

SPECIAL EDITION

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TEACHERS' DAY SPECIAL EDITION



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foreword

I've never had a teacher try to convince me to be one. In fact, it seems almost ubiquitous for teachers to jokingly warn a classroom of students against it – “*don't become a teacher*”. It's a faux piece of cautionary advice that seeks to amuse, but perhaps it's worth reflecting on.

Teachers have impacted hundreds of generations and today's generation of teachers is no different. In every regard, teaching is never limited to an academic curriculum. It's what enriches a tedious school day, forges our character, moulds the individual we are and the one we choose to become. We are beyond privileged to have teachers that engage and indulge us – teachers whose classrooms set curriculum as the bare minimum, and our personal growth at the forefront.

In these classrooms, we are familiarised with each teacher's voice, handwriting, teaching style, and even their silhouettes through window grates as they're about to enter. However, this year's Special Edition seeks to illuminate a side of your teachers you don't often get the opportunity to see, from introductions to lifelong friendships created in the staffroom to unconventional hobbies to a reunion with H2 Mathematics.

In these stories, you'll find a window into your teachers' multidimensional personalities, motivations and hobbies, and discover that the lessons teachers impart outside the classroom are just as valuable as those within it.

Dear teachers, this is Raffles Press' tribute to the art and sacrifice of being a teacher: a series of articles that sheds light on who you are as people, and the rich human experiences that shape your teaching.

I've never had a teacher try to convince me to become one – and I wonder if any of our teachers needed convincing at all, for teaching requires nothing less than unrelenting patience, commitment and passion. It's a choice made with little regret and undeniable conviction. So to all teachers, thank you for choosing this path, and guiding us down our own.

Happy Teachers' Day!

Teo Hui Sian (25S06C)

Chairperson of Raffles Press, 2024-25

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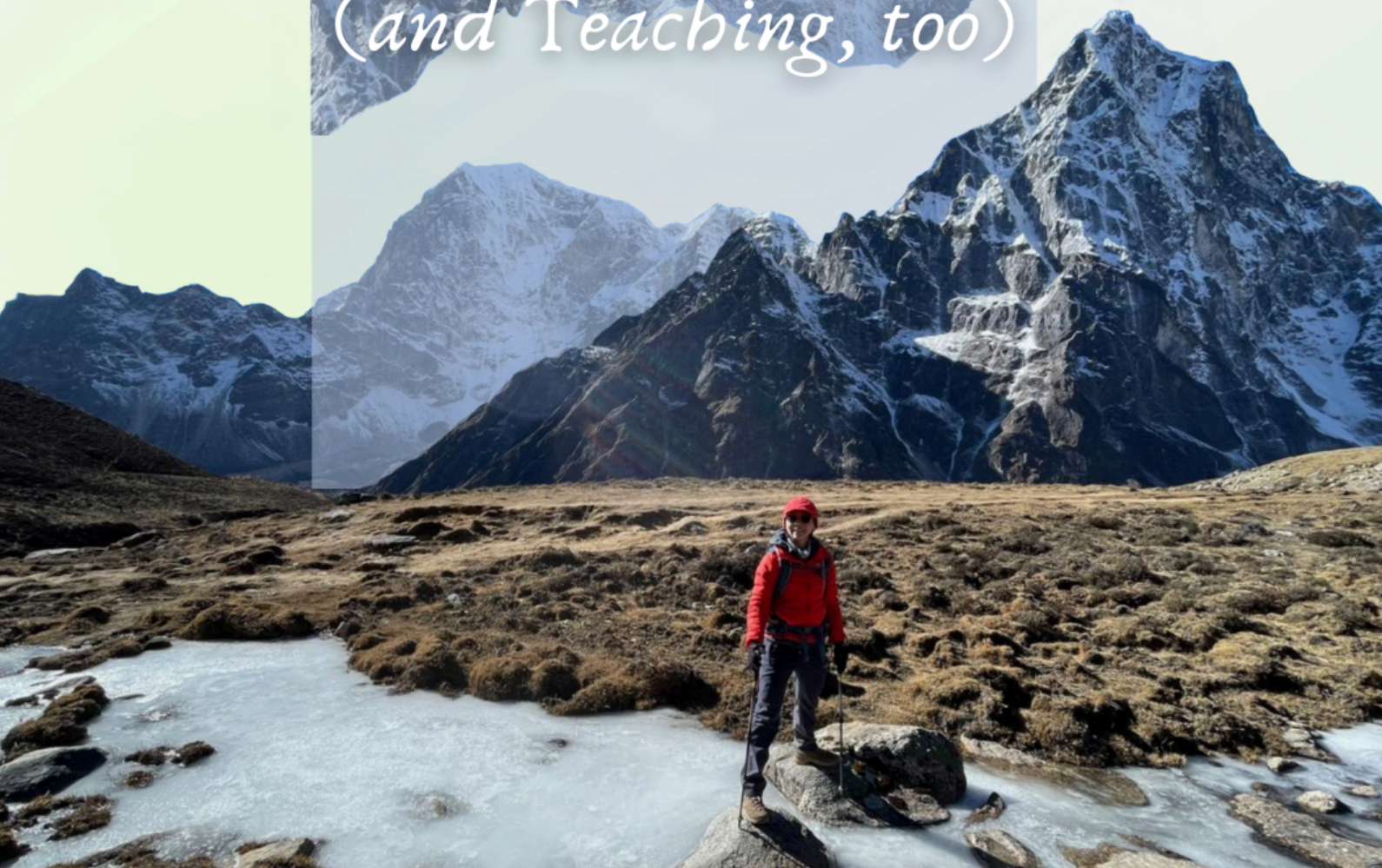
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COURAGE OF THE CLIMB

(and Teaching, too)



by Amanda Lim (25A01B) and Cayla Goh (25A01B)
Featuring Ms Ma Jialin

COURAGE OF THE CLIMB (AND TEACHING, TOO)

When you think of someone standing at Everest Base Camp, dangling over a cliff above the Pacific Ocean, or crossing a moving glacier, you most likely picture an adventurer, maybe even a NatGeo photographer capturing the perfect shot. But your chemistry teacher? Probably not.

