







By Yap Su-Yin CEO of Tan Chin Tuan foundation

"True Colours, True Hearts" is the theme for this year's More Than Words programme and this book. It honours our efforts to be true to ourselves, and to be sincere in our relationship with others. Over six months, 300 children and adults from 25 charities were immersed in more than 150 training hours.



Every child has a story, a talent and a dream. In nurturing a child's holistic development, the creative arts presents imaginative ways for the child's social emotional learning. Through music, dance, drama, creative writing, storytelling, percussion and many more creative avenues, we witnessed how the children who participated in our



More Than Words programme blossomed as they developed varied ways to express themselves. These forms of communication are critical tools to help them process what they see, hear, feel and understand about themselves and the world around them.



With the sponsorship of the Tan Chin Tuan Foundation (TCTF) and the commitment of enthusiastic trainers from ACTs of life, The Little Arts Academy, One HeartBeat Percussion, Singapore Repertory Theatre, Sri Warisan Som Said Performing Arts, The Theatre Factory, Encore!, Roger Jenkins and our volunteers who conducted the creative writing workshops, these participants grew in self-awareness, self-confidence and positivity, whilst learning new skills.



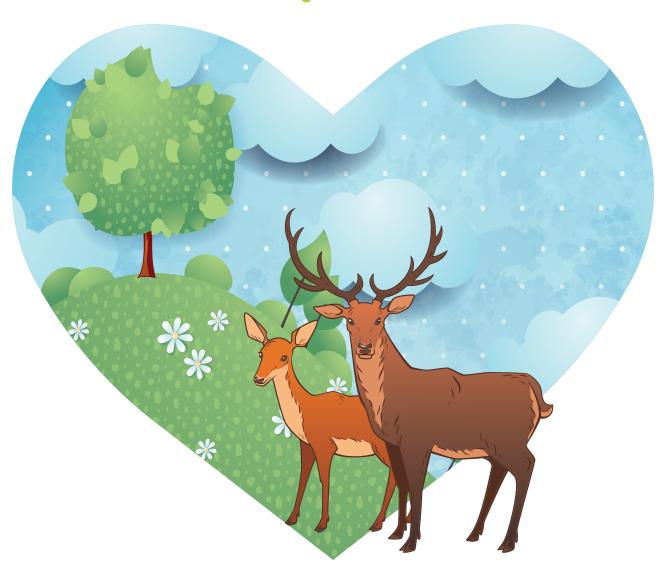


We were able to create an environment where they felt safe to express themselves. Our trainers encouraged and reinforced social skills, such as greeting others, taking turns and listening mindfully. The children teamed up with one another, within clear expectations and parameters, to overcome problems. They received the attention they craved and at the same time, learned to be mindful of giving attention to others who were performing. The participants were stretched outside their comfort zones and enjoyed the creative, collaborative process.

Some of their poems, stories, imaginative ideas and quirky illustrations are carried within the pages of this book, launched on 8 September 2016 during our More Than Words Showcase, where 200 children performed for their families, friends and supporters. Bravo!



Compassion





Rainbow Bridge of Wishes

Inspired by Joey Yap

A Magical Bridge

Once upon a time, in a faraway land, there lived a girl named Joey who yearned to make a wish at the bridge made out of all the colours of the rainbow. It was said that wishes made at the peak of the Rainbow Bridge would be granted by a fairy with magical powers. However, only those with a sincere heart to help others would be given access to the Rainbow Bridge.

One day, Lea the Fairy was looking around for a child with a heart to serve others. Seeing the potential in Joey, Fairy Lea decided to bring Joey to the bridge and grant her a wish.

"What would you love to have most in life?" asked Lea. "Only one wish though, I can't give you more. So think hard before you make your wish!"

Joey, excited to shout out her wish, answered instantly.

"TOYS! I want to have all the toys in the world!"

"Is that what you really want?" a doubtful Lea asked.

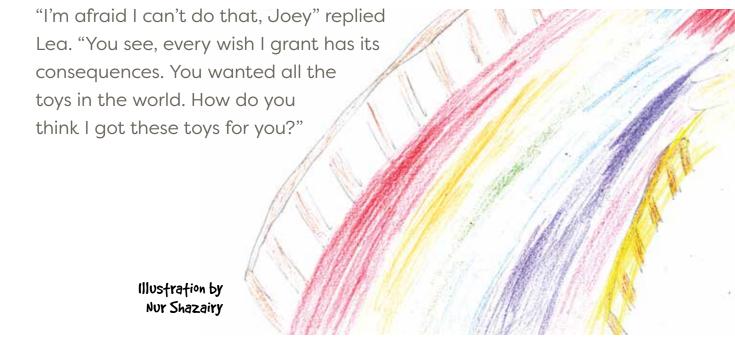
"YES! That's all I want!" exclaimed Joey.

Having made her promise, Fairy Lea set out to grant Joey's wish. With a handful of magic dust and a wiggle of her nose, she gathered all the toys from children of every village and presented them to Joey. What happened next was bizarre. While Joey squealed in happiness, loud wails erupted everywhere else – it was the children's cries as their toys were taken away.

Joey's Dilemma

"Are you happy with your toys, little one?" Lea enquired, seemingly **Unperfurbed** by the noise.

"Yes, but... everyone else is crying. Can you make the wailing stop, please?" begged Joey.







Feeling guilty, Joey softly pleaded for the toys to be returned to the children, and added that she would rather have none than to take away the belongings of others. Fairy Lea agreed and brought Joey on board a light, cottony cloud to return the toys to the children.

