment).

“Those are my three personal keystones and my five shared values—how are they any different, right?” he says. “At the end of the day, it is not about how much you accumulate but how happy and satisfied you are. A lot of these things overlap with my values, so Keystone has become a perfect place for me.”

The opportunity to teach in China has made Mr. Sawhney appreciate its culture even more, especially after seeing how the country is preserving its heritage and language and passing them on from one generation to another.

“The more I learn and understand about this country, the more that I need to learn,” he adds. “We’re basically expanding our circumference of ignorance, which is fine because that is exactly how we progress further.”

His arrival at Keystone also came at an opportune time as the school started its International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IB DP) and was looking for a new Science Department Head who would set new standards. It was an experience familiar to him as he was part of teams that had launched the IB program at his two most recent schools in Thailand.



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 The Sawhneys have traveled to different parts of China. They played musical instruments with locals in Lijiang (above) and went to the Tiger Leaping Gorge (below) for sightseeing.

Upon returning to Bangkok in 2013, Mr. Sawhney worked as an acting IB coordinator at Pan Asia International School, where the then-principal Mohammad Noman recalled how he assisted their first IB cohort during the tense DP exam season. Mr. Noman asked Mr. Sawhney—his “trusted lieutenant” and “go-to man”—to do something for the nervous students, most of whom hesitated to stay after school despite needing additional support. Within days, the class opened up and participated in test preparations, all because of a half-hour motivational session that Mr. Sawhney led.

In establishing Keystone’s rigorous science program for middle school, however, Mr. Sawhney faced “a good challenge” in selecting a curriculum that fitted the IB standards and Keystone requirements, while working with team members of different pedagogical backgrounds. His colleague Portia Mhlongo recalls that the deliberations had tough moments, but their new leader reminded everyone to consider a program through Keystone’s vision and its ultimate recipients—the students. Eventually, the team adopted the science and technology program of the Ontario curriculum.

“The people on the periphery—us teachers—have never felt anxious or uncertain because we know he will

always have that honest conversation with us if that needs to happen,” Ms. Mhlongo adds.

“First of all, in leading others, I try not to give my colleagues a feeling that I am their leader at all,” Mr. Sawhney says. “I’m just one of them, one amongst them. I’m not a know-it-all person. And you got to trust people to do what needs to be done because everyone has their own strengths and skills.”

At the “A Brief History of Time” session for teachers, Mr. Sawhney was actively engaging with his colleagues, giving them clues on calculating the distances and helping them string the information cards along the rope. All the while, he was observing how his colleagues collaborated.

“But that was not my full intention—we are all teachers and I want them to see class dynamics and lead students to understand what is happening,” he says.

“Also, they might want to try and find ways to diversify, differentiate, and spice their classes up, just like Indian food! I like the spice of my teachings,” he laughs. “But let us not make it too spicy that it tastes bad. Just enough spice to make it right.”

*We are all teachers and I want them to see class dynamics
and lead students to understand what is happening.*

GREEN TEAM

A group of five Keystone juniors looked amazed when they were served with a plate of *dosa*, a crispy crepe partnered with aromatic dips. The crepe, reminiscent of a *jiānbǐng* in size and appearance, gave off a slightly sour-smelling steam that bemused the then eleventh grader Tori Gu, who barely had an idea of how Indian food tasted.

They were with Director of Experiential Education Chris Cartwright at the airport in Delhi, waiting for their connecting flight to Indore for the 2019 Round Square Conference to represent Keystone, and also for Mr. Sawhney, who was called in at the last minute to replace a teacher who fell ill just before the conference. It was his first time joining Round Square as well.

When he arrived at Delhi’s airport just before midnight, he brought the starving delegates to an Indian restaurant, telling them along the way the process of preparing and eating *dosa*. Traditionally, it was served with palm leaves; the one students had was embellished with artificial leaves.

The conference invited over a thousand global delegates to learn and understand Round Square ideals so they could create a road map for “The World We Wish to See”, or that year’s theme. The five Keystone girls had a more flavorful experience, thanks to their supervisor-turned-local guide who introduced them to India’s spectacular street food culture. And throughout the seven-day conference, the Keystone delegates munched on Indian delicacies whose names they could not even pronounce.



Mr. Sawhney is grateful that he has gone to teaching rather than pursuing his childhood dream of becoming an automobile engineer.

“Baldeep was in his element,” Mr. Cartwright says, “especially the conference inspired not only the students but also him—he was visiting his own country while guiding the students. And during dinners, he held ‘courses’ about Indian culture, history—everything!”

“And he even taught me some Hindi,” Tori shares about her fond moment with Mr. Sawhney during the gathering, although both had never been together in a science class before. Even after the Indore conference, Mr. Sawhney still gave her support on numerous occasions.

In early December 2019, for example, he briefly supervised Tori’s team in their Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) Project—a science club that organized a talent show inspired by the *Myth Busters* series, where participating middle schoolers debunked scientific fallacies.

During the following year, when Keystone transitioned into a distance learning period due to the coronavirus pandemic, Mr. Sawhney acted as a teacher-partner to colleagues still awaiting return to China. He was “quite all over the place”, teaching different science units in middle and high school, including Tori’s high-level DP Chemistry class.

“I felt like I was useful and supporting people,” he says of the nearly four-month stint. “Everything going on in my mind was, ‘I need to support these people to the maximum extent and the best of my abilities.’ We didn’t want our students to be deprived of any experiences.”

Despite the challenges of the distance learning period, the Science Department still went ahead with an exhibition of student projects in the IB sciences subject group, or simply, the “Group 4 Presentation”. That year’s

successful showcase allowed twelfth-grade student researchers to present their plans to make Keystone facilities greener, more sustainable, and more energy efficient based on interdisciplinary experiments.

Student teams such as Tori’s investigated turning food wastage on campus into an energy source while others analyzed the usage of cafeteria refrigerators to know their efficiency in preserving food. Some looked at the efficiency of lawn sprinklers in conserving water and others ran tests in classrooms to calculate carbon footprints in the academic building.

Mr. Sawhney ran around the exhibition, checking out student presenters and guiding visitors. It was an event very close to his heart; as an ardent campaigner against climate change, Mr. Sawhney has always cared enough about reducing Keystone’s waste to frequently put forward green initiatives. The Keystone Environmental Committee, of which he is a member, led a school-wide discussion on sustainable food consumption, which later became the Ecological Eating Day, or “Meatless Mondays” when all food served on campus is vegetarian.

At the beginning of 2021, Mr. Sawhney started a waste sorting drive on his residential floor in the East Dormitory that eventually inspired students and other residents. He has been so energetic in promoting his green crusade, almost to a fault, that some of his actions, including his vegetarianism, have been seen as assertive.

“But as a science teacher, you walk the talk,” he says. “If you talk about climate change, conserving the planet, or saving animals, but your actions speak otherwise, you will lose the trust of your students.”

*I have always encouraged my female students and told them that,
“We need people like you taking physics,
and you can be an inspiration to all future generations.”*

IDEAL CLASS

In hindsight, Mr. Sawhney is grateful that he has gone to teaching rather than automobile engineering, where he could have been “thinking about how to make the world more polluted.” In teaching, he is always excited to jump-start the careers of his students.

In late 2019, for example, he was approached by then-senior student Jimmy Chen for a recommendation letter for his university application. Jimmy, who is now studying at Harvey Mudd College, had been Mr. Sawhney’s DP Physics student for two years. During that period, Mr. Sawhney noticed Jimmy’s “stored potential” that he “unleashes on the things that matter to him.”

Having been truly delighted by this chance, Mr. Sawhney spent so much time writing the draft that it seemed he was penning a narrative article where his “heart was speaking” about what made his student stand out.

Mr. Sawhney knows his letter is just one part of a student’s application, but “that little thing” is among the many reasons why making solid connections with his students matters to him. He sees how his writing can reveal to examiners the otherwise unnoticed qualities of a student. And such letters, for him, are where he makes a slight difference since “every student can change the lives of so many people.”

He also wants to see a class full of female physics students—a goal that he is “unsure of achieving in [his] lifetime.” He was close to achieving that in his previous school in Thailand, where 16 out of 21 students—or over three-fourths—in his Physics class were girls.

At Keystone, the gender ratio in his physics classes has

remained imbalanced in recent years. Still, there has been a steady increase in the number of girls taking science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) courses, such as biology. Mr. Sawhney sees this as a welcome development.

“I have always encouraged my female students and told them that, ‘We need people like you taking physics, and you can be an inspiration to all future generations,’” Mr. Sawhney says. “But I still think I am doing very little to achieve that goal. It is difficult so not only one person can do it, right? It also goes down to parents, teachers, the community—basically everyone. We need to work together to achieve that equality.”

Besides achieving the right balance in his classes, Mr. Sawhney believes everyone needs to be literate in science, not just to progress society but to develop our species further. For him, it is not enough to educate students with academic skills: we also need to give them the capability to “think through reason” and be critical about what happens in the world.

Whenever Mr. Sawhney conducts his Universe Timeline lessons with his students, he always awaits the awe students have as soon as they reach the present-day tail-end of the rope. Among the usual responses he gets are: “What happened before the Big Bang?,” “What is going to be the fate of the universe?,” and “What is going to be our fate?”

“Of course, I don’t have the answers to all these questions. But science is so powerful that we can go back in time with the data that’s currently available,” Mr. Sawhney says. “And for them to know that we have achieved so much as a species makes them appreciate our place in this universe.”

Special thanks to Mr. Chris Cartwright, Ms. Tori Gu, Ms. Portia Mhlongo, Mr. Mohammad Noman, and Mr. Ashok Shanishetti for providing information and materials for this profile.



How She Does the Math

Ashley Qiu on
Combining Passion and Purpose
in Math Teaching

In solving math problems, on paper, the more accurate the answer is, the better. For Ashley Qiu, however, math in real life does not always work exactly like that.

As strange as it may sound, Ms. Qiu—a middle school math teacher at Keystone Academy—admits her younger self was not passionate about the subject, although she has always appreciated its practical value. The young Ashley found math’s fun side whenever she fiddled with a traditional scale to estimate vegetables’ weight in *liǎng* (a Chinese unit of weight, equivalent to fifty grams) or *jīn* (half a kilogram). Now, as a mother, Ms. Qiu mentally calculates how much money she will save using digital *yōuhuìquàn* (discount coupons) whenever she and her husband go grocery shopping.

In these examples, Ms. Qiu touts the virtues of estimation and approximation, a concept “often ignored or undervalued in learning math” because students are always asked to be as accurate as possible.

Accuracy does matter in many other real-life situations. However, Ms. Qiu believes that when students place too high a premium on perfection, they miss out on finding possibilities or even experiencing enlightening failures. When they are encouraged to consider other sides of a math problem or view content knowledge from different perspectives, “they see new ways of learning and focus on how their minds adapt to conquer difficulties,” thus developing their critical and creative thinking.

