

ACE

English Enhancement Class 2022-2023



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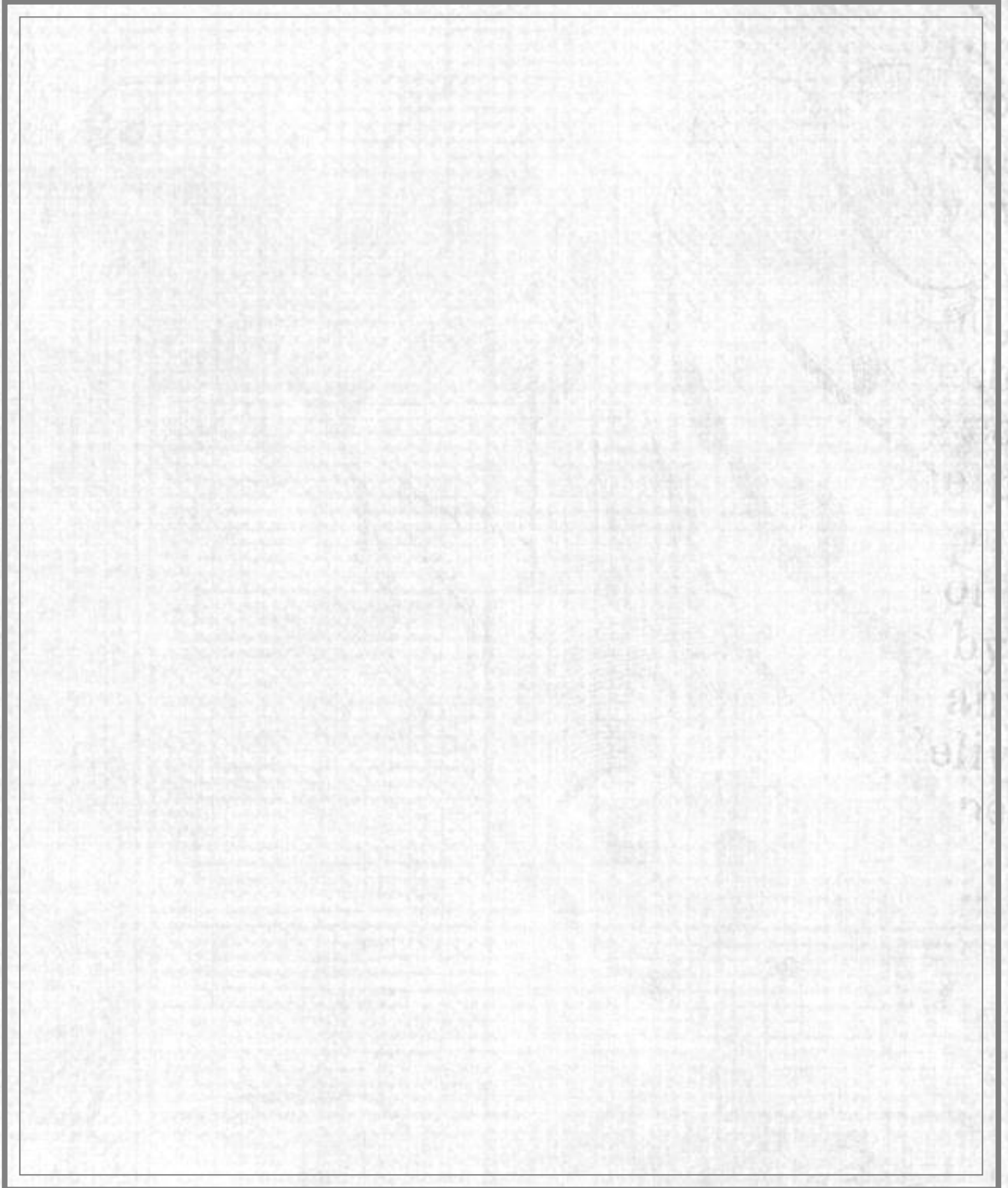
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About ACE Journal – English Enhancement Class

"ACE Journal – English Enhancement Class" is an annual anthology displaying selected written works crafted by Primary Six members of the Ying Wa Primary School English Enhancement Class. The course is designed and conducted by Dr H C Lee, who also edits this journal. The printed version of this journal is a gift to the course members at the end of the school year.

Message from Dr H C Lee

This booklet is a gift to _____



Impenetrable¹

Jiang Weike 6E

Sunshine poured into the room
as another culprit was pushed through
His face was covered in gloom
with nothing else but blues

Judge Pao sat on his wooden chair
his face darkened with sobriety
and his eyes glaring down in pairs
shining bright on one's notoriety

The sinister's name was Chan
who was accused of filicide
He killed evidence and ran
but there was nothing to help him stride

Pao got to his feet earnestly
as he doffed his hat away
Reprimanding Chan vehemently
for leading his mates astray

Chan's family attempted to intervene
with threats involving Pao himself
Still, he brought Chan to the guillotine
who teared up in regret to stealth

The unbiased judge stared blankly
as the murderer finished his last page of life
Then the blade was pushed down brutally
ending a dismal book of strife

I've watched this happen every day
sitting in the corner without biz

¹ Honourable Mention, Hong Kong Young Writers Awards 2023

Judge Pao was the greatest display
of the unchangeable justice.

Upright, historic and unafraid
Pao Zheng's legacy will never fade.