But that's exactly who you should be picturing – Ms Ma Jialin.



Evidence of Ms Ma in her element!

How well do you know Ms Ma?

So, do you really know Ms Ma? When asked to describe her, her students didn't hold back. Words like "helpful," "enthusiastic," and "super active" came up – with some even describing her as "very woke" and "alpha".

It's clear that Ms Ma leaves a strong impression, but no matter how many adjectives her students throw out, they're only scratching the surface of who she really is. They only catch glimpses of someone who's much more than just a teacher.

Before stepping foot into the classroom, Ms Ma was on a different path entirely. Trained as a chemical engineer, she spent six months in the field before realising that working with machines wasn't her thing. So, she made a bold career switch to teaching – a decision that has stuck for nearly 20 years now.

And it's a good thing she did, because her passion for people is what makes her such an incredible teacher. Ms Ma's genuine care and diligence are evident in everything she does, especially in her current role, where she works with the Year Heads to ensure the well-being of the Year 5 Batch.

(Before we even began our interview for this article, she greeted us with a warm smile that immediately made us feel at ease, and genuinely asked about our day, even though she doesn't teach either of us. It's these small, personal interactions that really show how much she cares.)

But Ms Ma's experience extends far beyond the classroom. When she first started teaching, she was also a CCA teacher in ODAC, where she got hooked onto rock climbing – literally. When she's not in class diving into the periodicity of elements, you'll find her on a cliff, getting up close and personal with actual elements.

Ms Ma in her element

There's little better than hearing someone talk about their passion. Ms Ma is definitely not an exception; her voice is self-assured, imbued with all the experiences she's had. There's a spark in her eyes, both reminiscent and hungry for future opportunities to climb. (Which are just longer ways to say that she was really cool.)

Rock climbing is a very vulnerable sport – it puts you face-to-face with your weaknesses, both physically *and* mentally. But this is what gives her the chance to say: "This is me, and I'll do my best with what I've got!"

COURAGE OF THE CLIMB (AND TEACHING, TOO)

In fact, this is what brings her back to it: despite and because of when she stumbles. The crux—the most difficult part of each route—can defeat the hardest of rock climbers. However, the perseverance she has built up, as well her sheer curiosity for scaling new heights keeps her going.



Ms Ma scaling new heights! (literally)

Her favourite kind of climbing is *lead climbing*. Lead climbing is when you hook your rope to the bolts on the cliff face as you reach them. This requires trust in yourself, because when you fall before you get to clip your rope, you reset the previous few metres of progress. This is done again and again. Limits are pushed; faith is tested.

A life changing experience for her goes back to a summer's day in Australia.

One summer's day

Ms Ma recounts the story like she's talking to an old friend.

COURAGE OF THE CLIMB (AND TEACHING, TOO)

Picture this: it's summer at Mount Arapiles. At 5 p.m., Ms Ma and her friends start their climb, expecting the sunlight to last for four hours, but just three and a half hours later, the sun is dipping in the horizon, and the moon peeks out instead.

By 9:00pm, they had lost their route, handphone-less and headlamp-less. 'We were just hanging on the rock with no idea where to go,' she recalls.



Ms Ma and her friends' view – probably. We don't know: she didn't have her phone. (Credits: [Parks Victoria](#))

Then, in the distance, a satellite tower. A sign of a road! They scramble to it, and they start walking along the pavement. It's pitch-black. Nothing but the crackle of their shoes with each heavy step. (And the kangaroos jumping around in complete darkness.)

'I was like, I'm not going to make it through.' Ms Ma recalls the panic she felt along with her friends. But then, there it is—the light at the end of the tunnel: a car! It's her other friends, who drove up to search for them. They're saved—and live to conquer other rock walls.

It's a story of resilience, and a lesson to *always* 'bring water! bring a headlamp! and your phone!' She laughs, the experience clear as day in her memory. Though, despite everything: 'That was amazing,' Ms Ma concludes. It's these challenges and the ever-changing nature of the sport that keeps her on her toes. No one climb is ever the same. Each time, the sun paints the rocks a different shade of beautiful. It's beauty, both in the scenery as well as the tenacity of the human spirit.

COURAGE OF THE CLIMB (AND TEACHING, TOO)

Ms Ma has tried other sports like tennis and pickleball, but she always goes back to rock climbing. Rock climbing is her rock – the reminder that the scale up is possible.

The creativity she needs to project routes for rock climbing is the same creativity she feels is reflected in Chemistry. It's the elegance and mystery of it – and the exciting way you can explore the answers with others. When asked if she has chemistry with chemistry, she replied: 'It's an equilibrium that's still shifting.'

When rock climbing bonds with teaching

'It's the best form of mindfulness training,' she asserts. (We're more than inclined to believe her.) It keeps her grounded, even if it *is* several feet off the ground. It gives her a deep understanding of her body's conditions, zeroing in on the next step to climb. Her attention cannot be fragmented, as the slightest crack can hinder her course. This, she says, helps her a lot with her teaching.

Teaching is a vocation that requires a lot of giving. There's the behind the scenes work, the piles of marking they have to clear, the lesson planning with us in mind. Then there's also what they bring to the classroom. Bringing her full self to class every single time is her priority. The ability to be grounded in rock climbing applies to her genuine presence in the classroom, too.