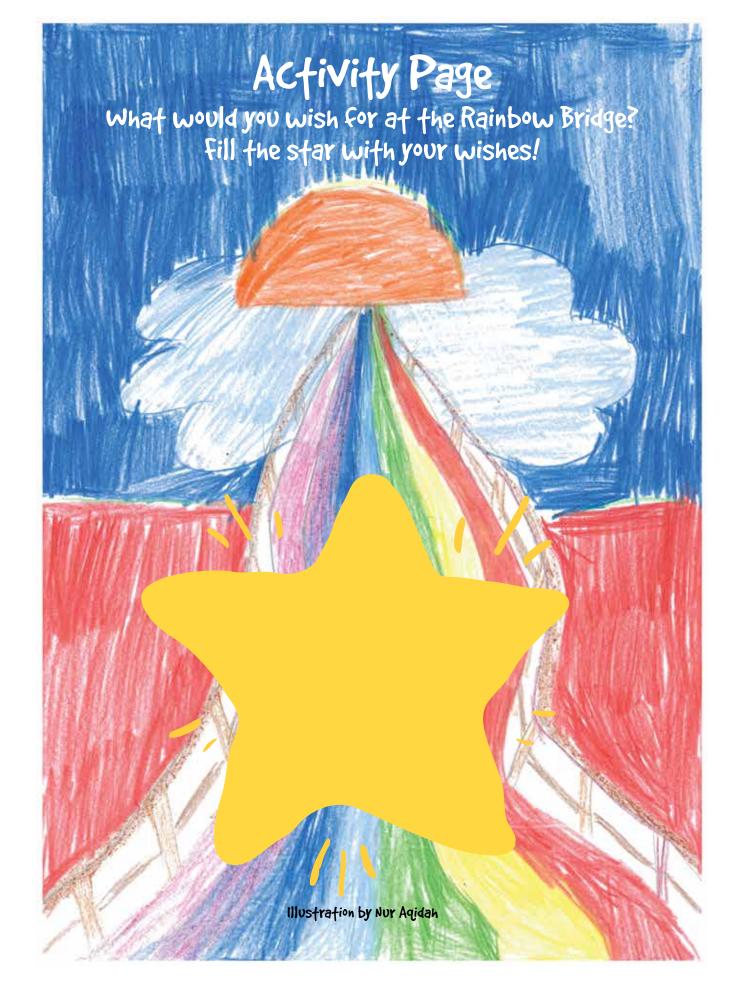
Lea, moved by Joey's selflessness, decided to give her a second chance to make a wish. She said to Joey, "Think carefully this time. It's your last chance." Without hesitation, Joey exclaimed, "I wish all the children in the world will receive the toy that they most desire!"

Lea smiled at Joey's consideration for others. With a flick of her hand and a shake of her left foot, a toy appeared in every child's bedroom. The elated voices of the children in the villages filled the air. This was Joey's first selfless act. Her eyes widened in surprise as a mysterious warmth and happiness welled up in her heart.

At that moment, a huge teddy bear appeared in front of Joey. Fairy Lea said, "With that, I have granted your wish. My work here is complete." Joey thanked Lea for her generosity. Before Fairy Lea left, she turned to Joey, "Young one, you have a hidden passion for bringing joy to others. I hope you will follow your heart and **PUTSUE** what you truly love and believe in."



Illustration by Syarmayne Shahril



Snow, the Small cat with Big Dreams

Inspired by Nur Ilyana

Heroic Dreams

"I want to solve crimes, and make the meoww-world a better place!" declared Snow. Perched on the windowsill was Snow, a small white feline from a cat café, which had big dreams to save the world.

Every day, Snow created big plans to make the world a better place. However, he always abandoned his plans thinking, "How could I compare to the humans? They are stronger and smarter. I am just a small and insignificant cat. They would save the world before I have the chance to do anything."

Despite feeling hopeless, there was a part of Snow that refused to give up. An inner voice reminded him constantly, "Snow, don't give up! An opportunity will come! **Persevere**!"

One day, a mysterious lady dressed in black walked into the cat café. She sat down and looked around for a cat to play with. Losing interest, she murmured, "These cats are ordinary. They are just playing with the humans or lazing around. Isn't there at least one unique cat?" At that moment, the woman noticed Snow, seated alone by the windowsill purring about his grand dreams. She approached Snow and greeted him in a series of mews.

"You speak our language?" Snow asked in surprise.

"Yes, I do. I overheard you talking about saving the world. What was that about?" enquired the woman.

"Solving crimes, fighting villains or even bringing justice to light. These are what I really want to do in life. But I am far too small and I certainly cannot save the world," Snow muttered. He heaved a deep sigh of regret.

Heartened that she had found a cat that was different from the rest, the woman responded, "Well, perhaps I could show you how. Follow me!" The lady and Snow left the café and turned into a nearby alley.

Making a Difference

Clang!

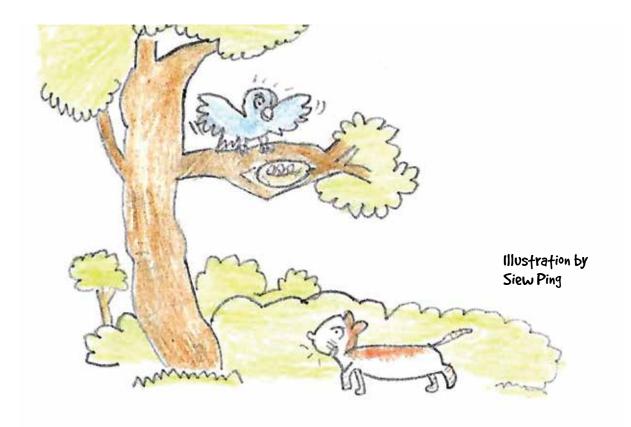
Alarmed by the crashing sound of metal against the pavement, the pair stopped and saw a cat scavenging for food in a nearby dumpster. Unable to find a meal, the cat walked towards the next dumpster in disappointment.

The woman asked, "Why do you think the cat is scavenging for food?"

"

Illustration by Nur Ilyana

"He must have been starving for days with nothing to eat," responded Snow.



Nodding her head, the woman asked again, "What will happen if he is still unable to find food?"

"He... He will... starve to death," Snow's eyes widened with fear.

Without hesitation, Snow sprang back to the café and gathered tuna from his food bowl. He returned to the alleyway and placed the fish in front of the stray cat. "Take your time," Snow assured him. "I can always get you more." To his surprise, the cat burst into tears of **grafifude** upon receiving the food. Snow turned to the woman, "I did not know that my simple gesture could mean so much to this little one."

Smiling, she remarked, "Snow, saving the world does not require big actions. Sometimes, the little acts of kindness are the ones that can make the biggest difference."

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Spirit of Giving

By Hanni Syafiqah

Being a student leader in primary school meant shouldering expectations from fellow students and teachers. There were many benefits to being a leader, but there were disadvantages too. Friends would avoid and be wary of us as leaders had the responsibility to report the **misdemeanours** of the students.

