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Entertainment

Weirdest Trend of the Decade: The Thriving of ASMR

By: Tsoi Ka Hin (4A)

ASMR is an acronym for Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response. You may know it as those videos of people whispering, tapping random stuff and eating in front of a microphone. Despite its extreme bizarreness, it is in fact a way of relieving stress and emotions for quite a lot of people. With



tapping, and whispering about pickles. It may seem really unbelievable that such videos can be so popular, but unexpectedly they indeed have earned over 10 million views and 500,000 subscribers. For now, I believe you have a brief understanding of what ASMR is. The next question is: Why did ASMR go viral so suddenly?

According to an interview with the Pickle Lady's daughter, the lady herself was inspired to do this job by ASMR videos which help relieve the pain from her bone disease. In other words, the ASMR videos do help people relieve pain and stress, or even inspire people sometimes. If we think about society's present situation, I think it all makes sense now.



Living in a society where everyone is competitive, the stress is great and mental issues are getting more serious. ASMR is probably a way of escaping from reality into an odyssey of intense relaxation. According to a very detailed research paper written by the Swansea University, there are a lot of reasons that people watch ASMR videos, but they are mainly

anxiety, stress and negative moods which can be grouped under "mental status". Basically, our society's pressure and stress is the main reason for this trend, which led to our negative mental state. The last question is: How is it still so trendy?



ASMR can make one a lot of money. The channel SAS ASMR is estimated to be making over \$90,000 USD per month. If you think that ASMR is only limited to those online videos, you are wrong. Whisperlodge is a live ASMR spa in New York that provides ASMR treatment in person. Little did anyone know that ASMR could be developed into such a business. The reason why the trend is still so popular is simply money and stress. People are trying hard to keep this trend as it effortlessly makes them money. To me, I think the trend will go on eternally as long as the stress never goes away. It will not only be a long-term trend, but also very likely a rising business.

In my opinion, ASMR is honestly very disturbing in certain ways but also comforting at the same time. As long as it benefits people positively, no one should be against it. We should all try to see if it suits us as well. Who knows, maybe it will be your savior!

approximately 4 million ASMR videos already on YouTube and 11 new ASMR-related videos being uploaded each hour, ASMR has become a global hit. This trend has raised some questions: what is ASMR exactly, why did it go viral and how is it still so trendy?



The term "ASMR" originated in 2010. According to Wikipedia, ASMR is a tingling sensation on the skin caused by various types of stimulating sounds, such as gentle whispering, smacking of lips, nail tapping and sounds of food being eaten. The best example of ASMR is none other than the famous "Pickle Lady", who is named ASMRTheChew on YouTube, with a channel of the same name. The 47-year-old has gained fame on the Internet by eating tons of pickles.

Social Issues

Can municipal solid waste (MSW) charging help reduce waste?

By: Pun Wing Yeung (5C)



It is undeniable that Hong Kong's amount of waste disposal is going through the roof. In 2017, the amount of solid waste disposed was 1.39 kg per day for each person. To reduce waste, the Environment Bureau (ENB) introduced municipal solid waste (MSW) charging in order to encourage citizens to throw away less rubbish and recycle more unwanted items.

After the charging is implemented, citizens have to pay when disposing waste. There are two ways of charging: "charging by designated garbage bags" and "charging by weight". In the first method, residential buildings, street-level shops and institutional premises need to put their waste into designated plastic bags of nine different volumes ranging from 3 litres to 100 litres. A three-member family will have to pay approximately \$1.7 per day, or about \$51 per month. In the second method, buildings which hire private waste collectors would be charged at \$365-395 per tonne according to the location of disposal. If the rules are not followed, a \$1500 fine will be charged and the people concerned may even face prosecution.



Many people are optimistic towards the new policy. Since the policy is mandatory, citizens will be willing to reduce their waste in the means of saving money, for instance, bringing their own bags when going to markets to avoid receiving more plastic bags and choosing products with less packaging so that they do not need to dispose of the bulky cardboards and disposable containers which are contaminated and cannot be used again. On the other hand, they will also put recyclable waste such as shattered glass, batteries and plastic bottles into recycling bins to save space in designated garbage bags. As a result, the amount of garbage sent to landfills can be significantly reduced.

