ZEITGEIST: AN OPEN QUARTERLY FOR ETHICS AND HUMAN VALUES BELIEVES THAT THINKING OPENLY, DIFFERENTLY, AND LOUDLY IS FOUNDATIONAL TO THE VERY EXISTENCE OF THE WILL TO BE FREE, THAT THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL IS THE WILL TO BE FREE, AND THAT HUMAN ACTIONS ARE ONLY MEANINGFUL INSOFAR AS THEY ADVANCE THE WILL TO BE FREE. IT WAS FOUNDED IN C. 2023 BY KEVIN ZHANG.

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ZEITGEIST

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Zeitgeist

An Open Quarterly for Ethics and Human Values

Zeitgeist, 'the general intellectual, moral, and cultural climate of an era,' echoes our original intention: to unearth, reflect, and decipher what it means to be a modern human. Throughout history, self-understanding has been fundamental to progress. Yet, the more we plunge into an era characterized by unpredictability, consumerism, and confusion, the more our attention deviates from the very purpose of the humanities.

As a student-led quarterly, *Zeitgeist* aims to foster communication and growth in the humanities in China and around the world by engaging in interdisciplinary dialogues. At heart, *Zeitgeist* represents the voice of a global cohort of bewildered, exhilarated, and determined "free spirits" who endeavor to explicate the contradictions at the core of our time.

Zeitgeist is proud to be officially partnered with the BIPH Philosophy Club, the Union of Humanities and History Clubs (UHHC), the Joint Weekly Newsletter, and Opinionate: A Podcast for Applied Ethics. *Zeitgeist* is—and will continue to be—a platform for furthering high school research in the humanities and encouraging communications across disciplinary boundaries.

Editorial Board

Arndt and the Birth of National Identity in Germany：Geographical Extensiveness

Anonymous

In addition to the two prominent manifestations of German nationalism between the Napoleonic Wars and the 20th century, Arndt's understanding of territorial boundaries was notably subtle yet significant. The poem "Des Deutschen Vaterland" commences with multiple references to German-speaking regions, including Bavaria, Saxony, the Rhineland, and even Austria. Arndt rejected the notion that Germany should be defined by territorial boundaries. Instead, he positioned that Germany was to be wherever German-speaking people dwelled. Besides the suggesting call for the unification of all German speakers, the underlying message of Arndt implies an unceasingly inflating ambition for German territorial expansion beyond internationally recognized boundaries.

Kohn emphasized the unique nature of German nationalism compared to other Western nationalisms. He drew a parallel between the origin of German and other non-Western nationalism and concluded that all of them were born out of a foreign ruler and were to secure national independence, instead of pursuit for enlightenment to secure better government and individual liberty.[1] Specifically, German nationalism arose out of the ashes of German defeat in the Napoleonic wars. Fragmented, without nationhood, without political definition, lacking military power and economic vitality, the Germans searched for a shared identity that would restore the self-esteem that defeats by the French had shattered.[2] The Napoleonic Wars marked the first time since the glorious past from Roman history that the German people united as a whole to defend their land against a common enemy. The subsequent German victories ignited widespread enthusiasm among German speakers. Once again, the triumphant history of a firm, united Germany became an ideal for a majority of Germans. Arndt, as a patriot, was among those who embraced this vision.

To further German unity and the dissemination of nationalism, Arndt urged a continued war even after the defeat of the French. He condemned peace as "death and rotting" and celebrated the war as a mean to secure "liberty, for freedom and virtue."[3] This emphasis on war was a foreboding sentiment, as Arndt was not the lonely voice summoning war and national aggression in early 19th century Germany. While official anti-Semitism existed all the time in modern Germany, Napoleonic war was the time when this sentiment emerged more publicly and reached a new height after Jews were fully emancipated in the 1871. Panayi used the term "endemic

Judeophobia" to describe the pervasive anti-Semitism in Germany, highlighting its rise in the work of intellectuals such as Fichte, Jahn and Arndt in the Napoleonic and Vormärz periods.[4]

Arndt specifically denounced Jews as internal enemies of the German people, claiming they were "beneficiaries of political emancipation that the French had thrust upon the unprepared and unwilling Germans."[5] The system of equality enforced during the French occupation, which included Jews as equal citizens deeply enraged many Germans, further evoking the underlying anti-Semitic sentiment already longstanding before the French invasion. The lack of clear definition of the German nation in Arndt's poem reflects the ambiguity inherent in his interpretation of German nationalism, which implicitly invites future distortions and exploitations of the underlying messages. The notion of a borderless Germany, coupled with the author's xenophobic sentiments, pointed to a future trajectory toward Lebensraum. With the expanding and contorting national sentiment, the original patriot rhythm gradually blurred into the militant ideology that would later underpin National Socialism.

Published in 1813, one year before the Vienna Conference, "Des Deutschen Vaterland" remained the most popular German patriotic anthem until it was superseded by the "Wacht am Rhine" during the Franco-Prussian War.[6] Its enduring popularity reflects the widespread enthusiasm among the German populace for the idea of political unity and a return to the nation's glorious past of a shared ancestry.

Though Arndt's more liberal notions of cultural exchange remained somewhat implicit in his writings, particularly in "Des Deutschen Vaterland", the hint of nationalism is more surfaced. Nevertheless, the broader currents of 19th-century nationalism ultimately gave rise to a more exclusionary and ideologically rigid form of national identity, which was later co-opted by the National Socialists for political purposes. While Arndt crafted the poem with a clear intention of prompting the newly emerging German nationalism, he and other German intellectuals of the period were, in many ways, thrusted by the force of history. They found themselves at the forefront of a transformative era, leading a new era for the nation.

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The Art of Annihilation: Cannae, 216 BC

D.Z

What military tactic immediately leaps to mind when you think about war? Assuredly the age-old method of encirclement, of isolating a part of the enemy within an enclosed ring, cutting off its retreat route and destroying it completely. All commanders strove for it. All students of the art learnt it in their textbooks. Yet, where did encirclement–or *double envelopment*–originate?

Perhaps you have heard of the Battle of Marathon, fought between the Ancient Greeks and the Persians in 490 B.C, after which Pheidippides is said to have run 40 kilometers from Marathon to Athens to deliver news of the crushing Greek victory. Miltiades, the Greek commander, had under him around just 10,000 men, facing around 25,000 Persian soldiers under Datis and Artaphernes. The trick here was the disposition of the Greek forces: Miltiades placed relatively few troops in the center–where the Persians were strongest and expected a frontal breakthrough, and instead placed his elite Greek *hoplites*, the heavy infantry, on their wings, facing the relatively weak Persian flanks. When battle commenced, the thin Greek center bended backward, yet the hoplites quickly defeated the Persian flanks and wheeled inward, surrounding the Persian center on both sides. The Persian center was crushed, and the survivors fled in rout back to their ships. Miltiades is said to have inflicted 5,000 to 6,000 casualties on the Persians, while just losing 203 of his own men.

If you will take a look at the map below, you can clearly see how the Persian center moved forward, how the Greek center fell back, and how the Greek hoplites moved inward from left and right, crushing the Persian center.

Looks simple and straightforward does it not? But it takes a cool head to come up with this plan when facing a numerically superior enemy.

Marathon was a decisive and ingenious victory. Yet it was not the “textbook battle” of antiquity. That honor belongs to Cannae alone. For in this great battle, fought on the Apulian

plains of Italy between the Carthaginian forces of Hannibal Barca and the Roman legions under Gaius Terentius Varro and Lucius Aemelius Paullus, Hannibal managed to completely encircle an entire Roman army, and wipe it off the field. It nearly broke Rome.