I became depressed as a result of feeling lonely in school and would often lock myself in my room when I was at home. Thankfully, my school counsellor helped me to rebuild my self-confidence.

Since then, I have developed a passion for helping others to feel appreciated and loved.

I donate my pocket money

to the aunties or uncles who **peddle** tissues or toys. When

I am older, I wish to help the poor so they can

lead happier lives.



Vinx, the Lost cat

Inspired by Nadiera, Ahminurul Quraisha, Chong Wen Sheng and Nursakinah



A Mysferious New Friend

Hockey practice was finally over. Sakinah dragged her feet tiredly along the pavement as she walked home from school. As she turned into a dimly lit street, a pair of glowing orbs flashed. "Ahhh!" she yelled as she scrambled backwards. A black kitten with bright emerald eyes emerged slowly from the shadows.

As Sakinah looked on in fear, she noticed that the kitten's eyes brimmed with tears. Her fear subsided and she felt sorry for the little animal, which looked as tired as she felt. "Why are you crying? What is your name kitty cat?" she asked timidly. "My name is Vinx, I can't find my mum. And I'm scared of the dark!" he wailed, bursting into fresh sobs.

The Search Begins

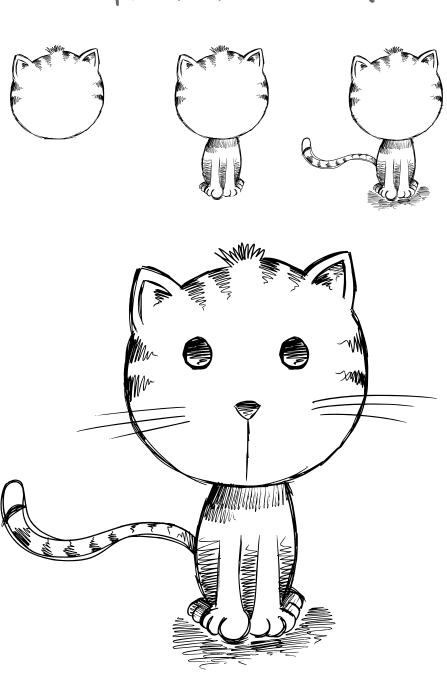
Pausing, Sakinah thought hard – it was late and Vinx was too afraid to be left alone. Eureka! She suggested that Vinx stayed the night at her house and resumed the search in the morning. Sakinah's mother empathised with Vinx's **plight** and cooked an extra curry assam fish for the miserable kitten. "Don't worry, everything will be all right!" she comforted him with a smile.

The next morning, the pair set off to search for Vinx's mother. It was a weekend and the neighbourhood was crowded with families. As the sun slowly rose over the clouds, Vinx became disheartened. His ears flopped down in defeat as he plodded behind Sakinah.

"Vinx!" A loud meow of relief was heard. Vinx **bounded** ahead upon seeing his mother and happily nuzzled her. "Thank you Sakinah! I will never forget your kindness," he purred as his mother turned to Sakinah with eyes shining with gratitude.







courage



Parkour with Geronimo Stilton

Inspired by Hazrul Abdul Rahman and Daniel Dayanand

An Unexpected Visitor

On Sunday, Aideil, Daniel and I walked to a nearby park to practise parkour – where we navigate obstacles using the fastest possible route. Suddenly, there was a flash of light and a human-sized mouse appeared! Alarmed, we were about to flee but stopped upon hearing a plea for help.

The mouse squeaked, "Please do not be afraid! I am Geronimo Stilton. I am being chased by a three-eyed alien. Can you help me?"

"I know you! I have read your adventures, but are you not a storybook character?" Daniel interrupted.

Before Geronimo Stilton could answer, there was a whizzing sound. "Here he comes. Run!" shouted Geronimo as a large dented flying saucer descended from the sky.

Using parkour, we escaped to a safe hiding place. The flying saucer landed in a puff of smoke. Emerging with a laser gun, the three-eyed alien screeched, "Geronimo Stilton, come out now and I will spare your life!" When there was no response, the enraged alien fired his laser gun wildly. The laser melted everything, leaving piles





Illustration by Mund Nur Zikry

of ashes in its wake. Shaking in fear, I overheard Geronimo muttering, "I can't injure innocent children. I have to sacrifice myself."

Bravery in the face of Danger

Despite feeling **pefricied**, I gathered my courage and shouted to the alien, "No matter what he did wrong, he can always apologise for his mistakes. But if you insist on taking him, you have to get past us!" The alien thought for a moment, "Let us do this my way. I will only let him off if you can avoid my laser."

With skilful **Maneev/res** and parkour stunts, we dodged the shower of glowing laser beams. "Ugh!" yelled the frustrated alien as he failed to injure us. Determined to protect Geronimo, I leapt forward and shielded him with my body. Taken aback, the alien ceased fire and conceded, "You are brave, young one. I will forgive him, if he apologises for damaging my flying saucer." Geronimo bowed his head in shame, "I'm sorry Uluwoni Macaroni. It was an accident and I should have informed you instead of running away."

Humbled by the mouse's sincerity, Uluwoni Macaroni graciously accepted the apology.

"Thank you for your bravery! I can return home safely at last," exclaimed Geronimo. He gratefully shook our hands as another surge of light flashed before our eyes. When we could see again, both Uluwoni and Geronimo were nowhere to be seen. Aideil laughed, "What an adventure!" We rushed back, excited to share our adventure with everyone.



Let's draw Uluwoni Macaroni, the three-eyed alien, and its dented flying saucer!



Journey to Eskarion

Inspired by Benjamin Tan, Rebekah Asherina, Nur Khalishah Edleeya, Kennes Sim, Abdul Al Hafiz and Ahminurul Lisa

Iron Man's Suif

"Let's try the Transformers ride!" I hurried my friend, Benjamin, hoping to make the most of our outing to Universal Studios Singapore. We chose a yellow car for the ride and sped off with glee.

Suddenly, it went pitch-black and our car stopped abruptly. Before we could react, the car shot down a steep slope. It felt like an eternity before our car slowed. Blinking in the darkness, we saw a shiny door in front and quickly climbed out and headed for the exit.