However, opposing voices from Hong Kong Food and Environmental Hygiene Department Staff Rights Union argues that the approach cannot reduce waste as a majority of 59% of Hong Kong's waste component is from the business and construction sector. No matter if there is a charge or not, disposal is ineluctable. At the same time, it inarguably increases the financial burden of the underprivileged and it is unfair for the rich and the poor to pay the same amount of money when 50 dollars means the daily bread of the family to the disadvantaged but a cup of coffee to the wealthy people.

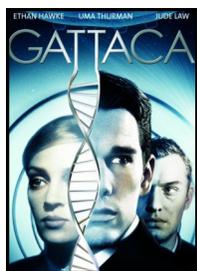
Editing Our Future

By: Audrey Wong (4D)



As the technology of genetic engineering continues to develop, a new age of discrimination has risen – genetic discrimination. People without the aid of genetic selection are ‘in-valids’, and they can only have their share of menial jobs because of their shorter life-span and lower abilities. On the contrary, people who have received the aid can do any job they want as they have higher intelligence, better stamina and relatively prettier looks.

That situation sounds like something straight out of a horrible science-fiction film, doesn't it? And to be honest, it is – it is the setting of *Gattaca*, a renowned 1997 Hollywood science-fiction film. But before any of you laugh it off as some outdated joke intended to scare you, let's think about this: with our burgeoning technology and knowledge of genes, how long will it take us to start the revolution of genome editing?



Truth be told, it has already started. On 26th November, 2018, an appalling news story exploded on the Internet – a set of gene-edited twins were born under the hands of a team of Chinese scientists, headed up by scientist and entrepreneur Jia Jian-kui. The babies were born *immune to HIV* due to CCR5, a part of their DNA that makes them prone to the disease, being snipped away.

This groundbreaking leap in genetic engineering, however, has brought forward

DNA Alteration of Plants on the International Space Station

By: Lok Mei Mei (5C)



Plants have often been taken into space in low Earth orbit to be grown in a weightless but pressurized and controlled environment. The reason for this is twofold:

1. To provide refreshing food to human spaceflight crews rather than freeze-dried space food which is stale and tasteless.
2. To obtain samples for the study of mutation (dramatic and permanent alteration of DNA) of plants in outer space, which is a distinctive growing environment. Seeds undergoing mutation are brought to Earth for additional growth and study.

In space, the environment has characteristics that vary from plants grown on Earth:

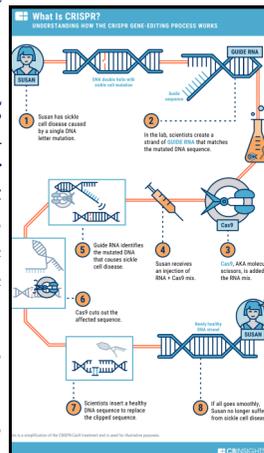
- large amounts of radiation
- strong magnetic fields
- low gravity
- vacuum
- other undiscovered factors that trigger the mutation of plants

Plants undergoing mutation in space

The root of the plant still grows downwards and away from the seed as far as possible in order to obtain more nutrients.

numerous possible problems for the babies. The increased risk of cardiovascular abnormalities, for example, is one of the major concerns. It may also be easier for the babies to get infected by the West Nile virus, a disease related to the Zika virus, Dengue and Yellow Fever.

The genome editing technique used was CRISPR (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats). Scientists discovered that bacteria use CRISPR to help them battle viruses. Here's how it works:



1. A bacterium gets infected by a virus.
2. The virus injects its DNA into the bacterium, so when the bacterium duplicates, so does the viral DNA.
3. The CRISPR system in the bacterium plucks the viral DNA out of the virus, then inserts it into a bacterial chromosome, which gets inserted into a site called CRISPR.
4. The bacterial chromosome makes RNA, which is an exact duplicate of the viral DNA.
5. The RNA binds with a special protein called Cas9 from the CRISPR site.
6. Cas9 searches through the bacterium's entire DNA to look for the same viral sequence as the RNA bounded to it.
7. If there is a match, Cas9 cuts that part away. It's a very precise cut.
8. And so that stops the virus from spreading when the bacterium duplicates.

9. It's beneficial to the bacterium's 'next generation' too, as the viral sequence was stored and passed on when it duplicates.

The technique sounds smart, doesn't it? Now scientists are trying to use CRISPR to look for the parts in people's DNA that increases the risk of genetic diseases' outbreak passed down by the family. They can even edit the genes of embryos, so that the offspring of these embryos won't have the disease anymore, unlike the case that the edited genes end in one generation if people get their genes altered when they're adults. Imagine a future when genetic diseases like AIDS can be cured completely. When cancer meets its demise. When we can better the human race.

