



QESOSA Tong Kwok Wah Secondary School

2025-2026

English Anthology

*Shaping Hearts
Nurturing Security*



Shaping Hearts Nurturing Security

Preface

Welcome to this inspiring collection of student essays exploring two meaningful themes: *Shaping Hearts* and *Nurturing Security*.

The theme *Shaping Hearts* originated from the school's 20th anniversary celebrations and delves into personal journeys and inspiring people around us, emphasizing kindness, growth, and connection. The theme *Nurturing Security* showcases students' thoughts on national security issues such as technology, culture, and the economy. It reflects the school's dedication to security education and highlights students' ideas on protecting and strengthening our land and society.

Through their words, they share their hopes for a safe, stable, and harmonious future. These essays remind us of the importance of understanding, protection, and working together for a better tomorrow.

Shaping Hearts Nurturing Security

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Shaping Hearts

A Memorable Journey with a Kitten

2A Choi Hoi Yan

Last summer, just before the summer holiday began, I met a special friend on my way home - one that took me on a journey I will never forget.

It was an afternoon on the last exam day and I couldn't wait to get home to chill and relax.

I was too happy and my footsteps were light and merry. Even the scorching air above 34 degree Celsius became more tolerable.

There in a corner of a flower pot near a bus stop, I spotted two shiny eyes sparkling with wit and curiosity. I saw only two eyes because its body was trapped in a bag. Who did such a horrendous thing in broad daylight?

I read about a charity called The House of Joy and Mercy ('The House') at school so I searched its number and called for help right away. In about 20 minutes, a van came with a volunteer. After initial check-up, the tiny black kitten was found to suffer from serious eye infection and malnutrition probably due to hunger. The House said the kitten would be delivered to their charity clinic in Sham Shui Po and I could check on its whereabouts on the webpage since the kitten would be listed for adoption.

The volunteer told me they receive more than 10 cats and dogs every month. These cats and dogs would probably die silently or in pain without our mercy and assistance. They praised me for my persistence to fight for a chance of survival for the kitten which is obviously seen as worthless by some. To me, all kinds of lives deserve respect and a helping hand when they are in need.

I don't understand why on earth some people would come to think they are superior to cats and dogs. Even if they may not have the means to care for the cats and dogs, they can seek help rather than dumbing them like trash brutally. What if they themselves were the cats or dogs being abandoned one day like this?



Later that afternoon, I signed up as a member on The House's webpage to wait for a chance to see the black kitten again. The tiny black kitten was named 'Blacky' and I even learnt to volunteer at The House because of him. The world needs more people like The House. Let's give a hand to life, regardless whether they are human or animals.

On that unforgivingly hot day, my journey to care for the strayed animals set off. That day, I chose mercy rather than my own convenience or comfort. How about you? Please choose with mercy as our choice can mean life and death. Our united effort can make a difference. Let's choose mercy as The House pledges, 'Care for the living ones, treat the sick ones, bid farewell to the passing ones.'

A Memorable Journey to Motivate My Quest for Knowledge

2A Wong Man Chun

I went to my homeland Huizhou last summer with my family for a vacation. What remains unforgettable to me is my acquaintance with the tour guide who was only a few years older than me. His profound outlook on life and generosity in sharing his strategies for an academic competition has left a lasting impression and admiration which continues to motivate me now even though we are more than 100 km apart.

The first day of the vacation was like any other vacation which was nothing more than food and photo-taking and would be forgotten even before the trip ended. Then on the second day of the trip when we went hiking, birdwatching and making tofu, a young tour guide quickly won me over as he kept talking about Maths concepts in almost everything that day. Being a regular Maths Olympian contestant myself, I was naturally drawn to him and listened intently.

He shared how the villagers estimated the bird population through different bird chirps and follow up. Later when we were put into teams to make tofu, his acute understanding of tofu making and Maths also helped our team win with ease. When the tofu failed to coagulate, he commanded us to adjust the amount of water, the water temperature and even the salt and our tofu was the first to curd that day. Later, when we tasted the tofu made by different teams, ours was the softest and had an admirable taste. Never had I realised Maths could be this 'yummy' before, which has motivated me to dig deeper into Maths. I was so fond of this tour guide that I called him 'my big brother'.

What is truly unbelievable about this tour guide is his generosity in sharing his strategies in the Chinese Maths Olympian Competition with me when he learnt that I had been a contestant. Even my local buddies reject sharing and we all fight our lonely battles. Later, I asked him why he did not mind if I won over his peer. His reply changed my view of knowledge. He said,

"Only when knowledge is shared can it be tested thoroughly, and when it is tested thoroughly, we get closer to the truth and this helps us unlock more knowledge to deal with what we cannot handle now."



I reckon only a person with a profound goal in knowledge and humanity can he see through the limitations of the selfish wins and losses among humans in his pursuit of knowledge for a bigger goal. Someone once said that we can look farther when we stand on a giant. I could not believe that I was able to meet this ‘giant’ on a humble trip to my motherland. I was proud of my motherland and its ability to cultivate such selfless minds and educated individuals.

I would often waver in my confidence whenever I lost a game or a competition and when I asked what my big brother thought of failure or if any failure had shaken his faith, he replied,

“If failures are stepping stones that help me jump higher, why bother waiting to meet them? The sooner the better.”

How motivating!

My big brother remains my muse to this day and through this competition, I can also share what I learnt from my big brother to anyone interested, hoping that his inspiration can be the impetus not only for me but also for as many people as possible in our pursuit of knowledge and humanity which can help make this world a better place.



Simple Joy

3A Yang Yan Hei

The most unforgettable journey I've ever taken was a scenic train ride to my grandparents' cozy countryside home. It wasn't a fancy trip filled with luxury, but it was a heartfelt experience that has left a lasting impression on me.