CHAIN REACTIONS

During math lessons, Ms. Qiu often tells her students to look at the world around them to picture a concept. For example, they peer at the residential building opposite their classroom to deduce the height of poles, or even the length of nearby electric wires using the Pythagorean theorem. Or she encourages them to think about their retirement funds by giving them ideas to calculate the money they need to save today so it will grow over time.

“More importantly, students develop the ability to think about all factors that impact their decision,” Ms. Qiu adds. “They can apply this transferrable skill when making decisions, or even thinking about which dish they would like to order in a restaurant.”

But those relatable examples seem lightweight compared to other problems that use the dreaded “ugly fraction” and many different notations. During those equations, students are dumbstruck.

“I remember one of my students telling me, ‘Ms. Ashley, how can you be so crazy to give us such a question?’” she says. “But when I replace that fraction with easy whole numbers, they are like, ‘Wow, it’s too easy.’ I tell them, ‘Some questions seem so hard to deal with so try making them simple. Real life is too complicated. You cannot solve problems without breaking them down into pieces.’ This is one of the problem-solving strategies that students practice in math study.”

Ms. Qiu frequently asks her students to come to the board and share how they deconstruct problems, for a reason: it helps them visualize their understanding and practice their communication skills, the latter being the third out of the four assessment criteria in the Middle Years Programme (MYP). The other three are knowing and understanding (Criterion A), investigating patterns (Criterion B), and application in real-world contexts (Criterion D). This method, she believes, hits two birds with one stone: students can convey their ideas clearly and practice their logical reasoning and English language skills.

There have been instances, however, when a student would proudly write their formulas only to make a mistake and feel awkward. Worse, they would be laughed at by classmates. But Ms. Qiu would come to the student’s rescue to recognize their efforts, while encouraging others to applaud their classmate for standing up and being brave. She believes that creating a safe learning environment is essential for students’ learning, as it also exemplifies the Keystone value of compassion and the IB learner profile of caring.

Ms. Qiu likens math learning to a chain whose links need to be strung together to work. If the links are separate or loose, she will find ways to connect them. But students themselves, she says, need to open up and be willing to learn. When they do, “they feel empowered, and that remarkable progress shoots their confidence up and spills to other subjects.”



Ms. Qiu with colleagues Tina Lium (center) and Jean Chang (above) on a hiking trip.

On every first day of school, Ms. Qiu asks her students to list both their ideal methods of learning, and also comments or remarks that might hurt and make them feel awkward. The “classroom agreement”, as they call it, is framed by Keystone’s five shared values. Some students wonder: do these values apply in math?

“Of course, they do!” she says. “They form every detail of all aspects of life, even in the classroom. For example, understanding others even if they make mistakes demonstrates respect. Being conscientious during exams or when doing homework reflects honesty. On the other hand, cherishing the opportunity to learn with others is a sign of wisdom.”

As classes moved online in the spring of 2020, Ms. Qiu infused apps and teaching software into her classroom engagement strategies to maximize distance learning experiences. She used Desmos (an interactive website that visualizes the use of mathematical graphs) extensively as it helped her spot students who faced difficulties.

Ms. Qiu also used games after seeing how students collaborated better and understood concepts faster when they solved problems together. The idea came from a training session hosted by the Digital and Innovative Learning Department, in which teachers worked together to complete a set of riddles. She tailor-fitted that concept for her Math Breakout class games using OneNote, with some help from the Digital and Innovative team. That game, which she shared with sixth- to eighth-grade math teachers, has received rave feedback from students.

“For example, the mathematical expression ‘ $8 + 6x$ ’ is unusual because the unknown variable should always be put in the front, which means it should be written as ‘ $6x + 8$ ’” she says of the challenge requirement. “Some students might forget these rules even after hearing them many times in class. But in games, they remember them easily.”

The gamified lessons were such a big hit in Ms. Qiu’s class that “even the least motivated student researched the topic and asked questions to go further.” It was not an issue if her students play ten rounds, because “in essence, they solved ten math problems in a different but more motivating way.”

And she still has more ways to engage students. In early April (and in a re-run in May), Ms. Qiu supervised the Math Festival, an afternoon extravaganza of math-related games organized by her mentees from the Math Club KAP (Keystone Activities Program). Compared to other math competitions, the Math Festival was a “more grounded” event open to students who wanted to see the subject’s fun side. Student organizers chose 24 fun and collaborative games, ranging from sudoku and Numpuz (a riddle where number blocks need to be moved to follow a specific order) to the challenging Tower of Hanoi (where disks of various diameters need to be put in a rod to create a cone). Ms. Qiu played with many participating middle schoolers until she sometimes looked like one of them.

She also organizes Keystone’s participation in contests such as Math Kangaroo and the annual American Mathematics Competitions (AMC 8, for eighth graders). Many *xuébà* (academic achievers) participate in these high-level events to challenge themselves or prepare for the rigors of high school or Diploma Programme (DP) math. But in recent years, Ms. Qiu has focused the training not only on competition but also on team cooperation.

“Each of them sees questions or concepts differently,” she adds. “When they combine their visions, they find more ways to solve problems.” And in these activities, she encourages her students to “get involved ... [and feel] they have a place in learning math,” regardless of their level of understanding.

Estimation is an ability that is often ignored or undervalued in learning math, because students are always asked to be as accurate as possible.



—
Ms. Qiu empowers her students to be willing to learn, making their “confidence spill to other subjects.”

*When students enter middle school,
a huge challenge that they will face is self-management.
That is why they must develop good study habits from an early age.*

BRIDGING THE GAPS

Oscar Zhou is grateful to have had Ms. Qiu as his seventh-grade math teacher. The now ninth grader says he made great strides in the subject because of her support in and out of the classroom. On several occasions in the first semester of the 2019-2020 academic year, they had afterschool math help sessions so Oscar could keep up with his classmates. The virtual classes of the following semester were incredibly challenging for him, but Ms. Qiu checked on him, and others too, from time to time to see their progress.

He knew that Ms. Qiu and many other teachers had bigger workloads during the distance learning phase, making her gesture all the more moving for him and his family. Oscar shares that his family and the parents of his classmates emailed school leaders to “praise and express gratitude for Ms. Qiu’s diligent work.”

In her ten-year teaching career, Ms. Qiu has encountered students whose struggles often lead to a feeling of failure. She taps into the Approaches to Learning (ATL) skill of “failing well and perseverance” whenever she reminds them to “not give up and remember how far you have gone and the progress you have made.”

Ms. Qiu remembers a turning point in her early career when a department head argued against building cordial teacher-student relations. That remark greatly surprised and almost discouraged the young Ashley, then a budding teacher excited about observing older peers and absorbing their best practices. Still, she followed what she felt was the right thing to do.

It always moves Ms. Qiu to see her students develop their knowledge and confidence after an entire school year. Her former students would often message her just to say how much impact she has had on them. Many of her current Keystone colleagues also commend Ms. Qiu for doing so much to benefit students.

“Ashley is one of the hardest working teachers I have ever met,” math teacher Tina Lium says. “Not only does she embody our five shared values, but she is authentic and very generous with sharing her ideas and works with other teachers.”

In 2020, Ms. Qiu became the school’s Math Curriculum Coordinator, a role that bridges the structural and pedagogical gaps between the Primary School and Secondary School math programs. In the former, math is taught mainly in Chinese and follows the Chinese



National Curriculum, while the latter uses English in teaching concepts based on the MYP of the International Baccalaureate (IB). The math coordinator ensures a smooth transition between those two programs by collaborating with primary and secondary math teachers. The coordinator also communicates with a team of math consultants tapped by the school to develop the subject curriculum, along with helping parents and new math teachers understand Keystone’s math program.

In one of her first observations since assuming the role, Ms. Qiu realized that primary math teachers have the same understanding of MYP Math and teach almost the same way as their secondary colleagues, although the former use different terminologies. Ms. Qiu drew upon this observation to recommend improvements in the syllabus. She has also organized meetings with primary and secondary math teachers to become better acquainted and find the common patterns between the programs.

“These meetings have helped us better align the secondary curriculum and to meet the students’ needs when they come up to the secondary school,” her colleague Ms. Lium says. “Ashley has been an active listener and she has helped consolidate our questions and comments to the math consultants.”

Among the developments in the Keystone math program are having bilingual math teachers in Grade 6 to assist students in English and Chinese, and special in-class activities that introduce students to the MYP and its assessment criteria.

“Actually, the transition between primary and middle schools is not as difficult as parents think.” Ms. Qiu says. “When students enter middle school, a huge challenge that they will face is self-management. That is why they must develop good study habits from an early age.”

—
Ms. Qiu is moved whenever she sees her students develop confidence in their math classes.

I want to develop students who excel in both morality and ability, who are empathetic, responsible, and caring.

HAVING GREAT INTENTIONS

During a faculty orientation session in early August 2021, Ms. Qiu had a long conversation with a new colleague about her teaching philosophy. In this sharing, she reflected on her growth as a teacher ever since coming to Keystone and appreciated her efforts to “prepare something that does not waste my students’ time and lives.” She felt all the hours she has spent coordinating with colleagues to improve their teaching methods, and even the extra time she allotted to help struggling students, were all worthwhile.

Some weeks before that orientation, Ms. Qiu had volunteered to teach math to 19 students supported by the foundation Educating Girls from Rural China (EGRC). The girls were on a two-week summer camp to experience living in a boarding school and learn from curricular and extracurricular activities organized by teachers from Keystone Academy and the Beijing Concord College of Sino-Canada, so they could better prepare for entering the twelfth grade and their *gāokǎo* (high school entrance examination) next year.

Ms. Qiu noticed that although the girls had a solid foundation of math, they still had trouble explaining their ways of solving problems—a similar issue that some fifth graders face when they move to middle school. And just like what Ms. Qiu had done in her regular classes, she gamified her lessons for the EGRC summer campers, in which they substituted unknown variables in equations with classroom doors. The door game worked wonders for the girls.

“I wanted them to have the same authentic and fun experience that my Keystone students have in my classes,” Ms. Qiu shares. “There was a moment when I almost teared up because I saw the girls were reluctant to talk in the classroom. I didn’t understand that at first, but then, I told them that in my classroom, I always welcome students to share their knowledge.”

Moments like these inspire Ms. Qiu to always think of engaging ideas which, she says, often come in her morning preparation time, or sometimes, in her dreams. Once the ideas arrive, she reflects on how those ideas will benefit her students, and the other way around—how she can “learn from students” to understand the habits of this generation. For her, students can always access content knowledge from various sources, but as a teacher it is her responsibility to develop their skills and values. She applies this to her daughter as well.