The door led us to a room crammed with computers. A flash of red caught my eye and we went to investigate. It was a life-sized Iron Man suit identical to the movies! We stared in awe - there was no mistake. It was Iron Man's suit!

Out of curiosity, we took turns to wear the suit. When it was my turn, I clenched my fist pretending to be a boxer and laughed. Woosh! A laser beam blasted out and damaged a nearby computer.



"What are you doing? Remove that suit immediately!" A stern voice barked. Terrified, I scurried out and came face-to-face with Tony Stark, the genius inventor of the Iron Man suit.

Tony Stark continued, "You should not be here. Why are you using my suit and damaging my laboratory?" With a shaky voice I stuttered, "W-We're sorry, Mr Stark. It is my fault. We arrived by accident and should not have worn your suit." Mr Stark saw our petrified faces and laughed, "That was a very brave and sincere apology young man, I forgive you. There is a mission I have to rush to and could use two brave partners. Are you interested?" Benjamin and I exchanged excited nods, "Yes, we are!"

Discovering the Unknown

Tony Stark lent us each an Iron Man suit with different powers. Mine was super-strength while Benjamin had super-speed. Our mission was located at 'Eskarion', a beautiful island where humanoid Eskarions lived with dinosaurs and dragons. We had to help defend their island, which was under a zombie attack.

Upon reaching Eskarion, we were stunned to see that the island had been destroyed. Shrouds of dust and fallen houses littered the streets. Cries of help and screams of terror filled the air. "Run! Zombies are coming!" I yelled as we sprinted away in horror.

Benjamin stopped, looked at Tony Stark and shook his head, "Hafiz, we need to stop running and fight. They need our help!" I clenched my fist in silent **resolve**. We must defeat the zombies



Illustration by Muhammad fahim



that brought this upon the innocent Eskarions. Together with the island's dinosaurs and dragons that flew from the depths of their volcano homes, we fought courageously against the zombies. After a long and weary battle, victory was ours!

The grateful Eskarions rushed collectively forward to thank us as we prepared to return back to Singapore. Tony Stark teleported us to our void deck and patted our shoulders, "I am very impressed with your bravery today." He threw a small device to us, "When this lights up, it means that I'm in Singapore. Press the button if you wish to visit my laboratory again. But remember, this is a secret." We grinned and thanked him, exhausted but excited about our next adventure with Iron Man.

Activity Page

There are several acts of courage in this story. can you find them? Fill in the blanks to find the answers!



Hafiz

a _ _ I _ g _ s _ d to Tony Stark.



Benjamin decided to stop

 r_nn_g from the zombies.

Pink Pank

By Ethel Cheng

Different from the Rest

"Leave! You are not one of us."

Pink Pank, a bright pink panda, sobbed as she turned and slumped back to the Land of Outcasts. Born different from the other pandas in Panda Village, Pink Pank struggled to gain acceptance. However, she continued to be bullied.



Illustration by Sakinah Batrisyia

Once the Panda Elders deemed her old enough to survive on her own, she was chased out to the Land of Outcasts. Though disappointed, Pink Pank never lost heart. She returned to Panda Village daily, hoping that she would be allowed to return home one day.

Brewing conflict

Every year, the pandas had to send bundles of bamboo to a neighbouring human village. In exchange, the humans promised not to invade Panda Village. But the humans had become greedy. They were logging acres of the Bamboo Forest dishonestly, without seeking permission from the pandas. If this continued, the pandas would not have enough food.



The Panda Elders decided to hold peaceful negotiations with the humans. But the discussions did not go well. The humans were furious that the pandas dared to voice their views. In retaliation, the humans waged a war against the pandas to seize control of the Bamboo Forest. Defeated, the pandas fled from their village to the one place that was safe for them – the Land of Outcasts.

Upon seeing groups of unhappy pandas entering the Land of Outcasts, Pink Pank knew something was amiss. "What happened? Why is everyone coming to the Land of Outcasts?" she asked. A Panda Elder sighed, "The humans have turned against us. They are invading our village and we have no choice but to escape!"

A Daring Choice

Pink Pank knew she could not stand idly by and let that happen. She ran in front of the pandas and shouted, "What are you doing? That's our home and we should protect it! We should not run away without



trying to defend it!" Pink Pank grabbed a bamboo sword and rushed boldly towards Panda Village without a second thought.



Illustration by Mund Amirul Hakimi

It was not long before all of Panda Village chorused their agreement. Weapons were seized and the pandas chanted "Let's defend our home!" They followed Pink Pank's lead. Their bravado took the humans by surprise. United, the pandas chased the humans out of Panda Village.

Pink Pank's perseverance paid off. Heartened by her courage, the pandas gathered around Pink Pank, ruffled her pink fur and cheered. The Panda Elders said, "You risked your life to save our home, even though we **osfracised** you. It was wrong of us. It is not appearances but a sincere heart that matters. From now on, Panda Village is not just our home, but yours too."



The Rollercoaster Ride of Life

By Kwik Feng Yuan

There is a saying that life is like a rollercoaster ride. There are ups and downs, highs and lows. Everyone has to ride it. It may seem like an **ardvovs** journey, but if you have the courage to persevere and push beyond your boundaries, you may reap unexpected rewards.

I would not have expected myself to become who I am today. I am proud to say that my learning journey and achievements are the result of numerous trials and failures. Despite having played six different types of sports, it was only after years of training that I managed to be a national bowler.

I did not excel academically and did not see myself as a scholar. But I tried my best, became the deputy head of the student council, took nine subjects in school and was awarded the Tan Chin Tuan Foundation's Thio Chan Bee Scholarship. So, I urge you to fearlessly pursue what you are passionate about. It can be anything from leadership, sports to volunteering. Try and you have a chance to succeed.