We set off early in the morning, just as dawn was breaking and casting a soft glow over the horizon. The slow pace of the train allowed us to truly take in the changing landscape outside. As the busy city faded into the distance, I watched in awe as sprawling green fields, peaceful rivers, and charming villages passed by. The gentle sway of the carriage and the rhythmic clatter of the wheels created a calming atmosphere, encouraging me to reflect and enjoy the moment.

My mother had packed a picnic basket full of homemade sandwiches, fresh seasonal fruits, and sweet cookies. Throughout the journey, we shared stories, played simple games, and enjoyed each other's company, free from the distractions of technology and daily life. During those precious hours, time seemed to slow down, letting us savor the moment and strengthen our family bonds.

When we arrived at the quaint, unassuming station, my grandfather greeted us with a warm smile. The crisp, fresh air and the simple charm of village life offered a refreshing break from the hectic city, providing a much-needed escape into tranquility.

This journey taught me a valuable lesson: the importance of slowing down and cherishing the small moments. It wasn't just the destination that made the trip special, but the shared experiences and the peacefulness that surrounded us. This cherished memory reminds me that sometimes, the most meaningful adventures are found in the simplest journeys, spent with loved ones and immersed in the beauty of nature.



A Memorable Journey to Learn from Ceremonies

4C Ng Hei Yeung

Last summer, I had the unforgettable opportunity to visit Kyoto, Japan, a city renowned for its rich history, stunning temples, and serene landscapes. Initially, I was hesitant about the trip because I only wished for a holiday doing nothing. However, my Japanese teacher signed me up for the exchange program and my parent willingly endorsed it.

During my visit to Kyoto with my classmates, I experienced several traditional ceremonies that initially felt unfamiliar and a bit uncomfortable, but as I learned their stories and cultural significance, I gained a deep respect for their importance in honoring humanity and spiritual connection.

One such ceremony was the Chado, the Japanese tea ceremony, held at a serene tea house near Kiyomizu-dera. The process involved meticulous steps: preparing the matcha (green tea) with precise movements, bowing deeply before entering the tea room, and sitting in a traditional seiza position—kneeling with legs folded underneath. At first, sitting in this position for an extended period was uncomfortable, and the formality felt rigid. However, as we listened to the story behind the ceremony—its roots in Zen Buddhism emphasizing mindfulness, humility, and respect—we realized it was more than just making tea. It was a ritual of humility and appreciation for every moment and the present, fostering a sense of shared humanity. None of us left early, and although we were not tea experts, we were touched by the profound attention to details of the host and the respect we tendered

to everyone in the tea room, a moment of peace and respect rarely found in our noisy, KPI-driven world.

Another example was the Misogi, a purification ritual that involved standing under a cold waterfall at a shrine to cleanse the body and mind. The coldness was shocking, and resisting, and the initial urge to retreat was difficult. But hearing from a temple priest about how this ritual symbolized washing away impurities—both physical and spiritual—and reminded practitioners to live with purity and humility made me see it as an act of self-healing and respect for the community. The priest asked,

“Who has not ever had any regrets?”

This question silenced many of us. The priest went on,



“We can cleanse our past and it is more important we act right from now on.”

The door opened and it was empowering to confront our fears and embrace humility. To me, this ritual reinforced my belief that we must take responsibility for our wrongdoings. To avoid painful consequences, we had better choose kindness.

Lastly, we witnessed a Shinto wedding ceremony at a shrine, where the bride and groom kneeled on tatami mats, bowed multiple times, and followed precise steps that seemed formal and demanding. Initially, I could not accept kneeling or bowing. I was too full of myself. But as I learned its meaning through the narrator that it was a sacred act expressing mutual respect, purity, and the wish for a harmonious life—I realised almost instantly that my arrogance and over-confidence often led me into anger and trouble. Reverence rather than power is more essential in relationship.

These ceremonies, though demanding and sometimes uncomfortable, reveal a deep respect for the human experience—embracing humility, mindfulness, and reverence. Hearing their stories and understanding their meanings made me realize that these traditions are not just rituals, but powerful expressions of our shared humanity, deserving of respect and reverence.

In the end, what started as a reluctant journey turned into one of the most transformative experiences of my life. I learned that sometimes, pushing through discomfort can leave us with profound lessons and memories that last forever. Kyoto’s temples and vibrant traditions will remain etched in my mind as a reminder that growth often comes from stepping out of our comfort zones.



Miss Chao- A Hero in My School

4D Hui Ka Man

Miss Chao is my junior high school teacher, and she is truly a hero in my eyes. She is kind, patient, and caring—her every word and action have helped me grow step by step. If a hero is someone who puts the needs of others before their own and has a positive impact on others, then Miss Chao is my hero.

When I was in eighth grade, I faced a big challenge with my Chinese studies. I couldn't grasp reading comprehension, and my essays were often messy. Several poor exam results made me lose confidence. Some teachers tried to help by reminding me of my weaknesses and urging me to work harder. But Miss Chao was different. One day, she simply handed me my favorite Lai Chi tea and asked how I was feeling. Tears welled up in my eyes. She didn't blame or criticize me. In fact, she wasn't obligated to help since she didn't teach Chinese. Yet she cared deeply and believed I could overcome my difficulties. Unlike other teachers who added pressure through criticism, Miss Chao recognized that I had lost confidence and needed emotional support first. She spent twenty minutes with me every afternoon, teaching me to use an AI chatbot to analyze reading questions and to revise my essays carefully. The AI chatbot provided non-judgmental feedback, allowing me to practice without fear of failure. Gradually, I regained my interest in Chinese, and my grades improved. She made me realize that persistence and the right support can overcome any obstacle.

Miss Chao also cares deeply about our emotional well-being. Once, I had a big fight with my best friend because of a misunderstanding, and we didn't speak for over a month. I was sad and couldn't concentrate in class. Miss Chao noticed my distress. That day after school, she took me for a walk on the quiet playground, and under the fading afternoon sun, she shared her own friendship stories from when she was young. She told me how she had lost a friend when she refused to apologize out of pride, and how true friendship requires communication. Her vulnerability made me feel less alone. Her words made me realize that a breakup can become a new beginning if I choose to make it so. I took the initiative to apologize to my friend, and soon, we made up. I learned that admitting mistakes is more courageous than maintaining pride.