The same way that rock climbing teaches her resilience, she teaches this resilience to her students. Through stories like that one summer day on Mount Arapiles, or even just her teaching, she demonstrates this resolve. Challenges come, but in us – she says – is the ability to show up, overcome them and turn out okay.

'Scary and strict' is what Ms Ma thought her students would have thought of her. ('I'm quite confident about this.') But, in reality, even if we can't see the walls she's scaled at the Everest Base Camp or in Italy, there's still something as distinct as her passion for rock climbing: her dedication and drive toward those whom she teaches. Her impact on others is tangible. Something we all can appreciate this Teachers' day.

Now you know more about her! (Psst. Now you know you can give her some rock climbing related gifts.)

The shifting equilibrium of life

Just like in chemistry, the equilibrium of our lives is always shifting. Yet, while the equilibrium of our lives may forever be in flux, Ms Ma proves one thing is constant: her

COURAGE OF THE CLIMB (AND TEACHING, TOO)

ability to embrace new challenges with a smile – whether she’s climbing cliffs or struggling to help us JC students understand organic chemistry.

“It’s okay to take some risks, so whatever you choose to do, it’s important to just have fun and to just do it! Fail and try again!” – Ms Ma

So, this Teachers’ Day, let’s celebrate Ms Ma and all our other teachers – not just for their exceptional skills in the classroom, but for the way they each inspire us to reach a little higher, climb a little further and push our limits to achieve great heights. (Though, on second thought, we might never literally scale quite as high as Ms Ma has.)

to understanding

physics

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and beyond

by Qiu Bixin (25A01A)

Special thanks to Teo Hui Sian (25S06C) and Keng Yi, Nicole (25S03S)

Featuring Mr Soh Wei Kuan

As the three of us walked into the interview, I had no idea what to expect. Out of the three of us, I was the only one who hadn't taken Physics since Year 2, a good three years ago—if he started talking about some Physics concept in the middle of the interview, my mind would go completely blank.

Once the interview started though, I heaved a sigh of relief. Other than the fact that no actual Physics was involved in the interview, Mr Soh broke down his teaching method in a very digestible way—a way that even someone who has no knowledge of Physics concepts can understand. This can be credited to Mr Soh's extensive experience in teaching Physics, as although this is his first year teaching in RI, Mr Soh had previously taught Physics in Nanyang JC (NYJC) for more than two decades.

Variables and constants... in teaching?!

“I create a set of variables and a set of constants for the student to identify.” - Mr Soh

The variables refer to the questions that come out, while the constants refer to the formulas and solving methods that the student should have in mind prior to doing any question. “So the student needs to realise that [...] what is more important is the constant and not so much about the solutions of the questions.” Hence, what Mr Soh focuses on in his lessons is teaching the constants—the problem-solving techniques—to his students and ensuring that they understand these constants.

“What's so good about this is, I'm creating a method that solves all questions, [and] I think [students] will be attracted to learning one method that's able to solve all questions.” - Mr Soh

Mr Soh came up with this teaching framework throughout his years teaching—at NYJC, and now, at RI. “To come up with this kind of framework,” he said, “you need to have a very strong understanding of the subject, and you also need to [try this framework out yourself].” He provided an analogy of cooking: if you want to make a good bowl of wonton mee, you yourself must find your cooking delicious too.

But... why Physics? Why teach?

Though, speaking of a “very strong understanding” of Physics, Mr Soh has just that. His love for Physics (and by extension, Maths) started when he was young. “I’ve naturally been comfortable with Maths since young,” Mr Soh told us. He then went on to take Further Maths, Maths, Econs and Physics (although he dropped Econs in JC2... kind of real of him, to be honest) in JC, before moving on to studying Civil Engineering in National University of Singapore (NUS).

But perhaps, the most puzzling question for me was, “*Why* do you like Physics?” To him, it’s “very simple”.

“What I like about the thinking process for Physics is [...] aligning the concept to the problem.” - Mr Soh

That instantly simplified the appeal of the subject for me. Although I still didn’t necessarily share that appeal, I could understand why someone might like it. The gratification you feel when you finally **get** something, and can finally apply it correctly to answer a question—that’s a feeling like no other.

Indeed, Mr Soh’s most memorable experience in NUS was a Physics special lesson he took. He remembers being exhausted because this lesson was late in the evening. But even then, the lesson was incredibly fun for him because he thoroughly enjoyed what was taught in the lesson.

So, his love for Physics led him to teach *Physics*. But why *teach* Physics? Well, Mr Soh, like some of us right now, took on tutoring jobs during his university years for some extra income (which is fair—who wouldn’t want some extra money on hand?). “[By the time] I graduated, I was already quite sure that I didn’t want to be an engineer—I wasn’t that interested after doing my [job] attachment,” Mr Soh shared with us. Conveniently, his twin brother (more about him in a bit!) went into teaching at the same time and Mr Soh followed in his footsteps.

“I couldn’t imagine teaching the same topic every 2 years, and as a [JC] student I always wondered, isn’t that job very repetitive?” - Mr Soh

Mr Soh was initially quite hesitant about being a teacher, but while he was teaching at NYJC, he realised that he actually really loved the job. He told us, “My passion for teaching has increased along the way rather than decreasing.” His favourite part about being a teacher is seeing students who change their attitudes and character and excel, because of his teaching and guidance.

“It’s not so much about getting a lot of As, it’s more [about] the impact we make on [our students].” - Mr Soh

Beyond Mr Soh the Physics Teacher: Who is Mr Soh the Human?

But Mr Soh is more than just a passionate Physics teacher: he’s also a family man, a Korean drama (K-drama) enthusiast, and the older one of a pair of twins.