The Three Guillotines²

Morgan Chan 6A

I am the dog-headed guillotine
Used to kill civilians
I've lost count
I probably killed millions
I'm the sharpest one of all
Criminals quickly die with no pain
Cutting the crucial part of the body
The dirty-minded brain

I am the tiger-headed guillotine
Used to kill ministers who embezzle
They're too greedy
And I think they'll meet the devil
I'm the second sharpest of all
It takes some time for the soul to wipe out
They suffer pain
And that's what everyone is scared about

I am the dragon-headed guillotine
I only killed two people in history
Is there more?
It might be a mystery
My blade is blunt
People don't die right away
They experience tremendous discomfort
To tell citizens they should go on the lawful way

We were all granted by the Emperor
And belong to the magnificent Judge Pao
He also has the authority to execute criminals
Before the Emperor allows

² Honourable Mention, Hong Kong Young Writers Awards 2023

Every murderer that walks into this court
Even using their glib explanations
The judge can somehow send them into our blades
Out of the criminals' expectations

Judge Pao was a true legend
With his noble character and fair trials
If we had lived until now
The society's development would've gone in miles



Remorse

Zenith Lee 6E

As a sorrowful, haunting melody bleakly replays itself in my mind, images of her smiles, memories of her wrinkled but kind face shining down at me like the purest sunlight float to the surface.

Every day, when I had come home from school, she had always been there to greet me with a hug and a beaming face. She became someone I looked forward to seeing every day, becoming more than just a relative, but a close companion. She was optimistic and friendly, and she was one of the only people able to make me smile at the time. With her, I believed anything was possible.

I had never realised up until that point how fragile life truly was, and how far hope could seem to be from the grasp of reality. Had it been out of the ordinary when she had had a coughing fit last month? Was it strange when she had waved me away, saying everything was fine with a smile that clearly stated the opposite? Would it have been too much for me to hand her a cup of warm water or a reassuring smile instead of turning my back and walking away obliviously, almost coldly? All these little thoughts and a million more blitzed through my mind, enveloping me, swarming me with guilt, drowning me with the fact that I had done nothing to help. As I pounded on the door, flesh meeting the bleached yet sturdy material, I managed to get a glimpse of her through the small window. Dressed elegantly in a white robe, her chest rising and falling unsteadily, her face peaceful even in the cold embrace of Thanatos. To this day, I still remember everything around me slow to a standstill as I witnessed the heartbeat monitor fade to a singular line, the dreadful, monotonous beeping to haunt me for the next few months. As I saw the hollow looks of sadness and shock on their faces, I knew it was all over. The smell of ammonia accompanied us as we went, my dam trying its hardest to hold itself together.

Lying on my bed now, I take a deep, shuddering breath. My eyes close. I picture her at my side, telling me to persist. A tear rolls down my stained cheek, my throat constricting once more. I gaze at the waning moonlight, knowing what I must do.

I lick my bone-dry lips and utter the words I had never gotten a chance to speak my entire life, only regretting I could not have said them sooner.



Two Responses to Tom Kwok's "Stairwell"

Thomas Suen 6A

Rust conquered me, growing uncontrollably on my body, but I didn't care, after all, it wouldn't last long. Seven decades was like a blink of an eye, everything here was left behind by the ever-changing, flowing trend. Moths lived on the pale wall, as if a baby in mother's embrace, dripping water danced naively, like there was no tomorrow. But, was there tomorrow? I doubted. The door screamed and howled in despair, nothing could stop our fate. The great wheel of time was grinding us into hopeless pieces. What could we do? We had no choice but to admit, we were waiting our life to drain. A gigantic paw easily knocked the roof over, the excavator was operating, demolishing the poor building. For the first time in my life, I saw the azure sky, gazed at the luminous sun, and feel the gentle breeze, This, I believed, was the best farewell...

The familiar place whispered silently that it was atypical, with the inky snowflakes on its naked, painful body, which was burnt severely by the merciless flame. Some bright ointment squeezed through the narrow gap through the windows, as if healing the throbbing wound, with its medical atoms. Steadily, I walked into the stairwell, as some flies were gliding effortlessly, like a few notes on top of a pile of yellowing sheet music. The sounds of dripping water, and my slow pace, formed a funeral music together, echoing.



Beacon³

Roderick Yuen 6A

The emperor's dragon cloak intimidates me,
On my shoulders it rests.
I have sworn to preserve justice,
Indeed a difficult quest.

Fortunately, I am not alone;
Aided by an honorable helper:
Judge Pao, a selfless man of steel,
Fair to every man, aristocrat or retainer.

Once a financial officer was murdered,
With another put in his place.
Judge Pao wasted no time.
So as to gather clues, he raced.

Inspecting the royal spending report,
Which was essential evidence,
He saw figures miscalculated.
Like a sprout, an idea took residence.

Such an elite, experienced officer
Would never make so grievous a mistake!
Thinking it through, thinking it through,
The judge realized that it was faked.

Four-two-five-six... What could the numbers mean?
Like a bolt of lightning, it struck him.
He rushed to the storage rooms,
It was all due to a sudden whim!

Indeed, there was a message,
Patiently waiting for his entry.