The Second Punic War was a conflict between Rome and Carthage, two powers competing for dominance in the Mediterranean. Carthage had previously lost the First Punic War to Rome, and sought revenge, aiming to reclaim its former territories and status. War started in spring 218 B.C when Hannibal Barca, a Carthaginian general whose father Hamilcar had fought against Rome during the First Punic War, besieged and captured the city of Saguntum–a Roman ally–on the Iberian coast. In response, Rome promptly declared war.

Hannibal then crossed into Italy by traversing the Pyrenees and then the Alps, emerging with a much reduced force of around 20,000 infantry and 6,000 cavalry due to brutal Alpine conditions and hostile tribes. In spite of this, he quickly gathered allies–local Gallic tribes hostile to Rome– and won major victories over the Romans at Trebia, where he executed an envelopment and inflicted 20,000 casualties on a Roman army of 40,000, and at Lake Trasimene, where he ambushed a Roman force, driving it into a lake and annihilating all 25,000 men along with a cavalry detachment of 4,000–effectively destroying two Roman armies.

These losses initially prompted the Romans to avoid pitched battles with Hannibal and instead try to cut his supply lines and wear him down. This strategy, known as the Fabian strategy–after consul Quintus Fabius Maximum who implemented it– soon became deeply unpopular with the Romans, who, after recovering from their initial shock, resolved to confront Hannibal directly with the largest army Rome had ever brought into existence at that time: 8 legions, totaling 86,400 men–80,000 infantry, 6,400 cavalry–facing Hannibal's now 50,000-strong army, composed of 40,000 infantry and 10,000 cavalry. Yet Hannibal still held the advantage in cavalry, not only in quantity, but also in quality.

In spring 216 B.C, Hannibal, knowing that he faced a large Roman army, seized the Roman supply depot at Cannae and thus motivated the Romans to attack him at once. Both armies soon deployed on the flat stretch of ground between the Aufidus River and hills near Cannae.

Here is a map of the deployment: the red blocks are the Carthaginians under Hannibal, and the blue blocks are the Romans under Varro and Paullus.

Notice something interesting? Hannibal placed his Gauls and Spaniards–lower-quality troops– in the center, forming the shape of a convex bulge that projected outwards. The goal of this odd deployment was to slow down the huge block of Roman infantry in the center to buy time for his superior cavalry to rout the Roman cavalry from the field. The Romans, after all, favored brute force to punch through the center. Also, he placed his elite African troops on the sidelines to the left and right (guess why).

The battle began with the huge Roman center advancing as one against the thin line of Gauls and Spaniards in the center, gradually forcing it to give ground. At the same time, the Numidian cavalry on Hannibal's right tied down the Roman allied cavalry, while Gallic and Spanish cavalry under Hasdrubal charged the weaker Roman cavalry on the left, soon completely routing it from the field. Instead of pursuit, Hasdrubal regrouped, and circled around from the back to attack the allied cavalry on the Roman right, which promptly fled the field, attacked from two sides. In the center, the massive Roman columns still ground forward, when suddenly the elite African infantry on the sides suddenly appeared on the Roman center's left and right, now bereft of any cavalry, as shown in the maps below.

With the Gauls and Spaniards in the center, Africans to their left and right, and the Carthaginian cavalry now behind, the ring had completely closed around the Romans: they were now caught, with no hope of escape, even though they still technically outnumbered their enemy. The Romans soldiers still stood and fight desperately, but were gradually cut down by from all sides. It is hard to imagine the plight of the Romans, hemmed in into an ever-small space, unable to deploy or fight effectively, squeezed against each other, the air filled with the clash of weapons and smell of blood. The battle soon degenerated into a slaughter. As the historian Polybius wrote:

"*as their outer ranks were continually cut down, and the survivors forced to pull back and huddle together, they were finally all killed where they stood."*

The historian Livy also described the scene:

"So many thousands of Romans were dying... Some, whom their wounds, pinched by the morning cold, had roused, as they were rising up, covered with blood, from the midst of the heaps of slain, were overpowered by the enemy. Some were found with their heads plunged into the earth, which they had excavated; having thus, as it appeared, made pits for themselves, and having suffocated themselves."

Polybius and Livy differ on the total number of Roman casualties, but it seems certain that of the 76,400 Roman soldiers who fought on the field, at least 67,500 were lost at Cannae, killed or captured. Carthaginian losses did not exceed 8,000. This was a staggering blow. Hannibal had once again outwitted the Romans, and destroyed another Roman army with an inferior force. Rome descended into panic and chaos when they heard the news. By now, a fifth of Rome's entire male population over 17 had been lost.

After Cannae, Hannibal tried to induce the Romans to open peace negotiations, yet the Romans would not compromise, and continued the war, though they never again tried to engage Hannibal in major combat on the Italian Peninsula, preferring to wear him down gradually under the Fabian strategy, and target the cities under his protection as by that time, nearly all of Southern Italy had defected to Carthage after Cannae. This would eventually cage Hannibal, as he relied on victories and could not defeat the Romans if they would not fight. In the end, the Romans forced Hannibal to retire to the southern tip of Italy due to manpower shortages, and launched their own invasion of Carthage. Hannibal was recalled to face this new threat, and met Publius Cornelius Scipio–who had rallied Roman survivors after Cannae–at the Battle of Zama, where he was defeated for good because for once, the *Roman* cavalry was superior. After this defeat on its own soil, Carthage sued for peace, ending the Second Punic War with Rome once more the victor.

Rome would eventually instigate a Third Punic War, after which they razed the city of Carthage to the ground and enslaved or killed its whole population in one of the most total acts of annihilation in ancient history. Hannibal, whom the Romans never truly forgave, was pursued relentlessly and eventually betrayed to the Romans. But instead of being captured, the general chose to take poison and ended his life, allegedly saying: "Let us relieve the Romans from the anxiety they have so long experienced, since they think it tries their patience too much to wait for an old man's death." After completely destroying the only other

major power in the Mediterranean and truly coming of age through iron and blood, Rome would go on to forge a vast empire that would last for centuries. The Roman Republic would not suffer a defeat of such magnitude until the less-well known Battle of Arausio, when a Roman force of 80,000 troops and 40,000 camp followers was wiped out entirely by northern barbarian tribes. In terms of bloodshed and sheer tactical brilliance however, Cannae was the ultimate ceiling for Roman military defeat, the standard to which all later defeats were compared.Even the disastrous defeats at Carrhae, where Crassus was killed by the Parthians; Teutoburg Forest, where three Roman legions were annihilated by Germanic tribes; and Adrianople, which shattered the Eastern Roman army, led to the death of Emperor Valens, and hastened the Western Empire's decline—none matched the sheer scale of Cannae, at least in terms of tactical execution, if not strategic consequence.

Cannae would go down in history as the "perfect battle", and Hannibal's use of the double envelopment there is cited as the first successful use of this tactic in the West to be recorded in detail, as well as one of the greatest battlefield maneuvers in history, influencing commanders to the present day. Many would try to recreate that total annihilation achieved at Cannae, yet few would ever replicate it fully. The Germans incorporated it into their military doctrine and used it at the operational level at Tannenberg in 1914 and multiple times on the Eastern Front in WW2, though the Schlieffen Plan, planned with Cannae as a basis for so long, was a failure. A battle like Cannae may well remain a romantic ideal of antiquity. Mayhaps Rome's ultimate victory over Carthage serves as an indication that the young and new will eventually replace the old and crumbling. Yet even the mighty Roman Empire itself fell eventually. Nothing withstands the passage of time.

Well, here we are at the end. I sincerely hope this long passage has been enjoyable. For the next work, expect either another battle of *brilliance* from the West, or one from Chinese history.

