

# What's Left When the Wrapping Paper Flies? The Cost of Christmas Consumerism

**Brogan Archer, Senior**

Strips of wrapping paper fly and discarded boxes pile high, as Christmas morning descends into a tangled mess of ribbon and packaging. Buried underneath must-have gifts and aesthetic decorations, have we wrapped the true meaning of Christmas in layers of plastic and expectation?

Just as the holiday season arrives, Christmas consumerism strikes. Advertisements are plastered on each screen and wall, forcing their way into each headspace. Social media comparison reaches new heights, portraying an idealised image of the perfect Christmas.

People fall prey to gift obligations, folding under societal pressure. And some have a genuine desire to convey love through gifts.

However, this hyperconsumption comes at a cost. A survey by Beyond Finance revealed that 76 percent of Americans celebrating winter holidays feel largely overwhelmed by financial pressures, 42 percent isolate themselves to



Illustration by Dora Lin, Junior

avoid feelings of inadequacy, and 21 percent succumb to compulsive overspending. This financial strain and stress are more than just personal problems; they represent a collective struggle, holiday spirit manipulated by a narrative that equates love with price tags. But these choices don't just affect us; they also deal immense damage to our environment. An analysis for the Guardian discovered: "the average Briton's consumption on Christmas Day causes 23 times more greenhouse gas emissions than a regular day." This includes all travel,

gifts, food, energy, drink, and waste related to Christmas consumerism. The version of Christmas that our holidays have become wreaks real, tangible consequences in all aspects of our lives. And still, if we have everything, why do we often end up in an emotional void, feeling like we've missed the point?

Beneath all the fluff and clutter, authentic Christmas spirit represents a different set of presents; for example, the gift of undivided attention. Spending time together, whether walking, cooking, or talking, is an incredibly valuable gift in a world where time is a luxury. Taking action in the community –volunteering, donating to a cause, or checking up on an elderly neighbor– is another uplifting form of giving. People can also simply slow down and appreciate what they already have.

Christmas isn't something we should buy for; it's something to remember, create, and give freely. This year, let's unwrap the true meaning of Christmas.

## Winter Class Recital Lifts HKAA's Christmas Spirit



Winter Class Recital

**Vani Yim, Freshman**

Every year, during the festive season of Christmas, HKAA hosts a Christmas Concert, bringing together students, teachers, friends, and parents to enjoy the joyous sounds of music.

This year, the Christmas Concert was changed to the Winter Class Recital to respect those who suffered from the tragic Tai Po Fire. The recital began with students from grades 1-3 singing Christmas songs under the direction of Mr. Brondo. Following the singing, the grades 4 to 8 orchestra performed festive

songs with wind, percussion, and string instruments, and the grades 4 to 8 orchestra performed festive songs with wind, percussion, and string instruments, with the guidance of Mr Rey. Then, a heartfelt speech about the Tai Po fire was delivered by Mr Joy. As the music performances resumed, the HKAA Symphony Orchestra, with participants from different grades and teachers, performed the three most significant pieces of the recital: Symphony No. 25 in G Minor, Fiddle Faddle, and Christmas Time, showcasing the jolly spirits of our school.

As a participant of the HKAA Symphony Orchestra, I, along with another student participant, Chelsea Yau, believe that our audience enjoyed the musical performance. Participants all contributed to the performance, producing a harmonious and merry sound of music.

With that, the HKAA Winter Class Recital 2025 came to an end, filled with cheerfulness and happiness.



High school choir

## The Reason for the Season

*"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").*

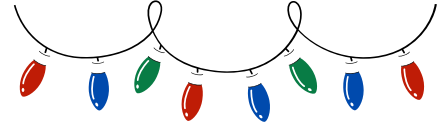
**Matthew 1:23**

*"But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told."*

**Luke 2:19-20**

*"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*

**John 1:14**



## The True Meaning of Christmas

**Breanna Bautista, Sophomore**

Christmas is the long-awaited holiday everyone knows and loves. For many, the true meaning of Christmas is giving and spreading love through kindness and generosity. This year, many people need a compassionate community to help them get through tough times, specifically the victims of the recent Tai Po Fires.