Mr Soh’s twin brother is also, amazingly, a Physics teacher—the science blood must run strong in their family. But that isn’t the only way Mr Soh and his twin brother (Mr Soh²) are similar. They’re also very similar in terms of their personalities and tastes, according to Mr Soh. Even the teaching philosophy (recall the wonton mee analogy?) they came up with is similar—without having discussed it with each other. “I guess it’s a DNA thing,” joked Mr Soh.

Throughout the interview, it became quite obvious that Mr Soh loves his family deeply. He told us, “I tend to put my family as my number one priority”. Because of how busy it is being a teacher, Mr Soh tries to spend as much of his free time as he can with his family. “It could be as simple as going out together for a meal”—Mr Soh clearly treasures every second that he can spend with his family.

But everyone needs some time alone, and Mr Soh is no exception. He spends that time watching Korean dramas (K-dramas) on Netflix. Originally a Hong Kong drama enthusiast, he started watching K-dramas after he switched to Netflix. He shared with us, with a slightly sheepish smile on his face, that one of his favourite K-dramas is *The Good Bad Mother* starring Ra Miran and Lee Dohyun, a heartwarming and funny K-drama about the reconciliation between a mother and son.

As the interview drew to an end, we asked him about his aspirations in RI going forward. He told us that he hopes he can continue inspiring more students to see the joy of Physics. Understanding that many students struggle while learning Physics, he aims to help them realise that *"the subject can be as easy as ABC"*.

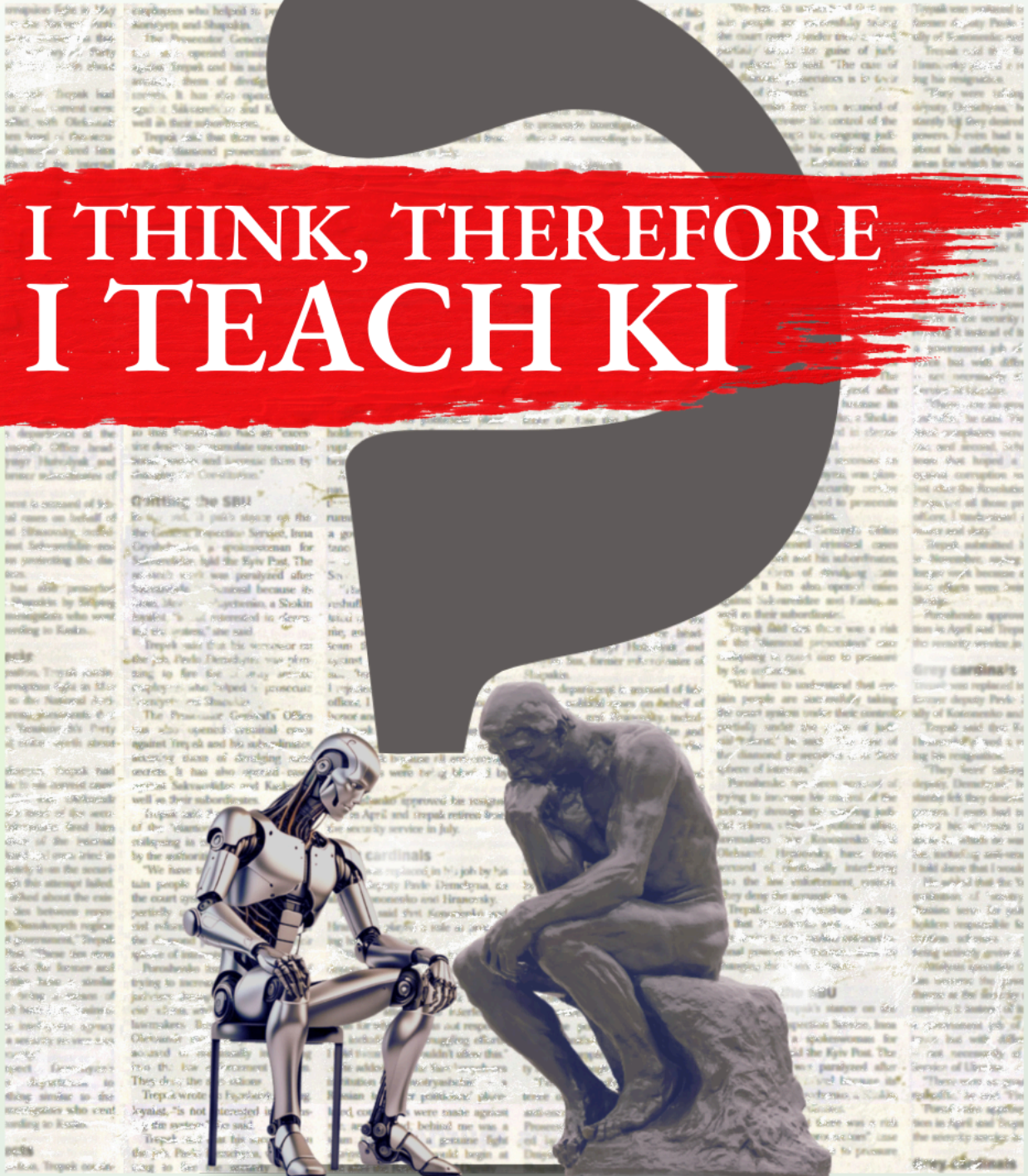
TO (UNDERSTANDING) PHYSICS AND BEYOND!

To end this article, here is a quote Mr Soh would like to convey to all students.

“Don’t find the answer, but let the answer find you.” - Mr Soh

Wishing Mr Soh all the best in his teaching career ahead, and hoping he makes many fond memories with his family!