At the time of the interview for this article, Ms. Qiu was waiting for her daughter to finish an activity with other children at the school gym. Before going there, Ms. Qiu reminded her that having fun was just one part of the activity; failing was another. She believes telling her daughter the possible outcomes before the activity would help the girl deal with disappointment and unmet expectations. She asked her daughter to observe others if she could not understand instructions or chat with non-Chinese speaking kids. By knowing what to do after failure, Ms. Qiu says, her daughter would have more memorable moments.

“This is my role,” Ms. Qiu emphasizes. “When I encourage children [to not give up], I draw upon my experience whenever I learn something new. It also reminds them that ‘It is totally okay to make mistakes because we learn from them.’ As students learn how to manage their emotions, teachers must continue encouraging and helping them improve their affective skills so that they can bounce back after failures. That’s the moment when I feel I am doing my job.”

“In Chinese, we say *chūxīn bù wàng, fāng dé shǐzhōng* [初心不忘, 方得始终, lit, ‘Remember your purpose to reach your goals’], which means your great intentions for the best interest of students can pass on even if you don’t see them, because this is something that you cannot feign,” she says. “I have always had this belief that I was born to be a teacher, because it just brings out all of my passion.”

① TRIED AND TESTED

Keystone students were recognized in numerous academic and co-curricular competitions in China and abroad throughout the 2020-2021 academic year. These included accolades in events such as the International Genetically Engineered Machine (iGEM) Competition, the John Locke Institute (JLI) Essay Competition, the Public Benefit International Challenge (PBIC) ⁱ for Youth, China Thinks Big (CTB), American Mathematics Competitions (AMC), the National Economics Challenge (NEC) ⁱⁱ, and the United States Academic Decathlon (USAD) ⁱⁱⁱ.



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ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-2021

MOSAIC



② LEARNING ON DISPLAY

Students from various grade levels showcased their academic works throughout the year, presenting their passions and growth journeys. In late March, tenth graders displayed their Personal Project products under the theme of resilience. A month later, senior students in Keystone's IB DP Music, Theater Arts, and Visual Arts courses staged an arts festival themed "Life Outside the Box." The entire Grade 12 level later displayed the artifacts and projects that embodied the second keystone of character and community throughout their years at Keystone in the Character and Community Exhibition.



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③ ATHLETIC PROWESS

Keystone teams opened a new athletic season with major victories, beginning with a decisive win in volleyball and basketball matches at the International Schools Athletic Conference (ISAC) in November. Keystone swimmers were splashed with 83 medals at the Global Virtual All Stars (GVAA) swim meet in April, while Keystone badminton players brought home a second-place finish with double gold medals at the Association of China and Mongolia International Schools (ACAMIS) Badminton Tournament 2021 ⁱ in Shenzhen in May. Aside from these victories, students also competed in campus sport activities, including the Keystone Cross Country Invitational Meet in October and the East 5 Dorm Olympics ⁱⁱ in March.

M4 LEGENDARY PARADES

Thanks to Primary School students who cosplayed on several occasions, superheroes and mythical characters from Chinese folklore descended upon the Keystone campus this academic year. Our students held a Halloween parade ⁱ in late October and a Chinese book character dress-up day ⁱⁱ in early May.



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M 5 FINEST ARTS IN VOGUE

Keystone students and faculty members returned to the stage on many occasions in the 2020-2021 academic year. From dazzling musical performances to spectacular stage plays, and even voice dubbing and talent shows for charity, the Keystone Performing Arts Center was awash with impressive displays of passion for the arts.



ME SPECTACULAR SEASON

Literature Playhouse concluded its first season of eight literary episodes on a high note despite moving several sessions online in response to the pandemic. The club's virtual events on Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* and Shi Tiesheng's *The Strings of Life* amassed thousands of viewers. It returned to the stage with an epic production featuring F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. In addition to these, the club also hosted special sessions that explored the musical genius of Bob Dylan and the poetry of Nobel Laureate Louise Glück.







M 7 THE RESILIENT CLASS OF 2021

The 76 members of the Keystone Academy Class of 2021 moved forward to the next stage of their academic journeys, celebrating their resilience, growth, and success in high school amid the pandemic. Head of School Malcolm McKenzie addressed our fourth graduating cohort and urged them to “be a teacher” who “[teaches] others about life and how best to live it, whatever career you choose.”







About the Speaker: Yan Chongnian is a researcher at the Institute of Manchu Studies at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences. A distinguished Chinese historian, Professor Yan has been one of the guest speakers on CCTV's *Lecture Room*. The Beijing Municipal Government conferred upon Professor Yan the title of Expert with Outstanding Contributions, enjoying special allowances rewarded by the State Council of the People's Republic of China. Among his accomplishments: publishing more than 250 papers on Manchu and Qing history and winning the China Copyright Industry Lifetime Achiever Award in 2018.



Historian Yan Chongnian on HOW THE FORBIDDEN CITY STOOD THE TEST OF TIME

® BEYOND THE GATE

The Forbidden City is more than just a historic monument or a cultural center; it represents time itself. Since its inauguration during the Yongle Emperor's reign in the Ming Dynasty, the imposing imperial palace has witnessed various significant world events in its 600-year history.

Also known as the Purple Forbidden City or *Zijinchéng*, the palace had been off-limits to commoners due to the belief that it was the terrestrial residence of the emperor—or the son of Heaven. The palace is located at the nadir of the *zi* (lit. “purple” and refers to Polaris or the North Star), whose surrounding celestial region forms

the *ziwēi yuan* or the Purple Forbidden Enclosure. Ancient Chinese astronomers believed this enclosure in the northern skies was the heavenly abode of the Celestial Emperor and his family.

Today, people from all walks of life can enter the Forbidden City—now called the Palace Museum—to marvel at its architectural splendor and cultural heritage that are all seemingly frozen in time. We rely on ancient texts, preserved artifacts, and rich imagination to revisit the imperial palace's glorious past.

What does the centuries-long history of the Forbidden City mean for us? In

November 2020, the Keystone Education Salon invited renowned Chinese historian Yan Chongnian to speak about the enduring legacy of this historical wonder.

In this session, Professor Yan recounted his research experiences into the Forbidden City for more than seventy years and entering the Palace Museum complex more than a thousand times. Professor Yan shared a way of viewing the monument that transcends time and space—through the “Eye of Heaven.” The historian also interacted with Keystone students during a dialogue, giving them deep insights into the vibrant history of the Forbidden City.





The “Eye of Heaven” sees the spirit of the Forbidden City. It looks at the five millennia of Chinese history, culture, art, and philosophy embodied and embedded in it.

THE FORBIDDEN CITY, VIEWED FROM THE “EYE OF HEAVEN”

On the fourth day of the twelfth lunar month in the year 1420, the Yongle Emperor declared that the construction of the Imperial Palace in Beijing had been completed. He made the announcement to an audience of civil servants, military officials, and foreign envoys at the Fengtian Hall (now known as the Hall of Supreme Harmony).

From that day until now, 600 years have passed in history.

Every country in the world has magnificent museums. What status does the Palace Museum hold among them? I maintain that it should be listed as one of the world's top five, alongside the British Museum in the United Kingdom, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the United States, the Louvre in France, and the State Hermitage Museum and the Winter Palace in Russia.

We are fortunate to be able to celebrate the six-hundredth anniversary of the completion of the Forbidden City. Not everyone can live until the next centennial.

In one of my speeches in a city in Guizhou, a reporter asked me, “Professor Yan, as a researcher studying the Forbidden City, how many times have you been there? You know, Beijing is so far from here. Have you visited it three times?” He seemed surprised.

As far as he is concerned, visiting the Palace Museum from Guizhou is a long travel for the first time, let alone three times. I told him that I had been there more than that.

“So, six times?” he asked. “More than that,” I answered. He stamped his feet and made up his mind. “Ten times, tops.”

“Way more than that,” I said.

“How many times exactly?” he insisted. “More than a thousand times,” I replied. He was quite amazed. He wondered what I have learned from so many visits to the Palace Museum.

He politely requested I talk about something that impressed me the most during my visits. My answer: the wisdom displayed in the Palace Museum.

So, I would like to share with you about learning wisdom from the Palace Museum. We want to see the Forbidden City with three eyes.

“The first eye” sees things: the buildings and their architecture, the three main halls, the palaces of the Inner Court, the six eastern and western palaces, the Qianlong Garden, the Palace of Compassion and Tranquility, the Hall of Literary Brilliance, the Hall of Martial Valor, and others. The jewels, porcelain, treasures, and other cultural artifacts are visible and tangible. These are what our “first eye” encounters when arriving at the Forbidden City.

What the “second eye” sees is less visible. It looks at the people who made up the history of the Forbidden City. They were the designers, builders, tenants, and guardians of palace buildings. From emperors and generals to eunuchs and maids, from cultural officers to foreign envoys, from artisans of all backgrounds to imperial families, they were all inseparable from the Forbidden City.

I can affirm that almost all prominent Chinese personalities in the past six centuries have had a direct or indirect bearing on the palace. The “second eye” helps us understand history creators by observing their legacy and surviving documents and relics.

The third eye, which I call the “Eye of Heaven”, sees the spirit of the Forbidden City. It looks at the five millennia of Chinese history, culture, art, and philosophy embodied and embedded in the Forbidden City.

We will focus on the “Eye of Heaven” and I will explain how to see the spirit of the Forbidden City through the stories of several historical figures.

STORY 1

SCHOLAR WEN ZHENMENG'S SUCCESS IS FALLING NINE TIMES AND GETTING UP TEN

I see you, students of Keystone Academy, as young people with great aspirations. You all have clear goals, ambitions, and life plans for your future. But if you think about it, the road of life is not always easily recognizable. You can imagine all sorts of roads you may take in the next ten, twenty, and even thirty years. But the truth is, the future may be quite different from what you think today.

I will share the stories of two intellectuals in ancient times. The first is about Wen Zhenmeng, who came from a well-educated family in Changzhou, Nanzhili (present-day Suzhou, Jiangsu). He became famous when he took imperial (or civil service) examinations for scholars, passing the county level at a young age. He successfully became a *jurén*, a candidate who passed the examination at the provincial level.

After that, Wen Zhenmeng went to Beijing from Nanjing and became a *jìnshì* or a candidate in the highest imperial examination. Though failing on his first try, he was not discouraged and went back home and returned to school. The *jìnshì* examination took place every three years. So, he returned to Beijing three years later and still did not pass. That was a big blow, and some people would have been heavily discouraged. But Wen took it for the third time and failed again.

He sat the exam for a total of nine times, spending 27 years of his life doing something that filled him with frustration and disappointment again and again.

On his tenth try, at nearly fifty years old, he finally passed the test and received the distinction *zhuàngyuan* or Number One Scholar for topping the highest imperial examination. He was the eighty-second person in the Ming Dynasty who did so. Scholar Wen Zhenmeng was later appointed to a government role in Beijing and rose through the ranks. He eventually became a Grand Secretary.