³ Highly Commended, Hong Kong Young Writers Awards 2023

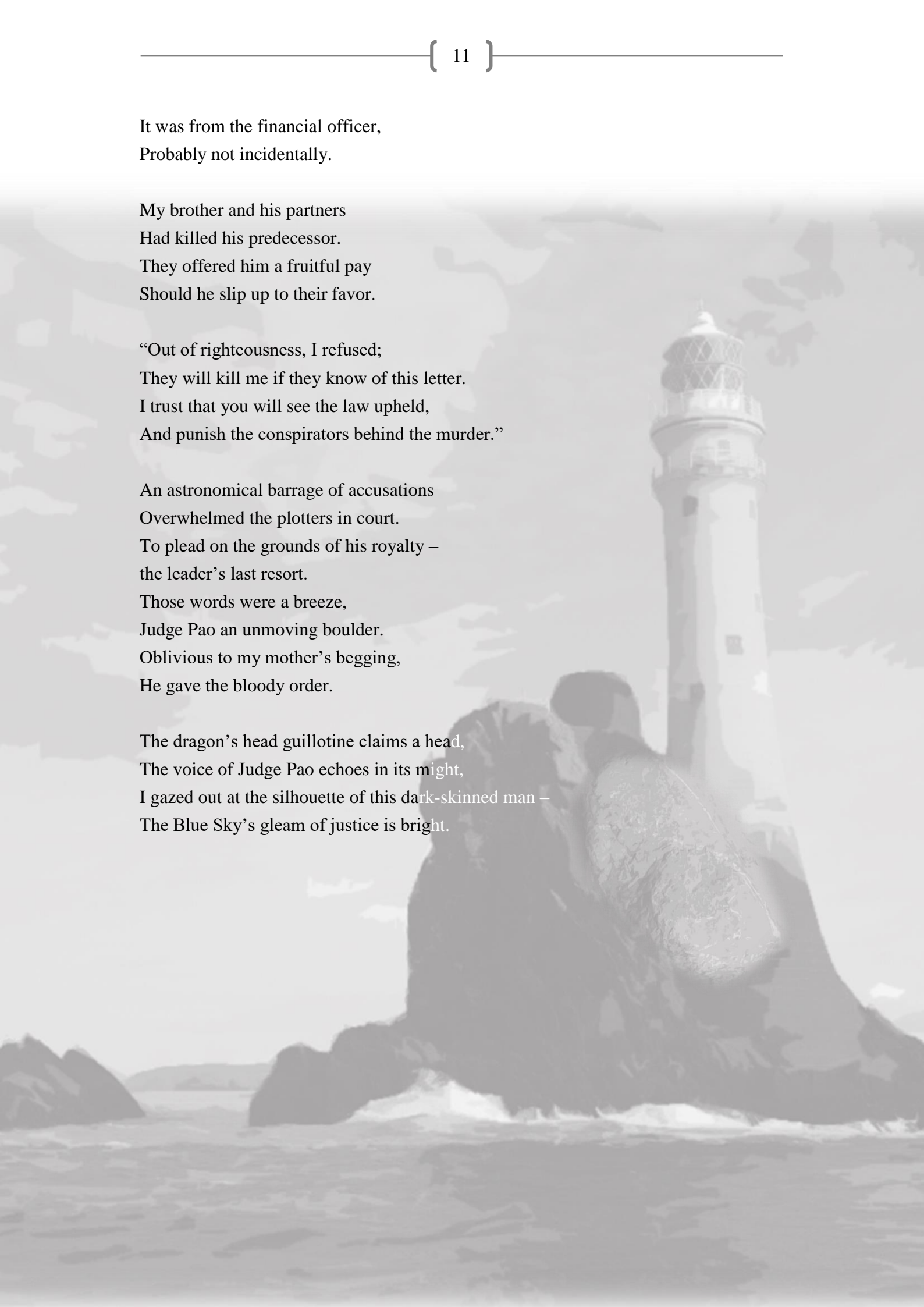
It was from the financial officer,
Probably not incidentally.

My brother and his partners
Had killed his predecessor.
They offered him a fruitful pay
Should he slip up to their favor.

“Out of righteousness, I refused;
They will kill me if they know of this letter.
I trust that you will see the law upheld,
And punish the conspirators behind the murder.”

An astronomical barrage of accusations
Overwhelmed the plotters in court.
To plead on the grounds of his royalty –
the leader’s last resort.
Those words were a breeze,
Judge Pao an unmoving boulder.
Oblivious to my mother’s begging,
He gave the bloody order.

The dragon’s head guillotine claims a head,
The voice of Judge Pao echoes in its might,
I gazed out at the silhouette of this dark-skinned man –
The Blue Sky’s gleam of justice is bright.



Every Twelfth Picture

(A response to Dr H C Lee's "The Twelfth Picture")

Roderick Yuen 6A

The wooden table was visibly weathered by age, unlike the person sitting on the other side. That person, called Luke, was about the same age as the 20-ish Benjamin, although his prestigious position of the Department Head of Predictions did nothing to suggest it.

Predictions, Benjamin said to himself. I wonder if that has anything to do with the camera on the table.

It was a peculiar thing, that camera. For one, it looked as bulky as a dump truck – certainly not even manufactured in the 21st century. Even the glint reflected from the lenses looked dull and gloomy. Besides, its two lenses seemed to summon something that had been buried deep into the pile of Benjamin's unwanted memories. He tried to remember, and it came back to him, at least partially. It was something about his grandfather, and moving, and something that sent chills reverberating inside him...

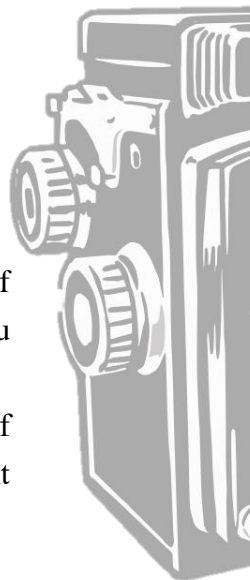
As if telling a story to a toddler, Luke smiled and pointed at the antique in front of him. "Everything about our work has to do with this camera. Every twelfth picture you take, it..."

"Predicts the future? I... heard." Benjamin explained. This fib about the source of his knowledge was quite unconvincing, but he couldn't care less now. He never thought he would set eyes on this mesmerizing object ever again. It lured him closer, with its boundless dark exterior, as mysterious and serene as the sea. It was all back now, the days at the photographer's, the unsolved mysteries, his inner dilemmas.

"Essentially," Luke replied, clearly not convinced. "Since you're probably aware, let's not delve into the technical details. Anyway, the entire production line of this twin-lens camera has the same function. We take photos with cameras like these in the whole country. As a result, we get to preview the disasters that happen."

He could not bring himself to focus his attention on Luke's lengthy briefing, with his head still in the clouds. It was only at the end that he was struck by inspiration and asked, "What do you do with the pictures? Do you prevent the misfortunes in them from happening?"

Here Luke's face darkened, radiating an aura of gloominess. He drawled slowly, as if ruing an age-old scar, "We don't do anything about it. It's the work philosophy to treat the future to be an immovable boulder that has been carved with fire into stone like the past. If the camera predicts it, you can't stop it. Of course, I know it's all bogus, but



I am truly powerless in the face of these clowns. I have reason enough to believe they all worship the camera in some way or another.”