On November 26, a large fire broke out and spread across many apartment buildings, taking the lives of hundreds of people over the course of 2 days. Not only did people lose their homes, but also the ones they love. Families became incomplete, people were scarred, and the whole tragedy impacted their lives negatively.

Following the devastation in Tai Po, numerous organizations provided food, shelters, food, and relief efforts to the victims. Examples of such are the Hong Kong Red Cross, Impact HK, Crossroads Foundation, and Feeding Hong Kong, offering support. Many local businesses branched out in Tai Po, like McDonald's, Tam Jai Sam Gor, and Jollibee supplied people with free food. The government provided temporary housing to the people who did not have a place to stay, and the HK Council of Social Service covered emergency

supplies, shelter, cash, and psychological support.

Providing a safe and comfortable environment to those affected by the fires is essential for them to heal from the traumatic events that unfolded. If you happen to know somebody who was a victim of this tragedy, you may help by providing them with emotional support. Approach them with compassion and remind them that they are not alone. No matter what they have lost in the blaze, ensure them with your presence that you are there for them.

There are many other ways to help the victims of the Tai Po Fire. You may donate to the organizations mentioned above. Information on where and how to donate can be found on the internet. Our school had a Winter Class Recital, a concert dedicated to the Tai Po tragedy. The purpose of the concert was to give an opportunity to parents and students to be able to donate to the affected.

This year, Christmastime is a difficult time for the victims of the fire. Chances are, for most of them, the challenges in their lives will last past the winter. It is important to be able to maintain a culture of supporting one another as a community, not just during Christmas but year-round.

Embodying the spirit of Christmas means being a giver rather than a receiver. Christmas is about uniting as a community and helping those who are in grave need of it. As a community, we must support the victims of the Tai Po fires and guide them during these dark times. Hopefully, this mindset of generosity and compassion will not just arrive around Christmas and last throughout each year!

## Editorial

## How to Ace Your Final Exams

**Jessie Lo, Sophomore**

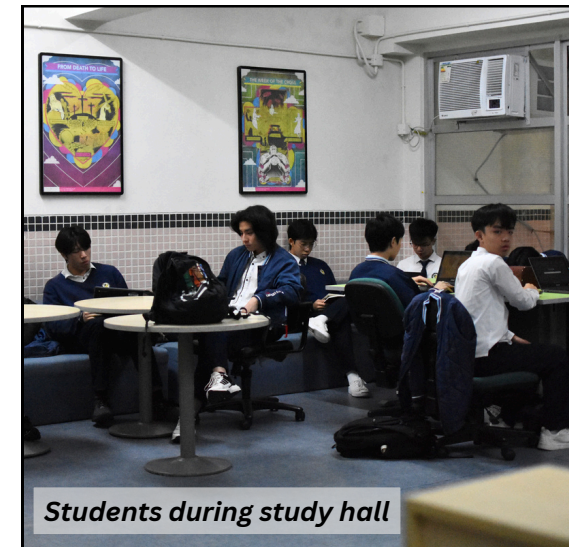
Final exams are difficult, so here is how you can ace them. If you are stressed about what to do, here is a guide to help you ace your final exams!

### Step 1:

To start studying for your exam, ensure you understand the topic covered in the final exam. Some teachers will only put the final exam as a project, while others will treat it as a one-chapter exam or a final exam covering the chapters you learned this semester. Always make sure you are studying the right material.

### Step 2:

To ace the final exam, study beforehand; never cram all the material the night before. Rather than cramming your studies, plan your study schedule. For example, one day you study a chapter of Math, and the next day you study another.



**Students during study hall**

### Step 3:

When you are studying, make sure you have no distractions, like a phone, an iPad, etc., anything that can distract you from studying.

### Step 4:

Make sure you understand what you are studying, not just copying and pasting notes from the presentation slides.