I THINK, THEREFORE I TEACH KI



by Teo Hui Sian (25S06C) and Keng Yi, Nicole (25S03S)
Special thanks to Qiu Bixin (25A01A)
Featuring Mr Eldrick Cheong

What would you imagine a modern-day Singaporean philosopher to look like? Perhaps just the word “philosophy” draws forth vivid images of a grizzled old man, greying with the weight of knowledge. Or perhaps a recluse buried in books who spends all their time pondering.

Our first impression of Mr Eldrick Cheong is that he looks, well, way too normal. His “chill guy” appearance subverts both the archetypes of the weathered old philosopher and the introverted art student.

In fact, at some parts of the interview, it’s easy to see him as a peer rather than a teacher, one that would fit right into our cohort.

But this appearance is deceptive. Mr Cheong is a new teacher at our school, who had previously taught GP and has now moved on to KI, and as we get to know him more, his deep devotion to philosophy is evident in everything he does.

Philosophy is not just a subject to Mr Cheong—*it’s a lifestyle.*

Assume nothing, question everything. (Hopefully) Learn something.

For one, Mr Cheong’s enthusiasm about the philosophy aspect of KI is undeniable. As he speaks of philosophy and the role it plays in his job today, passion bleeds unknowingly into his words—the love of a true philosopher speaking of their craft.

“It’s full-time philosophy, and every time I’m teaching I think: this is something I can do in the long-term.” - Mr Cheong

Mr Cheong considers this as an example of his more laid-back life philosophy. He says that as long as he is able to teach something that he enjoys and has meaning for the students, he’d be content.

He walks the talk, too: his passion for philosophy shows in all aspects of his life, including teaching. Deviating from mindsets perhaps held more by other teachers, he frequently chooses his own reasoning and teaching philosophies, admitting to some “non-PC takes” that are almost shocking in their frankness from a student’s point of view.

“I don't believe in grades,” he says. “Trust me when I say, at the end of the day, grades really don't matter. No one's gonna remember you by your grades or whatever.”

Additionally, he often ponders on some of the rules enforced upon RI students, such as male students being barred from growing out their hair, wondering if there are reasons beyond what is deemed as conduct befitting an educational institution. “Something I think is: would having long hair deter this student from learning?”

His embodiment of the KI spirit is obvious here—after all, the KI student is always encouraged to ask *why*, not to take anything at face value. Not being difficult, just being thoughtful.

He encourages his students to follow in his footsteps as well, questioning anything and everything. Mentioning a rule he decided to introduce where students would have to sit with a new deskmate for each lesson, aimed to promote more intermingling within the class, he expresses his desire for a counterargument in classic KI (and GP) teacher fashion.

“I was hoping that people would try to argue against the argument. (*Do you prefer it when your students argue with you?*) Not just my students, anyone.”

On a broader scale, he even philosophises on education as a whole, reflecting on the changing schooling landscape, especially in the humanities scene. “I think, honestly, a lot of things you can learn without going to an institution... in class, I'm just a mediator. You don't need to watch my lecture to learn about whatever you're learning.”

It's a surprising sentiment from a teacher, admitted with no hint of bitterness about the vulnerability of his role, instead focused entirely on his students. For Mr Cheong, teaching (and hence KI) comes first—hence his devotion to reasoning, to philosophy.

I was a JC student, therefore I suffered

It may come as a surprise that Mr Cheong was never an arts student in JC, having taken PCML (Literature) as his subject combination instead. Reflecting on his time in JC, he admitted “JC was the toughest time in [his] life” – a sentiment likely shared by most (if not all) JC students, past and present.

However, with the wisdom and lived experience that comes with a few more years of life, it seems memories of this universal hardship will eventually brighten. Mr Cheong, who

remarks, “I’m not very old yet, but I have been through the uni system”, shares some of this wisdom with us:

“When everything has passed, it's only the good memories you remember.” - Mr Cheong

We didn’t get too many details about Mr Cheong’s JC life, only that he was from Nanyang Junior College, was the President of Band, and dropped H2 Chemistry after a desperate plea from his chemistry teacher to “please downgrade”. In Mr Cheong’s own words, “those were good times that built me up.” (And we can only trust it’ll be the same for us.)

Mr Cheong made another significant discovery during his time in JC. With literature being the only humanities subject he took - and the one he enjoyed the most - he realised what he truly wished to pursue in the future, choosing to cast aside the sciences for pure arts.

And after a brief stint trying out “six, seven intro modules” at the NUS Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, Mr Cheong eventually, and very fittingly, became a philosophy major.

However, playing the role of “practical” science students, we can’t help but ask him the insidious question on everyone’s minds when it comes to arts like philosophy: are they even really useful?

To this, he acknowledges the many humanities students facing doubts about the pragmatism of the route they are going down. Nevertheless, he points out the inherent value of taking the humanities.

Bringing up the example of artificial intelligence, he claims that humanities answer the questions that science cannot, and argues against the mindset that the arts have to be supplemented with more “useful subjects”. After all, when we have to decide how to utilise miracles of science, what else do we turn to but morality and philosophy?

“It goes beyond the domains of science; that's where all the humanities come in.” - Mr Cheong

Minoring in Japanese Language Studies

Philosophy may take the centrestage when it comes to Mr Cheong's interests, however, we can't forget to mention that he also minored in Japanese Language Studies in university.

A fascination with Japanese literature and its tendency to lean towards darker themes was what first ignited Mr Cheong's interest in the Japanese language and culture - which is often portrayed as incredibly courteous and traditional. Still, there's a distinct philosophical angle with which he approaches the topic. As Mr Cheong puts it, "it's a very stark contrast, how such a nation is able to produce such literary output."

Eventually, Mr Cheong would spend 10 months in Japan on a language exchange programme, staying in the dormitory of a language school in the countryside of Mihara, Hiroshima.