Back in the comfort of his own home, Benjamin pondered Luke’s words. Why did no one want to prevent the disasters that the camera predicted? Wasn’t the whole point of predicting the future to better prepare for it? Benjamin could not, for the life of him, grasp this. He decided to let it go.

He looked down. Before leaving, Benjamin had asked the amiable Luke if he could take one of the cameras to study back home. His mission to unveil the secrets of the divining camera was alive again, reborn like a phoenix out of the ashes, that phoenix in his childhood that seemed so distant before.

Benjamin did not notice the hours flutter by as he tirelessly toiled, armed with a screwdriver, but to no avail. Yet the breakthrough did come eventually. Having found which gear system corresponded with which picture, Benjamin peered through the twelfth dense thicket of rusted gears and cranks. Benjamin thought he saw something suspicious. He looked closer and there it was, in the light of day, an atrocious mistake in the camera’s engineering! The gears corresponding to the twelfth picture were far too small. Substituting it into a digital camera simulation he had set up earlier, he found out that the twelfth picture often magnified background objects and placed them in the center, where they were viewed as the main objects. Yet of course, that did not explain why the camera’s “predictions so often coincided with reality – he would just have to let that ambiguity be. Setting down the camera, Benjamin grinned from ear to ear with satisfaction

He waltzed to the government building where he would meet Luke the next day, humming a light tune. The newest prediction from the camera, which was supposed to be a blazing inferno ravaging the port, was not on his mind.

However, as he passed the port, a few gruff-sounding grunts caught his attention. Cocking his head over to look, Benjamin saw three brutes circling around a stack of dry wood. Was this some kind of ritual? In line with his inquisitive disposition, Benjamin decided to observe further.

Of the three brutes, two were chanting some kind of prayer while the other one was pouring some kind of liquid on it. Although he was quite short-sighted, he saw the words “engine oil” flashing before him. Uncertainty turned into trepidation, trepidation turned into realization, realization turned into denial and denial turned into the cold chills of certainty.

It was at that moment when all the fragments in Luke’s cryptic message to him finally pieced themselves together. He heard him say it again: “If the camera predicts it, you can’t stop it.” Of course they didn’t stop it.

The sound of a lighter flickering in the background of the peaceful, azure sky.



Fly

(A review of the English Enhancement course)

Roderick Yuen 6A

The clock, gently ticking, was approaching 14:45. As this happened, a group of students, all nerves, watched it with anxious anticipation. A vaguely uncomfortable atmosphere of distress shrouded the air. They tried to console each other out of it, but everything they uttered added to the awkwardness of the situation.

English literature, they were thinking. They did not know what to make of it. After all, it was inexplicably entwined with an immovable stereotype of an indecipherable cryptogram. It felt so... intimidating.

Then it came at last. The towering figure, in a dashing suit, strode towards the classroom in large steps. Entering the classroom, the teacher was greeted by quite a sight – some of the students were chewing on their fingers, for fear that they would encounter yet another one of those no-nonsense teachers that struck fear with their mere stride; some of them were already yawning to themselves, expecting a tedious hour of being lectured on literature and the like; some of them were trying to straighten their backs beyond what was humanly possible in an attempt to provide an auspicious first impression. Already expecting something of this sort, the seasoned veteran scanned the faces, trying to locate the slightest trace of passion.

Sensing the distress, the teacher tried to lighten the mood by dropping some badly received puns. He asked them what they thought of literature, an expectant grin on his face, only to be greeted with a sea of stillness which would not budge even with the teacher's biggest efforts.

Seeing that all other efforts had been in vain, he handed out a brightly colored magazine. Even though the awkwardness had not yet dissipated, the students' curiosity had been piqued. They carefully leafed through the pages, some half-heartedly, like a baby cautiously fiddling with an unfamiliar toy. Still, as the teacher egged them on, they began engrossed in the pages.

The magazine was a children's book in all senses of the word – littered with vibrant illustrations and adorable cartoons. Slowly, all the fear, distrust, cynicism... melted with the oscillations of the pages, like wings, reflecting a lustrous gleam. The words danced on the lips of the children as if a catchy disco tune was playing. The whole room was filled with this inaudible melody - happy at times, melancholy at

times; silly at times, thoughtful at times. They were all engrossed as the echoes of the last word hung in the air.

As the students poured in and poured out of the classroom pages of the calendar wore themselves out, a weekly ritual.

Knowing that it was the eve of the final lesson, one of the students was smiling from the joy of remembrance. Watching him from afar, the teacher also. Rome was not built in a day, we all know.

“Fly,” he whispered, perhaps to no one in particular.



Path

(A review of the English Enhancement course)

Thomas Suen 6A

The awkward boy nervously entered. Silence disturbed. Within an hour, a ripple grew in the classroom and the boy's mind. A wave of creativity echoed. He could never predict that this was the new start in his learning path. As if a beam of sunlight pierced through the dark, bringing brightness to him. The teacher grinned as inspiration spread to a new boy again.

Time passed
confidence grew
words beautified

He walked in and sat down on his seat. No one could predict what their teacher would bring for them. This time, the teacher patiently introduced a game called "Countdown". The short period was extended when the fun time exceeded. Millions of words floated, alphabets mixed madly. His brain expanded. This game was unforgettable.

The moment
imagination stimulated
Explosion

He came in at a steady, assured pace. He handed his work to the teacher firmly before taking his seat. A white sheet was laid on the aqua green. Clear words were written on it. It was a piece of haibun. The teacher smiled as he found the techniques he taught keenly before buried in the short prose. The haiku stunned him with its thought-provoking meaning in it. He smiled.

Changing
the experience of writing
yet the beam hung

He went on writing, although he left his old school. He could never forget the first inspiration he got as his diction and description kept improving. As days, months, and years flew by, he finally realised he loved English...

The path is nice
when the trees and flowers
are even better

Alarm

Eric Lai 6E

The alarm is sounding. Door knocks were heard. It, is back.
I was playing on my tablet, sound blasting, echoing through my room. The door burst open with a mighty slam on the wall. My dad was standing there, with an unusual look of earnestness imprinted on his face.