It is understandable if you are stressed out, but if you at least try to study, you can have a better chance of doing well on your exam. To help, here is a trick I often use: the night before your exam, imagine yourself in the exam room taking it, so that you won't be nervous during it.

Following this guide can help you in acing your final exams. Good luck, test takers!

## Climate Change

**Sofia Perevezina, Senior**

You are most likely aware that climate change is a rising issue in the world. It is caused by various things, which include natural and anthropogenic factors. Some of the natural causes are changes in sun's energy, volcanic eruptions, continental drifts, ocean currents, and even asteroids. However, the most swift and impactful causes are the anthropogenic - caused by human activities. Those include burning fossil fuels for energy, producing greenhouse emissions (carbon dioxide, methane, etc) that trap heat in the atmosphere, deforestation, powering buildings, overconsumption, and more. All these things impact climate change seemingly slowly but surely.

But how does it impact us? In fact, climate change impacts us directly in various ways. It affects the Earth's temperature fluctuations, making them extreme and fast. Floods in certain areas and drought in others make it more difficult for all Earth's creatures to survive. Drinking water is becoming scarce, while ocean levels rise, flooding whole habitats.

What can we as individuals do about it? Experts are constantly trying to find a solution to combat climate change by trying to switch to renewable energy, etc.

But we as humans have a duty to take the initiative to rescue our planet by:

- Saving energy at home
- Walking or biking instead of using a car
- Reduce waste, reuse, repair, and recycle!
- Eating more plant-based foods, as they require less energy and greenhouse gases to be produced.
- Let us all contribute to a better environment by taking these small but significant steps to action!

## Environmental Club Column

HKAA Environmental Club

## FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE

You are most likely aware that climate change is a rising issue in the world. It is caused by various things, which include natural and anthropogenic factors. Some of the natural causes are changes in sun's energy, volcanic eruptions, continental drifts, ocean currents, and even asteroids. However, the most swift and impactful causes are the anthropogenic - caused by human activities. Those include burning fossil fuels for energy, producing greenhouse emissions (carbon dioxide, methane, etc) that trap heat in the atmosphere, deforestation, powering buildings, overconsumption, and more. All these things impact climate change seemingly slowly but surely.

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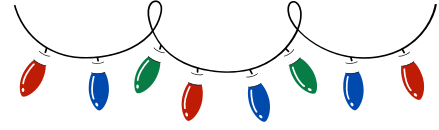
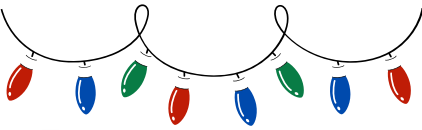


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## The Philippines' Christ our Mighty Savior (CoMS) Chamber Ministers in Hong Kong and Macau

**Joy Kuttappan, Faculty Advisor**

Christ our Mighty Savior (CoMS) Chamber from the Philippines visited Hong Kong and Macau from December 11-16 to minister to various churches and educational institutions. The dynamic music ministry group performed various spirit-filled songs during the festive season to uplift the spiritual lives of young and old alike in the Chinese Union Mission (CHUM) of the Adventist Church.

CoMS Chamber is a dynamic music ministry group from Cebu, the Philippines, representing the Seventh-day Adventist faith. "Our ensemble consists of talented young musicians aged 10 to 21, all committed to our mission of glorifying God, uplifting His people's spirits, and drawing hearts closer to Him through the power of music. Since our inception, we have been privileged to share God's message through sacred music in more than fifty Seventh-day Adventist churches both across the Philippines and abroad, including performances in Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, and Europe," says Mariella Beverly Bugtai, the

conductor of CoMS.

The original group consists of sixty members, but for the CHUM visit only twenty-four musicians and seventeen parents joined the ministry tour. The chamber performed various songs at Macau SDA Filipino Church, Bayview church, SDA International church (Happy Valley), and Hong Kong Adventist Academy (HKAA) Winter Class Recital.