STORY 2

CALLIGRAPHER JIANG HENG CARVES HIS LEGACY ON STONE STELES

In the Qing Dynasty, there was a calligrapher named Jiang Heng. He was the opposite of Wen Zhenmeng as he gave up his official career after failing the imperial exam and instead studied calligraphy. He practiced day and night and consulted calligraphy masters everywhere.

Jiang Heng was inspired by the stele forest in Xi'an and determined

to rewrite the thirteen classical scriptures or the Confucian classics. No calligrapher before had ever dared to do this—some did their best to write nine or twelve, but not the entire set.

Jiang Heng said he could do it. Since his home was not the best working place, he found a temple called Qionghuaguan in Yangzhou that provided him with food and humble accommodation.

Except for mealtime, Jiang Heng spent his waking hours writing calligraphy. He never went out of the temple, met any friends, or traveled. Nor did he go overseas. He stayed at the temple for twelve years, focusing solely on writing the thirteen books that accounted for more than 600,000 characters, all in regular script.

Was Jiang Heng successful? Sure. But there is more than that.



It was not an easy job to preserve such a big pile of calligraphy artwork, since it would likely be damaged if stored at home without professional protection. Fortunately, he met the right person. The first who helped Jiang Heng was a wealthy salt merchant who offered him 2,000 *liǎng* of silver (one *liǎng* is 50 grams, a *liǎng* of silver amounts to RMB 600-800 today). The salary of a county magistrate at the time was about 60 *liǎng*. It took a magistrate ten years to earn 600 *liǎng*. So, 2,000 *liǎng* was almost thirty years' worth of salaries of a local magistrate.

Why did the salt merchant give him so much money? It was used for bookbinding, collecting his calligraphy writing into a thread-bound book. And that was not enough.

The second ally was the Jiangsu provincial governor. He reported Jiang's story to the Qianlong Emperor, who became interested and asked Jiang to submit his work. The emperor was also a calligraphy enthusiast. He liked Jiang's calligraphy and wanted to preserve it. But how? They thought of carving it onto stone, as a tablet and a stele.

There were altogether 89 pieces, two meters high each. Emperor Qianlong wrote a preface and decreed to engrave the scriptures based on Jiang Heng's calligraphy. The total collection of 90 pieces of stele is known today as the Qianlong Stone Stele.

The Qianlong Stone Stele is inscribed with 13 books of the Confucian classics from the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period to the beginning of the Western Han Dynasty. All 89 pieces of stone carved with a decree form a monument. The Qianlong Stone Stele is now stored in the Confucian Temple and Guozijian Museum in Beijing. Jiang Heng's calligraphy artwork is considered to be an integral part of China's cultural heritage.

Wen Zhenmeng and Jiang Heng are both recorded in historical records of the Ming and Qing Dynasties. This is the truth that I realized through the Eye of Heaven. Their stories tell us that there are thousands of roads in life. If one path does not work, go to another one. All roads lead to Rome, as the saying goes. As long as you don't get discouraged or disappointed, you can always reach Rome.



*All roads lead to Rome, as the saying goes.
As long as you don't get discouraged or disappointed,
you can always reach Rome.*

STORY 3 SCHOLAR-CRITIC XIE JIN IS NOT ABOVE REPROACH

Next, I would like to talk about the art of speaking through the stories of two people.

In the Ming Dynasty, a very talented scholar named Xie Jin passed the imperial examination and obtained the title of *jinshi* at 19. It was a significant achievement.

Zhu Yuanzhang, or the Hongwu Emperor (1368-1398), knew Xie Jin's father and offered the young man a job in the court, to be his personal secretary. It was a great honor for a young student like him. The emperor's secretary had the prospect to serve the Grand Secretariat, the emperor's teacher and the prince's teacher in the future. Xie Jin accepted the offer.

The emperor told Xie Jin that “I have always seen you as my own son, and I expect you to treat me as your father. Since we are like father and son, you can confide to me and speak your mind.”

People said being close to the emperor was like being close to a tiger. When he asked for your opinion, you must ponder and weigh your words and expression. How do you put it?

Xie Jin misunderstood the emperor and abandoned rhetoric in his writing. He wrote *Ten Thousand-Word Manifesto* overnight, and handed it to the emperor. The writing was filled with complaints and criticism of the emperor’s rule. The emperor read this ten thousand-word accusation but refrained from giving Xie Jin a death sentence.

A few days later, Xie Jin wrote *Ten Strategies for Peace*, another list of suggestions, which were also a criticism of the emperor. The emperor directly summoned Xie Jin’s father to court and ordered him to bring his son back home for ten years. Before the tenth year, the Hongwu Emperor passed away. His son, the Yongle Emperor (1402-1424), succeeded to the throne.

The Yongle Emperor knew Xie Jin was talented, so he asked him to serve as a *hànlín* or a member of the Imperial Academy. The emperor appointed Xie Jin to be the chief editor of the *Yongle Encyclopedia*. Xie Jin completed the compilation within a year. However, the emperor was disappointed after reading Xie Jin’s work and sent another chief editor called Yao Guangxiao to supervise the task. In the end, it took the editorial staff of over a thousand people five years to finish the compilation. The emperor was satisfied and wrote the preface to the *Yongle Encyclopedia*.

Later, Xie Jin served as the teacher for the princes. However, he was embroiled in a dispute by commenting on the succession line to the throne and opposing the emperor’s decision to conquer Annan (or the southernmost province of the Tang Dynasty, and present-day northern Vietnam). He was imprisoned for several years.

One day, the Yongle Emperor saw the name of Xie Jin on the list of prisoners and asked the warden: “Xie is still alive?” His words were ambiguous, so the warden thought the emperor implied to execute Xie Jin. In the winter, the warden had Xie Jin drink a debilitating amount of alcohol and left him standing in the snow. He was discovered frozen to death the following day. It was a tragic passing of a genius scholar, who died at the age of 47.



STORY 4 HONORABLE MINISTER LUO YUREN TALKS HIS WAY OUT OF COURT

Here is the story of a person named Luo Yuren, a minister in the Ming Dynasty. The Wanli Emperor (1572-1620) was a recluse and alcoholic who paid little attention to government affairs. He had not been to the court for twenty years when Luo Yuren’s story happened.

Luo Yuren wrote a report to the emperor, accusing him of neglecting his duty by claiming poor health. After reading the report, the emperor was outraged and summoned his grand secretaries to inner court.

The emperor laid in bed, feeling sick, asked the ministers about the plan to punish Luo



Before we talk, we should think it over and try to be more considerate and tactful.

Yuren. His most senior grand secretary and prime minister Shen Shixing answered: “Your majesty, your resentment is beyond measure. But do not take it to heart. If you declare him guilty, you need to describe his offense by publishing the report that accuses you of indulging in wine, women, avarice, and pride. Once the report is released, it will draw public attention. His death is not to be regretted, but this will sabotage your royal majesty.”

The emperor realized that the issue was so tricky that he could neither punish nor execute this man. But he felt humiliated and was not willing to let Luo Yuren get away with this. He ordered the prime minister to find a way to settle the issue.

The prime minister told the other imperial officials about his plan. Later, the prime minister talked to Luo Yuren, informing him of the emperor’s displeasure. He suggested Luo Yuren write a report about his poor health and request to return home. Although Luo Yuren was banished and escaped punishment, his report was recorded in the historical archives.

Shen Shixing, as a grand secretary, could not publicly take Luo Yuren’s side at the cost of damaging the royal majesty. But neither could he stick to the emperor and hurt the feeling of his colleagues. In the end, the emperor was satisfied because his dissident had been defeated and banished from the court. The emperor approved of Shen Shixing’s solution, and so did the officials and Luo Yuren, who was grateful because he received a decent return.

To sum up, this was the art of speech. Before we talk, we should think it over and try to be more considerate and tactful.

The Forbidden City has so many stories to tell. It has stood for six hundred years. I firmly believe its charm can sustain another six centuries. Every time I visit, I discover something new about it. I hope you, my dear young friends, can visit the Palace Museum and see through the Eye of Heaven to learn about its intangible wisdom. May history bring you more inspiration and make you a wise person with an enriched experience. I wish you great success in the future and may you take the road to a happy life. Thank you!





DIALOGUE WITH HISTORIAN YAN CHONGNIAN

—
Hosted by eleventh-grader Hank Zhou



I firmly believe in the exchange and integration of Chinese and western culture to pursue mutual development.

Huang Zhan and Zuo Chunxi (both G11) In the 600-year history of the Forbidden City, what is its most noteworthy aspect?

Prof. Yan The Forbidden City is not only an epitome of the history of the Ming and Qing Dynasties. It is, more importantly, the embodiment of five thousand years of Chinese civilization. It demonstrates the convergence of history and culture over time. First, let us consider its architectural style. Chinese architecture is different from that of the western world. Both types are distinctive, yet they have their own merits. Take the eagle for example. However strong one wing is, the eagle needs a pair of wings to soar. If we liken palace structures and art of the west to one wing of the eagle, and the oriental architecture to the other, only by spreading both wings can the eagle of world civilization fly into the sky.

I believe we should balance and learn from each other's technology to make the world a better place, for human wisdom and civilization.

Wang Yutong and Wei Xizhe (both G10) We noticed that the Forbidden City contains various signs of cultural integration, such as Taoist features and Tibetan Buddhism architecture. What meaning does China's multiethnic culture give to the Forbidden City?

Prof. Yan In my recent book *Forest Empire*, I propose that Chinese civilization is composed of five cultural forms: the farming culture, the grassland culture, the forest culture, the plateau culture, and the oceanic culture. Their convergence, exchange, integration, and evolution constitute the main content of the history of Chinese civilization. The Central Plains farming culture has always been the core subject.

The third cultural form—the forest culture—is a creative idea born out of my research. In the past years, scholars and experts believed that the northeast and the northwest followed the grassland culture

and nomadism. I have been to Hulunbuir, Xilin Gol, Ordos, and Alxa. I have traveled from what is now the easternmost and westernmost parts of Inner Mongolia, covering 2,400 kilometers. After a long field investigation, I conclude in *Forest Empire* that north-east China is of the forest culture and not of the nomadic or the grassland culture. The entire northeast region, including the north of Heilongjiang and the south of Stanovoy Range, is covered by lush forests. This unifies the farming, grassland, and plateau cultural forms.

These cultural forms are reflected in the Forbidden City. For example, courtyard houses in the farming culture embody the architectural concept of enclosure. The Great Wall is a fortification strategy, and so are the Forbidden City, the imperial city, and the entire Beijing city. Having fortifications gave the Hongwu Emperor of the Ming Dynasty a sense of security. The grassland culture emphasizes horseback riding and archery, so there is a dedicated pavilion where emperors and princes practiced mounted archery in the Forbidden City. The backside of the Belvedere of Literary Profundity or the Wen Yuan Ge resembles a helmet of Manchu mounted warriors from the Eight Banners (or the military divisions).