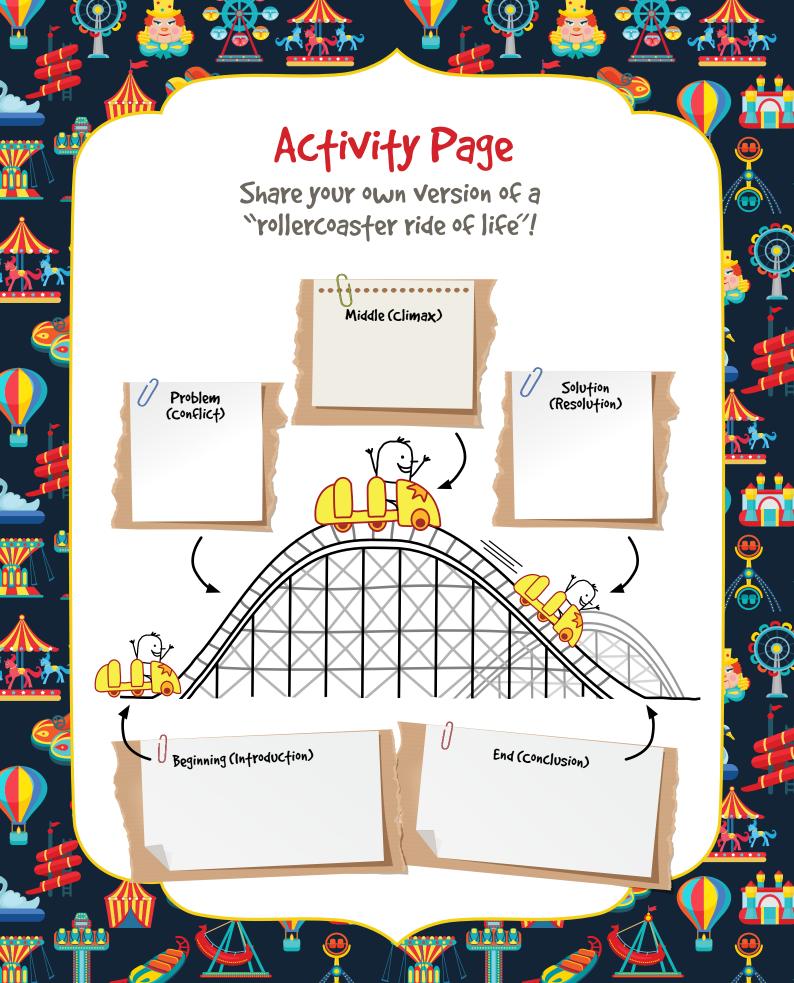


I am 15 this year and have a long journey ahead. I would take my chances to ride this rollercoaster of life, even if I may experience fear, challenges, regrets or doubts. Success only comes to those who have the courage to try, regardless of the failures that may come.

Go. Ride the rollercoaster and chase the horizon. It is always there waiting for you to seize the day and make the choice.



Illustration by Siti Nur Aina





The House By Shannon Tsou

Sitting in the corner Staring at the walls I see people Laughing at my falls

Alone in this house Unable to escape Society judges me Trapping me with red tape

Leaning against the wall Gazing out the window I wonder how People wear masks for show

Alone in this house Unable to escape Society judges me Trapping me with red tape Gripping onto the handle I push open the door I spy a path A way to escape it all

Alone in this house But able to escape Society judges me But who are they to gape

Walking down the steps Confident and free I see people judging But it doesn't bother me

Out of the house I'm finally free I look in the mirror Not perfect, but liking the real me.

This poem addresses how individuals can feel constrained when society judges them. It encourages us to feel confident with our identity and be free of labels that society may impose upon us. ??

Defermination



My Canoeing Journey

By Jon Yeo and Teo Heng Xuan

Illustration by Nur Shahrizam

If canoeing has taught me anything, it would be that life is full of disappointments. Yet, it is through the trials and **adversifies** that we are moulded into the people we are today. This is my story as a student, a canoeist and an adolescent.

Before joining the Anglo-Chinese School (Independent) canoeing team, I had no prior experience in competitive sports aside from heated football matches during recess. In Year One, I enrolled in canoeing in hope of a new challenge, only to be daunfed by the first training. Endurance training and gym sessions were demanding and a keen sense of visual-motor coordination was needed to ensure that we could paddle effectively.

Even though I faced various challenges over the years, I struggled and persevered on perfecting my techniques and building my strength. Encouragement from my family, friends and coach fuelled my desire to train hard and achieve something I would be proud of.

Eventually, I became a medallist. After all the difficulties faced, I understood the value of determination. I realised that when you put your heart to anything, with time and

perseverance, anything can be achieved.

Illustration by Mohamad Farhan



There Will Be Light at the End of Every Night

By Ashiley Thenpandiyan

A girl sits at the edge of her seat, in a circle of messy-haired teenagers. Her eyes fix themselves on their eyes, but her ears can't seem to cling onto anything they say. Uncomfortable, she stays quiet at the first orientation dinner, feeling like an outcast and fighting to keep a smile on her face.



Illustration by Nur Huzairan

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She sits on the piano stool, her fingers brushing the keys lightly but careful not to make a sound. Familiar notes, familiar memories but the unfamiliarity of the people watching her makes her heart pound in her ears. "Don't mess up, don't mess up," she mutters under her breath as her fingers descend into her *Allegro vivace*.

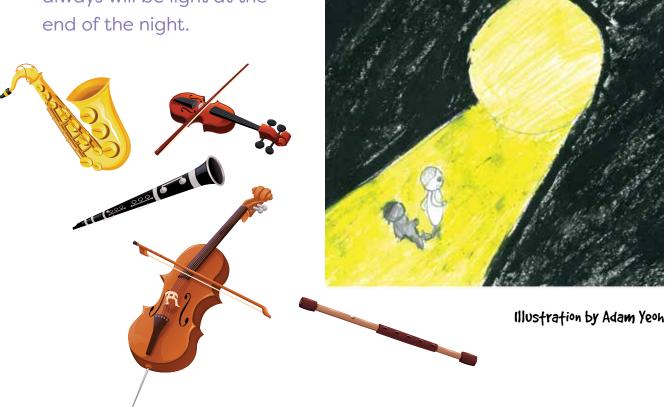
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She starts to freeze as she looks over the chemistry examination paper. Not one word. A month of preparation and she understands not a single word. She blinks away the tears threatening to spill over and sends up a silent prayer as the invigilator announces the end of the exam. Plastering on a smile, she shrugs off the entire **ordeal**, even as worry brews within her.

. . . .

A month later, the girl sits at a table full of familiar faces, laughing as one of the faces shares a silly joke. She no longer worries about what they would think if she said something embarrassing, played a wrong key or failed her Chemistry test. She works hard but knows she is loved by the very people she was once nervous to be around. She knows that no matter what, they will always have her back. She goes home and sleeps soundly, content and no longer uncertain. Her worth is no longer hinged upon an exam or a recital.