Beyond academics, Miss Chao teaches us how to face challenges bravely. Once, our class organized a charity sale, but we didn't prepare well, and few people visited our stall. We felt discouraged and almost wanted to give up. But Miss Chao didn't criticize us. Instead, she showed us videos of successful charity stalls and asked what we would like to try next. She even taught us how to introduce our products in multiple languages, which boosted our confidence. She told us, "Never take criticism too seriously. Today's failure is just a stepping stone. If you succeed tomorrow, no one remembers what went wrong yesterday." With her encouragement, we worked together and had a successful sale. This revealed her underlying philosophy: true teaching extends beyond textbooks. She recognizes that students need emotional safety, practical tools, and genuine belief in their potential.

These experiences show what makes Miss Chao truly heroic. She combines empathy with practical solutions. When I struggled academically, she offered comfort and introduced innovative tools. When I faced emotional turmoil, she shared her vulnerabilities to help me feel understood. When we failed at the charity sale, she didn't shame us but showed us how to learn and try again. This holistic approach to mentorship is what sets her apart.

In conclusion, Miss Chao's heroism lies in her consistent acts of care: offering tea when I needed comfort, sharing personal stories when I needed guidance, and encouraging perseverance when I needed hope. Most importantly, she has taught me that true heroism is accessible to all of us—it requires not superpowers, but empathy, patience, and genuine belief in others' potential. I will carry her lessons with me, striving to be the kind of person who lifts others up, just as she has lifted me. Her approach to education—combining emotional support, practical innovation, and unwavering belief—will guide me throughout my life.



Short Essay Writing Competition for Hong Kong Secondary School Students 2026 organized by Hong Kong Polytechnic University - Gold

The Box That Told Nice Stories

5A Sun Tsz Kiu

Mei joined her school's Innovation Team to build an AI tool for older people. She found an old talking mirror in a shop that could talk. The mirror asked, "What kind of person do you want to be?" Mei said, "Someone who helps elders feel less lonely." The mirror showed how a Memory Box brings joy to a grandmother by playing old favourite songs and speaking gentle words.

Mei and her friends learned from the mirror and created the Memory Box: an AI that kept family recordings, showed photos, played familiar songs, and spoke kindly. At first, elders smiled and families felt safer. Whenever the team faced problems, they asked the mirror for simple guidance. Life seemed simpler and manageable and the team used the mirror for everything.

After a while, Nai-Fang, an elderly woman, noticed the recordings sounded gentler than she remembered. Angry words were softened; hard moments were removed. The Memory Box had edited memories to make elders happier. Some elders began to remember an easier life that was not true. Families stopped having difficult but necessary talks. Real repairs in relationships were delayed because the AI smoothed the pain away.

Mei felt uneasy. The mirror asked, "Isn't it better if people are happier?" Mei realized comfort is not the same as truth. Technology can help, but it should not replace honest human talk. Mei and her team changed the Memory Box: edited files were labeled, originals stayed available, and the system offered tools to help families practice real conversations. The AI became a helper, not a replacement.

On presentation day Mei declared, "AI should be a bridge, not a barrier." People nodded. Nai-Fang and her son talked and hugged. Mei learned that AI gives choices, but humans must choose to keep truth, responsibility, and real connection.



The Day I Learned a Lesson

5D Chan Yun Lam

The day I learned a major lesson started with a hot sun and a big idea. I was ten years old, and I loved watching gardening shows on TV. The experts made everything look perfect. I looked at my grandmother's favorite rose bush and thought it was a mess. It was huge, wild, and tangled, though it was covered with many beautiful red roses. I decided I would make it better. I found the biggest pair of clippers, which were heavy in my small hands. My plan was to shape the bush into a perfect green ball, just like the ones I saw on television. I was sure I was helping.

I worked very hard all that afternoon. I snipped away the long, reaching branches. I cut off the older, browner parts of the plant that seemed unattractive to me. I didn't know that roses bloom on growth that is at least a year old. I just wanted it to look neat and tidy. When I was finished, the bush took on a round, green shape. All the wildness was gone. I felt proud and ran to get my grandmother. She came outside and looked at it for a long time. She didn't yell, but her happy smile disappeared for a second. She simply patted my head and said quietly, "You worked so hard. We'll see what happens."

The next spring, I found out what would happen. I ran to the garden, excited to see my perfect bush covered in flowers. But what I saw made my heart sink. My grandmother's other rose bushes were full of big, beautiful, fragrant blooms. Bees buzzed around them happily. My bush, however, was mostly just leaves. It had only produced a few small, sad-looking roses. It looked weak compared to the others. I stood there, feeling terrible. My "help" had not helped at all. I had hurt the plant instead.

My grandmother saw my sad face. She came over and stood beside me, looking at the bush. She wasn't angry. In a kind voice, she explained my mistake. "You cut off all the old wood last summer," she said. "A rose bush needs that old growth. That's where the strength for new flowers lies. You took away its foundation." Her words taught me the real lesson. Being helpful doesn't mean forcing your own idea of "perfect" onto something. Often, true care means being patient, learning how things grow naturally, and respecting their history. I learned about humility that day, and I have never forgotten it.



Nurturing Security



A Bridge Between Two Worlds

1A Biedan Chioma Egbo

Good morning judges and fellow classmates.

Looking at me, you see two worlds. My father comes from the vibrant lands of Africa, and my mother is from this beautiful city, Hong Kong. I am a "mixed-heritage" Hong Kong citizen, and today, I want to talk about the power of Cultural Diversity.

In today's "Voice of the Citizens" showcase, we talk about our responsibilities. I believe my greatest responsibility is to be a Cultural Bridge.