Photos from Mr Cheong's time in Mihara, Hiroshima

For Mr Cheong who admittedly “was [initially] very afraid of conversing in Japanese”, it was certainly a trial by fire. Surrounded by classmates from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Vietnam and India - who mostly couldn’t speak English - and locals from the rural countryside, there were few available channels of communication other than Japanese.

Academically speaking, the experience did improve Mr Cheong’s Japanese fluency. Holistically speaking, however, learning to be in a completely unfamiliar environment was a test of resilience and adaptation – a type of growth far beyond academics.

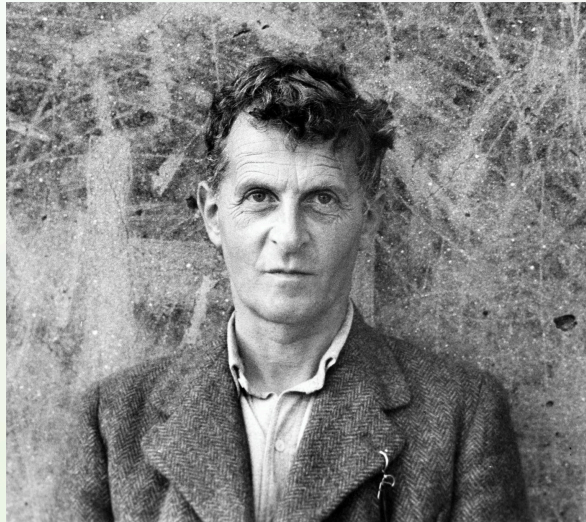
Life then was strikingly independent, for one. “If I was sick, I’d settle that myself. I would do the laundry, cook and manage my finances myself, and all of that in a very foreign setting.” Life was also abundantly diverse, with classmates, even roommates, with vastly different routines, rituals and beliefs.

For us JC students, too young and too busy to undertake such lengthy adventures just yet, Mr Cheong’s reflections remind us of how small our academic lives really are. A classroom has just enough room for two years of textbook curriculum; our souls have room for much more. Sometimes, it may be worth throwing yourself into the unknown.

Back in Singapore

Now, back in Singapore, Mr Cheong has embarked on learning a new language - German. He gives us another “non-PC” take, proclaiming “I’m of the opinion that English is a lousy language, because there are many nuances in other languages that English sort of reduces.”

Well, this hobby isn’t actually inspired by a bold act of defiance against the English language (as fitting for a philosopher as that would be). Rather, it’s an effort to capture the work of Austrian philosopher Wittgenstein - renowned for his work in logic, the philosophy of mathematics, language and mind - in its original language. A true lover of philosophy indeed.



A portrait of Ludwig Wittgenstein

Unless you're part of the 25-ish students who take KI every year, you may never be taught by Mr Cheong. However, perhaps there's still something you can take away from his teaching and life philosophy.

Mr Cheong's only message to all students is simple, and one he credits to one of his favourite artists, Tyler, the Creator –

“Whatever brings you that immense joy, do that, that's your luxury...” - Tyler, the Creator (from the song “Massa”)

– though, he did add one more clause of his own:

“... Of course, within ethical boundaries.”

Wishing Mr Cheong all the best in his teaching career (and German studies) ahead!

teacher besties

A photograph of a school building with silhouettes of teachers on balconies and decorative white swirls. The image is used as a background for the title and author information.

by Aniq Norhazry (25S03D), M.B. Dharshni (25S03O) and Nurul Iman Mohammed Rohan (25S03C)

Featuring Ms Eva Hor, Ms Elaine Wong, Ms Melissa Lim, Ms Fiona Lio, Mr Patrick Wong and Mr Eddie Koh

TEACHER BESTIES

Amidst the stress of school life, we students often find solace in our friends and the adventures we set out on together. Indeed, this joy of companionship and exploration can be found in the Rafflesian staffroom as well!

In this Special Edition, we embarked on a journey alongside two groups of globetrotting teachers. Travelling to places such as Ireland and Hawaii, these friendships have been nurtured with love and compassion. Read on to find out more!

Ms Eva Hor, Ms Elaine Wong, Ms Melissa Lim and Ms Fiona Lio



Nakatamamu Shimukappu, Hokkaido

From the very moment the teachers stepped in, the interview room immediately livened up. It would be apparent to anyone just how close this group was, filling the atmosphere with lively banter as they sat to tell us their story.

Let's begin by introducing the members of this squad: Ms Eva Hor, who teaches Y6 Biology and is the Head of Student Well-being, Ms Elaine Wong, a Y6 Economics teacher, Ms Melissa Lim, Deputy Principal of Organisational Development, and Ms Fiona Lio, who teaches Y5 Economics and is the Assistant Department Head.

Although Ms Fiona Lio was unfortunately unable to attend the interview in person, her presence was strongly felt through the words of her friends.

“We can't tell this story without talking about Ms Lio!”

– Ms Hor

First Impressions & Introductions

The story of these four began years ago, in the staffroom of the Mount Sinai campus. Assigned as table buddies in a smaller room, which was secluded from the main staff room, this special place signified the start of a friendship that would last across the years, and even across campuses. Incidentally, our principal Mr Aaron Loh happened to be a part of that staff room too!

In the early years of their careers, it was the late hours they spent together marking papers that brought them closer together. Thinking about those days brings back fond memories of being chased out by the lady who had to lock the staff room at the end of the day. That room was a room alive with the sounds of lively chatter, laughter, and the unexpected chirping of crickets – courtesy of Ms Hor, who was rearing them on her desk for practical lessons. Ms Wong likened it to a playground.

Similar to how we students come to school looking forward to spending time with our friends, for the four of them, school became something beyond just work. They had built a safe space for one another, where they could share laughter and tears, and form wonderful memories together.