No matter how long the journey, no matter how bleak the future, no matter how dark the night, there always will be light at the end of the night.



Turning Points

By Seow Ling Ern

She was a simple girl leading a simple life. Growing up, she was content and could not ask for anything more. Her parents showered her with love and her company of good friends left her with a constant smile.



Illustration by Emilia Qaisara Qamarulzaman

One day, everything changed. Her parents decided to migrate to another country - to begin a new life devoted to the service of others. In the interest of her education, she was left alone in her home country to continue her academic pursuits. Without her family, her country no longer felt like home.

Gone were the days where she had constant care and attention. Relatives seemed to have become distant and cold. She withdrew from her life of socialising and retreated into her shell, despondent and isolated. Living alone demanded an independent strength from her that she could never seem to muster.

She craved the warm comfort of a family and longed for the loving support she once had. She strived for **resilience** and strength to overcome her loneliness.

She would become invincible.

Gratitude



A Blessing in Disguise

By Junietta Lim

As a child, I felt that I was less fortunate than my peers. Watching my friends as their parents waited patiently for them after school to drive or walk home together made me envious. I have not experienced a mother's love because my mother passed away when I was little. It was years later before I understood the meaning of kinship.

My peers could not understand me. They rejected me and thought I was strange. When they talked about their mothers, I would remain silent.

At night when it was quiet, I often reflected upon my life. I wondered why I did not have my mother by my side like my peers did. I wondered why I had a broken family and a mentally ill aunt. I wondered why I could not freely enjoy my life. I often cried myself to sleep as I thought about my life.

One day, I was watching a Hong Kong drama about an orphan girl. She was ***PfimisfiC** and took things in her stride. Her words struck me. She said, "Why lament about all that you do not have? There are many precious people by your side who have always been there

for you; family and friends. You should treasure them instead of comparing your situation with others."





It dawned on me that I had wastefully spent my life being unhappy and wallowed in self-pity. I realised how short life is. My aunt, though mentally unwell, loves and cares for me just as much as my father does. Although I have lost my mother, I still have my father, grandparents and aunt by my side and I shall always treasure them.



Cherished Moments with the Elderly



Inspired by Selina Tan, Javier Tan, Ong Zheng Wei, Unice Chan and Nessa Lau

I never expected the need to send my grandmother to a seniors' day care centre.

Everything changed when my grandmother suffered a severe stroke and became comatose. After months of treatment, she regained consciousness. However, she was no longer able to care for herself.

My family's struggle to find good, reasonably priced medical care for my grandmother made me realise the need for affordable elder care services. Since then, I sought to volunteer at an elder care centre to help those who undergo similar circumstances as my grandmother. The opportunity came in the form of a volunteer stint at Project Cheer, a befriending programme by the Tan Chin Tuan Foundation.

I dislike going out of my comfort zone. It is for this reason that I avoided talking to the elderly. However, seeing how the older volunteers took the initiative to befriend the elderly inspired me. I gathered my courage and walked up to some seniors. Despite language barriers, we conversed with gestures and laughed at our lapses in communication.















Interacting with the elderly made me appreciate the value of helping others. During Project Cheer, I flew a kite for the first time. Being an amateur, I struggled to fly the kite and was about to give up when an elderly lady came over. "You silly girl!" she laughed. "Come, let me help you." Her warm and gentle smile resembled my grandmother's.

My Project Cheer experience was enjoyable and enriching. It showed me that I could bring cheer to others and helped me to understand how many helping hands go a long way.



Illustration by Vansie Chia

My Pillar of Life

by Chrystie Quek

As teenagers, we face challenges ranging from academics to relationships. The challenge I would like to share about was an emotional one. My mother recently suffered from a second slipped disc and had to undergo a major operation. As she has aged, the operation bore greater risk.

The day before her operation, I heard faint sobbing behind her closed bedroom door. Knocking gently, I found her lying in bed, tears streaming down her face. "N-Ning, I'm scared. I don't know what will happen to me tomorrow," she stammered.



I was shocked. She had always been my pillar of strength. The one who encouraged me to be resilient and pick myself up in hard times. Watching her suffer hurt me. It was the first time she had expressed her **Vulnerabilify**. I tried to assure her, despite feeling helpless as there was nothing I could do, except to calm her with my words.

Thankfully, her surgery was a success. But it was an experience that impacted me greatly and taught me the value of perseverance. In every challenge, we can choose to give up or press on, what happens tomorrow depends on what we choose to do today.



This episode of nearly losing my mother was a harsh reminder of how much she means to me. I cannot imagine life without her. She has been my listening ear, counsellor and friend. She has shaped me into who I am today.

It made me realise the importance of treasuring my loved ones, who support and guide me without complaint. I should not take them for granted. Little acts such as asking about their day, offering to carry heavy groceries, or even taking a walk together, are ways that I can express my gratitude. I will continue to work hard to give my parents a comfortable retirement. In the time that our loved ones are with us, let us be grateful and not regret in the future.



Conserving Wafer as a Way of Life

Inspired by Lee Le Pin, Jackie Ng and Lim En Tong

one evening, Perry Came home from school looking confused.

Grandpa: What's wrong? Did something happen in school today?

Perry: No...school was great but my teacher was talking about an upcoming water rationing exercise. I don't understand why we have to do that! Don't we have enough water?



Illustration by
Muhd Aminuddin

Grandpa: Ah...water rationing exercises bring back memories. No, Perry. We may live on an island surrounded by seawater but clean drinking water has always been a scarce resource. Did you know, we used to live with just four buckets of water daily for a family of six?

Perry: How is that possible? That's not even enough for drinking!

Grandpa: We had no choice. You can get clean water from the tap. But we did not have that luxury in the past. We could only get clean water from wells. Even the Kallang Basin and Singapore River used to be **MUrky** with rubbish.

Perry: But how did the rivers become this clean?

Grandpa: Let's have dinner! I will bring you to meet a friend tomorrow to answer all your questions.

The next day, Grandpa brought Perry to the Sustainable Singapore Gallery at Marina Barrage.

Grandpa: Perry! Meet my friend, Water Wally.