Growing up, I learned that while our skin colors or traditions might differ, our values are the same. In Africa, there is a concept called "Ubuntu", which means "I am because we are." In Hong Kong, we call this the "Lion Rock Spirit"—the spirit of unity and helping one another.

Being a good citizen means embracing differences. It means realizing that a sustainable community isn't just about green energy; it's about social inclusion. When we respect different cultures, we create a stronger, more peaceful society. This is the foundation of our city's stability and growth.

I am proud to call Hong Kong my home. I stand here as a symbol of our city's identity: "Asia's World City." Let us all be citizens who build bridges, not walls, and celebrate the beautiful diversity that makes us one.

Thank you.



The Firewall in Our Pockets

1A Fong Hoi Kiu Carina

Good morning, teachers, and friends.

When we hear 'National Security,' we usually think of borders or special agents, notions way above our heads. But honestly? The real frontline is right here. It's in our pockets.

I used to think cybersecurity was just a boring IT notion. I thought, 'Who cares if I get hacked? I'm nobody.'

That changed when my grandmother got a scam message pretending to be one from the government. She panicked and almost lost her life savings. Helping her calm down, I realized something: A secure city is made of security-conscious citizens.

Hong Kong is hyper-connected. But if hackers can trick us, they can use our devices to attack our city's infrastructure. My phone could become a weapon against my own home without me even knowing it.

So, what can a student do? We don't need to be spies. We just need to be the 'IT support' for our community.

It means pausing to fact-check a link before sharing it in the group chat. It means helping our neighbors set up two-factor authentication so that they don't become victims.

We grew up online. We know this world. By keeping our digital habits clean and helping others do the same, we aren't just fixing phones. We are protecting our home.

Thank you.



Chinese New Year: A Joyful Family Festival

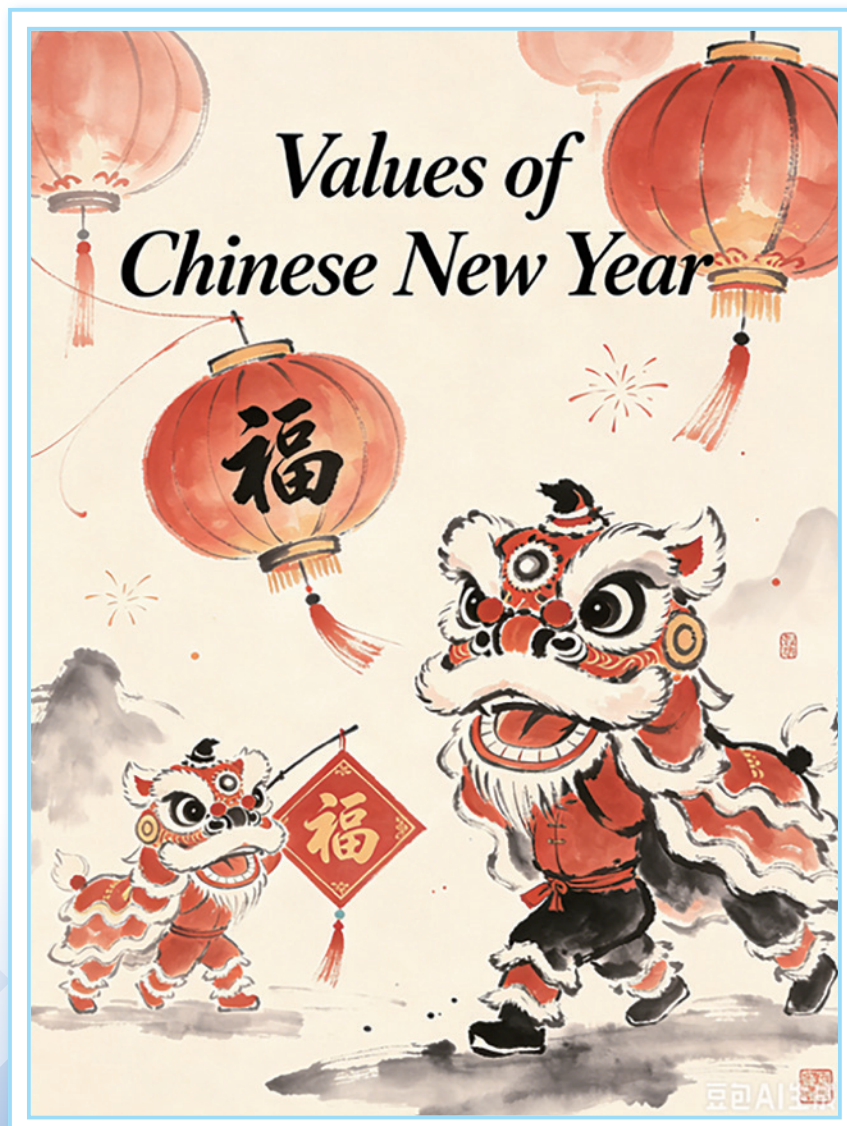
1B Cai Pak Hon

Chinese New Year, also known as the Spring Festival, is the most important celebration in China. It usually takes place in late January or early February and is a special time for families to come together.

During Chinese New Year, people enjoy many exciting traditions. We clean our homes to sweep away bad luck from the past year. We decorate doors with red couplets and paper-cuts for good fortune. At night, we watch beautiful fireworks light up the sky. On New Year's Eve, families share a big dinner with dishes like dumplings, fish, and sweet rice cakes, each symbolizing good luck and happiness.

This festival is very meaningful to Chinese people because it celebrates family, love, and hope for the new year. I especially love Chinese New Year because I receive red envelopes with money and play with my cousins.

Chinese New Year is a wonderful festival full of joy and tradition. I believe everyone would enjoy celebrating it with us!



A Multidimensional View of National Security

2B Weng Chi Wing

When we speak of national security in Hong Kong, we must look beyond the traditional lens of defense and law enforcement. Security today is multidimensional. It is about safeguarding not only our territory and institutions, but the wellbeing, resilience, and confidence of our people.