“What happened?” I asked impatiently.

“Alarm.”

My face turned instantly grey. It was self-explanatory. We lived in a small village, away from civilisation, where technology was out of reach. We were surrounded by the forest, and nobody had ever, or even dared to cross the thick woods. It acted as a protective barrier, but it is also a place for dark matters to hide. The event that came to be known as The Alarm happened randomly at different times and days. The last encounter was on Saturday, at 3 o’clock. A continuous alarm sound could be heard from anywhere in our village. It acts as a “friendly” reminder to anyone who is on the street to back off or else they get brutally massacred. A list, known as “Rules” are memorised by anyone in this village like the back of their hands. When a child is born, in civilised cities, they are taught how to walk. In our village, children are taught to memorise the list first instead of anything else. The list is shown below:

- i. Lock the doors exactly thrice individually after every two minutes of alarm
- ii. Lock windows once
- iii. Pull down the blinds and never peek out of the window
- iv. Turn on every possible light source
- v. Do not use the washroom after alarm
- vi. Turn on the TV and put it on static for only three minutes after alarm
- vii. Hide after finishing list or heard knocking at door three times uninterrupted

“The Alarm Prediction said an alarm is predicted to ring at about three minutes after,” informed my dad. Sure enough, about three minutes later, a high-pitched alarm rang through the town, notifying everyone. But today was different. Today is the day for me to conquer this dark force once and for all, or die trying. After finishing the list, I sneaked out of my hiding spot, tip-toeing on the hard wooden floor. Small creaks of

loose wood could be heard with each step. My heart was pounding as if it wanted to jump out of my chest. It was quiet. Too quiet.

I was standing in front of one of the windows of my house, preparing myself to disobey the laws that everyone had obeyed for so long. The knocking started. Thump. Thump. Thump. Three uninterrupted knocks. I peeked.

The village was covered in yellow fog, wrapping around every house, every corner. The streets were blood red, as if they had suffered multiple cuts. The sky was not yellow; it was a deep, dark void of nothingness. My eyes directed me at the door, uncontrollably. There was a man in a black coat, the long sleeves only revealing the yellow, dried hands that were twisting in weird angles. He also wore a long pair of pants and a black brogue. He was standing there, in front of my front door, motionless. As his head slowly turned to face me, I knew, at that moment, the alarm had just begun.



Night

Morgan Chan 6A

Hearing insects chirping
Owls are calling on trees
In the dark sky

The room is pitch-black
Silent as well
Am I in a forest?

Lying on a piece of wood
With cotton wrapped on top
And a sheet of fabric

I'm like a piece of han
In the middle of some wool
With my head resting on a cloud

I've been attacked by ghosts
Called fear, lonely and depression
I struggle to defend

But eventually I knock them down
One by one, they say their last words
And sun shines through the window



Jail

Moses Kan

Sitting in the seat
I yawn furiously as the teacher
gabbed on and on.

The words are
hypnotic and I started
to drowse.

The slides of the
learning material kept changing
once in a moment.

All was silent except
the husky, irritating voice
that echoed

As if us students
were in one world with the
teacher in another.

A loud ring woke
me from my drowse as the
cheering got louder, ending the “jail”



Pacific

Jiang Weike 6E

Our car drove along
the glorious coastal highway,
just like every other motorheads.

The chalky clouds drifted
into reach, as it slowly transformed
to a deep dark tone.

Waves slammed onto the rocks,
raindrops splattered at the will
as the nature's warfare began.

Wipers deployed immediately
into action, against the trooping soldiers
and blasting fans of wind.

We laboured along
the mighty battlefields as if
children searching for shelter at war.

At last the conflicts ended,
as sunshine reached out, and the small servicemen
return with many memorable honours.



The Calendar of Life⁴

Ethan Ngai 6E

His tiny paws struggled to open the door
Of his beloved home, where he had a mutual feeling against.
No matter what he did, the opening never had a bore.
I protected him when danger came that I could sense.

A smart pet he was, with talents of a different kind,
But sadly, all he wanted to do was to open the cage.
His tricks were deeply engraved in my mind.
Then he played with his toys and got off his stage.

One day I let him out and he was overjoyed,
He leaped and span when he saw the great outdoors,
And loved it dearly as I started to get annoyed,
I gave him a sunflower seed when he missed the tours.

After that experience he longed to get outside,
His everwanting expression filled my inside with joy,
And left me walking with a confident stride.
He was always a good little boy.

On a day I could never forget,
He became ravenous like a beast and aggressive,
With sharp claws that made people scream with regret.
I decided to keep him in the house to stay passive.

My parents sent him to the vet,
And his spirit had weakened due to going out.
It was a chilly day when he came back wet,
And it was all my fault, no doubt.

He departed the next day,
A free spirit who loved to explore.

⁴ Bronze Prize, Hong Kong Budding Poets (English) Award 2022/23

The memory of him always made me feel gray.
He was a great pet to the core.

I missed him greatly more than ever
And he was always a part of the family,
Which would never change forever.
Sadly, we couldn't avert this calamity.

Cherish, pay attention, observe,
Or it'll be gone with a blink of an eye,
Which is impossible to preserve,
So remember them before the end is nigh.

Days of life are numbered without you knowing,
Like a countdown, like a calendar hidden in mist.
You never know when life will stop growing,
Then wither, and dissolve according to the gods' checklist.



A Fault Confessed is Half Redressed

Hayden Yuen 6A

Terry stomped off to his bedroom and slammed the door shut. “Terry, come out and apologize!” Terry made a big mistake but he refused to apologize to mum. So, he spluttered with indignation, “Leave me alone! I wish none of you ever exist!” Obviously, he didn’t mean it, but that’s what he said...