CoMS in Bayview Church

Various members of the Hong Kong Bayview Church and staff members of HKAA supported the group by opening their homes for five days to accommodate the members while several other families joined in providing raw materials for their meals under the leadership of Mr. Rey Abellana, the music head of HKAA, as he was privileged to host some of his former students.

CoMS represent various SDA churches throughout Cebu. They regularly play at Capitol SDA Church and Tabunok SDA Church in Cebu.

## High Schoolers "Work Hard and Play Hard" in Ocean Park Learning Expedition



Mr Cheung, Tina, Liam, and Meredith enjoying a water ride

**Renae Yung, Junior**

On December 11, high school students had the chance to explore Ocean Park's attractions while participating in the Citizen Science and Research Method program. Arranged by Ms Shashi and the science department, the program helped students learn how their contributions can make a real impact in scientific research. They recorded data, including behaviour and physical characteristics, about the different animals at the park, including walruses, parrots, and different

characteristics, about the different animals at the park, including walruses, parrots, and different reptile species.

With this information, the Ocean Park scientists were able to better understand the animals and their needs. It is easy to overlook how much influence we have. Even as ordinary people, we can help animals live better lives. Regardless of occupation or ability, each individual can make a difference in this world, moving it toward improvement with each willing hand.

We also learned how important balance is. The rides and games at Ocean Park already made the day an unforgettable experience, but having the opportunity to learn and contribute something made it even better. Everyone should maintain this balance of work and play in every aspect of life.

Ultimately, the Ocean Park Learning Expedition represented a day of fun and growth for HKAA's high schoolers. Let's strive to not only be a contributor to citizen science, but also to work hard and play hard.

## Finding Georgina: The Journey of G10's Hamster



Renae holding Georgina Washington

**Breanna Bautista, Sophomore**

The famous creature, who has taken up residence in Ms Shashi's lab, runs on her hamster wheel as dozens of students crowd around her cage to see the round, furry rodent move around. At this point, she had been at this school for only three weeks and had already won the hearts of many, especially the Grade 10 Ocean students, who took on the responsibility to care for her. It had only been a few weeks, and Georgina Washington had already had quite an adventure.

On November 11, Ms Shashi and a group of students from her homeroom travelled to Mong Kok to buy a hamster. When they arrived at the pet store, they were presented with an array of different hamsters to become the new class pet. Crystal Chan, who was present at the time, said that all of the other hamsters did not like to be held by her, but when she picked Georgina up, she knew she was the one.

When the following school week arrived, there was a notable shift during homeroom time. Students who initially weren't friends with one another began to talk because of the new hamster. Students who weren't so energetic in attending homeroom began to show up just to play with Georgina.

However, the week after, Georgina wasn't there. Ms Shashi said that on Sunday, during the Parent-Teacher Conference, Georgina was happily in her cage, but the next morning, she disappeared, and

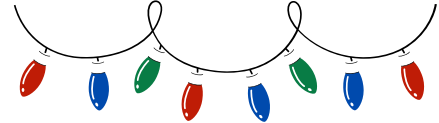
paper bits from her cage were scattered everywhere.

Students were devastated. They searched every nook and cranny to see if she was there, but she wasn't. According to Jayden Yip, many began formulating theories about how she could have disappeared. Some say she was taken away and brought to someone else's house. Some think someone forgot to close her cage gate, and she must have slipped away. Most supported the latter and left food and water out for her. During homeroom time, Ms Shashi always prayed that Georgina was safe and would come back.

A week later, on December 2nd, a custodian found Georgina by the first-floor staircase and brought her to the front office. Ms Shashi was informed, and Georgina was immediately brought back to the lab. Students were overjoyed and showered Georgina with love and affection.

When Georgina came back, she was gifted a larger cage. Now there is a sign that says no one else besides Ms Shashi and the class can pet Georgina, and that permission is needed if you want to hold her.

Crystal said that through this experience, she learned the importance of prayer and asking God for help. Ms Shashi often included Georgina in her prayers, and it paid off because a miracle happened. Georgina returned!