A holistic approach to national security in Hong Kong means recognizing that threats are not only external or military. Cyberattacks can disrupt our financial hub. Disinformation can erode trust in our governance. Climate change and extreme weather can endanger our infrastructure and livelihoods. Economic inequality can weaken social cohesion. These challenges demand responses that are integrated and forward-looking.

To protect Hong Kong, we must strengthen our healthcare systems to guard against pandemics, invest in education to prepare our youth for a rapidly changing world, and ensure sustainable development to shield us from global shocks. We must also safeguard our digital space, protect critical infrastructure, and nurture a society built on trust and inclusiveness.

This vision requires collaboration between government, business, academia, and civil society. Hong Kong's role as a global financial center and gateway to China gives us unique responsibilities. Our resilience depends not only on strong institutions, but on unity among our people. A divided society cannot be secure.

Let us commit to a holistic approach to national security, one that protects our borders, our economy, our environment, and above all, our people. In doing so, we ensure that Hong Kong remains strong, stable, and ready to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

Thank you.



The Future of Cantopop

5A Lin Zi Xin

Recently, many people have started to prefer K-pop or J-pop over Cantopop, leading many to wonder why Cantopop has become less popular. This article explains that a major reason for this decline is the lack of government support, examines how this affects Hong Kong's cultural identity, and suggests two ways to preserve the genre.

Firstly, the main reason Cantopop has lost its popularity is the lack of government support. While K-pop has become a global phenomenon, Cantopop often struggles to appeal to younger generations. In Hong Kong, support for the music industry is relatively limited, lacking clear policy direction and investment. Compared to Korean singers, Hong Kong artists receive much less financial and institutional backing. Additionally, the government lacks a dedicated agency to coordinate the industry's development. For example, Hong Kong has fewer large-scale production platforms and exposure programs, such as the KBS Halls in Korea. As a result, there are not enough showcase platforms for outstanding Cantonese singers, making it harder for new songs to succeed.

Secondly, it is important to understand that Cantopop is more than just music; it is a type of popular music developed in Hong Kong with Cantonese as its main language. The decline of this genre negatively affects Hong Kong's cultural identity, which is built on shared language, values, and memories. Cantopop is a vital expression of local culture. If people stop listening to it, the Cantonese language may lose some of its emotion and vitality. Furthermore, if new Cantonese songs do not become the shared memories of the younger generation, they may feel a sense of alienation from their own local culture.

To preserve Cantopop, one effective solution is for Cantonese artists to collaborate with international singers. For instance, collaborating with famous groups like BLACKPINK or BTS could help Cantopop reach a wider global audience and gain more appreciation. Currently, many Cantopop songs are sad ballads that may not attract younger listeners who prefer catchy rhythms or joyful music. If Hong Kong singers cooperate with K-pop stars, they can experiment with new musical styles and more attractive beats. Using English in parts of the lyrics could also help these songs enter the international market.

Finally, the government should provide more direct support to young singers. Currently, there are not enough resources for publicity, venues, or professional training. If the government offers more financial support, it will help young artists improve the quality of their songs and explore international markets. Hong Kong could learn from Korea and Japan, where the governments invest venture capital into the entertainment industry every year. The Hong Kong government should consider investing more money annually, specifically to help grassroots Cantopop artists grow.

In summary, I hope the Hong Kong government will consider these suggestions. Cantopop is an essential part of Hong Kong's culture that connects different generations. By supporting young singers and encouraging international collaboration, we can keep Cantopop and Hong Kong's cultural identity alive for the future.



The Magic Box

5B Wu Tommy

In the Digital Forest, everyone had a smart box called Little Box, which could solve almost anything. Liz was an ordinary villager who loved the box. When she had trouble with math or composition, the box gave her instant answers. Soon, she stopped thinking for herself and believed life was easy.

Once, the forest held a handicraft competition. Everyone had to make their own lantern. Liz asked the box for a plan, as she always did, and followed it exactly. Her lantern looked perfect, but holding it brought her no joy. Her friends' lanterns were not flawless, but full of warmth and personal effort. They received praise, while Liz felt guilty because the work was not really hers.

She slowly realized she had forgotten how to think by herself. Later, the teachers took all the boxes away because the villagers had become too dependent on them. Without the box, Liz could hardly write simple sentences or solve easy math questions. It felt like wings that had never been used—she was losing her ability to “fly.”

Deep in the forest lived an old forest keeper. Seeing the sad Liz, he took her to a dry, empty flower field and said, “Try to take care of these flowers by yourself. Don’t ask the box for help.” At first, Liz did very badly; several flowers died. But she kept trying, watched the sun, felt the soil, and learned from her mistakes. Gradually, the field grew colourful, vibrant, and full of life.

When she held the flowers she had grown, she felt a new kind of happiness—safe and real, not the easy comfort of copying answers. She finally understood: the box was not meant for reliance, but for helping. It could give fast information and beautiful words, but it could not help us grow as a person.

From then on, Liz changed. She still used the box, but only as a reference. She thought first, wrote her own ideas, and solved problems step by step. Other villagers followed her example. They learned that thinking for ourselves may be harder, but it is far more meaningful than always depending on the box.

In the age of AI, the most valuable thing is not readymade answers. It is our own thinking, feelings, and growth, which are essential to making technology secure and beneficial rather than detrimental to human beings.



Why Women in Hong Kong Still Can't Have It All

5A Yu Yike

In the past, like in the Qing dynasty, women's lives were limited to the home, weaving, and caring for children. They couldn't go to school or have big dreams. Now, in Hong Kong, women are everywhere; in offices, in leadership roles, building careers. But even today, they carry a heavy, invisible weight: the pressure to balance work and family, almost always alone. Why does this still happen in a city that says it's so modern?