At the moment he made that heart-breaking speech, everything seemed different. His favourite superhero poster above his bed was torn into pieces, the concrete wall started to peel and crack, every metal piece in the room turned rusty old... His room was a complete mess and everything was dusty gray. Terry seemed to be the only thing that was still in a fine condition.

A huge spider fell from the roof, and it was hanging right in front of Terry. He was horrified as he realized that it was a southern black widow. He immediately ran out of the room, screaming for help in an ear-splitting voice. The first thing his instinct told him was to find Mum. He cried out loudly, “Mum! Stop hiding! Where are you?” He could hear his voice reverberating for there was nothing but silence. He searched around in fear, yet cobwebs, spiders, shattered glasses and run-down furniture were what he found. Then, a miserable voice of a crow sounded. Terry was taken by the element of surprise, and he fell on the floor.

Terry sobbed, “Mum, Dad, please come out...No more hide-and-seek please...” Desperate and continuous cry consumed almost all his energy. He felt so weak that he could hardly move himself. He limped slowly to the garden, hoping to retrieve his breath. Unfortunately, he noticed two strange tombstones sat right in the center of the garden. He joked to himself, “Was it some kind of Halloween decoration?” However, reality was no joke. He used his T-shirt to wipe off the dust. “In Loving Memory of William Jones 1982-20...” He couldn’t believe his eyes. His parents’ names were craved on the stones. Once again, he started wailing, more earnest this time. Tears of extreme sadness fell from his face. He whispered to himself, “Mum, Dad, I didn’t mean to be mean. Please tell me it was just a joke...” Yet, comforting himself wasn’t effective.

He was frozen in front of the tombstones and his body became rigid. Flashback of the memory with his parents filled his mind. But he was helpless, only regrets were left with him. He slowly dragged his half-dead body back to his room. As he turned the door knob, a bright beam emitted from the gap of the door. It was so bright that got Terry temporarily blinded.

When Terry regained his eyesight, he heard something familiar, “Terry, come out and apologize!” Everything started over again but this time, he knew what to do. He opened the door gently and said, “I am sorry, Mum. Please forgive me...” He couldn’t control but burst into tears. Mum hugged him in her arms and said, “It’s okay, boy. It’s never too late to mend. A fault confessed is half redressed.”



Treasure⁵

Eric Lai 6E

The winds swept across the deserted road.
Withered leaves carried by the open hands of Mother Nature.
A shadow crept across the hard concrete,
As the heartless, ruff winds scraped her fur.

The road was silent, only the howling wind was heard.
Alone, fluffy paws absorbing the sounds she made.
The hair, ginger and red, covered by coats of dust,
Was dancing in the wind with her tail that swayed.

Betrayal was way too much of an understatement,
She had experienced much you don't understand.
The pain, was like blood, dripping from her wounds,
Nonstop, incurable, as she sank into an endless quicksand.

Soon, the sorrow turned into hatefulness,
A feeling so strong she couldn't outlast
Seeking for revenge; she turned around,
Facing the fear of many years past.

Through the mist, a human shape formed.
She tilted her head at the sight, confused.
An awkward stare between her and the person lasted minutes,
Before she inevitably grew bemused.

I stepped out of the mist, sobbing,
Kneeling down on the concrete road, alone.
My hair messy with days of dirt and grime.
Rivers formed from my eyes to my cheekbone.

Gone, left, never coming back,
The undeniable truth struck me like an unnoticed stab,

⁵ Honourable Mention, Hong Kong Budding Poets (English) Award 2022/23

Crumbled, like a rag doll,
Needles fell from the heavens, engulfing me in their trap.

Sometimes you never see the true value
Of a moment until it becomes a memory.
I used to see her as disposables,
As only an accessory,

Now I see her as jewels.
Yet it was too late, lost, taken.
So cherish your treasure,
While it's still in your possession.



The Spider's Will⁶

Keith Cheung 6B

Orange-gold fireball sets, with bright rays from high,
Stretching across the vast horizon, beautiful hues emerged.
Dawn approaches, from the majestic, boundless sky.
On a greenish frond, a tiny creature crawled, unobserved.

Eight segmental legs expanded from its sternum, tickling.
Silver strings spat out from spinnerets, the spinning nozzle.
It scampered on the aspect by its tarsus, starting its craft-making.
Dauntless, ignoring the obstructive impede and their jostle.

Silk soared through air, as if the spider was knitting its raiment.
It, carefully, danced on the magical lines of finesse.
Gradually, it affixed the last bit, euphorically triumphant,
Gazing at its paragon, it grinned celebrating success.

A white stratified spider web formed by its perseverance.
It was the masterpiece of its painstaking labour,
The magnificent oeuvre of its perspiration and diligence,
The diaphanous but inescapable insect-tangling saber.

Flawlessly symmetrical, hexagonal-structured it was,
As perfect and ideal as a mathematician's dreams,
Its hardness, its firmness, its rigidity, all because
Of the unique geometrical composition, supporting beams.

As breezes of wind waved the withered leaves and gusted,
The intrusive flare tattered the threadbare creation.
The spider, powerless, fragments of the broken work scattered.
The destroyer, now gone, leaving its brutal demolition.

The spider didn't cease, remaking a stronger craftwork,
As time flew, darkness to light, night to day.

⁶ Gold Award, Hong Kong Budding Poets (English) Award 2022/23

Strings overlapping strings, the artistic hexagon was done
In an infrangible and impenetrable way.

Not fearing the deadly attacks of the wind's fatality,
Nor being washed away to nowhere by the deadly rain.
Persistence, effort, determination and assiduity,
The unbreakable web of strings it built and attained.

The wind's smile pinned in the air, fazing.
'Not bad,' a breathless but vibrating howl popped,
The spider sought a spot to rest, up gazing.
Yet another turbulent troll, with gales, flocked.

The Last Expedition

(A review of the English Enhancement course)

Zenith Lee 6E

You wake up in an unfamiliar place. “Where am I?” You ask yourself as you stand up groggily, a lazy but welcomed breeze wafting lightly against your face. Balloons float in an erratic pattern next to you, almost reminiscent of hopping in joy; you approach with caution to see there are wide smiles plastered over their “faces”. You shake your head and continue.