Water Wally: Hello Perry! I heard that you have

many questions. Go on, I'm all ears!

Perry: Hello Water Wally, may I know how the Singapore River and Kallang Basin have become so clean?

water for consumption and prevent floods!

Water Wally: It was initiated by then Prime Minister
Lee Kuan Yew in the 1970s. The clean-up took over a decade and many foiled to clear the rubbish. Their hard work has paid off, our waters are clean now! The Kallang Basin became part of the freshwater Marina Reservoir. There is also a dam to provide clean

Perry: WOW! But why do we need to find so many ways to get clean water when we have reservoirs?

Water Wally: The water from our reservoirs is insufficient for the population. We must practise ways to keep our water supply sustainable. That is why we should follow the 3Rs, which are Re-

Perry: Reuse, Reduce and Recycle!

Water Wally: That's right! How can you conserve water?

Perry: Hmm...I can start by turning off the tap when it's not in use and collecting rainwater to water the plants!

Water Wally: Good idea Perry! I hope you will remember and be thankful for the efforts of our pioneers that gave us access to clean water. It was no easy feat. We should do our part to conserve the environment as well.

Perry: Yes I will! Thank you, Water Wally and grandpa!

Grandpa: You're most welcome! So how was your experience?

Perry: I learned that I should be more appreciative of our clean waters and our beautiful, green country. I, too, have an important role to play in saving the environment. My efforts may be small, but it can also contribute to making a difference.

Grandpa: That's good to hear!



Illustration by Foo Yu Wen

overcoming Challenges

By Lim Yong Shan

With a family of six, the financial situation at home was unstable.

Unlike my peers who owned popular gadgets and the latest clothes,
I found myself receiving hand-me-downs from my three elder sisters.

When times were especially bad, we had to cut back on our meals.

Were these obstacles challenging? Definitely.

But was I burdened by them? No.





Illustration by Alfredo Lim

I have a roof over my head, food on the table, parents who love me dearly and the privilege of having access to good education. There is more to life than luxuries that can only be bought by money. I may be poor in wealth, but my heart has certainly grown richer from all the love around me.



Respect



A Brave Soldier

By Then Shan

As Albert Einstein once said, "Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance you must keep moving forward."



One of my first experience in doing volunteer work was two years ago. My classmates and I went to Bethany Methodist Nursing Home eager to help out.

We were each assigned to a resident of the nursing home.
We **dufifully** carried out tasks, such as helping the elderly onto their wheelchairs. Between helping the staff and assisting the elderly, time passed quickly and we neared the end of our volunteering stint.

As I wheeled an elderly gentleman back to his room, he began a conversation with me. He shared that he had served as a soldier during World War II. He had lost a sister during the war, and had battled with immense grief. After a moment of silence, he offered a piece of advice that I remember to this day. He said, "Live without regrets. When I fought for our country, I saw and felt so much pain and bloodshed. But I helped many who were suffering too. That was what I set out to do as a soldier, and I live my life with no regrets."

I will not forget this brave soldier.

Mission to the World of Light

Inspired by Dianah Fikriyah, Tan Li Li, Christine Teng and Clement Aw

"Agent 147, you have a mission. Our world is threatened by the World of Light. We need you to inject our darkness potion into their main power system to shut down their light."

Alert, I jumped up and shoved gadgets into my bag including a laser gun and a pair of glasses to protect my eyes from the light. I slipped on the mission outfit. "Eew, this is disgustingly colourful unlike my black uniform," I thought as I looked at my reflection in the mirror. Not wanting to look at myself any longer, I left on my jet plane for the World of Light.

The World of Light

I was a Central Agency Spy in the World of
Darkness. Ten years ago, elders who used to
stay in the World of Darkness left in secret to
build the World of Light. They had been a
constant threat to our world as the elders
repeatedly tried to bring light to the World of
Darkness, damaging our peace. It was rumoured
that the elders were old, slow, unkind and ruthless.
I dreaded the mission but knew I had to complete
it to help maintain peace.





Upon arrival, I was surprised by the liveliness of the world. Vibrant lanterns and shimmering lights adorned the buildings and streets. The crowd milled around food stalls, stopping only to watch street performances. It looked like a carnival!

"Hello! Is it your first time here?" a passing elder asked. I plastered on a smile and nodded. "Welcome! I'm Clement from the World of Light. We have spare guest rooms in my village. Do you need a place to stay?" the elder asked. I quickly accepted his offer, silently thankful that the mission was going well. Even though I was suspicious about his kindness, I wondered if the rumours about the elders being ruthless were true.

A Warm Welcome

Clement's village had many elderly villagers. Most of them had wrinkles and used walking sticks. But that did not stop them. Music blasted from speakers as the elders danced and laughed with one another. A wispy-haired elder hobbled over. "Clement told me about you. Welcome to the Village of Happiness!" He led me to a table with more elders, who beamed upon seeing me. They offered me dishes laden with sumptuous food before I could ask questions about their main power system. Instead of annoyance, I felt strangely at ease and found myself grinning unconsciously.





Preconcepfions of them. They were peace-loving and sincere, unlike the rumours of them being ruthless and unkind. Despite our differences, we conversed effortlessly. I respected the elders for their youthful spirit and warmth, and did not want to destroy their light nor return to the World of Darkness.

Breaking into a smile, I opened my mission file and scribbled "Mission Failed". I was happy to find a place where people

were genuine and caring, a precious place that I could not destroy.





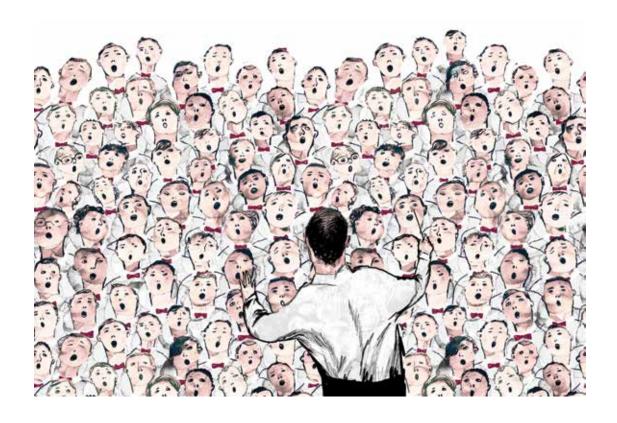


The Person I Respect Most

Inspired by Nigel Chee and Crystal Oh

The person I respect most is **meficulous**, driven, and never quits even when the going gets tough. Growing up, he led a simple childhood. He flew kites and caught fighting fish from drains near his house. He was a **sfellar** student who excelled in school. At this point, can you guess who he is? If not, read on!