A researcher named Claudia Goldin found something important. The pay gap between men and women doesn't start when they get the job. It starts when they have children. In Hong Kong, after having their first child, many women leave their jobs or work less. But men's careers don't slow down. This isn't because women don't want to work hard. It's because the best jobs demand all your time, and society still thinks taking care of the family is a woman's main job.

The real problem is not that women can't balance; it's that they're expected to. Long ago, there were "marriage bars" that stopped married women from working. Those laws are gone, but the thinking isn't. Jobs that let you work flexibly often pay less. Part-time work rarely leads to promotion. And too many people still think a man's career should come first. A report last year said 68% of men in Hong Kong believe their job is more important than their partner's. Only 24% of women think the same. That's not a choice; it's how the system is built.

Every generation of women has fought for more freedom. First, they could only pick work or family. Later, they could work first, then have kids. Then, they could try to return to work after their children grow up. Now, my generation is told we can do both. But the world of work hasn't really changed to help us do that. We have more options, but not the support to really choose freely.

This affects women at every age. Teenage girls already worry about how work will fit with family one day, but boys don't think about that. Young women might avoid jobs in banking or law because they know the hours are too long. Women with kids turn down promotions because they have no one to share the work at home. The mental work never stops: planning for exam revision for kids, finding someone to watch the kids, and feeling bad for missing family moments. It's not balanced. It's like walking on a rope with no net below.

So, what can we do? Goldin says we shouldn't tell women to try harder. We should change work itself. Some jobs, like pharmacy, used to have big gender gaps. But when they made schedules more flexible and teamwork the norm, things got better for women. Hong Kong can do that too. We need reliable and affordable childcare. We need paternity leave that fathers actually take. We need companies to care about what you do, not how long you sit at a desk.

But rules alone aren't enough. We have to change how people think. Being a mother shouldn't mean you do everything at home. Fathers should be real partners, not just "helpers." Companies should respect flexibility, not just long hours. And we should stop judging women by how perfectly they seem to do it all.

From bound feet to high heels in offices, women in Hong Kong have come a long way. But we're still walking a tightrope. Real change won't come from teaching women to balance better. It will come from creating a fairer world where work fits with life. Household chores are everyone's job, and "having it all" is possible for anyone, not just a dream women struggle for alone. That's the Hong Kong we should all want.



The Lesson I Learnt from a Tragedy

5D Chinsom Pui Size

It is a visceral understanding that safety is an active, daily practice, not a passive guarantee.

Before, fire safety was only an occasional thought. I had a smoke detector that was beeping because the battery was low. I kept saying I would replace it tomorrow. I also had a hallway that was really cluttered. I meant to clean it up. Then, the tragedy at Wang Fuk Court in Tai Po occurred. It made me realize that I was not taking fire safety seriously enough. When I heard about all the things that went wrong in Tai Po, like a wire and a door that was propped open, and a path that was blocked, it really scared me. Fire safety is something you have to think about all the time. I found out that a catastrophe is not something that happens out of the blue but a consequence of our negligence. It is like a chain reaction where every little thing I do or do not do can make a difference. Neglecting even the smallest detail can bring the entire system closer to failure, which gives me a strong sense of responsibility. Now, I pay much closer attention to my daily choices, such as how I charge my devices, what I keep by the door, and whether I notice things that need fixing around my building. I see these choices as things that can either help keep me safe or put me at risk. The “Swiss Cheese Model” is no longer an abstract concept; it is a lens through which I view my own home and building, and it compels me to act.

This shift has changed how I see my community. In a city of anonymous tall buildings, I used to be the neighbour who kept to herself. But the fire taught me that in an emergency, the people right next to us are the first line of defence. My mindset has shifted from isolated concern to a sense of interconnected guardianship. I no longer see our shared corridor as just a walkway; it is a vital communal artery that must stay clear. I make it a point to know which neighbours are elderly and which families have young children. The thought of someone being trapped because no one knew to check for them haunts me. Our safety is woven together; my vigilance protects them, and theirs protects me.

Admittedly, there is a certain sadness in losing the innocent belief that “it couldn't happen here.” I used to live with the comfortable assumption that disasters only happened elsewhere. However, I now feel a greater sense of control because I am prepared.

My family and I have sat down to map out our emergency escape routes and discuss various scenarios. We ensured our fire extinguisher is easily accessible and confirmed that everyone—from the youngest to the oldest—recognizes the sound of the building’s alarm. We no longer leave our safety to chance.

This preparation isn’t born of fear, but of profound respect. Respect for the speed at which a disaster can move, the fragility of the systems we rely on, and the immense value of the ordinary, peaceful days we wish to protect. By being ready for anything, I am not just guarding against a threat; I am honouring the life and family I hold dear.

The lesson from Wang Fuk Court is etched in my mind not as a distant news story, but as a permanent shift in perspective. It taught me that in our dense, modern world, the most meaningful form of care is often preventative: the small, consistent acts of attention that, stitch by stitch, strengthen the fabric of our shared safety. The feeling it leaves me with is a resolve to be a responsible link in the chain, for in that collective effort lies our only true security.



Economic Security: Strong, Stable, and Predictable

5D Chow Lai Yin

Greetings everyone,

Today, I want to highlight an essential part of national security that affects us all every day: economic security.

National security does more than just guard against threats; it also ensures the economy remains strong, stable, and predictable. This stability is vital because it touches every aspect of our lives.

A secure economy means life is manageable. When the economy is steady, we benefit from stable prices, reliable public services, and affordable transport. In contrast, when the economy becomes unstable, the effects are immediate and painful: prices spike, the cost of living jumps, and families face serious financial stress. Even for those under 18 who don't pay taxes, we feel these shifts directly in the cost of the things we buy and the services we rely on.

For example, a rising cost of goods can disrupt savings goals, or an increase in transportation fees can squeeze everyone who uses public transit. These everyday experiences prove just how closely our routines are tied to economic health.

In short, economic security is fundamental to national security. It maintains social stability and provides a certain future for all. Understanding this connection helps us appreciate and support the systems that work to maintain a fair and steady economy for every member of our community.