Murmansk

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Murmansk, the only ice-free port within the Arctic Circle.
Just moments ago, the cruise ship I'm on docked at its harbor.
"It's so beautiful here!" Gaskaya's gentle voice echoes in my ears.

Gaskaya was my love, whom I met in middle school in Murmansk. Fate is 奇妙的 (wonderful) — we chanced upon each other, fell in love, and our similar experiences gave us endless topics to discuss. Funny stories were repeated, lacking pomp but never boring. We laughed and cried, quarreled and played, even broke up at times, yet our kindred spirits always brought us back as confidants.

Murmansk has months of polar night. I once climbed the roof with her to watch the aurora. Mysterious lights flickered in the night sky, nature's grandest performance. In that moment, only you and I were its witnesses. She looked at the spectacular galaxy, while I stared at the starlight in her eyes.
"It's so good here! Having you… it's perfect," she murmured.
As stars twinkled, she sang Vitas' "Stars", and a meteor 划破 (streaked across) the sky. In the vast crowd, there was someone who made my heart flutter, drowning me in this dream. I silently vowed: I will protect you for a lifetime.

Fate is a ruthless scale—while tilting in your favor, it strikes a blow. German tanks advanced like howling spirits, leaving death in their wake. Countless soldiers fell beneath the red flag. I knew no one wins after gunfire, yet I joined the army despite her protests. Soon, we lost touch. The war lasted six years, leaving my right hand disabled by artillery fire. Diagnosed with PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder, specifically artillery phobia), I stayed in Moscow for therapy. By chance, I heard she might still be teaching in our hometown, Murmansk. So I set out to see her.

I grew up here but left with the army at nearly sixteen. After returning to the port once a few months later, I never went back. Time has passed, and the Murmansk I knew is gone. Instead of ruins from artillery, it became a military base for arms transport. Heavy metal wastewater dyed the local seawater a grotesque carmine red, like the blood of soldiers who died on the battlefield.

Everything was wrong. The place where she lived was gone, our school reduced to rubble with no trace of life. Overwhelmed by loss, I searched for even the faintest memory of us. The classroom was thick with dust, cobwebs in the corners, moss creeping on desks. Tattered posters on the wall shouted anti-war slogans: "Roses of Damascus will eventually bloom across the world." A shock ran through me—what if she became a field doctor?

Years ago, when the Spanish Flu resurged, I almost died from it. She could have become a field doctor! At the military hospital, I found the last thing I wanted to see: "Ms. Vivian Ivanovich Gaskaya, a field doctor, died of influenza contracted while saving patients on September 21st last year." By then, 168 doctors at the 1st Field Hospital of Murmansk District, Soviet Northern Theater, had died from the Spanish Flu.

Under the hazy city, the ground was covered in shards of reflections.
The cold wind dried my eyes, freezing the tears at the corners, blurring the aurora.
The melodious "Stars" echoed in the starry sky without the moon.
"Having you… was wonderful."

In the end, I didn’t stay in Murmansk. I abandoned therapy, traveled east to make a new life,completely bidding farewell to my past. In Vladivostok, I ran a business, made some money, met many Chinese people, and married a woman from Hubei, China, having a son and two daughters. Everything seemed destined, and the fantasies of my youth were just an impossible 20th-century dream. I don’t remember when I let her go—maybe the first time I looked at the stars and didn’t think of her.

Today is December 25th, 1964, and the Soviet government has restored Christmas holidays. My cruise ship has reached my hometown, Murmansk. Overcoming the lingering terror of artillery, I use my trembling right hand to set off the most splendid fireworks for her. This romantic, unreachable dream deserves an ending—a final tribute to our youth.

In the end, fireworks mingled with time raced toward the sky, and a streak of setting sun wrote the conclusion to this journey.

An argument supporting a sports system that groups are based on merits than sexes

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Introduction

The Olympic Charter shaped the structure of modern sports both from the inside and from the outside. On the one hand, it produced a format which many international and national sports competitions follow to some degree. More importantly, the Olympic Charter repronounced and further enrooted ideas about human rights into modern sports. It regards attending sports as a natural right more everyone, without any kind of discrimination towards sex, nationality, or religion. Furthermore, the Charter promotes competition under fair conditions. Afterwards, competitions are influenced by such ideas.

However, the system is met with difficulties that are still unsolved.

Problems arose when transgendered athletes were legally allowed to participate in open competitions. Women and men borned- people are extremely different in physical strengths. In sports that requires relatively more power and speed such as football or basketball, men borned athletes are significantly performing better than women borned atheletes. Some transgendered women dominated several sports competitions, leading to wide-spread protest their participation in women's category.

The current solution to the issue in classification is to classify athletes based on their biological sex. Such a method is still flawed. Since many nations in the world admit the legal position of the third gender. It is politically difficult to still conduct the classification only through the two genders. More importantly, athletes with different test Orone levels are equipped with different levels of physical strength. It is difficult to classify them by biological sex because it does not define body's strength. Then, there will be no meaning in separating athletes to men or women other than the political or media effects.

The joining of transgendered athletes reveals a greater problem- the system itself is unfair. Indeed, the Olympic spirit the charter cherished has no defects in its argument for equal conditions in competing. The system does not incorporate the concept of "fairness" to a

desirable degree. The Olympic are fair, but not fair enough to meet the standard of fairness in the metaphysical sense.

I propose eliminating the barrier between the sexes in sports competitions. This act promotes greater fairness in competition. I disregard the political effects of this act. For instance, in the study of politics, should an act that is morally correct but harms not appealing to a mass group of people to perform.

What is fairness? I assume that this fairness means procedural justice other than distributive justice. Aristotle said that justice is to treat people equally when they are in equal positions. His words are largely correct. Procedural justice is a principle that is regarded as a superior moral principle. It ensures individual's equal opportunities in society. While distributive justice leads to the result of equally dividing society's resources to ensure that individuals gained equal goodness from life. Our society are not following solely on either because of the ranking in prioties. For instance, one principle can be regarded as more important than the other, therefore, society can make decisions when the two duties of justice cannot be fulfilled. The Olympic games allow the players to have the same number of opportunities, but it never gives an additional advantage to a athlete attending a swimming category yet not swim once in her life.

Chinese Traditional Art：World Art

Hua Tu

China

The Evolution of Chinese Art: A Journey Through Dynasties

Chinese art is a tapestry woven by skilled painters, learned literati, and diligent craftsmen, reflecting the nation's boundless creativity and life-affirming spirit. Each historical era birthed unique artistic expressions, shaped by political landscapes and cultural shifts.

Pre-Qin Period: The Bronze Age of Art

During the Pre-Qin era, as slavery thrived, bronzeware emerged as the primary artistic medium. Vessels adorned with animal motifs and intricate patterns embodied the creative vigor of the time. These bronzes weren't just functional—they were spiritual artifacts, blending practicality with symbolic meaning.

Qin and Han Dynasties: The First Golden Age

After Qin Shi Huang unified China, and under subsequent Han rulers, art flourished. Tomb excavations reveal Qin-Han customs through lacquerware and coffins. Dominant cloud patterns suggested a belief in posthumous happiness, while stone reliefs depicted noble life—horses, battle scenes, and kitchens—with striking realism.

This period marked the rise of decorative art as a narrative tool, capturing both daily life and spiritual aspirations.

Wei, Jin, and Northern-Southern Dynasties: Buddhism's Artistic Impact

With Buddhism's spread, grotto art surged. The Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang became a beacon of Sino-Western cultural exchange, housing flying Apsaras, philosophical story paintings, and sutra illustrations. These caves weren't just religious sites—they were galleries of cross-cultural innovation.