To the world, he is the longest-serving prime minister. During his time in office, he fought for self-governance and later led Singapore into a merger with Malaysia. When the merger failed,



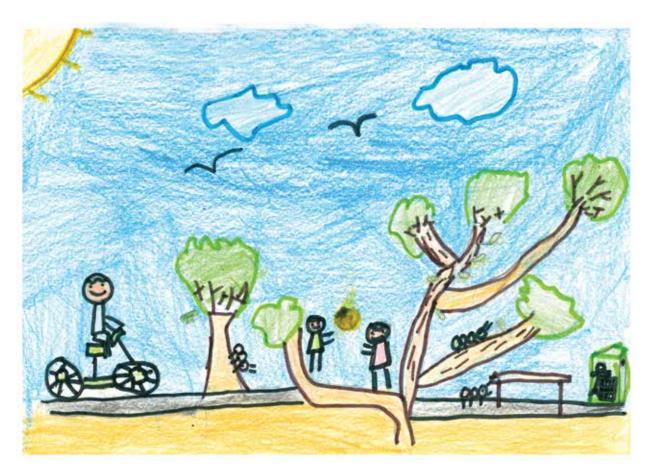


Illustration by Wong Shao Heng

he helped to develop Singapore into an independent First World country. His resilience is one of many reasons why I have the utmost respect for him.

By now, you may have already guessed. He is none other than the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew. Regretfully, I was unable to pay my last respects to him. I will, however, do my best to build on his legacy. I strive to contribute to and maintain the culturally diverse, clean and green city that Mr Lee had moulded over the years.

My Grandma

Inspired by Dianah Fikriyah, Zheng Xin Yi, Sebastian Tan and Sivathaashini

"Time for lunch, Dianah." It was Grandma's voice. There she goes again, I thought. Ignoring her, I browsed my Snapchat feed. After repeatedly shouting for me, Grandma walked over and took my phone, "Dianah, it is time for lunch! Stop using your phone!"

"Why do I have to live with an annoying person like you?" I screamed, snatching my phone back. "I hate this!" I hissed, storming out of the house. As I walked downstairs, I stumbled and fell. To my surprise, the stairs vanished and I fell into nothingness. Without warning, I landed with a poof. I felt disorien fated and realised that somehow, I was on my bed.

fast forward



"Didn't I leave the house? Is this a dream?" Wild thoughts ran through my head as I called for my parents and Grandma. There was no answer. Instinctively, I walked towards the kitchen table and picked up the calendar. 8 September. I exhaled in relief before noticing the year. It was 2021.

Hands shaking, I stood rooted to the ground. I had travelled five years into the future. As I paced the room worriedly, there were





















sounds of keys jingling and the front door opened. It was Grandma! But Grandma looked different. She looked pale and leaned heavily on a walking stick. Catching sight of me, she smiled and weakly wheezed, "Oh, you're up! I wanted to buy lunch but had forgotten to take my purse. Silly me, let me go to my room to get it." I instantly regretted shouting at her earlier.

"It's okay Grandma! I can cook lunch." Despite her poor health, Grandma insisted on helping me. I was thankful for her presence, she made me feel safe and comfortable - even in the future.



"Why are you so ill, Grandma?" I asked while preparing lunch. "This is common when growing old, my dear. Don't you worry!" she brushed me off. Grandma looked thinner and weaker. Her hair had turned grey and her face was lined with wrinkles. My heart sank as I regretted not being more caring or loving towards her.

After lunch, I helped Grandma with the household chores and fed her medicine. As her legs were swollen, we did simple exercises to ease the pain. With Grandma resting in bed, I took the chance to take a quick nap.

Rewind to the Present

Ringggggg! I fumbled to switch off the alarm, but found myself in an unfamiliar place. Looking around anxiously, I realised it was the hospital. Warm, trembling hands clutched mine. It was Grandma – her brow furrowed in concern. "You are finally awake! I was worried... you were unconscious after you fell! Thankfully, our neighbour was nearby and rushed you to the hospital."

Had I not travelled to the future?

"What year is it Grandma?" I asked. "It's 2016, silly girl! Are you more forgetful than me after the fall?" Grandma laughed. Reminded of how frail she might become, I sat up and hugged her tightly. "I'm sorry for shouting at you Grandma. Please forgive me. I love you very much."







break rules but are not crimes

Vinx, the Lost Cat

Plight: An unpleasant situation

Bounded: To move quickly with large jumping movements

Courage

Parkour with Geronimo Stilton

Petrified: To feel extremely scared

Manoeuvres: Skilful and careful movements

Journey to Eskarion

Resolve: A determined decision

Pink Pank

Idly: To do nothing

Ostracised: To intentionally prevent a person from being part of a group

The Rollercoaster Ride of Life

Arduous: Difficult.

The House

Red Tape: Official rules and processes that seem unnecessary and delay results

Gape: To look in surprise, often with an open mouth

Defermination

My Canoeing Journey

Adversities: Challenging or unfortunate situations

Daunted: To feel discouraged about one's ability to achieve results



There Will Be Light at the End of Every Night

Ordeal: A very tough experience

Turning Points

Despondent: To feel unhappy, with no hope

Resilience: The ability to recover quickly from problems

Grafifude

A Blessing in Disguise

Optimistic: To feel hopeful about the future

Dawned: Become known or obvious

My Pillar of Life

Vulnerability: A state of being prone to physical, emotional or mental injury

Conserving Water as a Way of Life

Murky: Dark and dirty

Toiled: To work hard

Respect

A Brave Soldier

Dutifully: To fulfil one's duty

Mission to the World of Light

Adorned: To decorate an object or person

Preconceptions: An opinion formed beforehand, often a prejudice

The Person I Respect Most

Meticulous: To pay careful attention to detail

Stellar: Outstanding

My Grandma

Disorientated: To lose the sense of direction



Good Shepherd, Teenage Centre (Malaysia)

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