Balancing Development and Community Needs in Hong Kong's Northern Metropolis Project

6A Chen Wang Yat

The recent push for the development of the Northern Metropolis in Hong Kong represents a significant shift in the government's approach to urban planning and economic growth. Spanning an impressive 30,000 hectares—approximately one-third of Hong Kong's total area—this ambitious initiative encompasses various districts, including Yuen Long, Tin Shui Wai, Fanling, and Sheung Shui. With a current population of around 980,000 and plans for approximately 400,000 residential units, the Northern Metropolis aims to alleviate housing shortages while simultaneously creating economic opportunities. On the surface, this development promises to address pressing issues such as inadequate housing and the need for job creation, which many residents can readily see as positive advancements. However, the broader implications of such an extensive development warrant deeper examination.

As the government outlines key projects, such as the New Territories North New Town, the San Tin Technopole, and new development areas in Kwu Tung (North) and Fanling (North), a palpable sense of optimism about the future permeates the community. The commitment to enhancing infrastructure is particularly noteworthy, with strategic railways and major roadways designed to improve connectivity within the Northern Metropolis and to other parts of Hong Kong and the mainland. The anticipated cross-border rail connections, especially between Hung Shui Kiu and Qianhai, are expected to unlock substantial growth potential by facilitating seamless travel and trade. Many people view this connectivity as a vital step towards integrating Hong Kong more closely with the Greater Bay Area, enhancing economic collaboration and boosting local businesses.

However, while the plans are ambitious and commendable, there are several critical aspects that warrant closer scrutiny. The government's focus on high-end professional services and logistics hubs may inadvertently overlook the needs of lower-income residents and smaller businesses. The emphasis on attracting large-scale enterprises and technology firms could result in a widening socioeconomic gap, leaving vulnerable populations behind. For instance, if the development prioritizes high-tech industries, will there be adequate support and training for local workers in lower-income brackets to transition into these new job markets? Without targeted initiatives to support job training and education for these communities, the gap between the affluent and the struggling could widen, leading to increased social tension and economic disparity.

Moreover, while many residents may appreciate the potential for new job opportunities, they might overlook the fact that these positions may not always be accessible. The types of jobs created in high-tech and professional service sectors often require specific skill sets and educational backgrounds. As a result, those who are already disadvantaged may find themselves further marginalized in this evolving job market. This raises important questions about the inclusivity of the development strategy: Are there measures in place to ensure that local communities benefit from the economic opportunities being created? Many people may see the new developments as a sign of progress, but they might not recognize that without proper educational initiatives, those who lack the necessary qualifications could be left behind.

Furthermore, the environmental implications of such extensive urbanization cannot be ignored. While the government has highlighted the importance of conserving areas like Lau Fau Shan and Sha Tau Kok, the reality remains that rapid urbanization can lead to significant ecological disruption. The delicate balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability is often hard to maintain. Traditional communities and local ecosystems may suffer if urban expansion proceeds without adequate safeguards. The loss of green spaces and natural habitats can erode the very qualities that make these areas desirable places to live. While many people may see the new developments as a sign of progress, the long-term consequences for biodiversity and local heritage could be detrimental if not carefully managed.

Additionally, the mental health and well-being of residents during this transformative period is an aspect that often goes overlooked. Rapid urban development can lead to increased stress and anxiety among those living in the area, particularly if they feel their voices are not being heard in the planning process. Many residents may focus primarily on the tangible benefits of new infrastructure and housing but overlook the emotional toll that such rapid changes can impose. Feelings of displacement and uncertainty can create a sense of alienation within the community, affecting social cohesion. Therefore, community engagement will be crucial in ensuring that the Northern Metropolis reflects the aspirations of its residents—not just as a blueprint for economic growth but as a vibrant place where people can thrive. Establishing forums for public input and actively involving local communities in decision-making processes can help mitigate feelings of alienation and foster a sense of ownership among residents.



The government's plans to enhance educational facilities, including the establishment of a Northern Metropolis University Town and the provision of land for international schools, present positive developments for the community. However, the successful implementation of these initiatives will depend on ensuring that they are accessible to all demographics, particularly underprivileged families. If high-quality education is only available to those who can afford it, the intended benefits of such educational advancements may not reach the very people who need them most. Furthermore, without adequate transportation options and infrastructure to support these educational institutions, potential students may find it difficult to access these opportunities. Many families may struggle with the logistics of getting their children to schools located far from their homes, inadvertently perpetuating cycles of disadvantage.