The Tibetan culture of the Ming Dynasty also entered the imperial palace. The Belvedere of Raining Flowers or the Yuhua Ge and the Palace of Eternal Harmony or the Yonghe Gong have ox-horn-style architecture often seen in Tibetan architecture.

However, there are hardly any signs of the oceanic culture in the Forbidden City. It is regrettable that most rulers in ancient Chinese history, from Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of China, to the Xuantang Emperor, neglected the oceanic culture. When the Age of Exploration began in Europe around the fifteenth century, there was still no oceanic culture in the Qing Dynasty. There was not even a proper navy in Chinese history.

So except for the oceanic culture, the Forbidden City integrated the essence of Chinese history, through its four major cultural patterns.

Hank Zhou In our studies at Keystone, we actually often use Chinese and Western comparisons and contrasts to understand eastern culture. Apart from this, what other approach do you recommend for us to understand the Forbidden City so we can strengthen our cultural and Chinese identity?

Prof. Yan Cultural differences result from long-term development in history. Despite these, we learn from each other and make up for each other's deficiencies. This is why I compare Chinese and western culture to the wings of an eagle. It takes two wings to fly. And we can make more achievements by cooperating with each other.

I firmly believe in the exchange and integration of Chinese and

western culture to pursue mutual development. We can find evidence of cultural exchange in imperial history, too. In Emperor Wan Li's reign, the Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci arrived in Beijing. He brought with him a world atlas and various modern ideas. In the Qing Dynasty, algebra, geometry, physics, and chemistry were introduced to China. The Palace Museum still houses a three-dimensional geometric model made of mahogany by the Kangxi Emperor.

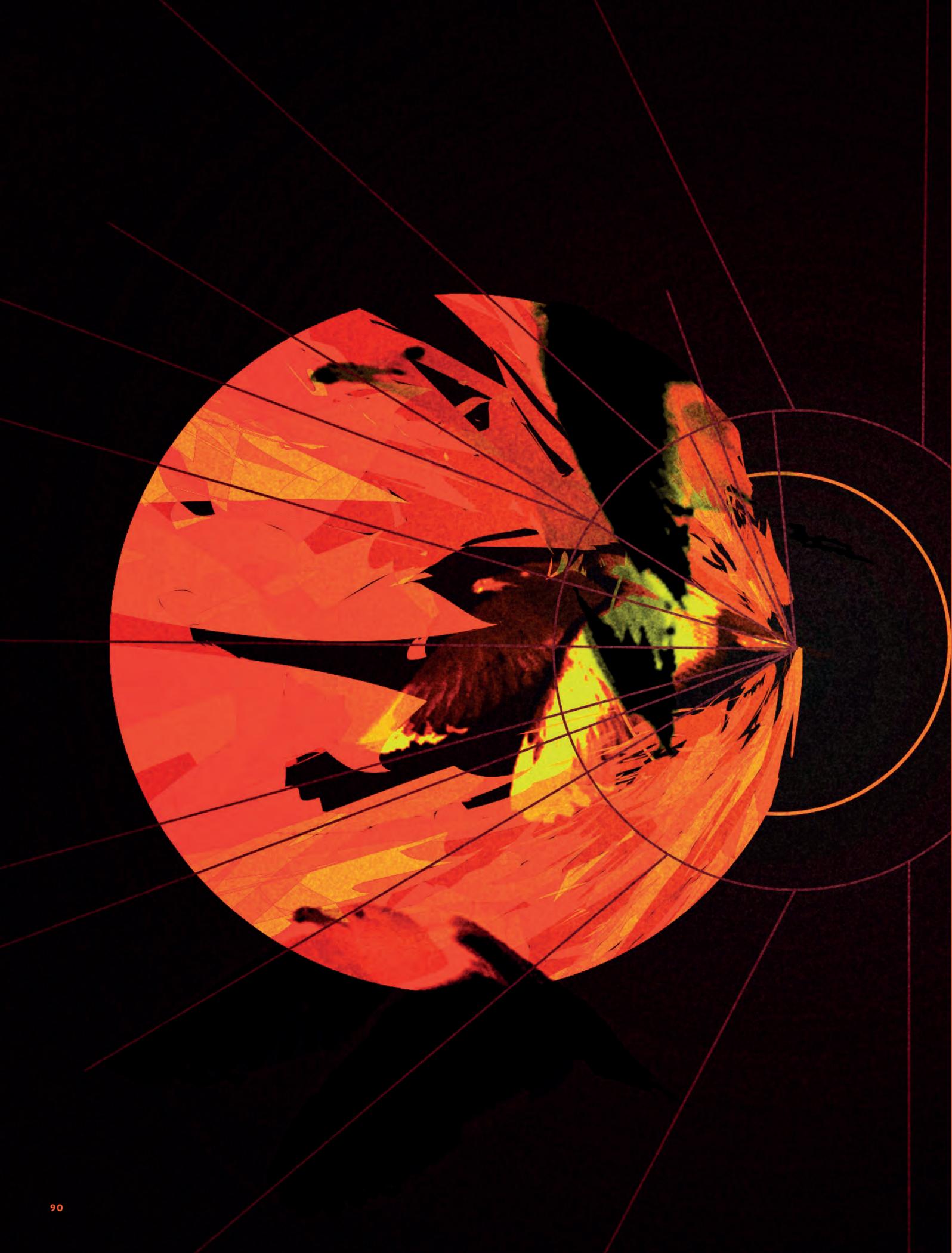
In addition, look at the name of the three main halls in the Forbidden City: the Taihe (the Hall of Supreme Harmony), the Zhonghe (the Hall of Central Harmony), and the Baohe (the Hall of Preserving Harmony). The east gate of the Palace is called Xiehemmen (the Gate of Blending Harmony), while the west is called Xihemen (the Gate of Glorious Harmony). It is worth considering why the emperor favors the word *hé* 和 (lit. "harmonious"). The Chinese people value harmony by establishing amicable social relationships and by pursuing peaceful coexistence among different nations.

Harmony brings about peace and security. If you pay attention to the Palace gates—Tian'anmen in the south and Di'anmen in the north, Dong'anmen in the east and Xi'anmen in the west, together with the two-side entrance in front of Tian'anmen, Change'an Left Gate and Chang'an Right Gate—you will find the character *ān* 安 (lit. "safe") repeatedly used.

The names were given after careful consideration of historical records. As the Forbidden City sat at the center, it stood for central harmony and peace. Being at the center brings about harmony and peace, between the emperor and his court, between the state and its households, and among different nationalities too. In this way, society is stable. A lack of harmony causes contradictions, and even divisions and conflicts.

This shows the basic principle and public feelings that the Chinese nation has had over the past six hundred years: being at the center, pursuing harmony and peace, and staying fair and just.

ABOUT THE KEYSTONE EDUCATION SALON / As a charitable and educational dialogue brand initiated and organized by the Keystone Office of Marketing and Communications, the Keystone Education Salon series is more than just a school activity. These intellectual and artistic gatherings aim to nourish the inquiring minds of learners of all ages on our campus through discussions with distinguished speakers, scholars, and guests from various disciplines. We published the first anthology of the series, titled *We Are from the Infinite Void* in October 2020. This publication documents the thinking processes, collision of ideas, and spontaneous exchanges in ten select salons from 2014 to 2019 so they will be remembered forever.



A Dialogue on Nobel Literature Laureate
Louise Glück and Her Poetry
with Her Chinese Translator Liu Xiangyang

① IN CONVERSATION WITH

*I Was Brave,
I Resisted,
I Set Myself on Fire*

ABOUT THE GUEST

Liu Xiangyang is the Chinese translator of Louise Glück's poems. A native of Shanghai, Henan, Mr. Liu has been recognized by his contemporaries for his excellent translation work that has made Glück's poetry recognized by numerous Chinese readers.

Mr. Liu's translations include the collections *Moonlight*, *Until the World Reflects the Deepest Needs of the Soul* (with Fan Jinghua), *The Complete Collection of Jack Gilbert's Poems*, and Gary Snyder's *Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems*.

Moonlight includes Glück's four poetry volumes: *The Wild Iris* (Pulitzer Prize for Poetry), *Meadowlands*, *Vita Nova* (Ambassador Book Award for Poetry), and *The Seven Ages*. *Until the World Reflects the Deepest Needs of the Soul* is a complete collection of Glück's *Averno* (National Book Award Finalist for Poetry in 2006) and *A Village Life*. The collection also contains a selection of her five early poetry volumes *Firstborn*, *The House on Marshland*, *Descending Figure*, *The Triumph of Achilles* (National Book Critics Circle Award for poetry), and *Ararat* (Rebekah Johnson Bobbitt National Prize for Poetry).

Although poetry is universally loved, safeguarding its essence and voice remains crucial regardless of language or generation.

In October 2020, the Nobel Foundation awarded the prestigious Nobel Prize in Literature to US Poet Laureate Louise Glück, recognizing her "unmistakable voice ... [that] makes individual existence universal". Her distinct voice has reverberated across the globe and been felt by millions in China, thanks to the extraordinary translation work of Chinese poet Liu Xiangyang.

Keystone Academy's Marketing and Communications director Sabrina Liu interviewed Mr. Liu recently for Literature Playhouse's "Storyteller" series. In this special In Conversation With feature, we share Mr. Liu's insights into ensuring nothing is lost in translation, especially for the works of this year's Nobel Laureate in Literature. Much of their insightful exchanges about the enduring beauty and transcendent quality of poetry resonates well with how Keystone celebrates China and the world—through the Chinese Thread and bilingualism. They also discuss a poet's journey and the ways to appreciate this enthrallingly rich, but frequently demanding, literary form.



As the child grows up, however, someone else tells the grown-up child that
“No wonder you are the way you are,
afraid of blood, your women
like one brick wall after another.”

FIRST ENCOUNTER

Sabrina Liu (referred to as SL) I felt thrilled and excited at the announcement of the Nobel Prize in Literature. Louise Glück is one of the poets I greatly respect and adore. My first encounter with her poetry collections was *The Wild Iris, Meadowlands, Vita Nova, The Seven Ages* (hereinafter referred to as *Moonlight*). I fell in love with her style when I read this collection, so I was glad to hear of her award.

As a reader, what strikes me most about Glück’s poems is their brevity and directness. She is clear and sharp in language. Compared to other poets, she harbors stern and restrained emotion in her work. How did you feel when you first encountered Glück’s poems?

Liu Xiangyang (referred to as LXY) I first came across Glück’s poems in 2006, one of which was “Love Poem” (published in *Until the World Reflects the Deepest Needs of the Soul*, hereinafter referred to as *The World*, p. 273). It is considered one of her early works.

This poem is about a mother bringing up her child. This mother, who remarried time and again, has always brought her child through hardships. She likes to weave red scarves of various shades as gifts to keep the child warm.