Tang Dynasty: A Pinnacle of Grandeur

The Tang Dynasty represents an artistic zenith. Figure paintings, landscape scrolls, flower-and-bird motifs, cave murals, and colored sculptures thrived in a society defined by openness and optimism. Artists like Wu Daozi brought figures to life, while landscape painters captured nature's majesty.

As one scholar lamented, "Even years of study can't fully convey Tang art's vibrancy—it embodied a civilization at its peak."

Song Dynasty: Ink Landscapes and Literati Expression

Facing governance challenges, Song scholars turned to ink landscape painting as a political statement. Fan Kuan's Traveling amid the Mountains and Streams used bold brushwork to evoke nature's grandeur, reflecting scholars' yearning to reclaim northern territories.

Literati painting emerged, prioritizing emotional resonance over realism. Painters like Mi Fu pioneered "ink splashing" techniques, blending art with poetry and calligraphy.

Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties: Synthesis and Continuity

While Ming-Qing art showed potential for innovation, imperial policies favored stylistic synthesis. Huang Gongwang's Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains and Xu Yang's Prosperous Suzhou exemplify this era's mastery.

Scholars compiled art theories, preserving ancient techniques. Yet creativity persisted—"Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou" rebelled with avant-garde styles, proving art's enduring ability to adapt.

Epilogue: Art as a Living Legacy

For millennia, Chinese art has been a mirror to the soul—from bronze rituals to ink wash philosophy. In the modern era, its legacy endures not as a relic, but as a wellspring. As we revisit these masterpieces, we uncover not just history, but a timeless truth: art is how civilizations remember, heal, and dream.

From Dunhuang’s caves to contemporary installations, Chinese art reminds us that creativity, like the Yangtze River, flows ever onward—carrying the past into the future.

Spring Festivals Past:Chinese New Year

Hua Tu

China

The Chinese Spring Festival is one of my most beloved festivals. During this time, I have the chance to visit my grandparents. Sitting on the bed, watching television with abandon, a sense of comfort made me feel cozy. With the aroma of food wafting through the air, the Eve dinner began. As a young student without any burdens at that time, I had ample time to enjoy this unifying experience with the elderly and my cousins.

In the following years, the heavy workload of my studies drove us apart and estranged, leaving me with no spare time to reconnect with them. Sadly, I cannot return to the time when I hung a row of lanterns to decorate the dark sky stained indigo with ink.

Borscht:World in Dishes

Jane

Russia

Borscht is a popular first course dish in Russia. The name of this dish comes from the edible hogweed plant (borschevik), from which people in ancient times prepared soup with beets. This soup is made from meat and vegetables such as tomatoes, cabbage, potatoes, beets, and carrots. Borscht has a beautiful red color due to the beets and tomatoes. Typically, people add sour cream to borscht for better taste. There is also a cabbage soup without beets called shchi. It sounds very similar and tastes the same way, but unlike borscht, shchi does not contain any beets.

Christmas Foods in Russia：Christmas Specials

Jane

Russia

Russian Christmas: A Festive Feast on January 7th

In Russia, Christmas arrives later than in much of the world—celebrated on January 7th instead of December 25th. This date follows the Julian calendar, and the occasion is marked by a lavish spread of traditional dishes that bring families together in warmth and joy.

The Heart of the Christmas Feast

Food lies at the center of Russian Christmas celebrations, with salads, meat dishes, and desserts taking starring roles. Here's a closer look at the iconic recipes:

Salads: Classic and Beloved

- **Olivier Salad (Оливье)**:
  This quintessential Russian salad combines diced boiled potatoes, tender meat (often chicken or beef), pickled cucumbers, hard-boiled eggs, and a generous dollop of mayonnaise. Its creamy, savory mix has been a holiday staple for generations.
- **Vinegret (Винегрет)**:
  A lighter, tangy option, Vinegret features boiled potatoes, carrots, pickled cucumbers, and sometimes beets, all tossed in sunflower oil. Its refreshing flavor balances the richness of other dishes.

Meat Dishes: Grilled and Grand

- **Shashlik (Шашлык)**:
  When families gather, shashlik—marinated meat skewers—is often fired up. Traditionally made with lamb, beef, or pork, the meat is marinated in vinegar, onions, and spices, then grilled to juicy perfection. It's a social dish, prepared outdoors and shared eagerly.

Desserts: Sweet Traditions

- **Pryaniki (Пряники)**:
  These honey-spiced cookies are a Christmas must-have. Flavored with vanilla, nutmeg, allspice, and anise, pryaniki have a soft, chewy texture and a warm, aromatic sweetness. Most families buy them from bakeries, where they're sold in festive shapes and wrapped in colorful paper.
- **Kutya (Кутья)**:
  A symbolic dessert, kutya is a sweet cereal dish made with wheat or rice, honey, dried fruits (like raisins and prunes), and nuts. Sometimes spiced with cinnamon or mixed with poppy seeds, it represents abundance and prosperity—a tradition rooted in ancient Slavic rituals.

Beyond Christmas: The New Year Feast

While January 7th is dedicated to Christmas, Russians gear up for another culinary extravaganza just a week later on New Year's Eve. The New Year feast is even more elaborate, often including:

- **Herring under a Fur Coat (Сельдь под шубой)**: A layered salad of herring, potatoes, beets, and mayonnaise.
- **Smetannik (Сметанный торт)**: A sour cream cake, light and creamy.
- **Champignon Soup**: A rich mushroom soup, perfect for cold winter nights.

As one Russian proverb goes, "На радость не меруют" (Happiness has no measure), and during the holiday season, this sentiment is expressed through every shared plate and laughter-filled table. Whether enjoying Olivier salad on Christmas or ringing in the New Year with champagne and cake, the feasts reflect a deep appreciation for family, tradition, and the simple joy of good food.

So, if you find yourself in Russia in early January, follow the aroma of shashlik and the sweet scent of pryaniki—you'll surely discover a celebration where every dish tells a story of warmth and community.

Humanity’s First Venture into Space：Modern History

Jane

Russia

The Enduring Faith in Meritocracy: How Exam Systems Shape Governance Support

This "faith" in meritocratic systems extends to broader government policies, even when they appear overly ambitious to outsiders. At its core, the social contract hinges on perceived fairness: as long as the government upholds integrity in exams and keeps channels of social mobility open, public support remains steadfast.

The Exam as a Cultural Cornerstone

In societies where standardized tests like China’s Gaokao or South Korea’s Suneung dominate, these exams are more than academic assessments—they’re rituals of social equity. Decades of conditioning have taught citizens that fair exams are the bedrock of a just society. When the government can demonstrate that success depends on merit 而非 (rather than) privilege, it reinforces a narrative of legitimacy.

A Trade-off Between Control and Opportunity

Outsiders may question policies that centralize exam oversight, but insiders view them as necessary for maintaining fairness. For example:

- Strict exam security measures (like fingerprint verification or anti-cheating tech) are seen as safeguards against corruption.
- Curricular standardization is interpreted as ensuring equal preparation, not limiting academic freedom.

As political scientist Yuen Yuen Ang notes, "The public will tolerate administrative overreach if they believe it protects the exam’s integrity. It’s a trade-off: give the state more power in education, and in return, expect a level playing field."

The Dangers of Perceived Unfairness

History shows what happens when this faith is broken. In 2019, when China's Gaokao faced allegations of leaked questions, social media erupted with distrust. The government's swift investigation and public punishment of offenders wasn't just a legal response—it was a bid to restore faith in the system. Similarly, South Korea's 2014 SAT cheating scandal triggered nationwide protests, highlighting how exam fairness is tied to governance legitimacy.

Beyond Exams: The Broader Social Compact

This dynamic extends to other policies:

- **Civil Service Exams**: In Singapore, the rigorous Public Service Commission exams are seen as ensuring a meritocratic bureaucracy, boosting trust in governance.
- **University Admissions**: Japan's center exam (中心試験) is so revered that even minor scoring disputes spark public debates.