However, this above issue is just what the other scientists are concerned about – we're actually mutating humans, like what many movies have predicted will happen in the future. What will be elicited if we let loose a few 'edited' people into the society? Are they still considered as humans? Or mutants? Will they be discriminated against because they aren't natural? Or, will we be discriminated against because we aren't as superior and healthy?

While some scientists are eager to dig deeper into genome editing, others fear that it may cause undesirable and disastrous consequences – violating the taboo of nature is like opening Pandora's Box, and they have agreed not to use this technology on human beings.

What do you think? Will the work of our imagination that once only existed in movies become reality?



The process of mutation of seeds in space is entirely out of control. This means that nobody can predict how a plant with specific DNA would change after mutation on the space station. Therefore, it can't be anticipated whether the effects of mutation would be constructive or destructive to the growth of plants. It is noted that every single plant with distinguishing DNA sequences changes in various ways.

Edges resulted from constructive mutation:

Good characteristics of plants are created in a random way. In mutation cases of certain plants in space:

- The sweetness of tomatoes are double that of those on Earth
- Cotton gains the capacity to resist worms and hence a mass production with guaranteed quality is achieved.
- The multiplication of yield and height of certain plants is possible when compared to those on Earth. Therefore the cost of planting can be reduced. For instance, tomato plants can reach a height of 14 metres after mutation in space, which is 7 times that on Earth (2 metres).

- On account of the fact that seeds have been transported to space, people would find them mysterious. Seeds and plants transported to space can be sold at a high price. There is no doubt that this revenue gained can recover a part of the tremendous cost of astronomical investigation.

Question: How can people utilize the good characteristics of plants controlled by the brand new DNA stored in the nucleus after mutation rather than letting the newly created DNA fade after the death of the plant?



In fact, one plant undergoing mutation can reproduce countless identical plants by mitotic cell division. By cutting the region of differentiation of plants and providing adequate nutrients, plants with identical genetic information with the parent plants are reproduced while getting rid of any bacterial and viral infections.

By using vegetative propagation, which is a form of asexual reproduction of a plant which can happen through the use of vegetative parts of the plants, such as leaves, stems, and roots to produce new plants that are genetically identical to the parent. Moreover, vegetative propagation can take place through growth from specialized vegetative plant parts like the runner of the plant and several food storage organs (e.g. rhizome).

5 = 5.5; 6 = 7; and 7 = 8.5?

By: Lai Chun Hei (5D)

Hong Kong University has recently announced a new HKDSE 'level to score' scale, which is going to be adopted in the next academic year on all subjects except for Bachelor of Biomedical Sciences, Bachelor of Pharmacy and Bachelor of Medicine, and Bachelor of Surgery, which have already adopted alternative new admission systems this year.

Level 5	Level 5*	Level 5**
5	6	7
+ 0.5	1	1.5
5.5	7	8.5
New HKU Scoring System		

Under the use of the new scale, a student who attains a Level 5, 6 or 7 in a particular subject will be rewarded with a score of 5.5, 7 and 8 respectively, which differs from the former Level 5, 6 and 7, while the score awarded to students attaining Levels 1 to 4 in any particular subject remains unchanged.

To decide whether the new system is better, I will discuss one of the pros and one of the cons of the policy below.

Pro: Breeding more specialists

Being a specialist requires people to have a thorough understanding in a subject or aspect of a particular subject and so, the students with specific talents will probably have a higher potential to be trained to become specialists.

Giving an edge to students with a specialty can allow students with talents in particular aspects to enter university more easily. In other words, it can enable students with specific

talents to more likely receive further education, which may help the training of more specialists. Hence, it may enhance the development of different job industries.

Con: Ignoring the importance and potential of 'multipotentialites'



'Multipotentialite' (*multi-potential-ite*) refers to people with diverse interests in many aspects and are capable of doing well in several fields. With knowledge in several fields, multipotentialites are said to be capable of coming up with more ideas that involve more perspectives.

Getting a good academic result overall indicates the ability of the student to learn from several different aspects, showing their potential to be a multipotentialite.

Lowering the competitiveness of students with a good overall academic performance in receiving an offer of university admission may reduce their opportunity to receive a better education, which is not favourable for the further development of multipotentialites.