As the child grows up, however, someone else tells the grown-up child that
“No wonder you are the way you are,
afraid of blood, your women
like one brick wall after another.”

This poem is actually about the effect that love has on children, which may be surprising. The previously mentioned various shades of the red scarves are to subdivide the scarves. To finish reading this poem is to break down the love.

This is her first poem that impressed me deeply. The second one is “A Fantasy” (*The World*, p. 337), which begins with:

“I’ll tell you something: every day
people are dying. And that’s just the beginning.”

These two lines struck me like an awl piercing my heart. So, my first encounter with Glück’s poems came as a shock. I was shocked by her pain. If “Love Poem” left a deep impression on me, “A Fantasy” touched me, just like what is said in Glück’s poem, “like being struck by lightning”.

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Louise Glück – Photo gallery. NobelPrize.org. Nobel Prize Outreach AB 2021. Fri. 13 Aug 2021. <<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2020/gluck/photo-gallery/>>

SL Were you moved right away?

LXY Yes, just like being struck.

SL Did that encourage you to translate her poems into Chinese?

LXY Yes. What I did next was to buy her poetry collections.

SL In your preface to the Chinese translation of *Moonlight*, you mentioned that Glück is quite demanding about how her poems should be published. She disagreed with publishing selected poems and instead hoped that all her collections would be presented in their entirety.

A poet with stringent expectations for herself and her poetry would also set a high bar for the translator of her works. Did you communicate with her directly when you decided to translate her poems?

LXY I first contacted her by phone. She was probably in her office at the time, talking to students. I then explained my intention to translate her poems and publish them in China. Glück happened to have a Chinese student with her and gave me her agent's contact information, saying that I could get in touch with the agent about the translation.

I initially thought of publishing an anthology of select poems, but she rejected it. It was only a short time after the publication of her eleventh collection, so Glück requested that all her collections should be translated and published completely. I first chose the collection published in 1999, *Vita Nova*, and then the latest, *Averno*.

During my translation, I would write down the usual difficulties I encountered and sent them to the agent, as Glück did not go online. I sorted out my questions usually once a month or two and then sent them all at once. She would answer my questions one by one and email her responses to me.

Glück took this matter very seriously and carefully. She replied to every question I asked. Sometimes, she would take the initiative to explain points she thought I might not understand.

It now occurs to me that few such American poets choose to publish their translated poetry by collections instead of anthologies.

SL That's true. She seems to have a stand-out personality.

LXY Absolutely.

—
Mr. Liu Xiangyang believes that the expression “the writing mirrors the writer” regards more a style than content.



“The master said You must write what you see.
But what I see does not move me.
The master answered Change what you see.”

MY POEMS WILL SPEAK FOR ME

SL In the preface of your translation, you had asked her to share a few words for Chinese readers, but she said, “My poems will speak for me.”

LXY She originally had a few lines that I had translated since I thought these might be included in the book. When she learned about that, she said nothing other than her poems should be put into the book. It should be only poems from beginning to end.

SL Chinese people often say *wén rúqí rén* (“the writing mirrors the writer” or “style is the man”), and sometimes that *shī rúqí rén* (“the poem mirrors the poet”) is also applicable. I feel Glück’s poems, and her way of dealing with people, leave the impression that she stays aloof. “I don’t want to tell people how to read my books, but in fact I do.” she said, “The books since *Ararat—The Wild Iris*, *Meadowlands*, *Vita Nova*, and the new one—all of them, I think, in different ways, are wholes.”

As a poet laureate, Glück is widely renowned in the United States. However, she is not yet well-known in China or even in the literary world. How should teenagers approach the works of such a Nobel Prize-winning poet?

LXY Glück mentioned at the opening of the *Vita Nova* that:

“The master said You must write what you see.
But what I see does not move me.
The master answered Change what you see.”

This involves the difference between people and biographies. The expression “the writing mirrors the writer” regards more a style than content, that is, her experiences. That would lead us to another misunderstanding. Glück is so sensitive to this issue. She is reluctant to write a few words for fear of misleading people, or for fear that people would interpret her poems through biographies and from her story.

As far as our readers are concerned, there are two kinds of literary research: internal research dives into the text, while external research mainly studies poets and biographies. We can broaden our understanding of Glück’s works bit by bit. However, we need a textual knowledge if we want to understand her corpus.

The process goes like this: when we study a poem, we read between the lines. To understand further, we then extend to the collection where the poem belongs. We continue outward, to all of her works and even of her contemporaries, and then to the entire European and American literary tradition and the whole western literary tradition.



Instead of being a poet who sprang out of nowhere, Glück grew up reading classic literature. In contemporary literary history, she is considered part of post-confessionalism, which followed confessionalism (or a modern poetry form that emphasizes the personal).

Both of these had her print. Soon after Glück's early poems were published, she was classified by the *Columbia Literary History of the United States* as a post-confessional poet. Now, some people question this. I would say they haven't read her early poems carefully. *Columbia Literary History* has positioned her quite accurately. Instead of entirely belonging to such a modern form of poetry, she still treads the shadow of confessionalism.

We read poems more from this tradition and the text. I had found quite a bit of talk about her at that time. There are some questions that I want to get into, but in reality, gossip doesn't help with making translations or make understanding her specific work easier. However, the idea that "the poem mirrors the poet" applies to how her poetry and way of thinking are sometimes very close, and this kind of aloofness is apparent.

SL I feel that poets in the confessional or post-confessional style deal with their personal experiences, that is, they are primarily driven by their impulses and passion.

One of Glück's favorite subjects is death. Sometimes, I feel like she's holding a scalpel, dissecting herself as a specimen for people to see. I'm often in awe of the ruthless yet stoic way in which she confronts reality through poems.

You mentioned earlier that Glück was raised in a well-established literary tradition. I also hope that students at Keystone Academy learn some background knowledge about her. We know that Glück grew up in a Jewish family of Hungarian descent. Many artists and thinkers have famously depicted Jewish parents as being typically keen to have their children study from an early age.

And she was indeed a precocious child and was exposed to a great deal of poetry at a very young age. Glück once joked about the fact that she was more familiar with such names as Blake, Yeats, and Eliot than those of her childhood playmates.

LXY She was a precocious girl, like her predecessor Sylvia Plath who was also a talented girl. Glück was fond of drawing and writing poems in her childhood, but she

—
Glück evokes the feeling
like turning lightning into a
power station.

had decided to give up painting and focus solely on poetry by her teenage years. Unlike others who remain carefree in their adolescence, she had already determined what she wanted to do in life. She was also very enterprising. Her problem came in adolescence when she suffered from anorexia nervosa.

Here I'd like to recommend a book, *Emergence of the Self*. It talks about anorexia nervosa, especially in teenagers, which usually comes from a strong desire to remain thin and maintain a particular physical state before sexual development. In fact, Glück wrote "Gallery" (*The World*, p. 289), a poem about the unwillingness to face this physical maturity.

Glück's early anorexia was quite severe. Among the confessional poets, Glück's predecessors include Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, and John Berryman.

SL And Robert Lowell.

LXY Yes, the first three were all geniuses who died young. It was tragic that Plath, a truly brilliant poet, died young. It is still tough for a person, as a poet, to go through this experience, just like travelling through a desert or thorny shrub.

Glück was amazing. She endured this challenging period quite well. She dropped out of high school and received a seven-year treatment. Writing is very cathartic. Therefore, it was not surprising that these poets, including Anne Sexton, went for psychoanalysis after being ill, and then embarked on writing poetry, which was a common treatment.

The only difference lies in that some people manage to heal themselves through poetry, while some end in failure, which is a great pity. I adore Glück very much in this regard. She's like a caterpillar. Life is destined to be more challenging for poets like them, but she managed to become a butterfly.

SL Right. I was also thinking of *pòjiǎn*

chéngdié (or "break through a cocoon and become a butterfly", which can also mean "to emerge strong after struggling").

LXY Glück also embarked on confession-alism. It doesn't matter if we say Glück is strong or talented. From this perspective, however, this caterpillar has truly become a butterfly—a spiritually soaring butterfly.

"THE SOUL SHOULD BE A BIRD THAT CAN FLY AT ANY TIME"

SL Glück was severely impacted by her lengthy treatment for anorexia nervosa. Her past incidents have almost determined how she viewed and faced herself and the world, and even her attitude towards poetry. She also mentioned that this experience taught her how to turn her plight into insight when self-doubt became overwhelming.

LXY Her treatment was successful, since her anorexia nervosa never reemerged. She left school proactively for this treatment. She took courses from a night school, including Columbia University, where she learned to write poetry with some of the greats like Stanley Kunitz.

Glück was determined to write poetry when she was a teenager, and she had learned many methods in psychoanalysis. She had clear views on such matters. We sometimes call it *jiǔ bìng chéng yī* ("prolonged illness turns the patient into a doctor").

If we compare Glück with her predecessors, we will find that she is very calm and disciplined. We call it *jiǎnjié* (lit. "simplicity" or "conciseness"). Plath and others couldn't control their impulses, so their poems came out in spurts. But Glück took good control of hers.

SL Yes, it seems that in the process, Glück's alter ego was born. This alter ego could have a conversation with the one that was in pain. She could look at it, or she could keep a relative distance to observe and reflect upon.

LXY Just like when Glück uses Greek mythology, she would borrow different characters who represent various aspects of a person's nature. Everyone has to go through different stages. People are unique, but even the same person has different personas.

We call it "personality face" or "personality aspect". Glück intermittently uses it throughout her entire collection of poems. You can see the word changes from "you" to "I" to "he". They are representing the same person, which is quite common.

I wrote "To Draw the Attention of the Lightning" (*The World*, p. 18), an introduction about the shifting of personalities in poetry. It's better to understand it this way: it resembles a character, or a different personality, or a different side of a persona.

Averno, in particular, is about the Greek goddess Persephone. She used to be a maiden and later lived in the Underworld. The wife of Hades is a maiden on Earth and the Queen of the Underworld.

On the whole, we can speak of the "personality face" as a character image divided into different aspects that correspond to personality. Understanding these facets requires a firm grasp of psychology.

I sometimes comment that everyone is sick, but Glück evokes the feeling like turning lightning into a power station.

SL That's right. Sometimes I think these artists are extremely sensitive, possess immense creativity and imagination, and their creative process is like going through a whirlpool. It is full of unpredictable danger, and not everyone can get out unharmed or even alive.

This leaves me in awe of them. I still remember a comment from a Chinese poet on Glück, and I always wonder if it reflects her resilience amid a similarly tumultuous process. "The soul should be a bird that can fly at any time". This comment always conjures up a vision in my head that Glück can

fly at any time to see the world from above at opportune moments.