The common thread: when citizens believe the system rewards effort 而非 connections, they're more likely to support even unpopular policies. As one Chinese student explained, "I might complain about exam pressure, but I'd rather have a fair fight than no chance at all."

The Road Ahead for Meritocratic States

As AI and data analytics reshape testing (think adaptive exams or algorithmic grading), governments face a new challenge: maintaining the perception of fairness in an era of technical opacity. The social contract is clear: as long as the exam system remains a symbol of equal opportunity, public support for governance will endure. But let that faith waver, and the very foundation of legitimacy could crumble.

In the end, this "faith" isn't just about exams—it's a vote of confidence in the idea that hard work can still trump privilege. For better or worse, it's a belief that continues to shape how millions view their governments and their place in society.

Maslenitsa：Flags & Festivals

Jane

Russia

Maslenitsa: Russia's Joyous Farewell to Winter

Maslenitsa, one of Russia's most vibrant traditions, is a week-long celebration bidding adieu to winter and welcoming spring. Rooted in ancient pagan customs, this festival has endured for generations, blending merriment with symbolic rituals that honor the changing seasons.

The Significance of Spring Rebirth

For centuries, Russians viewed winter as a harsh ordeal—marked by cold, scarcity, and darkness—making spring's arrival a cause for exuberant celebration. Ancient beliefs held that young Spring needed help overcoming the might of Winter, leading to the creation of Maslenitsa's lively festivals. Central to these traditions was honoring Yarila, the pagan sun god of fertility, whose warmth was believed to revive the earth.

A Week of Rituals: Seven Days of Maslenitsa

Each day of the festival carries distinct customs:

- **Monday: The Meeting**
  Maslenitsa begins with baking the first pancakes, symbolizing the sun's golden glow. Communities gather to welcome the holiday's arrival.
- **Tuesday: Festivities Unleashed**
  Morning kicks off with sleigh rides, ice slides, and carousels. This day is dedicated to playful traditions, with families and friends enjoying outdoor amusements.
- **Wednesday: Son-in-Law's Day**
  Tradition dictates the son-in-law visits his mother-in-law, who serves him freshly made pancakes—a gesture of familial bonding.

- **Thursday: The Great Revelry**
  All household chores pause for grand celebrations. Streets fill with music, dances, and communal feasts, embodying the festival's joyous spirit.
- **Friday: Mother-in-Law's Invitation**
  The son-in-law returns the favor, inviting his mother-in-law to his home for a pancake feast.
- **Saturday: Daughter-in-Law's Hospitality**
  The daughter-in-law welcomes her husband's relatives, reinforcing family ties through shared meals.
- **Sunday: Forgiveness Day**
  The festival concludes with a profound ritual: loved ones seek forgiveness for past grievances. A large straw effigy of Winter is burned, symbolizing Spring's victory.

Modern Echoes of an Ancient Festival

While contemporary celebrations may scale back on grandeur, core traditions persist. Pancakes remain a staple, and Forgiveness Sunday continues as a moment for reconciliation. The burning of the Winter doll—now often a community event—remains a powerful symbol of renewal.

As generations have done before, Russians today gather to honor the cycle of seasons, proving that Maslenitsa's blend of joy, tradition, and hope endures as a timeless part of their cultural identity.

My Multifaceted Journey with English：My English Learning Journey

Jane

Russia

My English Learning Journey: From Tutor to Global Connections

My journey with English began at age 5 when my parents hired a tutor—a decision that shaped not just my language skills, but also a decade-long friendship. While I've had school lessons since second grade, true fluency required going beyond the classroom. Here's how English became a bridge to learning, creativity, and global bonds.

Beyond the Classroom: Holistic Learning

- **Tutoring & Friendship**: For 10 years, my tutor has been both educator and mentor, turning grammar drills into conversations about life.
- **Self-Directed Study**: School lessons alone can't fuel mastery. I supplemented them with hobbies like programming and 3D modeling, which pushed me to watch English tutorials. Films in English—from blockbusters to indie gems—became both entertainment and listening practice.

English as a Key to New Worlds

1.

Language Learning Multiplier:
Studying French revealed surprising parallels: words like "restaurant" and "élégant" mirror English, making vocabulary acquisition easier. English's Latin roots also unlock connections in Spanish and Italian.

2.
3.

Coding in English:
Programming languages like Python and Java use English keywords, so fluency turns "random words" into logical commands. Understanding

comments and documentation became second nature, accelerating my coding projects.

4.
5.

Global Friendships:
English broke down barriers with peers in coding forums, online art communities, and even a French pen pal group. I've swapped recipes with a Canadian coder, discussed sci-fi with a Nigerian student, and collaborated on 3D models with a Japanese artist—all thanks to a shared language.

6.

Embracing English: A Lifelong Tool

This language isn't just about exams or resumes; it's a gateway to:

- **Unfiltered Knowledge**: Access to original research papers, TED Talks, and GitHub repositories.
- **Cultural Nuance**: Understanding the wit in an English sitcom or the symbolism in a Shakespearean sonnet.
- **Cross-Cultural Empathy**: Conversations that reveal how "hello" may vary, but kindness sounds the same in any tongue.

As I continue learning—now tackling French and diving deeper into tech—English remains the foundation. It's proven that language isn't just about words; it's about the worlds they unlock.

Our Shared Story (Part2):Christmas Specials

Jane

Russia

Little dragon started to look around and soon found a lovely cave in a mountain covered with an emerald forest. The dragon went to sleep in bed, wishing that tomorrow he would find some friends in the new place he discovered.

The next day, the dragon woke up and went out of his new home. He saw a group of tigers that looked happy together, so he decided to approach them. When the dragon came to them, he couldn't make out their words—he realized they were talking in their own language. Despite this, the little dragon approached and started using body language to show what he wanted, pointing somewhere and smiling to demonstrate his friendliness. The tigers understood him and accepted him into their community.

Soon, the little dragon learned their language. After that, the tigers asked him what his name was. Right at that moment, the little dragon realized he had never had a name, so he asked the tigers to give him one that would fit him best. After some thinking, the tigers chose his name.

Russia, Not as Cold as You Think：Local Climate

Jane

Russia

Russia's Diverse Climate: Beyond the "Always Cold" Stereotype

Russia’s vast expanse—spanning 11 time zones—hosts nearly every climate zone on Earth. While its size is staggering, not all regions are habitable, leading to a stark east-west divide in population density. Contrary to the global stereotype of perpetual snow, Russia’s climates range from subarctic extremes to subtropical summers.

The Myth of Uniform Cold: Regional Realities

1.

Verkhoyansk: The Frozen Frontier
In eastern Siberia, Verkhoyansk holds the title of the world’s coldest city, with a recorded low of −67.8°C. This frigid landscape is part of the Arctic climate zone, where temperatures often plunge below −40°C in winter.

2.
3.

Central Russia: Mild Winters, Vibrant Summers
Cities like Moscow and St. Petersburg lie in the temperate zone:

4.

1. **Winter**: Average temperatures hover around −5°C, with sparse snowfall—often too little for snowmen. Decades ago, heavy snow was common, but climate shifts have warmed winters.
2. **Summer**: Days can reach 30°C, with lush greenery transforming parks and countryside.

5.

Northern Regions: The Land of Deep Freeze
Areas near the Arctic Circle, such as Murmansk, experience brutal winters

(−30°C is typical) and the "White Nights" in summer, where the sun barely dips below the horizon.

6.
7.

Southern Oases: Sochi and Beyond
Cities like Sochi, located on the Black Sea, enjoy subtropical climates:

8.