It is quite hard to decide if the new system is better or worse than before, since the points discussed above are just one of the ideas. Personally, I think it is a double-edged sword. How do you feel about the new system?

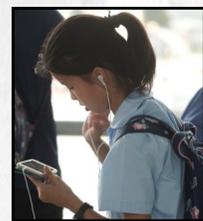
Everyone is to blame for the stressful life of students - even students themselves

By: Ng Chi Nok (4D)



Hong Kong students are always stressed. The exam-oriented education system has created a competitive and stressful learning environment for them. It is common to see primary students bringing tons of homework home, burning the midnight oil to finish tall piles of homework and preparing for tests. Meanwhile, secondary students are apprehensive about the HKDSE, which determines their application for university and their career. They spend hours attending cram schools and doing revision, lacking adequate relaxation and sleep. It seems that the Hong Kong education system is the culprit of the raft of problems. But who is to blame for their stressful life? Students, parents, teachers, or the system?

The Hong Kong education system stresses academic excellence, though the major concern is to achieve the best results possible. Results do reflect the learning ability of students, but they do not truly reflect learning attitude, and they also give younger generations the misconception that learning is merely for exams. If the incentive to learn is to do well in exams, how can students find learning interesting and meaningful?



Some may think that public exams are stretching students too far. However, it is easy to find that many students fall asleep in class, scarcely paying attention. What they are doing contradicts their intention - doing well in exams. Moreover, students often misuse time using digital devices rather than managing their time wisely. Without enough time to revise, they become fretful about tests and exams. Thus, they study at full stretch in a short time, making themselves extremely tense. Falling asleep in class also leads to inappropriate study methods

which rubs salt into their wounds. Many students merely focus on memorizing facts but not understanding the main concepts. Unsurprisingly, they find it hard to put all that knowledge into their brain and apply it during exams. The apprehension of attaining poor results is the underlying source of pressure. Students are often afraid of parents' severe rebuke and chastisement. Poor results also lead to a lack of confidence, intensifying anxiety about the HKDSE and their career. Lagging behind their peers makes their school life even more stressful because of the keen competition. Although the education system accounts for students' enormous pressure, students are to blame for the stress caused by inappropriate study methods and improper time management.

For primary school students, the competitive education system requires both academic excellence and holistic development in order to secure a place in a preferable secondary school. Apparently, the education system 'forces' the parents to 'train' their children by participating in myriad extracurricular activities and attending cram schools to make their scores stand out. However, I do not believe a wide variety of talents is necessarily needed for students applying to secondary schools. On the contrary, courteousness and modesty are the major concerns. The cruel reality is that the 'stressed' parents want to boast how talented their kids are. Tiger parents often force them to learn numerous musical instruments and join competitions. Not only do these contrived 'talents' lessen children's relaxation, they also create invisible conflicts between parents and children, resulting in miserable childhoods. Moreover, harsh verbal discipline for bad grades also exerts pressure on kids. Even a rubber band will break if you stretch it too far; how can children not be 'torn apart' when stretched too far?



Apart from that, teachers give an extortionate amount of homework for no discernible reason. Nowadays, 10-11 pieces of homework per day is routine for all primary school students. These assignments are often very simple, but very time-consuming. Homework is supposed to consolidate what students learn, not require them to repeat meaningless tasks. Students endeavour to finish all the work as they fear detention class, sacrificing sleep and rest. Attending extracurricular lessons make them more anxious as they have even less time to finish their innumerable and exhausting homework. Weary parents even need to help or accompany them to finish the taxing tasks. This exerts stress on both parents and children.

As C. S. Lewis said, "It's not the load that breaks you down. It's the way you carry it." The extremely heavy burden pupils bear is definitely unreasonable, but there are ways to alleviate, or even cope with it. From now on, stop blaming others but change ourselves first. Students can actually lessen their burden by being attentive in classes. Paying heed to what teachers taught, students can comprehend the content more easily. Teachers often give hints about traps in exams too. Studying will be much simpler and getting good grades will no longer be a fantasy. With good grades, parental and peer pressure will no longer exist. Scheduling a thorough and wise timetable also helps reduce the apprehension of upcoming tests and exams. Listening to music and getting adequate sleep are ways to alleviate pressure. Above all, always remember: learning is life-long and beneficial.