As you walk down a hallway with walls coloured a bright, happy yellow, you can’t help but notice a divergence in the path you are taking. Sure enough, a fork has appeared in the pathway. The left side seems to be the same as the one you are taking now; the other seems to be a complete opposite. The walls are murky grey and everything seems to be miserable; there’s even personalised storm clouds for all the objects there just to drive the point home.

Which path do you take?

→ left ← right

As much as you’d like to take the right side out of sheer curiosity and lack of danger awareness, something just seems to beckon you to the left side. So you follow your instincts and find yourself walking down the cheerful little hallway once more, this time humming to jazzy tunes now emitted from the ceiling.

Now filled with a warm, fuzzy feeling, you decide to take a look at some of the pieces of writing plastered on the walls. “Aquamarine and azure waves lapped gently at the end of the pier, propelled by the gentle summer breeze...” “You try having a one-eyed titan offer to snuggle with you in bed or a dragon the size of a residential building argue with you about how his flames would warm you up without reducing you to a pair of footprints on the sidewalk...” “The only source of illumination in the enclosed cell of a room flickered to life, casting uneven spells of light onto the corners of the room as I flipped on the light switch...”

Wait. Something isn’t right. These pieces... look oddly familiar. In fact, you could swear you had already come up with all these ideas before.

Then it clicked. These were your pieces. You made them. As you rifle through the limited works on the walls, you yet manage to smile a little with slight nostalgia crossing your veins, more warmth than you thought was possible spreading through you to see the way your pieces have progressed. However, something still didn't add up. You snatch a photo of a few smiling children and two handsome men off the wall before looking into the distance. You now know what this place was about. You realise, then, that your journey is coming to an end. A brilliant, shining pool of light awaits you at the end. Before you jump in, though, two more empty plaques catch your attention. One is writing itself as you peer in for a closer look, turning out to illustrate with words your journey in this mysterious world thus far.

The other one... remains blank.

Then, your final revelation for the night comes. Your path is not over. It is still extending, growing one final branch, one last memory for you, you who are leaving this wondrous place soon. Your voyage remains wide open, sprawling with the fruits of you, your friends and your teacher. Now it's time to go out with your very best bang. You know you are happy, but all happy things must come to an end. So why not end it on the highest note?

Start the final expedition?

→ yes ←

You close your eyes and jump into the portal, exiting the lane of your memory.



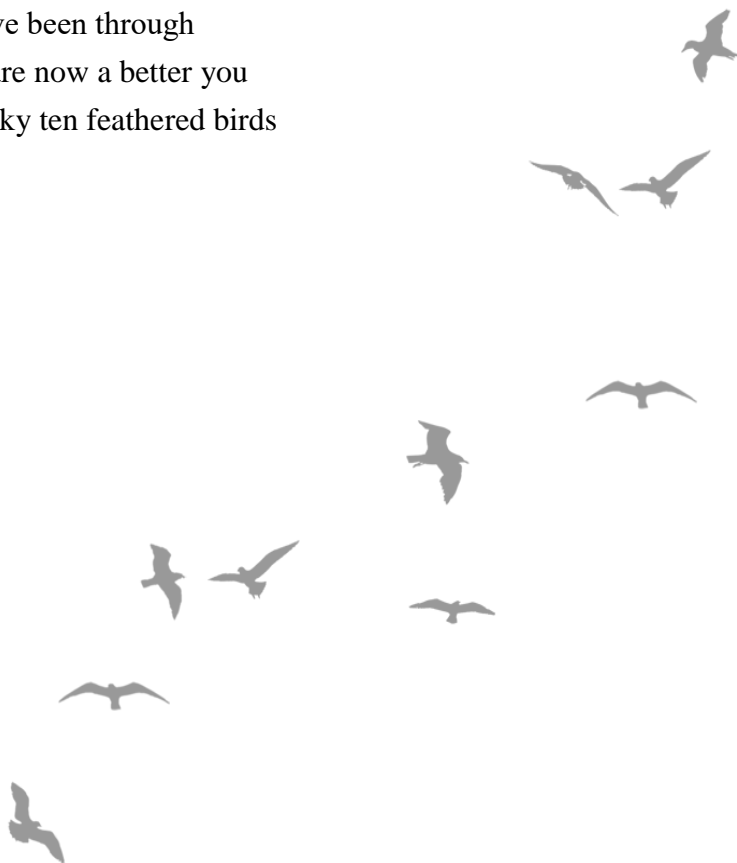
10 Boys Soaring

Dr H C Lee

Every one of my Enhancement boys is special and here is why –

Notably drunk and carefree, we have the awarded poet Eric Lai
Hayden may not be the best in haibun, but he's willing to try
A prose expert you're looking for? You need to visit Zenith Lee
Not to forget Master Jiang, graceful and assiduous like a bee
Classes are dreary without Keith, who brings us vigor and light
Ethan's sharp command of English has also kept the room bright
Morgan has his attitude – quiet and steady and cool like Freeman
Even Moses, the mild and modest, gets moved and writes with freedom
Nothing can stop Thomas from producing carefully crafted pieces
To us Earthlings, isn't that too obvious that Roderick is a genius?

Goodbye is such an ugly hollow word
Rejoice is the pretty sound to be heard
Over the months we've been through
Ups and downs, you are now a better you
Pleased to see in the sky ten feathered birds



About the Authors

MORGAN CHAN (Freeman) is a student in the “detention dungeon”, owned by Dr Lee. He lives next to an island in Hong Kong and always wants to have a cat. Although he sleeps early every night, he still falls asleep in the dungeon occasionally, which until now is still a mystery even for himself.