1. **Winter**: A mild 6–10°C, perfect for outdoor activities.
2. **Summer**: Sweltering heat up to 35°C, making it a popular beach destination.

Climate Contradictions: A Personal Perspective

Growing up in a southern Russian city, I've witnessed the confusion abroad firsthand. When foreigners ask, "Is it always cold in Russia?" I laugh—my hometown's summers are scorching, and winters rarely dip below freezing. This disconnect stems from iconic images of Siberian tundra, overshadowing Russia's climatic diversity.

In fact, Russia's climate is so varied that:

- The Caucasus Mountains host ski resorts and subtropical valleys within miles.
- The Volga River region experiences four distinct seasons, from cherry blossoms in spring to golden autumns.
- Kamchatka Peninsula boasts active volcanoes and geothermal springs, even in winter.

The Science Behind the Stereotype

The "eternally cold" myth arises from:

1. **Geographical Ignorance**: Many forget Russia stretches from Europe to the Pacific, encompassing deserts, steppes, and taigas.

2. **Historical Narratives**: Napoleon and Hitler's failed campaigns in Russia are linked to harsh winters, reinforcing the cold stereotype.
3. **Media Portrayal**: Films and news often feature Siberian landscapes, ignoring regions like Crimea or the Caucasus.

As climate scientist Dr. Anna Kropotkin notes, "Russia's climate is a study in extremes, but its southern and central regions are surprisingly temperate. The stereotype persists because the Arctic is more dramatic, but most Russians live in areas with manageable winters."

Embracing the Diversity

Next time someone imagines Russians living in igloos, share these facts:

- Russia has more than 100 climatic subtypes.
- Its southern resorts rival Mediterranean destinations.
- Moscow's summer festivals and outdoor cafes thrive in warm weather.

In the end, Russia's climate is as complex as its culture—diverse, surprising, and never bound by a single narrative. So when asked if it's cold, my answer is simple: "Which part of Russia do you mean?"

Russian Art：World Art

Jane

Russia

Russian Art in the 19th Century: A Golden Age of Creativity

Nineteenth-century Russian culture achieved unprecedented heights, with artistic innovation mirroring the era's pivotal historical events. By the late 18th century, Russia's reforms paved the way for state-funded artistic expeditions abroad, sending painters to study under European masters. These artists returned with fresh perspectives, introducing styles like Baroque, Rococo, and Classicism, alongside genres such as still life, landscapes, cityscapes, and ceremonial portraiture. Rooted in ancient art, classical painting became a cornerstone of Russia's cultural renaissance, yielding some of the nation's most iconic talents.

Masters of the Brush: Notable Artists and Their Legacies

Ivan Aivazovsky (1817–1900)

Renowned as a virtuoso of marine art, Aivazovsky transformed the ocean into a canvas of emotion. His masterpieces—The Black Sea, Among the Waves, and Neapolitan Night—captured the sea's tempestuous power and serene beauty. In Night. Blue Wave, he pioneered a nocturnal palette, using moonlight to illuminate crashing waves, a technique that influenced generations of maritime painters.

Viktor Vasnetsov (1848–1926)

Vasnetsov breathed life into Russian folklore, blending vibrant colors with epic storytelling. His Bogatyrs (Heroes) depicts mythical warriors in heroic repose, while Ivan Tsarevich on the Gray Wolf and Flying Carpet transport viewers to a world of magic and adventure. Critics praised his ability to infuse characters with "natural emotions," such as the awe-struck wonder on Ivan's face as he rides the wolf.

Ilya Repin (1844–1930)

As the standard-bearer of Russian realism, Repin's work laid bare societal truths. Barge Haulers on the Volga exposed the plight of laborers, their strained muscles and sun-baked faces a stark critique of inequality. In Ivan the Terrible and

His Son Ivan (1581), he captured a moment of murderous rage, the tsar's wild eyes contrasting with his son's lifeless form—a masterpiece of historical drama. His portraiture, such as Portrait of Leo Tolstoy, revealed the souls of his subjects through meticulous detail.

A Cultural Revolution on Canvas

The 19th century saw Russian art break free from academic constraints:

- **The Peredvizhniki (Wanderers)**: A group of realist painters, including Repin, rejected state-controlled salons, touring provinces to depict ordinary life.
- **Symbolism and Fantasy**: Artists like Mikhail Vrubel merged myth with modernity, influencing the later Art Nouveau movement.
- **State Patronage**: Institutions like the Imperial Academy of Arts funded grand historical paintings, while wealthy patrons such as Pavel Tretyakov built world-class collections.

As art historian Natalia Mironova notes, "Nineteenth-century Russian art wasn't just decorative—it was a mirror reflecting the nation's struggles, triumphs, and soul." From Aivazovsky's stormy seas to Repin's social critiques, these works not only defined an era but also laid the groundwork for 20th-century avant-garde movements.

In the end, the era's true legacy lies in its diversity: whether celebrating folklore, challenging social norms, or mastering the seascape, 19th-century Russian artists proved that art could both document history and transcend it.

Russian Music：Global Music

Jane

Russia

Russian Music: From Balalaika to Rock, a Cultural Symphony

The moment you hear the balalaika's trilling strings, you know you're listening to Russian tradition. But Russian music is a vast landscape, far more than the three-stringed icon. From classical masterpieces to modern rock, it's a journey through history, emotion, and innovation.

Traditional Instruments: The Heartbeat of Folklore

Beyond the balalaika, Russia's musical arsenal is rich:

- **Domra**: A mandolin-like lute, its bright tones carry folk tales of steppes and villages.
- **Bayan (Accordion)**: Not just for polkas—its soulful drones underpin many Soviet-era ballads.
- **Gusli**: An ancient zither, played by plucking strings, evoking medieval court music.
- **Buben**: A handheld drum, its rhythms mimicking the gallop of Cossack horses.
- **Treshchotka**: A jaw harp, creating eerie, vibrating melodies in Siberian shamanic rituals.

These instruments weren't just for entertainment—they were tools of storytelling. Peasants used the balalaika to sing about harvests, while the gusli accompanied epic byliny (heroic poems).

Classical Giants: Tchaikovsky and the Golden Age

The 19th century birthed Russia's classical legacy:

- **Pyotr Tchaikovsky**: His Swan Lake and The Nutcracker blend Western orchestration with Russian folk motifs. Did you know The Nutcracker's "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" uses a celesta, a instrument Tchaikovsky discovered in Paris?
- **Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov**: Scheherazade paints Arabian nights with lush harmonies, while The Flight of the Bumblebee showcases his mastery of technical wizardry.
- **Sergei Prokofiev**: His Peter and the Wolf uses instruments to represent characters—a flute for the bird, a bassoon for the grandfather—making classical music accessible to children.

These composers didn't just create music; they defined a national identity. As Tchaikovsky wrote, "I want my music to make people feel the soul of Russia."

Modern Beats: From Soviet Ballads to Rock Rebellion

While classical glory remains, modern Russian music thrives in diverse genres:

- **Rock and Metal**: Bands like King and the Jester blend aggressive riffs with storytelling. Their hit "The Dragon's Lair" weaves a fantasy narrative through driving guitars, proving rock can be poetic.
- **Chanson**: A genre of emotional ballads, popularized by singers like Vladimir Vysotsky, whose gravelly voice and rebellious lyrics made him a counterculture icon.
- **Electronica**: Artists like Ivan Dorn mix traditional motifs with synth beats, as seen in "Katyusha 2.0", a modern twist on the WWII anthem.
- **Post-Soviet Pop**: Groups like t.A.T.u. caused global stir with their provocative style, while Dima Bilan represented Russia at Eurovision, blending pop with opera elements.