When asked about their impressions of the others at first, it was apparent how much love and care the four shared.

Ms Lim was said to bring a calming effect to the group, comforting the others when they share their problems with her. Ms Hor is bubbly and cheerful, while Ms Wong is caring and gives the others hugs before class. Ms Lio is responsible and dedicated, always organising activities for the others and simply “made life more exciting”.

Travelling Together

As the declared “leader of the gang”, Ms Lio was described as someone who thrives on planning–she arranges all the trips for the group, and plans the itinerary for each destination. As for where their ventures have taken them, destinations include Hawaii, Tokyo, London, Vietnam, China, Thailand, Malaysia ... the list goes on!

Playing cards in hotel rooms to decide who had to bring home a photograph taken at Universal Studios Osaka that none of them wanted to keep and participating in a

TEACHER BESTIES

cooking class in Sapa, they have shared moments on their travels that have given rise to some special and also hilarious memories.

Does being colleagues affect their friendship in any way? Ms Lim jokes that there are a lot of mentions of Economics, courtesy of Ms Wong, whilst they are having tea or lunch.

But other than being support systems for one another at work, they resemble any other group of close knit friends. Being teachers also makes it easier for them to plan vacations together during school holidays.

With the busy schedules barely giving anyone any free time, especially teachers, making such travel plans requires extensive amounts of planning. Even we students find it difficult to meet up with old friends, with plans often never making it out of the groupchat!

Each of them plays different roles in making the trip a successful and enjoyable one. For instance, Ms Lio, who is the leader of the group, is responsible for the bulk of the planning; from picking travel destinations to booking flights and hotels – even for trips she herself was not able to join!

They also find value in different aspects of their travels. For Ms Lio, dubbed the fittest one, she is often the one walking ahead of the others, eager to marvel at the view from the top. Ms Wong enjoys walking and trekking, while Ms Hor finds beauty in the scenery and nature. And as for Ms Lim, it is the company of her friends that makes all the strenuous hiking worthwhile.



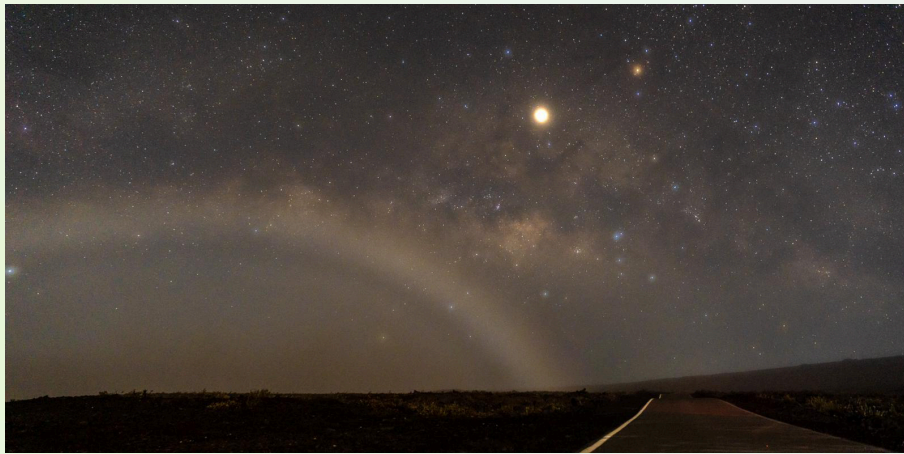
Daisetsuzan National Park Kurodake, Hokkaido

A favourite memory of theirs goes back to a winter's night in Hawaii.

One winter's night

One of their fondest memories from their travels was during a photography tour in Hawaii, where they went on a sight-seeing tour while accompanied by a tour guide with a burning passion for photography.

In the midst of taking a photograph, the tour guide looked up into the sky and exclaimed. A moonbow had stretched across the sky.



A picture of the moonbow they sighted that night.

Moonbows are known for their rarity and immense beauty, symbolising the hidden or overlooked beauty in the world and our lives. They act as an eternal reminder that while life is impermanent, our experiences are captured in memories and photographs that live on.

Standing together, the four teachers stared at the constellations scattered across the sky. The stars shone bright against the backdrop of the pitch black sky, just as how friends bring joy and comfort into our lives even in the darkest moments.



The four teachers admire the stars in Hawaii.

Whether it's nightscapes and constellations, or rivers lined with lush greenery, no sight would have been the same without each other's company. What a special feeling—to share hugs, laughter, tears, and memories of adventure with people you hold dear to your heart. We can only wish to find friends and forge bonds as well as these teachers have. As often said, maybe the real treasure is the friends we made along the way...

Mr Patrick Wong and Mr Eddie Koh



A nature park in County Adare, Republic of Ireland

JC's a time where you'll make the lifelong friends who will accompany you into adulthood, working life and (hopefully) retirement. But you may worry - people change, friendships drift apart, and time can prove to be your worst enemy, not your greatest gift.

TEACHER BESTIES

For two of our GP teachers, however, time has proven to be the latter. Mr Eddie Koh and Mr Patrick Wong's friendship marks its 15th anniversary this year. Those 15 years have seen joint overseas trips, animated "professional debates" and a shared interest in dead leaves (more on that later...).

There's no need for us to dub the duo as 'besties' or 'BFFs' (we're not too sure the two GP teachers will approve of our vocabulary). They have their own description for their friendship - "a warm brotherhood", nothing less.

First Impressions & Introductions

Mr Wong and Mr Koh joined RI in the same batch in 2009. However, this was in fact not the first time their paths had crossed. During Mr Koh's previous position teaching in Pioneer JC, he was in charge of the choir CCA. During that time, Mr Wong had worked on the Pioneer JC school anthem – which Mr Koh then taught to his students in choir!