FROM BEING SELF-CENTERED TO FITTING INTO THE WIDER WORLD

SL As you just mentioned, another remarkable feature of Glück's poetry is her recreation of allusions and imagery in ancient Greek mythology and the Bible. Could you please tell us more about this?

LXY It is a big topic. As for some of her poetry collections, the whole framework draws upon Greco-Roman mythology or one or two of its characters. For example, the myth of Persephone constitutes the framework of *Averno*. However, Glück always returns to modern society when she uses Greek mythology. It is her distinct touch. She is not trying to reshape those things.

SL I found it interesting when Glück explained in an interview that she did not deliberately use these classics, it was just that many people were unaware of her childhood. Because these ancient Greek myths were her bedside stories, these mythological characters were too familiar to her.

LXY Glück's childhood was full of fantasies. She grew up this way, drawing or writing poetry, and finally, determined to pursue poetry during her teenage years.

She was precocious and intrepid. Confessionalism pays too much attention to the ego, and poets of this tradition like Plath and Anne Sexton wrote poems that were filled with "me". Sometimes, it is necessary to forgo the ego and put on a different scene. Glück often uses imagery in Greek mythology or Biblical allusions.

This is equivalent to putting on a mask and changing it after a while. In a way, it pushes her out of being self-centered and allows her to integrate into the wider world. This is also very good for overcoming the disadvantages of confessionalism.

Using Greek mythology is one of her celebrated creative methods.

Objectively speaking, her poetry alluding to ancient Greek scenes can be considered a return to form—a revival of the great classics. This is beneficial to young people. For Americans and poets like her, it is a triumphant resurgence of original, canonical, or classic western literature.

It is akin to us Chinese, who often go back to our classical literature, from the Tang Dynasty for instance, and even the earlier *Book of Songs*. We read these masterpieces often. Whether Glück's method is a literary strategy or just an intention to revive classics, it is still brilliant.

SL In addition to inheriting the ancient Greek literary tradition, the other point you just made—about how Glück's works always return to modern life—is just as important.

I enjoy the poem "The Triumph of Achilles" in *The World*. Here, Glück mentions the story of Achilles. There's a line that moves me so much and speaks to the heart. She said:

he was a man already dead, a victim
of the part that loved,
the part that was mortal.

This poem makes me feel like she's dealing with the shared human experience, rather than just telling or retelling a story.

LXY Yes. I've mentioned in the preface that "love is a function of death". We can say that one of the foundations of philosophy, art, and even spirituality is death—that is, "people will die". Dying means a lot of the mundane will disappear. No anxieties, no imagination, no race against time. A lot of things will simply be gone. I think our greatest tragedy is if we live forever.

Death, precisely, brings out so many beautiful things in life. We should cherish being alive because our life is limited. Speaking of this, many other things are functions of death. Our spirituality constitutes one function. It is our yearning for immortality that gives rise to magnificent works of art.

*He was a man already dead, a victim
of the part that loved,
the part that was mortal.*



—
Louise Glück – Photo
gallery. NobelPrize.org.
Nobel Prize Outreach AB
2021. Fri, 13 Aug 2021.
<<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2020/gluck/photo-gallery/>>

SL Sometimes when I read her poems, I can feel that she keeps reminding us that when dealing with your personal experience, go deep to get to the core of what we all have in common.

Glück has also mentioned that poetry should not direct attention to the poet. It seems to be a guiding principle of her work.

LXY We often say that the human experience, and our state of mind, is common. This is the universality of humankind. That’s why the Nobel Prize recognized Glück “for her unmistakable poetic voice that with austere beauty makes individual existence universal.”

POETIC VOICE ISN’T THE VOICE OF POETRY

SL Let’s talk about the tone of Glück’s poetry.

Most of her poetry tends to focus on the themes of loneliness, betrayal, and oblivion and disappearance of love. These are quite dark. However, Glück has regarded herself as a very humorous poet. I quite agree with her. That dichotomy of tone and theme is especially apparent in two of her poems.

In “Prism” (*The World*, p. 47), she said:

When you fall in love, my sister said,
it's like being struck by lightning.
I reminded her that she was repeating exactly
our mother's formula, which she and I
had discussed in childhood, because we both felt
that what we were looking at in the adults
were the effects not of lightning
but of the electric chair.

This poem is cleverly written. She pointed out that the reality of love's wonderful fantasies is often followed by self-torture. In addition, speaking of marriage, she wrote in "The Crater Lake":

The word "marry" was a signal.
It was also a road sign, a warning.
You could take a few things with you like a dowry.
You could take the part of you that thought.
"Marry" meant you should keep that part quiet.

This strikes me as it is very ironic. It says that getting married may mean turning a blind eye and keeping the part of you that can think quiet—in other words, stop thinking. I believe she is straightforwardly sharp but also humorous. She has quite a few poems with ironic meaning like this one.

LXY That's right. There are many passages like this with such meaning. Her later poems are increasingly transparent and humorous.

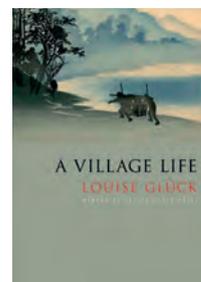
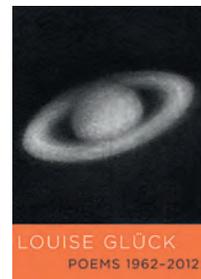
Glück's early poems can feel stern or cold, but her later poems are more open and show humor influenced by various casual cultural styles. The degree of casual styles is a little more pronounced, and maybe a little more fun so that it won't be so stabbing and distressing. Her poems at this stage won't directly hit you all of a sudden, or make you feel hurt; instead, they ease you in with a sense of humor.

SL The following question is actually about poetry translation. Mr. Fan Jinghua, another translator of Glück's poems, said in an interview that: "the text of her poetry is lean and plain, and her aesthetic sense is not a dense lyricism that cannot be transformed, but a cold lyricism and warm irony. This kind of language is more difficult to translate, since it is not consistent with the overall aesthetic tendency of Chinese."

Do you agree with such a view? Do you feel the same way when translating? How do you deal with this difference? I don't think it should be a simple matter to translate such poetry directly and accurately while, at the same time, preserving its original lyricism.

LXY Maybe it's not that complicated. In general, we require "faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance". But now, many people are criticizing this requirement.

There is no doubt that "faithfulness" is undoubtedly required, and it is also true of "expressiveness". But "elegance" is in doubt. Translating poems that are not "elegant" in the first place might bring their style to another endpoint. So, the concept of poetry translation is also changing. But about the text, it is mainly required to understand the characteristics of a poem from itself or from the collection to where it belongs.



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The *shīyì* ("poetic") we understand should not be limited to its literal meaning—refined, imaginative, flowery, all of which characterize a fine spring day.

The word “marry” was a signal.

It was also a road sign, a warning.

You could take a few things with you like a dowry.

You could take the part of you that thought.

“Marry” meant you should keep that part quiet.

For example, the Nobel Prize recognizes Glück’s “poetic voice”. In Chinese, we translate it as *shīyì de shēngyīn* (lit. “voice of the poet”), but the meaning is a bit inaccurate. In fact, “poetic voice” should be translated as *shīgē de shēngyīn* or *shī de shēngyīn* (“voice of poetry”).

SL Do you think the meaning of the word *shīyì* (“poetic”) seems narrow in the Chinese context? Poems of Louise Glück are relatively simple and straightforward. Sometimes, her language is like dialogues, a bit like the language of daily life. But I think her language is “poetic”, and such poetic flavor is embodied in the structure, rhythm, and imagery of the poem, and the feeling after reading her poetry is also poetic.

LXY The *shīyì* (“poetic”) we understand should not be limited to its literal meaning—refined, imaginative, flowery, all of which characterize a fine spring day. To fully understand Glück’s poems, we have to go deep into the lines and understand the seemingly trivial things behind her words. Even if her poems sound straightforward, we will find their “poetic” elements—and this is a way to understand her. Meanwhile, we should go beyond aesthetics and appreciate the texts that do not appeal to us.

There is an article about how Glück uses words like “true” and “real” to describe her poems. In Chinese, we can translate “true” (*zhēn*) as “truth” (*zhēnshí*) or “real” (*shí*) as “reality” (*xiànshí*) or “realistic” (*shíjì*). She also uses the word “sincerity” (*chéng*),

referring to “honesty” (*chéngshí*). All these are ways to speak and write poems.

Also, these comments are just for reference. In principle, we should always examine a poem by reading it beyond surface level, and then view it in the context of the collection to where it belongs, and then the poet’s whole body of work.

SL Let’s talk about Glück’s poetry style. When I read her poems, including her essays and interviews, I find that she regards herself as a minimalist poet. She uses simple words and avoids complicated rhetoric. She is also good at using poetic devices such as ellipsis, enjambment, and repetition.

Glück once expressed that “I am attracted to ellipsis, to the unsaid, to suggestion, to eloquent, deliberate silence.” Some critics comment that her poems sometimes are “overly simplified” to the point that they become incomprehensible. Others comment that she prefers metaphors than concrete images. Does this poetry style make translations more difficult? What do you think of this style?

LXY I didn’t have that feeling, maybe because I’ve read a lot about her, from her early poems to the later ones. They are consistent with her growth. For example, I will not worry too much if I see traces of ellipses in her later works, since I have encountered them in her early corpus.

The translation process must be extraordinarily detailed. The translator should be

conscientious. I have to revisit the lines that I don’t understand because I assume the readers will probably miss their meaning. At this point, I note these items down. In this case, I will ask Glück and she will explain them to me. Then I will sort out her answers and make some mental notes or comments.

SL Moreover, there is an essential feature in poetry—what is not said is often as important as what is. Glück has mentioned that she admired poets like Rilke and Eliot, who she said were masters fond of blank verse. I think sometimes ellipses or hints arouse greater imagination and the impulse to supplement them.

Professor Helen Vendler, a renowned American literary critic, wrote a commentary on Glück’s collection of poems, *The House on Marshland*, in 1978. “Glück’s cryptic narratives invite our participation: we must, according to the case, fill out the story, substitute ourselves for the fictive personages, invent a scenario from which the speaker can utter her lines, decode the import, ‘solve’ the allegory,” Vendler said. She added that “later, I think... we read the poem, instead, as a truth complete within its own terms, reflecting some one of the innumerable configurations into which experience falls.”

I entirely agree with Professor Vendler’s comment. Speaking of Glück’s fascination with ruins and the works of art that were destroyed or unfinished, she explained that it’s because she feels that such works point

to a broader context and world. This is actually a poet's expectation of the depth and power, carried in her poems, and I admire it very much.

LXY When we regard Glück's poetry, she leaves her readers with many spaces for interpretation or borrows a tiny thing in other forms. If something is too complicated, we may sometimes put our energy into detail while ignoring universal elements.