# A Christmas Tale

*Fiction*

**Renae Yung, Junior**

In the midst of the snowy mountains, Christopher stood out exceptionally, holding his teddy bear with a nice bow tie. A man on a reindeer came by. "Are you cold, kiddo? Why don't you come with me?" The old man invited Christopher to accompany him to the garden. He introduced him to his reindeer: "This is Blitzen, he has a mark on his back that is just like a lightning bolt, and Dasher, a swift runner. There are more of them in the pen, but these are the ones out here right now."

Christopher was surprised; all the reindeer's names sounded so similar to Santa's reindeer. "By any chance, do you have a reindeer named Rudolph?" he said. The old man laughed. "Wait here, kid." He went into the pen, said something, and came out with another reindeer walking behind him whose nose was glowing red. "Is that? Is that Rudolph?" Christopher cried in excitement, "Are you Santa?" The old man laughed gently. "Why, I don't have this white beard for nothing. Would you like to come send Christmas presents with me?"

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**Word Limit:** Under 250 words

## Puzzle



# CHRISTMAS

word search

e	l	s	y	m	f	t	o	r	n	a	m	e	n	t
s	t	o	c	k	i	n	g	s	j	d	a	e	s	n
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f	a	m	i	l	y	w	s	k	m	f	s	e	p	l

ornament	holiday	present	hot cocoa
reindeer	santa claus	stockings	caroling
snowman	winter	candy canes	family

# Legislative Council Election Day

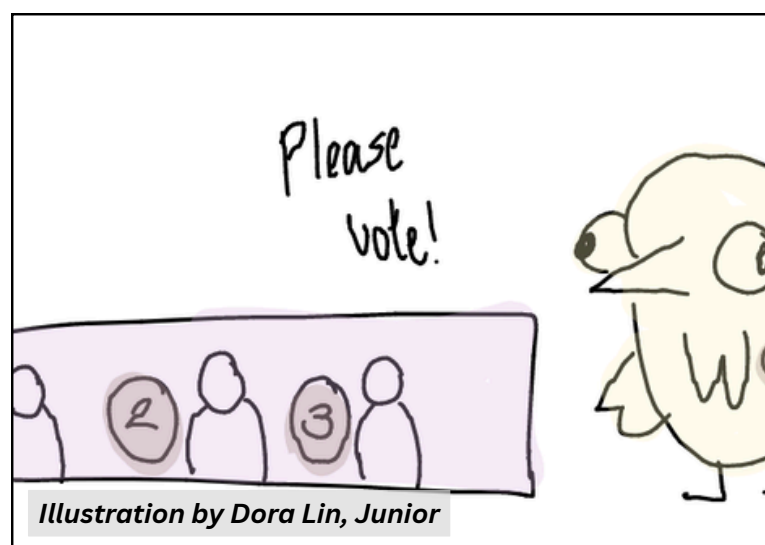


Illustration by Dora Lin, Junior

**Samson Chan, Senior**

The Hong Kong 2025 Legislative Council Election Day is an election held every 4 years, in which voters elect members to the legislative body of the Hong Kong SAR on 7th December 2025. Citizens are encouraged to participate and cast their votes in polling venues set up throughout Hong Kong to introduce new members to the Legislative Council. Composed of 90 members, 40 from the election committee, 30 from functional constituencies, and 20 from geographical constituencies, the LegCo is responsible for enacting laws, approving the budget, overseeing government work, and holding the government accountable.

A candidate of the election must be aged 21 or above and have ordinarily resided in Hong Kong for 3 years immediately preceding the nomination. The nominated candidate then campaigns across Hong Kong's districts until election day. The election uses the newly improved "block voting" system, where only 40 candidates are voted on, and the 40 candidates that get the most votes will be introduced to the LegCo.

As past members of the LegCo conclude their four-year terms, new members are sworn in to serve for the next four years, with each election bringing fresh ideas to improve and sustain the Legislative Council.

## Value of the Month: Integrity



Illustration by Breanna Bautista, Grade 8

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