THOMAS SUEN is a sniper. As someone who aims for good literature, he embodies the focus and precision of a sniper. He is recently dedicating himself to continuous learning, physical training, and cultivating patience. He has been trained for a year to take better aims at his target. His instructor always gives challenging missions, but he enjoys it every time because it enhances his sniping skills. Now, he patiently waits for opportunities to arise. Once he sees even the faintest trace of nice literature, he aims at it with the same intensity and exhilaration as a skilled marksman hitting their target. After taking down his target, he continues to learn and grow, always ready for the next opportunity to aim at his target and fulfil his mission.

HAYDEN YUEN is a boy who is artistic, but definitely not poetic. He is good at Visual Arts, and could write exquisite fantasy and detective stories as well. He used to have no sense in writing poems, but thanks to the English Enhancement Class (which he considered a torture at the beginning!) that boosted him to excel in excellence. Writing poems has been removed from his least favourite list. All tributes to Dr Lee for keeping him in the *A-list* and in his mind all the time.

RODERICK YUEN may or may not be a Primary 6 student, but he finds it more likely that he is a slice of blue cheese or a Lovecraftian entity. Believing that he is merely manifesting himself as a human being, he is passionate about literature, physics, maths and philosophy. He especially enjoys surfing the Internet, which he considers a means to improve his knowledge in the said subjects, continuously denying that he is addicted. In his spare time, he executes many immensely value-added tasks such as having inner debates about the ethics of technological advancement. Although he tries to feel satisfied with life, he is still concerned about issues like poverty and discrimination. He is convinced that there would not be such issues if he were a Lovecraftian entity.

KEITH CHEUNG (aka Kee) is a reincarnation of a powerful spiritual being, who is a master of English Literature. Hiding on Earth to regain his English powers, he was

caught by a Celestial named Dr Lee, the pro, and was imprisoned in an “English Enhancement Prison” located in Ying Wa Primary School. His English powers from his former self are starting to awaken and a sign of such is him winning the Hong Kong Budding Poets Award Gold Prize. He especially enjoys writing poems and prose, but only if the topic, in his opinion, is a good one. High fantasy stories like the Malazan series, or the Percy Jackson series, even complex ones like the Wheel of Time are books he likes. Being locked for almost a year, he recently found a small chance and escaped the place, and is currently on the loose. Please notify Celestial Dr Lee if you see him so that he can be locked for the safety of others. As a reminder, NEVER challenge him in terms of literature because his omnipresence may crush you!

MOSES KAN is a student who enjoys computer programming so much that he’ll forget the due dates of his English Enhancement “Detention” Class homework. He would try to escape from “detention”, but always get caught by the “policeman”, Dr Lee. He also likes maths, chess, badminton and whatsoever (including English somehow). But he doesn’t like to talk much, so don’t ask him too many questions!

VICTOR JIANG is a lab rat who has miraculously survived Dr Lee’s detention laboratory. It often refers to itself as ‘Victoria VI’ but holds the nickname ‘Professor Jiang’ for its totally splendid performance. 120 days after consuming pills and vaccines made by Dr Lee, the ‘poetic’ blabbermouth is finally being released from the laboratory with an overthinking brain and winged hands. Idolising midfield legends Zidane and Beckham, it adores watching football and dreams to be a football player one day (it still kicks the ball with its toe). Its worst enemies are the phrases ‘never give up’ and ‘it’s just a game’.

ERIC LAI (aka Drunc Ewik) is a 12-year-old that drinks whiskey every day and has alcohol running through his veins. He stumbled across Dr Lee one day and accidentally entered the Enhancement prison and could not see sunlight for a few months. Prison wasn’t so bad for him – he even had time to write a poem that got Honourable Mention in Hong Kong Budding Poets Award (somehow!). Dr Lee, the Prison Security Enforcer (PSE) then realised Eric was his “daughter” and has been treating him well since. Now Eric has taken advantage of his “father” and has been requesting Ikea hotdogs for his everyday meal. Unfortunately, he still had to “finish” some of the lazily microwaved food in a plastic box. He hates food that is lazily microwaved in a plastic box. He also hates cabbage and asparagus. Fortunately, he

has a companion, Zenith the Starfish to keep him company. It later died for lack of water. Eric is now very sad and alone.

ZENITH LEE is a relaxation-starved prisoner of war who has somehow managed to get captured by the legendary warden Dr Lee and dragged into the “concentration camp” known as the feared English Enhancement Class which is really just a classroom with a bunch of morally questionable kids. Being recently freed from this camp, he is giddy with joy and his resolutions to make his last conduct in Ying Wa Primary School an “A” has long since been thrown out the window with much force. He enjoys playing video games and going over the word limits of writing assignments as well as watching YouTube and reading books. You can find him having an existential crisis over orchestra practice or laughing at / with (but mostly at) his beloved friends on the planet Mars, because Elon Musk infiltrated his social life with SpaceX cameras and decided to host another concentration camp at Mars, where he is now an integral specimen for Martians. He remarks that they look a lot like Dr Lee if he was 95.

ETHAN NGAI, an alien from outer space, whose code name is E.T., is struggling to understand the art of poetry, but has the mind power and the will to hand in everything on time. The only thing he is good at is his BALLOONS Lit. Journal presentations, which have gotten what Earthlings call an “A”. What they don’t know is that he relies on his cutting edge technology, but the only one who dares to comment on his dreadful poetry is Dr Lee. He often gets his name on the *A-list*, an endless prison of time, which can only be unlocked using the sacred chalk eraser. To an alien from outer space, playing Kahoot games is always a sore experience. Playing Kahoot is a time of betrayal and a race to the top, where students exchange incorrect answers to feed each other wrong information, escaping from the endless prison of time. The sad thing is that Earthlings tend to be superior at their own game mode, leaving E.T. in the dust.

DR H C LEE is a proud teacher who empowers his students too much that he often gets bullied (intellectually) by them in the end. He loves to embrace technology by using it minimally in his lessons because he is still naïve enough to believe that he is more handsome than the computer. He is currently interested to see how AI embarrasses itself by failing to write quality free verses and sorting out human fingers in its generated artwork.

Ying Wa Primary School