The China-US Trade War 2018

International News

By: Fu Yee Lam (4A)



The relationship between the US and China has become intense in recent months because of the China-US trade war. The trade war was initiated due to the trade imbalance of the two countries. United States president Donald Trump claimed that imposing tariff on non-US products could protect and revitalise U.S. domestic production and manufacture. Since the start of the war, the US has imposed taxes on various import goods. The tariffs are aimed squarely at China. China then retaliated at the US, imposing 25% of tariffs on American imported goods.

You may probably think that this issue is none of your business. If you do, you're wrong! The Trade War is affecting your daily life! The trade war has raised the prices of goods in both the United States and China. For example, China's soybean supply relies heavily on the US. However, the US's imposition of 25% tariffs has increased the price of soybeans. As a result, China is forced to buy soybeans from Brazil, where the cost is even higher. The price of soybeans eventually gets higher in the market. Not only have soybeans themselves become more costly, but also their derived products are getting more expensive. Therefore, for Chinese people, the most direct effect of the trade war is worsened inflation.



One of the possible consequences for US producers for this trade war is the need to move some of their factories out of the US. Companies of both sides

have lost earnings, impacting both countries' economies. Global economy is based on global supply chains and globalised production locations. Hence, because of the tariffs, both non-US and non-Chinese companies are in a great loss.

The most talked about conflict between the two biggest economic powers in the world seems to be trade issues at the moment. In fact, it is a result of a difference in ideologies and value judgement. Hal Brands, Professor of Global Affairs at Johns Hopkins University said, 'the Chinese government is damaging the democratic systems in other Asian countries, spreading the Chinese type of corruption to other places. The Chinese government also supports authoritarianism, for example, they support military governments in South Africa and Latin America.' On the other hand, the US claimed that Chinese companies have stolen US technology company Micron's trade secrets, further worsening relationships between the two countries. The US government is aware that if these situations continue, the world will be threatened. Therefore, the US took the trade war as revenge. Some say that the growing economic influence of China threatens the world dominator position of the US. Therefore, the US is using tariffs to weaken China's power and influence in the world.



Regardless of the reasons, there are no winners but only losers in the trade war. Only through cooperation can the world's economy be advanced. What world leaders should do in order to make economic progress, is to keep the peace.

THE US-MEXICO BORDER WALL

By: Leung Tsz Wan (4D)



US president Donald Trump has shocked the world with his action of extending the US-Mexico border. The president is well-known for his negative attitude towards immigrants, which is believed to be a reason of the extension of the border. On November 23rd, 2018, President Trump said, "Two days ago, we closed the border. We actually just closed it. We said, 'Nobody's coming in.' Because it's out of control,".

The Wall

The US-Mexico border, which is over 1900 miles long, is nicknamed 'The Wall' by president Trump. The border runs from the Pacific Ocean to the west and from Gulf of Mexico to the east. The Wall took shape following the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) and completed its boundary commission in the late 1850s.



Motivation of construction

President Trump has been claiming that immigrants, mostly from Mexico, have been

making America out-of-control. He sees the immigrants as "rough people": *"You're dealing with a minimum of 500 serious criminals [among the immigrants], so I'm not going to let the military be taken of advantage of. I have no choice. Do I want that to happen? Absolutely not. You're dealing with rough people."* said president Trump on Thanksgiving.

Conflict

The Mexican government stated that it would not pay for The Wall's construction, which is estimated to cost 40 billion USD. However, as Trump repeatedly pledged during the 2016 presidential campaign, US Congress contributed only \$1.6 billion to the project in March 2018.

Present situation

April 2018: US National Guard troops were deployed to the border until further progress was announced on construction of the wall

June 2018: Policy of separating parents from their children at the Mexican border was started

Nov 2018: USA signed the USMCA, replacing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and Trump stationed nearly 6,000 US troops to the border to combat immigrants crossing the border without proper documentation.

Where do the immigrants come from?

More than 5,000 immigrants from Central America are waiting in Mexico, hoping to cross into the U.S. Most are from Honduras, where gang violence is widespread and a 2009 coup triggered an ongoing political crisis. The region has one of the highest murder rates in the world.

Points of view

Erika Guevara-Rosas of Amnesty International.



These families deserve dignity and respect to ensure that no one is illegally returned to situations where they could risk serious harm due to violence."

Shahrazad Encinias a Latina, Guatemalan:

"One thing for sure is that none of those children that were brutalized by tear gas could ever have thrown a rock over that fence. It's too tall. Yet, they were still to experience the full force of the Border Patrol's aggression. There's no telling how the repercussions of such actions will affect a young mind and body."