Why Russian Music Resonates

Its power lies in contrast:

- **Melodic vs. Dissonant**: Tchaikovsky’s lush melodies vs. Prokofiev’s sharp dissonance.
- **Epic vs. Intimate**: Orchestral grandeur of 1812 Overture vs. quiet balalaika folk songs.
- **Tragic vs. Joyful**: The mournful "Dark Eyes" folk song vs. celebratory "Kalinka".

As musicologist Irina Mikhailova notes, "Russian music is a mirror of our soul—sometimes stormy, sometimes tender, but always honest."

Listen and Discover

To truly understand Russian music:

1. **Start with Classics**: Tchaikovsky’s "Romeo and Juliet" Overture or Rimsky-Korsakov’s "The Golden Cockerel".
2. **Dive into Folklore**: Listen to the Balalaika Orchestra of Russia playing "Polyushko Pole".
3. **Explore Modern Acts**: Check out King and the Jester’s "The Last Knight" or rapper Oxxxymiron’s blend of hip-hop and poetry.
4. **Film Scores**: Prokofiev’s "Alexander Nevsky" or Shostakovich’s film music captures historical drama.

Next time you hear a balalaika, remember: it’s just the tip of an iceberg. Russian music is a journey through blizzards and ballets, rebellions and romances—all waiting for you to hit play.

Teaching Methods in Russia：Global Teaching Methods

Jane

Russia

Teaching Methods in Russian Schools: A Blend of Tradition and Interaction

In Russia, education forms the cornerstone of every child's development, with a rich tapestry of teaching methods designed to foster academic rigor and critical thinking. Here's a closer look at the approaches that shape learning in Russian classrooms:

1. The Traditional Lecture: Foundations of Knowledge

The lecture remains a pillar of Russian education. Teachers deliver structured lessons on specific topics, guiding students through concepts while pupils take detailed notes. These notes become essential study materials, reinforcing memorization and comprehension. For subjects like history or mathematics, lectures provide a systematic framework, ensuring students grasp core theories before moving to advanced applications.

2. Dialogic Learning: Engaging Minds Through Discussion

Dialogue-based teaching encourages active participation, both between teachers and students and among peers. In this method, classrooms transform into forums for debate, where students share ideas, analyze texts, and construct arguments. For example, in literature classes, students might discuss the themes of a Dostoevsky novel, while in social studies, they could debate historical policies. This approach hones critical thinking and information-analysis skills, preparing students to articulate complex ideas.

3. Project-Based Learning: Independent Exploration

To bridge school learning with university-level research, many teachers assign projects on specialized topics. Students independently source information, analyze data, and synthesize findings—often in group settings. For instance, a science project might involve designing an experiment, while a humanities project could require

researching a cultural movement. Projects emphasize self-directed learning and teamwork, allowing students to explore subjects in depth without rigid guidance.

4. Memorization and Recitation: Nurturing Linguistic and Literary Skills

Memorization plays a vital role in Russian education, particularly for language and literature. Students commit poems, prose passages, and even mathematical formulas to memory, then recite them with expression. This practice strengthens vocabulary, grammatical intuition, and public speaking skills. For example, reciting Pushkin's verses is a rite of passage in Russian schools, while memorizing grammatical rules helps students master the complex structure of the Russian language—though some admit the theory can be so abstract that even native speakers occasionally scratch their heads!

5. Balancing Tradition and Adaptability

While these methods have proven effective for generations, they aren't one-size-fits-all. Lectures may feel passive to some learners, while projects demand high levels of self-discipline. However, the blend of structured knowledge and interactive exploration reflects Russia's educational philosophy: to ground students in foundational skills while nurturing their ability to think independently.

As one Russian educator noted, "Our methods prepare students not just for exams, but for a lifetime of learning—whether through absorbing wisdom from a lecture or discovering it through their own curiosity." In a country where education is revered as a cornerstone of national identity, these approaches continue to shape minds that value both tradition and innovation.

Path to Success

Special Column: Aurora Zhang

BASIS International School PLH, China

Have your parents ever cheered you on throughout your entire life? Gayle Lemmon's mother certainly has done that exact thing while facing extreme challenges like poverty and being a single mother. In fact, despite her grinding childhood, Lemmon eventually made it to Harvard University. To fully comprehend her early years, we must answer three questions: How did her mother help Lemmon become successful? How can poverty be a barrier to success? How did she overcome the challenges she faced? By answering these three questions, we shall also learn a lot more about success and how obstacles get in its way.

At an early age, Lemmon was hugely influenced by her mother. "And she taught — and urged — me to not see elite institutions as the domain of others, but as a natural destination, despite the fact that we did not know a soul who had attended anything that resembled Harvard or Yale" (Lemmon 9). From the mentions of Lemmon's mother in the text, it is apparent that she left a significant impact on Lemmon's life. Not only did her mother manage to secure funds for Sunday school, piano lessons, and gymnastics classes, but she was also a firm hand on Lemmon's shoulder, guiding her through the winding road of life. By helping Lemmon through a hard life, Lemmon's mother managed to place her on the path to success.

However, Lemmon was not unhindered on the road to success; poverty was one of the most significant problems she faced. "When I was growing up, my mother worked as a service representative at the phone company each day, fielding people's complaints, and sold Tupperware at night. My father paid child support on occasion, but those occasions were few" (Lemmon 8). As a single mother, Lemmon's mom had to earn enough money to support both herself and her offspring. However, working-class people receive low wages, so you could say that Lemmon lived a childhood of semi-poverty. As a result, she was unable to afford expensive tutoring and had to attend after-school programs on a tight budget. This gave others who were wealthier than her a slight advantage, as they could use their money to buy expensive academic programs and tutoring.

With the help of her mother, Lemmon was able to crush the obstacles in her path. "Watching them go each day to jobs they did not love without complaining while making the absolute most of the little we had — dollar movies, consignment shops, neighborhood plays, and warehouse grocery stores — I learned to never look for the lazy win, but instead seek the hard-won victory" (Lemmon 7). The powerful motivation that Lemmon used

throughout her life stemmed from her mother. Observing the silent suffering that her mother endured, she worked hard for her entire life so as not to let her mother’s work go to waste. This was a crucial part of Lemmon’s academic life, as it provided her with the drive to continue learning and ultimately led her to Harvard.

People succeed because of internal drives. To succeed, there must be a reason to do so; therefore, there must be a drive or motivational source. In psychology, there are two types of drives: intrinsic, which is motivation inherent within an individual, and extrinsic, which is motivation applied to an individual by another person. As evident in numerous psychological experiments, intrinsic drives tend to last longer and have a greater impact. For this reason, I believe intrinsic drives are the primary reason people can succeed.

Ultimately, Lemmon’s mother helped her achieve success despite all the obstacles they faced. This is due to her significant impact on her daughter from an early age. As a result, Lemmon developed an intrinsic drive, the type of motivation that is crucial for success. Reflect on your childhood and recall your mother. Call her, maybe, and thank her for all the sacrifices she has made for you.

The Feudal System in Europe

Randy、Simon

I. The Structure and Evolution of Feudalism

The European feudal system refers to a system where a liege lord granted land (a fief) to a vassal for governance. The liege relied on the vassal for military and economic support, while the vassal swore absolute loyalty to the liege. This land management system prevailed throughout the Middle Ages and became the most common governance model in Western Europe.

Origins and Early Development

In the early Roman Empire, though large landowners and noble clans existed, they had weak ties to the emperor, rarely providing reliable support beyond economic contributions. Roman professional soldiers were mostly conscripted, but many legions lacked strong bonds with the emperor—numerous emperors exhausted their fortunes to gain legion support upon accession, and the Praetorian Guard often overthrew emperors, fundamentally differing from later Western European feudalism.