Though the two only made this connection after meeting in RI, it seems almost cosmic that the two would end up going through the same segments of RI's teaching orientation programme.

After being introduced to each other at assembly via a mutual friend Mrs Cordelia Fernandez, the "camaraderie develop[ed] organically", Mr Wong tells us.

When asked what his first impression of Mr Wong was, Mr Koh recalls it perfectly, as if they had just met—he had much respect for Mr Wong, who was formerly doing marketing communications with The Straits Times, describing him to be "extremely articulate". With this respect and a shared curiosity about each other, the two soon became well-acquainted, especially after realising their shared Catholic faith. Beyond that, a common love for animals, nature, and food brought them profoundly closer.

Mr Wong highlights the times when they would go for walks together in the park with his golden retriever when she was younger. Both teachers love birds as well, though Mr Wong's insistence that he "loves them more" is met by Mr Koh's swift rebuttal that he still "can name more". (Is this the GP teacher version of comparing essay marks?)

When the two teachers aren't debating about who can name more birds (though it seems the answer is rather indisputable), they're having "professional debates and discussions". A very fitting pastime for two GP teachers indeed!

Since the two first met in 2009, they've been friends for 15 years - a friendship merely 2 years younger than many of us. Their friendship extends beyond school walls, and at many instances, has also extended beyond Singapore.

Travelling Together

Mr Wong and Mr Koh have travelled to many places together including Ireland, Kota Kinabalu and Langkawi. Mr Wong's wife has expressed her amazement that the two would travel together, given that most colleagues would have enough of one another in the workplace, and usually cannot wait to see the backs of each other at the end of the day!

Their trip to Ireland, in particular, was definitely a memorable adventure. They stayed in 12 places in 17 days, along with several other teachers. But the two, in particular, had driven together, spending the daylight hours of the 17 days together stuck within the same 4 walls.

Some say that familiarity breeds contempt, but Mr Wong testifies this experience only brought them closer together.

"We told each other secrets we wouldn't tell anyone else and that would most likely take to the grave." – Mr Koh

When asked to name their favourite memory with each other, Mr Koh brought us to the cliffs in Ireland. That fine day, the spirit of nature was calling to him and he suddenly felt like touching some rocks! Who else to ask, but Mr Wong to accompany him? They crawled up the cliff together and posed for some pictures. In his own words, Mr Koh was "brought back to his teenage years".

It's a special kind of bond that transcends the usual expectations of adulthood. Anyone can shed their worries, and embrace a sense of pure, unfiltered, even childlike joy. Mr Koh gives us a more apt description - the ability to act as freely and 'goofily' as he wanted made him feel "at peace".

He jokes, "usually when men come together, you'd think they tend to act masculine and strong". Yet, on this cliff, he could truly let everything go, laughter flowed easily, and the weight of the world seemed to disappear, if only for a moment - a youthful liberation accessed only when one is with the right company.

TEACHER BESTIES



Giant's Causeway, Northern Ireland

Meanwhile, when we asked Mr Wong what his favourite sight was, he spoke of the Ireland islands. During the summer, when the sun was still out at 9pm, the two teachers would drive in silence to see a ruined church and a white horse on a hill, enjoying the sunset and Catholic symbolisms they spotted along the drive.

*“No words shared, but just quiet companionship...
... this was among the best trips in my life”*

– Mr Wong



County Antrim, Northern Ireland

Professional and personal lives

Although Mr Koh draws a line between his professional and personal life, Mr Wong has become quite an integral part of both. He recounted times when Mr Wong came to visit him at his home when he was at his lowest. Mr Wong has helped him through difficult times in his life, just like a brother would.

They tell us that their friendships would not have been possible to maintain without the lively environment of the staffroom. To students, teachers may seem rigid and serious. But in the peace of the staffroom, many personal stories are shared with both laughter and tears. The departments have a tight knit community where they all support each other.

“Happy teachers, happy classroom.” – Mr Koh

Mr Wong shares that you can't find this type of bond in most workplaces and he is forever grateful for his life's path for leading him here to RI. The GP teacher stated that he has stayed in RI not only for the teaching, but the people.

When we graduate, we may remember JC as a time where we made the lifelong friends who accompanied us into adulthood, working life and (hopefully) retirement. For Mr Koh, teaching in RI will be remembered as the time where he made “the big brother [he] never had”.

They assure us (and each other) that they will be in each other's life long after they stop teaching.

Brothers & Sisters at heart

It's easy to make friends – make a good first impression, fashion a warm dynamic, and maybe even create a Whatsapp group chat. What's difficult, is finding a family not bound by blood, but bound by memories you wouldn't be able to make with anyone else.

It's crazy how similar our teachers' friendships start off like ours; from orientation, common friends and even love for food! We can only hope the friendships we make as students can transcend into the deep well-forged bonds our teachers have. Hopefully, they last long enough for us to have our own adventures and make our own well-framed memories, just like our teachers!

TEACHERS vs. H2 MATH



by Arshia Mahajan (25S06R), Chen Ying (25A01C), Kavya Thirunavukkarasan (25S03I) and Rhea Sharma (25S06A)

Featuring Mr Chan Kuang Wen, Ms Tan Lee Hui, Ms Sulynn Chuang Xin

Your teachers might seem amazing at the subject they teach now, but have you ever wondered how they fared in other subjects in school? Other subjects like perhaps ... H2 Mathematics?



3 brave challengers (...ahem, *teachers*), Ms Chuang (Literature), Ms Tan (Economics) and Mr Chan (Chemistry), have agreed to try solving a few maths questions we students are all too familiar with. If you're interested in watching our non-Maths teachers take on H2 Mathematics, watch this [video!](#) (You can scan the QR code, or access this link: <https://tinyurl.com/h2mathTDSE>)

credits

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