Aristotle once proposed that poetry is universal and also a necessity. As far as I'm concerned, Aristotle's concept of universality is relatively straightforward. He regarded art as a foundation. To put it simply, a poem must be light to stand, get off the ground, and fly high. This is a requirement for works of art.

THE IVORY TOWER COLORED BY POETS' VOICES

SL Glück is an adjunct professor and a Writer in Residence at Yale University. She has also mentioned that teaching nourishes her creativity. She is very grateful and appreciates the emergence of young poets who inspire her.

It is terrific that poets can teach in educational institutions and use their craft to inspire and motivate young people to appreciate and create poetry. This makes me think that poets' voices color the ivory tower of education.

LXY I hope so, too. Teenagers are at a suitable age to read and appreciate poetry. Middle and high school students are closest to poetry, and that is about the same time when I fell in love with writing poetry.

Some time ago, I read the book *History of Chinese Poetry* written by Japanese scholar Yoshikawa Kojiro. Here, he says it is most comfortable for teenagers to read Li Shangyin's poems because this state of mind is the easiest to relate to. If you don't receive a poetry education at this age, it will be a bit harder later.

SL Glück said in her autobiographical essay "Education of the Poet" that she began to read poetry at age four or five and began to write poetry in her teens. She hoped to be a poet.

Keystone now houses many students who love and create poetry. Other students have set up poetry clubs and published poetry collections. As you mentioned, poetry is a natural call for children and adolescents. They yearn for poetry intentionally or unintentionally. Such an interest, however, is often lost as they reach adulthood. I wonder, as a poet and as a poetry translator, what do you think poetry means for teenagers? How should we encourage and reinforce their enthusiasm for poetry?

LXY I think we should be inclusive and not quick to label their work as "good" or "bad". Of course, we should hold their creative works to a high standard, but most of the time, it is not that important.

SL Indeed, teenagers should indeed be exposed to more poetry. Also, poetry education should play an important role in school education.

You previously emphasized that poems cannot be explained or analyzed easily because the poem itself should be read as a whole. Deconstructing the poem into pieces seems to spoil its mysterious atmosphere.

LXY We cannot assume we understand the entire poem just by knowing the literal meaning of its words. In music, for example, we wouldn't say we enjoy a song by grasping every note. But in poetry, we tend to think otherwise.

There are poems that I like very much, but I do not quite grasp what they truly mean. It doesn't matter because it is all about how we feel about art—being moved by it.

SL Poetry is full of symbolism and metaphors. Glück's poetry uses a lot of allusions. If students are unaware of these literary devices or lack cultural knowledge, they

may encounter difficulties in interpreting this kind of poetry. However, this should not prevent them from enjoying her poetry.

LXY In fact, Glück has written a lot of poems without special techniques. These can fully meet the needs of students. Children can choose to read these uncomplicated poems. For example, children can learn background knowledge from Greek myths that are already familiar to them.

ON A POETIC JOURNEY

SL We've talked a lot about poetry. Let's turn to poets. Glück wrote, "[The term] 'poet' names an aspiration, not an occupation". It really struck me. How should we define a poet? What kind of person may be considered a poet?

LXY We can say a 'poet' is an aspiration or a state of mind. We hope to be in such a state of mind.

We need to see beyond the superficial. What is there beyond the dead branches or fallen leaves? We must aim for something more real, beautiful, artistic, and philosophical. This method is always a matter of art: otherwise, it becomes philosophy. Art is always at the junction of sensibility and rationality.

SL To explore, to learn, and to read.

LXY Yes. Also, poetry education should be simplified. It's good to give students a lecture on how to read a poem. I especially like to select a poem and explain it to children bit by bit. There was a literary theory called New Criticism in the 1950s and 1960s in the United States. Literary critics at the time preferred to take and analyze a single poem from its text. I think this is an excellent educational method.

SL Which one among Glück's poems is your favorite?

LXY I have been recommending "Castile" (*Moonlight*, p. 267). Others have overlooked

this poem in the past. This poem also involves the method of reading poetry that I have just mentioned. Assuming that there are no notes and that we don't know what Castile is, we still have to read it.

“Orange blossoms blowing over Castile”. After reading this line, we can know that Castile should be a place, or a location. “Orange blossoms” in the air in this place sounds romantic, isn't it? It's a little dreamy and wonderful.

The second line writes, “children begging for coins”. Previously, we see the sky is full of dreamy colors and that spring is filled with fantasy, and then suddenly we get back to the ground, where it is cold and real, with coins. There is such a strong contrast.

We can roughly make a judgment through these two lines alone. If it is music, these lines set the tone. Here, there is heaven and reality. What follows is probably an interpretation of it.

“I met my love under an orange tree” corresponds to the orange blossoms that fall on the ground and the person I loved. Again, it is romantic.

Next, “or was it an acacia tree, or was he not my love?” This shows a scene approaching the ground. We start imagining, indicating the heart slowly gets colder yet more somber.

Reading a poem like this calls upon the same experience. Sometimes, it is better to have more background knowledge. For example, brides in Europe wear orange blossoms as these symbolize marriage and love (and chastity). But it doesn't matter whether you know this.

Just like music where some details appear repeatedly, a poem of this kind requires no special knowledge. When a child (or a reader) does not fully feel the poem, give them some pointers so we can take them on a poetic journey.

We can say a 'poet' is an aspiration or a state of mind. We hope to be in such a state of mind.

SL I want to encourage everyone, especially children, to read poems such as “Castile”. Those two lines you mentioned can present such an image—very imaginative, spatial, and picturesque.

I believe that poetry allows people to have a broader imagination. This is extremely important for teenagers who are beginning to admire literature. I hope children can read more poetry so they could open their minds and hearts to the beauty and richness around them.

Could you recommend a poetry collection or a poet for us?

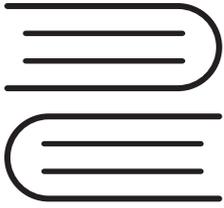
LXY I recommend Rilke and his book *Letters to a Young Poet*.

Rilke was already one of Europe's leading poets when he wrote this book. One day, a young poet visited him and asked nervously whether his poem was good or not. Rilke told him not to ask these questions. One should pursue what they think from their heart and uncover their inspirations instead of asking others. Rilke told him these tips patiently, explaining that one should reflect on themselves and think about the things that matter to them.

I would also like to share one of my poems called “*Roman Poems*”:

At the wishing fountain in Rome
I pondered over amid the crowd
what love is. Or, how to fall in love with someone.
Allow me to fall in love with Hepburn, for example, if I could
live in that movie, at this moment I happen to arrive in Rome.
The ultimate conclusion, therefore, is inevitably
to rewrite myself, to rewrite my life.





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Deep Learning: A Journey in Critical Thinking and Reflective Learning

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By Vivek Bammi, D.A., and Sally Booth, Ph.D.
Translated by Christine Shi

—
At Keystone, the synthesis of Chinese and global perspectives is deliberate in the original plans and evident in its vision and academic program. This book captures the Keystone model of critical thinking through active learning.



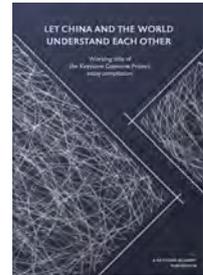
COMING SOON

Let China and the World Understand Each Other Working title of the Keystone Capstone Project essay compilation

Selected essays from the Keystone Classes of 2018 to 2022

—
Compiled by Dr. Yuanching Huang

—
Following the acclaimed curricular publication *Local Culture in a World School, Let the World Understand China* is a collection of some of the acclaimed Capstone Project essays written by several members of Keystone's first five graduating cohorts. This anthology shows students' in-depth understanding of the progress in Chinese civilization throughout their study at Keystone.



COMING SOON

Letters from Malcolm McKenzie, volume 3

—
Translated by Echo Cai, Christine Shi, and Allen Zhu

—
The writings of Keystone Head of School Malcolm McKenzie form part of a broader roadmap for the community as we head into uncharted territory in China's ever-expanding education field. This anthology documents Mr. McKenzie's thoughts and legacy in our new world school.



COMING SOON

Every Book Is a Mystery: The Literature Playhouse Anthology Season One compilation

—
Literature Playhouse commemorates its successful opening season with *Every Book Is a Mystery*, a compilation of transcripts, notes, and reflections from its first eight thought-provoking episodes. Jointly created by Season One participants, this anthology welcomes everyone to another exciting foray into the world of literature.





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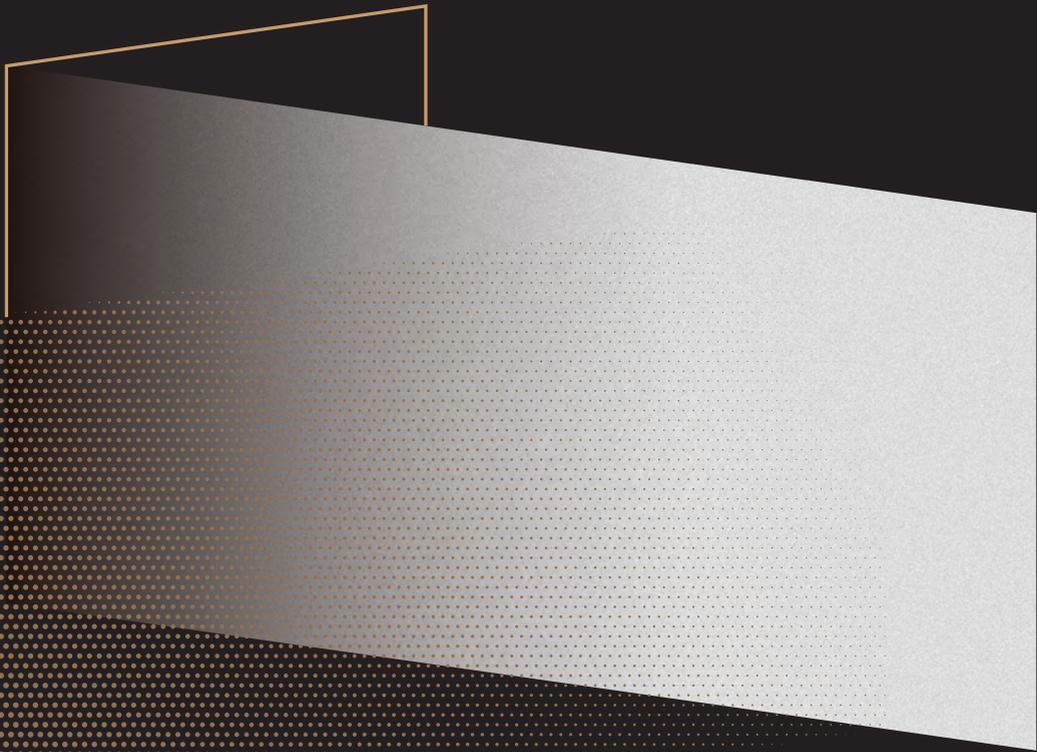
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