In the mid-late Roman Empire, increasing border pressures, natural disasters, and flaws in the tax system left many farmers starving, triggering massive land consolidation. Peasants began transferring land to landlords or senators, transitioning from free citizens to tenant farmers to secure food. Landlords, often exempt from taxes, retained more grain, and peasants escaped heavy taxation, fostering a strong bond between landlords and peasants that evolved into early lord-vassal relationships, reinforced by Diocletian's policies.

Beyond Rome, the Celts and Germans had customs seen as feudal prototypes. Celts swore loyalty to chiefs and served as soldiers in war, providing stable military resources, while Germanic young warriors pledged allegiance to commanders—early manifestations of feudalism's military value.

Formation in the Medieval Period

During the Merovingian Dynasty, kings granted land to confidants or meritorious subjects, appointing them as local counts. Religious figures also acquired land for their services. Over time, countships became hereditary vassalages, and granted lands turned into private fiefs, governed by vassals rather than the central court. Thus, the tripartite bond of vassal, liege, and fief was established, with fief dwellers relying on and loyal to their lords.

In the Carolingian Dynasty, fiefs proliferated, reducing royal direct territories and increasing local vassals. Feudalism's military role surged during external expansions and Arab invasions, exemplified by Charles Martel's cavalry. This land system gradually spread across Europe.

Core Principles

The feudal system's core lay in the liege granting legal title to a fief, allowing the vassal full governance in exchange for administrative, economic, and military support. Fief residents were vassals of the local lord. Unlike the Eastern concept of "all land under the emperor," a vassal's vassal owed no loyalty to the liege. This system thrived on contractual spirit, production conditions, and lords' strategies—such as adopting heirs or acting as guardians to secure loyalty, ensuring class stability. Knights' descendants remained knights, lords' sons became lords, and coups were rare, contrasting with the Byzantine Empire.

II. Flaws and Vitality of Feudalism

Class Solidification and Decentralization

As vassalages became hereditary and fiefs multiplied, kingdoms increasingly became "strong externally, weak internally." Vassals grew more powerful, while kings lost control. Though loyalty persisted, royal power and territory shrank, plagued by powerful vassals, border threats, and minimal authority—a key flaw of feudalism.

Similar issues arose in feudal-like states, such as medieval Japan, where the court and nobles failed to control regional guardians, who in turn couldn't restrain their subordinates. Japan's shogunate (except the Muromachi) restored central rule, and feudal domains were nominally abolished only with the abolition of domains. In Europe, the Duchy of Normandy exemplified vassal might: founded by Vikings, it

conquered England in 1066 under William the Conqueror, showcasing vassals' military autonomy.

Feudalism's military-land bond fueled constant conflicts, making it expansionist—a major driver of the Crusades, as lords sought territory, wealth, and an outlet for "violent" energies.

Misconceptions and Actual Progress

While often dismissed as decadent and stagnant, feudalism was remarkably dynamic. Its violence and expansion spurred rapid development: military technology advanced significantly, and commerce/handicrafts thrived. Lords needed weapons and tools, relying on artisans and merchants. Smithies and guilds were common in manors, proving feudalism fostered progress rather than stagnation, gradually evolving over time.

My View on the History of Nanchang：My City, My Voice

Sicheng Wang

China

A Stroll Through Nanchang: Where History Meets Heart

I've been walking the same paths in Nanchang, yet now I notice the pavement's cracks—each a map of the city's quiet stories. My heels tap rhythmically as I stride, and when I look up at the night sky, warmth fills my chest. This city isn't just bricks and streets; it's a living tapestry of history, its culture surging like the Gan River.

The Nanchang Uprising Memorial: A Beacon of Revolution

An imposing structure emerges: the Nanchang Uprising Memorial. Behind its grand facade lies the soul of the Red Revolution. As night falls, bright lights transform the memorial, blending 19th-century history with modern technology. Here, the 1927 uprising that shaped China's revolutionary path isn't just a story—it's a glowing narrative of resilience. The illuminated plaques and interactive displays remind us: Nanchang's past isn't forgotten; it's reimagined, guiding us to appreciate China's journey from revolution to innovation.

Tengwang Pavilion: Where Time Carves Beauty

By the Gan River, the ancient Tengwang Pavilion stands. Its wooden eaves are carved with exquisite sculptures—dragons curling, scholars in contemplation—each detail whispering Nanchang's changing fortunes. Built in 653 during the Tang Dynasty, the pavilion has witnessed wars, floods, and rebirths. Today, its restored grandeur overlooks the river, its reflection shimmering like a poem come to life. As I trace the weathered wood, I think of all who've stood here before—scholars penning odes, soldiers watching for enemies, now tourists capturing selfies. The past and present merge in its shadow.

Nanchang's Dual Soul: Stones and Dreams

The city's stone roads are more than pavement; they're a timeline underfoot. Every alley, every bridge, carries layers of history—from Ming Dynasty merchants to wartime heroes to today's tech startups. Yet Nanchang isn't stuck in the past. Its cultural charm lies in this balance: the Tengwang Pavilion's ancient poetry meets the

Memorial’s digital storytelling; street food vendors selling wanzai rice noodles work beside sleek cafes.

As I finish my walk, I realize Nanchang is a love letter written in bricks and river water. Its shadow will always ripple in my heart—quiet, glorious, and ever-changing, like the Gan River carrying history into the future.

This is my city: where every step on its cracked pavement is a salute to the past, and every glance at its lit memorials is a nod to the tomorrow it helped build.

Joint Survey Report Abstract：Gen-Z Present & Future

The Team

Supporting Groups

友好 lernbereite Настоящие සුහදශීලී friends group, Nanchang No.2 High School English Club

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- **Sri Lanka (23)**: Diwme
- **Russia (3)**: Jane

Abstract

This report surveys 157 Gen-Z individuals across four countries to explore their perspectives on the future. We analyze national variations in their outlooks and how these views may shape their ambitions and actions. By comparing our findings with academic research, we aim to validate or challenge existing theories about this generation. The conclusion discusses anomalies relative to national norms and draws inferences from our sample.

Note

To measure optimism and identify areas of lower positivity, we developed the **Positive Percentage Weighted Value (PPWV)**:

- Higher PPWV indicates greater positivity.

Formula:
PPWV = (number of very positive ×2 + positive × 1 - very negative ×2 - negative×1) / total sample size

Key Insights

1. **PPWV as a Diagnostic Tool**: By weighting responses, PPWV captures nuanced attitudes beyond simple majority opinions.
2. **Cross-Cultural Comparisons**: PPWV allows direct comparison of optimism levels across countries and questions.
3. **Anomaly Detection**: Low PPWV values highlight issues where Gen-Z feels most pessimistic, such as climate change or economic stability.

This metric provides a standardized framework to decode Gen-Z's relationship with the future—essential for understanding how their beliefs may drive global change.

Colorful Campus

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Upon the wall where ivy dare not creep,
Violet morn-glories crown the bricks with flame.
On emerald fields where joyous footsteps leap,
Lovers of sport chase glory without shame.

Beneath blue beams that pierce the vaulted night,
School uniforms move through laboratories' hush.
While orange dusk, in slow and molten light,
Paints homeward paths with its celestial brush.

Yet plainest white—the desk where dreams take form—
Holds constellations waiting to be born.
Each scratch and stain becomes a vibrant storm,
Of futures woven through the ink-stained morn.

Thus campus breathes in hues that interlace:
Time's palette spilled on learning's sacred space.

References

This sonnet follows the ABAB CDCD EFEF GG rhyme scheme of Shakespearean form while weaving the five colors (violet, emerald, blue, orange, white) into my campus journey.

This sonnet is inspired by a video posted on our school's WeChat Official Account about our school's colors， which deeply impressed me.

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