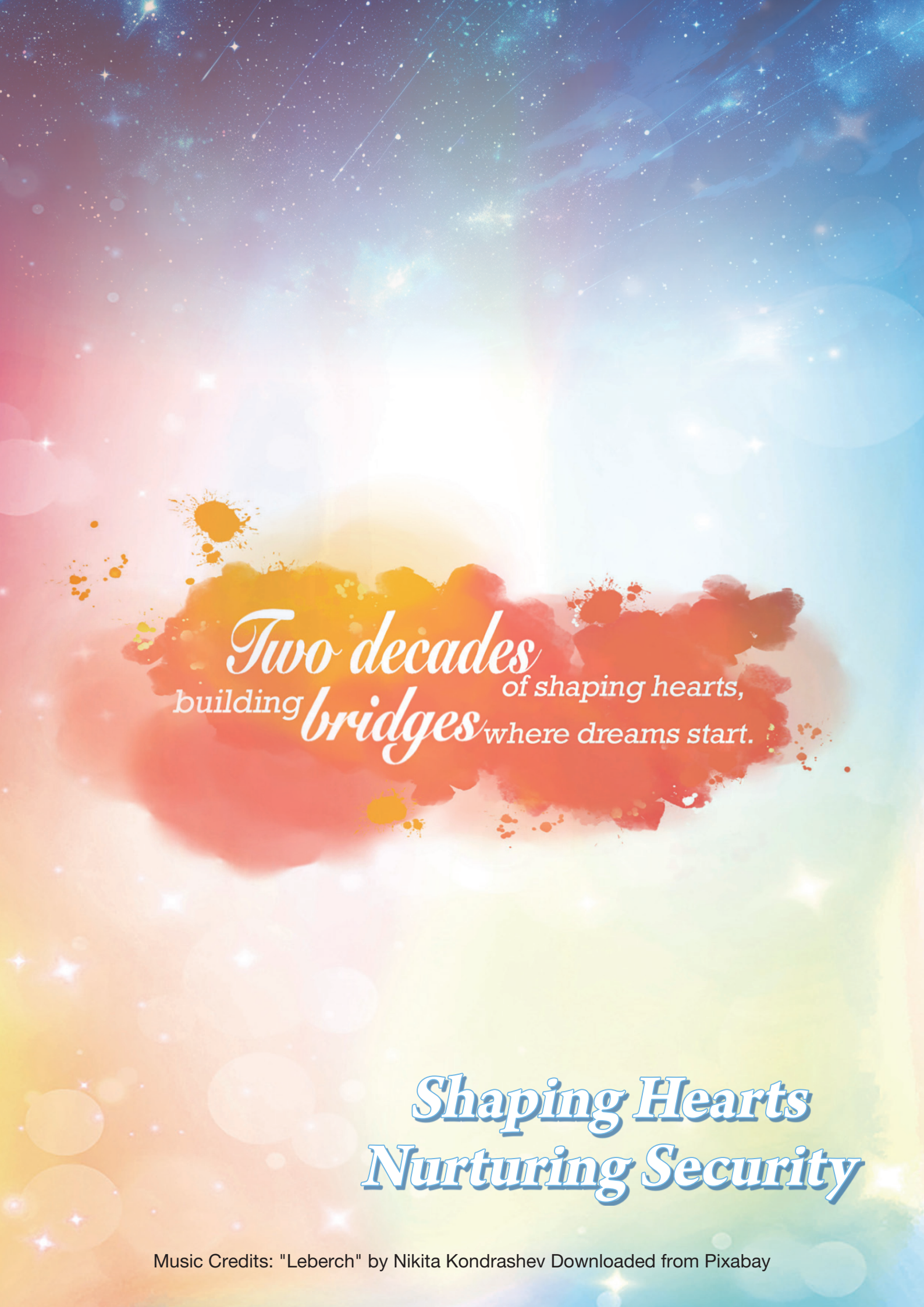
In addition to education, the integration of healthcare services must be a priority. As the population in the Northern Metropolis grows, the demand for healthcare will inevitably increase. If adequate healthcare facilities are not developed alongside residential and commercial projects, residents could face significant barriers to accessing essential services. Many might envision a bustling new urban area with ample resources, yet overlook the importance of ensuring that these resources meet the needs of a diverse population. Health disparities could emerge if low-income families cannot access quality healthcare, exacerbating existing inequalities and putting additional strain on the healthcare system.

In conclusion, while the Northern Metropolis project presents an exciting opportunity for Hong Kong's future, it is essential to approach its development with a comprehensive viewpoint. Stakeholders must prioritize social equity, environmental sustainability, and community engagement, ensuring that this ambitious vision truly benefits all Hong Kong residents. The government must remain vigilant and responsive to the changing needs and concerns of the community. By fostering a truly inclusive and prosperous Northern Metropolis, Hong Kong can set a precedent for future urban developments that balance growth with the well-being of its citizens. Ultimately, the success of this initiative will depend not only on its economic outcomes but also on its ability to enhance the quality of life for all residents, ensuring that progress does not come at the expense of community values and individual well-being. It is a delicate balancing act, one that requires foresight, empathy, and a commitment to building a future that everyone can share.



Winners in Writing Competitions 2025-2026

Students' Top Ten News Election 2025 - News Commentary Competition organized by the Hok Yau Club - 4 th	6A Chen Wang Yat
HKCYAA Writing Competition 2025 - Gold	2A Choi Hoi Yan 2A Chung Hiu Tung 2A Wong Man Chun 3A Yang Yan Hei 4C Ng Hei Yeung 5D Chinsom Pui Size
HKCYAA Writing Competition 2025 - Silver	2A Lui Ho Lung 2B Chau Ching Laam 5C Luo Yik Lam 5C Wong Yuk Lam 5D Chan Tsz Yau
HKCYAA Writing Competition 2025 - Bronze	2A Du Ke Ke Coco 3A Guo Pui Nam 4D Wang Joyce 5A Wai Yi Chun 5A Wong Hau Yi 5C Chau Kai Hing 5C Wong Wing Sze 5C Lai Tsz Him 5C Lau Ethan 5D Chan Yun Lam 5D Chow Lai Yin
Pegasus Cup Writing Competition 2025-2026 - 4 th	4D Hui Ka Man
Pegasus Cup Writing Competition 2025-2026 - Gold	4D Tang Yuk Hei 5D Chan Yuk Lam 5D Chinsom Pui Size
Pegasus Cup Writing Competition 2025-2026 - Silver	4C Huang Hiu Wing 4D Ma Nga Sze 5D Chan Tsz Yau
Pegasus Cup Writing Competition 2025-2026 - Bronze	5C Su Nga Huen Shanton
Harvard GlobalWE Essay Contest 2025-2026 - Winne	5A Yu Yike
Harvard GlobalWE Essay Contest 2025-2026 - Honourable Mention	5D Chinsom Pui Size
Short Essay Writing Competition for Hong Kong Secondary School Students 2026 organized by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University - Gold	5A Sun Tsz Kiu 5A Zhang Shing Ho
Short Essay Writing Competition for Hong Kong Secondary School Students 2026 organized by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University - Bronze	5A Chung Hei Tung
Short Essay Writing Competition for Hong Kong Secondary School Students 2026 organized by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University - Merit	5A Yip Kin Lok 5B Ng Chun Ting



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